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KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education, Health and Human Services

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION DEFENSE

of

Yu Li

For the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

Cultural Foundations

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING OF
FEMALE RURAL MIGRANT TVET STUDENTS
IN WESTERN CHINA

June 22, 2023
5:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9116700790?pwd=K2E5UHV3SmZaeS8vS0hIdXBZelpiUT09

Meeting ID: 911 670 0790
Passcode: 5Jc6n
Yu Li

M.A., Chinese–English Translation and Interpreting
Sichuan International Studies University, 2013

B.A., English Language Teaching
Sichuan International Studies University, 2009

Yu Li served as a research assistant at Kent State University for three years and a teaching assistant, and part-time faculty for four years in the teacher education program of the College of Education at Kent State University. Before that, she worked as assistant professor in a higher education institution in China for many years and a middle school teacher, teaching English and Chinese for 2 years.

Her research interests are comparative/international education, multi-cultural education, globalization and education, girls' education empowerment, from which to explore diversity, equity and inclusion in education from interpretive and critical perspectives. Her current research focuses on the population of female rural migrant students, families and teachers in China, especially regarding their capabilities at the intersections of culture, language, identity and social structures.

She has presented her research findings and projects at local, national and international conferences, such as the Comparative and International Education Society Conference, Asian Conference on Education, Anti-Racism Conference, Virginia Hamilton Conference on Multicultural Literature for Youth and her work has been published in the Journal of Chinese Education & Society, Oxford Scholarship, English on Campus, the Journal of Asia Pacific Education, as well as chapters in books.

The English Language Learning Of Female Rural Migrant TVET Students in Western China

This timely study is an investigation of the English language learning experiences and related empowerment capabilities and deprivations of female rural migrant youth in TVET schools in two locales in western China at macro, mezzo, and micro levels, during the years of the great expansion of the TVET school system. This study adopted basic interpretive research using semistructured interviews and field observations. The capability approach provided the conceptual framework for designing interview questions and analysis.

The macro level entails an exploration of the history of English language learning, policies, access, and resources in China during the research years. The mezzo level involves the sociological influences relevant to rural migrant youth’s studying English, their peer environment, cultural capital, teachers, and instructional approaches. The micro level focuses on participants’ voices, experiences with learning English, and their formulation of their related constitutive and instrumental capabilities.

Multilevel analysis reveals that for rural migrant youth, learning English presents a barrier to further education, entrenching a consistent urban-rural inequality. It reflects the unequal access to resources, opportunities and distribution of privileges and capital shaped by the residence control [hukou] system. English exams have become not only the bottleneck for migrant students’ educational advancement but also delimit employment opportunities. The underfunded and underresourced rural school is a key creator of social inequality and rural deprivation.

Recommendations include reformulating the national English education policy, allocating more resources to English learning, and improving English teacher training in rural schools, adapting TVET English curriculum to economic imperatives.