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Understanding Students' Learner Autonomy through Practitioner Research

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Warwick, Centre for Applied Linguistics
June 2011

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my two supervisors—Ema Ushioda and Richard Smith. With their supports and guidance, I have reached a destination I had never imagined when I embarked my journey four years ago. In Dr. Ushioda's words, this is 'a process of minimising confusion', and indeed, I felt less puzzled and more certain about my next step every time I walked out of her office after our tutorials. In our tutorials, they have always listened to my ideas patiently and attentively even at the early stage when ideas were not yet in shapes, they posed questions that directly pointed out the blind spots I had not noticed, and they were always very generous in sharing their resources with me. Dr. Ushioda has been very prompt and patient in replying all kinds of questions I raised through emails, gently nudged me when necessary and provided detailed comments on my drafts. Dr. Smith has offered alternative views to challenge my thinking. In 2005, it was Dr. Smith's edited book *Learner Autonomy across Cultures: Language Education Perspectives* that had drawn my attention to the notion of learner autonomy and brought me to University of Warwick. He reminded me to step out my comfort zone and question myself things I might have taken for granted, and encouraged me to not only focus on my study but also participate in conferences and seminars. It is truly an honour for me to work with them in the past four years.

Secondly, I am equally grateful to three chairpersons in my home university in Taiwan, Father Denial Bauer, Kate C. W. Liu and Yuan-Pi Yuan. Father Bauer, my first boss in Fu-Jen, hired me soon after I earned my Master degree from New York University in 2002. He has been not only a boss to me but a dear friend who always offers his honest opinions and consistently encouraged me. Special thanks also go to Dr. Liu who started the AIEDL project and has devoted herself in the pioneer work of online English learning which would only be possible as a team work. She pulled together a great team to provide all the technical and financial supports. I also would like to thank Dr. Yuan who agreed to let me teach the freshmen listening course in the day division, and the secretary Julie, Judy and Grace who took care of all the tedious administrative matters. I also owe much to the other two colleagues, Hsih Chin Kuei Yu and Beatrice Hsu, who also embrace the philosophy of autonomy and

have shared with me how they put this belief into their practices. As a novice teacher, I was very fortunate to start my career with such a devoting team in Fu-Jen. Even though the term learner autonomy was not stated explicitly in the documents, I have experienced such an autonomous spirit among the faculty.

Thirdly, in this study researching learner autonomy, I am indebted to all the students participated in the three courses. They had not been very open and honest in communicating their thoughts with me in their diaries and in the interviews, and I therefore gained a more colourful picture of their learning. My appreciation also goes to the five TAs who helped to respond to students' emails and questions posted online, and solved the technical problems students encountered in learning online.

I had to admit that there were moments I doubted my decision of studying abroad, but when I thought about all these amazing people I met in England, I knew I have made the right decision. I would like to thank the group of lovely friends I met in University of Warwick, Claire, Charoula and Theo, Dani and Rami, Kathy, Khem, Jane and Paulo, Jessie, Jennifer, Joan, Mary, Nicky, Rossana, Rossario, Sophia, Sun, Szu-an, Vani, and Young. They have not only enriched my personal lives, but also stimulated my academic thinking. We had shared all the ups and downs in this foreign country, sometimes crying on each other's shoulders and sometimes sharing tears of joy. To an international student like me, they are indeed my family that come from various countries all over the world.

Last but not least, I want to dedicate this thesis to my dear family, my forever supports. Even though my father Tai-Hong Wei had passed away years before I started this PhD study, he was the one that planted the seed of studying abroad in my head and saved up the money for my study. I want to thank my mother Shu-Er Cheng for having strong faith in me and encouraging me to pursue my dream. Thanks also go to my sister I-Han and my brother Chun-Chan whom I could always fall on, and my boyfriend Wade and his unconditional love.

Writing acknowledgements is emotionally overwhelming for me, as the study has taken several unexpected turns, and finally this is the end. I am extremely grateful that I have a long list of people to thank. My thesis will not be complete without mentioning names of these academic companions and personal friends who have inspired me at different points of this journey and thus shaped my thesis in different ways.

Abstract

This thesis reports on practitioner research I conducted over two semesters teaching online listening courses to three different groups of students in Fu-Jen Catholic University in Taiwan. Instead of a typical three-cycle Action Research model starting with a specific target area to improve, I adopted a more flexible exploratory approach allowing a longer evaluative phase before deciding on a focal area. Originally, my interest was to investigate how CSCL (Computer Supported Collaborative Learning) could help students in counteracting the relative isolation of online learning. However, after the first phase, I directed my attention more to the role of reflection as students neglected the online interactions and preferred communicating their ideas with me through reflective accounts and listening diaries.

My research questions focused on three areas: the roles of collaboration and reflection, the online modality and issues related to researching learner autonomy. With the aim of exploring development over time, I gathered three kinds of data: pedagogically motivated data including online interactions and student assignments (listening diaries, reflective accounts); additional student interview and evaluation data; my fieldnotes and observation data documenting how I managed the three courses. Therefore, all the data collected was textual and qualitative in nature. Different approaches to data analysis were applied to different datasets. Grounded theory was applied to the interview data to allow themes and codes to emerge, whereas I-statement analysis and some predetermined coding categories were applied to the diaries and reflective accounts.

The findings are structured according to the three areas of investigation. First of all, regarding collaboration and reflection, the success/failure of collaborative tasks depends greatly on task design configuration, while diary-keeping indeed serves as an effective pedagogical tool to raise students' awareness of their learning processes and heighten their sense of ownership. Based on this understanding, teachers can create a space for reflection by marking regular opportunities for reflection and offering guiding questions. Secondly, regarding the online modality, the success of the online interactions contributed to students' sense of ownership, which is closely related to their perception of what a listening course should be like and their identity as college students. Lastly, regarding issues related to researching learner autonomy, combining both Action Research and Exploratory Practice principles is beneficial to ensure that the teacher-researcher does not impose the research agenda onto learners. When data elicitation tools and data analysis techniques are also pedagogically motivated, the findings can authentically represent the picture of students' learning. In viewing the development of learner autonomy as a learning process, considering cognitive, affective and behavioural domains can help us to understand learners' perceptions and metacognitive strategies which are not easily observable from their learning behaviours. Furthermore, the data reveals that motivation and strategies interplay with learner autonomy throughout the process of learning.

1 Chapter One Introduction

This chapter aims to present background information of my study; therefore I will begin with the context of my study—the current language teaching and learning situation in Taiwan in 1.1. In 1.2, I will present my motivation for studying learner autonomy in a technology-mediated environment, and the purpose this study aims to achieve will be discussed in 1.3. In 1.4, I will map out the structure of the whole thesis to introduce the following eight chapters.

1.1 Context of the study

My study took place in Fu-Jen Catholic University in Taiwan, a context I am familiar with, since I had completed my bachelor study there and spent another four years teaching after I earned my master degree. According to Toma (2000), this closeness to the people involved in the study contributes to form a subjective understanding which can improve the quality of qualitative data in subtle details (cited in Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p. 61). In this section, I will present this EFL context at three levels, the overall EFL setting in Taiwan, the teaching context of Fu-Jen Catholic University I worked under and the Advance Intermediate English Distance Learning (AIEDL) programme this course belonged to. The purpose of laying out the three-layer context is to present the outside reality and some uncontrollable factors I faced in carrying out this practitioner research.

1.1.1 Current English education in Taiwan

In Taiwan, an EFL context, the English education up to high school still follows an exam-oriented curriculum, which lays more emphasis on reading and writing. This explains why the oral skills listening and speaking haven't received as much time and attention as reading and writing. As a result, a large number of college students are weaker in listening and speaking. According to Liu's (2005) survey report, in the interviews with students, non-English majors actually were unsatisfied with their oral communicative competence, and would like to have had more Lab courses, referring to the listening courses taking place in the language labs. In fact, the same opinion had been reported in two earlier studies conducted by Huang (1998) and Lai & Hamp-

Lyons (2001), which both reported students' expressed needs to receive training catering to the growing demand for oral communicative competency. My research aims to address this need for training targeted at developing students' listening.

The other issue arising in Liu's investigation is the growing demand to integrate the use of technology on the teacher's side. He used the term hybrid learning (equal to blended learning) to refer to the mode of learning combining face-to-face meeting with the use of technology, specifically online interactions. Currently, according to what teachers reported in this study, their use of the Internet was limited to sourcing or presenting teaching materials. They either asked students to go online for resources, or they uploaded teaching materials they made themselves. Liu suggested that teachers had yet to discover the potential of more interactive online tools, or they were aware of these ICT tools but they had not figured out how to effectively integrate them into their English courses.

These two main findings in Liu's study are exactly what my research aims to address. How my listening course was developed to promote learner autonomy and respond to students' need will be elaborated in Chapter Three (Pedagogical Rationale). As for the integration of technology, I am fortunate to have this opportunity to join the AIEDL project mentioned above, which has been established since 2004 to experiment with innovative ways in offering English courses in the online learning mode. The expansion of the AIEDL project in my teaching context in Fu-Jen mirrors the fast-growing demand of hybrid learning in higher education not only in Taiwan but around the globe. My context is a typical example of the soaring interest from higher education toward the goal of building "university/classroom without walls". According to Cannell (1999), most institutions are seeking a more "mobile and diverse" academic market to face the reality of "declining enrolments, increasing costs, the potential market of adult professionals, pressure from corporations, institutional competition for faculty, and increasing global access to technology". Most policy-makers encourage the development of distance learning programmes, viewing it as an investment to boost the institution's reputation and, of course, also to earn more profits. As the policy is encouraged and actually carried out, an increasing number of teachers in the middle of the power structure, including myself, are facing this challenge of managing this new mode of teaching and learning. As a result, the focus of discussion does not stay too long on a matter of *why* but shifts to a matter of *how*.

1.1.2 Institutional context of the study: Fu-Jen Catholic University

My home university is one of the renowned private universities in Taiwan, with one of the earliest founded English Departments. Fu-Jen Catholic University has been well-known for the foreign language education, both modern languages (English, Italian, French, German, Spanish and Japanese) and Latin. The foreign language college was established in 1963 by a group of enthusiastic foreigners coming from various countries. The foreign teachers also brought diverse teaching beliefs and methods with them. As a result, language teachers have been granted greater flexibility in designing their own curriculum. In such a conducive environment that supports language learning and innovative approaches to making the learning happen, I had the chance to explore the use of technology during my four years teaching there (2002-2006).

1.1.3 Developmental stages of AIEDL programme

In this section, I will focus on the AIEDL (Advance & Intermediate English Distance Learning) project I joined in developing this online listening course. The developmental stages of the AIEDL project have subtle impacts on the data collection process because these administrative factors were not within my control. The curriculum decision-making, like my goal-setting, the topic selection and activity designs was shaped by the AIEDL programme to a large extent. This background information is therefore important to this practitioner research in contextualising the institution that mediates between the researcher, the students and the outer social milieu (Edge, 2001, p. 5).

The integration of technology into the curriculum is viewed as a valuable asset among universities in higher education. “Distance education incorporates many alternative education opportunities such as web-based or web-enhanced instruction, which enables learning to be more accessible and interactive” (Brewer et al., 2001; Kearsley, 2000; Moore & Thompson, 1997 cited in Cheng & Myles, 2003, p. 29). The AIEDL project is such an example. Initially, it was established to offer paid courses for in-service teachers and professionals who are interested in improving their English language skills; therefore, the term distance learning was adopted.

Since the first course was offered in 2004, the AIEDL programme has undergone

three developmental stages to identify the potential target students. In Stage One, as the acronym suggests, the programme was designed in the distance learning mode to attract in-service teachers and professionals who wanted to improve their knowledge and skills of English and were willing to pay. Although the students recruited for the first course in 2004 were all highly motivated, the number of students was too small to support the project. The first course I taught in summer 2005 belonged to this initial stage, designed for in-service teachers as part of the English Teaching certificate programme. Due to the regulation of MOE (Ministry of Education), half of the course had to be instructed face-to-face. Although this summer course only lasted for six weeks, for both me and the students, this brand new learning experience in interacting online indeed transcended certain limitations of the conventional in-class learning.

After the realisation that running the programme with such a small number of students was not cost effective, college students enrolled in Fu-Jen Catholic University were invited to take the courses for free. The 2nd stage marked a turning point for the AIEDL programme, for the suddenly raised numbers of students, from 20 in a class to 50 to 60 in a class, consequently altered the nature of the course design. The accompanying challenges came from accommodating different needs and learning preferences of students from various departments. Moreover, all the communication was dealt with through the Business Management College and the Social Sciences College where the courses were offered. From the administrative perspective, this was a rather exploratory process as well, since without the direct contact channel with the students, we teachers played a less active role in communicating with them.

The course I offered in Fall, 2005 belonged to Stage Two, and so were the two courses I offered in Fall, 2007 and Spring, 2008, which form the focus of this PhD research. As I mentioned above, two major colleges cooperate with the AIEDL programme, the Business Management College and the Social Science College, both promoting English learning but approaching their goals quite differently. The policy in the Business Management College was to set a threshold—before graduation students have to take TOEIC and reach a certain score, or the alternative was to take a certain amount of English courses. On the other hand, the Social Science College establishes an English training programme called Honour Programme which invites students whose English has reached a certain level to take English courses, including

the AIEDL courses.

In 2005, managing a 72-student online course for the first time, my full attention was on how to structure my course and interact with students online, and as a result, I was totally unaware of the potential influence these two opposite policies casted on students until I started my fieldwork in Fall, 2007. The course in Fall, 2007 was offered under the Business Management College, whereas the course in Spring, 2008 was offered under the Social Science College. In the end-of-semester seminar of Fall, 2007, we teachers shared our observation on how the policies of English learning in students' college had an impact on students' initial attitude and motivation. Although motivation is not the main focus of my study, it is an inevitable factor, both a cause and an outcome. The difference shown in students' participation in class will be further discussed in the emerging issues of the data collection.

Now the AIEDL project has moved into its 3rd stage. The English Elite Programme (菁英學程) was established under the Sociology department. Starting from September of the spring semester, 2008, the courses were offered under the English department. Students need to apply for this English language programme and if they can complete 24 credits by the time of graduation, they will earn a certificate as a proof of their fulfilment and of course, as a proof of their English proficiency. As the time of writing, there are still discussions going on about the future development of AIEDL.

1.2 Motivation and purpose of the study

I had been teaching listening courses since I started to teach in Fu-Jen Catholic University in 2002. As described above, in my second year of teaching, I joined the AIEDL project, spent a year developing the online listening course, and offered it in 2005. My initial interests in researching learner autonomy in a listening course emerged from my previous teaching experiences in teaching the listening course in the lab (2002-2006) and online (2005-2006). I observed that certain students adapted themselves to the online learning environment a lot more easily than their peers. This led me to wonder why they managed to regulate themselves better, why they sought solutions on their own when they encountered problems, and why they were able to tell me more about their learning in their diaries. All these questions directed me to my current exploration of learner autonomy. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to

first achieve an understanding of students' actual development of learner autonomy in a technology-mediated environment. Based on this understanding, I can develop a more systematic way to foster students' subsequent development of learner autonomy.

1.3 Research aims

Instead of presenting all of my research questions here in the introduction chapter, I will address my research aims first in a more general sense, and raise my research questions later in Chapter two, when the literature is reviewed and gaps in the current studies are identified. The previous experience in 2005 gave rise to my interest in how learner autonomy works or does not work in an online learning environment. With this purpose in mind, the primary research aim is to observe how learners exercise autonomy in the online modality.

My fieldwork was divided into two stages—an exploratory phase (Fall Semester 2007) and the main study (Spring Semester 2008). The purpose of the exploratory first phase (Laying the Ground) was to gain initial understanding of the two classes I was teaching—an e-learning group (Class A) and a blended-learning (b-learning) group (Class B). I wanted to try to perceive students' learning including both positive and negative aspects. In the Main Study, I added a third class, which was a one-month b-learning group (Class C). In the Main Study, I decided to provide more discussion opportunities, either online or face-to-face, for students to share experience, worries and successful learning tips.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises nine chapters in total: introduction, literature review, pedagogical rationale, data collection methodology, data analysis methodology, the roles of collaboration and reflection, teaching and learning with online modality, researching learner autonomy and conclusion. The present chapter outlined the background of my study, the initial motivation for conducting this research, and the research aims. Chapter Two (Literature Review) covers two main areas of interest, learner autonomy, and the online modality with an emphasis on the roles of collaboration and reflection as the meeting place between the two. Chapter Three (Pedagogical Rationale) presents research studies underpinning the design of the

listening course. It begins with a review of listening research and then moves to listening strategy instruction and the specific use of technology in materials selection and the multimedia learning environment. The use of methodology is divided into two chapters with Chapter Four (Data Collection Methodology) on the data elicitation tools and the scope of data, and Chapter Five (Data Analysis Methodology) on the audit trail of my data analysis process including steps in using NVivo. The discussions on findings comprise three chapters. Chapter Six reports the roles of collaboration and reflection, whereas Chapter Seven looks at the teaching and learning aspects in working with the online modality component. Chapter Eight highlights the insights practitioner research provides into our understanding of learner autonomy. Chapter Nine provides a review of the key findings and further discusses the contributions, limitations and implications of my study.

2 Chapter Two Literature review

As stated in 1.2, my interest in studying learner autonomy derived from a previous online teaching experience in which I observed positive impacts of learner autonomy. Due to this interest of studying the actual exercise and development of learner autonomy in my technology-mediated context, this chapter consists of two main sections: learner autonomy and the online learning environment.

In 2.1, I will review literature in the learner autonomy arena first because this is my primary research interest. I will start with the historical development of learner autonomy and how this concept has been defined in theoretical discussions within the field of ELT (Benson, 2001, 2007, Dam, 1995, 2003, Holec, 1981, Little, 1991, 2004). With the strong nature of practitioner research underlying my study, I will next turn to empirical studies recording how practitioners carry out the notion of autonomy in actual practice, starting from setting the course objectives, integrating it into the course design and means of assessments. The purpose is to learn from what current research studies have already informed us and further identify the gaps in the literature.

What is reviewed next in 2.2 is the online learning modality, which serves as the context of my study. I will explain why I settle on the terms e-learning and b-learning which are used in the field of general education instead of CALL which is used more often in our field of language education. Next, in reviewing online language learning, the notion of affordance (Gibson, 1979; van Lier, 2000, 2004) will be elaborated to explain how the online learning modality provides opportunities for learners to reflect on their learning and interact with their classmates in this learning community. The section 2.3 will look at how the concept of learner autonomy interplays with the innovation of web-based technology in creating new learning opportunities for collaboration and reflection, my main focus in the study. At the end of this chapter, in 2.4, I will raise the set of research questions guiding this study.

2.1 Literature review on LA

Autonomy as an educational concept and goal has been shaped by several disciplines, within and beyond general education, particularly higher education, adult education and lifelong learning, and even politics and philosophy. Although tracing all these

influences can lead to intriguing discussions, in this chapter, I will narrow my attention only on learner autonomy in language education to make the already-complex concept feasible. As Pemberton (1996) warned us more than a decade ago, facing the profusion of publications with learner autonomy in the titles, we need to be aware how “different terms are often used to refer to the same thing...[and how] the same term is often used to mean different things” (p. 2).

Under the intention of clarifying what we actually refer to when talking about learner autonomy in our field of language education, this section will begin with a brief summary of the historical development of learner autonomy, and move to a collection of definitions on learner autonomy. The purpose of beginning with this theoretical review is threefold. First, I hope to pinpoint salient characteristics that have been identified as essential components in autonomy. Although autonomy has been used by different researchers to refer to different things, there remains a set of agreement on fundamental issues, particularly on what autonomy is not. Second, through reviewing these debated issues addressed in the past thirty years, I aim to join this dialogue and place my research on this continuum. Lastly, these theoretical discussions will serve as the foundation for my later discussions in data analysis (Chapter 5).

Along with portraying the theoretical landscape, I will review the empirical studies and practitioners’ endeavours in putting the notion of learner autonomy into actual classroom practice, an endeavours which are closer to my practical interest. To research classroom practice on promoting autonomy has been listed on the agenda for future direction in the field (Legenhausen, 2007). As Trebbi’s question goes, “Why after 30 years of theorizing, is there so little autonomy in our classrooms?” (Nicoll, 2007). Although individual classroom studies may be regarded as insufficient in themselves, by collecting research studies which report effective means in facilitating learners’ development of autonomy, we are in a better position to develop important insights into practice. Or to pose another question (the one I attempt to answer) if we believe autonomy is not equal to learning without a teacher, and it does not happen in a vacuum, what can a teacher do to build an autonomy-friendly environment?

2.1.1 A brief history and the definition of LA in language learning

As Smith (2009) states in *The History of Learner Autonomy*, the belief underlying the act to examine the history is that “insights from the past can help teachers navigate their own way, *critically* but *constructively*, among the top-down, centre to ‘periphery’ fashions which tend to characterize language teaching discourse” (p. 1, emphasis added). In line with this belief in furthering our understanding of learner autonomy, retracing the historical development of learner autonomy in the past helps me better perceive the current debates and arguments so as to position my study on this continuum of dialogue.

Reflecting on the past is necessary in order to address issues and join the ongoing discussion. As mentioned above, with my role as a teacher-researcher and the practitioner emphasis of my study, I am reviewing the history with an eye to how relevant, or distant, these discussions are for classroom teachers. Several questions I bear in mind are the following:

1. What does the theory tell us about learner autonomy? Since there are apparently different angles of looking at learner autonomy, which will best serve my purpose as an EFL teacher?
2. How do these theoretical constructs help to inform classroom practice, not in terms of providing direct technical transplantations and applications of these concepts to teaching of course, but more in terms of suggesting a framework for teachers to see better, to observe more and to approach learners and classroom ecology in multiple dimensions and realities?
3. When coming to practical concerns, namely turning the framework into action plans, how do these theoretical underpinnings help us, all shareholders including teachers, administrators, curriculum designers and even students themselves, to facilitate the process of developing autonomy in a way that our guidance does help to develop and not to constrain the actual exercise of autonomy?

These questions will emerge through the literature review not only in this section on learner autonomy but also in relation to the use of web-based technology. When I reach the end of this chapter, my research questions shaped by all these studies will then be presented as emerging from all these arguments, research and debates.

Under the major paradigm shift from the teacher-centred to the learner-centred learning mode in the past thirty years both in the field of general education (Hase & Kenyon, 2000) and in our field of language education, learner autonomy has earned greater attention than ever since the turn of the century (Benson, 2007). The documentation of autonomy in the field of language education that marked the initial interests of learner autonomy originated from Holec's (1981) report and his involvement in the self-access learning centre CRAPEL (Centre de Recherches et d'Applications en Langues) at the University of Nancy, France. In fact, this early association between learner autonomy and self-access learning was built in various countries in Europe and across the globe in Asia. Up in the Scandinavian Peninsula, Nordlund (1997) and her colleagues, Karlsson and Kjisik have worked to establish Autonomous Learning Modules (ALMS) in Helsinki University, Finland. Across the English Channel, In the UK, as Smith (2009) reported, in the 80s, there were also traces of work in the field of individualisation (Altman and James, 1980, Geddes and Sturtridge, 1988), which later merged into learner autonomy (Brookes and Grundy, 1988). Little (1991, 2004) also attributed his initial interests of learner autonomy to the self-access learning project he helped to establish in Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. Across the globe to Asia, Benson and his colleagues also had devoted themselves to the establishment of self-access centres in Hong Kong. In sum, early development of learner autonomy indeed struck a strong chord of self-directed learning and individualisation. A development common to all these self-access centres is to provide some form of learner support, training or advisory and counselling service. According to Little (2004), students could seek help "to determine their objectives, define contents and progressions, select methods and techniques, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes" (Little and Grant, 1984, 1986 cited in Little, 2004, p. 17).

The etymological root of autonomy might help to explain this early emphasis of being independent, as revealed in "managing one's learning" and "learning without a teacher", evident in the works of these pioneers in the 80s and into the 90s. Autonomy has its root in Greek, a combination of *auto* and *nemo*, which when joined together means "to live according to one's own rules/laws, self-governing" (Oxford, 2003, p. 80). Additionally, as defined in Petit Robert Dictionary, *autonomie*, autonomy in French, refers to "the distance a vehicle... can run without being

refuelled” (XXe) (Distance que peut franchir un véhicule...sans être ravitaillé en carburant.) This definition highlights the root *auto* which “dates back to the time when the capacity of engines started to free humans from constraints of time and space” (Namenwirth, 1994). Although this interpretation compares autonomy with the capacity of engines, a rather mechanical view, its suggestion of *breaking free from constraint of time and space* is worth considering.

However, as the seed of autonomy was carried by the wind and spread into the soil of language classrooms, this tone of individualisation has been nurtured and watered by a more social stream of thought. First of all, toward late 80s, Allwright (1988) called for “a radical restructuring of language pedagogy” and proposed to position autonomy within the context of classroom teaching and learning. His proposal of reconstruction “has become a reality that many language teachers must now come to terms with” (cited in Benson, 2006, p. 22). In the meantime, Little (1991) and Dam (1995) have both raised their voice by accentuating that autonomy is not a synonym for “learning in isolation.” This is significant in drawing our eyes to the role teachers play, and can play, in creating an autonomy-friendly environment. Consequently, as opposed to independence, Little (1991, 2004) proposed valuing interdependence when defining autonomy, marking a salient social turn in his psychological construct of autonomy. According to Benson (2006), this suggests erasing the definite line between ‘classroom’ and ‘out-of-class’ applications and led to “new and often complex understandings of the role of autonomy in language teaching and learning” (p. 22). Furthermore, the advent of technology, particularly ICTs, stirs this already complex understanding and creates an even more dynamic reconstruction of the look of language learning. Teachers are facing new challenges brought by the latest exciting digital opportunities.

In their commentary chapter, Smith and Ushioda (2009), along with accompanying authors Aoki, Esch and Riley, also lay emphasis on this shift of focus to place the exercise of autonomy within a socially situated framework as “a salient change.” They comment that “from this perspective, autonomy is now seen to develop out of interaction with others, it benefits from interdependence, and classrooms and teachers are no longer peripheral but at the centre-stage of practical concern” (p. 244). In this social perspective of defining autonomy, Leni Dam’s (1995) work with teenagers, oftentimes reluctant, in the high school, an institutionalised setting, has advocated another direction for research other than the early interests of

self-access learning. According to Smith (2008b), the significance of Dam's work lies in the fact that it stretches the potential of autonomy "to *address* constraints" (p. 9, emphasis original). In sum, under this shift of attention from out-of-class, self-managed learning to in-class institutionalised learning, teachers are brought into the picture in researching learner autonomy, an area my research aims to contribute to.

2.1.1.1 The definitions of learner autonomy language learning

After the brief review on the development of learner autonomy in the past thirty years, this section begins with a fundamental question that has been asked consistently, "what is autonomy". The purpose is not to locate one single best definition, but to include a collection of variant interpretations. Various aspects of tackling this question and several proposed definitions, including Holec's (1981), Little's (1991), Dam's (1995), Littlewood's (1987), Smith (2003) and, Benson's (2001, 2007) will be placed together in capturing evolving snapshots of learner autonomy. This is because, naturally, during the process of defining, we are not only placing the concept under the spotlight; in the meantime, we are also putting ourselves up on the stage. The question, "What is autonomy", will only be meaningful when we also explain "How do we see it in our eyes?", namely, how we illustrate our relationship with autonomy. Consequently, the act of defining autonomy carries the discussion beyond the WHAT question into the WHO and WHERE questions. As Benson (2001) remarks, researchers in the field of learner autonomy "often agree to disagree" on certain issues, since learner autonomy does not come with a set of prescribed formula, instead it is "a broad approach to the learning process" (p. 1-2). A certain degree of flexibility is allowed to include practices of different kinds taking place in a range of diverse local settings.

2.1.1.1.1 Holec (1981)

In the literature, the most often cited definition of autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" dates back to Holec's (1981) report for the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project (p. 1). This definition interpreted autonomy as a capacity that can be developed, and a list of characteristics were also named, including "*determining the objectives, defining the contents and the progressions, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.), and evaluating what has been acquired*"

(Holec, 1981, p. 3). As discussed earlier, this definition grew from theories of adult education in which the necessity of self-management and self-regulation were highlighted (Little, 2004, p. 16). Although this emphasis was later criticised as too technical (Benson, 2007), its significance lies in the underlying belief construing autonomy as a capacity which can be further developed through training and scaffolding, as oppose to defining it as something innate, something we were born with in our genes. This provides a point of departure for an ongoing attempt to explore means of further developing autonomy inside and/or outside of the classroom, for example, one possible means is to provide learner support and training via strategy use.

2.1.1.1.2 Little (1991)

Little (1991) is known for his extensive publications on and contribution to the theoretical discussions of learner autonomy, adding a strong psychological dimension to Holec's definition. According to Benson (2007), Holec's definition describes "WHAT autonomous learners are able to do", whereas Little's definition "explain HOW they are able to do it" (p. 23). Instead of answering the what question directly, Little (1991) defines autonomy by negation to break five misconceptions (p. 3):

1. Autonomy is not a synonym for self-instruction; in other words, not restricted to learning without a teacher.
2. In the classroom context, autonomy does not require the teacher to relinquish all initiative and control.
3. Autonomy is not something teachers do to learners; in other words, not a new methodology.
4. Autonomy is not a single easily described behaviour.
5. Autonomy is not a steady state achieved by different ways.

The above five assertions reveal Little's attempt to differentiate autonomy from the previous individualistic interpretation (Holec, 1988, Candy, 1991, and Dickinson, 1995). He digs deeper into the describable behaviours and asks why and how learners are willing to take a step further to assume greater responsibilities. This leads to the three principles he proposes in illuminating the relationship between learner autonomy and successful learning outcomes. The three pedagogical principles he formulates towards the end of the 1990s are: learner empowerment (involvement), learner reflection and appropriate target language use (Little, 1999, 2001 cited in

Little, 2004, p. 22). First of all, *learner empowerment* entails that learners are granted the opportunity and flexibility in taking initiative and making key decisions. During the decision-making process, *learner reflection* entails that they are guided to reflect on both the content and the process of their learning. This retrospective, metacognitive retracing helps to attach meaning to the first actions. By doing so, learners are also taking the responsibility to evaluate their previous learning experience. The third principle, appropriate target language use, entails use of the target language as the medium of all the above learning activities. As Little puts it, “autonomy in language learning and autonomy in language use are two sides of the same coin, the scope of each constraining the other” (in Little, 2007, p. 7). In a recent article, Little (2007b) adds the word language in front of learner autonomy to draw our attention to the development of proficiency as “an intended outcome” of language learner autonomy (p. 14).

Another influential idea of Little in defining learner autonomy is to bring interdependence, or what he recently called relatedness, and collaboration into the stream of discussion. Under the influence of sociocultural theory, specifically Vygotsky’s ZPD, Little (2007) discusses how “higher psychological functions—voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts—are internalised from social interaction” (p. 22). The interplay of social interaction, namely collaboration, and egocentric speech, namely reflection, is the key to develop autonomy (see 2.3). According to Little (1991, 1999a, 2004), the development of this line of thinking stressing interdependence was influenced by Leni Dam’s (1995) work in Denmark. Since then, as discussed in the above historical account, this social dimension of autonomy has been recognised as necessary by both theorists and practitioners (Benson, 2001; Smith & Ushioda, 2009).

2.1.1.1.3 Dam (1995)

Dam (1995) based her interpretation of autonomy on the Bergen report (1990), a collection of papers and discussion records from the Third Nordic Workshop on Developing Autonomous Learning in the FL Classroom. This definition of autonomy entails both “a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person” (p. 102). The learner is viewed as “an active participant in the social process of classroom learning”, which emphasizes the same social aspect discussed above in Little’s (1991) definition. However, different from

Holec's and Little's definition, teachers' roles and responsibilities are equally highlighted. "To operationalize learner autonomy typically begins by emphasizing the need for teachers and learners jointly to accept the freedom to determine the content of learning" (Bergen, 1990, p. 103). Based on her own teaching experience, Dam listed five differences between the traditional teacher-centred classroom and the one allowing space to develop learner autonomy:

1. A shift in focus from teaching to learning.
2. A change in the learner's role.
3. A change in the teacher's role.
4. The role of evaluation.
5. A view of the language classroom as a rich learning environment.

For most learners the process of promoting learner autonomy in school settings can be "a long, difficult and often painful" process of change, which "demands constant effort on the part of the teacher and learners, not only as individuals but in collaboration with one another; for it is in the interactive process of collaboration that growth-points occur" (ibid, p. 6). Dam did not attempt to define autonomy in terms of building a theoretical construct; however her work with high school students manifests the notion of learner autonomy louder than words. She listed a series of questions her learners had to answer, from *initial evaluation*, to *planning, carrying out the plans*, and to *new planning*, a learning loop resembling the cycles in action research (p. 31). For her learners, through goal-setting, selecting their own learning materials and designing their own activities to eventually evaluating learning outcomes, a sense of ownership was gradually established, step by step. Moreover, conforming to the third pedagogical principle Little (1999) proposed, the target language English was the required medium throughout the above process.

In short, Dam's version of learner autonomy is a story retold from the teacher's perspective. Its appeal lies in the fact that all of this was based on hands-on teaching and learning experience. Moreover, it provides possible answers for other teachers interested in the notion of learner autonomy. When we teachers are discussing what learners' responsibilities entail in the definition of autonomy, another corresponding question that is equally important is to ask ourselves what responsibilities we shall carry. Dam poses two important questions for teachers to ponder on: How do I get my learners to change? How do I make my learners responsible?" (Dam, 2003, p.

136). In my research, I have rephrased these two questions in defining my role and responsibilities during the process of facilitating the development of learner autonomy. If it is “a teacher’s responsibility ... to ensure that her [or his] learners are guided through these steps towards responsibility for their own learning” (ibid, p. 140), a crucial, but context dependent, question is about deciding when to provide guidance and when to let go. A question remaining paramount in my mind throughout my research is “How much guidance is enough, when should I step in and what should I offer?”

2.1.1.1.4 Littlewood (1999), Smith (2003) and Benson (2007a)

Having reviewed Holec’s, Little’s and Dam’s views on learner autonomy and collected questions inspired by their discussions, I will next review Littlewood (1999), Smith (2003) and Benson (2007), whose work contributed to categorising autonomy into types and versions. As emphasised earlier, my interest is to consider these theoretical discussions in relation to classroom implications; therefore, I will address aspects of their arguments relevant to the practical context of my research focus.

I will first discuss the two views proposed by Littlewood and by Smith. Looking at how learners react to the notion of autonomy, Littlewood (1999) characterises the practice of autonomy into two types, proactive and reactive. The former is similar to Holec’s definition, referring to the capacity to “take charge of their own learning, determine their objectives, select methods and techniques and evaluate what has been acquired”. The latter, reactive autonomy is not self-initiated, “the kind which does not create its own directions but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organize their resources autonomously in order to reach their goal” (p. 175). On the other hand, Smith regards more how teachers ground their practice in their beliefs and views toward learners’ autonomy. He therefore proposes two versions, the strong and the weak pedagogies. The strong version of pedagogy for autonomy refers to the kind of practice that creates space for student-directed learning, whereas in the weak version of pedagogy for autonomy, the teacher, or the institute, determines the curriculum and the syllabus leaving very little room for students to express their needs. Although these two categorisations have different standpoints—Littlewood on learners and Smith on teachers – their discussions imply a similar message, which is calling teachers to allow greater freedom to promote proactive autonomy and therefore work toward a stronger version of autonomy pedagogy. This is to say, what

matters is not how we classify types or versions of autonomy but that we draw practitioners' attention to the planning stage prior to their actual action. If teachers become more aware of the belief system from which their actions derive, they will make more informed decisions.

Throughout his early discussions on learner autonomy, Benson (1996, 1997, 2001) has argued for more recognition of the political dimension of learner autonomy, along with the technical and psychological dimensions. This three-version discussion, however, sends a different message, not directly regarding pedagogical implementation, but going beyond the practice of the classroom into the philosophical values which might be too sensitive for some language teachers working in a culture they are not familiar with. Benson's insistence on bringing in the political dimension actually leads to another heated debate on culture appropriateness. Although these two areas of debate have commonly been addressed separately, there are some intricate connections between the two. As Little (2007a) put it, when the concept of autonomy is "associated with Western liberal democracy, [this] makes it immediately suspect as a potential weapon of colonialism" (p. 15). In my research, in line with the argument that autonomy is a capacity all language learners can develop no matter what native language they speak or culture they belong to, I therefore do not attempt to join the debate on cultural appropriateness. This is not to say that the cultural background learners grow up with does not have an impact, but I wish to prioritise individual difference over cultural difference.

In summary, the above theoretical discussions on the defining features of learner autonomy provide a foundation for later discussion. I would like to point out that, although "learner autonomy theory has mostly been developed by practitioners of one kind or another—teachers working in the classrooms, teacher educators, those responsible for designing and evaluating self-access language learning systems, educational researchers charged with implementing innovation" (Little, 2007, p. 2), to date empirical studies into classroom research have been comparatively limited. There has been sufficient theoretical discussion for many voices to come back even more fully into this theoretical auditorium; however, there are fewer voices reporting from the empirical field. This lack of empirical research on learner autonomy has been observed by Benson (2007a) and Legenhausen (2007). In his State-of-the-Art article, Benson (2007a) concluded that "it has to be acknowledged that the empirical knowledge base on autonomy in language learning remains somewhat weak" (p. 34).

He also mentioned elsewhere (2007b) that “[o]nce we have clarified the meaning of autonomy, it is assumed, we can then explore methods of fostering it among learners and teachers” (p. 15). Legenhausen (2007) extends Trebbi’s question and voices a pressing concern: Why is so little research on autonomy carried out, if research in a given empirical field is to be understood as the systematic collection and analysis of data with the aim of constructing a theory and/or of providing empirical evidence for the validity of theoretical assumptions or hypotheses? (p. 18)

He carries on raising more questions to be answered:

- ◆ Where do we find these classrooms, and what are the institutional frameworks within which they operate?
- ◆ To what extent are the procedures determined by curricular guidelines and cultural variables?
- ◆ What do the classrooms actually look like? What kind of activities are the learners involved in?
- ◆ What opportunities for taking over responsibilities and for taking control do they offer?
- ◆ How do learners in these classrooms exploit these opportunities and thus construct their own agendas? What amount of variability can be observed?
- ◆ How are the various classroom procedures and learning processes interrelated? How do individual learning styles and preferences determine the learning processes?

For practitioners who are interested in carrying out the concept of autonomy, this list of questions can serve as a starting point to study how we approach autonomy research in the classroom setting. There is therefore a need for practitioners to report on evidence-based empirical studies so as to bridge the gap between the theoretical discussions in books and journals and the hands-on discussions about classroom lives.

2.1.2 LA in practice: Empirical studies

Having revisited the theoretical discussions on defining autonomy, in this section, I will continue the questions raised at the end of the last section. Legenhausen (2007) proposes a wider definition of classroom research in the field of learner autonomy:

[I]n the context of learner autonomy it seems wiser to subscribe to a wider sense, which includes characteristics of the learners, teachers, the learning process itself and the broader socio-political context in which classrooms are embedded, in order to facilitate interpretations of the procedures and developmental processes in autonomous classrooms and their learning outcomes. (p. 17)

This is also why I chose to stay with the term practitioner research instead of classroom research. It is true that when researching autonomy, especially when we play the dual role as teacher-researchers, we become interested in the dynamic process of learning and teaching, and all the factors involved during this process. Therefore, Action Research as a research methodology enables us to systematically study ways of promoting learner autonomy.

As mentioned above (Benson, 2007a, Legenhausen, 2007), we still have a rather modest collection of empirical studies to show us an overview of what kinds of research have been conducted. Most empirical reports on autonomy tend to be published in specially edited volumes of papers produced by various autonomy-related special interest groups or networks (such as the JALT Learner Development SIG, or the Nordic Workshop Group), rather than in independent research journals. Because of this, I intend to look for the studies published in journals, and will summarise four empirical studies (Apple, 2006; Cotterall, 1995; Porto, 2008; Yang, 2003) reporting the actual application in language classrooms. I chose these four to focus on in this report because these four cover a period of time when autonomy had attracted more attention. Moreover, these four reported studies were conducted in different geographical locations, Japan, Taiwan, Chile and New Zealand. As Benson (2007a) suggests, based on contexts of application, the studies can be roughly divided into autonomy *beyond* the classroom and autonomy *within* the classroom. The former refers to the self-access learning type of out-of-class learning, while the latter refers to the exercise of autonomy within an educational setting. It is the latter context to which my research belongs; thus, the four I chose all have this same feature. In the following discussion, I will present the studies in a chronological order, starting with Cotterall (1995), Yang (2003), Apple (2006) and Porto (2008).

2.1.2.1 Cotterall (1995)

Cotterall's study (1995) was first published in *ELT Journal* and later reprinted in Wallace's (1998) book *Action Research for Language Teachers*. Her study discussed means of promoting learner autonomy in an English language programme designed for international students who wanted to enrol in tertiary institutions in New Zealand. Her argument is that "learner autonomy is not something which can be 'clipped on' to existing learning programmes, but it has implications for the entire curriculum" (Cotterall, 1998, p. 173). This belief and the consequent action conform to the strong version of pedagogy for autonomy which Smith (2003) proposed. Through learner/teacher dialogue, classroom tasks and materials, student record booklets, and a self-access centre, various opportunities were created for learners to exercise decision-making on their learning process. She therefore reached the following four conclusions:

1. Autonomy in language learning is desirable.
2. Dialogue is more important to autonomy than structures.
3. The relationship between the learner and the class teacher is central to the fostering of autonomy.
4. Autonomy has implications for the entire curriculum.
5. In sum, her conclusion highlighted the learner-teacher relationship, which echoes Dam's emphasis on teachers' responsibilities. In Cotterall's case, not only teachers but also programme designers share this responsibility in promoting learner autonomy.

2.1.2.2 Yang (2003)

I chose Yang's studies because they were conducted in a very similar context to my study, language courses offered in a University in Taiwan. In her 1998 article titled 'Exploring a New Role for Teachers: Promoting Learner Autonomy' published in *System*, the same message was highlighted –teachers' responsibilities and the change of role. In saying that it was a "new" role, Yang argued that teachers used to neglect the potential of learners' ability in taking charge of their own learning. She also started with three questions:

1. How can language teachers aid their learners in becoming autonomous?
2. How do learning strategies contribute to learner autonomy?
3. How can the promoting of autonomy be incorporated into the teaching and learning of second languages?

From the second question, it shows that she turned to learning strategies as a means of developing learner autonomy in line with Oxford (1990) and Wenden (1991). However, in her 2003 article ‘Integrating Portfolios into Learning Strategy-based Instruction for EFL College Students’, as the title suggests, she included the use of portfolios as a means of raising awareness during the evaluation process. Her studies show that learner autonomy is not a concept that is foreign to English learners in Taiwan. As I mentioned above, when promoting autonomy, it is necessary to consider the cultural background of the learners, and not to interpret autonomy as part of the Western belief system.

2.1.2.3 Apple (2006)

Apple’s study reports his experience in encouraging students to do extensive listening with college students in Japan. I included his study because his study also explores the development of learner autonomy through the listening skill. His study will be elaborated more in 3.4.2 in relation to extensive listening.

2.1.2.4 Porto (2008)

The last practitioner study I would like to review is Porto (2008), who recorded the process of introducing more autonomy into her teaching as part of a larger Action Research project. She is the only one who reflected on her own role in greater depth through the teaching diaries she kept. She first started with a theoretical journal in which she listed several questions for herself to answer, which reveal a strong sense of “I” (p.189).

1. What are my views of autonomy?
2. How do I see my role as a teacher in the foreign language classroom and in education in general?
3. What do the notions of learner responsibility and learner choice entail in my view?
4. How are learner autonomy, responsibility and choice materialised in my classroom?

In order to put her belief of autonomy into practice, the first step she planned was to introduce “a gradual increase of responsibility from learners in the management of their own learning” (p. 194). She started her lesson with a session called “Amazing Facts” in which students voluntarily share something amazing. Along with this, she adopted a process-approach to writing, and introduced activities

students can practice at home. In her findings, she reported the dark side of students' choice-making. First of all, her own fear of granting more freedom and letting students get out of control led to a still authoritarian way of leading the class. She wrote,

I discovered how inconsistent I had been in my teaching practices...What I said I believed about learner choice and what I did in practice in this respect followed different paths. ... It was quite traumatic for me to face the fact that it was me who was unsure about welcoming my learners' initiatives. My diaries made me see that when learners strayed away from a topic, I tended to view this behaviour as evidence of my loss of control, took direct concrete action to restore order and, if I did not, I wondered about whether to do so in writing (*sic*). (p. 196)

How Porto struggled between maintaining control or allowing learner the freedom of choice is a typical dilemma for teachers in actual practice, and her narrative provides a very genuine suggestion for other teachers who are interested in trying out the same attempt. In fact, aside from encouraging more evidence-based classroom research in showing that learner autonomy has positive learning outcomes, we also need studies like Porto's which provide insights into what the journey is like for teachers in learning to learn how to let go.

2.1.3 Factors influencing the development of LA: The roles of collaboration and reflection

In this section, I will move on to two interacting factors crucial to the development of learner autonomy—collaboration and reflection. A commonly perceived distinction is that collaboration entails the external social interaction learners engage in with their peers, and reflection entails the internal retrospective accounts of the learning experience. However, according to Vygotskian sociocultural theory, these two actively interplay with one another, that is, through our interaction with others, we are more able to gain reflective understanding and therefore attain optimal cognitive development. In this section, I will briefly summarise related discussion in the field of learner autonomy and then, after reviewing the field of online learning modality, further develop this discussion to consider how the affordances of technology help to

create opportunities for collaboration and thus promote reflection.

Collaboration has been widely acknowledged as beneficial in terms of cognitive, social, and affective aspects of learning in developmental psychology and educational research (Donato, 2004). The simplest definition of collaborative learning is that “it is a situation in which two or more people attempt to learn something together” (Dillenbrough, 1999, p. 2). Collaboration applied to pedagogical purposes normally “involves a meaningful core activity (e.g. playing a network computer game, creating a visual product, developing curricular innovations) and the social relations that develop as a result of the jointly constructed goal for the common endeavor” (ibid., p. 287). Furthermore, each individual will be involved in the process of collaboration, and each person’s contribution will then be recognised as the team move toward the common goal. This is why Little argues for interdependence in promoting learner autonomy. “Belonging to a group creates a sense of social relatedness that promotes student autonomy. The findings of the Finnish ELP project provide evidence of the importance of involving students as responsible partners in the social learning process. Involvement and engagement clearly support the feeling of ownership of one’s learning” (Little, 2001, 2004 cited in Kohonen, 2006, p. 15). Moreover, with new functions made possible by CMC (Computer Mediated Communication), new forms of collaboration, ranging from “text-based and computer-mediated interaction, many-to-many communication, time- and space-independence, long distance exchanges and hypermedia link”, open up many new possibilities for learners to develop autonomy through CSCL (Computer Supported Collaborative Learning). Issues related to this particular use of technology will be elaborated in 2.3.1.

When it comes to the role of reflection, writing and diary-keeping are central to developing learner autonomy. Little (2000b) posits that writing as a tool for reflection and self-evaluation serves three pedagogical purposes (p. 2). First of all, writing serves as a means of providing supports and inputs for developing the target language use. This is less mentioned in the literature discussing the use of reflective writing, since the attention is directed to *reflective* more than to writing. Second, it promotes metalinguistic awareness by drawing learners’ attention to the form of the target language. Third, through writing, learners gain a distance, a sense of otherness, so as to better evaluate their own performance. In Dam’s class, keeping a learning diary was also a must for her high school students in keeping track of their own

learning. By doing so, they became more aware of what they went through. As one learner commented, “It is good to be able to see what you have done” (Dam, 1995, p. 40).

The most important purpose of reflective writing in relation to developing learner autonomy is awareness raising. I would like to borrow Trebbi’s (2007) discussion of freedom in manifesting the power of awareness and reflection. Awareness and freedom might seem two unrelated concepts. However, raising awareness through reflection might be the best solution to the dilemma of restricted freedom, especially regarding learning in a school setting in which there are rules and regulations to follow. According to Trebbi (2007), autonomy is always accompanied by a certain degree of freedom, since “human beings are not free in an absolute sense” (p. 35). “The question is not whether we are free or not, but rather whether we are victims of constraints or not. The only way out of the dilemma of freedom is consciousness raising about the external and internal conditions we are living” (ibid.). She later replaced the word ‘constraint’ with ‘condition’ to avoid the negative connotation. In line with her argument, through reflective writing, learners can become more aware of not only themselves but also the contextual factors that have an impact on their learning. Gradually, when they construe better the internal and external conditions, they become more autonomous in exercising their limited choices. However powerful this argument may seem, Little (1991) also warns teachers that we might find learners’ reflection stays at a very superficial level, “recording how hard they think they worked or how much they enjoyed a particular activity” (p. 52). He reminds us that without guidance, few learners can identify specifically their encountered problems and discuss them in great depth. More detailed discussion of reflective writing as a pedagogical tool for language learning will be presented in the next chapter on the Pedagogical Rationale (see 3.5.3.1).

2.2 Literature review on online language learning

The second part of the literature review looks at issues related to the online language learning environment. Since my interest is to study learner autonomy in an online learning environment, I will narrow my focus down on the affordances of ICT in creating a learning environment that can foster learners’ development of learner autonomy that can foster learners’ development of learner autonomy, but not review

the plethora of publications regarding the design of multimedia learning materials and activities. In 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, I will draw from the related literature to clarify my choice of the terms and explain why I chose to adopt e-learning and b-learning in referring to the online learning environment instead of CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). In 2.2.3, I will discuss the increasing attention paid to develop sound pedagogy for online teaching and learning. Then, in 2.2.4, I will explore the meaning of “affordance”, a notion originally proposed by the ecological psychologist Gibson (1977) and later borrowed by various researchers like Warschauer and van Lier to study the applications of ICT tools in facilitating language learning. Lastly, in 2.2.5, I will then discuss how the affordances of the online modality offer opportunities for the learners to reach out and collaborate with the wider learning communities and to dig in for deeper reflection.

2.2.1 The choice of term

In our field of ELT, CALL is the most widely adapted term among a list of available acronyms, to name only a few, CALI (Computer-Assisted Language Instruction), NBLL (Net-based Language Learning), TELL (Technology-Enhanced Language Learning) and WELL (Web-Enhanced Language Learning). All these terms highlight the same feature of the innovative use of the World Wide Web, but emphasise different aspects of the ever-changing technology adopted in teaching and learning. Therefore, in order to look for the terms best describing the online learning environment in my study, it is necessary to discuss how certain terms address the design of technology in certain ways.

As mentioned above, CALL has gained its currency in our field of language education and developed into a specific field of study. As the term suggests, the focus falls on how to integrate computer applications which have the potential of maximising students’ acquisition of the target language (Levy, 1997, p.1). Under the purpose of proving that learners do learn better with the assistance of computers, proponents of CALL conduct comparison studies to measure the results of learning, usually through quantitative methods, as indicators of how successful the computer applications are. For instance, Grgurovic & Chapelle (2007) built a database to collect comparison studies on the difference between computer-assisted and classroom second/foreign language instruction. In this case, CALL studies tend to

develop into a comparison for superiority which evaluates learning as successful or not-successful to indicate which learning mode is better. As Schwienhorst (2008) comments, this tendency has posed a problem when CALL researchers fix their lenses on the effectiveness of CALL practices in language learning, as the pedagogical approach can be easily neglected. However, as the computer applications are placed at the centre of the spotlight, discussions are driven more by technology rather than by sound pedagogy (Schwienhorst, 2008, p. 1).

Criticism also come from CALL researchers like Warschauer (1999) who questions “whether CALL should still be called CALL” (p. 184) and Kern (2006) who emphasises that technology should not be treated as a separate tool for learning the language but should be an integral part of the pedagogical design. As Warschauer (2004) argues elsewhere, the view of *technological determinism*, referring to “the belief that the introduction of new technology automatically brings certain results” (p. 15), can be too simplistic in reducing the holistic learning picture into a black-or-white one that ignores the fact that the old-fashioned, traditional face-to-face learning environment could also serve some students’ learning preferences and needs. As my interest is not centred on computer applications but more on pedagogical issues in facilitating students’ development of learner autonomy, I chose to adopt other terms, e-learning and b-learning in referring to the online learning modality which will be elaborated in the following section.

2.2.2 Definitions of e-learning and b-learning

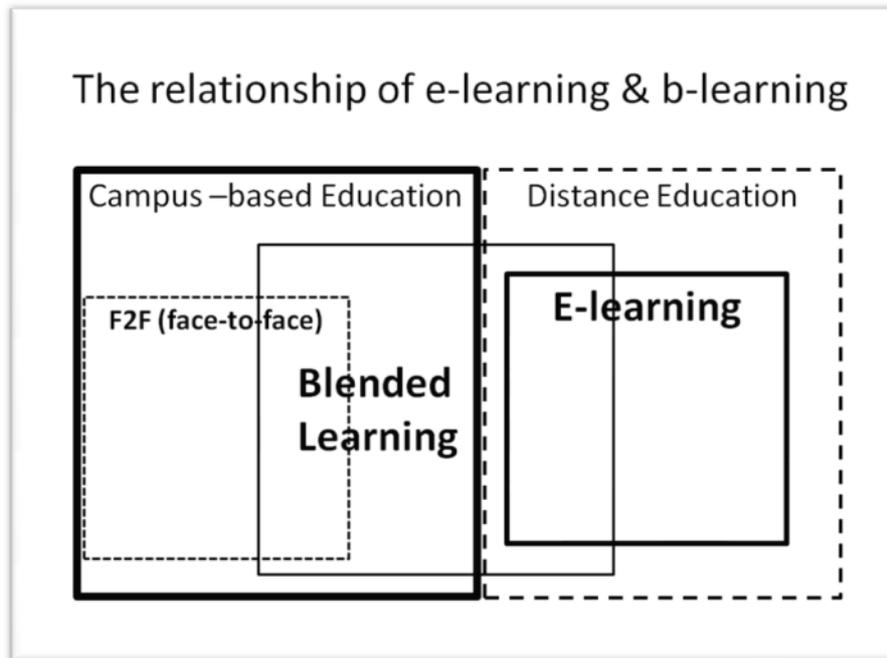
In this section, I will first discuss the emergence of e-learning in the higher education sectors, followed by the definitions of e-learning and b-learning (Mason & Rennie, 2008) to explain why I assign e-learning to Class A and b-learning to Class B & C in this study.

Originating from the corporate sector to refer to the kind of training conducted using computers with internet access (Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007, p. 16), the term e-learning has appeared extensively in the education sector particularly after the innovation of ICT and Web 2.0 functionalities, a significant paradigm shift from publishing to participation (Mason & Reenie, 2008, p. 4). With the affordable price of Personal Computers (PC), the more user-friendly operation system and rapid development of WWW, interest in e-learning has expanded in higher education for it

suggests new pedagogical opportunities. In addition to the pedagogical concerns, e-learning has become irresistible as it also acts as a solution to some new challenges universities face in the new millennium, such as the cutting of government funding, the increasingly global competition, and the need to attend to a new technology-savvy generation of students (Herrington, Reeves & Oliver, 2010). Prensky (2001) uses the term 'digital native' to describe this new generation of students and their increased use of technology on a daily basis. Littlejohn & Pegler (2007) also include student expectation as one of the major four drivers accelerating the implementation of e-learning in higher education (p. 22). The latest issue is no longer whether universities should adopt e-learning or not, but how e-learning is implemented into the existing institution, an ecological perspective supporting a relational mode of thinking to discover the interdependence of a complex system instead of a dualistic mode of thinking to separate and contrast things (Ellis & Goodyear, 2010). After all, the features of online learning enabling independent study conform to the ultimate goal of education in higher education—to train students to become independent thinkers. Compared with secondary education, college students are required to conduct a certain level of self-directed learning in their studies (Ellis & Goodyear, 2010, p. 33).

However, like all the buzzwords, e-learning has gradually become an umbrella term covering a wide range of different practices. In order to provide further clarification to specify the type of e-learning studied in my research, I followed Mason & Rennie's (2008) discussion in outlining the relationships amongst these terms, including distance learning, blended learning (b-learning) and e-learning (p. 25).

Figure 2-1 Mason & Rennie's (2008) Relationship of e-learning & b-learning



This distinction is based on their observation that now “universities that introduced online courses as a way of attracting new learners, have found to their dismay that their campus students also opt for these courses, often creating their own blend by taking online course plus several face-to-face courses” (Mason & Rennie, 2008, p. 28). Consequently, they chose to define e-learning as a type of distance education with no or reduced face-to-face meetings, whereas they counted so-called e-learning in the campus-based university contexts as b-learning, which normally combines a mixture of face-to-face interactions and e-learning components. This interpretation corresponds to Wahlstedt et al’s (2008) argument that there is an evolution from the virtual learning environments to inhabited places for learning which highlights the importance of social interactions. They borrow architectural concepts differentiating between “building” (learning space) and “school” (place for learning). In short, b-learning is now progressively more used “to describe a hybrid model of e-learning that allows coexistence of conventional face-to-face teaching methods and newer e-learning activities and resources in a single course” (Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007, p. 26).

This is why I adopted the terms e-learning and b-learning to describe the three courses in my study which have different online components, because what Mason &

Rennie (2008) observed indeed summarises the situation in my context, i.e. the AIEDL project in Fu-Jen Catholic University. Strictly speaking, all three classes would be counted as b-learning; however, in order to distinguish the clear differences in course design reflected in the different frequencies of face-to-face meetings, I refer to Class A as e-learning, in which students conducted independent study with only three face-to-face meetings, and refer to Class B and C as b-learning, in which weekly campus-based face-to-face meetings were still compulsory.

2.2.3 The teacher's role: The importance of sound pedagogy in implementing online modality

As I read through CALL and e-learning literature to decide which term to use, I found that despite the different theoretical underpinnings, surprisingly, researchers from these diverse disciplines in fact share a common view about the importance of sound pedagogy. That is, they all share an urge to search for sound pedagogy regarding how computers are deployed to support students' learning (Cuthell, 2006). It is agreed that the success of learning depends on how the online components are designed and implemented into the existing practice, and not on the use of the tools itself. By the same token, this acknowledges the significant role the teacher plays in students' online language learning, and therefore calls for more practitioner research to depict the real classroom picture.

In his article reviewing *New Trends in Using Technology in the Language Curriculum*, Blake (2007) posits that reporting the benefits of online language learning is not as important as looking for "a sound pedagogical framework for the tasks and activities that students are asked to accomplish" (p. 76). This resonates with Bax's (2000) argument on "putting it [technology] at the right place", Zhao's (2003) call for investigating ways of integrating technology instead of merely examining the effectiveness of technology, and Levy's (2005) warning not to juxtapose e-learning technology with old pedagogy. Researchers from distance education also found that online learning would only work when the focus is on *dialogue, involvement, support* and *control* in learning (Coomey & Stephenson, 2001). On the other hand, this is also why b-learning attracts more and more attention in the university context, as *blending* face-to-face and online components aims to situate the learning within a community of inquiry (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

In short, regardless of different adoptions of terms and positions, researchers have reached a consensus that we need to develop a more sensitive attitude in anchoring digital technology to accommodate students' genuine needs. As Bax (2000) proposes, holding a more neutral attitude is necessary, not “over-respectful or over-fearful”, so that we can identify the proper role technology plays in the particular context we work in.

2.2.4 The affordances of the online modality

In this section, the meaning of affordance in referring to the online modality will be elaborated so as to discuss more specifically the functionality of the online modality. I will first discuss Gibson's original concept considering senses as perceptual systems which later influence the studies of ICT in communication (Conole & Dyke, 2004), in education (Hammond, 2010), and in our field of language learning (van Lier, 2000, Kern, 2006).

First of all, Gibson (1979, 1977/1986) coined the term affordances to describe how we make sense of the properties of the environment through our visual perceptions. Therefore, an affordance refers to the relationship between a certain object in the environment and the observer, the agent. It is not a one-dimensional perception such as distance or how far the object is from the person, but a three-dimensional perception, i.e. how this agent observes, understands and perceives the property of this particular object in this particular environment, in a particular space and time. For instance, for an animal, a tree can be a shelter on a rainy day or a source of food when it is hungry. Under this notion, affordances are highly context dependent and agent dependent, like an arrow with two heads. This ecological view of affordance in psychology soon spread into the education field in describing the interactive process between the learner and the environment to emphasise the sense of agency in meaning-making.

When it comes to the digital era, Gibson's notion of affordances is applied to explain the relationship between us and cyber space. According to Salomon (1993), we use affordances to describe “the perceived and actual properties of a thing, primarily those functional properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used” (p. 51 cited in Conole & Dyke, 2004, p. 115). When proposing the taxonomy of ICT affordances, Conole and Dyke (2004) warn us that even though the

word affordance seems to imply an “afford-able” positive connotation, it comes as a package which has both positive and negative impacts on the learners. In a similar vein, Hammond (2010) also emphasises that “affordances provide both opportunity and constraint” (p. 206). Consequently, due to this “trade-off” effect between opportunity and constraint, researchers need to develop a more sensitive attitude for “affordances are always relative to something and, in the context of ICT, relative to desirable goals or strategies for teaching and learning” (Hammond, 2010, p. 216). Thus, we all need to ask the old question Gibson asked in defining the meaning of affordances, “How do user and tool come together?”

In our field of language education, the notion of affordances is exploit in discussing the role of ICT tools in language learning. Affordances do not refer to the tools only, but what the user can do with the tool to expand one’s boundary, to overcome the constraints in the environment. In discussing affordances, Warschauer (2005) cited Gregory Bateson’s (1972) metaphor: “Where does a blind man’s sensory mechanism end? Does it stop at the end of his hand, at the end of his walking stick, or somewhere in-between?” The answer to this question resides in the different degrees of affordances a hand or a walking stick can offer. The concept of affordance is also discussed in van Lier’s (2000) discussion on promoting an ecological approach to the language classroom by borrowing Gibson’s definition of affordance (p. 252). Instead of taking the psycholinguistic input-output approaches to language learning, he prefers an ecological notion of affordance, because in this interpretation, the use of language is not perceived as an object, the linguistic input, but perceived more actively as a learning activity (van Lier, 2000, p. 253 cited in Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 35). When we follow van Lier’s line of argument and bear Bateson’s question in mind, the answer will vary depending on the degree of affordance of the walking stick. Imagine if the walking stick can talk and report back the surroundings to the blind, then the sensory mechanism can be further extended beyond the end of this *talking* walking stick.

This is why in defining the role of ICTs and their affordances, Kern (2006) considers calling them a medium as a better metaphor than calling them a tool as in Levy (1997), for “medium better reflects how users think about chat, instant messaging, email, and other media” (p. 191). In seeing computers with Internet access as “a means of expression”, it surely encompasses a lot more than traditional media such as pen and pencil or telephone. Lamy & Hampel (2007) provide a long

list of affordances which can be offered now by the new online media, including browsing, artefact creation, artefact manipulation, displaying/storing/retrieving artefacts, shared textual/visual/graphic tools, clickable icons for interaction, asynchronous sending/receiving (forum), synchronous sending/receiving, voice-over Internet (e.g. audio conferencing), simultaneous use of different channels (e.g. audiographic/video conferencing) (p. 36). Their list conforms to Little's (2007) argument on how the use of ICT tools can foster learner autonomy, "information technologies can promote the development of learner autonomy to the extent that they can stimulate, mediate and extend the range and scope of the social and psychological interaction on which all learning depends" (p. 203).

2.3 The meeting place of LA and the online modality: Collaboration and reflection

As discussed earlier in 2.1.1, the early development of LA was highly associated with Self Access Centre (SAC). More recently, the advent of technology has attracted a revival of interest in this mode of learning. Affordable personal PCs and the birth of Web 2.0 grant language learners a sense of authorship (Kramsch, A'Ness & Lam, 2000, p. 190). Meanwhile, in the literature of online learning, the notion of learner autonomy appears more and more often in the empirical studies as an indicator of positive learning outcomes. Enthusiastic technology proponents are happy to borrow learner autonomy to promise the effective use of technology. Consequently, in this section I will discuss the meeting place of these two areas by focusing on how affordances of ICT provide opportunities for collaboration and reflection. Firstly, the affordances of multi-modality, the combination of texts, videos, and sound altogether in real-time communication creates collaborative opportunities which make it possible for individual learners to interact with each other without being at the same place at the same time (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 9). Secondly, as all the learning process can be recorded online, the learning space created on LMS (Learning Management System) creates more opportunities for learners to reflect on, monitor and evaluate their learning processes. Furthermore, since my online course focused on listening, I will take listening research, which will be reviewed more extensively along with the pedagogical rationale in Chapter 3, as examples in the following elaboration on collaboration and reflection.

2.3.1 Collaboration

I will build on the previous discussion on collaboration with regard to learner autonomy (2.1.2), and add another layer of digital technology in addressing the meeting place. Building on the concept of interdependence proposed by Little (2001, 2004), researchers have recognised the benefits of ICT like email and other CMC tools in developing more engaging interactive learning environments (Toogood and Pemberton, 2007). Meanwhile, the shift from constructivism to connectivism proposed by Siemens (2005) made possible by the online social network attracts more attention to this social dimension.

The ICT tools stretch the opportunities for collaboration, as they enable learners to not only interact with the tutor but also with their peers, on one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many bases. According to Lamy and Hampel (2007), “cooperative or collaborative language learning is linked with the notion of the teacher as facilitator and the autonomy of the learner (Macaro, 1997, p. 134; Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 192-201 cited in Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 96). This view of learning goes back to Vygotsky-inspired ideas of ‘problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)”. When speaking of this Vygotskian sociocultural perspective, Warschauer’s 1997 article on Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning (CMCL) is influential for the sociocultural perspective he brought in. As he stated in the opening of his article, the purpose is “to explore the nature of computer-mediated communication (CMC) by using a conceptual framework that starts with well-known theories of input and output and leads to sociocultural learning theory” (p. 470).

As Bax (2006) suggested, a more healthy attitude is to find the proper place to implement the technology into learning, which requires a genuine understanding of the digital technology and the learning contexts we teachers work in. Therefore, I will draw from Jones’ (2006, 2008) studies on listening comprehension technology to exemplify how technology is appropriated in listening instructional design. In her 2006 study, Jones examines the effectiveness of collaboration and multimedia annotations on L2 listening comprehension by studying 68 students at their second semester of beginner French class in University of Arkansas. In this qualitative study, she separated the use of multimedia and collaboration as two components, so that students collaborated as they were sitting at a computer instead of interacting directly

in cyber space. The result shows that first of all, the affordances of multimodality, the interactive media, have enriched the input-output process of learning and support vocabulary learning. Compared with the now-considered-outdated tape recording, L2 listeners have more resources to elicit meaning through multimedia products like videos with annotations and interactive web pages. Secondly, having their peers to interact with in their native language assisted their learning process, because they “approached the problem with multiple voices present and developed a sense of shared knowledge that supported their learning and development” (p. 49).

In conclusion, through Jones’ empirical study, I again found the same message raised earlier in 2.2.3 regarding the significance of the teacher’s role in planning the use of technology. Indeed the latest innovative technology has provides opportunities for online collaboration; however, for teachers, pedagogical consideration should still come first before technology selection to reach the best result of learning. As Hase and Ellis (2001) argued, “problems with online learning are systematic, not technical” (p. 28), which means the real issue is not about moving from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning, but about moving from teacher-controlled to learner-controlled learning, under the goal of learner autonomy.

2.3.2 Reflection

Following the previous discussion on the role of reflection with regard to learner autonomy, I will carry on with this thread of discussion with the additional inclusion of the digital technology. In a sense, just like writing with a pen and paper, typing on the keyboard serves as the tool for us to extend our memory and the capacity of communication with others and also with ourselves. Interestingly, this change of medium has opened up more opportunities for learners to reflect, to converse with themselves. For instance, with affordances of Word Processing, like copy and paste and other visual stimulations of editing functions, learners are equipped with more diverse tools for reflection. Referring to the earlier discussion on reflection (2.1.3), the important feature of reflection is to be able to keep track of one’s own learning and make necessary adjustments.

In the field of learner autonomy, this urge to encourage learners to reflect has been widely discussed. Smith and Ushioda (2009) emphasise the use of reflective writing as an effective mediation of metacognition regardless of “form, design,

function, and degree of structure and complexity” (p. 251). What matters more is to verbalise the learning process so that learners could first make sense of their own learning by recalling past events, monitoring their present action or estimating their next step, all these metacognitive strategies commonly found in good language learners. In distance learning, this issue on how to reflect better has been widely discussed. Regarding the use of technology, Fisher (2007) pointed out that reflective writing is an important tool which contributes to building the metacognitive knowledge underlying successful autonomous learning (p. 416). However, as pointed out earlier, in CALL research, reflection tends to be treated as the end result of learning produced by the use of technology. I found that details on how reflection is fostered in actual practice through listening diaries are not elaborated. Therefore, this is a gap my study aims to fill in, to explore systematic means of scaffolding learner reflection.

2.4 Research questions

Having reviewed two main areas related to my study, I will now raise the research questions I would like to address in my study. There are six research questions in total, and I divide them into three categories.

I. Regarding collaboration and reflection:

1. How do collaboration and reflection foster students’ development of autonomy in this online listening course?
2. How do I scaffold students’ learning, e.g. reflection, in a way that will not hinder students’ development of autonomy? (How much intervention is enough?)

II. Regarding the online modality:

3. How does learning in different modalities, face-to-face or online, have an impact on students’ learning? (Advocates of the use of technology tend to argue that the use of technology creates a better learning environment that fosters autonomy. How true is this statement?)
4. How do I manage the three courses with different degrees of online learning? And how do I apply what I learn from one course to the other?

III. Regarding my role as a researcher:

5. How do the insights gained from I and II contribute to our understanding of how autonomy develops and can be enhanced in a technology-enhanced (supported/mediated) environment?
6. How does my role as a researcher provide a different angle to look at student's learning and my teaching? How does my role evolve?

These questions start with the roles of collaboration and reflection in students' learning, move to the online learning environment and then address my role as a researcher in observing the teaching-learning alignment. Moreover, the last two questions address issues of researching learner autonomy for practitioners. They look beyond my own context and study, and aim to seek answers that can serve a wider audience.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed two prominent areas of my study, learner autonomy and online modality. I have also visited the meeting place of these two areas with specific discussions on the roles of collaboration and reflection. At the end of this chapter, my research questions have been posed as the foundation for me to develop my research design, data collection and the later stages of data analysis and interpretation.

3 Chapter Three Pedagogical rationale and the listening course design

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the rationale behind the course design and to explain how my practice is informed by the current research studies in the field of L2 listening research. I have decided to place my review of listening research in the current chapter rather than in the literature review chapter, because this listening research review is more related to my course design than to my research design. As I stated in Chapter One, my research focus is to observe how learners exercise and develop autonomy under the context of this particular listening course offered in a university in Taiwan, not to investigate listening strategy use nor to evaluate the effectiveness of strategy instruction.

Therefore, before I present the listening course design, I will start with the local context in Taiwan and the reported needs for more listening training at the university level. Next, rather than chronologically summarising the developmental changes in the field of listening research and instruction, I will mainly focus on the call for a methodological change for L2 listening instruction. Two main areas of interests in listening instruction relevant to my course design will be further discussed, including strategy-based instruction, specifically raising the listener's metacognitive awareness, and recently emerging investigation of the role of technology in assisting aural comprehension. In the final section, I will explain how I have designed the listening course, its objectives, the use of online platform and online materials selection, and requirements of students.

3.1 The reported needs for more listening courses in Taiwan

In this section, I will elaborate the local context in Taiwan to explain what kind of gap the listening course I offered attempted to fill in and in which way the course can offer an alternative option for students who wish to specifically improve their listening. Comparatively speaking, in Taiwan's EFL environment, students have limited exposure to the English language which they learn mainly through formal instruction. It means that "their exposure to authentic input is typically limited and trying to comprehend it can be painful and frustrating, particularly for low-level students in a test situation"(Chang, 2004 cited in Chang & Read, 2007, p. 376). Therefore, if the listening instruction cannot prepare learners for how to listen and

offer them sufficient chances for practice, the gap between what they receive and what they are expected to perform in real communicative situations will be widened.

Several studies reported discrepancy between students' own perception of their needs in developing English proficiency and the actual training they received in class (Lai, 2001; Liu, 2005). According to Liu's *The Trend and challenge for Teaching EFL at Taiwan Universities* (2005), Huang's study (1998) sponsored by the Taiwanese government provides significant investigation on whether the English programmes for non-English majors matched with students' expectation or not. The finding from the need assessment and follow-up interviews revealed that when students answered that they wanted fewer hours of English lessons, they referred to reading and writing courses emphasised by teachers. On the other hand, they expressed a desire for more hours of Lab courses which were offered to help them develop their listening and speaking abilities. They agreed that English is important but they did not find the programme satisfied their needs in developing their communicative competency. Three years later, the same mismatch between "students' desired goals and the actual instructional practice" was also reported in Lai's (2001) study (p. 110).

It is suggested in Huang's study to increase the teaching hours of the Lab course; however, what matters is not only the number of hours but also how these listening courses are taught. Regarding the teaching methods, the current listening instruction in Taiwan still follows a traditional P-P-P (Present-practice-production) model which focuses on the listening product rather than the listening process (White, 2006, p. 116-117). Although "listening to repeat" in Audio-lingual Method has been rejected as an out-dated approach, overtaken by the "question-answer" comprehension approach, what happens in the listening lab in the English courses in Taiwan still follows a rigid procedure of pre-listening, listening and post-listening activities (Richards, 2005, p. 245). Students are introduced first to several pre-listening questions and perhaps some discussion, they listen to a pre-recorded conversation, and then provide some answers to these post-listening questions. Nevertheless, to facilitate the process and to save time, some teachers may even turn to multiple choices for quick answers. Under such a circumstance, the process stops after the meaning of the passage is extracted and the right answer is provided. In summary, the reported needs for more Lab courses at the university level in Taiwan reveal a need to revisit the teaching method of the listening instruction, which is not merely a single local case but actually reflects a global wind of change.

3.1.1 The status quo of the listening research

Almost all articles reviewing the teaching and researching of listening start with how it was commonly neglected in teaching and how little attention listening used to receive in research (Rubin, 1994, Berne, 2004, Osada, 2004, Vandergrift, 2007, Cohen & Macaro, 2007). In early 90s, listening earned more recognition as a skill worth to be treated separately from reading comprehension, the two of which used to be treated as the same receptive construct (Lund, 1991). Later, under the trend of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) and the aim to improve communicative competence, listening was usually combined with speaking in those English courses held in the lab for its critical role in communication. However, if teachers did not emphasise listening enough, the focus would easily fall on speaking. Due to the implicit and covert nature of the listening process, it is necessary to integrate other elements of output, be it oral or written responses. As a result, the practice of listening tends to be sacrificed at the cost of developing students' speaking fluency.

There are continuous endeavours in exploring how to facilitate the learning of listening with the ultimate goal of enhancing learners' overall language proficiency (Richards, 2005). Over the past three decades, the research interests and the instruction of listening has undergone fundamental changes, as researchers and teachers change their perceptions toward listening, from a passive receptive process to an active meaning-construction one. Currently, a growing body of research studies reflecting the considerable changes is now available to provide theoretical explanations and pedagogical suggestions. For instance, the emerging themes for further investigation comprise "the balance between top-down and bottom-up processes, the relationship between proficiency level and strategy use, and the kinds of strategy interventions that might result in more successful listening" (Cohen & Macaro, 2007, p. 166).

3.2 The call for a methodological change in listening instruction

In recent publications examining the teaching of listening, there has been a call for a methodological change (Mendelsohn, 2006; Richards, 2005; Rost, 2006, Vandergrift, 2004; White, 2006, 2008). It has been criticised that what used to take place in the *teaching* of listening is actually testing. "The distinction that is being made is that

when you teach, by definition, you teach the learner of anything *how to do* something...On the other hand, when you *test* a learner, you do not show them *how to do it* but rather simply have them do it, and you evaluate how well they did it” (Mendelsohn, 2006, p. 75). The problem of the traditional approach is that both the teacher and students’ attention is directed to the product of listening instead of the actual process listeners go through.

It is now widely acknowledged that the osmosis approach, having students merely sit and listen, does not result in effective learning. The current situation in Taiwan is one example of the lack of proper listening instruction which fails to help students develop their listening proficiency. The goal should be to prepare them *how* to listen and *what* to listen for—to help them develop listening strategies they could apply in other situations either inside or outside of the classroom (Decker, 2004). As White (2006) criticises, “students are often asked on *what* has been said rather than *why* it has been said. The methodology of teaching listening appears to have remained somewhat unaffected by a number of recent developments in how we conceptualise the teaching and learning process, and how we view the relationship between the classroom and the world beyond it” (p. 112). Goh (2005) also emphasises that there is no need to replace the current practice of the three-phase lesson structure, but “the focus of listening lessons must expand to include knowledge about the language and listening processes” (p. 78). In the following section, I will discuss the adoption of learning strategy research as a methodological change to improve listening instruction.

3.2.1 The merging of listening and strategy instruction

Several reviews of listening research and teaching published in the past five years all dedicate substantial sections on listening strategies and strategy training (Berene, 2004, Macaro et al, 2007, Mendelsohn, 2006, Richards, 2005, Vandergrift, 2007, White, 2008). The fact that “learning a foreign language is difficult, complicated and time-consuming” drives language students, teachers and researchers to seek for any seeming possible means to “make it a little easier, faster or more successful“(Swan, 2008, p. 262). To researchers studying the learning process of listening, strategy research may open up a door. The findings from strategy research studies suggest that it is possible to improve learners’ listening experience and lower their anxiety by

making them more aware of what is going on in their mind and introducing them to potential strategies instead of constantly training their ears.

Meanwhile, as the pedagogic paradigm has been shifting from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches, more attention has been paid to encouraging learners to take responsibility. Grenfell (2007) identifies the promotion of autonomy, learning how to learn, as one of the prime motives behind the growth of language learning strategy research (p. 14-15). Vandergrift (2004) reviews research studies from 1998 to 2003 on instructional techniques in helping L2 listeners, and argues that a more systematic training of learning to listen is necessary before learners are left alone to do listening to learn. Furthermore, White (2006) wrote a chapter titled *Teaching listening: Time for a change in methodology* and provides a more specific list of suggestions for listening teachers: Choose what they listen to, make their own listening texts, control the equipment (being in charge of replaying difficult parts of the listening text, for example), give the instructions, design their own listening tasks, reflect on their problem of listening (p. 119).

In the following sections, I will discuss the salient influence of L2 learning strategy research on listening research, one of the two emerging areas of interests which have direct influence on the design of my listening course. I will first introduce how language learning strategies are defined and categorised, with a focus on metacognitive strategies. Next, strategy instruction including Mendelsohn's strategy-based approach and Vandergrift's teaching sequence to teach listening will be discussed. In the end, criticism on strategy instruction will be presented to explain why I did not adopt a direct instruction model for the listening course.

3.2.1.1 The definition and categories of learning strategies

The research interest in language learning strategies can be traced back to the works of Stern (1975) and Rubin (1975) in discovering secrets of good language learners. Rubin's 1975 article *What the Good Language Learner Can Teach Us* marks the starting point of analysing why some learners are more successful than others in acquiring a second or foreign language. Now, strategies are commonly agreed as a set of describable behaviours and/or actions under conscious control, which are problem-oriented and goal-driven, "subject to style" (Grenfell, 2007, p.10), "context dependent" (Chamot, 2005), and "plausible effective" (Swan, 2008, p. 262). With the root in cognitive psychology, the theoretical framework of learning strategies is expanded

from Anderson's (1983, 1985) Active Control of Thought (ACT) model which distinguishes knowledge between declarative (knowledge *of*) and procedural (knowledge *how*).

Based on this distinction, O'Malley & Chamot (1989) categorise strategy use into cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective. To take listening as an example, cognitive strategies refer to the strategies listeners use in comprehending the spoken language, such as "linguistic inferencing, using known words in an utterance to guess the meaning of unknown words in an utterance" (Vandergrift, 2008, p. 87). On the other hand, meta-cognitive strategies refer to "higher order executive skills" entailing planning, monitoring, evaluating and problem-solving used by learners to direct, manage, regulate their own learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 236; Vandergrift, 2005, p. 74). The socio-affective ones refer to those applied when learners interact with others. Among these three categories, it is shown in Vandergrift's studies (2003) that metacognitive strategies play a more critical role in distinguishing successful listeners from less skilled/successful ones, which will be discussed more in the next section. Since my focus is on one-way listening students perform in independent learning situations related to coursework, the last category of social-affective strategies will not be discussed here.

3.2.1.2 The significant role of metacognitive strategies

Early research reports the difference in the quantity of strategy use between more successful and less successful listeners; however, later the idea of *the more strategies the better* has been generally rejected. Several studies indicate that what distinguishes successful listeners from unsuccessful ones is not the number of strategies listeners employ but how these strategies are orchestrated from the repertoire, more specifically how they employ metacognitive strategies. Metacognition is in essence "both self-reflection and self-direction" (Vandergrift et al, 2006, p. 435). "It enables learners to participate actively in regulating and managing their own learning, provides a personal perspective on individual learning styles and abilities, and is amenable to classroom instruction" (ibid).

Vandergrift (2002, 2003, 2005) has studied the critical role metacognitive strategies play and reported that there is a positive correlation between language proficiency level and listening strategy use, particularly metacognitive strategy use. Building on Flavell's (1979) model of metacognitive knowledge and successful

results from Field (2000) and his own research (2002, 2003), Vandergrift developed a set of questionnaires MALQ (Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire) as the instrument to probe into the implicit process of listening and strategy operation. In his 2003 study, it is reported that the number of metacognitive strategies skilled listeners deployed is twice the number of those used by unskilled listeners. Metacognitive strategies are so crucial during the listening process because “they oversee, regulate or direct the listening comprehension process by orchestrating the deployment of specific cognitive strategies“(Vandergrift 2008, p. 85). This explains why skilful L2 listeners demonstrate a more careful orchestration of both metacognitive and cognitive strategies (Goh, 2002). This finding is later adopted as an important aspect into strategy training to enhance learners’ awareness toward their own listening process (Vandergrift et al, 2006). The details of instruction aiming to raise metacognitive awareness will be elicited in the next section on strategy instruction.

3.2.1.3 Listening strategy instruction

Based on the previous research describing good language learners’ strategies and the finding of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, in recent years, there has been a renewed interest in strategy instruction to provide intervention in helping less successful listeners to improve their listening experience (Bacon, 1992; Goh, 2000; O’Malley&Chamot, 1990; Vandergrift, 1997, 1999, 2003 cited in Vandergrift, 2008). The underlying belief was that through studying various types of strategies advanced learners employ, it is then possible to duplicate successful learning experiences through strategy-based instruction in helping other struggling language learners (Chamot, 2004, 2005; Chamot et. al., 1996). For listening researchers, they found it particularly helpful to apply the knowledge of strategies to tackle learning problems learners face during the listening process. In addition, incorporating the element of strategy training into listening instruction echoes the call for a methodological change discussed earlier, since “the ultimate goal of strategy training is to empower students by allowing them to take control of the language learning process” (Cohen, 1998, p. 70).

Strategy training is usually defined as explicitly teaching how, when and why to apply certain strategies (Carrell, 1996; Cohen 1998; Ellis & Sinclair, 1989). Basically, listening strategy instruction mirrors the cycle of training promoted in the model of

learning to learn in general L2 learning strategy instruction: consciousness raising, modelling, general practice, action planning, focused practice and evaluation (Graham, 2007). However, “should students be informed of the value and purposes of the training or not?” (Wenden, 1978, p. 159 cited in Chen, 2005, p. 42). Researchers’ and teachers’ different answers to this question lead to the development of two models of strategy instruction “at the two extreme ends of the explicitness continuum” (Chen, 2005, p. 43): direct instruction and embedded instruction (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990), or informed training and blind training.

Most of the studies favour direct instruction with explicit taught sections which directly inform learners why these strategies are important and how they can be applied into their learning. According to Carrier (2003), it is more possible for learners to transfer strategies, “if learners are presented and taught metacognitive strategies and receive explicit instruction about what the strategy is, how it works, and how it can be used in other contexts” (p. 405). Mendelsohn (1994) coined the term, strategy-based instruction and specifically proposes a curriculum whose “spinal cord” is built on the principles of listening strategy instruction (p. 37). He (Mendelsohn, 2006) argues that “the strategy instruction should be explicit and it should be made clear to the students what is being done and why” (p. 83). Specifically focusing on metacognitive strategies, Vandergrift (2008) investigates “the effect of process-based listening instruction on the development of metacognitive knowledge about listening” (p. 92).

With the emphasis on raising awareness, a teaching sequence is suggested to guide students through reflecting on the process of listening in facing listening tasks. The procedure of prediction, individual planning, peer discussions, and postlistening reflections were found effective when it was carried out for both beginner-level elementary school students (2002) and beginner-level university students learning French (2003) (cited in Vandergrift, 2006, p. 437). In his recent review (Vandergrift, 2008) on developing strategic knowledge about successful L2 listening, he reassures us that “[s]tudents can be encouraged to take responsibility for planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning, leading to greater success in L2 listening and, concomitantly, greater motivation and increased self-efficacy” (p. 92), which is parallel to the four recursive processes, *planning, monitoring, problem-solving and evaluating*, proposed in the metacognitive model by Chamot and her colleagues (2005).

In designing the listening course, I paid specific attention to the method of raising learners' awareness of strategy use in listening instruction including responding to questionnaires, collaboration with a partner for monitoring, and keeping listening diaries. Although the MALQ is proved by Vandergrift's studies (2002, 2003) to be effective in stimulating reflection, it is after all designed by researchers, and moreover, the act of answering questionnaires is normally passive. Since my study is to observe students' exercise of autonomy, as stated earlier, not targeting on guiding their use of strategies, I chose to rely on the use of listening diaries and class discussions generated through collaboration. The use of diaries is discussed in Goh's study (1997) as an effective means of reflecting on the listening process. "Studies so far show that language learners possess some knowledge about the listening process and that this knowledge can be further enhanced through classroom instruction. This is found to be generally true of all learners of different ages and language learning background."

As for embedded instruction, not much has been done to study to what degree learners fail to maintain and transfer the taught strategies. Graham et al (2008) conducted a longitudinal study to fill the gap in current strategy instruction research, and observed "how listening strategy use develops or changes over time in the absence of explicit strategy training" (p. 52). Instead of assuming that strategy instruction works from the previous descriptive research on successful listeners, they claim that it is necessary to investigate how strategies are developed without any explicit instruction so as to make any informed decisions. Consequently, to better involve learners in strategy-based instruction, needs analysis or some form of diagnostic testing is necessary (Mendelsohn, 2006, p. 83). It is also suggested by Reinders (2004) that teachers should build their strategy instruction on those strategies students already use which can be investigated through classroom discussions, teacher observation, diary keeping and, of course, questionnaires. The procedure he proposes covers three major steps, starting from "discussing a specific strategy and how it helps to solve a particular listening problem, modelling the process of employing this strategy, and provide hands-on opportunities for students and "evaluate how effective it is" (White, 2008, p. 214). Although Mendelsohn (2006) argues that "much of their potential resentment or opposition can be removed by explaining why you are doing what you are doing," when strategy training is foreign to learners (p. 83), it is acknowledged by Cohen & Macaro (2007) that strategy

instruction could be overemphasised and even become resisted by the learners. This caution from the above researchers explains why I hold a sceptical attitude and did not adopt a strategy-based approach from the outset.

3.2.1.4 Criticism of listening strategy training

Cohen & Macaro (2007) reviews research studies on listening strategies in the past 30 years, and draws two conclusions. First, “the relationship between successful listening and strategy use needs to be explored more rigorously”; second, “the literature related to strategy instruction is more sparse, although there is an emerging research agenda” (p. 165). Regarding his first conclusion, he reviewed the studies on successful and less successful listeners and their strategy use, but pointed out that the definition of successful hasn’t been clearly defined (p. 173). This question remains critical in thinking of classroom practice, since when teachers face a group of learners, how are students going to be categorised? Are they going to be categorised according to their L2 overall proficiency level or only their listening proficiency? Or if it is not necessary to make such a distinction, can the same strategy instruction apply to all? These questions lead to his second conclusion regarding strategy instruction. As Vandergrift comments, whether this kind of strategy instruction helps L2 learners improve their overall proficiency remains unanswered, because the studies which provided evident results of strategy instruction only focus on one or two particular kinds of strategy training (Carrier, 2003 cited in Vandergrift, 2007, p. 197-8).

Despite the current “modest but growing” body of research into listening (Goh, 2005, p. 79), there is obviously a gap between theory and practice for teachers are not well-informed of these investigations, let alone effectively integrating these insights into their classroom teaching (Goh, 2005; Macaro, 2006; Macaro & Graham, 2007; Mendelson, 2001). Moreover, for a small number of teachers who recognise the use of listening strategies, “they tend not to spell-out the strategies they want students to use in their classrooms” (Chand, 2007). Mendelsohn summarises Berne’s list of existing gaps between researchers and classroom practitioners aiming to bring more cooperation between the two groups by revising the textbooks and encouraging the teachers to access published journal articles and conference presentations. At the bottom of the list, he adds one more suggestion, which is “researchers should be required to be classroom teachers of ESL at the same time” (p. 34). Goh (2005) also reported that an urgent need “to investigate the usefulness of specific classroom tasks

and self-directed learning activities“ remains unfulfilled, and encourages practitioners to carry out “well-planned action research that aims at improving listening expertise among students from intact classes” (p. 79). Consequently, in improving strategy instruction, it is necessary to bring teachers into the picture for they know how not to overwork strategy instruction to the extent that it might be resisted by learners (Chen, 2005 cited in Vandergrift, 2007, p. 1997-8).

3.3 The implications of technology in listening research

As the implications of technology have matured, there are more inquires into this emerging field of listening instruction in the CALL environment (Jones, 2005; Rost, 2006; Vandergrift, 2007). It is reported in Liu’s (2005) analysis as the future challenge for English teachers at the college level in Taiwan to conduct the hybrid mode of language teaching, equal to Blended-learning, made possible by the advances of technology, specifically the Internet. For teachers, it is not possible to totally ignore the potential benefits afforded by the Internet and other web-based tools like ICT. To teach with these new media, teachers need to perceive learning in a different light, starting from materials selection. A series of new decisions have to be made.

On the other hand, for learners in this Internet age, they are presented with “the rich variety of aural and visual L2 texts available today via network-based multimedia, such as on-line audio and video, YouTube, podcasts and blogs” (Vandergrift, 2007, p. 191). The challenge for them lies in how to select what they need when thousands of links pop up with the click of the fingertips. My research studies a particular context when these two challenges meet together at an intersection.

As mentioned in 1.2, my inquiry into autonomy is grounded in the implications of technology; therefore, the discussion in this section is particularly important to lay out this feature. The question I bear in mind is, in terms of improving their listening, how can learners benefit from the rich collection of online audio/video materials in a b-learning mode? In this sense, the implications of technology in listening instruction and the authenticity of materials selection discussed in this section are particularly important both to my course design and research study. I will first discuss one major advantage the Internet provides—the access to a rich collection of both contrived and authentic materials which makes extensive listening outside of the class possible. Next, I will discuss how the presence of multimedia has changed the listening process

from a linear process to a recursive, multilayer one. Moreover, with interactive tools like ICT also adding an interactive dimension to the learning process, there is a shift from ‘structural’, to ‘communicative’, and finally to ‘integrative’ CALL (Warschauer, 2001).

3.3.1 The choice of online authentic materials

As discussed in 3.1.1, EFL students in Taiwan who have limited exposure to English in their daily lives acquire the language mostly in formal instruction, mainly through textbooks and pre-recorded conversation. Consequently, the exposure to authentic materials can familiarise them with the stream-like everyday spontaneous speech, so that they will not “be led to false expectations concerning the acoustic clarity of what they will hear” (Cauldwell, 2004, p. 211). The merit of authentic materials has been recognised to fill the gap between the contrived language presented in textbooks and the genuine use of the target language (Dumitrescu, 2000). Now, authentic listening materials available on the Internet grant EFL listeners the opportunity to taste “a totally natural ‘slice of life’” (Rixon, 1986, p. 13). What’s more, they have better chances to “draw inferences and make generalization from valid samples” (Cauldwell, 2004, p. 211).

As Vandergrift (2007) summarises in his state-of-the-art article, under the prevailing goal of CLT to “help L2 listeners understand the target language in everyday situations”, the use of authentic listening materials is considered “best-suited” because they “reflect real-life listening, they are relevant to the learners’ lives, and they allow for exposure to different varieties” (p. 200). Rost (2006) also counts the issue of authenticity as a factor affecting the quality of input in listening instruction (2006, p. 51). “The learner, in order to acquire the L2, must come to understand input in personally meaningful ways, engage in interactions and tasks based on that input, and simultaneously pay attention to the form of the input and interaction that will allow for permanent development of L2 knowledge and skills” (ibid.).

Despite how promising this use of authentic materials may seem, attention is called to more judicious use of them in listening classrooms. They “can be very valuable, but authenticity is not an absolute virtue in the teaching world” (Rixon, 1986, p. 9). Field (2000) also argues that the assumption that language development

can be prompted by increasing exposure to the target language through better “vocabulary development” and “heightened language awareness” might not hold true for all learners (p. 186). Low proficiency or weaker listeners particularly may not benefit from authentic materials when the speed is too fast for them to follow and the use of vocabulary and expressions is far beyond their current level. Nevertheless, this does not mean simplified listening materials can guarantee better learning results. “Elaborated texts are able to bring about almost as great an increase in comprehension as simplified ones, but they achieve this without damaging the richness of the original text” (Long, 1996 cited in Rost, 2006, p. 52). Based on the above discussion on the appropriateness of authentic materials, I decided to introduce authentic materials to learners in a more prudent manner by starting with those websites designed specifically for English learning purposes before presenting authentic materials recorded for L1 listeners. Meanwhile, following the principle of extensive listening, discussed in the next section, students are encouraged to choose their own listening materials whenever they find the assigned listening too difficult or too easy.

3.3.2 Extensive listening

Following the concept of extensive reading, Extensive Listening (EL) encourages learners to listen to massive amounts of highly comprehensible recorded materials at their own pace in their personal time (Waring, 2003). EL had been discussed as early as 1980s by Rixon (1986) and Broughton et al (1993) as listening for pleasure, a means to develop listening in personal time without focusing too much on specific language usage, as opposed to intensive listening activities which emphasise getting the message right and locating specific information. However, audio materials available at that time were restricted to limited sources of audio production, so for teachers who were interested in EL, they usually needed to produce homemade materials by recording their own voice, conversations by local native English speakers, or news broadcasts and advertisements on TV and radios during their stay in English-speaking countries (Broughton et al, 1993, p. 70-71). Since quality listening materials were less obtainable and moreover, listening was still closely associated with reading, a major amount of attention was paid to read aloud stories which later were criticised on the grounds that they failed to represent the features of spoken language and lacked variety.

Two decades later, the aforementioned restriction has been solved by the widespread ownership of computers and the convenient connection to the Internet. As Field (2008) remarks in the editorial of the special issue on L2 listening in *System*, “some of the most striking changes in the way instructors handle L2 listening have come about as the result of new technology, which has enormously expanded the range and type of materials available” (p. 6). The advent of downloadable digital media files online grants students greater freedom in choosing what they enjoy listening to and when they want to do the listening. Teachers are no longer the only source-provider. Thanks to this rich collection of audio and video files on the World Wide Web, EL starts to attract more attention. In the past few years, EL has been included in reviews on the teaching of listening, but only briefly mentioned as an alternative (Macaro, 2002). As discussed above, this is because compared to print materials, the audio materials used to be less obtainable. Now, it is not a matter of not having enough listening materials but a matter of not being overwhelmed by the sea of audio and video materials available online.

The current challenge of EL for teachers is how to integrate it into teaching in an efficient, systemic method, which has not yet been fully discussed in details. In Japan, there has been a thread of discussions on EL derived from Waring’s works in 2003 (Apple, 2006; Ferrato and White, 2004). Similar to Rixon (1986) and Broughton et al (1988), Ferrato and White (2004) defined EL as “listening to massive amounts of easily comprehensible recorded material” with the emphasis on listening materials falling within learners’ comfort zone. They claim that learners can stop listening “if it is not easy and enjoyable,” since EL aims at global comprehension and emphasises meaning and fluency rather than form and accuracy. After discussing the principles of EL, they listed six major benefits including “increased exposure to spoken English—ideally to many varieties, increased rate of recognition—making sense of what they hear, increased vocabulary and depth of word knowledge, especially when listening and reading along at the same time; increased comprehension, improved listening perseverance.” However, how these conclusions were reached was not fully elicited.

Apple’s study (2006) combining in-class strategy training with out-of-class EL activities provides more empirical evidence through analysing learners’ listening diaries and in-depth interviews. His background of the study, including the EFL environment in Japan, students’ limited exposure to English and his attempt to introduce EL, is very similar to mine. To explain his motivation for conducting this

study, he quotes a student's reflection about not hearing enough proper English in Japan and planning to go to Australia to improve his listening and comments that "the problem of access to L2 aural input in an EFL context is only exacerbated by learner beliefs ...that study abroad is the only way to improve English listening skills" (p. 34). He argues that this commonly-held myth by students viewing going abroad as the only possibility to improve their listening can be broken by encouraging them to carry out EL projects outside of class. The design of my listening course conforms to this belief of Apple's, that is, for EFL students the exposure to the target language can not only provide a slice of life but also better motivate them when the topics are more relevant to their own life experiences (Rost, 2006).

When it comes to the choice of materials, there have been various proposals. As mentioned above, Ferrato & White (2004) think that learners can be left alone in choosing what they like to listen to and stop whenever they find the materials too challenging. As for Apple, he criticises Waring's choice of listening to graded readers on tapes, and believes that L2 listeners benefit more from a healthier diet of a wide range of authentic listening variety, especially when they find their own sources of materials in the real world (p. 38-39). Fox's (2002) model also supports introducing a variety of language in listening instruction, and suggests that the listening materials should provide students with a number of varieties of language, and social and situational variants within each variety. Therefore, student will "listen to language heard by L1 speakers in authentic contexts, speak with one accent but learn to understand many others, understand careful speech of educated L1 speakers, based on L1 speakers expectations of what is appropriate for L2 learners" (Vandergrift, 2007, p. 200).

The discussion on the choice of materials leads to the role teachers play in EL. It is true that learners will be more motivated when they have a certain degree of freedom to choose what they listen to; however, freedom is easily mistaken as accepting whatever learners choose and leaving them alone with their decisions. In Apple's strategy training course, EL was treated as a separate unit which served as a space for learners to practice their strategy use; therefore, there was little intervention. Ferrato & White (2004) also think that few or even no follow-up activities are needed. Based on my own experience, EL can be used more effectively when learners are provided with more guidance in material selection and the connection between listening practices inside and outside the classroom. As a result, follow-up activities

like in-class group discussions can maximise the effect of EL instead of treating EL merely as an add-on supplement unit of the curriculum.

3.3.3 The multimedia environment and the use of ICT

As previously discussed in 3.2, the practice of listening instruction has evolved from the monotonous listen-and-repeat behaviouristic approach in the 1970s and 1980s to a more process-oriented approach accentuating interactive communication and strategy use. The innovation of technology is another force behind this move “from passive drill and practice activities to those that emphasize language learning based on individual students’ linguistic knowledge, prior knowledge, and interaction with the text” (Fischer & Farris, 1995; Joiner, 1986; Lynch, 1995; Pusack & Otto, 1997 cited in Jones, 2006, p. 103). In this section, I will focus on the combination of visual and audio components and the interactive functions of ICT and how they change the used-to-be-linear listening process into a recursive, more dynamic and interactive experience.

Nowadays, the visual presentation contiguously integrated with the audio component is advocated as strongly supportive to L2 listening learning (Rost, 2002, p. 105). As Plass & Jones (2005) claim, listening “in the computer-based multimedia realm” is multisensory and interactive, as it “provides meaningful input, facilitate meaningful interaction with the target language, and elicit meaningful output” (p. 469 cited in Jones, 2006, p. 106). Güichon and McLornan (2008) also emphasised that learners are not merely presented with several options but “several parallel possibilities of developing their comprehension skills—possibilities which they integrate by using their experience of multimodal representation in real-life contexts” (p. 86). A major focus of current studies is how comprehension can, or cannot, be improved when the visual stimuli, advance organizers, subtitles or other help options, are accessible to learners on demand (Boltova, 1999; Brown & Yule, 1983; Cardenas-Claros & Gruba, 2007; Kon, 2002 cited in Güichon and McLornan, 2008, p. 86). Furthermore, this feature of multimodality “enables learners to manipulate the various channels, so that “they can control the flow of information with pause and rewind buttons, thus breaking free of the temporal linearity of oral speech” (Güichon and McLornan, 2008, p. 86). For instance, in a pre-listening activity, an advance organizer will be presented to activate listeners’ prior knowledge. On the screen, they

can control their listening process by pausing and rewinding to a previous point. They can also click on hyperlinks which provide them with translation of key words or other relevant information. Consequently, these multimedia functions allowing learners to discover their own route are ideal to cater for individual differences and increase learner responsibility.

Another innovation that has great impact on listening instruction is the application of ICT which opens up opportunities of interaction and collaboration. According to Cauldwell (2004), the use of ICT has drawn researchers' attention for "its capacity to isolate key moments in a recording, allows immediate and repeated playback of these moments, and is therefore an important tool in transforming listening activities into true listening-goal-directed pedagogical experiences" (p. 207). He argues that it is essential to ascertain that listening is the goal in teaching, as opposed to listening being treated as an activity which serves a speaking goal, commonly seen in contemporary approaches especially CLT. His argument echoes Liu's report (2005) on the discrepancy between what students received and what they expected in my context in Taiwan (see 3.1). With the widespread interests in promoting "real-life listening in real time, involving *communicative* tasks and/or interaction with native speakers" (Morley, 1999), to date, relatively few studies have been carried out to investigate unidirectional listening comprehension (Macaro, 2007), which is the type of listening activities studied in my research.

Bearing the aforementioned studies in mind when designing the listening course, I adopted the use of technology for two main purposes. The primary purpose is to introduce learners to the advantages of various authentic multimedia materials like YouTube, podcast, and blogs (Vandergrift, 2007), so that they can make informed choices when engaging in EL activities. The secondary purpose is to integrate the use of ICT to assist the listening process by getting students to collaborate with their peers online. According to Jones (2006), "collaboration offered students the ability to compare their understanding of the aural text (Blaye, Light & Rubtsov, 1992), allowed for negotiation of meaning and deeper understanding (Mydlarski, 1998), supported their recall of the aural material, and enhanced their comprehensible input (Szostek, 1994)" (p. 109). The computer can be the medium students collaborate through in an asynchronous learning activity or in a face-to-face learning one. Therefore, to reach listening-as-a-goal, I did not rely on the communicative function of ICT, but emphasised its pedagogical function in promoting collaboration among

students. This collaborative aspect of the use of technology has been elaborated in 2.3.1 in association with learner autonomy.

3.4 The listening course design

This listening course, offered twice in Summer, 2005 and Fall, 2006 prior to this study, has been developed as an online course. Therefore, the use of online materials and the integration of synchronous and asynchronous interactions are what differentiate this listening course from the traditional listening course in the lab. In this section, I will outline the basic structure of the listening course including the objective, the material section and the major requirements students have to fulfil.

3.4.1 Objective

Under the principle of providing “learning opportunities rather than teaching points” (Allwright, 2005), the ultimate goal of this listening course was to engage learners in reflecting on their listening process and developing a repertoire of skills and strategies through a wider exposure to both contrived and authentic listening materials available online. As the concept of extensive listening suggests, students are introduced to the rich online audio/video bank available to them, so that they can develop a more balanced appetite for listening according to the topics of their interests and their comfortable level of difficulty.

3.4.2 Material selection

The guiding principle in material selection is the concept of extensive listening to provide learners with various topics under different listening purposes and to a variety of accents. The course adopts a topic-based syllabus to cover a variety of topics from entertaining ones like movies and travel, to more serious ones like social issues in the news. With the objective to familiarise students with the rich digitalised resources, I chose free websites that students can access online as listening materials. These websites are divided into two main categories: one is the online listening labs like *Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab*, *The English Listening Lounge*, *English Language Listening Lab Online*; the other is authentic materials intended for L1 listeners,

including speeches like *Steve Jobs' Stanford Commencement Speech in 2005* and radio podcasts from blogs such as *What's Up In Taiwan*. Moreover, to engage students in material selection, in the last month, students work in pairs to report on the website they found interesting and useful in improving their listening.

Referring to studies on authentic materials and extensive listening (3.3.1 & 3.3.2), I planned extensive listening in a structured way by gradually introducing authentic materials. Although the exposure to authentic spoken language is critical for EFL learners in developing their familiarity with the target language, it might be too demanding or inappropriate for L2 learners (Widdowson, 1979, 2003; Clarke, 1989 and Cook, 2001 cited in Gilmore, 2007: 98). To avoid the sudden challenges students have to face in grappling with the use of language beyond their level, we start with the former category, websites designed specifically for language learning, and move to the later one, which usually provide less guidance. According to Rost (2006), providing elaboration and scaffolding which “allow learners to deal with selected aspects of an authentic text” is a better alternative than just providing simplified texts with controlled difficulty (p. 52). Furthermore, to the students enrolled in my listening course who had taken a year-long prerequisite Lab Listening course, and are not completely beginners, authentic materials provide them with the increasing complexity they need to take their learning to the next level.

3.4.3 Requirements of students

For those students taking this course, the major requirements were the online listening activities, which included uploading their weekly diaries, joining online discussion and two major presentations. These three major requirements are further explained below. The syllabus distributed to students is attached in Appendix 1.

3.4.3.1 Listening diaries

In the Main Study, there were three listening classes, A (e-learning), B (b-learning), and C (one-month b-learning). In all three courses, students are required to do the online self-study listening activities before they join the in-class or virtual discussions. By doing so, they can control the equipment and listen at their own pace and repeat it as many times as they want, which is hardly possible in the lab when the teacher is the only one who is controlling the machine. However, as some CALL studies indicate,

there are costs of this freedom—that is, without the presence of the teacher, it is hard to monitor students’ progress. This is why diaries, whose function is to record students’ learning process and communicate their needs to TAs and the teacher, play an essential role in this listening course. In listening and strategy research, using diaries is associated with enhancing metacognitive awareness of the listening process and strategy usage (Chamot, 2005, p. 114). In this section, the function of the learning diaries as an instructional tool is highlighted, whereas the use of diary as a research instrument will be elaborated in 4.3.

The use of diaries fits the ultimate goal of this course to develop students’ autonomy. The main purpose of the diaries is to help regulate students in keeping a regular habit of listening. A space for reflection is then created for students through regularly recording their thoughts on their listening and language learning in general. When the course was first offered in summer 2005, students could choose to upload the diaries or directly post their responses online. Diaries were optional, and the format and the number of entries were not fixed. However, the majority of students chose to share their thoughts in the diaries rather than to post them in the discussion board. I, therefore, found it effective for both me and the TAs (Teaching Assistant) to communicate with students about their questions, respond to their reflection and observe their progress through the diaries. The role of TAs will be further discussed in 3.4.5 What’s more, in addition to diaries’ self-reporting nature, the other merit is to develop in-class or online discussions in better depth based on what students wrote in their diaries.

From previous experiences in 2005 and 2006, I found it necessary to explicitly explain the purpose and the content of diaries. Therefore, there was one discussion in the course introduction on why students should keep a diary and what to include, and another discussion after they handed in their first diaries to discuss their encountered problems. To initiate the discussion, students also listened to the conversation on study diaries from the British Council. Instead of showing them a sample diary, I took several extracts from students’ diaries to show various possibilities and also encouraged them to read others’ diaries.

3.4.3.2 The online discussion

As emphasised earlier, the important feature of this course is the technology component. The web-based platform *EngSite* was used for the teacher to deliver

course materials and for students to upload their assignments. To engage learners in online interaction, there are embedded interactive functions, including the message board for everyone to leave messages, the discussion area under each lesson which is initiated by the teacher and where students can post their responses and a chat room where students can meet and talk to each other through text chatting. However, although all three courses are offered through the platform *EngSite*, depending on the nature of the three different groups, there are different degrees of face-to-face contact and synchronous communication. The details of how the course was adapted and therefore modified for the three different target groups will not be discussed here but in 4.2.2.

3.4.3.3 Presentations

Aside from the weekly diaries and the online posting, another requirement for students is to do two major presentations: one pair work and one group work. The pair work is a show-and-tell on a website they find interesting and beneficial in improving their listening abilities. The second is a group recording project in which they produce a recording no longer than ten minutes. In White's (2006) discussion on a change in methodology, "helping students to create their own listening texts and tasks" is listed in the proposed listening syllabus (p. 127-28), which is claimed to motivate students in paying attention to the use of language. Rosell-Aguilar (2007) also propose that in addition to the use of existing podcast resources, developing one's own podcast materials, either by the teacher or by the students, is another potential use of podcasting in CALL (p. 476). Furthermore, this collaborative opportunity adds an interactive dimension into this online listening course.

3.4.4 The use of the platform *EngSite*

The type of computer technology involved in the AIEDL project is a learning management system *EngSite* under the auspices of two English Departments of Fu-Jen Catholic University and Central University. This kind of learning management system "involves integrating sources already available on the Web, making use of synchronous and asynchronous communication, and providing other forms of interaction;" thus, is ideal for teachers to design interactive activities for a group of learners and keep records of their learning process (Jarger, 2004, p. 34). Compared to

the commercial platforms like WebCT and Blackboard available on the international market, *EngSite* is designed by the local computer engineers who could modify the design according to teachers' needs, so that we do not need to tailor our course to fit the platform. It is more possible to modify the functions and designs of the platform to meet our needs as teachers.

3.4.5 The role of TAs

I will further describe the role of TAs, essential in the management of Class A (e-learning). In the fall semester, with 77 students, three TAs were involved, whereas in the spring semester, with a smaller group of 25 students, only one TA was involved. With the support of funding from the university to the AIEDL project, TAs act as the communication channel between the instructor and students in all the courses. Their major duties are offering technical supports in solving problems with the platform *EngSite*, keeping track of students' learning pace and responding to their assignments. Since the online learning mode might be new, and rather frustrating, to some students, the assistance from TAs could help to build the rapport and shorten the distance inevitably created in this modality. At the end of the fall semester, a seminar was held for teachers involved in the AIEDL programme to report on the progress, to share problems we encountered and to seek possible solutions together as a team. At least two to three students were invited to this end-of-semester seminar after each teacher's report. Several students thanked the TAs for their assistance in all aspects. In general, it was less intimidating for them to ask for help from TAs. However, some of these TAs, all full-time graduate students, failed to bridge the communication gap. In the course evaluation, I also read about complaints about a certain TA's lateness in replying to emails and responding to assignments. Indeed, it became very critical for me to communicate with TAs beforehand to ensure they realize the demands of the job and their responsibilities.

3.5 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter started with a review of listening research studies and learning strategy research studies which have direct impact on my course design. Specific issues related to the use of technology comprising material selection and the

use of ICT were discussed next before I presented the design of the listening course. As emphasised earlier, the purpose of this chapter was to illustrate the connection between theories and my practice; therefore, I only addressed those studies related to my course design. I will address issues related to my research design in the next chapter which presents the research framework and the details of data collection methods.

4 Chapter Four Data Collection Methodology

This chapter aims to outline the research framework and data collection methods I adopted in seeking answers to my research questions. The chapter comprises three main sections; research framework, research design and detailed description of data collection instruments. The practitioner research framework will be presented first in 4.1 to discuss fundamental principles drawing from both Action Research (AR) and Exploratory Practice (EP), which guide my research design and choices of data collection instruments. Section 4.2 on research design presents the year-long data collection process and a narrative of decision-making details in a chronological order. The last section 4.3 discusses the multiple methods I used in combination and outlines the scope of data.

4.1 Research framework: Practitioner research

The main purpose of this section is to justify the choice of the term ‘practitioner research’ and the underlying framework before the methods of data collection are introduced. I chose to frame my research as practitioner research instead of classroom research or action research to highlight the teaching-learning alignment and my role as a teacher-researcher. As explained in 1.2, my initial interest to study learner autonomy derived from my engagement in conducting an online listening course in 2005 in Fu-Jen Catholic University. I decided to extend this interest to further understand why and how learner autonomy plays a critical role in online language learning, and therefore, went back to the same setting in Fu-Jen Catholic University in Taiwan for my fieldwork. This decision marks the feature of my research as practitioner research, as my research interest rose from my previous practice and my research questions and data collection were all geared toward improving my practice.

This kind of research conducted by teacher researchers in the classroom context is termed as teacher research, practitioner research or classroom research. “The classroom...is a primary research site in applied linguistic investigations and the unique features of this context have a strong bearing on the way we conduct research in it” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 176). However, according to Nunan (2005), early classroom research, called “methods comparison studies”, was concerned about teaching methods. Up to the present time, there remains a tendency that classroom research

emphasises the cognitive acquisition process and the linguistic output of learners. For example, Tsui (2001) classified classroom research based on the research focus and came up with three categories; focus on *input* (the language used by the teacher), focus on *output* (language produced by learners) and focus on *interaction* (the interrelationship between input and output). In this light, regarding the choice of term, practitioner research reflects more the learning-teaching alignment I would like to emphasise than classroom research, since my focus is to study not only students' learning but also the interplay between my teaching and their learning.

Similar to Burgess' (2006) experience in her account of *First Person Perspective of a Graduate Student*, I also went through the same process of choosing the research terminology best labelling my research. My purpose of studying students' autonomy in the online learning environment is close to the concept of *exploratory praxis*, "the continuous interplay between doing something and revising our thought about what ought to be done" (Noffke, 1995, p. 1 cited in Somekh, 2006, p.178). In the literature of CALL and CMCL, there is a prevailing attempt to introduce the use of technology into teaching by proving its effectiveness. Nonetheless, my intention is not as radical, and this is another reason I settle with practitioner research as a more general term covering several strands of research approaches and methods, reflective practice, action research, action learning and exploratory practice. As Dadds (2002) states, the practitioner research movement, which has been developed for decades (e.g. Stenhouse, 1975; Elliott, 1993; Hollingsworth, 1997) highlights "the need for practitioners themselves to be at the heart of the research process, identifying questions of significance for the learners in their care, conducting their own enquiries for their own professional purposes" (p. 12). In the following sections, I will present guiding principles drawn from two particular strands, action research (AR) and exploratory practice (EP).

In order to achieve the epistemological diversity suggested by Ortega (2005), in this study, my definition of practitioner research integrates two strands of research, action research (AR) and exploratory practice (EP). As suggested in the term, AR focuses more on studying planned actions in a cyclical process and evaluating the changes brought by this series of plans, actions and observation; on the other hand, EP emphasises more on the initial stage of achieving understanding prior to the actual action planning. Settling with this broad definition of practitioner research enables me to integrate different strengths of the two research strands: from AR, I adopted the

iteration and spiral process, and from EP, I adopted the emphasis on inviting students as stakeholders during the research process.

4.1.1 Action research

This section starts with a brief review of AR and then discusses my choice of a more general three-stage model among other prevailing frameworks. Next, I will present the strengths and limitations of AR and then focus on how writing plays an important role in recording and promoting reflexivity.

4.1.1.1 The emergence of AR

The root of AR can be traced back to Lewin's (1948) work in social psychology. More than five decades later, AR has now expanded into "a family of practice" across various domains of social science, ranging from health, psychology to education (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Since the literature on AR is extensive, covering a wide range of professional and organisational contexts (Stringer, 2007, p. 15), I will start with a brief summary on the features of AR and suggested models. Next, Burns' responses to common concerns of AR will be presented, followed by empirical studies related to my research interests, learner autonomy and online language learning. Both AR studies conducted in education and our field of language teaching and learning are included to attain crucial understanding and facilitate later discussions. This is because the presence of AR in our field dates back only to the late 80s, not as long as it has been in the general field of education (Burns, 2005b, p. 60).

According to Stringer (2007), AR is fundamentally grounded in a qualitative research paradigm, "whose purpose is to gain greater clarity and understanding of a question, problem, or issue" (p. 19). Unlike quantitative researchers who start with pre-determined hypothesis and specific variables, AR researchers usually start with more broadly defined questions, problems, or issues to allow flexibility for possible changes emerging from the fieldwork. Consequently, the nature of investigation is more on defining the issue studied through inviting participants to describe "how things happen and how it affects them" (ibid.). Under this purpose of study, AR researchers have to address local settings so as to explain not only *what* is happening, but also *how and why* things are happening. This means the researchers have to take

the social aspect into account and understand that participants inevitably *perceive*, *interpret*, and *respond* to related issues in their own ways.

The spirit of AR lies in creating space for other stakeholders, who might construe quite a different worldview, to voice their thinking throughout the research process so that “deep-seated understandings that lead to effective remedial action” can be achieved (Stringer, 2007, p. 20). The intention is to create a communal environment that allows all stakeholders to voice their opinions, especially those who will be “centrally affected”, to “explore their experience, gain greater clarity and understanding of events and activities, and use those extended understandings to construct effective solutions to the problem(s) on which the study was focused.” To conclude, Stringer summarises AR with three adjectives; *phenomenological*, focusing on people’s actual lived experience/reality, *interpretive*, focusing on their interpretation of acts and activities, and *hermeneutic*, incorporating the meaning people make of events in their lives.

In the field of education, AR is particularly influential for it is seen as a form of self-reflective enquiry (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, McNiff, 1988), and a powerful tool for teachers to explore and improve their practice (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, Elliot, 1991, McNiff, 1988, McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, Nunan, 1993, Stringer, 2007).

The emphasis is on the combination of *action* and *research* (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 297), but the component of research and the importance of systematically studying a situation has been highlighted more so that AR leads to successful production of knowledge beneficial to practitioners. In the field of education, the focus then is on the relationship between research and teaching. This leads to the teachers-as-researchers movement to empower teachers by granting them the right to research. As Stenhouse’s (1983) famous quotation goes, “It is teachers, in the end, who will change the world of education, by understanding it.” Rudduck and Hopkins (1985) followed Stenhouse’s thread of thoughts in strengthening the notion of “*Research as a Basis for Teaching*.” Hopkins (2002) suggests that in combining action and research, there is this personal intention “to understand, improve and reform practice”, which is why cycles are in the central focus in AR. It is through the series of plan, act, observe and reflect, that effective changes in teaching practices can be reflected “more systematically, and more rigorously than one usually does in everyday life” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992, p. 10). In short, through closely examining the effects of the intervention, further action can be consequently planned.

4.1.1.2 Models for action research

As AR has been grounded in real world practice, there have been numerous attempts in generating theoretical and conceptual models and frameworks. With the feature of dealing with real world issues, the process of research can be quite dauntingly messy. Therefore, to guide practitioners through such a messy process, some models are set up to suggest systematic ways of studying our practice.

The earliest models of action research are Lewin (1946, 1948) and Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988), which both divide the AR process into four main stages, *plan, act, observe, and reflect*, following which the next cycle starts again with "plan again for the next iteration". In our field of language education, Nunan (1993) also proposes a model including six steps, 1. Problem identification; 2. Preliminary investigation; 3. Hypothesises; 4. Plan intervention; 5. Outcomes; 6. Reporting. Likewise, McNiff (2002) outlines a more detailed process of eight steps, 1. Review your current practice; 2. Identify an aspect that you wish to improve; 3. Imagine a way forward in this. 4. Try it out. 5. Modify and reflect on what happens; 6. Modify the plan in the light of what has been found, what has happened; 7. Evaluate the modified action; 8. Continue until you are satisfied with that aspect of your work (repeat the cycle) (p. 71). However, do all these models really help to guide teachers better in conducting research? Hopkins (2002) voiced his concerns after visiting models built by Kemmis, Elliott, Ebbutt, McKernan and others. He warned us that "the tight specification of process steps and cycles may trap teachers within a framework which they may come to depend on and which will, consequently, inhibit independent action" (p. 50). After all, the original intention of promoting teacher research is "to free teachers from constraints of prespecified research designs."

In *Online Communication in Language Learning and Teaching*, Lamy and Hampel (2007) summarise models of practitioner research and came up with three essential steps for practitioners:

Step One: Reviewing your practice,

or 'What do you want to find out and why?'

Step Two: Design and implementation,

or 'How will you carry out the actions and how can you pre-empt difficulties?'

Step Three: Evaluate and disseminate,

or "What have you found out and who needs to know your conclusions?"

Similar to Stringer's (2007) suggestion of a three-step model, *look, think, and act*, and again the next cycle, these three steps, reflecting essential components of previous models, start with the point of departure—identifying an area of interest through looking back and attending more closely to the past experience. Based on this understanding, the journey then embarks—action is planned in reaction to the issue identified earlier. The last step is writing up the account of this journey—to examine the effectiveness of this action and write up a report so that this experience and knowledge construed from it can also be passed on. I adopted their three-step model for its simplicity. This three-step model conforms to the *research* element of AR, “the systematic collection of data as planned interventions are enacted, followed by analysis of what is revealed by the data, and reflection on the implications of the findings for further observation and action” (Burns, 2005b, p. 59). Burns also (1999, 2005) commented that following a rigid step-by-step procedure (e.g. Wallace, 1998) might be too “technicist and practical.” She, therefore, encourages researchers to maintain a certain degree of the flexibility, the so-called messiness (e.g. Cook, 1998), and deems it essential for the researcher to be able to move back and forth between different stages of planning, observing, action and reflecting.

4.1.1.3 Strengths and limitations of AR

In this section, I would like to address both strengths and limitations of AR. As with most methods, the strengths of AR are exactly its weaknesses. As Sankaran et al (2007) discussed, in AR, it is “the research question [that] drives the method not the other way around” (p. 295). Through the cycles, it involves testing assumptions derived from previous cycles in a real-life situation. In this sense, the knowledge is produced through learning from the actual experience, “it is *born of experience* rather than the simple acquisition of knowledge and skills” (ibid. emphasis added). This process can be interpreted as “as a cogent and systematic way of thinking” for professionals by embedding themselves in “a cycle of critically reflective practice that incorporates questioning, assessing, investigating, collaborating, analyzing, and refining” (Schoen and Bullard, 2002 cited in Schoen, 2007, p. 211). This is why AR can capture and react to “the fluidity and responsiveness” of actual practice (Dick, 2007, p. 433).

By the same token, this feature of “its iterative, or cyclical, nature” leads to a

number of common criticisms listed by Burns (2005a), including “the over-involvement of the action research, leading to personal bias; the time constraints posed by longitudinal research; the double burden of teaching and research; the lack of models and procedures for data analysis (cf. Winter, 1989); and question marks over accountability in experimentation with learner subjects (cf. Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Sachs, 2000)” (p. 250). In responding to these concerns, she provides the benefits of this recursive process, in the data collection process, which are that researchers can

1. build on evidence from previous cycles;
2. expand the scope of the study;
3. triangulate the data across different episodes, sites, and subjects through multiple data sources;
4. test new findings against previous iterations of the cycle;
5. avoid the bias inherent in cross-sectional research.

Lastly, McNiff (2007) provides a metaphor for this recursive and ongoing process as “a matter of running to stay still,” in which researchers “constantly find[ing] ways to transform an already improving moving practice into an even better version of itself.” By doing so, “the best of now is the best it can be for the moment, but the moment will move on within the ever-transforming contexts of human living, and the goodness of the moment will need to transform into something even better if it is still to be seen as good”.

4.1.1.4 Writing as a means of recording and promoting reflexivity

During this journey of “running to stay still”, reflexivity and the ability to reflect are central to the research process in AR, be it reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action or even critical reflection (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 310). Glanze (2003) highlighted “the importance of reflection and of expecting the unexpected” (cited in Dick, 2007, p. 433). Therefore, Schön’s (1983) three components of reflective practice, knowledge in the action, reflection in the action, and reflection on the action also serve as a means to explain the importance of reflection and how it helps teachers to construe their experience when facing a mixture of thoughts, feelings and actions. Somekh (2006) also added to this line of discussion on reflection, by stating that “the reflexive sensitivity of the researchers” decides greatly the quality of AR, because “data collection, analysis and interpretations will all be mediated by their sense of self and

identity". Therefore, as Borg (2001) argues, it is essential for researchers to keep some form of reflective accounts, since writing is not only a record of what actually happens but also a tool to "deepening researchers' understanding of all facets of the research process". The function of writing during the process of carrying out AR is therefore, "a self-revelatory and creative process" and it is concluded that "the research diary or journal [is] an essential companion" (O'Hanlon, 1997; Altrichter and Holly, 2005 cited in Somekh, 2006, p. 14).

However, the quality and validation of this growing feature of narrative writing is frequently attacked as a major weakness of AR. In responding to this, Heikkinene, Huttunen and Syrjala (2007) propose five principles in ensuring the validation of narrative writing in AR: principle of historical continuity, principle of reflexivity, principle of dialectics, principle of workability, principle of evocativeness. They concluded that judging the quality of narrative is not merely an issue of validity in the scientific sense, "but a fertile process of validation" involving "raising new possibilities, opening up horizons, generating new interpretations and stimulating dialogue between the researchers and the participants; between the academy and the rest of the world" (p. 18). The narrative form of writing is "finely-tuned" as it ensures that the researcher's "exploration begins at the point more relevant to the diarists' needs and interests depending on who they are, how they came to be, and how their belief affect their learning and their lives" (Ghahremani-Ghajar and Mirhosseini, 2005, p. 209).

Next, I will draw on Porto's (2008) study as an example in showing how narrative writing can help the researcher to perceive more. Her report is about how teaching diaries helped her in gaining insights into an AR study in investigating her efforts of promoting learner autonomy in her English class in a university in Argentina. As she manifested, "the teaching diaries portray my feelings, emotions, values, and beliefs and offer testimony of my professional growth as I struggled to modify my classroom practices to make my teaching more responsive to my beliefs about good pedagogy within the constraints at my University" (p. 185). She treated diary writing "as a vehicle for channelling both [her] reactions to the innovation as well as [her] students." Narrative helps the researcher to understand what motivates our actions, the beliefs, values and emotions, which he or she might not be aware of (Bruner, 1986 cited in Davis, 2007). In my study, the reflective accounts I kept worked in the same way. Both the students' reactions and mine were recorded, and sometimes a

combination of the two. Details of my journey, with both expected and unexpected encounters, are elaborated in 4.2.

4.1.2 Empirical studies on learner autonomy and online language learning

In this section I will refer to two fundamental areas of interest in my study, learner autonomy and online language learning, in which two areas of empirical studies carried out by practitioners gain increasing attention. As discussed in 2.3, empirical studies are fundamental in extending our understanding of learner autonomy moving from theoretical discussions to actual practice in the classroom. Practitioner research, therefore, becomes a medium for researchers to study the process of integrating the concept of autonomy into their practice. Smith and Ushioda (2009) comment on the significance of awareness raising in practitioner research, the *exploratory praxis* mentioned earlier. In discussing pedagogy for autonomy, only through constant reflecting on the roles we teachers play, will we perceive better how learners exercise and develop their autonomy. In order to encourage students to practice autonomy, I aimed to look for ways of providing opportunities for practice instead of planned intervention (Allwright, 2005a, 2005b). Moreover, regarding the second area of interest in my study, the online learning modality, researchers who advocate the use of technology tend to adopt AR in planning the use of technology in a more radical attitude so as to prove the value of this innovation and promote more investigation into it (e.g. Somekh, 2006, Warschauer, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2005). However, my intention is not to promote the use of technology, but to study how students learn in different modalities. Therefore, principles of EP are taken into consideration, especially the epistemological and ethical aspects.

4.1.3 Exploratory Practice

In this section, I will present another strand of practitioner research, EP, which has shaped my research particularly in the epistemological and ethical aspects. Allwright's principles will be presented first, then followed with a comment by Burns (2005) questioning its legitimacy. Next, I will propose an alternative interpretation of EP not as distant from AR as Allwright proposed, but more as a voice calling for attention on various aspects of conducting research in the field.

4.1.3.1 The emergence of EP

Allwright's (2003, 2005a) intention in establishing EP was inspired from his work with teachers in Rio, Brazil. In working with local English teachers, he explored alternative ways of approaching issues teachers deal with. A set of principles were formed to address particularly the epistemological and ethical aspects of research:

1. Put quality of life first.
2. Work primarily to understand life, in the language-classroom or in other contexts.
3. Involve everybody.
4. Work to bring people together.
5. Work also for mutual development.
6. Integrate the work for understanding into classroom or other professional practices.
7. Make the work for understanding and for integration continuous.

According to Allwright (2003), in contrast to AR's starting with problems and aiming to provide solutions, EP proposes to start with puzzles, closer to inquiry in nature, a drive of curiosity not criticism, and aims to achieve 'situational' understanding (p.116). EP is therefore infused with a more appreciative attitude, which is marked as its defining feature in a series of articles published in *Language Teaching Research* since 2003 (Bartu, 2003; Chu, 2007; Kuschnir & Machado, 2003; Li, 2006; Perpigan, 2003; Rose, 2007; Silver, 2008; Slimani-Rolls, 2003; Tajino, 2005; Wu, 2006; Zhang, 2004).

4.1.3.2 Interpreting EP in relation to AR

Although Allwright attempted to distinguish EP from AR, as Burns (2005a) commented, after reviewing the principles, she found that a number of these principles proposed by EP are actually relatively similar to those of AR, "while at the same time apparently disallowing the status of research to teachers' investigative activities" (p. 246). This leaves an impression that EP emphasises teaching more than researching, and consequently leads to a question whether it should be considered as a teaching method or a research method. However, this question does not mean that as EP lays more emphasis on the teaching aspect, it is not worth considering as a research framework.

After speculating on the literature in both EP and AR, I would like to propose a more appreciative way of looking at EP by focusing on the following three aspects; *encouraging teachers-initiated research, calling for achieving genuine understanding and including students in mutual development*. Rather than positioning EP as “a practical alternative to the AR approach” as Allwright originally stated, it can be more constructive to construe his message as a call for attention to issues emerging from the actual execution of AR. This is because very similar assertions, to engage more teachers, to achieve genuine understanding and to include students in the research process, are also voiced in the more general fields of education and practitioner research. In short, instead of interpreting EP as opposed to AR, they are in fact compatible in terms of fundamental beliefs and the ultimate destination.

4.1.3.3 Encouraging teacher-initiated research

First of all, Allwright (2005a) kept emphasising the necessity to have teachers exploring their own practice, which is why this term was coined in the first place. “[A]dopting Action Research as the model for classroom research would only give a new name to what was being asked of teachers. It simply repeats the demand on them to develop research skills taken from the academic repertoire and to run classroom research projects that would be essentially parasitical on both their normal working lives as teachers and the lives of their learners” (p. 355). In fact, not only in our field of ELT, but in other AR practices across disciplines, the same concerns were also expressed. McMahon (1999) turned to reflective practice as a solution, and listed the question as the title of the article—*Whether Reflective Practice Is Just a Synonym for Action Research or Not?*—and provides a definite No.

The answer is emphatically not. Action research is distinguished by a deliberate and planned intent to solve a particular problem (or set of problems). By its nature, action research involves *strategic action* (original italic). Such strategic action is not integral to the reflective practitioner model of learning and teaching (though, of course, it may result). That the reflective practitioner model involves going through part of the action research spiral ... does not make it action research. Merely going through the spiral (even all of it) will not result in action research (p. 167).

Several researchers have reported the observation that the gulf between teaching and research has not yet been bridged, such as Dörnyei (2007) and Borg

(2006) in out field of ELT. This call for a more teacher-controlled research agenda and a more flexible means of presentation has also been discussed by Dadds (2001, 2002) and Burton and Bartlett (2005) in the field of education. This reflects that a voice encouraging teacher control of the research agenda, which has long existed in AR (Elliot, 1991), is still paramount. “Teacher as researcher” used to be rendered as an indispensable pre-requisite in AR. As a widely cited quote by Stenhouse (1975) goes, “*It is not enough that teachers' work should be studied, they need to study it themselves*”. However, according to Burns (2005), “it was realized that it is often unrealistic to expect teachers to have the expertise to conduct rigorous research” (cited in Dörnyei, 2007, p. 191). As a result, collaboration with different degrees between teachers and researchers started to earn recognition in AR.

In Carr & Kemmis’s work (1983) collaboration was essential in emancipatory action research in order to promote changes, and it is assumed that “the process of collaboration will be supportive and unproblematic”. However, Somekh (2006) discussed the potential danger of collaboration in conducting AR—the power-relationship. She drew on her own experience in the PALM project in raising researchers’ awareness of the possible down-side, and explained the following observation:

It was not just the operation of power that constrained our working relationships with teachers, but the fundamental differences in *how we understood the world*. What we came to learn was that our collaboration should not aim to ‘empower’ the teachers by inducting them into new understandings of our world, but that each side of the partnership should learn to respect the others’ values and assumptions in a participatory process that involved moving between and inhabiting each other’s worlds. There is after all something inevitably patronizing in the concept of others needing to be emancipated, particularly as the literature always assumes that the university-based partners will be the leaders in emancipating those characterized as ‘practitioners.’ It is hard to escape the implication in this discourse that practice is of lower status than theory and this is clearly contrary to the espoused values of action researchers.

Dörnyei (2007) also has reported a similar observation about the low quantity of published AR studies, and concluded that “the top-down technology transfer model” still seems to be hard to avoid.

Even though one of the stated goals of action research has been to 'democratize' research, that is to oppose a 'professional expert model' and avoid the pitfalls of 'the "top-down technology transfer model" of academic intervention policy formation and policy implementation" (David, 2002, p. 12), the movement is rather 'top-down' itself with primarily researchers trying to promote it. (p. 191)

Going back to Allwright's argument, in this perspective, there are two attempts in tackling the same problem that teachers are normally overburdened and do not have the time and the energy to carry out research. In AR, the solution is collaboration, so that researchers bring in their expertise to fill in the gap of knowledge of doing research teachers lack. Nevertheless, as Somekh and Dörnyei discussed above, the power relationship between the researcher and the teacher seems to be a very subtle issue to deal with. This will help us to understand why Allwright proposed EP with the hope to lessen the burden and grant teachers a chance to conduct research in a friendlier genre, more narrative and practice-orientated. By doing so, maybe more teachers can *research* their "doing of teaching" and make public their findings.

4.1.3.4 Achieving understanding

Secondly, another prominent argument of EP is the emphasis on achieving understanding, which is closely related to the previous intention, encouraging teacher initiated research. Allwright's (2005a) attention directed to understanding is sometimes criticised as undermining the importance of action, especially when he claimed that sometimes the act of understanding is sufficient. However, instead of taking this voice as a criticism of the lack of understanding in action research, it might be more constructive to interpret it as a warning on the point of departure. In fact this emphasis of understanding is what Freeman (1998) pointed out, "how research can fit within the work of teaching and transform it through increased understanding" in his discussion of teacher education (cited in Burns, 2005a, p. 247).

In fact, Mason's (2002) idea in *The Discipline of Noticing* and Brookfield's (1995) *hunting the assumption* both resemble this prioritising of understanding. The same concern is also elaborated by Stringer (2007), before he discusses strategic planning. "Significant change is also likely to connect with many agencies and organizations, so that participants may find themselves subject to pressures to develop

controlling and bureaucratic styles of operation and lose their community focus and override the principles of action research” (p. 147). What Allwright spotted as pitfalls of AR can be results of those unfortunate cases when AR is carried out under a type of authoritarian manner, called “tyranny” by Stringer, and therefore the well-intentioned understanding AR originally proposed could not be achieved. Moreover, under the pressure of producing findings and results, being able to prove evidences of effective teaching is a lot more pressing than ensuring sufficient understanding has been attained. As Stringer (2007) also pointed out, “in many situations, this expectation (the intention to achieve understanding) runs contrary to the lived experience of the people. ‘Experts’ are usually trained in narrow areas and often cannot understand the intricacies and complexities of people’s lives...Moreover, many of the procedures used to try to broaden inputs from constituent groups are so flawed as to be of little value” (p. 25).

4.1.3.5 Including students in mutual development

Thirdly, another component in Allwright’s principles of EP is the notion of seeking mutual development and viewing students as practitioners of learning. According to Allwright (2005b), this is a question of agency. Again, this concept can be traced in AR. As Dadds (2008) states, AR researchers also need to consider “Who gets changed by the research process, and what is the nature of such changes?”. Carroll and Cotterall (2007) quote Freire (1972) and his view of teachers and learners as co-workers who influence each other, rather than “the teacher acting *upon* the students” (p. 157). They think this is particularly true in language classroom which is “closely intertwined with the social world and is not only influenced by it, but also has an influence on it”. Based on Freire’s notion, they believe that granting learners greater autonomy can help to improve their language acquisition. In a similar light, the American educationalist Barth (1997) proposed to build *a community of learners*, in which “schools can become much more than places where there are big people who are learned and little people who are learners. Schools can become cultures where youngsters discovering the joy, the difficulty, and the excitement of learning as we adults are rediscovering the joy, the difficulty, and the excitement of learning. We are all in it together—a community of learners” (cited in Lamb & Simpson, 2003, p. 55).

4.1.4 AR and EP as compatible in the research framework

In summary, both AR and EP have provided considerable inspiration for me in designing my research and choosing the data collection tools for me to seek answers to my research questions. AR's long tradition and rich discussions have provided solid background and specific guidance in maintaining a flexible yet focused structure, whereas EP has reminds me of issues to consider in ensuring my research stays close to my teaching. This is why I include both in this discussion of my research framework.

4.2 Research design

As stated earlier in 1.3, there were two stages of my research, Stage One, *Laying the Ground*, and Stage Two, *Main Study*. My research purpose is to achieve understanding first rather than carrying out planned action at the initial stage. Therefore, no radical changes were planned for the first semester. Two courses, Class A (e-learning) and Class B (b-learning), were carried out, targeting on two different groups of students. This first semester is termed as Laying the Ground instead of Phase One or Cycle One, for there are fundamental differences between the two semesters in the research focus and the way I managed the course.

The following section will present the challenges faced at different stages when seeking answers to my research questions. How to maintain flexibility in the process of the data gathering is marked as the hallmark of qualitative research. The presentation of the year-long data collection is arranged chronologically. The field work is divided into four stages: the Prelude (April-Aug. 2007), Laying the Ground (Sep. 2007-Jan. 2008), Winter Break Reflection (Feb. 2008), Main Study (March-June 2008). I will move along the timeline by starting with how I negotiated access into the field in April, 2007. The first stage of data collection termed as Navigating the Ground will then be outlined to list a number of unexpected challenges. Winter Break Reflection will be discussed to highlight the change of direction based on the first semester's experience. The fourth stage is the main study in which a third listening course with a planned one-month project is included.

4.2.1 Prelude: Negotiating access into the field

As I explained in earlier chapters on the background and the research framework, the online courses I taught in summer and fall 2005 triggered my interests to probe into the area of learner autonomy and pursue further study. During the process of locating the area of my research interests, I was fond of Action Research and the idea of researching my own teaching. Even before I started my PhD study in Oct., 2006, I had expressed my interests in offering the same listening course to the coordinator Kate Liu who kindly agreed to arrange two courses in the academic year 2008/2009. The decision to research the same listening course underpins the nature of my research as practice-oriented. It also conforms to one of Allwright's (2005a) practical suggestions, "integrate the work for understanding' into the existing working life of the classroom" to achieve a sense of continuity (p. 360).

In April, 2007, I went back to Taiwan to settle down details for my fieldwork. With Liu's help, my application to teach the e-learning course was already processed through email communication. During my stay in Taiwan, I visited my ex-boss Father Bauer, the chair of the English department in the night division which offers full-time study for those who need to work during the day. I shared with him my research progress, and he showed interest in offering an advanced listening course designed for the seniors who were graduating and entering the job market. We decided to adopt the B-Learning (blended) modality because the students in the night division were not introduced to the E-Learning mode before and besides, they would need to pay an extra fee for online courses offered in the AIEDL programme. After settling on these two elective courses, out of the fear that they might be cancelled due to an insufficient number of students, I wrote an email to the chair Yun-Pi Yuan about the possibility of teaching the required listening course for freshmen as the back-up plan.

In summary, my trip to Taiwan changed my previous plan to study solely the E-Learning modality. It wasn't my initial purpose to compare two different learning modes; however, this episode is common in reality for teachers working in an institution to offer a certain type of course, skill-oriented or topic-oriented, for different target groups of students. In addition, this prelude signifies the EP nature of my study even before I started to collect data. From the starting point, my research serves the teaching needs more than my teaching serves my research needs, a fundamental tenet in EP.

4.2.2 Laying the ground (Fall, 2007)

The aim of the first semester was to gain a more thorough understanding of the nature of the two courses Class A (e-learning) and Class B (b-learning). Both classes were elective courses offered for the third year and the fourth year students. However, the mode of learning was quite different. In Class A, students only needed to come to an in-class meeting for three times during the semester. Therefore, students did most of the learning online by themselves. In Class B, the face-to-face weekly meeting was compulsory, and the online learning became what they did before or after the face-to-face meetings.

For Class A, although the course was offered before, certain adjustments were necessary when it was offered to different groups of students. In the first semester, I encountered different problems in these two courses. In Class A (e-learning) I ended up with an oversize class of 77 students coming from several different departments. Due to this large size, I was appointed three TAs whose jobs were communicating with students regarding technical issues and responding to their listening diaries. Moreover, I met the student three weeks after the semester began, since the first class was cancelled because of a typhoon and the second class was cancelled because of a national holiday, the Moon Festival. Therefore, the first month passed fairly quickly and students started to report their problems in the second month. Because of the large number in class, the communication between me and the TAs, between students and me and between the students and the TAs was not as smooth as I expected. This communication problem resulting from the large number of students also influenced the way students interacted on the online platform. Although the number of posts was high, it was difficult to develop threads of discussion as there were limited replies under each post.

As for Class B (b-learning), I faced a different kind of problem more related to students' attitude. I have to admit that I carried an assumption that since we met face-to-face, it should be a lot easier to communicate, and they would have fewer problems with online learning since we could solve the problems together. However, the reality was a lot more complicated than my expectation. Students still encountered a lot of technical problems, and they were more frustrated since this online learning mode was new to them. Moreover, since the online component was planned differently for different units, students sometimes got confused and the responses on the platform

were few if I did not remind them.

4.2.3 Winter break reflection (February, 2008)

On January 22nd 2008, I attended the end-of-the-semester meeting for AIEDL teachers at 8 A.M., and in the same afternoon, at 4 P.M., I hopped on the plane with the collected data from the fall semester and flew to England to spend two weeks in the University of Warwick. The travelling, physically moving from Taiwan to England, detached me from the working context in which I had been immersed for four months and helped to create a distance that enabled me to perceive things in a different light. In this section, I will narrate how the short winter break after the fall semester marked the major turning point in my study. The end-of-semester meeting in Fu-Jen and the seminars and tutorials in Warwick both provided me opportunities to reinterpret what had happened in the fall semester.

Since the inception of the AIEDL project in 2005, the end-of-semester meeting served as a main gathering opportunity for all teachers to report on progress, to share questions arising from our practice and to exchange successful, or unsuccessful, stories. Gradually, the form of the meeting evolved as the project developed, and in order to build a more rounded picture of students' learning, the TAs and students were also invited. In the meeting I attended in Fall, 2008, each course was allocated 40 minutes in total. The teacher gave a 20-minute presentation, followed by a 10-minute TA report, and then in the last 10 minutes, two students shared their learning experiences and offered suggestions. At the end, there was a panel discussion open to all participants to raise issues.

This AIEDL meeting was the first step for me to step back and make sense of the fall semester teaching. My report was built on the presentation I gave in the ILA conference (The Independent Learning Association), Oct., 2007, titled *Approach Distance Learner through Diaries*, with new data collected in the fall semester. Having an audience was particularly helpful for me to better put my thoughts and observation into words. While I was preparing for my report, I took an initial look at students' learning including those messages they left on the forum and also the listening diaries they kept. It became clear to me that students preferred to communicate their thoughts and reflections in the diaries rather than the forum, the reasons for which seemed worth exploring. I also benefited from listening to the TA

and students' reports. Regarding the TA's report, one of my TAs, Jason, who also worked for the other two courses, presented an interesting comparison of how students turned to different channels of communication in different courses. His report reminded me that indeed this group of students in Class A (e-learning course) left more messages on the message board but they were not that keen on participating on the forums. It seemed that they had interpreted the functions of message board and the forums differently, and they chose different media to express their ideas depending on their needs and intention, which later drew my attention during more in-depth data analysis to look at their sense of agency in using these ICT tools (see 6.2.1.1).

Some practical issues raised in the panel discussion also resonated with my own observation, such as how to better improve email communication to establish a sense of trust and how to facilitate online collaborative learning in small groups. We teachers shared common interests in looking for means of integrating technology effectively in accommodating students' needs. However, while I felt relief that other teachers also shared the same kind of worries with me, I started to wonder that there seemed to be a shared sense of anxiety underlying those reports and communal worries. That is, a question we teachers ultimately had to answer was, "Why adopt the online learning mode when face-to-face instruction seems more manageable and effective?" In order to prove that time and money invested in this online learning mode is worthwhile, we wanted to prove that this online learning mode worked as well as, or even better than the face-to-face learning mode. I only realised the pre-conditioned technology-determinist point of view during my stay in England. However, the process of integrating the use of technology is much more complicated than a simple question of which mode of learning works better. This realisation later led to a re-direction of my research questions, what I call "the process of appropriation", which will be later addressed in the discussion chapter (7.1.2.3 The Emerging Issues during the Process of Appropriation).

The two weeks were long enough to create a distance for me to perceive things in a different light and make changes for Phase Two accordingly. I switched from a teaching gear to a research one. It was not a sudden realisation overnight but accumulated through some minor incidents while I attended seminar and tutorial meetings and even included some small talks I had with other PhD students in the corridors or in cafés. For instance, over a coffee break, I had a discussion with another PhD student from Taiwan who also worked on forum analysis. She pointed

out that what I described as forums was quite restricted, so it did not sound like an open kind of forum to her. It suddenly dawned on me that it is true that it was not the type of forum that could grant users total freedom in posting messages and starting threads. In fact, it functioned more like a discussion space subordinate to each lesson, for it was not student-initiated. Instead, teachers or TAs had to open up a thread first for students to reply and generate further discussion. On the other hand, it was the message board that was open for students to leave messages; however, it was not threaded so that it could be hard for them to respond to any other previous messages. This realisation explained perfectly why the kind of interaction I expected never happened on the forums. Yet, this realization did not lead me simply to blame their limited participation on the constraints of the technology we used. I learned that I needed to adopt a more understanding attitude toward students' choice of medium of expression, i.e. diaries or forums. As a result, I decided to pay more attention to listening diaries and the role of reflection.

Another major change regarding the data collection procedure was to include a third listening course (Class C). This decision was not out of a research intention, but more a decision that emerged out of my teaching practice. First of all, I had tried several activities in class and found that this group of freshmen were probably more ready for online learning than some of the seniors in Class B (b-learning). Since Class C was the third listening course I taught, and I indeed integrated several online listening activities in the fall semester it seemed natural to include it in my study so as to discuss my role as a teacher-research and how I changed throughout this process of managing three courses with different degrees of technology integration. What encouraged me was that two students who had lived in the United States previously and whose English was nearly native chose to do the course as an independent study in the e-learning mode. This led me to think that it would be beneficial to incorporate online activities for the whole freshman group in Class C – in other words, to adopt a b-learning mode for part of the course. Unlike the design of Class B, Class C was a required two-semester course and the curriculum had been mapped out in the fall semester, which meant I could not make major changes. Thus, I resorted to implementing a one-month online learning project at the end of the semester.

In summary, through preparing for my report in Fu-Jen, I had the first chance to step back and reflect on the fall semester, and reconsider whether to pursue my original research focus, collaboration. After my trip to England, the opportunities of

participating in seminars and tutorial meetings in Centre for Applied Linguistics offered me a more research-oriented perspective in examining the courses, which then prompted me to make the two major changes for the spring semester—to focus on listening diaries and the role of reflection, and to include Class C in my study.

4.2.4 Main Study (Spring, 2008)

After all the discussion and reflection in February, I went back to Taiwan with a more relaxed mind and a more open attitude. Like *the Balanced Research Plea* Li (2006) proposed, “‘balanced research’ should involve researchers moving back and forwards between pre-designed and adapted plans in the course of research, especially in authentic social contexts such as a language classroom. Such adaptations or changes should neither be simply attributed to the researcher’s lack of foresight nor be regarded as something detrimental to the success of a research study”. In my Main Study, especially after the third listening course (Class C) was included, I went through a more dynamic and fluid teaching and researching process, as my teaching was more closely integrated with my research. At several points, several things were going on simultaneously in three different courses. There were more improvised moments in teaching which led to spontaneous decisions in research, which made it difficult for me to write the narrative. Therefore, instead of presenting Phase Two in a chronological order, I will briefly summarise the three courses and then present some emerging themes shared by two or three courses. I believe when I later analyze the data, this phase will appear more clear to me (for further discussions, see 6.3 ‘The role of collaboration and reflection’ and 7.1.2 ‘Issues in the process of appropriation’).

To facilitate the following discussion, I will present the e-learning course as Class A, the B-Learning course as Class B and the freshmen listening course with the one-month project as Class C. In the 2nd phase, both Class A and B were run the 2nd time, but for Class C, this online learning mode is a new learning experience for students. The following table outlines the background information of the three courses.

Table 4-1 Description of Class A, B and C

	Class A e-learning	Class B b-learning	Class C b-learning
Course Title	Intermediate Listening	Computer Assisted Listening Comprehension	Freshmen Listening Lab
Course Type	Elective	Elective	Required
	Semester-long	Semester-long	Year-long
Student Major	Non-English Major	English Major	English Major
Year	2 nd year and above	3 rd year and above	First year
No. of Students	25	24	33
Length of online learning	One semester 16 weeks	One semester 16 weeks	One-month 4 weeks
Modality of Interaction	Reduced F2F meeting (3 times)	Regular weekly F2F meeting	Regular weekly F2F meeting
	synchronous & asynchronous discussions	asynchronous discussions	asynchronous discussions

In my study, all of the courses are listening courses but serving three different groups of target students. This arrangement does not result from an intention to study different modalities or to compare e-learning and b-learning, but merely a result of the simple demand for more courses, a common situation many language teachers face in reality. In order to facilitate later discussion on how I modified the courses for different target groups in the data collection process, it is necessary to present the overview of the course design. I will explain the fundamental structure of the listening course, including the objective in designing this listening course, the choice of listening materials, the audio/video websites, and the assignments, the listening diaries and the group recording project. After presenting the overview of the listening course, a unique feature of the online courses offered in the AIEDL programme, the role of TAs, is then illustrated before the conclusion.

4.2.4.1 Class A (e-learning): Intermediate Listening

Probably because the course was offered for the second time in the spring semester, we had a much smaller number of 25 students than in the fall semester. This time the course was offered under the Social Science College and there were two students from Life-Long Learning Programme. This group of students seemed to be more prepared for online learning and their own responsibilities. With this small number, I only had to work with one TA Ya-ren who had helped in the fall semester. I met with her in the week before the semester began for an interview which originally I thought would last 30 minutes but she shared with me her own experience of online learning as a student and it lasted for more than one hour. As described in 3.4, the course design and the listening materials remained the same except for the last month. When I was making plans for Class C, I thought the same idea could be applied to other classes. Therefore, instead of me choosing what to listen, starting in May, the last month, students took turns to share websites they actually listen to.

4.2.4.2 Class B (b-learning): Computer Assisted Listening Comprehension

The B-Learning course was also offered for the second time, and in the spring semester students in the third year were also allowed to take the course. Similar to Class A, students had better clues about what the course was like and some of them had even talked to those who took the course in the fall semester to get an overall picture. I also booked the lab for the first month so that students had more time exploring the use of *EngSite* and their questions could be answered immediately in class. In the very first class, I explained why doing the listening before they came to class was essential in this course and shared with them the discussion I had with the students in the fall semester. To avoid making the assumption that they would read the instructions online, at the end of each lesson I showed them what they were expected to listen to for the next class. As I mentioned above, the listening diaries were the main focus in the first two months. I took extracts from the diaries students wrote for them to discuss in small groups. As for sharing their own websites, students in this B-Learning course could actually present the site and elaborate the reasons and examples in more details.

4.2.4.3 Class C (b-learning) Freshmen Listening Lab

This course offered to freshmen in the English department is the only required course among the three and also the only year-long course, which means I taught this group of students for two semesters. I had chosen Class B (third year students) as the b-learning course to study in the fall semester because I was not sure whether the freshman group could adapt themselves to a new learning mode while they were adjusting to the college life. However, after the first semester, I found that this group of freshmen in Class C were actually very used to technology no matter in their daily life or in the academic learning. I tried to integrate several units of online learning in the fall semester, 2007 and they reacted well. Therefore, I decided to try a one-month online listening project by the end of the semester. Moreover, we had classes in the lab, where all students had a computer with Internet access in front of them, which made it easier for them to interact with each other even during the class time. For the above reasons, I decided to run a one-month online project in May.

4.3 Data collection instruments

In this qualitative research study, for the validation and triangulation of data, a multi-method approach was applied “in order to examine different levels of the same situation or to focus on different aspects of the same phenomenon” (Luttrell, 1999; Dillabough, 1999; Mann, 1998 cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 114). According to Denzin (1978), “data triangulation refers to the gathering of data at different points in time and from different sources“(cited in Hall & Rist, 1999, p. 296). Since each data collection tool has its own strength and weakness, to achieve better data triangulation, at least two different methodological approaches are considered to take in different perspectives of the same issue when the researcher answers the research question (Flick, 2007, p. 40-41). In my research, to obtain a robust picture of students’ development of learner autonomy, students’ interactions in both the virtual and conventional classrooms are accompanied by my observation and field notes; the analysis of solicited diary materials is complemented by focus group and individual interviews.

The table below (4-2) shows the types and amounts of data collected in Class A, B and C, the three courses with different modalities. The quantities of each type of data are listed to present a better picture of how much data were collected.

Furthermore, to capture the feature of this classroom-based practitioner research, I label the collected data into two main categories. The first category is *pedagogically motivated data*, comprising students' assignments, the listening diaries, their reflective accounts on the language learning process, and the interaction in the classroom and on the platform. The second main category is *added data*, including questionnaires and interviews, to obtain the emic view from the students.

During my year-long fieldwork, I faced the same dilemma Li (2006) described in her proposal of 'balanced research'. She admitted her initial intention was to collect data for her research; however, during the process of teaching, she became naturally concerned more about teaching than her own research. She described the challenges in striking the balance between teaching and researching: "I would have to struggle between my research pressure and my teaching beliefs, between my research expectations and my teaching responsibilities, between my own research aims and my students' learning needs, between what I wanted from them as a researcher and how I felt about them as a teacher" (p. 443). At the end, she concluded that "research tools and pedagogical tools may/should never stay apart." Consequently, the purpose of labelling my data in two categories is to highlight this pedagogically motivated nature of practitioner research—the activities and assignments that took place in class constitute the majority of my data. In the following sections, the data collection instruments will be explained individually to elaborate how different sources of data were collected during this year-long process.

Table 4-2 Scope of Data

Class Course title Types of data	Class A Intermediate Listening Comprehension	Class B Computer Assisted Listening Comprehension	Class C Freshmen Lab
Modality	e-learning Reduced F2F meeting (Three times per semester)	b-learning Regular weekly meeting (16 times per semester)	One month b-learning Regular weekly meeting (16 times per semester)
Group Size	Fall 77 Spring 25	Fall 19 Spring 23	Spring 33
I. Pedagogically Motivated Data			
A. Interaction on <i>EngSite</i>			
Asynchronous			
1. email correspondence	○ (Fall 190 + Spring 185)	○ (Fall 98 + Spring 70)	○ (One Month 42)
2. Message board	○ (48 messages)	○ (20 messages)	○ (4 messages)
3. Weekly Posting	○ Total 224 (Fall 217 + Spring 17)	○ Total 171 (Fall 103 + Spring 68)	○ Total 78 (One Month)
Synchronous			
4. Weekly discussion (chat room or MSN)	○ (1359 lines)	✕	✕
B. Listening diaries	7 entries	7 entries	4 entries
Total entries	170	172	114
Average word counts	350 (per entry)	400 (per entry)	450 (per entry)
C. Number of Reflective accounts	Two	Two	One
Total entries	40 (25+15)	39 (22+17)	31
Average word counts	300 (per entry)	350 (per entry)	200 (per entry)
II. Added Data			
A. Numbers of Interviews	8	8	4
Total hours	10.20 (hrs)	11.40 (hrs)	5.50 (hrs)
1. Focus group	6 (3 online + 3 F2F)	5 (F2F)	3 (F2F)
Total hours	7.20 (hrs)	6.40 (hrs)	4.40 (hrs)
2. Individual	2 (F2F)	3 (F2F)	1 (F2F)
Total hours	3 (hrs)	5 (hrs)	1.30 (hrs)
B. Questionnaires	Pre-course Midterm End-of-course	Pre-course End-of-course	End-of-course

4.3.1 Pedagogically motivated data

The pedagogically motivated data refers to those data collected as I taught the three listening courses face-to-face and online without particular data eliciting instruments. Since online learning is an essential component to all three courses, the use of the Internet inevitably plays a critical role in data collection as well. As Mann and Stewart (2000) remark, “the Internet is considered not simply as a technological tool but as a wholly new, constructed environment with its own codes of practice” (p. 7). In the following sections, the interactive functions of the *Learning Management System EngSite*, including the message board, weekly discussion points and the chatroom, will be discussed to present how students left their traces of learning for further analysis.

4.3.1.1 Interactive space in EngSite

As introduced in 3.5.4, *EngSite* is a *Learning Management System*, which has similar functions to *Blackboard* and *WebCT*, the widely adopted commercial system for online learning. *EngSite*, dedicated to English teaching and learning, has been designed by Dr. Wen-chi Lin and his team from Central University since 2001 (Lin, 2007). As with all computer software and programs, it is not perfect. The major advantage is that it was designed specifically for the purpose of English teaching and therefore, some demands specific to online language teaching and learning were taken into consideration, such as providing annotations on vocabulary and idioms. This teacher-initiative feature enables us teachers to communicate *our* needs with the platform designers, which rarely happens in commercially design platforms when teachers are the consumers who have the right to complain but have to go

through a much longer process to have their opinions included in the programme designed. The fundamental guiding principle of *EngSite* is to extend two-way communication between teachers and students beyond the walls of traditional classrooms—for teachers to design, store and assemble course materials and to provide guidance anytime when necessary, and for students to share their opinions with the teachers or the peers and to reach for help anytime when they need. In the following sections, the three main functions contributing to creating an interactive space will be introduced one by one with screenshots presented to illustrate the functions. Both advantages and disadvantages are equally discussed to evaluate the actual use of these functions in *EngSite*.

4.3.1.1.1 Messages board

After teachers and students log into *EngSite*, the first screen they see is the message board open to all to leave messages (Screenshot 4-1). For the teacher and the TAs, this is the best space to make announcements, which can be sent automatically to students' preferred email accounts. For students, this is a miscellaneous space to communicate all kinds of issues with not only the teacher and TAs but also their peers. There is one disadvantage of the message board, that is, the messages are listed chronologically, and they cannot be replied to and developed into threads of discussions. Please see Figure 4-1 for the total number of messages posted. The total numbers of messages posted in one semester reveal the degree of importance the message board played in communication in the three courses.

Screenshot 4-1 Message Board (Class B)



群英網
ENG SITE

Course Title

Computer-Assisted Listening Comprehension

Teacher : [Sherri Wei](#)

Log out

Roster
Announcement
B.B.
Discussion
Assignments
Polls

Announcement Last Updated: **03 12 2008 11:58PM** [New](#)

[Announcement](#)

- ▼ [Invitation to participate in group interviews](#)
- ▼ [Online Course Evaluation](#)
- ▼ [Reminders for Final Recording Presentaiton](#)

| ALL |

Message X

Title 公告 : **【Invitation to participate in group interviews】**

Content Dear All
As you know, I'm working on my research and need to interview students participated in the listening course last semester. Hope that some of you could join me for a group interview, which is about 30 mins, to talk about your experience last semester. The interview is in Chinese. Please contact me if you are willing to help out. Many thanks in advance.

[[Sherri Wei](#) [Sherri Wei](#): 03 12 2008 11:58PM] TOP

Title 公告 : **【Online Course Evaluation】**

Content Dear All
First of all, thank you all for your participation this afternoon. I'm not sure if I'll offer the course again next semester, but your comments are really valuable. Many thanks!
This is to remind you to fill out online course evaluation before 1/11(Fri).
請在 1月11日 (五) 之前登入 下方網址
<http://newevaluate.fju.edu.tw/questionary/>
Many thanks!

[[Sherri Wei](#) [Sherri Wei](#): 01 10 2008 1:05AM] TOP

Title 公告 : **【Reminders for Final Recording Presentaiton】**

Content Dear All
Here're some reminders for next week.

1. Please come on time.
2. We are going to meet in 608 instead of 508.
3. Please send me the recording file before next Mon.
4. The way you present your recording would also be graded.

[[Sherri Wei](#) [Sherri Wei](#): 01 9 2008 5:17PM] TOP

ENG SITE






- Course Intro
- Requirements
- Course Units
 - 1、 Course Orientaiton
 - 2、 Self Introduction
 - 3、 Travel
 - 4、 Travel: Taiwan
 - 5、 Movie
 - 6、 Midterm Review
 - 7、 Storytelling: Fairy Tales
 - 8、 Music
 - 9、 American Pie
 - 10、 Steve Jobs' Speech
 - 11、 X'mas songs
 - 12、 Radio Diary
 - 13、 News Story
- Chat Room
- Teacher
 - Mark Grades
 - List Grades
- TA
- Links
 - About.com Video Library

Message X

4.3.1.1.2 Weekly discussion points

Every week students have to go to the specific section dedicated to that week for self-study (Screenshot 4-2). Right below each week's listening materials is a discussion area targeting on the topic of that week for students to share their reflection and/or questions. The purpose of this discussion area is to maintain a focus discussion on that particular week's topic. The advantage is that students can develop threads when replying to the original posts (Screenshot 4-3). The numbers of views are also shown so that we know how many times this message has been read, which signal the number of students lurking. However, since the threads have to be initiated by the teacher or TAs, this limits the freedom of developing other topics of discussion. Although I opened a free thread for any comments and questions to encourage students to leave messages, as Figure 4-2 shows, not many interactions actually happened. Students still preferred to reveal their thoughts in the listening diaries rather than online in this public space.

Screenshot 4-2 Weekly Discussion Points (Class C)



群英網
ENG SITE

Course Title
Freshmen English Lab

Teacher: [Sharn Wei](#)

[Log out](#)

[Roster](#)
[Announcement](#)
[B.B.](#)
[Discussion](#)
[Assignments](#)
[Polls](#)

Section — Orientation [1 Week]

[+](#) In this one month extensive listening project, you would be asked to keep a list...

Section Content Unit Discussion Area | Assignment Area

Week	Date/Title	Teaching Materials
1	5/13-5/20-	<p>British Council</p> <p>Podcast & Listening</p> <p>Study Diary</p>
2	5/13-5/20	<p>California Distance Learning Project</p> <p>Fun Reading Show</p> <p>Fun Reading Show</p> <p>Cnn SF/WPLN Learning Resources</p> <p>Oscar Nomination for Palestinian Teen</p>
2		<p>VOA</p> <p>VOA Special English</p>

Discussion [Add Entry](#)

No.	Topic	Content	Post No.	The Lastest Post	Edit
1	Please say hi and tell us 3 things about yourself	Dear All I know yo...	30	2008/6/14	Edit
2	Your Favorite Website?	Among the listening ...	7	2008/5/27	Edit

Section Assignment [Add Entry](#)

No.	Section Assignment	Openness	Deadline	Submission No.	Read Assignments	Edit
1	Reflection on your listening process	Yes	2008/5/20	31	Read Assignments	Edit
2	Group Presentation PPT	Yes	2008/6/10	5	Read Assignments	Edit

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Screenshot 4-3 Threaded discussion (Class A)

Discussion

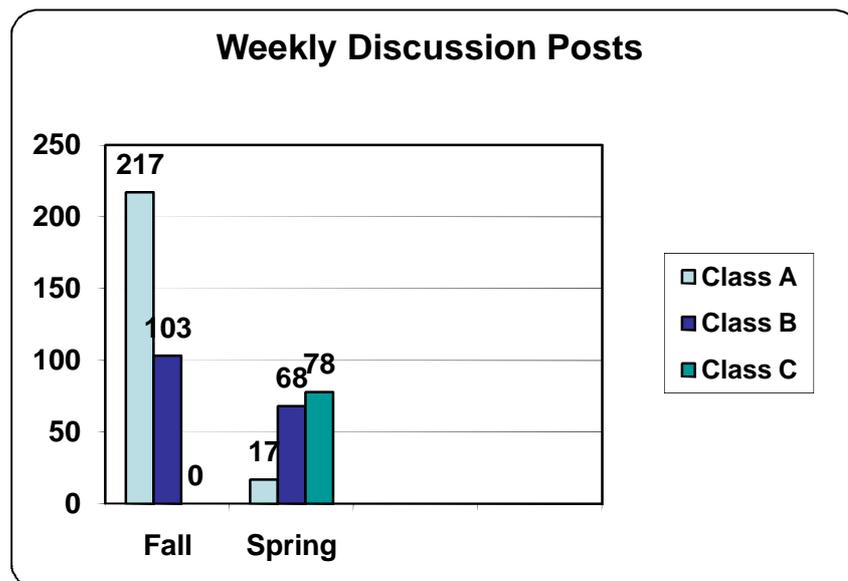
Topic / More on Movies Course Section| Post
Msg

Please recommend any website that you can watch movie trailers or any site that related to your favorite movie.

Name	Content	Response	View	Create
江欣樺 Jacqueline	I found a meaningful movie called "click", and the.....	0	19	2007/10/29
黃家盈CASH	IMDB is a huge movie database you can find a compl.....	0	10	2007/10/29
李宗穎	Ratatouille is a cute movie, I found this movie tr.....	1	8	2007/10/29
胡佳婷	This is the official website of "The Matrix" ~~~W.....	0	8	2007/10/29
Glendy Chen(陳怡 菁)	http://www.imdb.com/ It is a website you can sear.....	0	10	2007/10/29
鄭孟潔	Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement is one of my	1	14	2007/10/28
翁健豪	There are some clips of the movie "The Legend Of 1.....	1	19	2007/10/28
沈韶純	The movie I recommend is "LiveFree or Die-Hard".	0	7	2007/10/28
葉子嫣 Yeh Tzu-Yen	My favorite movie type is comedy. Last time I reco.....	0	18	2007/10/27
Sophia Lin (林芸伊)	Pride and Prejudice's short subject: http://www.p.....	0	27	2007/10/25
林佩蓉	This is the view trailer of "Love actually": ht.....	0	26	2007/10/24
郭芬如 (Janno)	1).Movie trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=.....	1	32	2007/10/24

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Figure 4-1 The Numbers of Weekly Discussion Posts



4.3.1.1.2 Chatroom records

In Class A, the e-learning class, since face-to-face in-class meetings were reduced to only three times per semester, I had regular online office hours for students to ask questions and share ideas. A chatroom function is available for real-time synchronous text discussion in *EngSite*. In the beginning of the semester, I met with students from Class A for online discussions in this chatroom. The advantage of the chatroom is that all the discussions are saved automatically and the record is open to all users. However, the design is not as user friendly as other instant message programmes as MSN or Skype. As the following screenshot (4-4) shows, students were in the chatroom but decided to write emails, use msn or even meet face-to-face. As a result, after a few tries, students stopped coming to the chatroom and preferred using MSN with which students were more familiar.

Screenshot 4-4 Chatroom (Class A)

The screenshot displays the EngSite chatroom interface. The top navigation bar includes 'Course Title: Listening Comprehension (Spring, 2008)', 'Teacher: Sherri Wei', and a 'Log out' button. Below this is a menu with icons for Roster, Announcement, B.B., Discussion, Assignments, and Polls. The chatroom header shows 'Chat Room' and 'In Chatroom: 1 persons'. The main content area is titled 'Real Time Discussion Record' and contains a table with the following data:

No.	Text	Date	Time	Nick Name	
201	我覺得我們可以當面討論會筆線上來的有效率	2008/5/6	下午 06:38:00	阿	<input type="checkbox"/>
202	wyc212@ms75.hinet.net	2008/5/6	下午 06:37:00	阿	<input type="checkbox"/>
203	Ok but what's the time all of us could be online	2008/5/6	下午 06:36:00	Zenobia	<input type="checkbox"/>
204	or write a e-mail	2008/5/6	下午 06:35:00	阿	<input type="checkbox"/>
205	or write a e-mail	2008/5/6	下午 06:35:00	阿	<input type="checkbox"/>
206	maybe we can leave a message by the msn	2008/5/6	下午 06:35:00	阿	<input type="checkbox"/>
207	how to catch the teacher	2008/5/6	下午 06:33:00	Zenobia	<input type="checkbox"/>
208	what do you think	2008/5/6	下午 06:33:00	阿	<input type="checkbox"/>
209	and discuss this tomorrow or other time	2008/5/6	下午 06:32:00	阿	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.3.1.1.3 Other ICT tools: Email and MSN

As emails have become “the dominant type of daily communication” (Peter et al., 2006 cited in Janetzko, 2008, p. 167), they also play a dominant role in communication in my study. I provided my email address on the course syllabi in our first class meetings for students to reach me in all three courses. For the e-learning Class A, this use of emails as a communicative channel was particularly crucial, for the face-to-face meetings were reduced to three times only, in the first week, in the midterm week, and in the final week. The use of emails in my study served as a communication tool among the teacher, TAs and students, instead of a data elicitation tool for interviews or questionnaires. According to Lin (2007), my colleague who ran an online writing course on the same platform *EngSite*, her students preferred writing emails to the teacher and TAs to ask questions, especially those directly related to their learning. In the case of online learning, prompt replies are crucial in establishing the student-teacher relationship, especially during the initial email exchanges in the first month, when students are testing the water. Therefore, she suggested that to build a sense of trust, it is better to reply within 48 hours.

In addition to the common use of emails, the other ICT that is now popular among college students is MSN. As I explained above, my first intention was to use the chatroom in *EngSite* for synchronous interactions. However, after the third week, students stopped coming to the chatroom, and suggested to chat on the MSN which had obviously become the norm of their daily communication. Therefore, I stayed on the MSN during the online office hours. MSN is indeed more user-friendly; however, it became more demanding for me when more than three students were sending messages to me at the same time. Moreover, when the same questions were

asked over and over again, I couldn't refer to the chatroom record, but had no choice but to answer them over and over again. It was indeed more convenient for students to reach me via MSN than emails; however, it was the same group of students who would take the advantage of MSN. I faced another challenge of making a choice between freedom and control.

4.3.1.2 Assignments: Diaries & reflective writing

As outlined in 3.5.3, the main assignments students were required to work on were the listening diaries, in which students described the difficulties they encountered and reflected on the listening materials. Different from the diaries which focus on the weekly topics, two reflective accounts, one at the beginning of the semester and the other at the end of the semester, were also collected for students to reflect on their overall language learning processes with the focus on listening. In all three classes, all the assignments students handed in were word files uploaded to *EngSite*.

4.3.1.2.1 Listening diaries

As discussed in 3.5.3.1, in this online listening course, diaries are the main requirement for students to record their listening process and communicate their problems with the teacher and TAs. Listening diaries were designed as both a pedagogical tool and a data collection instrument. From the data collection perspective, the listening diaries collected from students provide rich data in understanding more about their listening process, particularly their use of learning strategies, impact of classroom interaction, conversational interaction, proficiency thresholds, self-study, and vocabulary development (Oxford et al, 2004). The following table lists the number of entries collected in both semesters.

Table 4-3 Numbers of Diaries Collected

Diary entry Number of Ss		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
		Fall							
A	77	71	69	66	65	21			334
B	20	20	19	19	19				92
Spring									
A	25	24	23	23	20	14	16	10	170
B	23	21	23	22	9	21	19	17	172
C	33	28	5	24	26				114

In Class A, diaries play a critical role in acting as a channel for direct communication between the learner and the teacher (TAs), and to understand individual differences and to create further interaction among peers when they read each other’s diaries. It also creates a comfort zone for students to express what they think and communicate with the teacher and TAs. A student said in the interview, “I feel more comfortable to express my ideas in the diaries. In *EngSite*, I sometimes feel uncomfortable to post. I feel that I’m naked in front of others.”

Table 4-4 Sample Data 1 Diary from Class A (Original)

Name	Zenobia	Student No.	494630447	Diary Entry	Diary 5
Date	4/26~29	Time	1 hours	Difficulty	★★★★
Subject	New York works-Selma Koch, Bra Saleswoman				
Summary	<p>“ We know your size” is a quote of Town Shop’s owner, Selma Koch. She sold many kinds of underwear for many people, although she is 95 years old, she’s still animate and humorous person. There are many bra’s size today, but she still could know what’s a woman’s bra between two size. During selling days, it’s very busy to order things, sometimes it doesn’t have a complete set for customs, however, the most thing is how to treat customs in polite way, nether a compliment or a suggestion. “Honest is important in selling” said from Selma Koch.</p>				

Listening Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why a woman custom says:” Well is this one going to hide a lot of stuff?” after she try the bra? 2. Is Selma Koch speaking in American accent? sometimes I don’t know what she said, because the words are connect together.
Reflection	<p>In this diary, I very admire Selma’s humorous to customs, such as a woman customs came to buy a rode, which had long sleeves. And Selma ridiculed that custom’s husband, because he is a nice husband, who won’t let his wife to do breakfast. Form this short episode; I can know she is a articulate selling, no matter how old she is. Not only her selling skill, but also her attitude toward customs, she takes customs as friends, if the underwear doesn’t fit on customs, she will tell the true, not just for business to earn money. That’s way I like her, because many salesman just sell their products whether is fit on customs or not.</p> <p>It’s very interesting to know many people’s daily life, especial from working person, I could learn their working attitude and personality, in spite of not seeing them actually, by listening their diary, I learn a lesson before I go to work.</p>

What is interesting about students’ responses to keeping the listening diaries in Class C is that they wrote more in their diaries than students in Class A and B, and claimed that they enjoyed the writing in the interviews. As the following Excerpt shows, the sample diary entry from Class C is 517 words, more than double in length than the above entry from Class A which is 157 words.

Excerpt 4-1 Listening Diary from Class C (Original)

Summary of Steve Jobs Stanford Commencement Speech 2005

Steve Jobs starts the speech with the story of his birth. He biological parents decided to give him to someone else to be raised up and they insisted that the adopted parents must be graduated from colleges. As a result, they found a lawyer and his wife. It turned out to be that the lawyer and his wife wanted a baby girl instead of a baby boy and young Steve Jobs was sent to another couple who didn’t graduate from college. However, the adopted parents promised that Steve would someday go to college. After graduating from high school, Steve studied in a college which cost a lot each year. Steve Jobs found it unnecessary and dropped out from it. Because he dropped out from school, he didn’t have to take normal classes. He started to sit in the courses he was interested in. He learned a lot about calligraphy at that time. It results the invention of different fonts in the personal computers he worked on ten years later. It’s impossible to connect the dots when you look forward. You can only connect the dots when you are looking backward. And you have to trust that someday you can

connect all the dots you have when you look backward in the future. Believing in the dots will be connected in the end will give you confidence to move on.

When Steve Jobs turned thirty, he was fired from Apple and he found himself still in love with what he was doing. As a result, he decided to start everything from the beginning. He now feels that being fired from Apple may be a blessing in disguise for he found the passion when he was again a beginner. During the years, he established a new company called "Pixar" and got married with the woman he deeply loves. "Pixar" is the most successful animation company in the world nowadays. Everyone has to find what you love for you will achieve great work only when you are doing something you truly love. The principle also applies to our relationship with others.

The third story is about "death." If today is the last day in our life, we will eventually change our attitudes. Remember that we are going to die is the key to force ourselves to grab something we originally allow to lose for we are already naked and there's no reason for us not to follow our hearts. A year ago, Steve Jobs was diagnosed as having cancer. The doctor told him that he was going to die in months. The tumor miraculously changed into another kind of tumor which could be completely removed by surgery. Steve survived by the surgery eventually. Death is the destination we all share. It clears out everything and presents the new. Everyone's time is limited. So don't waste it and have faith and courage to follow our hearts and destination. Everything else is secondary. In the end, Steve Jobs shares a saying he found in a set of books which he loves very much- "stay hungry, stay foolish" with all the Stanford students.

4.3.1.2.2 Reflective accounts

As the diaries are targeted on the weekly listening contents, the reflective accounts aim to create a space for learners to look at their learning experiences in a broader sense. In the fall semester, students were asked to write one piece of reflective writing at the end of the semester. However, after reading their reflective accounts, I realised students did not fully understand how to reflect and what to reflect on. The majority of them had difficulties in elaborating their thoughts in depth. Moreover, some of them raised questions but I did not have a chance to respond to their thoughts and inquiries. Therefore, in Class A, e-learning, and B, b-learning, of the main study, students were asked to write two reflective accounts, one at the beginning of the semester and the other four months later at the end of the semester.

In this case, they could go back and see whether they had changed their perception after four months' learning. In Class A, students uploaded both of their reflective accounts as word files. In Class B, the last class was cancelled because of the graduation ceremony, so I asked them to write the second reflective account in class when I met them for the last time. As for Class C, since it was a one-month b-learning project and students still had to take final exams, there was no time for the second reflective account. The numbers of reflective accounts collected and the average word counts are listed in Table 4-7.

Table 4-5 Numbers of Reflective Accounts

No of Ss	Ref. 1	Ref. 2	Total	Average word counts
Fall				
A 77	42			150
B 20	15			250
Spring				
A 25	25	15	40	300
B 23	22	17	39	350
C 33	31			200

From the reflection at the beginning of the semester, comparatively speaking, the students in Class B, b-learning, are more responsive in writing reflection than the students in Class A, e-learning. In the main study in the spring semester, I provided a list of questions for them to start with, *including their past experience of English learning, their reasons of taking this course and their preference of English learning in general and listening practice in particular*. Some students merely provide short answers to my questions without further elaboration; some students reveal their attitudes toward listening and English learning in better depth. For the b-learning course, the in-class discussion helped to generate more ideas. The following sample

data are the reflective accounts written by a student at the beginning of the semester. After our discussion, the same student told me that he had more thoughts and emailed me the following two paragraphs which were more elaborated.

Table 4-6 Reflective Account from Class B (Before the discussion, original)

I don't often practice listening ability intentionally. However, I do listen to ICRT Radio or watch English Movie very often. I do sometimes listen to English from CD which attached from book. Yet, I seldom listen to news radio. I used to listen to ICRT everyday in the course of going to school on the bus. But I recently seldom listen to it because I started to read some books on the bus. But at home, I watch English movie almost everyday. Anything broadcast on ICRT, or whatever movie that shows on TV or films that I have as far as their speed are not too slow.

As for ways to improve listening, I have heard from some professors before. According to their opinion, listen to the radio constantly will help a lot. Furthermore, if they provide script, then listen to news without reading it first time. Then when after finish listening, then read script to confirm the correctness of understanding. After all, listen to news once more with looking at script.

Table 4-7 Reflective Account from Class B (After the discussion, original)

There are two reasons that I take this course.

First, I want to expose myself to English environment as much as possible. I know that it will be hard to find English environment when you go to work after graduation unless my job is somehow related to English. Second, I know that I will not practice my listening skill in organized way unless there is a pressure. So I put myself into this situation, have to listen to English constantly, to improve my listening ability.

This is my method to learn all kinds of skills, listening, speaking, writing, reading, second foreign language, cooking, etc. When I went to Australia, I also tried to find the school or major that no Chinese, Japanese students so that I could rely on no one but myself. So I get used to force myself learning something.

Regarding the repetitive listening as the model, as a matter of fact, I seldom really follow it often. What do I do is just keeping

listening some English news or radios, movies, or participate listening comprehensive course. Like this time, I download materials weekly from class and listen to them whenever I am on the public transportations or walking.

When it comes to the reflective accounts at the end of the semester, students from Class A, e-learning course were more responsive than students from Class B, b-learning. I did not hold an online discussion section for Class A as I did for Class B; however, their reflective accounts show a more obvious difference in depth when compared with their first reflective account at the beginning of the semester. An example of the two reflective accounts from the same student is included in Appendix 3 to show that Reflective Account 1 written at the beginning of the semester followed more on the questions I provided, whereas Reflective Account 2 written at the end of the semester was more structured and coherent.

4.3.2 Added data

The second main category is generated data which include interviews and questionnaires, the data elicitation instruments outside of the administration of the course. The purpose of these two instruments is to interrogate the online observation gathered from naturally occurring data and hear more directly from the students. More emphasis is paid to interviews, particularly focus group interviews to understand students' perception of this online learning experience. Questionnaires were also collected to gather factual information.

4.3.2.1 Interviews

“In qualitative inquiry, we need to go deeper, to pursue understanding in all its complex, elusive and shifting forms; and to achieve this we need to establish a

relationship with people that enables us to share their perception of the world” (Richards, 2003, p. 50). Interviewing is the direct access to people’s thoughts and their perceptions of the world, in depth. Compared with the use of questionnaires in large scale surveys to obtain “mass data about a particular issue”, qualitative interviewing is applied for the purpose of achieving “the depth of understanding” (Tierney and Dilley, 2002, p. 454). A fundamental belief underlying this method is that, “the participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it (the emic perspective), not as the researcher views it (the etic perspective)” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). Siedman (2006) quotes Vygotsky (1987) in discussing this fundamental belief, “[e]very word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness” (p. 236-237 cited in Seidman, 2006, p. 7). The researchers’ attempt is to understand how “the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2 cited in Seidman, 2006, p.10). Especially when it is combined with observation and other data collection tools, interviews can verify the researchers’ interpretations and achieve better triangulation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 30).

As Kvale interprets interviews as *inter-views*, “an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data” (1996, p. 14 cited in Cohen et al, 2007, p. 349). The growing attention interviews attract indicates “a move away from seeing human subjects as imply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversation” (ibid.). In this light, the respondents are treated more equally in this power

relationship, as research collaborators (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 14). During the interviewing process, the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is “responsive” and “interactive” (Gillham, 2005, p. 3). A certain degree of flexibility for adjustments grants the participants the openness in expressing their opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences in the real world (Denscombe, 2007, p. 175).

In my research, the purpose of interviews is to collect the voices of the students so that their views will be included in painting the picture. More specifically, the main purpose of interviews is to understand students’ online learning experience so as to discuss their development of learner autonomy in this particular context. To achieve this goal, I conducted both individual interviews and focus group interviews which include both face-to-face and online modes, since interviews are a repertoire of various forms conducted under different settings, for different purposes and under different relationships. In the following sections, I will discuss focus group interviews and individual interviews in more details including the guidelines and my practice.

Table 4-8 Numbers and Length of Interviews

Interviews	Class A	Class B	Class C	Others
Numbers	8	8	4	3
1. Focus Group Total Hours	6 (3 online + 3 F2F) 7.20	5 (F2F) 6.40	3 (F2F) 4.20	
2. Individual Total Hours	2 (F2F) 3	3 (F2F) 5	1 (F2F) 1.30	3 (2 TAs + 1 Coordinator) 4

4.3.2.2 Focus group interviews

Among all these various forms of interviews, focus group (FG) interviews are the main data elicitation method I adopt to obtain the emic views of students’ learning. Compared to individual interviews which portray biographies, FG interviews are

considered ideal to study “how knowledge, ideas, storytelling, self-presentation and linguistic exchanges operate within a given cultural context” (Fern, 2001, p. 5). In the literature, FG interviews have received criticism as being a shortcut to save time. Researchers argue that individual interviews shouldn’t be replaced by FG interviews for the depth individual interviews can provide (McQuarrie, 1996, Wight, 1994 cited in Morgan 2001, p. 151). On the other hand, Morgan (2001) addressed Agar and MacDonald’s (1995) critique on FG interviews and proposed that “instead of arguing about the supposed superiority or inferiority of either method, social science researchers would do better to channel their energies into understanding both the differences and the similarities between these two forms of interviewing” (p. 152-54). I agree with Morgan’s proposal, for each interview method has its strengths and limitations. When a better understanding is achieved, researchers can choose different lenses according to their needs and contexts.

After reading related literature and the hands-on experience with FG interviews, I chose focus group interviews as my primary interview tool for three reasons. First of all, since the focus of inquiry is students from the three classes, 175 in total, it saves more time and includes more student views to conduct group interviews than individual interviews. According to Tierney & Dilley (2001), the main reason FG interviews attract educational researchers’ attention is because they can “call upon larger number of individuals than is possible with serial individual interviews” (p. 461). Secondly, as Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest, “an individual’s attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum. People often need to listen to other’s opinions and understandings to form their own. One-on-one interviews may be impoverished because the participant had not reflected on the topic and feels unprepared to respond” (p. 114). A richer variety of responses can be

triggered in the mode of collective group discussion, a more supportive environment (ibid.). Moreover, because of my dual role as a teacher-researcher, “being part of a group lowers respondents' anxiety and provides a more comfortable setting for discussion” (Greenbaum, 1988). Being interviewed as a group can help to lower the effect of power-relationship and thus encourage the student-participants to be more expressive. The third reason is a parallel in the underlying beliefs between focus group interviews and learner autonomy, both promoting empowerment. Therefore, students were encouraged to participate in FG interviews, but when there were time conflicts or when they preferred to be interviewed alone, individual interviews were also scheduled.

In the following sections, I will draw on the related literature on FG interviews to support my decision in using FG interviews and to explain necessary modifications in adopting the guidelines. Next, I will discuss how a piloting preliminary study shaped my later practice before I present the procedure of the actual FG interviews I conducted. At the end, online focus group interviews and their special features are explored.

4.3.2.2.1 Literature review on FG interviews

Since most of the FG interview guidelines currently available are borrowed from marketing research, it is necessary to first introduce the roots of FG interviews before I discuss necessary modifications. Deriving from the marketing research studies in the 70s, FG interviews earned popularity in the 80s and have enjoyed growing attention across disciplines since the 90s, “the decade of the consumers” (Popay and Williams, 1994). As Merton (1987) first proposed in the 80s, this FG interview method was then treated as a cost-effective and time-economic interview technique supplementary to quantitative methods (p. 558). Listing FG Interviews

combined with other quantitative data collection methods helped researchers to gain credibility of being versatile by including the participants' perspectives and seeing things in a different light (Krueger, 1994). In the past decade, it has gained recognition as a valid qualitative research method, especially attractive for the claim of empowerment. Kitzinger (1994) defines FG interviews as "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (p. 6). Interactions, the dynamic aspect, among the participants are the key feature of FG (Parker & Tritter, 2006, p. 34). "The participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer, such that the views of the participants can emerge—the participants' rather than the researchers' agenda can predominate" (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 376). In summary, the moderator holds the discussion but does not dominate the interview; therefore, participants are encouraged to voice their opinions and even "shift topics, attribute views, and account for disagreement", instead of merely being the providers of information (Myers, 1998, p. 107). This feature reveals the interpretivist paradigm, as opposed to a positivist one, and proposes to value subjective experiences and to encourage knowledge and reality construction through these individual experiences.

In recent years, researchers cumulatively explore a wide range of issues in the use of FG through clarifying the use of the term (Boddy, 2005); revising the contemporary guidelines in group composition, the moderator's role and the question types (Stokes & Bergin, 2006); seeking alternative data analysis method (Hydén & Bülöw, 2003), evaluating the socio-cultural research context (Jovchelovitch, 2004) and exploring potential use of technology (Hurworth, 2004; Turney & Pocknee, 2005; Graffigna & Bosio, 2006). Morgan (2001) calls these modifications "naturally occurring innovations", which necessarily occur when

researchers borrow FG interviews and adopt the guidelines to meet their own contexts (p. 156). The context-dependent relationships that unite the researchers and the participants change virtually every aspect of the actual practice in FG interviews. Nonetheless, as FG interviews expand their popularity, some researchers in social sciences realise the urgent necessity to modify the guidelines of interviews in actual practices. At the turn of the century, Barbour & Kitzinger (1999) questioned the blind acceptance of marketing research in the field of social sciences in their collection reporting the use of FG interviews in participatory action research. More recently, Jowett & O'Toole (2006), holding the same sceptical attitude, also criticise that it is the positivist paradigm that underlies this kind of FG interviews as a means “to access some static but as yet untapped set of opinions or preferences” (p. 191). They argue that the participants are treated as passive fact holders instead of active knowledge constructors involving in the research process.

In summary, researchers in social science are calling attention to discuss details of how FG interviews work (Myers, 1998). In our field of language teaching and learning research, it is necessary to examine the guidelines proposed in FG interviews handbooks more closely to better suit our research contexts.

4.3.2.2.2 Developing FG interviews skills: A preliminary study with ELSM students

The importance of practice in conducting data-dense interviews is emphasised in the discussion of interviews (Richards, 2003). “It takes practice to sit with an open mind and an open agenda and not let nervousness get in the way of the free flow of information” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 27). To ensure the quality of interview data, two sets of pilot FG interviews were conducted in Oct. 2006 and Feb. 2007, which will be discussed in the next section. Similar to the attempt of piloting in

conducting questionnaires, I conducted pilot FG interviews with a group of MA students of ELSM (English Language Studies and Methods) taking the module *Introduction to ELT* at the University of Warwick for the purpose of developing my moderating skills. Since they were with a different group of students and the topics were not directly relevant to my focus of study, learner autonomy, I will focus on how this hands-on experience shaped my following practice of FG interviews and will not go into details about the procedure and analysis of the interviews. This opportunity to practice my moderating skills is crucial, because the difficulties I encountered in adopting the mediating guidelines from a marketing research context suggested the necessity to adapt these guidelines to serve my educational context. As mentioned above, sufficient discussions have not yet been made available about how to adapt the interview procedure and still capture the essence of this interview method in our field of language teaching and learning. For example, the study on autonomy and motivation in Hong Kong Polytechnic University mentioned the focus group as a brainstorming session at the stage of designing questionnaire (Spratt et al, 2002, p. 249), but no details were provided but six lines. Consequently, I will focus on what I learned from this piloting interview experience, including the potential arrangement of questions, the use of visual materials and my role as a moderator.

In preparing for interviews, to have a list of right questions in the right sequence is the first challenging task for all interviewers. When it comes to FG interviews, what makes this job even more challenging is to arrange questions that allow enough freedom but still keep the discussion relevant to the topic in good focus (Puchta & Potter, 1999). If not well-managed, interactivity, the main advantage of FG interviews can become a major flaw. “While interactivity of the

focus group can be a positive aspect it can also lead to discussions which are disparate in focus and which produce only surface data. The involvement of multiple participants can also lead to difficulties as the role of the facilitator is challenged when discussion diverges, particular participants are domineering while others are quiet, or differences of opinions become extreme or not different enough” (Mann and Stewart, 2000, p. 100). In preventing this from happening, the moderator may easily become more controlling to keep the discussion on the right track. In this case, the interviews will turn out to be fact-gathering structured interviews as a result of controls, which was the most important lesson I learned from my piloting interviews.

As a novice moderator, I was greatly influenced by the how-to guidance from Focus Group Interview handbooks (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Stewart et al, 2007), and centred my attention on how to play the mediator’s role well enough to maintain the focus and produce enough quality data. Morgan (2001) warns social scientists that “this is particularly problematic in situations where more structured focus groups run the risk of limiting the discussion to the topics the researchers want to hear about rather than revealing the participants’ own perspective” (p. 148). Indeed, while analysing the interview transcriptions, I stepped back to see why this attempt resulted in adverse effects, and realised that I laid too much emphasis on adherence to the mediator guidelines so as to keep control. The emerging dialogues turned out to be fragmental and underdeveloped. This overemphasis on being the mediator and getting the participants to talk actually did not facilitate the group discussion as much as I expected. On the contrary, I found that as the moderator, when I became more controlling and intervened more, the group tended to become less interactive and quieter. In solving this problem, I adopted Hurworth’s (2004) suggestion of

turning to the help of visual aids such as photos, cartoons and videos as stimuli, which helped to trigger discussions and keep the discussions in better focus.

Despite the above mentioned struggles in adapting FG interview guidelines, the preliminary study confirmed my choice of FG as the main interview method to engage the participants, for it not only empowers the participants to voice their opinions, but also brings them into the decision making process. “The opportunity to be involved in decision making processes (Race et al, 1994), to be valued as experts, and to be given the chance to work collaboratively with researchers (Goss & Leinbach, 1996) can be empowering for many participants” (Gribbs, 1997). As mentioned earlier, this element of empowering proposed by FG interviews is parallel to the concept of learner autonomy, a concept I will not further develop here but will revisit at a much later stage in my discussion chapter (8.1.2). “[I]f participants are actively involved in something which they feel will make a difference, and focus group research is often of an applied nature, empowerment can realistically be achieved” (ibid).

4.3.2.2.3 The procedure of FG interviews in the main study

The average length of the FG interviews was 80 minutes. Following by my brief introduction about the purpose of the interviews, the FG interviews started with an ice-breaking warm-up section, approximately five minutes. Although most of the students I interviewed had known each other from the course work, I still invited each participant to briefly introduce themselves and to explain why they were interested in taking the course, so that every participant had a chance to literarily say something. Moreover, as discussed in 4.3.2.2.2, based on my piloting experience of providing visual stimuli, I prepared the screenshots of the webpages at this warm-up section, and allowed five to ten minutes for pair discussions for participants to

generate ideas. This was to ensure that the participants understood the topic of discussion and had enough time to generate responses, so that it would be easier to initiate the flow and keep the ball rolling. With this starting point, the discussions then were in good focus.

The questions were divided into three main categories. The first category was about their expectations of the course and whether the course met their expectations or not. The second category was about their online listening experiences required in this course, regarding the websites selected by me and by themselves and other related technical issues. The third category is about their experiences of the online learning mode, especially with the use of *EngSite* and the interactive functions including the message board, the forum and the chat room. Screenshots provided earlier were still available when they discussed the functions of *EngSite*. Since most of the interviews were conducted in my office, I turned the screen of the computer to face them and clicked on the webpages of *EngSite* when they discussed specific functions. As the feature of FG interviews, the sequence of questions was flexible to be adjusted according to the flow of the discussion.

4.3.2.3 Online FG interviews

Aside from the conventional face-to-face FG interviews, I also conducted three online FG interviews with students from Class A, the e-learning group. This arrangement was due to the reduced face-to-face meetings and students' preference in using ICT. Since the majority of students taking this course were seniors from several departments, the idea of participating in online interviews was a lot more tempting for them in saving the time and effort to come to the same site. The use of the Internet indeed offered a solution to interview "disembodied" people located in

different geographic places, despite the fact that we were all in Taiwan and in the same time zone (Turney & Pocknee, 2005, p. 3). For instance, one of the three online FG interviews was conducted with two adult students who were parents with children. Our online interview was conducted before one of them went to pick up her child and before the other started to prepare dinner for her family. Although the use of asynchronous CMC, such as emailing and forums, is also suggested as a form of online FG interviews, because of student-participants' preferred use of the client programme MSN, I conducted the three interviews in the mode of synchronous CMC which "involves the interchange of messages between two or more users simultaneously logged on at different computers or computer terminals" (Mann & Stewart, 2003, p. 242). Therefore, in the following discussion, I will refer to online FG interviews in this synchronous mode.

The innovation of ICT as a new means of communication has served as an alternative for researchers to conduct online interviews. Online FG interviews, or sometimes called virtual focus groups, tend to "group together all those techniques that share the main characteristics of text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC)" (Graffigna & Bosio, 2006, p.3). To date, there are still a series of ongoing methodological debates on whether they are merely a digital version of the traditional face-to-face interviews and should be "a faithful reproduction of a face-to-face focus group," or whether they have their own "specificities that are not reducible to face-to-face focus group characteristics" and therefore deserve "[their] own peculiar advantages and limitations" (Graffigna & Bosio, 2006, p. 5 and p. 12). Although there remain some strong doubts of the validity of online FG interviews (e. g. Greenbaum, 2000; Holge-Hazelton, 2002), researchers generally are positive about the application of online FG interviews (Mann & Stewart, 2000). However,

with limited discussions available in the literature, researchers are still experimenting with appropriate shared guidelines.

As discussed in 4.3.2.2.1, Morgan's (2001) proposal on not comparing FG interviews and individual interviews to argue for "the supposed superiority or inferiority of either method" is also applicable to the debate on face-to-face and online FG interviews. It is more important for researchers to understand how using a different medium can change the nature of the interview process before carrying out online FG interviews. First of all, the major appeal of online FG interviews is the possibility to transcend time and geographical limitations. It is therefore more possible to reach participants who are usually beyond the reach of the researchers. However, when meeting online, participants *chat* through typing instead of having face-to-face, verbal and non-verbal, communication. When participants cannot see each other as they can in face-to-face interviews, a critical component of communication is missing—the visual clues. As a result, the moderators of online FG interviews need to adopt a different role to compensate for the lack of non-verbal visual cues (Turney & Pocknee, 2005). "The absence of visual clues prevents the interviewer from picking up on important facial expressions and other non-verbal communication that could be valuable for understanding the interviewee's thoughts. The time lapse can stultify the flow of interaction, depriving the interview of its natural qualities" (Dencombe, 2007, p. 187). The moderator "must simultaneously worry about the script of questions and be sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction" (Frey & Fontana, 1998 cited in Lam & Tan, 2001, p.51).

Gaiser (1997) has commented that with missing visual, verbal and non-verbal cues, 'participants have little information to ensure [*sic*] them they are performing as expected' (p. 140). Mann & Stewart (2000) also suggest that at the

initial stages of an online focus group, the facilitators usually “need to take a proactive role to establish a permissive and friendly atmosphere” (p, 107), because “participants may get confused or be unsure of their participation, in finding out how the group is operating or what is expected of them” (p, 115). Additionally, they raised another issue for the moderator to consider, that is, “the distinction between replying and sending becomes blurred as the interactivity defines conversational turn-taking” (p, 102). In real-time text-based FG interviews, the discussion can be “fast, furious and highly interactive”; therefore, it is important for the moderator to identify quickly “who is replying to whom” (ibid.).

On the other hand, Joinson (2005) is more optimistic about the effect of the missing visual cues. He argues that early CMC studies tended to emphasise what was missing during Internet-based interactions, such as the lack of visual cues in real-time communication; nevertheless, later studies reveal that despite this lack of visual cues, the nature of Internet communication remains highly social. “Internet communication can lead people to identify highly with relevant social groups and identities (Spears and Lea 1992; Spears et al, 2002) and develop high levels of affiliation and liking (Walther, 1996)” (Joinson, 2005, p. 23). Furthermore, when the Internet is used as a data collection tool, a tendency of higher self-disclosure via (or to) a computer is reported in research studies on Internet behaviour (Wallace, 1999; Parks and Floyd, 1996; McKenna and Fitzsimons, 2002 cited in Joinson, 2005, p. 23). In “hyperpersonal communication” (Walther, 1996, p. 17), the disappearance of the visual cues can bring positive influences on the process of communication. Especially for those shy or introverted participants, “they can experience a lower level of anxiety, because they can be neither seen judged ‘in the flesh’, participant inhibitions may be loosened” (Mann & Stewart, 2000, p, 115). Therefore, they are

“more able to express their ‘true’ selves on the Internet, which may involve disclosing information about the self that would normally be socially unacceptable“(McKenna and Fitzsimons, 2002 cited in Joinson, 2005, p. 23).

My experiences with the three online FG interviews were positive. The missing visual cue did not have too many negative effects on the interview process. With one group who met regularly online for weekly discussions, I had a particularly successful experience. I joined their discussion twice. In the first discussion, I had explained the purpose of the interviews and asked for their permission. When I came back for the interview the following week, the host who was holding the discussion that week reminded other group members of the purpose of my interview and had helped with the warm-up section. Therefore, I could skip the first stage of ice-breaking and warm-up, and had more time for the main discussion.

4.3.2.4 Individual interviews

The choice between FG group interviews and individual interviews is a decision of “the familiar trade-off between breadth and depth (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 102). As mentioned in 4.4.1.1, those students who were willing to be interviewed but had time conflicts, or preferred not to join the FG interviews were interviewed individually. In addition, two TA interviews and an interview with the coordinator were also conducted individually to gain a fuller picture on different aspects of the listening course and the AIEDL project.

Before I discuss the guiding principles I adopted for individual interviews, I will start with the ethical concerns. Because of my dual role as a teacher-researcher, *consequences of the interviews*, one of the three ethical concerns proposed by Kvale

(1996) along with *informed consent* and *confidentiality* (p. 111-20), have greater impact on my interview process. After student-participants arrived, the very first thing I explained was to assure them that this interview was conducted for my research, and therefore, whatever they said would have no influence on their academic performance in any way. As addressed in 4.2.3, students were informed in the first class that I was conducting PhD research on the courses I taught and they signed the informed consent. The same explanation was offered again in the interview to confirm that they understood the interviews were conducted for me as a researcher to listen to their opinions.

It is emphasised in the interview literature that at the heart of the choice of interviewing lies “an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of the experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). Since the focus of attention is on interviewees, it is important for interviewers to withdraw themselves as much as they can. In all sorts of interviews, the pre-condition of doing successful interviews is to create a comfort zone where the participant feels secure enough “to disclose and reflect honestly on controversial personal and political issues” (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 215). Therefore, “[a] sympathetic and encouraging ear is not only helpful but also necessary”, so as to ensure that “the respondent does not feel judged or tempted to say only what he or she imagines the interviewer wishes to hear” (ibid). In achieving this, the interviewer needs to “keep their ‘selves’ out of the interview process” and “avoid shaping the information that is extracted” (Kvale, 2007, p. 14).

In order to achieve better interview quality, Kvale (1996) offered a practical suggestion, “[t]he shorter the interviewer’s questions and the longer the subject’s answers, the better” (p. 445 cited in Cohen et al, 2007, p. 364). In my study, because

of the teacher-student power relationship, I bore this suggestion in mind and tried to withdraw myself as much as I could. Individual interviews permit the researcher more time and attention spent on one single interviewee, and thus, a more in-depth understanding of this particular interviewee's view can be achieved. By the same token, this increased amount of attention may also lead to greater anxiety, especially when the interviewer is the teacher. Therefore, I took this issue of raising interviewees' anxiety into consideration and avoided actions that might "imprint" my presence onto the student-participants' reported experience (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 215).

The individual interviews followed the guideline of semi-structured interviews, which are flexible in terms of the order of the discussed topics. "The answers are open-ended, and the interviewees are encouraged to elaborate points of interests" (Denscombe, 2007, p. 176). According to Patton (2002), "open-ended" refers to the answers the respondent replies to the questions which are usually prepared before the interview. "The respondent supplies his or her own words, thoughts, and insights in answering the questions, but the precise wording of the questions is determined ahead of time" (p. 346). In individual interviews, I designed a shorter warm-up section at the beginning and left more time on the three main categories of questions. Regarding visual stimuli, I still provided the screenshot and linked to the *EngSite* webpage, since having something to read helps to keep participants focused and it becomes easier to ask for specific elaboration. Comparatively, since in one-on-one interviews the interviewer plays an investigative role, as opposed to the facilitating role in FG, in guiding the direction of the interview, I allowed more wait time in individual interviews than I did in FG interviews to ensure the interviewee had sufficient time to develop his or her

responses. I also followed Seidman's (2006) suggestions on interview techniques, including "listen more, talk less"; "follow up on what the participant says"; "ask questions when you don't understand"; "ask to hear more about a subject"; "explore, don't probe"; "avoid leading questions"; "ask more open-ended questions"; and "follow up, don't interrupt" (p. 78-94).

As addressed in 4.3.2.2.1, Morgan (2001) reported a thread of discussions in the field of social science comparing FG interviews and individual interviews. As he concluded, "there is no denying the fact that the types of interviews that researchers conduct can shape the things they hear in interview conversations" (p. 152). In Parker & Tritter's (2006) summary on the ongoing debates associated with the deployment of focus group methods, they suggested that including individual interviews is "of the interests of facilitating the triangulation of research finding", to achieve what Flick (2007) called "within method triangulation" (p. 72-3). By combining both, the strength of one can compensate for the weakness of the other; I, therefore, can bring in a wider collective view while maintaining a degree of depth.

4.3.2.5 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are the major quantitative tool to collect large amounts of information. Researchers commonly use mixed methods to combine qualitative and quantitative methods. According to Flick (2007), "the quality of qualitative research can be promoted by integrating quantitative parts in the research not only at the level of quality assessment but also by adding more and different aspects of knowledge about the issue of research from each of the approaches" (p. 91). Most of the researchers (e.g. Morse et al, 2001, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) discussing the use of mixed methods "tend to question the independence and value of qualitative research

on its own” (Flick, 2007, p. 92). Some argue that the underlying paradigmatic assumptions behind qualitative and quantitative methods are quite different; therefore the combination of methods is still controversial (Howe, 2004). However, there is a trend in viewing qualitative and quantitative methods as “complementary” instead of “as rival camps” (Jick, 1983, p. 183 cited in Flick, 2007, p. 92). It is useful to use qualitative results to check against quantitative results, or vice versa (p. 93).

In my study, originally questionnaires were designed to collect information on simple facts and to gain an overall understanding of students’ level of satisfaction of the course. However, I decided to give up the idea of distributing my questionnaires since students had already been asked to fill out two other questionnaires, one from the university and one from the AIEDL project. Since these two evaluations were not designed for my study, out of ethical concerns, I did not count them as part of my data. Moreover, the qualitative data from the listening diaries and the interviews already provided abundant information about their learning and their exercise of learner autonomy.

4.4 Conclusion

I have separated my discussion on methodology into two chapters (4 and 5). In this chapter on methodology for data collection, I have started from the underpinning researcher framework in 4.1, laid out my research design in 4.2, and elaborated my data collection tools in 4.3. Theoretical and practical issues related to how I approached my data including transcription and the details of analysis will be further discussed in the following chapter.

5 Chapter Five Data Analysis Methodology

In this chapter, the process of data analysis will be made transparent. I separate the methodology into two chapters so as to address issues emerged during the process of data analysis. It is through the process of systematically analysing data that I gained a deeper understanding of students' learning process.

In 5.1, before methods of analysis are presented, theoretical rationales, including grounded theory, content analysis, I-statement analysis and Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS), will be first elucidated to explain why and how I borrowed experiences from previous researchers in guiding my decisions at different stages. The data analysis procedure will be divided into two sections: 5.2 reports how I conducted I-statement analysis on the diary and reflective account data, and 5.3 reports the data analysis procedure with the interview data using the terminology of NVivo.

In 5.2, the focus is more on the application of I-statement analysis, including how the coding categories were reached, on which basis the statements were counted and the emerging category, we-statement. In 5.3, since the bulk of my data was analysed using NVivo, a more detailed account of the coding process will be presented to outline four main stages I went through, including interview transcription (5.2.1), initial manual analysis (5.2.2), data preparation (5.2.3) and the actual analysis using NVivo (5.2.4). The last section (5.2.5) takes nodes (coding categories) from the interview data to exemplify the coding process. More details of findings and further discussions will be presented in the next chapter.

5.1 Theoretical rationale of data analysis

For qualitative researchers, analysing texts denotes a different way of interpretation and analysis from that of processing numeric data. To enable interesting findings to emerge from the data, the researcher navigates through the texts over and over again to look for patterns and emerging themes, a process notorious for being recursive and messy. Due to this great degree of messiness, even though qualitative researchers do not want to be restrained by questions and predetermined choice options, they have to adopt certain analytical guidelines.

In my study, four theoretical rationales, content analysis, grounded theory, I-statement analysis and CAQDAS provide guidance to facilitate my data analysis journey. Grounded theory and content analysis are sometimes used interchangeably since they both suggest very similar techniques to qualitative data analysis. In order not to confuse these two usages in my analysis, I restrict the meaning of Grounded Theory to the open coding process, through which coding categories are inductively developed from the data. For added data, the data collected from students who volunteered to give extra time to attend the individual and focus group interviews, this technique was applied to the interview transcripts to produce more data-driven coding categories related to learner autonomy and motivation. On the other hand, following Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) definition, I narrowed the usage of Content Analysis down to *Directed Content Analysis* or what Mayring (2000) referred to as *deductive category application*, which allows existing key concepts to be applied in initial coding. This deductive technique was specifically applied when analysing types of listening strategy. Lastly, for pedagogically motivated data, the data which were compulsory for students enrolled in the course, including diaries and reflective accounts, I-statement analysis was applied to direct my attention to students' own

voices and how they perceived and presented their own learning. I started with a set of predetermined I-statement categories, but revised the categories according to the data. CAQDAS, mainly the software NVivo, was the major means of analysis in addition to manual analysis. In short, different techniques of analysis were applied to different groups of data, depending on the nature of the data and how the data analysis method helped to answer my research questions.

5.1.1 Grounded theory

My intention of borrowing Grounded Theory is not to emphasise theory-building, but to incorporate its coding guidelines to allow more themes and coding categories arising from raw data. This feature of listening to the data conforms to the nature of my practitioner research. Moreover, a recursive data analysis process promoted by grounded theory fits well with the action research cycles. As Dick (2007) argued, due to its flexibility and responsiveness, Grounded Theory is compatible with action research, and can be very effective when it comes to data analysis (p. 398). As a result, it is natural for AR thesis candidates to turn to grounded theory, especially drawing on Strauss and Corbin's discussion on coding and theory building as a theoretical rationale (p. 402).

A grounded theorist starts with gathering focused data and stays close to the data, while developing concepts that synthesize and conceptualize the collected data. The uniqueness of this procedure is that the interpretation of data is emphasised at an early stage of data collection. "Interpretation is the anchoring point for making decisions about which data or cases to integrate next in the analysis and how or with which methods they should be collected" (Flick, 2006, p. 296). Resulting from this, the strength of Grounded Theory is that researchers will not be influenced by "preconceived concepts of hypothesis" and can therefore step out of the frame that

the researchers are trained with and thus perceive new insights (Charmaz, 2008, p. 86).

Furthermore, when the researcher begins with a substantial amount of data, and is simultaneously involved in data collection and analysis, additional data can be collected subsequently to illuminate emerging interests and themes (Charmaz, 2008, p. 86). Again, this feature conforms to the nature of my practitioner research. Playing the dual role as a teacher-researcher, I indeed began analysing the data since the first piece of data was collected (Flick, 2006).

As described in 4.2, after the first semester (Laying the ground) ended, I conducted a general (global) analysis of the data collected in the first semester. Although it was not a detailed microanalysis, I had enough information to make further decisions on the next stage of my research, the main study in Spring Semester. This action of pausing in the middle of the data collection and reflecting on the first semester greatly shaped the focus of my study. I decided to give central emphasis to reflection and its role in autonomy, instead of looking exclusively at collaboration. Substantial changes to the course design were therefore made, for example, adding one more piece of reflective writing at the beginning of the semester and providing more explanations on how and why to keep the listening diaries.

5.1.2 The use of content analysis

Content analysis is the most widely applied data analysis technique among qualitative researchers. Because of its wide application and flexibility, even though the term seems self-explanatory, it is necessary to define its use and how it is performed (Tsech, 1990 cited in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). In my data analysis, to avoid confusion, I confine the use of Content Analysis specifically to

one particular technique, Direct Content Analysis, which is the procedure of reducing the texts by applying predefined criteria deriving from the theoretical literature and one's research questions.

The purpose of applying existing key concepts in initial coding is to compensate for the possible drawback of totally relying on Grounded Theory. The major criticism of Grounded Theory falls on the lack of theories at an early stage of the coding process. Consequently, when “used unintelligently, it can also degenerate into a fairly empty building of categories [...] or into a mere smokescreen used to legitimize purely empiricist research” (see Bryman, 1988, p. 83-7; Silverman, 2005, p. 232-7 cited in Silverman, 2006, p. 96). Similar to Silverman's (2006) criticism of grounded theory, Hsieh and Shannon also warn researchers about the danger of not being able to achieve a robust understanding; “thus failing to identify key categories” (p. 1280). Therefore, to avoid this failure, I applied directed content analysis when examining the data for listening strategies, and adopted Vandergrift's taxonomy of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

5.1.3 I-statement analysis

When analysing diaries and reflective accounts, due to their distinct feature as narratives, I decided to apply I-statement analysis, a form of discourse analysis initially discussed by Gee (1999) in his study on how teenagers fashion themselves through the choice of language. I-statement analysis was one of the discourse analytic tools he applied in order to take a “snapshot” of teenagers' actual use of language so as to further explore their underlying identity formation (Gee et al, 2001, p. 177). This form of discourse analysis “examines how people speak or write in the first person to describe their actions, feelings, abilities, goals and so on, and how they thus construct particular socially situated identities for themselves through

language” (Gee, 2005, p. 141 cited in Ushioda, 2010, p. 49). As Lankshear and Knobel (2004) suggested, the sociolinguistic aspect of I-statement analysis helps researchers to examine “how language operates as a social practice within particular contexts that are ‘captured’ in and through spoken data” (p. 280). Because of this underlying social view, they believe that it is applicable to teacher research in particular.

In guiding my analysis of listening diaries, I drew on three empirical studies which applied I-statement as an analytical tool in our field of ELT: Fang & Warschauer’s study (2004) to analyse interviews, Brown, Smith and Ushioda’s (2007) study to analyse students’ reflective writing and again Ushioda’s study (2010) to analyse written reflective accounts. Two levels of analysis were conducted. At a macro level, a thorough analysis was applied to a number of diaries from three classes so as to reach a set of descriptive categories. At a micro level, case studies were conducted to take “snapshots” of various stages to portray individual students’ route of the learning process through their written texts. As discussed earlier (3.4.3.1 & 4.3.1.2.1), the purpose of the listening diaries was to record each student’s listening process and progress along the way. Therefore, diaries kept by the same student were placed together as a case study (6.2.2.1.3) in order to depict a longitudinal line of development. More issues related to apply I-statement analysis will be elaborated in 5.2.1.

5.1.4 Computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS)

The benefits of CAQDAS have attracted qualitative researchers’ attention since 1960s, especially when dealing with content analysis (Seale, 2008). First of all, CAQDAS makes it possible to access massive amounts of data within a click. Moreover, with more and more word-processed qualitative data in the digital form,

researchers can now organise the data by filing them directly in the software.

The most important merit of computers in qualitative research is the capacity to create *project unity*. Taking NVIVO as an example, the coding tools, memos, external links and mindmaps are all stored in one single file (Weitzman, 2003 cited in Séror, 2005, p. 323). This combination of various tools in one software save the researcher the trouble of opening several windows and managing different files.

Of course, CAQDAS is not 100% perfect without drawbacks. Séror (2005) voiced words of caution shared by a number of researchers (Brent & Slusarz, 2003; MacMillan & Koenig, 2004; Mangabeira et al, 2004; Thompson, 2002). He summarised the debate over the use of CAQDAS and made the conclusion that second language researchers working with qualitative data should pay close attention to how this innovation has developed and is going to develop. Instead of accepting it, a more sceptical attitude is probably necessary to question its implication in both theoretical and practical aspects (p. 326).

I actually have experienced both advantages and disadvantages when using NVivo. Working with the large amount of text data I have collected, the software NVivo helps me to piece the puzzles together. Nonetheless, it is still necessary to first analyse data manually to familiarise myself with the data, because working with the computer software NVivo is rather time consuming at both the data preparation stage and the actual analysis stage. For example, the use of heading styles has to be consistent to reach the best visual presentation (see 5.3.3.2). Although the diaries and reflective accounts were mostly collected in digital forms, different texts need to be merged into one file. However, the time and effort invested were worthwhile when all data were imported and it became possible to access data from different perspectives. In this light, the use of CAQDAS will help me in answering Research

Question Five in which two aspects are checked against each other for a deeper understanding.

5.2 Data analysis procedure I: Diaries and reflective accounts

The data analysis process of the diaries is informed by content analysis (5.1.2), which means a set of I-statement categories is developed prior to the coding of the diaries and reflective accounts. This section explains first how I reached these eight I-statement categories, and then discusses the combination of different statements in one sentence and explains on which basis I-statements were counted. In the end, I will report the emerging category, we-statements.

5.2.1 Pre-determined I-statement categories

As previously discussed in 5.1.3, I-statement analysis is applied in order to capture the narrative feature of diaries and reflective accounts. A set of seven I-statement categories were summarised from Gee's (2001) and Fang & Warschauer's (2004) studies.

Table 5-1 Gee's and Warschauer's Categories of I-statements

Gee's I-statement categories and examples		
Categories	Definition	Examples
Cognitive statements	about thinking and knowing	"I think...", "I know...", "I guess..."
Affective statements	about desiring and liking	"I want...", "I like..."
State versus Action statements	about states or actions of the speaker	"I am mature," "I hit him back," "I paid the bill"
Ability versus Constraint statement	about being able or having to do things	"I can't say anything to them," "I have to do my paper route"
Achievement statements (accomplishment, or distinction)	about activities, desires, or efforts that relate to "mainstream" achievement	"I challenge myself", "I want to go to MIT or Harvard"

Fang & Warschauer's I-statement categories and examples	
Categories	Example
Action	"I put forward my ideas..."
State	"I was responsible for..."
Ability	"I acquired new skills..."
Constraint	"I could not express it..."
Cognitive	"I strongly believe ..."
Success	"I am proud of our work..."

As the above table shows, Fang and Warschauer basically adopted Gee's categories, but they did not include Affective statements and separated the two categories, *state versus action statements* and *ability versus constraint statement*, into four categories. Since their context of research is more similar to mine, I adopted theirs as preliminary categories but still keep affective statements. During the process of coding, I found that I had quite a large number of Action Statements, when students described their listening process. I decided to keep Affective Statements for there were quite a lot of statements related to emotions. Due to the nature of this diary data, it was also useful to separate Ability and Constraint Statements into two groups.

With these seven categories, I did the initial manual analysis on six students, and then included 15 students (A=6, B=6, C=3) in total into NVivo for a more extensive second-time analysis. In order to have a better understanding of the learning process, I chose from those students who kept a substantial amount of diaries, especially those who attended the interviews so as to check what they said with what they wrote. The following table (5-2) illustrates the definition of my categories with examples from students' writing.

Table 5-2 I-statement Categories and Examples

Category	Definition	Example
1. Cognitive	About their understanding of the listening texts	"I think this conversation is between two strangers who met for the first time." A 5
2. Affective	About their feelings, both positive and negative	"I enjoy listening to this interview, and Mr. Oelker really makes me laugh." C 2 "I'm getting frustrated after listening to this women talking for the first two minutes." B 4
3. Personal history	About their past life experiences and prior learning experiences	"I used to work as the receptionist in a foreign company, and I had many chances to talk to foreigners coming to our company." B 3
4. Action	About specific steps they took (or will take) in reaction to problems or tasks	"To improve my listening ability, I listen to the radio ICRT, and watch English TV programs, such as CNN news." B 2
5. Constraint	About problems they encounter	"This conversation about the movie Star Wars is really difficult for me to follow, because they speak too fast, and also I know nothing about this movie." B 4
6. Ability	About what they are capable of doing (usually in present tense)	"Even though there is no transcript this time, I can follow the interview and understand 80% at the first time!" A 6
7. Achievement	About what they have accomplished	"In this semester, I've learned how note-taking can help me concentrate during the listening process." C 3
8. Freedom	About their freedom of choice-making	"I can decide when and where I want to do my study." A 6

5.2.1.1 The challenge of applying I-statement analysis

The above table shows the examples of having one statement per sentence. However, the actual analysis is not as clear-cut as that, since in reflective accounts, it was common to find more than one type of statement in one single sentence. When learners are describing their actions, they attach meanings or feelings to the described actions, so the sentence stretches into more complex entities. Due to this complex sentence structure, I decided to count I-statements on the basis of clauses in order to break a long sentence down. For example, in the following compound sentence, the main clause and the subordinate clause will be counted as two separate statements, one affective and one action.

Because I really like to read (affective) the magazine of movies,
I will read (action) the introduction which are attractive.

More examples are presented in the following table (5-3) to show how statements are counted and the possible combination of different statements. Certain categories tend to be combined with other statements. For instance, Affective Statements are often combined with Action, Achievement or Constraint to explain the source of emotional ups and downs.

Table 5-3 Combination of Statements

(The sentences were taken directly from students' writing without correction.)

Combination of statements and examples	Notes of analysis
Affective + Action	
I'm glad (affective) that I took this course (action), I would not have studied English so diligently (cognitive) if I did not enrol (action) in this course.	Positive emotion expressed here reinforced the decision of taking this course.

After watching the news, I feel quite sad (affective). Cuz at the first time I saw this news(action), then I go on youtube (action) to check some videos. I couldn't even believe(cognitive) what I just saw(action) there.	The emotion sometimes can be the motive of certain actions
Affective + Constraint	
Sometimes I will feel frustrated because they say fast and use some difficult words that I cannot 100% understand what they say.	Negative emotion commonly accompanies difficulties and problems in understanding.
Action+Cognitive+Constraint	
I have tried to listen to (action) CNN on Channel 5, and I found (cognitive) that political news and economic news are difficult to understand, especially, when they are talking about competition between Clinton and Obama as I do not have (constraint) basic knowledge on these two candidates, and I'm not following up (constraint) on the US presidential election.	An example of a longer sentence with three statements together. The learner identified the problem of inability after carrying out a certain action.
Now my challenge is to overcome different accents of English (cognitive). Maybe I can't get used to it(constraint) and feel unfamiliar (affective), by practicing and trying guess the meaning of the vocabulary often, I think I would get used to and enforce (cognitive) my listening comprehension.	Goal setting. The learner identified a problem first and came up with possible solutions to overcome this challenge.
As long as I concentrate(action) on what people say, I will understand(cognitive) most of the content and be able to think about it(cognitive) before I make the response (action).	The learner is also trying to offer a solution to an already identified problem, a more meta-cognitive one.

5.2.1.2 We-statements

During the process of coding, a large number of We-statements caught my attention (89 statements). In further looking into these statements, I found that we-statements are not merely a habit of writing influenced by the more collective Chinese culture. Instead, the 'we' refers to different groups of people the learners were involved with

at different periods of time. The following table provides several examples of different references of ‘we’.

Table 5-4 Examples of We-statements

Reference of we	We-statements
We=non-native speakers, foreign language learners	The conversation passages we heard are from people, whose English is their native tone, they reply to questions fluently and responsively, whereas for us, we do not normally speak or think in English, therefore, when it comes to reply to the interviewer’s questions, it would probably take us more time to think about how to reply.
We=people in Taiwan	For us, Christmas time is just like our Chinese new year. We whole family will stay together to chat, play cards and so on, and we just want to spend the happy time together. The stockings are like our red envelopes, which represent good luck to the children in this new year.
We=the high school classmates	(I’ve always loved The Student Post.) Since high school, our English teacher had asked us to book the weekly student post.
We=teenagers in particular	We all have been through similar circumstances as to what Nick suffered during our teens, just like Nick, everyone encounters different scenarios in life.
We=family members	When I hear this conversation, I can’t help to think about my Dad. We are always really excited to catch a movie, but somehow, he will fall asleep in the middle of the movie sometimes.
We=college students	But seriously, can we always really do what we really love? What about something we don’t love but we should? Do we know what we really desire?
We=classmates in this class	Every week, in this course, different from what I used to learn, we learn though the modern technology, the online network. I think keeping a study diary really enhance the connection between teachers and students because teachers can trace the study progress of the students and understand what difficulties we might encountered. And also, it’s easier for us to express our feelings freely.

According to Schutz (1932/1960), when people choose to use *we*, there is usually a shared common living experience which builds this *we*-connection in the social world. Based on this notion, I did In-vivo coding by extracting the context “we” involved in these statements. After scrutinising the groups of *we*-statements, I sub-divided *we*-statements into four groups, past and present v.s. living communities and learning communities. The following table outlines the types of *we*-statements and frequency counts of each sub-category.

Table 5-5 Types and Prevalence of We-statements

Time	Communities		Living Communities [44]		Learning Communities [45]	
	Past [15]	Childhood friends	1	High school classmates	11	
Sports team members		2	Class mates in private English learning institutes	3		
Present [74]	Interpersonal relationship [30]					
	Family	4	College classmates	3		
	People who share the same hobby (music, movie, travel)	9	Course mates	14		
	Collective identity [44]					
	People in Taiwan	13	Language learners	9		
	People in modern society	4	College students	5		
	All human beings	13	Teenagers			

To conclude, my initial attempt was to reply on listening diaries as a pedagogical tool to trace how learners tackled the listening process; to my surprise, with the application of I-statement analysis, I was able to untangle the stream of thoughts of this particular student writer, and understood more how students

constructed their identity in a larger learning context. The results of I-statement analysis will be further illustrated in 6.1.2 in the discussion of reflection.

5.3 Data analysis procedure II: Interviews

In this section, I will present the process of data analysis to show how meanings were extracted from raw data on NVivo. I divided my journey which stretched out over several months (from May 2009 to February 2010) into the following four stages: transcribing the interview recordings, the initial manual analysis, data preparation for NVivo, and the analysis using NVivo.

The first two stages, transcribing the interviews (5.3.1) and the initial manual analysis (5.3.2), are relatively shorter, since this manual analysis was not as extensive as the main data analysis performed on the platform of NVivo. Data preparation (5.3.3) is a transitional step of formatting word files so that they are ready to be imported into NVivo. Next, the second time analysis using NVivo (5.3.4) will be then elaborated with greater details, particularly the use of free nodes and tree nodes, functions of storing codes in NVivo. Examples from the interview data will be presented to illustrate the coding process on NVivo (5.3.5).

Aside from the aim to present an audit trail of my data analysis, this section also aims to share my experience of experimenting with ways in using this software with other researchers who are also developing their love-hate relationships with NVivo. It is worth noting that only one example of coding categories and theme elicitations from the interview data is included to illustrate the analytic process, as a more detailed report of findings will be presented in Chapter 6.

5.3.1 Transcribe the interview recordings

First of all, the recording files were transcribed into texts using Microsoft Word. As I was not applying conversation analysis to my interviews, all the rising and falling intonation patterns and the non-verbal elements are not captured or marked in the transcription unless it is necessary to emphasise particular features of the spoken language revealed by the participants. During the process of transcription, I consistently reminded myself to disregard my role as a teacher and required myself to listen to the interviews and transcribe data with a blank mind and present the raw data as honestly as I can. Being the researcher and the teacher at the same time, it can sometimes be challenging not to react to and interpret what students commented at this stage.

5.3.2 Initial manual analysis with predetermined coding categories

At an initial stage of approaching the data, interview transcripts, diaries and reflective accounts were all printed out for colour coding. After transcribing the data, I printed out the transcriptions and started with a list of predetermined key concepts summarised from the literature review and interview questions. Print-outs of transcripts and dairies were read through and colour coding was applied with the old fashion pen and highlighters. This was to familiarize myself with the data, as print-outs were more feasible than the digital forms. Examples of manual analysis are provided in 5.3.5 (Table 5-7). The benefit of this initial manual analysis was to develop hierarchical coding categories so that I did not need to totally start from scratch when working with NVivo.

5.3.3 Data preparation for NVivo

I consulted Bazeley's (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo* as the main source for guidance. According to her suggestions, data preparation, the process of preparing raw data ready to be imported into NVivo, is fundamental for the later

analytical process, especially for group interviews. Small details such as “font type, size and style, colour and spacing” can result in great visual impacts and therefore facilitate the following analysis (p. 44). After a number of experiments, I finalised a set of steps in structuring the transcribed interview data in consistent heading styles, which is described below.

5.3.3.1 Keep the real names

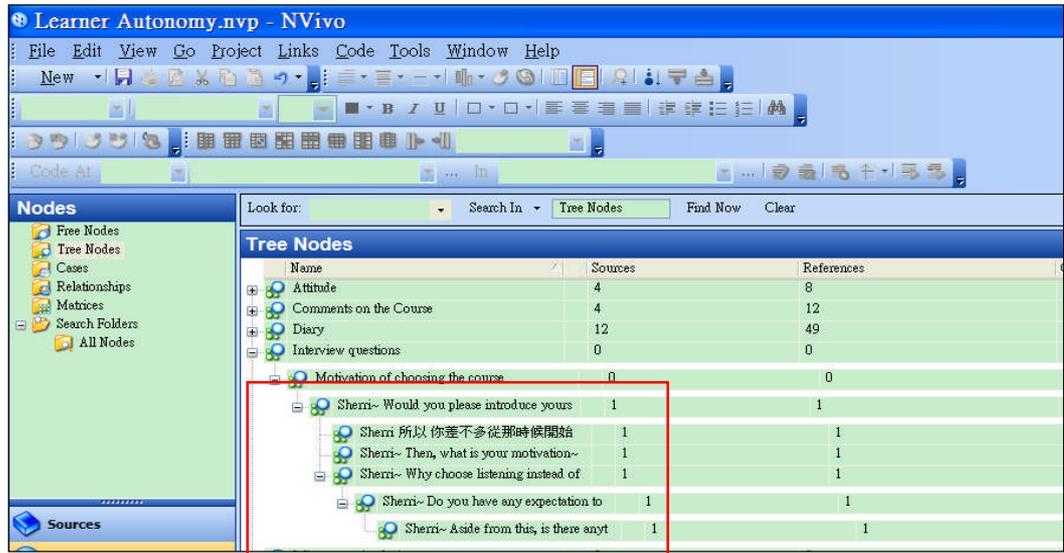
At this stage of analysis, I found it helpful to use the real names instead of replacing them with the pseudonyms right away. Firstly, it is because in the group interviews, there might be more than one participant speaking simultaneously. Sticking to the real names helped me to recognise who is who, for the voice was connected with the names in my memories from working with them during that semester. In this sense, the real names carry rich contextual information for the later stage of data analysis. The ethical concerns of using pseudonyms would be taken care of after the process of data analysis; the names appearing in the selected data samples would be replaced with pseudonyms.

5.3.3.2 Formatting heading styles

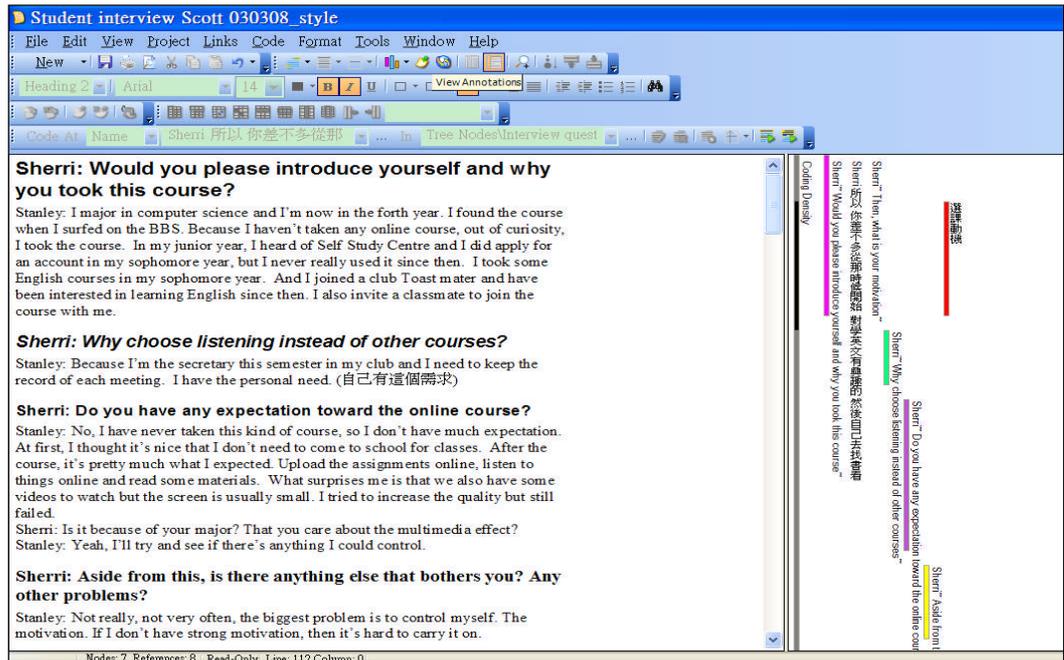
Formatting heading styles is a crucial step before importing data into NVivo. For my semi-structured interviews, the interview questions were mostly not in the same order, so it seemed impossible to format the interview questions as headings to run automatic coding. As a result, the idea of formatting heading styles initially seemed unnecessary for the semi-structured interviews. However, in my attempts, I found different formats of heading styles led to different visual presentations, and therefore could be beneficial to the later coding process in NVivo. When formatting interview questions as headings, it maps out how I initiated questions and probed during the

interview process.

Screenshot 5-1 Formatting Questions as Headings



Screenshot 5-2 NVivo Auto-Coding with Colour Strips



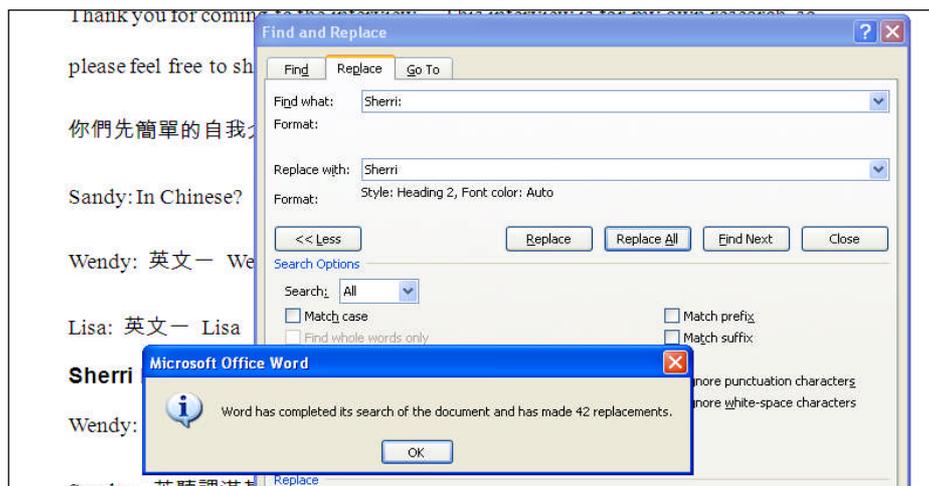
On the other hand, when formatting participants' names as heading styles, it became easier for me to identify 'who said what'. In my case, this makes a significant difference when I want to match students' comments in the interviews later with what they wrote in the diaries and reflective accounts. Again, based on

Bazeley's (2007) advice, I left *heading 1* blank and marked the names of speakers as *heading 2*, so as to insert emerging themes as *heading 1* at the following stage of analysis (p. 48).

5.3.3.3 Assign colours to all participants

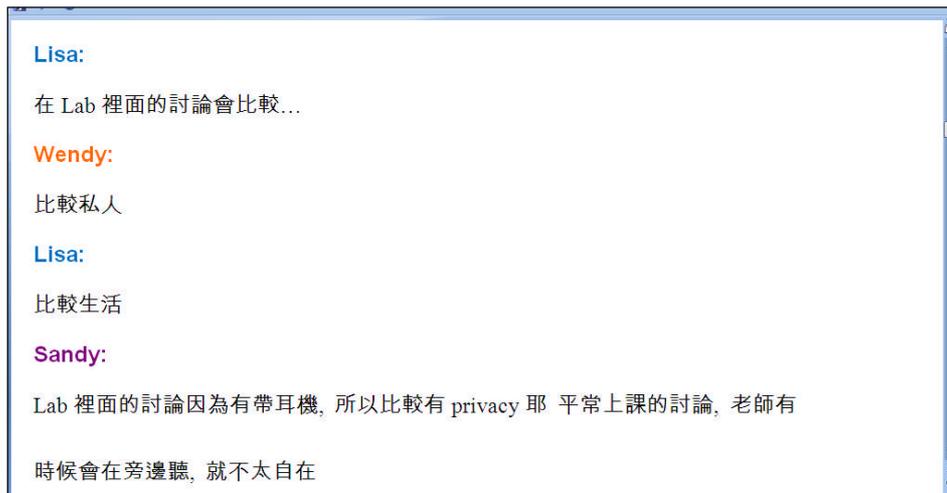
In setting up heading styles, I relied on the *Find and Replace* function in Microsoft Word. I started with my part as the interviewer and marked my name together with the questions I asked as headings, so that later if I was interested in analysing how I managed FG interviews, I could look at the sequence of questions and the turn-takings.

Screenshot 5-3 The Found-and-Replace Function



Next, through the same function of *Find and Replace*, a colour was then assigned to represent each participant to facilitate the identification of speakers on the screen. The following screenshot (5-4) shows the final result after the word file was imported into NVivo.

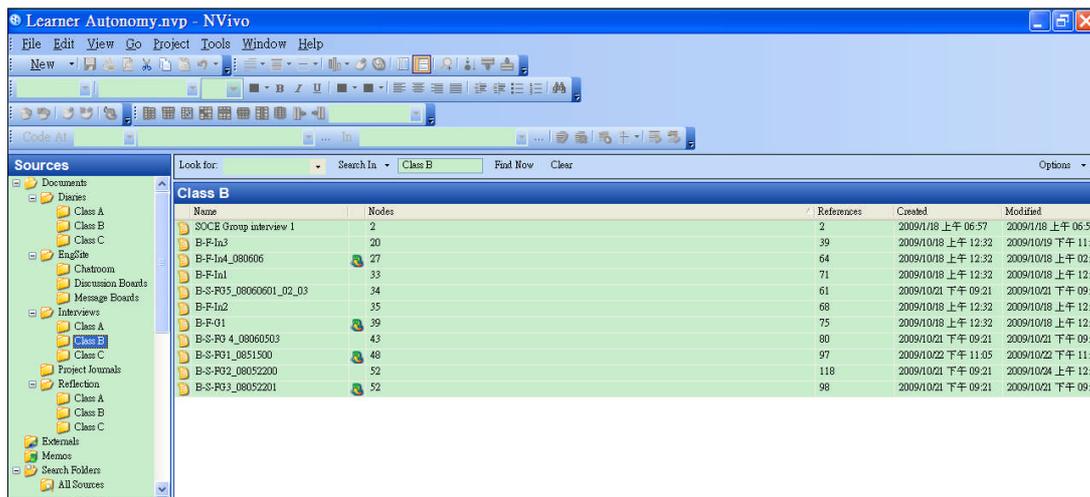
Screenshot 5-4 Final Look of Word Files



5.3.4 Analysis using NVivo: From texts to nodes and models

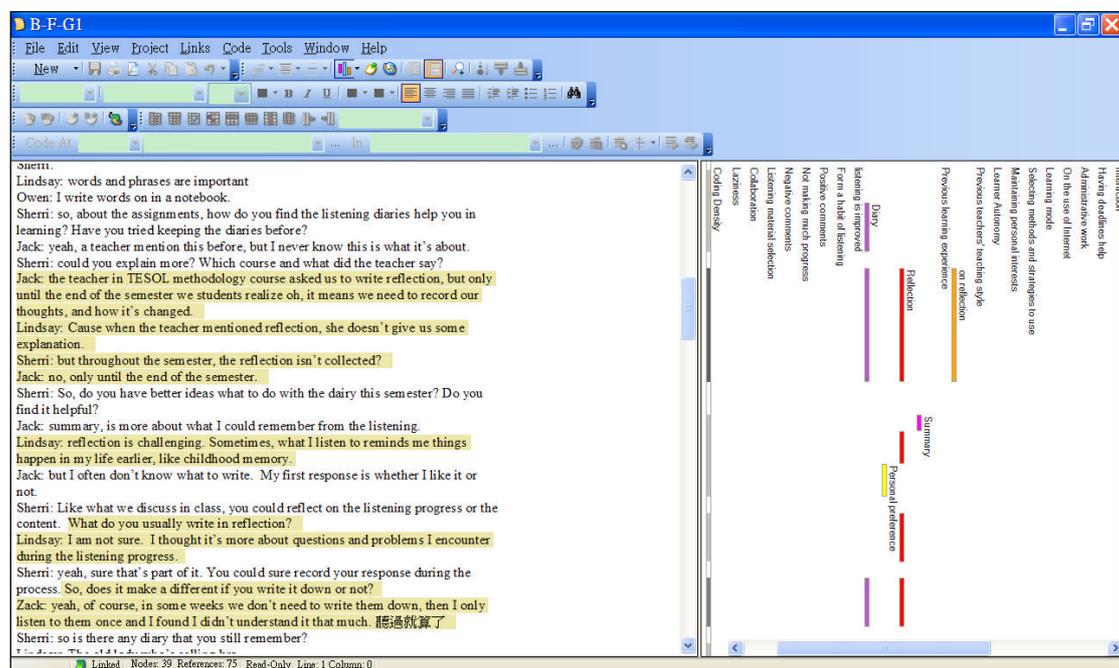
After the initial manual analysis, all data, both the interview and the diary data, was imported into NVivo and processed in a similar procedure. Upon importing, the documents were filed into Class A (e-learning), B (b-learning) and C (one-month b-learning), so the impact of modalities could be studied later by comparing different degrees of online involvement.

Screenshot 5-5 Importing Documents into Folders



While each document was read through, I started the coding process by creating nodes. Nodes, originally “indicate[ing] either a terminal point or a connection in a branching network”, refer to a folder storing coding labels (Bazeley, 2007, p. 15). The function of nodes is to enable the researcher to bring segments of text from various sources into one single folder (Bazeley, 2007, p. 83). Moreover, the same text can be labelled more than once so that it allows different interpretations on one single text.

Screenshot 5-6 Coding Segments of Text as Nodes

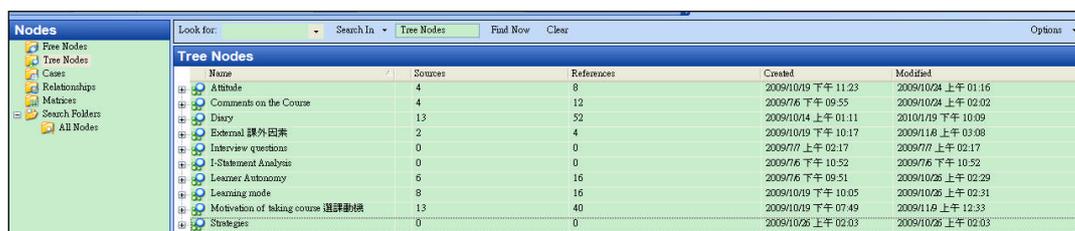


The nodes folder is subdivided into *tree nodes* and *free nodes*, which are not only two different folders but also two different techniques of coding. In a sense, tree nodes can be identified as the result of applying direct content analysis (5.1.2), whereas free nodes and In-Vivo resemble the application of grounded theory (5.1.1). In the following section, the application of free nodes and tree nodes will be further elaborated.

5.3.4.1 Create nodes: Free nodes, tree nodes and In-Vivo

I established tree nodes directly according to the revised predetermined coding categories resulting from the initial manual analysis. Tree nodes entail “hierarchical, branching structures in which parent nodes serve as connecting points for sub-categories or types of concepts” (Bazley, 2007, p. 83). As I read through the documents, I dropped highlighted segments into tree nodes. If the segment did not belong to any node, it was dropped in free nodes which serve as a parking space for me to store the emerging nodes which seem to be independent from others at the moment of analysis.

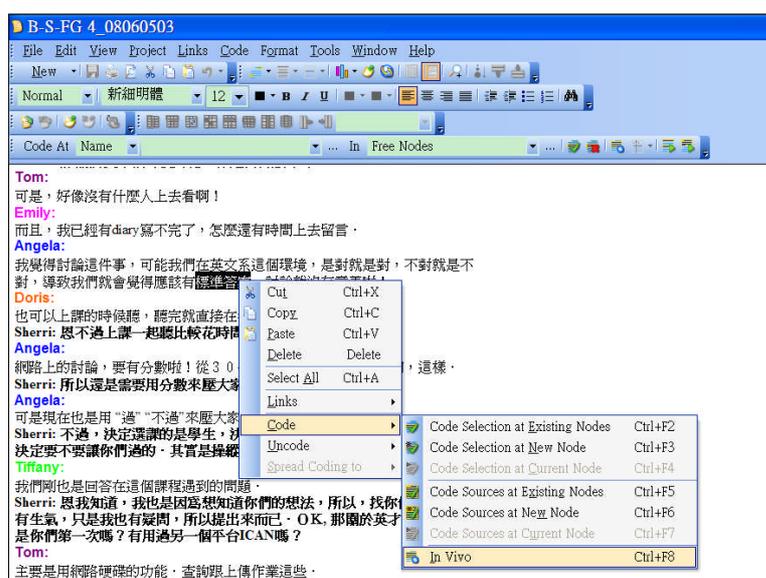
Screenshot 5-7 Tree Nodes



Name	Sources	References	Created	Modified
Attitude	4	8	2009/10/19 下午 11:23	2009/10/24 上午 01:16
Comments on the Course	4	12	2009/7/6 下午 09:55	2009/10/24 上午 02:02
Diary	13	52	2009/10/14 上午 01:11	2010/1/19 下午 10:09
External 課外因素	2	4	2009/10/19 下午 10:17	2009/11/8 上午 03:08
Interview questions	0	0	2009/7/7 上午 02:17	2009/7/7 上午 02:17
I-Statement Analysis	0	0	2009/7/6 下午 10:52	2009/7/6 下午 10:52
Learner Autonomy	6	16	2009/7/6 下午 09:51	2009/10/26 上午 02:29
Learning mode	9	16	2009/10/19 下午 10:05	2009/10/26 上午 02:31
Motivation of taking course 選擇動機	13	40	2009/10/19 下午 07:49	2009/11/9 上午 12:33
Strategies	0	0	2009/10/26 上午 02:03	2009/10/26 上午 02:03

The coding option *In-Vivo* was another technique for me to take the exact wording from the participants as coding labels. In this way, the codes stayed descriptive and then were later connected with theoretical concepts.

Screenshot 5-8 In-Vivo



In a similar process, the In-Vivo nodes were added to tree nodes when certain relationships between the new node and the existing tree nodes were identified. Otherwise, the In-Vivo code was dropped into free nodes, the miscellaneous folder. After coding each document, I paused and examined free nodes so as to integrate them into the hierarchical tree nodes. In this way, tree nodes were gradually expanded by including new emerging codes. Meanwhile, tree nodes were consistently restructured to better represent how concepts were related. When the nodes were more fully developed, the function of *models*, a mind-mapping graphic tool, also helped me in visualising the interrelationships by transforming nodes into a mind map. As I revised the models, the relationship among themes and coding categories started to make better sense to me.

The above mentioned coding procedure was a process of directing my attention from the documents and sources to the restructuring of nodes and models. In the end, in a more mature coding system, “nodes become points at which concepts potentially branch out into a network of sub-concepts or dimensions” (Bazeley, 2007, p. 83). The advantage of using NVivo lies in this flexibility in expanding and trimming nodes. In the following section, I will draw from the interview data to present specific examples to exemplify this process from texts to nodes and models.

5.3.5 Examples of nodes from the interview data

In this section, I will draw from the interview data to illustrate the coding process described above. As described in 4.3, the interview data was labelled as *added data*. This is not to say that this dataset is additional but to highlight the nature of this practitioner research and emphasise the fact that the interviews were conducted outside of the class, and were not compulsory. To maximise the opportunities of interviewing students, both individual and FG interviews were conducted; in total,

18 interviews were conducted with 33 students from both Fall and Spring semesters.

5.3.5.1 Coding categories from the initial manual analysis

The initial categories for colour coding derived from the semi-structured interview questions. The purpose of this initial coding was twofold, first, to categorise participants' responses according to the interview questions since I did not ask these questions in the same order; second, to capture emerging questions deriving from participants' responses. The following table revisits the list of interview questions investigating their learning experience in this online listening course.

Table 5-6 Interview Questions

I. Ice-breaking and opening:
Asking students to introduce themselves and explain why they were interested in taking this listening course.
II. On their expectations
Is this course different from what you expect? Why or why not?
III. On the listening process and strategies through material selection
1. How do you rate the listening experience with the online listening materials, the websites?
2. Which websites do you find helpful?
3. What is the usual process of listening?
4. Which ones do you find difficult?
5. Which ones will you go back and keep listening?
IV. On listening diaries
1. Is this your first time keeping a learning diary?
2. Do you have any difficulties in keeping the listening diaries?
3. Does it help you to improve your listening?
V. On the online learning mode
1. How is your online learning experience?
2. What kind of difficulties do you encounter in this course? Any difficulties in using the platform? How do you manage your online learning?
3. What do you think of the group project and online discussion?

The following table shows the coding categories resulting from the initial analysis.

Table 5-7 Pre-determined & Emerging Coding Categories (motivation)

Main coding category	Coding colour	Sub-categories
1. Motivation	Yellow	A. Reasons for taking this listening course B. Reasons for learning English in general
2. Comments on the course	Blue	A. Positive B. Negative C. Listening diaries
3. Comments on the platform <i>EngSite</i>	Green	A. Positive Message board Discussion points Chatroom B. Negative Problems encountered in logging in Uploading assignment
4. Listening strategies (From Vandergrift's Taxonomy, 2008)	Pink	A. Cognitive Inferencing Elaborating Imagery Translation Transfer Repetition Note taking B. Metacognitive Planning Monitoring Evaluating Problem-solving
5. Learner autonomy	Red	A. Willingness to assume responsibility B. Exercise choice-making C. Capability to take control D. Determining the objectives/goal-setting E. Defining the content F. Evaluating the progress G. Monitor the procedure of acquisition H. Self-management I. Reflection J. Sense of ownership K. Selecting methods and strategies to use

5.3.5.2 Coding categories from the NVivo analysis

From the result of the manual analysis, tree nodes with five main categories were first built including motivation, learner autonomy, comments on *EngSite* (the online platform), comments on the course and strategies. After the analysis in NVivo, these five categories then branched out into nine main categories and twenty-one sub-categories. The following tables present the nodes from the interview data. The highlighted four categories, motivation, external factors, attitude toward learning and their changed of perception, are the new categories that emerged from the analysis.

Table 5-8 Coding Categories (Emerging: Motivation, external factors, attitudes and change of perception)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Learner autonomy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Sense of ownership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Willingness to assume responsibility (Identify the boundary of responsibility) 2. Goal setting (Determining objectives) 3. Exercise choice-making (Freedom) B. Self-motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintaining interests/curiosity/attention 2. Ask for help when necessary 3. Maximising opportunities for practice C. Self-management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Defining the content 2. Evaluating the progress 3. Monitoring the procedure of acquisition 4. Push one's limits 5. Overcoming challenges 6. Selecting methods and strategies to use 7. Reflecting on one's strength and weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> II. Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Self-improvement B. Practical purposes C. Personal incentives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> III. Diary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Difficulties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First time keeping a learning diary 2. Not having standardised answers in reflection 3. Express precise ideas in English 4. In raising questions 5. Lacking of time 6. Concentration B. Benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieve better understanding of the listening task 2. Freedom to choose what they want to listen to 3. Connecting with their past experiences/memories 4. Making inferences 5. Having a space for imagination C. Format of the diary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary 2. Question 3. Reflection

<p>IV. Strategies</p> <p>A. Language learning strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affective 2. Cognitive 3. Metacognitive <p>B. Listening strategies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affective 2. Cognitive 3. Metacognitive
<p>V. Learning mode</p> <p>A. B-learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaboration 2. Face-to-face communication 3. Regular in-class meetings <p>B. E-learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexibility 2. Technical problems 3. Transparency 4. User friendly design of the platform
<p>VI. Comments on the course</p> <p>A. Collaboration</p> <p>B. Listening material selection</p> <p>C. Expectation</p> <p>D. Suggestion</p>
<p>VII. External factors</p> <p>A. Academic issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General situation in Taiwan 2. Past learning experience 3. College education 4. Peer influence 5. Decisions imposed by curriculum design <p>B. Job and career concerns</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Past working experience 2. Current jobs 3. Future plan (Job hunting and Promotion possibility)
<p>VIII. Attitude toward language learning</p> <p>A. Positive</p> <p>B. Negative</p>
<p>IX. Their change of perception (listening, language learning and academic identity)</p>

At this stage, the functions of tree nodes and free nodes in NVivo helped to facilitate the “fracturing and slicing data”, a process of *zooming in* and *zooming out* to group individual codes into themes (Bazeley, 2007, p. 71). In the meantime, the set of coding categories grown from the interview data was compared with the list of predetermined coding categories until they were saturated. Similar codes were grouped together and from bottom-up, sub-categories were then established. During this process of theme elicitation, the model function in NVivo, which will be describe in 5.3.5.4, became a great help. Through visualising the themes and codes, I made associations among the concepts by modifying the mind-map as I moved along.

5.3.5.3 Emerging coding categories: Motivation as an example

In this section, I will take motivation as an example to illustrate the process of developing nodes (In-Vivo) and how the coding evolved (how the descriptive coding categories were revised into new labels). Unlike learner autonomy, motivation was not a predetermined theme, but it came up as the first theme because of the interview question arrangement. Originally, the first ice-breaking question was to ask students to briefly introduce themselves. However, as students tended to be a bit withdrawn at the beginning of the interview; they said very little in this warm-up question. I, therefore, invited them to talk about why they were initially interested in taking this course, which served as a better warm-up question. As a result, motivation emerged from the interview data as an important theme.

Screenshot 5-9 Motivation Nodes

Name	Sources	References	Created	Modified
Motivation of taking course 選擇動機	13	40	2009/10/19 下午 07:49	2009/11/9 上午 12:33
Because of the teacher	1	1	2009/10/26 上午 12:15	2009/10/26 上午 12:15
Better at listening	1	2	2009/11/9 上午 12:02	2009/11/9 上午 12:05
Don't like other courses	2	2	2009/10/20 下午 10:44	2009/10/23 上午 01:27
Don't need to come to school	1	2	2009/11/9 上午 12:40	2009/11/9 上午 12:41
Force myself to learn English	2	3	2009/10/20 下午 10:47	2009/10/23 上午 01:00
Friends' recommendation	1	1	2009/10/22 下午 11:58	2009/10/22 下午 11:58
Future career	3	3	2009/10/23 上午 01:17	2009/11/9 上午 12:00
Improve listening	1	2	2009/11/9 上午 12:33	2009/11/9 上午 12:41
Improve speaking	5	8	2009/10/19 上午 10:13	2009/11/29 上午 05:40
Interested in English	1	3	2009/11/9 上午 12:04	2009/11/9 上午 12:08
Like to learn on computers	5	5	2009/10/20 下午 10:45	2009/11/27 上午 03:17
Curious about the use of multimedia	1	1	2009/10/26 上午 12:32	2009/10/26 上午 12:32
Multimedia	1	1	2009/11/27 上午 03:17	2009/11/27 上午 03:17
Limited exposure to English	1	1	2009/11/9 上午 12:31	2009/11/9 上午 12:31
Listening is important in communication	2	3	2009/10/23 上午 01:17	2009/10/24 上午 01:58
Listening is weaker than other skills	1	1	2009/10/22 下午 11:50	2009/10/22 下午 11:50
Need the credits	2	3	2009/10/19 下午 11:40	2009/10/22 下午 11:51
Peer support	3	3	2009/10/19 下午 11:41	2009/10/26 上午 12:16
Taking exams	2	4	2009/10/20 下午 11:46	2009/11/9 上午 12:22
Time schedule	2	3	2009/11/9 上午 12:06	2009/11/9 上午 12:33
To maintain English at a certain level	1	2	2009/11/9 上午 12:29	2009/11/9 上午 12:29
缺少練習	6	14	2009/10/19 下午 10:11	2009/10/26 上午 12:14
練習英語	8	19	2009/10/19 下午 10:10	2009/10/26 上午 12:36
Synthesis	0	0	2009/10/26 上午 02:03	2009/10/26 上午 02:03

The most frequent reason students provided for choosing this course was to improve their listening, obviously because listening is in the course title. As I probed into this general response, and asked them why they felt they needed to improve their listening and what area particularly they wanted to improve, different answers flowed out more. There were two main reasons behind this recognition, first, they felt that their listening abilities were comparatively weaker than other skills, due to insufficient exposure or limited opportunities of practicing listening. Second, they recognised the vital role of listening during the process of communication.

Not much difference was found among Class A, B and C, except that students from Class A (e-learning) chose the course because this is an online course and they do not need to come to the school. Students from Class C (one-month b-learning) had no choice since the listening course was compulsory for freshmen. Table 4-4 shows the coding categories with extracts from data.

Table 5-9 Coding Categories: Motivation of Taking the Course

Coding categories		Extracts from the data
Self-improvement		
Improve English in general		Since I entered college, I haven't been studying English, feeling my English is. That's why I am here.
Force myself to learn English		I will be more motivated to study English when enrolled in a course. (Enrolling in a course will push me to study English more.)
Improve listening		
Poor listening skills	Limited opportunities of practicing listening	I didn't have a lot of opportunities to practice listening in junior and senior high schools.
	Lack of training	I think it's because of the lack of training. There's only one course in the freshmen year.
	Listening is weaker than other skills	Listening is comparatively weaker than reading and/or writing.
	Insufficient exposure to English speaking	In Taiwan, it is not an English speaking environment, so I rarely hear people speaking English.
The importance of listening in communication	Taking exams	Because I am going to take TOEIC later.
	Future career	I think it'll be useful for future job hunting, such as jobs in those foreign companies.
For academic concerns		
Don't like other courses		I don't like other literature courses.
Need the credits		Because I need the credits.
Have the freedom to choose		It's elective course, so I want to choose what I like.
Peer influence		
Friends' recommendation		My friend took this course last semester, and she recommended me to come.
Peer support		Because my classmates are taking this course, and I am also available during that time slot, so I come along.
The use of computer		
Curiosity		I'm curious how this course will be conducted...since there is this term "multimedia" in the title.
Like to learn on computers		I want to try combining listening and the use of computer, wondering if that will be more convenient.
Busy time schedule (for Class A, e-learning)		I have a tighter schedule because of my part-time job, so I want to take this online course, which does not require in-class meeting, to save some time.

Later, after consulting with another colleague working on motivation, I reached the following hierarchical coding categories under the theme of motivation.

II. Motivation

A. Self-improvement

1. Improve English in general
 - a. Going abroad for further study
 - b. Job hunting
 - c. Passing exams

B. Improve listening specifically

1. Lack of training
2. Insufficient exposure to English
3. Limited opportunities of practicing listening

C. Practical purposes

1. Academic related
 - a. Fulfil department requirement and/or school policy
 - b. Passing language exams for certificates
 - c. Further study
2. Work related
 - a. Past—Previous working experience
 - b. Present—Part-time job and busy time schedule
 - c. Future—Future job hunting

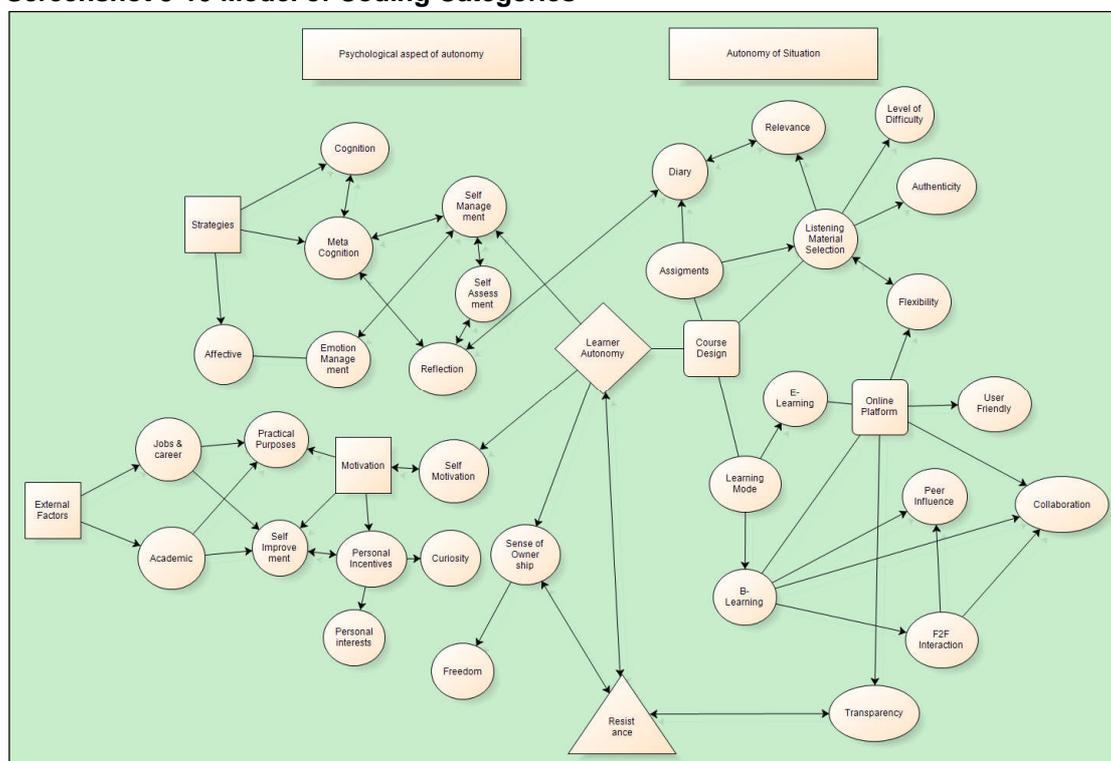
III. Personal incentives

- A. Need a prod
- B. Personal interests
- C. Curiosity
- D. Preference on learning with computer

5.3.5.4 Transforming coding categories to models

The Model function in NVivo, similar to a mind-mapping tool, helped me to visualise how these concepts are related. During the coding process, this model had been consistently modified to summarise how nodes relate to each other (see Appendix 7). By doing so, my perception of how these concepts relate to each other evolved. However, it is worth noting that the model below shows how themes and concepts interact, but, like a two-dimensional map of the globe, the model does not capture how some concepts which seem far away are closely connected.

Screenshot 5-10 Model of Coding Categories



As the above model presents, the codes centred on the concept of learner autonomy are divided into two groups. In the interviews, I did not plan to ask questions directly addressing learner autonomy, but surprisingly, students brought it up themselves when they were commenting on the course and describing their learning experience. The first group, *the psychological construct of autonomy* comprises three major themes– motivation, learner autonomy and strategies. The second group regarding *autonomy of situation* reports students’ comments on course design and use of the online platform. Resistance to autonomy will be treated as a separate theme as it responds to both groups.

5.4 Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of separating data collection and data analysis methodology is two-fold, firstly, to present the audit trail of how I approached my data, and secondly, to share my experience of using NVivo. In this chapter, I have presented first the theoretical rationale supporting my analysis of the data in 5.1. Next, in 5.2, I presented the data analysis procedure of the diaries and reflective accounts, pedagogically motivated data, with the focus on the application of I-statement analysis. In 5.3, I presented how I approached my interview data, the added data, step by step with screenshots of NVivo 7. In the following three chapters (6, 7 & 8), findings from data analysis will be reported and further discussed according to my research questions.

6 Chapter Six The roles of collaboration and reflection in fostering learner autonomy

Aiming to provide answers to the research questions in my study, I will discuss the teaching-learning alignment in two chapters—the role of collaboration and reflection in this chapter and issues related to online modality in the next chapter (Ch 7). I will first revisit my research questions so as to lay down the structure for the following sections.

As stated in 2.4, my research questions cover three aspects, students' learning, my role as a teacher and my role as a researcher, and are subdivided into six questions listed below.

I. Regarding collaboration and reflection:

1. How do collaboration and reflection foster students' development of autonomy in this online listening course?
2. How do I scaffold students' learning, e.g. reflection, in a way that will not hinder students' development of autonomy? (How much intervention is enough?)

II. Regarding the online modality:

3. How does learning in different modalities, face-to-face or online, have an impact on students' learning? (Advocates of the use of technology tend to argue that the use of technology creates a better learning environment that fosters autonomy. How true is this statement?)
4. How do I manage the three courses with different degrees of online learning? And how do I apply what I learn from one course to the other?

III. Regarding my role as a researcher:

5. How do the insights gained from I and II contribute to our understanding of how autonomy develops and can be enhanced in a technology-enhanced (supported/mediated) environment?
6. How does my role as a researcher provide a different angle to look at student's learning and my teaching? How does my role evolve?

This chapter addresses the first two questions pertaining to the roles of collaboration and reflection. In 6.1, summaries of findings will be provided to pull different datasets related to the same theme together. *Pedagogically motivated data* will be presented first to portray the picture of learning before *added data*, in which reasons and explanations were offered by the students. In 6.2, the roles of collaboration and reflection in relation to learner autonomy will be discussed respectively drawing from both the summarised findings and the current literature. Since this chapter is comparatively longer, a short summary is provided in 6.2.1, 6.1.1.3, 6.1.2.3 and 6.2.3 to highlight the key findings regarding collaboration, reflection and their relationship to autonomy.

Questions 3 and 4 investigating the impacts of online modality on students' learning and my teaching will be addressed in Chapter 7. Questions 5 and 6 which add a third dimension including my role as a researcher and the contribution of my study to the current body of knowledge will be discussed in Chapter 8.

6.1 Summaries of findings: The roles of collaboration and reflection

As mentioned above, this section addresses the first aspect of students' learning investigated in the roles of collaboration and reflection in fostering the development of learner autonomy. In 6.1.1, findings from different data elicitation tools will be summarised first. In 6.1.2, the roles of collaboration and reflection in mediating students' development of learner autonomy will be further discussed in relation to theoretical issues in the current literature.

In this section, findings related to collaboration and reflection will be reported. Even though I moved my focus away from collaboration to reflection in the middle of my fieldwork (see 4.2.2), I did not remove the two collaborative tasks in the course design. Therefore, collaboration still emerged as a salient theme in data analysis. I will start with *pedagogically motivated data*, the interaction recorded on the online platform *EngSite* first. Students' comments on the tasks in the interviews will be drawn upon later. In discussing the role of reflection, I rely on *pedagogically motivated data*, the listening diaries and reflective accounts. Two levels of analysis will be reported, a horizontal one and a vertical one. The horizontal analysis looks at the eight I-statement categories across the three classes; whereas the vertical analysis presents three case studies to elucidate the process of reflection by depicting the

individual routes of learning. Lastly, the interview data focus on the benefits and challenges of diary keeping from the students' perspective.

6.1.1 The role of collaboration

In this course, there were two types of collaborative tasks with different pedagogical goals. The first one was the weekly online discussions, a CSCL (Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning) task, and the second one was the group recording project at the end of the semester. Under the overall objective of understanding authentic listening materials, collaborative task one aimed to provide students an opportunity to work together online in achieving a more rounded understanding of the listening task on a weekly basis. With some guiding questions, students were encouraged to approach and explore the listening tasks on their own. I did not provide a list of vocabulary or explanations for them to start with. Thus, the weekly online discussion was designed as an opportunity for them to collaborate through synchronous online discussions on MSN and asynchronous threaded discussions. In collaborative task two, the purpose was to encourage creativity and to develop ownership; students were asked to work as a group to apply what they had learned from the previous listening tasks we worked on and produced a recording with their own selected topic. They were allowed to adopt scripts but they had to acknowledge the source to avoid plagiarism. At the end of the semester, the recording was presented in front of their peer classmates as the final project to replace an in-class multiple choice listening exam.

In the following sections, pedagogically motivated data, including the message boards on the *EngSite* and one online chatroom discussion, will be presented first to look at how this interactive space was utilised by students. Added data will then be presented to summarise students' comments in the interviews, in which they evaluated their collaborative learning experiences and explained why they did or did not participate.

6.1.1.1 Pedagogically motivated data: Interactive space in *EngSite*

Already in the Fall semester, I faced the challenge of stimulating the online discussion. It seemed that despite their frequent use of ICT in their daily lives, students were not comfortable when it came to discussing coursework online. In the Spring semester,

the situation had not improved much in all three classes. Even though I encouraged them to interact online, the weekly online discussions still did not have a fruitful result. Table 6-1 shows the numbers of messages left in *EngSite*.

Table 6-1 Numbers of Messages on *EngSite*

	Class A	Class B	Class C
Message boards			
Messages	From me: 29 From Ss: 18	From me: 17 From Ss: 0	From me: 8 From Ss: 0
Threaded Discussions			
1. Course Orientation	4	0	0
2. Self introduction	4	3	30
3. Travel	4	6	4
4. Movie	0	4	
5. Storytelling	1	2	
6. Radio Diaries	1	12	25
7. Speech (Steve Jobs)	1	21	3
8. Music & songs	1	5	
9. Recommended websites	7		
Chat room			
Number:	1		
Participants:	9		
Length:	98 mins		
Posts(lines):	359		

In Class A, since it was an e-learning course with only three face-to-face meetings, the weekly online discussions were designed as an essential component of learning. However, as the above table shows, the numbers of posts are actually the lowest among the three classes. Furthermore, these posts mostly had very few replies. In other words, it could hardly be counted as collaboration with the limited interactivity. In the two B-learning classes (Class B & C), even though the numbers were comparatively speaking higher, the situations were not better in terms of interactivity.

Class B was held mostly in a traditional classroom with blackboard and chairs. After the midterm week, I planned two extra sessions in the computer lab to allow students direct access to computers so that I could assist them in solving the technical problems. This explains the two highest numbers of posts under the topic of *radio diaries* and *speech*. Sadly, despite the higher numbers of posts, the interactivity remained quite limited. Class C, the one-month blended learning class, was a listening course conducted in the lab for freshmen in the English department. Each student had a computer with Internet connection at the desk, which explains why it has the highest numbers of posts. However, since it was only a four-week project at the very end of the semester close to their final exams, the online discussions were still not as interactive as I expected. In sum, the interactive space in *EngSite* remained quite inactive in all three classes.

Among the three classes, only Class A had one synchronised discussion, a text-based discussion in the chatroom. We only managed to run one group session in the beginning of the semester on March 28th. The topic for discussion was a podcast from *What's Up in Taiwan*, a website that collected interviews with foreigners in Taiwan. The table in Appendix 5 outlines the changes of topics and the amount of time spent on each topic in this particular online discussion.

Compared with the asynchronous threaded discussion, this chatroom discussion was a lot more interactive and closer to the type of collaboration I expected to happen. A lot was discussed during these 98 minutes. However, among seven participants, it was noticeable that the three more active students dominated the discussion. After this first experience of chatting online, very few students returned to the following online discussion. I speculate that this first-time experience was not rewarding so that they did not continue to participate in the synchronous discussions.

The above table only briefly summarises the main topic of discussion by listing the posts that directed the discussion, but in fact, since students were typing simultaneously, oftentimes there were more than one topic going on in the chatroom. I had to admit that for me as a moderator, it was a bit overwhelming to divide my attention and to respond to both content questions and technical problems all at the same time. The 98-min discussion seemed like three hours long to me! Furthermore, I expected that students had already finished listening so that they could bring questions regarding this first authentic listening material we tried, an interview with the manager of Domino's Pizza in Taiwan, Mr. Oelkers. I had prepared some

questions beforehand to guide the discussions; however, those questions failed to stimulate further discussions. Students took the discussion to a very different direction from my plan, talking about sightseeing places and food-related topics. I found it almost impossible to maintain the discussion under one single topic, and none of the topics I prepared was discussed. Out of this frustration, I did not rate this experience a positive one. Further critical commentary regarding students' perceptions of this online modality will be explored in 7.2.2.

6.1.1.2 Added data: Interviews

In the interviews, students comment on the two collaborative tasks. Collaborative task one, the online discussion one, received more diverse comments; whereas task two, the group recording project, received more positive comments. Three major themes emerge from students' comments on collaborative task one, *readiness for the use of ICT, the transparency of the cyber space* and *sense of ownership*. The following table presents the positive and negative comments together.

Table 6-2 Comments on Collaborative Task One

Themes	Positive comments	Negative comments
A. Readiness for the use of ICTs	1. I'm surprised by the convenience of modern technology. The face-to-face discussion can be replaced by MSN in this course. Scott (Class C, Fall)	1. The technical problems experienced are quite off-putting. Alice (Class A, Spring) 2. Found it too troublesome to log into <i>EngSite</i> to leave messages. Doris (Class B, Spring) 3. I just don't have that habit to discuss online. Zack (Class B, Fall) 4. I still prefer having discussions in person, I do not feel comfortable to do that online. Han, Zoe (Class A, Spring)
B. The transparency of the cyber space	2. I can ask questions about what I did not understand when talking to the teacher and classmates online. Karen (Class A, Spring) 3. I think discussion is pretty important. I find it helpful to discuss what I don't know. Lin (Class B, Spring)	5. I still prefer communicating via emails which allows more privacy. Lily (Class A, Spring) 6. You have to be more careful when leaving a message online and it takes more time to think. Jennifer (Class A, Spring)
C. Sense of ownership	4. I feel a greater sense of participation when responding online. Because I like English, I ask myself to read a little bit	7. It depends on whether I am interested in that topic or not. If not, I will only read the posts. Lily (Class A, Spring)

	<p>everyday. Ming-Fan (Class B, Spring)</p>	<p>8. If the teacher asks me to do it, I will. Betty (Class C, Spring)</p> <p>9. Most of the time, I only read them. Because a lot of these questions ask why, which require quite a lot of thinking. It's too much trouble to think. Tom (Class B, Spring)</p>
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The use of technology is perceived by students differently depending on which side of the coin they looked at. For instance, the same use of the forum can be interpreted as convenient or troublesome. The underlying reason is their readiness for the use of ICTs. Prior experiences with the use of ICTs in this aspect become a factor influencing students' willingness to participate in the online collaborative tasks. The following excerpt from one interview with students in Class A exemplifies some of the negative comments listed in table 6-2. It highlights the impacts of the previous experiences with ICTs. When students had previously experienced technical problems which resulted in the failure of meaningful communication, they carried this impression with them and tended to give up more easily.

Excerpt 6-1 Reasons for Not Participating in Online Discussion (Class A, Translated)

Sherri:	About the online discussion, what do you think?
Han:	We don't really like that part, because it is convenient for us to meet face to face.
Sue:	We tried once, the two of them were at home, and the two of us were on campus. But we couldn't all get connected, we had to give up and go home.
Zoe:	After that, we just prefer meeting face to face, which is easier for us.
Chen:	We did try once, but we were not very productive. We don't know what to say in the discussion.
Wu:	She thought I knew and I thought she knew, but neither of us knew what to do.
Chen:	So we gave up.
Sherri:	But some of you took online course before, didn't you try online discussion in other classes?
Yeh:	We did in the Business Communication, but with Breeze, and the teacher assigned which group to go online.
Sue:	But it wasn't very effective. Because you have to press the button when you talk, and you're not sure if the teacher could hear you.
Zoe:	When it was my turn, I would keep asking "can you hear me?" Then no body answer me.
Sue:	Yap, like an idiot.
Zoe:	You keep talking to the computer, and don't know where to look, it's really weird.

Sherri:	So, that was an online discussion? On what kind of topic?
Yeh:	It's not really discussion, because one after another has technical problems with the mic.
Zoe:	The teacher asked us, do you know how to use the mic. We all did, but the voice just did not come out.
Sherri:	If you exclude the technical problems, what about other aspects of the online discussion?
Zoe:	We were mostly quite passive. Most of the time, the teacher was the one who asked questions. When she started calling names, we knew that we needed to say something.
Sherri:	So besides the synchronised discussion, what about message board and the discussion area?
Lily:	I still prefer to use emails when getting in touch with the teacher and TA, because it is more private, you don't need to think about the wording, and which is the right usage. It's more causal to write emails.
Zoe:	And you can receive it in real time, you don't need to log into <i>EngSite</i> to read the messages.

The transparency of cyberspace is the second theme. The feature of automatically recording all the interactions in cyber space may intimidate those students who cherish privacy more than the communal space. Moreover, for some students who were more concerned with accuracy, this also added to their pressure in getting the sentences right. The phenomenon of lurking then brought up another issue of silent participation. It seemed that students tended to read others' posts first before they decided to leave messages.

The last theme is related to a component of learner autonomy—whether students possess a sense of ownership of this task or not. The interview transcription in Appendix 4 provides more insights into those negative comments. First of all, it was pointed out that using ICT tools in their personal lives was different from using it for coursework. Then, the students themselves brought up the issue of responsibility and ownership. That is, who should be responsible for the interactivity of the online discussion, the teacher or the students?

When it comes to collaborative task two, those students who participated in the interviews were all positive about this group recording project, regardless of the time and efforts invested into creating their own scripts, practicing the conversation or stories and recording and post production. They were mostly proud of their final product and felt rewarded about what they had accomplished. In the following table

(6-3), the comments from the interviews reveal a quite opposite attitude toward the task, compared with the negative comments on collaborative task one in which students complained about how time consuming it was to talk online. In this case, students emphasised the amount of time they spent and how many times they had tried in achieving the best result. The difference is they had accepted this recording project as their responsibility. Since they needed to present their recording in front of the whole class, this sense of audience helped to develop their sense of ownership.

Table 6-3 Comments on Collaborative Task Two (Translated)

Themes	Students' comments
Creativity	Regarding the final recording project, I think our group is pretty creative . We were inspired by the ING commercial on TV, so we chose to record messages on answering machine in telling the stories. It's a pity that we had some technical problem on the presentation day, but the process of creating the scripts made me realise that it can be fun when working with English. (Lin, Class B, Spring)
	It took us quite some time to create the script ourselves, and we even did some research about the topic in order to have a good content/ (Zack, Class B, Spring)
Develop interpersonal relationship	I had a chance to know my classmate better through working in the project . (Cathy, Class C, Spring)
Willingness to devote time and effort	We did a radio drama and it took us a long time, very long! Because we didn't want to edit the recording, we needed to do the recording without stopping and finished it all at once. And we did it in a café, people sitting next to us were all laughing because we repeated it too many times, more than ten times, I think . (Sally, Class B, Spring)
	We found that to decide the topic is more difficult. We spent quite some time to find a topic that everyone is satisfied. (Sylvia, Class C, Spring)
	Me and my partner spent quite some time in writing the scripts and recording. We had to try several times and record it over and over again to achieve the best results. We also add in some background music. (Cindy, Class A, Spring)
Realise the need to improve speaking	But, I also realise that I have to improve my speaking , because when I actually listened to my own voice (in the group recording project), I was not satisfied with my pronunciation and the intonation. It reminds me that I need to improve my speaking. (Scott, Class A, Fall)

6.1.1.3 Highlights of findings on collaboration

To conclude, the collaborative task one, the online discussion part, was not as successful as collaborative task two, the group recording project. The online learning mode was still unfamiliar to the majority of students, and in addition the transparency of cyber space led to a certain degree of insecurity. Therefore, they preferred raising questions in their listening diaries or emails rather than on the open space in *EngSite*. Regrettably, the purpose of “collaborative use of technology” (Lipponen, 2001 cited in Lipponen & Lallimo, 2004) to co-construct a shared understanding through interactions with their peers (Baker, 2002) was not met. As the literature on CSCL pointed out, without the non-verbal element, it does take more scaffolding in online collaboration. The one and only chatroom record revealed that there was indeed *a real need* for communication among the students. However, the absence of non-verbal cues accentuates the challenges of online interaction and therefore leads to difficulties in maintaining interactions (Brennan, 1998). The failure and potential of CSCL will be further discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to the impacts of different modalities. On the other hand, the final group recording project was quite successful. It demonstrates the powerful effect of enabling students to create their own listening materials. The findings regarding collaboration highlight two themes, *willingness to accept responsibility* and *the sense of ownership*, as essential to the success of collaborative tasks. Further discussion in this aspect will be elaborated in 6.2.1.

6.1.2 The role of reflection

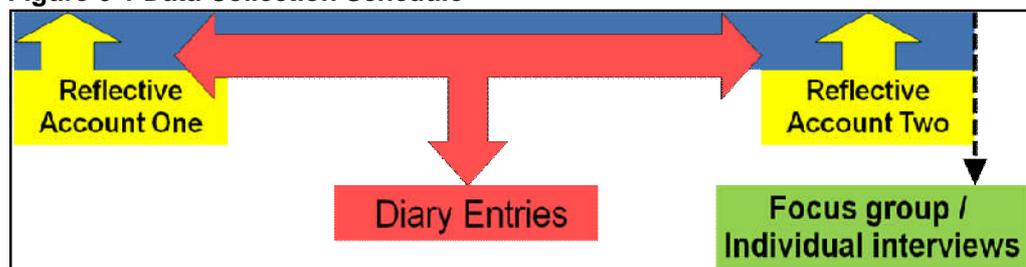
Reflection has been recognised as an essential component in developing learner autonomy. According to Little (1991), reflection helps “learners to think critically when they plan, monitor and evaluate their learning”, and therefore, plays a crucial role in developing learner autonomy. In the Fall semester, I had witnessed the impacts of reflection on students’ listening process. In this section, the role of reflection is illuminated first through the dataset of the listening diaries and reflective accounts, in which students reflected on their listening process. Later, the interview data will be drawn upon to present students’ comments on diary-keeping.

6.1.2.1 Pedagogically motivated data: Diaries and reflective accounts

Diaries and reflective accounts were designed both as a pedagogical evaluative tool

and a research investigative tool to document students' learning. As the following figure shows (previously described in 3.4.3.1 & 4.3.1.2.1), at the beginning and at the end of the semester, students were asked to do a piece of reflective writing to record their thoughts on language learning related to this course; throughout the semester, they kept the diaries as they completed the listening tasks.

Figure 6-1 Data Collection Schedule



As discussed in 4.4.1.3 and 5.2, because of the strongly narrative nature of the data, a lot of the sentences in the diaries start with I as the subject. Consequently, I adopted *I-statement analysis* to explore students' voices. This application helped me to turn off my teacher antenna and avoid imposing immediate teacher judgments. I conducted the analysis at two levels. First, a horizontal analysis will be presented to report the average frequency counts of the seven I-statement categories across the dataset. First, each I-statement category will be discussed with examples. Second, I will present the combination of different statements and how the combination represents learners' stream of thoughts which are usually inaccessible to teachers. Third, we-statements, the emerging category that looks at sentences starting with we as the subject will be reported to discuss learners' identities revealed in their writing. At the end, a vertical analysis comprising three case studies is presented to portray individual differences.

6.1.2.1.1 I-statement categories

As discussed previously in 5.2, I consulted Gee's (2001) and Fang & Warschauer's (2004) studies to start with seven predetermined I-statement categories, and after the second analysis on NVivo, I arrived at eight I-statement categories. The following table 5-4 summarises the frequency of the eight I-statement categories. There are three categories which each represent more than 20% of the data, Cognitive (26.4%), Action (21.5%) and Affective (20.5%). The next two categories, Constraint and State, are slightly above 10%. And the last two categories, Achievement and Ability statements, are as low as 5 % and 3%.

Table 6-4 Frequency of I-statements

I-statement categories	No. of statements	Frequency (%)
1. Cognitive	218	26.2%
2. Action	179	21.5%
3. Affective	170	20.5%
4. Constraint	103	12.4%
5. Personal history	86	10.3%
6. Achievement	43	5.1%
7. Ability	20	2.4%
8. Freedom	13	1.6%
Total	832	100%

The top three categories, Cognitive, Action and Affective, together count up to 68% and they are quite balanced. Cognitive Statement as the most frequent (26.2%) is predictable since comprehending listening tasks was the primary goal of this course. When scrutinising statements in this group, I divided this category into two subcategories, *cognitive listening strategies* and *language learner beliefs*. The former conforms to Vandergrift’s cognitive listening strategies, targeting on comprehension (3.2.2.1). Borrowing the reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994), Cognitive Statements about listening can be interpreted as a text-to-text relationship, because this particular text is written to describe another text. This means that in the sentence, the learner is focusing on a specific idea of the listening text and provides his/her understanding, inference or further interpretation. The following table (6-5) presents examples from students’ diaries.

Table 6-5 Cognitive Statements I

Cognitive Statements I	My notes
I think the lyrics of the song “Imagine” is written to express what everybody wants—world peace. It reminds me of a song “We are the world”, sang by Michael Jackson. A 4	Identifying main idea.
I think Frankie has been through a lot of things, first, he has to burden all the responsibilities after his father left. It’s very difficult for a 17-year-old boy to become a man all of a sudden. Second, it’s hard to make a living. His mom has to look for food in the trash or the food which is out of date. B 2	Summarise the main ideas.
I think Steve Jobs is one of the most respectable persons in our department (computer science). Not only because of the truth that he is the founder of Macintosh computer, but the	Taking the main ideas and attach personal judgements.

positive attitude he has among us. Before this address, I didn't know that it was calligraphy that inspired him to invent the interface of Mac, although we all know that GUI is something that definitely not from Microsoft. A 5	
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The second subcategory, language learner beliefs, refers to the set of hypothetical value systems underpinning their overall language learning experiences. There is a wide range of issues addressed in this subcategory, including previous learning experience, opinions about language learning and attitudes toward current language learning. In reader response theory, this kind of relationship between the text and the readers (listeners) is counted as the level of text-to-self, when learners relate what they read to their own lives, a process of moving their focus from the listening topic to their own life. This is an area that tends to be largely ignored in teaching listening, as the focus has been more directed in getting the answers right, not relating the listening topic to themselves. However, in real-life listening scenarios, this association between the text to the self is essential in maintaining the listeners' attention on the listening tasks. If the learner cannot find this link, they would soon lose interest and find it hard to follow. As the examples in the following table show, the sentences in this category are not as easily identified as those in the previous table. It is because when coding these statements, I also considered the semiotic meaning of the whole sentence, and how these statements reflect their deeper thinking and perception of their lives and themselves.

Table 6-6 Cognitive Statements II

Cognitive Statements II	My notes
When I visit the Windy city of Chicago I would like to compare it with the city where I live which is HsinChu to see which city has the strongest wind. A 8	Comparing the city in the listening with the city this learner lived.
During 13years language learning, I know the first thing to learn English best is "keeping", keeping language listening, keeping language reading, keeping language reciting from teacher warning continuously. B 2	Reflected on previous language learning experiences.
I consider that there is the ways can improve learning is when every language learner are "do everything what you like". C 1	Emphasise the importance of personal interests.
I think I'm not a successful language learner because I don't read many grammar books as others do. A 2	Self perception.

The second largest category is Action Statements (21.5 %), which often refer to specific action verbs used in the statements. Since listening was the main focus discussed in the diaries and reflective accounts, the meaning of “action” here first refers to those observable actions that take place at the behavioural level, for example, “I listened to this recording three times”. Secondly, the meaning of “action” refers to specific steps they went through in directing their learning process, which is equal to meta-cognitive strategies, the higher-order executive skills (Vandergrift, 2008, p. 87).

Table 6-7 Action Statements

Action Statements	My notes
When I do the listening this time , I like to listen to different accents and imitate their pronunciation. B 6	Describe a certain action
I listen to ICRT while driving my son to and from school and home, other than that I read Taipei Times e-news now and then. B 4	Regular language learning activities.
For listening, the reporting speeds are in the range that I can accept. ... With the transcriptions, it makes me understanding more easily. But I would not see them and ask myself to focus on listening as far as possible. I believe that I can completely know the meaning of the article by listening. A 1	Self regulation. Focus on the listening only without reading the transcription.
I think note taking is a good tip I learned from this class. I found that I now grab a pen and write things down when I listen , and I can remember more when I write things down. C3	Describe the action of note taking.

The third group is Affective Statements (20.5%) covering both positive and negative emotions. Having Affective Statements at the same frequency level as Cognitive and Action Statements heightens the role of affective factors during the listening and language learning process. Studies show that anxiety is one of the main constraints impeding comprehension in listening tasks, aside from speed, accent and unfamiliar vocabulary. However, what’s interesting is that not only negative emotions were reported but also quite a number of positive emotions.

Table 6-8 Affective Statements

Affective Statements	My notes
When the first time I listen to this article without seeing the conversation, I m a little afraid to listen to the British accent, because some of words I am not really sure about what those are. B4	Negative emotion, fear.
I'm not really interested in movies. So that I can't really get into the situation and I feel a little upset, bored with the conversation. :(B4	Negative emotion. Blaming the lack of interests as the reason of inability.
I am glad to see that Nick made it and started education again back in school. B3	Positive emotion.
I like the website in our course: American cities very much, it's like a review knowledge for me to know the city's history and feature more. A2	Positive emotion.

To sum up, these three top categories show that learners wrote about how they approached the listening task at the cognitive level, how they planned and executed their learning at the action (strategic) level, and how they felt during this process at the affective level. This allocation reflects both the cognitive and psychological dimensions of the listening process Vandergrift (2008) discussed. As discussed in 3.2.1, the acknowledgement of the affective aspect of the listening process is prominent in the listening strategy studies, which also include psychological dimensions such as anxiety as influencing factors during the listening process.

The two groups of statements between 20% and 10% are Constraint Statement and State Statement. Constraint Statement (12%) refers to the problems and challenges students encountered. In the first semester, when there was no format to follow when keeping a diary, students tended to only note down the questions they had without reflecting much on the task. Therefore, in order to encourage them to reflect more, a separate section was designated for questions they would like to ask about words and phrases they didn't understand or any specific problems they encountered. While I was reading the diaries, I had the impression that students talked about problems a lot more frequently than 10%. After looking through the statements, I found two possible explanations for this discrepancy. Firstly, even though the question section is one of the three main sections in the diaries, students

tended to merely list their questions without further elaboration. Secondly, the questions structured as an interrogative sentence were not counted as I-statements.

Table 6-9 Constraint Statements

Constraint Statements	My notes
The clip about NZ is more difficult because of the speaker's accent and more proper nouns and new words. I did not quite follow when the author's talking about how this South Island of New Zealand. A4	Difficulties in following a New Zealand accent.
I found the passage "Oscar Nomination" hard, for it uses words that I have not learnt before , words like abridge, skirmish and martyr are not familiar to me. B5	Unknown vocabulary.
Maybe, my computer is too old; I had some problems while I open the website that I want to listen. B3	Technical problems.
The reason is because of other responsibilities like part-time jobs, so I had to divide the time and found it hard to concentrate . B2	Constraint from the student's personal life.

The next frequent category after Constraint Statement (12%) is Personal History Statement (10%). This category refers to descriptions of their current state and past experiences of English learning, which I thought would only appear in the reflective accounts. In fact, I expected this category would fall at the very bottom, but it is even higher than that of Achievement (5.5%) and Ability (3%) Statements. I found that students wrote about their current and past language learning experiences quite often, even in the diaries. These experiences they described help to build up their learner profiles, so that I know more about their background and how they reach the current state.

Table 6-10 Personal History Statements

State Statements	My notes
Since I was 8 , my family moved overseas. That's when I started my English lessons , it has been about 15 years so far. C1	Past learning experience.
I used to work for a company that produce/sell computer peripherals, now I am a full-time mom, and a part-time student. A2	Past and present job.

I used to learn at a much loosen pace, and sort of learn as it goes without a clear goal. A2	Describe past learning habit.
(In recommending a website for English learning, I chose the site of "Student Post" this time.) I used to read that newspaper everyday when I was in my high school time. A4	Describe past learning experience to explain present decision.
When I was in high schools, I wasn't really into English, in my thought, it is just a subject for me have to study like math, history and geography. (In the following passage, she described the change after entering college.) B1	

Lastly, Achievement Statements, Ability Statements and Freedom rank as the three lowest categories at the bottom of Table 6-4. These three categories can sometimes be overlapping when what has been achieved is described as an ability, and when freedom is described as part of their ability to make choices. However, I still decided not to merge them together, because there are other types of achievements not related to abilities, and because the realisation of freedom is essential to learner autonomy. Those statements referring to what they had accomplished in this course are counted as Achievement Statements. On the other hand, those statements describing the ability they acquired some time earlier are categorised as Ability Statements. As for Freedom Statements, it refers to those statements that specifically announce their freedom in making certain decisions regarding their overall learning.

Table 6-11 Achievement Statements

Achievement Statements	My notes
I would not have studied so diligently if I did not enroll in this course. (I have studied so diligently...) A2	Accomplishment in taking this course.
By doing this, I can both learn the ability of English listening skill and also understand how to express my thoughts into some daily and specific sentences. B2	Benefits in keeping the listening diaries.
Ability Statements	My note
My listening was trained during the three years in junior high school. Through regular exposure to listening (at least two hours per week), I found that my listening was better than most of my classmates when I entered senior high school. B1	The listening ability from previous training

Freedom Statements	My note
I can choose anytime I want to finish the homework before the deadline. A4	The ability to make choices.

The frequency of these three groups of statements may be interpreted negatively. However, it is necessary to clarify that the low frequency does not mean that students do not recognise their own abilities, achievements or freedom, but it simply shows that they did not make this explicit declaration in writing. It is worth speculating why these statements do not feature much in the data.

The first reason that students did not report ability and achievement that frequently is bound to do with the nature of the diaries, which is more like a space to reflect on the task in that particular week. Consequently, their attention fell on that particular listening material and how they approached the task. By comparison, I noticed that most of Achievement and all of Freedom Statements appeared in the final reflective accounts when they had a chance to look back on their learning process in the previous four months. In other words, a change of perspective (Boud et al, 1985), what I call *a sense of otherness* (discussed later in 6.2.2.3) is created in the second reflective accounts, which enables them to position themselves at a distance and evaluate what they have accomplished. This highlights the critical role of the time factor in reflective writing. For teachers to encourage reflection, it is necessary to create a space by marking significant events along the way so that when students look back, they can connect all the dots into a continuum of the learning process. The length and depth of reflection depend greatly on the size of this space, and a teacher's role in facilitating reflection is to help maximise the size of this reflective space (see 6.2.2).

6.1.2.1.2 We-statements

We-statements demonstrate how keeping a learning diary is not merely an intra-personal process, but also a highly inter-personal one, involving all the communities in the social world the learner lives in. The following table exemplifies different references of 'we' and the prevalence of different types of we-statements.

Table 6-12 Types and Prevalence of We-statements

Communities Tense	Living Communities [44]	Learning Communities [45]
Past [15]	Childhood friends 1	High school classmates 11
	Sports team members 2	Class mates in private English learning institutes 3
Present [74]	Interpersonal relationship [30]	
	Family 4	College classmates 3
	People who share the same hobby (music, movie, travel) 9	Course mates 14
	Collective identity [44]	
People in Taiwan 13	Language learners (Non-native speakers) 9	
People in modern society 4	College students	
All human beings 13	Teenagers 5	

As this table shows, the overall living experiences are referred to as frequently as the learning-specific experiences (50% vs. 50%). This points out that first language learning is embedded in their life experiences, and second, through English as a medium of communication and expression, writing about life in general is as important as writing about their learning experiences. On the other hand, in terms of verb tense, they refer to the current group of people who they are working with three times more often than those in the past, which shows the central role of current learning communities. It is interesting to me that the sense of community is revealed more in the reflection data than in the collaboration data. The high number of we-statements conforms to the Vygotskian socio-cultural point of view and Schtuz's we-relationship. Reflection which is commonly viewed as a solitary thinking task is in fact grounded in each individual's involvement in the learning communities.

6.1.2.1.3 Three case studies

After reporting the horizontal analysis of I-statement categories, the vertical analysis including three case studies will be reported. This application of I-statement analysis aims to trace learners' changes over time so as to understand what they went through during their learning processes. As Ushioda (2010) pointed out, presenting textual data systematically in quantifiable numbers is one important feature of I-statement analysis. After doing so, it is easier to recognise significant features in the dataset by "relative frequencies of particular types of statement" (p. 6). Therefore, in each case, a table of the I-statement distribution of this student will be first presented to show the quantified results of analysis in the chronological order. With all the numbers of statements listed, it is more feasible to make comparison and pay attention to nuances of the changes that took place during this process. Secondly, a table of the frequency counts of all the categories will then follow to offer an overview of relative frequency. In addition to these quantitative features of data, qualitative analysis including excerpts from diaries and reflective accounts will be provided to tell the story of each learner.

Three students were selected, one from Class A (Zenobia) and two from Class B (Helen and Ming-Fan), to represent different styles of learning and to tell the stories of individual differences. These three students were not necessarily the most successful language learners, if the definition of success depends solely on learners' proficiency level and linguistic competence. Their diaries were still full of grammatical mistakes that I did not correct, and their comprehension of the listening items was not always accurate. However, they were comparatively speaking more reflective in their accounts which give more details of their journeys of learning. The reason why I did not include one student from Class C was because Class C was only a one-month project with only one reflective account at the beginning. Therefore, it was hard to construe a sense of development within such a short period of time.

6.1.2.1.3.1 Student one: Zenobia (Class A, Spring)

The first student Zenobia was from Class A (e-learning), the Spring Semester. The following table outlines the total number of diary entries she kept throughout the semester. She missed the one on 4/16 but she handed in two entries in the following week (4/26), and she wrote a long final reflection at the end of the semester.

Table 6-13 I-statement Distribution of Zenobia (Class A, Spring)

Diary	Date	Topic of listening	Word counts	No of statements
Reflection 1	3/3	Motivation of taking the course and reflecting on her own learning process.	181 5 statements	Cognitive 1 Affective 3 State 0 Action 1 Constraint 0 Ability 0 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 1	3/9	Movie	597 11 statements	Cognitive 1 Affective 3 State 3 Action 3 Constraint 1 Ability 0 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 2	3/15	Travel	524 11 statements	Cognitive 0 Affective 3 State 1 Action 1 Constraint 4 Ability 2 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 3	4/1	Music	576 8 statements	Cognitive 0 Affective 3 State 0 Action 3 Constraint 2 Ability 0 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 4	4/16			
Diary 5	4/26	Teenage diary	358	Cognitive 2

			5 statements	Affective 2 State 1 Action 0 Constraint 0 Ability 0 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 6	4/26	New York diary	325 5 statements	Cognitive 1 Affective 3 State 0 Action 0 Constraint 0 Ability 0 Achievement 1 Freedom 0
Diary 7	5/6	Steve Job commencement speech	584 15 statements	Cognitive 2 Affective 3 State 4 Action 4 Constraint 0 Ability 1 Achievement 1 Freedom 0
Reflection 2	5/12	Reflecting on keeping the listening diaries	829 (Chinese) 18 statements	Cognitive 5 Affective 3 State 3 Action 3 Constraint 1 Ability 0 Achievement 3 Freedom 1
			Total word count: 3974 Total statement: 79	

The frequency table (6-14) below shows that the highest category is Affective Statements (28 %), and the numbers of Action, Cognitive and State Statements are quite balanced. Compared with the general frequency counts (table 6-4 in 6.2.2.1.1), it is noteworthy that she has a wider mixture of different statements, plus a higher frequency of State Statements and a slightly lower frequency of Constraint Statements. Later in providing excerpts from her diaries, I will further discuss the meanings behind these numbers.

Table 6-14 Frequency of Statements

	No of statements	Frequency %	Average frequency %
Affective	23	28 %	20.5%
Action	15	19 %	21.5%
Cognitive	12	15 %	26.4%
State	12	15 %	10.3%
Constraint	8	10 %	12.4%
Achievement	5	6 %	5.5%
Ability	3	4 %	3%
Freedom	1	1	1.6%

Comparatively speaking, most students in Class A were not English majors and they were unfamiliar with reflective writing in relating what they listened to themselves. However, Zenobia left a deep impression on me with the strong sense of reflectivity in her writing. In her first reflective account, she stated very clearly her reasons for taking this course—to improve her speaking, which was quite different from other students. Moreover, she came to this listening course with an intrinsic motivation, to learn with “enjoyment”.

Excerpt 6-2 Zenobia's Reflective Account 1 (Original)

Hello everyone, I'm Zenobia. When talking about experiences of learning English, **I think until I entered the university I wasn't really enjoying English**, in my mind, it was just a subject for me to study. However, after I'm growing up, I take many classes about English, and knowing different people, who have different ways to learn English. Most of them tell me learning language shouldn't just learn it, should **enjoy it, let it become the part of your life**. For example, watching English movie, listening English song, read English novel, choosing English section of website or cell

phone. **Above are the tips I learned and now I'm actually doing it in my lives.**

Taking this class, it is not a subject I must choose, but I'll try to improve my listening comprehension. As I mention before, I wasn't enjoying English, therefore, I am good at reading and writing, and **I'm afraid to speak English.** In order to overcome this difficulty, I want to learn some ways and put myself in an environment of English to force myself to be used to.

Later in her diaries, her goal of improving her speaking led to a positive attitude toward learning when approaching challenges in listening. The following excerpt shows how she presented an encountered problem, the strong New Zealand accent, in a more appreciative manner. She had made mistakes in decoding two key phrases, but she laughed at her misunderstanding and presented these two incidents with a sense of humour. At the end of her reflection, based on her belief that “[the English] language is universal”, she maintained a positive attitude by setting up a goal of “overcoming different accents of English”.

Excerpt 6-3 Zenobia on Travel (Original)

The most difficult part is “New Zealand”, because this listening comprehension has a **British accent, which the pronunciation is strengthened in some syllables.** And also, there are some vocabularies I couldn't recognize or misunderstand. **For instance,** when first time listened to the word “*chilli bin*”, I thought it was “chewing gum”, therefore, I felt weird that way chewing gum could be a spicy food. **Another example,** “*because today I'm off tramping Now I must rattle my dags in the bush*” all I could understand is bush, I thought the speaker has a date with someone in a bush. **I felt it was interesting to date someone in the bush.**

...

As far as I concerned, **language is universal.** And speaking and listening are good skill for us when traveling. **Now my challenge is to overcome different accents of English.** Maybe I can't get used to it and feel unfamiliar, by practicing and trying to guess the meaning of the vocabulary often, I think I would get used to and enhance my listening comprehension.

Another important feature of Zenobia's reflective writing is her strong identity as a college student, which has already been revealed in her reflective account one, when she stated that *she did not truly enjoy learning English until she entered college.* In the following diary on Steve Job's commencement speech, she raised this issue again

and commented that even though she followed the norm to enter university and was not fully aware of what she wanted to achieve in her first year, she reckoned this decision as her own choice and therefore was willing to take this as her *responsibility*. Phrases and clauses related to her identity as a college student are highlighted in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 6-4 Zenobia on Job's Commencement Speech (Original)

As a university student, I am trained to be **independent** to do things, and find something that is important. But honestly, not until the second year in university, I found out what I want to do. **Before I entered university, I didn't think of why I want to go to university, and what I want to get from it.** However, I just followed the policy, which is to enter the university after graduating from high school. I don't like Steve Job decided to drop out from school to find out his future, and not to waste time and money. **As far as I consider, I choose to enter university to find my future.** In my thought, I do love what I've chosen and won't be regret, because that's **a responsibility of my life.**

In her reflective account two, she reflected on this course and wrote about *diary keeping* and *the use of Internet as a source of listening* as two things she benefited the most. It seemed that even though this was her first diary-keeping experience, this concept was not new to her. Her high school teacher had introduced this idea and encouraged her to do so. At the end of the paragraph, she also set a goal for herself in carrying it on in the future.

Excerpt 6-5 Zenobia on Reflective Account 2 (Translated from Mandarin)

I think learning a language has to come with a bit **regulation**. The most special part about this course is that we had to keep Listening Diary. To me, this is the very first time I keep a diary in English. In Senior High School, the teacher told us to write a sentence or two in English about our lives everyday in order to get used to writing in English. **The learning diaries in this course really help me to put learning into my life.** Whenever I needed to write the diary, I really have to scratch my brain to link what I listened to with my own experience. I learned to think logically when I need to discuss some issues and explained why I agree or disagree. To me, I am still learning how to write my own learning diaries. **The expectation I have for myself is to get more used to keeping listening diaries, and use this to encourage myself to think and practice English.**

...

I found that we're really lucky now. In primary school, I had to go to private language institutes to learn English, and the materials were mostly textbooks or CD. Now, with the Internet, it is a lot more convenient to learn English. **No wonder, it is described as an era of the Internet, and learning is beyond boundaries.** This course really helps me to see another means of learning English. I especially like the website recommended by classmates, which introduces websites I will never know. It is a big help for me, someone who is sometimes lazy in looking for new materials.

Zenobia's case typifies a successful story of learner autonomy. In the beginning, she enrolled in this course with a strong motivation in learning English. She had managed her emotions positively so that difficulties in listening did not create a strong feeling of frustration, which happened quite often for EFL students. What is more, she has a strong sense of identity as a college student which helped her to assume the responsibility in managing her learning.

6.1.2.1.3.2 Student two: Helen (Class B, Spring)

The second student Helen is from Class B (b-learning), Spring semester. As described in 4.2.2.2, the target group of students in this class were junior and senior English majors in the night division. The course was offered in a blended-learning mode, which meant we still had weekly face-to-face meetings in the classroom. The following table outlines her progress throughout the semester. Because her reflection provides an interesting contrast with the first case study, I chose her despite the fact that she only handed in four diary entries. The purpose is to show a different picture of learning which is in fact more common in the language learning classroom. After all, Zenobia presents an extremely successful case which does not always happen in the classroom.

Table 6-15 I-statement Distribution of Helen (Class B, Spring)

Writing	Date	Topic of listening	Word counts	No of statements
Ref. 1	3/8	Reflecting on the listening preferences.	277 11 statements	Cognitive 1 Affective 3 State 1 Action 6 Constraint 1 Ability 0

				Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 1	3/19	Self-introduction	607 8 statement	Cognitive 1 Affective 1 State 0 Action 0 Constraint 6 Ability 0 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 2	3/25	What's up in Taiwan	231 4 statements	Cognitive 0 Affective 3 State 0 Action 0 Constraint 1 Ability 0 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 3	4/9	Movie	494 14 statements	Cognitive 0 Affective 4 State 1 Action 1 Constraint 7 Ability 1 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 4	4/16			
Diary 5	4/23	Radio Diary	280 8 statements	Cognitive 3 Affective 1 State 1 Action 2 Constraint 1 Ability 0 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 6	5/3			
Ref. 2	5/29	Reflect on what their learning this semester	143	Cognitive 2 Affective 0 State 1 Action 4

			8 statements	Constraint 1 Ability 0 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
			Total word counts: 2032 Total I-statements: 53	

Table 6-16 Frequency of Statements (Helen)

	No of statements	Frequency %	Average frequency %
Constraint	16	30%	12.4%
Action	13	25%	21.5%
Affective	12	23%	20.5%
Cognitive	7	13%	26.4%
State	4	7%	10.3%
Ability	1	2%	3%
Achievement	0	0	5.5%
Freedom	0	0	1.6%

Regarding the relative frequencies of I-statements revealed in the development of Helen's diaries, the high frequency of Constraint Statements reveals an interesting feature of her diaries. In fact, throughout her first three diaries, she listed the problems she encountered, but did not further explain why or provide solutions. It was only in the last diary that she reflected on her listening process. As a result, the frequency of Constraint Statement is 30%, which ranks as number one among all categories. Next, even though the frequency of Action Statement (25%) looks higher than average, in fact, 10 out of 13 Action Statements appeared in the two reflective accounts. That means the number of Action Statements is actually much lower in the diaries.

In her reflective account one at the beginning of the semester, she was quite motivated and positive about exploring topics she did not usually listen to.

Excerpt 6-6 Helen on Reflective Account 1 (Original)

I guess I have to explore my world of interest. I have to establish other interests or habits to give myself more motivations to practice English listening ability, and don't narrow my focus on my own interests, cartoons and music.

However, in the first two diaries, she complained about the quality of recording, (“The sound in the wav file wasn't so clear as we listen to the CDs, I think it's kind of unclear to hear.”) And she listed *the lack of interest* as one of the main reasons stopping her from understanding the text aside from the quality of the recording, and the unfamiliar accent (“The difficulty I met in this diary is different from the previous one, for the way the woman's accent. I could not really get used to her accent, there are a lot of words I don't really understand but only guess.”). The following excerpt serves as an example of the high-frequency of Constraint Statements in her diary (7 out of 14).

Excerpt 6-7 Helen on Movie (Original)

I'm not really familiar with movies, so this part is kind of hard for me to understand. I watch cartoons most of the time. [...] **My history is awful**, therefore, **I found the conversation becomes kind of hard to understand** and feel the situation while they're talking. [...] **I'm not familiar with the movie's type**. I can understand the language but **I don't really get into the situation**. [...] Well, as I mentioned before, **I'm not really interested in movies**. So that **I can't really get into the situation** and *I feel a little upset, bored with the conversation*. :(I think I need to work hard in this part. At least to understand these kind of conversations or vocabulary (*sic*).

As the Excerpt 6-7 shows, she attributed the problems she encountered to the lack of interest and in the end the passage was concluded with an Affective Statement expressing her frustration. After the third diary on movies, she did not hand in the fourth diary. However, nearly a month later in the last diary she handed in, there was a sudden change in the way she reflected on the content and her listening process. Although the last diary was short (280 words), she was able to elaborate more on the listening process. The following excerpt is from her fifth diary, in which she wrote

about how the practice and discussion we had in class helped her to familiarise herself with the topic, and she found that she could concentrate more on the listening task when listening alone in the dorm.

Excerpt 6-8 Helen on Radio Diary I (Original)

This Diary wasn't so unfamiliar with me for the reason **we've already heard it in the classroom** for about 2 to 3 times and **talked about it**. Yet **the process of listening** to the same files in the classroom and in the dorm is totally different. I think for **listening for this file again alone can make me more concentrate in the content**. Also, I think practice listening skill is a **lonely work you have to do it by yourself**.

In addition to the one we worked on in class, she chose a different teenage diary to listen to on her own. Although she did not enjoy this one that much, she illustrated what she did and provided an explanation, which did not happen in her previous diaries.

Excerpt 6-9 Helen on Radio Diary II (Original)

"I've heard this audio files **for several times without the script** to understand what Juan wants to say. However, I found it was a hard work to only listen to it without the script. It's **not** for the reason that I rely on the words, but **almost at the end of the file, he sobs and sniffles a lot. And the breath even covers the words**. Therefore, I **feel confused**. For the reason I even don't get the idea of his grief and sorrow and he cries. (Well, I thought that according to the picture on the website, I've choose a man with cool life, but I was wrong.)"

In Class B (b-learning), due to the regulation, the course with seniors in class had to end almost two weeks earlier, which I did not realise until the middle of the semester. Therefore, I decided to have the second reflective accounts in class after our last in-class discussion when we were also reflecting on what we had covered in that semester. Consequently, the second reflective accounts collected in Class B were shorter in length and more structured in the sense that they responded to what we had discussed earlier.

In the following reflective account two, Helen reflected on what she had learned in that semester, and listed four steps she would take when facing difficult listening tasks.

Excerpt 6-10 Helen on Reflective Account 2 (Original)

Next, when facing difficult listening tasks, first, I will take **the audio file's name** or **website page** into my guess, also from the words, vocabulary, and even check the name (people's name or place's name) to have a wider understanding. Second, if I can't follow, I would **stop listening and take a short break**. I believe I'll come back to deal with it later. Third, I'll challenge it if I think I'm **familiar** with the material enough. Fourth, well, **I'm a picky person**, in fact. Therefore, I'll escape from the topic that I'm **not familiar** with.

Compared with her diaries, what she wrote here was more structured. Firstly, she started with her pre-listening strategies, such as checking the file names, which she did not mention in her diaries. Next, she explained what she would do when facing a more challenging listening task, one of the main issues we discussed earlier in class. In the end, she addressed what she had been referring to in her diaries, the familiarity of the topics. This final reflection highlights the different nature between diaries and reflective accounts, which will be elaborated later in 6.2.2.

6.1.2.1.3.3 Student three: Ming-Fan (Class B, Spring)

The third student Ming-Fan is also from Class B, the same as Helen. I chose to have her as the third case study because her frequency counts present quite a comparison to the above two cases. As the following table shows, Ming-fan did not hand in the first diary, so the number of diaries she handed in is also four, but compared to Hazel (word counts 2032, I-statement 53), Ming-Fan wrote nearly 900 words more in total (word counts 2910, I-statement 100) and the number of I-statements is almost double.

Table 6-17 I-statement Distribution of Ming-Fan (Class B, Spring)

Writing	Date	Topic of listening	Word counts	No of statements
Ref. 1	3/8	Reflecting on the listening preferences.	478 17 statements	Cognitive 1 Affective 1 State 3 Action 8

				Constraint 2 Ability 2 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 1	3/19			
Diary 2	3/24	Travel	387 8 statements	Cognitive 5 Affective 0 State 0 Action 1 Constraint 0 Ability 2 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 3	4/6	Movie	739 14 statements	Cognitive 1 Affective 2 State 4 Action 5 Constraint 2 Ability 0 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Diary 4	4/16			
Diary 5	4/23	Radio Diary	739 31 statements	Cognitive 6 Affective 4 State 2 Action 15 Constraint 2 Ability 1 Achievement 1 Freedom 0
Diary 6	5/3			
Diary 7	5/29	The art of travel	558 23 statements	Cognitive 2 Affective 6 State 4 Action 8 Constraint 1

				Ability 2 Achievement 0 Freedom 0
Ref. 2	6/6	Reflect on what their learning this semester	184 7 statements	Cognitive 2 Affective 0 State 0 Action 3 Constraint 1 Ability 0 Achievement 1 Freedom 2
			Total word count: 2910 Total statement: 102	

Table 6-18 Frequency of Statements (Ming-Fan)

	No of statements	Frequency %	Average frequency %
Action	40	39 %	21.5%
Cognitive	17	16 %	26.4%
Affective	13	13 %	20.5%
State	13	13 %	10.3%
Constraint	8	8 %	12.4%
Ability	7	7 %	3%
Achievement	2	2 %	5.5%
Freedom	2	2%	1.6%

The above frequency table shows that she has a much higher number of Action Statements (40%), and the numbers of State and Ability Statements are also higher than average. Starting from the first reflective account, she has relatively more Action Statements. She recalled her past experience and explained why she decided to take the transfer exam and major in English. Similar to what Zenobia has written, she also emphasised intrinsic motivation here, and highlighted the importance of sheer enjoyment of learning English.

Excerpt 6-11 Ming-Fan Reflective Account 1 (Original)

... However, after deciding to take the transfer examination, **I discovered** that English seems to have a magic power attracting me much. I start to cultivate myself to love English. As I am concerned, no matter which subject one majors in, **one needs to find his or her interests in it**; otherwise, it is quite difficult for him or her to learn. Because of this notion of mine, **I follow what I really want and which one I love the most—English**. Fortunately, I stopped my endless seeking and found my favorite one. English really attracts me, and I indeed love English.

Like many other students in the night division, she used to work during the day as a receptionist in a financial building in Taipei. Taking this job also shaped her beliefs about English learning, which was one of her motivations in taking this course. In this previous job, she had to understand various accents when visitors approached her for help. In the following excerpt, she addressed the importance of listening.

Excerpt 6-12 Ming-Fan Reflective Account 1 (Original)

My previous job was a receptionist in Taiwan Power Company. There are many visitors coming to Tai-Power Building. Some visitors look for the workers of Tai-Power Company; some just pass by and ask some questions to me. For example, some foreigners will ask me where they can pay the bill; some will ask me where the toilet is. English is the global language. Hence, **no matter where they come from, they speak English with their accent**. The most difficult thing is that you have to listen to their accent carefully and answer their questions correctly. There are many Japanese people, German, and other foreigners coming from different countries. Hence, listening is very important for us to understand what they say and what information they need. Sometimes **I will feel frustrated** because they talk fast and use some difficult words that I cannot 100% understand what they say. Encountering the situation, I always frowned and asked them to say it again. **As a student in Department of English, I tell myself I need to improve my English ability to compete with other people**. Listening is essential in our lives. Even though you talk in Chinese to a native, you have to listen carefully to what he or she says in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding. English is not our mother tongue, so if we are not familiar with it, there will be some troubles and misunderstanding between you and others.

An interesting pattern in her combination of statements caught my attention during the process of coding. I noticed that there were several cases when she described the difficulties she encountered, where an Action Statement followed the Constraint Statement. In reacting to a problem, she would describe what she had done or could have possibly tried in the future, which explains the high frequency of Action Statements. In the following excerpt, she first referred to what another classmate mentioned in class and related it to the strategy she developed in her own listening practice.

Excerpt 6-13 Ming-Fan on Radio Diaries (Original)

I remember once in the class **Wade told us that he just put these mp3 files in his mp3 and listened to all the files when he took the bus or MRT.** Besides, teacher told us that it is a good way for us to improve our listening even when we are not paying much attention to the listening. **I try to offer myself this kind of environment and involve in the English surrounding.** I downloaded the mp3 files to my computer, put them to the mp3 player, and played them again and again. Whenever I listen to the files, **I firstly ask myself to understand what the speaker was saying.** After knowing the meaning of the radio, **I will do other things;** for instance, when I brush my teeth, have a meal, or just sit on the bed thinking nothing, I will keep playing the radio files. Hence, **this time I repeated the radio of Selma many times.** I found out this is indeed a **good strategy** of improving listening. Improving is invisible.

As I explained above, due to the change of schedule, the second reflective account was written in class. Due to time limitation, she did not write as much as she did in the first reflective account. She first reflected on the importance of listening, which resonates with what she wrote in the first reflection. Just like Helen, Ming-Fan also mentioned note-taking, one of the issues discussed in class, which she did not mention at all in her diaries.

Excerpt 6-14 Ming-Fan: Reflective Account 2 (Original)

I believe that listening is the most fundamental part of all language learning skills, including listening, speaking, writing and reading. I also regard listening as the basic part of communication. If you 100% understand what others say, it is easy for us to get along with others, no matter which languages you use.

Now, **I know to know the topic in advance** is of much importance, and it is easy to catch the key point if you have a guess before listening. If I can't get into the topic, I will give myself a rest and go on later. Besides, **I will involve myself in this kind of environment that speakers there speak fast**, so I can be accustomed to the speed of the normal talk of foreigners.

Note-taking is a good way and necessary strategy for me. Of course, I cannot always understand the whole content, so I will take notes on the part I don't listen clearly. When I listen to it twice, **I will pay more attention to the part I don't know** and will have more ideas of it.

To conclude, these three case studies aimed to present the vertical application of I-statement analysis in portraying changes over time and highlighting individual differences. In each case study, the frequencies of I-statements indicate how this student developed her own way of tackling the listening task. This particular choice reveals their preferences of learning styles which were not always visible to teachers, sometimes not even to themselves. These three case studies exemplify the notion that autonomy means different things for different learners, and highlight the importance of catering for individual differences. Furthermore, during the process of analysis, I recognised the potential application of I-statement analysis as a pedagogical tool. If students are given a chance to go through their own accounts, this may help to draw their attention to visualising their own route of learning as it had helped me to see more how they had learned.

6.1.2.2 Added data: Interviews

In this section, I will present students' perceptions of diary writing from the interview data. One of the purpose of the interviews was to investigate whether the objectives I set for diaries were met or not, and what kinds of difficulties remained unsolved. The

rationale behind the design of the diary was for the learners to document the listening process, to raise questions and to communicate with me, and most important of all, to make personal connection with the listening tasks (see 3.5.3.1 & 4.3.1.2.1).

From previous experiences in the Fall semester, 2007, I learned that a certain structure and house-keeping regulations were still necessary, since the concept of keeping a learning diary was not familiar to most of the students. They particularly struggled with reflective writing, which they seldom tried in their English classes. After a series of trials and errors, students were advised to divide the diary into three main sections: summary, question and reflection. Moreover, the diaries were collected regularly on specific dates. On the other hand, in order to create a comfort zone to encourage reflection, a certain degree of freedom was granted. Firstly, students were allowed to use whichever language they feel comfortable, English or Mandarin Chinese. Secondly, under the topic we worked on each week, in addition to the assigned listening task, they were encouraged to choose other listening materials they liked to reflect on. The following table compares the objectives I set for the diaries and students' comments. Because the interviews were conducted before reflective account two, students only commented on diary-keeping but not on the reflective accounts.

Table 6-19 Comments on Listening Diaries

Themes	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
1. Collected regularly on specific dates	It helps me to regulate my progress so that I can finish the tasks according to the schedule. Zenobia (Class A, Spring)	The diary-keeping becomes a pressure, because it requires a lot of patient and time to keep up with the writing. Doris (Class B, Spring)
2. Document the process of listening	I become more focused when listening and recall more details when I need to write. Sharon (Class C, Spring)	I don't find the writing process necessary, it's too time consuming. I would rather spend more time practicing listening. Zoe (Class A, Spring)
	When I kept the diary, I listen to the files more times and therefore it left a deeper impression on me. Ming-fan (Class B, Spring)	As long as I understand, I think it's enough. Instead of writing, I recommend that we can record the diaries instead. Tom (Class B, Spring)
3. Divide the diary into three sections, summary, question	I find it clear to follow, but reflection is always more difficult.	I found it annoying to have to follow the format. It restricts my thinking, and

and reflection	Daphne (Class A, Fall)	it's like filling up the spaces. Sharon (Class C)
Themes	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
4. A channel of raising questions and communication with the instructor	I not only read the comments on my own diaries, I sometimes also read others', especially in the first couples weeks when I wasn't sure what to write. Cindy (Class A, Fall)	I think the problems I encountered are always the same, it's because there are vocabulary I don't know. So I am always repeating the same problem. Jack (Class B, Spring)
5. Allow a certain degree of flexibility in material selections	I started with the easy one so that I can manage them better. Helen (Class B, Spring)	It's sometimes hard to find the one I'm interested in to write, cause I'm looking for things related to intonation and accents. Daphne (Class C, Spring)
	I like it when we (students) can choose the topics according to our interests. When I chose the topics I like, even if it's difficult, I'm more willing to finish it. Ann (Class A, Fall)	
6. Their choice of languages	But I don't want to use Chinese even though you said it's okay. I want to improve my English. That's why I took this English class. Cindy (Class A, Spring)	
	It's easier to explain it in Chinese but I found it more challenging to write it in English. Jenny (Class A, Fall)	I stuck with writing because it's hard for me to express my ideas in English. Jack (Class B, Spring)
		When I read what I wrote, I feel it's quite childish. I always stuck with word choice, trying to find the right word. Tom (Class B, Spring)
7. Encouraging reflection	I think reflection is not that difficult for me. I just wrote down what is in my mind, or sometimes I wrote about what I don't understand. Ming-fan (Class B, Spring)	I'm still not sure what reflection means, because there is no standard answer. I think having this flexibility is making me even more confused. I don't know if I'm on the right track. Doris (Class B, Spring)
	I think I learned to explore the topic and push my understanding further. Jack (Class B, Spring)	

The majority of students were quite positive about diary keeping. They were surprised that by simply writing down the listening process, they learned to listen better. First of all, because they had to write, it required more attention and a genuine understanding of the listening tasks. They had to concentrate on not only what they understood but also the parts that they did not understand. Secondly, the diaries grant students the freedom to exercise choice-making. Since some of the listening websites have a bank of listening materials of various topics, they could choose the ones they were more interested in. Thirdly, in the reflection section, they had a chance to associate what they had listened to with their personal experiences, which builds a close bond and develops a sense of ownership.

On the other hand, these same features of diary-keeping can also be interpreted negatively when students did not see the relevance of reflective writing in relation to improving their listening abilities. Looking into the negative comments, I found that it reveals the underlying beliefs these students held. First of all, the act of writing itself requires quite a large amount of time which could easily add to their pressure. Keeping the diary was not an attractive idea for those students who still held the belief that getting the answers right was enough in listening. Under this belief, they did not see the merits of going beyond “getting-the-answers-right”. On the same note, this explains why they commented on reflective writing as confusing. When reflection and getting themselves involved in learning the language is a new concept, it can be confusing as there are no correct answers, and more than one acceptable interpretation.

However, despite all the negative comments, it is worth noting that all students decided to use the target language English to write, even though they struggled to articulate their thoughts in English. It was only in the second reflective accounts that some of them decided to write in Chinese to fully express themselves. In terms of their choice of language, it was actually a very positive attitude about their attempt to improve their written English.

Another theme that emerges in the analysis of the interviews is listening strategies. My interview strategy of starting with the listening tasks and materials worked successfully in tackling the issue of strategy use without explicitly interrogating students about which kinds of strategies they employed. When I asked them how they managed the listening tasks and diary-keeping, they were able to elicit the listening process and those steps they went through, which indicates a higher meta-cognitive awareness. Some details were revealed when they referred to certain

listening tasks, but since it was not a think-aloud protocol, students did not recall specifically what they did, but commented on a more general process of their listening process. Due to this difference, I modify the definition of Vandergrift's listening strategies to better describe this set of data (See Appendix 6).

The most interesting is the creative imaginary elaboration under the category of cognitive strategy, in which learners were making connections between the listening tasks and themselves, an aspect absent in Vandergrift's taxonomy. Furthermore, similar to the findings in I-statement analysis, it is common that more than one strategy was applied when learners described their listening process. For example,

"I usually listened to the whole file without stopping. In the second time listening, I will pause when I identify the main ideas, write it down, and then carry on. If necessary, I will repeat that segment to make sure my understanding is correct or repeat that several times until I understand." (Jack, Class B, Spring)

6.1.2.3 Highlights of findings on reflection

The use of diaries in the three online listening courses proved to be an effective pedagogical tool in facilitating reflection, a critical component of learner autonomy. In diaries, language learners have a chance to transfer the implicit and ephemeral process into concrete words. This act of writing promotes meta-cognitive strategies and encourages them to make sense out of their own actions which they might not have noticed before. In data related to reflection, the findings of I-statement analysis and case studies demonstrate that learners employed a balanced use of cognitive, metacognitive and affective strategies as evidence of learner autonomy. Moreover, individual differences are highlighted. In the following section, the above reported findings will be drawn together in illuminating the roles of collaboration and reflection.

6.2 The roles of collaboration and reflection in developing learner autonomy

Based on the summarised findings and initial discussions in 6.2.1 and 6.2.2, in this section, I will discuss the roles of collaboration and reflection respectively first and then jointly in relation to students' development of learner autonomy. New examples of data which are not yet presented in the previous sections will be drawn upon here

to elucidate how collaboration and reflection mediate students' learning.

6.2.1 The role of collaboration

As Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010) recently reported, *collaboration* together with interaction and negotiation are deemed as the three crucial factors in promoting learner autonomy in language classrooms (p. 2). As discussed earlier in 2.1.2 and 2.3.1, researchers have consistently highlighted the collaborative component of learner autonomy (Dam, 1995, Sinclair, 2000, Jiménez Raya, Lamb & Vieira, 2007). In defining learner autonomy, Little (1994) emphasised that “learner autonomy is the product of interdependence rather than independence” (p. 435); he argued elsewhere (1996) that autonomy entails the capacity “to participate fully and critically in social interactions” (p. 210). In line with his argument, practitioners like Leni Dam (1995) promote the notion of interdependence and the application of learner autonomy in school sectors where learners work with teachers and their peers (Benson, 2001, p. 14). She marked the readiness and “the willingness to act independently in cooperation with others” in the Bergen definition of autonomy (Dam, 1995, p. 1).

My study is also contextualised in the school sphere, a university context; therefore, collaboration plays an integral role in the research and course design. In the listening courses, two collaborative tasks were designed in order to achieve “a shared understanding through interaction with learners” (Dillenbourg, 1999). Both the face-to-face and online interactions were considered as possible means of communication for the students to discuss with their peers the difficulties they faced, to share resources they found helpful and, through these interactions, to build a community of practice (Lave & Wagner, 1998).

As Table 6-3 and 6-4 show, the data related to collaboration reveals different results of the two tasks. It is apparent that students were more engaged in collaborative task two, the group recording project, than collaborative task one, the weekly online discussion. Analysis of the interview data points to students' *willingness to accept responsibility* as critical to the successful completion of the tasks. As Little (1996) argued, this willingness is the starting point of developing learner autonomy. Unless learners recognised the need to accept learning as their own responsibility, they would not take the learning as merely meeting the requirements set by the teacher. This notion of accepting responsibility resonates with the inclusion

of commitment in Roschelle and Teasley’s (1995) definition of collaboration, which accentuates that participants have to be committed first so that they will “engage in shared goals and problem solving” (cited in Arvaja et al, 2008, p. 2). Without this commitment, it is not possible to develop subsequent interactions to enable learning. In the following section, reasons resulting in different degrees of willingness will be explored.

6.2.1.1 The impacts of task types

The interview data unravels two factors influencing students’ willingness to accept responsibility—task types and modality. In this section, I will mainly focus on the impacts of task types, as the issue of different modalities will be addressed later in 6.3. I adopted Willis’s (1996) definition of a task which narrows the meaning down to “a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome” (p. 53 cited in Edwards & Willis, 2005, p. 18). As Roggenkamp (2009) argued, the use of language can be counted as a type of group knowledge participants co-constructed, because the language itself is without doubt collaborative in nature, and new gain in language use is co-constructed through meaning negotiation among participants as in genuine social contexts.

To further discuss the difference between these two tasks and to understand students’ different responses, I adopted Pica et al’s (1993) explication of task features, including four parameters, *interactant relationship*, *interaction requirement*, *goal orientation* and *outcome options*. Collaborative Task One, the online discussion, was an opinion-exchange task which involves a higher level of two-way communication and it led to an open-ended result. Collaborative task two, the recording project, was a production task which led to a convergent result—producing their own listening materials. The following table lists the comparison of these two tasks.

Table 6-20 The Configuration of Tasks

	Collaborative Task One Weekly Online Discussion	Collaborative Task Two Group Recording Project
1. Interactant relationship	Non-specific interactant	A specific number of group members
2. Interaction requirement	Weekly meetings throughout the semester (4 months)	Approximately one month and the number of meetings was decided by group members

3. Goal orientation	Work toward comprehending a listening task	Work toward a recording project
4. Outcome options	More than one possible outcome (divergent)	One single outcome (convergent)

As the above table shows, Collaborative Task One required a longer period of participation with regular meetings, and participants interacted with a non-specific group of interactants. The task was designed as deliberately less structured without assigning which group to respond to which topic. Since it was an open forum available for the whole class, students had no control over whom they would interact with and therefore faced more uncertainty. In terms of goal orientation and outcome options, students were working toward a goal for comprehension. In this sense, constructing a shared comprehension is a goal which requires a higher level of cognitive loads and depends greatly on interactants' negotiation of meaning. Consequently, the outcome options were not predictable. On the other hand, Collaborative Task Two was a month-long project and students could meet as many times as they found necessary to complete their recording. I met with each group when they first initiated their project to discuss their choice of topic, and one week prior to their presentation to discuss other related issues regarding their progress. The goal was more straightforward and the outcome was more simplistic.

As Table 6-2 reporting the analysis of the interview data (6.1.1.2) on the role of collaboration shows, the transparency of the cyber space is identified in the interviews as having opposing pulling effects. Students expressed their uncomfortable feelings when leaving messages in such an open space like the forum, and explained that this is why they preferred emails or listening diaries as a channel of communication to raise questions. This emotional aspect should be taken seriously since it is interwoven with the cognitive and social aspects in the collaborative process (Arvaja et al, 2008, p. 268). I, therefore, probed further to discover the source of their uncomfortableness, and if this negative emotion reflected any structural design that can be improved in future practice. As Dillenbourg (1999) encapsulates, when there exists a better symmetry of action, knowledge and status, collaboration among participation is more likely to be achieved (p. 7). In other words, the lack of symmetry leads to higher collaborative loads. In van Lier's (1996) term, "symmetry refers to equal contribution

of right and duties in talk” (p. 175). Even though it is hard to reach an absolute symmetry as participants are always taking turns, it is the goal of all collaboration to balance the constant asymmetry among participants’ contributions.

Associating students’ negative feelings with the above analysis of task types, it can be speculated that their uncomfortableness reveals a relatively high degree of asymmetry in the interaction, the unequal participation (Jacobs, Power & Loh, 2002), which increases the difficulties to collaborate. First of all, the weekly interaction requires a greater amount of time and devotion of energy. Secondly, interacting with their peers online always came with a strong sense of uncertainty and they were not comfortable expressing themselves in this online environment. Thirdly, the open-ended nature of Collaborative Task One also increased the level of difficulties in reaching a shared understanding that all participants agreed on.

It is now understandable why the analysis reveals a mismatch between my expectation and their actual experience. From my perspective as a teacher, Collaborative Task One was intended to lead to an open-ended outcome, which granted more freedom for students to develop the kinds of interactions they wanted with their peers. It is informed by the “interaction-based pedagogy” which encourages teachers to create classroom opportunities for learners to exchange information and communicate ideas so that they can “perceive, comprehend and ultimately internalize L2 words, forms and structures” (Pica et al, 1993, p. 10). However, from the students’ perspective, they perceived this freedom and flexibility as confusion.

To conclude, the failure of collaborative task one has a strong connection with the task types. As the four parameters reveal, students needed to devote a greater amount of time and energy into Collaborative Task One, and they faced a higher level of uncertainty caused by the transparency of the cyber space and asymmetry in group composition. However, this failure of the online collaborative task does not indicate that the advocating of online collaboration in fostering learner autonomy does not work. In a different light, it can explain students’ choice-making when they see other options available for them to fulfill their needs of communication, i.e. emails or the listening diaries, and so they may take the alternative. This finding sends words of caution to teachers to be more sensitive to students’ attitude as one influential dimension. Donato (2004) calls attention to “the value the participants assign to their collective work” (p. 286). Moreover, the online modality adds another factor for

consideration. A number of students turned away from Collaborative Task One after experiencing some technical problems. I eventually came to realise that I tried to impose my own conception of collaboration on students' learning without listening to the message they sent through their unwillingness to participate.

6.2.2 The role of reflection

The discussion of reflection is divided into four sections. I will first restate the reasons for studying reflection from my own personal experience and the observation of students' learning. Secondly, as reflection is promoted through diary-keeping, the relationship between diary-keeping and listening will be addressed—including both benefits and challenges. Thirdly, two essential dimensions central to the process of reflection will be discussed: the necessary change of perspective in creating *a sense of otherness*, what Boud et al (1985) called “perspective transformation”, and the *time* factor. Results of I-statement analysis in the diaries will be drawn together with excerpts of interviews to discuss how diaries play an important role in fostering reflection through personalising students' learning and catering for individual differences. Lastly, the social dimension of reflection which tends to be overlooked in the literature of reflection will then be illuminated.

6.2.2.1 The decision to focus on reflection

Reflection has long been recognised as a powerful mechanism worth promoting in education by renowned scholars like Dewey (1938), Bruner (1960) and Boud et al (1985). By no exception, in language pedagogy, reflection has been identified as crucial to the development of learner autonomy (i.e. Kohonen, 1992, Little, 1997, Sinclair, 2000, and Wenden, 1998), through the use of journals, log books or diaries (Dam, 1995, Murphy, 2008a and 2008b). My own experience as a language learner also coincides with the theoretical discussions on the benefits of reflection to language learners. In fact, the initial interests to integrate diary-keeping into language learning was from my past experience as an English learner. Starting from high school, I had the habit of keeping a notebook specifically for learning English. At first, it was merely simple words and phrases I jotted down from reading, and gradually I wrote longer passages as I developed my writing skills. After entering college and majoring in English, I needed to keep a large amount of journals as assignments in recording

my thoughts about life in general or specifically about literature works.

Naturally, after I became a teacher, I have always encouraged my students to keep their own learning diaries and have been experimenting with various ways to implement diary-keeping into coursework. When designing the online listening course in 2005, I included listening diaries as the major assignment. I found that even though the term diary-keeping is quite self-explanatory to the students, simply encouraging them to write on a blank notebook did not lead to the best result. In the first phase of my study, I spotted that more supports were necessary. First of all, the majority of students rarely experienced diary-keeping as a medium for language learning, and they struggled with filling up a blank page. Moreover, these diaries were not merely kept for personal pleasure; they were designed for a pedagogical purpose and there were learning objectives to meet. Consequently, the focus in the second semester was directed to what a teacher could do to provide systematic supports in a way that did not restrict learners' development of autonomy. Learners were reminded that diaries were part of the course requirements, and their diaries would be read and graded by the teacher and TAs. This is not to hang a carrot in front of the learners as incentives, but to assure them that their endeavors will be rewarded. I also added a piece of reflective writing at the beginning of the semester to generate a before-and-after comparison for the end-of-semester reflection. Two extra sessions were planned at the very beginning of the semester to foreshadow potential difficulties they might encounter, and guiding questions were provided to suggest explicitly some topics to explore. I also took some diaries from the previous semester to serve as samples for discussions.

Figure 6-2 Listening Diary PPT

They wrote...	On Self-introduction
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the problem: "When dealing with those difficult tasks, I would try to find out what the problem is. Then, I would try to find some reference and information to solve the problem. If there is no solution, I would ask or discuss with my classmates."• Be resourceful: "I will search the internet first. After getting enough information, I will discuss it with classmates. If I still cannot understand the materials, I will turn to ask teacher."• Note-taking: "If I'm not allowed to listen to it too many times, I will write down the notes quickly. I think to develop my own system of taking notes like use some word codes is very useful."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I feel that some self-introduction is difficult is because of those place names I don't know."• "I feel that this self-introduction is too formal, just like a biography, writing, which is not necessary when you talk to people and introduce yourself."• For the first listening, I think it is easy to understand. Through "Small Talk on the Bus" this listening exercise, I think it is not necessary to start talking and mention your name or where you're from. Facing different situations, we start our conversation differently."

6.2.2.2 The role of reflection and the listening process

The first question to be answered is whether diary-keeping is beneficial to learners' listening process or not. The design of the diaries is to bring the independent learning component into classroom learning. In the AIEDL project, all the English courses are offered online with reduced face-to-face meetings. The overall objective is to promote self-study with sufficient supports, not leaving students in an isolated learning environment. In the listening course, I therefore counted on the diaries to connect the out-of-class listening activities with the classroom. As Benson (2001) commented, it is a new area in autonomy research to study how out-of-class learning can relate to classroom learning (p. 185). He then suggested researchers learn "from introspective or retrospective accounts of learning gathered through diaries or interviews" (ibid.). The advantage of diaries is that learners write about their learning experience in real time while their memories are still fresh so that it "wouldn't be distorted by time" (p. 203).

Extensive reading has been gaining ground as a legitimate means to improve reading skills for language learners. However, extensive listening has not attracted equal attention so far in the realm of listening instruction (discussed earlier in 3.3.2). Now with the advent of technology, the mounting multimedia materials available on the Internet have made extensive listening more feasible. Through keeping a diary, students were first introduced to a number of websites and they were encouraged to discover more sites based on their personal interests. Meanwhile, diary-keeping aims to bring learners' attention to both the language itself and their learning process.

The first focus of the diary is to encourage learners to explore language use on their own. The published listening textbooks usually start with a list of key words and some pre-listening questions. However, this is also why it is hard for EFL students to work with authentic listening. In the diary, they were encouraged to catch the key words themselves and notice certain linguistics features. Similar to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Schmidt (1990) proposed that no matter how much learners are exposed to the target language, if they never *notice* new features of the language in the input, they are not learning (cited in Richards, 2005, p. 88). Little (2007b) accentuates the importance of language use in the practice of learner autonomy. In the interviews, students also said that in order to be able to summarise, they need to pay more attention to key words and main ideas.

The second function of diary-keeping is to bring learners' attention to how they approached the listening tasks, the metacognitive aspects covering "planning, goal-setting, reviewing, self monitoring and self-evaluation" (Murphy, 2008a, p. 201). I did not plan a strategy-based instruction in this course, so the word strategy was not used explicitly. However, strategy emerged as a salient theme from the analysis of the diaries and the interviews. Students did not use specific terms like goal-setting or monitor, but a wide range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies are identified from their accounts (Appendix 6). This finding shows that diaries indeed are an effective self-reporting tool to raise learners' awareness of strategy use, particularly the metacognitive ones. Wenden (1998) considered this awareness of the process of learning as an indicator of learner autonomy rather than any specific mode of learning (cited in Usuki, 2007, p. 12).

Two students' comments in the interviews are provided to illustrate two quite opposite opinions toward diary-keeping. The first excerpt is from an individual interview with Roger (Class B, Fall). He commented that through keeping the diary he played a more active role during the listening process. To him, the reflecting process is 'a digesting thinking process'.

Excerpt 6-15 The Dialectic Process of Diary-keeping (Translated)

Sherri:	Does keeping a diary help you in any ways in terms of the listening process?
Roger:	Yes, it does. Because listening can be a passive receptive process. When you need to express it in writing, you need to think it through, that means you digest what you listen to, otherwise, you wouldn't be able to write about it.
Sherri:	Can you explain more?
Roger:	I think, hum, how should I put it, it is like when you are reading an article, listening is also a kind of text, but you listen to the audio form. What I was trying to say is, in addition to the actual reading or listening process, you still need to digest, to actually take it in, that's the thinking process I mean.
Sherri:	That's interesting.
Roger:	hum, because it's hard to produce an idea from no where. It usually start with a stimulus, you probably need to read some related information online, or through others' idea to stimulate your thinking. Then, through the thinking process, new ideas come into birth. So, even though it is stimulated by others ideas, it is the thinking process that matters, you make it yours.
Sherri:	Oh, I see, so you mean it is an interactive process, between you and what you listen to? Like a dialogue? Hum, it's philosophical.
Roger:	Yes, it's what I want to say about what thinking means. Hope it's clear.

Roger's account echoes Reed's (1981) argument in viewing reflection as an empowering learning process (cited in Boud et al, 1985, p. 23). Through the meaning-making process in reflection, learners interact with the language they work with and turn inputs into intakes. On van Lier's (1997) spectrum of pedagogical interaction, this kind of reflection moves from monologic to dialectic (p. 179). It is this dialectic process that helps learners to personalise the content of listening which then is conducive to ownership and autonomy. More details about how reflection functions will be elaborated in the next section 6.2.2.3.

However ideal it may sound like, in practice, not all the students appreciated diary-keeping as much as Roger did. As the analysis of the interview data shows (6.1.1.2), students' willingness to accept responsibility is still critical to the success of the diaries. Until they accept that reflection is essential to their learning, they will perceive writing as extra burden. The second excerpt from a focus group interview with students in Class B (b-learning, Spring) provides valuable insights into the premises on which this negative reaction is based.

Excerpt 6-16 Interviews on Diary-keeping (Class B, Translated)

Tom:	I'm a bit disappointed, to be honest. Even though you have told us in the first class that we would need to practice speaking and writing as well. I indeed know more listening sites, but I still want to focus more on my listening, like some basic training, such as the linking sounds that's hard to follow. Because I can also search online and find those if I want. And then, because we needed to do the listening before we came to the class, and I was always prepared. I nearly listened to all the required tasks, but I didn't have time to write the diary. Because I took more courses this semester, and I need to get ready for other courses as well. So, I would do the listening, otherwise, I don't be able to participate in the group discussion. But I didn't do the diaries. So on the record, I just did not hand in the assignment. Now it's the end of the semester, and I still owe you several entries of diaries. This is what bothers me a lot. But, many websites are indeed useful.
Sherri:	Hum, does this has something to do with the level of difficulty? Because we started with intermediate level and move on to more advance, so it's more demanding later.
Doris:	Hum, I think so. Sometimes, I click on the link and then I freeze. Cause I think,

	bla bla bla and I don't understand a word, then I can only read the transcript.
Sherri:	Can you explain more.
Doris:	I think I had quite some expectation at the beginning, but then I started to feel stressed, and want to avoid this course. I think listening should be more relaxing, but we need to listen, read and write, it's indeed quite stressful. So toward the end, I was a lot lazier. so, it's also because of my procrastination. And because of this, I didn't improve much. A bit like I'm doing the listening to get the credits, not because I want to improve my own listening.
Tom:	And it's also because there are more vocabulary, but I feel looking up all these words are not going to help me improve my listening. Then I wonder why I am doing all these work? Maybe this can gradually increase the amount of words I know but I felt it is not effective.

Tom's and Doris' negative attitudes toward diary-keeping represent a common conception of diary-keeping as "time-consuming and difficult" (Murphy, 2008a, p. 202). When I dig deeper into their *unwillingness to reflect*, as Murphy suggested, it is closely related to "their previous experience of what learning involves" (ibid.). In these two students' eyes, listening was about getting the message right; therefore, their job as a language learner ceased when they thought they had understood the message. Under this belief, keeping a listening diary becomes an extra burden and therefore, they questioned its *usefulness*. Students honestly reflected the current dominant methods of listening instruction in Taiwan. Listening is still treated as a skill to decode what they hear. In Goh's (2008) research on listening diaries, she also encountered the need to challenge the comprehension-based instruction persisting in the current teaching of listening. Students like Tom enrolled into the class with specific ideas about what a listening class should be like, and therefore, the purpose of the diaries did not fit into their perception. The following table lists two more similar comments from interviews.

Table 6-21 Negative Comments on Diaries

Student	Comments
Claire from Class A	"I sometimes didn't know what to write in reflection. In the beginning I just put 'good' or 'I don't understand the accent'. I gradually wrote more but now if you ask me what reflection is, I still can not answer."

Olivia from Class B	I paid more attention to listening, but I'm lazy in writing. I have this idea that as long as I understand it, that it's fine. Besides, it really takes time to write about what I think.
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To sum up, the implementation of diaries indeed creates opportunities for learners to reflect on their listening process, when its purpose was accepted by the learners. The extra classes and explanation were effective but more could be done to draw learners' attention to unearth their own belief system so that changed actions can accompany changed attitudes.

6.2.2.3 The process of reflection: Stepping back and making sense

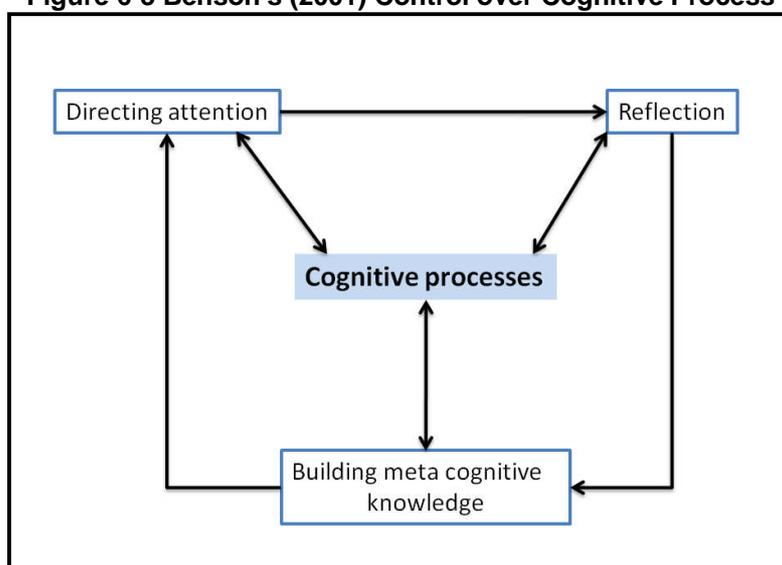
In this section, I will discuss the process of reflection in greater details to facilitate the following discussion on students' reflection on their listening and learning processes. A loop of reflection synthesised from various theoretical discussions across different fields (Boud et al, 1985, Benson, 2001, Fook & Gardner, 2007) will be presented. Two essential and interrelated components of reflection will be pinpointed, a sense of otherness and the importance to set time aside for reflection. Examples from students' diaries and interviews will be provided as empirical evidence to support the insights I gained from the teaching process and the data analysis process.

First of all, to foster reflection, it is essential to gather what I call *a sense of otherness* (6.2.2), so that the learners gain a new perspective and appreciation of their own learning, a process of stepping back and making sense. In a similar light, Boud et al (1985) described reflection as a recursive process involving stepping back from the current action to evaluate this action's effectiveness. In order to do so, it takes a "perspective transformation", termed by Mezirow (1978, 1981 cited in Boud et al, 1985, p. 23). This change of perspective can "free [us] from [our] habitual ways of thinking and acting and becoming more critical aware of how and why our assumptions about the world in which we operate have come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships" (ibid.). From my observation, when students were too involved in the process, it is usually difficult to answer further questions about their learning.

Reflection and metacognition have sometimes been used interchangeably. In my study, I would like to distinguish reflection from metacognition. Indeed, they both refer to learners' capacity to think about their learning process. However, in my view,

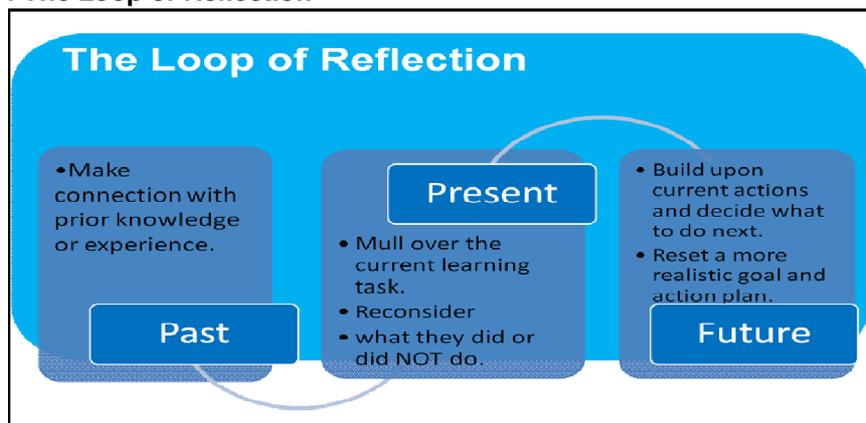
metacognition refers to the individualistic aspect of monitoring, planning and evaluating; whereas reflection encompasses not only the monitoring and evaluation but also a broader perception of “unearthing individually held social assumptions” (Fook & Gardner, 2007, p. 14) in order to enhance their awareness toward the consequences of their own actions. In the following figure, Benson (2001) associates reflection together with learners’ metacognition and attention. Applying this model in my study, the cognitive process equals to the listening comprehension process. Thus, during the course of reflection, learners are paying attention to both the oral inputs and to their own listening process.

Figure 6-3 Benson's (2001) Control over Cognitive Process



During the analysis, I found that this model captures the relationship among reflection, attention and metacognitive knowledge as a static picture, but the time dimension is not included. When a learner reflects, it always takes place along the continuum of time as he or she “looking forward or (usually) looking back to actions that have taken places” (Louden, 1991, p. 149 cited in Benson, 2001, p. 91). Wegerif (2007) borrowed Bakhtin’s (1981) idea of a *chronotope*, a literary notion of “the presentation of space and time together in a text”, to argue that time is an indispensable component in creating a space of learning (p. 25). This argument can also shed light on the listening diary in my study, since reflection is mediated through writing, consequently resulting in a written text as its end product. The following figure is therefore created to present the loop of reflection in a more dynamic state with the emphasis of time.

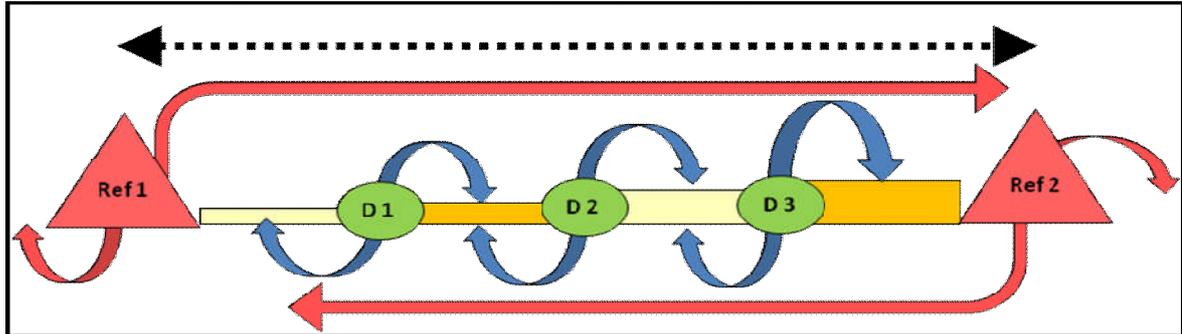
Figure 6-4 The Loop of Reflection



First of all, the current action sitting in the centre is the starting point in this loop of reflection. Learners direct their attention to the present task and this attention remains as the central focus. The medium of writing provides a means of documenting this current learning experience. Based on the writing of this present learning, it is then more possible to create *a sense of otherness* so that learners can monitor and evaluate their present actions. To make sense of their decision-making process, learners may look into their database to retrieve their personal history and prior learning experiences. The category of *personal history* in I-statement analysis is the evidence of the past experiences which pave the way for the current learning to take place. This link can hardly be accessible to the teacher if the learners do not make the association themselves. Sometimes, even the learners themselves are unaware of these impacts of their past learning experiences unless they set time aside to ponder upon their learning process. On the other hand, as they come to the completion of the present task, the written text provides them an opportunity to think forward about the next step. If the current task works well, they can stick to their original plan. Otherwise, if they realize that the original plan is not realistic, they need to make necessary changes.

In sum, in a single loop of reflection, the process is built around the present task and the learner can go back to the past experience or look forward to the future planning. This loop of reflection can be extended into multiple loops as the learners proceed. What is compelling about the multiple loops of reflection is that it links the current learning episodes with the previous experiences and future aspiration, and thus enables the learners to ascribe meaning to the actions that they consciously or unconsciously conducted.

Figure 6-5 Creating A Space for Reflection (Multiple Loops)



The two red triangles are the two reflective accounts at the beginning and at the end of the semester. They function like the powerful words of “Action” and “Cut” signaling the starting point and the finish line. The first one collects background information about the learners, and invites them to state their resolution for the coming semester. The second reflective account draws the learners’ attention to evaluate what they have accomplished so far and to examine whether they have met their goals. In-between, the green circles represent the listening diaries they kept to document their weekly learning. Borrowing Schön’s (1983) notions of different types of reflection, the diaries resemble *reflection-in-action*, and the second reflective account resembles *reflection-on-action*. This explains why achievement statements appear more in the second reflective account. As the above figure (6-5) shows, by stringing all these dots together, a space of reflection is then created.

In connecting all these dots together, learners are drawing their maps of learning marking the peaks and valleys on the landscapes. What is more important is that, this is the map they have created themselves to document the region they have traveled, not a given map handed down by their teachers. The three case studies provide three portraits of the multiple loops of reflection. What I found particularly interesting is that the role of reflection is even more important when learners face difficult situations they struggle with. Through reflecting on what they were unable to do, they perceive their failures and negative emotions when they gain the sense of otherness. Take Helen, the second case study, as an example (6.1.2.1.3.2). She had high numbers of affective and constraint statements in her diaries, but her second reflective account was full of action statements. The power of reflection in her case works in releasing her frustration and brought her attention to those constraints and her inaction. When she examined her learning process retrospectively, she then recognised the gap between the initial goal she set for herself and the reality. To my surprise, she then

could identify specific steps she carried out when completing a listening task. The precious lesson in Helen's case is that even though she did not achieve the goal she initially set for herself, she recognised that she couldn't work against her personal interests. In this sense, I would not call this a story of failure in not meeting her goal, because the recognition itself is considered an achievement.

There have been abundant studies on good language learners and their successful stories; however, I would like to argue that through reflection, we can learn as much from those not-so-successful stories. The following excerpt is another story to support the above argument. The power of reflection lies in recognising not only the successful actions but also the unsuccessful ones. Winnie was a student from Class A (e-learning) who disappeared for two weeks after the midterm exam. However, in her second reflective account, she acknowledged her lack of self-regulation and re-evaluated her learning attitude.

Excerpt 6-17 Linda's Reflective Account 2 (Class A, Spring Translated)

I remember the end of last semester, I was running among the secretary's office in sociology department, Sherri's office and the secretary's office in my own department in order to sign up for this course. Now, it's coming to the end of this course. When looking back to this learning journey, I felt that it's a pity that I was always behind in handing in the diaries even though I always finished the listening tasks within two weeks. That's why now at the last stage, I was rushing to make up the diaries.

I can feel the progress of the improvement of my listening. At first, I can only understand 50 or 60 % of the listening task, but then when we're doing the News Listening, I don't know if it's because the content is easier, I didn't struggle that much. Although I don't understand some of the strong accent, I like most of the materials provided in this course. Those that I was not familiar, I tried to understand the structure. When I encountered those topics I was familiar with, such as movies, when I was listening, I can simultaneously think about which types of movies I liked the most, if I were the one that was interviewed, how could I introduce the movies I like.

Now when I went back to read my responses to the three questions, I still feel that I am not a successful language learners, because I lack the persistence to master English listening, so that even when I did the listening I still didn't submit the diaries in time. But the only thing that is fortunately is that, even though now I'm under the pressure of assignments, I still enjoy learning English. I like listening to the British accent, appreciate the cultural smell; I also like the more brisk American English and I could know some slangs Americans use in their daily lives.

...

The workload is already heavy in my own major, but I think this can not be an excuse of handing in late assignments. As the teacher mentioned it in class, this course is not only about listening training, it's also about our self-regulation. Maybe what I learned this semester is not a positive self-learning experience, but through the negative experience, I learned a precious lesson in exchange. If I have a chance later, I will still take online English courses, after all, this learning style indeed is very flexible. But I think I have learned the lesson, and I will follow the weekly schedule, and take this course as seriously as my major. Thank you, Sherri.

Through listening diaries, the students developed their own styles in approaching the listening tasks and the diaries turn out to be a very important communication channel for me to truly understand what they went through. For both teachers and students, a better understanding of the reflection process can assist better execution. Reflection does not just happen when students are asked to reflect. Just like autonomy, it is a capacity that can and has to be developed. Thus, the best thing a teacher can do to foster reflection is to create a space for the learners to draw their maps. For the best result, I found it essential to integrate opportunities for discussions in the course design. The social dimension of reflection will be elaborated in the next section.

6.2.2.4 The social dimension of reflection: We-statements

In this section, the top five categories of we-statements will be first reported before the social dimension of reflection is discussed. When I first noticed that students used we quite often as the subject instead of I, I thought that might be a possible influence of their mother tongue Chinese. However, when I scrutinised each individual usage, I found that the *we* actually refers to a wide range of associations that the learners identified with in their reflective writing. As the earlier Table 5-13 shows their accounts are full of an abundant supply of other living and learning experiences connected with their previous or current experiences and the communities involved. The following table lists the top five communities in we-statements with examples from the diaries.

Table 6-22 Top Five We-statement Categories

Communities	We-statements
1. College learning communities [14]	I think keeping a study diary really enhance the connection between teachers and students because teachers can trace the study progress of the students and understand what difficulties we might encountered.
2. Collective identity: People in Taiwan [13]	I think it is fun to take a road trip in Taiwan. The transportation is really convenient, we can travel with only a map. ... I really think we should introduce the beauty of Taiwan more.
3. All human beings [13]	As human beings, we all have problems with relationships, whether family, friends, or lovers, more or less.
4. High school learning communities [11]	When I started my junior high, I became really upset. English was not interesting for me anymore during such annoying time. We spend lots of time memorize vocabularies and did thousands of English tests and examines.
5. Collective identity: Language Learners [9]	The conversation passages this time are from people, whom English is their native tone, they reply to questions fluently and responsively, whereas for us , we do not normally speak or think in English, therefore, when it comes to reply to the interviewer's questions, it would probably take us more time to think about how to reply.

Despite the small number of statements listed here, the prevalence of these five categories of we-statements reveal two interesting findings—the importance of learning communities and the identities learners carried with them. First of all, for these college students, the learning communities they have participated in high school and the current college settings have great impacts on their learning. For this group of EFL students in Taiwan, the English classes they have previously experienced in school left deep footprints on their journey of language learning. Since I did not conduct further investigation into how these positive and negative learning experiences shape their beliefs and perception toward English, it will be too arbitrary for me to make any assumption based on these eleven statements. However, the impact of past learning communities is apparent. The second issue is the identities learners carry with them. From the two categories of collective identities, I am particularly interested in the language learner identity expressed in their statements. As examples listed above indicate, learners were aware of the difficulties inherent for EFL learners mastering a language they do not normally use in their daily lives. In short, we-statements reveal the communities the learners had been growing up with, including both the living communities and the more specific language learning communities. The participation within a community can be a powerful drive for the learners to develop their autonomy.

In fact, theorists like Boud et al (1985) and Candy (1991) have already mentioned the social dimensions of reflection. It is a pity that when reflection is brought into the picture of learning, it is normally the individual dimension that is discussed, and the social dimension is usually not under the spotlight. It is probably because reflection is studied through self-reports which are considered writing in solitude. However, writing is actually a social process for us to communicate ideas as “a means of exploring, testing, conducting, and commenting on our social relationship” (McLane, 1990, p. 312). In ethnomethodology, an account by definition means that the actors “explain (describe, criticize, and idealize) specific situations” in their social lives (Ritzer, 2003, p. 155). Through accounting, the actors are trying to make sense of what may seem like a banal incident of their lives and rediscover its meaning (ibid). In Boud et al’s (1985) classic work on reflection, they have pointed out that reflection requires the transformation at the level of social consciousness, which takes a substantial amount of social experiences to develop such a consciousness (p. 23). This is perhaps why adults are deemed as more reflective than young children, not because there a definite causal relationship between reflection and age, but because of the important role of social experiences. In line with this argument, in keeping the listening diaries, even when learners are working on their own with the listening tasks, their reflection is not limited to the single learning experience of that particular task.

This thread of situating reflection in social contexts is parallel to the core of the Vygotskian socio-cultural theory, in which social interactions are believed to stimulate higher order thinking and cognition (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991, p. 6). The large number of we-statements identified in the diary data serves as empirical evidence of the social milieu reflection reflects. Schutz’s (1967) theory on we-relationship provides another sociological explanation of learners’ use of we. He argues that the the use of we reveals a sense of belongingness built through the social interactions. People first build up the relationship through face-to-face interactions, and carry this “stream of consciousness” and a sense of belongingness even after they are physically separated. Furthermore, this is how identities are established through groups of people encountered. Feldman (2000) asserted that in the twenty-first century, we are moving from the “Age of the Individual to the Era of Community” referring both to the geographic communities we live with and communities of common purposes (p. xiii cited in Kilpatrick et al, 2003, p. 1). In our field of language pedagogy, Donato (2004) also pointed out that in successful collaborative learning activities, the use of

the pronoun “we” is an indicator that signals the close bond among the members (p. 287). All these arguments point to the “person-in-context relational view” Ushioda (2009) argues for language teachers and researchers, “we need to understand second language learners as people, and as people who are necessarily located in particular cultural and historical contexts” (p. 216).

6.2.3 Highlights of findings on collaboration, reflection and learner autonomy

In this section, the role of reflection and the use of listening diaries as a pedagogical tool are elaborated. From the learners’ perspective, the diary is indeed a successful exploratory and recording tool for EFL learners. From the teacher’s perspective, it is a good channel for communication to achieve better understanding of individual difference. From the researcher’s perspective, reflection in the diary-keeping as a data elicitation tool offers a lot more than a think-aloud protocol. It is worth paying more attention to the social dimension of reflection such as students’ personal history and other living experiences which shape their learning and explain why they become who they are today. I would like to provide a definition of reflection to conclude this section:

Reflection is a dialogic process (between learner and text, learner & world) that centres on the current learning task, covers cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective aspects; traces back to prior experience to unearth assumptions and the belief system; and looks forward to necessary modifications regarding future goal-setting and action planning.

When carefully designed in the curriculum, reflection can play a rigorous role during the process of language learning. Through setting time to write, a sense of otherness is created and therefore students can converse with themselves and make sense of the learning process. Moreover, even though reflection centres on the current learning task, it traces back to past personal history and prior learning experiences, and at the same time, reflection also encourages learners to look into the future to make subsequent plans or modifications. It was also a process of exploration for me to reflect on my role as a teacher and how I can better assist learners’ reflective process. Drawing on the previous discussion on collaboration and my initial attempt in building a community of practice through online collaboration, I was trying hard to

create a learning community in my classes but neglected the communities my learners have already carried with them. It may be more effective to construct a new learning community based on the already existing ones.

6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I responded to the first and second research questions regarding the role of reflection and collaboration. In 6.1, the focus is more on reporting findings related to collaboration (6.1.1) and reflection (6.1.2). The findings are reported according to the two different groups of data, pedagogically motivated data and added data. In 6.2, the initial discussions of how collaboration and reflection relate to learners' development of autonomy is presented. I address the role of collaboration in 6.2.1 first. In 6.2.2, I presented a more elaborated discussion on my main focus—the role of reflection. Since this chapter is relatively longer, I provided highlights of findings and initial discussions in 6.1.1.3 (collaboration), 6.1.2.3 (reflection) and 6.2.3(collaboration, reflection and learner autonomy).

7 Chapter Seven Multi-modalities in teaching and learning

During the process of data analysis, I gradually realised that RQ 2 investigating the impacts of modalities bears an underlying techno-centric assumption that students would learn differently under different modalities, online or face-to-face. However, the data reveals that students' learning is more complex than this reductionist assumption which tends to compare the results of learning and asserts that X is better than Y. When I constructed such a question, students' active role in the choice of modality was neglected. In fact, in the interviews, students demonstrated that they were highly aware of their choice of modalities and the subsequent influences on their learning and life in general. Since it was not my intention to conduct a comparative study, I decided to give up the original question about the impacts of modalities, and address a more intriguing issue emerging from the data—students' choices over different modalities, and how their choices in return shaped my decisions about integrating the online learning component in the three classes.

To avoid repetition, this chapter will not start with the summary of findings categorised by data elicitation tools; it will be structured around two emerging themes: *appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation* in 7.1, *students' perceptions and motivation in using ICT in English learning* in 7.2. Lastly, I will reflect on this journey from Wonderment to the Looking Glass (Davis and Morrow, 2010), and argue that the process of *appropriating* educational information technology into the culture of the learning communities is indeed a two-way dialectic communication (Hoppe, 2007). In order to create an autonomy-friendly environment, teachers have to develop a more sensitive attitude concerning students' prior learning experiences, preferences and identities.

7.1 Appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation

In this section, I will discuss the process of embedding technology innovation into students' learning in the three listening classes by first presenting the theoretical backgrounds before drawing on my observation and the relevant data. In 7.1.1, I will first discuss the theoretical grounds of coining the term “appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation” (Hoppe, 2007; Rogers, 2003). I will illustrate why I borrowed Hoppe's (2007) unconventional use of “appropriating” as a verb

meaning “befitting”, “making something appropriate”. In 7.1.2, I will address issues that lead to my process of appropriation by starting with reviewing the decision to include three classes to outline the foundational differences in group composition in Class A, B and C and the difference between e-learning and b-learning in course design. Next, I will focus on two prominent issues, first the change of focus from collaboration to reflection, and second, the unexpected difficulties in managing b-learning.

7.1.1 Theoretical grounds

The term “appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation” combines Hoppe’s (2007) discussion in relation to CSCL and Rogers’ (2003) discussion of technology adoption in the broader field of sociology. I bring these two terms together for they both stress the central role of communication during the process of applying digital technology. As described in 4.2.3, when I reflected back on the fall semester, I found that the whole online learning experience had shaped both me and the students as we communicated our different needs and preferences. In Dewey’s (1916/2004) words, the process of communication inevitably shapes all parties involved:

To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience. One shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far, meagrely or amply, has his own attitude modified. Nor is the one who communicates left unaffected.

(cited in Reneland-Forsman, 2009, p. 5)

In this quotation, being a recipient does not imply a passive role of the participants; rather, it places communication as the ultimate purpose higher above all the participants. This is also why I decided to adopt Hoppe’s (2007) usage of “appropriate” to refer to the process of adjusting ICT tools to serve these groups of learners.

In arguing that ICT tools should always be accepted with certain modification, Hoppe (2007) chose the word *appropriate* both as an adjective, to emphasise the importance of selecting the suitable ICT tools according to the context, and as a verb, to accentuate the necessary modification when integrating technology into learning (p. 2-3). He argued that “an educational appropriation of ICT” should be a two-way dialectic process between the community and the technology itself. When the online

modality is integrated into the culture of the learning community, this modality has to be adjusted accordingly, like a chameleon changing its colour to fit into the environment. By the same token, the community will also need to develop a different dynamic to accept this innovation, which means both the teacher and the students should take the ownership of these ICT tools and only select those functions they need.. In this view, all the participating teachers and students are not passively receiving the impacts; on the contrary, they play an active role in projecting their needs and preferences which in return modify the employment of these tools. As Hoppe (2007) argued, “[e]xisting technology is ‘appropriated’ in a collaborative learning setting in that its functions and its way of embedment in the learning context is subject to design and investigation” (p. 6). In my study, when I incorporated the online component into the three classes, all three, the students, the teacher, and the online modality, had to go through certain adjustments.

In a similar light, the same emphasis on the need to communicate during the process of integrating digital technology can also be found in Rogers’s well-known theory of *diffusion of innovations*. He chose the word *diffusion* to describe the dynamic process of communication in “exchanging information in order to move toward each other (or apart) in the meanings they give to certain events” (p. 6). The importance of communication is again the centre of attention. Furthermore, he brought our attention to two external factors, time and the social context; any innovation “is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (p. 5). Time again plays a critical role to bring about changes in any institutions, either public or private sectors. It always takes *time* for practitioners to truly accept innovation at a deeper level of thinking and let this innovation penetrate through their practices.

To conclude, combining Hoppe’s and Rogers’ views, the term “appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation” proposes that teachers need to consider what the learning communities bring with them, such as students’ prior learning experiences and their readiness in using technology to complete learning tasks. This is a very subtle and ever-changing process of listening and responding to learners.

7.1.2 Issues in the process of appropriation

The process of appropriation on the practitioners’ side is discussed by the action

researcher Bridget Somekh as a process of maturity through the metaphor of Lewis Carroll's two famous books, from *Wonderment* to the *Looking Glass* (Davis and Morrow, 2010, p. 90). Most of us who are interested in technology innovation in the classroom experience the challenges and frustration of moving from the initial exciting phase, when the idea of integrating technology into practice seems all rosy and perfectly attractive, to a transitional phase, when we realise gaps between Utopia and reality. This change of phases does not necessarily reflect different choices of technology (what to use), but what is more important is that the thinking behind is different (why and how), reflecting a deeper understanding of the contextual factors in choosing the technology to use. In the following sections, I will tackle issues involved in the process of appropriation in my study, as I discovered what did NOT work and what works in my original design. The background information of the three classes will be first revisited to outline the fundamental differences in group composition in Class A, B and C. I will next discuss two issues related to managing online learning, first, the decision to change the focus from collaboration to reflection, and second, the unexpected difficulties in managing the b-learning class (Class B).

7.1.2.1 Group composition of the three classes

As mentioned earlier in 1.2, my interest in researching learner autonomy stemmed from the previous experience of conducting an online listening course in 2005; therefore, the online component had been essential in the course design since the early stage. As described in 4.2, my original plan was to study the e-learning class only (Class A) as part of the AIEDL project. The idea of including Class B to compare e-learning and b-learning came to my mind first. As I was negotiating access into the field (April, 2007), the English department offered me the opportunity to teach the same course in the traditional face-to-face mode to two different groups of students, one in the night division and one in the day division. I chose the night division as Class B, because it was a similar target group of students in the upper years. I assumed that this group of students who mostly had day-time jobs would benefit from online learning. The decision to include Class C, a typical lab listening course offered to freshmen English majors in the day division, was made later during Winter Break Reflection (February, 2008). After working with them for one semester, I found they responded quite positively to the supplementary online listening activities. Therefore, in my main study (March to June, 2008), I planned a one-month online learning

project in this class. In this case, unlike most of the online courses which were converted from face-to-face courses, I developed the online course first, and converted it into the two b-learning classes later.

As presented previously in 4.2.3, the different group compositions are summarised in the table below. Due to diverse department requirements and group compositions, I had to blend the face-to-face meetings and the online learning component in three different ways.

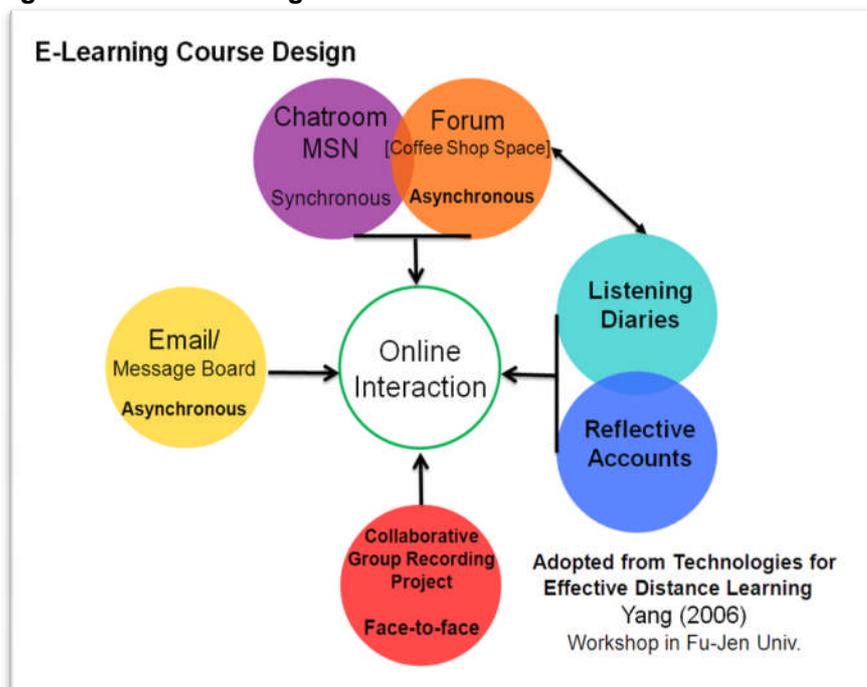
Table 7-1 Description of Class A, B and C

	Class A e-learning	Class B b-learning	Class C b-learning
Course Title	Intermediate Listening	Computer Assisted Listening Comprehension	Freshmen Listening Lab
Course Type	Elective Semester-long	Elective Semester-long	Required Year-long
Student Major	Non-English Major	English Major	English Major
Year	2 nd year and above	3 rd year and above	First year
No. of Students	25	24	33
Length of online learning	One semester 16 weeks	One semester 16 weeks	One-month 4 weeks
Modality of Interaction	Reduced F2F meeting (3 times)	Regular weekly F2F meeting	Regular weekly F2F meeting
	synchronous & asynchronous discussions	asynchronous discussions	asynchronous discussions

7.1.2.2 Different designs between e-learning and b-learning

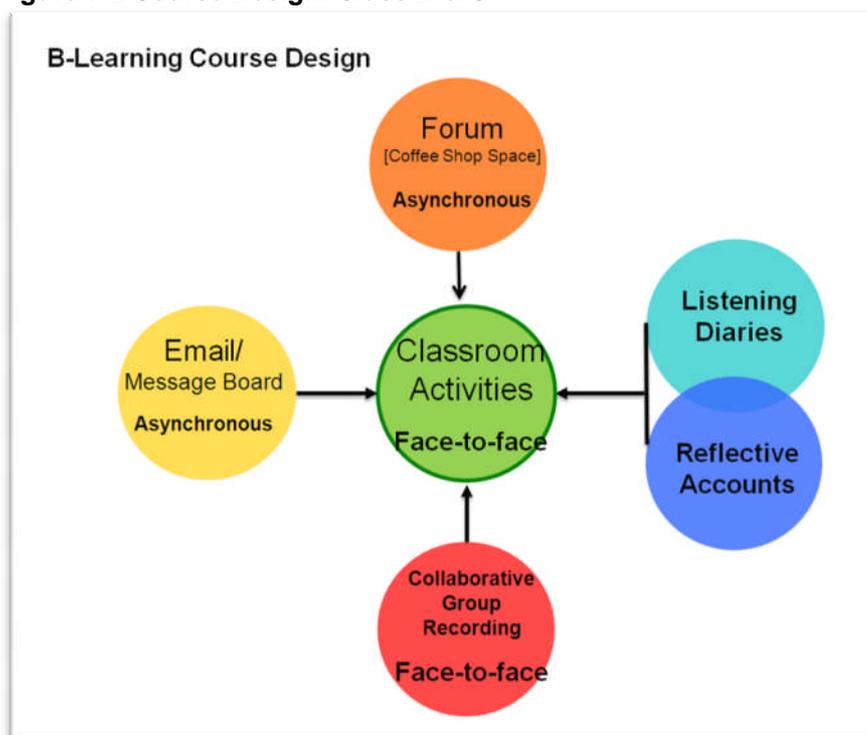
Following the different group composition of Class A, B and C, I will next describe fundamental differences in the course designs of e-learning and b-learning. As discussed in 2.2.2, I followed Manson & Rennie's (2007) definition and labelled Class A as e-learning because of the reduced face-to-face meetings and the fact that students were doing self-study mostly on their own without my direct presence. This is why interactions depending on ICT tools, both synchronous and asynchronous, played the central role in the course design. The forum was planned to function as a coffee shop space where students could share their learning experiences with each other and exchange ideas. Every Tuesday from 6 to 8 pm, I also stayed online in the chatroom and on MSN as my online office hours. Based on the previous experiences in the fall semester, to encourage participation, I planned to link their reflections in the listening diaries with the discussions on the forum. Other asynchronous tools like emails and message boards were another channel of communication. The following figure shows the key components of the ICT tools, collaborative tasks and assignments.

Figure 7-1 Course Design: Class A



The two b-learning classes (B&C) followed the same design. Because of the weekly meetings, the face-to-face interactions were placed in the centre and the online interactions through ICT tools like MSN, emails and the forum played a subordinate role. I also made the same plan to link the listening diaries with the in-class activities to create opportunities for students to discuss their concerns and share experiences.

Figure 7-2 Course Design: Class B & C



7.1.2.3 Two emerging issues during the process of appropriation

The above two figures (7-1 & 7-2) present my initial design of integrating different modalities before I went into the field. It goes without saying that in actual practice, it was not ideal and modifications were necessary. In this section, I will discuss two prominent challenges I faced—first, students’ lack of interest in online collaboration which led to the change of focus from collaboration to reflection, and second, the unexpected difficulties I encountered in managing Class B (b-learning).

When I first started my research, I had high expectation toward the ICT tools, both synchronous and asynchronous, including the forum, the message board, and MSN. However, in both Class A and B, students were not very enthusiastic in participating in online discussions. Due to the large number in Class A (77), the synchronous online chatting was not a good idea. Therefore, I turned to asynchronous forums to encourage interactions. As reported earlier (6.1.1.1), even though in Class

A students did post their replies, the level of interactivity was low. As for Class B, it took longer than one month for students to familiarise themselves with the use of the Learning Management System (LMS); therefore, the forum remained very quiet as well. After the midterm week in the Fall semester, I soon faced a dilemma to either enforce my original plan and looked for means of prodding, such as grades, or still allow them the freedom to choose to communicate their ideas in their preferred medium (i.e. the diaries). The situation was that most students remain silent on the forum, but they did write about their problems and express ideas in their diaries. The following excerpt from my fieldnote expressed my worries and the struggles between my role as a teacher and my role as a researcher.

Excerpt 7-1 My Field note on 22nd Nov. 2007 (Class B, Original)

I had a serious discussion with students in the night division today regarding their remaining problems of using *EngSite*. It seemed that some of them were still quite confused about how to use the platform and the number of the messages in the discussion area is still very low. It has been more than a month, and I've planned two lab sessions with them. When we were in the lab, everything worked fine, but the situation was not improved. I couldn't tell those technical problems they reported were real or simply excuses of not doing the work. My colleague told me that only grades will drive them to participate on the forum. Do I really have to? If not, I'm afraid that I won't have enough data to analyze. But even if I will, how am I going to grade each individual post? By the length? By the quality of idea? It just doesn't sound right to me. I actually think if I start grading, it will scare them away even more!

This question of 'to grade or not to grade' lingered in my mind as the first semester came to the end. In the Winter Break Reflection (February, 2008), I decided not to fixate on collaboration. Since students preferred to write about their learning in the listening diaries, I would consequently switch my attention to reflection and study how to better foster their reflection process. The interview data confirms my observation and students offered their explanations on why they did not choose to

participate in online discussions. As presented earlier (6.2.1.1), the nature of the online collaborative task is indeed more demanding. Furthermore, from students' perspective, the diaries allow them more time and space to reflect on their listening process. The forum might provide a communal space for idea exchanges, but for them, that is not that important. In short, I realise that no matter how wonderful the affordance of technology seems to me, it has to be equally attractive to students; otherwise, prodding with carrots and sticks does not work like magic. Furthermore, as discussed earlier in 2.2.4 on affordances, Hammond (2010) has warned us to pay attention to "the trade-off effect" and consider both the opportunities and constraints of ICT tools .

The second reflection that emerged from the looking glass is the unexpected challenges in managing Class B (b-learning). Admittedly, when I converted the e-learning mode into the b-learning one, I expected that with the regular face-to-face meetings the b-learning mode would be easier to manage, because I could communicate with students more directly. Nonetheless, starting in the fall semester, I found that students seem to be less prepared for the online modality than those in Class A, and they struggled more with using CMS and doing the online listening tasks on their own. In the middle of the semester, about one-fourth of the students in Class B still reported technical problems that they could not solve as reasons for not doing the listening. Since the in-class activities were based on their listening comprehension, it caused serious problems when students came to class with little ideas of the topics we were going to discuss. Therefore, in the interviews, I was interested in uncovering their seeming unwillingness and resistance to the online modality, namely, the use of CMS and the embedded ICT functions.

As Garrison et al (2004) proposed, students need to go through a stage of role adjustment in the online environment to accept the fundamental changes in their roles in online interaction. Garrison et al adopted the sociological definition of role as "a collection of behavioral requirements associated with a certain social position in a group, organization or society" (p. 64). This means students need to recognise that in online learning, their boundaries of responsibilities are widened and they need to prepare themselves to engage more in their online learning environment. This line of reasoning is very similar to the discussion on *the willingness of accepting responsibility* in the literature of autonomy, particularly concerning Asian students (Ho and Crookall, 1995, p. 235 cited in Palfreyman, 2003, p. 7). Chanock (2004)

voiced her concerns regarding a kind of arbitrary association between learner autonomy and responsibility and argued that acknowledging alternative cultural-orientations should not fall into overgeneralisation, ‘a retreat from autonomy’ (Jones, 1995; Smith, 2001). All in all, it will be too simplistic to infer that students in Class B were reluctant to participate in online learning because they refused to adjust their roles and did not want to “move from a relatively passive classroom experience into a more active online community of inquiry” (Garrison et al, 2004, p. 63). During the interview process, I found that students did recognise the necessary role adjustment and there were more intricate reasons behind their decisions in not participating. It is their perceptions toward the use of ICT that support, or stop, their participation online, which will be elaborated in 7.2.

Wegerif (2007) quoted the sociologist Manuel Castells and his trilogy *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* to remind us that “developing a new pedagogy for the internet age is not only about developing new practices it is also about developing a new way to understand our new situation”(p. 1). Indeed, it is a precious lesson for me to learn that the face-to-face component does not guarantee better quality of communication. The fine balance of blending face-to-face and online learning depends greatly on students’ participation. Fortunately, the one-month online learning project in Class C was run more smoothly. It was probably because the online learning project was planned in the last month of the semester. By then, I became more aware of the necessary preparation for online learning after the previous experience with Class B. Therefore, I could apply what I learned from Class A and B and provided more elaboration on the use of CMS and diary-keeping. In addition, since Class C was a two-semester course, the rapport we built in the previous semester thus added to the success of communication. The following excerpt from the FG group interviews with students in Class C illustrates students’ views on learning with different modalities and highlights the significance of social presence, one of three essential components in Garrison and Vaughan’s (2008) Community of Inquiry.

Excerpt 7-2 Preference of Discussion Mode (Class C, Spring, Translated)

Sherri:	You mentioned the use of computer, can you tell me more about that? Why do you feel that’s special?
Wendy:	It’s about having discussions with classmates, and then, express your opinions

	in English and then you talk to different people every time.
Sherri:	Oh, you mean the pair discussion in the lab. But in your conversation, don't you have a chance to talk with your classmates? What's the difference between talking in the lab?
Wendy, Sandy, Lisa:	Yeah, it's actually different.
Lisa:	The discussion in the Lab will be more...
Wendy:	more private
Lisa:	more about our lives
Sandy:	because in the lab we talked with the handsets, so we had more privacy. In normal classroom, the teacher can walk around, and listen to us, so it's not too comfortable.
Sherri:	But you know I can also monitor your conversation.
Wendy:	But you can't listen to all of us at the same time, can you?
Lisa:	There are still fewer chances to be heard, but in Conversation classes, the teacher will be listening standing right next to us! Sometimes I really don't know how to carry on.
Sherri:	Then, what about the online discussion in <i>EngSite</i> ?
Wendy:	I still don't know how that works, how do I talk to my classmates with that.
Sherri:	You mean the online interaction?
Wendy:	But then it's all typing, we can't talk
Sherri:	Well, we can also use audio online chat. Like MSN you know.
Wendy:	Oh oh oh
Sherri:	or skype
Wendy:	hum-um
Sherri:	So you still prefer coming to the lab and have discussion there?
Wendy, Lisa:	Yes, yes, that's right.
Sandy:	It's not the same when you're actually in the same room.

They brought up an interesting issue about the affordances of different technology applications and the importance of social presence. For this group, the network in the lab provided them the right kind of affordance in allowing more privacy when they can talk to each other, contrasting to the teacher's eavesdropping in

the normal conversation class. However, the kind of affordance provided by the virtual online discussions that transcend the limitation of spaces went beyond their current needs and preferences, and therefore did not arouse their interests. In other words, the social presence of physically being in the same space still remains as an essential component to this group of students, even though they may not see each other literally face-to-face when they were confined to their own cubic seat. This awareness was revealed in several FG interviews with students from different classes. For example, another student Cathy from Class B also expressed a similar view explaining her choice of modality and confirmed the importance of the social presence. The following is a summary of her comments in a FG interview.

Excerpt 7-3 Cathy's comments in FG interview (Class B, Translated)

And it's not going to be that ideal when you actually do it at home. Even if you can regulate yourself, when it involves other classmates in online discussions, it's really hard to say. I will still choose to come to the school, because I feel more secure when I actually see people. I feel I'm actually working. If I'm all alone by myself, I think there are chances that I'll just be lazy and forget about it.

...

Therefore, I'm hoping it's more like a mixture of the two, that we still come to class, so that we can actually talk to classmates, because listening to them talking is also a training of listening, different from listening to the recording. As for the internet, I like the part that we can access a wide range of topics, very diverse. I like that better.

To conclude, my journey of appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation started quite bumpy but ended up rewarding. The later data analysis of the interviews provides missing pieces to my earlier puzzles. Students' voiced opinions better assist my understanding of their choice not to participate. I have become more aware of students' agency and their choice-making. This is why I chose to answer a different research question. In the following section, their motivation and perceptions toward the use of ICT in the interviews will be discussed in more details.

7.2 Students' motivation and perceptions toward the online modality

Following the previous discussion on my process of appropriation, in this section, the lens turns to students' motivation and perceptions related to the online modality. Integrating technology in language classroom is never a single teacher's decision; it usually entails a much more complex decision-making process at the higher levels of hierarchy in higher education. Even though the centrality of learner participation has always been stressed (Manelle, 2000 cited in Ehlers, 2006, p. 384), in reality, teachers and students at the very bottom of the hierarchy are rarely consulted during the entire decision-making process. However, students' participation decides the success of this integration. This is why their motivation and perception toward the online modalities are worth further discussions. I will focus on their motivation in 7.2.1, and then move to their perceptions regarding the use of CMS and the accompanied synchronous and asynchronous online tools in 7.2.2. In 7.2.3, I will discuss their sense of perceived freedom in relation to their college academic identity.

7.2.1 Motivation in online modalities

Even though there is still a lack of consensus, the relationship between motivation and autonomy has been explored by several researchers (Dickinson, 1995, Ushioda, 1996, 2003, 2007, Spratt et al, 2002). Therefore, I was not surprised to find motivation appearing on the list of emerging coding categories. However, because I did not include motivation in my research question in the first place, it will be too ambitious for me to discuss students' motivation extensively since it comes with a rich body of literature. For this reason, I will only focus on Dörnyei's (1998) process model of L2 motivation as the theoretical basis to discuss students' motivational changes under the classroom context. In the following sections, I will draw on Dörnyei's theoretical model first and discussed why I focus on this process of model of L2 motivation.

7.2.1.1 Dörnyei's (1998, 2001) process model of L2 motivation

When scrutinising the interview data, I found that students' motivation is closely associated with the subject of learning, which is listening in this course, and the online modality of learning. In the interview data, students recalled their motivation in taking this course, how this course met, or did not meet, their expectations, and whether they had achieved the goals they set for themselves or not. In listening

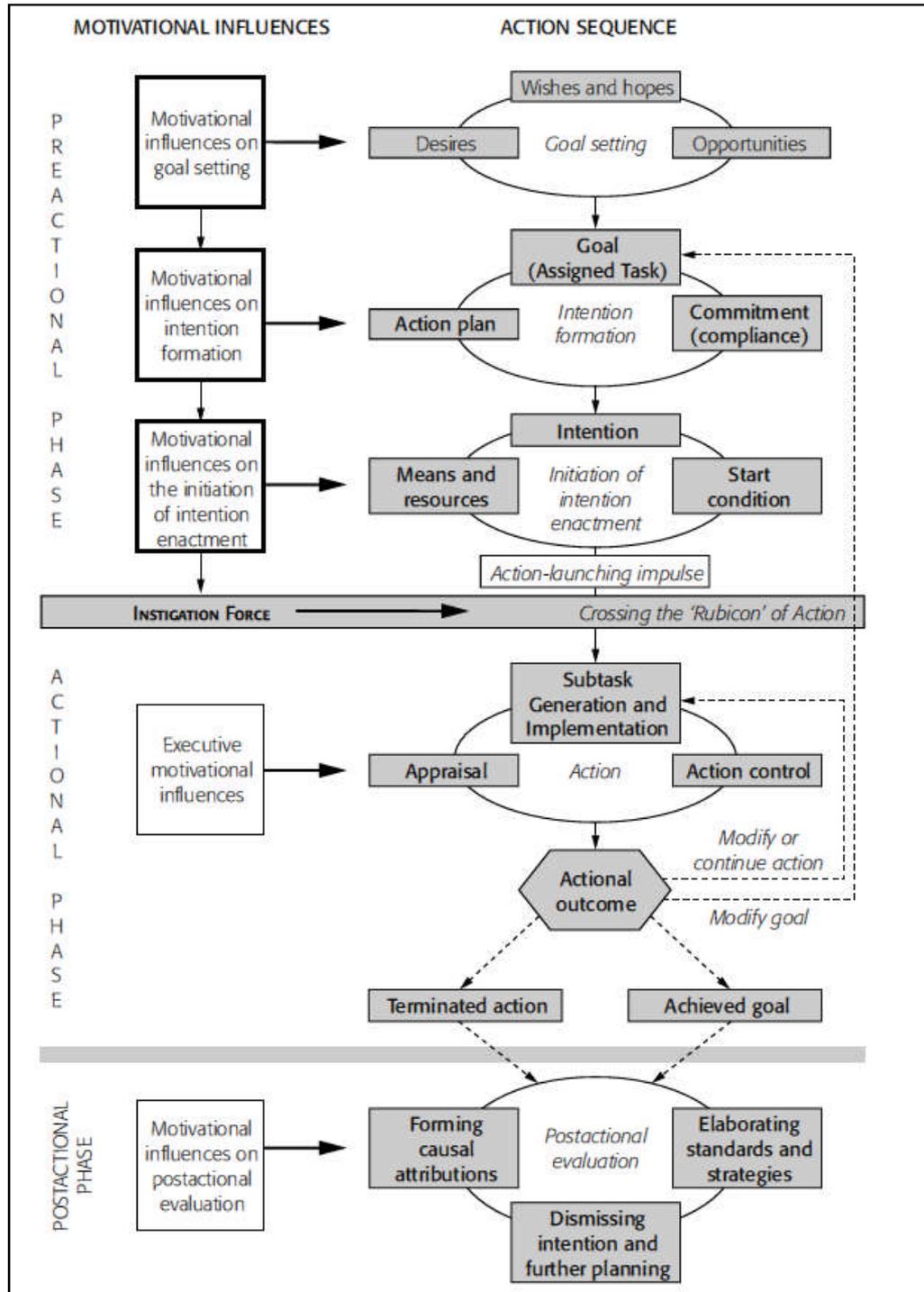
diaries and reflective accounts, students also documented their initial intention, the process of listening, and the final evaluation of the whole process. This is why Dörnyei's (1998, 2001) three-stage process model of L2 motivation offers a comprehensive framework to perceive students' motivational changes over time.

Instead of going into details of their model developed over years (Dörnyei and Ottó, 1998, Dörnyei, 2000, 2001, 2005), I will directly apply this model to the online listening course I studied. As Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) have indicated, this model aims to provide an alternative framework for complex classroom learning scenarios to highlight motivation changes over time and the various influential forces coming from all directions, including the people involved, the learning tasks and materials, and the medium of learning.

In order to capture the ongoing progressive nature of classroom learning, which lasts over a period of time, as the following figure (7-3) shows, they proposed a three-stage model divided into pre-actional stage (choice motivation), action stage (executive motivation) and post-actional stage (motivational retrospective). What is special about this model is the emphasis on motivation evolving during the actual implementation (p. 45). Namely, this model summarises how 'choice motivation' transforms into 'executive motivation', and "describes how initial *wishes* and *desires* are first transformed into *goals* and then into operationalized *intentions*, and how these intentions are *enacted*, leading (hopefully) to the accomplishment of the goal and concluded by the final *evaluation* of the process" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 84, original emphasis).

In all three classes, students' intention to improve their listening can be interpreted as their initial 'choice motivation', whereas, during the four-month period, the process of completing online listening tasks and the accompanied coursework can be counted as 'executive motivation.' Their oral comments in the interviews and the second written reflective accounts belong to the last stage 'motivation in retrospective'.

Figure 7-3 Process Model of L2 Motivation



I found interesting parallels between the multiple loop of reflection and this process model, especially the emphasis of time. The first reflective account students wrote at the beginning of the semester conform to the main function of the pre-actional stage, including setting goals and forming intentions so as to get ready to launch actions. Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) comment critically that this pre-actional

stage tends to be ignored in schools because students enrol without participating in the design of the curriculum and their schedules are normally predetermined (p. 51). However, in my study, these college students were granted more freedom in choice-making, as a two-week drop-and-add period allowed students to decide whether or not to commit themselves to enrolling in the course. Moreover, the AIEDL project held at least one orientation workshop in the first week to invite all the teachers to give a 10-minute presentation on the course. In this sense, this is why students in Class A (e-learning) were more aware of their choice of learning online. Students in Class B were less aware of the online component since they paid more attention to the listening component of this course.

The listening diaries students kept during the semester represent the Actional Stage, as they carried out subtasks, the weekly listening activities. Due to the use of CMS and the accompanied ICT tools, the online modality became a prominent motivational influence in this second stage. Furthermore, in my study, the online learning modality is in this Actional Stage, since they had to access the CMS in order to complete their learning. Consequently, their knowledge and readiness in using those embedded ICT tools had direct impact on their self-regulation. More details regarding their perceptions will be discussed in the next section (7.2.2). This second stage is the main focus of this process model. However, as Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) also pointed out themselves, the model presents an ideal flow of action under highly rational and conscious motives (p. 62). In actual practices, the process is not as neatly divided as the model presented and it is usually recursive. As happens to all models aiming to reproduce a miniature representation of learning in the reality, the process model of L2 motivation has to simplify the learning process and some details in minor steps are sacrificed. It is understandable that the complex multi-dimensional learning phenomena are consequently reduced into fewer presentable options. For example, as the three case studies presented, students did not constantly monitor themselves and evaluate whether they were approaching their desired goal or not. In short, when looking at individual subtasks, it is hard to identify the immediate learning outcomes. This is also why reflection in diaries was deemed as difficult for some students. Or, it can be argued that even though this model provides a possible interpretation of the learning process, teachers and researchers still need to bear individual differences in mind.

The last Post-Actional Stage is the evaluative stage in which learners look back on their learning process in retrospection. In the original model, the focus is on the attributional factors, self-concept beliefs, feedback from the teacher and action vs. state orientation (whether to give up or not). Reflective account two served exactly the same function. As students read through what they wrote at the beginning of the semester and also the whole process, it was a chance for them to recognise what they had accomplished.

To sum up, this process model highlights that motivation does change over time during the learning process. The learners are constantly changing as they interact with the peers, the teacher and the learning materials; therefore, their motivation also undergoes some essential quality changes throughout the whole process. In addition, the process model of L2 motivation provides further supports to applying the multiple loop of reflection as a pedagogical tool to sustain 'executive motivation' and to generate a greater "recognition of the self-as-agent...in formulating goals, self-perceptions and motivation, ... and self-regulation" (Ushioda, 2007, p. 14).

7.2.2 Students' perceptions toward the online modality

Students also went through the same process of appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation as I did. As discussed above, the online modality is a determinant factor in students' motivational changes during Actional Stage. Therefore, it is worth investigating the perceptions students held toward using ICT in English learning, and how these perceptions shaped their overt online learning behaviours. In the following sections, I will discuss first how they perceived CMS as a platform for learning, followed by their perceptions on the specific use of the embedded ICT tools. Lastly, a separate section will report an interesting emerging issue on their sense of perceived freedom in relation to their academic identity as college students.

7.2.2.1 Students' perceptions toward LMS

For all three classes I adopted *EngSite*, a home-grown LMS platform, for students to access the listening websites, to upload assignments and to interact with their peers and the teacher. As Littlejohn and Pegler (2007) put forward, the functionalities of this kind of platform comprise "saving individual work in progress, self-paced learning, tracking student progress, and using third-party content" (p. 13-14). I will

only briefly review the functions of *EngSite* which have been previously described with screenshots in 4.3.1.1. Whenever students logged into *EngSite*, they would see the message board first as the welcoming page. Therefore, every week I posted a message to introduce the listening tasks for this week and to remind them if there was any assignment due. The forum was not one single space but subordinate to each week's listening task. The design was to encourage further discussions on that particular topic, so this weekly discussion space was content-specific. There was also a chat room for students to meet online for synchronous interactions. This application of CMS combined certain Web 2.0 tools and thus granted users the freedom to express and exchange their ideas (Warschauer & Grimes, 2007). Another advantage of using an online platform is that all interactions on *EngSite* were digitally recorded.

Students reported positive experiences in using CMS. As Sanprasert (2010) reported, the virtual space created by CMS granted the learners more flexibility in exercising choice-making, and it developed four aspects of learner autonomy: autonomous perception, autonomous behavior, autonomous strategies and interdependence (p. 110). Students found that *EngSite* was user-friendly, and since all the functions were grouped together, it was convenient to access the listening websites, and upload the assignments all together. During the interview process, the screenshots were prepared for students to comment on the functions; however, those print-outs of the screenshots were not of much use, because students all knew the functions pretty well by heart. Their knowledge of *EngSite* showed that they indeed used it and were quite familiar with various functions. However, they also reported that it still required certain online literacy, such as the knowledge of navigation, and a certain degree of self-regulation. More details regarding cognitive, perceptions, behaviours, strategies will be illuminated in a conceptual framework in 8.2.2.

Based on her interview data comparing her study on the use of CMS, Sanprasert (2010) reported that “the experience of using the system changed the way students perceived and behaved in the course of learning English as a foreign language” (p. 120). I also observed a similar change in attitude when students were commenting on *EngSite*. In a sense, through mastering various functions of *EngSite*, students were also managing their own learning. It is worth noting that this observation does not mean that students went through a transformation process. I did not view students enrolled as more passive learners and later turned into more active language learners after the application of LMS. Instead, the emphasis is on how the affordances of

LMS can help to create a learning environment that is friendly to the exercise of learner autonomy. According to Wang (2008), ICT tools like forums provide not only the technological affordances, but also social and pedagogical affordances (p. 417). All these three aspects come together to create a learning community comfortable for students, for they knew that they were interacting with real people on this platform.

7.2.2.2 Students' choices over the embedded ICT tools

As opposed to the positive responses to CMS, students present diverse comments on both the synchronous and asynchronous ICT tools. During the process of interviews, I also realised that I bought into the notion of the digital natives (Prensky, 2001), and assumed that the application of these ICT tools would work for this generation of students without doubt. Indeed, students were familiar with the appearance of technology in their daily uses. Nonetheless, when it comes to academic studies, the nature of the interaction is not exactly the same. Even though I changed the focus from collaboration to reflection, I was highly interested in finding out why students did not choose to participate, and whether their attitudes were pre-conditioned by previous experience or influenced by the peer that they worked with. The following discussion will address asynchronous forums before synchronous real-time online chatting.

7.2.2.2.1 Two successful stories regarding asynchronous tools

The use of the asynchronous tools, the message boards and the forums were comparatively speaking more fruitful than the synchronous ones. The feature of responding in their own time allowed greater freedom for students to take time to think before they left messages. However, it also prolonged the length of communication, and thus created a different sense of time and pace. In the interviews, students reported that the transparency of the cyber space somewhat increased their level of anxiety when they were composing messages that every coursemate could see. This audience awareness hints at their identity as a language learner and the fear of making mistakes and being judged. On the other hand, their lack of willingness in using the messages boards and the forums also had something to do with their previous educational experiences in which teachers were the ones that provided answers. Again, this is not to fall into the stereotype of Asian students, but to report what was revealed in learners' educational histories. In this section, I would like to

share two episodes of successful stories: one positive use of the message board in Class A (Fall semester) and relatively more positive responses to the forums in Class C (Spring semester). Through these two cases, I would like to argue that despite the possible influences from previous learning experiences and their lack of confidence in expressing themselves online, if students really recognised the value of the ICT tools, they could still break their pre-conception and actively participate.

The message boards and the forums served different functions due to where they are located on the CMS platform *EngSite*. The message board is an open space for everyone to leave messages regarding all kinds of issues. Since the messages posted here would automatically be sent to all participants' emails, I made an announcement at the beginning of the week to remind them of the topic of listening for that week. As the following figure shows, the disadvantage is that all messages were listed chronologically, so that it was not convenient for students to reply to a particular post and further develop it into threaded discussions. This limited the interactions and sometimes created confusion when the later post was meant to respond to an earlier post.

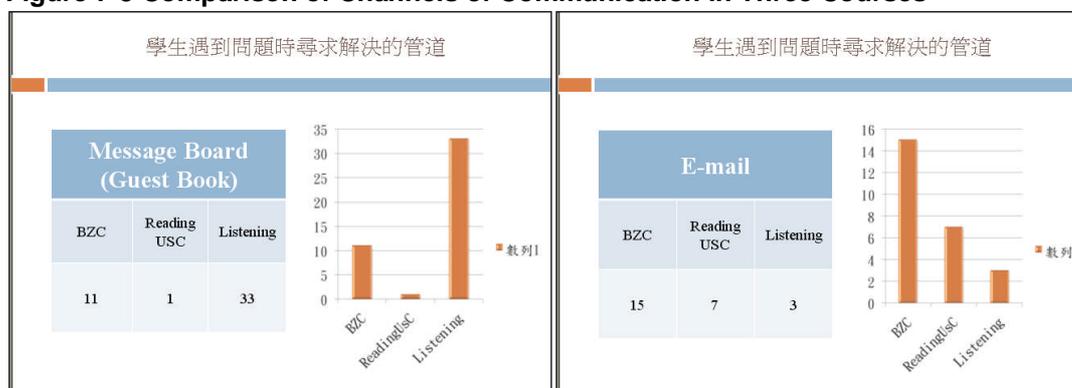
Figure 7-4 Message Board



An interesting case on the use of message board is Class A from the fall semester, the largest class with 77 students. One of the TAs, Kim Chen, who also worked with two other courses, *Business Communication* and *Reading US Culture*, noticed that students left more messages in this course. He made an interesting comparison of students' choices of communication channel in his end-of-semester report seminar in January 2008. The following two figures show that students in this listening course

turned to the message board to ask for help more often than students in other courses.

Figure 7-5 Comparison of Channels of Communication in Three Courses



What is compelling about this exceptional use of the message board is that students in this class chose to leave messages instead of sending emails for they recognised the advantage of posting questions on this space which was open to the whole class. Thus, anyone who held an answer to the question would be able to answer, so that the one who posted a question did not have to wait for the teacher or the TA to reply to the email. I postulated that this did not happen in other classes, because the other class sizes were much smaller and they could reach me, the teacher, much easier either through emails or through face-to-face contacts.

The space of the forums was initially designed to build a community of inquiry through asynchronous interactions as learners responded to each other and developed a question into threads. The major advantage of this forum function is that the reply function missing in the message board was available here. Students could now reply to messages and develop the thread. However, even in Class A, when the online participation was made as a requirement for students to raise questions and to share ideas, there were limited interactions on the platform. Due to the large class size, the number of the posts was higher in the fall semester than the number of posts in the spring semester, but when examined more closely, the interactivity was low. The TAs and I were the ones that were replying to the messages most of the time.

Regarding the use of the forum, I was surprised to find Class C, the one-month b-learning class, had better interactivity. As mentioned before, Class C was a typical listening lab class in which students had direct access to the Internet in the computer labs during class time. Moreover, since it was a two-semester required class for freshmen in the English department, students had known each other from the previous

semester. Under this situation, they had stronger social presence, which means that they knew better who was out there reading their posts. The personal computers and the Internet access in the lab also facilitated the blending of the physical classroom with the virtual ones. Students could discuss face-to-face as a pair or a group and post the results of their discussion onto the forum directly.

7.2.2.2.2 The synchronous interactions in the Chatroom

As described above in 7.1.2.2, in the first semester, I assigned a pivotal role to online interactions in Class A because of the lack of face-to-face interactions. I also assumed that MSN and chatrooms would be a familiar channel of communication for this group of students, as part of the digital native generation. Contrary to my expectation, students were not very keen on online chatting. In discussing their perceptions toward the synchronous online interactions and reasons for not participating, I will also draw from my reflection on mediating the one and only chatroom experience in Class A.

In response to my interview question about why they did or did not participate in online chatting, students replied that the online interactions were not why they were interested in taking this online course in the first place. This revealed another gap in my perception and students' perception in curriculum design. For these students who were in their junior and senior years, the flexibility of doing the learning when and where they preferred was what attracted them. Because of the different purposes of communication, they did not see this synchronous online communication equal to their daily usage of ICT tools like MSN. The real-time interaction brought a higher degree of pressure when it was meant for the learning purposes and thus required different commands of attention and preparations.

Resulting from the above reasons, we only managed to have one online discussion in the chatroom to discuss one podcast from the website *What's Up in Taiwan* on March 25th 2009. The discussion lasted for 100 minutes, and it was not that kind of discussion I had in mind, as among the 9 students who participated only three seemed to fully understand the purpose of this task. As the following excerpt shows, during these 13 minutes when we just began our discussion, students were still quite confused about the topic of discussion, and there was even a misunderstanding about the name of the host.

That experience in moderating the online discussion for nearly two hours was truly exhausting for me, described as “disaster” in my fieldnotes, since not everyone

had listened to the interview. For the first twenty minutes, the TA and I kept saying hi and greeted the students who entered the chatroom. During the process of discussion, the more expressive students dominated the discussion, and they wandered around and discussed various topics out of the list I prepared. In order to encourage their participation, I “talked” a lot and tried to draw their attention to my list of questions. The following Excerpt is what happened during 6: 16 P.M. to 6: 28P.M.. We were getting confused about who Angie was referring to, which also showed that, except for Angie, I was the only one that was familiar with the interview.

Excerpt 7-4 Chatroom Records (Class A, Spring, Original)

1319 2008/3/25 06:16:00	Sa-Sa	So is this a website that many people can post their articles on there?
1318 2008/3/25 06:16:00	Dani	I am totally not understand what the blog is
1317 2008/3/25 06:16:00	Elaine	Hallo~ I'm Elaine
1316 2008/3/25 06:17:00	Sa-Sa	Or just one person to interview many people?
1315 2008/3/25 06:17:00	Sherri	Hi, Elaine, welcome to join us
1314 2008/3/25 06:17:00	Sherri	Yes, this is a blog run by Julian, http://whatsupintaiwan.blogspot.com/ This is the opening page
1312 2008/3/25 06:17:00	angie	Hi, I'm Angie
1311 2008/3/25 06:17:00	Grace	Hello
1310 2008/3/25 06:17:00	Grace	sorry, I'm late
1309 2008/3/25 06:18:00	Sherri	Hi, Grace and Angie.
1308 2008/3/25 06:18:00	Sherri	It's ok, we just got started.
1307 2008/3/25 06:18:00	Sa-Sa	Got it, than you ^^
1309 2008/3/25 06:19:00	Sherri	Do you know 余光中 (Gwan-Chung, Yu)? He's the one that runs the blog
1305 2008/3/25 06:20:00	Sherri	I want to introduce this site to you because I found podcast convenient
1304 2008/3/25 06:20:00	angie	He was a missionary, but how come he came a managing director?
1303 2008/3/25 06:20:00	Sa-Sa	Sure, I know him! Really? He did?
1302 2008/3/25 06:21:00	Sherri	Sorry typo 于光中 (Gwan-Chung, Yu)
1301 2008/3/25 06:21:00	agnie	I think everyone knows him, but honestly, i don't know he's a missionary at the first time
1300 2008/3/25 06:21:00	Sherri	I think he write songs, a music producer

1299 2008/3/25 06:21:00	naiboc	He's most famous as a poet guys!
1298 2008/3/25 06:21:00	angie	I'm mean Mr. Oelkers
1297 2008/3/25 06:21:00	Grace	余光中? He's my aunt's friend
1296 2008/3/25 06:21:00	naiboc	Ooh
1295 2008/3/25 06:22:00	Sherri	Oh, I see. Yeah, when Mr. Oelkers first came to Taiwan, he was indeed a missionary.
1295 2008/3/25 06:22:00	Sa-Sa	Wow~
1294 2008/3/25 06:22:00	Sherri	Really! Grace, have you met him in person?
1293 2008/3/25 06:23:00	Angie	that's cool
1292 2008/3/25 06:23:00	angie	Have anyone ever gone to 七星山 (Seven Star Mountain)?
1290 2008/3/25 06:24:00	Grace	No, but I met 楚戈 in person
1289 2008/3/25 06:24:00	Sherri	I like his ideas of interviewing foreigners, cause I also wondered what brings these people to Taiwan
1288 2008/3/25 06:24:00	angie	cause i never been there b4, but he did
1287 2008/3/25 06:24:00	Sa-Sa	Who did?
1286 2008/3/25 06:24:00	angie	Mr. dominos
1285 2008/3/25 06:25:00	Sherri	Yeah, he mentioned that it's his favourite place to visit
1284 2008/3/25 06:26:00	Sherri	Any difficulties in following this interview?
1283 2008/3/25 06:26:00	angie	Yeah, as a Taiwanese, it's a shame I didn't actually go there
1282 2008/3/25 06:26:00	Sa-Sa	It's a nice place to go on holidays
1281 2008/3/25 06:26:00	angie	I think it's fine
1280 2008/3/25 06:27:00	Sherri	I guess when we live here, then we don't travel that much
1279 2008/3/25 06:28:00	angie	what's so special there?
1278 2008/3/25 06:28:00	Ines	Sherri, I still can't listen from this blog because my computer has a little problem

For those students who participated in this chatroom discussion, the three who were active actually had a positive impression and thought that this kind of synchronous discussion was helpful. Of course, those who were not prepared and did not actively participate found it disappointing. Again, it confirmed that learners' perceptions are not only decided by their general attitudes toward ICT, but are normally shaped by their previous experiences. Not only the students but I myself

was also greatly influenced by that experience. During the later data analysis process, when I reread the chatroom records, I suddenly found that it was actually not as bad as my memory had reminded me. To illustrate this point, here is part of my narrative on the chatroom experience which provides a comparison of my perspective and students' comments in the interviews. To sum up, both students and teachers need to go through role adjustment during the process of appropriation.

Excerpt 7-5 My Fieldnotes on Online Chatting (Class A, Spring, Original)

This time when we met for the first time, the topic of discussion was an interview from the podcasting blog, *What's Up in Taiwan*. Every week, the host interviewed a foreigner in Taiwan and discussed their first impressions and shared travelling stories. The one we listened to was an interview with Mr. Oelkers, the manager of Domino's pizza in Taiwan. He became highly recognizable because of a series of TV commercials, and therefore, most students were familiar with his face and his voice.

Since I defined my role as a moderator, I did not jump in and enforce them to answer my questions. In fact, it was not possible to do so, since they all could talk at the same time, it was a bit out of control. To be honest, I found this first and only experience quite exhausting. I stayed online from 6 o'clock to 8 o'clock in that evening, the period of online office time scheduled for this listening course. Prior to the discussion, I posted a message telling them the time for online discussion, and also provided a list of questions for them to think before joining the discussion. In the practice of focus group interview, I learned to play the role of a mediator without imposing too much so as to allow the participants to articulate their opinions. However, when I played the role as a teacher, it was hard to bear this in mind and withdraw myself when students led the discussion into a different direction.

7.2.3 The perceived freedom and students' college academic identity

Internet freedom has been coined as a term addressed in the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's speech in Newseum, a journalism museum in Washington D. C. in January 2010, in which she compared *the freedom to connect* with the five freedoms in the First Amendment. Indeed, the Internet connection has grown as an indispensable necessity in the modern life. As BBC's four-part documentary series *Virtual Revolution* (Barnes & Krotosku, 2010) reported, since Sir Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web (WWW) two decades ago, this freedom and desire to

connect to a borderless cyber world is the main driving force behind the upsurge of the Internet. With a PC connected to the WWW, the minds of the users break the geographical boundaries and the curb of time, and travel through hyperlinks to reach groups of people they would have never known before the birth of the Internet. For instance, it used to be impossible to converse with people face-to-face who were living on another continent in real time or to carry on that conversation by responding to others' messages while they are sleeping.

This penetrating magical power of the Internet affordances spreads into all aspects of lives, and education is no exception. The innovative Web 2.0 particularly challenges the traditional power relationship between teachers and learners, and thus contributes to the shift from the instructional paradigm to the learning paradigm. With a richer bank of language usages and more authentic language practices, such as interacting with speakers from all over the world through English, the opportunities to learn second or foreign languages online have been maximised by both learners and teachers opportunities to. This is why the AIEDL project was established in 2003 and has been developed to date in order to provide students at Fu-Jen an alternative mode of English learning. The interviews showed that students also recognised this Internet freedom as an important characteristic of this online listening course. This perception of freedom will be addressed in this section to refer to a more general kind of perception regarding the freedom and flexibility granted by the Internet. This perception reveals an underlying epistemological belief system which was not immediately presented in the data, but emerged through deeper analysis across three datasets, the interviews, the diaries and reflective accounts and my own fieldnotes. This is why it is not included in the previous section. In the following sections, I will first discuss Internet freedom as perceived by students, and then discuss how this perceived freedom is highly associated with their identity as college students, which is a concept central to learner autonomy.

7.2.3.1 The perceived freedom granted by the Internet

The importance of freedom and choice-making has been accentuated in the literature of learner autonomy. Although freedom is not explicitly included in the widely accepted definition of learner autonomy, such as Holec's (1983) "capacity to take charge of one's learning", and Little's (1991) "learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning—a capacity for detachment, critical reflection,

decision-making and independent action” (p. 4), the concept of freedom is inherent in these definitions. When learners are in charge of “all of the decisions concerned with [their] learning and the implementation of these decisions” (Little, 1991, p. 11), it goes without saying that the freedom of choice exists so that they can demonstrate specific techniques and strategies in directing their own process of learning (ibid., p. 3). It is therefore understandable to treat freedom as one of the prerequisites of learner autonomy.

However, “the freedoms conferred by autonomy are never absolute, always conditional and constrained” (Little, 1991, p. 5). In line with this view, Trebbi (2008) dug deeper into the philosophical underpinning of freedom and pointed out that assuming the definite relationship between freedom and learner autonomy may be too simplistic. Even though her discussion focuses on teacher autonomy, it is equally applicable to learner autonomy. This direct association may be why some teachers are reluctant to integrate the notion of autonomy into their classroom practices, for the reason that in institutionalised learning, there is usually a curriculum to follow and this restricts the freedom of both teachers and students in materials selection and goal setting to a certain degree. Furthermore, teachers may worry that if students are all granted this freedom to select how they are going to learn, they will have trouble catering to all students’ preferences and needs. To avoid this dilemma, Trebbi argued that the interpretation of freedom depends largely on the external socio-cultural context of teaching and learning. Therefore, she offered an alternative interpretation of freedom, and proposed that “[t]he question is not whether we are free or not, but rather whether we are victims of constraints or not” (ibid., p. 35). A better interpretation of freedom is to raise consciousness about the potential external and internal conditions. Toohey (2007) also presents a view similar to Gibson’s notion of affordances (2.2.4) emphasising the sociocultural aspect of learning. She argues that learners do play an active role in interacting with the environment. How they resist and shape the access to learning is an indication of their sense of agency.

The above discussion on freedom and constraints through a sociocultural lens sheds light on students’ choices of participation and non-participation in online learning. As the earlier discussion on reflection indicates (6.2.2.3), reflection helps to bring learners’ attention to the provocative moments of choice-making. In other words, what learners cannot do is as valuable as what they can do; the stories of failures are by no means less valuable than stories of success. In this study, freedom

is highly associated with the medium of learning—the online modalities including the use of LMS and the embedded functions discussed in the previous sections. First of all, the use of the Internet itself helps to create a classroom culture to encourage choice-making; nonetheless, students themselves as agents play a critical role in realising this sense of freedom. It will lead to more positive learning outcomes when what the teacher regarded as freedom is also perceived as freedom by students. As the following excerpt shows, to this group of students (Class A, Spring), they indeed recognised the freedom in deciding when and where to learn and this was why they were interested in taking the course in the first place. On the other hand, they also commented that with the greater level of freedom granted by the Internet, a higher level of self-regulation was required so as to lead to positive results of learning.

Excerpt 7-6 Focus Group Interview from Class A (Translated)

Sherr:	Okay, let's talk about the online courses, the two of you have taken one online course before. Do you find any difference between online courses and face-to-face ones?
Alice:	Well, it's probably that you have to be more strongly self-regulated. Otherwise, because we don't need to come to classes, the assignments are scheduled more intensively on a weekly basis. So, there is at least one per week, right, so you have to more active. Otherwise, if you did not follow the tempo, sometimes you will feel lost.
Sherr:	So you have to be more self-regulated?
Alice:	Yes.
Sherr:	And is this why you want to take online courses?
Claire:	It depends more on how I arrange my schedule. I want to take online courses because of this.
Alice:	It allows more freedom and it's up to you. If you want to listen to it more times, you can, and you can learn more. But if you were in classes, there are more restrictions. Like there is only so much time and the teacher will have his/her own schedule.
Sherr:	And you? What's the difference to you?
Olivia	Hum, it depends on the course. I also took a face-to-face one. So, I don't think you can compare the two. It depends on how the course is managed. After all, you have to check what the course is about and whether it really suits you.
Sherr:	Hum, it's true that it can't be compared in that way. But is there any difference between taking the normal English classes and this online course? Do you need to adjust yourself or have you encountered any problems?
Olivia	Hum, it indeed requires more self-regulation, other than this, I don't see much differences.

Comparatively speaking, this perceived freedom was more commonly found among students in Class A, which showed that they were more aware of their decisions in taking the online course. It is understandable since they all needed to attend the orientation workshop in Week One. In the first face-to-face meeting, I also reminded them of the potential challenges in taking this online course. The following excerpt is from the online interview with one of the two mature students coming from outside of the university to take this course.

Excerpt 7-7 Online Interview with Karen (Class A, Spring, Original)

Sherri:	How do you like the course? And the way it is conducted?
Karen:	I like it a lot, because it fits into my lifestyle well.
Sherri:	Is it because of the flexibility in time? Can you explain more?
Karen:	Yes, and there are a lot of recourses for me to choose from.
Karen:	And I can choose when to do the listening, very flexible.
Karen:	I'm so surprised that there are so many websites for English learning, which I have never discovered before.
Sherri:	Yeah, there are still a lot more that we haven't had time to work on.
Karen:	I feel that this is the biggest benefit for me, to open my eyes. There are even sites for kids to learn English. I used that for my son.

As the French Nobel-prize winner Albert Camus (1960) puts it, “Freedom is nothing else but a chance to be better” (p. 103). To Karen, this Internet freedom was the main reason drawing her to take this course in bettering her English. Her participation in this course was an interesting case in demonstrating how Internet freedom was perceived positively and how she did not become a victim of constraints. She lived in another county Shih-Chu (about an hour and half drive to Fu-Jen); with a family to run, it would not be possible for her to attend weekly classes. She used to work as a secretary in a foreign company before getting married; therefore, she already had good command of English. In this regard, she is not that different from other college students in class, all sharing the same goal to improve their English. To sum up, we all need to face a certain level of constraints as social beings in life, particularly in educational institutions. Yet, by the stark contrast of shadow, we appreciate the sun more; the value of freedom becomes even more significant when we perceive what has been stopping us from learning.

7.2.3.2 Students' college academic identity

Since languages now are learned in diverse contexts, the issue of identity, which is context sensitive, has been explored in various ways under different settings (Block, 2007). In this section, instead of focusing on learners' identity in foreign language contexts, I will focus on their role as college students which is of paramount importance to their use of the online modality. As mentioned above, the link between the perceived Internet freedom and students' academic college identity was found at a later stage of data analysis. This theme of their college identity first emerged in the interview data, and later traces of this identity were found in the we-statements in the I-statement analysis. In different datasets, different features of the college identity were identified. In the interview data, the emphasis is on the Internet freedom allowing them to arrange their own time and deciding when to do the work, which was commented on by the students as a strong feature of college life; whereas in we-statements a collective aspect of the identity was revealed which reflected the social aspect of learning embedded in communities.

I also noted down in my fieldnotes that in the interviews several students commented on how this online modality made them feel like a college student, or how this was the kind of the course that should be offered in college. These comments revealed that they had projected their own expectation of what college and college students were like. In the general field of education, researchers have adopted Erikson's (1959, 1963) and Chickering's (1969) theories of identity formation and development to study college students' process of constructing identity at this transitional phase from teenagers to adulthood, for example, Baxter-Magold's (2001) concept of self-authorship. Classrooms are part of the organised activities considered as effective in promoting students' development of "initiative, relationship and identity" (Hanson et al., 2003 cited in Duerden et al, 2009, p. 342). Under the influence of this college identity, English learning therefore is perceived differently by this group of college students I worked with. It was not merely a subject to be studied, but is treated as a means of self-exploration and self-definition. This explains why in the interviews students preferred those topics relevant to their current life experiences in colleges, for example, Steve Job's commencement speech and Teenage Diaries in Radio Diaries. This conforms to the notion of relevance in Keller's (1984, 1987) ARCS model popular in the field of instructional design—attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction. When the listening materials have a stronger link to their

college lives, it motivates learners to maintain their interests and complete the task. This sense of identity as college students explains why some students perceived Internet freedom more positively than others.

Another level of analysis from the diaries and reflective accounts shows the collective aspect of this college identity. As the sociologist Manuel Castells (2006) argues, “Creating an identity is both a collective as well as an individual understanding” (p. 84). The we-statements in the diaries reflect this view, since learners’ identity is embedded in the living and learning communities the learners had experienced. As Brumfit (2001) argued, deciding which community to identify with is a form of ‘freedom of choice.’ Especially nowadays, the use of language is no longer ascribed to us biologically like race or gender. They can decide for themselves which community of practice they want to join out of their free will. Interestingly, Brumfit also emphasised that freedom of choice should “include the right to choose not to practice and associate as well as the right to do so” (p. 135). As mentioned in the previous section, Toohey’s (2007) discusses learners’ sense of agency through socio-cultural lenses, and proposes that three elements in the circle of community of the learning—persons, resources and practices (p. 233). It is worth noting that the action of taking this course is interpreted as voluntary choice-making to be involved in a learning community.

7.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the application of the online modality covering two aspects, my own process of appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation and students’ motivation and perception toward the online modality. I first presented my process of appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation and discussed related issues. This was followed by the discussion of students’ motivation and perceptions in relation to the online modality. The third section on the perceived freedom and students’ academic college identity addressed the important issue of identity which was not directly expressed by the students but crucial in demonstrating their exercise of learner autonomy.

I chose not to divide my journey into a typical four-stage action research cycle in order to highlight students’ equal participation during this co-constructed meaning-making process. My gradual realisation did not happen overnight, but took place little

by little as I interacted with students from these three classes, what Smoken described as three stages of maturity from Wonderment to the Looking Glass (Davis and Morrow, 2010). During the process of data analysis, the role of the researcher emerged and I started to make more sense out of students' learning which I did not recognise when I still wore the teacher's antenna during my fieldwork. I learned to listen to what students were trying to say during those silent moments of non-participation, and realised that even when they were not talking, they were sending out messages about their learning. In the following chapter, this aspect of the teaching-researching alignment will be further elaborated.

8 Chapter Eight Researching learner autonomy

With the previous two chapters focusing on the main themes of the learning-teaching alignment—Chapter 6 on the roles of collaboration and reflection and Ch 7 on the online learning modality—this chapter will focus on the teaching-researching alignment from the perspective of a teacher-researcher in researching learner autonomy. This chapter encompasses two sections, 8.1 on methodological issues in researching autonomy and 8.2 reporting findings on the theoretical constructs related to learner autonomy. In 8.1, I will revisit three methodological issues in relation to developing pedagogy for autonomy, including the underpinning research framework integrating both AR and EP principles, the data collection instrument (Focus Group (FG) interviews), and the data analysis tool (the application of I-statement analysis). Next, based on the systematic analysis of data reported in the previous two chapters, in 8.2, I will set out to answer the last research question regarding how the present study contributes to our understanding of learner autonomy.

8.1 Practitioner research in developing pedagogy for autonomy

In this practitioner research, learner autonomy is studied through classroom practice and my direct engagement with students' learning as a teacher. In both the area of autonomy (Benson, 2001, 2003) and online language teaching and learning (Lamy & Hampel, 2007), this form of practitioner research has been encouraged to directly address teachers' practical concerns and learners' genuine needs. In recent years, there have been more attempts in answering this call of inviting teachers to study their own practices in the language classrooms and to tell their own stories. This is why discussing related methodological issues is necessary so that through sharing experience and exchanging stories, we can enrich the repertoire of various methodological tools and different means of investigation. In this section, in reflecting on my dual role as a teacher-researcher, I will revisit earlier discussions on the research framework in Chapter Four and illustrate two pertinent methodological considerations relating to data collection and data analysis.

8.1.1 The practitioner research framework: Including both EP and AR

As discussed earlier in the methodology chapter (4.1), I drew from both strands of practitioner research, AR and EP, in guiding different aspects of my research design. I would like to continue the argument presented in 4.1.4 in viewing AR and EP as compatible frameworks for practitioner research. As Ortega (2005) proposed, epistemological diversity is particularly beneficial for research into L2 teaching and learning in educational contexts. Indeed, I benefited from integrating principles from these two main strands of practitioner research. The rich body of the AR literature and the central focus on the spiral process and the researchers' reflexivity helped to raise my sense of awareness during the year-long fieldwork in striking a balance between teaching and researching. On the other hand, the EP principles proposed by Allwright (2003, 2005) reminded me to listen to the voices of students with the goal of mutual development. In studying learner autonomy, this aspect in treating students as *practitioners of learning* (Allwright & Hanks, 2009) who hold abundant knowledge is particularly important, so as to ensure that it is indeed "learner" autonomy that is studied but not teachers' own projected version of autonomy.

To allow more flexibility, I adopted a more general three-stage framework proposed by Lamy and Hampel (2007) for online practitioners, instead of a typical four-stage, Planning-Action-Monitoring-Reflection, AR cycle model (i.e. Carr and Kemmis, 1986). This model outlines three essential steps common to all practitioner research: *reviewing the practice, design and implementation*, and *evaluation and dissemination* (p. 159-164). Adopting a more general framework does not mean sacrificing details. In the AR literature, the perception of cycles has undergone some changes as well. In the introduction of *the SAGE Handbook of Educational Action Research*, Noffke and Somekh (2009) provided the reason to follow Noffke's analytical framework, "to avoid simplistic divisions between different kinds of action research which always tend to produce a hierarchy of status/worth" (p. 1). After all, AR serves practitioners who are interested in making sense of their practices; therefore, it's important to adopt a framework that is "fluid with porous boundaries rather than essentialist" (ibid.). It is because the process in playing the dual roles is notoriously messy with all actions interwoven. Consequently, the process of tidying up the messy fieldwork process into prevailing AR models is normally accompanied with a certain level of anxiety for some AR researchers. Dadds (1995) described this

anxiety as having “a daily urge to lift the flaps and corners of the action research arrows, spirals and boxes; to take a closer look at the embroiled underworlds below the clean theoretical diagrams” (p. 3). I indeed shared the same urge when I entered the field for data collection, for it was difficult to stick to the original plan as surprises came from all directions.

According to Lamy and Hampel (2007), the fundamental difference between AR and EP lies in the researchers’ attitudes in the initial stage of *reviewing the practice*. They compared three research studies following different AR (Clerehugh, 2002 & Pinkman, 2005) and EP (Zhang, 2004) frameworks, and suggested that different choices of frameworks indicated different points of departure. The two AR studies started with more specific questions and identified problems; whereas the EP one began with a null question without “a theoretical *priori*” (p. 165). In Zhang’s study, the teacher did not plan the implementation but turned to the students for explanations of their lack of interests. Later, the solution for improvement derived from student interviews, which pointed to student-led group work to involve all students in the process of teaching and learning. In this light, my change of research focus from collaboration to reflection as a revised point of departure had a stronger exploratory nature which is more similar to Zhang’s study and the EP principle in highlighting the importance of achieving understanding prior to implementing planned intervention.

In my case, I started with the intention to conduct a two-cycle AR study with the focus on the role of collaboration, but modified my research plan after the first phase. I recognised that the intention to ‘improve’ the collaboration of students’ learning could be paradoxical to a belief in learner autonomy. In order to answer the question central to AR, “How do I improve what I am doing?” (Whitehead, 1989, 1993), I had to answer another *how* question first regarding students’ learning, “How does this group of students exercise learner autonomy?” This is why I turned the lens to the role of reflection through analysing the listening diaries. In this sense, this decision to change my research focus from collaboration to reflection resulted from both AR and EP principles. The AR principle enabled me to reflect on my previous experiences so that I started with a focus from the initial stage of my study. Otherwise, I might have felt lost as I entered the field. On the other hand, with EP principles in mind, I realised that the initial attempt of “identifying the problem” was built upon my previous experience in 2005. As I worked with a different group of

students in 2007, I found it necessary to update my understanding to a 2007 version. This realisation involved a renewed understanding of students' perceptions of using technology in their learning and also of my role as a teacher. This adoption of a more exploratory purpose of study does not downplay the value of emancipatory action research proposed by Kemmis (2006), which stems from dissatisfaction with actual practice and a strong emphasis on the need to 'improve' the practice. Furthermore, even Kemmis (2006) proposed the notion of open communication to engage all the stakeholders, and there have been more discussions on including students in other educational studies. For instance, researchers (Niemi et al, 2010) in Finland have proposed 'lived pedagogy' to include multiple voices in the presentation of research, 'my voice' (teacher), 'your voice' (pupils) and even 'their voice' (parents). In researching learner autonomy, it might be dangerous for the teacher to jump too fast into the action without fully recognising the underlying perceptions students carry with them. As Nix (2007) advises, teachers should not misinterpret by pursuing "a transformation to autonomy" and treat students as "completely lacking autonomy" at the starting point. In other words, it is crucial for teacher-researchers to identify the underlying assumptions we had previously construed; hence, a relatively long process of reviewing our practice is necessary in this regard.

In the two steps of *design and implementation* and *evaluation and dissemination*, incorporating both AR and EP principles facilitates the two-way communication integral to the process of *appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation* (7.1.2.3). The AR principles informed me of the active role I played in mediating students' learning, namely, the pedagogical impacts from the use of technology. It is particularly important with online language learning not to let the tail wag the dog (Witte, 2007). On the other hand, the EP principles remind me not to evaluate students' learning solely from the apparent learning outcomes, but also take their unobservable perceptions into account. In fact, it was not until the third stage of interpreting data that I listened more carefully to the messages in their voices and gained a better understanding of the reasons behind their participation and non-participation. Otherwise, without realising the gap between our perceptions, I would have been evaluating the results of their learning based on my agenda of teaching. This is why the research questions on students' learning precede the research questions on my practice to highlight their partnership during this journey. By doing so, students are placed in the centre of this research.

To conclude, viewing AR and EP as compatible frameworks for practitioner research is a direction worth driving towards. In fact, not only Allwright in our field of language education has perceived the potential limitation of AR in actual practice, but Dadds (2009) has also indicated that early in 1995, she had observed that in those widely adopted AR theories and frameworks, “the whole dimensions of human experiences were missing” (p. 278). This is why she chose to call her AR project “Passionate Enquiry” when she started her journey as an AR researcher in 1995. This resonates with Allwright’s initial attempt in setting up EP as an alternative to AR and his first principle of “putting quality of life first”. Going back to the epistemological diversity proposed by Ortega (2005), having these two strands in practitioner research in fact indicates that there are now more practitioners interested in sharing their stories and therefore, we can also welcome those teachers who are interested in exploring their practice to join this thread of discussion on language teaching and learning.

8.1.2 Focus group interviews as a means of promoting learner autonomy

In this section, I will discuss how FG interviews can be viewed as not only a data collection tool (4.3.2.2) but also a pedagogical tool supporting learner autonomy, for students can gain a greater sense of engagement in their own learning through participating in FG interviews. As for the researchers, we need to allow greater flexibility in letting go of our interview agendas and allow the participants to direct the flow of the discussions. In this aspect, as the teacher-researcher, I faced a dilemma in deciding the fine line between maintaining the focus and creating a discussion-friendly atmosphere when playing the role as a moderator, a challenge similar to the one I faced earlier in facilitating students’ exercise of learner autonomy. One FG interview in Class B will be drawn on as an example of students’ sense of empowerment. I will also discuss the potential to include FG interviews as part of the pedagogical design.

Through the process of conducting FG interviews, I recognised the potential benefits reported by Gribbs (1997) in empowering participants. In fact, the value of inviting students to share their voices in FG interviews has now been more widely recognised in the general field of educational studies (Williams & Katz, 2001). Indeed, when participating in the FG interviews, students “are actively involved in

something which they feel will make a difference, and [since] focus group research is often of an applied nature, empowerment can realistically be achieved” (Gibbs, 1997). As participants were invited to voice their opinions, they perceived their existence and value as being treated as those of an expert. “The opportunity to be involved in the decision making process (Race et al, 1994), to be valued as experts, and to be given the chance to work collaboratively with researchers” were all evident in my research (Goss & Leinlach, 1996 cited in Gibbs, 1997). The above passage echoes the notion of learner autonomy. Results of my data analysis also confirmed the parallel between the two. Students were more eager to share their experience when they found that I, the teacher-researcher, was genuinely interested in their experiences. As a result, they assumed a greater sense of agency in evaluating their learning. For example, in the interviews, compared with what they wrote in the listening diaries, several students were able to describe their listening process and strategies they employed in more details (See the case study of Helen 6.2.2.1.3.2).

The parallels between pedagogy for learner autonomy and FG interviews can be found not only in engaging students, but also in the similar dilemma I encountered as a teacher-researcher in promoting learner autonomy, as I faced the same the tricky question about “how much control is necessary.” My initial concern in conducting FG interviews was that students might easily go off the topic, and therefore, I considered the main challenge for me would be to keep the discussions relevant to the topic. At the same time, I could not impose my pre-determined agenda onto the participants too much. In this light, the moderator’s challenge was very similar to the teacher’s in fostering learner autonomy and the inherent fear of losing control. Interestingly, contrary to my initial fear and beyond my expectation, none of the FG interviews actually went out of control. All discussions remained close to issues related to students’ learning and mostly went beyond my expectation.

I postulate that there are three possible reasons for this success: the effective warm-up strategy, the existing power hierarchy and the sense of empowerment as the motivation to participate. First of all, the strategy of providing screenshots and allowing time for pair discussions was the first possible reason. With sufficient warm-up, the students became aware of the purpose of the interview, and therefore could stay in focus when they tossed the ball among the participants. I had learned this technique on the importance of warm-up in FG interviews from the practice interviews. With visual aids and sufficient time for warm-up, participants were more

prepared to contribute to the discussion.

The second possible reason is that students succumbed to the teacher-student power relationship and dared not to go off the topic. If they still perceived me as the teacher who was higher in the hierarchy, they would pay more respect to the kind of questions I asked and tried to stay on the same track. Nonetheless, judging from the low participation rate in online collaboration which was an explicit part of the course requirements, I believe that I did not have such an intimidating impact on students which could force them to do what they were not willing to do. Furthermore, the interviews were scheduled at the end of the semester when their grades were mostly already uploaded on *EngSite*. The transparency of the grading policy was another benefit of using the CMS platform *EngSite*. Students' grades were uploaded after each task and assignment, so that they could see how they were *earning* their grades along the way, and knew that their grades depended solely on their efforts. What they expressed in the interviews would not affect their grades. Accordingly, this concern regarding the power relationship is unlikely to be the dominant reason for the success of the FG interviews.

The third possible reason is the sense of empowerment, as proposed by Gribbs (1997) as the potential benefit to FG participants. I believe that students' willingness to share their valuable experiences contributed to the true success of the FG interviews. The fact that all the interviews went longer than my expected length of 30 to 45 minutes shows that students had a lot to say about their learning. From the transcriptions of the interviews, I also found that students interpreted positively the invitation to participate in FG interviews. They were happy that their opinions were valued and the teacher was willing to listen to their share of experiences for further improvement. As mentioned earlier, Williams and Katz (2001) discuss the application of FG methodology in the realm of education, and argue that the experiences of working collaboratively with the researcher and other students participating in the interview can be a transforming educational experience, because the student participants would have the chance to express themselves in a public but more private environment. This notion of empowerment, having the teacher willing to listen to students' experiences of learning creates a more balanced dynamic of classroom ecology, similar to the notion of collegiality proposed by Allwright (2003, p. 131). The participation in FG interview allows the students to play the role of an expert and the teacher then becomes the learner listening to how students evaluate the learning

process.

To better illustrate the above discussed reasons I will draw examples from one of the FG interviews with students in Class B to exemplify what I meant by empowerment (See Appendix 4). Generally speaking, students who were willing to participate in the FG interviews were normally those who were already motivated to learn and thus came with a quite positive learning attitude. However, I had an intriguing case with a group of five students from Class B (Spring) who were not typically considered as “good language learners”. These five students in fact did not manage their learning that well, for all of them had the history of not handing in their listening diaries regularly and four of them had occasionally showed up late or missed the class. During the process of the interview, there were some moments of tension when they were a bit emotional in voicing their complaints. Toward the end of the interview, they actually asked me to explain my reasons for using the listening diaries. In my fieldnote (03-06-2008), I wrote about how I had to withdraw my opinions during the process and not respond until they had all expressed what they wanted to say.

“I was upset by what this group of students commented today, especially how they said that they did not see the purpose of listening diaries. We indeed spent at least two classes talking about diaries. I wondered why they did not bring this up earlier in class when we had the chance of discussing their problems with listening diaries.”

However, after I transcribed all the interviews, I in fact found this interview one of the most interesting FG interviews revealing an aspect that I had never thought of. After gaining ‘a sense of otherness’, what Boud et al (1985) refer to as *perspective transformation*, with the lapse of time, I came to a better understanding by piecing together their stories of learning. Albeit that this was not considered as one of those successful stories about good language learners, I appreciated their honest opinions even more. It occurred to me that there should be opportunities for this kind of discussion offered in the course design. Even though I already arranged two class periods for students to discuss the use of the diaries, according to this group of students, they were still figuring out how to keep learning diaries and were not prepared to honestly express their opinions back then. It seems that the FG interviews served a different function from the in-class discussions. The former were conducted

in a safer, more private environment by me as the researcher to listen and understand; whereas the latter were conducted in public by me as the teacher to solve problems. This is why they did not feel that what they said could make any changes to the arrangement in the earlier in-class discussions. To sum up, through analysing FG interviews, my role as a researcher has enabled me to listen to students' voices which I would not have paid attention to as a teacher. I found that I made a common teacher mistake in finding convenient excuses like laziness to justify why certain tasks did not work. This is to say that my role as a researcher helped me to gain a different perspective including withholding immediate judgement as a teacher so that I could perceive students' learning in its own right. To sum up, what I have benefited most from carrying the dual role as a teacher-researcher is this 'sense of otherness' in stepping back and making sense. Consequently, for further practice, I would like to incorporate FG interviews as part of the course design to invite students to discuss their learning outside of the classroom context.

8.1.3 I-statement analysis

I will continue the discussion of the pedagogical benefits of my methodological design and focus on the benefit of applying I-statement analysis as a data analysis tool in this section. In the second and third stages of my practitioner research, through analysing and interpreting data, I gained a deeper understanding of students' learning. As discussed earlier, in the data analysis methods (6.1.2.1.1), the application of I-statement analysis helped me "to turn off my teacher antenna" and perceive students' learning with less judgemental and more neutral eyes.

As reported in 6.1.2.1.1, the vertical and horizontal analysis of the I-statement analysis presents two layers of perceptions on students' learning. The horizontal analysis focuses on individual clauses and the combination of different I-statements. In this analysis, I paid more attention to the different categories of I-statements and their frequency. On the other hand, the vertical analysis focuses on how a certain student documented his or her learning process. The characteristics of I-statement analysis focusing only on sentences that start with the subject "I" may have its limitation; however, this characteristic untangles the writers' stream of thoughts and thus offers me an opportunity to direct my attention to their choices in addressing certain aspects of learning. This analytical tool acted like a window into students'

learning process which also shaped my perception of learner autonomy. Furthermore, with the emerging category of ‘we-statement’, I gained a more rounded understanding about the role of learning communities. Influenced by socio-cultural theory, such as Wenger’s community of practice and community of inquiry in b-learning (Garrison & Anderson, 2003), I have been striving to establish the sense of community through ICT either on the forum or via MSN. However, I had been ignoring the communities that learners have grown up with and brought with them. The sense of community is not created out of a vacuum, but is normally established through this natural social milieu that learners have experienced (Schutz, 1972).

Similar to the above discussion on FG interviews, I also recognised I-statement analysis as a potential pedagogical tool, particularly the vertical analysis of case studies portraying students’ learning and capturing their changes over time. In my study, students did not read through all of their diaries again in their reflective account two, but only referred to their first reflective account written at the beginning of the semester. If they also had the chance to reflect on the diaries, I believe they would have gained a deeper understanding of their own listening and language learning process. As Ridley (2003) argues, learners’ perceptions play an equally important role in the success of their learning, particularly in relation to their ability to reflect on language and on their learning. Therefore, the ultimate goal of language classroom should be enhancing learners’ understanding of how they learn, so that they will become more cognitively, emotionally motivationally engaged in this process (p. 78).

8.2 Insights into learner autonomy

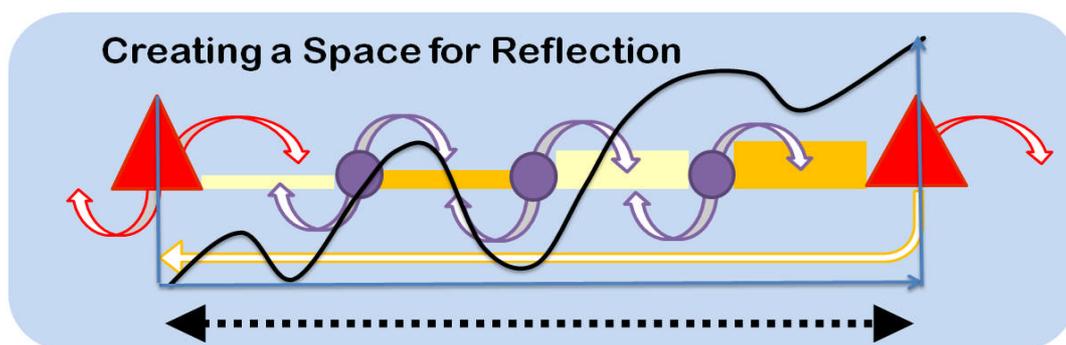
The second section in this chapter responds to one of the main purposes of this study (listed in literature review 2.1.1) to look for “a framework for teachers to see better, to observe more and to approach learners and classroom ecology in multiple dimensions simulating the reality.” Instead of proposing the framework earlier, I have saved this theoretical discussion as the last concluding section, because these insights on abstract concepts gradually emerged in the last stage of *evaluation and dissemination* (Lamy and Hampel, 2007) through the systematic analysis of data and particularly during the process of writing up my research. As Benson (2003) argued, it is through writing about autonomy that we have a chance of “abstracting it as a construct from the complex realities of the practice of teaching and learning” (p. 281). Since these

theoretical discussions are grounded in my findings on the role of reflection, my main focus of study, in the following section I will revisit the key findings on viewing reflection as a process before I proceed to illustrate the other two themes, motivation and strategies, related to students' exercise of autonomy observed in this study.

8.2.1 The role of reflection during the process of language learning

First of all, I would like to revisit the previous discussion on the role of reflection, essential to students' development of learner autonomy. In the main phase of my study, I have observed that reflection played a critical role in fostering learner autonomy in the online listening course. This finding conforms to Carrol and Catterall's (2008) discussion in viewing reflection as one of the three essential components in language classrooms that foster learner autonomy (p. 156). Similar to Dörnyei's (2000) proposal of a process-oriented conceptualization of student motivation, from the analysis of the listening diaries and interviews, I also found it necessary to perceive reflection and learner autonomy as a process. Taking the time dimension into consideration helps the teacher to create a space for reflection under such an educational context. Therefore, I would like to revisit Figure 6-5, which best summarises the previous discussions on creating space for reflection (6.2.2.3).

Figure 8-1 Reflection and Drawing Individual Learning Map



I would like to borrow Burt's (2008) ideas in the article *Time, Language, and Autographical Memory* to address how the sense of time shown in the temporal markers contribute to an enhanced sense of agency. Even though my focus is not to study learner autobiography, students' reflective accounts describing their past experiences in fact share the same characteristics with narratives. Furthermore, his insights into how the notion of time relates to the way we use language and create

memory provide theoretical supports to the use of diaries and the analysis of reflective accounts in my study. According to Burt (2008), all the accounts of life experiences are arranged chronologically under our shared knowledge of time, such as duration, order of events and specific moments of occurrence (p. 123).

First of all, Burt (2008) points out that it is the nature of this kind of autographical memory to have distinct starting and end points. This explains why having the first reflective account made it easier for students to reflect, and therefore, justifies my decision to have regular collections of diaries in creating a sense of time and a space for reflection. What defines language learning in the classroom is the fact that the learning takes place over a period of time, with a group of people including the teacher and the fellow students. Thus, the time dimension is an important feature of this kind of learning. As this figure shows, with the starting point and the ending point, the learning route of a student is outlined, and by marking discrete opportunities for reflection during this period of time, a space for reflection is created by connecting all the dots.

This figure results from several years of experience in promoting listening diaries to my students in Taiwan since my first attempt in 2005. At first, I allowed more freedom for students to decide how many entries they would like to write. I thought that it would be more productive to allow students to choose which topic to reflect and when to reflect; thus, I did not collect the diaries regularly during the semester but only once at the end of the semester. As all experienced teachers can foresee, very few students kept the diaries frequently enough to effectively reflect on their listening and learning processes. Furthermore, students had very limited experience in keeping learning diaries. I, therefore, found it necessary to provide more guidance. In this study, I modified the earlier design and developed the current structure in fostering reflection by collecting their diaries several times during the semester. Close observation, diary analysis and interviews confirmed that regular collection of reflective accounts and diaries did not constrain students' freedom in exercising learner autonomy. On the contrary, this structure provided an opportunity for both the students and I to communicate and thus enhance our understanding of their learning process.

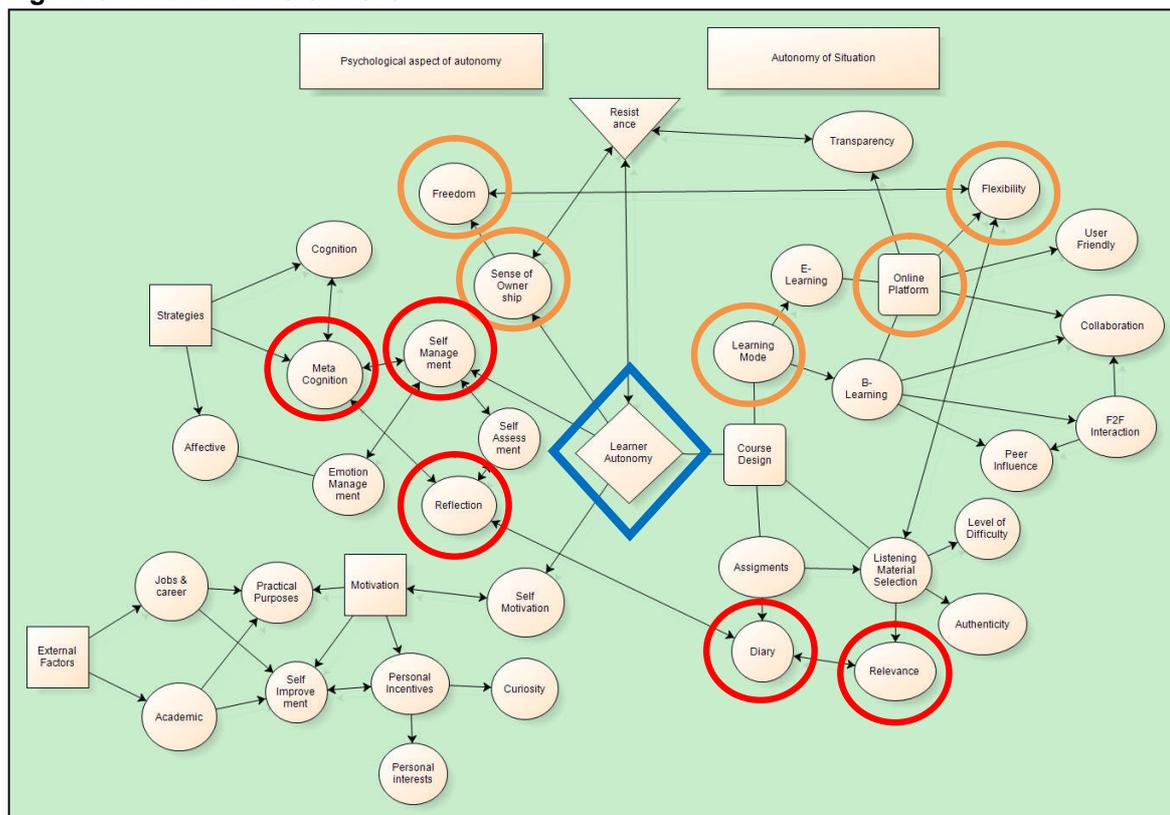
Some may assert that this regulation contradicts the notion of freedom and choice-making considered central to learner autonomy. However, I would argue that to assign specific dates of collection in the curriculum does not restrain learners'

freedom in exercising learner autonomy. The notion of freedom is often interpreted as allowing learners some space for choice-making over the content and the methods of learning. Under this impression, regulation could be interpreted as controls imposed by the teacher. However, according to Trebbi (2008), in reality, as social beings living in this modern society, we are never totally free from regulations and responsibilities. It is necessary to redefine freedom not as total freedom without constraints, but as a creative space for us to exercise choice-making particularly under certain constraints and responsibilities.

When it comes to the case of reflection in fostering learner autonomy, the purpose then is to help learners recognise both external and internal constraints in their learning. The findings in the interview data and the I-statement analysis both provide evidence to support the above argument. Firstly, students also addressed the issues of freedom and diary-keeping in the interviews. The previous figure 8-1 presents a more individualistic process of reflection, whereas the following figure 8-2, a mindmap developed from the model function of NVivo, presents the role of reflection in relation to other elements of online learning in this course. This mindmap explains how a sense of choice-making can be granted by the flexibility of the online learning mode. Therefore, collecting diaries regularly does not contradict the notion of freedom and choice-making.

I will first briefly describe this mind map since the codes represents theoretical constructs related to learner autonomy. To focus on the role of reflection here, I put orange circles to highlight codes related to freedom, and red circles to highlights codes related to reflection and diaries. The red circles show that the listening diaries as part of the course design are the medium for learners to make connections with the listening materials and to further reflect on their listening process, which relates to meta-cognition and self-management. On the other hand, freedom is recognised by the students from the flexibility of the CMS online learning platform. The red circles and the orange circles again show that reflection is fostered in diary-keeping, and at the same time, freedom and the sense of ownership are developed through this online learning mode.

Figure 8-2 Model on 15-02-2010



Secondly, the analysis of the diaries also confirms that learners reflected on their listening process and their overall English learning. In I-statement analysis, the categories of ‘personal history’ and ‘freedom’ illustrate learners’ own recognition of how their past learning and life experiences have an impact on their current learning (see 6.1.2.1.1). In the next section, the role of reflection and meta-cognitive strategies will be further discussed (8.2.2.2). Furthermore, the category of **Constraint Statements** indicates how learners perceive the difficulties they encounter in relation to either external or internal constraints. In this sense, those statements which are normally considered as negative learning results in fact can be interpreted as positive impacts on students’ learning through reflection.

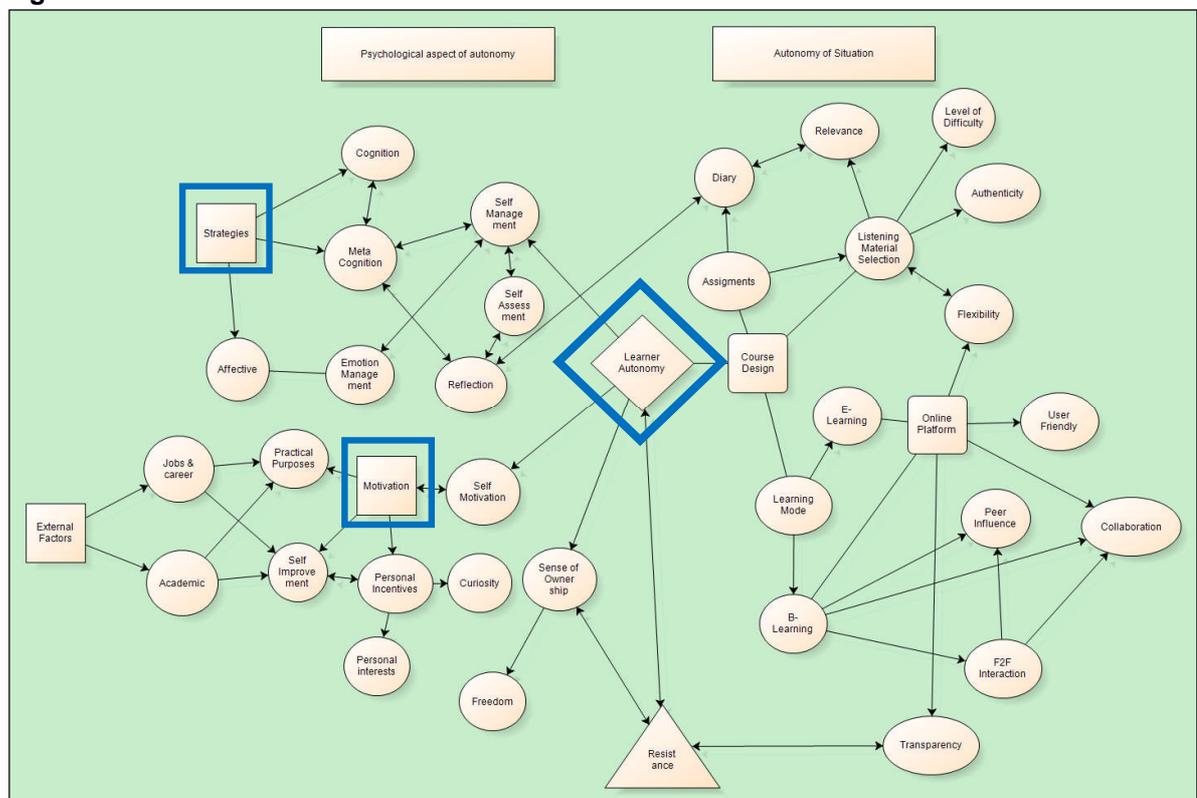
In summary, external constraints refer to those social conditions learners live in, such as regulations and expectations coming from the school or the society in general. Internal constraints refer to those personal conditions that come from within, such as personal traits the learners are born with or perceptions that have been developed from their past experiences. With this realisation of both the external and internal constraints, learners can exercise learner autonomy to transcend limitations in the learning context.

8.2.2 Toward a conceptual framework for autonomy in language learning process

In this section, I will build on the above discussion on viewing autonomy and reflection as a process, and further elaborate the results of the interview data analysis on how students exercise learner autonomy during this learning process. During the process of data analysis, inspired by grounded theory (5.1.1), I allowed codes to emerge from the data, particularly the interview data. In the meantime, I worked with the model function in NVivo to visualise how codes related to each other so as to determine prominent themes (Appendix 7). Gradually, through modifying the mind-maps I developed this conceptual framework presented later in Figure 8-7.

As the following figure (8-3) shows, under the psychological aspect of autonomy, motivation and strategies emerged as two salient themes related to students' exercise of learner autonomy. Therefore, motivation, strategy and autonomy are not treated as separate concepts in isolation, but as interacting constructs in the situated classroom ecology.

Figure 8-3 Model on 23-02-2010



To better illustrate the abstract conceptual framework, this section is structured according to the sequence of appearance during the stage of evaluation and disseminate (Lamy & Hampel, 2007). In 8.2.2.1, I will first discuss motivation and Littlejohn's (2008) iceberg metaphor. Next, in 8.2.2.2, based on the cognitive-affective-behavioural tripartite inspired by attitude research in the field of social psychology (Fazio & Petty, 2008), I will discuss strategies with the focus on meta-cognitive strategies. In 8.2.2.3, I will illustrate a conceptual framework summarising the emerging key findings from the interview data and my observation of students' learning. In the learner autonomy literature, motivation and strategies appear quite frequently as related constructs. Their relationships with autonomy have been addressed by several researchers such as Ushioda (1996, 2003, 2007) on motivation and Hurd (2008) on strategies, but the relationships among the three have not yet been addressed explicitly.

8.2.2.1 Motivation

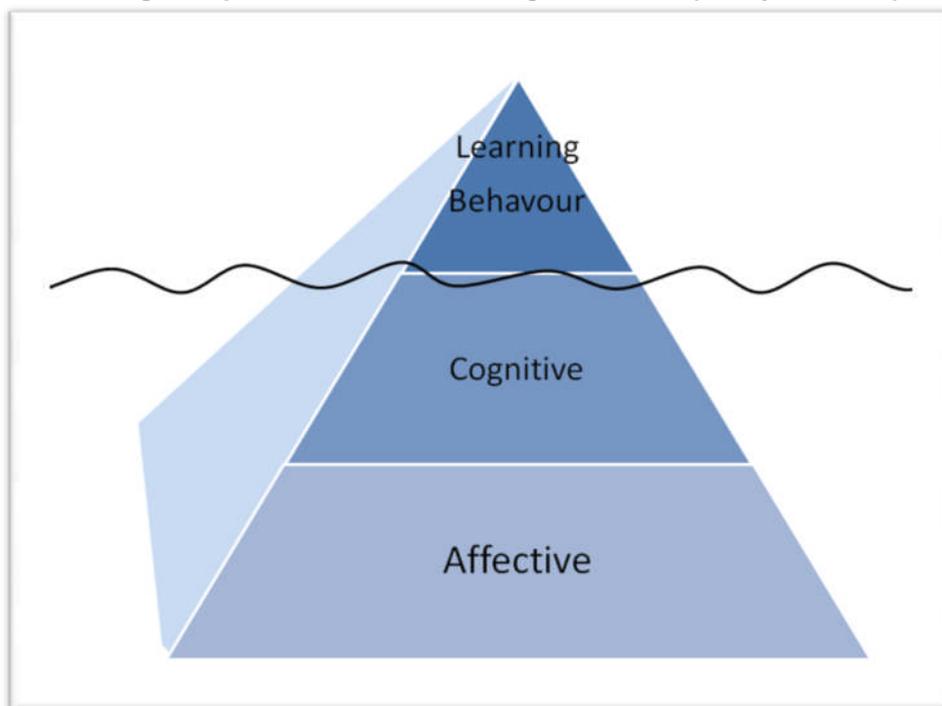
In my study, the interview data gives indication that students were aware of their motivation in taking this course and in learning English in general. Since it was not my intention to investigate different types of motivation, my focus in data analysis was not to categorise their motivation into different types of integrative, instrumental, intrinsic and extrinsic, but to reach a better understanding of the role of motivation interacting with learner autonomy. In order to achieve this, as discussed earlier in 7.2.1, I applied Dörnyei's (2001) process model of L2 motivation as a framework to perceive the role of motivation in classroom language learning. That is, motivation not only influenced their initial decisions in taking this online listening course but also played a part throughout the whole learning process, for instance their participation in the collaborative tasks. Therefore, this is why I focus on the role of motivation in a dynamic process situated in classroom learning, but not the bipolar categorisation of integrative/instrumental or intrinsic/extrinsic.

First of all, the fact that students chose to take this listening course and subscribe to the teacher and course regulations as a means to improve their English might be interpreted as instrumental and extrinsic motivation. However, as Ushioda (2008) pronounced the concern of simplifying types of motivation, "while its self-sustaining dynamic may make intrinsic motivation an optimal form of learning motivation, we should not lightly dismiss extrinsic motivation as inherently less effective and less

desirable...what seems crucially important is not whether these motivational factors are intrinsic or extrinsic to the learning process, but whether they are internalized and self-determined (emanating from within the learner), or externally imposed and regulated by others (teachers, peers, curricula, parents, educational, and societal expectations)” (p. 22). The findings in the interview also showed that these students who came to the interviews all demonstrated the sense of agency when they explained their reasons for taking this listening course. In other words, they could explain clearly their initial motivation for taking this course and even their motivation in learning English in general. They could also articulate what motivated or demotivated them during the course of learning. For some students, they were aware of their own motivational changes and could even self-motivate themselves. For example, in the FG interview (Class B, Spring), two students discussed how they maintained a higher level of motivation in learning English by choosing those topics they were interested to listen to and managing their schedules. This self-motivation seems to be an important link between motivation and autonomy. According to Dörnyei’s (2001) definition, motivation is “an abstract, hypothetical concept that...[explains] why people think and behave as they do” (p. 1). This shows that motivation is not only what drives people to certain actions, it also closely bound up with these actions throughout the whole actional stage, the so-called motivation-in-execution. On the other hand, learners also need to develop a set of “motivational thinking” (Ushioda, 1996) and motivational self-regulation (Ushioda, 2003, 2007, 2008).

I would like to borrow Littlejohn’s (2008) iceberg metaphor which points out that in actual classroom learning there are other factors less observable hiding under the water which affect learner motivation. I found that the cognitive-affective-behavioural tripartite widely applied in attitude research in the field of social psychology helps to categorise these factors under the water into cognitive and affective (Fazio & Petty, 2008). In a similar light, students’ learning outcomes in higher education are normally divided into these three domains, cognitive, affective and psychomotor (Herrington, Reeves & Oliver, 2010, p. 98). The following figure presents the iceberg metaphor with the apparent learning behaviour above the water and the cognitive and affective factors under the water.

Figure 8-4 Iceberg Metaphor of Factors Affecting Motivation (Littlejohn, 2008)



My data analysis also highlights the affective aspect of motivation. When students described their motivational changes, they also described their emotions and feelings. For instance, one student commented on how keeping the listening diaries de-motivated her in this course. It is interesting that as I dug deeper into this statement, I found that the affective aspect was crucial in how her motivation fluctuated. First of all, this student was highly aware of her reason for taking this course. She came to the course with the previous impression of a listening course, and therefore, was quite frustrated when she found that it was more than listening that she had to complete in this course. In short, what truly demotivated her was not only the apparent reason she offered—the listening diary—but the gap between her previously formed perception of a listening course and the current listening course. This conflict then led to frustration and resulted in the drop of motivation. Again, this highlights the importance for the teacher to truly understand the underlying reasons for motivational changes.

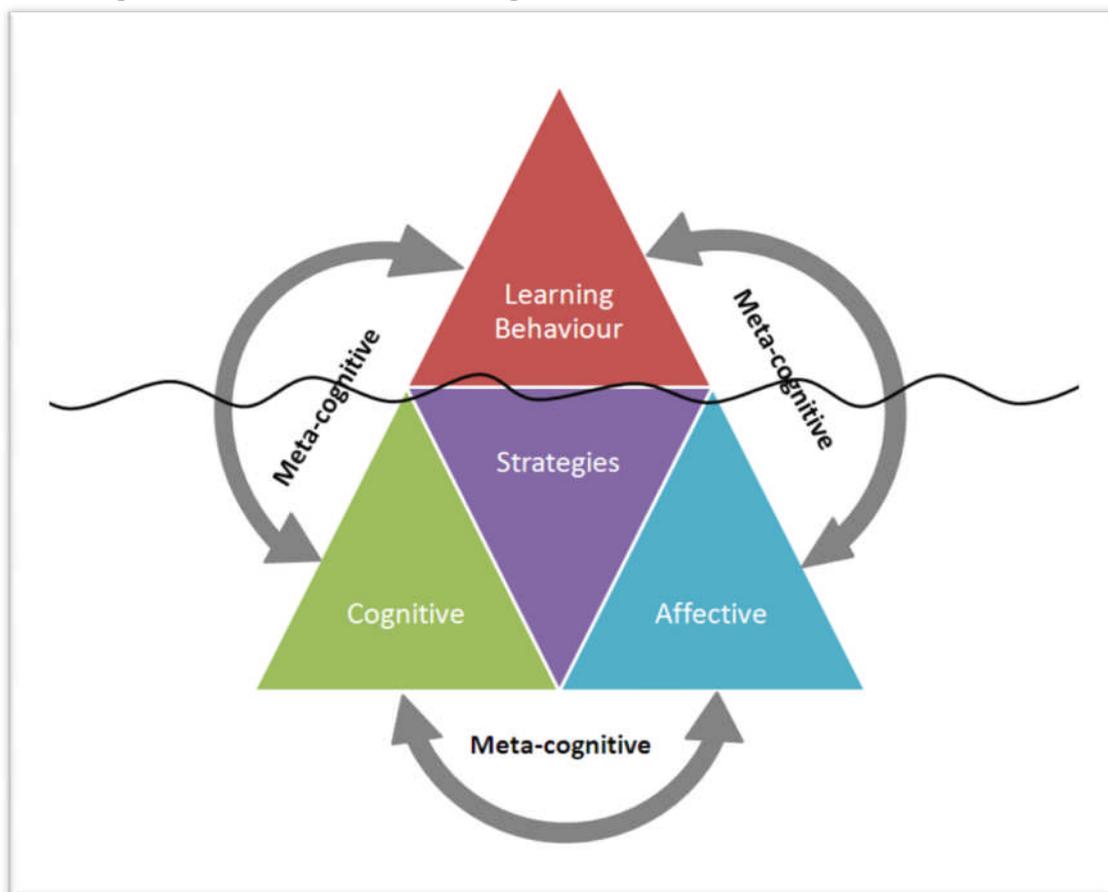
The intricate relationship between motivation and learner autonomy remains an unsolved task for researchers. In the current literature on the interplay between motivation and autonomy, the attention tends to be directed to a linear causal relationship about which triggers which (i.e. Spratt et al, 2002). However, as Spratt et al (2002) concluded in their study, “the relationship between motivation and

autonomy could also be dynamic and operate in different directions depending on the kind of motivation involved” (p. 262). For practitioners, Dörnyei’s (2001) process model of L2 motivation serves as a framework for us to study what actually happened in the classroom. As Ushioda (2008) commented, there are not sufficient empirical studies to shed light into this issue, an area worth further exploration. To better illuminate this relationship, it is important to include both teachers and learners in painting the pictures of learner motivational changes.

8.2.2.2 Strategies

Strategies are the second emerging theme related to students’ exercise of autonomy. Similar to the above discussion on motivation, I also did not set forth to study the linkage between strategies and autonomy in my initial research design. Likewise, instead of presenting categories of listening strategies and language learning strategies, I will only address those aspects related to student’s exercise of learner autonomy, particularly the meta-cognitive strategies. In the interviews, students described their listening process retrospectively; therefore, meta-cognitive strategies played an important role as they described how they monitored their process of learning. To illustrate the exercise of strategy, I will continue the above discussion on Littlejohn’s (2008) iceberg metaphor in conceiving strategies from these three domains, learning behavioural, cognitive and affective. What is different in this figure is that I present meta-cognitive strategies as a flowing awareness travelling among learning behavioural, cognitive and affective. The frequent combination of different I-statements within one single sentence serves as the evidence for this claim, for instance, the frequent combination of Affective Statements and other types of I-statements (5.2.1.1, Table 5-3). Since “meta-” comes from the Greek root means “among, with or beyond”, meta-cognitive strategies, as well as reflection, are more like a fluid stream of consciousness as a cycling and recursive loop as learners monitor, plan and evaluate their current learning so as to move to the next step.

Figure 8-5 The Exercise of Strategies



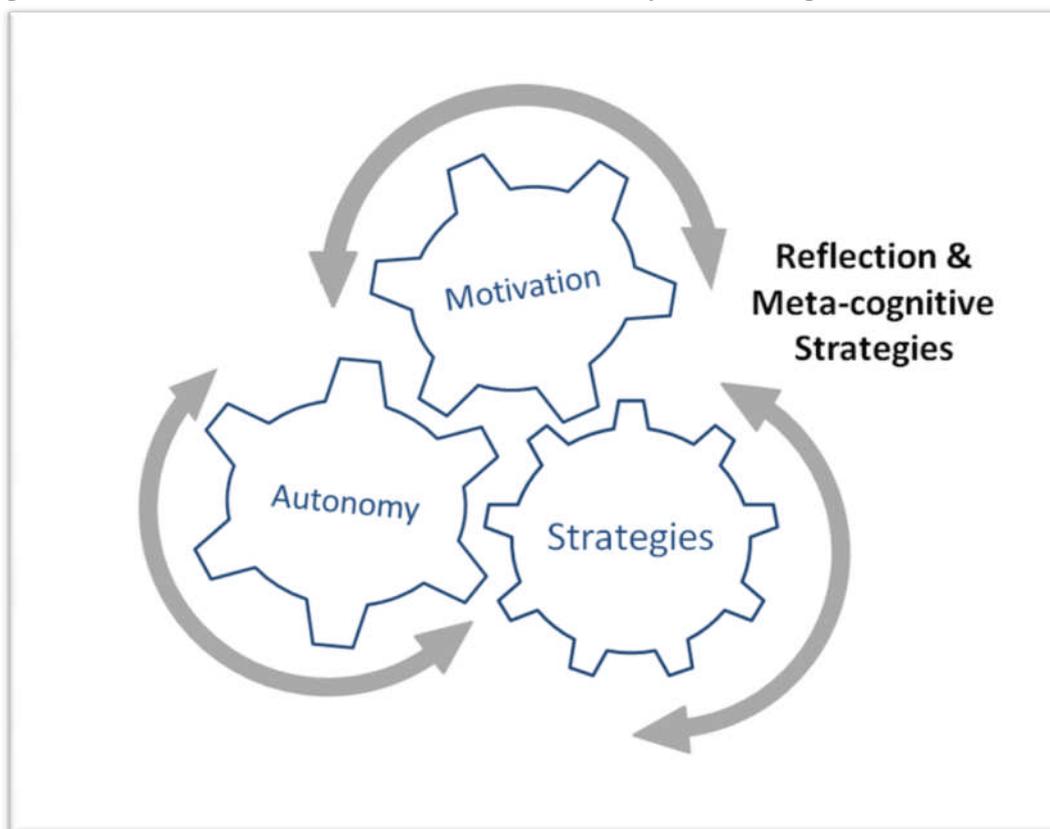
According to Oxford's (1990) and Wenden's (1991) definitions, learning strategies refer to both those observable tactics and mental procedures and planning learners apply to facilitate and regulate their language learning process. Therefore, strategies certainly reveal learners' "operation" of their learning behaviour as they directly engage in the use of the target language, and at the same time, strategies also refer to those cognitive mental processes less discernible to researchers. Furthermore, the affective aspect is also counted as part of learner's learning strategies in maintaining their emotional disturbances. In the above figure, the metacognitive strategies are presented as the three arrows flowing among the different domains as the learners monitor, plan and evaluate their learning. This explains why Oxford (1990) views language learning strategies as "keys to greater autonomy and more meaningful learning" (p. xi).

8.2.2.3 Learner autonomy and the dynamic conceptual framework

Last but not least, the last theme I am going to discuss is the focus of my research, learner autonomy. By presenting this framework, I am also presenting my understanding of learner autonomy in this study. As the following figure shows, there

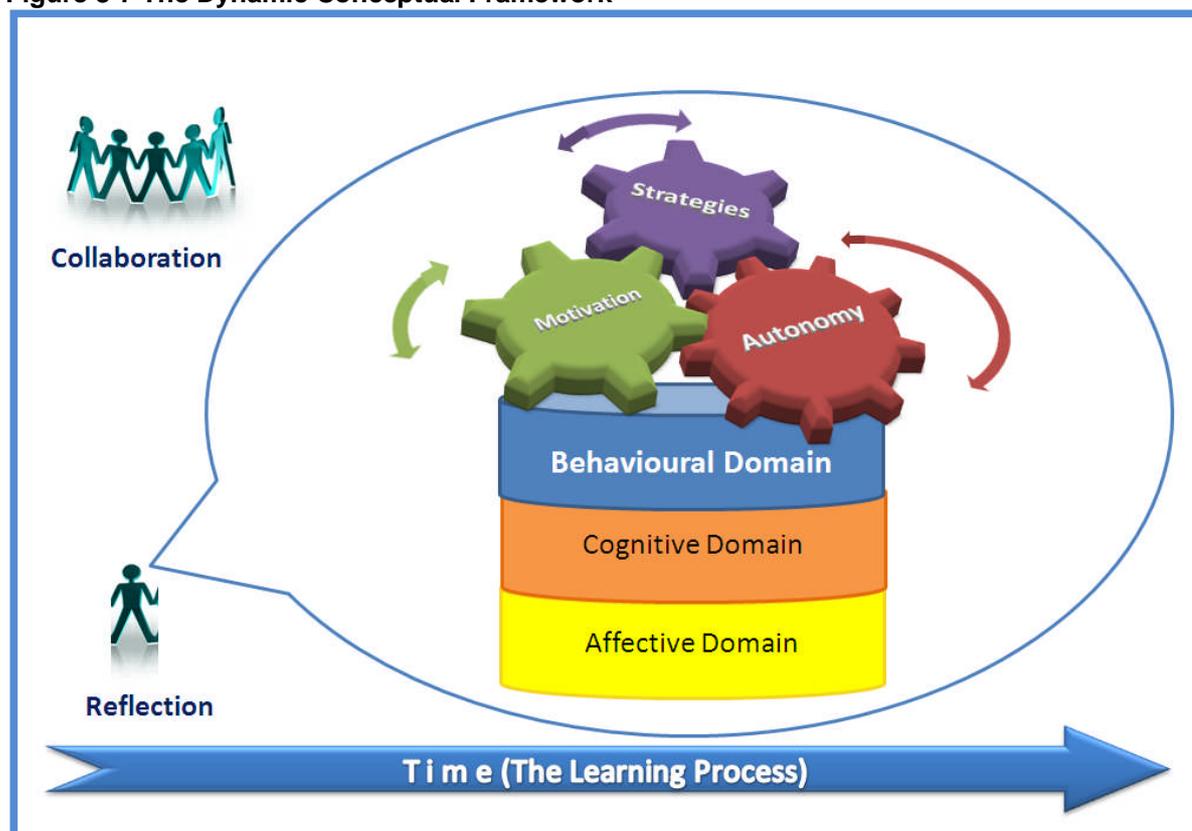
are three constructs, autonomy, motivation and strategy, central to students' language learning in a dynamic, interactive and interdependent mode as opposed to a linear unidirectional causal relationship. It is worth emphasising that my attempt is not to view autonomy as overpowering motivation and strategies; instead, I perceive these three as equally important but closely interactive constructs. My attempt in presenting these three concepts in the shape of wheels is not to perceive students as learning machines, but to simulate how these three constructs work together and influence each other very closely. In sum, these three themes are not presented in hierarchical order to view learner autonomy as more important than the other two, but they should be treated as three independent but closely related constructs. Furthermore, following the above discussion on meta-cognitive strategies as a fluid stream of consciousness, I also present them as the flows that are pushing the three wheels of motivation, learner autonomy and strategy.

Figure 8-6 The Three Wheels of Motivation, Autonomy and Strategies



As mentioned above, what I present in this section is not only the end product of my findings, but also the process of how I reach this conceptual framework. After having developed this three-wheel model, I have tried to combine this emerged finding with the findings on the reflection-as-a-process model. Therefore, the following conceptual framework was then developed to include both findings.

Figure 8-7 The Dynamic Conceptual Framework



Combining all the figures presented in this section, this last figure summarises the key findings of my study. First of all, in the centre of this framework, there are the three wheels, motivation, learner autonomy and strategies, and each of these three wheels consists of three domains—behavioural, cognitive and affective. These three domains provide reasons why these three wheels fluctuate and also how they interact with each other. The learning behavioural domain refers to the actions of language learning and language use directly observable during the process of language learning in classroom learning. The cognitive domain refers to the information processing process. In my study, it refers to comprehending the listening tasks (the unidirectional listening). The affective domain refers to the emotions and feelings accompanying this process, both positive and negative. As explained above, metacognition is presented not as one independent domain, but as the arrows travelling among the three wheels and transcending the three different domains.

In addition, collaboration and reflection are considered as the two forces that keep these three wheels going, and make language learning happen. On top of these three dimensions, the symbol of a group of people and a single person at the left-hand

side indicate that the whole learning process takes place through having dialogue within the individual or with a learning community. The impact of collaboration is manifested by Little (1994), “Learner autonomy does not arise spontaneously from within the learner but develops out of the learner’s dialogue with the world to which he or she belongs” (p. 431). In addition to these two symbols, the blue arrow at the bottom represents the third dimension in this framework, the time dimension. It accentuates language learning as an ongoing dynamic process. With this framework in mind, it is easier to be aware of individual differences in students’ actual practice of learner autonomy. For example, in the case studies, each student relies on one domain more than the other, and develops their own learning preference and style. For example, both Zenobia and Helen who have a higher frequency of Affective Statements rely more on the affective aspect in directing their learning; whereas Ming-Fan is a more action-oriented person who emphasised more the specific actions in her learning behaviour rather than her emotion.

In this framework, I would like to highlight the crucial role of the affective aspect of language learning which comparatively speaking is less explored and addressed in language classrooms. The emotions and feelings in the affective aspect are now gaining grounds not only in our field of language education but also in the general field of education. Egan (2010) borrowed the term “*perfunk*” coined by Bruner (1986) to call our attention to how feelings are inevitably part of the thinking process. The participants in the FG interviews had a chance to talk about this affective aspect, particularly how they overcome anxiety during the listening process. Therefore, as Cotterall (2008) proposed, for practitioners interested in fostering learner autonomy, “individual learners’ psychological relation to the language learning process” (p. 119) is worth further exploration.

To conclude, this framework provides a means to perceive individual difference in researching learner autonomy. Similar to the studies on strategies, research into learner autonomy tended to treat those learners with better strategy usage and/or higher capacity of learner autonomy as “good” or “advanced” language learners. However, I did not want to take such a position in labelling more autonomous students as “good” language learners. In line with Grenfell and Macaro’s (2007) criticism of strategy research, in the early research studies of the good language learner, “the good language learner” tended to be treated as a synonym of the advanced language learner, which implied that all the advanced learners were good in

employing efficient strategy use. However, they argued that beginners can be “good” language learners, whereas, there are also chances that advanced language learners are poor in strategy use (p. 15). Consequently, I would like to argue that we need to tell stories of all types of learners, not merely those who can be easily presented as successful cases. After all, what matters is not just the proficiency level the learners reach at a certain point, but the whole process of learning. What matters is not only the current process learners went through, but also what happens after the finish line, whether learners keep moving or not.

9 Chapter Nine Conclusion

In this practitioner research, the purpose is not to directly transplant and apply theoretical concepts into practice, but to ground my research in the actual setting of learning to investigate what practice tells us about learner autonomy. Due to this exploratory nature of my research, this study has taken several turns and reached a destination that I had not anticipated at the starting point. In this final chapter, I will first review the research design by summarising the introduction (Ch 1), literature review (Ch 2), the pedagogical rationale (Ch 3), and the methodology chapters (Ch 4 & 5) in 9.1, before I draw conclusions of the key findings presented in the discussion chapters (6 and 7) in 9.2. I will then discuss the contributions of my study regarding how these findings further our understanding of learner autonomy (Ch 8), and the limitations and suggested implications for future teaching and research. Lastly, I will end this chapter by my final concluding remarks reflecting on this journey as a practitioner.

9.1 Summary of the research design

In Chapter One, I presented the context of my study, including the current English education in Taiwan and the demand for more listening courses reported in Liu's (2005) survey study. The institutional context of higher education was then described including the developmental stages of the AIEDL programme to which my online listening course belonged. I then presented my initial interests in learner autonomy and a more general research aim as the starting point of my journey. That is, I decided to adopt an exploratory perspective in investigating the role of learner autonomy through qualitative data.

Due to the nature of this practitioner study, I had deal with more than one research area in my literature review to lay out components related to my research focus—learner autonomy—and the learning context in which it is studied. In Chapter Two I focused on learner autonomy and the online modality, and I reviewed the literature on listening strategies in Chapter Three. Since my study looked at learner autonomy particularly in the online learning modality, Chapter Two was divided into three main sections: learner autonomy, the online modality, and the roles of collaboration and reflections as the meeting place. In reviewing learner autonomy, I started with a historical account of learner autonomy in our field of language

learning, discussed the widely cited definitions of learner autonomy, and reviewed relevant empirical studies reporting experiences and insights by other practitioners. I next focused on two factors influencing students' development of learner autonomy—collaboration and reflection—which also play prominent roles in students' learning in the online learning modality. In reviewing online language learning, I first clarified my choice of terms, e-learning and b-learning, following Mason & Rennie's (2008) distinction. I then illustrated the significant role teachers play in implementing sound pedagogy in the actual practice of online learning. I next elaborated on affordances of the online modality so as to bring together the previous discussion of the influencing roles of collaboration and reflection.

In Chapter Three, I highlighted the reported needs for more listening courses in Taiwan to explain why I chose to offer listening courses in my local Taiwanese context. Furthermore, I responded to the call for a methodological change in listening instruction and to the issue of listening materials in extensive listening. With the advance of technology, it is now possible to create a multimedia online learning environment catering for EFL students' needs for authentic language input, an area that has not yet been widely researched. I then discussed details of my course design, including objective, materials selection, requirements, the use of the LMS platform EngSite, and the role of TAs.

The discussion of methodology was divided into two chapters – Chapter Four on data collection and Chapter Five on data analysis– because the process of data analysis played an equally important role as the process of data collection in shaping my perception of students' development of learner autonomy. In Chapter Four, I first addressed the issue of my research framework, and discussed the uncertainties I felt in choosing between Action Research and Exploratory Practice. I then explained how, as I carried on with my study, it became clear to me that it is worth considering both AR and EP principles for they address different aspects of teaching and researching which are in fact compatible for practitioners in reflecting on our practice. After I explained how I combined AR and EP principles, I then presented my research design and the three phases I went through in collecting data, Prelude (April, 2007), Laying the Ground (Fall, 2007) and Main Study (Spring, 2008). Lastly, in presenting the data collection instruments, I categorised them into *pedagogically motivated data* and *added data* so as to highlight the different nature of these two datasets.

Chapter Five (Data Analysis Methodology) started with the theoretical

rationale which guided my process of data analysis, including grounded theory, content analysis, I-statement analysis and Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS). The main body of this chapter presented the audit trail of my analysis of two main datasets, *pedagogically motivated data* and *added data*, namely, the diaries and reflective accounts and the interviews. I also described two approaches to coding, one with pre-determined I-statement categories, and the other one using NVivo to allow codes to directly grow out of the interview data. Details and steps of my data analysis procedures using NVivo were presented with screenshots so as to share my experience in experimenting with the use of this new data analysis software.

9.2 Summary of answers to the research questions

In this section, I will summarise the second half of the thesis, and highlight the results of my data analysis and key findings. As raised at the end of Chapter Two (2.4), my research questions addressed three main areas this study sets forth to investigate—collaboration and reflection, the online modality, and issues related to researching learner autonomy. Therefore, I divided the discussion accordingly into three chapters—Chapter Six on collaboration and reflection, Chapter Seven on the online modality and Chapter Eight on issues related to researching learner autonomy. In this section, I will revisit the research questions again and recapitulate the key findings of each chapter respectively.

9.2.1 Collaboration and reflection

Findings regarding collaboration and reflection presented in Chapter 6 reveal the important role learner autonomy plays during the learning process. As I stated in the first research question, I am interested in achieving an understanding of how collaboration and reflection interplay with learner autonomy under this online learning environment.

1. Why do collaboration and reflection foster students' development of autonomy in this online listening course?

First of all, regarding collaboration, as discussed in 6.3.1, the different designs of the two collaborative tasks required different degrees of involvement, which I was not aware of in the early stage of data collection. However, Pica et al's (1993) four parameters of task types explain students' different responses to these two

collaborative tasks. Collaborative task one, the weekly online discussion, required a consistent effort of participation over four months; students had less control over the group of interactants and the task outcome was also less specific. On the other hand, collaborative task two, the group recording project, was less demanding in terms of length of collaboration, more specific in terms of the goal, the outcome and the interactants. In addition to the task types, students' *readiness for the use of ICT*, *the transparency of the cyber space* and *sense of ownership* also played a part in the success of the collaborative tasks.

Secondly, regarding reflection, results of I-statement analysis first reveal that the two reflective accounts and the listening diaries are useful pedagogical tools in fostering reflection and enhancing students' awareness of their own learning process. First of all, the most important finding on reflection is the existence of multiple loops of reflection (Figure 6-5) highlighting how the time dimension is influential. Secondly, the two emergent I-statement categories, personal history and freedom, are important indicators of learner autonomy. Personal history reveals that learners came to this class carrying their past experiences and perceptions. The freedom category has the lowest number of I-statements but it highlights learners' sense of agency which is associated with their college identity. In other words, this finding shows that reflective accounts and listening diaries are effective in creating a space for reflection during the process of learning. Moreover, we-statements referring to the learning and living communities address the social dimension of the reflection which has not been discussed much in the literature on reflection.

2. How do I scaffold students' learning, e.g. reflection, in a way that will not hinder students' development of autonomy? (How much intervention is enough?)

As for Q2, my findings reveal that in my role as teacher, I did have an impact on both collaboration and reflection starting from the very beginning of the course design. We also need to consider the above reported finding on the collaborative task types, which means that as teachers we also share the responsibility for the success and failure of the tasks. In a similar light, how successfully students are able to reflect also depends on how the opportunities for reflection are planned and introduced in the course. More suggestions related to practice will be addressed later under implications (9.4).

9.2.2 The online modality

Findings regarding the online modality were reported and discussed in Chapter 7. As I explained, I reshaped my original research questions and combined Q3 and Q4 into the following question.

3. How do students choose to work with different modalities, face-to-face and online, and how do their choices in return shape my decisions of integrating the online components in Class A, B and C?

The first finding on *appropriating the diffusion of technology innovation* highlights the subtle process of integrating the use of technology into language learning. It is never a simple yes/no question, but it is more a why and how question about communicating students' needs and the teacher's intention. The second finding regarding the application of the online modality is that even though the affordances of these ICT tools seem to remain the same to different groups and individuals, the teacher needs to be aware that learners' perceptions of affordances and their motivation in using them will greatly define what these tools mean to them. Lastly, based on the above two findings, the teacher therefore has to develop a more sensitive attitude in blending the face-to-face and the online learning components.

9.2.3 Researching learner autonomy

Key findings related to the research dimension of learner autonomy concern methodological insights in researching learner autonomy and also what I have learned from the above key findings on collaboration, reflection, and the online modality.

4. How do the insights gained from I and II contribute to our understanding of how autonomy develops and can be enhanced in an online learning environment?
5. How does my role as a researcher provide a different angle to look at student's learning and my teaching? How does my role evolve?

In a sense, these two questions are about the contributions to the literature on learner autonomy. RQ4 focuses more on how this study contributes to the current body of knowledge on how learners exercise learner autonomy in a classroom setting, whereas RQ5 focuses more on my role as a practitioner and how this study helps teacher-researchers expand our knowledge on *researching* learner autonomy. To avoid repetition, I will elaborate findings regarding these two questions in the following

section on the significance of my study.

9.3 Significant contributions

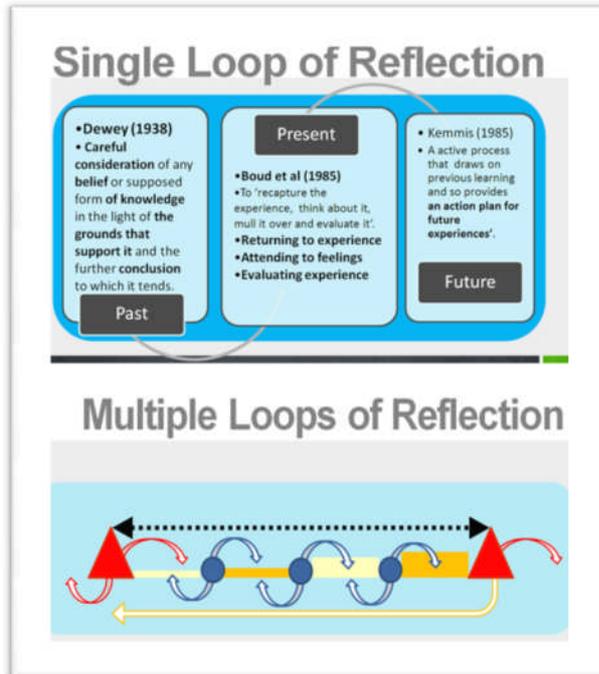
The findings on the role of collaboration and reflection and students' perception of the online modality have allowed me to further my understanding of learner autonomy and develop my own theory of how students exercise learner autonomy. The significant of this contribution is two-fold: first of all, the conceptual framework of the relationship among learner autonomy, motivation and strategies is grounded in empirical classroom practice; secondly, my experience in researching learner autonomy also provided an example for other practitioners interested in exploring more about learner autonomy. Therefore, as mentioned above, I divide the contributions of my study into two areas—students' learning and my role as a teacher-researcher. In 9.2.1, I will discuss the conceptual framework (Figure 8-5) I have proposed to capture the exercise of learner autonomy in the classroom setting. Next, in 9.2.2, I will then turn the lens to several methodological issues I encountered in this practitioner research.

9.3.1 Contributions to our understanding of learner autonomy in the classroom

Since my intention was to look for means of systematically fostering students' learner autonomy, the main contributions of my study are related to what teachers can do in the language classroom in this regard.

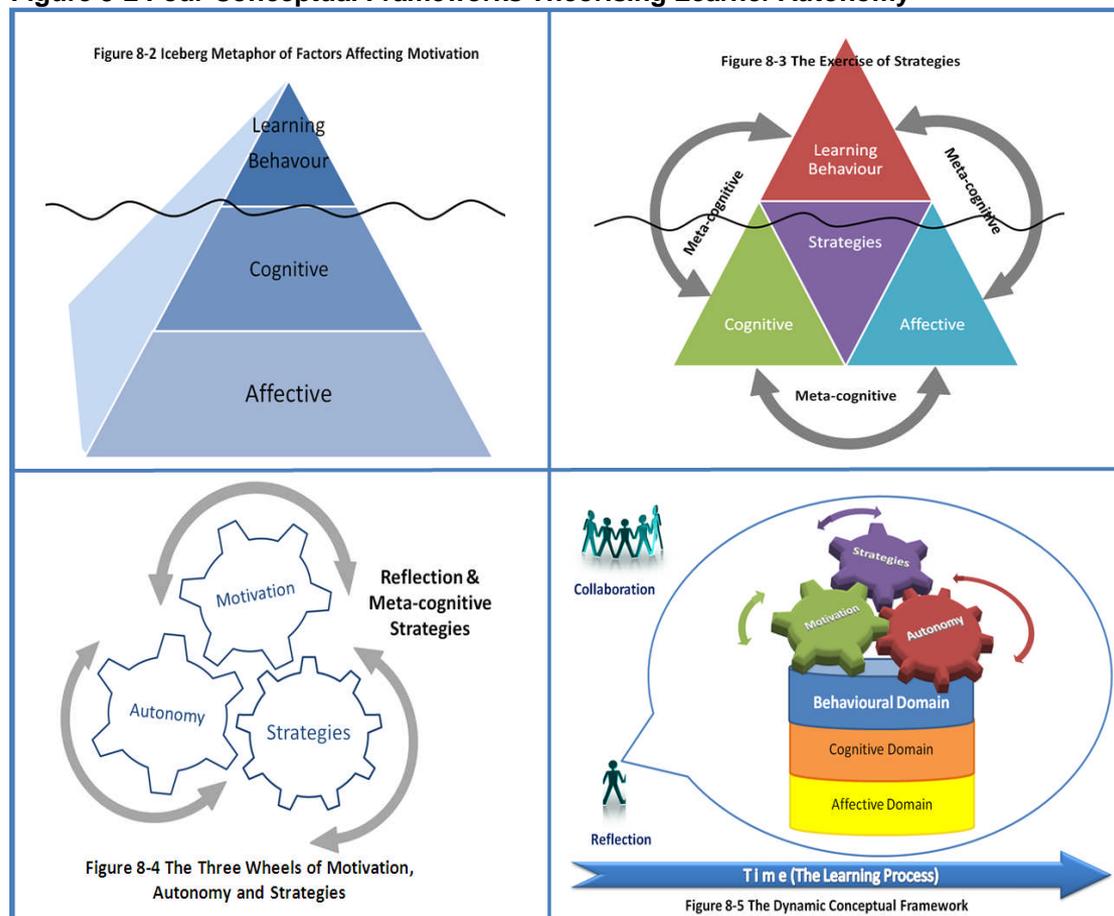
The first contribution of my study is that, through directly observing students' learning, I have a better understanding of how reflection can foster students' development of learner autonomy. As indicated in 2.3.2, even though reflection has been agreed as integral to learner autonomy, not much has been discussed as to how we can better assist learners to reflect. From my study, it is shown that students indeed need more guidance especially when they are not familiar with reflective writing. Furthermore, in addition to providing some guiding questions, the teacher can help them in establishing what I call *a sense of otherness*, which is equal to *perspective transformation* by Boud et al (1985), through drawing their attention to their own process of learning by marking a starting point at the beginning, several stop points and an end point to review their journey. The following figure (9-1) presents the single loop of reflection and the multiple loops of reflection.

Figure 9-1 Single Loop & Multiple Loops of Reflection



The second contribution is that I have found interesting interplays among learner autonomy, motivation and strategies presented in four figures (8-2, 8-3, 8-4 & 8-5) in Chapter 8 to visualise how I theorised learner autonomy in the classroom.

Figure 9-2 Four Conceptual Frameworks Theorising Learner Autonomy



I did not aim to study the relationship among motivation, learner autonomy and strategies; however, the data reveals that these three constructs interact with each other throughout the learning process. First of all, I was inspired by Littlejohn's (2008) iceberg metaphor in Figure 8-2 which pointed out that cognitive and affective factors are not directly observable as learning behaviours, but constitute a major part of the students' learning. In the next Figure 8-3, I combined the discussion on strategies and presented a more dynamic conceptual model of how metacognitive strategies work, which is evident from the diary data and I-statement analysis. This explains why students tended to combine different categories of I-statement in one sentence. In other words, when learners are reflecting on their process of learning, they dive into the cognitive and affective domains under the water for explanations for their own learning behaviours. Following the same concept on the exercise of metacognitive strategies, Figure 8-4 is centred on motivation and learner autonomy as the three main wheels driving the learning process. Even though these three constructs are presented as three wheels, I would like to perceive them as three dimensional, and each resembling the iceberg floating on the water and divided into three domains, behavioural, cognitive and affective. This is why in last figure, the conceptual framework (Figure 8-5), there are three layers under the three wheels to show that they are three-dimensional including the behavioural, cognitive and affective domains.

In short, the main contribution of my study is to propose that in perceiving learner autonomy as a process, we need to bear in mind that it involves all three levels of cognitive, affective and behavioural domains, and simultaneously interacts with motivation and strategies. Again, I would like to emphasise that this is not to say that learner autonomy is THE most important one superior to all the other related factors. Rather, instead of perceiving these factors as linear during the learning process, we need to perceive them as interacting in a three-dimensional learning space. To be more specific, the whole learning process is actually four dimensions after we also take *time* into consideration.

9.3.2 Contributions to our understanding of researching learner autonomy

The second contribution of my study is to respond to both Legenhausen's (2007) and Benson's (2007b) call for more practitioner research on learner autonomy, particularly regarding the search for methodology, systematic data collection and analysis. As I

have discussed in Chapter 8, first of all, I have benefited from integrating both AR and EP principles during this journey. The legitimacy of EP has been questioned in the AR literature (Burns, 2005a); however, it indeed has provided a valuable framework for practitioners interested in inviting students as partners. For researchers interested in developing pedagogy for learner autonomy, principles proposed by Allwright are still worth considering for epistemological diversity (Ortega, 2005). As a result of combining the AR and EP principles, the methodological considerations—focus group interviews and I-statement analysis—have also served as pedagogical tools in furthering both my understanding of learner autonomy and students' understanding of their own learning.

Regarding data elicitation tools, I found that focus group interviews in fact share some parallel core values with learner autonomy. The role the moderator plays in facilitating group discussion is very similar to the teacher's role in fostering learner autonomy in the classroom settings. In both AR and EP studies, the voices of students have gained more recognition, and through focus group interviews, students have opportunities to articulate their thoughts in a less intimidating atmosphere. Furthermore, it is sometimes feared that students would be exploited when they are asked to participate in these interviews. However, as discussed in 8.1.2, in my study, students were proved to take a much more active role in both their processes of learning and the process of research, as they were indeed the experts of their learning, and therefore, they could offer valuable insights into how learner autonomy, motivation and strategies interplay in their learning.

Regarding data analysis tools, the application of I-statement analysis to reflective accounts and diaries is another significant contribution of my study. As presented in 5.2.1, 6.1.2.1.1 and 8.1.3, I have applied two layers of I-statement analysis to study the frequency of different types of statements at the horizontal level and to conduct case studies in capturing personal changes over time at the vertical level. Furthermore, the emergent we-statements discussed in 5.2.1.2, 6.1.2.1.2 and 6.2.2.4 reveal the social dimension of reflection which has not yet been illuminated. The richness of applying I-statement analysis to reflective writing can be further explored as a pedagogical tool so that learners themselves can apply this process of analysis in visualising their personal routes of learning. I will elaborate this potential more in the following discussion on implications (9.5).

9.4 Limitations

As strengths and weaknesses are usually two sides of a coin, this study inevitably has its weaknesses and limitations. First of all, since this study is exploratory in nature and I kept a space of reflection for myself during the fieldwork, it required a certain level of flexibility which can also be interpreted as a high level of uncertainty. The fact that I changed the focus of study from collaboration to reflection and then revised the research question on the online modality can be considered as the first limitations regarding research design and administration. That is, I did not persist with my original interests in studying collaboration and dig deeper into the role of collaboration.

Secondly, even though I have spent a whole year in the field collecting data, my main study was only four months long, which is not long enough to do follow-up interviews and observations on what happened after students took this online listening course. Did they carry on listening to these websites online or did they simply stop after the course ended? Because of restrictions on time, these questions remained unanswered, and point to an interesting area for future studies.

Thirdly, in terms of the types of data, another limitation is that this study is completely qualitative and does not include any quantitative questionnaire data. As explained earlier in 4.3.2.5, I was originally intending to administer questionnaires to investigate students' habits in using ICT at the beginning, and to ask them to evaluate their learning at the end of the course. However, it turned out that students already needed to fill out two different sets of questionnaires for the university and the AIEDL project. Therefore, since what I wanted to study had already been collected in their assignments and the interviews, I did not insist on having my questionnaires completed.

Fourthly, even though I have presented the research context in the introduction chapter, I did not go back to inspect how the local cultural context may play a role in students' learning. This absence of discussions on the local Taiwanese context is another limitation of my study. However, I excluded the discussion on the cultural factors for the following reasons. The first reason is not to make my exploratory study even more complicated. Since my main research focus is to observe learner autonomy in the online learning modality, I did not set forth to include the cultural factor in this already complex dynamic. This is not to overlook or ignore learners'

background, but to lay more emphasis on individual difference.

Secondly, as mentioned in the literature review chapter (2.1.1.1.4), in line with Little's (2007a) argument that learner autonomy is a universal construct existing in all culture, I did not set forth to study the cultural impact on students' development of learner autonomy. Since this cultural factor was not included in my research question, I did not probe into the possible impacts this Taiwanese context has on students' learning, and thus, in the three discussion chapters, it does not seem appropriate to discuss how the local environment influences students' language learning and their development of learner autonomy.

As Holliday (2003) warned us of the danger of being culturally reductive, it may be risky to begin with an assumption that we can apply a homogeneous label "Taiwanese" to the group of learners under focus, and ascribe features of their learning behavior (e.g. passivity) to the influence of Chinese culture.

In other words, my reason for not addressing relevant cultural factors is that when examining the cultural factors, one might easily fall into the trap of looking for common cultural characteristics and overlook individual differences. In fact, as traveling across continents is a lot more common among learners, it becomes more difficult now to pin down their cultural background even though they all carry the same ethnic identity as Taiwanese. For instance, in all three classes A, B and C, I have students who had the experiences of living in other countries, such as United States and Japan, from several months to several years. In short, the set of data I collected for this study is not sufficient for me to address the role culture plays in their learning; therefore, I chose not to address this cultural issue in my discussion chapters.

9.5 Implications

The implications of my study speak directly to teacher-researchers who are interested in creating an autonomy-friendly environment and studying how to communicate with students the notion of learner autonomy. Instead of listing implications according to the key findings on collaboration, reflection and the online modality, I will list three main principles drawn from these findings, which are individual differences, the necessity of regulation accompanying freedom, and digging up the bright side of seemingly unsuccessful learning episodes.

First of all, individual differences are what we need to bear in mind in designing the course and evaluating students' learning. No matter in the roles of

collaboration and reflection or the online learning modality, I came to recognise the importance of accepting individual differences and realising that students come to the class with their past histories and experiences that we have not yet appreciated. Therefore, providing a space for reflection is important so that as learners have a chance to trace their learning process, we as teachers will have a better chance to perceive who our learners are in our classrooms. Secondly, through studying the collaborative tasks and reflection, I discovered that for us teachers who are interested in promoting learner autonomy, we need to accept that all freedom comes with constraints and regulations. Setting the rules clear from the beginning in fact can facilitate students' exercise of learner autonomy and help them to make informed decisions about their learning. Again, in creating a space for reflection, a certain level of regulation is necessary to outline when and what to reflect on. Thirdly, as Tolstoy's famous line goes, "Every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way". Research studies on learner autonomy tend to embrace successful stories so as to show the empirical evidence that learner autonomy does work for language learners. However, my findings regarding collaboration, reflection and the online modality all point out that what may seem "unsuccessful" to the teacher still can have the successful, bright, side of learning in it, particularly when learners have a chance to reflect.

9.6 Concluding remarks

This practitioner research has developed into a much richer investigation of both students' development of learner autonomy and my own exploration as a teacher-researcher. I would like to borrow Appadurai's (2006) argument of "de-parochialising the idea of research" in his article *The Right to Research* as my concluding remark of this chapter and also to the whole thesis (p. 168). According to Dimitriadis (2008), de-parochialising the idea of research entails "strategic and continuous inquiries" on a certain subject area and it is through this effort the notion of research is open to anyone who is curious enough to make an action plan and carry out this inquiry (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). In other words, research is not perceived as "the high-end knowledge about knowledge" (Appadurai, 2006, p. 168), but more grounded in everyday banal but complex practice that requires "strategic and continuous inquiries". The following passage on the paradox of research utterly captures my perplexity during this journey:

I continue to be interested in thinking about why research is a strange activity, and above where its strangeness lies, and I hope to build on the observation that its fundamental mystery is that it purports to be a systematic means for discovering the not-yet-known. How can you have a systematic means for getting to what you do not know? For example, ***what you do not know might be so profoundly unsystematic that systematically getting to it is logically impossible. Or may be that your systematic way is not suited to the most important object that you do not know but ought to be thinking about*** (Emphasis added). So there remains a paradox deep inside the idea of research, and this paradox might explain why it is such a hot-house activity.

From this practitioner study, I have learned to systemically unravel the messy but lively pictures of classroom ecology, and discovered that there are pearls in those seemingly unsuccessful stories, which tell us that learner autonomy indeed has its place in language classrooms.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Syllabus

AIEDL Intermediate Listening Comprehension

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EngSite <http://ce.etweb.fju.edu.tw/engsite/index.asp>

Listening is more than sitting there, doing multiple choices and filling in the missing information, this course would offer you another alternative, a more self-reflective learning experience. With the ultimate goal to help you better perceive your role as a learner, we treat listening not as a passive decoding process but a more active one, to listen critically—be able to evaluate, predict and respond instead of merely translate the messages. A number of collaborative group activities are designed to invite you to reflect on your past experience with the themes we are exploring. Now, I'm sharing with you the following quote that reminds us the options we have during the process of listening.

“Listening is not merely not talking...it means taking a vigorous human interest in what is being told us. You can listen like a blank wall or like a splendid auditorium where sounds comes back fuller and richer.”

by Alice Duer Miller

Grading Policy

Online Discussions and Participation 20 %

Pair Presentation 20%

Weekly Listening Diaries (Including response to others' diary) 30 %

Group Presentation (listening material evaluation +Group Recording) 30%

Date	Topics	Assignment
1. 2/28	Holiday	
2. 3/6	Course orientation & Ice Breaking Why do you learn English? British Councils: Listening downloads archive	Pre-course Questionnaire
3. 3/13	Ello Randall's Listening Lab ESL Listening lab:	Reflection on Listening and Language Learning

	Self-Introduction: <u>The English Listening Lounge</u> <u>Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab :</u> <u>Randall's Introduction Tell Me About Your Self</u>	Announce the Forum to use
4. 3/20	Ello Travel: <u>Forms of transportation Road Trip</u> What's Up in Taiwan	Diary Exchange 1
5. 3/27	ESL Radio BBC World Service: Singer and the Song	Decide Group Presentation Topic
6. 4/3	Radio Programmes <u>Radio Diaries</u>	
7. 4/10	<u>English in Speech</u> <u>American Rhetoric: Lean On Me</u>	Diary Exchange 2
8. 4/17	<u>Bob Dearborn's analysis on American Pie</u>	
9. 4/24	<u>California Distance Learning Project</u> Western/Pacific Literacy Network/CNN SF Learning Resources <u>VOA News: News Radio for English Learners</u>	
10. 5/1	Midterm Exam	
11. 5/8	Listening Topics Suggested by Groups	Diary Exchange 3
12. 5/15		Diary Exchange 4
13. 5/22		
14. 5/29		
15. 6/5		
16. 6/12	Course Reflection & Evaluation	

Appendix 2: PPT content on listening diaries

參與研究同意書 Participant Consent Form

研究計畫題目

Learner Autonomy in E-Learning through CSCL (Computer Supported Collaborative Learning) 自主學習與網路合作學習

研究者

Miss Yi-Chun (Sherri) Wei, Doctoral researcher

Centre of English Language Teacher Education, University of Warwick, UK

Dear Student

Welcome to take Intermediate Listening, one of the AIEDL online courses. I will conduct a research related to this course, and therefore I need to observe and analyse the interactions and your writing on EngSite. I will also conduct Focus Group Interviews to understand your learning. 歡迎選修這門中高級英語學程的英語聽力課程 Intermediate Listening。我的博士研究跟這門課程有關，需要觀察分析這個學期同學們在群英網上的互動，平時的留言和討論，聽力日誌的繳交狀況以及小組焦點對談(Focus Group Interview)。

This research emphasises your direct participation and discussion, and hope that you can also gain more understanding about your language learning process. Therefore, your opinions are highly valued and they will help me to improve this course. This is why I would really appreciate your participation. All of your personal information will not be revealed and if I need to mentioned your writing and opinions I will use pseudo names. The most important of all, whatever you say and write will not influence your grades at all. If you have any questions during the semester, please feel free to contact me. You also have the right to withdraw after you inform me. Please contact Sherri Wei at the following number and Email: 886-916-031-071; wyc212@ms75.hinet.net. 這項研究強調參與者直接參與討論，共同決定議題討論與進行方式，我相信參與這項研究可以加深你對自己語言學習的認識。你的寶貴意見也為提供日後改進這門網路課程的依據，非常需要你的參與。所有的個人資料都經過匿名處理不會被批露，你的參與也不會影響你的成績。在學期中，任何時候如有疑問，都可以向研究者詢問，你也有權利在告知研究者原因之後停止參加。任何有關這項研究計畫的疑問請聯絡，魏亦淳+886-916-031-071; wyc212@ms75.hinet.net。

After you have read through this consent form, please sign your name and contact information if you agree to participate in this research. Thank you very much! 在了解研究內容後，請在下面填上你的姓名與聯絡方式並簽名。非常感謝你的參與及合作。

Name 參與者姓名 _____ Date 日期 _____ 2008

Contacts 聯絡方式 Email _____ Mobile 電話 +886-

Signature 參與者簽名 _____ Researcher's Signature 研究者簽名

Appendix 3: Sample Data— Reflective Accounts

Reflective account at the beginning of the semester (Original)

1. Describe your past English learning experience. How many years have you learned English so far? Do you consider yourself as a successful language learner? Why or why not.

I've learned English for almost ten years, but I once gave up.

I went to cram school that teaching English when I was in elementary school. At that time, I didn't want to learn English. I went there just because my parents wanted me to do so, and there were many pupils started to learned English. Therefore, I wasted money and time on many English classes; I didn't understand why I had to sit on the chair, listened to the teacher and couldn't watched the TV program at home?

I don't think I am a successful language learner, because I seldom practice speaking, reading, listening and writing. For a long time, I study English just because it was a subject at school. But now, I think I have a chance to be a successful learner, because I realize English is an interesting language and I really want to advance my abilities.

2. Do you know how you would learn the best? EX. What kind of material you like the most? Do you prefer study alone or work with a partner and/or a group of people?

I took an on-line course named "Reading American Culture" last semester and it was good. But sometimes I felt alone because we had no team work. I couldn't discuss with my classmates and I even saw them just twice a semester-the mid term and the final. I think work with one to two partners is a better way than work alone and with a group. Too many people in a team will be hard to communicate.

I think those websites are good ways for learning. We can concentrate on listening.

3. Explain why you are interested in this online Listening course. What do you expect to achieve in this course?

In my experience, listening training class most like a teacher reading or speaking on the stage and students repeated after the teacher. That's sounds boring. This online class may lead an interesting class and a flexible learning. Also, Listening ability is the subject I want to practice in this semester I hope I can improve my listening ability, and have a good work with my group.

Sample Data Reflective account at the end of the semester (Translated)

I remember how I ran back and forth between the Secretary and Sherri's office at the end of last semester in order to take this course. It doesn't seem that long before, and now the course is coming to the end. I look back to my learning process and feel I could have done more. I did finish the listening but always drag myself in finishing the listening diaries.

I really can feel the progress of my listening. At first, if I didn't read the transcription, I could only understand 50-60%, but now when we come to the unit of News Listening, which I thought would be difficult, I found it less intimidating, more manageable. Or maybe it's just

because the content indeed is easier. Although sometimes I couldn't follow the listening when the accent is too heavy, I really like the topics we listen to. When I encounter unfamiliar topics, I'll try to get the structure. If I counter familiar topics, like favorite movies. I could follow it better and further reflect on my own preference, and if I am the one that is interviewed, how would I talk about my favorite movies.

Now I go back to my own responses to the three questions at the beginning of the semester, I still feel that I am not a successful language learner, because I lack the determination to learn English well, so that even if I've listened to the materials, I couldn't finish the diaries as I expected. However, I feel that I truly enjoy learning English, even when I am struggling with the assignment. I enjoy listening to the British accent and the British culture. I enjoy listen to the American accent and the slang in ICRT.

About the final recording project, I think our group is pretty creative. We choose the recording on the answer machine as the way to present our voices. Although we had some troubles on the presentation day, but the whole process of coming up with the script let me see English could be playful.

The workload from my major is really heavy, but I know this is not the excuse for handing in late assignments. Just like what the teacher said, this course is not only to train our English listening but also the self-regulation ability. Although this semester I didn't manage to regulate my own learning, this is a previous reflection from a negative experience. If I have a chance, I will still choose this kind of online English course, afterall, this way of learning is really flexible. I have learned the lesson, next time, I will follow the schedule strictly and treat this course just like my majors.

Appendix 4: Sample Data— Listening Diaries

Name	Cindy	Student No.	494630447	Diary Entry	Diary 1
Date	3/5~9	Time	1hour (each day)	Difficulty	☆☆
Subject	Movie talk				
Summary	Most of us must have seen the movie before, and there are many different kind of categories, such as action movie, comedy, thriller, horror. Some like drama movie, for instance, Jamie, however, Tennessee and Simon like The Lord of The Ring, which is a magical movie. When talking about the most impressed movie, that would be differ form people. Just like Jamie, he like <i>Sophia's choice</i> because of the character's acting, it let Jamie feel the movie become brilliant. And some movie might adapted by the book, due to the reputation of the				

	<p>book, maybe this adapted movie would become popular, for example, The Lord of The Rings. Watching movie not only relax and enjoy in the leisure time, but also enlarge our horizon.</p>
Questions	<p>At the first website: <i>Movie review</i>, it's a little fast when listening to in the beginning, there are many unfamiliar words too. Therefore, I will miss many sentences and couldn't follow the transcript. I think the most difficult part of this topic is "Travis talking about Star Wars", at the beginning I could understand why the speaker like this movie and why it is so popular. But I couldn't understand why he mentions "CP30 and R2D2", and I'm very curious why the Japanese movie "The Hidden Fortress" will translate as "The Hidden Fortress"</p>
Reflection	<p>When knowing this week we're going to talk about movies, I suddenly recognize that it's been a long time that I wasn't see the movie in the theater or rent some DVDs. Because I really like to read the magazine of movies, I will read the introduction, which is attractive. That means I don't have specific favor about the movie, I focus on whether this movie could give me something meaningful or inspired. However, I seldom see the horror movie, because nowadays the horror movie often use some effects let audiences scared, or whole movie just use horror sound effect or masters, and doesn't know what this movie want to present.</p> <p>In the winter vacation, I brought a movie DVD, Lucky Number Slevin, the leading actor is Josh Hartnett and the heroine is Lucy Liu. I brought it because of Lucy Liu(劉玉玲), I really like her. I had seen her movie before, at that moment I was appealed by her elegant idiosyncrasy. At the beginning of this movie, I thought it was talking about two gang's leading want to kill each other, therefore, they find the hero to do the mission. But it's a surprising end that the hero and his helper plan a fatal trap for two leadings, the reason is they had killed his father and mother just for a bet, and they dead as the same method as they killed the hero's father, asphyxia(窒息). It's really ironic. I like this movie not only the story is cuing and tight temple, but also the interaction between hero and heroine, which can lessen the nervous</p>

atmosphere. For example, the heroine always goes to her neighbor's home to borrow something, and often in the hero doesn't wear clothes only have a towel in his waist.

After all, seeing movie could learn some culture of that nation, for me, by watching the foreign movie could let me learn much than just reading books, most importantly is that I would enjoy my studying. So in order to solve my questions asked before, I should go to see the Star Was as soon as possible.

Appendix 4: Sample Data—Interviews

Translation of Focus Group Interview

Class B Spring semester FG interview 05-06-2008

5 Participants: Angela, Tiffany, Tom, Doris and Emily

Length: 1hr 36

Sherri:

I will invite you to introduce yourself, and later my questions are mainly about your learning this semester, about this course. To make it easier for me, I will record our discussion, do you mind? We will start when you are ready. Are you ready?

等一下會先請你們自我介紹，然後問題主要是關於這學期的修課的狀況。這門課的，為了方便我整理，我等一下需要錄音，你們介意嗎？準備好就可以先開始了，你好了嗎？

Angela:

Okay, I'm Angela, now a fifth year student in the English Department, SOCE Fu-Jen Catholic University.

我是 Angela 輔大英文系進修部五年級的學生。

Tiffany:

I'm Tiffany, I'm now a third year student in the English Department in Fu-Jen.

我是 Tiffany 輔大三年級英文系

Sherri:

Why are you interested in taking this course? 你們當初為什麼會選這門課？

Angela:

I want to try the combination of computer and English learning, and on the other hand, I want to improve my listening. 想要試試關於電腦和英文方面的結合，另一方面是想要把聽力做一個進步。

Tiffany:

I also want to improve my listening. 我也是還滿想要練習聽力的。

Sherri:

Why listening? 為什麼是聽力呢？

Tiffany:

Because we are normally in a Mandarin speaking environment.

因為平常還是在一個中文的環境比較多，

(Other three students, Tom, Doris and Emily, join us.)

Sherri:

We just get started, they are introducing themselves. You can speak in Chinese.

我們才剛開始，他們在自我介紹，講中文就可以了。

Tom:

So, I can tell the truth?要講事實嗎？

Sherri:

Yes, of course the truth. What you say will not influence our grades. Okay, you just arrived, take your time. Angela and Tiffany, you were taking about improving your listening, can you explain more? 講事實阿！這個不會影響到你們的成績。好，你們剛到先等一下好了，Angela and Tiffany 你們剛說想要練習聽力，要不要多解釋一點。

Angela:

Because when I listen to English, there are some problems with the accents. I found that those words are pretty simple after I check the dictionary. 因為平常聽英文的時候，有一些口音的問題，查了單字之後發現其實字都還滿簡單的。

Sherri:

You already knew that accents are the major problem for you before you took the course?

修課之前就知道口音是比較大的問題嗎？

Angela:

I don't know before I took the course. I only realise that the accents are the major problem for me during the course. Because we listen to quite a lot of different accents, I found it a bigger problem. 修課之前不知道，是上課的時候發現對我來說，口音是很大的問題，因為上課聽了滿多不同的口音，發現是比較大的問題。

Tiffany:

Yes, we listening to the teacher's and the classmates' English in our classes. I want to listen to more standardised British accent. 對，平常上課聽到的還是老師同學的英文比較多，我想多聽一些道地的英國腔。

Sherri:

Are you ready now? 你們準備好了嗎？

Tom:

Hi, everyone. I'm Tom, a third year student from the SOCE. I want to share my reflection on Multimedia Listening. In the beginning, I wanted to take this course because although we're in the English department, but it's always the same group of

teachers. Even though we all use English in class, we listen to English all the time, I don't feel that my listening is improved a lot. So, my initial intention was to do more listening. 大家好，我是進修部三年級 Tom，今天是要對多媒體聽力做出一點小小的感想。那當初選這門課是因為雖然我們是英文系，但是系上的老師就是那幾個，雖然平時上課的時候，有練到聽力，但是沒有什麼進步的空間，所以當初是為了多聽一點。

Doris:

Hi, everyone. I'm Doris. When I saw your name I remember you taught a few classes for Lisa. I felt that you were quite nice, so I took this course and it happened to be listening, a skill I need. Because I feel that my listening is very poor, I want to improve that, so that I can understand what people are saying, not without any clue. So I wanted to improve my listening. 大家好我是 Doris，當初是看到老師的名字回想到你大一的時候，幫我們帶過 Lisa 課的樣子，那時候覺得老師人好好，所以就選了課。進去之後，剛好發現就是聽力是自己需要的技能，因為我覺得我的聽力非常的差，所以想加強聽力，可以讓我比較聽的懂人家在說什麼，不會完全是很茫然的樣子，所以當初想加強一下聽力。

Emily:

Hi, everyone. I wanted to take this course because they invited me to join them, and I am available this afternoon. I thought that since I am free in the afternoon, I can improve my listening with multimedia. After taking this course, I found that I've learned a lot, like about the accent, that's something we haven't encountered. If we move onto the fourth year without realising this, it will be a big problem. But, hum, about the diary... 大家好，我當初選這門課的原因，是因為他們兩個找我一起去，剛好我下午沒有課，就想說下午沒事可以去加強聽力，利用多媒體可以做結合。上了之後，我覺得學到滿多的，就像是關於腔調的問題，是我們一直都會遇不到的，如果說一直到四年級還不知道這會是很大的問題，不過，就是恩 diary...

Sherri:

Hum..about the diary, I also have a few questions. I want to ask you, after you took this course, is it different from your expectation? 恩關於 diary 的問題我等一下也會問到。我想先請問大家，關於上了這門課之後，跟你們當初的預期有沒有落差。

Tom:

About expectation, I'm a bit disappointed. Although you've told us that we are not going to only work on listening. And I did learn many websites for me to practice listening, but I still hope that there will be some exercise like the linking of the sounds. Because I can also just google and find those website, you know. 跟我的預期有小小的失望，雖然，第一堂課老師說過，這門課並不是只針對聽力做加強，但是，上了課之後，我得

到很多可以自己練聽力的網站，但是，我還是希望可以有一些連音的練習，因為網站的話，我自己也可以搜尋到那些網站。你知道，

Sherri:

Okay.

Tom:

And, about completing the listening before the class, I almost did that everytime, but I didn't have time to write the diary. Because I took many modules, not only this one, there are a lot of assignments. So, I indeed did the listening, otherwise, I can't join the discussion. But even if I did the listening, I didn't write the diary! So, on the record, I did not hand in the assignment, like now, it's the end of the semester, I still have several entries to hand in. This is what bothers me a lot. But, to be honest, many websites are quite useful.

然後，上課的話需要先預習，我幾乎都有聽，但是我的 diary 都沒有時間寫，因為我修的學分比較多，不是只有這一科，作業很多。所以我課前都會聽，要不然上課沒辦法討論，但是我聽了可是沒有寫 diary 阿！所以檯面上我就是沒有交作業，到期末我就欠了好幾篇 diary 沒有交，這是很困擾的地方。但是，老實說很多網站的確很受用。

Doris:

I feel that I also quite looked forward to this course in the beginning, but, then I started to feel the pressure. I want to avoid this course. I thought that practicing listening should be relaxing, but I feel that I have to listen, and read and write. It's indeed quite tiring, so I got lazy later on. I did the writing in the first couple weeks, but fell behind the schedule toward the end. But because of this, I did not improve too much toward the end. A bit like for the sake of handing in the assignments, not like, I did the listening because I really want to improve it. 我覺得剛開始上這門課還滿有期待的，可是，後來就開始有壓力了，會很想逃避這門科目，我覺得練聽力應該是很輕鬆的，可是我覺得又要聽又要讀又要寫，其實真的滿累的。所以到最後就會開始懶散了。前面有寫到後面因為自己的懶惰啦！可是到後來因為這個關係，就沒有增進很多。有一點應付啦！而不是因為很想增進自己的聽力而去聽這個東西。

Sherri:

Does it have anything to do with what we listened to? Because we started with simpler topics, slower and move to more advanced one. 跟聽的東西有沒有關係嗎？因為剛開始的比較簡單，比較慢，後來的份量比較重。

Doris:

Hum, I guess so, sometime after I clicked the link, I was in shock, listened to bla bla

bla, but don't know what he's saying. And I can only read the transcript. 恩我想也有關係，有時候點進去之後有點傻住，想說 bla bla bla 不知道他在說什麼，就只好看 transcript 那樣。

Tom:

Also because there are more vocabulary, but I don't think checking these vocabulary is helpful to improve my listening. Then, I wonder, why am I doing this? Even though this can also improve the amount of the vocabulary we know, but to me it should be the other way around. 因為單字也蠻多的，但是，查這些單字對聽力沒有幫助啊！就覺得我做這些幹麻？雖然說這樣也許可以慢慢地增加我們的字彙，但是有點本末倒置。

Doris:

I like American Pie, the one on Don McLean, it also has many vocabulary, but after our discussion in class, I understood it! 我喜歡 American Pie Don McLean 那篇，單字也多，可是，我們上課討論之後，老師一講我就懂了！

Sherri:

Really? You're the only one said so. 真的嗎？你大概是唯一這樣講的。

Doris:

That's very good. After your explanation, then I realise, oh, that's what it means. It's difficult because there is some background knowledge that we don't know. Because of that, it's quite difficult to understand, I couldn't get it when I first listen to it. But in class, I did understand more. I don't like it, if it's easy to understand, and we can just listen to it on our own. It feels quite different. 非常好阿！老師一講我就懂他的意思，這個東西原來是這樣，有些背景的東西我們又沒有接觸過，就是因為難，剛開始聽的時候不懂，可是上課來一聽就懂了；而不是我們自己聽就懂，這樣感覺差很多。

Tom:

I like the speech on Apple, not to mentioned whether it helps to improve our English or not, at least it inspires my life. 我喜歡 Apple 那一個，不要說對我們的英文有沒有幫助，起碼對我人生有激勵的作用。

Doris:

Yes, these two are both quite good. 對，這兩篇都很不錯。

Sherri:

There is no sequence! If you have something to say, you can jump in anytime. 不用照順序喔！你們覺得有話說的時候，就可以說。

Emily:

I think this course has several things like topics and accents, but time is limited in class, and this is an elective course, I think it's hard to master all in one course.

Besides, this is offered to juniors and seniors, so this workload is too heavy for us. That's why we want to give up. And we have to do all the listening before the class, otherwise, it's not possible to join the discussion. So like what he said, it's a lot of pressure, because we need to say something. Even though the teacher is nice, it's peer pressure, if you can't say something meaningful, it's embarrassing. As for the group presentation, I don't think it's very difficult, as long as we put in our effort, you didn't give us a hard time. So, that I think it's fine, just the diaries are really quite demanding. 我覺得這堂課是有很多重點像是主題跟腔調，可是因為這是選修課，所以時間有限，我覺得，要全部都學會很難，還有，因為它是針對大三跟大四開的，所以這樣的份量對我們來講，會稍稍太重，所以我們才會想要放棄。而且每一次上課都要有聽過，要不然即興要講真的很難，所以就像他剛說的，壓力會很大。因為要發言。雖然老師很和善，可是講不出來總是很尷尬。至於說報告的部分，我到是覺得沒有很難。只要有認真做老師不會太要求。所以，那個部分我們覺得還好，只是 diary 的部分真的覺得很吃重。

Sherri:

You mentioned that the diaries are heavy. Is this your first time in keeping a learning diary? 那你們剛有提到 diary 比較重，這是你們第一次寫 learning diary 嗎？

Tom:

I did that in the writing class, but it's about one entry every two or three weeks, and the form is not quite the same. Writing 課有寫過，不過，大概兩三個禮拜寫一次，不過形式不太一樣。

Emily:

In fact, I don't think the diary is that difficult, but, because it's nearly every week.

其實我覺得 Diary 是不難寫，不過，因為幾乎每個禮拜都要寫。

Doris:

Besides, just listening is taking quite a lot of time, in order to write the diary, we need to finish listening to it several times, it's like several hours. 而且，常常聽就要花很多時間，Diary 又要全部聽完好幾次才能寫，聽完已經過N個小時了。

Tom:

Besides, I pay attention to my grammar and things like that, to me, I want to make sure my writing does not have too many grammatical errors. 而且我還是會比較注重文法那些的，我覺得啦就算寫出來也不能有太多文法錯誤。

Sherri:

You never thought about writing in Mandarin? I did mention that you can keep the diary in Mandarin. 你們沒有想過要寫中文嗎？我有說你們可以寫中文阿。

Tom:

No, because we're in the English department. Then, I have a suggestion, that is, students can record their listening diary. 沒有耶！因為還是英文系啊！那我有一個建議就是 Listening Diary 以後可以用錄音的。

Doris:

But that's a different kind of pressure, you'll have to do the recording after you do the listening. And it might end up that you are not happy with your accent. 可是那又變成另一種壓力，就是你聽完還要再錄，可能又變成挑剔自己的口音。

Sherri:

I also thought about it. We tried it once at the beginning of the semester, do you remember? There are some technical problems, like I couldn't download some of the files. Then, what is the difference between writing the diary and recording the diary? 我的確也想過，我們期初的時候試過一次，你們還記得嗎？還有一些技術性的問題需要克服，像是有些人的檔我沒辦法 download，那錄音跟寫的差別在哪裡？

Tom:

I think, after listening, I can quickly express what I thought. Because when I say it, I don't pay that much attention to the grammar, but when I write, I will. But, when I express myself orally, I will feel that's easier. 我覺得聽完之後，我就可以比較快表達我的想法，因為講的時候比較不會注重文法，再寫的時候，就會有一些堅持。可是，口語上覺得表達出來就好。

Doris:

But, recording is a lot more troubles for me, I might still need to write a draft. 可是，錄音對我來說更麻煩，可能還要打草稿什麼的。

Tom:

Then, it can be optional, you can write your diary and I record mine. Freedom of choice. 那可以變成 option 阿！你可以用寫的我可以選錄音阿！自由選擇。

Doris:

Then, it also has an issue of fairness. 那還有公平性的問題。

Emily:

Some people will have some difficulties, shy in speaking. 有的人有開口方面的困難，會害羞什麼的。

Sherri:

However, this is something I will think about in the future. 不過，這個我以後可以考

慮考慮。

Tom:

Sherri, to be honest, is it still meaningful for me to hand in the diaries now? Because I counted it yesterday, and I still need to hand in four entries. Yeah, I can just write them up, just one page each, but it doesn't mean anything to me! We want to learn with some pleasure.

Sherri, 說真的，diary 現在補交還有意義嗎？因為我昨天就再算我還有四篇，可是，這四篇我可以隨便敷衍一下，每個都寫一頁，不過，這樣好空虛喔！我們想輕鬆地學習，

Angela:

I was quite happy coming to this listening class, but this diary is really too heavy.

本來上英聽還滿開心的，不過這個 diary 真的太重了。

Tom:

It isn't not going to be meaningful to myself, and it also adds to your workload.

這樣對我自己沒有意義，對你也增加你的工作負擔。

Angela:

If you don't require all of us to upload the diaries, can we just decide whether we want to or not? Because the main thing is that we all did the listening before we came to the class, as long as we can express our opinions, it's fine, isn't it? Because now, just because of this diary, we're under so much pressure that we want to give up this course. 如果是不要硬性規定要上傳，可不可以就大家自己準備，因為主要是上課前要聽過，大家只要可以講出他們聽的看法什麼的，就可以吧？現在因為 diary 的關係，壓力很大反而想要放棄這門課。

Sherri:

Are you asking me? 你們是在問我嗎？

Tom & Angela:

Yes! 對阿！

Sherri:

Can I respond to this after the interview? 這個部分我等 interview 結束再回答好嗎？

Tiffany:

I think this is a task to challenge how we handle pressure, some people will choose to stay up and finish it, but like me, I'll just give up. 我覺得這是考驗個人抗壓的問題，有的人會熬夜把作業寫完，像我就會直接放棄。

Emily:

We talk about this the other day, this course is more suitable for freshmen and

sophomore. It's going to be better. 我們那天有討論過，這堂課好像比較適合開在一二年級，會比較好操作。

Sherri:

Why is it better for freshmen and sophomore? 對大一大二比較適合的原因是？

Emily:

Because we have some requirements in the junior year, and we need to think about what to do after graduation, we don't have that much time for the diaries, and spend so much time on this one module. 因為大三有一些必修課，還有要考慮畢業的問題，所以沒有太多的時間可以寫 diary，特別把時間花在某一個科目。

Sherri:

Does this mean that you expect the elective course to be less demanding? 是不是你們也預期選修課是比較輕鬆的。

Doris:

But if the course is offered to freshmen and sophomore, the listening materials will need to be modified. 開在大一大二可能教材就需要調整一下。

Angela:

Like what Tom said, the focus can be more on listening skills, teach some note taking...ect. 可能像 Tom 說的可以把重點放在 listening skills 那個部分，教一些 note taking 阿等等的。

Doris:

It's hard to build a skill just in one semester. 如果是要在一個學期內建立起一個 skill 是非常難的。

Emily:

Why don't you make it a year-long course, instead of having so many topics in one semester, it can be a two-semester required course.

為什麼不把它變成學年課，與其東西塞那麼多，不如，多一個學期。

Sherri:

Hum, okay, do I respond to this? I'll wait after we finish the interview and I'll talk about what I think. 恩 好，這個部分我需要回答嗎？我等整個 interview 都結束再說我的想法好了。

Tiffany:

We don't need to be so serious. 大家可以不要那麼嚴肅...

Sherri:

No, no, no, this is good, I mean I am afraid that what I said will influence your

thoughts, so I want to wait until you have all finished, and if you still want to listen to what I think I will share my thoughts later then. Have you all finished?

不會不會，這個是好的，我的意思是說我怕我會影響，所以等大家都講完，如果你們想聽我的想法，等一下再說。大家都說完了嗎？

Angela:

About the diary, like what he said, if you like you can keep it, but if you don't want to, you can skip it. That's better. Yeah.

關於 diary 就是他剛剛說的喜歡就寫不喜歡就不要寫，這樣比較好。對啊！

Sherri:

And about your learning experience, except that the listening diary is too heavy, is there any other things? 還有自己經驗的部分，除了剛剛說的份量太重，還有沒有其他的？

Tom:

I think that under the time pressure, because I'm afraid that I won't have enough time to do the listening, sometimes, if I don't understand after the first time, I will cheat and look at the transcript. And of course, I understand it better with reading, but it doesn't help much with my listening, I don't want to do that? 我覺得因為有時間上的壓力怕會寫不出來，所以有時候聽了一次不懂，我就會偷懶去看 transcript，看內容的話當然就一下就容易懂，不過，對聽力沒有什麼幫助，個人就不太希望這樣。

Sherri:

Then, summary, question and reflection, which part is more difficult for you?

那麼 summary, question & reflection，有那個部分比較難的嗎？

Tom:

I feel quite confused. It's hard for me to separate the summary and the reflection, when I write about what I thought I had to refer to the content of listening, but then I'm repeating the summary again. As for the question, it's always about things I couldn't understand, which is always the same question. How can I repeat it over and over again. I'm still confused what to write in reflection. 我覺得很混淆，如果看完這個東西的感想，我很不想把內容寫出來，要不然就變成在重複，那有時候我在寫我在聽的時候的困難，那就是聽不懂，不過，每一個聽完都是同樣的問題，那我要每一個都寫同樣的嗎？我就很困惑 reflection 到底要寫什麼。

Emily:

I also don't know what you want us to write. 我會不知道到底老師要我們寫什麼。

Tom:

So, sometimes, we have to repeat what we listen to. Yeah. 所以就變成我們有時候，還是

寫我們聽到的內容去填充版面，對阿！

Emily:

Sometimes, about reflection, when you're not interested in this topic, it's hard to write. 有時候感想，當你對這個主題沒有興趣的時候，就很難寫。

Doris:

Like, there is one about Australia, it was so long that I really don't have patience. So I just skip it, didn't write anything about the summary, reflection. I just left it empty. 那時候有一篇在講澳洲，那時候聽到落落長就想要跳過去，所以那時候連 summary, reflection 阿，都不想寫。Reflection 我就只好空著。

Sherri:

So, why is reflection so difficult for you? You have never written anything like this in other courses? 那 reflection 對你們來說很難的原因是什麼？上其他的課都沒有寫過嗎？

Emily:

No, this is the first time, so when you talk about reflection, my mind is totally blank. 沒有，第一次，所以老師在講 reflection 的時候，都一片空白。

Tom:

I know I need to reflect, but it's very general. 知道要寫感想，可是這個字很籠統。

Angela:

Yes, reflect about what? 對阿！感想要寫哪一方面的？

Doris:

Because in the literature class, I can google and look for related resources to see what this is about. But the reflection in this course doesn't have a right answer. I'll think, then what's the right answer? 因為文學還可以上網找一下這一篇作品在講什麼，可是，reflection 沒有正確答案，就會想說，那正確答案是什麼？

Sherri:

So, you want to have the right answer? You'll guess what is the right answer? 所以，你們想寫出正確答案嗎？會猜甚麼才是對的嗎？

Angela:

Yes, yes, I will feel that what I wrote is quite childish, I'll mull over the word choice. Even now, I will. Still not very sure what reflection means, because in the literature class, we will have a standardised answer, this is so and so. 對對，就覺得自己寫的東西還滿幼稚的，會一直斟酌那個字，到現在也是阿！Reflection 到底是什麼意思，還是不是很確定。因為文學課上會有一個標準答案，這是什麼什麼。

Doris:

So, when you let us just reflect and wrote whatever we want, we are very confused, uncertain that what I wrote is right or not? 所以，要讓我們自由發揮的時候，我們反而會很 confused · 會開始不確定那我寫的到底對不對 ·

Sherri:

But, we talked about reflection twice in class, that does help? 但是，我們有兩次上課在討論寫 reflection，那個沒有幫助嗎？

Doris:

Oh, yes, you printed out other's reflection to show us, but I was even more anxious, thinking that how come it's all different from what I wrote. 喔對，那一次老師把大家的 reflection 都印出來給我們看，反而更焦慮，想說怎麼跟我寫的都不一樣 ·

Tom:

I think the problem is repetitive. Because what enables me to understand is the same problems. First, vocabulary, because if you understand all the words, then the accent wouldn't be a big problem. 我覺得問題是重複的，因為會造成我聽不懂的問題就是那幾個嘛！第一個是 vocabulary，因為你如果字都懂，那口音就不會是太大的問題 ·

Emily:

Yes, I mentioned that in class earlier. Vocabulary is the biggest problem for me, but sometimes, it's the expression, like work it out, when I heard it, it's all simple words, but you need to know what it means as a phrase. 對我剛剛上課的時候有說，vocabulary 還是最大的問題 · 不過有時候不是那個單字，是那個用法，像是 work it out，可能聽到的時候，字很簡單，可是還是要知道他拼起來的意思 ·

Tom:

So, I think, my problem is simple, not enough vocabulary, do I need to repeat this? 所以我就想，我的問題很簡單，就是字彙不夠阿！那我還要一直重複嗎？

Sherri:

Ok, then about using EngSite? Like the message board? OK 那關於英才網的使用呢？像是留言版等等 ·

Tom:

But, I don't think that many people log in. 可是，好像沒有什麼人上去看啊！

Emily:

Besides, I already have so many diaries that I couldn't finish, how can I have time to visit the message board? 而且，我已經有 diary 寫不完了，怎麼還有時間上去留言 ·

Angela:

I think about discussion, if you are right then you're right, if you're wrong then you are wrong. So that we think there is some standard answer there, then there is no point in having discussion! It's more important to get the right answer. 我覺得討論這件事，是對就是對，不對就是不對，導致我們就會覺得應該有標準答案，討論就沒有意義啦！

Doris:

Or we can do the listening in class, and then write the diary in the classroom.

也可以上課的時候聽，聽完就直接在教室寫 diary，

Sherri:

But it takes quite a lot of time doing the listening together. 恩不過上課一起聽比較花時間。

Angela:

The online discussion has to be graded. Like we all started with 30 points, if you don't do it, you lose the point. Like this.

網路上的討論，要有分數啦！從30分起跳，沒有寫的就往下扣，這樣。

Sherri:

So, you think the grades will help to threaten the students if they don't participate? 所以還是需要用分數來壓大家嗎？

Angela:

But eventually, it is still "pass" or "fail" that put pressure on us.

可是現在也是用“過”“不過”來壓大家阿！

Sherri:

But this is an elective course, you are the one that decides to take this course, not to hand in the assignment, it's not totally decided by the teacher to fail you, isn't it? 不過，決定選課的是學生，決定要不要交作業的也是你們，並不是老師決定要不要讓你們過的。其實是操縱在你們手上的，不是嗎？

Tiffany:

We're just answering your question about the problems we encountered.

我們剛也是回答在這個課程遇到的問題。

Sherri:

Hum, I know, I also want to know what you think. Don't worry, I'm not upset, just that I also have questions, so I ask. OK, we are running out of time. About the use of EngSite, is this your first time? Are you familiar with the platform?

Here are the screenshots, 恩我知道，我也是因為想知道你們的想法，所以，找你們，放心，我沒有生氣，只是我也有疑問，所以提出來而已。OK, 那關於英才網的使用，這是你們第一次嗎？他的功能都還熟悉嗎？這邊有 Screenshots。

Tom:

It's mainly the functions of online storage, search and upload assignments. 主要是用網路硬碟的功能。查詢跟上傳作業這些。

Doris:

Because most teachers don't use too many functions. 因為大部分的老師他們不太會用太多的功能。

Tom:

The teachers don't know much about the function. 老師不太會用阿！

Doris:

So, it's mostly a place for use to receive what the teachers upload, like PPT, things like that, not too interactive. 所以，大部分是我們去收老師丟的東西，像是 PPT 啦！那些的，不是互動的功能。

Sherri:

So, this is the first time you use this platform to interact? 所以，這一次是你們第一次用這樣的平台來互動？

Angela & Tiffany:

Yes 對

Doris:

So, you see, how will we post things on it, because we are not familiar and we also don't think that is important.

所以，你說我們怎麼會去 post 在上面，因為我們不熟悉，也不覺得那是重要的。

Emily:

You are probably the one that sent use the most emails, we would say that Sherri sent another email. 你大概是我們收過最多信的老師，我們會說老師又寄信來了。

Sherri:

Did I send you emails too often? 我很常寄信給你們嗎？

Emily:

I think sending emails is good, and you replied the assignments. Because you work hard, I feel that I was also influenced, want to respond to this attitude. 我覺得很常寄信的話是好事，而且作業會回 po 回來。因為老師很認真，我覺得自己也會受影響。想回饋這一份認真的態度。

Sherri:

Hum, thanks, so you said that this is your first time using this platform, so the familiarity is an issue? 恩 謝謝，所以剛剛是說你們都是第一次使用這個平台的，所以，那個熟悉度是主要的問題嗎？

Doris:

Well, it's not really a big problem, just that we don't think it's that important, not like is a bridge for communication. 其實是沒有太大的問題，可是我們不覺得他很重要，不覺得會是溝通的橋樑。

Sherri:

So, it's not because you had problems in using it. 所以使用上沒有太大的問題。

Angela:

A problem is that if you don't have a habit in using computers, you sometimes can't find where to go. 有個問題是平常沒有用電腦的話，會找不到東西在哪裡。

Sherri:

The last question, if this is an online course, will you still take it?

最後一個問題，那如果這一門課是全網課，你們還會選嗎？

Emily:

Then how do we communicate? Like reading the messages online?

那這樣要怎麼溝通？也是在網路上看你給我們的訊息嗎？

Sherri:

Probably through text or audio, or video. 可能會用文字或聲音或影像。

Angela:

No! I think I'll get lazy and feel like I don't have this course.

不會耶！因為我覺得我會怠惰，會好像沒有這門課的樣子。

Doris:

I think, coming to class is about listening and speaking, but if I do it at home, then whom will you talk to, the machine? 我覺得上課就是聽跟講，可是自己在家修課，那你要跟誰講，機器嗎？

Emily:

Yes, you will gradually ignore that class, like we still come to the school, and you will tell us what's the assignment. I'll still do it after I got home, but if you're always at home, you don't need to come to the school, you don't face the teacher, then the link of EngSite will gradually disappear in My Favourite. 對，你會好像忽略了那堂課，就是連來學校，你跟我們說作業是什麼等等，回到家就算是再怎麼樣，也會努力做一點，可是網課

就變成你都在家，也不用來學校上課，也不用面對老師，然後群英網就會慢慢在我的最愛裡面消失。

Tiffany:

I won't take it, either? Because I have my own way of practicing listening, like listening to songs, I don't need an online course like that. 我也不會，因為我已經有自己英文聽力的方式，會自己去聽歌什麼的，就不需要那樣的網課。

Sherri:

Then, why do you need to take this course? 那你為什麼需要修這門課呢？

Tiffany:

It's not the same, because I have a teacher, I need to see the teacher and classmates. 不太一樣，因為有老師，我需要看到老師同學。

Angela:

Besides, even though you also will communicate with us online, there might be some misunderstanding. 而且雖然說你也會在上面跟我們交流，不過，可能會會錯意阿什麼的。

Doris:

And, when we are in class, there are still some pressure, if I'm at home alone, I'll just avoid that, I think. 還有就是，上課的時候還是有點壓力，自己在家的話可能就會躲掉吧！

Tom:

Oh, and I wish we don't need to move from class to the lab, and back again.

還有就是教室不要換來換去。

Sherri:

But, if we're all in the lab, you need to pay extra fee. It's about time, some of you have to run to the next class. Thank you very much for coming to this interview.

不過，因為如果都在英聽教室，就有額外的費用。時間也差不多了，你們有的等一下還要趕去上課吧！謝謝你們來 interview！

Excerpt of Focus Group Interview with my notes

For 6.2.1.2 Sense of Ownership (Class B, Fall Semester)

Names	Transcript	My notes
Sherri:	So, about the online discussions on EngSite? These two? [Pointing to the screenshots]	Very negative responses to my question on interactive functions. I hadn't even had a chance to elaborate my question. Lindsay claim that it's not working because of the lack of habits.
Lindsay:	Oh, please don't !	
Jack:	It's not working.	
Lindsay:	We don't have that habit to get online.	
Sherri:	You don't get online, like on the MSN or blog to talk to your friends?	
Jack:	But when it's course work, then it's different.	Separating personal use and the academic use of ICT.
Owen:	Still, it depends on you.	Owen's first attempt in voicing his opinion, which is different from the other two interviewees.
Lindsay:	I would lurk [5M] but I don't respond. It really depends.	Lurking as a form of participation.
Sherri:	You mentioned that you also tried to use online platform in other courses as well.	
Jack:	Yeah, also in Tracy's class. She also took us to the lab and asked us to post messages there, but after I go home I really wouldn't do that. Well, maybe once in a while.	Different attitude at home and in class.
Lindsay:	Usually, if there's deadline. For example, by midnight. Then we mostly would wait until midnight. And you'll see lots of posts right before mid night. Ha ha All posted at 11:55.	Regulated by deadlines
Owen:	I audited a course once and the forum runs pretty well. People would really go and post message	Owen refers to previous successful forum

	and discuss things.	experience.
Sherri:	So, what makes the difference?	
Lindsay:	To be honest, I think it has something to do with the teacher. If the teachers are stricter, then the students would be more responsive. Like you and Tracy, you are both nice, wouldn't give students too much pressure. The students know you wouldn't get mad and yield at them.	Lindsay contributes the success to the teacher's authority.
Sherri:	Owen, about the course you audited? How's the teacher? Why do you think it works?	
Owen:	I think it's because of the students. These students in the day division are different. There are several students very active. When they take the initiative, then it's easier to run the discussion.	Owen elaborates his opinions more and contributes the success of the forum to students' taking the initiative.
Sherri:	So, don't you feel there's more a need in the night division to run online course in the night division? Like you have part-jobs, don't you?	I tried to relate the question to themselves and students' needs in the night division.
Lindsay:	It's a matter of attitude. They think it's not time yet, so they don't need to do it. And then they keep pushing it until the last minute. Besides, the English proficiency level also matters. Their English is better, so they have higher level of autonomy.	The word attitude was mentioned for the first time here. Lindsay explained that matter of attitude has something to do with the English proficiency level.
Sherri:	You just said it has something to do with the level of your English? Can you explain more?	
Lindsay:	Yeah, when you have learned English to a certain degree, you understand more, then you are in better control.	Autonomy was mentioned as an indication of having better control
Sherri:	Oh, that's interesting.	
Owen:	The grade also matters. Students care about grades, like taking this course, it's a pressure, we	The issue of grade is mentioned as a driving force.

	<p>have a topic to discuss and we all need to say something. In order not to embarrass ourselves. We just have to do the listening before hands.</p>	
<p>Sherrri:</p>	<p>So what if we make it part of the requirements to have online discussions. Like how you talk to your friends online like on the MSN...</p>	<p>Based on what they said earlier about teachers being nice and the grade giving pressure, I tried to ask if they think my making it as a requirement will make a difference.</p>
<p>Jack:</p>	<p>But it's still the same! Even if it's part of the requirement, those who don't care will not participate. They might appear online but just hanging there. I think coming to the school will give them more pressure. It's all about the students' attitude.</p>	<p>Jack interrupted me and made the last comment on this topic after remaining quiet for a while. He concluded that students' attitude is more important than the teacher's regulation, which is quite different from his initial response.</p>

Appendix 5: Chatroom record

Table for 6.2.1.1 Chatroom Record (25 March)

Topic & Duration	Records	My notes
Topic 1 Warm-up 6: 00- 6: 17	6: 00 Sherri & Ya-ren (TA) 6: 08 Irene 6: 11 Amy 6: 12 Sharon 6: 13 Diane 6: 16 Elaine 6: 17 Grace 6: 17 Angel 6: 52 Wu	Explain the purpose of this discussion while waiting for participants to arrive in the chatroom.
Topic 2 Background info. of the host 6: 18-6:23	6: 18 Sherri: do you know Yu? He's the one who kept that blog. 6: 20 Grace: 余光中? He is my aunt's friend.	A typo of the host's family name developed into a 5-minute long misunderstanding.
Topic 3 Sightseeing spot Yang-Ming Mountain 6: 23- 6: 28	6: 23 Angel: have anyone ever gone to 七星山?	Students found that Mr. Oelkers went to more places than they did and started talking about these sightseeing places.
Topic 4 Travelling experience in NY 6: 29- 6:43	6: 29 Angel: He mentioned ppl in Taipei are like New Yorkers. 6: 33 Irene: but my friend said that she was called a Chinese pig in New York 6: 33 & 6: 42 Sherri: What are the marketing strategies he mentioned in the interview?	Angel's comment took the discussion to a different direction, they were talking about negative traveling experience in NY. Even though I tried twice to draw their attention to the marketing strategies, they didn't reply to my questions.
Topic 5 Domino's marketing	6: 42 Sherri: I asked a question earlier about the marketing	I finally managed to draw their attention to Domino's marketing

<p>strategies in Taiwan 6:43-6:53</p>	<p>strategies...what do you think? 6: 44 Apple: Excuse me, does this interview have a transcript? 6: 49 Sharon: I don't know Domino has opened at Beijing.</p>	<p>strategies, but in the meantime, there were other questions regarding technical problems or the transcript. After Sharon's post, students started to talk about different fast-food brands, like McDonald's and MOS (Japanese fast-food).</p>
<p>Topic 6 Foods 6: 53-7: 12</p>	<p>6: 53 Sherri: Is there anything you find difficult in Mr. Oelker's interview? 6: 54 Angel: can I ask what is "dinsome" in grand hotel he recommend foreigners to eat?? 6: 59 Angel: I wonder if Americans have so many kinds of "餅皮" to choose from? and what's "餅皮" in English?? i can't find it in my dictionary.</p>	<p>After Angel's question about the pizza dough and toppings, we had a long discussion centering on Taiwanese' preference of pizzas. We clarified the meaning of crust and dough. This then was extended into other food-related discussions, such as the similar way of cooking.</p>
<p>Topic 7 wrapping up 7: 12-7: 38</p>	<p>7: 12 Sherri: There are also other interviews can you listen to on this website 7: 14 Angel: we have to introduce our food more graceful and tasteful 7: 17 Wu: I wonder if foreigners like to this kind of food like 豬血糕(pig's blood) 7: 18 Sherri: In Scotland, they have haggis 7: 27 Wu: cause as we know,</p>	<p>I was trying to wrap up the discussion and bring their attention back to the interview, but Angel's comment led to more discussion on foods and how we could introduce local delicacies in Taiwan. In the end, Wu suddenly asked a question about different kinds of meat, and students were talking about the difference between mutton and lamb.</p>

	<p>beef is 牛肉, pork is 豬肉 what about 羊肉 (mutton or lamb)??</p> <p>7: 28 Irene: sherri I need to leave and I will fix my computer later</p>	
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Appendix 6: Sample Data analysis—coding categories of listening strategies

Table for 6.2.2.2 Listening Strategies

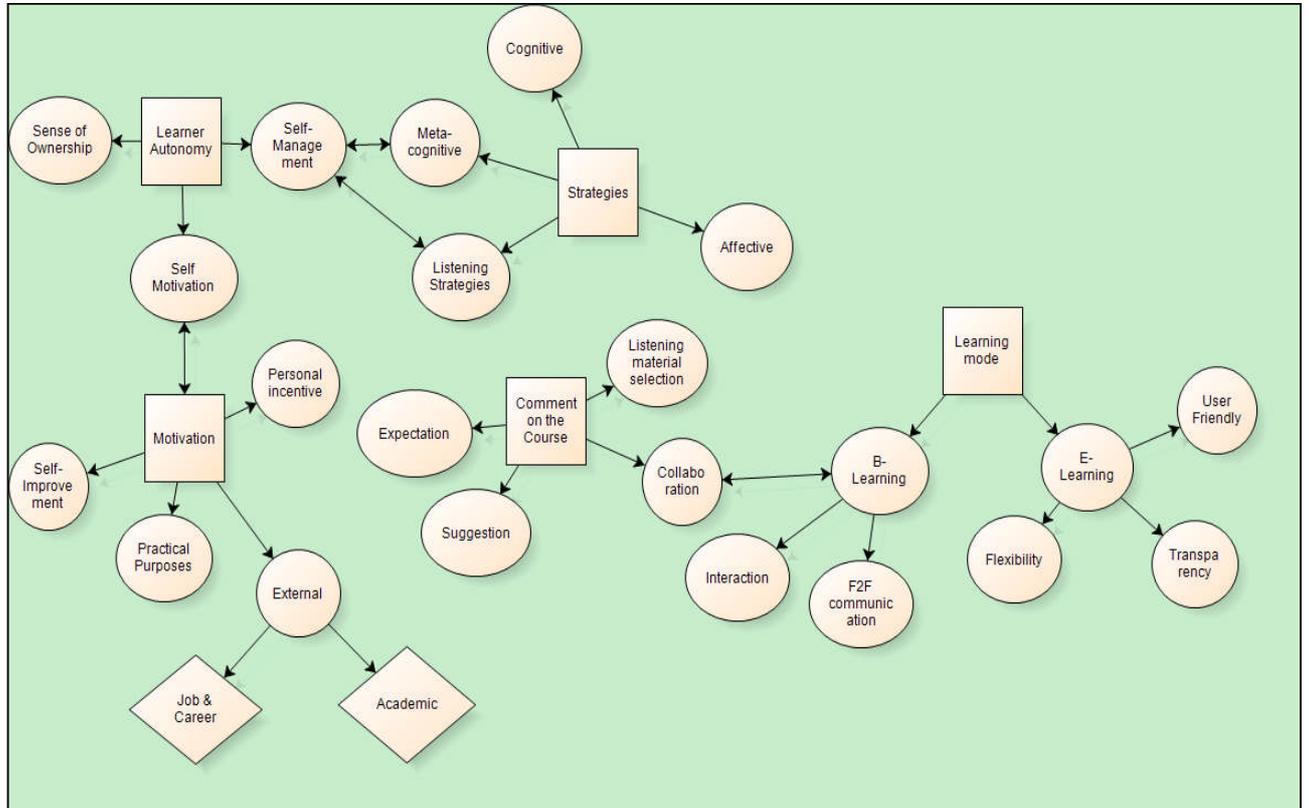
Listening strategies & Definition	Examples from students
Cognitive	
<p>1. Summarisation Making a mental or written summary of language and information presented in a listening task.</p>	<p>I will start with the summary section to write down the main ideas first, and sometimes compare different listening items together.</p>
<p>2. Repetition Listening to a passage repetitively to achieve understanding.</p>	<p>I will listen to a passage I think is important repetitively.</p>
<p>3. Inference Using information within the text or conversational context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar language items associated with a listening task, to predict outcomes, or to fill in missing information.</p>	<p>Sometimes I don't listen to the whole thing, I will try to making inferences, and come up with what that speaker might be saying.</p>
<p>4. Note taking Writing down key words and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form to assist performance of a listening task.</p>	<p>While I do the listening, I will jet down some key words and phrases, so that I can remember the content more easily. Otherwise, if I don't write it down, I need to it many more times.</p>

<p>5. Creative imagery elaboration Using prior knowledge from outside the text, inside conversational context or other visual cues and relating it to knowledge gained from the text or conversation in order to predict outcomes or fill in missing information.</p>	<p>I will create my own images with the voices, if there is no image, and create a story based on what I have heard. Like the one with movies, I even designed the plots myself.</p> <p>When writing reflection, I will grab some themes and develop around them. It's like you then become the speaker and you try to interpret what he or she thinks. 寫In the question section, I didn't want to write about my problems, but my questions were built on my understanding of this content. For example, this narrator said he did this and that, then I will be curious about his motives. I want to know more based on this listening task.</p>
<p>Metacognitive</p>	
<p>Planning</p>	
<p>1. Advance organisation Clarifying the objectives of an anticipated listening task and/or proposing strategies for handling it.</p>	<p>I sometimes do some research on the background information. In order to write the diary on American Pie, I did some research online to know more about the song and grow to love the song even more.</p>
<p>2. Directed attention Deciding in advance to attend in general to the listening task and to ignore irrelevant distracters; maintain attention while listening.</p>	<p>I change my ideas about listening, now I not only want to get the main ideas, but also want to pay more attention to the details.</p>
<p>3. Selective attention Deciding to attend to specific aspects of language input or situational details that assist in understanding and/or task completion.</p>	<p>I found that I don't need to understand every single word, I can select the ones that are important, those key words.</p> <p>The summary part isn't as easy as I expected, cause I need to listen more carefully to write the summary to make sure I understand it right.</p>

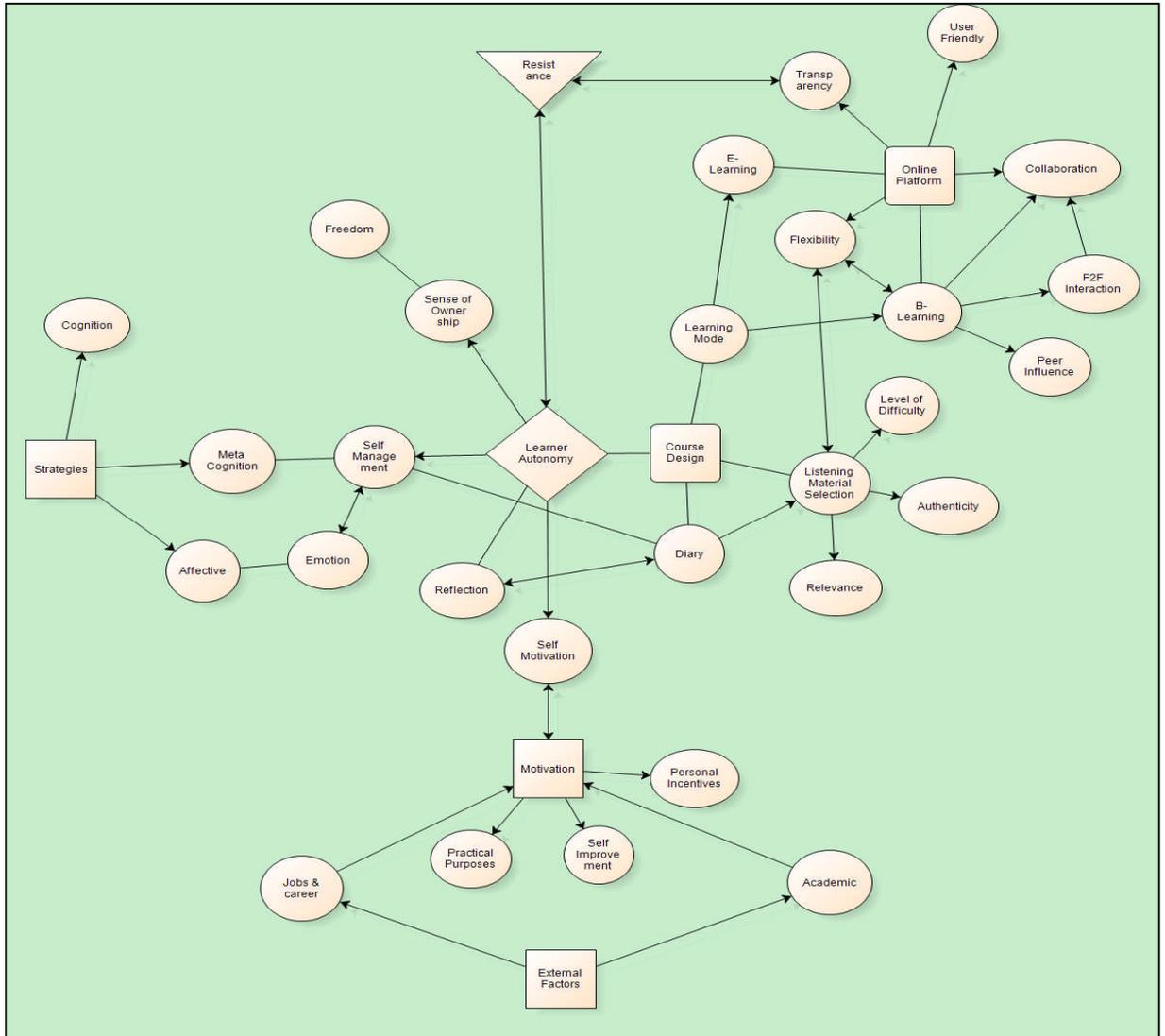
Monitoring	
<p>4. Monitor the listening process Checking, verifying, or correcting one's comprehension or performance in the course of a listening task.</p>	<p>I found that I was too careful with the details and stuck with one or two words, so that I would pause, slow down to figure out what these words mean. But then the process becomes too long and I lost patient in the middle.</p>
	<p>I realise that I could just ignore that one or two words and just keep listening. Still, I could understand the passage with some unclear words. I started to guess what those words mean and tried to identify the direction the text is going.</p>
Evaluation	
<p>5. Performance evaluation Judging one's overall execution of the task.</p>	<p>I think I did better when listening to conversation, but not those speeches, which are longer and more serious.</p>
<p>6. Problem solving Identifying what needs resolution in a task or identifying an aspect of the task that hinders its successful completion and applying cognitive strategy.</p>	<p>My main problem is usually the same, vocabulary, vocabulary and vocabulary.</p>

Appendix 7: Models of data analysis on NVivo

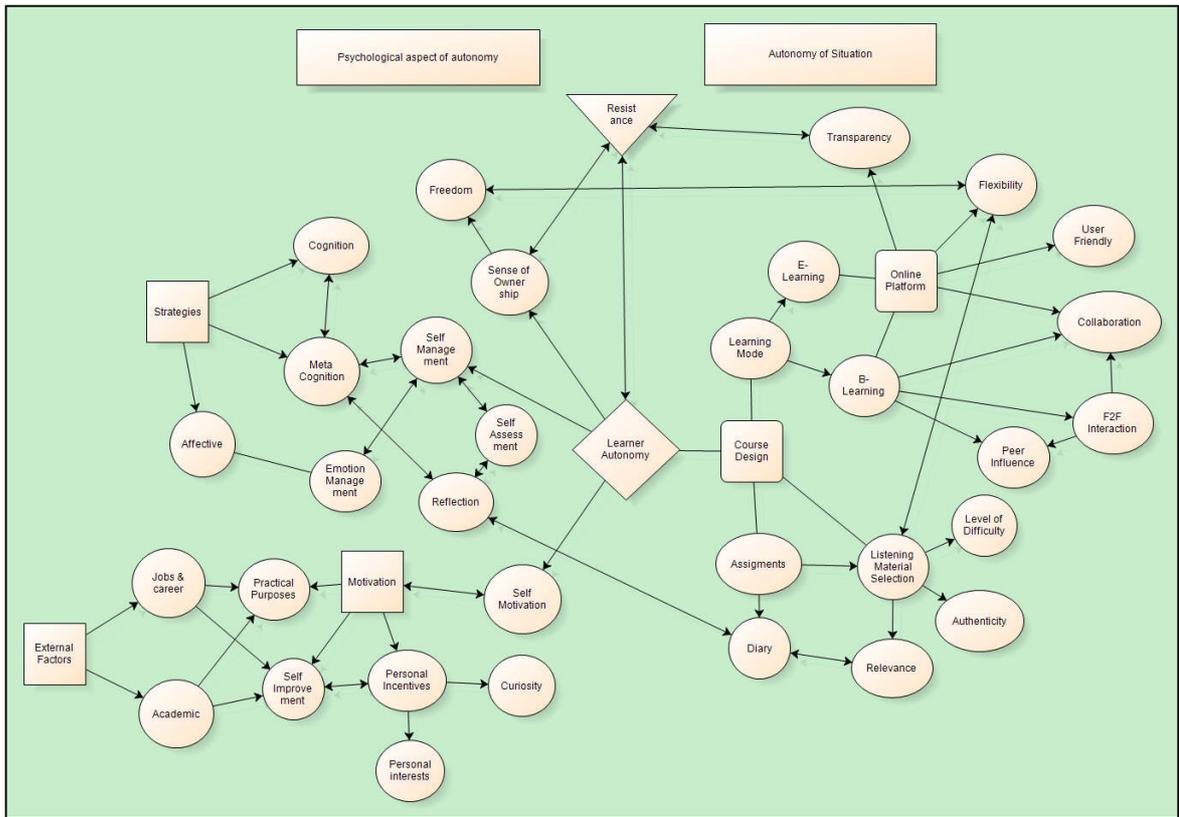
Model on 31-10-09



Model on 02-11-2009



Model on 15-02-2010



Model on 23-02-2010

