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Introduction

Like so many of today's Chinese in Germany, I am a relatively recent arrival to the country, having spent most of my life elsewhere. At the age of 30, I came to Germany with a dream of building my own family. Although I had no local, cultural, and linguistic knowledge of the country, I thought I was going to settle down. Born in Beijing, I spent much of my childhood in the old city of Beijing, investigating every corner of the Forbidden City and Qian Men Da Jie. My world was the inner two rings of modern Beijing, a world which was childish, fun, and safe. My teenage years saw me in Scotland, where I found myself alone in a small village, learning about Scottish weather and British education. In my memory it is cold, windy, and full of curiosities. I try to remember the time of my 20s, which unfolded in England where I received my Bachelor and Masters degrees. I recall a phase of colours and self-confidence.

Later, life has split into different parts: family life in Germany, PhD in London, and spending time with my mom and brother in California, in the States. While I was able to commute easily between London and California where I was familiar with the local cultural patterns and fluent in the language, I found that it was rather difficult to engage myself with my German environment. The world here was foreign; I had never felt so far away before. The most difficult thing was not becoming fluent in a third language, not making sense of the local customs, but creating my own friendship circle. On the one hand, it took me a long time to become friendly with the local Germans because of their different socialisation norms. On the other hand, I was out of reach from any Chinese communities in the country. Unlike most Chinese migrants in Germany, my path to the country had nothing to do with the classic Chinese settlements (see Chapter 1): I did not come to the country for higher education where one can forge solid friendship in universities; I did not have any companions from China with whom I could share my own confusions and vulnerabilities. Marrying a German does not help me to stay in touch with my own flesh and blood. Indeed, I was, for a while of the time, vulnerable in the country for which I had so much hope.

The impetus for this research arose from my own migrant experiences and life trajectories, and it would never have taken place, if my daughter had not been attending a Chinese complementary school in Germany prior to the research. It all began with my thrill at seeing one or two Chinese people every once in a while, at the very early stage of my life in Germany, sometimes later encountering them on a street, and hearing Mandarin on a bus, a train or in other public settings in the major city where I have settled. The curiosity about my own ethnic migrant group in Germany came to the fore some years prior to this study, when I registered my daughter to learn the Mandarin language in a local Chinese school. On that day, I entered a place where I was overwhelmed

by the memory deep inside of me. It had been a long time since I had seen a crowd of Chinese and greeted them by saying nihao 你好 (how are you). Many Chinese parents were there at the school, divided into different groups. They were chatting, joking, sharing food, playing mahjong and practising yoga. There were so many of them that I was not able to count them all. However, I was primarily interested in their stories.

Until recently there was a dearth of studies on Chinese communities and the lives of Chinese migrants in modern Germany. The need to investigate Chinese communities in modern Germany was widely ignored by the scholars of social sciences (Gütinger 2004). However, this absence has drawn increasing attention, in particular from scholars with ethnic Chinese minority backgrounds, and the topic of Chinese communities in Germany has slowly become an emerging theme in the field of sociology studies over the past few years. For instance, Maggie Leung, a Hong Kong-born researcher, has conducted a series of studies related to the important strategy of ethnic networking for Chinese-run business in Germany (Leung 2001, 2005b), the construction of Chinese migrants' identities in Germany (Leung 2006), and the question of how Chinese immigrant tourism business owners and related suppliers pursue their business opportunities in Germany and their practice of transnationalism and transculturalism (Leung 2005a, 2009). Silvia Van Ziegert, a second-generation Chinese-American of Hong Kong descent, studies the culture of diasporic Chinese communities in both the United States and Germany, suggesting that overseas Chinese are constantly reconstructing Chinese culture, forming transnational linkages (Ziegert 2007). In a later study, Qilan Shen, a Shanghai-born writer, portrays a detailed picture of the formation and diversity of an evangelical Chinese community in Leipzig, Germany, with the focus on the transnational mission and immigrant lifestyle of the community members (Shen 2010). Nevertheless, few of these studies have taken place in the domain of sociolinguistics. With an emphasis on Chinese migrants social-linguistic (oral) interactions, the current book intends to contribute to the legends of first-generation Chinese migrants and open up discussions on the phenomenon of Chinesische Schule (中文学校/Chinese school) in modern German society.

In this book, I focus on the parental social interactions established at a Chinese complementary school in a major city, in Germany, hoping to demonstrate the significance of the interactions for first-generation migrant parents. To be more specific, I investigate the empowerment and the constraints of such parental social interactions for the first-generation migrant parents. Here I am following the concept of social capital, which broadly refers to the value of the interactions of social groups. The three most influential notions of social capital are: the ways in which resources potentially and actually reside in durable social networks with an emphasis on the reproduction of social inequality (Bourdieu 1986, 1987, 2018); the ways in which certain social structures facilitate social actions which support youth education (Coleman 1988, 1990b); and

individual connections, trust, and norms of reciprocity with attention given to civic engagement (Putnam 1993b, 1995, 1996, 2000). My aim is to contribute to knowledge on ethnic Chinese minority studies in the field of sociolinguistic ethnography with a focus on the value of social interactions in relation to the concepts of social capital as well as including the notion of Guanxi 关系, which refers to the interpersonal relationship in Chinese society (Bian 2001; 2006; Chen and Chen 2004; Lin 2001; Qi 2012, 2013). This provides a Chinese perspective that adds to the anglophone literature.

The research for this book took place at Hua Hua School, a pseudonym for a Chinese complementary school in Germany. Hua Hua School has more than 500 students and is open one day each weekend. Over the whole day, parents and students come and go, and many parents remain at the school while their children take lessons. I conducted the research with the participants, namely, the parents who waited at the school. All the participants were China-born and came to Germany as first-generation migrants. Participants were between the ages of 30 and 50, and their origins were from across Mainland China. All my participants are multilingual. Their linguistic repertoires include more than one language; for example, many of them spoke varieties of Chinese, German and English.

My immediate concern was a desire to gain a deeper understanding of the social interactions of Chinese migrants in Germany. Given my own narratives and social background, inevitably I focused on parental interactions, in particular, parental social interactions among first-generation Chinese migrants in Germany. Sending my own child to a Chinese language school operated by a local ethnic Chinese community, I witnessed the intense social interactions at the school site and the resources that emerged from the parental group interactions. My own multilingual repertoire allows me to participate at the school site, listening to conversations, grasping meanings and collecting data which is most interesting. This impression formed the starting point for this book. As a researcher, I am informed by qualitative research, since the nature of the question posed for this research presumes the need for an exploratory and interpretive approach. I also see myself operating in a post-structuralist paradigm where the world is discursively constructed and truth is socially shaped. I therefore see the phenomenon of social capital as being discursively constructed through the social interactions among my participants in this study. Bearing in mind the material basis of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and the fact that the main social capital theorists in this study do not take a poststructuralist approach to the concept, I treat the data of this study as discursively constructed. Following Block (2014), I intend to reconcile the material world with the discursive social truth and draw attention to the interaction of social structure and human agency, which sees structures facilitate and constrain individual actions while individual actions serve to constantly reshape and reproduce the same structures (ibid). In other words, by looking into the spoken interactions among

my parental participants and how they construct social relations with each other, I intend to explore how social capital is generated and comes into being through their social interactions.

Considering …language as a site for the construction and contestation of social meaning (Baxter 2003, pp.6), I place my special interest in the parental linguistic interactions taking place among my participants. In particular, I draw my attention to their spoken interactions since spoken interaction was the most intensive form of practice during their gatherings. Drawing on Michel Foucault's theory that social reality is discursively constructed and language is both deeply related to knowledge, power and truth, and the means through which the social world is created by individual subjectivities (Foucault 1991), I pay close attention to the parental spoken interactions and attempt to reflect on the discursive practices during their interactions in relation to the issues of social capital.

Three key parental groups emerged during the fieldwork at the school setting. As the parents met regularly in these three groups, I noticed their intensive interactions with one another through endless chatting, joking and gossiping. In studying their spoken interactions, I draw on Lemkes (1995) notion of social voice, which refers to the voices of our communities that are available to and used by people who speak in order to make the meaning comprehensible in the community in which they are embedded (pp.24-25). Thus, my interest in the three parental groups spoken interactions resides within the social voice of the participants and its interrelatedness to the value of their social interactions, as seen in informational exchanges, mutual support, emotional backup, social inclusion/exclusion, marginalization/elimination, both within and beyond the Chinese complementary school site.

Over time, the study has been shaped by a diverse body of literature focused on: firstly, social capital theories, such as the value of group networking related to personal profit, children education, community development, civic participation, bridging to host society, and the construction of social class and groups; secondly, the most related concept to social capital, Guanxi, in Chinese scholarship; and thirdly, poststructuralist questions, such as the discursive practices of social relations, individual self-positioning, and the discursive positioning of others within power relations. From initial readings in sociolinguistics and social capital theory, other texts have come to inform my approach. The most important of these come from: Bourdieu's work on the structure of society, habitus, and the accumulation of capital; Putnam's concepts of social capital, civic engagement, and society development; Colemans ideas of community and parental engagement in young people's academic success; Foucault's knowledge of discursive practice within power relations; Chinese scholarship on Guanxi; migration studies, and sociology.