



Title of Project:

Examining Supplementary English E-Learning for Children in Rural China: A Critical Ethnographic Study

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Project Summary:

China is a country with huge educational gaps between students from rural areas and those from cities. Many Chinese rural schools, especially schools in rural ethnic minority regions in western China, have a great shortage of English teachers because of economic and geographic reasons. Other than the limited access to quality English education, many rural students also lack home learning support. Millions of rural Chinese children are growing up with grandparents, because their parents migrate to work in suburban factories in order to feed the families back in village. These children are called “left-behind” children in China.

In order to provide more learning opportunities for children in rural areas, recently Chinese educational non-profit organizations have increasingly started to build e-learning programs. This research will examine English e-learning classes provided for a rural, ethnic primary school in western China by one of the country’s leading non-profit e-learning programs. Specifically, this research attempts to understand the interactions in an English e-learning class serving fifth-grade, low socioeconomic status ethnic minority children, as well as the teachers and students’ perspectives on their English e-learning experiences. Anderson’s (2003a) model of interaction in distance learning environments will be applied as the theoretical framework to analyze different modes of interaction in the English e-learning class. Critical ethnography will be used as methodology in order to acknowledge and empower students’ own voices and experiences through the research. Findings will help educators understand how to promote meaningful interaction and instruction to support low socioeconomic status ethnic minority students’ English e-learning.