

A Project entitled

***Comparing secondary students' English learning
motivation in online and face-to-face tutoring***

Submitted by

Wong Shu Fai

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Abstract

Based on the L2 Learning Experience in Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), this study compared and analyzed Hong Kong secondary students' L2 learning experience and their English learning motivation in online and face-to-face English private tutoring (EPT). Using narrative inquiry, this paper studied twelve Hong Kong secondary students' L2 learning experiences in online and face-to-face tutoring and investigated their engagement and English learning motivation in different tutoring environments. Through an initial questionnaire and one round of interview, the study revealed that students generally have a poor L2 learning experience in online EPT, wherein the poor language learning experiences disengaged them in the language learning process and formed demotivation in L2 learning. The findings contributed to our understanding of the 'L2 learning experience' component in L2MSS and the impact of L2 contexts on students' L2 motivation. As the study also indicated that there are some irreplaceable elements in face-to-face tutoring (e.g. physical proximity & facial expressions) which could affect students' L2 learning experience and their engagement, TESOL practitioner and L2 motivation researchers may need to take into account of the learners' situated contexts or their immediate learning environment when conducting relevant studies on L2 motivation.

Declaration

I, *Wong Shu Fai* declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of *Dr YUNG Wai Ho Kevin*, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution. . .

Wong Shu Fai

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Introduction

In recent decades, private tutoring has become one of the most prevalent and thriving out-of-school learning activities for students, with greater expansion and influences in the global educational contexts (Zhang & Bray, 2020). Defined as a fee-paying service that students adopted to supplement their learning on school's academic subjects outside school hours (Yung & Bray, 2017), private tutoring is also known as a “shadow part of the education system” given its mimicry to the mainstream education and its complementary function in formal schooling (Bray & Kwo, 2014). Whilst the curriculum of private tutoring is largely parallel to the mainstream, it puts more emphasis on teaching the exam techniques and strategies that could help students with diverse abilities to improve their grades and academic performance (Stevenson & Baker, 1992; Bray, 2009). Therefore, by captivating people's hope for better educational success and social mobility (Yung, 2015), this kind of skill-focused, goal-oriented, out-of-school learning activity often enjoys great popularity amongst parents and students in Hong Kong, especially in those major subjects that most Hong Kong students struggle with—English (HKFYG, 2013; Kwo & Bray, 2014).

Similar to other places where English is learnt as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL), English private tutoring (EPT) is the most popularly enrolled type of tutoring among students in Hong Kong (Yung, 2015; Zhan, Bray, Wang, Lykins, & Kwo, 2013). It has mainly four modes of instruction, including one-to-one tutoring, small-group tutoring, lecture-type tutoring, and online tutoring (Zhan et al., 2013). Whilst most students would predominantly select the former three types of face-to-face tutoring given its stronger interactivity and personalized support (Yung, 2015; Yung & Bray, 2017), it is not until recent years that the distant mode of tutoring—online tutoring has also started to gain attention and popularity amongst the students (Zhang & Bray, 2020). Unlike face-

to-face tutoring which mandates both the tutor and tutees sitting in the same room for classroom interaction and instruction, online tutoring is a type of web-based private tutoring that enables tutees to attend synchronous or asynchronous lessons via the Internet (Ventura & Jang, 2010). Within a few fingertips, students can not only have their tutorial class online and ask tutor questions in a less embarrassing manner, but they can also gain access to numerous interactive e-mediated tools and multimedia learning resources to address their doubts in learning (Takashiro, 2018). Therefore, owing to these strengths and flexibility offered in the distant mode of tutoring, online tutoring has been growing progressively (Ventura & Jang, 2010). Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many schools are forced to shut down and there are surging demands for quality distance education, the number of service subscriptions even experience a sudden boom, with more students subscribing to online tutoring services to catch up with their learning and prepare better for their exam (Zhang & Bray, 2020).

However, despite the rising popularity of online tutoring, much still remains unknown about the students' experience in online tutoring and their perception towards it, especially in language learning and L2 motivation aspects (Yung, 2019). As suggested by Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), L2 learning experience is a key, 'context-specific' constituent of one's L2 motivation that could be influenced by the individual's immediate learning environment (Dörnyei, 2009). Therefore, one's situated context may potentially affect one's L2 motivation and engagement in his L2 learning, in particular when some of the engagement-specific needs (e.g. one's peers and teacher) related to L2 learning experience were perceived unsatisfied or unfulfilled by learners (Dörnyei, 2019). Therefore, the investigation of students' L2 learning experience in an online English tutoring environment shall help gauge an understanding of the online EPT's impact on students' L2 motivation. Since the online environment varies largely

from the face-to-face environment and it has relatively limited interaction than face-to-face tutoring (Okdie et al., 2011), it would be interesting to know if the difference in tutoring environment (i.e. online vs face-to-face) would have an impact on students' language learning experience and their L2 motivation. These questions possess especially crucial implications for L2 language learning and TESOL research, given that language motivation is a crucial determinant of one's success in second language acquisition (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

This study aims to address the following questions:

- Compared to face-to-face EPT, what experiences do students have during online EPT?
- Compared to face-to-face EPT, how does students' L2 learning experiences motivate them in online EPT?

Whilst the motivational dimension of different forms of EPT are often under-researched and neglected in TESOL (Yung, 2019), it is hoped that this study could also shed some light or inspiration to TESOL's practitioners, teachers, scholars, and policymakers.

Literature Review

L2 Motivational Self System and L2 learning experience

Since the advent of L2MSS in the past decades, the field of L2 motivation research has experienced a great paradigm shift from a static, linear approach to a more self-based, dynamic approach, with a plethora of researchers understanding and studying the L2 language motivation in a situated, dynamic manner (Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015; Yung, 2019). Constructed based on the theoretical framework from motivational psychology (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Higgins, 1987) and L2 motivation research (Noels, 2003; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005), Dörnyei's L2MSS is considered as one of the most prominent and influential models for studying self-related L2 motivation over the past decades (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Yung, 2019). It believes that by constructing and manipulating the visions, language learners can operationalize their visions and use them as self-guides to energize learning behaviour and motivation in L2 learning (Dörnyei, 2009).

The theoretical model of L2MSS consists of mainly three components, namely the *ideal L2 self*, the *ought-to L2 self*, and the *L2 learning experience* (Dörnyei, 2009). Whilst the former two 'self-related' components put greater emphasis on the learner's imagined experience and treat it as future self-guides in L2 learning, the third component, L2 learning experience, interestingly concerns learners' present L2 experience and their situated motives related to their immediate learning environment (Dörnyei, 2014; Dörnyei, 2019). These may involve the experience of success or failure, the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum and the peers in the L2 learning environment.

However, as Dörnyei (2019) noted, due to the under-theorization and limited understanding of L2 learning experience, most of the past studies have not featured this component prominently but focused more on the future selves when studying learner's L2 motivation. Therefore, to remedy this theoretical loophole of L2 learning experience,

Dörnyei (2019) has further published an article to complement the definition through the lens of educational psychology. Using the measurable term “to-engage”, the definition is later extended to be as “the perceived quality of the learners’ engagement with various aspects of the language learning process”, which include school contexts, syllabus and the teaching materials, learning tasks, one’s peers, and the teacher in a L2 learning context (Dörnyei, 2019). It believes, in an L2 context, learners have certain engagement-specific facets to satisfy in order to have a good L2 learning experience (Dörnyei, 2019).

Therefore, considering the emergence of this research gap, it is necessary to revisit the learners’ L2 motivation through the L2 learning experience and engagement, especially considering that L2 learning experience has emerged as the strongest predictor of one’s motivated behaviour in L2 learning (Lamb, 2012; Papi, 2010; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009).

Besides, since some learners might have never “internally or externally generated self-images”, their initial motivation is entirely driven by their successful engagement with the actual language learning process in the immediate learning environment (Dörnyei, 2009, p.29). In this regard, the investigation of L2 learning experience hence poses vital importance to understanding learners’ L2 motivation, especially in those studies that examine the learner’s L2 motivation in different learning environments (i.e. online EPT and face-to-face EPT).

Research on L2 Motivation in English Private Tutoring

Despite the global popularity of EPT and its growing influence in international educational contexts, scholars have noticed a paucity of research in EPT (Yung, 2015; Huang, 2017). Notwithstanding a number of studies have acknowledged the students’ participation in EPT as an important after-school language learning activity that formulates their English learning experience (Ireson & Rushforth, 2011; Lamb, 2007),

only a few of them put the EPT at the center of discussion and explore its motivational impact in students' L2 learning.

Chung (2013) first attempted to study Taiwanese students' L2 motivation in attending EPT using the motivational orientations approach (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Her study revealed that most Taiwanese students were instrumentally motivated to join EPT owing to its practical benefits in safeguarding their English exam grades and university admission (Chung, 2013). Though the study's findings may have shed some light on understanding the rationale behind students' participation in EPT, this study treated motivation as a static, fixed construct without considering its dynamic nature, neglecting the learners' past experience as a factor that affects their participation in EPT (Yung, 2019).

It is also noticeable that some motivation studies which applied Dörnyei's L2MSS have somehow touched on EPT too (See Lamb, 2007; Irie & Brewster, 2013). Whilst these studies showed mixed results and attempted to explain the rationale behind students' participation in EPT, they did not place students' experiences in EPT as the focal point of discussion and exploration (Yung, 2019), making it difficult to derive a full picture of students' L2 learning experience in EPT and their L2 motivation.

There are still some other studies that specifically focus on learners' experiences in EPT and their L2 motivation. Kim (2011) conducted a quantitative study that examines Korean elementary school students' English learning motivation with Dörnyei's L2MSS model. Analyzing the questionnaire data obtained from 6301 elementary school students in South Korea, his study found that students who attended hakwon (i.e. private institutes) exhibited higher levels of instrumental and intrinsic motivation, with the instrumental motivation (ought-to L2 self) slightly outnumbering the intrinsic one (ideal L2 self).

However, given the study's quantitative nature, it remains unclear how these selves originated and their association with the L2 contexts (Yung, 2019).

Another noteworthy study that addresses students' English learning experiences in EPT and their L2 motivation is Yung's study (2019). Conducted based on Dörnyei's L2MSS, Yung (2019) examined the L2 selves of 18 Hong Kong senior secondary students who subscribed to EPT using narrative inquiry. After analyzing students' narratives on their English learning experiences and their motivation for learning English and subscribing to EPT, he found that "the learners possessed insecure actual L2 selves, revealing a discrepancy with their future L2 selves consisting of dominant ought-to L2 selves and suppressed ideal L2 selves". However, since his study operationalized the actual L2 self in lieu of the L2 learning experience component in the L2MSS, it did not place much attention to the context-specific motives that may have direct impact on students' L2 learning experience and their L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2019). According to Dörnyei (2009), one's immediate learning environment or classroom learning situation (i.e. the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group) can largely affect his L2 learning experience. However, as Yung's study (2019) focused on the "person in context" rather than the context itself, it could not explain in detail how the contextual conditions might have taken an impact on students' L2 learning experience and their L2 motivation.

The notion of whether the L2 contexts would affect one's L2 motivation becomes particularly important considering the learning environment or context have changed drastically during the COVID-19 pandemic, wherein the forms of EPT have undergone radical changes and more tutorial centers are now delivering their tutorial in a remote or online way (Zhang & Bray, 2020). Given that L2 learning experience is the most powerful predictor of one's L2 motivated behaviour and the students' learning environment is one of core constituents of L2 learning experience (Dörnyei; 2019; Lamb, 2012; Papi &

Teimouri, 2012), it would be interesting to know if the difference in tutoring environment (i.e. online vs face-to-face) would have an impact on students' language learning experience and their L2 motivation.

Therefore, similar to other language learning research that uses a qualitative approach in gauging a more contextualized picture of learners' experiences (Yang & Kim, 2011; Yung, 2015), this study analyzed and compared secondary students' L2 learning experience and their L2 motivation in online and face-to-face EPT using narrative inquiry. The reason behind narrowing the research group to secondary students in Hong Kong is that they are the dominant group in EPT's participation in Hong Kong (Zhan et al., 2013). Therefore, using narrative inquiry to explore their voices in their EPT experiences shall help us better understand the students' experiences in both forms of tutoring and their perception, hence helping to determine if there is a correlation between the learning contexts and L2 motivation.

Research Design & Methodology

Research method

In light of a recent paradigm shift in language learning and teaching research from the overrelied survey method to a more qualitative approach in gaining more contextualized pictures of learners' experiences and perceptions (Yang & Kim, 2011; Yung, 2015), this study analyzed and compared secondary students' L2 learning experience and their L2 motivation in online and face-to-face EPT through narrative inquiry. Focusing on how people use stories to organize and make sense of their experiences from "an insider point of view" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004), narrative inquiry is a qualitative approach that emphasizes the "process of telling, analyzing, and criticizing personal stories" with instruments like interviews (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014; Yung, 2015). Using narrative inquiry in studying experiences can not only help us understand the inner mental worlds of language learners as lived experiences, but it can also help us gain a richer understanding of the language teaching and learning process in the L2 learning contexts (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014, p.12). In terms of L2 motivation, the narrative mode of thought can also explain the dynamic ways in which "people attempt to understand events, the meanings they ascribe to various experiences, and the ways by which they organize and structure them through storied arcs" (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p.199). Therefore, using narrative inquiry for this study shall help us better understand students' experiences in both forms of tutoring and their L2 selves in different L2 learning contexts.

This study primarily used narrative inquiry to elicit students' response and reflection on their experiences in online and face-to-face EPT through the instrument of one-to-one semi-structured interviews. In order to gain a better understanding of the student's language learning history before the interview, an initial background questionnaire, which

is designed based on a few adaptations on Yung's study (2015), was also adopted to screen and recruit participants who are receiving secondary education in Hong Kong and had experience with both online and face-to-face EPT over the past 12 months.

Participants

Concerning the limited scale and resources of the study, a convenience sampling was adopted to recruit participants from several Hong Kong secondary schools, including the researcher's alma mater and some schools or secondary students reachable via the researcher's network. Initially, questionnaires were distributed to these schools to recruit participants and collect brief information about participants' history in EPT and their self-efficacy in English. However, after two weeks of recruitment, it was known that most schools could not help with the recruitment due to the class suspension and the recruitment had to be changed online. Therefore, I have changed the initial questionnaire as a digital form, and distributed it via social media platforms to recruit participants. Luckily, after weeks of efforts, 24 students have responded to the questionnaire and all of them consented to participate in the interview study. Based on their questionnaire responses (e.g. EPT participation history and their self-efficacy in English), I have reviewed their backgrounds and removed some of the similar cases, and eventually selected 12 as the participants of this study, which is a reasonable yet manageable number for an in-depth narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014). While attempt was made to balance the gender ratio, the 12 selected participants were also widely considered to ensure that they are broadly diverse in terms of their level, the type of EPT they participated, and the time period of EPT (see Table 1).

All selected participants are current students who are receiving secondary education in Hong Kong and had experience with both online and face-to-face EPT over the past 12

months. Such a 12-month restriction ensures that the participants still have fresh memories of their experiences and feelings in tutoring and thus can offer a relatively updated recountal (Bray, & Kwo, 2016; Zhang & Bray, 2020). All participants speak Cantonese as L1 and have been learning English since kindergarten. Moreover, they have joined a wide range of EPT, with the one-to-one tutoring being the dominant.

Table 1

Participants' background and EPT participation history

Participant	Gender	Type of EPT joined	Level	Time Period of EPT
1 Benny	Male	small-group face-to-face tutoring, small-group live online tutoring	S.6	Since primary 3
2 Cathy	Female	small-group face-to-face tutoring, small-group live online tutoring, lecture-type tutoring	S.6	Since primary 3
3 Charlene	Female	one-to-one face-to-face tutoring, one-to-one live online tutoring, video tutoring	S.6	Since primary 1
4 Chris	Male	one-to-one face-to-face tutoring, one-to-one live online tutoring	S.4	Since primary 3
5 Daphnee	Female	one-to-one face-to-face tutoring, one-to-one live online tutoring	S.6	Since primary 1
6 Helen	Female	small-group face-to-face tutoring, small-group online live tutoring	S.6	Since secondary 4
7 Issac	Male	one-to-one face-to-face tutoring, one-to-one online live tutoring, lecture-type live tutoring	S.6	Since primary 2
8 Kaki	Female	one-to-one face-to-face tutoring, one-to-one online live tutoring	S.6	Since primary 2
9 Pansy	Female	one-to-one face-to-face tutoring, one-to-one online tutoring, small-group face-to-face tutoring	S.4	Since primary 3
10 Sammy	Female	one-to-one face-to-face tutoring, one-to-one online live tutoring, lecture-type live tutoring	S.5	Since secondary 4
11 Sandy	Female	small-group face-to-face tutoring, video tutoring, lecture-type live online tutoring	S.6	Since primary 1
12 Venus	Female	one-to-one tutoring face-to-face, video tutoring	S.6	Since secondary 4

Note. EPT stands for English Private Tutoring.

Data Collection

The study's data was collected through questionnaires and interviews, with the interview as the primary instrument. To obtain the participants' biographical information and a preliminary understanding of their participation in EPT, an initial questionnaire was distributed to the participants before the interview. The questionnaire inquired participants about their EPT participation history, perceptions towards EPT and English learning, and their self-efficacy in English. These data have helped the researcher to gain a rough understanding of their L2 learning experiences in tutoring.

Upon analyzing their questionnaire response, the potential interviewees were contacted to schedule a one-to-one, semi-structured interview. The interview was conducted in a face-to-face or ZOOM meeting where their body language, facial expressions, and eye contact were clearly visible for the researcher to gauge their latent attitudes and perception towards a specific topic (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009; Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014). At the beginning of the interview, follow-up questions were asked to obtain clarification and elaboration of the participants' response in the prior questionnaire. This was then followed by a set of open-ended interview probes adapted from Yung's study (2019), prompting participants' language learning narratives on their L2 learning experiences in face-to-face tutoring and online tutoring incrementally. Each interview took around an hour, which gave a reasonable time for narrative elicitation without overwhelming the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Follow-up questions were also asked via WhatsApp to verify the narratives with the participant and fill in the missing gap left in the first interview. To facilitate communication, the questionnaire was written in Chinese and the interviews were all conducted in Cantonese, helping students who struggled with English to express their feelings at ease (Yung, 2019).

Data Analysis

Since the interview data were audio-recorded (or videotaped if the interview was conducted on ZOOM), they needed to be processed before the data analysis. All the interview data were transcribed and subsequently translated into English for further analysis. Reviewing the participant's responses in the interview recursively, the researcher conceptualized participants' L2 learning experiences in tutoring and wrote a narrative for each participant. The content of the narrative was further confirmed and negotiated with participants to ensure that it best described their tutoring experiences and their perceptions. The researcher then compared the similarities and differences amongst the narratives recursively, and identified the recurring themes that can determine their L2 learning experience and engagement in different learning contexts.

Findings

Upon comparing and analyzing the narratives of 12 participants, it is found that students of EPT generally have a poor L2 learning experience in online EPT, compared to that in face-to-face EPT. Owing to the poor focus and concentration, decreased interaction amongst the tutor and tutees, and the poor learning support in online EPT, students found it hard to engage in the language learning process and hence it demotivated them in their L2 learning.

Poor focus and concentration in online EPT

Based on EPT students' English learning narratives, it is revealed that students generally have a poor focus and concentration in the online EPT. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, during which many schools were forced to shut down and suspend their face-to-face class, most students have started to sign up for online EPT in a bid to continue their study for English and prepare for exams. Chris has further highlighted the complementary function of EPT, especially during the times of pandemic:

In school, the teacher will not only take care of you. When I ask questions, he may use English words that I don't understand to answer my question. It does not feel right for me to ask again especially during online lesson, since it's so embarrassed. So I turned to my tutor, and asked those questions which I didn't understand during tutorial lessons. [Chris, Interview I]

Having said that, despite the complementary function of EPT during pandemic, not all students were benefited from the online EPT. As most students consistently noted, the learning effectiveness in online EPT was still far from satisfactory, in which many students often found it hard to focus and concentrate without the tutor's presence. Daphnee shared an example:

There are quite a lot of temptations in online tutoring, with your phone being just next to

you. However, if it's in face-to-face tutoring, the tutor can monitor you and check what you are doing in class. Let's say if I received a friend's message during the face-to-face class, I would ignore it and reply it later since the tutor was watching. [Daphnee, Interview I]

Similar as other participants, Daphnee revealed that the tutor's physical presence in face-to-face tutoring possesses a monitoring effect which helps to keep them focused and concentrated in their learning. For some participants like Helen, this physical quality of face-to-face EPT also involves the tutor's physical proximity and facial features, which would remind her to stay on-task and get away from distraction:

It's easier to focus during face-to-face tutoring as I will have eye-contact with my tutor. You will 'give face' to him and try not to do anything aside from studying, or he might come to you and ask if you need 'any help'. [Helen, Interview I]

However, as in online tutoring, the tutor and tutees may not necessarily turn on their cameras, the monitoring effect is thus significantly compromised, resulting in decreased engagement and learning behavior. Kaki shared an example on how she has changed in the EPT writing class since the EPT has become online:

When the class is online, even if the tutor is teaching the same thing, I may not be that interested to listen when the tutor is not discussing my piece. Perhaps it is because that I am not mandated to sit somewhere and listen just like in the face-to-face classroom, I would have just skipped the explanation section and played with my phone instead, since the tutor couldn't see what I am doing. [Kaki, Interview I]

Therefore, due to the tutor's physical absence, students are no longer positioned in a controlled environment where tutor could easily check and monitor students' learning status, hence making them more inclined to distractions and poor class involvement.

Some students added that the disruption caused by the Internet or technical issues in online tutoring was also a factor that affected their attention level and impeded their

tutoring experiences. As some tutors or tutees did not have a good network or infrastructure for online lesson, technical problems like distorted sound or video have occurred to them frequently, which somehow affected their level of concentration and language learning experience.

Wifi indeed was a problem. Sometimes when the network wasn't stable, I would get kicked out of the class. There was also once that my tutor had problems with his home's network, and the class was suddenly disrupted in the middle and he was gone for like 10 minutes... at the time my tutor showed up and continued teaching, I wasn't in the same state of mind as I was 10 minutes ago, and I have forgotten something that he taught already.

[Cathy, Interview I]

As the learning could be disrupted by network and technical matters at any time, it might have also disengaged the student from learning tasks and trains of thoughts, forming a poor learning experience.

Decreased interaction amongst the tutor and tutees

Another noticeable change which participants perceived was the decreased interaction amongst the tutor and the tutees in online EPT. Although the tutoring content and pedagogical approach stood largely same in online EPT, which was drilling-based and exam-oriented, students still perceived significant differences in the interaction amongst the people in class, as signaled by the chatters and non-verbal communication. In the case of Benny, the change was most obvious in the interaction amongst his peers, wherein small talks and in-group chatter have decreased significantly:

They would be a bit hesitant to talk. If it's in face-to-face, normally you won't have such an issue since the chatter is kept between the students, so the tutor won't know. However, if it's online, everyone can hear your chatter once you speak. So they rather not speak at all.

[Benny, Interview I]

From here, it is clear that the chatter functioned as the in-group rapport amongst the students. However, due to the limitation of online EPT (i.e. center of attention), they tended not to initiate it, which thus resulted in a decreased interaction between Benny and his peers. With less chatter and peer interaction, the rapport between students has weakened, making them less motivated and engaged to participate in the class.

Likewise, the decreased interaction also occurs between the tutor and tutees since the EPT has switched to the online mode. Students have also experienced a more distant relationship with their tutor due to the absence of nonverbal communication clues. This point is supported by Cathy's testimony:

For example, sometimes when I was playing with my cellphone during class, my tutor Eric would say something like "Aiya, now we are having lesson ah, stop looking at your phone la" with lifted eyebrows, which I found extremely funny and cute. However, when the class is online, he couldn't really see me and thus he wouldn't have these cute facial expressions coming up even if I did play with my phone. And not being able to see these cute faces of my tutor, has somehow made the class a bit dull and less fun. [Cathy, Interview I]

Regarding the 'cute faces' feature, I have further asked if switching on the camera can substitute the interactivity in face-to-face EPT, and here is her reply:

After all, what I treasure most is the feeling of being authentic and physical in face-to-face tutoring. Even if I can 'see' you virtually online, it doesn't really give me a sense of reality. [Cathy, Interview I]

From here, it is noticeable that tutor's facial expression in face-to-face EPT is a type of non-verbal communication which gives tutees a sense of authentic interactivity. It is also a key motivator which could engage students in their L2 learning process. For example, as in the case of Cathy, she also told me that she would finish her homework right away when she got home just to show off to her tutor and see his surprised face. However, due

to the ‘off-camera’ feature and the lack of proximity in online EPT, students and tutor cannot interact with each other via these facial features. Hence, it took away some part of non-verbal communication, making it challenging for the tutees to interact and engage with the tutor during the online EPT. With decreased student-teacher interaction, the rapport between them may also weaken, making students less motivated and engaged in the class.

Poor learning support

Through the participants’ narratives, it is also observable that the students were poorly supported in their learning during online EPT. Many students complained that the question-and-answering process has been largely ineffective and inefficient because the tutor’s response or feedback is often delayed. Issac shared on his experience on asking questions in online EPT.

When I have found something that I don’t understand, I need to write them down and ask the tutor after the class. This is the most obvious change. There are many things that I have missed as I cannot point out directly what problem I’m facing...And I probably forgot the questions after the class. It’s been quite frustrating actually [Issac, Interview I]

For Isaac, the goal of going to EPT is to have his queries about English answered. When he could not get a response from the tutor, he felt frustrated and confused. As time went by, when the unanswered questions have accumulated to a certain sum, it may impede student’s learning, making them increasingly frustrated in their learning and hence disengage them from the learning tasks.

Students also expressed that they found it difficult to ask questions clearly in an online setting. Due to the limitation of online tutoring, it is hard for students and tutors to

communicate effectively via non-verbal communication. Previously in the face-to-face EPT, the tutor would be monitoring the students in their physical proximity, which made it easier for the tutor to notice when students have faced a difficulty based on their non-verbal cues (i.e. frustrating faces). Chris expressed this difficulty during his interview:

There is a chance of miscommunication. The tutor may use PowerPoint to illustrate some points and he/she would write out the steps accordingly. It would be confusing when I lost track and ask the tutor questions... I find it easier to express my queries in face-to-face.

[Chris, Interview I]

Students also noticed that the tutor cannot cater to their needs as effective as in face-to-face EPT, contributed by the fact that tutors taught at a higher pace in online tutoring and they often couldn't perceive students' frustration. Charlene described her experience in an interview:

The tutor teaches at a slower pace during face-to-face tutoring as the tutor has to give examples after explaining the content and the techniques. But the online tutors assume we will replay the video if we don't understand the contents, so they teach at a faster pace.

[Charlene, Interview I]

For Charlene, although she could pause the video and watch it again if she couldn't understand certain concepts, she would usually choose to procrastinate instead. This would never happen in face-to-face EPT.

I have to catch up with the progress of the video classes which I usually procrastinate on. This won't happen in face-to-face mode. If the videos are too long, let's say one or two hours, I usually won't have the drive to watch them, especially when they are split into multiple parts. But if it's face-to-face class as you won't notice the passage of time in class.

[Charlene, Interview I]

Similar situations also occur to other students like Issac, Sammy, Venus, and Sandy, in which the tutors taught the class in a faster pace and made the students felt lost and

frustrated in class. They all expressed discontentment to this change, as the tutor could not perceive their frustration and they felt being unsupported in their learning. Hence, due to this ineffective provision of learning support, students generally have a lower learning drive and class engagement in online EPT, which demotivate them in L2 learning.

Discussion

Upon analyzing participants' narratives, we found that students of EPT generally have a poor L2 learning experience in online EPT, compared to that in face-to-face EPT. Owing to the poor focus and concentration, decreased interaction amongst the tutor and tutees, and the poor learning support in online EPT, students are disengaged in the language learning process and demotivated in their L2 learning.

During the interviews, many students pointed out that they initially enjoyed the online EPT and the entire language learning experience due to two main conveniences: firstly, there was flexibility in time and location; secondly, the students felt more relaxed and comfortable without being constantly watched by the tutor. The online environment is a safe space for the students: it gave them the autonomy to do whatever they want to do, including things that they didn't dare to do in physical classrooms (Chakraborty & Muya Nafukho, 2014). However, as time went by, they soon noticed that the online environment was not conducive to effective learning as they were constantly distracted without the tutor's physical supervision. Moreover, they also experienced a lot less interaction with their tutor and peer, with limited learning support in their online EPT experiences. These all contributed to a poor L2 learning experience, making students gradually disengaged in the language learning process and demotivated in their L2 learning.

Such a decrease in student engagement and L2 motivation can actually be explained by the unfulfillment of the engagement needs in the L2 learning experience. According to Dörnyei (2019), in an L2 context, learners have certain engagement-specific facets to satisfy in order to have a good L2 learning experience (Dörnyei, 2019). It includes school contexts, syllabus and the teaching materials, learning tasks, one's peers, and the teacher in a L2 learning context (Dörnyei, 2019).

Our findings confirmed Dörnyei's claim that the physical proximity and contact with people, small-talk and rapport are the irreplaceable engagement-specific elements that connect and engage student in a tutoring experience (Dörnyei, 2019), in that we found most students interviewed are eager to interact and engage with tutor and peers during their EPT class. Hence, when the students' implicit engagement needs were not satisfied during online EPT, it thus resulted in their frustration, boredom, disengagement and demotivation in L2 learning, as evidently seen in Cathy's "no-facial-expression-no-fun" claim.

In EPT, the syllabus, teaching materials and the learning tasks are usually fixed, and students are simply assigned to do some repetitive drills or exam practices; there is not much space or freedom for students to engage with other engagement-specific facets like school context or learning tasks. To EPT students, EPT itself is already disengaging and the only way for them to engage in the language learning process is through their interaction with their peers and tutors. However, in the online tutoring environment, their freedom to interact are severely restricted (Chakraborty & Muyia Nafukho, 2014). They are no longer in an active learning role who has control over what they do in the classroom, instead they are simply the passive receptor of information. It is as if they have lost their autonomy, which was allowed previously in the face-to-face environment. Therefore, because of this inability to interact with the peers and the tutor freely, they are disengaged from the only people-oriented engagement facets and feel demotivated to participate in the online learning environment. This situation is further exacerbated when the students perceived very little to no privacy in the online environment: everything we say or do will be recorded and can be traced. In fear of the consequences of being found saying the wrong or inappropriate things, students also tend to refrain from interacting with their

peers or tutors in the online class (Siemens, Althaus, & Stange, 2013). Consequently, students were gradually disengaged in the language learning process and demotivated in their L2 learning, with obvious reduction on class engagement and learning behaviors (e.g. reluctance to participate in class, procrastinating on the homework, less likely to ask questions).

Conclusion & Implications

This study investigated the L2 Learning Experience in Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) by comparing and analyzing 12 Hong Kong secondary students' L2 learning experience and their English learning motivation in online and face-to-face English private tutoring (EPT). It has deepened our understanding of L2 learning experience, especially the ways in which the different L2 contexts influence learners' engagement and L2 motivation. We found that there are some elements in face-to-face tutoring that are irreplaceable, such as physical proximity and facial expressions, in that their absence in online EPT has been shown to negatively influence students' L2 learning experience and their engagement. Apart from engaging with the peers and the tutor, there are also some engagement-specific elements to be addressed, in order to produce an engaging, motivating L2 learning experience, such as school context, learning tasks, syllabus and the teaching materials (Dörnyei, 2019).

This study is unique in the sense that it fills an existing gap in the literature; while other studies focused more on the L2 future selves as a means to study learner's L2 motivation (Yung, 2019; Dörnyei, 2019), this study focused on L2 learning experience's influence on learners' L2 motivation and engagement by exploring students' L2 learning experience in different L2 contexts. As suggested by our findings, L2 learning experience is shown to have a noticeable impact on learner's L2 motivation and engagement; hence TESOL practitioner and L2 motivation researchers may consider taking into account of the learners' situated contexts or their immediate learning environment when conducting relevant studies on L2 motivation. It is also hoped that this study could also offer some new insights to language education researchers, teachers, and policymakers.

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Appendix A. Initial Questionnaire

Questionnaire

If you are willing to be contacted and participate in this study, please provide the following basic information:

Name: _____ Form: _____ Gender: _____
 Email: _____ Contact Number: _____
 Signature: _____ Date: _____

1. Have you ever participated in any type of English tutoring?
☐ Yes (*go to Question 2*) ☐ No (*end of questionnaire*)
2. Which of the following type(s) of English tutoring have you participated in?
(you may choose more than one)
☐ one-on-one private tutoring
☐ small-group private tutoring (*2 to 7 students in a group*)
☐ large-group tutoring in small-scale tutorial centre (*specify class size: _____*)
☐ mass tutoring by star tutor in large-scale tutorial centre (*specify class size: _____*)
☐ others (please specify: _____)
3. During which time period(s) did you participate in English tutoring?
(You may choose more than one)
☐ before primary school ☐ primary 1 to 3 ☐ primary 4 to 6
☐ secondary 1 to 3 ☐ secondary 4 to 5 ☐ secondary 6
4. Which mode of English tutoring have you experienced in the past 12 months?
☐ face-to-face tutoring ☐ asynchronous online tutoring (e.g. video lecture)
☐ synchronous online tutoring (e.g. real-time remote tutoring)
☐ others (please specify: _____)
5. Which mode of English tutoring do you prefer most? (*Choose ONE only*)
☐ face-to-face tutoring ☐ asynchronous online tutoring (e.g. video lecture)
☐ synchronous online tutoring (e.g. real-time remote tutoring)
6. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your enjoyment level in your last English tutoring experience?

Not enjoyable at all
Extremely enjoyable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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7. On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do you like learning English?

Not at all
Very much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----
8. On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate your competence level in English?

Incompetent
Highly competent

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Appendix B. Interview Probes

Part 1 – Questionnaire follow-up

1. According to your questionnaire responses, you have participated in both face-to-face and online English tutoring in the past 12 months, right?
2. What was the first type of tutoring that you took part in? When did it start? And how did it end? What made you change to your current mode of tutoring?
3. Regarding the mode of English tutoring, why do you prefer this mode of tutoring than the other?

Part 2 – Background and English learning history

4. Could you talk about your background, e.g. your school, family, social life?
5. How have you been learning English since young?
6. Could you describe your English learning experience in your life, both in formal schooling and private tutoring?

Part 3 – Comparison between online tutoring and face-to-face tutoring

L2 learning experience

7. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, how do you learn or study English in an online environment? Does the change in the learning environment affect how you learn English? (e.g. Internet > easier access to different learning materials)
8. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, has the student-tutor relationship or interaction improved or worsened in online tutoring? Why?
9. How does the tutor deliver his/her instruction or content in online tutoring compared to face-to-face tutoring? What is the difference?
10. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, what strategies does the tutor use in teaching English in online tutoring? Is there any difference in the content that you perceived (e.g. more theory, less practice? Receptive skills training vs. Productive skills training?)
11. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, do you feel more connected with your peers in class during online tutoring? Why or why not? Has your relationship with your peers in class changed along with the environment?
12. What are the main differences that you noticed between these two tutoring experiences?

Perception and attitudes towards online tutoring and face-to-face tutoring

13. How do you feel when you first had your online tutoring class? Between online tutoring and face-to-face tutoring, which one do you find more enjoyable?
14. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, do you find online tutoring more useful or effective in helping you learn English? Why or why not?
15. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, do you find yourself more committed or motivated in English learning through online tutoring? Why or why not?
16. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, what are the pros and cons about online tutoring?

Values, attitudes, and beliefs of teaching and learning English

17. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, what were your beliefs in learning English during online tutoring? Why did you study English? Is studying English important to you? What is your goal?
18. How do you think English should be taught and learned? How is the way you learn English shaped by your schoolteachers and your tutoring experiences?
19. What are your thoughts about the teaching and learning of English in the current education system? What function does the tutoring serve?
20. How can English learning be more motivating and effective to you?
21. How do you see yourself using English in the future? Has your view changed after joining online tutoring? How was it in the past?

Reasons for joining English private tutoring and their expectations

22. Why did you attend English tutorial class in the first place? What drives you to continually signing up for English tutoring?
23. Why did you choose this mode of tutoring than the other?
24. What do you expect to get from the tutor? Has the expectation changed along with the change in the mode of tutoring?
25. Are you satisfied with your learning experience in online tutoring? Comparing face-to-face tutoring and online tutoring, which one do you prefer? Why?
26. Is there anything else you can think of that may help me to understand your English learning experience better, particularly on face-to-face tutoring and online tutoring?

Appendix C. Interview Transcript Sample

Student Interview I (ZOOM interview: Student X)

Total time: 01:06:41

I: Interviewer

R: Respondent

- I: It seems that it's recording now. Let's get started. According to your survey response, you have participated in small-group English tutoring in the past. May I ask why did you choose small-group tutoring?
- R: Actually, there was no particular reason. It's just that the class was already in a small-group when I first joined the tutorial.
- I: I see. Since when did you start signing up for English tutorials? When was the earliest time?
- R: Er...if dating back to the earliest, it should be in the junior primary period.
- I: Oh, around which primary level precisely?
- R: Primary three, I guess.
- I: Wow, it seems that you have been taking part in the English tutorial for quite a long time already! What drives you to sign up for it continuously? Is there any reason?
- R: In fact, I have changed my tutors in the middle. I have come across a total of 2 to 3 different tutors. The first tutor was mainly to support my studies at primary school. But later, when I entered secondary school, I changed to another tutor to better support my secondary school's studies. The tutoring was also conducted in a small group, which consisted of around 6 to 7 people. There was a period which I had two English tutors simultaneously.
- I: Oh, it must have been quite tiring to you, right? Taking tutorial lessons from two different tutors at the same time?
- R: Yes...
- I: What did the tutor do with you during class? Was there any difference between the tutors in primary school and secondary school?
- R: Yes, there were distinctive differences, particularly in the teaching content. For primary school, the tutor would focus more on the fundamental stuff, such as explaining what past perfect tense is and its mechanism. As for secondary school, it was simply about drillings with past papers and exercises.
- I: Oh, so for secondary school tutoring, the tutor would focus more on doing exercises than teaching the fundamentals like tenses?
- R: Exactly.
- I: Alright. I noticed that you have been taking English tutorials since primary

- three, with occasional change of tutors in the middle. What was the reason for the change?
- R: At first, it's because the tutorial center did not have the tutoring service for secondary students. Therefore, I changed my tutor when I went to secondary school. Following that, I have met two tutors respectively in F.1 and F.4. I still take classes with one of them till this day, while I stopped taking classes from the other when I was in F.5.
- I: Oh, why was it suspended?
- R: Because having two English tutors at the same time was quite exhausting to me. There were a few times that I even felt asleep during the tutorial.
- I: I see. What did your tutors teach you in class? Simply reading aloud passages?
- R: Not really. Both would involve drillings and exercises. The only difference is that one would focus more on paper 2 (writing), while the other would cover more comprehensively. Though both of their lessons were quite tiring to me.
- I: Oh, both were very tiring? Which tutor's lesson was more exhausting to you?
- R: The one which I suspended in F.5, I guess.
- I: Hmm...Why is that? Did having writing lesson bother you a lot?
- R: No, it's actually the tutor who taught English more comprehensively overwhelmed me a lot.
- I: Oh, I got it. So does it mean that you enjoy having writing lesson better?
- R: Yes, since the things I write can be based on my own will. But for paper 1 to 4 trainings, most of the stuff were so mechanical.
- I: Mechanical as in repetitive, mechanical drillings?
- R: Yes. Some of the class exercises have even been done by me before, as there are not many past papers from DSE to now. Therefore, it is definite that there would be some repetition on the exercises. Considering that I used to have two English tutors in the past, it is certain that most exercises used in class should have been done by me before...and hearing them repeating the same thing over and over, it just makes me feel so repetitive.
- I: Hmm... It must have been so pointless to you, right? Repeating over and over.
- R: Exactly!
- I: So somehow the exercises only helped you remember the answers rather than helping you improve your English?
- R: You can say that. It's just so pointless to me. If you repeatedly do the same exercise to an extent that enables you to remember the answer, what is the point of doing it?
- I: Right. Doing an exercise which you can remember the answer may not do much help especially when you are taking the public exam.
- R: Absolutely.

- I: Do you perceive any improvement on your English when you have your writing lesson? Let's say the latest session of your writing tutorial.
- R: Hmm...I think there is. Since the lesson covers a variety of question types and content, you can never guess what the tutor is going to do next in the coming class. Hence, the lesson content is less repetitive. Also, for the same thing, you can get to try different methods to complete a task. Basically, you can work and stay on task for the whole lesson.
- I: Right. Having something to do can help you stay on-task and concentrated in your tutorial lesson.
- R: Yup. And you can also think constantly, while working on your piece.
- I: Seems nice. As I recall, you have participated in online English tutoring before. May I ask whether you are currently having the tutorial in a face-to-face or online manner?
- R: Sorry, can you repeat?
- I: OK. How do you have your English tutorial now? Are you having it online or face-to-face?
- R: Face-to-face.
- I: I see. But you have tried taking it online, right?
- R: Yes.
- I: Hmm...Then what drove you to take your tutorial online in the first place? Why did you suddenly change your tutoring mode from face-to-face to online, and eventually change it back to face-to-face?
- R: It's primarily due to the pandemic. Originally, I had it face-to-face, but later I had to change it to online due to the pandemic. Now with the pandemic situation alleviated, I then changed it back to face-to-face.
- I: Oh, I see. So, if you had to choose between these two modes of tutoring, you would prefer face-to-face tutoring, right?
- R: Yes.
- I: Hmm...Why is that?
- R: Because in the online class, it's very difficult to control yourself not to do other things else. There were too many distractions. But in the face-to-face class, you are usually forced to do a specific task. I think that's the main reason.
- I: So, you mean the environment is a factor that affects if you do or focus on a certain task?
- R: Yes...Face-to-face class has the learning atmosphere. Though it's unlike the traditional classroom that has more than 20 students, there are still around 18 to 20 students sitting in the same tutorial class as you do. By comparing the peers' work, you can discover new methods and learn from each other. However, as for online class, there may be occasions that people do not know how to use the

software or run into some technical issue, which makes the flow not quite smooth and fluid. That's why I would prefer face-to-face.

- I: Well understood. Here comes to the second part, in which I will ask you to do some comparison between online tutoring and face-to-face tutoring. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, how do you learn or study English in an online environment?
- R: Erm....
- I: Let's say in online tutoring, you may use the online dictionary to check for the unknown words immediately. However, such a function may not be applicable in face-to-face tutoring and you will need to go home and check it afterwards. Did such a similar situation occur to you when you had your online tutorial?
- R: Ehh...To me, not really. Since I was already a F.6 student when I had my online English tutorial. Even if I am doing a reading paper, in most circumstances I will refrain myself from checking the dictionary. And erm... what was I going to say? I forgot.
- I: No worries. Let me put it in this way...Do you perceive any change in the way how you learn English since you joined online tutoring? Like in face-to-face tutoring, you may have more writing to do in class. Nevertheless, when it comes to online tutoring, was there any change in the way the tutor taught the writing? Or was there be any difference in the way you learned English?
- R: I think there was, since after all you have changed the tutoring mode from face-to-face to online. The teaching content may be adapted a bit in order to ease the tutor himself in delivering the message effectively without seeing the tutees physically. As a result, there was actually less writing done in online class, but with more focus placed on something like grammar to ease the instruction.
- I: What was your attitude towards such a change? How did you feel when your favorite writing part of the lesson was taken away and being changed to some grammar items which you despise?
- R: Erm...Actually I am not particularly fond of writing, it's just more preferable compared to the grammar. Facing the change, I can understand why the tutor had to perform these changes, since it's quite difficult to teach online. To me, these changes had me thinking more on how to keep myself focused on the task. In the past, I didn't really have to think and I was in the state of working at the time I had my tutorial, but now I have to learn how to block myself from distraction and stay on-task during the tutorial.
- I: What strategies did you use? What did you do to avoid getting distracted when you were having your online tutorial?
- R: Well, it's not like really distracted but I did request myself to focus and put my phone aside to minimize the distraction, so that I can focus on the class.

- I: Ahha alright. But did you use secretly your phone during the online class? Like checking Instagram or so?
- R: Sure. This also happens in face-to-face class. It's just that in online class it would be more common.
- I: Alright. Has the student-tutor relationship or interaction improved or worsened in online tutoring?
- R: No, I don't think so, since the tutor speaks in the same way no matter in face-to-face or online. He simply speaks through the microphone. The way didn't change much.
- I: I see...but do you guys chitchat or interact sometimes during class?
- R: His teaching style is not the rigid kind. We occasionally will have some chatter during the class.
- I: Chatter? Do you guys chat more in the face-to-face class or the online class?
- R: I guess they are the same. As the tutor usually would reserve some time for us to plan for our essay before the actual writing, the tutor would briefly chitchat with us during that time to lessen our stress. Such a practice also continues in the online class. So I don't think there's much changed.
- I: Oh, not much changed even in online. I see. As you mentioned, your teacher had performed some instructional adaptation in online lesson, such as placing more focus on the grammar than the writing. Apart from that, was there any difference in the tutor's pedagogical approach that you perceived when you were having your online class?
- R: Pedagogically... I don't think there was. Not much have changed.
- I: Not much have changed, right?
- R: Yup.
- I: OK. In English, there are different language skills to be taught in order to acquire the language successfully. How did your tutor teach you those skills? Was there any difference after you have changed to the online tutoring?
- R: Normally, the tutor would quote one or two sentences in our writing and analyze it with us in face-to-face class, while giving us comments on how to furnish the sentence with grammar techniques like inversion. As for paper 3, it's just playing the recording and then we did the exercise together, followed by checking answer. For paper 3, I don't think there has been much change after going online, except that the sound quality of the recording was improved with better speakers. As for paper 2, it is noticeable that there were less writing analysis and correction part in the online class, which I guess was primarily due to the fact that the tutor cannot receive our writing right away and we weren't active to write a piece for him.
- I: I see. As I know, let's say paper 3 Listening, there is a data file booklet which

you need to flip through to get the information for doing listening tasks, was it a bit inconvenient to you after switching to online class?

R: Yes, indeed. Normally before the online class, the tutor would send the file to us via Internet. As the file is usually made up of many pages, I find it so troublesome to scroll between the pages and look for the information I need. However, if it's in face-to-face, I can just extract one or two important pages I need and then do a quick reference to complete the task. So there's a minimal difference between online tutoring and face-to-face, though it didn't pose great impact on my learning.

I: Alright. Could you describe how you learn English in your face-to-face tutorial class?

R: When I got into the class, there would usually be a writing question given, either from Part A or Part B, and we would write a piece based on the question within 40 to 50 minutes. When the time was up, we would submit our piece and the tutor would go through our work quickly to give us some feedback. Also, as mentioned previously, the tutor would select one or two students' writing and analyze it with us to let us how we could polish our writing in a decent manner.

I: Hmm...Then how was it when it's changed to online? Was it the same?

R: I think these activities have become less when it's in online, since not necessarily every student would submit his piece to the tutor. When it's in online, the productivity usually isn't quite good and hence some students may not submit their work. With fewer work submitted, there was less chance for the tutor to discuss the writing with us. On top of the network delay and lagging issue, which had posed some impact on teaching writing online, it became more difficult for the tutor to teach writing online. So that's why these activities have become less.

I: Well understood. Regarding the classmates in your face-to-face tutoring class, do you talk to them? Or chitchat with them?

R: Yes, sure! Sometimes the tutor would join the chatter too.

I: Oh, really? Then how's it when the class was online? Did you talk to your classmates? How's your relationship with them?

R: If the relationship between me and my classmate was good, we would usually keep each other's contact like WhatsApp and Signal to continue our discussion via the Internet, though microphone was rarely used unless requested. Since changing the tutoring to online, I noticed that our chatter had become less, though the communication was still there.

I: I see. So, the chatter had become less, but communication was still maintained, right?

R: Yes...Just that the communication was not verbal, but simply text messaging.

- I: Hmm... Comparing face-to-face and online tutoring, which one do you feel more connected with your peers in class? Why or why not?
- R: Face-to-face.
- I: OK. Why is that?
- R: As in online messaging, some people may have slower typing speed or delayed response. It's difficult to know if the person whom you are talking to has received the message or not. However, if it's in face-to-face, the person can hear you right away when you speak. Together with the facial expressions and body language which you can observe and use in the face-to-face environment, the communication would be better.
- I: Right. As if the communication becomes more in-depth and interactive with the bodily expression and physical contact in the face-to-face communication.
- R: Exactly. And the relationship will improve too.
- I: I see. How's your relationship with your tutor then? Has the interaction improved or worsened in online tutoring?
- R: I think the interaction had become lesser, since we might not want to speak up and give response when the tutor is conducting the class online. Hence, it was oftentimes the tutor who talked to himself during class, which was a bit awkward.
- I: Ahha, must be very awkward indeed. OK. Between the entire experiences in face-to-face and online tutoring, what are the main differences that you noticed?
- R: I think it's the communication with my classmates and my tutor. Since the tutoring that I want is not like having endless mechanical drillings, but more about having some peers to talk and interact with while doing past papers. I would prefer something like this.
- I: I see. You would prefer having some peers in face-to-face, who would accompany you when you do the past papers and provide the mutual support for each other, right?
- R: Exactly.
- I: Alright. Now we shall move on to the next section, which will inquire your views and attitude towards online tutoring and face-to-face tutoring. When you first had your online tutoring class, what was your first feeling?
- R: My first concern was whether I have to turn on my microphone and camera or not. But then when I actually had my first online tutorial, it seemed that we had reverted back to the time when we first knew each other. Everyone was a bit shy and intimidated to talk.
- I: Interesting! I wonder why's that, shouldn't you already know these people for a long time?
- R: Yes...but they would be a bit hesitant to talk. If it's in face-to-face, normally you

won't have such an issue since the chatter is kept between the students, in which the tutor won't know. However, if it's online, everyone can hear your chatter once you speak.

I: Hmm...So this 'everyone-can-hear' feature of online tutoring somehow brought you some pressure?

R: Yes. A pressure which stemmed from universal attention.

I: I see. So in this case, when you were in online tutoring, is it true that you asked less questions than in face-to-face tutoring?

R: Yes, indeed.

I: I see. How did you ask questions when you were in online tutoring?

R: I just used the 'Raise Hand' button. After the tutor noticed those 'hands', he would call the students' names out to let them ask questions when he had finished his content.

I: And then you turned on your microphone and voiced out your question?

R: Yes.

I: Alright, I see. Then how do you ask questions when you are in face-to-face tutoring?

R: Usually it's more direct. I will say my question out loud. Haha. But if it's on Zoom, the tutor might not be able to see my 'hands' that easily.

I: So, during online tutoring, you had to wait until the tutor saw your virtual 'hands' before you could ask your question?

R: Yes.

I: Hmm... Did it bother you? Was it a bit slow or inefficient to you, when you had questions?

R: Not exactly. As the process of waiting can give you some buffer time to organize your question, it's probable that you could come up with the solution on your own before the tutor's answer. In such case, you could retrieve the 'hand' via the button to let the tutor know that you are okay.

I: So, online tutoring somehow gives you more time to think and process your question then?

R: Yup.

I: I see. But you have spent a fortune to get this tutoring service. Wouldn't you feeling a bit disturbed or dissatisfied when you couldn't get the response from the tutor?

R: Not necessarily. The main reason that I subscribed to this service was not really about asking questions, but more about learning the knowledge. If you 'raised' your 'hand' online but then you later found yourself capable of solving the question alone, it wasn't really a waste of time or resources as the learning continued.

- I: Hmm...OK. Let's move to another question. According to your survey's response, you have rated 7 out 10, which is a pretty high mark, for your perceived level of enjoyment in your last tutoring experience. Between face-to-face and online tutoring, which one do you find more enjoyable?
- R: Hmm...I think it is face-to-face. After all the learning environment which I prefer is not like a deadly one, but more like a fun and interactive one. But when the environment is online, the feeling is less intense, which is less preferable to me. Therefore, when I had my online tutorials, I did have the thoughts and desire to change it back to face-to-face, in order to have the interaction that I seek in tutoring.
- I: I see. Then between face-to-face and online tutoring, which one is more useful or effective in helping you learn English?
- R: I think face-to-face tutoring is more effective. Since the tutoring that I have been joining was mostly face-to-face, I have already got used to such way of tutoring and it has been quite effective to me. However, when the tutoring was shifted to online, I had to pay extra effort to learn how to pick up this new mode of tutoring and keep myself productive. The process of adaptation somehow added extra burden on me and slowed me down.
- I: Slowing you down? Interesting. So, taking online tutoring somehow had slowed down your learning progress?
- R: Yes, you can say that, though it's just a bit.
- I: As you said, you needed to do something to "pick up" the new mode of tutoring. Was it the preparation work for online tutoring?
- R: Erm...Yeah, I guess so. Originally what I meant for the "pick up" was the learning and productivity skills which I learnt from the prolonged face-to-face tutoring. Nevertheless, as for online tutoring, I need to think of some strategies which could enable me to learn effectively and efficiently in an online platform. As for the preparatory work, which is a good point that I missed, I had to tidy up myself and get my learning setting ready for the class, for example, checking the camera, testing the microphone...That's quite a lot of work.
- I: I see. As I recall, you preferred face-to-face tutoring after-all. So if as you said, the teaching content and the way of instruction are the same in online tutoring and face-to-face tutoring, what is it that attracted you most about face-to-face tutoring?
- R: I think it is because that I have already got used to this mode of tutoring, which I have been signing up since my young age. I am used to the atmosphere and feeling of having a bunch of peers in a mini group, doing the task with you and supporting each other.
- I: Alright. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, do you find yourself more

- committed in English learning through online tutoring? Why or why not?
- R: Face-to-face for sure. Because in face-to-face tutoring, if you are doing other stuff, it's difficult to get away from the tutor's eyes. Everything is visible in the classroom. But if it's online, it will become something else... Though I eventually managed to come up with some strategies on how not to be distracted that easily, the process of adaptation had me suffered greatly from distraction. So it did pose some impact on my learning. And in some way, when I was having online tutorials, I had more time to do the stuff that I like such as watching manga and reading comics, even though I know it's not good for my learning in the class.
- I: Alright. Comparing face-to-face tutoring and online tutoring, which one do you find yourself more motivated in English learning?
- R: Should be face-to-face. Because if you cannot even attend to the online class, how would you have the motivation to improve your English? However, if it's a face-to-face class, even if you did not attend to the class most of the time, you could get to interact with the peers, in which seeing them jotting notes and practicing with great efforts somehow would affect you too. This is the thing which you cannot access during online tutoring. Therefore, normally you would be inclined to do other stuff considering the tutor cannot see. Some of the extreme cases I know would even posting on Instagram to reveal that they were doing other stuff during the online class, which I find it a bit disturbing.
- I: Oh! I see. So, being unable to see or check on peers' learning status in the online tutoring somehow had changed the dynamics and the competitive sense in the class? Since everyone was assuming each other being inattentive during the online lesson?
- R: Exactly.
- I: Okay. Speaking from your experience, what are the pros and cons about online tutoring when compared to face-to-face tutoring?
- R: If it's face-to-face, the main advantage is that the tutor can ensure that you are working the whole time and you are surrounded by people with positive dynamics. Everyone would be on-task and the learning atmosphere would be better. As some of the peers in the tutorials are your classmates at school, the time in tutoring is as if having more opportunities to mingle with your friends. Regarding the cons of face-to-face tutoring, since luckily the class that I am attending has a relatively positive atmosphere towards studying, so it does not really bother much. But if the class atmosphere is not good, it might turn out to affect one's study motivation, making him or her less willing to study with the bad influence around them. As for online tutoring, it's difficult for the tutor to monitor what every student is doing and stop every misbehavior, which may

negatively impede the teaching and learning in class. Everyone in the class does not seem to be putting any effort in doing the classwork...Actually from my personal point of view, everyone is doing the same thing repeatedly since secondary 2, whichever teacher you have. The teachers normally won't introduce anything new, like grammar item or whatsoever, but just repeating constantly.

I: Mmmm...What is repeating precisely?

R: The content. It's so similar every year. For example, well...not for me now, but I know that for students in other grades, they are required to purchase a designated grammar exercise book every year. Even though the topics covered in the grammar book are basically the same, we are required to do it again every year. And I don't really see why... we have to do the same thing repeatedly.

I: I see. This becomes just like a form of punishment, right?

R: Yes. It's pointless to do it over and over again.

I: Alright. As you mentioned, you have been doing exercises since secondary 2, do you think the drilling and the exercises have helped you learn English as a communicative device? Just as a communication language like Japanese?

R: I think if it's just to handle the education in Hong Kong, somehow you will gradually get accustomed to exams and drilling when the number of past papers that you did have reached a certain sum. It does help you at least not to chicken out or be frightened during the exam. However, if you are really learning English as a language, aside from being a bit more familiarized with the language, I don't think the drilling can do much help in achieving that. Taking learning Japanese as an example, I had learnt a bit Japanese myself starting from F.6 and it was a sudden thing solely out of interest. If you genuinely like it, you would naturally want to dig it deeper as a language rather than relying on drilling to achieve the same purpose. Conversely, drilling would gradually kill one's passion and interest for the subject, as can be evidently seen in many Hong Kong students. Though deep down they do not like English, they still think it's good primarily because they have derived the satisfaction out of the drilling and exercises, rather than having a genuine affection for the language. Then I would think, in terms of English learning, if you have already lost your interest in it, you cannot really count yourself as having acquired or learnt the language, but only as a person who knows how to use it.

I: I see. If you were having the English tutorials online, would this kind of 'fun' or 'interest' further decrease?

R: I think it depends if the tutor knows how to create some fun during the online lesson. There are some tutors who don't know how to use computers and applications, and you can feel that they are frustrated and disturbed when

teaching the class online. Nonetheless, if the tutor is familiar with the software and know how to use the applications, the outcome might be better than that of face-to-face tutoring.

- I: Oh, really? So, in some way, the apps used in online tutoring have stimulated your interest in learning English then?
- R: As I have only started approaching online tutoring when I was in secondary 5 to 6, I think it did not have much impact on me. But if it's for the younger form's students, who might already be sick of English since young age, these kinds of application, which is associated with the image of 'high-tech', may invoke stimulation to them, hence they may have more motivation to learn English while being drawn to it.
- I: I see. But why didn't those tools have much impact on you? Was it due to your level or age?
- R: Actually, I think, for senior students like us, who are heading to HKDSE soon, there isn't much space for change in our curriculum. What we do every day is fixed, mostly piles of exercises and past papers. We have developed a mindset that we are supposed to be doing drilling around this time, and I don't really expect that there will be any fun in it. When you don't have the expectation, you won't have any feelings to it.
- I: I see. As I recall, you have talked about the pros of face-to-face tutoring. How about its cons?
- R: Oh, it's the learning atmosphere. If the learning atmosphere is bad, most students will turn out to become unwilling to study.
- I: Hmm... can online tutoring counteract with this loophole then? Or still, the students will be affected regardless?
- R: Hmm...it's difficult to say. If the student is already active in face-to-face class, normally he or she will be active in online class too. In other way around, if the student is not attentive in face-to-face class, he won't suddenly love going classes when it's changed to online. What really matters, in my opinion, is whether the student has the motive to learn, whereas the form or means doesn't affect much. Motivation cannot not be given, rather it's stemmed intrinsically by your curiosity or interest. The change in the means or forms won't suddenly change that.
- I: I see...it's quite interesting, isn't it...Alright, let's move on to the next one. Compared to face-to-face tutoring, what were your beliefs in learning English during online tutoring? Was there any change in the attitude?
- R: I don't think there is. As I have mentioned, as a secondary 6 student, I have already anticipated myself doing past papers and drilling at this point of time, so I won't expect anything fun or whatsoever to happen aside from preparing for

the HKDSE exam. As I am clear about my goals and basically what we do every day in tutorials are the same, the difference in the form of tutoring does not really bother me.

- I: I see. What are those goals that you were referring to? Why do you study English?
- R: The reason why I study English is merely for preparing the HKDSE exam. I am not really a big fan of English. I would prefer learning Japanese instead, to be frank.
- I: Ahaha I see. Then if that's a case, why do you still study English? Is it important to you?
- R: I think there is such a need to learn English in these days. If I move my sight outside of Hong Kong and travel abroad, I will need this language for communication since English is widely accepted and understood by many people in different countries. With this language, I could at least communicate with people with different mother tongue. For example, in Japan, if you are speaking in Cantonese, nobody can understand you. But if you are speaking in English, it's possible that the local could understand a bit. This makes a great difference. So, English has its own usefulness and certainly there is a need to learn it, but is it really necessary to learn how to beautify your piece with fancy techniques and understood every word in passages when the ultimate purpose of learning the language is to communicate? I don't think we should go that far.
- I: Alright. As you mentioned, tutors mostly just do exercises and past papers with you in the tutorials, regardless of which form. Do you think the drilling have helped you learn this language effectively for a communication purpose? Like it enabled you to communicate with the Japanese people in English?
- R: I don't think so. At the time when he designed the exercise for us, he wouldn't make it too off-the-ground. It would normally be something within our knowledge. But because of this feature, what we have been practicing repeatedly are something that we have learnt already, and we never really get a chance to learn new things and new topics. The purpose of the exercises becomes a means for repetitive drilling rather than a tool for stimulating interest or furthering your learning in English. So, yeah, it's just so pointless, and I don't think drilling can help me achieve that.
- I: I see. Seems that the exercises you've done only helped boosting your marks in exam, but it didn't help you much in learning English for communication, right?
- R: Exactly. The direction went wrong in some way. Isn't it ridiculous that you learn a language by doing lots of its exercises? Instead of interacting with the people and learning their slangs and cultures? It is quite strange that people would claim that they have learnt the language after doing the exercises.

- I: I see. So, you have noticed the abnormality here too. Then what drives you to consistently signing up for English tutorials, despite knowing how strange it is?
- R: It's because I have to take HKDSE...and I don't really have a choice...that's why I have to keep doing and drilling. But after doing exercises, I would never go deeper or whatever. So that's why you can see that the direction has gone wrong. If I were truly passionate about it, like my love for Japanese, I would have kept my passion even after DSE and studied it continually to learn this language. Right now, if I am asking myself if I would do those exercises after DSE, my answer would be a definite NO. Why would I revert to doing those hellish stuff?
- I: Hmm...Then would you still study English for communication after completing DSE?
- R: Not really, unless I need to use it, such as doing presentation or writing essays. In this case, I would learn a certain number of useful expressions or phrases for achieving the purpose, but I won't do anything beyond that.
- I: OK...How do you think English should be taught and learned?
- R: I think English should be taught in a way that could stimulate your interest. It could attract you to learn involuntarily and enable you to see the beauty in it. You may talk to native speakers and discuss the daily life with them in English. And in the way of exchanging ideas with them in English, you can get to learn some expressions and utterances related to daily life. Everything occurs naturally and it should not be forced, like forcing you to sit in a room to do exercises won't help to raise the interest in English. Not everyone likes studying English.
- I: Alright. Do you think your schoolteachers or your tutors have helped you achieving that? Learning English voluntarily while being related to daily life?
- R: Overall speaking, I don't think so. Because my English teacher would use Chinese after the class. If he isn't using English himself in daily life, how could he convince and teach others to do the same? But speaking from its effectiveness in helping me to learn some daily life English, I think in some way, it does help a bit as the vocabulary and expressions would accumulate along with more exercises. Also, you may be less hesitant when it comes to grammar too. But overall speaking, I don't think it's effective in helping me to become a competent English speaker in daily life.
- I: Hmm...How about your tutors? Can you use what your tutor taught you in daily life?
- R: Not really, except the format of different text types. When going to tutorials, you will at least know the correct format of a certain text type, but whether to have the content to be such exquisite...to an extent that you finely select and arrange every word or expression, I am not sure about that.

- I: What are your thoughts about the teaching and learning of English in the current education system?
- R: I think it's too rigid. Actually, there are many different ways or angles that you can look into to learn or teach English effectively. However, what is in the system now certainly don't serve the purpose. If you ask any Hong Kong students about English, they will tell you paper 1, 2, 3, and 4. This is because, to them, English has become an exam subject, which is no different from Economics or Physics.
- I: Hmm...it seems that the original purpose is twisted somehow, and the pupils nowadays are not really learning a language, right?
- R: Yes. If you are really learning English as a language, you will naturally apply it anytime, anywhere. But what is teaching in the system now is simply spoon-feeding knowledge, forcing students to learn bunch of phrases that they will not even bother to process or use it after learning it. The exercises and drilling, from my point of view, would turn someone who is originally passionate about English, into someone who doesn't, since it is too tiring to do exercises.
- I: I see. It's turning into something else. But to you, what function does the tutoring serve?
- R: I think if the education system is good enough, we don't really need to sign up for tutorials, since the purpose of having tutorials was to boost the exam performance and supplement the loophole at school. Let's say if you have missed a lesson at school, the tutor can teach you back the thing that you've missed and introduce to you how to achieve higher marks based on the marking scheme. The whole point of tutorials focuses on how to boost your exam marks, rather than stimulate your interest in English. It's very goal-oriented, unlike the school's one, which is relatively relaxing.
- I: I see. Then how can English learning be more motivating and effective to you?
- R: For me, I would start with something I like or related to my interest. Let's say I like manga and movies very much; I would have gone for Marvel movies in English and started exploring if there is any English term that I like and dig it deeper. However, I understand this ideal type of learning might be a bit difficult when being put into practice, as different students' interest could vary greatly.
- I: Alright. Have you ever envisioned yourself using English in the future?
- R: Yes, and I think it would mostly be in workplace...Normally in daily casual chatter, I won't use English. Maybe a bit code-mixing in messaging, but most of the time I won't use English to communicate with people. It is only in workplace that I would envision myself using English to write an email or letter.
- I: Hmm...Has your view changed after joining online tutoring?

- R: Not really...Because to me, the change in the means does not really change how I would see myself using English in future.
- I: Alright. As I recall, you have started attending English since primary three. Why did you attend English tutorial class in the first place?
- R: It was primarily due to my parents. Initially, it was my sister who joined English tutoring first and then later I was asked to join it too. I did not really know what it was at the time I joined it.
- I: Hmm...if that's a case, what drives you to continually signing up for English tutoring?
- R: Er...At first, it's because the way of English tutoring was not really a rigid kind. Perhaps it's for primary students, so the format was freer and the learning was not really intense. As I didn't really have anything to do back then and I was not really against it, so I agreed to continue my English tutorial class when I was in primary 3.
- I: Oh, I see. What did you and your tutor do in the class back then?
- R: It's quite funny. They would sing songs with us, kind of like playgroup. They would sing a song in English, and we followed. Maybe it was expected to help us internalize the words in a song and learn them. After that, we would come into groups, and do worksheets and exercises together.
- I: Did you like this kind of tutoring back then?
- R: I didn't have much feeling to it, considering I was having a few other subject tutorials in line during that time. I had already used to the format of tutoring at my young age. I think, as long as my grades or marks improved, I would continue joining it.
- I: Alright. Regarding your English experience in face-to-face and online tutoring, was there anything special that you perceived?
- R: Ahah there's one, though the expression might be a bit inappropriate. I had a feeling like 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder', in which the relationship with my tutoring peers have strengthened. Not having seen my classmates for a while, I felt warm and connected with them when I can see them face-to-face again, and we can tease and annoy each other as usual, while commenting on how lame the exercise is. That's why I would prefer face-to-face after-all.
- I: What do you expect to get from the tutor? Has the expectation changed along with the change in the mode of tutoring?

- R: To me, I would anticipate that the tutor might cover less content in online tutoring, as he or she may not be quite familiar with online teaching. This was a circumstance that I would have foreseen.
- I: Alright. Are you satisfied with your learning experience in online tutoring?
- R: I wouldn't say I am dissatisfied, since I didn't expect anything at first and the online tutoring was a contingent solution during the pandemic time. But if you had me saying that I am satisfied, I don't feel like that too since online tutoring is far from good.
- I: Okay. Comparing face-to-face tutoring and online tutoring, which one do you prefer?
- R: Face-to-face for sure.
- I: Why is that?
- R: Because I can see others' face-to-face response and reaction. During online tutoring, there was a time that I attended the lesson without seeing the tutor's face, I then turned to see what my classmates was doing during the class. Some of them were gaming, a few of them were doing make-up. I just felt too distant with my peers during online tutoring, and the learning atmosphere wasn't right on point.
- I: I see. Is there anything else you can think of that may help me to understand your English learning experience better, particularly on face-to-face tutoring and online tutoring?
- R: I think I have shared enough. Haha. Nothing more to add.
- I: Alright...