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**Investment in Imagined Identities of Korean Study
Abroad Learners of English In New Zealand**

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ABSTRACT

This research adopts a narrative epistemological and methodological approach to explore various investments of Korean study abroad learners of English in New Zealand. The specific focus of the study is on: the relationship between Korean learners' investing in study abroad English learning and Korean societal ideologies; the learners' study abroad investing in relation to their imagined identities; and, the identity work and outcomes the learners experience during their sojourns. The study focuses on six adult study abroad sojourners from Korea, most of whom participated in this research for a period of six months. As data collection instruments, the study employed narrative interviews, narrative frames, and a private Facebook group.

Two types of data analysis are used in this research: narrative analysis and cross-case thematic analysis. Narrative analysis consists of narrative writing as a key process of analysis, while allowing for the presentation of the findings in storied form. Through engaging in narrative writing, I emplot individual participant data into a storyline that highlights the salient data linkages in relation to the scope and aims of the research, and thereby produce individual participant narratives as findings that are readable and possess verisimilitude. I also use cross-case thematic analysis to address the research questions by exploring theoretical relationships among salient themes identified in the individual narratives and across the data set.

This study explores the social situatedness of study abroad language learners and contextualises study abroad language learning as a crucial part of investing in imagined identities and desired futures, characterised by identity work. The findings highlight the mutually informing relationship among investment, imagined identities and identity work and the dynamicity of the push and pull factors that characterise study abroad language learner experience. Furthermore, it reveals the power of storytelling as a meaning-making

tool, suitable for inquiry into human experience. Lastly, the findings of the study attest to the fruitfulness of researching the social aspects of language learning, as it humanises the language learner and sheds light on the dynamicity of the language learning process.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study has been in the making for a long period of time. It largely stems from my life experiences associated with language learning and teaching, migration, and study abroad. Reflecting on these experiences, I often wondered about the implications of learning a foreign language and being exposed to new cultures through study abroad and migration – particularly in relation to identity. I wondered what it was, beyond the mechanics of a language, that a person gains or loses by becoming fluent in a foreign language. Upon consulting the relevant literature, I found that, coincidentally, second language acquisition (SLA) was undergoing a social turn (Block, 2003) that involved increased focus on the social aspects of language learning, which included identity (Block, 2007). This motivated and encouraged me to contribute to this growing body of literature by conducting my own research. Before providing the rationale and the background to this study, below I outline stories of life experiences that informed the scope and the focus of this research.

1.1 From Stories and Ideas to Research

Story 1: I only recently realised that one of the underlying inspirations for this research stems from as far back as my early adolescence. My earliest memories of having a keen interest in a foreign language date back to when I was growing up in Montenegro, in the former Yugoslavia, and when I would watch Italian television programmes for children with my two cousins, from whom I was inseparable. The programmes were so entertaining, to the extent that we initially watched them in spite of having almost no knowledge of the language. However, given my uncle's knowledge of Italian, we often turned to him for help, asking him what various words and phrases meant, thereby slowly building our own vocabulary of the language. Soon after, our knowledge of Italian improved to the extent that we were able to play games that involved impersonations and

role-plays in Italian. Though it might appear at first sight that we were simply young children engaging in these activities purely for our own amusement, there were much more significant underlying processes taking place. Our games involved impersonations that required attention to the relevant pronunciation, appropriate gestures and body movement, and an altogether convincing pragmatic performance of a foreign language. Though we only spoke Italian for fun at the time, it was the beginning of a process that would eventually result in both of my cousins and me being fluent Italian speakers who take a keen interest in various aspects of Italian culture, and visit Italy frequently; therefore, without being aware of it at the time, we were learning Italian as part of our pursuit of belonging to an *imagined community* (Anderson, 1983; Kanno & Norton, 2003). Reflecting on my experiences of learning and using Italian, I often felt that it entailed identity work, as the complex pragmatic and cultural norms I was adopting while using the language informed the construction of my second language or multilingual identity (Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott & Brown, 2013).

Story 2: Many years later, after having immigrated to New Zealand at the age of 12, having lived in Auckland for over a decade, and having finished my tertiary studies (with Italian as one of my majors), I embarked on a four-year journey to South Korea (Korea hereafter) where I taught English as a foreign language. It was during this period that my ideas for this study emerged, particularly as I struggled to convince my students that learning a language is much more than the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical rules. However, this proved a difficult task, particularly in light of the assessment-oriented learning of English in Korea, where the audiolingual method of language teaching is still present (Ahn, 2011) and where there is a lack of emphasis on pragmatic development (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Consequently, I often found myself facing conflicting demands as a teacher, which involved keeping the students interested and

happy, while adhering to the expectations of the school and the parents, who expected sustained and rapid improvements in the students' test scores. I noticed that my students struggled to generate genuine interest in English and associated learning English with boredom. The emphasis on test scores prioritised decontextualised learning of vocabulary and grammatical structures, devoid of excitement and fun that discovering a new language ought to entail – that my cousins and I enjoyed experiencing while learning Italian. In light of the above experiences of teaching English in Korea, I often asked myself: *Beyond the pressure from parents and teachers to study English, what motivated Korean students to pursue English study? Was their English learning supported by visions of membership in imagined communities? Did their learning entail identity work?*

Upon returning to New Zealand from Korea in 2014, in line with the focus on the social aspects of language learning in SLA and in search of answers to my questions outlined above, I sought to conduct a PhD study. Given New Zealand's popularity with study abroad English learners from many parts of the world, including those from Korea, I expected to be able to recruit a small number of Korean learners of English in New Zealand as participants in my research. My goal was to conduct a study in search of answers to some of the questions I outlined in *Story 2*; furthermore, I was also heeding the calls for increased research into the needs of Asian students in New Zealand. The strengthening economic ties with Asia, in addition to New Zealand's stake in the lucrative study abroad market, justify research on Asian study abroad learners (Kitchen, 2011) and a deepening in understanding of their experiences, goals, needs, and wants during their study abroad sojourns.

In the next section I outline the thought processes that informed the design of the study.

1.2 Epistemological and Methodological Considerations

The previous section outlined some of my reflections and ideas that served as means to clarify my research aims and objectives. Furthermore, as the preceding section also showed, while organising my thoughts and ideas I drew on stories of relevant personal experiences. This alerted me to the potential and power of stories as evaluative tools of human experience that “assist humans to make life experiences meaningful” (Kramp, 2004, p. 107). As revealed in *Story 1* above, constructing a narrative about my own language learning experience helped me gain a deeper understanding of the implications behind the language learning journey; for example, it helped me realise that my language learning was associated with my visions for the future that I was not necessarily entirely aware of at the time. Furthermore, it prompted me to reflect on the identity work that language learning entails. In light of these realisations, I considered narrative inquiry as a potentially suitable framework for my study. Just as I found stories fruitful in making meaning out of my language learning experiences, I pondered eliciting stories from Korean study abroad learners in New Zealand, thereby prompting them to make meaning of their study abroad experiences, the motivations behind their language learning, their identity work, and how these related to their imagined futures.

Consequently, the epistemological and methodological foundations of this study are informed by narrative inquiry and storytelling as a means of making sense of our “experiences, our social practices, our identities, and our imaginings of the future” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 660). Of particular significance in this study was the function of stories as a window into identity. Given that our life stories are constantly subject to plot revisions, based on new experiences and events that alter our lives (Polkinghorne, 1998), this research allowed me to investigate how study abroad experiences, English learning, and the related plans for the future fit into the narratives of the participants – and how

study abroad may have instigated revision of who they have been and influenced and facilitated the construction of who they would like to become in the future. As the core construct of narrative research that encapsulates the practical processes in narrative studies, *narrative knowledging* was central to this study. It entailed “the meaning making, learning, or knowledge construction that [took] place during the narrative research activities of (co)constructing narratives, analysing narratives, reporting the findings” (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 395).

This study therefore consisted of a series of mutually informing processes, which involved the researcher and the research participants. The researcher co-constructed the interviews with the participants; subsequently, the researcher transcribed and analysed the interview data, and, finally wrote the research report – this thesis, which will be consumed by its readers. Each step entails narrative knowledging on the part of each stakeholder involved in the multiple processes.

This section highlighted the epistemological and methodological considerations that informed this study. The following section outlines the background of the study, including issues surrounding the role of English in Korea, the societal ideologies that inform the more particular ideologies of English, and the significance of study abroad English sojourns. Subsequently, the aims and the rationale for the study are outlined, and the chapter concludes with a thesis overview.

1.3 Background of the Study

English has existed as a *lingua mundi* for a number of decades, and has thus become the language of international trade, business, politics, and academia in over 100 countries around the world (Nunan, 2003). Korea has become recognised in recent decades as one of the champions of the pursuit of English, as the country’s public and private sector spending on English is measured in billions (Lawrence, 2012). Despite the

importance of English as a global language in relation to Korea's aspirations for economic success in the global market, there are concerns over the growing importance of English and the associated consequences. As a result, English has been described as a *frenzy* (Song, 2011) and a *fever* (Park, 2009). In addition to being a mandatory school subject from elementary school and higher (Chang, 2009), English is tested as part of a highly competitive university entrance exam; consequently, the final grade is commensurate with the rank of university it guarantees access to, with only the top achievers guaranteed places in the elite universities, also referred to as SKY (Seoul National, Korea, and Yonsei University). In turn, elite university graduates secure the most lucrative careers, with desired positions typically also requiring English screening (Choi, 2002).

However, Koreans remain ambivalent towards such a high importance assigned to English in their society, particularly in light of its infrequent use in everyday life or in the workplace (Park, 2009). Yet, English remains a crucial form of capital (Bourdieu, 1991) in Korea, though its role in Korea continues to be the subject of debate, especially in light of its apparent function as a tool for *elimination* (Song, 2011), a source of socioeconomic hardship (Park & Lo, 2012), and education pressure derived high rates of mental health issues amongst Korean youth (Lee & Larson, 2000).

As a consequence of the rising importance of English, study abroad programmes have become popular amongst Koreans, with the number of Koreans pursuing English through study abroad doubling in the past two decades (Abelmann, Kwon, Lo & Okazaki, 2015). Early study abroad became particularly popular as Korean parents believed there was an advantage to be gained by sending their children on study abroad sojourns in their early teens, or earlier; specifically, they believed their children would learn English faster and gain a competitive advantage over their peers in Korea (Lee, 2016). Furthermore,

study abroad appealed to the Korean elite as a status marker, and therefore an additional strategy of diversification. Pursuing English in study abroad is associated with global citizenry and is therefore valued over English education available in Korea (Song, 2011). Consequently, study abroad has been succinctly defined as “a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes” (Kinging, 2009, p.11). However, as further discussed in Chapter 2, study abroad is also pursued by some Koreans as a pathway to settling overseas (see Chapter 2), which featured strongly as an underlying motivation of the participants in this study (see Chapters 5 & 6).

This section briefly introduced the background to this research by highlighting the role of English in Korea and the associated popularity of study abroad English learning amongst Koreans. The section below outlines the rationale for the study and situates it within the study abroad literature.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

Barbara Freed’s 1995 *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* is widely recognised as a volume that marked the beginning of a new era in applied linguistics. In contrast to previous study abroad research that mainly focused on the acquisition of language knowledge and skills in study abroad learners, Freed’s publication paved the way for inquiry into the social and cultural aspects (Kinging, 2013) of study abroad language learning. She called for more research into “how students actually spend their time while abroad ... [and] the purposes for which and the amount of time they actually spend using the target language” (Freed, 1995, p. 28). The underlying rationale for such research was that the sole focus on language acquisition outcomes may omit “important gains by learners whose learning is not limited to the formal classroom” (Collentine & Freed, 2004, p. 157). In the years that followed, a number of study abroad ethnographies and case studies emerged in applied linguistics (e.g. Jackson, 2008;

Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005; Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott & Brown, 2013), which focused on the “individual student sojourners”, and which demonstrated that “an examination of their storied experiences can make an important contribution to our understanding of the impact of stays abroad” (Jackson, 2008, p. 4).

One of the emerging topics in study abroad research has been that of identity. In Benson et al. (2013), identity is explored in light of second language learning, particularly in relation to “the ways in which second language identities develop over time and in response to new contexts of language learning and use” (p. 2). The study focuses on the experiences of individual study abroad learners and their situatedness in specific study abroad contexts, and views “study abroad as a potentially ‘critical’ experience that opens up second language identities to change” (p. 3). In her survey of recent study abroad language learner research, Kinginger (2013) highlights studies that have also focused on individual experience of study abroad learners focusing on how they are received by host institutions in study abroad (Churchill, 2006), their host families (Kinger & Lee, 2019), their encounters with hostility or indifference (Pellegrino-Aveni, 2005), and on how they negotiate interaction in study abroad as newcomers (Kinger, 2008). However, she concludes that studies that are reflective of the social turn in SLA remain few, while also highlighting the predominance of published studies focusing on American study abroad learner sojourns. Benson et al. (2013) share this observation, while identifying the apparent narrowness of focus on university-based programmes rather than individually organised sojourns by the students themselves.

This study builds on the study abroad research discussed above, heeding the calls for an increased focus on the social aspects of study abroad language learning. Specifically, the study seeks to contribute to the growing research on identity in study abroad language learners. Furthermore, by focusing on individually organised sojourns of

Korean study abroad learners in New Zealand, it addresses the current lack of diversity in published research that is mainly based on study abroad cohort programmes of American students abroad. The following section discusses the specific aims of the study.

1.5 Aims of the Study

As outlined in section 1.3 above, English has become a language of significant importance in Korea in recent decades. Consequently, the number of Korean English learners embarking on study abroad sojourns has increased exponentially. My first aim in this study is to explore the relationship between Korean societal influences and language ideologies and individual investment in English learning and study abroad. Drawing on Norton's (2013) construct of *investment*, I seek to investigate "the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language", as informed by Korean societal influences, and the way in which

learners 'invest' in the target language ... with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money) which will increase the value of their cultural capital and social power". (Norton, 2013, p. 6)

The second aim of this study relates to identity, which Norton (2015) describes as "multiple, a site of struggle, and changing across time and space" (p. 377), while defining it as "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2013, p. 4). This study thus seeks to investigate the study abroad learner investing in English and other forms of capital in study (Bourdieu, 1991) as investing in imagined identities.

The third and final aim in this study is to explore the identity work and the associated identity outcomes (Block, 2007) of Korean study abroad English learner

participants in New Zealand, as related to investing in imagined identities, the exposure to and interaction with the study abroad context, and the learning of a new language that “influences both the learner’s sense of self and the possibilities for self-representation through language use” (Benson, et al., 2013, p. 1).

In line with the study aims above, this study seeks to answer the following three research questions:

1. How do socially imposed expectations of Korean society relate to investment of Koreans in English learning and study abroad?
2. What imagined identities do Korean study abroad English learners in New Zealand invest in?
3. What identity work and identity outcomes do Korean study abroad English learners experience in New Zealand?

1.6 Thesis Outline

This thesis is organised in eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the formative ideas and personal experiences that led to this study, the epistemological and methodological considerations, along with the background, rationale, and aims of the research. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature on the role and history of English in Korea and its mutually-perpetuating relationship with Korean societal and language ideologies. Furthermore, it discusses the role of study abroad in relation to English learning in Korea. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical foundations of the study, focusing on central theoretical constructs such as *investment* and *identity* (Norton, 2013), *capital* (Bourdieu, 1991), *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and *dialogue* (Bakhtin, 1986), while situating the study within recent study abroad empirical literature. Chapter 4 presents the methodological framework and describes the narrative nature of the study, in addition to the paradigmatic considerations that underpin this research, along

with participant recruitment and selection, data collection and analysis methods and procedures, and validation criteria. Chapter 5 presents the six stories of the main participants in this study. It is also the first findings chapter. Chapter 6 presents the cross-case thematic analysis and explores inter-thematic relationships amongst the participants in relation to the research aims. Chapter 7 presents a theoretical conceptualisation of the findings. It outlines a conceptual model that illustrates the study's theoretical implications and discusses and explores key theoretical conclusions of the research. Lastly, Chapter 8, as the concluding chapter discusses the implications of the study, while outlining its' limitations and recommendations for future research in language learner identity in study abroad contexts.

1.7 Conclusion

This introductory chapter presented the framework for this study. It discussed my personal motives for engaging in this research, in addition to outlining the key details pertaining to the study design and associated procedures. The outline section then provided a preview of the contents of each chapter. The chapter that follows provides a review of the literature and the background on the role of English in Korea.

CHAPTER 2: ENGLISH IN KOREA

This chapter presents and discusses the salient literature on the role of English in Korea. The initial focus of the chapter is the history of English and the emergence of English *fever* in Korean society. Next, the mutually perpetuating nature of English and various societal processes in modern Korean society is explored as an important lens for interpreting findings in this study. Finally, the literature relating to experiences of Koreans on study abroad sojourns in New Zealand is consulted and explored for themes relevant to this research.

2.1. Situating English in the Korean Historical Context

The English obsession that has existed in Korea since the latter decades of the 20th century has become a widely known but unique phenomenon in the modern era. Despite the undisputed status of English as a dominant language of the globalising world, the Korean English “frenzy” (Park, 2009) as such remains associated exclusively with the southern part of the Korean peninsula. As one of the key objectives of this study is to deepen the understanding of Koreans’ investment in English, it is necessary to provide insight into the origin of the presence of English in Korea and how this underpins modern Koreans’ relationship with English. A close analysis of the role of English and its evolution into one of the prized assets of modern life in Korea will shed light on the manner in which English ideology has come to permeate all scales of context (Blommaert, 2010) in Korean society.

2.1.1 English in Korea in the 19th Century

The importance of English in Korea today is rooted in processes that were initiated as far back as the end of the 20th century. Korea was seeking to establish key international relations, which resulted in the signing of a Korean-American treaty in 1882. This is when English was first recognised as a necessity, and Koreans allowed for the first

English schools to be established in Korea. As increasing importance was placed on diplomatic and trade relations, the newly established English schools were expected to produce English-speaking government personnel, such as diplomats and other officials who would represent Korea in trade negotiations and official communication with their new allies and trading partners (Chang, 1986). Though English had not achieved the status it holds in Korea today, it had become associated with power and a high social status during the final decades of the Chosun Dynasty rule (Jin, 2012). However, the Japanese colonisation that occurred in the early stages of the 20th century would interrupt Korea's pro-American course and the associated rise of English.

2.1.2 Japanese Colonisation (1910-1945)

The period of Japanese colonisation remains remembered amongst Koreans as one of the most difficult times in their history. The colonisation is recognised as Japan's attempt to completely assimilate the Korean population to Japanese imperial rule, while destroying Korea's linguistic, cultural, and traditional heritage (Rhee, 1992). In line with such goals, Japanese was introduced as the dominant language in the education system, while Korean was banned altogether in schools and public space by 1938 (1992).

On the other hand, despite having been marginalised, English still had its purpose on the Korean peninsula. Despite having been viewed as a form of resistance to Japanese rule, private English education was still allowed (Chang, 2009). In the early months of 1919, during a wave of a Korean independence movement, allowing Koreans to learn English was one of the concessions made by the Japanese colonizers; however, English education would again become banned prior to the initial stages of World War II (Kim-Rivera, 2002).

Despite English having been marginalised during Japanese colonial rule and overshadowed by Koreans' issues of fighting to preserve their native language and

culture, it still carried importance in the minds of Koreans, who perceived it as the language of an ally – especially following the start of World War II.

2.1.3 Post WWII Period, the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Aftermath

In the aftermath of Japan's capitulation at the end of World War II Korea was freed from Japan's occupation and regained its freedom. Despite achieving this much desired goal, the country was headed into a period of unexpected turbulence and instability. Though the World War had just ended, a cold war between the world's two superpowers, the U.S. and U.S.S.R was just starting – and Korea would soon become their battleground. An arbitrary division of the country occurred, with the U.S. taking control of South Korea from 1945 to 1948, and the U.S.S.R occupying the North. The region eventually slipped into a civil war, also known as The Korean War (1950-1953), out of which the peninsula emerged largely ruined and swept by hunger and poverty. Though a ceasefire agreement was signed in 1953, the war officially never ended, with the two Koreas remaining recognised as two separate countries until the present (Chang, 2009).

2.2 The Return of English

A lot had happened since Korea's first attempt to establish relations with the U.S at the end of the 19th century. However, now, following the end of The Korean War, South Korea's ties with the U.S. appeared stronger than ever before. Korea's territorial integrity was dependent on U.S. military presence, as was their ailing economy on the financial help in the form of U.S. loans and aid. America, which Koreans refer to as Miguk (beautiful country) was viewed as Korea's saviour; furthermore, it was associated with advancement and wealth – while English as America's official language was considered a symbol of America's glorified image in Korea (H.H. Moon, 2009).

It was therefore evident that English was en route to claiming an important place in Korean society. It was gradually being promoted to a dominant language on the world stage (Song, 2011); furthermore, close ties with the U.S. resulted in a number of Koreans receiving higher education in America and subsequently being promoted to key societal positions in Korea, paving the way for English to be recognised as a marker of the ruling class (E.G. Kim, 2008). With education traditionally being viewed as a pathway to higher social status (Seth, 2002) and English subsequently gaining the status of a marker of high social classes, it becomes evident how the rise of English is reflective of Koreans' obsession with the pursuit of a higher social status.

2.3 Korea's Economic Boom

After decades marred by Japanese occupation, wars, and poverty, Korea's rebuild gathered pace in the 1960s; a period of industrialisation and urbanisation ensued. The country's economy surged from one of the least developed in the early 1960s (GDP per capita \$91,50) to one of the world's top 15 economies in 2010, with a GDP per capita of \$18,647 USD (CIA, 2012). As advancements in technology and mobility intensified, opportunities for global trade increased, making the growth of local economies increasingly reliant on their competitiveness in global markets. Korea showcased its economic progress and infrastructural development by successfully hosting the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Summer Olympics (Cumings, 2005).

With English, as the *lingua mundi* being inextricably linked to globalisation, it inevitably became a highly sought after global commodity and an indispensable asset in international business. In line with Korea's growing aspirations for asserting itself as part of the international economic elite, the promotion of English gathered pace from the early 1980s; from the Fourth National Curriculum (1982-1992) English became the second most important subject, and by the Sixth National Curriculum (1992-1997) it was an

established core subject from Elementary [Primary] level onwards, with emphasis on native-like pronunciation and learner-centered teaching methods (H.H.Moon, 2009). These were the initial stages of what would soon develop into an English “frenzy” that is today a globally unique phenomenon, with the Korean population’s pursuit of English unparalleled and unmatched elsewhere in the world.

2.3.1 The Asian Market Crisis and the Start of English Frenzy

The steady rise of English in Korea in the 1990s followed Korea’s economic growth and strategy to develop into a competitive global market presence. However, the 1997 Asian financial crisis resulted in serious repercussions for the Korean economy: interest rates rose sharply; the local currency depreciated in value; unemployment rates soared. This is still remembered as an extremely challenging period for Korean society, and one that was psychologically burdensome for its citizens (Robinson, 2007). Somewhat unexpectedly, the crisis also coincided with a rise in popularity of English. Reflecting what J.S.-Y. Park (2009) referred to as the ideology of *necessitation*, it was widely believed that English is a key element of Korea’s economic recovery and further development in the era of globalisation. The forthcoming national curriculums reflected Korea’s English strategy, with an increase in public spending on the recruitment of native English speakers for public schools and requirements for teachers to use English exclusively during English lessons, among some of the changes introduced (Moodie, 2015).

However, these were also the initial stages of the formation of a multi-billion dollar private English education sector that exists in Korea today. The public spending on English was outweighed by the demand for English education that has transformed into a “social malady” (Song, 2011). Around 75% of primary and secondary school students attend private English lessons; consequently, an average of 25% of household income is

spent on education (mostly English) (S. Kim & Lee, 2010), hence the increasing concerns that the pursuit of English has done more harm than good to Korean society.

2.3.2 The English Obsession Domino Effect

Education has long been recognised as a crucial instrument for achieving upward social mobility in Korea (Seth, 2002). With many Koreans from low and mid socioeconomic groups having successfully climbed the societal ladder due to higher education from the 1960s onwards, it is unsurprising that tertiary enrolments amongst high school graduates in recent years have reached as high as 80%, which is among the highest in developed countries. Since the more recent policies that have introduced the ideology of *necessitation* in regard to English have made it a central part of the Korean education system, the importance of English in Korea has risen to unprecedented levels; this is exemplified by Koreans' annual spend on private education of (USD) 18.4 billion, a third of which was spent on private English lessons (The Korea Times, 2016).

With English having become an indispensable asset, and Koreans having little choice but to pursue English education, the English obsession has become a socially accepted norm in Korean society. However, despite expecting to reap benefits from raising the level of English proficiency of its population, Korea has suffered numerous consequences as a result of its English pursuit.

2.3.3 English Test Focus and Examination Hell

One of the most common critiques relating to the underwhelming outcomes of Korea's pursuit of English are based on the persistently low general levels of English proficiency amongst its population, in spite of the enormous economic sacrifices that are continuously made in its pursuit. One of the primary causes is the structure of the education system. It is argued that young students' efforts at learning English through the public education system and the private education sector are primarily test-oriented (Choi,

2015). The goal of entering one of the elite tertiary institutions is entirely dependent on the score in one entrance exam, guiding students towards prioritising grammar and reading comprehension over English communicative fluency (Nunan, 2003; Park & Abelmann, 2004).

In addition to falling short of increasing English fluency amongst Korea's population, by embracing English fever Korea has placed an additional burden on its students throughout the schooling system. With increasing issues surrounding students' mental health and well being as a result of what is referred to as *examination hell* (Robinson, 2007), English has exacerbated the consequences, as students often associate English with anxiety and stress. In turn, the demand for supplementary English lessons has significantly influenced the growth of an ever expanding English education private sector, which places significant pressure on Koreans' household finances. However, what has also become an additional component of English education are short-term study abroad sojourns, through which Koreans seek to gain an advantage in a highly competitive education system.

2.4 English as a Social Malady

In light of the issues discussed above, many argue that the cost of the English frenzy for Korean society is unjustifiably high. However, as such, it is arguably a fitting tool of the ruthless neoliberal mechanisms with its many systems of elimination. In line with this argument, according to Song (2011), "English [in Korea] has been recruited, in the guise of globalization, to exploit the meretricious ideology of merit to the advantage of the privileged classes and to the disadvantage of the other classes of the society" (p. 35). Viewed through the figures of expenditure on private education, including private English lessons, it appears that English indeed serves as a system of elimination for those who are unable to afford it. As Ihm and Choi (2015) point out:

Vast expenditures on private tutoring, including individual or group tutoring, instruction at for-profit institutions, self-study, internet tutoring, training abroad, and after-school lessons within schools, have given children from wealthier families a significant advantage in the competition to get into the best schools. (p. 35)

This assertion is further solidified in light of statistical figures, which confirm that Korean families from the top income bracket spend almost nine times as much on private education as those from the low income families (KOSTAT, 2016).

Other curiosities surrounding the role of English in Korea include its rare use in everyday life, as well as the lack of guarantees for future success in the job market, in spite of which Koreans continue to invest heavily in the language. Given its rare use in the workplace (Park & Jung, 2006), but nevertheless consistent evaluation of employee English competence in some companies – such as those in export and manufacturing industries – English appears to be no more than an expensive luxury and a seemingly unnecessary part of the repertoire of the modern, global Korean worker (Choi, 2002). Furthermore, despite being a valued form of capital, English appears useful only in conjunction with other prerequisites set by the Korean job market; for example, as argued by Ablemann et al. (2009), a tertiary qualification from a third tier university in Korea, along with impeccable standardised English test scores and English fluency, are unlikely to guarantee desirable employment opportunities in Korea – meaning that English only becomes decisive when it is accompanied by qualifications from one of the top tertiary institutions.

Ultimately, the English obsession phenomenon in Korea appears overly impractical and unjustifiable. The unprecedented sacrifices made in its pursuit appear illogical vis-à-vis the often elusive benefits that it frequently fails to guarantee and

deliver. However, English does (coincidentally or not) appear to be an effective tool for the reproduction of neoliberal values in Korea. Ignoring the societal inequalities and the uneven playing field with regard to social mobility, it employs the ideology of merit to suggest that upward social mobility is equally available to all who are willing to pursue it – although for those already near the top of the societal hierarchy, the journey would be somewhat simpler. However, as Song (2011) explains, Korea is arguably somewhat culturally predisposed to such a system.

2.4.1 Hierarchy, Education and English as a System of Elimination in Korea

According to Song (2011) “South Korea’s hierarchical structure of power relations is considerably more rigid and less mutable than those attested in most other developed countries” (p. 43). As a traditionally hierarchical society, Korea is recognised for clearly delineated and socially accepted hierarchical structures that exist in virtually all spheres of society (Nelson, 2000). Despite Korea’s close ties with America and Western influence following the formation of South Korea as a state, egalitarian values had failed to replace the rigid hierarchical stratifications that emphasise and accentuate differences between socio-economic groups. Such a social value system still applies today, as white and blue collar workers rarely associate or reside in the same area, and even less frequently form families with members of a different social-economic class (Lett, 1998). The extent to which belonging to a certain social class determines and dictates people’s lives in Korea reflects the importance which hierarchy and structure hold in Korean society – offering support for Lett’s (1998) assertion that Koreans are inherently disposed to seeking a high social status. This, in turn, contextualises the obsession with pursuit of education, and English in particular, in Korea; education is still perceived as the main guarantee to higher class status, while English is its close companion as a marker of the ruling class.

Today's education system in Korea, as well as the general perception of the value of education, were largely defined during the Japanese colonial period (Seth, 2002). A highly competitive, test oriented system was introduced and established. Despite education having been encouraged during this period, the educational policies were hostile towards Koreans. The language of instruction was Japanese, and access to higher education for Koreans was highly contested (Seth, 2002). Today, it still remains a widely accepted norm that extreme sacrifices ought to be made in pursuit of higher education and academic success. Arguably, this norm plays an important role in perpetuating the ideology of merit that underpins the social hierarchy system in Korea. This ideology is based on the belief that success in education, and life in general, is based on merit, conveniently ignoring the comparative advantage of the wealthier socioeconomic groups of Korean society and their relative ease of access to such education and thereby serving to preserve their position of power (Song, 2011).

In the past decades English has also become an important component of higher education, widely associated with success and upward social mobility in Korea. Similarly, the same ideology of merit that informs beliefs regarding higher education also guides perception towards English: it promotes the notion that English can be mastered through dedicated study and practice, ignoring the reality that quality (private) English education is reserved for those possessing higher economic resources. It is thus widely recognised that the Korean English "frenzy" (Park, 2009) primarily serves to support the system of elimination (Song, 2011) in the race for upward social mobility. As argued in the previous section on English as a social malady, this belief is often legitimised by the argument that despite being highly sought after, and extreme sacrifices being made in its pursuit by Koreans, English is seldom used in the workplace or in everyday conversation, raising the question as to why it holds such an important place in Korean society (Park, 2009).

2.4.2 The New Face of Korea: From Confucianism, to English, Globalisation, and Capitalism

As outlined in the previous sections of this chapter, English has long been a language of importance in Korea. Its unprecedented rise is associated with the country's independence following The Korean War, its subsequent geopolitical affiliation with the West, and most recently its economic rebirth and globalisation successes. However, the new face of Korea, derived from the amalgamation of neoliberal ideology and Confucianism (Shim, Kim & Martin, 2000), despite the apparent progress that it represents, has come at an underlying cost.

According to Callahan (1999), Confucianism is still a significant presence in Korean society. It informs the Korean people's way of life, as well as shapes their motivation and beliefs. As one of the founding traditions of Korean society, it centres on societal hierarchy that establishes clear power relations, guides human interaction, and is widely understood and accepted by people. However, the Confucian emphasis on hierarchy, which entails obedience and respect to seniors and superiors (Doe, 2000), coupled with the neoliberal focus on profit and competition, poses a dangerous combination. It is seen as the driving force behind the imposed English ideology that has instigated the English frenzy, which, as Song (2011) argues, is primarily a neoliberal instrument of elimination, and which psychologically and financially burdens Koreans to learn a language they hardly ever use.

Furthermore, the blending of neoliberal, capitalist values and tradition is also perceived as the driving force behind the economic success of Korea and other Asian countries:

The political capital that comes from reinventing local cultures to make local participation in capitalism appear as a natural outgrowth of indigenous traditions

can be considerable. Rather than picturing capitalism as an imposition from above or ... from the outside, it is seen as coming from within and therefore adhering to a higher moral legitimacy. This strategy not only reaffirms the legitimacy of the state that claims to represent the honoured tradition, but it makes elements of the reclaimed tradition available for persuading people whose standards of living are rising to accept whatever controls the state regards as necessary for scaling the global ladder and ensuring the dominance of its elites. (Brook & Luong, 1999, p. 8)

However, despite economic growth serving as a justification for introducing capitalism into Korean society under the veil of Confucian tradition, the associated “ideology of productive subordination – enunciating the values of hard work, labour discipline, and high rates of savings – that binds subjects effectively to the economic authority ... and its elite” often entails negative consequences for the average Korean citizen (Brook & Luong, 1999, p. 9). The emphasis on profit, competition and high productivity, has created unfavourable working conditions, as Koreans often tolerate low wages and long working hours, while remaining productive and obedient. Consequently, toxic and high pressure workplace cultures are increasingly common, as “seniority and authority are respected even to the extent that mistreatment by seniors and superiors may be overlooked” (Seo, Leather & Coyne, 2012). In sum, as Shim et al. (2008) claim, modern Korean society is characterised by various tension between tradition and modern day life. Influences of Confucian values, Japanese colonial rule and feudal aristocracy, and Western democracy and capitalism are blended together (Callahan, 1999). Koreans, therefore, “negotiate these contrasts on a daily basis: a scholarly society vs. a Confucian-Capitalistic society, a country of obligatory social conformity vs. individualism, and a land of the morning calm vs. the land of dynamism” (Shim et al., 2008).

In any case, whether justified or not, English remains an important factor in the lives of Koreans. It continues to be viewed as indispensable in accessing desirable higher education options and building a successful career. Furthermore, given Koreans' desire to diversify and gain advantage over the competition, learning English through study abroad has emerged as a popular option. For those with high enough purchasing power, it is an option that is perceived as more effective (particularly in early study abroad cases), as well as being a diversification strategy of the elites.

2.5 Study Abroad as a Branch of English Frenzy

As specified in section 1.3, study abroad can be defined as “a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes” (Kinginger, 2009, p.11). However, as highlighted and discussed further in section 2.6 below, study abroad is not always clearly discernible from other forms of migration. Namely, study abroad experience can comprise similarities with experiences associated with temporary or permanent migration and tourist experience, depending on the individual circumstances and future plans of study abroad sojourners.

Study abroad for education purposes is by no means a new phenomenon on the Korean peninsula. It had first developed into a common practice during the period of Japanese colonisation, sharing some similarities in the way it is perceived by Koreans today. According to Lo et al. (2015), during this period

the number of Korean students studying in Japan skyrocketed, from over 500 in 1910 to nearly 30,000 in 1942, due in part to the limited opportunities for schooling in Korea at that time. Several parallels to the contemporary South Korean situation are apparent: (1) the idea that modernity and certain kinds of capital are only attainable outside of the country, (2) the conviction that such capital will be highly valued upon return to Korea, (3) the view of study abroad as

a tactic to compensate for the inadequacies of the nation, and (4) the idea that privately financed study abroad is a sound family investment in light of a weak state and a highly competitive job market”. (p. 6)

Further supported by Korea’s sustained economic growth, global market aspirations, and social emphasis on the value of education, the number of Koreans pursuing study abroad options has also increased exponentially in recent decades. While this number had increased nine-fold between 1963 and 2006, it had also doubled between 2000 and 2015 (Lo et al., 2015). This increase is to an extent reflective of an increase in the number of Koreans studying English abroad on short-term sojourns. Given the highly stratified, competitive Korean education system, study abroad English programmes have become all but standard, diversifying components of regular education. Early study abroad is especially common as a diversification strategy among the Korean elite who can afford study abroad and give their children an early advantage over their peers, and ultimately increase their chances of eventually gaining highly contested entry into Korea’s top tertiary institutions, also known as SKY – Seoul National, Korea, and Yonsei University (Abelmann et al., 2015). In turn, this is motivated by the importance of elite university qualifications for guaranteeing future success in the labour market, argued by many to be the most crucial determinant of a successful career in Korea (Seth, 2002).

However, with many top Korean companies including English as a prerequisite for employment and conducting regular English tests (Song, 2011), and the apparent shortcomings of private English education in Korea to develop English proficiency, the demand for study abroad English education also increased noticeably amongst tertiary students preparing for the job market in Korea in the early 2000s (Choi, 2015) Recent surveys of the more prominent Korean companies reveal that foreign languages are a sought after asset. Some large companies invest in language training for their current

employees and regularly conduct job interviews in English. Despite foreign languages rarely being used on a daily basis in the workplace, in a recent survey their value was recognised by 95% as crucial to corporate career development, while around 71% considered study abroad as useful for future career prospects (Ihm & Choi, 2015). This view is supported by Choi's (2015) finding that there is indeed a strong correlation between positive employment outcomes and higher earning power and study and training abroad; however, this is especially the case for those who do not possess a qualification from Korea's elite universities. Study abroad experience can at times serve as compensation for the lack of qualifications from one of the top tier universities; since not all companies in Korea conduct job interviews in English, having English study abroad on a CV may be enough evidence that an applicant received a level of English education that is superior to that available in Korea, which is looked upon favourably by employers (Choi, 2015).

However, regardless of their potential usefulness, study abroad English programmes are viewed in Korea as a by-product of the English frenzy, the competition and the need for diversification in education and the workforce. For some, sending their children on early study abroad programmes is aimed at gifting them with English fluency and overseas study experience; for others it's an attempt to compensate for the lack of qualifications from elite Korean institutions. Yet for others it is a means of attaining the status of global citizens and using it for upward social mobility upon returning to Korea (Abelmann et al., 2015).

Ultimately, the rise in popularity of study abroad English programmes primarily appears to be one of the many trickle-down effects of the ideology of *necessitation* surrounding English in Korea. However, despite its popularity and perceived benefits, in light of the high costs associated with studying abroad it is viewed as one of many

negative consequences of the English frenzy. With an estimated cost of student fees and living expenses in study abroad reported to be around USD 27,000 in 2011, and the Korean GDP per capita amounting to USD 24,000 in the same year (Choi, 2015), it is clear that it poses a significant financial burden on the Korean economy, in addition to the billions spent on private English education in Korea. Moreover, study abroad is also often viewed negatively in relation to the consequences it can impose on Korean families.

2.5.1 Reconsidering Study Abroad: The Cost of Chasing Globalisation

As outlined in the previous section, for Koreans, study abroad is often pursued due to educational and career goals. Furthermore, foreign education in Korea has traditionally been highly regarded, and is currently an important part of the globalisation narrative. However, despite English and education reportedly being the primary aim of study abroad sojourns, for many, the underlying objective is prestige and the acquisition of the image of a global citizen. At first glance, it appears a worthy venture that is aligned with the modern neoliberal ideology of Koreans evolving into globalisation frontrunners and cosmopolitans. However, the socioeconomic costs associated with study abroad and the varied rewards have generated a social debate regarding the perceived usefulness of study abroad in Korea.

In addition to the high economic cost, there are a number of significant social issues that are associated with it. For example, study abroad has been “associated in the press with the negative stereotype of the non-serious student who goes abroad not on a quest for global citizenship, but as a way to escape failure in South Korea, and whose time abroad is imagined as an indulgent spree” (Abelmann et al., 2015). This is especially of concern in relation to those from the lower to mid socioeconomic group. As Kim (2010) highlights: “there are significant numbers of lower middle-class families who burden themselves enormously to engage in [study abroad] against great odds – and

sometimes to unfortunate ends” (p. 279). Essentially, the reasons a particular study abroad sojourn does not yield the expected results can be varied, yet the burden of financing these sojourns remains for many Korean families.

Study abroad has also raised serious questions about the strain study abroad sometimes places on Korean families – particularly for those that are separated for lengthy periods of time. In particular, this is the case with what have become known as “wild geese” families, usually involving the fathers staying in Korea in order to work and financially support their wives and one or more children while they are on study abroad (Lee & Koo, 2006).

On the other hand, there are also major concerns that in many cases study abroad may reap too few rewards to justify the sacrifice Koreans make in its pursuit. Imagined benefits and access to desired forms of capital prior to departure are not always guaranteed to materialise during the sojourn – which is often realised at the end of a study abroad stint. Koo’s (2010) findings on study abroad outcomes of Koreans in New Zealand shed light on some of the associated issues; for example, despite the attractiveness of New Zealand as a quiet, affordable, friendly country, it is often reported that due to New Zealand’s comparatively more lenient education system Korean students lose valuable ground with their peers in Korea, forcing parents to consider supplementing their education during study abroad. It therefore suggests that the appeal of the study abroad adventure and cosmopolitanism it is usually associated with at times comes at a high cost, and does not necessarily result in the accrual of desired capital.

Further, it is also only after arriving at their destination that many study abroad learners realise that arrival alone does not guarantee access to and accumulation of desired capital; in fact, there are numerous potential barriers. For example, Shin’s (2013) study portrays the struggles of high school age Korean study abroad students in Toronto

being positioned by their local peers unfavourably; instead of being perceived as cosmopolitan and cool, due to their limited linguistic competence they were positioned as uncool and unmodern, often resulting in study abroad learners building social networks exclusively amongst each other.

Ultimately, the high stakes of study abroad, characterised by significant financial, social, and emotional expense are often overshadowed by the looming possibility of failure, which apparently occurs more often in study abroad than people would readily admit. As succinctly explained by Abelmann et al. (2015):

The promise of cosmopolitanism, modernity, and global citizenship does not always bear fruit ... [the] early-wave returnees who had spent seven to ten years studying in the West were disappointed upon their return to South Korea to find that their fluent English, experience abroad, and overseas university degrees had not transformed them into the worldly global citizens that they had envisioned. Returnees were instead sometimes figured as lazy “escapee” students, national traitors, or, for some women, sexually compromised. For many returnees, return to South Korea is thus not the triumphant culmination of a journey, but rather a temporary way station in what can become an endless quest for the elusive global. (p. 15)

As the following subsections reveals, some of the above issues raised in relation to study abroad also apply to Koreans who choose New Zealand as their study abroad destination.

2.6 Koreans in New Zealand: Imagining Paradise

As stated above in section 2.5, though study abroad is defined as primarily education-focused and of a specific duration, and therefore different to migration and tourism, it tends to share a degree of overlap with these categories in some instances. For some sojourners, study abroad serves as temporary migration and distancing from issues

present in their home countries, a tourist experience with a focus on socialising and enjoying all that the new context has to offer, or even a pathway to permanent residency.

Though the number of Koreans living in New Zealand is not high in comparison to other, significantly larger Korean diasporas around the world, as a percentage of population it is the largest Korean community in the world (Park, 2010). Some of the early accounts of immigrants from Korea included desires of fleeing the class structure in Korea and replacing it with New Zealand's less discriminatory system, without major divisions in life quality and employment conditions between blue and white collar workers. New Zealand's clean, green environment is also a positive factor (Kitchen, 2014), especially amongst Asian migrants seeking to flee problems associated with overcrowding and pollution (Kim & Yoon, 2003).

Generally, the reputation of New Zealand as a peaceful, comparatively affordable, clean, and safe country is what influences many who consider embarking on study abroad to New Zealand. In relation to early study abroad, the driving ideology of Korean parents is New Zealand's image of a 'paradise' destination offering environmental benefits and quality education to their children (Kim & Yoon, 2003). In turn, these are grounded in ideologies that place emphasis on the importance of English and quality overseas education in relation to social mobility in Korea discussed in previous sections above. However, as Benson and O'Reilly (2009) argue, motivation to immigrate to New Zealand is also associated with a desire to experience a lifestyle that is not available to them in Korea; it is associated with exploring the imagined opportunities of a new context that offers more choices than the homeland. Ultimately, some study abroad journeys to New Zealand are motivated by a brighter imagined future, an increased sense of agency in relation to future plans, and access to a wider array of lifestyles and career paths than are available and socially accepted in Korea (Kitchen, 2014). As Kitchen's study on Korean

migrants in New Zealand reports, strict education ideologies that shape rigid societal hierarchy and power relations create pressure that some Korean parents recognise as detrimental, and therefore bring their children to New Zealand with the aim of allowing them to choose their futures, rather than having them socially imposed in Korea.

However, as Kitchen's study also reports, in relation to early study abroad in particular, the accompanying parents of early study abroad students also seek benefits of escaping the pressures of Korea, in addition to investing in their children's futures.

2.6.1 Different Faces of Study Abroad

As discussed in the above sections on study abroad related issues in Korea, study abroad is zealously pursued by Koreans (as driven by education and overseas study ideologies) despite the associated high costs, and at times doubts surrounding its actual benefits. The imagined rewards and a sense of adventure and excitement create an appeal to study abroad as a context of easily accessible opportunities. Ideally, study abroad is imagined to offer access to quality education, improved English proficiency, and immersion in the new context. However, as also previously covered in the section on reimagining study abroad, such expectations are rarely met. Though the optimistic imagined experiences of study abroad learners prior to departure may instigate positive outcomes in study abroad, they can also fuel unrealistic expectations that at times underpin negative outcomes. For example, imagined ease of access to desired social circles and finding decent part-time employment that facilitates communication opportunities with the local population are based on overambitious assumptions regarding the sojourners' own English proficiency, the extent to which it can be improved in study abroad, their sociocultural communicative competence, and their overall familiarity with their new context.

An indication of the general trend regarding migrant immersion in local contexts is reflected by Abelmann's (2009) long-term study, which reported on the progress of Korean American students at a reputable American university, finding that disconnect and segregation dominated their study abroad experience. Furthermore, the findings of the study suggested that this trend generally continued amongst first, and even second generation migrants.

However, the nature of the study abroad stay may depend on a number of factors. The statuses of study abroad learners and migrants from Korea in New Zealand are varied; there are a number of people who are permanent residents, while there are also many others on temporary visas, such as those who are in New Zealand on study abroad programmes. However, as Park and Anglem (2012) argue, there are also a certain number of "intending immigrants". These are described as those who may hold various types of short term visas, but are essentially searching for ways to remain in New Zealand on a permanent basis. They also rightly assert that "there are significant differences among groups in terms of the nature of immigration and its impact on the level of acculturation and social interaction" (p. 35). In this respect, they argue that the extent to which migration can be labelled as voluntary or involuntary reflects strongly on adaptation to host society, with those whose journeys are voluntary achieving higher levels of integration.

Study abroad students may fall in either one of the above categories; also, the nature of their visit is largely determined by whether they intend to use study abroad as a pathway to permanent migration, or whether they indeed plan to return to Korea once their sojourn ends. As the findings of the present study will reveal, a study abroad stint in New Zealand may well be a voluntary journey that lasts several months, but which ultimately ends with a return to Korea, while it can also be characterised as an involuntary

journey, motivated by the desire to leave Korea permanently (due to the pressures of Korean society discussed above) and use study abroad as a pathway to permanent residency in New Zealand.

The underlying reasons for migrating to New Zealand may significantly inform the adaptation process of Korean newcomers. While each case is likely to be affected by its own, idiosyncratic set of circumstances, a family funded study abroad sojourn with a set return date is likely to be characterised by limited immersion in the local context. The financial stability and the temporary nature of the stay is likely to direct the visiting student to a tourist-like experience, given that there would be little pressure to adapt and overcome barriers that are usually associated with adaptation to new contexts. On the other hand, in the case of study abroad being used as a pathway to permanent residency, creating local contacts and seeking immersion in the new context becomes paramount in achieving long-term stability and future opportunities, while also revealing the challenges of migration and the uncertainties of success in study abroad.

2.6.2 Home and Away: The Migrant Dimension of Study Abroad

Creating a sense of connectedness and belonging appears also to be a challenge amongst migrants in New Zealand. According to Gendall, Spoonley, and Trlin (2007), there is a lack of support systems or interest for such agendas amongst the general population for the settlement and integration of migrants in New Zealand society. As discussed above, short-term migrants such as study abroad students may also have issues positioning themselves favourably in their new context. This could be due to their unfamiliarity with the new context, lack of valued types of capital for that particular context, or the temporary nature of their visit that poses issues for forming meaningful relationships with the members of the local context.

However, according to research, even those Koreans who secure permanent residency and remain in New Zealand for a number of years tend to live transnational lifestyles; they remain strongly in tune with their homeland, as their belonging remains in balance between the native and host society. As they navigate the various scales of context (Blommaert, 2010) of their host society, they are faced with ecological factors that characterise the local context and may experience varying levels of success in securing favourable positioning. Furthermore, they are likely to explore the local diaspora community networks for socialisation opportunities and support. One of their most common points of contact with such networks are the local Korean churches, of which there are reported to be almost 100 across New Zealand. Connecting with local Korean networks is aimed at obtaining support and alleviating the often painful adaptation process, ridden with challenges of navigating and appropriating a new language and culture. Lastly, according to the local Korean community leaders, despite there being a constant influx of new Koreans arriving to New Zealand, there is a significant number who decide to return to Korea, mainly due to a language barrier, a lack of employment opportunities, or loneliness and boredom (Park & Anglem, 2012).

Although study abroad can be classified as temporary migration, Korean study abroad arrivals tend to experience similar issues to those reported by long term Korean migrants. As the scope of this study has defined, the nature of these experiences and their implications for Korean study abroad sojourners in New Zealand can be investigated in light of: (a) the socially imposed expectations of Korean society in relation to English; (b) various types of investing the learners engage in, and the imagined identities this investing is related to, and (c) the identity work and the identity outcomes learners engage in during their stay. The following chapter will explore the various theoretical

components that underpin the study and that will be used to explore the focal phenomena of this research.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the study. It focuses on key theoretical concepts relevant to study abroad research, namely identity, Bourdieu's (1991) *Capital*, Norton's (2001) *Investment*, Lave and Wenger's (1991) *Communities of Practice*, and Bakhtin's (1986) *Dialogue*. Though all of these concepts are relevant to this research, identity, capital and investment remain the most pertinent and are therefore fundamental to the theoretical framework of this study. However, as this chapter reveals, communities of practice and dialogue are also important as theoretical lenses in this study and thus support the three primary theoretical constructs.

The chapter presents and explores the relationships amongst the above constructs with regard to this research, and draws on other theoretical literature pertinent to the situatedness of language learners in study abroad contexts. Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate adaptability of the presented theoretical framework to the aims of this research.

3.1 The Social Turn in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Much of the more distant history of SLA is marked by research that focused on cognitive aspects of language learning. As Firth and Wagner (1997) suggest, this approach tended to frame language learners as having a single identity – that of a language learner. However, social sciences along with SLA have experienced a *social turn* (Block, 2003) that has yielded research that focuses on language learning as a social process rather than solely a cognitive one. Adopting poststructuralist views of identity, researchers became interested in exploring the interplay between language learning and identity, including in study abroad contexts.

As Block (2007) posits, individuals who experience language and cultural border crossings are often able to tell stories of “how these border crossing experiences

inevitably and irrevocably destabilise an individual's sense of self-identity and how this destabilisation subsequently leads to struggle, the negotiation of difference, and the emergence of third-place identities" (p. 867). This research focuses on exploring the stories of study abroad English learners and analyses the negotiation and construction of their identities as study abroad sojourners – as guided by their individual investment in various future enterprises, imagined identities and imagined communities (Norton, 2013).

3.1.1 Identity From a Poststructuralist Perspective

There are varying views and positions of scholars with regard to the concept of identity. In recent times, the conceptualisation of identity as fixed and relatively stable has been challenged by poststructuralist perspectives, which view identity as complex and changeable over time in relation to a number of contexts. Therefore, according to poststructuralists, identities are subject to constant negotiation and reformation in relation to the social contexts in which they are situated (Hall, 1996). In this view, identity can be labelled as "a dialectical relationship between the 'inner' and the 'outer' aspects of the self, involving our own sense of who we are, the ways in which we represent ourselves, and how we are represented and positioned by others" (Benson et al., 2013, p. 2).

According to poststructuralists, identity ought to be viewed as a non-finite process. Bourdieu and Giddens viewed identity as such, while Hall (1996) refers to identity as *identification* in order to reflect its nature as a continuous process. Weedon (1997) prefers using the term *subjectivities* when discussing identity, which for her represent an individual's self-view, their understanding of the world and their relationship with it. Harré (1999) on the other hand views identity as a process of *positioning* of individuals in interaction with one another. In sum, all of the above views are underpinned by the common poststructuralist belief that identity is fluid and subject to constant change (Block, 2007).

In line with poststructuralist views of identity, this research focuses on language learner identities in a study abroad context. Specifically, it focuses on the identity work (Block, 2007) of study abroad students in interaction with the study abroad context and its linguistic, cultural, and sociopolitical characteristics. Furthermore, it explores identity work as part of investing in imagined identities and futures. Identity work is thus viewed as one of the central study abroad processes that encompasses the study abroad learners' efforts of finding new ways of being in study abroad. One of its functions is to facilitate participation in desired local communities of practice, thereby creating affordances for successful investing in various forms of capital relevant to the future construction of imagined identities.

Norton (2014) recognises the multiplicity of identity, preferring to refer to *identities*, and its changeable nature in response to different contexts, and particularly the way its negotiation is often affected by inequitable power relations (see section 3.1.2 below). This notion is also applicable to language learners in study abroad contexts, in which the ability of an individual to negotiate favourable subject positions largely depends on securing *legitimate peripheral participation* (*Communities of Practice*; see section 3.2), before learning about the common enterprise and eventually gaining full membership in the new community. Therefore, in the context of this study the participants can be recognised as learners of English who are investing in learning a language, which is expected to increase their cultural capital and social power in the communities they wish to become part of in the future; however, such endeavours are often accompanied by struggles with inequitable power relations (Darvin & Norton, 2015). This is particularly relevant to the lives of migrants or study abroad students who usually sacrifice economic, cultural, and social capital when moving to a new country. Such an outcome was evident in a number of participants in Norton's (2000) study, which

explored the experiences of individuals who had moved to Canada and attempted to settle and build new lives as migrants.

3.1.2 Redefining the Self in the Face of the “Other”

According to Young, Natrajan-Tyagi and Platt (2015) “individuals studying abroad are proffered to negotiate self-identity when they confront novelty and new contexts” (p. 175). As they are challenged to discover new ways of being and to compete for social positioning within the new context, individuals are also confronted with the task of expanding their understanding of the “other”. This process also leads to a phase of self-evaluation and the outcome is often a deepened understanding of oneself as well as the “other” (Dolby, 2004). However, the experience of settling into new contexts often entails consequences, as feelings of uncertainty and insecurity accompany those who attempt to reinvent themselves in order to find their place in their new contexts. Ting-Toomey (1999) labels this process identity *negotiation*, as she associates it with unfamiliar contexts unsettling one’s secure self-image. This process involves individuals evoking, asserting, defining, modifying, challenging, and/or supporting their desired self images. The self images individuals carry around in their minds are constantly supported or challenged through social interaction – meaning that people achieve a sense of security in familiar contexts and a sense of vulnerability and insecurity in unfamiliar ones. In the latter case, individuals must decide whether to assert, or question and redefine their existing self-images (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

3.1.3 Bakhtin’s Dialogue, Identity Formation and Study Abroad

When discussing issues related to identity, culture and language, many scholars draw on the work of a well-known soviet visionary and theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin (e.g., Jackson, 2008). Bakhtin’s ideas provide a lens for exploring the relationship between language learners, their new language, and the identity formation process associated with

language learning. In particular, such processes are of importance in this research, especially given the differences between English and Korean, and how these are reflected in the performance of English-mediated identities of the Korean participants in this study.

Bakhtin viewed language as a phenomenon comprising a multitude of sociocultural artefacts, which are derived from social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, he believed that through interaction and social activity, these sociocultural artefacts were constantly renewed and regenerated (Bakhtin, 1986). Language is thus perceived to be a tool that people use to engage in dialogue and make sense of their realities, and to communicate with other human beings – thereby constantly creating and re-creating their cultural worlds and finding their own spaces within them (Hall et al., 2005).

The above view offers an explanation as to why language learning cannot be described as merely the acquisition of a new skill set, but rather a process that involves engaging in communication in a context defined by specific political, cultural, historical, and social circumstances. Despite the challenges that this often entails, Bakhtin views dialogue as a process of enrichment through interaction with people and contexts different from our own, without which human beings would not be able to flourish and grow.

According to DaSilva Iddings et al. (2005):

Bakhtin's interpretation of dialogue included above all the dialogue between the mind and world.... Within these theoretical parameters the human activity of meaning-making is inextricably connected to social interactions, which occur in a particular social, cultural, and political context and at a particular point in history. (p.1)

At the heart of Bakhtin's dialogism also lies heteroglossia, a concept which suggests that everything has meaning and is understood as part of a greater whole in which there is constant interaction among meanings, which can all influence each other in different ways. This concept underlines the extent to which communication, meaning-

making, and sign-making activities are subject to continuous change, as well as the extent to which meaning is created inter-personally and intra-personally (Hall et al., 2005). Engaging in this meaning making process in a new language brings about what Bakhtin refers to as an encounter between self and the “Other”; and according to him, “by engaging in dialogue with Others throughout our lives ... we routinely shape and reshape our expressions as well as our sense of self (identity)” (Jackson, 2008, p. 22).

The above discussion is to a large extent reflective of the complexities associated with second language identity formation in those who are exposed to study abroad language experiences. It shows that identity is subject to change in response to new contexts, and is as such consistent with Bakhtin’s view of identity as constantly changing and developing in space and time. However, negotiating desired identities, especially in study abroad, is a highly contested affair, often influenced by relations of power.

3.1.4 Towards an Imagined Identity through Inequitable Power Relations

An important aspect of identity work in study abroad concerns the imagined futures that study abroad learners work towards. However, the pursuit of imagined identities remains highly contested, particularly in light of inequitable power relations that characterise study abroad. Consequently, Norton (2014) argues that language learner identities in study abroad should be explored with regard to inequitable power relations and students’ ideas of possibilities for the future:

Poststructuralist theory has led me to define identity as multiple, changing, and a site of struggle, frequently negotiated in the context of inequitable relations of power. Identity signals the way a person understands her or his relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future. (p. 61)

The complexities surrounding the inequitable power relations in the study abroad context can be analysed with reference to Pierre Bourdieu's sociological concepts, particularly through the lens of Bourdieu's (1991) ideas of *field*, *habitus*, *social agency*, and *capital*. The concept of field is equivalent to a specific network or a set of relations between positions; habitus refers to traits of social culture linking individuals to relevant social groups; social agency refers to individuals who partake in the field; and capital refers to various sets of resources that social agents strive for.

Bourdieu's framework offers a view of study abroad learners as individuals who enter a new field, or rather, a network that carries its own established system of social values and relations that are dictated by their own power hierarchies. Such a network is supported by a set of worldviews, which also determine what its subjects deem important and worth striving for. In this context, unless the learners originate from a similar field, they may find themselves disinvested as they may deem the above worldviews and values irrelevant, or find the locally valued capital inaccessible (Jackson, 2008). In addition, habitus influences identity outcomes, as it is determined by durable motivations, perceptions and forms of knowledge that people carry around in their heads as a result of living in particular social contexts and that predisposes them to act in certain ways (Layder, 1997, p. 236). Ultimately, the study abroad context, as seen through the above concepts, presents individuals with the possibility of facing invisible hierarchies and unfamiliar rules in the new field that may restrict their access to locally valued capital and favourable positions within the field. As Joseph (2004) explains:

Even the individual who ... takes on a new identity ... is still going to be perceived, interpreted, and measured by those around them in terms of their relative place within a network of social hierarchies based on the distribution of cultural capital. (p. 75)

Language learners in study abroad settings are thus fronted with entering new systems of exchange, which have specific socially established ideas of capital unfamiliar to the visiting learners. Therefore, study abroad language learners are often assigned a relatively low hierarchical social status given their entry into a new socially established system of exchange, where the worth of their existing capital diminishes. Furthermore, this entails language as one of the crucial cultural capital resources used to determine the positions of power in discourse. Bourdieu recognised language as such, as he argued that language competency is heavily linked to an individual's social positioning within a field (Bourdieu, 1991). He also argued that language serves as a means of producing and reproducing power relations and inequality within a society via various facets of language ideology and discursive practices and norms in key institutional sites and sociopolitical contexts (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996). Within this context, study abroad language learners possibly face a complex set of issues that have a considerable bearing on their ability to create favourable identity positions when constructing their identities in a new language and a new context.

3.2 Identity Work and Agency in Study Abroad within *Communities of Practice*

Constructing favourable identities in study abroad and pursuing desired imagined identities is largely dependent on the successful immersion of study abroad learners in the study abroad context. Lave and Wenger's (1991) *Communities of Practice* (CoP) serves as a useful theoretical lens in exploring what such immersion may entail. The basis of the concept includes the premise that people are drawn to coming together for the purpose of performing activities as part of their daily lives. As Wenger (1998) explains:

Being alive as human beings means that we are constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprises of all kinds, from ensuring our physical survival to

seeking the loftiest pleasures. As we define these enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world and we tune our relations with each other and with the world accordingly, in other words we learn. Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore to call these kinds of communities *communities of practice*. (p. 45)

Jackson (2008) argues that the above framework paves the way for exploring various dimensions of identity formation applicable to study abroad language learners. In study abroad, learners seek to take on the role of social individuals who participate in a common endeavour, continually renegotiating their role with the aim of achieving their goals, gradually discovering and appropriating the resources required to achieve those goals.

Within the framework of CoP, study abroad language learners can be viewed as learners who enter into socially situated interaction with more experienced members of the community. The concept of legitimate peripheral participation refers to the opportunity for newcomers to interact with the more experienced members of the community, with the aim of gaining competence, and a sense of belonging or membership. However, relations of power (also discussed in section 3.1.2 above) outlined by Bourdieu are also relevant to newcomers' ability to secure the position of legitimate peripheral participation:

Legitimate peripherality is a complex notion, implicated in social structures involving relations of power. As a place in which one moves toward more-intensive participation, peripherality is an empowering position. As a place in which one is kept from participating more fully – often legitimately, from

the broader perspective of society at large – it is a disempowering position.

(Jackson, 2008, p. 36)

The *Communities of Practice* framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is therefore useful in exemplifying the extent to which learning is part of the context of our lived experience and participation in the world. More importantly, in the context of English fever in Korea, it shows the importance of social participation “in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relationship to these communities” (Wenger, 1998, p.4, emphasis in original). Therefore, participating in the practices of desired (or imagined) social communities and creating identities in accordance with the norms of these communities corresponds to the subject positions assumed by individuals during their ongoing agentive negotiation (Papastergiadis, 2000).

In this thesis, agency is considered as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p.112). Therefore, individual or collective action is by default viewed in relation to relevant sociocultural contexts. Study abroad learner agency is thus viewed in this thesis in relation to sociocultural contexts of Korea, the New Zealand study abroad context, as well as the imagined global context.

In the case of Korea, the interrelatedness of Korea’s English fever, and the cultural and social frameworks of Korean society are often recognised as key influences that guide individual agency of Koreans to pursue proficiency in English.

However, in some cases investment and human agency alone may not suffice, as due to the loss of social and cultural capital upon relocating to a new context individuals may find attaining competence and projecting the desired identities difficult. As Block (2011) argues, these are the scenarios that may produce feelings of loss, instability, and vulnerability – resulting from:

constantly positioning and repositioning themselves on uncertain playing fields, that is, spaces which are not the ones they have grown up situated in ... as they engage in activities which are not the activities that they grew up engaging in and which are mediated by different semiotic assemblages. (p. 164)

3.3 Language Competence and CoP Access in Study Abroad

Wenger (1998) acknowledges the issues associated with power and access within a CoP, arguably that engagement opportunities newcomers are offered upon entering the community are largely dependent on the openness of the hosts to make opportunities for participation and practice available to the newcomers. Negotiating access and empowered identity positions determines the extent to which desired identity work and construction of imagined identities can be pursued by study abroad learners. Essentially, negotiating participation opportunities becomes crucial, as “membership in a community of practice translates into an identity as a form of competence” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153). In other words, access to desired social circles and the status of legitimate peripherality is by no means freely available, but rather highly contested for study abroad learners, especially in relation to seeking opportunities to engage in meaningful communication with members of the local population. Seen through Wenger’s (1998) social theory of identity formation, from a language point of view, securing legitimate peripheral participation entails a dual process: that of identification and negotiation of meanings. This process is reflective of the study abroad complexities that surround the “relationships between membership, competence, and legitimacy of access to practice; between the appropriation and ownership of meanings, the centrality of participation, and the mediating role of power relations in the process of identity formation” (Tsui, 2007, p. 657).

It is thus evident that access to desired communities of practice is subject to receiving recognition for the desired level of competence in pursuing common endeavours from more expert members of target communities of practice. Opportunities for engaging in the construction of desired identities are thus dependent on competencies, with language competence being recognised as one of the most crucial ones.

In a Bourdieusian sense, seeking participation in desired communities of practice entails the identification and appropriation of various forms of capital within the new field (such as that of the local language), for the purpose of improving one's positioning within the social hierarchy and gaining opportunities for peripheral participation. In this context, Wenger (1998) describes identity formation as the "tension between our investment in the various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in those contexts" (p. 118). Therefore, for study abroad learners, it is meanings that dictate the outcomes of various situations, events, and actions (Tsui, 2007). Having language proficiency and being relevant in the process of negotiation of meanings directly affects opportunities for participation.

The extent to which the above process can affect identity formation is evident from the assertion that an individual's inability to appropriate, modify and essentially claim ownership of meanings can lead to an identity negotiated from a position of marginality and disinvestment in participation. Thus, those members of a community whose meanings are predominantly rejected and who in turn struggle to gain recognition of their competence inevitably create identities of marginality (Tsui, 2007, p. 661). Wenger (1998) also claims that competence is key in attaining membership, and therefore having one's competence recognised as valued within the community is one of the most important sources of identity formation. Furthermore, "this competence encompasses

knowing how to engage with other members, understanding the enterprise in which members are engaged, and sharing the mediating resources” (Tsui, 2007, p. 674).

As discussed in the following section, successful negotiation of access to desired communities of practice in study abroad (or lack thereof) informs identity work and investment in imagined identities.

3.3.1 From CoP to Agency and Investment in Imagined Identities

According to Kinginger (2009), identity in study abroad should also be viewed through the lens of agency. One of the more useful concepts used among scholars to elaborate on the role of language learner agency is Norton’s concept of *investment*. It is a concept that is described as being a sociological complement to the psychological construct of motivation (Norton Pierce, 1995). According to Darvin and Norton (2015), through investing in learning a new language, learners attempt to increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. This notion is aligned with Bourdieusian theory discussed above, as Kramsch (2009) claims: “Norton’s notion of investment ... accentuates the role of human agency and identity in accumulating economic and symbolic capital” (p. 195). Similarly, Norton (2000) claims that learners invest in the target language with the aim of acquiring a wide range of symbolic and material resources that increase their cultural capital, and through increasing their cultural capital, learners reassess their desires for the future.

Norton and Kamal (2003) discuss the importance of imagination when considering how learners shape their ideas of desired futures. They refer to Simon (1992) and his argument that imagination has a central role in people's decisions on what sort of future is worth striving for. They also put forth Wenger’s (Lave & Wenger, 1991) argument that imagination supports our engagement in practice, as well as determines our alignment with broader enterprises. Consequently, study abroad learner investment in imagined

identities and futures in study abroad is significantly informed by the success with which they gain access to desired communities of practice, through which they seek to amass various forms of capital relevant to their imagined identities and futures.

3.3.2 Exerting Agency through English Learning in Study Abroad

The development of global identities in the era of globalisation has been recognised by scholars as an identification with or “belonging to a worldwide culture” (Arnett, 2002, p. 32). In this context, English language as a widely accepted global language provides this option to those studying it and imagining their options for the future once English becomes part of their cultural/linguistic capital.

As discussed in Chapter 2, due to the effects of English fever, the English language holds an important place within the Korean context and can be identified as one of the prerequisites for membership in the elite social circles of Korean society (Lee, 2016). As such it also ought to be scrutinised as an instrument for attaining and maintaining power and hegemony in Korea. In this view, Song (2011) argues that “English has been recruited, in the guise of globalisation, to exploit the meretricious ideology of merit to the advantage of the privileged classes and to the disadvantage of the other classes of the society” (p. 35). Song also points to Korea’s specific stance towards meritocracy, which he sees as one of the key enablers of English fever. Consequently, Korean obsession with English illustrates Bourdieu’s (1991) claim that agency is best viewed through the lens of the objective structures of a society and its culture. The relevance of social structures in relation to individual agency is also pointed out by May (2001) who argues that much of individual activity is shaped by social constructs. He does, however, allow for individual agency (Ahearn, 2001) in the form of ongoing negotiation and pursuit of valued forms of capital according to individual goals and trajectories. In other words, the drive for English amongst Koreans can be a reflection of

societal pressures or an exertion of individual agency in pursuit of English for other imagined futures.

In relation to learners' desires and hopes for the future, Norton (2001) argues that both learner investment in and resistance to language learning is largely dictated by the characteristics of the imagined communities they hope to gain membership in. Kanno and Norton (2003) claim that "imagined communities are no less real than the ones in which learners have daily engagement and might even have a stronger impact on their current actions and investment" (p. 242). Such claims are given further support by Wenger's (1998) view that imagination, and therefore the imagined belonging in imagined communities, is a crucial tool for transcending the limits of the present and constructing new imagined realities. While such imagined communities are constructed and reconstructed through people's imagination, their imagined membership and participation are constantly renegotiated. In this view, it is justified that the constant renegotiation of memberships in multiple (real or imagined) communities "may influence agency, motivation, investment, and resistance" in language learners (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007, p. 669). The agency of Korean learners in relation to their investment in English, therefore, ought to be viewed as part of their investment in imagined identities and projected memberships in imagined communities.

While exploring imagined identities in language learners, Holland et al. (1998) claim that learners explore a "figured world ... in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. ... These collective 'as if' worlds ... inform participants' outlooks" (p. 52). The collective nature of these imaginary spaces is therefore highlighted, while individual learner agency is also stipulated as a deciding factor in constructing and reconstructing these worlds based on their experiences and future plans (Song, 2012).

3.4 Empirical Literature on Language Learners in Study Abroad

The empirical research related to identity in language learners in study abroad contexts has increased significantly over the past two decades, following the social turn in SLA. Poststructuralist approaches to SLA research following the social turn theorise “language as a form of symbolic capital and learners as agents of their own learning who may either accommodate or challenge the practices they encounter” (Pavlenko, 2002, cited in Kinginger, 2013, p. 9). Consulting empirical research helps in locating studies within the current discussions in the field and exploring the different methodological underpinnings employed in the latest research. Below I review some of the recent studies on identity in language learners in study abroad contexts while highlighting differences and similarities with the present study.

3.4.1 Translating Identities Across Languages

The study conducted by Brown (2013) on the use of Korean honorifics by four male study abroad students in Korea has a number of links to my study. One pertains to the focus of the study on learner identity in relation to second language acquisition in study abroad contexts, while also using interviews as one of the qualitative data collection methods. The other link derives from the focus on the complexities of Korean language and how Korean-speaking identities are negotiated – which can provide some basis for understanding and exploring the relationship between the identities of the Korean participants in my study and the New Zealand study abroad context.

One defining feature of the Korean language, which is not present in English, is that each utterance is marked by verb endings and lexical forms that are linked to the honorific system of the language. Considering the highly hierarchical nature of Korean society, the honorific system is a crucial tool for establishing the roles of speakers in conversations, as well as being a tool that shapes the social identities and images of

speakers of Korean. Therefore competence in proper use of honorifics in Korean largely determines the degree to which foreign speakers of Korean are able to negotiate desired subject positions within the Korean context (Brown, 2013). According to Block (2007) this is related to the construction of *linguistic identities*, which he describes as being based on an individual's sense of self and their means of communication. A topic of interest with regard to the participants in my study is related to their ability to construct linguistic identities – as mediated by a foreign (English) language, which possesses no such honorific system.

The process of constructing such foreign language mediated identities is also tied to the negotiation of legitimate membership in desired communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Adequate types of linguistic competence, as dictated by the local context, can be crucial in determining the success with which legitimate membership is achieved by study abroad language learners. Leung, Harris and Rampton (1997) propose three factors which determine the relationship between an individual and a language: language expertise (proficiency), language affiliation (attachment to language and the community that uses it) and language inheritance (being born into a community with a particular language). The use of honorifics is part of the language expertise category, and is an important factor in obtaining the status of a competent member within Korean society. Conversely, inability or unwillingness to employ honorifics to the expected standard significantly affects the speaker's ability to claim the status of a legitimate speaker (Brown, 2013).

The example of honorifics in Korean serves as an illustration of the variation of linguistic features in different languages. Furthermore, as Brown's (2013) study shows, when these are in conflict with pre-existing self-images and cultural norms they can lead to a rejection of local language identities – especially when study abroad students are

expected to appropriate a foreign language identity, which in Brown's study was "a Korean language identity and the hierarchical and non-reciprocal patterns of interaction that came with it" (p. 273).

In sum, Brown's study highlights the specifics associated with communicating in the Korean language, and the way these specifics are inscribed with facets of Korean culture. Similarly, a topic of interest in my study was to observe how participants negotiate subject positions in a context dominated by English, which is inscribed with different cultural norms and practices from Korean.

3.4.2 Negotiating Identities Across Contexts

A number of studies on language learner identity in study abroad have yielded a variety of findings that illustrate the extent to which the identity negotiation process affects the experiences of study abroad language learners. Facets of identity such as race, gender, sexual orientation, physical appearance, and sense of fashion (and many more) all have bearing on the subject positions available to study abroad language learners in their new contexts. For example, Polanyi (1995), in a seminal study, found that American study abroad female learners in Russia were assigned gender positions of sexual partners in heterosexual relationships, which they perceived as limiting and unsuitable, and which therefore limited their opportunities of integrating and interacting in the target language. Also pertaining to the question of gender, Isabelli-García (2006) discovered that males had more opportunities than females to create social networks while on study abroad language learning programmes in Argentina. In other cases, such as that presented in Iino's (2006) study of American study abroad students in Japan, the identity position of "foreigner" assigned to study abroad students by the local population potentially creates obstacles for integration. Societies such as Korea and Japan may at times reject non-native language use as insincere and inappropriate, as they may deem foreigners

incapable of completely understanding the cultural norms that are inscribed within their native language. Such a scenario was apparent in Brown's (2013) case study of Patrick, who was frustrated to find that Koreans treated him differently in conversation to other Koreans, despite his high level of proficiency in Korean language, including the honorific system (Brown, 2013).

3.4.3 Identity Construction in Study Abroad

Another recent empirical study on the experiences of study abroad language learners is Jane Jackson's (2010) *Intercultural Journeys: From Study to Residence Abroad*. The study investigates links between language development, cultural awareness, and identity reconstruction in Hong-Kong study abroad learners of English in England.

In this study, four students from the Chinese University of Hong-Kong are sent on a five-week study abroad sojourn to England in order to fulfil the study abroad component of the English major at their university. As part of this meticulously designed programme, students were expected to complete courses at their university that would prepare them for the study abroad experience. During their stay in England students lived with host families and participated in language and culture-related courses at a small university in England. The mix of homestay and university contexts was aimed at providing students with a chance to communicate in both informal and formal settings. Throughout the length of their stay, the students took part in group discussions and reflection sessions, which served as support and provided opportunities for them to share and make meaning of their experiences. During the post sojourn period the students were also offered the opportunity to write a dissertation based on their experiences and ethnographic data collected during their stay (Jackson, 2010).

This extensive ethnographic study was carefully planned and structured, as it involved a host of pre-, during- and post-sojourn activities that the participants were

required to participate in. It also included a high level of involvement from the ethnographer, who was present and accompanied students on various field trips during their stay in England.

The relevance of Jackson's study to my own lies in the similarities of the guiding research questions, which are concerned with the participants' interactions with the study abroad context and the ways these relate to their identity negotiation processes. Although the study employed quantitative data collection instruments such as the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory), it also employed a number of qualitative instruments similar to the ones my study employs – such as participant diary entries, weekly open-ended surveys, individual interviews, as well as informal conversations with the ethnographer. As opposed to Jackson's approach of collecting data prior to, during, and after the study abroad sojourn, my approach was to employ qualitative data collection methods such as semi-structured narrative interviews, narrative frames and the Facebook group only during the study abroad stay of my participants. However, the goal of my study was also to explore participants' identity work and investment in imagined identities over the course of their stay.

The study provides detailed accounts of the participants' pre-, during- and post-study abroad experiences and their reflections on those experiences. Through employing a qualitative software programme (NVivo) the researcher gathered the data, which was subsequently analysed by using an "open coding" approach – which was also employed in my study. As the data was coded, recurring issues and themes emerged, and new categories were generated. These provided insights into the data and the relationships between items became apparent. The above study highlighted a number of interesting processes related to identity change in study abroad language learners and used the data to

portray the way these processes unfolded, which aligns closely to the process followed in the present study.

3.4.4 Identity Work in Korean Study Abroad Learners in the United States

Another study of relevance to my research is Lee's (2016) on the identities of Korean undergraduate study abroad learners in the United States. Similar to my study, Lee's research considers the role of English in South Korea in light of English fever and its role as a marker of the elite classes, the experiences of individuals who spent time abroad as language learners, and the identity changes associated with study abroad language learner experiences.

Lee's study provides background information to the phenomenon of English fever (see Chapter 2) in the form of historical facts which place the beginnings of Korea's pro-English stance in the post Japanese colonisation period. America's role in the Korean War (1950-1953), as well as its subsequent investments in the Korean economy, was recognised as crucial by the Korean people in rebuilding and modernising their country. As the ties between the two countries strengthened, so did the positive perception of the English language among the Korean population, who perceived America as an ally, a superpower, and a country whose language was key to global integration (Lee, 2016).

The participants in Lee's study were seven Korean undergraduate study abroad students who all went to the United States during their elementary or secondary school years. Some lived with American host families, and others lived in private dormitories or with Korean relatives. The data collection procedures involved two phases: the initial phase consisted of individual semi-structured interviews, followed by a second phase during which four of the seven participants were selected to participate in focus groups. The study was designed and data analysed according to methods associated with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and critical discussion analysis (Gee, 2004).

The study also focused on the identity formation of the participants during their study abroad experience, paying particular attention to the study abroad context and their first and second languages. Lee focuses specifically on the role of English and the participants' perception of English, as well as the role of ethnicity in relation to their identity formation processes. Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory is used as the basis for defining identities as socially constructed and influenced by the contexts in which they are negotiated. Lee also draws on ethnolinguistic theory developed by Giles and Johnson (1981) in order to highlight the role of language in the formation of social identities and to attain group membership. Identity markers such as ethnicity, race, and culture are also explored as defining factors in identity formation. Although the study deals with classroom based experiences, it also analyses participant study abroad experiences outside the classroom.

The findings presented in Lee's (2016) study reveal the investment in English of Korean study abroad learners as motivated by socially constructed ideologies of English in Korea, the perception of English as a prerequisite for attaining an imagined global citizenship and gaining social capital in Korea, and the view of America as the undisputed world superpower.

3.4.5 Bicultural Identities in Study Abroad

Taking into account the significance of communities in study abroad, Kanno's (2003) study of four Japanese teenage returnees from North America is also explored in light of their experiences and positioning between their native and host languages and cultures. Kanno (2003) claims that the participants in her study created bicultural identities through undergoing the phases of sojourn, re-entry, and reconciliation. The feeling of dividedness between the old and the new context is eventually overcome by creating bicultural identities. According to Kanno (2003), being exposed to two

linguistically and culturally different contexts also allows for the creation of hybrid identities which are supported and maintained by imagined participation in both contexts.

My study relates to Lee's (2016) and Kanno's (2003) in that it explores the experiences of individuals who have spent time overseas, and have been exposed to contexts linguistically and culturally different from their native context. Furthermore, the studies share the focus on findings relevant to study abroad experiences and identity change in relation to language, culture, investment, imagined identities and communities.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the key theoretical constructs drawn on in this research. Furthermore, it has explored the significance of each construct in relation to this study as well as the relationships among them and how these define the theoretical framework of this study. Finally, this chapter has contextualised the study vis-à-vis some of the more recent relevant empirical literature in applied linguistics relating to study abroad language learner identity.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This study explores the experiences of a group of study abroad Korean learners of English in New Zealand, with specific focus on (1) the relationship between their investment in English learning and study abroad and societal ideologies regarding English in Korea, (2) their investment in imagined identities during their sojourn, and (3) their identity work and outcomes in the study abroad context. With the participants' stories being the focus of this research, this study is situated within a constructivist-interpretive paradigm and employs a qualitative, narrative mode of inquiry. This chapter presents the methodological framework of the study by outlining the methodological considerations and procedures including: researcher positionality, participant recruitment and selection, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis approach and procedures, validation criteria.

4.1 Research Approach

In its broadest sense, research entails the process of seeking answers to questions we pose ourselves about the world we live in (Dörnyei, 2007). The credibility of this process rests on the meticulous design of the study and careful formulation of the research problem, the selection of appropriate methods of inquiry, including the data gathering and analysis methods employed, and the ethical considerations adopted in obtaining reliable findings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Mackey & Gass, 2005). Given that the primary focus of study in this research is human experience, narrative inquiry has been selected as a methodological lens due to its focus on stories as meaning-making mechanisms – allowing for phenomena to be understood from the point of view of those who experience them (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). The narrative approach to this study, situated within a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, aligns with the aims of the research and offers methodological compatibility for obtaining answers to its research questions.

4.1.1 Paradigmatic Considerations

The methodology of a study largely depends on the set of beliefs that guide the researcher. This set of beliefs guides decision making, whether it be in relation to everyday life decisions or the process of a research study (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Making explicit the paradigmatic alignment of the researcher and justifying the choice of paradigm in relation to the research at hand is important in helping readers interpret and evaluate the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003) researcher beliefs are determined by the researcher's biography, which draws on the social situatedness of the researcher, as informed by his or her gender, ethnicity, race, religion, and cultural and political orientation. As such, the researcher is guided by a specific set of ideas about the world, which define three of the most salient components that inform paradigmatic positioning: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) associate the meaning of these three terms with the following questions: *ontology* (What kind of being is the human being? What is the nature of reality?), *epistemology* (What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?), and *methodology* (How do we know the world or gain knowledge of it?).

The varying paradigmatic positions that researchers take with regard to the above has resulted in the emergence of different research paradigms, which are referred to in different ways by different scholars. Lincoln et al. (2011), for example, classify them as positivist, post-positivist, critical, constructivist-interpretive, and participatory (postmodern). The differing characteristics of these paradigms are best defined by their differences in relation to questions associated with ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

Positivism is characterised by an ontological belief that there is an order of reality that is true and that exists in the world. According to positivists, this reality is guided by

laws of nature. The job of the researcher is to discover this true reality with the aim of developing means of predicting and controlling it. Such realist ontological views lead positivist researchers to objectivist epistemological stances. If a true, fixed reality (guided by laws of nature) exists out there, the role of the researcher is to discover it and explain it without attempting to change it. Therefore, distance and sensitivity are required from the researcher in order to yield results that exactly reflect the true reality being investigated (Lincoln et al., 2011).

Post-positivism can be described as a paradigm that embraces certain aspects of positivism, while distancing itself from others. Ontologically, it remains close to positivism in its assertion that a reality guided by laws of nature exists; however, it differs from positivism as it acknowledges that human frailties have an impact on the way we view the world, thereby compromising our ability to perceive it as it truly is. This ontological view reflects on the epistemological stance of post-positivists: they accept that it is impossible for the researcher not to affect the research process, and due to the human factor, allow for the possibility that we can only get *close* to knowing the real truth. Such a stance of modified objectivity informs the methodological choices made by post-positivists, through which they seek to address the limitations of their perceived inability to produce results which portray reality as it really is. In qualitative research, this is usually done through triangulation, which involves basing the results of an inquiry on as many different sources of data, methods, theories, and investigators as possible. Furthermore, imbalances of the research process are addressed through natural inquiry, which involves studying phenomena in their natural setting; richness of the research is promoted through use of qualitative methods; grounded theory research is encouraged in order to provide tailored theory to specific local contexts, placing an emphasis on discovery throughout the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The set of beliefs that inform the critical paradigm differ somewhat from those that are associated with the positivist and post-positivist paradigms discussed above. The critical paradigm embraces the political aspect of research which is introduced through values brought into the inquiry by the human researcher and which essentially shape the way the study is conducted. As such, according to critical theorists, the world can only be seen through the values of the person observing it. It is therefore evident that critical theorists reject the positivist and post-positivist notions of a true reality existing, regardless of how humans may perceive or understand it. Furthermore, the critical paradigm is also concerned with the political dimension of research, as it poses the question of whose values lead the inquiry, and therefore whose values will be promoted and empowered, and whose will not. Critical researchers seek to empower the oppressed and invite them to change the world in order to free themselves from oppression. This is achieved through a dialogic approach, which aims to construct a common point of view that will be recognised and accepted by the oppressed – and used to motivate transformation of society in favour of the oppressed. Therefore, this paradigm is informed by realist ontology, a subjectivist epistemology as dictated by the values set forth by the researcher, and by a dialogic, transformative methodology which aims to promote consciousness with the aim of inspiring transformation.

The constructivist-interpretive paradigm, which informs this study, is based on relativist ontology; it equates realities to mental constructs, dependant on the mental frameworks of the individual who perceives them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Individuals frame their views of reality based on their lived experiences, contexts in which those experiences are created, and the people with whom they are co-constructed (Creswell, 2007). Epistemologically, the constructivist-interpretive paradigm is subjectivist, and acknowledges the nature of knowledge as co-constructive, and emerging from interaction

between the researcher and the researched (Given, 2008). Methodologically, it is based on hermeneutics (interpretation and re-interpretation), dialectics (rational reasoning and discussion), and naturalistic methods of inquiry (interviews, observations) (Lincoln et al., 2011).

In consulting the literature on paradigms, and discovering the evolution of varying paradigmatic positions, I inevitably sought to clarify my own paradigmatic positioning, as defined by my own set of beliefs and in relation to the study I am conducting.

Ontologically, I believe realities to be complex, fluid and relative to the individuals who perceive them and the contexts in which they are created. Such a view of reality invites the use of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis in order to extract the richness of data that accompanies research on people's understanding of their realities, and the manner in which they reflect on them and explain them to others. This relativist stance I adopt in relation to ontology is complemented by a subjectivist view of epistemology. Therefore, the subjectivity of the researcher (myself) and the participants is acknowledged and findings produced as a result of the interaction between myself and the participants, especially through narrative interviews as the primary source of data in this study. The section below situates the paradigmatic choices in this study within the wider framework and recent trends in social science research.

4.1.2 Shifting Paradigms in Social Science Research

The rationale for adopting the constructivist-interpretive approach in this study is to an extent a reflection of changing approaches to research in social sciences over the past two to three decades. The previously dominant positivist and post-positivist approaches had become recognised as largely inadequate for exploring and describing the complexities of human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The move towards interpretive and constructivist approaches gave rise to what is referred to as the *narrative*

turn (Block, 2003) in social sciences. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) outlined the trends that are associated with the narrative turn in four parts: (1) a change in the relationship between researcher and researched; (2) a move from the use of numbers toward the use of words as data; (3) a change from a focus on the general and universal toward the local and specific; (4) and a widening in acceptance of alternative epistemologies or ways of knowing. The above trends closely informed the methodological foundations of this study, as outlined below.

Turn 1: Researcher-participant relationship. In contrast to the positivist position of the researcher as a neutral observer entrusted with producing reliable, generalisable, and valid results, the constructivist approach adopts co-construction of knowledge by researcher and the researched and the interpretation of meaning as the norm (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). The position of the researcher as an impartial, objective observer is perceived to be incompatible with inquiry into human experience, as such research inevitably entailed becoming intimately implicated in the research (Barkhuizen, 2011). In this study, I had the opportunity to develop close relationships with my participants (Jackson, 2008); the participants were the centerpieces of this narrative study and an inseparable part of the phenomenon under research (Spector-Mersel, 2010). This relationship with the participants allowed me to see the world from their point of view, while remaining outside it and forming my own interpretations, heeding Bakhtin's (1986) advice of including both etic and emic perspectives (see section 3.4.1) in achieving a deeper level of understanding (Jackson, 2008), and thereby achieving what Bourdieu et al. (1991) referred to as 'double objectification' in social research.

Turn 2: Words over numbers. In line with the perceived limitations of positivist approaches and assumptions about measurable results relating to human experience, qualitative approaches shifted towards textual data. Emphasis was placed on

contextualising the richness of human experience and interaction, and avoiding the “sterile discourse” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p.17) that quantitative approaches were associated with. Henceforth, narrative approaches gained in popularity, as they were recognised as suitable in exploring the contextual, social, and temporal (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) aspects of data.

Turn 3: Generalisable to context-specific. With the turn towards textual data, qualitative approaches to research became increasingly oriented towards depth rather than breadth. Generalisability and predictability, as central to quantitative approaches, gave way to “the particular” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p.24) that was often lost in statistical data and numbers. Case studies, biographies, and ethnographic studies focus on the situatedness of the individual within a context and therefore place emphasis on contextually sensitive understanding of human experience. Within its qualitative approach, this study has focused on both context-specific individual participant stories and a cross-case analysis that focus on the most salient themes across the data, themes that to an extent resonate with wider research on study abroad language learners, and therefore provide a degree of transferability.

Turn 4: Expanding epistemologies. As qualitative research redirected from positivist paradigms, so did the epistemological assumptions that guide research. In the place of objectivity that positivism advocates, paradigms such as constructivism viewed knowledge as a product of interaction of the individual with their context (Lincoln et al., 2011). This paved the way for narrative approaches, which hinge on *narrative cognition* (Bruner, 1986) as an invaluable mode of knowing in social sciences. Inevitably, the validation criteria were adapted to reflect the epistemological shift, with research findings being evaluated based on authenticity, resonance, and trustworthiness (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), rather than traditional positivist criteria of objectivity, reliability, and

generalisability. As in this study, emphasis is placed on interpreting and understanding human experience, while being “unashamedly interpretive” (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, p.19).

With the methodological turns discussed above contextualising the methodological choices of this study within the wider discourse of changing research methodologies, the following section will focus on narrative characteristics and their methodological significance within the frame of this study.

4.1.3 Narrative Inquiry and Constructivism

Though generalisability is not usually emphasised as one of the objectives of narrative research, in some narrative work exploring generalisable human behaviour patterns based on experience is the primary aim. Such narrative research draws on post-positivism, and inquires into mutual influences between individuals and context (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). However, narrative inquiry is predominantly based on research into individual experience (Spector-Mersel, 2010) that is context-specific and often non-transferrable.

Given that narrative research hinges on narrative realities that are constructs of complex cognitive processes in individuals (Bruner, 1991), ontologically, it is aligned with the underlying post-structuralist notion that the distance between an individual’s description of the world and the actual world is “ultimately unbreachable” (p. 6). Consequently, narrative inquiry does not entail gaining insight into actual lived experiences, but rather the narrative representations of the individuals who recount them (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). As such, narrative inquiry aligns with the constructivist paradigm that this study is situated in, reflecting the relativist assumption that “realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructs, socially and experientially based ... dependent on their form and content, and the persons who hold them” (Lincoln, et al.,

2011). Furthermore, given that narrative is recognised as a mode of cognition (Bruner, 1986), narrative inquiry allows for a merging of ontology and epistemology as narrative reality is interpreted and moulded through narrative (Moodie, 2015). Finally, from a methodological perspective, the use of narrative interviews (Chase, 2005), narrative frames (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008), and narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) in this study align with constructivist methodology, which is interpretive and allows for researchers to assume the role of “co-constructors of knowledge” and interpreters of “the meaning of lived experiences” (Lincoln et al., 2011). The section below addresses the key methodological considerations related to situating narrative inquiry within constructivism.

4.1.4 Methodological Considerations for Narrative Inquiry within Constructivism

Situating narrative inquiry within the constructivist paradigm rests on key methodological considerations that Moodie (2015) identifies as (1) knowledge fluidity and (2) its co-construction by participants and researchers; (3) the interpretive nature of analysis, and (4) the emphasis on verisimilitude in the place of objectivity in reporting of findings. The considerations below closely inform the narrative methodology of this research.

Fluidity of knowledge. Knowledge is characterised by temporality and the ongoing reinterpretation of human experience (Bell, 2011). As such, knowledge remains informed by the subjective perspective of the narrator, which remains susceptible to change across time and contexts (Moodie, 2015). In narrative research, the fluidity of knowledge characterises the meaning making processes associated with the analysis, interpretation, and reading the reports of the research studies (Barkhuizen, 2011). However, in spite of the inherent fluidity of knowledge that storytelling produces, pertinent to this research is the “power of storytelling as a tool for eliciting people’s local knowledge and

understanding of social phenomena and of narrative analysis as an instrument for analysing them” (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, p.18).

Knowledge co-construction. Narrative inquiry necessarily entails the co-construction of knowledge involving the participant and the researcher. Narrative researchers become intimately implicated in the research as they “elicit, co-construct, interpret, and, in their retelling, represent participants’ accounts of lived and imagined personal experience” (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 393). Canagarajah (1996) called for researcher involvement in applied linguistics studies to be made explicit in light of the “complex values, ideologies, and experiences” that guide the research and consequently reflect on the research processes and findings (p. 324). In this study, the nature of the co-constructed knowledge by the researcher and participants is acknowledged, while the position and involvement of the researcher is also made explicit (see section 4.3 on Researcher Positionality).

Interpretive analyses. The interpretive, subjective nature of narrative research allows for an interpretive process for the analysis of the data. Large amounts of data are collected and decisions made on the part of the researcher on how it ought to be analysed and presented (Barkhuizen, 2011). Findings emerge from narrative data through interpretations that are arrived at iteratively (Dörnyei, 2007). Furthermore, the interpretation of the research findings on the part of the readers is informed by their cultural lenses and their “positioned identities” (Riessman, 2008, p.111). The interpretive nature of the present study is explained further in section 3.7.1.

Reporting verisimilitude. The verisimilitude of narrative (Bruner, 1986) lies in their resemblance of a reality from the narrator’s perspective. Consequently, the reporting of findings in narrative studies relies on portraying experiences from the narrator’s perspective, as supported and represented by the data collected (Webster & Mertova,

2007). Furthermore, the findings are evaluated on criteria such as “honesty, verisimilitude, authenticity, familiarity, transferability, and economy” (p. 94).

4.2 The Use of Narratives in Qualitative Research

Recent decades have marked a significant increase in the implementation of narrative research across a broad range of fields, including applied linguistics. At the heart of such research are the stories people tell of their lived and imagined experiences. The potential of these stories in applied linguistics research was recognised by a number of scholars who realised that stories play an important part in helping people generate meaning of their life experiences (Kramp, 2004).

However, the rise to prominence of storytelling and narrative methods in applied linguistics was somewhat delayed due to the dominance of experimental methods deriving from positivist approaches during the 20th century. Important texts on narrative methods in general education began emerging during the 1990s (e.g. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995), influencing the shift in focus in applied linguistics research from a traditional emphasis on language acquisition processes to a focus on language learning and learners in social contexts. Of particular importance for this study is narrative inquiry’s compatibility with research on language learner experiences in interaction with context (Benson, 2018), such as that of study abroad.

However, there are differing views and assumptions about narrative research. These include analysis of narrative forms or content (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012), narrative writing as an approach to analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988; Benson, 2018), and narrative as a window to identity (Bamberg, 2006; Barkhuizen, 2009). As outlined below, in this study narrative takes on multiple roles, with narrative content and form being subjects of analysis, narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) used as an analytical tool,

and narratives being employed as a window into participants' identity work in study abroad.

4.2.1 Why Stories?

In line with the relativist ontological position that guides this research, which views realities as products of lived experience, the contexts in which this experience originates, and the people with whom it is co-constructed (Creswell, 2007), this study has relied on narratives as a lens for exploring, and a tool for analysing participants' experiences during their study abroad sojourns in New Zealand.

The core strength of stories lies with their potential as meaning-making mechanisms (Pomerantz & Kearney, 2012). Telling stories entails an interpretive process in relation to the meaning of our lived experiences; furthermore, in addition to being a "universal human activity" (Riessman, 1993, p.3), it is "the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.1). According to Benson (2018), telling stories is also a mechanism of identity work in the postmodern era, especially in contexts of global mobility (Benson, 2004) and rapid social change (Giddens, 1991). These features of narrative research closely align with the aims of this research, which explores rapid social change in Korea with regard to English ideology, the identity work of Korean learners of English in the context of study abroad and global mobility, and their investing in imagined identities.

Furthermore, a narrative approach offers advantages for exploring the temporality of human experience in this study. The temporality of narratives allows for inquiry into context related shifts in knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts, as well as temporal shifts in identity and the nature of investing in future imagined identities. Through the temporal dimension of narratives, experiences are often evaluated in relation to the past, present, and future, and narrative representations can capture the unfolding of human experience

through time (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Therefore, in this study, the participants' experiences are explored through their study abroad stories. The focus is on how study abroad experiences enrich their experiential base, and how this is reflected in narrative representations relating to their past, present, and future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), thereby offering insight into their context-specific identity work in study abroad.

Lastly, the rationale for exploring human experience through narratives ultimately rests on the key role that storytelling plays in human cognitive capacity. According to Bruner (1986), narrative exists as a mode of thought that is deeply rooted in our thinking. As “storytelling organisms” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) we employ narrative cognition (Bruner, 1986) to make sense of the world around us, and therefore use stories to both construct and construe reality (Bruner, 1991). As such, narratives are used by humans to disentangle and create order out of human experience (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). As Polkinghorne (1995) explains, people employ narrative cognition in order to understand and analyse human action, and its explanatory power makes it “a legitimate form of reasoned knowing” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 9) that imposes order on the “structure of human experience” (Bruner, 1991, p. 21).

4.2.2 Narrative Knowledging as the Core

While the previous section offers insight into some of the key characteristics of narrative research, the concept that most closely encompasses the core processes that narrative research entails is *narrative knowledging* (Barkhuizen, 2011). It is a concept that highlights “the meaning making, learning or knowledge construction that takes place during the narrative research activities of (co)constructing narratives, analyzing narratives, reporting the findings, and reading/watching/listening to research reports” (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 395). Therefore, it posits that knowledge is shaped and produced at each one of these complex, interrelated, and mutually informing stages. For narrative

researchers, stories are used to “elicit, co-construct, interpret, and, in their retelling, represent participants’ accounts” of lived and imagined experiences, while storytelling allows for narrators (researchers and participants) to engage in a meaning making process through which they “make sense of their lived experience; they understand it, give it coherence, make connections, and unravel its complexities” (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 393). This qualitatively rich process, through which the co-constructed, contextually informed accounts are explored, is succinctly captured by the concept of *narrative knowledging*, which is a defining feature of this study.

4.2.3 The Five Dimensions of Narrative Inquiry and this Study’s Orientation

In his recent handbook chapter on narrative inquiry, Barkhuizen (in press) discusses some of the salient issues that have become evident in the increasing narrative inquiry literature in applied linguistics. In his latest contribution, he proposes five core dimensions of narrative inquiry, outlining its fundamental characteristics, as well as highlighting the decision-making that the various stages of the research process entail. With each dimension also being a continuum, the methodological considerations that guide the research process can occupy a certain area along the continuum, depending on the orientation of the study. The five core dimensions are labelled as follows: *1. Narrative study and narrative inquiry; 2. Narrative and interaction; 3. Narrative research and researcher engagement; 4. Storied data; 5. Analysis of narrative and narrative analysis*. Below, I map the orientation of this study within the first three dimensions of Barkhuizen’s framework. The content relevant to dimensions 4 and 5 is discussed in section 4.6 below.

Narrative study and Narrative inquiry. The first dimension is related to a distinction between two types of narrative analysis: the one (towards one end of the continuum) that focuses on structure of narratives, and the other (towards the other) that

uses narrative as a method to discover what the narratives are about. The former focuses on the act of storytelling and the way stories are told (De Fina, 2016), while the latter considers narrative as method to explore what the narratives are about, and the details pertaining to “what was told; and why, when, where, and by whom” (Barkhuizen, 2011a, p. 401). This study occupies inquiry side of the continuum, as it uses participant narratives and storytelling as a methodological means to investigating participant experiences in study abroad (De Fina, 2016). Narrative features prominently in the study design, as part of the data collection (narrative interviews; narrative frames) and data analysis (narrative analysis; thematic analysis of narrative data).

Narrative and interaction. When data collection involves face-to-face interaction, such as interviews, narratives are co-constructed by both researcher and participant (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). The opposing ends of the continuum within this dimension are characterised by differing analytical foci: towards the left of the continuum, the emphasis is on the interactional shaping of stories, or the way stories are co-constructed “in the here-and-now of the ongoing talk” (Kasper & Prior, 2015, p. 230); towards the right, the focus of analysis is excerpts of interviews, which are explored for their content. The analysed textual data derives from the interaction (interviews or conversations) and may or may not be in story form (Barkhuizen, in press). This study focuses on stories-from-interaction, largely consisting of storied data relating to the participants’ experiences in study abroad. The data was analysed thematically, as well as through narrative analysis, in which the analysis is presented in storied form, with excerpts from the interview data incorporated into the stories (Barkhuizen, in press). While this study is predominantly reliant on the stories-from-interaction, and therefore leans towards the right side of the continuum, a degree of attention to the discursive aspect of the interview data was paid during the narrative analysis. This offered insight

into the identity construction processes in the here-and-now of the interview conversations (Kasper & Prior, 2015) shedding light on important issues that informed the synthesising of the narrative accounts during narrative analysis.

Narrative research and researcher engagement. Researcher engagement is an important aspect of narrative research as it relates to subjectivity/objectivity in the research, as determined by the extent of researcher influence on the data collection process and the reliability of the analysis. During the data collection process in this study I sought to gain insight into the lives of the participants and elicit stories about their lives in Korea, their English learning careers (Benson, 2012), their experiences in study abroad, as well as their investing in imagined identities. I engaged with the participants through developing a relationship of trust as they shared with me some of their most intimate life experiences (Chase, 2003) about personal struggles, future plans, worries and uncertainties of the rewards of their study abroad investing. This relationship was informed by my positionality as the researcher, which is discussed in the following section.

4.3 Researcher Positionality and Engagement

In line with the qualitative nature of this study, researcher subjectivity should be acknowledged as an important factor in the shaping of the research. Given the narrative nature of this study, I was deeply implicated in the research process from the collection of the data to the presentation and interpretation of the findings (Nunan & Choi, 2011). It is thus important to provide a biographical profile and acknowledge my researcher positionality and engagement over the course of the study.

It is relevant to this research that I am a male New Zealander (Caucasian), born in 1984. I taught English as a foreign language in South Korea for over four years between 2009 and 2014. My interest in the sociolinguistic aspects of English learning amongst

Korean learners of English arose through personal and professional engagement in the Korean context during my stay in Korea. It is pertinent to note that my prolonged exposure to the Korean context provided me with a degree of insider perspective, albeit conditioned and informed by my outsider sociocultural lens.

My own experience of study abroad was also significant in allowing me to relate better to the study abroad experiences of the participants. As part of a postgraduate course in Italian, in my 20s I spent eight weeks on a study abroad programme in Florence, Italy, when I was of a similar age to most of the participants in this study.

Being familiar with Korean culture and having lived in Korea, having my own study abroad experience to draw on, and being a member of the local New Zealand population were important factors in establishing my relationship with the participants. Being aware of sociocultural norms in Korea helped me establish rapport with my participants, as they found comfort in my familiarity with Korea and my previous life experiences associated with their native country. Furthermore, drawing on my own experience of difficulties in forming friendships with locals in a study abroad context, I expected the participants to welcome the opportunity to speak with me (as a local) and discuss their study abroad experiences. Further solidified by my genuine interest in their stories, my relationships with the participants were characterised by frankness and trust, and further developed into friendships, with mutual desire to maintain contact even after their involvement in the study was concluded. My role throughout the study developed, as in addition to being a researcher, I took on the role of a motivator, evaluator, advisor, and a confidante (Jackson, 2006). This, I believe, contributed to the success of the study, as it encouraged participants to feel reassured while disclosing their reflections on past experiences, talking about their feelings, and exposing their vulnerabilities.

In contrast to the above benefits, there are certain limitations that my researcher positioning imposed on the data collection process. For example, being perceived as a local by the participants most likely restricted their willingness to be openly critical about certain aspects of life in New Zealand, which potentially left certain areas of their experiences unexplored and underrepresented in the data.

4.3.1 Emic and Etic Researcher Perspectives and Positioning

The terms *emic* and *etic* are often used in social sciences when referring to insider and outsider perspectives; emic is associated with insider, and etic with outsider knowledge (Headland, Pike & Harris, 1990). The emic/etic distinction is important in positioning the researcher on the emic/etic continuum and making explicit the significance of such positioning for the research processes and findings. Moodie (2015) draws on Lett (1990) to describe the emic view as the insider's view, meaningful and relevant within the belief and value system of the group under study; on the other hand, Moodie draws on Ochs and Schieffelin (1994) to highlight the issue of insiders' difficulties of making the emic constructs explicit. He thus proposes an etic approach to exploring and describing emic phenomena, which is adopted in the present study. In addition, this view is in line with Bakhtin's (1986) notion of *outsideness*, which involves attempting to view the world from the position of the insider, while preserving the etic lens throughout the course of the study (Jackson, 2008).

While my time in Korea did provide me with insight into Korean culture, it remains only the insight of an outsider and thus a limited emic position. Furthermore, this research relies on accounts of lived experience, as told from the point of view of the participants that took place in the absence of the researcher, thus placing the researcher in an etic position in relation to the data collected. Conversely, being an Auckland local

makes me an insider of the context where the study takes place and gives me an emic perspective in relation to the study abroad context of the participants' stories.

Finally, the emic/etic distinction is useful in positioning the approach to research. According to Kuttner and Threlkeld (2008), emic approaches are inductive, and emic coding prioritises participant perspectives as central to analysis; etic approaches are deductive, top-down, with etic coding relying on existing concepts from prior research when determining themes central to the analysis. While the participant's stories are a central part of this study, which places this research in emic territory, the themes central to analysis were derived from both, existing concepts and prior literature, reflecting this study's etic nature.

4.4 Finding and Recruiting Participants, Obtaining Consents

For the purposes of this study, seven adult Korean study abroad learners of English in New Zealand were selected as participants; six of them took part for the duration of the study, while one participant ended his engagement after two months of participation (see Table 4.1 below). In accordance with the recruitment process previously outlined in a PhD proposal approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (see Appendix A), I sought to recruit participants for this research from at least two reputable language schools in Auckland.

With the research aims and study design in place, I began exploring various language schools in Auckland to recruit participants. I prioritised language schools according to length of time in operation, location, facilities, and education programmes on offer. I contacted two language schools (Language School 1 and Language School 2) that appeared to be amongst the most reputable in Auckland, and requested to meet with respective members of their administrative staff in order to discuss the possibility of recruiting participants for my study. During each meeting the administrative staff were

familiarised with the aims of my research and the extent of the involvement of the participants. They were subsequently provided with participant information sheets (see Appendix B), which provided details relating to their role in the recruitment process, project procedures, data handling, and confidentiality. Upon gaining consent from language school management, each one of my administrative staff contacts signed the participant information sheets and agreed to forward my participant flyer (see Appendix C) to their current Korean students. Subsequently, three participants were recruited from Language School 1 and four from Language School 2. A total of three participants were recruited in response to the flyer, while the rest were recruited through referral sampling (Dörnyei, 2007).

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Length of participation in study	Purpose of SA visit	Long-term goal
Annie	23	6 months	English study, SA experience, independence	Settle outside of Korea
Danny	34	3 months	English study, preparing for PhD in NZ or Australia	Obtain PhD in Aus or NZ and remain permanently
Joanna	21	6 months	Visiting relatives, improving English	Become a global citizen, improve English
Tim	26	6 months	English study, permanent residency in NZ	Avoid returning to Korea, settle in NZ
Park	36	6 months	English study, obtaining permanent residency in NZ	Obtain permanent residency, bring family to NZ
Lucy	26	6 months	English study, travel, prep for career in foreign company in KR	Build a career at non-Korean company in KR

Jerome* ¹	24	2 months	English study, SA experience	Improve English for job in KR
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Table 4.1: Information about the Korean study abroad English learner participants

Participation in the study was voluntary. An explanation of the aims of the research and an invitation to consider participating was given to the participants by non-teaching members of the language academies in Auckland in which they were enrolled. The recruited students were sent participant information sheets (see Appendix D), which contained detailed information outlining their participation in the study. I allowed time prior to the first interviews to read the information with the participants and provided clarifications where necessary. I then obtained their signed consent to participate.

4.4.1 Participant Selection

The most important criteria of participant selection in this study included sufficient English proficiency and a willingness to participate and share stories pertinent to the research. I employed a purposive sampling recruitment approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Prior to formally recruiting the students, I had the opportunity to exchange text messages with them as they contacted me in response to the flyer or due to referral from their schoolmates. These were the first opportunities at evaluating whether their level of English would be sufficient for participation in the study. This was followed by an in-person introduction and conversation, which served to assess their conversational English skills, general interest in participating in the study, and openness to sharing their study abroad experiences with me and other participants (through the private Facebook group). A total of eight potential participants were considered for the study; seven were

¹ Jerome is considered a peripheral participant as his involvement was limited to two interviews; he subsequently discontinued his participation without providing a reason.

recruited based on the above criteria, while one opted not to participate due to low English proficiency.

4.4.2 Ethical Caveats of Participation

In line with the UAHPEC requirements, there were a number of ethical issues that I considered prior to recruitment and during the participants' engagement in the study. Perhaps the most important of these was related to the mental wellbeing of the participants and ensuring that their involvement in the study would not provoke negative emotional consequences. Given the relational nature of narrative inquiry and the centeredness of this research on life stories, which consist of personal, potentially sensitive information, I had to remain mindful of avoiding topics or questions that I sensed might cause discomfort or negative emotions in participants.

Another issue was related to compensating participants for their time and effort. While I greatly appreciated their willingness to participate and wished to offer monetary compensation for their time, I was concerned this would jeopardise their status as voluntary participants. In other words, I prioritised their status as voluntary participants who were not compelled to remain engaged in the research but participated in the research due to their own free will.

Finally, I was committed to guaranteeing their anonymity as far as the conditions of their participation would allow. The participants' real names were substituted with pseudonyms throughout the research, and the names of their language schools also remained undisclosed. Furthermore, the data collected in the study was protected according to the procedures previously outlined in the UAHPEC approval.

4.5 Data Collection Methods

In narrative inquiry a number of different data collection methods are used. Data can be collected from journal records, field notes, autobiographical writing, documents, or

interview transcripts, among others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In this study, the data was primarily collected from narrative interviews. Further data was generated from narrative frames, as well as from a Facebook group created by the researcher, and subsequently joined by the participants. Below I outline the data collection methods, procedures, and some of the guiding principles of their use in this study.

4.5.1 Narrative Interviews: Rationale and Procedures

Interviews are one of the most common methods of data collection involving human participants. As the primary focus of my research was the subjective experiences of the participants and the way those guided and informed their identity work, I considered narrative interviews to be an appropriate method for uncovering such complexities, and helping the participants make sense of their experiences through narration (Chase, 2003). Consequently, I opted to use semi-structured narrative interviews in this study, with the aim of providing more freedom to the participants to express themselves through longer turns at talk (Riessman, 2008). Eliciting stories in this way allowed the participants to make sense of life experiences that were important to them, and that were central to the research questions of the study (Chase, 2003).

Furthermore, this type of interview design allowed me to abandon the typical question and answer process that characterises structured interviews, and facilitated active co-construction of narrative and meaning (Riessman, 2008) by me and the participants. In addition, as Chase (2011) recommends, I sought to avoid asking sociological questions, and instead looked to invite stories, in conjunction with follow-up questions when necessary, in order to explore topics of interest and initiate discussions related to the research.

The interviews took place in the Arts 1 building of the University of Auckland. The two interview rooms were located on the ground floor of the building. They were

both equipped with a desk, desktop computer, and two chairs. They were roughly about 6m² in size, with two windows facing the front courtyard, and a transparent glass wall separating them from the ground floor hallway. The rooms were selected as the preferred interview location as they provided the conditions for private talk while also creating the sense of being in a public place, offering a sense of informality about the interviews and thus providing a relaxed atmosphere for conversation. The participants were contacted via text message three to four days prior to the interviews to confirm the meeting date and time. Interview rooms were booked in advance, and the interview times negotiated to suit the schedules of the participants. To record the interviews I used a Samsung Galaxy 6 smart phone voice recorder application. Copies of the audio files were saved on a password protected computer and backed up regularly in order to prevent any potential data loss. The duration of the interviews varied from around 40 to 70 minutes. The interview schedule is presented in the table below.

	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Interview 4	Interview 5
Annie	3 May 2017	28 Jun 2017	10 Aug 2017	28 Sept 2017	9 Nov 2017
Danny	18 May 2017	16 June 2017	23 Jul 2017	19 Jan 2018 (Skype from KR)	
Tim	22 May 2017	11 Jul 2017	29 Aug 2017	9 Oct 2017	23 Nov 2017
Joanna	24 May 2017	7 Jul 2017	28 Aug 2017	11 Oct 2017	14 Nov 2017
Park	13 Jul 2017	30 Aug 2017	12 Oct 2017	7 Dec 2017 (Skype from KR)	
Lucy	10 Oct 2017	28 Nov 2017	26 Jan 2018	15 Mar 2018	
Jerome	5 May 2017	3 Aug 2017			

Table 4.2 – Participant interview schedule

The section below explores the theoretical basis that informs the use of interviews in this study and highlights its alignment with subjectivist orientations of the study (see Section 4.1.1)

4.5.1.1 Theorising the interview: from instrument to social practice

Despite the ubiquity of interviews in empirical inquiry in a range of social sciences, their frequent under-theorising has emerged as a common subject of critique (Pavlenko, 2007; Kasper & Prior, 2015; Talmy & Richards, 2011). The view of interviews purely as research instruments often overlooks the dimension of interviewing as a social practice (Talmy, 2010) and ignores important implications of the co-constructive nature of interviews for data collection, analysis, and ultimately research findings. As outlined in section 4.1.1, this study adopts a subjectivist epistemological stance, thereby recognising knowledge as co-constructed by the researcher and the researched. Consequently, as Gubrium and Holstein (2012) posit, in this study “interview participants are as much constructive practitioners of experiential information as they are repositories or excavators of experiential knowledge” (p. 25). Therefore, in line with the recent turn towards a more “reflexive appreciation of knowledge production” in interviews, this study adopts the position that the interview ought to be treated as “a social encounter in which knowledge is actively formed and shaped” by participant and researcher (p. 32).

In light of the co-constructive dimension of interviews, making explicit my role as the interviewer and acknowledging my contribution in the shaping of the interview context (Mann, 2010) and co-constructing interview talk allows for increased transparency into the generation of interview data, and addresses the critique of the frequent invisibility of the interviewer in interview-based research. It is thus important to acknowledge the implicit “interactional contingencies” (Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006,

p. 40) that guided the interviews. Such contingencies inform the shaping of the interview context, as guided by the power relations between interviewer and interviewee.

Consequently, “respondents’ answers are oriented to, shaped by, and designed for the questions that occasion them”, as well as the interviewer who occasions them, while “answers are built on *previous* questions and answers the respondent has been asked and has (not) answered over the course of an interview or series of interviews” (Talmy, 2010, p. 31). Thus, my positioning as a member of the local New Zealand population, a native English speaker, a former English teacher in Korea, and the interviewer, offered me a power advantage in the interview context; conversely, the participants’ positioning as study abroad sojourners, and English learners with limited proficiency in a relatively unknown country, placed them in an inferior position. Therefore, my comparative power advantage reflected on the co-construction of interview talk. My subjectivities (Canagarajah, 1996) informed the questions I asked, while my power advantage informed the way I asked them and guided the conscious and subconscious responses (verbal and non-verbal) I offered to participants’ answers, which in turn informed the participants’ responses.

Nevertheless, as outlined in section 4.2.3, I pursued various strategies to alleviate the uneven power relations in the interview context between me and the participants, which positively reflected on their desire to participate in the study and share their life stories. I sought to achieve this through allowing participants longer turns at talk, engaging in active listening, abandoning topics that caused discomfort or that participants appeared unwilling to discuss. For example, Park initially told me of his disappointment at losing his job in Korea and criticised what he believed were various indicators of inequality in his home society, but when prompted to elaborate on his views on Korea, he felt visibly reluctant to do so. Sensing that he did not wish to speak negatively about his

native country, I avoided asking questions relating to Korea that elicited negative commentary.

Furthermore, I sought to create rapport with the participants by showing genuine interest in their stories, not only as data, but as emotionally charged reflections and interpretations of real life events of importance in their lives (Prior, 2018). I also strived to make the participants feel comfortable during interviews, reminding them that they were in no way tests of their English proficiency, as most of them were self-conscious about their English. Ultimately, my strategy of easing the power relation imbalance between me and the participants by treating them as real people and showing genuine interest in their stories allowed me to form a closer relationship and become their friend, confidante, and advisor, in addition to being the interviewer.

This section has offered insight into some of the characteristics of interviews as social practice and the factors that shaped the interview context of this study. It highlighted the interviewer-interviewee relations and the subsequent implications for the generation of interview data, addressing the claim that “interview *products* cannot be separated from the *processes* by which they are generated” and making explicit its relevance in this study (Prior, 2018, p. 230).

4.5.2 Narrative Frames

Narrative frames are templates used to support and guide reflective writing, and as such have been introduced as research instruments by Barkhuizen and Wette (2008). In the context of my study they were used to introduce the participants to the general topics of interest to be covered more thoroughly in the narrative interviews that would follow. The frames offered the participants an opportunity to reflect on the salient topics and write about them. They guided the participants through the task as they provided a scaffold that dictates the structure and the content of what is to be written (Barkhuizen &

Wette, 2008). Of particular importance for this study was the diachronic element of narrative frames. In line with the aims of the research, which focused on past experiences in Korea and study abroad, as well as their investing in an imagined future through study abroad, narrative frames allowed participants to reflect on and explore these topics in each frame. Furthermore, the narrative format of the frames is aligned with the narrative nature of this study and the power of storying as an effective tool in evaluating human experience (Polkinghorne, 1995). The narrative structure of the frames allowed the participants to engage in self-reflective writing, but was also designed to ensure generation of information that pertains to the research questions (Barkhuizen, 2014).

With the above recommendations in mind, the first narrative frame used in this study invited the participants to write about general topics, such as their backgrounds, their families, and first impressions of New Zealand (see Appendix E for Narrative Frame 1). This was followed by sections that introduced themes pertinent to the focus of the research. In these sections, the design of the frames invited the participants to reflect on their journeys of English learning, with reference to the past, present, and future. The function of these sections was to reveal the ways in which the participants understood and reflected on their language histories and how their reflections implicitly or explicitly portrayed the way their investment in language learning informed their imagined identities.

The number of frames filled out by participants varied according to the length of their participation in the study, as well as their time and availability; the six month participants were required to complete narrative frames before interviews 2, 3 and 4, while the three month participant was asked to complete frames before interviews 2 and 3. Copies of the relevant narrative frames were emailed to the participants a week prior to their next interviews. They were required to return the completed frames to the

researcher, in electronic format, two days prior to attending their next interview. Given the participants' engagement in English school work and various social activities, some of the narrative frames were submitted late and/or incomplete, while on other occasions the participants were altogether unable to complete their frames. Due to these inconsistencies the frames were not subjected to detailed analysis, and were used exclusively to prepare participants for upcoming interviews by allowing me to prepare questions and guide the interviews that followed.

4.5.3 Facebook Group

When conducting research involving human participants, some researchers choose to employ focus group interviews in addition to individual interviews in order to extract further content-rich data generated from the sharing and discussion of views on a variety of experiences relevant to the participants. However, in my study, I chose to facilitate discussion among the participants via a private Facebook group, specifically created for this purpose. What can be described as an online focus group, this Facebook group was an interactive group in which participants engaged in qualitative discussions, guided by a pre-defined set of topics (see Appendix F for a list of topics) which kept the focus of discussion on the research questions. The three month participant in this study was asked to write at least one post per week on a designated topic, while the six month participants had to complete the same task at least every two weeks. However, the participants' activity in the Facebook group was conditioned by time constraints and language school work, resulting in sporadic rather than continuous engagement.

As pointed out by Stancanelli (2010), there are many similarities between traditional focus groups and online focus groups. One of the motivations of using online instead of traditional focus groups is that it is more convenient for the participants, as engaging in an online, rather than face-to-face focus group, requires less time, money,

and effort (Brüggen & Willems, 2009). Also, it was likely that the participants would be more inclined to participate, as “the physical absence and psychological distance of the Internet could stimulate group participation and boost self-disclosure, especially for individuals who might otherwise hesitate to participate in a face-to-face focus group” (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2015, p. 2). Furthermore, the Facebook group allowed participants more time flexibility than would have been possible with traditional focus groups, as they were able to participate asynchronously. In other words, the discussions did not necessarily occur in real time, and allowed participants more time to reflect and read the prompts before participating in the discussion (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2015).

While all participants welcomed the opportunity to join the private Facebook group, ensuring regular participation proved somewhat problematic. The members were reluctant to share stories of their study abroad experiences in the group, some of them (Annie, Tim) admitting to me they found it intimidating to share their writing in [poor] English with people they did not know well. Nevertheless, the Facebook group still provided useful data that helped complement that generated by the interviews. I initiated most discussions, inviting participants to comment and give their opinions.

The following section discusses the procedures associated with data collection. It also outlines the ways in which the methods were used to complement each other throughout the data collection process, with the aim of providing the participants multiple opportunities to revisit, reflect on, and clarify their experiences related to the research topic.

4.5.4 Data Collection Procedures

The process of data collection began with an introductory interview with each participant. The first interview served to create a rapport between myself and the interviewees and to provide a snapshot of their English learning histories. Furthermore,

the participants engaged in an open ended discussion with me during which they were invited to discuss and express their opinions and beliefs about their English learning, as related to the Korean context, the study abroad context, and their imagined identities. During the first set of interviews, the participants became accustomed to longer turns at talk and freedom to tell stories they deemed relevant to the topic of study.

Participation in the first interview implicitly invited the participants to reflect on the significance of English learning in relation to their imagined identities. Consequently, this raised their awareness of experiences and events during their study abroad sojourn in New Zealand that were relevant to the study, and which they at times chose to expand on when writing their narrative frames. To complete the first round of data collection, each participant completed one narrative frame. As described in section 4.5.2, the purpose of the narrative frames in this study was to invite participants to engage in reflective writing in relation to their English learning, their experiences abroad, and the ways they viewed its relevance to the development of their imagined identities. The data gathered from the initial interviews, the Facebook group, and the narrative frames, was then used to profile the participants and prepare the topics and starter questions for the second round of interviews. Therefore, in order to steer the data collection process in the direction of the research questions and encourage increased participant engagement, the data collection methods were triangulated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and mutually supporting. The data they produced was constantly revisited, and it informed the focus of further data collection. Table 4.3 below illustrates the data collection procedures followed in this study:

<p>Interview 1 preparation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare list of starter prompts • Book interview room and arrange seating for interview • Prepare interview equipment
<p>Interview 1</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with open-ended questions; create rapport with participant • Allow longer turns at talk; elicit stories related to research topic • Transcribe interview; engage in initial coding
<p>Narrative Frame 1</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on Interview 1 data, design Narrative Frame 1 • Invite participant to expand on salient themes covered in Interview 1 • Send narrative frame to participant at least one week prior to next interview • The completed narrative frame is received two to three days prior to the next interview • The narrative frame informs the preparation of the following interview
<p>Facebook group</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Facebook group discussion is explored for relevant topics • The relevant data is used to complement the previous interview and narrative frame data in designing the upcoming interview
<p>Interview 2</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Interview 1 transcript, along with the completed Narrative Frame 1 and relevant Facebook group discussion, is used to prepare Interview 2 questions and starter prompts • Where relevant, participants are asked follow-up questions relating to earlier interviews, narrative frames, and Facebook posts • Interview 2 is transcribed and coded
<p>Narrative Frame 2, Interview 3, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The above procedure is continued until the end of data collection

Table 4.3 – Data Collection Procedures

4.6 Data Analysis

Polkinghorne’s (1995) “analysis of narratives” and “narrative analysis”, based on Bruner’s (1986) paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought respectively, closely informed the analytical approach in this study. *Analysis of narratives* is closely aligned with what is referred to as thematic analysis in qualitative research, and only differs in its use of narratives as data (Benson, 2018). It entails “categorisation and classification, in which particular instances of phenomena are linked to more general concepts”, and “the use of abstract reasoning to establish theoretical relationships between concepts derived

from the data” (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chick, 2014, p. 74). Thematic analysis is predominantly concerned with the content of *what* is said or written, rather than *how* it is said, *to whom*, or *for what purpose*. In thematic analysis the *what* aspect is the primary focus (Riessman, 2008). Furthermore, engaging in a thematic analysis of biographical content allows for advantages when studying specific groups or communities as it facilitates the exploration of topics and perspectives common to specific groups and provides insight into experiences, as told and interpreted by members of those groups (De Fina, 2015).

On the other hand, *narrative analysis* entails narrative writing as the key element of analysis, where “storytelling plays a significant role in the analysis of data and reporting of findings” (Benson, 2018). Data from various sources is presented in storied form, with the key narrative element being “a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in the denouement” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). Polkinghorne (1995) claims that narrative analysis is usually conducted with non-storied data; however, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to *restorying* as an approach that allows for reconstruction of storied data in narrative analysis (Benson, 2018).

In qualitative research it is often the nature of the data at hand and the aims of the research that determine the approach to data analysis. For example, Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chick (2014) explain that establishing whether data is in narrative or non-narrative form is important for deciding the approach to data analysis. Given the narrative foundations of this study, the data collection methods were used to elicit stories from participants, as the meaning-making function of stories was central to narrative interviews (see Appendix G for an illustrative transcript) and narrative frames in particular, which accounted for the majority of the data collected. However, not all of the collected data

was in fact in storied form; for example, despite the intention of using narrative interviews to elicit stories from participants, large stretches of interview transcripts contain short sentence questions and answers, and general conversation (see Appendix H for an illustrative transcript). This prompted me to consider different analytical options in order to ensure the analysis does justice to the data. I therefore adopted multiple analytical approaches with the aim of exploring the collected data from different angles.

Consequently, this study employs both *analysis of narratives* and *narrative analysis* to explore the data through different analytical lenses and provide added depth to the findings. The rationale behind using both of the above approaches was to explore the data set as a whole and explore salient themes across the data but without sacrificing the richness of the participants' individual stories. I therefore first chose to conduct narrative analysis by writing six stories (one for each primary participant), thereby preserving the richness of the individual stories and their verisimilitude. Highlighting the importance of the temporal dimension of the study, relating to past experiences in Korea, the present study abroad journey, and the participants' imagined identities, I was able to use narrative analysis for its key strength: "its capacity to provide access to long-term experiences and act as a means of representing the coherence of such experiences" (Benson, 2018). In other words, each participant's data was emplotted into a story that highlighted the salient themes from the data, and offered a narrative analysis of the relationships between those themes and their implications for the research questions.

After finishing the individual stories I moved on to analysis of narratives. This involved conducting a thematic analysis of the stories written in the previous stage of analysis, while also referring back to the data for themes that may not have been included in the stories. Given the compatibility of thematic analysis with studies involving multiple participants, I was able to reap the benefits of this paradigmatic approach and its

effectiveness in developing “general knowledge about a collection of stories” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). The salient themes from across the stories and the entire data were illustrated with relevant textual extracts, and accompanied by analytical commentary that explored the relevance of the themes in relation to the research questions. Furthermore, heeding Pavlenko’s (2007) advice of avoiding the ineffective shopping list approach to thematic analysis, I sought to explore and present the interplay and relationships amongst the themes, and highlight the relevance of these relationships in addressing the research aims. This analytic approach allowed for an “effective way of linking data extracts to more abstract categories and concepts and of re-arranging them in support of theoretical arguments” (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, p. 81).

4.6.1 The Iterative, Emergent, and Interpretive in this Study

The terms “iterative”, “emergent”, and “interpretive” (Dörnyei, 2007) encompass the core processes associated with analysis in qualitative research. Barkhuizen et al. (2014) thus use the above terms as a framework for outlining approaches to analysis in narrative inquiry. Similarly, in this study the three terms were closely aligned with the analytical procedures. The analysis was *iterative* in nature insofar as it involved a continued “back and forth” movement between data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 243). For example, the interviews were transcribed and coded for themes shortly after being conducted; this informed the design of the upcoming narrative frames and subsequent interviews, in addition to providing early opportunities for data analysis and interpretation. The study was *emergent* as its iterative design allowed for repeated cycles of data analysis, ensuring the data was thoroughly examined for answers relating to the research aims. Lastly, the *interpretive* nature of this study is reflected in the “researcher’s subjective interpretation of the data” that closely guides analysis and shapes the research outcome (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 37).

While this section provides the rationale behind the data analysis approach in this study, the following sections outline the relevant analytical procedures.

4.7 Data Analysis Methods and Procedures

4.7.1 Transcription

The process of data analysis begins with the transcribing of the interview data (Dörnyei, 2007). The transcription process primarily entails turning audio data into written form. This seemingly simple task is vitally important for achieving rigour in qualitative research (Davidson, 2009). Making explicit the steps taken to transcribe data provides insight into the early stages of the analytical procedure. The format of transcription should align with the intended use of transcripts (Barkhuizen et al., 2014), while the approach to transcribing ought to be considered in relation to the methodological framework of the research and the roles of the researcher and participants throughout the research process (Jaffe, 2007).

Given the selective nature of transcription, due to the practical impossibility of recording all features of interaction from recordings (Davidson, 2009), researchers must make choices in regard to transcription (Kvale, 1996). While seeking to adopt a suitable transcription style for this study I considered the methodological procedures I had chosen and how transcripts would be used during analysis. In matching the transcription process with the requirements of subsequent analysis, I opted for a broad transcription style (Gee, 2004) that involved editing of the transcripts where necessary, without substantially modifying the underlying message of what was said by the participants (Davidson, 2009). Given that the participants in this study were study abroad learners of English with varying levels of English proficiency, verbatim transcription would have created issues of disjointedness and incoherence that would have made for difficult reading of the transcribed data. Word-for-word, or verbatim transcription, is a common approach to

transcribing in research entailing detailed analysis of transcripts, such as in small story analysis, which employs conversation analysis techniques (Bamberg, 1997), which was not the focus of this study. The aim of the transcription process in this research was to render the transcribed data readable and suitable for extracting quotes, which were an important part of subsequent narrative and thematic analyses. Finally, this approach to transcribing was aligned with the interpretive nature of this research, where the researcher involvement and interpretation is an important part of the research process.

Further decision-making that entailed the transcription process is related to sentence structure, punctuation, and non-linguistic aspects of dialogue (Altheide et al., 2003) such as laughter, sighing, and tone of voice. In order to faithfully transform the audio interviews into written format, I carefully considered punctuation, given the significant bearing it can have on meaning. I included exclamation marks to indicate excitement, while also noting in parentheses occurrences of laughter, sighing, long pauses, and other significant non-linguistic content in the interviews where necessary.

4.7.2 Narrative Analysis

Through continuous transcription during data collection, which involved thematic coding, I was able to familiarise myself with the data (Dörnyei, 2007). However, once the data collection process was concluded, prior to engaging in the writing of stories for each one of the participants (*narrative analysis*) I read the data thoroughly and revisited the earlier thematic codes “in order to establish potential themes that can be developed through the storyline of the narrative” (Benson, 2018, p. 604). Once I familiarised myself with the data, I engaged in narrative writing. I constructed six stories outlined in Chapter 5, as “interpretive accounts of lived experience” of the participants, using “storytelling as an analytical device” (Barkhuizen, 2013, p. 599). I began the narrative analysis process by reading the transcripts several times, which allowed me to become familiar with

important aspects of the lives of my participants. I grouped data extracts under thematic codes and explored relationships amongst the salient themes; as I continued this process the storyline become increasingly apparent and I sought to use the data extracts to construct a coherent narrative that portrayed the journeys of the participants and followed the chronological order of events, while highlighting the relationships of the salient themes and their pertinence to the research aims. Ultimately, the data extracts were connected into “coherent paragraphs, a process that involve[s] weaving my own words into” those of the participant, “while trying as far as possible to retain [their] wording where it mattered” (Benson, 2013, p. 257-258).

Through “restorying” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) the data, I retold the participant’s stories with regard to the research aims. At the core of this analytical approach is the meaning-making potential of storying (Pomerantz & Kearney, 2012), which offers “access to long-term experiences *and* act[s] as a means of representing the coherence of such experiences through narrative writing” (Benson, 2018, p. 599). Therefore, narrative analysis was used in this study to exploit storying as an analytical lens and to preserve the richness, accessibility, and the verisimilitude of individual stories of participants, which is usually sacrificed in studies based on content or thematic analysis.

It is thus important to highlight the two-fold function of narrative analysis in this study as an analytical lens and a means of presenting the findings of the research in narrative form. Furthermore, this highlights the process of “narrative knowledging” in narrative studies, and the associated versatility of storying, used to make sense of experience, analyse narratives, and report narrative research (Barkhuizen, 2013, p. 4).

However, as outlined in the following section, moving from individual case studies to the data set as a whole, further cross-case thematic analysis was presented in Chapter 6.

4.7.3 Analysis of Narratives

As discussed in section 3.7, *analysis of narratives* (Polkinghorne, 1995) shares a number of similarities with and closely resembles thematic analysis. As such, it was a suitable tool for analysing data from multiple cases. According to Barkhuizen et al. (2014), “thematic analysis is more frequently employed in studies involving multiple participants and multiple narratives” as it “opens up the possibility of comparing the narratives in the data set, of establishing shared themes, as well as highlighting individual differences” (p. 77). With *narrative analysis* having provided the analytical depth through separate analyses of each participant, *analysis of narratives* was intended to provide analytic breadth. The aim was to explore the content across the data through coding and categorising themes, identifying patterns of relationship amongst them, and interpreting them in order to construct or support theoretical arguments. The generation of themes and categories was both inductive and deductive; that is, some of the themes were identified in the literature (Wette & Barkhuizen, 2009), while others emerged from the data (Charmaz, 2006). For example, the theme *Investment in imagined future* originated from the literature, while the theme *Korea has very hierarchy system* featured prominently in the data and therefore emerged as a key theme in relation to at least one of the three research questions.

The analytical process in the *analysis of narratives* section resembled that of grounded theory, as part of the process entailed inductive generation of themes and categories and constructing theory that is grounded in the data itself (Charmaz, 2006). As Khan (2015) points out, through the work of scholars such as Charmaz (2006) grounded

theory was adopted in constructivist approaches to research that are aligned with this study and that highlight the interpretive nature of the theoretical constructs that grounded theory approaches in qualitative research offer.

Following initial, tentative thematic coding conducted during transcribing, the data sets were printed, read and re-read for further themes. The data was coded manually while memos and notes were written in the margins of the paper transcripts. This first cycle of coding (Saldaña, 2013) involved *in-vivo* coding (Creswell, 2012; Dörnyei, 2007), which involved coding that used exact wording from the data in generating code names; the code *Korea has very hierarchy system* mentioned above is one example. As the data was re-read several times with no new codes emerging, the coding process was complete. This was followed by the uploading of the data into qualitative analysis software *NVivo 11*, where coded data extracts were grouped into sub-themes, themes, and categories (see Appendix I).

In sum, the successive rounds of coding involved focused coding, which required identifying patterns across the data set that would support subsequent interpretation and analysis (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). This process involved a careful reorganisation of codes until data was finally categorised into appropriate themes and categories. Similar codes were merged where necessary, data extracts regrouped under appropriate codes, and thematic relevance between codes explored to ensure appropriate categorisation.

Since the aim of any study is to draw conclusions relevant to the research questions (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) thematic analysis is presented through using data excerpts to illustrate themes and categories in relation to the research aims. Throughout this process I iteratively moved from: (a) the coded and categorised data, to (b) the relevant literature, and (c) the research questions. This process allowed for theorising and

exploration of conceptual developments that would subsequently be further refined and presented in the findings and conclusion chapters.

4.8 Evaluating Research

The criteria used for evaluating research are an important part of determining trustworthiness of any study. The transparency of the methodological considerations largely sets the tone for evaluating research. The researcher has an opportunity to convince the reader that the study is well thought out, and that the choice of paradigm is in line with the researcher's basic set of beliefs about ontology, epistemology, and methodology. As all other aspects of the study should align with the paradigmatic choices which inform the research, this will also be the case with the evaluation criteria. Therefore, given the narrative orientation of the study, it is important to acknowledge that evaluating narrative research can be a complex task, due to its interpretive nature. This echoes Riessman's (2008) claim about the partiality and incompleteness of narrative truths. Therefore, the relativist position adopted with regard to ontology, the subjectivist position on epistemology, along with the hermeneutic and dialectic approaches to methodology, are all compatible with the underlining statement that this study cannot promise to deliver "the truth". However, it can use the relevant criteria for judging the trustworthiness of the data and its interpretation. A set of categories suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) according to which qualitative research can be evaluated and which will be used to judge the trustworthiness of my study, are *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*.

Credibility. In quantitative research, internal validity is associated with the truth value of the research. Meanwhile, in qualitative research the truth value of a study is measured in terms of its credibility (Dörnyei, 2007), or in other words authenticity in representing participants' experiences. A number of different strategies were used in this

study to achieve authenticity in relation to the representation of the voices and experiences of participants.

Through living and working in Korea for over four years I became familiar with the context. This experience played an important part in this research, as I often relied on my familiarity with Korean culture and my knowledge of the role of English in Korea. It helped me create a relationship of trust with the participants, and resulted in their genuine desire to take part in the study, as attested to by regular participation and only one case of attrition (Jerome). I also found the Korea experience useful during data collection and analysis, as it facilitated the understanding and the co-construction of meaning between me and the participants. Accordingly, in my statement regarding researcher positionality (see Section 4.4), my role as the researcher and the co-constructor of knowledge was made explicit.

On the other hand, prolonged engagement allowed for persistent observation, which in turn enriched the data collection and analysis process, enabling me to identify the “characteristics and elements ... that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focus on them in detail” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). Finally, meeting the criteria of triangulation was achieved through the use of three different methods of data collection; semi-structured narrative interviews, narrative frames, and a Facebook group.

Transferability. When a phenomenon is studied in sufficient detail for the purpose of achieving thick description (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010), it is seen as a technique for achieving external validity. Specifically, this relates to the transferability of the drawn conclusions to other contexts, people, and situations (Given, 2008). Based on prolonged engagement mentioned above, my study was informed by a rich awareness of the factors and contexts that hold bearing on the findings. In Chapter 2, I sought to provide insight

into Korea-related phenomena that are of relevance to the study and that assist the reader in contextualising the findings.

Further, given a certain degree of similarity in the experiences reported by the participants, the findings arguably offer a certain level of transferability in the Korean context, as well as the study abroad context in New Zealand. Therefore, accounts of multiple participants allow for representation of what others in similar contexts may experience (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña., 2014).

Dependability. Dependability of a study refers to the extent to which all aspects of the way in which the study is conducted have been considered – and which essentially determine its reliability (Dörnyei, 2007). In this study, the integrity of the research process and the dependability criterion is addressed through a detailed description of the methodological considerations which support the study. Therefore, dependability is achieved through a detailed description of the research design, the procedures of the study, and a transparent acknowledgement of the potential limitations the study may encounter.

Accordingly, I sought to closely describe and outline the steps taken at each stage of the research process. Where necessary, this included the decision-making regarding the methodological procedures. Furthermore, the methodology was supported with relevant documents and evidence included in the appendices.

Confirmability. Confirmability is associated with the value assigned to the analysis and the findings of a study. One of the strategies for achieving confirmability in this study was the inclusion of data excerpts in support of the findings. Further, triangulation of analytical procedures was pursued through the use of both inductive and deductive approaches to data coding, as some themes were preset, while others emerged from the data. Lastly, considering the inherent limitations of qualitative research, the

reader judges the trustworthiness of the study based on the procedures outlined and the findings presented.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodological framework of this research and highlighted the relationship between the theoretical foundations and the practical procedures implemented in this study. Next, Chapter 5 outlines the individual stories of the primary participants, followed by further cross-case thematic analysis in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

This chapter presents brief profiles of the main participants in this study, in addition to constructed narratives of the data collected from each participant. The stories are accounts that offer insights into the individual trajectories of the participants with regard to the issues under research, as defined by the research questions. The analysis below will be complemented by cross-case thematic analysis in Chapter 6, which will present the salient themes and explore thematic links and relationships of relevance to this research.

5.1 Joanna (University Student and English Enthusiast)

My first meeting with Joanna left me with a number of positive impressions. At a young age of 21, Joanna emanated maturity and determination, and showed a strong desire for new life experiences. Already well travelled, she planned her New Zealand trip as an opportunity to grow and become more independent. She was not afraid to break cultural norms in order to ensure she could at least partly fund her travel; against the advice of her parents, who were willing to fund her trip, she found part-time employment at a supermarket in Seoul. She acknowledged that people would have probably perceived her as poor, as young adults in Korea are usually financially supported by their parents through tertiary education, and seldom pursue employment opportunities before graduating from university. However, Joanna was intent on becoming more independent and making her own life choices, often in spite of cultural norms and barriers. Ultimately, her New Zealand trip would serve as a self-exploring adventure, with ample opportunities for identity work through interaction with the study abroad context, and a time for reflecting on imagined identities worthy of investment in the future. During her stay in New Zealand, Joanna engaged in full-time study at an English language school in Auckland, which played a significant part in her study abroad journey. It provided Joanna

with a sense of purpose, challenged her to improve her English enough to be promoted to the advanced class, and allowed her to pursue friendships with her classmates.

5.1.1 Finding the New Joanna

Joanna's New Zealand journey appears slightly different in a number of ways from that of a typical study abroad student. It cannot be said that she was bearing the pressure of arriving in a completely new, unfamiliar context, as she had already spent a summer in New Zealand at the age of 10, having visited her relatives, who have now resided in the country for over two decades. What's more, she was coming to stay with them once again, which made her "not nervous" at all about returning to New Zealand. This is also one of the reasons why her family was supportive of her trip to New Zealand; they wanted her to stay with her aunt again and experience the country as an adult. For Joanna, it was also a chance to continue travelling, as she reports to have already visited Europe and a number of Asian countries.

In attempting to explore Joanna's relationship with English, as well as the relationship between English and the imposed social expectations in Korea, I asked her a series of questions about the language. Her reflections on her English learning experiences mirrored a sentiment about English that is common in Korea, as she described it as "boring" and "not interesting" – largely due to the way it had been taught in schools, with the strict focus on grammar and reading. Furthermore, she also reported that she was not interested in pursuing English for career purposes, as her major "isn't related to English" and "it has nothing to do with my major or job." According to her, the family "don't really mind" about English either. However, she did report that she really wanted "to speak English well" because it was "awesome" and because she was impressed by some other Koreans who spoke it like native speakers; "I really wanted to be that person". Apart from that, Joanna didn't see much point in the English hype,

stating that she thought Korea “didn’t need English” as it was a “white people language”, and after all, most English related problems could be solved with Korean subtitles as far as she was concerned. However, as her New Zealand journey progressed, this view would change significantly, as her story will reveal.

Her life in Korea, like that of many young Koreans, mainly revolved around her university studies and career planning, as her “most important goal” was to enter university in Korea. She described life in her home country as “tough”, “stressful”, and “sometimes like army.” Through travelling she could enjoy her life a little more, and thus described it as her “most important reason” for wanting to improve her English. As she claimed she usually needed a specific goal to encourage her, she aimed to improve her English enough in New Zealand to “watch the movie without subtitles” and be able to understand it. Joanna’s language school learning was of crucial importance in helping her pursue her English goals in New Zealand. Benefiting from her teachers’ praise and support helped her “really enjoy studying English”. She was recognised as an outstanding student and felt free to ask questions in class, which encouraged her to pursue English with purpose and determination. Her progress at the language school motivated her to keep improving her scores in the hope of advancing to the top level class.

Despite appearing driven and determined to pursue her goals in New Zealand, the first interview left the impression that Joanna was yet to form clear ideas about her future; she mentioned perhaps wanting to teach overweight kids English (as her major is in Physical Education), but described that as “just her big dream”, while later stating she wasn’t sure if she would stay in Korea, and that she wanted to live in England, because “I like the British accent.”

On the other hand, her story, as told in the interviews that followed offers evidence of how the identity construction processes and outcomes that Joanna underwent

in New Zealand informed her investing in future imagined identities. In reporting small things she noticed that were different in New Zealand from her own country, Joanna demonstrated an increasing sense of awareness of the differences between the two contexts. She noticed general politeness in New Zealand, with people thanking the bus driver when stepping off the bus, strangers on the street making eye contact and greeting each other, and people appearing freer in general. She observed young people freely smoking and exposing their tattoos – which she thought was “very cool.” This led her to the conclusion that there was “less pressure” in New Zealand, and consequently she is friendlier with people. This is partly reflected through her change in stance on gay people, whom she described as not being well accepted by Korean society; she reported making gay friends in New Zealand and finding them “kind and friendly”, and becoming much more accepting of them than she was in Korea.

Her openness to the influences of the New Zealand context, as well as her desire to develop and exercise agency, was perhaps best exemplified in her decision to get a new tattoo. Describing it as something she would not have done in Korea, as her parents and the wider society would not have approved of it, Joanna claimed that she “saw a lot of people with tattoos in New Zealand” and therefore “felt very confident about it.” In explaining her thought process and decision making regarding the tattoo, Joanna told me that she consulted some of her close friends in Korea, who tried dissuading her from going ahead with it, but that she surprised herself with her resolve to get the tattoo that she really wanted, and that her strong resolve in the face of disapproval was a “new experience for me.” She commented that she realised it was important to take advice, but that the final decision had to be hers only. At last, the meaning of her tattoo, which wrote “be joyful always” in Chinese characters, is also a strong reflection of Joanna’s resolve to always be herself, whatever that may be.

However, Joanna's increased sense of agency and freedom in New Zealand was at times in conflict with her family's expectations and some general values which characterise Korean culture. For example, her desire to stay out late and "drink beer out until midnight" with her friends was thwarted by her aunt's expectation that she should be at home in those hours of the night. Joanna reported feeling a sense of "pressure" and limited freedom due to staying with her cousins as she felt she was treated like a "young girl", rather than the adult she was. However, she also claimed feeling bad and "selfish" about being slightly annoyed with them, as they were, after all, just trying to care for her and make sure she was safe in New Zealand. On the other hand, Joanna understood that her aunt and uncle had a strong Korean mindset, and they knew "they couldn't change" despite 20 years of life in New Zealand. This caused regular arguments between them and their son, who came to New Zealand as a toddler, and who appeared "more free" and had a Kiwi mindset. Consequently, during our last interview, Joanna told me she probably would not be returning to New Zealand soon, as she suspected that her parents would insist she stayed with her aunt again, which she was not prepared to do in the future; "Sometimes it is like disturbing with relatives here.... Can I say walking on eggshells? I learnt this expression." Even before coming to New Zealand it seems that Joanna was not shy to pursue her goals in the face of pressure and disapproval; despite reporting that her parents disagreed, she insisted on working at a supermarket to earn the airfare for New Zealand in order to gain more independence. She also claimed that people in Korea can sometimes have a "narrow point of view", and that having a "wide viewpoint or more freedom" may be seen as "not smart". When I asked her how she imagined her return to Korea, considering the reported changes she had undergone in New Zealand, she had the following response: "I think this is a problem. At least, if I stay here I can do this, kind of new Joanna, but I am not sure when I go back to my country I can do this." It was clear

that in New Zealand Joanna enjoyed an increased sense of agency and developed a more independent and autonomous identity, which she wasn't convinced would be well received by Korean society.

Furthermore, it appears that her identity negotiation in New Zealand was strongly supported by her status as a highly competent English speaker. Thriving on this rewarding status, improving her English further became a priority. Despite reporting being nervous about speaking English with locals and finding it difficult to decipher the local accent, Joanna's attitude towards English changed mainly due to the support and praise she received from her teachers, as well as the recognition from fellow students. She felt a sense of "pride" and began seeing herself as a possible future English "professional" as she was "looking for a new way in the future." She reported now seeing English as possibly being related both to her "travel" and "job" plans. She went as far as claiming that the New Zealand journey had completely changed her life, saying "I got new plans for my life." She now saw English as a language that belonged to her, and that could help her meet new friends and learn about different cultures. Moreover, since coming to New Zealand Joanna became so deeply invested in constructing her imagined identity as a competent English speaker living in London that her free time was spent "on YouTube searching for British slang." Even in class she would ask the teacher questions and constantly try to learn new things, to the extent that classmates asked her why she was so obsessed with small details. Thus, exposure to, as well as interaction with the New Zealand study abroad context, transformed Joanna's investment in English, and gave English a central place in the imagined selves that Joanna was currently investing in.

However, as often is the case with study abroad students, Joanna was finding it difficult to enter local social networks. She complained that she "can't meet Kiwis", and that when she did, her inability to cope with the Kiwi accent would prevent her from

engaging in conversation with them. This was compounded by her frustration with having encountered a high number of Asians in Auckland, claiming that she was “disappointed” about this, as she expected her “new life” to include more interaction with the local population in New Zealand. Sometimes walking down Queen Street she would ask herself: “Is this Korea or New Zealand?” Her determination to avoid contact with other Koreans was also evident from her decision to turn down job offers from Korean and other Asian restaurants, as she specifically wanted a “Kiwi job”. However, her social circle still mainly consisted of other foreigners, although mainly non-Asians from her language school. Nevertheless, Joanna still reported that building friendships with her diverse classmates still required “an open mind”, and that socialising with them left an impression on her. For example, her South American friends didn’t appear to care much about punctuality, which she at first struggled with, but then realised it is part of their culture. She eventually managed to see the humour in it, as it amused her that the South American classmates would “still smile and walk slowly” despite arriving to class late, whereas “Koreans would run and apologise”. Her Korean concept of friendship as being significantly dependent on age was also altered in New Zealand, as she managed to create friendships with older males (one of them Korean) with no underlying unequal power relations due to age – something that would not be possible in Korea.

In sum, Joanna’s New Zealand journey can be described as one that transformed her relationship with English, prompting her to invest in her future self as a competent English speaker who will have improved the British accent and will have become a legitimate citizen of London. On the other hand, the heightened sense of agency and freedom in New Zealand allowed for identity construction processes that produced the “new Joanna”, who was committed to being herself and following her own dreams.

Finally, however, her one week long trip to Australia towards the end of her study abroad journey in New Zealand revealed to what extent identity processes are fluid and variable in response to the change of circumstances and context. During her Australian trip, Joanna reported having met a group of Koreans who were also travelling around Australia; being a young group with similar interests they quickly formed a bond, sharing and enjoying their experiences together during the trip. As a result of this experience, Joanna reported realising how Korean she actually was, and how important her native culture was to her – despite having largely avoided other Koreans while in New Zealand. These people she had just met felt “like family”. In sum, she concluded that this short trip to Australia helped her realise that other countries may be fascinating and beautiful, but that Korea was home.

5.2 Annie (Dental Hygienist and Cosmopolitan Hopeful)

When I first met Annie she was a newly arrived study abroad English learner full of excitement about her forthcoming adventures in New Zealand. Somewhat shy and hesitant, she worried about her lack of English proficiency, but was nevertheless motivated to make the most of her time in New Zealand. At 23 years of age, she was a recent graduate who had been working as a dental hygienist for some time, but generally felt trapped in her life in Korea, and hoped study abroad would help her improve English and re-imagine her life – possibly away from Korea. On her journey she was hoping to discover and create a more empowered version of herself than the one that struggled under societal pressure in Korea. Full-time English study was a central part of Annie’s sojourn. During her stay in New Zealand she pursued English study at two Auckland language schools during different periods of her sojourn; she invested significant funds in her formal English study, while also becoming part of various social networks in her schools.

5.2.1 Annie's Freedom

I met Annie for the first time in Auckland, on May 3rd 2016. Having recently arrived to New Zealand, on what was her first overseas sojourn, Annie seemed to be in the process of getting accustomed to her new surroundings. Her relatively limited English appeared to provide some added pressure as she was telling me about her first impressions of Auckland. However, as our talk progressed, the English barrier eased and Annie began to engage in making meaning of her life experiences.

We started by discussing her life in Korea prior to her arrival in New Zealand. Her story was representative of life in modern Korean society, with all its potential pitfalls. She described her life as conditioned by the rigid hierarchical structures which exist in all aspects of social life, which negatively affected her sense of agency in relation to her life desires, goals, and plans. Her struggles with hierarchy were immediately portrayed through her description of the relationship with her boss, which she described as “vertical” and “very hard”, as she always had to be “concerned about boss”, and couldn't refuse his orders. What is also evident from Annie's story is the extent to which English can appear to be imposed on the Korean population; despite describing it as “boring” and a language that “I hate”, she conceded that she had no choice but to learn it. It was “forced” and there was “pressure from teachers and parents”, and in Korea you “have to” study it for getting a good job and entering university, despite the majority often reporting they seldom use it at work. From Annie's story it was evident that she was feeling constant pressure while living in Korea: “I couldn't get dream” and “I couldn't do what I wanted”. This feeling of pressure was exacerbated by the sense that her choices came with the added weight of how they might advantage or disadvantage her in the future, reflecting the highly competitive culture that exists in Korea. Furthermore, friends and family were largely complicit in creating this high pressure environment, often

questioning Annie's choices and discouraging her from abandoning the model Korean life path that usually involves extreme sacrifices for academic excellence and career success. Her idea of coming to New Zealand was criticised by friends and parents as they told her "negative things", such as that she will have a "hard life" in New Zealand because of being unable to speak English well. Apart from occasionally reporting that she missed Korean food and seeing her friends and family for a day or two, throughout the rest of the interviews her stance on Korea remained largely unchanged. It was a place she associated with negative emotions, lack of agency, and generally a place where she was unable to take control of her own life.

Annie's investment in study abroad English learning had strong ties with the socially imposed expectations of Korean society, while it also informed her investment in imagined identities. Her study abroad sojourn could be interpreted as a refuge from Korean society and its pressures, justified (to her family and friends) as a goal of acquiring English as a valued skill in Korea – but also a skill that could give her the opportunity of living overseas, and away from the pressures of Korea. This was evident from the very first interview, during which she stated that after her one-year student visa in New Zealand expires, she would look to extend it by another two years in order to pursue tertiary study. After obtaining a New Zealand tertiary qualification, she would not go back home, claiming: "If I can afford to pay the university fee, I must stay here ... I really want to stay here".

However, her English progress was somewhat conditioned by the lack of motivation she experienced in her language school classes. She described the classes as "boring" and "repetitive", as she struggled to focus in class and felt "sleepy". Annie eventually opted to change schools and challenged herself by enrolling in a class that she felt was above her level. She focused on "studying hard every day" but also struggled to

follow the lessons, often relying on her classmates for help. Ultimately, she reported constantly feeling that the class level was not suitable for her, but persisted with her efforts in the hope of achieving more progress in her English learning.

Annie's desire to live overseas also remained evident throughout her participation in the study, especially in light of her positive experiences and views of life in New Zealand. Upon arriving in New Zealand, she reports to have felt "excited" and "free!" She spent the majority of her time at her language school, or with her language school friends, whom she described as "happy and kind". Despite repeatedly stating that she could not manage to meet Kiwis and enter local social networks, she commented that in New Zealand "everybody is kind and I can relax my mind". In addition to the sense of freedom and the relaxed mind, Annie was "happy every day" in New Zealand, due to her newly found positivity, freedom of choice, a chance to meet kind people, and the possibility of dreaming about the future: "I don't have pressure here; I feel I can do anything here!" English was the crucial component to her making friends from different countries and getting to "experience many cultures", which is why she described her New Zealand experience as being equal to "English and friends". The more English she knew, the more she could make use of her time in a context that has made her thrive, and allowed her to start building her cosmopolitan identity: "Wow! I really want to be that. I hope!"

However, despite feeling empowered in a number of ways in New Zealand and wanting to stay here, Annie also quickly realized there were a number of challenges to be faced in her new context. English itself appeared to be at the centre of her struggles, as having limited proficiency inevitably reduced her ability to function as a human being. She reported feeling hesitant about changing her language school, looking for new accommodation, or finding part-time work, all due to fear of completing real-life tasks in English. In addition, she felt constrained by her limited vocabulary, which forced her to

resort to “simple” language when trying to express herself. Her fear of speaking to locals also prevented her from engaging in everyday conversations as she found the Kiwi accent challenging to understand, as well as the appropriate body language and facial expressions difficult to learn – leaving her feeling “fake” when she spoke English. Furthermore, she reported feeling frustrated at having to rely on her more fluent European classmates for help, as she willingly enrolled in a class which was above her English level. This led to some periods of crisis and reflection for Annie, who after our second interview told me she “hated English” and that she was seriously considering giving it up and studying Chinese instead. She did after all report to me that she found friendships with other Asians easier (especially the Chinese), as she claimed that Koreans and Chinese shared cultural traits, and that some of her friends knew more about Korea than she did.

It was clear that despite enjoying her time in New Zealand and wanting to invest in her future self as a fluent English speaker who would build a life outside of Korea, Annie faced constant challenges which forced her to reconsider her future plans on an ongoing basis. Liking life in New Zealand was a good start, but immersion and adaptation involved numerous challenges. Consequently, her ambivalence towards English was the outcome of her desire to improve it in pursuit of her future goals, while her current lack of English proficiency and struggles to improve it affected her quality of life in New Zealand, as well as challenged her investment in an imagined identity as a fluent English speaker: “I always think English is so difficult and not fun, but I definitely have to learn it ... I want to talk to many people from different countries, and I need English for this ... If I speak English fluently, maybe I can have more opportunities.”

Annie’s ongoing negotiation of investment in her imagined identities during her stay in New Zealand is also likely to have been affected by her identity construction

processes experienced in the country, as reflected by some of the experiences she shared with me. In broader terms, as portrayed above, Annie's study abroad journey was about self reconstruction and self empowerment which appears to have been impossible for her in Korea. She described herself in her home country as an individual with little agentic power and control over her life, and an identity largely based on weakness and resentment. Conversely, in New Zealand, she found stimulation, support, and inspiration to imagine herself as a positive, outgoing, brave person who is able to exert agency in her life. In addition to feeling free upon arriving in New Zealand, Annie felt an increased sense of open-mindedness; her disposition to trying new things became evident in our first interview, when she told me that with influence from her Swiss flatmate who likes piercings, she pierced her ear, and was also considering getting a tattoo. She added that she most probably wouldn't have done that in Korea, as "many people think negative" about piercings.

Some of her identity work is also related to interaction with the study abroad context, the influence of the English language, and the people she encountered. She reported worrying that she may not be able to "get used to foreign friends" because of being "different in thinking". This was mainly related to her South American classmates who were usually direct about expressing their opinions, and who appeared confident and "positive". However, despite her initial fears, Annie reported that her South American classmates influenced her to have a more positive outlook on life and feel relaxed, especially about her English: she explained that due to their positive attitude and confidence her friends appeared better at English than they actually were, which initially intimidated her, but eventually relieved the pressure of her own English learning and helped her become more encouraged about her learning. Moreover, the positive social network she encountered in New Zealand helped her in undergoing what she described as

personality change; she claimed that in Korea she was unable to sincerely be happy for other people's success, while that has completely changed in New Zealand. Now she was genuinely happy about her friends' achievements due to the supportive environment she found herself in.

Annie also reported identity negotiation processes and outcomes related to the use of English itself. She soon realised that "English is much more direct than Korean", and that as a result of "speaking English maybe my thinking change". She reported feeling comfortable and free when speaking English, insofar as she didn't have to worry (as she does in Korean) about being direct in speaking her mind; for example, during an argument with a Korean friend, she consciously did not use English, but used Korean instead as she wanted to be "more polite", since in Korean she couldn't "speak the main topic". Yet, as a result of her experience with English and the directness associated with it, she concluded that she would be more direct when she returns to Korea. It was also interesting that she appeared to have changed her mind about friendships with non-Asian foreigners; despite initially reporting difficulties in creating friendships with Europeans, whom she described as "far away" because of her English, she later claimed that they were "the same" as her. She claimed she could understand their sense of humor and enjoyed their jokes, and generally felt closer despite English still being a barrier.

As mentioned above, it seemed that her struggles with English created problems with adaptation in New Zealand, and also impacted her identity construction processes and outcomes. Despite feeling free and empowered in New Zealand, the English barrier prevented her from fully constructing such an identity, often leaving her feeling "frustrated". This was evident from her story about an incident during a park picnic, where her friend was inadvertently hit with a soccer ball by a stranger who didn't apologise; "So my friend angry. 'Why you don't apologise to me?', she asked him, but

they didn't answer and, so, if I speak fluently I can speak him." Some of her other English-related identity negotiation struggles involved feeling fake when using certain expressions in English, and being unable to react to situations in English in a way that would express how she felt while using pragmatically appropriate language: "I can't find the right reaction, like 'what a shame' – when I say this it feels a little strange ... Sometimes I say this sentence, and I think maybe they think it is not a real reaction. I am real! It's just that I am not sure about this sentence."

What perhaps best sums up Annie's identity construction in New Zealand is the reflection she engaged in during our last interview. She told me that she sometimes imagines what her life would have been like if she had been born in New Zealand: "First, I could speak English fluently. And maybe like I feel free to choose my dream, more than in Korea, and I can be more confident, maybe, I don't care too much to people around me ... Maybe I can challenge many things, because I am not sure but, in Korea when I say something many people say 'you will give up someday', or 'you easily give up', but here people say 'just do it', 'you should try', so yeah." Such a reflection poignantly depicts how study abroad can initiate identity related changes that prompt new perspectives of the self, as well as reinterpretations of the past, present, and future. The last interview also revealed some of Annie's worries which seemed to be the result of a reality check of sorts; she conceded that she would eventually end up in Korea one day, as living in foreign countries is not easy, and that she was worried about what she would do once she returned. Also aware of the likelihood of her return to Korea (but also unaware of Annie's desire to go to China), Annie's mother was asking questions of her plans once she returned from her travels. Most importantly, Annie's funds were running out, and it seemed to have dawned on her that she would now have to experience the more difficult side of life abroad, which would involve working, saving money, and funding her own

travel. Whatever path Annie chooses to take in the future, her story vividly depicts the ways in which study abroad contexts can influence varying investments in future identities, as well as prompting identity changes, both in the short and long term.

5.3 Park (Physical Education Teacher on the Move)

As a 35 year old man with a wife and a newborn son, in addition to a career as a teacher in Korea, Park possessed a somewhat unusual profile for a study abroad English learner. However, he did appear to possess an unshakeable resolve to energetically pursue all available avenues for English improvement while in New Zealand. In fact, study abroad was his pathway to permanent residency in New Zealand, and improving his English proficiency was central to achieving this goal. Consequently, he was enrolled in a full-time English language programme at one of Auckland's English language schools. Evidently disappointed with future prospects in his home country, having lost his job due to what he deemed was an unfair set of circumstances, Park strongly believed that the future for him and his family was in the West, and it was his responsibility to facilitate their resettlement. However, his experiences in New Zealand and his efforts to achieve these preset goals would offer proof of how contested investment in study abroad can be.

5.3.1 Park's Investment in an Imagined Future in the West

Study abroad stories are often imagined as uncontested experiences of excitement, fun, discovery, and freedom. This is why study abroad sojourns are mostly expected to be gratifying and enjoyable experiences for those who are lucky enough to live them. However, Park's experience was entirely different, mostly due to the goal he had set himself prior to leaving Korea: to remain in New Zealand and build a life for himself, his wife, and their infant son. This goal would define to the smallest detail the time he spent in New Zealand and demonstrate how active investing in an imagined future can influence and shape the study abroad experience.

Park's plan of living abroad has its beginnings in developments related to his employment situation in Korea. As a proud holder of a Master's Degree in Physical Education (PE) from a major university in Seoul, Park was happy with his job as a secondary school PE teacher; he was working in a job he loved, and had excellent relationships with his students, colleagues, and the school principal. However, all changed when the school principal retired, only to be replaced by the vice-principal, who quickly decided to release Park from his role: "All of a sudden, he brought in someone new pretty PE teacher, so, yeah - just I am fired. I was fired. Yeah. So, that time, I don't want to live in Korea". Struggling to accept his dismissal, Park soon began thinking about moving away from Korea. He saw Korea as a place of unequal opportunities where "rich people is have many benefit ... I am just poor people ... I hate that situation in Korea". His first choice would have been to move to Hawaii, where his friend moved some years ago, and has settled very well: "My friend who live in America, he also poor people but he got married in America and he live very well". Park visited his friend twice before deciding he also wanted to move to Hawaii in search of a better life. However, his visa application was rejected. This is when he decided to change his plans and explore the option of settling in New Zealand in search of a better life. It was clear that Park's investment in settling in a Western country was partly motivated by the desire to escape the inequalities of Korea. He saw Western societies as similar in promising equal job opportunities and offering better lifestyles to those who weren't necessarily near the top of the societal hierarchy.

Park's decision to pursue a future away from his homeland resulted in English learning becoming one of his main priorities: "I thought about to emigrate to other country. That's when I started studying English". Although he claims he never cared for it before, it was clear to him that English was now an essential prerequisite for life in a

Western country. After being dismissed from his job in Korea, Park studied English for almost two years, and was now intending to invest more of his time and money in studying English in New Zealand. He was well aware that he would need a high level of English in order to obtain university certification, find proper employment, and eventually sit and pass an IELTS test for his permanent residency. It was therefore justified that Park took English into consideration when opting to enrol as a full-time English language student in Auckland, find a “Kiwi” job within one month of arriving in New Zealand, and abandon the safe and comfortable flatting lifestyle with three other Koreans in central Auckland in favour of moving far from the city centre to stay with a Kiwi family. His strong sense of agency and willingness to conquer his fear of doing the difficult is what characterised Park. He did not shy away from the intimidating challenges of finding employment and living with locals in a new context, while having limited English proficiency. Furthermore, it was clear that through facing these challenges Park was investing in English as the founding cornerstone of his imagined future in New Zealand:

Today I told my friends I thought I am wasting three months because I can't talk - I can't use English in my place. But my friends told me 'no, you are comfortable in your place, in your previous place because you could talk to Koreans', so, but, actually I was not comfortable because my mind is always 'I have to use English, I have to use English' but actually I used Korean all the time. Keep speaking Korean, so, I am not comfortable. Even now I don't understand my landlord, yeah, but I am happy because I can use English, yeah.

Park also quickly realised the importance of finding work, not only as a source of income, but more importantly as an additional opportunity for using and learning English. He made a clear distinction between “Korean” and “Kiwi” jobs: the first type are more

convenient and easily accessible, as they usually involve working for a Korean business owner, which also usually means working with other Koreans in a context dominated by their native language; the second, on the other hand, involve working for a local business and being immersed in a context dominated by English. Just like with his accommodation, Park chose the more difficult option in relation to his employment; he found a job at a “Kiwi restaurant”. In the hope of having more opportunities to speak English, he accepted a dishwasher position where there was no “breaking time”, where it was “really hard to dishwash”, and the job was stressful because the plates stacked up very quickly. He also felt uneasy about being pressured by the head chef to work extra hours, despite claiming he didn’t “need that much money” and he thought “studying (English) is more important”. His strong investment in English through work was also evident by his claim that he almost “give up finding a Kiwi job” and was about to settle for one of many Korean job offers. However, he was really happy when he found this “Kiwi restaurant” job, despite having insecurities about his English, which would make working in a Kiwi job more challenging.

Despite initially hoping that completing a 12-week intensive English course would result in significant language improvement, Park soon realised that this would not be the case. The classes were helping, but Park found that he needed to extend his enrolment by at least another 12 weeks. However, due to the high cost of fees at his current school, he was forced to explore cheaper options and enrol at a different language school where the lesson quality was “still OK”. Nevertheless, he would still persist with seeking English conversation opportunities outside the school and through real-life immersion.

However, Park would soon realise the potential difficulties associated with immersion in a new context, especially for a study abroad student with little social capital. In the “Kiwi job” that Park struggled to find, he felt “nervous” as he would often be

unable “to understand what Kiwi says”. Wanting to impress his employer and do a good job, he would work with “no break time for eight hours”. His “elbow would really hurt”, with the head chef often being “really rude” to him. Furthermore, the head chef would insist on assigning Park more working hours than his visa allowed and would ignore Park’s complaints that this was illegal. At last, Park realised that he worked so hard that he had little time to talk to anyone, which meant that in addition to being a difficult job, it also did not help his English, making him quit the job after one month. However, despite this somewhat negative adventure with the “Kiwi job”, Park would continue his mission of trying to become immersed in the Kiwi context and improve his English through real-life immersion. Although Korean owned, his next workplace was a shop where he worked as a cashier and had more opportunities to speak English with customers while being less physically challenging than his previous job.

Park’s work experiences in New Zealand helped him quickly realise the extent to which his quality of life in his study abroad context would depend on English. He knew that if his “English is not enough, I can work just dishwasher or do physical work”. He was proud that in a few months he managed to find a cashier’s job, which, although not high-paying, was much easier than dishwashing, and allowed him more opportunities to speak to people in English.

As mentioned above, in addition to investing in English through employment, Park opted to move in with a Kiwi family in the hope of creating opportunities for English practice in his homestay. He described his homestay family as “really kind”; every weekday he would finish “school and go to home until sleep and just keep talking”. Despite having difficulties understanding the Kiwi accent and reporting feeling “sorry” because of being unable to communicate with his host family very well, he would persist, even if his contribution to the conversation often amounted to nodding and “pretend to

understand, and say ‘yeah, yeah’”. He understood that forming meaningful relationships with locals was crucial in gaining access to real-life English practice and new networks in the new context. This is why he said he would “hope, hope, hope” to meet and “talk to Kiwi people”, and that by moving in with a Kiwi family he “got many opportunity”, as his landlord took him places and introduced him to “some new Kiwi people”.

Park’s sense of agency played a major part in helping him confront his challenges since arriving in New Zealand. It was the sense of agency that he noticed many of his fellow study abroad students and migrants in general did not have: “other students or migrants, they don’t try something new ... they don’t get a job, they stay just home ... they don’t change their life. I don’t want to do that, so I try everything I can do”. This approach helped Park create a number of opportunities for himself, which were all directly or indirectly related to his investment in an imagined future as a New Zealand resident who would enjoy a happy life with his family in New Zealand. Within the space of a few months he managed to find four different types of work, change two places of stay, buy a motorbike, change two language schools, and find a local church that he visited every Sunday. In short, in such a short period of time, he managed to dive in and experience real life in his new context with all its positives and negatives – which is, arguably, much more than an average study abroad student manages to achieve.

Park’s strong focus on English and building the foundations for his future in New Zealand did, however, affect the quality of his life in Auckland. Despite being happy with his achievements, he reported feeling that pursuing English was not enough for him to be happy: “I just thought I need my English skill. But, I’ve lived here four months, I realised I need some relationship deeply ... I need close friends ... but I don’t have any friends now”. Although he avoided relationships with Koreans because of wanting to focus primarily on English, he admitted now wanting to make Korean friends if he could. This

prompted him to pursue friendships with younger Korean study abroad students – something he would never have done in Korea due to the cultural barriers which discourage friendships between people of significant age differences.

Despite Park's commendable efforts, his story in New Zealand would not finish as he had anticipated. His planned pathway to residency in New Zealand changed when stricter immigration laws were introduced; a higher IELTS score and a job offer with a higher salary were now required. Park realised that instead of the planned two to three years, he would need five to seven years to obtain permanent residency. Already struggling and feeling increasingly lonely in New Zealand without his family and friends, he decided to abandon his plan of pursuing long-term stay in New Zealand and returned to his native Korea. However, his plan to live overseas did not change, and after only a month of moving back to Korea, he was due to travel to Canada in order to implement the same plan he unwillingly had to abandon in New Zealand.

5.4 Danny (Environmental Scientist with Doctoral Dreams in the West)

When Danny joined this study, he was at a stage of his life when he was seeking change. His study abroad journey was an important part of his future plans, as he endeavoured to re-imagine his life. At 34 years of age, with previous experience in Environmental Engineering, which he was extremely passionate about, Danny was looking for opportunities to resettle outside of his native Korea. Frustrated by his lack of agency in pursuing his career goals, in his opinion caused by the hierarchical structure of Korean society, while also being critical of certain aspects of Korean culture, Danny strongly believed in a better life in Australia or New Zealand. He made significant sacrifices towards achieving this goal, one of which was to embark on a study abroad sojourn in New Zealand, with the aim of improving his English and experiencing life in

New Zealand. As Danny's story will reveal, investment in imagined identities and futures is a crucial driving force behind various the pursuit of forms of capital in study abroad.

5.4.1 Danny's Resolve to Settle Abroad

The story of Danny's New Zealand study abroad journey has its roots in the wider context of his life in Korea prior to his arrival in New Zealand. A problematic relationship with the norms of Korean society features strongly in Danny's story and appears to underpin his investment in English learning, which is in turn related to his investment in his imagined future.

When asked to tell me about his life in Korea, Danny immediately pointed out that Korea "has a very hierarchy system". He explained that this negatively affected his agency in relation to his work, but his strong passion for Environmental Science nevertheless resulted in him obtaining a Bachelor's, followed by a Master's degree in this field. However, he soon realised that the value of his work would largely depend on his superiors and their own agendas. He reflected on working very hard as an assistant for his professor in Korea: "Even I worked until 2 or 3am, but I felt it was not difficult. When I think now, it was just for him, not me. At the time I had a lot of respect for him, but now I don't like him. I feel I spent a lot of my young years working for him - not for me". This trend would also continue at the workplace: "When I go to my job at first, I could deal with water quality modelling, and broadcasting of air quality, broadcasting water quality change. I wanted to do the work, but it was not. I worked for company or some people. If seniors think it is not good for them or the company, they stop the project". Danny reported struggling to accept such an order of things and tried whenever he could to oppose practices that were reflective of power imbalances imposed by the hierarchical system, even if it meant challenging the deeply embedded cultural norms of his society; for example, while running tutorial labs for his professor at the university, he insisted that

students treat him as an equal (i.e., refrain from using honorifics and bowing to him): “I wanted to all be friend and freely discuss, so I did that. But many students were not comfortable with that”.

Despite Danny’s hard work and best intentions, he felt that his efforts were not translating into any benefits for himself or his career; the work that he did was benefiting his superiors while he suffered from a lack of agency in pursuing his own research interests and furthering his career. However, his life and career paths would take a turn as a result of an international seminar that he attended in Korea in 2015. After meeting a professor from New Zealand, with whom he was impressed, Danny decided to quit his job and start preparing for a PhD – in New Zealand, under the supervision of the professor that he had just met. This decision reflected Danny’s resolve to exercise agency in relation to his career and start building a more empowering future; it also marked the beginning of his investing in English, which was a bridge to an opportunity to build his life and career outside of the Korean context and a key component of his investment in his imagined future identity. The seriousness with which he invested in this plan is evident from his bold move to quit his job and starting his intensive English study program: “I think I am a little special than other people because I [self] studied English for two years very hard, whole day”. He has persisted with English study ever since, despite admitting he initially believed he would learn it “very fast” but eventually realised it was “much harder than I thought”. He also acknowledged that it was difficult “to leave all to study English” and that he still reflected on whether “it is good way or not”, given that he also had to think about settling down and starting a family with his wife. Furthermore, improving his English sufficiently, being accepted into a PhD program in New Zealand and settling down in this country seemed like a distant goal, despite all of the sacrifices that he had already made. However, his level of investment in his future

goal remained unchanged; realising that his two years of self-study in Korea helped him improve his reading and writing, Danny wanted to immerse himself in a context where English is spoken in order to improve his conversational skills. He chose to come to New Zealand on a study abroad program as he “wanted to learn about New Zealand culture as well as English”, since he also planned to pursue his PhD in New Zealand.

His experiences at the language school were somewhat mixed. Danny complained that he expected the school to organise some type of immersion activities, which was not the case. Furthermore, he felt “disappointed” that other students would speak their native tongue in class as he “paid big money” and expected to be exposed to English as much as possible. On the other hand, he was happy with teachers “focusing on learner needs” and the classes being learner oriented. He also appreciated teachers “stimulating interaction”. Danny felt “very free” to ask questions and learn more in class.

It was clear that Danny’s study abroad journey to New Zealand was closely linked to his investment in English learning, as well as his vision of a future in New Zealand as a PhD student, which included becoming a professor of Environmental Science, and one day living and working in New Zealand. However, his investment in this imagined future would gather even more strength following his study abroad experience in the New Zealand context. Danny’s identity work in the new context appeared to be producing the desired outcomes as he felt an increased sense of agency that he could not find in Korea. In his native country he felt that he constantly “had to consider other people” whatever he did, while in New Zealand he could “have his own life”. Some of his positive impressions were related to his experiences at his English school in Auckland. Although he admitted feeling awkward about it at first, calling his teacher by first name was “amazing”, “unbelievable” and “impossible in Korea”. He felt this removed unnecessary barriers that would often obstruct a more relaxed conversation with seniors and superiors in Korea.

Furthermore, this new sense of freedom appeared to strengthen his sense of agency and empower him to act in ways in which he otherwise would not. For example, asking questions in class now appeared to him more acceptable, despite it being viewed unfavourably in Korea where it can be interpreted as selfishness on the part of the student as it takes away valuable lesson time. In addition, Danny claimed to have learned how to “express his mind” more due to the way lessons are conducted, but also claimed it made him realise that in Korea he “could not have his own thinking” as both in class and at work he had to follow instructions and his opinion didn’t matter much.

In sum, the New Zealand context appeared to remind Danny of the low sense of agency he associated with his native society, thereby highlighting his strong negative emotions towards Korea: “Actually, I don’t like my country some years ago, but this has become big after living in New Zealand”. According to Danny, this was largely due to him feeling pressured and judged in Korea, whereas in New Zealand he could “do action freely, without worrying about other people”. His critical stance on Korea remained explicit as he claimed that Koreans “don’t have their own mind”, that they tend to criticise their society’s hierarchical structure but never directly oppose their superiors, and that they often enjoy exercising power over those who are below them in the societal hierarchy. On the other hand, Danny spoke highly of New Zealand culture and claimed that “people had respect for other people”, and “listened carefully”, and he imagined one day working with Kiwis in New Zealand and “getting along”. Consequently, his views on Korea remained largely negative throughout his involvement in this study, while those on New Zealand remained overly positive – which made Danny open to identity work in his new context and more accepting of the local practices as they appeared to align with the lifestyle and imagined future that Danny was seeking to pursue.

Towards the end of his study abroad sojourn it seemed that Danny was content with his achievements and was set on using his newly found sense of agency once he returned to Korea; he claimed he was going back to Korea feeling “totally different”. He was ready to apply what he had learnt in New Zealand: “to speak his mind”, not to “worry about respect towards seniors too much”, and to speak up if he thought that “something was not correct”. He appeared happy with how he had spent his time in New Zealand, though he felt he perhaps could have studied English more rather than having enjoyed himself travelling around the country, especially given the significant costs he incurred from paying for his English course in Auckland. However, his return to Korea would be another difficult test of his resolve and investment in his future PhD goals and life abroad. Returning to Korea meant that he had to “start again” in that “harsh environment”; he also felt pressure as he anticipated high expectations in relation to his English proficiency improvement, as well as questions about whether he had visited all of the famous tourist locations. Six months later, Danny and I spoke over Skype and discussed his situation following his return from New Zealand. It appeared that his relationship with his native society had not changed. His negative stance on the central role of hierarchy in society was still present. Furthermore, his pursuit of English continued, as did his investment in finishing his PhD overseas and relocating to Australia or New Zealand. He claimed that the majority of his time was still invested in improving his English, although he regretted having little opportunities to practise it in real life. Despite having recently failed an IELTS test, which he needed in order to enrol in his desired university, he stated he “will take test constantly until taking the test pass”. In addition, despite having to shift between living with his parents and his wife’s family and not having a full-time job, Danny vowed not to give up on English and his dream of pursuing his PhD and future career overseas: that plan “will be not changed”.

5.5 Lucy (University Graduate on Self-Discovery Mission in Study Abroad)

At 25 years of age, Lucy had recently graduated from university, followed shortly by a year-long study abroad sojourn in Australia, before arriving in New Zealand. Her struggles with socially imposed expectations of Korean society in relation to education, English, and wider societal norms were some of the underlying factors that motivated her study abroad plans. Reimagining her identity and future plans, and distancing herself from the pressures of Korea featured prominently in her narratives. Her experience in New Zealand was significantly informed by her status as a self-funded study abroad student, prompting her to seek various employment opportunities in order to secure financial stability, while seeking to explore the New Zealand context for forms of capital related to her future goals and plans. Her story highlights the struggles of study abroad for those who simultaneously attempt to experience and explore the study abroad context for various forms of desired capital, while addressing their basic needs.

5.5.1 Lucy's Study Abroad Redemption

When I first met Lucy, she immediately struck me as an open, expressive and friendly person. We engaged in small talk about my time in Korea and her initial thoughts on New Zealand. As our conversation progressed Lucy got deeper into her story about her life in Korea. She took longer turns at talk and shared with me some of her most critical life experiences in her homeland. These emotionally charged accounts shed light on her life journey and helped contextualise her investment in English, as well as her decision to pursue it through study abroad in New Zealand.

The main focus of her reflections on life in her home country was based around her pain and suffering during her studies, which began during her early teenage years and would continue until the end of her tertiary education. Lucy talked at length about studying Environmental Economy; a degree that “wasn't interesting” and “bored” her so

much that she would read random books in the back of the class “almost every day” resulting in her having read almost “1000 books” over the course of her degree – none of which were related to her major. She repeated several times that she “hated” the education system in Korea and that she “found it so boring”. Talking about her school days, she reflected on the painful memory of being recognised by teachers at her middle school as a hard working student whose grade averages were still near the bottom of her class: “Can you imagine? For six years I listened to a lot of things like this. All teachers knew me because I studied really hard, but my scores were low ((laugh)). They wondered why I was getting low scores”. She remembered being interested in music, arts, and painting, and performing well in these subjects, but being “bad, bad, bad” at subjects like “Korean, English, and Science”.

Despite her difficulties, Lucy worked hard during her high school years in an attempt to secure a grade average that would offer her a place at one of the higher ranked universities in Korea that offered degrees she was interested in: “I studied every day so hard in high school – Korea is crazy ((laugh))”. During high school I would go to school at 6am and return home at midnight. For three years I did this”. However, her struggles with low scores continued and resulted in her being rejected by 12 out of the 13 universities she applied for: “I applied for thirteen universities; thirteen! And then, 12 rejected me, and the last one accepted me”. As Lucy continued telling her “really sad story” of her educational struggles it suddenly brought tears to her eyes, such was the emotional pain associated with these experiences. She repeatedly stated she “hated” both the high school and university education systems in Korea. She wanted to “write essays” and “read books”, while all they did was “keep checking and ticking right and wrong answers”, and she wondered: “Why are we doing this”? Her final obstacle to graduating and obtaining the degree she so much disliked was English. Requiring a minimum score

of 550 in English in order to graduate, Lucy repeatedly sat the exam and struggled to score above 500: “I did my best, but maybe in three months I tested 12 times – 12”! At last, after attending an intensive two week course that required a daily seven hour commute, Lucy graduated and ended her long battle with the education system in Korea.

In addition to her negative experiences with the education system, Lucy also reported struggling with some of the general societal norms in Korea. She claimed that “Korean people want achievement too fast” and that they are obsessed with certificates and scores. In her fourth year of university, she was pressured by friends to start preparing for job interviews. However, instead, she had the desire to learn and develop more, despite people telling her she was too old for that. According to her, there was a strict way of doing things in Korea and “they don’t think about it any other way”. Generally, she was of the opinion that Koreans and other Asians had similar cultures that were constraining in many ways, and that “Western people think more widely”. Furthermore, these constraints were also reflected by the education system in Korea, which made her want to “explore Western education”. Her desire for new experiences in the Western world was fulfilled shortly after the completion of her tertiary education; immediately after graduating, Lucy found employment as a burger maker at Burger King in order to save enough money to travel to Australia on a work and travel visa. Four months later, she arrived in Australia where she would stay for 12 months in order to work and fund her subsequent study abroad trip to New Zealand.

Lucy’s travels were foremost an attempt to achieve distance from a context where she experienced a number of struggles, and to discover and explore new contexts that she had hoped to find more stimulating and better suited to her needs as an individual. Her investment in her travels abroad was a turn away from the socially imposed expectations of Korean society and an investment in the creation of a different future – and therefore

an investment in a new imagined identity: “Now it’s time to make my career and experience and learn more. That’s why I explore many interests, to try and have a big adventure”. Her big dream was to “compose music”, but she wanted to work overseas first, which is “why I need English”. Before going overseas she wondered what it would be like to visit the Opera House in Sydney. She imagined the architecture and people while wondering what they would be like. She thought about the feeling of being around people from different countries, speaking to them in English, while also imagining working in a system where she could voice her opinion, which she felt she could not do in Korea; “never, ever”.

However, as Lucy soon found out, active investing in imagined futures is often accompanied by difficulty and uncertainty, especially when it involves living and working as a visitor in a foreign context, with limited local language proficiency. In pursuing her dream and funding her big adventure, in Australia she had to make the sacrifice of working “three jobs” at various “Japanese sushi bars and restaurants” for six months, almost every day. In New Zealand, apart from attending an English course that was funded by the money she had saved in Australia, she also wanted to gain exposure to the local way of life through finding work and becoming immersed in the local context. Although learning English while working was one of her priorities, gaining access to such employment options is no easy task for study abroad English students. Despite managing to find employment as a dishwasher at one of Auckland’s more prominent restaurants, Lucy would soon realise that her hopes of speaking “English at work every day” would not materialise. Although she initially felt “lucky” to have got the job, she had no opportunities to speak English to anyone: “I cannot say anything – just work”. In addition to the big workload, she also found the job stressful due to having been treated disrespectfully by some of her co-workers: “The relationship with waitress was OK, but

with kitchen staff no. Maybe they don't want to be friendly with me because they are so professional job, and I am just kitchen hand – too bottom! That's why they doesn't want to talk to me, and they just do like [flexing index finger to invite her to come] to me. They call me like that [tongue clicking and flexing index finger to call her to come]”.

It was evident that Lucy's low social capital in New Zealand affected her positioning in her new context, which reflected negatively on her employment and immersion opportunities, and ultimately on her quality of life in New Zealand. Due to the high workload, stress, low pay and no opportunities for English practice, Lucy resigned from her position after two months. Despite her continued pursuit of job opportunities where she could be surrounded by Kiwis, practice English, and experience real life immersion, she felt those jobs were unreachable: “I just wanted cafe job, but this country I don't have any experience in New Zealand in barista, and they doesn't hiring for me”. Furthermore, like most other study abroad students, Lucy felt unable to find opportunities for interaction with the local population: “I want to meet Kiwi people. If I have a chance I want to meet them. I want to know about New Zealand life. How do they spend time, how they live; because I am just a visitor, and I am staying here for a limited time. Where can I meet those Kiwi people!? Where ((laughs))”!? Her next job as a sushi maker also did not help with her immersion and English speaking goals. Lucy did feel relieved of the stress she had experienced in her previous position, but was now working with other Koreans while not having any direct exposure to English or opportunities for communication.

Her English classes did help. She enjoyed having “young Kiwis” as teachers, who always appeared happy and cheerful. Lucy even formed a friendship with one of the teachers, who she claimed was “same as friend nowadays”, clarifying that, “I like him, not love him (laugh)”. However, she could only afford to pay for a 12-week course at her

school, and would have to rely on pursuing other avenues for English practice while still in New Zealand.

As a result of the numerous obstacles she encountered in New Zealand, Lucy realised that the reality of her study abroad experience was unfolding differently from what she had imagined, despite her best efforts. After three months in her sushi maker position, it occurred to her that she was working in a job that was “boring” and that she was unable to “improve herself” or “make friends”. Also, despite initially reporting that English was “definitely” one of her goals in New Zealand, her study abroad experience was affecting her investment in English learning. She found that in addition to having few opportunities to practice speaking English, the difficult Kiwi accent and the frequent impatience of local native speakers discouraged her from practising English while in Auckland: “This country people sometimes don’t understand me ... I just talk like this, first of all because I am a foreigner – I have some English grammar mistake and some people will still understand, but sometimes they don’t want to understand”. Such experiences “annoyed” Lucy as she found some people unnecessarily “rude”, whereas she felt they should show understanding “because we are foreigners trying to learn another language”.

In turn, these negative experiences also influenced the plans that Lucy had made before arriving in New Zealand. The imagined future of working abroad – which was her primary reason for pursuing English – suddenly seemed less appealing. Despite her parents wanting her to live away from Korea because it’s “so hard” there, despite her wanting to say that she will live in a country other than Korea, she “can’t”. She now realised that life abroad would be difficult with her limited English and that everything in Korea was more convenient. Furthermore, she wondered about the effort it would take to secure permanent residency in a foreign country, labelling it all “hard”, “complicated”

and time consuming. Her alternative plan was now to self-study and prepare for a cabin crew position for a non-Korean airline in Korea. She hoped that this would allow her to avoid working in the notoriously harsh conditions that characterise Korean companies, while allowing her to “see the world” before pursuing her ultimate dream of composing music.

Lucy’s story clearly shows that investing can vary according to the interaction of the individual with a given context. Furthermore, it demonstrates that it can vary according to the extent to which the individual can secure the identity positions that provide access to the desired forms of capital, the acquiring of which determines the success of the investment in imagined futures and identities. Evidently, Lucy’s apparent failure to attain desired identity positions in the study abroad context influenced her investment and prompted a change in her future plans. However, her New Zealand experience can be described as an identity altering experience in itself; living in Korea was stressful, while exposure to the New Zealand context produced more positive outcomes. Lucy noticed she was “changing” and becoming “more positive”; she did not “overthink anymore”. The pressure to achieve instant results in Korea disappeared as she was now happy to “do more tomorrow” if she couldn’t manage today. Her mind was now “more peaceful” and she learned in New Zealand that achieving results takes time, which is something that generally isn’t accepted in an obsessively competitive Korean context. However, for Lucy, this was a new formula for pursuing happiness and success in the future and a strategy for resisting the struggles that the Korean context had imposed on her for a better part of her student life.

5.6 Tim (Civil Engineer who Loves to Party)

Spending time in New Zealand on a study abroad sojourn was Tim’s long standing wish. He made it clear to me that he was excited to experience all that New

Zealand had to offer, and all that he was not able to experience in Korea. At 25, he had already been in full time employment in Korea, which had consumed his life, as he claimed that he worked long shifts and most weekends. With financial help from his family, he came to New Zealand to improve his English – or, at least, that was what he told his family. He was enrolled as a full-time student at an Auckland language school, but eventually changed schools as he struggled to advance to a higher level class, which was his family’s condition for continued funding of his study abroad fees and living expenses. However, what featured much more prominently during Tim’s time in New Zealand was an active social life, partying, and fun. Despite claiming he was invested in improving his English enough to stay in New Zealand permanently, in order to avoid returning to the harsh reality of full time work in Korea, his stay in New Zealand was dominated by partying and socialising.

5.6.1 Tim’s Movie Life in Study Abroad

Before arriving in New Zealand, Tim had little knowledge of the country. He was a fan of the film *The Lord of the Rings* and had a strong desire to visit the film set, which he thoroughly researched on the internet before arriving. Like most other Koreans, he thought of New Zealand as a quiet, safe, developed country where people enjoy a high quality of life. This positive opinion of the country was reinforced by Tim’s mother, whose friend’s daughter has lived in New Zealand for ten years and whose experiences have largely been positive. This was enough to convince Tim’s mother to fund Tim’s study abroad trip to New Zealand, including his English course and living expenses.

Prior to his arrival in New Zealand, Tim’s life in Korea was mainly consumed by work. He complained that he regularly worked 15 hour days and that it made him “very tired” and that he “hated it”. The socially imposed expectations of Korean society had trapped him in a cycle that he described as “work, sleep, work, sleep”. Furthermore,

despite his more positive expectations, his Civil Engineering degree did not provide him with the expected earning power, making the long workdays difficult to justify. In addition, the little free time he did have was largely spent having dinners with friends and watching movies – something he did not find particularly entertaining or enjoyable. Given that Tim was only in his mid-twenties and that he could only expect his work-sleep cycle to continue, with financial help from his family he chose to come to New Zealand and pursue English on a study abroad program, thereby investing in an entirely different imagined future than what his homeland could offer.

His first impressions of New Zealand were positive, as he thought people were kind: people on the street were happy to help him with choosing the correct bus, many thanked the bus driver when getting off the bus, and strangers sometimes greeted each other on the street. He also enjoyed meeting people from different countries and learning about their cultures. He did not have a chance to do so in Korea, where he only had exposure to Korean culture, and which he found “boring”. Within weeks of his arrival, Tim decided he wanted to improve his English to the extent that he could stay in New Zealand to obtain a Civil Engineering degree from a New Zealand university, and eventually find employment and settle in Auckland. His investment in this imagined future was reinforced by further positive experiences involving his social life; his young homestay hosts “every day have party”. He reported only seeing “this kind of party in movie” and that he thought it was “miraculous and amazing”. Despite complaining that the frequent drinking was “very hard”, Tim was happy to have access to Kiwi social gatherings as his hosts’ Kiwi friends “always tell me to join them” and “encourage me about my English”, so “I have confidence”. He also enjoyed socialising with classmates from his language school, with whom he often went on field trips and organised beach picnics.

His investment in an imagined future in New Zealand was, however, largely dependent on his English. Despite enjoying his social life in New Zealand, he was worried about his English fluency and feared he would struggle to improve his English enough to reach university entrance level. Furthermore, his source of funds would depend on his progress at the language school, as his mother expected him to advance at least one level and threatened that “if you don’t move up, you will go back to Korea”. For this reason, Tim often worried about his English progress. He was failing his monthly exams at the language school and his scores were “going down”. Furthermore, despite reporting he liked his teacher, he claimed his classes were “getting boring” and he was considering changing schools. In a somewhat conspicuous sequence of events, this he did and quickly achieved the desired goal of joining a more advanced class. This ensured a further six months of funding from his mother towards his study abroad living and education expenses, though he soon after regressed back into a lower level class because he struggled to keep up with the lessons. It is unclear whether his mother was advised of this latest change, but Tim was determined to extend his stay in New Zealand, where his lifestyle is “more relaxed and less busy” and where he was “very, very happy”. He “definitely” did not want to return to Korea.

However, despite his desire to remain in New Zealand, the strength of Tim’s investment in English and his imagined future was continuously tested. Despite being an important point of contact with the local population, his homestay arrangement became a source of a number of inconveniences that Tim found difficult to resolve. His homestay hosts would engage in heated arguments that resulted in objects being thrown around the house. There was also noise and arguing when one of his fellow study abroad student flatmates was expelled from the house for not doing his household chores. In addition, Tim complained that there was no Wi-Fi, the shopping centre was far from the house, and

generally the place was inconvenient and “uncomfortable” for him. Despite repeating many times that he should change his accommodation, it appeared that Tim felt slightly intimidated and was hesitant to discuss the matter with his hosts. Furthermore, he found it difficult to forfeit his only opportunity to practice English and associate with the local population.

Soon after, he finally decided to change flats. The difficult living conditions resulted in him opting to find a place that was near his school and that he shared with other Korean and Chinese study abroad students. Tim did, however, mention that he missed the Kiwi parties that his ex-host family organised because he could speak English there, and that he would definitely go again if he had the chance. Some weeks later, he even contacted his ex-hosts about potentially sharing a flat together in the city, which they were not interested in: “Yeah, it’s good for me because I speak English every day.”

It was also apparent that Tim’s current lack of English fluency posed additional obstacles in the way of his investing. Although he was open to seeking accommodation with “other country people” with whom he could also practise English, he worried his English was not strong enough to engage in flat searching and negotiating the terms of his tenancy. His subsequent decision to share housing with other Korean and Chinese students allowed Tim comfortable living and easy communication while taking away crucial opportunities for daily English practice. In addition, he was worried his change of school would also be detrimental to his English progress. Despite initially allowing him to advance a level, thereby allowing him to secure further funding to extend his study abroad stay, his new school had many Thai and Korean students who only spoke their native languages in class, which negatively affected Tim’s English learning progress: “Every day I listen to music in class and just talk with my teacher”. Soon after, Tim

reported that he was also hoping to meet “other teacher, like Kiwi”, as he realised that his teacher was in fact not from New Zealand.

In spite of the numerous difficulties that he was encountering, Tim still very much held onto the hope of creating a life for himself in New Zealand. He somewhat jokingly spoke of a future with a “Kiwi wife, and many friends and have party”. However, his more immediate “hope” and “wish” remained to improve his English in order to enrol in a Civil Engineering degree, while he did have concerns whether this goal was indeed achievable for him. Some of his friends were not so optimistic, suggesting Tim was wasting his time and would be better off moving back to Korea. Tim admitted he “was confused” as he had already paid his English course in advance and had “just six months” to improve his English enough in order to enter university: “I’ll try. Every day I watch the Zootopia film without subtitles but I don’t understand ((laugh))”. Despite feeling the pressure build, Tim’s investment in English remained strong. He needed English in order to stay in New Zealand, and failing to stay would result in a return to Korea, which he did not want, as it reminded him of a life which revolved solely around work: “I don’t know. I just know my job. Go to work early and leave late. Just my job”.

Finally, his fear of the “work, sleep, work, sleep” cycle that he had already experienced in Korea made him question whether his future life in New Zealand would become similar if he was to graduate and obtain employment: “But, I don’t know after I get a job ... maybe same routine as in Korea”. As a result, Tim was determined to enjoy his work-free study abroad adventure while focusing solely on English. The goal remained to secure a student visa, graduate with a Civil Engineering degree and build a life in New Zealand.

CHAPTER 6: CROSS-CASE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

As illustrated by the participant stories in the previous chapter, the data collected in this study pertains to: (a) the investment of Korean study abroad students in English learning, as it relates to the socially imposed expectations of Korean society; (b) the future imagined identities that the students invest in; and (c) the identity work and outcomes that Korean learners of English experience during their stay in New Zealand. With the previous chapter having illustrated the individual trajectories of the participants, this chapter presents a thematic cross-case analysis. The salient themes will be analysed, inter-thematic relationships explored, and their relevance within larger categories established. The analysis will be supported by relevant data excerpts and literature, as necessary.

The themes analysed below are grouped into three categories: (a) socially imposed expectations of Korean society in relation to English learning (Sections 6.1 – 6.4); (b) investment in imagined identities in New Zealand (Sections 6.5 and 6.6); (c) identity work in study abroad and identity outcomes (Sections 6.7 - 6.9). The sections within the first category present themes and thematic relationships that illustrate the influence of Korean ideologies of English and various societal processes on investment in English learning. The influences of the Korean habitus (Bourdieu, 1991) and the ways they inform investing in study abroad in New Zealand are subsequently explored in sections within the second category. Further, different types of investing are explored in light of the imagined identities the participants invested in. Finally, the last category contains sections that present an analysis of identity work of the participants during their New Zealand study abroad sojourn.

This chapter presents identity outcomes of each participant, thereby summarising and synthesising the inter-thematic thread between Korean influences, investing, and

identity work in study abroad. As further explored in Chapter 7, investing, imagined identities and identity work appear closely bound in a mutually-informing relationship. Successful identity work entails adaptation to norms and practices of the study abroad context, which in turn facilitates investing in various forms of capital relevant to the imagined identities pursued by the sojourners.

6.1 Life in Korea as Catalyst for Investment in Study Abroad English Learning

With one of the focal categories of this study being the socially imposed expectations of Korean society regarding English learning, I sought to gain an understanding of the participants' lives in Korea prior to their arrival in New Zealand and how their pursuit of English in study abroad resonated with the overarching ideologies of English in their home country. Prompted by my interview questions, throughout their involvement in the study the participants often reflected back on their lives in Korea, their English learning careers (Benson, 2011), societal expectations in relation to English learning, and their investment in study abroad language learning as related to their imagined futures. The participants' accounts of their experiences in Korea offered insights into their lives prior to their arrival in New Zealand and highlighted their intended investing in study abroad, as informed by their Korean habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). As the literature review shows, and as the data excerpts and analysis below illustrate, a wide-ranging relationship between Korean societal influence and investment in study abroad English learning exists; furthermore, this relationship contextualises the significance of study abroad English learning in relation to individual life trajectories and investment in imagined futures and identities.

While making sense of their respective pasts in Korea, the participants offered their views on life in their home country and how it relates to their investment in English. Their reflections explored key themes in this study, such as negative sentiments relating

to the hierarchical foundations of Korean society, highly competitive educational and workplace cultures, and general expectations that societal norms are to be respected and followed rather than challenged. This also applied to English, which is widely accepted as a necessary evil in modern day Korea (Song, 2011), and largely acknowledged as such by the participants in this study. However, despite my initial anticipation that studying English abroad for the purpose of using it in Korea as a valued form of capital would be a goal shared by the majority of the participants in this study, the data told a different story. It would appear that English, despite being a valuable form of capital in Korea, was pursued by the participants for quite different reasons. As the stories in Chapter 5 suggest, for some of the participants, studying English in New Zealand was a worthwhile venture in the eyes of parents who funded the sojourns, and more of a refuge from societal pressures at home for the fun-loving students who placed more emphasis on their social lives in New Zealand. For others, English was a necessity that would guarantee them permanent residency in New Zealand, since they sought to escape the pressures of their home country and settle in New Zealand. Ultimately, as the analysis below demonstrates, rather than being an act of adherence to the socially imposed expectations of Korean society (and the Korean ideology of English), the investment in study abroad English learning of the participants in this study was essentially part of a plan to, abandon temporarily or permanently the pressures of Korea and the associated socially imposed expectations.

The following section discusses how the perpetuating relationship between English ideology and English fever (Song, 2011) in Korea informed the participants' views of English. It highlights their ambivalence and conflicting sentiments towards English as: a valued form of capital in Korea that justifies their English study abroad sojourns to friends and family at home; a lingua franca that is an essential part of future

plans of settling abroad; and a language associated with forced learning and educational pressures.

6.1.1 English Ideology and Educational Pressures: “In Korea we must study English” (Annie)

The participants all had similar views on their schooling in Korea, as well as on their English learning experiences. Reflecting the 1990s curricular reforms, which included English as a compulsory subject from elementary school and up, the participants all confirmed that their English learning started at a young age (ranging from 10 to 12 years old). However, given the memorisation-based, grammar-focused approach to English teaching, learning English was depicted as difficult, boring, and even something that students hated: “Very hard so I really don’t like – I hate English ((laugh))” (Annie Interview 1). This was compounded with constant pressure from parents, teachers and the wider society to learn English, which made it feel forced and difficult to enjoy (Annie Interview 1).

Despite the generally negative sentiment towards English learning reported by the majority of participants, they recognised it as an essential asset in modern day Korea. They confirmed that passing the relevant English tests (TOEIC or IELTS) was a minimum requirement for their university entrance and employment opportunities. Like many other Koreans, unenthused by the prospect of learning English, they only sought to obtain passing grades in their English tests without genuinely pursuing English proficiency. Joanna studied it “just for my (university entrance) test” (Joanna Interview 1), Annie for her job placement test, and Lucy for her graduation requirement – enduring a traumatic experience of attempting and failing the test 12 times in three months, before finally obtaining a pass. However, despite being a requirement, English is seldom used in the workplace or during university education in Korea, justifying the frustration of many

who struggle with it and only study it for testing purposes. Nevertheless, the ideology of *necessitation* (J.S.Y. Park, 2009) related to English, which permeates all scales of context (Blommaert, 2015) in Korea, is evident in the participants' narratives and reflects the common attitude towards English as disliked but necessary.

Although none of the participants explicitly stated that through investing in English learning in study abroad they were investing in it as a prized form of capital in Korea, their views reflected the dominant English ideologies in their country. Jerome (the secondary participant) claimed that English proficiency is “very important to earn money”, that he felt it was his “duty” to study it, and that his family only care about his English “because of job” (Jerome Interview 1). Park, on the other hand, commented on the importance of English as a global language, but also as a prerequisite for jobs and university entrance (Park Interview 1). Lucy recalled spending her school holidays watching Harry Potter, “the whole day, every day”. While taking care of Lucy and her brother during summer holidays, Lucy’s stay-at-home mother would play Disney cartoons and movies in an attempt to learn English and expose her children to it: “Every day we saw the same English shows, every day! For one or two months! ((laugh))” (Lucy Interview 1).

Finally, as evident from Tim’s story, it was mainly due to the pervasive English ideologies in Korea that some families agreed to fund study abroad sojourns for their children. For Tim, the monthly exams at his language school were important in gauging his English learning progress, but perhaps even more important in satisfying his mother’s expectations – as she was the one funding his trip. Passing those exams “matters because my mother said to me ‘if you don’t move up, you will go back to Korea’” (Tim Interview 3).

From the above examples it is apparent how the English ideology was perpetuated in Korean society through the education system and the widespread ideology of *necessitation* adopted by Korean parents. As Song (2011) has pointed out, English in Korea had become a *social malady*; Korea's socio-political and economic strategy has artificially imposed English upon its population, creating a multi-billion dollar English education sector, and leaving many wondering why they are forcibly learning a language they are unlikely to ever use in their career or everyday life.

However, as the stories of the participants in this study revealed, the superficiality with which they claimed to have pursued English in Korea changed once they started studying it for reasons other than those socially imposed by their home society. While the English ideology in Korea was useful in helping secure financial support from families, and their decision to learn English in study abroad being recognised as worthy by the participants' social circles, the majority of participants in this study pursued English in study abroad for its properties as a lingua franca that could help them explore their life options outside of Korea, or at least help them secure employment for foreign companies in Korea. This reveals that their investing in English in study abroad was to an extent motivated by the desire to resist and reject the socially imposed expectations of Korean society, in favour of using English to explore other contexts. As the following section illustrates, the desire for pursuing English and creating opportunities in other contexts was also an outcome of struggles with the traditionalist, hierarchical structures of Korean society.

6.2 Hierarchy and Neoliberalism: “Korea as very hierarchy system” (Danny)

The hierarchical structure of Korean society (Cha, 1994), as one of the more prominent themes in this study, frequently appeared in participants' accounts as the force behind the societal ideologies that negatively impact individual agency. In fact, the sense

of choice is reportedly diminished by societal pressures at all levels of context, and perpetuates the overarching neoliberal ideologies in Korea (Park & Lo, 2012). English is one of the cornerstones of these dominant ideologies and a key form of strategic capital for connecting Korea with the global marketplace (Song, 2011). For many young Koreans, the result of the increasingly popular global leadership ideology is the emergence of a common pursuit of academic excellence (which includes English) in a notoriously challenging education system, with the final goal of securing employment in one of the champion companies, such as Samsung, which marked the resurgence of Korea and solidified it as one of the top ten world economies in the past decade (Noland, 2012). However, the fierce pressure and competition associated with the pursuit of global dominance reflects strongly on Korean society; neoliberal ideologies and the quest for upward mobility in Korea can translate into a sense of entrapment on the part of those who (unwillingly) persist in the pursuit of this goal, while creating a feeling of exclusion and helplessness in those for whom upward mobility and desired capital appear unattainable. Indicative of such issues is a sense of inaccessibility of desired futures in Korea by the majority of participants in the current study – particularly as a consequence of the traditionalist hierarchical structure of Korean society, and the competition-driven, neoliberal ideologies that inform modern day social hierarchy.

Participants often reflected on how the dominant presence of hierarchy in Korean culture and society impacted their lives, particularly their sense of agency. For example, Danny, who hoped to be accepted into a PhD programme in Australia or New Zealand, often spoke about his hierarchy-related struggles in Korea, which he described as damaging to his career plans and goals:

After finishing my studies it was a very good time for me for five years, but I realised it is not good for me anymore because I couldn't do anything for my work.

Korea has very hierarchy system; I want to research for my major, but the senior doesn't want. They only focus on their benefit. This is usually in Korea. (Danny Interview 1)

Similar workplace experiences in Korea were described by Annie. She claimed that she did not want to return to Korea where there was “always overtime”, where she “was always concerned about boss” with whom she had a “vertical” relationship, which meant that he could “always order me, and I couldn't refuse ((sigh))” (Annie Interview 1).

Tim's stories relating to Korea also contained strong and frequent references to workplace hierarchy struggles, echoing those of Annie and Danny. As a young man in his mid-twenties, he lamented his 15-hour workdays: “I working, my job was 15 hours ... Very hard and very tired. I hated it. ((laugh))” (Tim Interview 1). However, despite having hated it, he felt he had no choice. In addition, weekend work was also expected, leaving Tim feeling trapped in what he described as a “sleep-work-sleep” cycle (Tim Interview 4). His plan of obtaining a further civil engineering degree, this time from a New Zealand university, and the longer term plan of remaining in the country and seeking employment, reflected his desire to primarily avoid work life struggles associated with a low sense of agency and the hierarchy in Korea.

On the other hand, Park believed that his struggles with hierarchy in Korea originated from general social inequality created by class disparities. He remained jobless and powerless in what he described was a case of wrongful dismissal, claiming that it was simply due to the fact that “rich people is have very many benefit” and that “I am not rich people”, “I am just poor people”, while adding that he “hates” this situation in Korea (Park Interview 1).

The above examples are illustrative of issues associated with the traditionalist societal structures that still exist in modern day Korea and the way these can reflect on its

citizens (Śleziak, 2013). It would appear that the combination of hierarchy, tradition, neoliberal ideology and economic boom contributed to the creation of an unforgiving system that left many struggling, on the margins, and without a sense of agency to pursue their life goals. In light of the data excerpts discussed above, and the stories in Chapter 5, which portray certain negative aspects of life in Korea and its seemingly ruthless system, it is telling that all of the participants mentioned in this section (Danny, Annie, Tim and Park) were pursuing English in study abroad with the goal of either settling in New Zealand or another English-dominated country – thus clearly illustrating the relationship between life in Korea, the socially imposed expectations of Korean society, and the pursuit of English in study abroad as an act of resistance and pathway (for some) to imagined identities and futures away from their homeland. (See more on this theme in Section 6.7 on identity outcomes)

6.2.1 Lack of Agency: “In Korea I couldn’t get dream” (Annie)

In light of their hierarchy-related workplace difficulties, both Annie and Danny associated their study abroad journey to New Zealand with freedom and an increased sense of agency in terms of their everyday life choices and general future goals. Although they had not yet experienced employment in New Zealand, or had opportunities for immersion in their new context, they experienced an increased sense of possibility. Their respective trips were, therefore, not only an investment in English as a prized form of capital (Bourdieu, 1991), but also an investment in time spent in a new context, away from Korea, for the purpose of reimagining their lives anew. As Annie pointed out:

First, when I was in Korea I couldn’t get dream. I couldn’t do what I wanted. But here, I can have a dream. I feel more positive. I have a chance to choose many things; chance to meet many kind of people. (Annie Interview 2)

Annie's excitement about having dreams for the future since arriving in New Zealand is indexical of an important type of investing associated with study abroad. Relocating to a study abroad context, undiscovered and initially devoid of social expectations and pressures, strengthens the sense of confidence in *possibilities for the future* (Norton, 2000):

In Korea, I always have to think about the possible. If I focus on something, I have to think the something give me advantage or not. I always have to think. But here, if I like this, I can just do it - it makes me happy. I don't have to think about advantages and disadvantages. (Annie Interview 2)

Annie's concern about the possible or impossible, advantageous or disadvantageous, is reflective of her mindset in Korea, where she struggled to find the agency to do what she truly wanted to do, hence her assertion that in Korea she "couldn't get dream" (Annie Interview 2). Despite her somewhat glorified and naive view of study abroad as a context characterised by freedom of choice, her initial sense of agency and desire to pursue what made her happy offered her what she missed in Korea.

As outlined earlier, Danny also reported having similar difficulties pursuing his dreams in Korea. He encountered numerous obstacles that prevented him from pursuing his career, which he struggled to accept:

When I go to my job at first, I could deal with water quality modelling, and broadcasting of air quality, broadcasting water quality change. I wanted to do the work, but it was not ... I worked for company or some people. If seniors think it is not good for them or the company, they stop the project. (Danny Interview 1)

His sojourn in New Zealand was also motivated by his perception that New Zealand could possibly be a place where he would have better opportunities to pursue his career. He perceived New Zealand as a "very good country because safe, and this country have

good facility system for foreigners” (Danny Interview 1). Despite creating limited affordances for immersion in the New Zealand context through employment or local social networks, Danny maintained a positive image of New Zealand in his mind; to him it appeared that “all people have respect for other people” and that “in most situations, people don’t force others; they just ask and wait”, whereas in Korea they “put pressure” (Danny Interview 1). These were all positive indications for Danny, who, like Annie, enjoyed a heightened sense of possibility since his arrival.

As evident from the analysis above relating to themes of hierarchy, neoliberalism, and agency in Korea, for some of the participants there was a more important journey behind the study abroad English journey to New Zealand: one that involved a search for a more empowering context than the Korean one, a context where the participants could rediscover their agency to pursue their life goals and dreams. As the analysis of the theme of societal pressures in Korea in the next section illustrate, discovering such agency was problematic in Korean society with its self-perpetuating dominant ideologies, which left little choice but to follow pre-established societal norms.

6.3 Societal Pressures: “In Korea everyone do same” (Lucy)

In line with the hierarchical social structures that dominate in Korea, participants’ stories contained accounts that reflected societal pressures that serve to perpetuate the dominant ideologies. Respecting the hierarchy, following instructions of superiors, and essentially adhering to the societal ideologies is accepted and socially encouraged (Śleziak, 2013). It is common for people to have their lives pre-planned by their families, in accordance with societal norms, to the smallest detail; this often includes planning of a schooling pathway, a professional career, and even investing in cosmetic surgery to achieve the socially desired look (Park & Kim, 2006). However, diverting from these socially pre-defined pathways arguably creates more societal pressure than it does to

pursue them. In this view, as Danny pointed out, for him, diverting from the holy grail of obtaining a tertiary degree from a reputable university and securing employment in Korea was heavily contested:

Korean people tell other people unnecessary things. Too much talk. In my case, when I came [to New Zealand], most people told me that I was old and that it's late for me to study more. They said I should work in Korea. I don't like that.

Most people do that. (Danny Interview 1)

Danny also claimed that the voice of his critics was reflective of Koreans' tendency to "follow the society rule" which he believed encouraged people not to "have their own thinking" (Danny Interview 4). However, this also encouraged those who felt constrained by societal pressure to explore other options – such as relocating overseas or spending time on study abroad programmes.

Lucy also referred back to her belief that Western cultures foster wide thinking, whereas Asian cultures in general are traditionalist and conservative. She remembered her painful experiences in the education system, having battled with low grades throughout her schooling, despite being recognised as a bright and hardworking student, but one that was suffocated by a test-oriented system that could not meet her needs for artistic and literary development. She spoke about Korean people all having similar hobbies and interests, Korean cities all looking alike and not having distinguishing features. She reflected back on friends asking her why she still had no plans to finish her studies, find a job, and get married – in other words, to do what everyone else her age was doing at the time. According to her, many of her friends would approach her for advice and support when they planned on pursuing ideas and dreams that did not follow societal norms. One of the reasons why she decided to invest in study abroad experience was to "talk to a lot of Western people" because they "think more widely" (Lucy Interview 1). Like Danny,

Lucy also experienced pressure from her peers who forcefully insisted she should be looking for work, as she had just finished her final year of university:

Almost all people like that. Almost all people I met, they think they are right and I am wrong. Because they are going to achievement, they are going for document and making score, and I didn't. I don't have any score or certificate, only I have one – university graduation. But in my age, almost all people have some sort of licence, like computer licence and other kind of things, because they want to get some kind of job. And the company want this certificate. (Lucy Interview 1)

Despite having had the courage to choose her own path and reject the common life path of her peers, Lucy evidently felt she was losing ground and reducing her chances of succeeding in the Korean system. Nevertheless, she was still determined to resist the societal pressure and choose her own life path.

Reporting on similar experiences, Joanna commented on her university friends discouraging her from taking a year off to study abroad, claiming that when she decided to go to New Zealand “everyone asked me about my remaining one year of study” and tried to “scare me” that “I would miss out” by not staying in Korea (Joanna Interview 3). Joanna recognised this as being part of the societal pressures she was trying to resist by spending time studying abroad:

I also highly recommend to my friends to have study abroad experience because I think Korea has too much pressure, they always looking for job and results. I think it's not good for their life ... The problem is that people have a very narrow viewpoint, and so people who have a wide viewpoint or more freedom could be seen as not smart. (Joanna Interview 3)

As also highlighted by Danny and Lucy, Joanna was suggesting that the societal pressure at times created tunnel vision amongst people in Korea, and that many struggled to

imagine their lives outside of the confines predetermined by societal ideologies. Thinking outside those confines would be considered unwise, risky, and would be questioned and contested. Thus, tradition and hierarchy went unchallenged and promoted neoliberal values, placing pressure on Koreans to adhere to them and perpetuate them. As the next section illustrates, this has resulted in extreme competition amongst people in Korea, in pursuit of socially valued goals and capital.

6.3.1 Competitive Korean Society: “Harsh environment” (Danny)

In line with the societal pressures stemming from the neoliberal ideology and the traditionalist hierarchical structures that dominate Korean society, fierce competition is one of the key drivers of the reproduction of such societal ideologies (Park & Lo, 2012). As illustrated by some of the participants’ experiences, this competition may result in the smallest action being considered in terms of its advantage or disadvantage (Annie), or societal contestation of diverting from futures deemed desirable by Korean society and its dominant ideologies (Annie, Danny, Joanna, Tim). However, the sense of pressure created by the competitive nature of Korean society is also apparent in the socially acceptable obsession with rankings, results and evaluations – not only those obtained through formal testing, but also those conducted by family, friends and the wider society through everyday discourse (Card, 2005).

Often reflecting on the pressures he felt as a result of the competitive culture in Korea, Danny appeared to also be under the influence of those pressures in New Zealand. He anticipated that upon returning to Korea he would be evaluated on his English progress; he feared his family and friends would “ask me how much I improved my English” while stating that “they always think if you live abroad three months you have to improve very much” (Danny Interview 3).

The extent to which investing in New Zealand study abroad can be influenced by ideologies and expectations in Korea was also reflected in his account of a fellow Korean he had met on his trip to Queenstown. Danny was surprised to hear that his travel buddy was struggling to afford the expenses of his trip to Queenstown, but still opted to visit the popular tourist location, fearing he would be judged in Korea if he had not done so:

“Unbelievable. Yeah. I don’t know why Korean people ask those kinds of questions. It is good to just ask if the trip was good. But asking why you didn’t visit all the places – so annoying. Koreans always asking why” (Danny Interview 3).

Most of the other participants shared the same sentiment about the competitive nature of their home society. For example, Joanna described life in Korea as “tough”, claiming there was a lot of “competition” and “assessments” (Joanna Interview 2). She also made the observation that many Koreans feel uneasy about struggling with English because “most of people consider other people and what they think”; “if I speak English bad, maybe the other people will think less of me” (Joanna Interview 1). One of Lucy’s stories was somewhat reflective of this; she told of inadvertently running into a person in Auckland that she had met in Korea, only to find that he insisted they talked in English only, refusing her invitation to switch to Korean. In describing this awkward situation, she claimed he wanted to position himself as a competent English speaker and showcase his English proficiency:

I don’t like him ... he wants to talk in English very well. He really actually he want say to English, English, English, every day, almost all the time ... ‘I can say English very well’ - he thought ... But I said speak Korean. ((laugh)) Because I couldn’t understand. That’s why I just wanted to speak in Korean, but he all the time told me like English (Lucy Interview 3).

Due to such competition, the majority of participants reported avoiding contact with fellow Korean study abroad learners in New Zealand: Danny was worried they would be judgemental; Joanna felt uneasy due to her superior English skills, with fellow Koreans asking her how she speaks English so well; Annie also feared they would be critical of her choices.

Particularly representative of competition in Korea is the country's education system, characterised by a rigorous assessment structure. As highlighted in the following section, the theme of a harshly competitive Korean society is exemplified by the competition for high test scores and academic success.

6.3.2 Assessment Nightmare: “I hate the education system in Korea! I hate it!”

(Lucy)

In addition to being recognised for its extremely demanding workplace culture, featuring the longest work-week among developed countries (Kuchinke, 2009), Korea is also well known for one of the most challenging education systems in the world. As one of the crucial pillars of society's test-oriented culture, the education system perpetuates the societal ideologies of competition and hierarchy, thereby also reproducing immense pressure and stress for a large number of young Koreans who struggle through their schooling life.

This is exemplified by Lucy's struggles, as portrayed in her story; realising her university enrolment depended on her high school marks, she “studied every day so hard in high school”. For three years, she would “go to school at 6am and return home at midnight”. However, the test oriented education system did not suit Lucy, and despite her best efforts she was “always bottom” in her class. Her misery was compounded by teachers identifying her as the hard-working student who had poor marks: “When I was in middle and high school I studied so hard”, but “for six years – can you imagine – for six

years I listened to a lot of things like this. All teachers knew me because I studied really hard, but my scores were low”. However, her painful experience with the education system in Korea would continue, as due to her low high school marks she would struggle with being accepted into university; only the last of her 13 university entrance applications would be successful, albeit by a university of modest reputation and ranking.

Reflecting on these experiences, Lucy justified her study abroad New Zealand adventure with the desire to explore a Western style of education and what she perceived as a system that stimulates “wide thinking” (Lucy Interview 1). Furthermore, she needed time away from the pressure and the competition: “I want to travel more. I want some balance ... When I travel it relaxes me. It’s match the balance. Balance is easier here in New Zealand. In Korea, all the time is getting stressed. I want to some resting” (Lucy Interview 1).

The stress, in Lucy’s case, was primarily the result of struggling with obtaining scores in a score-obsessed society. However, she raised questions about this social malady, whereas, according to her, many other Koreans did not:

Koreans get stress about many things, like results and achievements. They always need a document or something; like, you got an A+ or something. But study is slowly done, like small thing – reading a book or something. Korean people just want to know their results. (Lucy Interview 1)

However, despite seeking to escape the Korean assessment-driven culture, it appeared that scores and rankings were still of high importance for some. For Tim, it determined whether his family in Korea would continue to fund his study abroad education, with his mother reportedly threatening that he would be forced to return to Korea unless he advanced at least one level at his English school (Tim Interview 3). On the other hand,

Joanna also worked very hard to reach the top level class at her school, driven by her investment in becoming an expert English speaker.

Finally, the above examples are reflective of the common belief in Korea that English can be mastered quickly with enough effort; this justifies the frustration and negative sentiment towards English study in a system that places pressure on immediate measurable results (such as in Lucy's case discussed above). Both Park and Danny were initially under the same impression, only to admit that they now both understand that mastering English takes years of intensive study, but remain firmly aware that Korean societal expectations are unchanged.

6.4 Summary – Life in Korea in relation to Investment in English Study Abroad

The analysis presented in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 was based on the recurring themes of hierarchy, agency, societal pressure, competition, and assessment obsession in Korea. With the use of illustrative data excerpts from the participant data, the analysis in the above sections has offered a portrayal of life in modern day Korea and the associated socially imposed expectations of Korean society. The analysis demonstrated how the interplay of the salient themes formed the participants' perceptions of life at home and defined the expectations that Korean society places on its citizens.

Furthermore, the role of English in Korean society was explored, as well as the way its pursuit by the participants related to socially imposed expectations in Korea. The role of English as a forced social malady (Song, 2011) and a necessary evil was recognised. However, its value and importance in Korean society was identified as important in justifying the study abroad journeys for some of the participants in this study, as well as securing financial support during their sojourns. On the other hand, the reported desire of the majority of participants to improve their English with the goal of settling in New Zealand or another English-dominated country was significant. It showed

that the largely unfavourable living conditions, as defined by the socially imposed expectations, had inspired the majority of the participants to pursue English as a pathway to building a life outside of Korea, or at least temporarily flee the challenges of their native society – making this the key relationship between investment in study abroad English learning and socially imposed expectations of Korean society for the participants in this study.

The following sections (6.5 and 6.6) explore themes relevant to the category of investment in imagined identities during study abroad in New Zealand. It analyses the participants' investments in imagined identities as informed by their Korean habitus (Bourdieu, 1991) discussed in sections 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 above, the nature and the success of their investing in study abroad, and their fluid ideas and hopes for the future.

6.5 Investing in Study Abroad

As pointed out by Darvin and Norton (2015), investment is situated at the intersection of identity, ideology and capital. As such, it is a concept that can be used as a theoretical lens to explore social situatedness of study abroad language learners in their new contexts – particularly in relation to the imagined identities they invest in, the ideologies that inform their investment, and the various forms of capital they invest in. The preceding analysis outlines some of the relationships between social expectations of Korean society and investment in study abroad English learning. However, the participants' stories reveal that their investment in study abroad was also informed by their immediate needs of escaping pressures of Korea and enjoying the exciting prospects of study abroad as a context that offers new opportunities, adventure, and an increased sense of agency.

6.5.1 Investment in Imagined Identities and Futures

Investing in study abroad English learning is strongly related to participants' lives in Korea before their arrival in New Zealand. While their investing can be aligned with English ideologies in Korea, it can also be an act of resistance and an investment in imagined identities and futures that are in opposition to the societal norms and wider ideologies of Korean society.

Danny's story is reflective of his difficulties of living in Korea. His complaints were largely associated with the highly hierarchical nature of Korean society and the low sense of agency it can bestow upon its citizens. Danny repeatedly expressed high negative emotion towards Korean hierarchy. He claimed he would only be prepared to live and work again in Korea if the hierarchy system changed. Furthermore, he spoke of his efforts to counter the influence of hierarchy through his own actions; for example, he insisted that undergraduate students not bow to him and speak to him without using honorifics, despite his higher status as a senior and a tutor – something that violated the cultural norms and codes of conduct, but that (according to him) resulted in students being more actively involved in class and asking questions more freely (Danny Interview 2).

Danny's study abroad journey in New Zealand was an investment in his imagined future as a PhD candidate, and subsequently a permanent resident and an expert in his field: "I was think about studying here, so I wanted to learn about New Zealand culture, as well as English. I think this is very good culture" (Danny Interview 2). Throughout his involvement in this study Danny spoke positively about his experiences in New Zealand. His positive impressions solidified his investment in an imagined future in New Zealand, while also serving as proof to himself that his complaints about Korea were justified. He claimed that in Korea he thought there was a problem in his mind (Danny Interview 2) that prevented him from fitting in, but realised that in New Zealand he felt liberated and happy. His time in New Zealand appeared to validate his critical stance towards his

homeland as he saw New Zealand as a place with a “good culture” and no apparent overarching hierarchical structures that thwarted his sense of agency. Despite struggling to improve his English enough to be accepted as a doctoral candidate in New Zealand, Danny claimed that his investment in his imagined future remained firm and his plan “will be not changed” (Danny Interview 4).

Lucy, who had experienced great difficulties throughout her schooling in Korea, had a type of investment that was somewhat similar to Danny’s in that she also sought to explore a different context – one that inspired her and did not reduce her sense of agency. Following her extreme difficulties with the education system in Korea, after finally obtaining her tertiary degree Lucy was ready to distance herself from her struggles at home and discover new contexts. She embarked on a year-long working holiday in Australia, before arriving in New Zealand on a study abroad programme. From the offset, Lucy had clear expectations:

When I decided to go to Australia, I really wanted to see the Opera house ((laugh)). Yeah! ((pause)) Actually, I became very interested in architecture since visiting Auckland, because it’s very different. In Korea, the buildings are all the same - just concrete apartment buildings. But here, buildings have character, they are like castles ((laugh)). Different style. So, imagined architecture and people – wondered what they would be like. I also wondered about co-workers from other countries and what it would be like to be around them. Then, I thought about feeling. What will it be like to talk in English to people from other countries. And then, working in a different system. In Australia and New Zealand, I could voice my opinion at work – in Korea, I couldn’t do that. Never, ever. (Lucy Interview 1)

In addition to dreaming about her new life experiences in a context that would provide her with a different perspective and opportunities, Lucy had plans to use her study abroad

journey to find inspiration for her “big dream” of working in arts and composing music one day, while also using it to improve her English in order to work overseas. However, in case her plan of successfully settling overseas would not materialise, she intended to pursue an airline cabin crew career for a foreign company in Korea – which would still allow her to travel, improve her English, and avoid working in the Korean company culture.

Investing in study abroad as a ticket to a future away from the struggles in Korea was also evident in Tim’s story. Using study abroad as a pathway to residency in New Zealand, Tim was investing in English as a crucial component to his imagined future. His plan of remaining in New Zealand, having a family and “a Kiwi wife”, while working as a civil engineer, depended on improving his English and re-obtaining his civil engineering degree from a New Zealand university: “If I get English skill, maybe after six months, I will go to university about civil engineer or electronics; then I study for two or three years, and I think I will get a job here” (Tim Interview 5).

Tim’s investment was heavily informed by his fear of the Korean “sleep-work cycle” and the belief that staying in New Zealand would provide him with a more balanced lifestyle. Furthermore, his investing was motivated by his desire to secure a better future for his children one day, which he believed he had more chance of achieving in New Zealand: “One day I should ask my kids whether they want to study in Korea or not, because I didn’t have a choice. I think New Zealand have different thinking. When Korean people don’t have job, we will be stressed, but Kiwi people no. They just enjoy. Very interesting” (Tim Interview 3). It appeared that Tim was already concerned about his children not having to endure the difficulties associated with growing up in Korea that he had experienced himself, while having recognised that Kiwis enjoy a more balanced life and suffer less work related stress compared to his fellow Koreans.

Park had similar reasoning; like Tim, he had concerns about the sort of future that Korea would be able to offer him and his family – though his concerns were more related to social class discrimination he believes exists in Korea. Through study abroad he was investing in permanent residency, which would allow him “to live in other country with my family”. Primarily, he claimed he wanted “to give my son a very good environment” where he can learn English, so he wanted to settle in an “English speaking country” (Park Interview 4).

However, despite having initial future plans and intending to use study abroad to invest in them, the majority of participants were constantly forced to re-negotiate their investing while on study abroad. Depending on their study abroad experiences and their ability to negotiate the often highly contested access to desired forms of capital, as their stories revealed, their imagined identities and futures were under constant revision. They invested in their imagined identities through pursuing various forms of capital, but often revised their ideas for the future upon evaluating the outcomes of their investing. As the analysis in sections 6.5.1.1 to 6.6 reveals, the key themes related to their investment in imagined identities include the English language, cosmopolitanism, study abroad as a tourist experience, and investing through Kiwi jobs. Furthermore, the analysis problematises the highly contested nature of investing in study abroad, and highlight the participants’ struggles to decide whether to live the glorified, tourist version of study abroad, or face the often harsh reality of heavily contested investment in the desired forms of capital.

6.5.1.1 The study abroad honeymoon period: “I am free!” (Annie)

Despite being somewhat illusory and misleading, the initial positive impressions of the new context for some participants served as encouragement. Settling quickly and learning to successfully navigate their new context raised their sense of accomplishment

and self-belief in pursuing their study abroad goals. Furthermore, they benefited from investing in study abroad through achieving an immediate sense of happiness, satisfaction, and excitement.

In particular, Annie expressed positive initial impressions, which validated her struggles to receive approval from her friends and family about coming to study abroad in New Zealand. Ignoring their warnings that she would face difficulties due to her poor English and unfamiliarity with the context, she was now reaping the much needed benefits of her study abroad journey. Upon answering my question about how she felt when she arrived, she exclaimed: “I was free ((laugh))! Free!” In addition to feeling an increased sense of freedom, Annie also felt that everyone was “kind and I can relax my mind”, while also adding: “While I stay here, every day I am happy! I appreciate being here” (Annie Interview 1). As her story reflected, Annie exploited her freedom by forming new friendships with classmates and doing things she otherwise would not do in Korea, such as getting a nose piercing, partying, and enjoying her life without worrying that people would “think negative” of her actions, as they would in Korea. Furthermore, she benefited from the sense that in her new context anything was possible (Annie Interview 2).

Similar to Annie, Danny also benefited from positive first impressions that had a significantly positive influence on his mental state: “When I walk or talk (in Korea) I always thought if there is a problem, I thought that it was maybe because of me. Now I talk freely now. Before I thought I have problem in my mind, but it was not” (Danny Interview 3). Influenced by his struggles in Korea, Danny adopted a positive stance towards New Zealand and identified positive characteristics of the new context that were important to him, but that his native context lacked. For example, it was his perception that people in New Zealand generally “have respect for other people”, “listen carefully”

and “wait for a response”. Crucially, he felt that in Korea he was obliged “to consider other people” in terms of strict, culturally coded norms, but for which in New Zealand there was “no need anymore”. He concluded: “I can have my life here” (Danny Interview 1). His positive impressions were also based on his witnessing people thanking bus drivers, and families spending time together in parks and public places. He also reported imagining that he could one day live in New Zealand, have a job, work with Kiwis and get along well (Danny Interview 3). Throughout his involvement in this study, his opinion of New Zealand remained positive, and he claimed, “I really want to live here. All things is good for me” (Danny Interview 2).

Joanna and Tim also often spoke about their heightened sense of agency since arriving in New Zealand. Financially supported by their respective families, they used their time in study abroad to enjoy their freedom from their usual responsibilities in Korea. Joanna labelled New Zealand as “more free”, and explained that she viewed it as such because she saw “many people smoke and have tattoo”. She claimed that this was not commonly seen in Korea amongst young people, while she felt that New Zealand society was more lenient, saying that here it’s “whatever, it doesn’t matter”. In her opinion this was “really cool” (Joanna Interview 1). She also liked this friendly culture where age doesn't matter, where “people saying hello and more friendly”, and “even if someone is 10 years older, it doesn’t matter” (Joanna Interview 2). Similarly, Tim enjoyed partying with his Kiwi flatmates, forming friendships and exploring his new context with his English school classmates. In New Zealand he was free from his “sleep, work, sleep” cycle that he suffered from in Korea and enjoyed a lifestyle that he previously only saw “in movie”. He enjoyed meeting people from different cultures, concluding that in Korea there is “only Korean culture”, which to him was “very boring” (Tim Interview 2).

However, despite the positive impressions, an increased sense of possibility, agency, and accomplishment associated with settling in study abroad, negotiating investment and pursuing desired forms of capital related to imagined identities and futures reveals often unanticipated challenges of studying abroad. As discussed further in the following sections, investing in desired forms of capital entails challenges that reveal the contested nature of investing in imagined identities and futures, which is in stark contrast to the illusory, glorified view of study abroad as a context that offers uncontested immersion in local networks and access to the desired forms of capital.

6.5.1.2 Investing in imagined identities through English: “Now everything is about English” (Joanna)

Irrespective of differing life trajectories and imagined identities of the participants in this study, English has consistently appeared in their stories as central to their investing. Firstly, it was related to their needs in study abroad. They all appeared aware that improved English proficiency guaranteed more opportunities for immersion and improved access to employment opportunities in the study abroad context, and a generally more fulfilling study abroad experience. Furthermore, investing in imagined identities and futures was directly dependent on English; it was essential for those who were investing in an imagined future as New Zealand residents (Park, Tim, Danny), those investing in imagined identities as global citizens (Annie, Joanna), as well as those investing in improved future employment opportunities in and outside of Korea (Lucy, Jerome).

The level of investment in English by the participants in this study is exemplified by their individual sacrifices. For example, Danny’s decision to invest in settling in New Zealand had informed his decision to resign from his job and focus exclusively on English: “At that time I really couldn’t speak English, so I quit the job and then I’ve been

studying English more than three years”. His extreme dedication led him to study “English for two years very hard; whole day” (Danny Interview 1). Such a decision reflected strongly on his private life, as he and his wife were forced to alternate between staying with their respective families during this period, while also having to postpone their plans to have children. His strong investment in English also informed his English studies in New Zealand, as he reported having “paid big money” for his English course, hence regularly attending lessons and taking a keen interest in participating in class activities (Danny Interview 2).

Similarly, Tim’s investment in his imagined future of living in New Zealand was heavily dependent on his investment in English. Firstly, the financial support he was receiving from his family was subject to his ability to show that his English was improving. As he repeatedly stated, ensuring a place in a higher level class in his language school was expected by his family in order for them to continue funding his study abroad sojourn. More importantly, his ability to sufficiently improve his English and gain entry into one of New Zealand’s universities would determine whether he would fulfil his goal of remaining in New Zealand in a bid to eventually complete his education and permanently settle in the country.

On the other hand, despite still being in the process of clarifying her future goals, Joanna’s investment in English was spurred by her imagined identity of an expert English speaker. Receiving recognition from teachers and classmates in her language school as one of the best English speakers in her class, Joanna discovered English as a central part of her future plans, claiming that “now, everything is about English” (Joanna Interview 3). Her fascination with the British accent influenced her to spend time on YouTube learning slang expressions and imagining herself living in London one day and claiming the position of a legitimate English speaker. Over the course of her stay in New Zealand,

this motivated her to challenge herself to transition from a language learner to a language user (Benson et al., 2013). She sought to navigate the study abroad context independently and engage in conversations in English whenever possible. Her week-long trip to Australia in the final weeks of her study abroad sojourn was planned as a test of her ability to survive in English independently. Upon successfully completing the journey and safely returning to New Zealand, she proudly exclaimed: “I nailed it!” (Joanna Interview 5).

Lastly, for Lucy, investing in English was primarily related to her future employment opportunities. Though she was still unsure of whether she would remain abroad or return to Korea, she claimed that English was definitely one of her key goals in study abroad. She perceived English to be an investment in improved job prospects in the future. However, her investing did not appear to be motivated by the ideology of English as a valued form of capital in the Korean job market; instead, her goal was to use English to gain access to jobs offered by foreign companies in Korea in an attempt to avoid working in the notoriously challenging Korean company culture.

As evident from the above examples, English was a central part of the investing of the participants in this study. The above examples also show that rather than being an object of investment in itself, English in study abroad was being pursued as one of the most important forms of capital in relation to the respective imagined identities and futures of the participants. As the following analysis reveals, English was also closely intertwined with, and formed a crucial part of, a number of other types of investment that the participants engaged in.

6.5.1.3 Study abroad investment in cosmopolitan identities: “Wow! I really want to be that!” (Annie)

Despite investment in study abroad experience and English learning being associated with specific future goals (as illustrated Section 6.5.1.2), it can also be associated with the construction and projection of cosmopolitan or global identities. Residing in a desirable international destination such as New Zealand, pursuing English (a global language), becoming interculturally aware, and forming friendships with people from various countries, are all status markers associated with global citizenry. To varying degrees, imagined global identities informed the investing of some of the participants in this study.

For example, Joanna repeatedly spoke about her fascination with the British accent, which she was intent on improving, motivated by her imagined future as a resident of London. She also recalled being impressed by fellow Koreans who spoke like native English speakers, and stated that “it just looks awesome”. She then explained that she really “wanted to be that person” and that her pursuit of English was not motivated by future career opportunities, subsequently confirming she was pursuing it for one reason: “my travel” (Joanna Interview 1).

An important part of the construction of desired identities is their successful projection and validation. Joanna reported satisfaction in receiving such validation from her friends, whom she claimed to have influenced through her own investing:

Yeah, because my friends told me when they saw my pictures, they want to have plans like me. They also want to have this kind of experience, so now they try to find a way to go overseas to study English. I think this is positive for me because I inspire my friends. (Joanna Interview 3)

Similarly, Annie’s plans of pursuing further travel to Australia and China following her stay in New Zealand also reflected her desire to claim the status of a global citizen. In response to a question about whether she liked the idea of being a cosmopolitan, she

responded: “Wow. I really want to be that. I hope ((laugh))! And when I saw my picture I took in New Zealand, my face is so happy” (Annie Interview 3). Her investment in an imagined identity of a global citizen was also reflected by her comment that “I don’t want go back home; maybe if I graduate foreign university, I will not go back home” (Annie Interview 1). Like Joanna, Annie frequently referred to her habit of posting pictures and videos from her travels on social media, projecting her global citizen status, and offering proof to friends at home that she had successfully settled and was enjoying her life overseas.

6.5.1.4 Family funding, cosmopolitanism, and study abroad as tourist experience

In line with the status of English as a global language, often represented (even in English textbooks) as a language of travel, choice, and accessibility (Pennycook, 2007), study abroad learners at times feel compelled to produce such projections in order to receive validation and recognition for their time spent abroad. Consequently, study abroad sojourns are at times transformed into predominantly tourist experiences, especially for those whose sojourns are funded by their families. Consequently, study abroad sojourns sometimes resemble fully funded tourist trips abroad consisting of fun, travel, partying and friendships with other study abroad students.

Danny’s travels and adventures in New Zealand included visiting Rotorua, Taupo, and Hobbiton, and spending time travelling the South Island, with skydiving in Taupo being one of his most memorable experiences in New Zealand. While he reported enjoying his travels in New Zealand, he admitted that it could at times feel like a mandatory part of being overseas, as “in Korea they ask immediately about your experience of travelling around New Zealand” (Danny Interview 3). The pressure of meeting people’s expectations in Korea and thereby having the study abroad sojourn

validated is what at times, at least partly, motivates travel and encourages tourist activities during study abroad. As discussed in the preceding section on pressures stemming from Korean society (see Section 7.3), this was exemplified through the situation of Danny's Korean travel companion in the South Island, who reported to have visited Queenstown in spite of financial difficulties, and to avoid the dreaded questioning in Korea of why she had not done so:

Actually, in Korea, they ask immediately about your experience of travelling around New Zealand. One Korean friend who came with us to the South Island said to me that one reason for her going there was so that she wouldn't be judged in Korea for not having visited. (Danny Interview 3)

Despite having plans of pursuing English and tertiary study in order to remain in New Zealand permanently, Tim also appeared heavily invested in experiencing adventures in his study abroad context. Frequently referring back to his uneventful lifestyle in Korea, dominated by long work hours, Tim was determined to enjoy himself in New Zealand as much as possible. He desired to "travel around New Zealand and study", imagined his future in New Zealand with a "Kiwi wife", "many friends" and lots of "party" (Tim Interview 1). Those visions were supported by his first impressions of New Zealand and his active social life that involved visiting a local bar every Friday night and partying with his classmates, while also enjoying plenty of house parties with his young Kiwi hosts. This new lifestyle involving parties he previously only saw "in movie" suited Tim, and he described it as "miraculous" and "amazing" (Tim Interview 2). Despite admitting that his family in Korea were worried about having to fund the high expenses of his New Zealand lifestyle, he claimed he would eventually pay them back and that he was intent on enjoying his life in New Zealand and making new friends.

Also, as highlighted by their respective stories in Chapter 5, both Joanna's and Annie's stay in New Zealand appeared to be of a touristic nature. Financial support of their respective families facilitated their travels and general expenses. In turn, this shaped their experiences in study abroad, removing the need to seek employment and survive independently, and channelled their sojourn towards English classes, friendships and fun with classmates, and homestay experience [for Annie]. As Annie claimed, for her, the time spent in New Zealand was only about "English and friends; that is all" (Annie Interview 4).

The analysis presented in subsections 6.5.1.1 to 6.5.1.4 demonstrates the links between family funded study abroad sojourns and tourist-like experiences in study abroad. The financial support received by some of the participants appears to have shaped their immersion in the study abroad context. In turn, this channelled them towards a more superficial study abroad experience based on spending time with other study abroad learners, having the financial means to visit tourist attractions around New Zealand, and not having to face the reality of working and supporting themselves during their stay. Particularly in the case of Annie and Joanna, this influenced them to view study abroad as an investment in English, a cosmopolitan future, and the global identities they were portraying to friends and family at home by living this fun, carefree life during study abroad. However, as section 6.5.2 demonstrates, study abroad was an entirely different experience for those participants who were self-dependent, and whose life trajectories directly depended on their investing in study abroad.

6.5.2 Living the Dream vs. Facing Reality: Contested Investing in Study Abroad in New Zealand

For some of the participants in this study, especially those who enjoyed financial support during their sojourns, study abroad initially offered a sense of freedom and

choice. The pressures of real life in Korea were replaced with a simple lifestyle that primarily consisted of attending English lessons, forming friendships with classmates, and exploring the attractions of their new context. The friendliness of the locals and the appeal of their new surroundings also added to the positive perceptions. However, this initial, somewhat glorified view of study abroad would soon be tested by the difficulties of everyday life challenges associated with investing in study abroad, especially for the participants who were self-dependent. Working and surviving in the study abroad context, communicating in English, securing adequate housing all proved much more contested than having the means to freely navigate the context and dream of an easily accessible cosmopolitan future. Investment in imagined identities and futures would be tested by the participants' abilities to navigate the study abroad context and negotiate access to the desired forms of capital that hold importance in relation to their future plans.

The recurring theme of contested investing features prominently in subsections 6.5.2.1 to 6.5.2.4 below. It represents the contested nature of pursuing desired capital in study abroad, which entails and often depends on the successful negotiation of identities, claiming of desired identity positions, and having desired identity positions scrutinised and validated by interlocutors (see Section 6.7).

6.5.2.1 Study abroad investing through Kiwi jobs

As some of the participants' stories reflected, employment in study abroad was regarded as an important part of investing. For those whose study abroad journeys were not funded by their families (Park, Lucy), it was a source of income that ensured they could cover their living expenses. However, equally important were the opportunities for immersion, real life English practice, and potential access to local networks that employment in study abroad potentially provided.

Joanna, who was living with her Korean relatives in New Zealand and whose trip was funded by her parents, admitted wanting to find work in Auckland so she could “meet foreigner (Kiwis) and speak English with them”, but that “it’s difficult to find that job”. Apart from a number of job offers from local Korean restaurants that she turned down, she managed to secure an interview for a juice bar position, but did not receive a job offer. However, given that she was primarily focused on her English studies, and given that her parents in Korea were only supportive of her working in New Zealand for immersion experience and English practice, Joanna’s unsuccessful search for a “Kiwi job” resulted in her declining other job opportunities (Joanna Interview 2).

On the other hand, Park’s investment in “Kiwi” jobs was somewhat different to Joanna’s, as it was informed by his imagined future as a permanent resident in New Zealand. Given that his complex plan required him to improve his English, enrol in a degree at a university in New Zealand, complete his degree and secure a job offer in order to obtain his permanent residency – all while being away from his wife and infant son in Korea – Park’s Kiwi job search reflected the urgency with which he tried to create opportunities for English practice and immersion, while financially supporting himself, and ultimately attempting to fulfil his goal of reuniting with his family in New Zealand as soon as possible. Like Joanna, he also struggled and “almost give up finding Kiwi job”, before being offered a dishwasher’s position at a “Kiwi restaurant” with which he was initially “really happy” (Park Interview 2).

Lucy’s investment in employment in study abroad was motivated by similar circumstances to Park’s. Although her imagined future did not involve permanent residency in New Zealand, she required income to support her study abroad stay, while also seeking to create affordances for English practice and immersion through work. Lucy was able to secure a job at a “fancy restaurant” where she worked as a “kitchen hand”,

and where she had to “focus on chefs” and “their talking”. Given that they were “all Kiwis or from other countries” and that Lucy was “the only Asian”, her goal was to “speak English at work every day and learn English”, which is why she felt “lucky” that she secured that position. She claimed: “Because for my experience, for my new experience, for my new challenge. I know I have to do it” (Lucy Interview 2).

Despite the difficulties they experienced with seeking employment and the workplace troubles they were exposed to in New Zealand, it is evident that both Park and Lucy consciously sought to invest in their imagined identities through working in study abroad. Apart from offering them financial stability, employment allowed them to invest in real-life English practice, overseas work experience, and exposure to the New Zealand workplace culture. However, it also represented a heavily contested form of investing, as it involved competing with other applicants for the advertised positions, displaying the desired levels of confidence and English command, and eventually negotiating favourable positioning within the workplace. As some of the stories in Chapter 5 illustrated (Park, Lucy), this often proves a difficult task for study abroad learners.

6.5.2.2 Affordances for immersion in study abroad: “Where can I meet those Kiwi people!? Where!?” (Lucy)

As the previous subsection illustrated, a seemingly simple task of finding employment can be a complex one for study abroad learners of English. Furthermore, rather than just being a source of financial stability, it is often a source of opportunities for English practise and many other important forms of capital for study abroad learners. The same can be said of friendships between locals and study abroad English learners. With seemingly ample opportunities to meet and befriend members of the local population, it can prove to be a heavily contested task for study abroad learners (Kim & Okazaki, 2014). Study abroad sojourns often create opportunities for new friendships,

albeit mostly amongst the study abroad learners themselves rather than with members of the local context. This reveals the contested nature of investing in gaining access to desired local networks and communities of practice. Despite seeking to immerse themselves in their new context, study abroad learners encounter numerous barriers to their attempts. For example, they are often unfamiliar with local cultural norms and practices, unaware of the locally valued forms of capital, and feel insecure about their ability to communicate with native speakers in a foreign language. Therefore, despite being surrounded with members of the local community they tend to struggle to identify the commonalities and shared enterprises based on which to seek immersion – and subsequently often resort to forming networks with fellow study abroad learners instead.

As pointed out by Lucy, this apparent lack of meaningful, purpose-based interaction with the local population reduces possibilities for immersion, which is often one of the primary purposes of study abroad:

Yeah, I want to meet Kiwi people. If I have a chance I want to meet them. I want to know about New Zealand life. How do they spend time, how they live, yeah. Because I am just a visitor, I am staying here for a limited time. I think New Zealand is small, and the population is very small, it's better than Korea ((laughing)). It is diverse. Where can I meet those Kiwi people!? Where ((laughing))!? (Lucy Interview 2)

As Lucy points out, it is common that one of the primary purposes of embarking on a study abroad journey remains unfulfilled – that of meeting the local population, learning about their way of life, and benefitting from real life immersion. Despite being surrounded by them, the local population at times appears unreachable and inaccessible to study abroad learners.

Joanna also reported having similar difficulties during her stay in Auckland, claiming this was “one of the downfalls of international students” (Joanna Interview 4). However, her one successful attempt at forming a spontaneous relationship with a local reflects the significance it can hold. Meeting a local named Bella on her trip to Coromandel, Joanna reported feeling “proud” for managing to communicate with her the entire day, and happy that she had a great time and received praise for her English command (Joanna Interview 4). Also, becoming part of local networks in study abroad is important in validating the study abroad experience to friends and family in Korea; towards the end of her stay in Auckland, this appeared to be one of Joanna’s concerns:

I just want to know why I don’t have any Kiwi friends here. This is just one thing that I feel like shame ... This is also another stereotype, because I often post photos on Instagram or Kakaotalk, and sometimes my friends ask me ‘oh, but they looks like Asians and South Americans’. So, in Korea they think if you study abroad you should be friends with white people with blond hair. I used to think like this, but it is not true. So, yeah. It is good anyway, but still I have desire to make Kiwi friends.

(Joanna Interview 5)

It is evident that Joanna considers it a defeat that she did not manage to form relationships with locals. It also appears that some of this guilt is derived from pressures back in Korea, as her friends back home posed questions about why her new friends in Auckland did not look like what they perceived locals to be.

On the other hand, desire for immersion alone may not be enough for study abroad learners. Perhaps something that tends to be missing the most is the welcome and encouragement for immersion that study abroad learners crave in their new contexts, and expect from the local population. As pointed out by Jerome, this is key to facilitating affordances for purposeful communication:

On the [Great Barrier] island there weren't a lot of travellers so they [the locals] were curious about me, because I am different from them. So, they asked me where I was from. Wherever I went, they were curious about me, approached me and talked to me. They were really kind to me. This situation is what I expected before I came to New Zealand. (Jerome Interview 2)

However, creating these affordances is a difficult task for visiting language learners, while even more challenging would be to use them in forming lasting relationships. As Annie claimed, the locals "are not my relatives, father or mother; it's not easy to get close" (Annie Interview 5). As the subsection 6.5.2.3 below discusses, in light of the issues associated with creating affordance for meeting the local population, one of the most common ways of gaining access to local networks for study abroad learners has been through homestay living arrangements with local families.

6.5.2.3 Meeting locals through homestay: "I haven't had much experience with Kiwis – only homestay people could talk about that" (Danny)

Given the commonly reported difficulties with gaining access to local social networks, living with Kiwi homestay families becomes the preferred immersion option for study abroad learners who are able to afford it (Magnan & Back, 2007). This was confirmed by most participants in this study. They invested in living with Kiwi homestay families in order to create affordances for English practice, cultural immersion, and access to wider local networks. However, homestay living included a number of potential difficulties, in addition to being more expensive than renting with other study abroad learners. Investing in homestay living with locals often involved life in suburbia, and therefore longer commutes to CBD language schools. In addition, at times, living conditions were unfavourable, and neglect and lack of communication from the host family were experienced.

Tim's homestay arrangement entailed some of the above. Although homestay living arrangements are usually subject to legal guidelines that aim to protect international students, it is not clear whether Tim's arrangement was formed in accordance with the law. He talked about the inconvenience of living deep in the suburbs, where there was limited access to public transport and grocery shops, lack of an internet connection, and despite food being included in his board fee, there was frequently not enough ingredients to make a meal. However, because he was flatting with a young Kiwi couple, Tim did get a number of opportunities to attend their house parties, which he thoroughly enjoyed: "Yeah. I like Kiwi people ((laugh)). My homestay very kind and help me, and every day have party" ((laugh)) ... My favourite things is every day have party. I like crazy, funny atmosphere" (Tim Interview 1). He often reflected on his partying with his homestay flatmates in somewhat humorous fashion, claiming it "very hard" to "drink for 15 hours", but repeating that he looked forward to it (Tim Interview 1). The parties, as well as the time spent at home, were his opportunities for immersion and English practice. He felt included by his hosts' friends and enjoyed being praised and encouraged about his English progress.

However, despite Tim's strong investment in his homestay arrangement and the benefits that accompanied it, it reflected the often precarious position of study abroad learners and their inability to successfully negotiate living arrangements with locals. Tim reported feeling uncomfortable due to the arguing and, at times, violent fights between his homestay hosts. He also felt "scared" when they were "very angry" at "other flatmate" for not completing his house duties, resulting in him being evicted: "Yeah – very stress for me, because noise, noise, noise" (Tim Interview 3). Furthermore, this caused him to hesitate in giving his notice and relocating to a more convenient accommodation:

I should tell her [flatmate in charge of the tenancy] that I want to change, but I didn't ... There are many things why I want to move. There is no Wi-Fi, and I think this place is uncomfortable for me. The shopping centre is far from my house; maybe drive car for ten or twenty minutes. (Tim Interview 3)

Subsequently, Tim changed his place of stay, though he did encounter some issues as he was requested to pay an extra week's rent.

Although the circumstances under which he lived during homestay did reflect his limited agency, which prevented him from successfully negotiating the terms of his stay, the importance of the affordances for immersion and interaction that homestay provided motivated Tim to remain for five months. Despite leaving on somewhat unfair terms, Tim reported that he would still visit, if given the chance: "I liked that party because I have chance for talk in English. So, maybe, if have Kiwi party again, I will definitely go there" (Tim Interview 4). After relocating to a place he shared with other Korean students, he missed living with his Kiwi homestay hosts: "Yeah it's good for me, because I speak English every day. Ah, I am sad. Two weeks ago I went to my room in North Shore to meet them [ex Kiwi flatmates], but I couldn't meet them because they fight, yeah, go out" (Tim Interview 4). The significance of homestay living for study abroad students and the importance it held for Tim was reflected in his willingness to accept unfavourable living conditions in order to invest in immersion and opportunities for real life English practice. Finally, this was evident from his final, unsuccessful attempt to convince his former homestay family to join him in sharing accommodation in the CBD.

However, despite not having been completely satisfied with his homestay living arrangement, Tim's experience was positive comparing to that of Jerome, which showed that local homestay arrangements can at times offer few benefits to the visiting students. This was evident from Jerome's first impressions:

I live with a local family, but they are a little bit different. There is main house and separate house ... I stay in the second house. So, actually, before I arrived here I expected homestay, but I think really different. I thought homestay maybe share house and then talk, and then watching TV, drinking beer ((laugh)), but I think it's different. Little bit disappointing. But I think it depends on homestay. Other my Korean friends told me that their landlord is very good. It depends on homestay. (Jerome Interview 1)

Jerome's homestay experience remained largely unchanged, as he reported feeling that his landlord was only interested in profiting from his stay, without making Jerome feel welcome and included: "When I eat dinner or breakfast in Korea, we eat together and talk. At first, my homestay didn't do that; we didn't have conversation" (Jerome Interview 2). Subsequently, Jerome decided to change his place of stay and found a new homestay family that he reported being much happier with.

However, the other two participants in the study that opted to live with local families reported having largely positive experiences. Both Annie and Park found homestays to be friendly, inclusive environments that significantly contributed to their study abroad experience. Annie was happy to be included in family dinners and sometimes spent Friday evenings watching TV with her host family (Annie Interview 3). On the other hand, Park was happy that his host family made an effort to talk to him, invited him to their barbecue parties and introduced him to their friends (Annie Interview 4). It remained a financially onerous option, which forced Annie to reluctantly relocate and seek shared, cheaper accommodation with other study abroad students, while Park worked part-time and even managed to reduce his rent by agreeing to clean his landlords' house three times per week.

As confirmed by all of the participants in this study, homestay is often the desired accommodation arrangement amongst study abroad students (Magnan & Back, 2007). However, it remains a contested form of investing in study abroad experience, as exemplified in some of the cases discussed above. Achieving the desired outcomes depends on study abroad students negotiating their investing and ensuring the financial sacrifices and other efforts associated with homestay result in achieving sufficient communication in English, cultural immersion, and access to local social networks.

6.5.2.4 English as a barrier to investment: “I thought I am good at English, but that time – oh my gosh! What to say? Pretend like I understand.” (Joanna)

Despite being an important goal of investment for study abroad learners, English remains one of the main barriers to immersion in the local context. In particular, the challenges of transitioning from a language learner to a language user (Block, 2006) become apparent in the study abroad context. The controlled classroom setting is replaced with real life situations that require proficiency and pragmatic competence in order to achieve desired outcomes in daily communication. However, these are frequently lacking in study abroad learners and negatively affect their investing and general interaction with the study abroad context. Crucially, this can often determine whether the study abroad experience becomes a tourist adventure or is used for real life immersion.

As a result of English proficiency related issues a large number of participants justified their lack of effort in creating affordances for communication with the local population. For example, Joanna, who was confident in her English proficiency and was one of the high achievers in her language school, reported that talking to Kiwis was “a bit scary”, and used a story to illustrate how she arrived at this conclusion:

I had a new experience. I think this week I went to swimming pool. I went to spa, so there were two Kiwi guys trying to talk to me ... but it's really tough for

understanding. Nothing! So, I feel like I stay here for long time, and I thought I am good at English, but that time, my mind is very frustrated. Oh my gosh! What to say? Pretend like I understand ((laugh)). Totally different. (Joanna Interview 2)

Furthermore, as also confirmed by Joanna, the communication difficulties with locals are often exacerbated by issues relating to the local accent and frequent use of slang, which is normally not studied in the classroom.

Annie's experiences were of a similar nature, as she also reported struggling to accomplish basic tasks in English, such as shopping: "So when I bought something, they told me very fast, so I can't understand. That time I am very frustrated ... Yesterday ((laugh)) I bought this bag and the woman tell me but I don't understand. I was very frustrated ((laugh))" (Annie Interview 1). Annie also pointed out that communication in English with other Asians was easier as they could understand each other, whereas native speakers struggled to understand her pronunciation. This often made her feel "uncomfortable and annoyed"; for example, while attending a dinner at a restaurant she attempted ordering orange juice, "but the waiter couldn't understand my pronunciation" (Annie Interview 3).

However, this inability to successfully communicate did not only affect Annie in innocuous and relatively unimportant situations. It also affected her ability to claim desired identity positions in certain situations, such as when she wanted to stand up for her friend, but her lack of English proficiency prevented her from doing so (see Annie's story in Chapter 5).

The language barrier, accompanied by fear of miscommunication and misunderstanding, is therefore commonly reported as a significant obstacle to immersion, pursuit of desired capital, and the desired level of agency in study abroad. It often tests the resolve of study abroad learners and is representative of the contested nature of investing in immersion

and real life communication for visiting students. However, the level of investment students exert despite its contested nature largely depends on individual circumstances and is associated with individual investment in imagined identities and futures. For example, Joanna and Annie, as young women in their early twenties, financially supported by their families, appeared to have fewer pressing circumstances, which removed the sense of urgency to persist with their investment in immersion and real life English learning when faced with contestation. On the other hand, Park, whose investment was informed by his imagined future of a life in New Zealand with his wife and infant son, whom he had left behind in Korea while attempting to secure permanent residency before bringing them to New Zealand, has demonstrated higher tolerance for contested investing.

Park's resolve to invest in various opportunities for real life English communication despite the associated difficulties was evident: he joined church worships where people were kind to him and "asked me many things" but he did not understand the worship, as the priest spoke fast and there were "some different character name Korean Bible and English Bible" (Park Interview 3). At his restaurant job, the chefs initiated conversations with him, but he did not understand as they used "really short and some special word" (Park Interview 2). He planned on remaining with his homestay Kiwi family until bringing his wife and son to New Zealand, despite claiming he did not understand his landlord's accent "even now", two months after moving in (Park Interview 3).

Based on the above illustrations, it is evident that investing in immersion for the purpose of real life English communication is often challenging for study abroad learners. The general lack of English competence, as well as pragmatic competence in the local context, often leads to difficulties in securing legitimate peripheral participation and

obstructs the pursuit of desired forms of capital in study abroad. Furthermore, the above examples reveal the contested nature of investment in study abroad and the differing responses in the face of such contestation of study abroad learners – as informed by their level of resolve, and essentially their level of investment in their imagined identities.

6.6 Summary – Investing in Study Abroad

The aim of this section was to reveal the complex intricacies associated with the investment of the study abroad participants in this study. It revealed that study abroad investing can be related to desire for fun and travel, exploration of an exciting new context, and seeking distance from pressures in their native society. On the other hand, it also discussed the contested nature of investing in study abroad as part of investment in imagined identities and futures. Furthermore, it revealed the fluidity of investing in study abroad, as students continuously revisit their investment in current needs and desires, imagined identities and futures, and revise their investing according to their ability to negotiate and claim desired forms of capital in relation to their future plans. In the section that follows, the identity work of study abroad participants in this study will be explored.

6.7 Identity Work in Study Abroad

Research on study abroad, particularly in the past two decades, has offered an increasing number of studies relating to the topic of identity (Benson et al., 2013). This research has highlighted the extent to which study abroad sojourns entail identity work in relation to a number of factors, such as exposure to a new context, language, and culture; negotiation of favourable identity positions in the new context (Jackson, 2008); and investing in desired forms of capital in study abroad in attempting to construct desired imagined identities. Sections 6.1 to 6.4 offered insights into how investing in English in study abroad relates to social expectations in Korea, while subsections 6.5 to 6.5 focused on elucidating the complex nature of investing in study abroad. The analysis below

discusses identity work of the participants in this study as related to their negotiation of identity in interaction with the study abroad context, as well as their identity work relating to their investment in imagined identities.

6.7.1 Agency and Context Related Identity Outcomes

As revealed in the analysis on investment above (Sections 6.5 and 6.6), study abroad participants in this study engaged in various types of investing throughout their sojourns. It appeared that for some (Joanna, Annie, Jerome) study abroad offered distance from their native context and an opportunity to invest in various types of capital while attempting to re-imagine their identities and refine their investing for the future. For others (Park, Danny, Lucy, Tim) study abroad appeared to be a pathway to preconceived imagined identities and futures away from Korea, which informed their investing in study abroad.

As reflected in the stories of most of the participants, the identity positions attainable in their homeland were informed by the dominant societal ideologies in Korea. Extreme societal pressure, strict traditional norms, hierarchy, and inequality were some of the factors that were associated with unfavourable identity positions of the participants in this study. Investing in study abroad entailed exploring a new context in search of constructing more empowered identities.

For example, Lucy reported that for her the change of context resulted in favourable identity outcomes. Despite study abroad having its own challenges, she believed that being in New Zealand taught her to face her everyday life problems in a more constructive way:

Now, I am changing. I am more positive. Because when I lived in Korea, for example, when I had to change jobs, like I am thinking of doing here now, I would think about it all day, for weeks, and months; “Oh my God! What should I do”?

That's why my feelings were depressed and gloomy. But here, I am changing because I have to think about a more positive way. If I want to quit this job it is a good experience for me, and I tried to do my best. I am not lazy. I just want more fun and work at the job. So, yeah, I don't overthink here anymore. And that's much better for me now. Sometimes, I just think for one or two days and get stressed, and then I change. I forget about it. I have something to do. I make a plan and go with it. I don't want to get stressed for months and weeks anymore. (Lucy Interview 2)

The excerpt above exemplifies that with the change of context and the absence of societal ideologies in Korea she had struggled with, Lucy used her time in New Zealand to re-imagine her identity. She appeared to have adopted a different life philosophy through her engagement with the study abroad context. Her new perspective is that "Western people think about it more slow – today, tomorrow, third day, fourth day ... and we keep growing our life". She reported that she arrived at this conclusion by observing people around her while in New Zealand and not because "someone told me; I just thought this myself". She noticed that people were more relaxed and took their time, as opposed to Koreans who are generally more stressed and want "achievement too fast". Ultimately, her study abroad trip helped her become "more flexible" and "more peaceful", as she now thinks that "if I can't do today, tomorrow I will do more" (Lucy Interview 3).

Observing and appropriating cultural norms of the new context also entails identity work; for example, Danny initially struggled to adopt the norm of calling his English teacher by their first name, instead of "teacher", which is common in Korea. However, after admitting it "was very difficult" for him in the beginning, he would eventually accept it and label it as "unbelievable", "amazing", and "impossible in Korea" (Danny Interview 1). The absence of hierarchy-derived sociocultural norms was

particularly welcome for Danny, as it reflected positively on his agency in the study abroad context, and therefore informed his identity construction processes and outcomes. Despite admitting that he was “adjusting for a long time about the culture”, Danny was consciously engaging in constructing a more empowered identity in the study abroad context. For example, noticing that his non-Asian classmates freely interrupted lessons to ask questions, he engaged in the same practice, despite this being deemed inappropriate and inconsiderate behaviour in Korea. He also admitted that it was not always easy to ignore his native society’s norms: “If the person is in a high position we respect. Even me, I still think about that but I try to remove the thinking” (Danny Interview 3).

However, ultimately, Danny’s time in study abroad resulted in an elevated sense of agency, which made him feel “totally different”. He had firm plans of adopting some of his newly discovered identity positions once he returned to Korea:

If I don’t think something is correct, I will say it. I will have confidence to speak my mind. Before, I would worry about how to make my point to a senior person, but now I will not think about respect too much ... When I have that kind of situation I just think I have to follow rule. But now I don’t want to do that; I want to say if something is not correct. Yeah, I can say that now. Seniors are not correct always. I feel that while I am here, Western culture think very usefully. The decisions here are very fast and right. (Danny Interview 3)

Similar identity processes and outcomes were reported by Annie, who, like Danny, benefited from an elevated sense of agency in her new context. In contrast to Korea, where she reported having insufficient control of her own life, in New Zealand she felt more independent and free to make her own choices: “Because now I away from my country, and now I can think myself more, not subjective, so nobody interfere and interrupt my thinking. Yeah, independent” (Annie Interview 5). This feeling of

independence and increased sense of agency informed Annie's identity work in New Zealand. It made her "decide that I will do what I want in the future, really. Now I realised that I don't have to stand working I don't want – I really don't" (Annie Interview 5). However, constructing desired identities is often a highly uncertain and contested affair. As some of Annie's reflections show, study abroad is an identity destabilising experience that allows exposure to identities that may not be easily attainable:

Sometimes I imagine if I born here, my life so different. And my personality also different. Sometimes I also imagine, my classmate they are always so confident, and they can talk with teachers very confidently, and they can talk anything, really, (pause) I am not jealous of them, I don't know how can I say ... Yeah, I wish ... but I don't know, I can't. (Annie Interview 5)

6.7.2 English Related Identity Work: "In English, I feel we are just friends" (Danny)

In addition to context related identity work discussed in the previous section, study abroad entails identity work related to enactment of identities in the target language (in this case English). Language related identity work can be associated with a range of complex processes, some of which are: gaining pragmatic competence in L2, negotiating desired identity positions, and appropriating sociocultural norms that apply in L2.

As noted in the previous section, one of the challenges for the participants in the current study was adapting to the absence of honorifics in English, which is heavily present in their native language. As evident in Danny's case, although it may be a welcome change as it removes the burden of strictly adhering to the hierarchical status of participants in each conversation, its absence can cause discomfort and become a barrier for conversation in English. However, as Danny concludes, addressing people by their first name in conversation, even seniors and those of a higher social position, makes him feel that "in English we are just friends". Consequently, this made him conclude that he

felt friendlier as a person in New Zealand as everyone greeted him and he was “always happy” (Danny Interview 3).

Joanna reported having similar experiences when using English. She found it particularly interesting how use of English with one of her fellow Korean classmates, who is more than ten years her senior, transformed their relationship. They agreed to speak only in English, and he requested of Joanna not to “worry about showing me respect, like you would in Korean”. Joanna reports that they enjoyed speaking to each other and sometimes socialised outside of class, going to a Korean restaurant for dinner and Soju. However, forming this type of relationship while using Korean would have been complicated, as Joanna feels that speaking to a senior on equal terms would have felt “really uncomfortable, awkward, cringy” (Joanna Interview 4).

Jerome, on the other hand, believed that while speaking English he could not “express my own personality”, leaving him feeling like he was constantly attempting to “translate” the identity he associated with Korean. However, he also observed that when using English he was “getting to be outgoing person, more than in Korea”. He justified this with what he believed was a common practice amongst English speaking people in New Zealand:

Because English people usually do small talk, but in Korean case, we don't have small talk. We don't have small talk with stranger. We don't say hello if we don't know each other. If we did that it would be strange people or dangerous people ... If I use English to English people, because English people have an open mind to strangers ... I can be outgoing person, yeah. (Jerome Interview 2)

As Jerome observes, communicating in English in New Zealand, while attempting to adapt to what he recognised as pragmatic norms in his new context, resulted in identity work that changed Jerome's perception of his own “personality”.

Similar experiences were also reported by Annie who reported struggling with finding appropriate “reaction” in English. This affected her interaction with people in English; for example, when using phrases such as “what a shame”, she would feel “strange”, claiming that

even though I know I should use it in this situation, I don’t feel comfortable. I am not sure if I used it in the right context. It feels fake ... Sometimes I say this sentence, and I think maybe they think it is not a real reaction. I am real! It’s just that I am not sure about the sentence. (Annie Interview 3)

In addition, Annie also noticed that code switching can be beneficial when seeking to position herself in certain situations. She claimed that “English is much more direct than Korean. Much more”! She gave an example of a situation where she consciously chose one language over the other in order to fulfil her goal: “A few weeks ago I had an argument with my Korean friend. I didn’t say in English with him, because English is more direct. If I used Korean I am more polite and I can’t speak the main topic”. On the other hand, she claimed that she liked the directness of English and that “I think when I go back to Korea I will be more direct than before ... I speak English here, because of speaking English maybe my thinking change”. She felt more “comfortable” and more “free” when speaking English (Annie Interview 3).

However, battling with low English proficiency entails its own identity work and can have negative implications for study abroad students looking to attain favourable positioning in their new contexts; for example, Annie described an incident where her English proficiency prevented her from successfully engaging in an informal conversation, causing frustration and limiting her involvement in conversation with others:

Yeah, my English now is improved. But I think I need more practice. Especially when I describe something. When I talk about my story I can't. Today also, I really wanted to explain about this, in Korea when we eat meal, we don't hold up the plate. But that time, I can't remember "hold up", and I couldn't explain my story, so that was my weak point. So that makes me feel bad. Even my friend speaks better, it makes me feel smaller. (Annie Interview 3)

6.8 Investing in Future Selves – Identity Work in Progress

As evident from the stories of the participants, the identity work and outcomes experienced in study abroad are varied and can be related to a host of factors. These can depend on the imagined identities that students invest in during study abroad, the degree of success with which they are able to access valued forms of capital in study abroad that relate to those imagined futures, and the extent to which study abroad can prompt formation of new imagined identities and plans for the future.

For example, Joanna's initial plan of simply visiting her relatives in New Zealand and working on her English changed as she found herself increasingly invested in an imagined future that she had not considered before. Her positive experiences in her language school served as motivation to imagine herself as an expert English speaker capable of securing legitimate membership in her desired city of London. Her identity work was partly informed by her accepting English as a desired language, given that it poses fewer sociocultural barriers that obstruct free communication, unlike her native Korean that is culturally coded and dependent on honorifics.

Danny and Annie reported similar identity work related to the use of English. They enjoyed communicating freely with people in English, without the burden of demonstrating the culturally appropriate level of respect to people based on their age or social status. Furthermore, in New Zealand they both reported benefiting from an elevated

sense of agency and possibility. They felt more in control of their lives and more free to make their choices without being judged or criticised. This entailed an identity construction process that allowed both Danny and Annie to re-imagine their lives in this new context, a context that allowed them to be more of who they desired to be – allowing them to re-imagine their identities and plans for the future.

Likewise, for Lucy, the study abroad journey was related to identity work – though in her case it was pre-planned as a journey of adventure and self-discovery. Despite its own struggles, it was a journey that Lucy used to grow as a person, and learn a new approach to life that was different from the one she had experienced within the confines of her own culture. Her identity work was associated with becoming a more positive person and being able to deal with everyday life issues with less pressure and suffering than she did in Korea.

Lastly, Park, who insisted he had not changed as a person since coming from Korea, soon reported feeling isolated and lonely due to attempting to distance himself from Koreans and fully immerse himself in the New Zealand context by speaking English to locals whenever possible. He claimed his English was not good enough in order to create deep relationships with locals and thus reported pursuing friendships with Koreans at his school.

As revealed in this section, the identity work of study abroad students is of a complex nature, and consists of a set of multilayered, interconnected processes. As the stories of the participants in this study have demonstrated, study abroad sojourns can be informed by firm plans for the future, or indeed loosely defined ones. In either case, it is evident that investing in study abroad closely informs the identity work process; successful investing in desired forms of capital may result in the initiation of construction of desired imagined identities, while failed investing prompts a revision of plans for the

future. Whatever the outcome, the exposure to a new context, language, and culture, prompts identity work in study abroad learners that is largely dependent on their personal trajectories and experiences during their sojourns. The concluding section below discusses identity outcomes of the participants, while using identity labels to highlight their emerging identities.

6.9 Revealing the Emerging Study Abroad Identities

Despite the fluid nature of identity and the identity formation process being subject to ongoing negotiation across contexts and changing circumstances, the identity work of the participants in this study during their New Zealand sojourn has yielded evident identity outcomes. The identity labels used for each of the primary participants below are representative of the emerging identities constructed during their time in New Zealand.

6.9.1 The “New” Joanna: the English Expert and Future Resident of London

As outlined in Joanna’s story in Chapter 5, her study abroad trip to New Zealand was initially not linked to a preconceived future plan. She intended to spend time with her New Zealand based extended family while attending a full-time English course. However, her interaction with the study abroad context, successful English learning, and friendships with other study abroad students instigated identity work and prompted Joanna to envision and invest in a new imagined identity.

During her time in New Zealand Joanna benefitted from an elevated sense of agency. Influenced by what she perceived as widely accepted social norms in New Zealand, she got her first tattoo, and socialised and partied with her classmates, sometimes until much later at night than she was allowed in Korea. This increased sense of agency paved the way for the formation of what she described as the “new Joanna”. Encouraged by her English progress and praised by teachers and classmates, Joanna

found herself increasingly invested in English learning and developed visions of membership in imagined communities (Kanno, 2003). Specifically, due to her affinity for the British accent, she imagined the “new Joanna” using her English proficiency and becoming a legitimate member (Lave & Wenger, 1991) of the London community.

Ultimately, Joanna’s successful investing in English and the positive influence of study abroad on her sense of agency informed her identity work and instigated the formation of a “new Joanna” with a new imagined future.

6.9.2 Annie: the Cosmopolitan in Search of Self-Empowerment

Due to the pressures she felt in Korea and the lack of agency that she associated with her life in her homeland, Annie consciously embarked on her study abroad journey in the hope of creating a more empowered identity. Her negative experiences in Korea prompted her to invest in study abroad English learning as a pathway to a new identity.

Over the course of her sojourn she invested in English learning in the hope of improving her opportunities for immersion and interaction in the study abroad context, as well as using English on her future travels. She also invested in friendships with her language school classmates, thereby gaining valuable cultural exposure. As her story revealed, her investing prompted an identity destabilisation (Block, 2007) as both negotiating her identity in English and forming friendships with non-Koreans entailed significant identity work. However, crucially for her identity formation in study abroad, Annie received validation and felt accepted and encouraged in her new social networks, which led to an increased sense of agency and freedom. Her time in New Zealand prompted reflections on her life in Korea in light of her positive experiences in study abroad, and encouraged Annie to consciously engage in forming a more empowered identity. She claimed she felt happier and more extroverted as a person in New Zealand due to her increased sense of agency, and vowed to continue on the same path. The new

Annie would preserve the right to make her own choices and refuse to relinquish her agency in the face of cultural or societal pressures.

6.9.3 Park: the Struggling Migrant Chasing the Elusive Residency Dream

From the very start, Park's study abroad sojourn was intended to be a pathway to residency in New Zealand. His plan was to transition from a study abroad language learner to a New Zealand resident as quickly as possible. He pursued this goal with great determination, remaining prepared to do whatever he could to improve his chances of successfully settling in New Zealand. His plan primarily depended on English, which was at the centre of his investing, as gaining residency status involved passing an IELTS test. Furthermore, Park knew that English was essential for successful integration into New Zealand society once the residency status was eventually obtained. Park remained largely practical in maximising his opportunities for English practice and immersion throughout his study abroad stay. He invested in formal English lessons, changed two part-time jobs, lived with a homestay Kiwi family, and even attended church sermons in search of new networks and opportunities to speak English with locals.

Though Park's imagined future of a well-integrated permanent resident of New Zealand society served as a motivating factor for his investment, his identity work during his stay was steering him into a different direction. He realised that improving English proficiency would take much longer to achieve and that his current level of English was hindering his immersion. He struggled to understand the Kiwi accent, which prevented him from negotiating favourable positioning in his first workplace, as well as limiting his communication with his Kiwi hosts. Despite avoiding contact with Koreans in favour of seeking membership in local social networks, he realised his English was still a barrier and he felt increasingly lonely. The physical distance from his wife and child exacerbated the feeling of isolation. In short, despite Park's goodwill and sacrifice, investment in his

imagined identity proved challenging and Park's emerging identity became that of a struggling migrant chasing the elusive residency and happy future in New Zealand, forcing him to eventually revise the plot (Benson, 2012) and return to Korea.

6.9.4 Danny: a Liberated Environmental Engineer with an Imagined Future in New Zealand

Danny's complicated relationship with Korea featured as a central topic throughout his involvement in this study. It significantly informed his identity work in study abroad and investment in English learning, which were important building blocks of his imagined identity. Danny frequently referred to his frustrations with the lack of agency he felt he possessed in Korea, and his previous English study in Korea and the study abroad sojourn were investments in an imagined future in New Zealand, where he hoped to create a different life.

Danny's positive experiences in New Zealand further strengthened his investment in an imagined future in New Zealand. Furthermore, he engaged in identity work towards building an imagined identity that is consistent with his imagined future. He felt liberated in New Zealand and freer to express his mind than in Korea, thereby benefiting from an elevated sense of agency. The emerging identity he was constructing in New Zealand appeared to offer him confidence and directness that he desired to retain, even after he returned to Korea, as Danny claimed he would no longer remain quiet in the face of authority but instead speak his mind, regardless of the consequences. Ultimately, his positive interaction with the New Zealand context during study abroad validated and justified his investing in an imagined future in New Zealand, further stimulating Danny's investment and identity work, and informing the development of his emerging imagined identity.

6.9.5 Lucy: a Rebel on a Mission to Re-imagine her Identity

Lucy's story is dominated by struggle and sacrifice for success, happiness and inner peace that she never quite managed to attain in her homeland. Her study abroad sojourn was planned as an attempt to distance herself from her struggles at home and explore a different context, which she hoped would offer her the opportunity to find peace and re-imagine her identity and future. She invested in English study in New Zealand with the aim of gaining future employment opportunities outside of Korea, while also investing in English practice and immersion opportunities through work.

Lucy's rebellious nature, which she particularly expressed through resisting various societal norms in Korea, appeared less dominant during her time in New Zealand. She claimed that the New Zealand way of life made her feel calmer, less stressed, and more peaceful, as she felt free to take her time and reflect on her life decisions, much more so than in Korea. This was crucial in removing the sense of pressure she felt in Korea, which she believed made her a more positive person.

However, despite her positive identity outcomes, her investing in an imagined future abroad was not without difficulties. As a non-native speaker of English, she felt her employment opportunities were limited, and communication with locals problematic, leading to some negative experiences during her stay. This led her to conclude that life abroad would entail a number of difficulties that she would not face as a native in her home country, leading her to the decision to return to Korea after her sojourn. Nonetheless, she was determined to build on her positive identity outcomes in study abroad by resisting the pressures of Korea and building and pursuing a more balanced lifestyle.

6.9.6 Tim: a Socialite with New Zealand Residency Dreams

As his story depicted, Tim's life in Korea was mainly consumed by work, to the extent that he felt trapped in a "sleep-work-sleep" cycle and had little time to explore

other interests and hobbies. Through the study abroad sojourn in New Zealand he invested in a different future, as he hoped to eventually remain as a resident in the country. Through his investing and identity work in New Zealand Tim experienced identity outcomes that were aligned with his desired imagined identity.

He envisioned life in New Zealand that involved having a Kiwi partner and a family, and an active social life. He invested in English as the centrepiece of this vision, which he needed in order to secure residency in the country and to immerse himself in local social networks. Furthermore, he pursued friendships with other study abroad students, as well as locals. Living with a young Kiwi couple who frequently hosted house parties was associated with some of his favourite experiences. Despite having to endure somewhat unfavourable living conditions, Tim often expressed his happiness at having the opportunity to be part of social events that he previously only saw in movies; this informed his identity work, as he claimed that he had become less shy, and desired for this to be a part of his imagined identity in New Zealand.

Ultimately, through interacting with the New Zealand context, Tim developed new desires for the future, engaged in identity work and invested in an imagined identity that was significantly different from the one he associated with Korea.

6.10 Cross-case Thematic Analysis Summary

This chapter highlights the salient themes of the study and provides an inter-thematic analysis, closely guided by the research questions. It begins with an analysis of the relationship between various Korean influences and investment in English learning in study abroad; subsequently, participants' investing in New Zealand is analysed in light of the influences of their Korean habitus (Bourdieu, 1991), their exposure to and interaction with the study abroad context, and the imagined identities they invested in; and, lastly, the

participants' identity work is highlighted, along with profiles of their emerging identities presented at the end of the chapter.

The discussion Chapter that follows situates the analysis from Chapters 5 and 6 within the relevant literature, discusses the findings in relation to the research questions, and offers a conceptual synthesis of the findings in this study.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

In line with the focus of this study, previous chapters have outlined: the interplay between various societal processes and the formation of English ideology in Korea, and their relationships with investment in English and study abroad learning amongst Korean learners of English (Chapter 2); the theoretical framework that situates English learning in study abroad as investment in imagined identities (Chapter 3); and the analysis that explores and contextualises the collected data in line with the aforementioned chapters (Chapters 5 & 6). The present chapter offers a theoretical conceptualisation of the findings. It begins with a conceptual model that illustrates the theoretical implications of the study. The chapter then discusses and explores key conclusions of this research in light of the salient findings and the relevant literature that underpins the study. The research questions are used as headings to organise the discussion and categorise findings in relation to the scope of each question.

7.1 Encompassing Study Abroad through Imagined Identities, Habitus, Investment, and Identity Work

As the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 reveals, the learners' investment in study abroad relates to their Korean habitus and imagined futures, and entails identity work. The analysis highlighted complex relationships among the concepts that informed study abroad outcomes in this research. Below, Figure 7.1 outlines The Study Abroad Theoretical Model that illustrates the relationships among the salient concepts in this study.

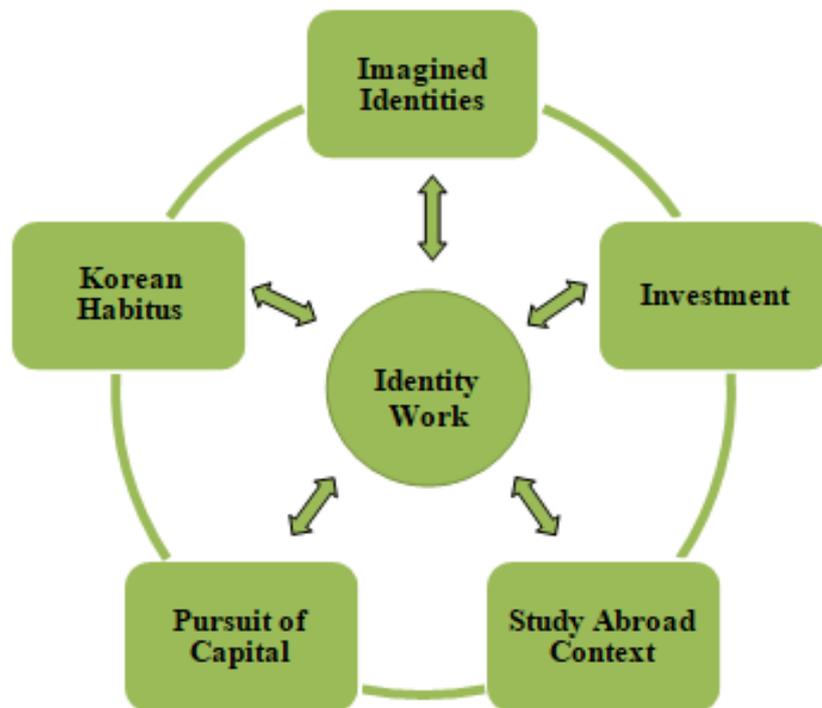


Figure 7.1 The Study Abroad Theoretical Model

The above model conceptualises the study abroad language learning and identity experiences of the participants in this study through key theoretical concepts derived from the study abroad literature. As the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 has demonstrated, for the participants in this study, investing (Norton, 2013) in English in study abroad, as well as in a variety of other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1991) relevant to their imagined identities, was informed by their Korean habitus (Bourdieu, 1991) and associated Korea-related constraints; furthermore, through study abroad the participants explored their possibilities for the future and negotiated various imagined identities (Norton, 2000; Norton & Early, 2011). Therefore, as the model in Figure 7.1 shows, the study abroad sojourn is characterised by a continuous interaction of mutually-informing elements and processes: Imagined identities are negotiated through various types of investing, interaction with the study abroad context, and success or failure in gaining access to

desired forms of capital, while being informed by the Korean habitus. The outer circle in the model implies a continuous, mutually-informing relationship among the elements that it connects.

Finally, identity work emerges as the fundamental process of the study abroad experience, as informed by investing in imagined identities and the “negotiation of difference” (Block, 2007, p. 864) in the study abroad context. Block (2007) claims that “identity work occurs in the company of others ... with whom to varying degrees individuals share beliefs, motives, values, activities, and practices”, while “negotiating new subject positions at the crossroads of the past, present, and future” (p. 27). Study abroad learners engage in identity work through testing the feasibility of their current imagined identities and investing, appropriating or rejecting the local cultural, social, and linguistic norms accordingly, or gaining new ideas about imagined identities worth pursuing in the future.

In sum, the above model illustrates the dynamicity of the participants’ study abroad experiences in this study, informed by push and pull factors and interdependence of the concepts outlined above; moreover, the model highlights the fluid nature of identity work and investment, in light of their ongoing revision, informed by small and large successes and failures in constructing desired identities and pursuing future goals.

The sections below highlight the salient findings of the study, drawing on the relevant theory and the model in Figure 7.1, while categorising the discussion according to its relevance to each research question.

7.2 Research Question 1: How do socially imposed expectations of Korean society relate to Investment of Koreans in English learning and study abroad?

As discussed in Chapter 2, English has traditionally been perceived as a language of importance in Korea. With Korea’s economic success in recent decades and the

emphasis on competition in the global marketplace, the presence of English in Korea as an essential asset in the globalised world has grown exponentially, resulting in what many now refer to as English fever (J. S.-Y. Park, 2009). In conjunction with neoliberal values that characterise modern Korean society and encourage societal competition for upward social mobility (Song, 2011), English fever has significantly contributed to the formation of English ideology (Kroskrity, 2010) which centres on the notion of necessitation (J.S.-Y. Park, 2009). As such, English is widely imposed on the Korean population as one of the pre-requisites of success in Korea. As the following subsections illustrate, and as the analysis in the preceding two chapters has revealed, English ideology compounded by societal forces stemming from the hierarchical nature of Korean society, to educational, social, and workplace pressures, shapes the socially imposed expectations of Korean society (*Korean Habitus* – see Figure 7.1) that relate to investments (*Investment*) in English learning and study abroad (*Pursuit of Capital*). Furthermore, the pursuit of English in study abroad strongly features as a form of resistance to social expectations and pressures in Korea, and a pathway to new, more empowered imagined identities.

7.2.1 From Workplace Struggles in Korea to English as a Bridge to Employment (and Residency) Abroad

The participants' stories and the cross-case analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively contained numerous references to life in modern day Korea. They revealed issues of power imbalances due to the hierarchical structure of society (Nelson, 2000), particularly in relation to workplace culture. Most of the participants with prior work experience in Korea referred to workplace struggles as a catalyst for seeking distance through pursuing English abroad, and even exploring options of settling outside of Korea. The inability to exercise agency (Ahearn, 2001) in the workplace was one of the dominant themes amongst participants who were employed in Korea. Viewed through the

theoretical model in Figure 7.1, the workplace struggles informed the interplay between the *Korean habitus* and *identity work*, leaving some of the participants feeling powerless, resentful, and pessimistic about their lives in Korea; consequently, they perceived Korea as a place where their *investment* in desired forms of *capital* in relation to their *imagined identities* was obstructed by various societal ideologies, especially the Confucian-Capitalist ideology (Shim et al., 2008) that informs the workplace culture. Study abroad therefore emerged as a form of resistance to the societal expectations in Korea related to the workplace, and a potential catalyst for new *imagined identities*, possibilities for the future (Norton, 2000), and even employment opportunities and residence abroad (see Figure 7.1).

For example, Park felt powerless when faced with what he believed was an unfair dismissal. Feeling he had done his utmost in his role as a Physical Education teacher, performed to a high standard, built positive relationships with his students and the previous school principal, he struggled to accept that he was simply being released because of the incoming school principal's preference for another candidate. Furthermore, with reference to Figure 7.1, he clearly outlined this workplace episode as the driving force behind his investment (*Investment*) in English as a crucial form of capital (*Pursuit of Capital*) for his imagined future (*Imagined Identities*) in the West.

Both Danny and Annie reported similar issues, with workplace hierarchy and power imbalance diminishing their sense of agency. Danny's efforts to further his career in Environmental Science were thwarted by his seniors, who he felt exploited his work for their own interests and benefits. He believed this limited his ability to gain new skills and work experience. Subsequently, he terminated his employment and pursued private English study for two years, with the ultimate goal of doing a PhD, building a career, and eventually settling in New Zealand. Similarly, Annie's workplace experience was

characterised by lack of agency in her dental hygienist role. She described her relationship with her boss as “vertical” and claimed she was unable to challenge his authority, leading to an increased sense of frustration and resentment that contributed to her decision to leave her job and Korea altogether. As in Danny’s case, Annie recognised English as a crucial form of capital that justified her study abroad sojourn, and believed that improving her English sufficiently would create opportunities for an settling abroad. Therefore, in both Danny’s and Annie’s cases, workplace culture, as part of the socially imposed expectations of Korean society informed their investment in study abroad English learning, as they explored their possibilities for the future (Norton, 2013).

Finally, Tim’s investment in study abroad English learning was also closely related to his workplace experiences in Korea. Though slightly different to that of Park, Danny and Annie, in that it did not entail direct references to difficulties with power relations and hierarchy, Tim repeatedly identified his exhausting work schedule as the primary reason for his desire to settle outside of Korea. Indexical of Koreans’ extreme work habits (Park & Lee, 2009), Tim’s full-time employment, which often included late nights and most weekends, featured strongly as his justification for investing in English in study abroad and planning to settle permanently in New Zealand. Furthermore, his family’s willingness to fund his sojourn and their keen interest in his English progress highlighted the relationship between Tim’s investment in English learning and the widespread English ideology in Korea (J. S.-Y. Park, 2009).

In sum, a number of participants (Danny, Park, Tim, Annie) highlighted workplace issues as a significant contributing factor to their discontent in Korea. Consequently, it became one of the driving forces behind new imagined identities and futures away from Korea. The above participants sought to negotiate their imagined identities in the study abroad context by pursuing various types of investments,

negotiating access to relevant forms of capital – all the while engaging in identity work. Furthermore, their *Korean habitus* justified English proficiency as a valued form of capital in Korea, while they simultaneously recognised English as a crucial form of capital in relation to their *investment*, *identity work*, and pursuit of other capital in *study abroad* that relates to their *imagined identities*.

As outlined in the next section, the above work-related issues stem from wider societal ideologies and pressures that inform the context, largely derived from the blending of traditionalist Confucian values with modern Korea's capitalist ideology.

7.2.2 “English Duty” and “Fast Achievement”: The Pressures of the Confucian-Capitalist Blend

As discussed in section 2.4.2, the face of modern Korea can largely be described as a product of traditionalist Confucianism and contemporary capitalism. As revealed in the previous section, this Confucian-Capitalist blend (Shim et. al., 2008) reflects strongly on workplace conditions and employee agency. However, its influence on the overarching societal ideologies is also evident, as attested to by numerous references of the participants in this study to societal pressure and emphasis on conforming to societal ideologies and hierarchy. In the context of the model in Figure 7.1, the life experiences and difficulties in Korea described by the participants created tension and negatively affected their *investment* in *imagined identities* in Korea, thereby also prompting negative *identity work* in their native society, which reflected on their *Korean habitus* and served as a catalyst for subsequent investing (*Investment*) in English (*Pursuit of Capital*) in study abroad (*Study Abroad Context*) as a pathway to new *imagined identities*.

For example, in addition to speaking at length about his hierarchy-related workplace struggles, Danny frequently referred to hierarchy as the underlying cause of wider societal issues in Korea. Opposing his society's Confucian principle of conforming

to societal ideologies, he questioned, resisted, and struggled with many aspects of life in Korea. He complained that people persistently questioned his way of thinking and life choices, as they were in opposition with local ideologies. For example, some of his students felt uneasy with his suggestion to abandon the use of honorifics during lab tutorials, despite his intention to soften the vertical power relations during discussions and encourage students to freely ask questions. He saw this as their socially embedded fear of violating hierarchical norms, which he hoped would eventually disappear in Korea. Furthermore, he criticised the competitive, “harsh” Korean environment, which he believed disposed people to persistently enquire about and comment on others’ life plans and goals, creating a sense of pressure. For him, this translated into friends and family claiming he should “stay in Korea”, that he is “too old to study English”, and expecting him to “improve English a lot” after his short stay in New Zealand. Ultimately, he felt that he always had to “consider other people” when in Korea, and felt pressured and criticised if his views were misaligned with those imposed by the overarching societal ideologies. Therefore, Danny believed that relocating overseas was the best solution, and study abroad was part of the pathway to his imagined future in New Zealand, and in spite of a number of difficulties that he faced to achieve this goal, he was firmly invested and claimed that his plan “will not be changed”.

Annie’s and Lucy’s experiences largely corresponded with Danny’s. Annie felt coerced into a lifestyle of pressure, due to socially reproduced ideologies, as shaped by the Confucian-Capitalist influences. She referred to her experience of learning English in Korea, as she felt “forced” to study it, despite hating it, reflecting the influences of the English frenzy (J.S.-Y. Park, 2009). Moreover, she struggled to find happiness due to the constant pressure and ruthless competition, where all decisions are weighed in terms of “advantage or disadvantage”. Rather than offering support and encouragement, people

“thought negative” and instilled doubts in her mind, telling her that she would “give up some day” in pursuing her life goals. Lucy’s story portrayed a similar picture, as she claimed that “in Korea everyone do same”. The uniformity of a heavily competitive, test-oriented education system that is aligned with societal ideals of contested education as a pre-requisite of social mobility and success (Seth, 2002), was closely related to Lucy’s struggles and isolation. The Confucian teaching of heeding the advice of seniors (in this case the Korean elites who influence the formation of societal ideologies) encouraged Koreans to widely follow societal trends (Song, 2011). Lucy purposefully opposed such trends, often to the surprise of her peers, who expressed concerns that she risked having limited future options. On the other hand, Lucy thought that Koreans were obsessed with “wanting achievement too fast” and that she was unwilling to make the extreme sacrifices that this often entails. Thus, both Annie and Lucy recognised the imposed social expectations of Korean society as facets of modern societal ideologies that most Koreans endure and that entail a number of negative consequences.

Finally, Joanna’s views also aligned with those of Danny, Annie and Lucy. She felt that it was partly due to competition-derived jealousy that some of her university peers discouraged her from going on a study abroad sojourn, and partly due to their claims that she would jeopardise her studies and subsequently decrease her chances of securing a desired job. She felt that such ways of thinking reflected a “narrow point of view” that people in Korea may suffer from, which is indexical of the belief that socially desired life paths ought to be pursued. Consequently, she claimed that life in Korea sometimes felt “stressful” and “like army”.

With reference to Figure 7.1, this section shows the relationship between societal ideologies and social expectations of Korean society (*Korean Habitus*) that consequently served as catalysts for investing (*Investment*) in English in study abroad (*Pursuit of*

Capital) in search of new possibilities for the future and new imagined identities (*Imagined Identities*). Furthermore, it reveals how investing in imagined identities through learning English is guided by “how a person understand his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how a person understands their possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2000, p. 5). The following section explores the dynamic relationship between investment in English and study abroad and the social expectations of Korean society.

7.2.3 Investment in English as Adherence and Resistance to Societal Ideologies in Korea

As evident from the participants’ stories, the motives behind English investment are varied. They range from global citizenry dreams (Joanna), to residence abroad plans (Park, Annie, Danny, Tim), to improved employment opportunities in Korea (Lucy, Jerome). However, the key underlying relationship between socially imposed expectations of Korean society and investment in English and study abroad can be described as dynamic: firstly, investment in English is associated with language ideology and wider societal norms and expectations in Korea; secondly, English is used to resist Korea’s dominant societal ideologies in search of opportunities to settle abroad. Though the two relationships appear mutually exclusive, for some participants they coexisted.

For example, Joanna’s investment in English in study abroad was funded by her family, as they considered it a worthy venture, given the importance of English in Korea. Furthermore, Joanna frequently used social media to share stories and photos from her New Zealand sojourn with friends in Korea, often receiving praise and encouragement, and feeling proud that she influenced some of her friends to consider embarking on a similar journey. Moreover, although this was not her primary goal, she pondered one day pursuing a career in English teaching in Korea. The above examples are illustrative of

English as a valued form of capital (Bourdieu, 1991) in Korea, and Joanna's investment as aligned with the *Korean habitus* and the socially imposed expectations in Korea with regard to English, which "signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language" (Norton, 2013, p. 6).

However, Joanna simultaneously explored plans for the future that informed her investment in English learning, and that appeared as an act of resistance towards Korea's societal ideologies. She associated English with the formation of the "new Joanna" with a newly acquired sense of agency (Ahearn, 2001) to engage in identity work and pursue experiences that Korea's socially imposed expectations would have largely prohibited. Consequently, investment in English for Joanna signified the investment in an imagined identity as a global citizen and a future resident of London – away from the social constraints associated with Korea.

On the other hand, in Park's and Danny's cases, investment in English learning and study abroad was repeatedly labelled as a stepping stone for a future outside of Korea. For them, the Confucian-Capitalist ideology of modern Korean society imposed constraints on professional development and created a high-pressure environment with strong social emphasis on adherence to societal ideologies. In other words, both Park and Danny invested in English in order to resist the pressures of socially imposed expectations of Korean society by seeking a new life abroad (or new imagined identities).

Lastly, Lucy's and Jerome's investment in English in study abroad appeared to be of a more practical nature, and aligned with Korean ideology of English and the associated importance of English in improving employment outcomes. Jerome explicitly stated that studying English was important "to earn money" in Korea. On the other hand, Lucy's strategy was to seek employment opportunities with foreign companies in Korea; therefore, her investment in English was motivated by the desire to avoid the socially

imposed expectations related to work in Korea, but also aligned with the ideology of English as a prized asset (*Pursuit of Capital* – see Figure 7.1) that contributed to favourable employment options and career success.

7.2.4 Summary: Claiming English to Settle Abroad – Disguised as Pursuit of English as Valued Form of Capital in Korea

As illustrated in sections 7.2 to 7.2.3, the investment in English learning and study abroad in relation to socially imposed expectations of Korean society is multilayered, varied, and at times conflicting. The versatility of English as a global language and a highly desired form of capital in Korea offered participants flexibility when relating their investing in English learning in study abroad to the socially imposed expectations of Korean society.

For example, Tim strategised his investment in English in study abroad as a worthy venture that guaranteed his family’s funding. Furthermore, he claimed he enjoyed using social media to portray his sojourn as a success to friends at home and gain recognition for having settled well in New Zealand. Annie and Joanna engaged in similar activities, as Annie frequently updated her social media profiles and claimed her “face is happy” every time she sees her photos and videos from New Zealand. Likewise, Joanna particularly enjoyed the attention her Facebook profile was getting from friends in Korea, and she felt “proud” that she had inspired many of her friends to consider studying English abroad. Finally, Jerome’s investment in English was aligned with English ideology in Korea, as he claimed that his family’s financial support for his English study was to improve his job prospects in Korea.

On the other hand, for the participants mentioned above, investing in English was also recognised as a strategy to remain abroad and evade the struggles of Korea and the high-pressure lifestyle that it entails. As their stories revealed, remaining in New Zealand

or settling elsewhere in the West was the favoured option. However, in case such plans would fail to materialise, improving their English and gaining experience of living in a study abroad context remained valuable forms of capital they could use to their benefit in Korea.

Ultimately, the underlying relationship between investment in English in study abroad and socially imposed expectations in Korea was characterised by the versatility of English being used to explore options of resettling abroad and fleeing the pressures of Korea, while claiming study abroad experience and English improvement as valued forms of capital in the event of returning to Korea.

7.3 Research Question 2: What Imagined Identities do Korean Study Abroad English Learners in New Zealand Invest in?

As discussed in Chapter 3, in line with the social turn in SLA (Block, 2003), this study explores the social situatedness of the study abroad learner, particularly in relation to various types of investment that align with desires for the future. The previous section has outlined the relationship between the participants' investing (*Investment*) in English (*Pursuit of Capital*) and socially imposed expectations of Korean society (*Korean Habitus*), thereby providing insight into some of the roots of study abroad investing explored in this section. The current section focuses on specific types of investing engaged in by the participants during their respective sojourns (*Study Abroad Context* – see Figure 7.1); furthermore, it highlights the relationships between investing and imagined futures (Norton & Kamal, 2003), while also problematising the extent to which investment success or failure informs imagined identity changes, or confirms the imagined (Simon, 1992) futures worth striving for (*Imagined Identities*). In line with the illustration in Figure 7.1, this section reveals the fluid character of investing (*Investment*) in *imagined identities*, as informed by continued re-evaluation of future goals in light of

the positive and negative outcomes that characterise individual study abroad (*Study Abroad Context*) experiences.

7.3.1 From Existing to New Study Abroad Imagined Identities

As revealed by the stories of the participants and the subsequent cross-case analysis in Chapter 6, their English learning study abroad journeys in New Zealand were closely related to goals and desires for the future. The study abroad context offered access to various forms of desired capital (Bourdieu, 1991) in relation to the participants' future goals. Consequently, through investing in study abroad capital, the participants were investing in their imagined identities. Furthermore, at times, the study abroad experience itself was a catalyst for new investing and construction of new imagined future selves. As outlined below, their varied investing in English, friendships with locals and fellow study abroad learners, employment opportunities and travel, were all closely related to the construction of imagined identities, such as those of a New Zealand resident, expert English speaker, global citizen, and others.

For example, Danny's and Joanna's investing and their associated imagined identities were informed by study abroad experience. As discussed in section 7.1.1, Danny's initial decision to invest in an English learning study abroad sojourn was related to his work and hierarchy related issues in Korea, from which he sought to distance himself. He therefore invested in the imagined identity of a New Zealand resident who would reap the benefits of life in New Zealand, such as having a work-life balance and enjoying his social life, and being able to raise a family in what he recognised as a more family-friendly society. His positive New Zealand experiences validated his investing in an imagined identity of a New Zealand resident, with a sense of belonging in his imagined New Zealand community (Norton, 2013). Similarly, study abroad experience had a similar impact on Joanna's imagined future, as her positive experiences and

successful investing in English provided impetus for new imagined identities. Exposure to the New Zealand context positively destabilised her sense of identity (Block, 2007) and prompted her to adopt norms and practices she admitted she would not have adopted in Korea, the most notable of which was her decision to get a tattoo. Subsequently, the “new Joanna” had an imagined future of an English expert, a future London resident, and a global citizen, which is aligned with the claim that “a focus on imagined communities in language learning enables us to explore how learners’ affiliation with such communities might affect their learning trajectories” and future plans (Norton, 2013, p. 8) . In addition to arduously pursuing English proficiency, and focusing specifically on London slang, Joanna invested in her emerging new self through pursuing friendships with classmates from diverse backgrounds, with whom she enjoyed engaging in cultural exchange. In sum, as illustrated in Figure 7.1, Danny’s and Joanna’s examples demonstrate the mutually informing relationship between investment and imagined identities. While investing is often informed by desires for the future, the study abroad experience and successful investment in its various forms of capital may validate the existing, and prompt new, imagined identities that inform subsequent investing.

However, as revealed in the next section, unsuccessful investing likewise informs imagined identities, as it may prompt a revising of the plot (Barkhuizen, 2017) and a change of desires and understanding of the possibilities for the future.

7.3.2 Between Dreamy Study Abroad Goals and Contested Reality, to Revising Plans for the Future

Funded by their families, some of the participants in this study enjoyed their study abroad lifestyles as their daily lives revolved around attending English lessons, socialising with classmates and having fun. In some cases, such as those of Annie and Tim in this study, this initial excitement and the appeal of study abroad context prompted idealised

visions of the future, with plans for global citizenry and a lavish, exciting life abroad. On the other hand, those seeking to support themselves through study abroad experienced an entirely different reality, as they experienced the struggles of surviving as study abroad sojourners with limited English knowledge and a general unfamiliarity with the practices of the local context as some of their many obstacles. The above distinction is important in determining the extent to which the participants' imagined belonging in imagined communities (Wenger, 1998) and their imagined identities are tested and negotiated during their sojourn, since such negotiation informs "agency, motivation, investment, and resistance" in language learners (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007, p. 669). Thus, as illustrated below, unfavourable investment outcomes prompt revisions of imagined futures.

For example, those participants whose trips were funded by their respective families (Joanne, Tim, Annie), appear to have faced far fewer obstacles that would have tested the resolve of their investing. Thus, the feasibility of their imagined possibilities for the future remained largely untested. Tim's goal of remaining in New Zealand through gaining access to tertiary education appeared unrealistic in light of his English struggles and his realisation that improving his English would take longer than he expected. Furthermore, his hesitance to seek employment opportunities, with the excuse that he preferred to focus on his English study, further limited his study abroad experience, as his lack of investing prevented him from exploring the feasibility of his imagined identity and future in New Zealand. Tim himself expressed doubts, claiming that he had paid "big money" to study English in New Zealand, and that he may be "wasting time".

Annie's situation was somewhat similar, as her family's financial support also channelled her study abroad stay to a lifestyle of socialising and leisure. Her future goals remained somewhat vague, as her plans shifted from permanent residency in New Zealand, to residency in China, or maybe Australia. Ultimately, both Tim and Annie

pursued few immersion opportunities in study abroad, which would have tested their resolve to invest in an imagined future in New Zealand, or abroad in general. Their departure from New Zealand shortly after their involvement in this study ended attested to the lack of investing in their imagined identities as future New Zealand residents. To an extent, Annie's and Tim's examples fit the description of negative stereotype study abroad Korean learners, whose travels abroad place extreme financial pressures on their families, without yielding significant returns (Abelmann et al., 2015).

On the other hand, Park and Lucy were conditioned by more pressing circumstances in the absence of financial assistance from their families. Consequently, their determined investing was spurred by their impetus to test the feasibility of their clearly defined imagined futures. Park sought numerous employment options, secured a homestay living arrangement, and explored the study abroad context for English practice opportunities. He did so with the intention of experiencing life in New Zealand without seeking the safety net of study abroad student networks. Furthermore, his efforts reflected the strength of his investment in his imagined future with his family in New Zealand. For Lucy, her study abroad investment was also clearly defined as investment in a new identity and an attempt to leave behind her struggles in Korea. Like Park, Lucy struggled at her kitchen hand position, but claimed she was obliged to do it for her "new life" and her "study abroad experience", as well as to financially support herself. Moreover, she saw it as an opportunity to explore the feasibility of her tentative plan to settle outside of Korea, somewhere in the West.

In sum, Park's and Lucy's investing entailed unanticipated difficulties that prompted them to revise their plans for the future. Park realised that his limited English constrained him to low-paying jobs and prevented him from engaging in meaningful conversation with locals; furthermore, he realised that his three-year plan of acquiring

permanent residency and bringing his family to New Zealand could extend to five years. Thus, his investing revealed difficulties associated with his imagined future, forcing him to revise his plot. Similarly, Lucy concluded that her plan of living in the West would be marked by language difficulties that conditioned her investing in New Zealand. Speaking with locals in English was problematic, as she felt a lack of sympathy and patience from locals due to her constant inability to understand them and to respond in fluent English. Consequently, her plan changed as she now aimed to return to Korea and seek employment at a foreign company.

As revealed in section 7.2.1 and the present section, the imagined identities invested in are closely informed by the nature of the participants' investing in study abroad. Successful investing may prompt new plans for the future (Joanna), validate existing plans (Danny), while difficulties or failed investment prompts revisions of future plans (Park, Annie, Lucy).

7.4 Research Question 3: What identity work and identity outcomes do Korean study abroad English learners experience in New Zealand?

Language learning study abroad sojourns are often highly destabilising affairs that lead to “struggle, the negotiation of difference, and the emergence of third-place identities” (Block, 2007, p. 867). As the fundamental process in study abroad, in a mutually-informing relationship with a number of other processes and factors, the participants' *identity work* in this study was varied and multilayered: it was particularly informed by investment in imagined identities, negotiation of socio-cultural and linguistic difference, negotiation of access to relevant forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1991), and negotiation of pragmatic competence in English (Kasper & Rose, 2002). The fluid nature of identity became apparent in this study, in light of the ongoing changes in positioning (Harré, 1999) of the participants, particularly in response to their changing plans for the

future and *imagined identities* as informed by the degree of success of their investing (*Investment*) in study abroad (*Study Abroad Context*). The sections below highlight the salient identity work and the related identity outcomes of the participants in this study in relation to the relevant identity and study abroad literature.

7.4.1 Encountering the “Other”, Reimagining the Self

As pointed out by Jackson (2008), Bakhtin believed that dialogue with “Others” is crucial in reshaping our sense of self throughout our lives. Study abroad sojourns often entail exposure to contexts characterised by otherness, which prompt identity work; sojourners experience vulnerability, as their negotiation of difference involves an ongoing questioning of their self-image (Ting-Toomey, 1999). As revealed in sections 6.7 – 6.9 above, the participants’ emerging identities were significantly informed by the influences of the New Zealand study abroad context. Some of the participants (Annie, Danny, Tim) benefitted from an elevated sense of agency (Ahearn, 2001), as their study abroad sojourns predominantly involved attending English lessons, socialising with classmates, exploring Auckland, and travelling around New Zealand. Their impressions of New Zealand were largely positive, based on their perceived kindness of the local population, an absence of hierarchically coded communication, and supportive relationships with classmates, teachers, and homestay families.

The positive experiences in the study abroad context informed the participants’ identity work (Block, 2007), thereby informing their investing in imagined identities. This mutually-informing relationship amongst investment, the study abroad context, and imagined identities is illustrated in Figure 7.1. Tim’s homestay experience with his young Kiwi flatmates and their active social lifestyles prompted him to envision a socialite’s *imagined identity* in New Zealand for himself, which stood in contrast with his work-dominated lifestyle in Korea (*Korean Habitus*); Annie’s supportive social network of

language school classmates helped her build self-belief and encouraged her to pursue her future goals, prompting her to invest (*Investment*) in a more empowered imagined identity (*Imagined Identities*) than the one she associated with herself in Korea; and, Danny felt he could have his life back in New Zealand, as he eagerly adopted what he described as a “kind” approach to communication and interaction he believed was missing in Korea.

As revealed in this section, study abroad may prompt identity work in light of positive negotiation of difference (Block, 2007) and favourable encounters with the otherness that characterises the study abroad context. Furthermore, such identity work may or may not be associated with construction of preconceived imagined identities. As Figure 7.1 illustrates, *identity work* is a fundamental process of the study abroad sojourn and remains interrelated with a number of factors that are salient to study abroad experience. These include the study abroad learner ability to pursue relevant capital (Bourdieu, 1991), resist inequitable power relations when negotiating identities (Norton, 2014) in the study abroad context, and invest in gaining competence, belonging, and membership in desired communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) that are of relevance to the imagined identities being constructed. The following section shows how the push and pull forces that interact with identity work affect identity outcomes in this study.

7.4.2 Constructing Imagined Identities in Study Abroad

Despite desires and possibilities for the future being the catalysts of imagined identities and the associated investment, their construction ultimately depends on successful identity work. As revealed in Figure 7.1, *identity work* in study abroad also remains central to push and pull forces relating to *pursuit of capital*, the *study abroad context*, and the *Korean habitus*. Furthermore, as discussed in section 3.1.4, negotiating and constructing identities in study abroad is conditioned by inequitable power relations (Norton, 2014), which condition study abroad learners’ access to desired capital

(Bourdieu, 1991) in relation to imagined identities. A fitting example in this study is Park, whose imagined future of a New Zealand resident underwent a series of challenges that he had not anticipated. First, despite applying for a number of different jobs, he was somewhat disappointed that he was primarily offered work as a kitchen hand or a dish washer, where he felt unappreciated, overworked, and often disrespected. During his work engagements in New Zealand he experienced the difficulties of inequitable power relations associated with study abroad, which reflected negatively on his identity work as his experiences were misaligned with the imagined future he had envisioned. Second, his strategy of seeking membership in local social networks (through homestay, employment, church visits) also appeared problematic, as he felt that his level of English proficiency prevented him from creating meaningful relationships with locals. Consequently, his inability to gain membership in local communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and his experience with inequitable power relations while working in the *study abroad context* impeded the construction of his *imagined identity* and negatively affected his *identity work* (Figure 7.1); the envisioned happy future in New Zealand appeared less possible with each hurdle, as Park felt increasingly lonely and isolated. Therefore, despite investing in English, seeking immersion opportunities through employment and homestay, becoming involved in and learning the local “*practices of social communities*” and constructing an identity “in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4), Park’s investment in an imagined identity in New Zealand ultimately proved unsuccessful.

On the other hand, as evident from Joanna’s example, study abroad experience may also offer positive identity outcomes. Despite initially not having a specific plan for her study abroad journey, apart from visiting family and enrolling in English classes, Joanna’s successful *investment* in various forms of *capital* and positive interaction with

the *study abroad context* prompted positive *identity work*, which generated projections of new *imagined identities* (Figure 7.1). Joanna liked the emergent “new Joanna” for her recognition as an exceptional English speaker by her peers, her freedom to get a tattoo (which reads “always be yourself”) against the advice of her friends in Korea, and her imagined future as a resident of London. Irrespective of whether Joanna’s imagined identity construction would succeed, it was evident that she had undergone identity work in study abroad that will remain significant for her future identity construction.

Drawing on the model in Figure 7.1 and the relevant literature, this section illustrates the key processes that shaped identity work and imagined identity construction in some of the participants in this study. In particular, it highlights the interrelation and the mutually-informing relationship among investment, the pursuit of capital in the study abroad context, identity work, and imagined identities. The following section discusses the significance of language for identity work as a key feature of the study abroad context, a subject of investment, and a key form of capital in relation to imagined identities.

7.4.3 English as Identity Work

Although explicitly absent from Figure 7.1, English is implicitly central to all of the outlined components in the model. It informs the *Korean habitus*; it is central to *imagined identities* of the participants; it is therefore an important object of their *investment*; it is a central feature of the *study abroad context*; and, it is an essential form of *capital* in study abroad (Figure 7.1). As such, it closely informed the participants’ identity work and outcomes in this study. As previously highlighted in section 6.7.2, some of the participant experiences of communicating in English entailed identity work. For example, adapting to local sociocultural and communicative norms when speaking English resulted in a friendlier approach to everyday communication, devoid of honorifics

that are central to appropriate communication in Korean. Consequently, most of the participants (Tim, Annie, Joanna, Danny, Jerome), associated speaking English with a friendlier disposition towards their interlocutors, and therefore claimed this had encouraged them to become friendlier and more open to communication since arriving in New Zealand.

However, in addition to communication in English being a source of identity work, English remained important in negotiating desired identity positioning in study abroad. As newcomers seeking legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and opportunities to claim capital relevant to their imagined identities participants relied on English as a key form of competence in the New Zealand study abroad context. Thus, negotiating opportunities for constructing desired identities in study abroad hinges on language, or, in other words, on “the tension between ... investment in the various forms of belonging and ... [the] ability to negotiate meanings that matter in those contexts” (Wenger, 1998, p. 118). In this study, Annie and Lucy in particular spoke of English struggles as related to their inability to negotiate desired identities in study abroad, which impeded their identity work and contributed to a perceived sense of marginality (Tsui, 2007). Annie struggled with her heavy accent causing difficulties when attempting to accomplish simple tasks, such as ordering food at restaurants or engaging in conversation with shop assistants when buying clothes, which made her “feel small”. Similarly, Lucy felt that people lacked patience when conversing with her in English, which contributed to her difficulties in the workplace and in everyday conversation. Therefore, both Annie and Lucy experienced English related difficulties in the study abroad context, which negatively reflected on their investing in the study abroad context, and in turn prompted undesired identity work.

7.5 Summary

This chapter offers a conceptual framework that highlights the theoretical implications of this study. The theoretical model in Figure 7.1 is used to contextualise the findings of the study, with reference to theoretical literature and the salient findings. The concluding chapter that follows offers a review of the research aims and a summary of the contributions of this research. Furthermore, it outlines the implications and discusses the limitations of the study, prior to concluding with future research recommendations and researcher reflections.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This study focused on storied experiences of six adult Korean study abroad English learners in New Zealand. It explored the learners' investment in English and study abroad in relation to Korean societal and language ideologies, their investing in imagined identities in study abroad, and the identity work and outcomes they experienced during their New Zealand sojourn. Storytelling was a central feature of this research. Elicitation and co-construction of narratives with the participants in relation to their lived and imagined experiences with regard to English learning and study abroad allowed me to use stories as a meaning-making tool that explores lived experience. Furthermore, I relied on the evaluative power of stories to analyse the data through narrative analysis, which also allowed me to present findings in the form of individual storied accounts that are readable, accessible, and that preserve the life-likeness of the participants' individual experiences. In addition to focusing on individual experiences, I also exploited the paradigmatic function of thematic analysis to explore the relationships among the salient themes across the data. Both analytic approaches were closely guided by the research aims outlined above.

This concluding chapter offers a summary of the salient findings in this study. Then, it outlines the major contributions that this study makes to the applied linguistics literature on social aspects of language learning, particularly in relation to identity and study abroad. The chapter then addresses the limitations of the study, followed by recommendations for further research and concluding researcher remarks.

8.1 Summary of Findings

Chapter 7 presents a conceptual model that was used to highlight the theoretical implications of the main findings, organised under research questions as subheadings.

This section offers a summary of those findings and highlights the answers the study has generated in response to each research questions.

Research Question 1: How do socially imposed expectations of Korean society relate to investment of Koreans in English learning and study abroad? The first research question called for an in-depth exploration of the participants' life experiences in Korea prior to their arrival in New Zealand. The primary focus of the research question was on the relationship between socially imposed expectations of Korean society, as informed by societal and language ideologies, and the participants' investing in English and study abroad. The findings in regard to this research question were varied, and contextualised the participants' investing in English learning and study abroad in relation to their lived experience in Korea. I initially expected the learners' investing to be primarily related to the importance of English in Korea; however, the findings suggested a much wider set of influences. As revealed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, ideology of English as a valued form of capital in Korea in some cases justified and validated the pursuit of English in study abroad, and allowed some of the participants to secure family funding for their sojourns. However, for most of the participants, investing in English in study abroad was a response to their struggles in Korea. Investing in English was related to their imagined futures abroad, and away from difficulties in Korea relating to: the combination of neoliberal and Confucian societal ideologies that have created an atmosphere of extreme competition, pressure, and stress, and that have diminished the individual sense of agency; the subsequent workplace issues regarding hierarchical power imbalances, long working hours, and employee rights. Thus, English was central to the participants' imagined futures abroad and away from Korea, and for some, studying abroad in Auckland was used as a pathway to eventual permanent residence in New Zealand.

Research Question 2: What imagined identities do Korean study abroad English learners in New Zealand invest in? The second research question focused on the participants' investing in study abroad, particularly in relation to the imagined identities they invested in. As Chapters 5 and 6 revealed, learners engaged in various types of investing in study abroad. They all invested in English through attending formal English classes, while some also sought extra opportunities to practise English through home stays, part-time employment, attending church sermons, and spontaneously engaging in conversation with local people. Furthermore, investing in home stay living arrangements and part-time employment also served as immersion strategies.

However, as highlighted in Chapter 6, the participants' investing was closely informed by the imagined identities they invested in. English emerged as the primary target of investment, as it was a crucial form of capital in relation to the emerging identities in this study, such as those of "New Zealand stayer", "cosmopolitan", and "resident of London". Moreover, the findings demonstrated that successful investment can prompt new imagined identities (Joanna, "the future Londoner"), while failed or contested investment can prompt revisions of future plans (Park, Annie, Tim, Lucy).

Research Question 3: What identity work and identity outcomes do Korean study abroad English learners experience in New Zealand? The last research question focuses on the identity work and outcomes of the participants during their sojourn. As illustrated in the theoretical model (Figure 7.1) in the previous chapter, identity work emerged as the fundamental process in this study, as informed by a mutually-informing, dynamic relationship with other key processes relevant to the participants' study abroad sojourn. However, the most salient sources of identity work for the participants emerged from the interaction with the study abroad context and the associated negotiation of difference, construction of and investment in imagined identities, and negotiation of pragmatic

competence in English. As illustrated in the model, identity work in relation to the above processes occurred simultaneously, while the processes themselves were also interconnected and interdependent. Participants explored the study abroad context, negotiated the novelty and otherness they encountered, invested in desired forms of capital relevant to their imagined identities, and sought to develop and appropriate pragmatic competence in English in order to negotiate favourable positioning – all the while engaging in identity work. Finally, the fluid nature of identity is highlighted by the dynamicity of identity work of the participants in this study, as revealed in section 6.9. The push and pull forces that characterise the relationship between identity work and the outer processes in Figure 7.1 are reflected in the ongoing negotiation and revision of the identities of the participants, with their emerging study abroad identities appearing as works in progress.

8.2 Major Contributions

As discussed previously in section 1.4, studies on the social aspects of study abroad language learning remain few. Thus far, research has predominantly focused on study abroad learner experiences of American students abroad, with some studies focusing on sojourns of Asian students in Europe and America. Furthermore, the majority of studies have focused on university-organised study abroad sojourns of student cohorts, rather than sojourns organised independently by the learners themselves. Lastly, despite the increasing interest in language learner identity in study abroad (Norton & De Costa, 2018), further studies are needed in order to expand on the knowledge relating to language learner identity outcomes in study abroad.

This study contributes to the study abroad literature by addressing all of the above gaps. It focuses on the New Zealand study abroad sojourns of Korean learners of English, organised independently by the learners themselves (see Jackson, 2019, for a similar

study on a Hong Kong study abroad learner's journey in New Zealand). Furthermore, it focuses on study abroad language learner identity from a new perspective, employing constructs of habitus, investment and capital to explore identity work and the construction of imagined identities in study abroad. The study answers the call for further research into the social aspects of language learning, demonstrating that exploring study abroad sojourns as holistic experiences sheds light on linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes, which are tightly bound and interrelated. Moreover, it situates the lived experience of study abroad language learning at the nexus of learner identity work and individual goals and aspirations for the future, showing that “various purposes of study abroad are not ... easily separated” (Benson et al., 2013).

In addition to focusing on identity work as an important outcome for study abroad language learners, this study attempts to address the issue commonly present in research in this area, that is: “The lack of an adequate model that would account for the more fine-grained developments that might ultimately lead to a sense that one has become ‘another person’ as a result of learning and using a second language”, engaging in identity work, and seeking to construct imagined identities in study abroad (Benson et al., 2013). The theoretical model in Figure 7.1 outlines identity work as a central process of study abroad language learning in this study. It situates and contextualises identity work in relation to linguistic and non-linguistic goals and processes, demonstrating how the interplay of various key segments of study abroad experience facilitates the construction of new emerging identities that may or may not be pursued and developed further in the future. Despite specifically pertaining to the participants in this study, the model could potentially be adapted in studies focusing on study abroad language learner identity in other contexts.

8.3 Limitations of the Study

Given that this study was based on data gathered from a small number of participants in a specific context, scope arises as one of the limitations. However, as in most qualitative studies, the research focus was on depth rather than breadth. Nevertheless, despite the study being situated in the New Zealand context and generalisability not being a specific aim (Canagarajah, 2005), the findings may offer a degree of transferability in relation to language learner identity research in other contexts (see Section 4.8).

Furthermore, from a narrative perspective, the findings in this research are specifically related to the participants' stories. Their degree of generalisability to other contexts and study abroad language learner individuals and/or groups remains unclear, therefore reflecting Clandinin and Huber's (2010) claim that knowledge generated from narrative studies inevitably remains incomplete and provides few certainties. However, the participants' narratives in this study possess striking verisimilitude that possibly suggests there are similar narratives to be told by study abroad learners in similar circumstances to those of the participants in this study.

The data collection timeframe may also be identified as a limitation, despite the longitudinal nature of this study. The length of the participants' sojourns emerged as a constraining factor, as data collection was carried out during the participants' limited stays in New Zealand. Longer engagement in the study would have allowed for the collection of more data, which would have enriched the findings of this research.

Another limitation that is likely to have influenced the findings is the collection of data in the participants' second language (Pavlenko, 2007). Despite their demonstrating satisfactory English proficiency for the purpose of participating in this study, it is likely that their responses would have been richer and more elaborate in their native tongue.

However, one of the motivating factors for participants was the opportunity to speak in English with a member of the local population, while my beginner Korean eliminated the option of using Korean during data collection.

Lastly, given the qualitative nature of this study, researcher bias and subjectivity arise as potential limitations. I sought to acknowledge my influence on this research by outlining some of the biases and subjectivities that informed my role as the researcher (see Sections 4.3 and 4.5.1.1), while also outlining the steps of how my influence on the study would be managed. However, given the narrative nature of this study, it inevitably entailed researcher influence and reflexivity as integral to the research process.

8.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Language learner identity in the study abroad context remains a relatively new area of research in applied linguistics. Focusing on identity and the lived experiences of Korean study abroad language learners in New Zealand, this study showcases the potential of exploring language learning in the wider context of learners' lives. It demonstrates the importance of understanding learners as real people with unique life stories, rather than just language learners. Crucially, it contextualises their language learning in relation to their desires, future goals, identity work, and the imagined identities they invest in, demonstrating the extent to which it is integral to their learning. Consequently, research on social aspects of language learning has the potential of complementing and enriching future studies on second language acquisition, which often lack lifelikeness due to sacrificing the social situatedness of the learner and strictly focusing on language outcomes. Furthermore, as pointed out by Kinginger & Lee (2019), knowledge on study abroad language learners has the potential of being further enriched by studies that: (a) consider historical time, and study abroad language learning in the digital era, where learning is highly influenced by technology-led communication, as well

as neoliberal and consumerist ideologies; (b) are longitudinal in nature and focus on the enduring effects of study abroad language learning; (c) consider the views of the hosts rather than exclusively relying on the accounts of study abroad language learners themselves; and (d) seek to inform policy, as well as curriculum and language program design.

At a conceptual level, this study has offered a theoretical model that facilitates the exploration of identity and some of the other salient social aspects of study abroad language learning. However, there is potential for this model to be further developed, revised, and adapted in future studies in accordance with different foci and across other contexts.

Furthermore, the narrative approach of this study has highlighted the potential of storytelling as a valuable meaning-making mechanism and a window into lived experience that is crucial to understanding the various social aspects of language learning. However, narrative research remains open to methodological innovation that could benefit future studies, such as the incorporation of visual methods and social media as methods of data collection.

8.5 Concluding Remarks

This study has sought to contribute to knowledge on identity in language learners in a study abroad context. It has employed narrative methods to explore the learners' lived study abroad experiences and reveal the multilayered relationship between language learning and identity in study abroad. Ultimately, my goal was to unravel the complexities of the study abroad sojourn and explore the numerous ways in which identity is central to the language learning of the sojourners in this study.

As the findings have revealed, humans live storied lives that are subject to ongoing revisions of the plot in light of inevitable changes that we encounter.

Consciously or subconsciously, we are actively engaged in identity work that entails a continuous re-evaluation of our past, present, and future life experiences. This study has demonstrated the potential implications of study abroad experience and language learning as a catalyst for a re-evaluation of our sense of self, and therefore the initiator of identity work in an attempt to construct desired imagined identities.

Conducting this study has been a highly gratifying experience, not only because I found the answers to some of the questions I posed myself before I commenced this research, but because I realised that there is so much more to be learned and explored in this area of applied linguistics. In fact, I feel that the stories my participants have shared with me over the course of the study have significantly deepened my understanding of the role of English in Korea and how it can impact the lives of Koreans. Despite having spent four years in Korean classrooms teaching English, I was surprised by the findings of this study and this has made my discoveries even more satisfying.

I believe this study will help to pave the way for further research of my own as well as other researchers with an interest in study abroad language learner identity.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee approval letter

Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Finance, Ethics and Compliance



The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand

Level 10, 49 Symonds Street
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599
Extension: 87830 / 83761
Facsimile: 64 9 373 7432

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE (UAHPEC)

12-Jul-2016

MEMORANDUM TO:

Prof Gary Barkhuizen
Cultures, Languages & Linguist

Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 017453): Approved

The Committee considered your application for ethics approval for your project entitled **Investment in imagined identities in study abroad Korean learners of English in New Zealand**.

We are pleased to inform you that ethics approval is granted for a period of three years.

The expiry date for this approval is 12-Jul-2019.

If the project changes significantly, you are required to submit a new application to UAHPEC for further consideration.

If you have obtained funding other than from UniServices, send a copy of this approval letter to the Research Office, at ro-awards@auckland.ac.nz. For UniServices contracts, send a copy of the approval letter to the Contract Manager, UniServices.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, you are requested to notify UAHPEC once your project is completed.

The Chair and the members of UAHPEC would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals. If you wish to do so, please contact the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

Please quote reference number: **017453** on all communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application.

(This is a computer generated letter. No signature required.)

UAHPEC Administrators

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet (Language Schools Marketing Managers)



School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics
(Applied Language Studies and Linguistics)
Arts 1, Building 14A, Symonds Street, Auckland, New Zealand
Ph (09) 923 8197

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Language School Marketing Manager)

Project title: Investment in imagined identities of study abroad Korean learners of English in New Zealand

Researcher: Jovan Cavor

Supervisor: Professor Gary Barkhuizen

Researcher introduction

I am a student at the University of Auckland, Faculty of Arts where I am currently undertaking a research project in fulfilment of my PhD in Applied Linguistics. My supervisor is Professor Gary Barkhuizen. This research is funded by a scholarship grant, received by from the University of Auckland.

The Project

I have chosen to study the motivation behind people's English learning, the identity changes that can be associated with such motivation, and how this relates to what people would like to become in the future.

My study will investigate the experiences of study abroad students in New Zealand, and the implications this experience may have for their future educational and personal development.

The findings will be used for my PhD in Applied Linguistics thesis, and may also be used for publications and conference presentations. The consent form will include the option for the participants to choose if they wish to be provided with a summary of the main findings, upon completion of the study. Upon completion and examination, the thesis will also be accessible from the University of Auckland Library database, in electronic format.

Invitation to assist

You are warmly invited to assist in this project because you have expressed willingness to approach the potential participants for this study, on behalf of the researcher, and offer them the option of participating in this study. Your assistance is also welcomed because your position of marketing manager within the institute does not include a relationship of power with the potential participants, meaning that they are not likely to feel pressured to participate in the study. In order to find the potential participants for my project, I approached the University of Auckland English Language Academy, and was referred to you as a suitable contact.

Project procedures

If you choose to assist, your involvement would consist of informing the potential participants of their expected commitments as participants in this study. You would be asked to inform the potential participants that they would be asked to take part in 4 or 5 individual interviews (depending on the length of their course at the language school) conducted at an agreed time between the 30th of June 2016, and the 30th of June 2017. You will also be asked to inform them about their responsibility to fill in narrative frames, explaining to them what narrative frames are, and informing them that they will be expected to fill them out before attending some of their interviews. To be specific, those taking part in 4 interviews will be asked to fill in a narrative frame before interviews number 2 and 3, while those who will participate in 5 interviews will fill out narrative frames before interviews 2, 3, and 4. You would need to inform them that their permission will be sought to audio-record the individual interviews as means of data collection for the study. However, you will also be asked to advise them that at any time during the interviews, they will be able to request that the audio-recording be stopped. Also, if they agree to participate, their interviews will be transcribed and they will be given an option to choose whether they wish to review the transcripts for verification and/or editing.

Your commitment towards assisting in this study is expected to amount to three to four hours of your time. This may include making contact with the potential participants, informing them of the details of the study and their expected involvement, and advising the researcher of the number of participants who have accepted to participate in the study.

Data Storage, Retention, and Destruction

The interview transcripts will be printed and also stored electronically on a password protected computer. Printed data will be stored securely in a locked cabinet at Arts 1

building at the University of Auckland, in the researcher's office. The facebook page electronic data will be downloaded and also stored on a password secured computer upon completion of the study. Consent forms will be stored separately from printed data in my supervisor's office at the Faculty of Arts for a period of six years. Upon completion of the project, the facebook group will be deactivated, and all of its online data deleted. After a period of 6 years, all printed data will be shredded and saved electronic data deleted.

Right to Withdraw from Participation

The participation of the students is entirely voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any time without giving an explanation. However, because of the required date of completion for my research, they will be given a period of up to one month after their last interview to withdraw any data they supplied throughout the data collection process.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

For confidentiality purposes, names of participants will not be used in any reports, publications or scholarly articles written from the project. Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of the data and quotations will be used in a manner that avoids identification. However, preserving anonymity during participation in this study will not be possible due to the interaction in the closed facebook group, during which the members of the group will become identifiable to each other.

Risks and Benefits

I expect the participants in this study to benefit from a heightened awareness of some of the crucial aspects of the study abroad experience. This means that the students may find the study engaging and informative, as well as useful in making their study abroad experience more interesting and enjoyable by deepening their understanding of the intricacies of the study abroad context.

On the other hand, there is a risk that the study may prompt them to think about the negative aspects of their study abroad sojourn, possibly causing them to experience some negative emotions. However, they will be under no obligation to discuss topics that may cause such emotions, or that may make them uncomfortable in any way. Furthermore, the students will be encouraged to inform the researcher if they suffer any psychological or spiritual consequences, resulting from their participation in the study. In such cases, the researcher would offer to make arrangements with the language school student services, so that the suffering participant(s) would receive pastoral care in order to help them overcome the difficulties they may be experiencing.

Thank you for considering this invitation. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the following:

CONTACT DETAILS AND APPROVAL

Student Researcher name and contact details	Supervisor and Head of Department name and contact details
Jovan Cavor Cf. Faculty of Arts The University of Auckland jcav007@aucklanduni.ac.nz	Professor Gary Barkhuizen Cultures, Languages and Linguistics The Faculty of Arts The University of Auckland g.barkhuizen@auckland.ac.nz (09) 923 8197

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz.

Approved by the University Of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on for three years. Reference Number

Appendix C: Participant Flyer



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

Korean learners of English in New Zealand

Many Koreans come to New Zealand every year to study English and experience life in our beautiful country. Are you one of those people? If you are, I would love to offer you a place in my study! As part of my PhD study at the University of Auckland, I am interested in talking to English learners from Korea. I would love to hear all about your experience of living in New Zealand. If you are interested, please contact me on the following email address: jcavoo7@aucklanduni.ac.nz. I look forward to hearing from you!



A little bit about me



My name is Jovan , and I have been an English teacher for the past 5 years. I have also spent 4 amazing years teaching English in South Korea. My interest in Korean learners of English inspired me to conduct a PhD study on the experiences of Korean learners of English in New Zealand. I enjoy talking to people, and I hope you will share your story with me!

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet (Student Participants)



School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics
(Applied Language Studies and Linguistics)
Arts 1, Building 14A, Symonds Street, Auckland, New Zealand
Ph (09) 923 8197

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Student Participant)

Project title: Investment in imagined identities of study abroad Korean learners of English in New Zealand

Researcher: Jovan Cavor

Supervisor: Professor Gary Barkhuizen

Researcher introduction

I am a student at the University of Auckland (Faculty of Arts), where I am currently undertaking a research project in fulfilment of my PhD in Applied Linguistics. My supervisor is Professor Gary Barkhuizen. This research is funded by a scholarship grant, received by the researcher from the University of Auckland.

The Project

I have chosen to study the motivation behind people's English learning, the identity changes that can be associated with such motivation, and how this relates to what people would like to become in the future.

My study will investigate your experiences as study abroad students in New Zealand, and the implications this experience may have for your educational and personal development in the future.

The findings will be used for my PhD in Applied Linguistics thesis, and may also be used for publications and conference presentations. The consent form will include the option for you to choose you wish to be provided with a summary of the main findings, upon completion of the study. Upon completion and examination, the thesis will also be accessible from the University of Auckland Library database, in electronic format.

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in this research because your study abroad experience in New Zealand is directly related to the topic of study. In order to find the potential participants for this study, I have approached your language school. I provided the school's marketing manager the relevant information regarding the role of the participants in my study, and asked for any currently enrolled Korean students to be informed of the study taking place, and to be offered voluntary participation.

Project procedures

If you choose to participate, you will be taking part in 4 or 5 individual interviews (depending on the length of your course at the language school) conducted at an agreed time between June 2016 and June 2017. I seek your permission to audio-record the individual interviews. However, at any time during the interview, you can request that the recording be stopped. Your interview will be transcribed by the researcher, and you will be given an opportunity to review your transcript for verification and/or editing. You will be able to specify whether you wish to exercise this option on the consent form.

You will also be asked to fill in narrative frames before attending some of your interviews. To be specific, the ten week participants will need to fill in a narrative frame before interviews 2 and 3, while the six month participants will fill out narrative frames before interviews 2, 3, and 4.

Furthermore, you will be asked to participate in a closed facebook group, in which you will have a minimum requirement of writing one post on a designated topic, once a week if you are a ten week participant, or once every two weeks if you are a six month participant.

Time commitment

The approximate minimum time commitment for participation in the study for ten week participants will be 5 hours, while for six month participants it will be 6 hours.

Data Storage, Retention, and Destruction

The interview transcripts will be printed and also stored electronically on a password protected computer. Printed data will be stored securely in a locked cabinet at Arts 1 building at the University of Auckland, in the researcher's office. The facebook page electronic data will be downloaded and also stored on a password secured computer

upon completion of the study. Consent forms will be stored separately from printed data in my supervisor's office at the Faculty of Arts for a period of six years. Upon completion of the project, the facebook group will be deactivated, and all of its online data deleted. After a period of 6 years, all printed data will be shredded and saved electronic data deleted.

Right to Withdraw from Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without giving an explanation. However, because of the required date of completion for my research, you will be given a period of up to one month after your last interview to withdraw any data you have supplied throughout the data collection process.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

To protect your confidentiality, your name will not be used in any reports, publications or scholarly articles written from the project. Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of the data and quotations will be used in a manner that avoids identification. However, preserving anonymity during participation in this study will not be possible due to the interaction in the closed facebook group, during which the members of the group will become identifiable to each other.

Risks and Benefits

I expect the participants in this study to benefit from a heightened awareness of some of the crucial aspects of the study abroad experience. This means that you may find the study engaging and informative, as well as useful in making your study abroad experience more interesting and enjoyable by deepening your understanding of the intricacies of the study abroad context.

On the other hand, there is a risk that the study may prompt you to think about the negative aspects of your study abroad sojourn, possibly causing you to experience some negative emotions. However, you will be under no obligation to discuss topics that may cause such emotions, or that may make you uncomfortable in any way. Furthermore, if you find that your involvement in the study is causing you psychological or spiritual difficulties, you are encouraged to inform the researcher. If this happens, the researcher will offer to make arrangements with the language school student services, so that you may receive pastoral care in order to help you overcome the difficulties you may be experiencing.

Thank you for considering this invitation. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the following:

CONTACT DETAILS AND APPROVAL

Student Researcher name and contact details	Supervisor and Head of Department name and contact details
Jovan Cavor Cf. Faculty of Arts The University of Auckland jcav007@aucklanduni.ac.nz	Dr. Gary Barkhuizen Cultures, Languages and Linguistics The Faculty of Arts The University of Auckland g.barkhuizen@auckland.ac.nz (09) 923 8197

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz.

Approved by the University Of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on for three years. Reference Number

Appendix E: Narrative Frame 1

August, 2017

Annie's New Zealand journey

My life in New Zealand is different from my life in Korea because

The changes in my lifestyle that I am enjoying are

However, some of the things I don't like about my way of life here

are _____

_____. Living in a country with a different language and culture has been good/not good for me _____

_____. I feel that I have/haven't changed as a person because _____

_____. The way I feel about English has/hasn't changed since I came to New Zealand because _____

Compared to speaking in Korean, when I speak in English, I feel _____

I think this is because _____

Talking to the local people makes me feel _____

The reason(s) I feel this way about talking to the locals is _____

Has anything interesting happened to you since our last meeting? What was it? Where were you? Who were you with?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this narrative frame :)

Appendix F: Facebook Topics

Facebook discussion topics

Topic 1 - History of English learning

1. What are your earliest memories of English learning?
2. Did you enjoy it? (Why?)
3. What else do you remember about the time you started learning English?

Topic 2 - Motivation behind English learning

1. What motivated you to start learning English?
2. What was the role of your family in relation to your English learning?
3. How do you think the Korean society views English? How did this affect your motivation to learn English?

Topic 3 - Opinion about New Zealand

1. How would you describe your opinion about New Zealand?
2. What are some of the things you know about New Zealand culture?
3. Of all the things you have heard about New Zealand, which do you find the most interesting?

Topic 4 - Expectations of the New Zealand study abroad experience

1. What do you expect to gain from your time in New Zealand?
2. Do you think this experience could change you as a person? How so?
3. What do you plan to do while in New Zealand?

Topic 5 - Future plans

1. What are your plans for the future?
2. Where do you intend to live in the future?
3. How do you think this study abroad experience in New Zealand will help you achieve your future plans?

Appendix G: Illustrative transcript 1 (Narrative)

Joanna – Interview #4

11 October 2017

Jovan: Hello Joanna, and welcome to our fourth interview.

Joanna: Already fourth? Time flies.

Jovan: It definitely does. How are you feeling?

Joanna: Feeling good. How about you?

Jovan: I'm good! The weather is getting nicer, which is always a good reason to feel good. So, it's been about five weeks since we met last time, and as usual, I am interested in the way you are going along this New Zealand journey of yours. So, what's been happening in the last five weeks?

Joanna: Actually, next month I have to go back to Korea so last five weeks I travelled a lot with my friends. Did I mention the Waitomo Cave last time?

Jovan: Yes, I vaguely remember that you had plans to go there?

Joanna: Yes, I went there, and also to Mt. Ruapehu for snowboarding. I also went to the Bay of Islands and Cape Reinga.

Jovan: Wow, that's a lot of trips. Sounds fun.

Joanna: Yes. Quite intense.

Jovan: So, I am guessing you went on those trips over the weekends.

Joanna: Yes.

Jovan: I am guessing you would like to make the most of it before you leave.

Joanna: Yes, that's right.

Jovan: So, any interesting stories from those trips?

Joanna: I really enjoyed the snowboarding, because back in Korea I only skied in Winter, but I never tried snowboarding. I bought a package which included snowboarding lessons, and that was amazing.

Jovan: Did you prefer it to skiing?

Joanna: Yeah, I think now I prefer snowboarding.

Jovan: Right, I think on a snowboard you have more freedom.

Joanna: The instructor was very nice. She was a Kiwi woman, and a really nice person.

Jovan: So, you got along with her.

Joanna: Yeah.

Jovan: So, how have you been feeling about those trips and about your time in New Zealand in general? I'm guessing as you got to know the country more, you saw many things you liked, because nature is pretty nice here, right?

Joanna: Yeah.

Jovan: Any other impressions? Anything that sort of stuck out for you?

Joanna: I really enjoyed Cape Reinga and Russell.

Jovan: Yeah, it's a nice little town, isn't it?

Joanna: Yeah, it's beautiful.

Jovan: And in terms of human contact? Did you mostly keep to your group, or did you make new contacts?

Joanna: I stayed within my group.

Jovan: And who did you go with?

Joanna: Waitomo Cave and Mt. Ruapehu with my classmates – really close friends. But last week, Bay of Islands and Cape Reinga was in a group tour; almost by myself.

Jovan: So, you just went with other random people. Were those just other tourists?

Joanna: Yeah, there was twelve people on that tour.

Jovan: Did you make any friends there?

Joanna: But the interesting thing was that I was the only Asian. The others were all European. German, French, Swiss.

Jovan: That's quite interesting.

Joanna: Yes! Because I had never met any Germans before.

Jovan: So what was your impression of them?

Joanna: Slightly different.

Jovan: In what way?

Joanna: They are not very friendly, but still quite nice. And the first time when I saw them I thought they were Kiwi or English, because their English is so good, but actually they are from Germany. I was very impressed and asked how their English was so good, and they said that it is similar to their own language.

Jovan: OK. So, did you get to meet them better, or was it just basic conversation.

Joanna: Mainly just basic conversation. But it was a good experience – new experience.

Jovan: So, yeah. Basically, a lot of trips and just standard English lessons? Are the classes going well?

Joanna: Yeah ... Actually, I tried to move up to the advanced level. Now I am in upper intermediate, and at first I failed the assessment for the advanced level. This week I will try again and I am feeling nervous about it. It's quite challenging.

Jovan: So, why do you want to move up?

Joanna: I almost finished my book, and I only have two weeks left.

Jovan: Oh, OK. So you want to give it one more push and get the most out of it.

Joanna: Yes.

Jovan: Right. That would be nice. So, when do you leave New Zealand?

Joanna: On the 24th of November.

Jovan: So, two more weeks of classes, and then what will you do?

Joanna: I am going to Australia.

Jovan: Oh, you're going to Australia!? Very interesting.

Joanna: I'll spend a lot of money. ((laugh))

Jovan: I'm sure it will be fun. Do you have everything planned?

Joanna: Yes, everything.

Jovan: So, where will you go?

Joanna: First, Sydney. I also applied for a group tour. Then, I will go to Melbourne.

Jovan: That sounds awesome. I look forward to hearing about it when you get back. So, as I have asked you before, I am wondering how much of a change you feel as a result of your time New Zealand. That's not an easy question to answer, you know. Sometimes we may change as people, but may not be aware of it – we are unsure of how we are changing. There could be small things, as a result of being in a different place, that make us feel different. You've told me about some of these changes, including your views of gay people having changed during your time in New Zealand having changed. Then, the interesting story of your decision making about your tattoo choice, and I think those are some interesting examples. I am curious to know whether there has been anything else that has been floating around your mind since you've been here, that has to do with how you feel about yourself and what you want to be.

Joanna: Recently I've been thinking about my family, because frankly I used to – how can I say – not really care about my family that much. I was with my friends more than I was with my family, but recently I realised “ah, family is really important”, and I missed them more than friends. That's quite interesting.

Jovan: So, perhaps as a result of having been away longer you feel that you miss them and want to spend more time with them.

Joanna: Yes.

Jovan: So, I guess you'll have a chance to do that when you go back. Until they start to annoy you two weeks later. ((laugh))

Joanna: Yeah. ((laugh))

Jovan: That's usually how I feel when I go away. I miss my family and then after coming back I think to myself "ah, they're annoying". ((laugh)) Anyway, if you think about your future – you've told me a bit about that. I remember some plans of yours about finishing your degree, the possibility of returning to New Zealand to live in Taupo. So, you had some ideas, including going to England, as well. So, from what I could tell, you did have some plans. It doesn't mean they are firm plans; they could just be ideas. Have you had any developments there?

Joanna: My plans are still quite similar, but I don't want to come back here again, and I will go to England after finishing university. Maybe I will try to look for a part time job in Korea instead of New Zealand.

Jovan: To make some money for England, right?

Joanna: Yes.

Jovan: And I am guessing your family has been supporting your travels so far, but you have said to me that perhaps you would like to be a little more independent and save your own money, right?

Joanna: Yes, that's right.

Jovan: Cool. So, if I asked you ... You said you'd like to explore other places and you would not like to come back to New Zealand for now. Could you tell me a few reasons as to why you feel this way? Some people come and feel like they would like to stay in New Zealand, but it seems that you feel different?

Joanna: I had an experience here already for almost one year, so ((pause)) but on the other hand I have relatives here, and of course my parents suggest that I come here instead of other places for safety. But, enough for me. Sometimes it is like disturbing with relatives here.

Jovan: You've mentioned that on the one hand you really appreciate – and obviously you should – the fact that you stayed with them, but on the other hand I would imagine that it limits your freedom a little.

Joanna: Can I say, walking on eggshells? I learnt this expression.

Jovan: Yes. So, you feel a little bit like that, I guess.

Joanna: Yes.

Jovan: Perhaps you feel that if you were to return to New Zealand, your family would expect you to go back to your cousins again. So, you probably ...

Joanna: There is no other reason for that.

Jovan: I have to say that I have had a similar experience when I returned to Europe, where I have relatives. I feel welcomed and loved, but feel I have a lack of autonomy and privacy. They would call me and say “please come for lunch; did you eat anything; we will wait for you” and I would say “no, thank you – I am out with friends; thank you for calling me; you guys go ahead and eat”. So, I am guessing it was probably similar for you, when relatives want to care for you but nevertheless suffocate you a little. ((laugh)) So, anyway, New Zealand will be a closed chapter for a while.

Joanna: Yeah. I think so.

Jovan: So, what do you think you will take away? Specifically, during this period that you’ve been here, what are going to be some things you feel like you will take away with you? They could be memories, or anything else?

Joanna: The most important thing now are friendships. Sometimes I was thinking how can there be a really close friendships between a Colombian, Thai, and a Korean? We would talk about this topic for a whole night, on the bench. It was quite good, because when people stay overseas for a while, it’s not easy to meet close friends. So, I am lucky, I guess. I really want to continue these relationships. But we know that returning to our countries we can easily forget. So, we have plans to visit each other.

Jovan: That is really cool. It must be a nice feeling. That is very interesting, actually. I guess having become close to people who are from different countries than Korea, what has that meant for you, when you think about it? Is that any different? When you compare close friendships in Korea to these friendships?

Joanna: They are basically the same.

Jovan: Right. You probably love and care for these people.

Joanna: There are cultural differences between us, or of course sometimes hard to explain using English, but still all fine. Yeah. It doesn’t matter at all to make a relationship.

Jovan: I am just interested in some of the steps of how the relationships were created. So, what do you feel you had to do? How did they form, when you think about it?

Joanna: First step will be open mind.

Jovan: Right.

Joanna: Share similar interests. And, of course, time is important.

Jovan: Right. You guys spent time together in class. How about some of the barriers? Were there any barriers?

Joanna: I never thought about it.

Jovan: Right. Maybe you don't want to think about it, sorry. ((laugh)) I guess I am asking you about very small things that we don't even necessarily think about. Sometimes friendships form spontaneously and we are not aware of the exact process.

Joanna: That's true. But, I actually remember that when we were in class together, we got a project to work on as a group. Me and my friends chose to buy chocolates and give them to homeless people, and this project brought us together. We stuck to each other.

Jovan: We usually enjoy making friendships through group activities, and doing things together. Right – interesting. But, if you think about English for a moment, so you guys had to rely on English to communicate. How did that work?

Joanna: Uhm, before it was really hard, because our English skills were poor, but now it's way better.

Jovan: Right. I'm also thinking, comparing friendships in English to friendships in Korean, there may be some differences, right? Perhaps, using one language creates one type of atmosphere compared to another. So, comparing English and Korean in that way, what would come to mind?

Joanna: Actually, my best friend who is from Columbia is 30 years old. If he was Korean, I couldn't be friends with him, because there is a big age gap.

Jovan: Right – so, that's already different, right?

Joanna: Yes, because the first step has to be the polite way. But here, age doesn't matter, so that's a big difference.

Jovan: I guess, that changes things. I know that in Korean you have to use honorifics which implies a higher position of the older person.

Joanna: Yes, definitely.

Jovan: Because, in a way, being closer to people means being on a similar level.

Joanna: Also, I want to say something interesting. Also I have a Korean friend with whom I speak in English, but he is much older than me. He is really nice. First time it was really weird and awkward; he told me, “you don't have to worry about showing me respect, like you would in Korean.” So, until now, we have never spoken in Korean. He is 35 years old. I remember two weeks ago we had a dinner at a Korean restaurant and drank Soju.

Jovan: That's so cool. So I'm guessing you behaved with him like you would have with any other friend.

Joanna: Yes.

Jovan: I am guessing it means that he also embraced this new way of communication facilitated by English.

Joanna: If I imagined this in Korea, this would be impossible – this kind of relationship. Age and hierarchy wouldn't permit it.

Jovan: Right. It really does seem that a journey from Korea to New Zealand involves a few changes. Arriving to New Zealand you realise there are some differences in the way things work, and you have a choice of whether you want to embrace or reject those novelties.

Joanna: Yes, that's right.

Jovan: It seems to me that language is quite important in many ways. So, imagine that you would have to speak Korean to your friend, how would you feel if you spoke to them without honorifics?

Joanna: Really uncomfortable, awkward, cringy.

Jovan: Right. ((laugh)) It would break a lot of rules and create an uncomfortable situation. It's funny, right; it's the same people, but choosing a different language changes things dramatically.

Joanna: Yes. That's a good point.

Jovan: On the other hand, I have heard of different experiences than yours, where the older person in the conversation rejected the change in norms.

Joanna: Oh, really? I'm guessing it could be that the older person was more conservative.

Jovan: Maybe. Right.

Joanna: I can understand that person, of course.

Jovan: Of course – because living in Korea your whole life, maybe they are not ready to change certain things. Now, my chain of thought leads me to the next question, and if you find that you are not ready to discuss it, please let me know. So, you know, in a way you are going back to Korea soon. This new way of life that you have experienced here, and which you seem to have embraced and liked, perhaps it won't be possible to replicate once you go back. What do you think you will try to do when you go back?

Joanna: Uhm, that point I am still thinking about. I know that probably, sadly, it wouldn't work.

Jovan: So, if you could, would you take some things from here and try them in Korea? Would you like to see some things from New Zealand work in Korea?

Joanna: One thing. I reckon it's really nice to say thank you or hello when people get on and off the bus. Maybe I will try it in Korea. Yeah – it's pretty nice.

Jovan: I agree. I have tried it when I was in Korea. ((laugh))

Joanna: Did it work?

Jovan: Not really. People would look at me strangely. I would say “ki sa nim, kamsa hamnida” ((thanks driver)), and they would all be a little confused. If you think about it, maybe that person driving the bus, especially in Seoul, he's probably stressed, it's not easy; so, saying thank you may improve his mood, and he may in turn be nice to other people. So, I agree, I think New Zealand is really good like that. In general, people do small things to be nice, like saying sorry and thank you.

Joanna: This thing is quite unusual in Asia, because not long ago we discussed “bless you” when people sneeze, so I may try that when I go back.

Jovan: Yeah, interesting.

Joanna: For example, Colombians and Russians in my class say they have it, while Asians don't. But I like that; “bless you” – it sounds cute.

Jovan: So, do you have a way you may say it in Korean?

Joanna: I might just try it in English. It will be funny. ((laugh))

Jovan: So, I am guessing, perhaps, if you agree, going back to Korea, you sort of know that you understand the way of life there, and that you will easily transform again and fit back in. And, perhaps, you will take a few things from New Zealand that you like, and you will try to practice them there. So, I am trying to understand if you are thinking at all about how you will fit back into life in Korea. Going back, and carrying on, how will you do it? Are you expecting things to be the same or different since you left?

Joanna: I think things will be a little bit different, but I don't know exactly how. Maybe in the future I will find out.

Jovan: I guess, I felt the same way after living in Korea for four years and having to come back to New Zealand, I knew things will be different, but I also didn't know what to expect. I had things that I learnt in Korea that I wanted to bring back with me.

Joanna: Oh, really. Interesting.

Jovan: Yeah. If anything, I feel that I understand Koreans a lot more than someone who hasn't lived there, of course. But, you know, I am also thinking, some of the questions that I ask, perhaps you don't really think about them, or you don't want to think about

them. You came as a young person to explore, enjoy and have good time. Sometimes is best not to think.

Joanna: Yeah. ((laugh)) That's true.

Jovan: So, there's two more things I'd like to ask.

Joanna: Yup.

Jovan: Are you happy with your English progress? Do you feel you have improved?

Joanna: A lot!

Jovan: Your test scores probably reflect that?

Joanna: Yes. I am happy. ((laugh))

Jovan: I guess you just didn't really have a chance have a lot of contact with the locals?

Joanna: That's right. I think that's one of the downfalls of international students.

Jovan: Right. So, even the limited interaction that you had with the locals, was it positive?

Joanna: Most of the time it was positive. A long time ago I went to Coromandel. That time I met Belle – she is Kiwi. She was really friendly, and we are not Facebook friends or have each other's phone numbers, but when we see each other we have a great time.

Jovan: What did you find enjoyable about spending time with her?

Joanna: I guess this could be just her personality, but when we met, she always hugged me and was always really cheerful. Because of that my feeling is really happy. And, I am kind of proud, because I could try to communicate to hear.

Jovan: So, you were proud that she wanted to be close to you?

Joanna: Yes! And sometimes I asked "Can you understand my pronunciation"? And she would say "Yes! You speak so well".

Jovan: Interesting. But, in Korea, do friends hug when they meet.

Joanna: Not really. Sometimes, close friends, or friends who hadn't seen each other for a while.

Jovan: In some cultures that is very common. Like in South American cultures hugging and kissing when greeting friends is quite common. Did you do that with your Colombian friend?

Joanna: Yes, of course. ((laugh))

Jovan: OK. So, I guess that's quite a new thing for you.

Joanna: Now I've gotten used to it.

Jovan: Maybe before it was a bit weird.

Joanna: Yes, a little bit.

Jovan: I guess it's a sign of love. I think everyone likes being hugged, especially if you like that person. Right. Any other little things that you have notice here through interaction that you perhaps didn't enjoy? Or things that you noticed that you didn't like?

Joanna: I'd say not really. Yes, but especially in Auckland, I think I mentioned before too much Asians, Indians, and different nationalities. In a way it is good, but in another it is not really good for me. ((laugh))

Jovan: I guess what you're trying to say is that you imagined New Zealand as being more European.

Joanna: That's true. I was expecting ...

Jovan: Right. For you as an international student, it's not desirable to speak to speakers of English who are non-native.

Joanna: Sometimes walking down Queen Street, I sometimes ask myself "Is this Korea or New Zealand"? ((laugh))

Jovan: Right. I understand.

Joanna: It's still fine.

Jovan: Of course. So, if I was to ask you what you have learned about life in New Zealand, what would you say?

Joanna: Maybe I would say I learned how to greet people politely. Also I have an impression that Kiwis care about family, a bit more than people in Korea.

Jovan: I understand what you mean. I guess in Korea people work more and have less time for family. But you see, I really liked the family interaction I saw in Korea. I thought that Koreans were really nice and kind to kids – I liked that a lot. I thought that was a bit different than in New Zealand. It all depends on the experiences as well.

Joanna: I've found people more friendly here.

Jovan: Right. Well, to be fair, I didn't speak Korean well at all so I couldn't really judge what was happening around me. On the other hand, your English is good, so you could understand more of what was happening around you.

Joanna: Yeah.

Jovan: Alright Joanna – thank you so much for meeting with me!

Joanna: Thank you!

Appendix H: Illustrative Transcript 2 (Non-narrative)

Tim – Interview #5

23 November 2017

Jovan: Hi, Tim! How's it going?

Tim: I'm good. And you?

Jovan: Very good, very good! So, as you've mentioned to me a few minutes ago, there are many new things happening in your life, right?

Tim: Yep.

Jovan: Good things? Exciting?

Tim: It depends.

Jovan: Maybe half and half?

Tim: Yeah. I changed to a different school. I could make a new friend.

Jovan: Oh, right. So, I guess you met a whole lot of new people.

Tim: But ... ((laugh)) there are many Thai people, and many Korean people in my school.

Jovan: Is that good for you?

Tim: No. So, so.

Jovan: Because you speak Korean?

Tim: Yeah. They talk about Korea, and I don't like.

Jovan: Right. You would like to speak in English.

Tim: Yeah. And Thai people talk in Thai language.

Jovan: Right.

Tim: Every day I listen to music in class. ((laugh)) Just talk with my teacher.

Jovan: Oh, I see. So you can't really talk to you classmates in English. So, perhaps that's not so good.

Tim: Yeah, I think so.

Jovan: How long have you been going to that school now?

Tim: Maybe two weeks. Oh ... I went to Paihia! Cape Reinga. With my friend.

Jovan: Did you drive there?

Tim: My classmate drove the car with ... yeah. And, my classmate and another classmate, and me. Just three people.

Jovan: Did you have a good time?

Tim: Yeah. Very funny. And, I saw young dolphins. Very cute.

Jovan: Did you meet anyone on the way?

Tim: Yeah. A few people.

Jovan: Did you talk to them?

Tim: Just a little bit. Some backpackers. I met Germany, just a little bit talk. She just travelled in New Zealand. Maybe after one week she go back to her country.

Jovan: Right, right. I remember you telling me that you were going to change your school. So, what is the main reason you wanted to change?

Tim: First, I want to new friends. Not Thai, not Korean. ((laugh)) But I failed. ((laugh))

Jovan: I understand. ((laugh))

Tim: I want to meet other teacher, like Kiwi.

Jovan: So, is your teacher Kiwi?

Tim: No. I forgot her country.

Jovan: OK. I remember you were having some problems with the tests at your old school, right? You wanted to improve your test marks, right?

Tim: Yeah. I already move up.

Jovan: Right. Because your family in Korea wanted your test scores to move up. So, are they happy now?

Tim: Yeah, I was very happy that time. But now, my class is pre-intermediate again because my listening skills are not good.

Jovan: I really really think your English has improved since you came here.

Tim: But it's slow and slow.

Jovan: Right. But it's a process. I mean, how long have you been in New Zealand now?

Tim: Maybe just over six months.

Jovan: And how much longer will you stay?

Tim: My visa expires in April.

Jovan: So, at least until April you will be here. But you want to stay longer, right?

Tim: Yeah. I don't know. Because my English not good now.

Jovan: So, are you saying that maybe you expected for your English to improve quickly?

Tim: Yeah, so, I have just six months and then I want to go to university here. But my friend told me he thinks now I am wasting my money. Yeah, so, go back to Korea is better.

Jovan: What do you think about that?

Tim: I was confused.

Jovan: Yeah, I think it's difficult to decide. It's an important decision.

Tim: And I paid already.

Jovan: Right, right. Yeah, maybe now you have to try to work very hard to try to improve.

Tim: (sigh)

Jovan: Is it stressful?

Tim: Yeah. Last Saturday I met Kiwi friend, he told me so confusing now. When I took a exam, I was very nervous again. Because it's low level, but my speaking I think not good.

Jovan: Yeah. I think it means you have to work more, you know. And slowly it will keep getting better, but I understand you get a bit stressed about it.

Tim: And my host changed now. Now I live with flatmates.

Jovan: Right. You told me last time. How is it now?

Tim: Now very stressful because at midnight I always study about English but they very very noise. Sometime when I study, they watch a movie very loud.

Jovan: So then you can't study, right?

Tim: So, I want to change the house.

Jovan: Right. Why not. If you're not enjoying it. But let me recap what me and you have discussed during our interviews. As far as I understand, your general plan was to come to New Zealand to improve your English, then enrol in a university degree, and possibly stay in New Zealand long term. Does that sound about right?

Tim: If I get English skill, maybe after six months, I will go to university about civil engineer or electronics; then I study for two or three years, and I think I will get a job here.

Jovan: Right. So that's the plan.

Tim: Yeah.

Jovan: It's a valid goal. And you've worked hard for it. If you keep going, maybe you can do it.

Tim: I'll try. ((laugh)) Every day I watch the Zootopia film without subtitles but I don't understand. ((laugh))

Jovan: Why don't you put on the English subtitles?

Tim: Yeah. I will try. My friend told me it is better like go to the cinema and just pay and watch the movie. Because ... how to explain. He recommend this way

Jovan: Maybe you could try that. But anyway, I can see that you care very much and that you want to achieve this goal. So, separately from that, it seems that you also enjoy living in New Zealand because you met a lot of new people, including your interesting host friends.

Tim: Oh, yeah ... this week I have a birthday party, so maybe I will die. ((laugh))

Jovan: Why? ((laugh))

Tim: You know, the first time I went to the party and I drank for 15 hours. ((laugh))

Jovan: So, what happened?

Tim: Just die. ((laugh)) Dead. Slept for one day.

Jovan: So, are you going to do that again? ((laugh))

Tim: Maybe. And she invite me again, my last host.

Jovan: Right. It seems to me that since coming to New Zealand you have had some very interesting experiences that were much different from those you had in Korea. You know, you told me you have partied here, you talked to Kiwi people, you drank together.

Tim: Yeah, relaxed.

Jovan: So you liked that right?

Tim: Yeah. I want to go to Wellington. My friend told me that is the real New Zealand.

Jovan: Why real New Zealand?

Tim: Don't have Korea.

Jovan: Oh, right, right. So, tell me if I'm right: before you came to New Zealand, your thinking was that you will mostly see white people with whom you will talk and interact?

Tim: Yeah, yeah.

Jovan: But then when you came you realised that in Auckland there are a lot of foreigners, other foreigners.

Tim: I think only Auckland.

Jovan: But anyway, you don't like that right?

Tim: Ah, yeah.

Jovan: I think that's what you told me before, which is why you just said you'd like to go to Wellington, right?

Tim: That's right. I want to travel the South Island, but I think very expensive, right?

Jovan: South Island, it depends. It can be.

Tim: My host paid two thousand dollars for five days.

Jovan: I think that's probably how much it costs.

Tim: Very expensive.

Jovan: Yeah, it is. So, you're not going to work here?

Tim: Not yet. ((laugh)) Because I have to study English.

Jovan: But if you work somewhere, maybe you will talk English all day. So that's a good way to study. You could work at a petrol station, restaurant, or any other part time job.

Tim: Yeah.

Jovan: I'm wondering why ... I mean, you said you were a little lazy ((laugh)).

Tim: Yeah. ((laugh))

Jovan: But is there any other reason why you don't want to work. Is there anything else?

Tim: I have to choose just one, work or study. But, yeah.

Jovan: Why do you have to choose just one? You think you wouldn't have time.

Tim: Many people told me we can't choose two things, so, if I get two things, very hard. Don't have time and something.

Jovan: The reason I am asking this is because maybe right now you are spending a lot of time at school where it seems like you are not getting the right opportunities to learn English, you also live with Koreans, so talking to Kiwi people through work might be good.

Tim: Ah, so, I try to talk with Kiwi people on Hello Talk, and I sent message, yeah. Keep going.

Jovan: Oh, OK. So was that good?

Tim: Just little bit. I want to meet them, yeah.

Jovan: But I think ... yeah. So, the only Kiwi people that you really met were your host family, right?

Tim: Yeah.

Jovan: Any other locals?

Tim: Just teachers in the school and when I went to the party I met the Kiwi people. Her friends and her cousin, yeah.

Jovan: And that was a good experience, right?

Tim: Yeah. And I still talk with them.

Jovan: Oh, that's nice. I remember you telling me that you enjoyed that.

Tim: Yeah. So, everyday they told me to try watch movies to learn English. I try, yeah. ((laugh))

Jovan: That's good. So, as I've asked you in some of the other interviews, I'm wondering what you think about your time here? What is your thinking about the time spent here? Are you happy with your time here?

Tim: Yeah. Sometime happy, sometime sad.

Jovan: Can you explain?

Tim: Because, when I came here I get achievement, like independence. Like, how to spend money, and talk with foreigners, and yeah ... learn the some culture and languages. It's good for me.

Jovan: So that was good.

Tim: And sometimes sad because the I miss my family and my friend. Yeah, that's it.

Jovan: OK. I understand. As you know, I went away for a long time to other countries, so I felt the same. I also missed things.

Tim: When you went to Korea, you married or not?

Jovan: Yeah, so, we weren't married at the time of going, but we were a couple. It was easier for me because I wasn't alone.

Tim: Me too here, I came here I was a little lonely. And, I don't know where is good for me. Like, Korean shop, Korean barber. Yeah, I don't know. I just know a little bit.

Jovan: And, let me just ask you again: I am interested in any way you think you may have changed as a person. So, what do you think this New Zealand experience has done to you?

Tim: ((laugh))

Jovan: Is there anything in particular you can tell me about?

Tim: About New Zealand?

Jovan: So, during your time here, is there anything that has changed about you? Do you think you have changed?

Tim: I think, first the job – job is good for me. Civil engineer is get a lot of money. In Korea not good. Yeah. In my country only government job is good. But like civil engineer and something like that is not good.

Jovan: So you think your profession is better here?

Tim: Yeah. And I like the work time. Like, 9am to 5–6pm.

Jovan: Right. But let me ask you this question: Do you feel you are now more Korean or more Kiwi, or more international person?

Tim: ((laugh)) Very difficult. I think half and half, because some time I am confusing the Korean language. I forget the word. And I don't know the Korean news.

Jovan: So you don't read Korean news?

Tim: Just read the New York Times. But very difficult for me.

Jovan: So, do you feel closer to Korea or New Zealand?

Tim: The second one.

Jovan: Why?

Tim: Because, you know, there are many Korean restaurant in New Zealand, but I try that just little bit. Maybe two times for six months and ...

Jovan: So you prefer to try other types of food?

Tim: Yeah. Sometime Kiwi restaurant, or Japanese restaurant. Last Sunday I went to Chinese restaurant, I don't like it. ((laugh)) Not good.

Jovan: I'm not a big fan of Chinese food either.

Tim: Did you try?

Jovan: Yes, I did. In Shanghai. I went to McDonald's after that. ((laugh))

Tim: ((laugh)) Yeah, after that I never try. I think Kiwi and Japanese restaurants are better than Chinese.

Jovan: OK. So, when you imagine your future, are you hoping that it will be here?

Tim: Yeah. I wish to live here and I changed my mind, like Korean. ((laugh))

Jovan: Really?

Tim: Yeah.

Jovan: Why?

Tim: I can communicate about more, like share my mind.

Jovan: So you now prefer Korean girls?

Tim: Yes, a little bit.

Jovan: Because it's easier to communicate.

Tim: Yeah.

Jovan: Yeah, because before you told me you preferred Kiwi girls.

Tim: Yeah. ((laugh)) Because when I travel North Island I talked a lot with my friends. Everything share. All Korean friends. It was very exciting and funny. ((laugh))

Jovan: Because you could share and communicate, right?

Tim: When I talked with some other people in English, I want to talk a lot but I talk just 20%. Yeah. ((laugh))

Jovan: 20% of what you would like to say. So that's a bit of a barrier right?

Tim: Yeah – barrier. Very confuse word and grammar.

Jovan: I understand. But probably as you learn more English it will get easier and better. OK. And, after this time in New Zealand, what do you think about Korea now?

Tim: I think same because my friend maybe two times one week, he call me about his job and everything.

Jovan: So, what does he say?

Tim: He says it's hell. Every day work hard.

Jovan: Did you guys work in the same job?

Tim: No, different job. He working about car fix.

Jovan: So he is a mechanic?

Tim: Yeah, kind of.

Jovan: Yeah, so probably his stories are not so good.

Tim: Everything is just bad story.

Jovan: So, probably it makes you think that you do not want to go back, right?

Tim: Yeah for now. But I just want Korean girlfriend, just this. ((laugh))

Jovan: Fair enough. I think there's plenty of Korean girls here.

Tim: Yeah. At face club.

Jovan: Right. You've mentioned it to me before. Do you go there a lot?

Tim: Maybe three or four times, because my Thai friends want to go there every Friday and Wednesday. But I don't want to pay \$10 entrance fee.

Jovan: Yeah. Sometimes it's too much.

Tim: On Halloween, it was \$30. ((laugh)) I don't want to go.

Jovan: Yeah, that's too much. OK Tim.

Tim: I want to try the university class. Can I join. ((laugh))

Jovan: Right. ((laugh)) Well right now it's summer break, so you could ask next semester if you could come and see what it's like.

Tim: Just anything. Because I want to try the New Zealand culture. Just try.

Jovan: Right. Because that's what you want. So you want to see what it's like. Yeah, maybe it will be possible.

Tim: With my friend or alone?

Jovan: I really don't know what is the procedure, but there is a way to find out. Anyway –

Tim, thank you very much!

Tim: Thanks!

Appendix I: Nvivo Coding

Nodes	
Name	
[-]	Struggles of life in Korea
	Relationship between investment in English and social expectations i
[+]	Korea has very hierarchy system
[+]	Harsh environment in Korea
	Avoiding harsh environment in Korea through SA journey
[+]	Investment as contested
[-]	Investing in Study Abroad
	SA influenced investing - new plans
	Projecting a cosmopolitan status
	Positive perception of NZ in Korea
	Investment through English
	Investment in imagined future
	Investing through homestay
	Investing in settling in NZ
	Investing in SA experience
[+]	Increased sense of agency
	Friendships with classmates
	Investing in settling in NZ
	Investing in English, immersion, through work
[+]	Identity work in NZ
	Family sponsored SA trip vs self-funded