

Ineffective English Learning in the Family Field during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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코로나19 팬데믹 기간 동안의 가정 내 비효과적인 영어 학습

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Abstract Building on the framework of language socialization [10] in language learning and use, the present study examines the environmental factors involved in four college students' English learning in the situated place of the home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using narrative inquiry, this study implements a time-series analysis to investigate undergraduates' online English learning in a rural area of northwest China. The data were collected via oral and written narration, semi-structured interviews, and class documents. Leveraging the field-habitus theories, the findings reveal that each of the students had a different habitus in the family field that influenced their English learning at home between March to July of 2020. Ultimately, all four students felt that their habitus made their online English learning ineffective and expressed that they did not wish to continue learning at home. The findings imply that it is important for rural parents to pay more attention to building college students' learning environments and helping students cultivate a strong learning habitus in the family field in northwest China.

Key Words : Language socialization, Family field, Habitus, Chinese rural undergraduates, English learning in the situated place of home

요약 본 다중 사례 연구는 언어 학습 및 사용에서 언어 사회화의 프레임워크[10]를 기반으로 코로나19 팬데믹 기간 동안 가정 내에서 4명의 대학생의 영어 학습과 관련된 가정 내 환경적 요인을 조사합니다. 본 연구는 서술 기법을 활용하여 중국 북서부 농촌 지역에 위치한 가정에서 중국인 대학생 4명의 온라인 영어 학습 양태를 조사하기 위해 시계열 분석을 수행합니다. 데이터는 2020년 3월부터 2020년 7월까지 구두 및 서면 서술, 반구조화 인터뷰, 수업 문서(수업 일정, 시간표)를 통해 수집되었습니다. 연구 결과에 따르면 각 학생은 가정 내에서 영어 학습에 영향을 미치는 서로 다른 가정 내 행위관습을 가지고 있었습니다. 결국 4명의 학생 모두 자신의 행위관습이 온라인 영어 학습을 비효율적으로 만든다고 느꼈고 가정 내에서 계속 학습하고 싶지 않다고 말했습니다. 본 연구의 결과는 중국 북서부 농촌 지역 부모들이 대학생들의 학습 환경을 구축하고 학생들이 가정 내에서 효과적인 학습 습관을 기를 수 있도록 주의를 기울이는 것이 중요함을 시사합니다.

주제어 : 언어 사회화, 가정, 행위관습, 중국 농촌 대학생, 가정 내 영어 학습

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1. Introduction

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, schools have been closed to limit public gatherings and curb the spread of the virus. Throughout the world, students and teachers were required to stay home and engage in distance learning to maintain social distancing[1]. China was among the first countries to implement the online study. In so doing, it faced a huge challenge, especially with respect to English learning. Tian[2] noted that the biggest pandemic-related challenge for English learning has been the transformation of both classrooms and teaching methods. Specifically, in traditional education, teaching occurs with students and teachers in the same physical classroom[3]. However, during the pandemic, students have moved their learning space from school to home[2]. That is, the context for English learning has moved from school to family: from offline to online[4].

In March 2020, a total of 265 million students engaged in online learning across China[5], marking the most widespread home online education experience in the history of human education[6]. Li and Zhou[7] argued that online learning in China is ineffective because of shortages in technology, information resources, and teacher supervision. Jiang [8] identified several problems with online education during the COVID-19 epidemic in China, especially with respect to college students' English learning. For instance, online classrooms allow little teacher-student interaction; a lack of appropriate learning affects evaluations; and students lack enthusiasm to attend online classes[8]. Although numerous studies have examined online educational technology and pedagogy, online learning situational environments, such as the family, are still relatively under- investigated[9]. Further, Li and

Zhou[7] noted that existing research on online teaching and learning in China is primarily quantitative and based on questionnaires, while few qualitative studies have been conducted.

To address these gaps, the current qualitative study examines the at-home online English learning of four Chinese undergraduates from a rural area in northwest China, investigating the influential factors of the students' online English learning from the family perspective. First, we present the theoretical framework and previous research on students' online learning. Then, we describe the data collection and research methodology. The paper concludes with the research results and discussion, followed by pedagogical implications. Overall, this study examines the influence of the family environment on students' English learning by answering two guided research questions:

1) How did Chinese college students study English in the situated space of the home during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown?

2) What are the factors that affect students' online English learning at home?

2. Theoretical Framework

The concept of language socialization holds that language learning is inseparable from and deeply influenced by the specific social environment[10]. The social environments such as learners' homes, classrooms, workplace, and other language contexts are shaped by culture, society, and politics, and their social significance affects learners' understanding and use of language[11]. Thus, it is crucial to understand the relationship between learners' language learning and the social, cultural, and political environments in which learners acquire language[12].

In recent years, the development of internet

technology has launched a new research trend in language socialization: exploring the impacts of online language environments[14]. In fact, according to United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization[15], over one billion students have engaged in remote learning at home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced an unprecedented experiment in online education[6].

Previous studies[16,17] have revealed a relationship between individual language learners and their social environments. Norton [16] borrowed the concept of “cultural capital” [18] as a metaphor for English, describing English learning as an “investment.” Because language learners exist in a social world, in which cultural capital can increase their living or speaking rights, many are motivated by cultural capital to “invest” in learning English [16]. As Ma [19] noted, such an “investment” is a conscious human behavior with a strong purpose. However, there is another kind of human behavior that most people, including learners themselves, fail to notice: that of “habitus,” which takes place in “the field,” defined as a network or configuration of objective relations among various objectively defined positions[20].

Li and Shi[21] noted that Bourdieu’s[20] field-habitus theory has a significant influence on education in China because it provides researchers a conceptual apparatus and methodological guidance for in-depth analyses of phenomena in Chinese education. Traditionally, the school field includes schools, teachers, and students, which are closely linked to form a network of relationships[7]. The habitus of the school field refers to teachers’ and students’ original knowledge, intellection, life experiences, comprehension, and other complex ideologies[22]. Since the outbreak of

COVID-19, traditional learning has shifted from school to home, significantly affecting both the field and habitus of education[2].

Therefore, using the framework of language socialization, the present study seeks to understand the relationship between learners’ online language learning environment and their language acquisition. Specifically, by examining four Chinese university students’ online English learning within the situated space of the home during the 2020 pandemic lockdown, the present study investigates students’ English learning from the field-habitus perspective to better understand the influential factors in the family field on students’ English learning.

3. Literature Review

The language socialization paradigm examines the influences of the language environment on learners’ language learning from both macro (e.g., society, politics, culture) and micro (e.g., learning resources, learning environment, individual learner) perspectives[23]. From the micro perspective, Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen[24] pointed out that a variety of rich learning environments for the second language (L2) acquisition come from outside the classroom, rather than inside. On this note, Morris and Jones[11] found that family has a significant influence on language socialization. For instance, early studies on first language (L1) socialization [26,35]demonstrated that newcomers or novices internalize the linguistic practices of their parents or older siblings.

Moreover, in L2 socialization, Dong[23] noted that language socialization research should pay attention to the language learning environment, such as the home or family. To explore this, Guo and Fu[25] found that the habitus in the family field can shape students’ active learning state. Chang et al[26]. found that Chinese

students' age and the increasing difficulty of L2 learning gradually weaken the learning influence of family or parents. By college, especially, the family has only a marginal impact on students' L2 learning.

Existing studies[27,28] reveal that, due to the general disregard for habitus in English education in China, students' mother tongue and other social habitus can impact language learning. For instance, Yang[4] found that a lack of an English environment or learning habitus in the family field reduced the English learning efficiency and increased the English learning anxiety of students from northwest China.

In sum, while previous studies[22,27,28] have observed Chinese students' English learning in different fields and showed the various influences on students' English learning, few qualitative studies have utilized the habitus and field mechanism to analyze English learning phenomena in depth[22]. Moreover, in 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic halted traditional education at school, forced a switch to online language learning[29], and seriously affected the teaching and learning field and habitus[30].

The present study builds on this existing research by analyzing the impact of habitus on English learning in students' family field in depth. To observe English learning in language socialization, a multiple case study applying the field-habitus theory[20] is used to examine how four Chinese students learned English in a situated social context: the family field during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Methods

Language socialization studies usually emphasize the qualitative analysis of data acquired through subtle observations in the state of nature[30]. In-depth semi-structured

interviews conducted with learners can help researchers understand the purpose and significance of learners' participation, thereby meeting the criteria of qualitative research validity[31]. Accordingly, the current study implements a qualitative research approach—namely, a multiple case study, by applying time-series analysis to data from the students' learning diaries, to understand how four Chinese college students in a rural area learned English online at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.1 Class setting

This study was conducted in the medical department of a university in northwest China. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all Chinese students had to learn online at home[14]. The focal English class was taken via Xuexitong and the QQ chat group, which are two mainstream online teaching platforms in China. Xuexitong is a live-streaming platform for distance education. During the pandemic, teachers used Xuexitong to convert traditional teaching in physical classrooms into long-distance online teaching in homes. Because of technical reasons, students are not allowed to speak in case the live streaming lags on Xuexitong. QQ chat is another major social media tool for online communication. Chinese students can form different chat groups with their QQ friend, but QQ can only be used for words or vocal messages. Online live class is unavailable via the QQ chat group. Thus, the QQ chat group was used for information and discussions generally shared in Chinese before or after class.

The focal English class was held on Tuesdays from 8:40 to 9:50 and Thursdays from 7:40 to 8:50. Table 1 presents the class schedule:

Table 1. Course Schedule

| Course | Student number | Class day | Class Time | Learning Platform |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| New Horizon College English | 51 | Tue. Thu. | 8:40-9:50 7:40-8:50 | Xuexitong QQ chat grop |

(5 boys and 46 girls; 11 from urban areas, 40 from rural areas)

4.2 Participants

Four focal students participated in this study: two girls (Lan and Chun) and two boys (Cheng and Jun). All were sophomores from a rural area. Their English proficiency level were low since they were not majored in English. We guaranteed their privacy and have ensured anonymity by replacing their real names with pseudonyms.

Lan is a 23-year-old girl. Because of her parents' low level of education, they do not ask about Lan's studies or learning at home. Thus, due to a lack of family supervision or requirements, Lan does not learn English efficiently at home (Lan, original in Chinese, student diary, July 16th, 2020). Lan considers home to be a place for relaxation and rest, without supervision or interruption.

Chun is also 23. Chun's parents are poorly educated. She got married last year. Chun's parents think there is no need for a married girl to keep studying at home or invest in English learning. Therefore, Chun spends no time on English learning at home. She does not consider her family or home environment to be conducive for continued study (e.g., learning English or other school subjects). Instead, she engages in a routine of helping her parents with housework and farm work at home (Chun, original in Chinese, student diary, November 16th, 2020).

Jun is a 21-year-old boy. For economic reasons, he spends his winter and summer vacations earning money for tuition by working a part-time job in a big city. He said that, except for school time, he stays home no more

than eight days a year. Thus, Jun spends his time at home taking care of other family members. He never learns English at home (Jun, original in Chinese, interview, July 12th, 2020).

Cheng is a 25-year-old boy. Children in his hometown learned the local dialect from an early age and did not care about any other languages. Growing up, Cheng had little English learning experience. Now, he feels that being a student from the countryside has limited his English learning ability, and so he does not learn English at home (Cheng, original in Chinese, student diary, October 23rd, 2020). He usually spends his time with family or hanging out with friends (Cheng, original in Chinese, interview, July 12th, 2020).

Since all four of the focal undergraduates are from a rural area in northwest China, they lack the funds to have a computer or laptop at home. In sum, as shown in Table 2, due to their family backgrounds, family economic statuses, equipment for online class, and family activities, and the four participants provided a wealth of information for the study of rural students' English learning in the family field.

4.3 Data collection

The investigation was conducted in students' family field using narrative inquiry, a qualitative research approach used to explore individuals' views about themselves and their actions in depth [32]. Further, as proposed by Connelly and Clandinin [33], narrative research emphasizes the value of examining learners' oral, written, and visual narratives to ensure a full understanding of both them and their

experiences[34]. The data used in this study were collected from March to December of 2020 via students' diaries and semi-structured interviews. In addition, the researchers interviewed the English teacher in the observed class once via telephone to ask for course documents (e.g., the textbook and the course syllabus) and class information (e.g., the course curriculum and students' attendance). This additional information contributed to the compilation of full background information regarding the students' English learning.

4.3.1 Students' diaries

We asked four participants to keep a written diary recording their online English learning. The diary themes, which combined research questions with practical situations, were left mostly open to allow for an understanding of the real psychology of rural students' English learning and their state of learning at home. The diary theme topics were announced by the English teacher during the students' English classes at the beginning of every month. Considering the participants' other study tasks, the researchers asked them to finish one diary entry every two weeks, with one diary entry per

topic in Chinese. From March 2020 to July 2020, we collected 35 diary entries. Finally, we translated all the students' diary contents into English. Table 3 shows the diary times and topics.

4.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

We conducted semi-structured interviews in Chinese via WeChat, a popular Chinese social media for online communication (similar to Kakaotalk in Korea). To avoid allowing students' answers to influence those of others, we invited only one focal student per interview once a week. All semi-structured interviews were held in Chinese, lasted approximately 30 minutes, and was either written down or audio recorded.

4.4 Data analysis

We analyzed the data using time-series analysis, which is a narrative inquiry method for exploring relationships among various events at a certain time[35]. In this study, the time series followed an ongoing and comparative process[24] to explore the influences of students' family fields on their online English learning.

Table 2. Participants' Information

| Name | Gender | Age | Family Background | Family Economic Status | Equipment for Online Class | Family Activities |
|-------|--------|-----|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lan | Female | 23 | rural | medium | smartphone | housework, minding the store |
| Chun | Female | 23 | rural | low | smartphone | housework, farm work |
| Jun | Male | 21 | rural | low | smartphone | taking care of the family |
| Cheng | Male | 25 | rural | high | smartphone | hanging out with friends |

Table 3. Times And Topics Of Student Diaries

| SEMESTER | TIME | TOPIC |
|--|-------|--|
| | March | History of English Learning |
| | April | Self Introduction |
| 2 nd semester of 1 st year | May | Introduction of Family |
| | June | Online English Learning in the Space of Home |
| | July | The Influences of Family on English Learning |

Specifically, the data analysis involved three stages. First, we coded students' diaries and interview transcripts, focusing on the students' habitus and English learning in their family fields. Then, we identified two time-series themes based on the students' English learning stages: the beginning of students' online English learning at home (March, 2020) and the end of students' online English learning at home (July, 2020). Second, we reexamined the raw data on each theme in depth. For instance, data on the students' family environment (e.g., family background, learning atmosphere, learning space, learning equipment) supported an understanding of the students' habitus and English learning process in the family field. Finally, using comparative method to compare the two themes, we selected focused data (i.e., the habitus in the family field and the influences of the habitus on the students' English learning) from each word, line, or segment of the students' interviews and diaries, according to the two-time nodes.

5. Findings

Lan's Story: "Free and Relaxed" and "Get Up Late, Lie on Bed to Listen to English Class"

Beginning of online English learning at home

Lan recalled that when she got the news that all students would be home for online learning, she felt very excited. She recorded her English learning in the family field as follows:

English classes are usually in the morning. In rural areas, there is no heating at home... Sometimes I didn't want to get up. I usually stayed on the bed while listening to my English class. It was wonderful... because I was the only one in the room and no one would bother me.

Compared with the school environment, it is much better to study at home... (Lan, original in Chinese, student diary, June 27th, 2020)

In the observed university, students had to enter the classroom before 8:00 a.m. regardless of the weather (course syllabus for medicine students of 2019). However, during the pandemic lockdown in March, 2020, Lan "sometimes" didn't get up and "usually" stayed in bed while listening to her English class. Lan experienced English learning differently at home because "home is a place for relaxing and resting" (Lan, original in Chinese, interview, July 12th, 2020). In other words, her thinking set—that is, habitus—in her family field was "free and relaxed." Through the influence of this habitus, Lan felt "free" to get up and lie on the bed to listen to her English teacher: a practice that would not have been possible in a normal class held in a classroom. Accordingly, "not getting up on time" and "lying on the bed while in English class" in the morning are embodiments of Lan's "free and relaxed" habitus in the family environment.

Different fields construct their own habitus [8]. Lan wrote that she occupied her space in her family field without disturbance. She did not have to share a classroom or dormitory with others. Her space allows her to construct her "free and relaxed" habitus. With respect to her English learning, since she was not in a traditional classroom, no one knew she got up late and listened to her English teacher via her mobile phone on her bed. In her diary, she wrote, "...it was wonderful." In short, because Lan's family environment allowed her to construct a home habitus—"free and relaxed"—Lan woke up late and usually stayed on her bed while listening to her English class, and she described such online English learning as "wonderful."

End of online English learning at home

Because of Lan's family habitus, however, she was worried about her final exam. She recalled her English learning as follows:

I knew my teacher couldn't see me, so I fell asleep after a short while of listening to the class... I seldom did homework; my teacher didn't check it often. But I was worrying about my final exam... I don't want to continue online English learning... (Lan, original in Chinese, interview, July 25th, 2020)

Ma[19] described habitus as the embodied history of human beings. As Lan mentioned in her diary, "home is free and relaxed". This "thought set" of being "free and relaxed" in her family field deeply influenced her actions[19]. Thus, she often stayed on the bed during English class. Further, because of the issue with streaming lag and the prohibition of video chat, Lan knew that her English teacher "can't see me." Finally, in the family field, homework was not checked regularly. Therefore, to a certain extent, "sleeping in class" and "not doing homework" became external behaviors of her habitus in the family field: "free" and "relaxed." However, she knew she had learned little English via her smart phone at home, and there was a chance she could fail the final exam. Thus, it could be said that online English class was not effective for Lan. Ultimately, although she enjoyed learning English in the situated space of home at the beginning of the semester, by the end, she was ready to return to a classroom environment.

Chun's Story: "Help Parents with Housework and Farm Work" and "Get Lazier with English Learning"

Beginning of online English learning at home

At the beginning, however, she enjoyed the new learning paradigm. She described her English learning in her diary as follows:

Although I have a separate space for English learning in the morning, my parents usually do housework and farm work early in the morning themselves. I usually help them do farm work and housework instead of listening to class. Additionally, I am married. I spend less and less time living in my parents' home. To reduce my parents' burden, I always actively help my parents with housework and farm work when I am home... This time I helped my parents more... (Chun, original in Chinese, student diary, June 27th, 2020)

Habitus is the combination of the possibilities of individual behaviors and individual real actions in a given situation[20]. Chun believed that English learning requires a given situation: "school." She felt she could only learn in school. The family field had its own habitus: doing housework and farm work. As she wrote, "I always actively help my parents and do housework and farm work when I am home." Because of the lack of labor in rural China, college students from rural regions must help their parents work during their winter vacation in February and March[9]. Accordingly, during her mornings at home, Chun helped her parents instead of attending English class.

In addition, Chun spent less and less time staying her parents' home after she married. Thus, she prioritized helping her parents while in her family environment during lockdown. Since she used her smart phone for English class, she could do housework or farm work without missing her class. This allowed her to

help her parents more. In sum, because of the influence of her habitus—"help my parents with housework and farm work"—Chun saw home online learning as a time for helping her parents with housework or farm work, not learning.

End of online English learning at home

Ultimately, Chun felt that staying and learning at home made her lazier with her English learning, and she decided she preferred learning in school:

I could freely spend my time during English class... to me; the online English learning is inefficient. Too much free time makes me lazier in English learning, so I don't want to stay at home for online English learning any more... (Chun, original in Chinese, interview, July 25th, 2020)

In Chun's case, online English learning at home was influenced by her habitus in the family field: helping her parents with housework and farm work. Since she did not enjoy learning English (Chun, original in Chinese, student diary, November 16th, 2020), she could use this habitus as an excuse to quit English learning—or at least to quit English learning at home. Since rural residents have to do farm work in the morning, Chun often helped her parents during English class. Thus, her habitus in her family field had a negative effect on her English learning at home, and she became lazier in learning English. Ultimately, since her habitus in the family field prioritizes helping her parents, Chun felt that online courses were inefficient and decided she did not want to continue studying at home.

Jun's Story: "Family Responsibility" and

"Failed to Learn English"

Beginning of online English learning at home

At the beginning of winter vacation in 2020, Jun went to a big city to earn money; however, the COVID-19 outbreak forced him back home. Jun enjoyed getting to spend so much time at home. He recorded his online English learning at home as follows:

My grandmother is bedridden all year round. My sister and I are both students. As the only breadwinner in my family, my father earns money to feed the family. In order to lighten my father's burden, I do some part-time work every winter and summer vacations to make money... With the increase of my age, I am taking on more and more responsibilities for my family... I usually cook for my family, accompanying my grandmother while watching TV, and chat with my family during English class... (Jun, original in Chinese, student diary, June 20th, 2020)

As Guo and Fu[25] noted, habitus can be shaped by the field. This was the case with Jun, who spent a lot of time earning money to reduce his family's financial burden for his family. He and his sister needed financial support, and his grandmother needed care. His father was the only one looking after the families. Thus, "responsibility" became his "thought set," or habitus, in his family field. Specifically, Jun considered "earning money," "cooking," "accompanying," and "chatting" to be his responsibility for his family as well as the representation of his habitus.

In Jun's family environment, "my grandmother is bedridden all year round," and "my father earns money to feed the family." Jun also had very limited time at home, so he cherished it.

His desire to stay with his family at home, therefore, was understandable. He felt he had to do something to make up for his long absences, so he devoted his English class time to cooking and spending time with his family. In his words, “the only thing listening to my English class was my smart phone itself” (Jun, original in Chinese, interview, July 12th, 2020).

End of Online English Learning at Home

Jun failed to learn English. As he told the researchers:

I put my mobile phone aside and did other things, such as cooking or watching TV with my grandma and sister... Since I seldom stay at home, I want to spent time with my family... I know I failed to learn English at home... sometimes I am afraid of the teacher's questions. I am afraid she will ask me to give an answer. If I don't know how to answer, I will feel very ashamed in front of all my classmates. I want to go back to a normal class to study English... (Jun, original in Chinese, interview, July 26th, 2020)

Jun's habitus in his family field comprised taking responsibility for his family, cooking for his family and watching TV with his grandmother and sister. This habitus grew out of his family background, since he had to take responsibility for his family both outside (working hard to earn money) and inside (cooking, watching TV with grandmother and sister). So, when English learning took place inside his family field, his actions continued to be guided by his family habitus, and he ultimately did not he learn a lot of English class. The result was that he felt fear and shame about being asked a question to which he did not know the correct answer. In sum, Jun's habitus negatively impacted English learning in

the situated space of home, and he wanted to return to a normal English class.

Cheng's Story: “Having Fun” and “Quitting English Learning”

Beginning of online English learning at home

Cheng was happy to extend his winter vacation for online learning at home. He described his online English learning in his family as follows:

I have few things to do when I am home, so I just hang out with my friends most of the time... So I often play basketball or have a barbecue with my friends at home... During the online English course, if my friends came, I would go out with them, bringing my mobile phone in my pocket... I could attend the English class while having fun with my friends... (Jun, original in Chinese, student diary, June 23rd, 2020)

Since “there are few things I need to do in my home,” Cheng spent a lot of time hanging out with his friends. According to Bourdieu[20], habitus, as the long-term accumulation of experience, becomes the mechanism of human action and cognition in different fields. Cheng's family field lacks significant life pressures, so he does not have to think about his family too much. In other word, his long-term experience of enjoying time with friends in his family field internalized these actions and cognitions into his habitus. Through this habitus, he felt he could attend English class while having fun with his friends.

Cheng's family field lacked a learning atmosphere because “I often play basketball or have a barbecue with my friends at home.” Even when he had English class, Cheng prioritizes his habitus of hanging out, bringing his smart

phone with him in his pocket. Further, since his father was a truck driver who transported goods all year round (Cheng, original in Chinese, interview, July 12th, 2020); Cheng experienced a decrease in family supervision. This allowed him to engage in online English learning within the context of his family field and habitus, learning English while having fun.

End of online English learning at home

Cheng gave up learning English at home. He explained:

I just lay on the bed when I had online English classes at home... If my friends came to ask me to go out, I would put my mobile phone in my pocket and go out to play with them... And we had breakfast every morning while I was taking English class... I feel like, in my family, most of the time, I gave up English studying, so I hope to go back to school as soon as possible...(Cheng, original in Chinese, interview, July 26th, 2020)

For Cheng, lying on his back and listening to English class became a norm for online English learning at home. He did not have to help his family like Jun and Lan. Thus, his habitus in family field: enjoying time with friends and putting his “mobile phone in his pocket” when his friends asked him to go outside during a live English class. He also noted that English class was held during breakfast time. Therefore, in addition to playing with friends, Cheng had breakfast during online English learning. As a result, he admitted that he had essentially given up learning English at home. Since learning English is a requirement for every undergraduate, Cheng worried about his failure to study English at home and expressed a desire to go back to

school for normal study as soon as possible.

In short, whether relaxing at home, helping parents, taking care of families, or enjoying time with friends, each student’s internalized family habitus produced a series of inappropriate behaviors within their English learning. In other words, the influence of the original habitus on the students’ English learning became increasingly apparent over time, resulting in concerns about the final exam, laziness with respect to study, failure to learn English, and giving up on English learning. Eventually, all four of the focal rural students expressed a desire to stop learning online English at home and return to traditional classes.

6. Discussion

Using the lens of language socialization, the current qualitative study investigated four rural Chinese undergraduates’ online English learning processes at home. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced all students to stay home for safety and social distance, the original English learning field—the “school field”—moved to the family field. By analyzing the focal students’ English learning at home using Bourdieu’s [20] concepts of “field” and “habitus,” we found that habitus in the family field influenced the students’ online English learning in important and negative ways. As a result, all four undergraduates felt their home online English learning was inefficient and expressed a desire to return to normal learning in school.

First, we analyzed how Chinese college students studied English within the situated space of the home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The collected class documents (text book, course syllabus, course curriculum, students’ attendance) provided rich information on the students’ English class, while semi-structured interviews with the focal

students identified family background, learning atmosphere, learning space, and learning equipment as main aspects of the family environment. Specifically, in the focal family field of northwest China, we found that students from rural areas: a) have different types of habitus that influence their online English learning; b) lack an appropriate learning atmosphere; c) have their own space without supervision; d) use their smart phones for English learning, meaning that they can engage in other activities during English class. Thus, due to the influence of the family environment, students from rural areas struggled to learn English actively and effectively.

Second, by comparing their English learning at the beginning and end of the lockdown, we used field-habitus theory[20] to examine the influential factors of the four students' English learning processes. Overall, since online English learning allowed them to carry out their habitus in their family field, the four rural undergraduates in this study were—at first—happy to stay home for online English learning. Later, however, as each student's habitus had negative effects on their English learning over time, all of the participants ultimately said that they did not want to continue online English learning at home.

In brief, Chinese college English learning usually takes place at school[37]. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, online English learning took place in a new field: the family field[38]. As Bourdieu[20] noted, if a new field is similar to the field in which a habitus was initially internalized, the original habitus will spontaneously transfer and reproduce social practices in the new field. In the current study, online English learning in the family field triggered the students' original family habitus. As a result, each student's

habitus spontaneously influence their English learning in the original field in which the habitus was shaped. The resulting negative effects on the students' English learning in their family field motivated the students to prefer returning to school for future English learning.

7. Conclusion and Implications

This study was a multiple case study on Chinese undergraduates' English learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Grounded in language socialization, the research borrowed the "field" and "habitus" theory. We observed four rural undergraduates from northwest China and used narrative inquiry to collect data from the students' written diaries and semi-structured interviews. By analyzing the data, we found that each student's different habitus in the family field negatively impacted their online English learning, resulting in all four students expressing a preference for returning to school.

Although China is now ending its lockdown, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over. Therefore, investigating students' online English learning at home can help us research existing problems in the new education field in order to develop a sound education system for future emergencies, especially in under-developed rural areas in China. The findings of this study have two implications for English education.

First, it is important to complement and repair the absence of family education in rural areas of northwest China. In rural families, a lack of family education is a common problem because of parents' own low level of education. During the lockdown and resulting distance education, although the focal students spent a relatively long time learning at home, there was no parental supervision over their education. Therefore, there is a room to rebuild or repair the lack of family education for rural Chinese

undergraduates.

Secondly, it is crucial to establish a comprehensive distance education system for use during natural disasters and public emergencies. Improving the standard online education system and evaluation mechanism is important for rural areas in China. The current research exposed the drawbacks of online education in northwest China. For instance, due to technical issues with lag time, all students in the focal study were forbidden to speak during the online English class. To address such issues, online education and offline education should be integrated, allowing their advantages to complement one another to ensure a more comprehensive and mature development of future online education.

This work explored Chinese rural undergraduates' online English learning during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown with the goal of identifying and solving problems that exist in online English learning in a new field in northwest China. However, this study's research cases and sites were limited. We only have students' negative cases which showed students' ineffective online English learning influenced by habitus in their family field. Diversity online learning should be explored. Thus, there is room for further research on online English learning in the situated space of the home.

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