# England is Blue and China is Red: A Case Study of Two Chinese Adolescents' Expression of Linguistic Identity Through the Construction of English as a Second Language (ESL) Poetry

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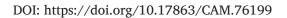
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**Highlights**

- If ESL writing can spur novel identities, ESL creative writing thereby goes one step further in combining imagination, storytelling, and emotion into written pieces.

- Linguistic identity and ESL poetry complement one another by reframing our understanding of the use, aesthetics, and mediation of language.

- Linguistic identity is inheritance, affiliation, expertise, expectation and affluence; it is the heightened expectation that affluence brings so as to exploit the English language not only linguistically, but culturally, socially and economically.

**精彩提要***

- 如果说英语二语可以激发新的身份认同，那么英语二语创意写作可以更进一步将想象力、讲故事以及情感元素融入到写作文本中。

- 语言身份认同和英语二语诗歌二者构成互补，重塑我们对于语言使用、美学以及中介作用的理解。

- 语言身份认同由继承性、归属性、专业技能、期望以及财富构成。正是财富带来的更高期望使得语言使用者不仅可以从语言本体出发，还可以从文化、社会和经济的角度运用语言。

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*Chinese Translation | Meng Liu

# England is Blue and China is Red: A Case Study of Two Chinese Adolescents' Expression of Linguistic Identity Through the Construction of English as a Second Language (ESL) Poetry

Olivia Anne Halsall*

## Abstract

This paper reconceptualises linguistic identity for the contemporary era by recognising the integral role of socioeconomic influence in the construction of linguistic identities. By building upon Rampton's (1990) framework of linguistic repertoire, this case study of two Chinese adolescents explores how linguistic identity is creatively expressed through the construction of twelve English as Second Language (ESL) poems. The data consist of a three-week, online poetry workshop and follow-up interviews. The poems and interview transcripts were coded for each facet of linguistic repertoire using Rampton's framework (inheritance, affiliation, and expertise) as the thematic analytical tool. Two additional facets (expectation and affluence) were found, resulting in a total of five facets of linguistic repertoire. Participants displayed a strong sense of language inheritance toward their L1 (Mandarin Chinese) and mixed feelings of affiliation towards their L2 (English). They demonstrated strong sentiments of language expertise and an inclination to show off their bilingualism while possessing high expectations of their English abilities. Themes of affluence revealed an awareness of educational privilege; English was seen as a "tool" to acquire more capital and access international communities. Therefore, inheritance, affiliation, expertise, expectation, and affluence comprise these Chinese adolescents' linguistic identity, revealing socioeconomic influence to be integral to contemporary expressions of linguistic identity.

## 摘要

本文研究社会经济因素对语言身份认同建构的重要作用并以此重构当代语言身份认同这一概念。此项案例研究基于Rampton（1990）提出的语言库（linguistic repertoire）理论，探究两名中国青少年如何通过创作十二首英语二语诗歌创造性地表达语言身份认同。研究数据包含一个为期三周的在线诗歌工作坊以及后续访谈。研究者根据Rampton提出的语言库的三个维度（继承性、归属性、专业技能）对诗歌和访谈文稿进行编码和主题分析。研究者在数据中发现语言身份认同的两个新维度（期望、财富），与Rampton理论原有的三个维度共同组成语言身份认同的五个维度。研究对象表现出对母语（中文）的强烈传承意愿以及对二语（英语）归属性的复杂情绪。他们在语言专业技能方面表达了强烈的情感，倾向于炫耀自己的双语能力，并对英语能力有很高的期望。财富主题揭示了研究对象对教育特权的意识，英语被视作一种获取更多资本和接触国际群体的"工具"。因此，继承性、归属性、专业技能、期望和财富共同构成了这些中国青少年的语言身份认同。此项研究发现揭示出社会经济因素在当代语言身份认同表达中不可或缺的作用。

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## Introduction

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), contemporary frameworks of linguistic identity have seldom emphasised socioeconomic influence, let alone as an integral facet. Today, the English language is not only considered a means of accumulating linguistic capital since it possesses the "highest communicative value and the highest linguistic utility" (Gerhards, 2014, p. 49) but also as a "tool for social inclusion [and] a conduit for economic and social advancement" (Park, 2011, p. 433). Indeed, scrutinising linguistic identity via a sociocultural lens is necessary to fully grasp the intricate social and cultural layers in continual flux around us, as exacerbated by globalisation. Vygotsky (1896 – 1934), a renowned socio-cultural educational theorist, used the term "identity" neither explicitly nor directly in his work, yet posited we may only understand individual mental functioning by "going outside the individual and examining the social and cultural processes from which one is constructed" (Vygotsky in Zembylas, 2003, p. 220). From the standpoint of a sociolinguist, using Vygotsky's presupposition that human mental functioning is socioculturally, historically, and institutionally situated, the perception of "the self" as navigating society through language(s) conjures an image of the linguistically fluid and fragmentary world of today. Where "identity constructs and is constructed by language" (Norton, 2006, p. 3), one assumes language to be at the heart of linguistic identity, and yet this paper suggests that this is no longer the case. The poetic discourse of linguistically fragmented individuals within a globalised society

identity in the contemporary era.

In the wake of capitalism and the commodification of language, socioeconomic influence seems to have nudged itself to the core of linguistic identity. This paper centers on Chinese students, as the swelling middle-class has resulted in those with financial means sending their offspring to independent English schools. Indicative of this phenomenon is the figure that for the academic year 2018-19, 120,385 out of 485,645 (or 24.7%) of all international students enrolled in higher education in the United Kingdom were from China (HESA, 2021). Hence, this paper posits the question: What can the construction of ESL poetry reveal about expressions of linguistic identity among Chinese adolescents? ESL stands for English as a Second Language and is the instruction of English to non-native speakers in an English-speaking country.

The early work of Rampton (1990) is a useful theoretical framework to outline the building blocks of linguistic identity due to his focus on the English language. Promoting social issues to the forefront of how teachers see their students' linguistic identity, Rampton proposed we should be asking: What precisely is the linguistic repertoire of my students? Is it founded on inheritance, affiliation, expertise, or indeed a combination of all three? Rampton's work on displacing the native speaker (Rampton, 1990) produced two core facets of linguistic identity which can be divided into three pillars: language loyalty, consisting of inheritance and affiliation, and language expertise. These are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** A summary of Rampton's (1990) linguistic repertoire.

| Facet of linguistic identity | A summary of key points from Rampton's linguistic identity model in my own words |
|---|---|
| Inheritance (Language Loyalty) | Notions of linguistic / cultural heritage. Feeling a sense of allegiance to one's native language. Relation to ethnic origin with language |
| Affiliation (Language Loyalty) | Understanding others' linguistic / cultural positioning. Being able to "affiliate" (attach or unite) with speakers of a language |
| Expertise (Language Expertise) | Ability to understand / use humour / idioms and 'play' with the language. Seeing oneself as a native speaker (of L1 or L2). Realistic understanding of one's own level. |

is therefore intriguing. Furthermore, there is value in unravelling data as a series of poems; researching poetry "lies in its ability to provide reflective and linguistically negotiated understandings of personally meaningful events" [own emphasis] (Hanauer, 2010, p. 165). Scrutinising what these linguistically negotiated understandings entail enables an understanding of how the language used in poetry can reflect linguistic

Conceptualising these facets emerged through what is conceived as a paralysis of ESL educators' response to their students' needs. The combination of ESL, an English socio-cultural environment, and the creative expression of linguistic identities provide interesting variables within which one can better understand the integration of English into students' linguistic identities. These

points indicate that language learning is a multifaceted process. Poetry is thus proposed in this paper as a way for ESL students to explore and creatively express their L1, L2, L3, etc. Here, L symbolises the language one is familiar with; each number denotes the level of language familiarity.

What is more, writing can be effective at eliciting novel identities as non-native speakers try out different voices, including, for example, authors, critics, and narrators. It has been suggested that learning a second language "can lead to the reformation of one's mental system, including one's concept of self" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 5). When we change our cultural environment and develop new social relations, we must thereby employ different mediational means. This notion is supported by the demonstration of how, through ESL writing, students can co-construct new mediational means through a second language (Kramsch, 2006). The process of undertaking a new identity is said to be mediated by the powerful role of personal narratives (Pavlenko 2002; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004), and although the construction of an identity in L2 through life story writing may incur a loss phase (of one's linguistic identity, inner voice, and first language attrition), the reconstruction phase offers a reformation of one's own past and continued growth into new roles (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). If ESL writing can spur novel identities, ESL creative writing thereby goes one step further in combining imagination, storytelling, and emotion into written pieces. Encouraging ESL creative writing provides an alternative outlook on the temporary displacement of languages, and therefore linguistic identities. Leveraging this knowledge to the very core of ESL classrooms could, for learners who express anxiety at the loss of their L1 for example, facilitate opportunities to play with their languages and identity in an innovative and inclusive environment.
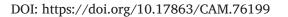
The focus of this paper is not so much on participants' ability to produce a poem, but to feel the language of a poem, and for the power of poetry to draw out facets of linguistic identity. As such, the core epistemological understanding of poetic discourse is that of "unique, multileveled, experiential activation" (Hanauer, 2003, p. 77) that has the power to situate the reader "in the impossible situation of experiencing another's linguistically mediated experience" (Hanauer, 2003, p. 70). Linguistic mediation has been depicted as empowering bilingual students, especially in situations where they can leverage their language skills within communities (Soto, 2002). The application of sociocultural theory is therefore apposite. Indeed, there is significant potential to bridge linguistic identity and the construction of ESL poetry. Linguistic identity and ESL poetry complement one another by reframing our understanding of the use, aesthetics, and mediation of language.
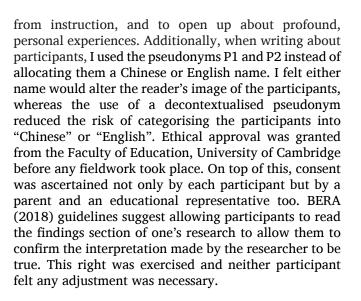
## Methodology

This paper employed a case study approach for the benefit of understanding similarities and differences between cases (Stake, 1995) and analysing data both within and across differing situations (Yin, 2004). The participants were two native, adolescent Chinese students attending separate independent schools in England. Due to rapid developments of the COVID-19 pandemic and a government-imposed lockdown, the research site was desk-based, and communication with participants was conducted online via the Chinese social media platform WeChat. The online poetry workshop took place over a three-week period and via the online meeting platform Zoom.

During each thirty-minute lesson, poetic structure and some creative-language brainstorming techniques were taught. Participants were then shown some examples of poems and given five days to independently construct their own poem. They were told to use English and to experiment with other languages if they wanted to. Harnessing creativity is an integral part in poetry whereby "the fertile ground of free-verse can be broken" (Disney, 2012, p. 38). Nevertheless, this "fertile ground" was limiting as participants chose not to divaricate from the examples shown. Therefore, a final poem, "Me at 25" was added onto the final week, for which students were not given an example or structure to work from. Both were interviewed for thirty minutes at the end of every week upon completion of their poems to understand their language choice. Often, a linguistic anecdote or personal story was uncovered behind the facade of a short poetic line; these intimate insights facilitated the deciphering of which lines could be coded into their respective facets of linguistic identity. Rampton's framework was used to inform the coding process. However, during the research, other patterns in the data emerged. Therefore, aspects of grounded theory were used to formulate additional codes, situating this paper beyond a pure grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), moving instead towards later reconstructions of the theory (Charmaz, 2006). Hence, while Rampton's facets of inheritance, affiliation and expertise were used initially, the concluding conceptualised framework is based on the premise that Rampton's framework could be more aptly positioned to consider socioeconomic influence.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed participants to talk freely about their experience constructing each poem (Drever, 1995; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). However, it is recognised that my role as both an educator and researcher may have introduced "explicit tensions" (BERA, 2008, p. 3) regarding both confidentiality and power dynamics. For example, due to the high level of respect towards educators in Chinese culture, it is uncommon for students to deviate

from instruction, and to open up about profound, personal experiences. Additionally, when writing about participants, I used the pseudonyms P1 and P2 instead of allocating them a Chinese or English name. I felt either name would alter the reader's image of the participants, whereas the use of a decontextualised pseudonym reduced the risk of categorising the participants into "Chinese" or "English". Ethical approval was granted from the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge before any fieldwork took place. On top of this, consent was ascertained not only by each participant but by a parent and an educational representative too. BERA (2018) guidelines suggest allowing participants to read the findings section of one's research to allow them to confirm the interpretation made by the researcher to be true. This right was exercised and neither participant felt any adjustment was necessary.

## Findings

Initially, participants were asked to construct a total of five poems: two "5 Senses", two "Hero" and one "I Am" poem. These poems were chosen in line with sociocultural perspectives of identity being mediated via varying levels of societal engagement to ensure the research question was appropriately answered. This aligns with Vygotsky's stance on comprehending individual mental functioning by stepping outside of the individual in question and instead looking to their surroundings for insight. The "I Am" poem sought to elicit individual encounters, the "Hero" poem would elicit situated encounters, and the "5 Senses" poem would elicit linguistic mediation of the networks and institutions within which the participants operate (Rampton, 2005). Matching each poem to a sociocultural level reinforced the contemporary analysis of linguistic identity through a sociocultural lens.

Four out of the twelve poems constructed by P1 and P2 are presented in turn; although it has been advocated to display all poems produced, thereby enabling the reader to engage emotionally with the poems in their own right (Hanauer, 2010, 2015), those not included in the body of this paper are included in the appendix for the reader's appreciation. The aim of the "5 senses" poem was to elicit facets of linguistic loyalty (inheritance, affiliation) towards participant's L1 (Chinese Mandarin), by constructing a poem about China, and their L2 (English), by constructing a poem about England. To ascertain which theme of linguistic repertoire was allocated to each line, poems are color-coded as: Inheritance, Affiliation, Expertise, Expectation, Affluence. The justification for these can be found in Table 2.

## "5 Senses" poems: China

*P1*

China

China is fiery red.

It tastes like a mixture of salt and spice;

It sounds like the roar of unity;

It looks like a phoenix ready to soar;

When the power of it bursts,

I feel proud of being part of it.

*P2*

China · 中国

China is a red dragon roaring across the sky,

It smells like sheets bathed in sunlight,

It tastes like homemade cuisines from my kitchen,

It sounds like meticulous footsteps of the parade,

It feels like parents' warm palms,

It looks like the rise of a rooster.

When I feel hungry, I'm delighted

Because food is everywhere.

Both "5 Senses" poems about China elicited feelings of nostalgia, pride, and a longing for their home country. They were packed with cultural symbols including food, national symbolism, and historic events. Both participants chose to depict China as red given the color of the national flag and the depth of symbolism red has throughout Chinese culture. P1 linked his choice of red to blood, "When you think of WW2 China, millions of lives were sacrificed to resist the enemy … we pretty much built our country with blood and bodies". Four of the five senses were similar, except for differences between the participants' approach to unity. Both lamented the superiority of Chinese over English food in their interview about the "5 senses" poem with P2 remarking, "I love Chinese food and I miss it a lot when I'm away. Chinese food is really important for me and I'm sad without it". P2 produced imagery of "sheets bathed in sunlight" which she explained as a "homely smell". Both participants described striking sounds they associate with China. Whether the "roar of unity" (P1) or the "meticulous footsteps of the parade" (P2), both projected feelings of pride at being from China. Furthermore, both participants illustrated China as looking like "the rise of a rooster" (P2) or "a phoenix ready to soar" (P1), both of which refer to the literal

**Table 2** Contemporary framework of linguistic identity

| Facet of linguistic identity | Recurring themes | Example from interviews |
|---|---|---|
| Inheritance (Language Loyalty) | 1) Cultural symbols (of China); 2) Sentiments of nationalism and nationality; 3) Loss of heritage through language | *"Because Chinese is my mother tongue, I feel more comfortable speaking it and I'm more fluent"; "[My L1] is easier to have fun with … you can make jokes because you can interpret the pronunciation of words different and it's funny … you can't do that in English"; "It's important for me to have someone Chinese to speak to when I'm in England because it's so far" P1* |
| Affiliation (Language Loyalty) | 1) Cultural symbols (of England); 2) Affiliating with communities in England through language; 3) Emotions towards England (positive, negative, neutral) | *"I find the jokes my teacher makes about Boris Johnson very funny and I get that humour" P2 "Being a Chinese speaker in England is just a student role … you get your education and then go back to China" P2; "I don't really know this country that well yet, so much of my England experience comes from being at school and I have only lived in the boarding house rather than the whole community" P1* |
| Expertise (Language Expertise) | 1) Bilingual expertise; 2) Poetry expertise | *"There is a strong chance that after my Master's I'll be able to speak English just like a native speaker" P1; "I think I can be better in communication because I think my writing is pretty good but when I'm talking I can't always find the exact word I want to express" P2* |
| Additional facets of linguistic identity | Recurring themes | Example |
| Expectation | 1) Academic pressure sought through English; 2) Responsibility of self; 3) ESL as a tool to enhance capital | *"I don't see myself living in one place" P2; "My teachers and my parents would be very pleased if I have a very close friend with whom I speak English all day as it's very good for my oral English skills … since the start of my time learning English, I used it as a tool of learning but never as a tool of keeping friendships or getting new experiences" P1* |
| Affluence | 1) Acknowledgement of superior education advantage; 2) Comparison between less affluent students in China; 3) Gratitude; 4) ESL as a tool to enhance capital | *"When writing this poem, I felt proud to be able to speak English and experience another culture when many Chinese back home wouldn't get this experience" P2; "I feel very happy with myself that I have the chance unlike many other students in China" P1* |

shape of the nation and demonstrate similarities in their perception. References were made to China's economic strength since its reform in 1980 under former Chairman Deng Xiaoping's leadership, for which participants expressed awe.

The predominant difference between each "5 Senses" China poem derived from their use of language for their homeland. It is interesting that P2 chose to entitle her poem "China · 中国". She explained, "I chose to write China in [Chinese] Mandarin too because I wanted to add a Chinese element [to the poem]" which demonstrates that language features strongly in her sense of heritage. P2 focused on what she loves about her homeland – food. Although she felt strongly that she is "more comfortable in China because I speak in a language I know and eat the food I like", she didn't see herself as exclusively Chinese. She explained, "I don't necessarily think in the Chinese way, but I use its language… Because Chinese is my mother tongue, I feel more comfortable speaking it and I'm more fluent". To her, language seemed to be a tool to navigate a community at large. Most interesting perhaps is that for P2, "there isn't a big difference between Chinese and English ideology". For P1 however, the divide between England and China was more pronounced. When discussing his sense of pride towards China, anecdotes of England versus China's reaction towards the COVID-19 pandemic were provided readily. P1 recently suffered verbal abuse from classmates who tormented him about COVID-19 originating in Wuhan, China. Moreover, P1 saw language as more integral to his identity than P2. He expressed concern at sometimes forgetting Chinese characters and not understanding conversations between his former classmates. "When I come back to China, I feel like I'm not fully integrated into the community because I don't go to school in China anymore". His sorrow was coupled with nostalgia at not being able to "properly" celebrate Chinese festivals when studying in England. Overall, both participants expressed a strong allegiance towards China. It is possible these feelings are heightened when they study in England as they come to crave home dishes, miss out on festivals and long for their parents. Although many cultural references made by both P1 and P2 can be seen to overlap, their approach to the role language plays in their feelings of Chinese linguistic inheritance diverge.

## "5 Senses" poems: England

*P1*

England

England is purely white.

It tastes sweet mixed with a bit of bitterness;

It sounds like the whoops of football fans;

It looks like the Three Lions standing majestically;

When the time of success comes,

I feel grateful for being here.

*P2*

England

England is a blue sea, deep and mysterious,

It smells like refreshing grass in the gardens

It tastes like school meals

It sounds like the church bell

It feels like the chilly wind pierced in my skin

It looks like a kind gentleman.

When the weather didn't change for a whole day,

I feel bewildered.

Both "5 Senses" England poems were punctuated with mixed emotions not only towards England itself, but towards the English language. Given participants were less familiar with English customs in comparison to Chinese customs, the feelings expressed in their "5 Senses" England poems were different, even if their underlying meaning was similar. For example, P1 referred to England as "purely white" in reference to the colour of England football shirts which he described as "beautiful". P2 however referred to England as "a blue sea, deep and mysterious". Although she depicted blue as "one of my favourite colors" which indicates positive affiliation, it is also mysterious because "sometimes the way English people talk it's like they have a meaning inside another meaning". The sense of affiliation towards English here is less clear-cut and somewhat stunted through language. P2's illustration of England smelling "like refreshing grass in the gardens" transpired to be a Biblical reference. Initially, this was surprising as P2 is not religious. However, it demonstrates the influence of the school environment, culture, and values on P2's affiliation to England, and therefore the English language. She tells of people in her school "being pretty religious", and that she does participate in religious traditions "because we have Sunday prayers and a really big church in school". She elaborated that she does not "believe in the religion, but I can understand it". This notion of understanding and acknowledging a key value in her school, without necessarily believing it herself, seemed to enlighten P2 that she has the choice to pick and choose certain cultural and traditional rituals from either country as she sees fit. This builds the case for her global mindset, for which English is the tool to achieve the latter. In keeping with her love of food, P2 humorously described

English food as tasting "like school meals". In a more neutral tone, P1 remarked his appreciation of English food as "sweet mixed with a bit of bitterness" due to his adoration of English afternoon tea.

The sounds illustrated by both participants elicited experiences of feeling accepted at school in England. P1 told of the "whoops of football fans" and P2 of the sound "of church bells". Finally, both participants created strong images of how they see England; P1 as "Three Lions standing majestically", an image of pride from his first visit to Buckingham Palace and P2 as "a kind gentleman" illustrating the outline of Britain's geography. Similar to their illustration in the "5 Senses" China poem, both looked to their understanding of cultural symbolism to express how they see England. Even though neither participant made references to heritage in their England poem, they spoke of participating, affiliating and understanding English culture.

## Linguistic loyalty

The two poems bring out differences in each of the participants' linguistic loyalty in the last two lines of their "5 Senses" England poem. P2 employs humor to reflect her increased understanding of English mannerisms and frequent conversational topics, but she also attests that talking about the weather "like English people" is a part of her personality and has "nothing to do with my Chineseness". Whilst this should not immediately be assumed as a rejection of P2's "Chineseness" in the place of an adoption of "Englishness", it potentially represents a lack of affirmed categorisation into either. Nevertheless, she says, "I find the jokes my teacher makes about Boris Johnson very funny and I get that humor". Once again it becomes clear that for P2, language doesn't have a significant impact on her sense of self. Furthermore, she attests that "being a Chinese speaker in England is just a student role … you get your education and then go back to China". This honest assessment of her economic and geographical mobility is heightened by her sense of privilege. P2 reflects, "I think maybe I've got to travel too much which is why I think of England as similar to Shanghai … as long as I have people I know and can trust then I don't mind where I am in the world". By contrast, in the last two lines of P1's poem, a strong belief of academic pressure, expectation and gratitude emerge. He has a strong sense of his privilege; "When writing this poem, I felt proud to be able to speak English and experience another culture when many Chinese back home wouldn't get this experience". For P1, his association with England and learning English are embroiled with high levels of self-expectation. Both participants admitted that "so much of my England experience comes from being at school and I have only lived in the boarding house

rather than the whole community" (P1) and "most of my English poem reference was from school … because that's my main experience" (P2). It is worth noting that the schools both participants attend are among the most prestigious in England, boasting impressive grounds and resources. Hence, the participants' experience of England is not representative and must be seen in the context of a niche, wealthy demographic.

To conclude, facets of inheritance in the "5 Senses" (China) poem were punctuated with cultural and national symbolism, history and traditions. Where language came into play was not always clear, yet the broader institution (England, China) played a significant role in participants' poems. Through the construction of the "5 Senses" China poem, both participants spoke of being "more fluent" in Chinese and feeling "more comfortable" in China itself. The "5 Senses" England poem did not, perhaps predictably, elicit facets of inheritance. However, both P1 and P2 did associate their affiliation with England somewhat positively, and the construction of the poem provoked them to reflect on their use of English in context. Not only were sentiments of linguistic loyalty seen throughout these two poems, with linguistic inheritance featuring in the "5 Senses" China poem and affiliation featuring in the "5 Senses" England poem, but notions of expertise, affluence and expectation all featured too.

## Discussion

Poetry reveals intriguing insights about one's expression of the self not only via the meaning of language, but the aesthetics of language as a mode of creative expression. This can be seen by the varying poetic structures and creative techniques employed such as alliteration, assonance and free verse. While prior studies argue that writing involves code-mixing without compartmentalising various languages (Liao, 2018), the findings from this paper are mixed. For example, P1 would continually compartmentalise English and Chinese; he was anxious to lose his "Chineseness" yet saw English as facilitating capital accumulation and prestige. P2 on the other hand didn't like to distinguish or separate English and Chinese (and therefore her English and Chinese identity). She saw herself as a global citizen undefined by language, borders or ethnicity. The findings from this study align strongly with the notion that English acts as a global commodity and economic enabler (Rosenhan & Galloway, 2019). Hence, the discovery of two additional facets of linguistic identity (expectation and affluence) are conceptualised through a sociocultural lens, which has the added value of pivoting perceptions of identity towards an incorporation of social class (Skeggs, 1997) and linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 2002). These can be found in Table 2.

The additional discovery of two facets, expectation and affluence, demonstrate the necessity for creative, complex and contemporary appreciations of linguistic identity in the modern era. Contemporary linguistic identity is governed by the inescapable intricacies of socioeconomic influence. Linguistic identity is inheritance, affiliation, expertise, expectation and affluence; it is the heightened expectation that affluence brings so as to exploit the English language not only linguistically, but culturally, socially and economically.

For P1 and P2, as their social membership and perceived language ability continue to evolve owing to international exposure, it is accurate to determine their linguistic identity remains in flux. Rampton (1990) made the point that facets of linguistic inheritance would conjure a sense of allegiance to one's native language; P2 identified herself as a 'native' speaker of Chinese Mandarin and justified this as grounds to import Chinese Mandarin characters into her ESL poem. Similarly, P1 expressed anxiety at losing his native language skills – and thereby his "Chineseness". Linguistic inheritance is an integral aspect of identity and a way to choose to express that identity. Bilingual expertise, whether directly referred to or not, was revealed as a pertinent factor when analysing language expertise. As supported in the literature, the construction of poetry enabled an aesthetic appreciation of the English language (Disney, 2012) and provided linguistically negotiated understandings of personal events (Hanauer, 2010). P2 presented her bilingual expertise by alluding to Chinese idioms through English. She does this twice. First, in her "Hero" China poem, she chooses the color green for her friend as this refers to the idiom 戴绿帽子 dài lǜ mào zǐ to wear a green hat. Second, in her "I Am" poem, she refers to the phrase 红线 hóng xiàn, meaning invisible lines between loved ones. She talks of "wanting to go deeper" in her poems, and it is likely she wanted to simultaneously express her English capabilities whilst alluding to her Chinese heritage. On the contrary, P1 attempted to "sound like an Englishman" when constructing his poems because "if I were to write this in Chinese, I wouldn't write the same thing because if I write in Chinese it would feel very different". This represents a mismatch between the way P1 and P2 provide linguistically negotiated understandings of their use of English and Chinese Mandarin.

Each facet of linguistic repertoire aligns strongly with current epistemology on sociocultural identity theory and the influence of community in one's identity navigation. As far as language loyalty is concerned, language inheritance demonstrated a fervent loyalty to China and thereby Chinese, whereas language affiliation denoted the ways in which participants had linguistically mediated their participation at schools in England. Language expertise and expectation elicited

insight into the ways in which we perceive native and mother-tongue speakers, particularly the ways in which individuals imagine and align themselves to a future self, through language. Finally, affluence brings the conceptualisation of linguistic identity into class, socioeconomic status and an international mindset denoting that, due to the internationalisation, affluence and linguistic capital associated with English, for these Chinese adolescents, being an English-speaker is an expected facet of their linguistic identity.

## Pedagogical implications

ESL poetry workshops for multilingual international students can introduce more encompassing, inclusive social participation in school communities, beyond the boundaries of school itself and into the wider community. Of growing interest within ESL is the concept of meaningful literary practice (Hanauer, 2012), which is conceived as language-learning in a meaningful way that reflects one's life, using personal experiences to promote the ways in which ESL writers negotiate, construct and express their identity. A classroom that celebrates the vibrant linguistic identity of its students can achieve immeasurable progress in the inclusivity of all students. Hence, it is hoped that the linguistic play and creativity taught via the methodology of this paper, a three-week ESL poetry workshop, will be mimicked and trialed by educators more widely.

For students whose L1 is not English, poetry as a pedagogy has a multitude of benefits. ESL poetry in classrooms can create the sentiment that "language is not only a system but a site to test and contest experimental, personal modes of expression" (Disney, 2012, p. 37). Engaging ESL learners in the construction of poetry entices the learner towards the center of the learning process. In terms of the expression of linguistic identity, poetry holds that learning a language is depicted as an emotional experience, for which issues of identity and self-perception are at its core. As the world continues to support global connections, individuals who relocate bring with them lived experiences; presenting these experiences through a creative medium, such as poetry, has the potential to engage readers emotionally yet constructively in appreciating others' experiences. For Chinese adolescents, a poetry workshop in their first year attending education institutions in England may help to conceptualise, place and understand their linguistic identity, resulting in better engagement with their environment and more confidence in their linguistic abilities.

## Conclusion

This paper asks: What can the construction of ESL poetry reveal about expressions of linguistic identity among Chinese adolescents? Using creative elucidation

of linguistic identity, ESL poems took participants on a journey from the networks and institutions in which we operate, to situated encounters and finally, reflecting on the self. The methodological process of incorporating participants into an experience that proved useful and meaningful for them ought to pave the way for more academic studies to expose students to novel workshops, training and pedagogies. The research process proved useful and therapeutic for learners to understand how language mediates their identity construction. Rampton's (1990) framework of linguistic repertoire as the analytical tool to dissect each of the twelve poems revealed that a novel conceptualisation of linguistic identity is necessary. Hence, the research illustrates the value of using ESL poetry as part of language learning as well as the need for a more contemporary, concrete definition of linguistic identity. For Chinese students who are educated at independent schools in England, expectation and affluence appear to govern their relationship with the English language and nation. This paper goes one step further in positing that it is these additional facets of linguistic identity that comprise the way in which these students linguistically mediate their English surroundings. Future studies on the expression of linguistic identity, using ESL poetry, may uncover the way English is perceived by students and offer deeper insight as to whether it has indeed lost its sociocultural richness in the place of functioning as a pragmatic tool for which to accumulate capital. In a world that is increasingly multilingual and globalised, the commodification of English and its subsequent cultural, social, and economic gains ought to be scrutinised if we are to fully comprehend linguistic identity in the modern era.

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## Appendix

### P1 (Chinese friend)

中文 English

Imaginative. Impartial. Impassioned.

[Anonymised content] squash court before and after school

Practicing. Participating. Performing.

Sports hall: sweats, efforts

Skills. Proficient.

奥力给

Blue

### P2 (Chinese friend)

English

Humorous. Supportive. Positive

[Anonymised content] toilet, everyday

Dancing, smiling, debating

School corridor: gossips, pranks

Memories. Happiness.

'中文！陪我去厕所！'

Green.

### P1 (English friend)

English

Friendly. Fabulous. Generous.

Second Orchestra as well as football pitches

Working. Striving. Communicating.

Chamber Concert: determination

Patience. Curiosity.

Let's go

Red

### P2 (English friend)

English

Energetic. Intelligent. Sympathetic.

[Anonymised content] in the swimming pool.

Laughing, cheering, thinking

Dining hall: chit-chats, shares

Resilience. Responsibility

'SPAGHETTI!!!' Orange.

### P1

中文 English

I am curious, but I am hypocritical.

I wonder why we are under gravity.

I hear the magma flowing under the crust.

I see the luminous lighting striking across the sky.

I want to discover the interactions between matter and energy.

I may be curious, but I am hypocritical.

I pretend that I don't care about anything.

I feel the responsibility inside me.

I touch the genuineness from others.

I worry that everyone leaves me behind.

I cry for my failure in the exams.

I may be curious, but I am hypocritical.

I understand that only successful people can choose their ways of living.

I say you have to what you are ought to do.

I dream of graduating from top universities.

I try to become the best at everything.

I hope all the efforts pay off.

I may be curious, but I am hypocritical.

### P2

I am 中文 English

I am fragile, but I am strong

I wonder if I am doing the things I truly want

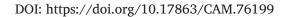I hear the voice in my heart, telling me to be myself

I see my dreams becoming true – an explorer

I want to spend more time with my family

I may be fragile, but I am strong

I pretend I am unbreakable in front of strangers

I feel the bond of me and my family

I touch the line that links everyone together,
and strengthen them
I worry that I will lose the people I love
I cry for the unspoken truth
I may be fragile, but I am strong
I understand that truth could hurt
I say accept it, and move on with life
I dream about having a dog,
and time I would spend with it
I hope that I could become the people I respect
I may be fragile, but I am strong

*P1*

Me at 25
At the age of 25.
I would have finished
my undergraduate and master's degrees
in my dream university.
At the age of 25.
I would have gotten
a job that I'm passionate about
in a high-tech company.
At the age of 25.
I would have met
the person who I can take care of
for the rest of my life.
At the age of 25.
I would have made
friends who I can trust without thinking
when I mostly need help.
At the age of 25.
I would have discovered
a lot of my new interests and hobbies
that I have never touched before.
At the age of 25.
Many things would have changed.
But what would never change,
is the faith and the courage within me.

*P2*

I am 25
I may be vulnerable, but I am wild
I wonder if I will do this for my life
I will hear the call of the wilderness in Africa
I will see myself amongst the pride of lions
I want to help the wildlife from disappearing
I may be vulnerable, but I am wild
I pretend my family is with me wherever I go
I feel love sprouting as the thunderstorm roars
I will touch the softness of nature
I will worry that I will leave her
I cry for lives lost because of poachers
I may be vulnerable, but I am wild
I understand that life is not fair
I say do the things you truly like
I dream of 25, and my adulthood life
I will try to give my best to save them
I hope that nature would except me,
after all the things we've done
I may be vulnerable, but I am wild.