

Impact of Fee-Free Supplementary Tutoring in English on Underprivileged Secondary Students' L2 Motivational Selves in Hong Kong: A Longitudinal Narrative Inquiry

Unequal access to language learning resources has been an issue in both economically developing and developed societies where English is learnt as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). Underprivileged students (i.e. those in poverty) are usually linguistically disadvantaged due to inadequate communication opportunities and learning resources. This may decrease their chance of English learning success, thus potentially resulting in the lack of second language (L2) motivation. This educational inequality is exacerbated by the global prevalence of private supplementary tutoring, or “shadow education”. In the current educational context emphasising performativity, many secondary school students invest in tutoring to supplement their school learning and boost their examination results. In Hong Kong, English tutorial classes have the highest enrolment rate because of the importance of English for studies and future career. When the majority of students subscribe to paid tutoring, those who cannot afford the tuition fee are further disadvantaged and are likely to lag behind their peers. In this connection, some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Hong Kong offer fee-free supplementary tutoring for students from low-income families by recruiting voluntary tutors to help them catch up with their studies, increase their self-esteem and motivate them. Whether this emerging type of tutoring has made a difference in underprivileged students' L2 learning experiences is still underexplored. Given the significant role of motivation in determining L2 learning success, this study will draw on Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System to investigate the impact of fee-free supplementary tutoring in English on underprivileged secondary students' L2 motivation. Informed by the recent “dynamic turn” in L2 research, this study will capture the complexity of individuals' motivational dynamics as mediated by contexts. Through longitudinal narrative inquiry, this study will identify and investigate the potential changes of the current and future L2 selves of 18 underprivileged secondary students receiving fee-free supplementary tutoring in English. Participants will be recruited through an NGO offering such tutoring. Data will be collected through three rounds of in-depth individual interviews over one year, supplemented by the participants' self-plotted “motigraphs”, tutorial lesson observations and informal conversations with their tutors and parents. This study will paint a comprehensive picture of underprivileged students' narrative experiences and add to our understanding of their dynamic L2 motivational selves. It will generate recommendations for policy and curriculum development regarding how to minimise educational inequalities and offer practical advice for tutors and schoolteachers to better support underprivileged students' English learning inside and outside school.