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**The Strategies for Learning to Speak English
Employed by Taiwanese Non-English Majors:
A Phenomenographic Study**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate in Education

University of Warwick, Institute of Education

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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is given in the text.

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ABSTRACT

English speaking is arguably the most problematic aspect for adult learners in Taiwanese EFL environments. The gap between the curricular objectives and the results of the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) indicates that younger generations outrun college students in learning to speak English. Moreover, the exchangeable use of terms such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reveals the conceptualization of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) which assumes that learners learn to speak the target language in a naturally occurring language environment. This is manifested in Language Learning Strategy (LLS) theories focusing on communication/compensation strategies. However, the initial pursuit of ‘universally effective’ LLS has been called into question and there is a need for the contextualization of LLS research.

To begin with, this study differentiates the concept of ESL and EFL in order to unravel the hidden assumption of SLA/LLS. Next, in adopting a sociocultural-ecological perspective, strategies for learning to speak English are considered as niches rather than fixed entities presented in mainstream LLS survey research. Specifically, because this study aims at depicting five non-English majors’ qualitatively different ways of perceiving and experiencing in their local environment (i.e., their constructed reality), phenomenography is used to examine the person-environment relationships. Lastly, qualitatively different SLSEs will be discussed in hopes of facilitating a more reflective way of learning to speak in EFL environments.

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LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Learning and acquisition.....	13
Table 3.1 Classroom observation schedule.....	82
Table 3.2 Learner diary entries.....	85
Table 3.3 Interview schedules.....	89
Table 3.4 Duration of one-to-one interview audio recordings.....	89
Table 3.5 Duration of focus group interviews.....	90
Table 3.6 Documents collected from each participant	92
Table 4.1 An overview of the optional course.....	113
Table 4.2 Data relating to Cindy.....	119
Table 4.3 Data relating to Fanny.....	131
Table 4.4 Data relating to Peter.....	142
Table 4.5 Data relating to Nick.....	154
Table 4.6 Data relating to Dennis.....	164
Table 5.1 An overview of Course-related SLSEs.....	209
Table 5.2 An overview of Non-course-related SLSEs.....	210

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 The producer-consumer relationship.....	18
Figure 2.2 Mediation.....	50
Figure 2.3 Schematic of the co-implicative relations among actions, perceptions, and the environmental niches.....	59
Figure 2.4 Analytic framework I : strategies as environmental niches.....	60
Figure 2.5 Analytical framework II : a sociocultural-ecological perspective.....	65
Figure 3.1 Object of Study.....	73
Figure 3.2 The classroom setting.....	77

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Proficiency Guideline
ECL	English Comprehension Level
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FLL	Foreign Language Learning
ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign Language Teaching
FLL	Foreign Language Learning
GEPT	General English Proficiency Test
GLL	Good Language Learner
LLS	Language Learning Strategy
MND	Ministry of National Defense
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCEE	National College Entrance Examination
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SLSEs	strategies for learning to speak English
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

DECLARATION.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
 CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	 1
1.1 Background information on learning to speak English in Taiwan.....	1
1.1.1 The curriculum.....	1
1.1.1.1 Grade 1-9 Curriculum.....	2
1.1.1.2 Senior high and vocational school Curriculum.....	3
1.1.1.3 The NCEE and English education at tertiary level.....	4
1.1.2 The proficiency requirement and the GEPT system.....	4
1.2 My motivation for this study.....	7
1.3 Background of the participants and the significance of this study.....	8
1.4 Outline of this study.....	9
 CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	 11
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Language learning processes, environments and strategies.....	11
2.2.1 EFL environments vs. ESL environments.....	13
2.2.1.1 Acquisition or learning?.....	13
2.2.1.2 First language acquisition, Second language acquisition and foreign language learning.....	14
2.2.1.3 The key feature of EFL environments.....	16
2.2.1.4 SLA learning theories and EFL learning practice.....	17
2.2.2 The Conceptualization of SLA and Contexts.....	18
2.2.2.1 Acquisition: input, output and interaction.....	19

2.2.2.2 The gap between the ESL-based theoretical framework and EFL local reality.....	20
2.2.3 College students learning English in Taiwan.....	22
2.2.3.1 EFL classroom teaching practice.....	23
2.2.3.2 Shared L1 as language for socialization.....	24
2.2.3.3 Lack of immediate relevance.....	26
2.2.4 Summary.....	27
2.3 Language use strategies, language learning strategies and contexts.....	28
2.3.1 Speaking strategies and their contexts.....	30
2.3.1.1 SLA traditions.....	30
2.3.1.2 Contextual view.....	32
2.3.2 Strategies for learning to speak and their contexts.....	33
2.3.2.1 Language learner vs. Language user.....	33
2.3.2.2 The good language learner and strategies for learning to speak English.....	34
2.3.2.3 Bialystok's model for oral proficiency.....	37
2.3.2.4 Huang & Van Naerssen's research and Contextual Sensitivity...	39
2.3.3 Summary.....	43
2.4 My theoretical framework: sociocultural-ecological perspective.....	43
2.4.1 The adult foreign language learner as developing person.....	45
2.4.1.1 Regulation: ability to know what to do.....	45
2.4.1.2 Mediation and mediated activities in the ZPD: a process of knowing the environment.....	49
2.4.2 SLSE as by-products in the mediated language learning process.....	51
2.4.3 SLSE as niches as a result of person-environment negotiated interaction..	54
2.4.3.1 Mediated agency: person(s)-acting-with-mediational-means.....	56
2.4.3.2 Affordances: social and material resources and constraints.....	56
2.4.3.3 Environmental niche: a set of affordances.....	58
2.4.3.4 Context as nested ecosystems.....	61
2.4.4 Summary.....	66

CHAPTER 3 THE NATURAL HISTORY OF MY RESEARCH.....	67
3.1 Introduction.....	67
3.2 My methodological approach and research design.....	70
3.3 The research site.....	74
3.3.1 The school setting.....	74
3.3.2 The classroom setting.....	77
3.4 Research participants and data collection process.....	78
3.4.1 Phase I : Purposive Sampling.....	79
3.4.2 Phase II : in-depth investigation.....	82
3.4.2.1 Naturally occurring data	82
3.4.2.2 Generated data.....	85
3.4.2.3 Reflection.....	93
3.4.3 Field identity and research ethics.....	96
3.4.3.1 Field identity.....	96
3.4.3.2 Research ethics.....	98
3.5 Languages and transcribing.....	99
3.5.1 Languages.....	99
3.5.2 Transcribing.....	99
3.6 Data analysis.....	100
3.6.1 Trial stage: familiarising with my data.....	101
3.6.2 How I analysed my data.....	103
3.6.2.1 Step 1: generating initial codes.....	104
3.6.2.2 Step 2: searching for themes.....	104
3.6.2.3 Step 3: reviewing themes.....	105
3.6.2.4 Step 4: defining and naming themes.....	106
3.7 Formulating my research questions.....	106
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS.....	110
4.1 The optional course.....	112
4.2 Cindy.....	119
4.2.1 EFL learning autobiography before college.....	119

4.2.2 Strategies as part of the course work.....	123
4.2.2.1 Imitation before speaking: Andrea, CD-ROMs, tests, military environment and CD-player walkman.....	123
4.2.2.2 Read aloud before speaking: Andrea, tests, long-hand copy and marching band practice.....	125
4.2.3 Strategies apart from the coursework.....	127
4.2.3.1 Speak English in a safe environment: members of the marching band and practices.....	127
4.2.3.2 Speak with someone who is also interested in speaking English: the roommate and her incident.....	128
4.2.3.3 Speak to an English native speaker: class tutor, Paul and classmates.....	129
4.2.4 Constancy and change.....	130
4.3 Fanny.....	131
4.3.1 EFL learning autobiography before college.....	131
4.3.2 Strategies as part of the course work.....	134
4.3.2.1 Read aloud, write and listen before speaking: Andrea, magazines, CD-ROMs, tests, and a notebook.....	135
4.3.3 Strategies apart from the coursework.....	138
4.3.3.1 Write to learn to speak: learner diary and Joy.....	138
4.3.3.2 Speak to an English native speaker: class tutor, Paul and classmates.....	139
4.3.3.3 Listen to learn to speak: prior instructor, ECL preparatory class, sergeant, and schoolmates.....	140
4.3.4 Constancy and change.....	142
4.4 Peter.....	142
4.4.1 EFL learning autobiography before college.....	143
4.4.2 Strategies as part of the course work.....	146
4.4.2.1 Read, translate and review before speaking: Andrea, magazines, tests, breaks and night studies.....	147

4.4.2.2 Read, listen, and write before speaking: Andrea, CD-ROMs, tests, computers, and weekends.....	149
4.4.3 Strategies apart from the coursework.....	150
4.3.3.1 Memorize vocabulary: vocabulary booklets, and girlfriend.....	151
4.3.3.2 Following an example: older brother, GEPT and TOEIC.....	152
4.4.4 Constancy and change.....	152
4.5 Nick.....	153
4.5.1 EFL learning autobiography before college.....	154
4.5.2 Strategies as part of the course work.....	159
4.5.2.1 Classroom practice before speaking: Andrea, CD-ROMs, magazines, tests, and pair/classmates.....	160
4.5.3 Strategies apart from the coursework.....	162
4.5.3.1 Watch films to learn to speak: company leader, weekends, television, DVD player, company members.....	162
4.5.4 Constancy and change.....	163
4.6 Dennis.....	164
4.6.1 EFL learning autobiography before college.....	165
4.6.2 Strategies as part of the course work.....	170
4.6.2.1 Read and translate before speaking: Andrea, magazines, written tests, and night studies.....	170
4.6.2.2 Recite in mind and translate before speaking: Andrea, magazines, oral tests, and night studies.....	173
4.6.3 Strategies apart from the coursework.....	174
4.6.3.1 Play while learning to speak English: pair, girlfriend, and an unexpected encounter.....	175
4.6.4 Constancy and change.....	176
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION.....	178
5.1 Introduction.....	178
5.2 Overview of my participants' language learning experiences in Taiwan....	179
5.2.1 Local reality of EFL language learning.....	179

5.2.2 Shared L1 and the lack of immediate relevance concerning speaking English	181
5.2.3 Local purposes for learning to speak English	183
5.3 My study and other studies	185
5.3.1 Strategies for learning to speak in the GLL tradition	185
5.3.1.1 Talk to native speakers of English	185
5.3.1.2 Communication in English outside classroom	186
5.3.1.3 Learn to speak by engaging in conversation	188
5.3.2 Issues concerning contextual sensitivity: memorization	189
5.3.2.1 Cindy	191
5.3.2.2 Fanny	191
5.3.2.3 Peter	192
5.3.2.4 Nick	193
5.3.2.5 Dennis	194
5.4 Revisiting the theoretical frameworks	195
5.4.1 The Taiwanese EFL nested systems	196
5.4.1.1 Curriculum, GEPT and projects	197
5.4.1.2 Military college environment	200
5.4.1.3 Social contexts and physical environment	201
5.4.2 My participants' ZPD: a dialogue between other-regulation and self- construction	203
5.4.2.1 Learning English as a foreign language: other-regulation	204
5.4.2.2 ZPD: mediation and the process of knowing the environment	205
5.4.3 My participants' SLSE: mediated agency in the Taiwanese ecosystems	206
5.4.3.1 Meaningful and useful past was present	211
5.4.3.2 What artefacts were meaningful and useful to the participants	212
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION	216
6.1 Implications of the study	216
6.1.1 Advantages and limitations of the study in terms of methodology	216
6.1.2 Implications for policy makers, teachers and adult learners	217

6.1.2.1 Speaking is not a result of EFL classroom learning.....	217
6.1.2.2 Users of English.....	218
6.1.2.3 Context of English as an additional language.....	219
6.1.3 Implications for me as a researcher.....	220
6.2 Suggestions for future study.....	220
6.3 Revisiting my experiences.....	221
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 225
APPENDICES	
Appendix 1.....	248
Appendix 2.....	254
Appendix 3.....	255
Appendix 4.....	256
Appendix 5.....	257
Appendix 6.....	258
Appendix 7.....	259
Appendix 8.....	260
Appendix 9.....	261
Appendix 10.....	262
Appendix 11.....	263
Appendix 12.....	264
Appendix 13.....	269
Appendix 14.....	272

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information on learning to speak English in Taiwan

Mandarin has been the official language in Taiwan since 1945 and it has become the common language of people who have different mother tongues such as Taiwanese, Hakka and other aboriginal languages. Though Taiwan has been an active participant in the world community (*The Republic of China Yearbook*, 2011), English in Taiwan serves mainly inter-national purposes and seems to have little intra-national use. The Taiwanese government has been making consistent efforts in building an English-friendly environment in different ways, for example, the launch of the four-skill General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) system in 1999, the implementation of the Grade 1-9 Curriculum in 2001, the attempt to designate English as an official language in 2002, and the latest gigantic investments in enhancing the English proficiency of people in Taiwan from 2011 to 2016 (MOE, 2012).

In the following discussion of the curriculum, my attempt is to make clear the gap between the curricula (the expected progresses) and the GEPT results (proficiency-based test results) in order to shed light on the challenge facing college students in developing their English speaking skills in Taiwan.

1.1.1 *The curriculum*

English as a required subject was first placed in the first-year junior high school curriculum along with the implementation of nine-year compulsory education in 1968 (Tseng, 2008). Raising the English language proficiency of Taiwanese students has been

a high priority for the Ministry of Education (MOE). For instance, in the Challenge 2008 National Development Plan, the future of English language learning was highlighted: English is the language that links the world; the government should designate English as a quasi-official language and actively expand the use of English as part of everyday life (MOE cited in *ibid*:84). Correspondingly, English has been required for younger and younger children. In the autumn of 2001, all fifth graders and sixth graders started to learn English in elementary schools; followed by all third graders in the autumn of 2005 (Tsou, 2005). In leading cities such as Taipei, formal English education starts from the first grade (Nunan, 2003). What is more, parents appear to be the most enthusiastic advocates of English learning and children are sent to English-medium kindergartens if their parents can afford it (Tseng, 2008).

It is worth mentioning that the order of language skills listed in the curriculum appears to assume an acquisition model (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing) and may not reflect the order of the diverse paths of EFL learners' language experiences (Ellis, 2008).

1.1.1.1 Grade 1-9 Curriculum

According to the Grade 1-9 Curriculum released by the government (MOE, 2006), English language learning is divided into two stages: first stage from grade 3 to grade 6 (elementary school); second stage from grade 7 to grade 9 (junior high). Note that pronunciation and listening-speaking skills are listed as a priority (Appendix 1); there are two hours a week throughout both stages. The three main objectives are listed on the first page:

1. to foster students' basic communication abilities in English, so that they can use English in everyday situations.
2. to foster students' interest and learning methods in English, so that they can conduct active and effective English language learning.
3. to enhance students' knowledge of local and other cultures, so that they can compare, appreciate and respect the differences.

1.1.1.2 Senior high and vocational school curriculum

There are four hours of English classes per week in senior high schools. According to the Senior High School Curriculum (MOE, 2005), the general objectives are:

1. to improve students' English listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities, so that they can use English for daily communication.
2. to foster students' abilities of logical thinking, analytic thinking and innovative thinking in English.
3. to help students take on effective learning methods, so as to enhance private study and lay the foundation for lifelong learning.
4. to cultivate their interest and positive attitude towards learning English, actively seeking to acquire all knowledge, both humanities and new technology, through English.
5. to facilitate intercultural understanding and mutual respect; to develop a global and sustainable worldview. (p. 25)

Namely, communication, 'think in English', effective learning, English-medium private study and a global worldview are the foci of EFL learning in Taiwan and speaking skills are classified into 'basic' and 'advanced' levels at this stage (Appendix 2).

Senior and vocational high schools share the same learning objectives; the former have at least four class hours per week; the latter, two. The main difference between senior high schools which are examination-oriented and vocational schools is in the proficiency level expected. For example, English articles for vocational high school students are usually around 400 - 500 words on the basis of a 5,000 vocabulary level; in contrast, English articles for senior high school students are normally longer on the basis of a 7,000 vocabulary level (MOE, 2005).

1.1.1.3 The national entrance examinations and English education at tertiary level

Education is highly valued in the Taiwanese society and some schools are considered more prestigious than others. Examinations have been the long-established mechanism for this screening process. In other words, these national examinations can be taken as junior high school and senior high school students' purpose for learning in the hope of a better future. The national college entrance examination (NCEE) is by and large focused on reading and writing abilities. Specifically, examination-takers for senior/vocational high schools are only required to answer multiple-choice questions. Thus, the MOE has proposed a four-year plan to encourage monthly listening tests and speaking tests from grade 1 to grade 9 to promote contextual learning (Wang, 2010a). Also, in respect of the NCEE, the government has plans to add a 50-minute listening proficiency test to the examination from this September to promote more integrated skill learning (Wang, 2010b, 2011).

1.1.2 The proficiency requirement and the GEPT system

After students go to college, there are English majors and non-English majors. The latter is the majority. According to the MOE, required courses for freshman English include reading and listening. In the remaining three years in college, English courses are most often offered as elective courses. The MOE proposes that English proficiency level be a requirement for graduation and that it be measured by the GEPT system (Lin and Hu, 2009). According to the *China Post* (01/02/2012), most universities have accepted and set the English proficiency requirement, but it is still individual universities' decision whether to utilize the GEPT or other English proficiency tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS and others. At present, English proficiency is not just a concern of English majors, but also non-English majors. In effect, the National Taiwan University has adopted high-intermediate GEPT level as a requirement for graduation; in the Ming-Chung University, English is a required course for four years (Lin and Hu, 2009). Meanwhile, the National Science Council (Wang, 2010c) has proposed establishing listening-and-speaking proficiency in English in university entrance requirements.

The implementation of the GEPT system, 'the most widely taken English test in Taiwan' (Language Learning and Testing Centre, 2012), has played a significant role. The design of the GEPT system corresponds with Taiwan's English curricular framework (ibid):

Elementary level is roughly equivalent to that of a junior high school graduate in Taiwan; Intermediate level is roughly equivalent to that of a high school graduate in Taiwan; High-intermediate level is roughly equivalent to that of a university graduate in Taiwan whose major was not English.

Note that its impact is not limited to measuring English proficiency; it provides a packaged promotion of teaching workshops, learning resources and institutional recognition for employment, career advancement, school admission, and graduation. The administration of the GEPT has resulted in putting more emphasis on previously neglected listening and speaking skills. In effect, one of the intended impacts of the GEPT is to emphasize four-skill learning and speaking skills were first included in a domestic English proficiency testing system.

Furthermore, the Taiwanese English learning materials also line up with the curriculum requirements and the GEPT levels. For instance, *the Republic of China Yearbook 2008* reports:

[English language learning] magazines have seen considerable growth — from 11 percent of total magazines sales in 2005 to 27 percent in 2006—replacing fashion magazines (23 percent) as the most popular category of magazines.

Also, there are local English newspapers in Taiwan (i.e., the *Taipei Times*, the *China Post*, and the *Taiwan News*) for ‘Taiwan’s international community and local people who wish to improve their English proficiency’ (ibid). As a matter of fact, the members of the English-speaking community in Taiwan are steadily increasing.

To sum up, research reports that Taiwanese college students tend to be weak in oral communication skills (Magno et al., 2009). In addition, the younger generation, including primary school and junior high school students, appears to outrun adult learners, especially college students, in speaking skill (GEPT report, 2010, 2011). The latest report

on the result of the TOEIC test in 2010 appears to show that the government's ongoing efforts are beginning to pay off (*Taipei Times*, 2010). In a nutshell, Taiwanese college students' learning to speak English as a local experience needs to be addressed.

1.2 My motivation for this study

My interest in speaking derived from the change of my teaching career (i.e., from an L1 teacher at senior high school level to an EFL teacher at college level) and that of my learning environment (from an EFL environment to an ESL environment). I came to the United Kingdom with an interest in finding out how to accelerate my own and my EFL students' development of speaking skill. Nonetheless, it was not until I came across *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know* by Rebecca Oxford (1996) that I was able to identify the academic area in which I saw the potential for facilitating learning to speak English.

My experience of teaching Chinese and EFL allows me to reflect on the difference between using Mandarin for daily communication purposes, enjoying the efficiency of everyday spoken communication as an excellent basis for the teaching of the Chinese classics; since English has been a knowledge-based subject in education, speaking English (a productive skill) can be easily taken as an act of showing off one's English skill or taking the risk of 'losing face' in public. In the Taiwanese EFL context, it appears that few people are interested in using English to communicate and most people worry that their English is not 'correct' or 'perfect' before they open their mouths to speak. My overseas study in an English-speaking country has given me the privilege of conversing with native speakers and meeting international students from both ESL and EFL contexts.

The use of English in daily spoken communication can be one of the main criteria used to differentiate native speakers and ESL learners from EFL learners.

I found it dramatic to observe how my own strategy use in relation to speaking English changed because of being immersed in an English-speaking environment (i.e., the emergence of social strategies) and initial reading of the literature, e.g., Huang and Van Naerssen's (1987) research focusing on EFL Chinese learners; Gao's (2006) research comparing strategy use in two contexts. Being aware of the differences between Taiwan and the United Kingdom, I was interested in finding out the dialogic development and employment of language learning strategies (LLS) in the Taiwanese EFL learning environment. The main purpose of this study is to understand individual learners' experiences in order to facilitate a more reflective approach for adult learners learning to speak English in Taiwanese EFL environments.

1.3 Background of the participants and the significance of this study

This study involved a group of first-year college students registered in a military academy. Chapter 3 gives a detailed view of this military context. Here I will briefly introduce why it is important to look at this group of learners. First, like most college students in Taiwan, these participants have gone through the English education curricula. They have chosen to study in a military environment in which free time is usually limited, which arguably makes it more difficult for these participants to learn to speak English. However, little research appears to be conducted in military contexts. Moreover, as LLS research has often limited itself to classroom activities, I wish to highlight that learners'

strategy use can be an emerging process through interaction with their learning environment. Therefore, I feel that it is necessary to look at their learning process from a holistic perspective. Third, because of the hidden assumption of learning to speak from native speakers of the target language in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, LLS research has focused more on speaking strategies rather than strategies for learning to speak in an environment where the target language is not the language of the speech community. My study hopes to give a fuller picture of how EFL learners, instead of users, in Taiwan develop their strategies for learning to speak English (SLSEs). Last but not least, this study may also help language learners and language educators recognize basic theoretical frameworks which can help them understand the specific nature and diverse mediated processes of EFL learning. With this understanding, learners, teachers, and educators may be able to work together to foster learning strategies that are appropriate for specific local environments, instead of imposing unthinkingly learning strategies which are considered effective in other contexts.

1.4 Outline of this study

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 starts with background information considering the gap between curricular objectives and the GEPT results in Taiwan, followed by my motivation for conducting this study. And then, I discuss the background of my participants and the significance of my study and then describe the organization of this thesis. In Chapter 2, I discuss in detail my critique of the current LLS in relation to speaking through the unstated assumption of SLA theories, the unbalanced relationship between ESL theories and EFL teaching and learning practice, and the difference

between speaking strategies and strategies for learning to speak. Correspondingly, I discuss the framework I apply to examine how my participants' qualitatively different ways of strategy use were developed in the environment by drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning, Wertsch's (1998) construction of mediated agency, Gibson's (1986) concept of affordance and Bronfenbrenner's (1992) ecological systems theory. In Chapter 3, I describe my research methodology on my journey of data collection, and my methods of data analysis. In Chapter 4, I present the findings of my participants individually. Each participant's findings are presented corresponding to each research question in order. In Chapter 5, I discuss my findings with reference to other studies and the framework I discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 6, I conclude my study with the implications of my findings, advantages and limitations of my study and suggestions for future research. I finish this chapter by revisiting my personal learning experiences.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, English speaking, instead of being a natural outcome of EFL learning, is arguably the most problematic aspect for adult learners in Taiwanese EFL contexts. My focus is on cadets as university freshmen learning to speak English in a local EFL environment in Taiwan. The aim of this chapter is to justify the need to contextualize the development of strategy use, not language use, in its local environments. This will be accomplished through, firstly, a discussion of the key features of EFL environments in contrast to ESL environments in order to unravel the hidden assumptions in the conceptualization of the language learning process in SLA. Secondly, a critique of the descriptive ESL-based GLL speaking strategies which reflects this unstated assumption of SLA will be presented. Finally, an explanatory view of the development of the strategy use of learners as developing persons in a local EFL environment from a sociocultural-ecological perspective will be presented.

2.2 Language learning processes, environments and strategies

LLS research began by identifying effective learning strategies used by ‘the good language learner’ (GLL) in the mid-1970s (for a comprehensive review of LLS, see Cohen, 2011 or Oxford, 2011). The focus of LLS research, as Gu (2008: vii) puts it, is ‘on the learner’s decision- making process and behaviours involving learning decisions aimed at maximizing results’. The ‘results’ of learning are higher proficiency levels which are assumed to be the common goal for all language learners. LLS has been a vibrant area of research as a result of its apparent potential in facilitating effective

teaching and learning (Grenfell and Marcuro, 2008). However, though in its fourth decade of rigorous work, the field of LLS research may still be considered as ‘quite an immature field’ (ibid: 28). As Dörnyei (2005: 162) states, ‘nothing is clear-cut’ in LLS research and there are issues that need to be further discussed and clarified. I will begin by discriminating between EFL and ESL learning environments.

A close examination of the underlying theoretical conceptualization of SLA is crucial since LLS research is now an important area of research. It is worth noting that, as Ellis (1985) points out, the name *Second Language Acquisition* is not in contrast with *Foreign Language Learning* (FLL) but with *First Language* (L1) Acquisition. Brumfit (1996) states that the substantial study of language development of children acquiring their mother tongue during the whole of the 1960s and 1970s could have shaped the way second language researchers view the second language learning process to a large extent. Cameron (cited in Block, 2003), Ellis (1985, 2008) and Ortega (2009) suggest that the unspoken assumption of acquisition – learning the target language in the presence of a natural language environment – embedded in SLA research, might have this origin. Also, it should be noted that English has been a main research object in SLA and thus SLA could have been biased in this regard as well, i.e., monolingualism (VanPatten, 1990).

The following discussion will begin with an attempt to clarify the meanings of EFL and ESL in the SLA field. It moves on to examine the hidden assumption of SLA which has underpinned LLS research. This will then lead to an examination of the definition of

language user and language learner which appears to be a prerequisite for differentiating the employment of SLSEs from speaking strategies.

2.2.1 EFL environments vs. ESL environments

2.2.1.1 Acquisition or learning?

Krashen's acquisition-learning hypothesis proposed in the mid-1970s was important not only because 'he was the first SLA researcher to put together what might be called a theory of SLA' (Block, 2003: 92) but because he contrasts two types of *second* language learning environments. Krashen (1981) delimits learning as a conscious effort in his acquisition-learning hypothesis because, unlike acquisition, learning takes place in an input-poor environment.

Table 2.1 Learning and acquisition (adapted from Cook, no date.)

	Learning	Acquisition
Learning process	conscious	subconscious
Language focus	explicit rules (correctness: the form)	meaningful interaction (appropriacy: the meaning)
Learning situations	the form of their utterance through error correction (formal situations)	the meaning they are conveying and understanding (informal situations)
Language development	from simple to complex (order of learning on syllabi)	from simple to complex (stable order of acquisition)
Language is a system	mental representations (grammatical rules)	mental representations (grammatical 'feel')
Key to success	attitude	aptitude

This oversimplified view might lead people to believe that acquisition is an 'effortless' way of learning a language and it happens 'naturally' in a natural language environment.

Thus, compared with learning English in Taiwan, acquiring English in an English-speaking country is preferable (Wu, P. C., 2008; Wu, 2009). In fact, the phenomenon of learning and acquisition may not be as simple; for example, it may not be easy to interact with English native speakers in the host country (Wu, P. C., 2008). However, it can be argued that Krashen successfully shed light on the important difference between EFL *learning* environments and ESL *acquisition* environments. As Cohen (2011: 13) remarks, it ‘still has utility as a metaphor’ because acquisition and learning have been used interchangeably in SLA in many cases (e.g., Ellis, 1994, 2008; Griffiths, 2008). As a matter of fact, the ‘second language’ of SLA refers to ‘any language learned after learning the L1, regardless of whether it is the second, third, fourth, or fifth language’ (Gass and Selinker, 2008: 7). This means the term ‘second language’ in SLA can refer to a second language (i.e., learning a target language in its natural environment), a foreign language (i.e., learning a target language mainly in classroom settings) or both.

2.2.1.2 First language acquisition, second language acquisition and foreign language learning

In terms of the development of first languages, it appears to be widely observed that children most often learn to speak before they can write and ‘the spoken form is generally regarded as the primary form of language upon which the written form is essentially dependent’ (Hughes, 2011: 14). At the pioneering stage of theorizing SLA, Krashen (1985: 2) claimed that ‘speaking is a result of acquisition, not its cause’. That is, there appears to be a natural listening-speaking-reading-writing sequence of language development. The importance of English speaking skills for today’s English learners is

obvious to Richards and Renandya (2002: 201) who state that, ‘A large percentage of the world’s language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking’.

Hughes (2011) also argues that to be able to speak the target language fluently is most often a layman’s goal for learning a language.

Nevertheless, adult second language learning appears to be different from child L1 acquisition (Doughty, 2003). Though learners can successfully acquire their mother tongue, adult SLA has generally left the impression of ‘lack of success’ (DeKeyser and Juffs, 2005: 439). However, it is also widely observed that some learners are ‘more successful’ than others and this is what intrigued pioneer LLS researchers such as Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) and the LLS researchers who followed. After more than thirty years of search for ‘universally effective LLSs’, the relationship between local learning contexts and LLS use has caught more attention. For example, while reviewing GLL speaking strategies, Kawai (2008) contends that developing oral proficiency in an EFL learning environment is more than likely to be a challenging task. Coming to terms with this challenge, Pica (2005: 264), among others, tries to tease out the concept of foreign language learning in SLA:

Also found in this domain [SLA] is work on foreign language acquisition. Often referred to as foreign language learning, it is distinguished by a lack of access to the L2 outside the classroom and by factors surrounding an individual learner’s motivation and goals.

To bring to light the significance of learning environments when investigating strategy use in context, discriminating between the meanings of ESL and EFL appears critical.

2.2.1.3 The key feature of EFL environments

Regarding language teaching and learning environment, the traditional and most used typology could be English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) has been used as an umbrella term for ESL/EFL in America; ELT (English Language Teaching) in Britain (Kirkpatrick, 2007). These were well recognized by the early 1970s (see Strevens, 1992 and Nayar, 1997 for detailed discussion). To make my point, I will focus on Strevens's (1992: 36) writing which helps to clarify the role and status of English in EFL and ESL environments:

English is a *foreign language* within a community when it has no special standing but is simply “just another language”; whereas English is a *second language* when it has special standing, such as being acceptable in the courts of law, being the medium of instruction in major sectors of the educational system, being used in regional or national administration, being commonly used on radio or television, and where there are major newspapers published in English.

Nonetheless, what needs to be borne in mind is, under this guideline, there is more than one type of ESL and EFL environment and different combinations of ESL and EFL could exist in one country. Griffith (2008:4) gives as examples of ESL and EFL environments:

The terms *second language* or *ESL* (to describe a language being studied in the environment where the language is spoken, for instance Somalis studying English in New Zealand), and foreign language or EFL (to describe a language being

studied in an environment other than where it is spoken, for instance French as it is taught in England or New Zealand, or English as it is taught in China).

Note that the lack of need for ‘communication’ in English and the unavailability of ‘spoken language’ in English are identified as key characteristics of EFL environments. In other words, there is significantly more access to speakers of the target language when learning in an ESL environment than there is in an EFL environment (Gass and Selinker, 2008).

2.2.1.4 SLA learning theories and EFL learning practice

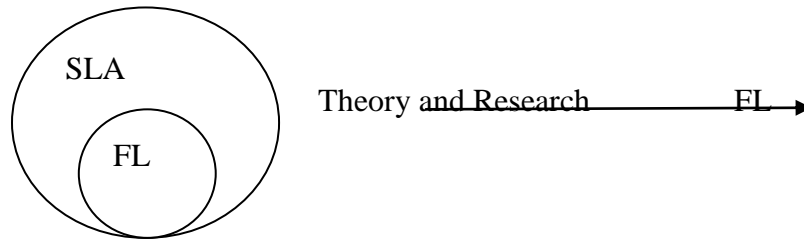
The norms and expectations of learning and teaching English are very likely to be different when English is not the community language. In essence, this local linguistic reality (referring to various ESL and EFL environments here) most often shapes learners’ English learning process, as Tomlinson (2005: 137) points out:

EFL is learned by people who already use at least one other language and who live in a community in which English is not normally used. This community is inevitably influenced by norms that are not those of English-speaking countries and those norms influence the teachers’ and learners’ expectations of the language learning process.

As stated in 1.1, though English is viewed as the first foreign language to learn and has been one of the main subjects in the curriculum from primary to college, most college students in Taiwan are considered EFL learners because of their learning environments. However, the relationship between EFL teaching and learning and SLA research seems a one-way path. VanPatten (1990) gives a telling description in which SLA (theory and

research) is considered as the producer and FL (foreign language teaching) as the customer.

Figure 2.1 The producer-consumer relationship (Reproduced from VanPatten, 1990, p. 18)



In other words, there appears to be a discrepancy between SLA learning theories and FLL (foreign language learning) which has largely relied on SLA for theoretical explanations of language learning processes. He (ibid: 23) thus endorses a new relationship between SLA and FLL:

The FL profession needs to cease being only a customer of SLA research and theory and start becoming an active contributor ... Indeed, it can be argued that there are some questions asked in SLA that are best answered or even only answerable by researching *foreign* language learners and not *second* language learners.*[Italics in the original]*

This theoretical gap partly explains this study's aim to investigate the locally developed SLSEs of EFL learners in the hope of not only making a contribution to LLS research but also having implications for EFL teaching and learning in Taiwan. This imbalance of ESL-EFL research appears to have its root in the conceptualization of SLA.

2.2.2 The Conceptualization of SLA and contexts

SLA research, which entails LLS research, is generally pedagogy-motivated and has been conducted within a traditional cognitive framework in the main. The main underpinning theory is the information-processing model. It is not, therefore, surprising that most SLA research is more than likely to be conducted in classroom settings (Ellis, 1994). This sees learning as the internalization of de-contextualized professional knowledge, the learning process as happening primarily in individual learners' heads, and individual differences as the defining factor in learning. Accordingly, the internalization of linguistic items and rules has been the main focus; local learning contexts and environments are inclined to be overlooked.

2.2.2.1 Acquisition: input, output and interaction

An illuminating example of this cognitive view of SLA has been described by Lamy and Hampel (2007). They summarize the preceding hypotheses in the cognitive SLA tradition to catch the dynamics of second language learning as a cognitive process which is considered universally true for all second (and foreign) language learners (Appendix 3). Though SLA researchers tend to use 'second language acquisition' and 'second language learning' interchangeably, this conceptualization of *acquisition* is at the core of the SLA field in general with the goal of investigating and establishing the cause and effect relations between second language *use* and second language *acquisition* (Block, 2003). The confusion between the acquisition process and the learning process is made evident when we are looking at learners who need to develop English speaking skills in a *learning* environment in which this ideal input-output-interaction acquisition loop is most often either unavailable or incomplete as aforementioned in 2.2.1. These missing links

might help illustrate the difficulties in learning to speak English in EFL environments. Distinguishing the essential differences between ESL and EFL learning environments can help address the long existing issue of the unbalanced view shown in LLS research and the confusing findings produced through self-report questionnaires in this field (e.g., Gao, 2004).

2.2.2.2 The gap between the ESL-based theoretical framework and EFL local reality

Since Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), is 'perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date' (Ellis, 1994: 539) and is often adopted as a convenient framework, I will use this framework to exemplify the ESL tendency in LLS research. In her six-category SILL, Oxford summarized the LLSs identified in previous LLS research literature. SILL has since been the most widely used questionnaire in LLS research (Oxford et al., 2004; White et al., 2008; Woodrow, 2005) because of its strength in measuring range and frequency of strategy use and correlating strategy use with other factors (Chamot, 2004). Concerns about its contextual sensitivity were probably first addressed by Locastro (1994): she compared data collected by Oxford's SILL, and group interview data collected from the same group of Japanese language learners. She found that the SILL appeared to fail to address the participants' use of 'listening as a means to learn' (p. 412). Though SILL was intended for use in different contexts (Oxford, 1996), the identification and classification of SILL have been based on research conducted mainly in an ESL context (Yabukoshi and Takeuchi, 2009) and this could account for the discrepancy when employing SILL to understand EFL learners' strategy use (e.g., Lai, 2009).

In effect, the field of LLS research presents a similar unbalanced view, with more focus on cognitive/mentalistic orientations than on social/contextual aspects of second language learning (Gao, 2010). To fill the gap, Politzer and McGroarty (1985), among others, administered a questionnaire, which was divided into classroom behaviours, individual study behaviours and interaction behaviours, to thirty-seven Asian and Hispanic students enrolled in an intensive ESL course in the United States. The result suggests that the Hispanic students used significantly more GLL strategies. However, when it came to the subsequent grammar test and communicative competence test, Asian students' results were higher than those of the Hispanic. The researchers conclude that learning strategies are not inherently good or bad and successful strategy use was related to the learners' educational and cultural values. Wharton (2000: 207) postulates that the popularity of rote memorization strategies among Chinese students in Singapore may come from their L1 experience, i.e., their 'conscious learning of thousands of characters'. This seems to echo the essential assumption of the sociocultural research paradigm – the social/cultural nature of learning in local contexts.

To sum up, as Dörnyei (2005: 182) points out, one of the main issues in LLS research is a discrepancy between the question asked and the methods adopted to answer this question:

A learner using as many different strategies as possible...it is largely the quantity that matters. This is in contradiction with strategy theory, which has indicated clearly that in strategy use it is not necessarily the quantity but the quality of the employed strategies that is important.

I will now focus on giving a general picture of the Taiwanese EFL context to introduce to the more detailed local environment within which this research study is conducted. This will be described in the methodology chapter.

2.2.3 College students learning English in Taiwan

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, it seems apparent that, though English is not yet an official language in Taiwan, the linguistic reality of English learning is that it is not ‘just another language’ or that it ‘has no special status or use over any other foreign language’ any longer, in Judd’s terms (1987 cited in Nayar, 1997:13). In face of the trend of English as the world’s second language, Taiwan’s English-speaking environment is evolving in the absence of the historical or social ties to create a true immersion environment (Wu, 2009). In spite of the current status of English as the first foreign language to learn, Wu (2009) depicts well the current EFL Taiwanese learning context in which communication in English tends to be put at a low priority:

The Taiwanese educational system treats English as a subject, similar to math or geography. ...because learners would have minimal or no second-language survival needs in Taiwan, English learning must happen in certain locations or places, like schools or special programs. English is used only for the purpose of academic advancement, career advancement, and traveling abroad. ...The majority of people in Taiwan can live without English at all. (p. 157)

In the absence of an everyday English-speaking environment, it may seem extremely difficult for learners to master English, especially speaking. Compared to their prior English courses through elementary school and secondary school, research has shown

that in Taiwanese universities English courses are more four-skill integrated (Su, 2007) and communication-oriented (Savignon and Wang, 2003). What is more, college students also show interest in having more listening and speaking courses (Yang, 1999; Liu, 2005). In effect, though most learners appear to show an interest in English conversation, they could have psychological barriers in relation to ‘correctness’ required in tests and classroom practice (e.g., Carter, Hughes and McCarthy, 1998). Specifically, the main reason and motivation for learners to improve their speaking skills is perhaps to pass speaking tests, in school or other proficiency-based tests such as the GEPT which requires this *language skill*. SLSEs, instead of compensation strategies, which can be utilized to accelerate college students’ development of English speaking skills in their local contexts, need to be investigated both in and out of classrooms.

2.2.3.1 EFL classroom teaching practice

Rutherford (1987) points out that foreign language teaching had often been equivalent to the teaching of grammar for 2,500 years. Indeed, grammar-related issues have been one of the most studied areas in TESOL (Canagarajah, 2006). Form-focused teaching practice, such as Grammar-Translation Method, is still popular in EFL classrooms, including in Taiwan (Fotos, 1998; Yu, 2008). VanPatten et al. (1987) and Shin and Nation (2008), among others, argue that EFL teachers tend to have such a clear focus on written grammar, that the learners produce grammatically correct but ‘unnatural’ language when speaking English. It is also suggested that EFL teachers may, consciously or unconsciously, become ‘linguists’ (Murakami, 1999). English language teaching in Taiwan has long been questioned for its ineffectiveness caused by its ‘outmoded’

Grammar-Translation Method, and its great emphasis on memorization, accuracy and test-oriented goals. Research shows that these could account for learners' inability to use English in everyday social interaction which is viewed as a problem (Chen et al., 2005; Yu, 2008). However, including English speaking skills in local tests and the GEPT has raised awareness of its importance and thus has influenced classroom practice to some extent (Wu, J., 2008). In other words, classroom teaching and its wider societal environment appear mutually embedded.

In addition, since the aim of learning is to become speakers of the target language, EFL learners may demonstrate 'foreign language anxiety', Ortega (2009) states:

Many foreign language learners embrace the emulation of an idealized native speaker as a goal. This idealized goal draws from the discourse of monolingualism dominant in much foreign language education, which holds that the best kind of linguistic competence is that which is attained by primary socialization (i.e. in a language given by birth) and which contains no impurity or trace of other languages (i.e. no codeswitching or code mixing, no transfer, no foreign accent). (p. 245)

Though there have been debates about this native speaker model in Taiwan (e.g., Kuo, 2006; Lai, 2008), it appears this is still the desirable goal. The institutionalization of the GEPT as a domestic English proficiency testing system has seemed a further manifestation of this.

2.2.3.2 Shared L1 as language for socialization

As Lazaraton (2001) and Shumin (2002) elaborate, speaking can be considered as the most difficult skill to develop in an EFL environment. The difficulty of expressing oneself in a foreign language might be best understood in the light of the contradictory phenomenon between learners' everyday use as advanced users of Mandarin and their largely confined English learning activities in the classroom. Though the availability and accessibility of English in the world and in Taiwan has changed drastically (Wu., 2009), EFL learners appear to be less motivated and may be reluctant to learn the target language through its authentic materials (Chen et al., 2005; Cives-Enriques, 2006; VanPatten et al., 1987). For example, the present global world seems to be constantly connected by advances of communication technology, which McArthur (2009) calls a 'global nervous system', which is 'an electronic network, whether it's the radio, television, cinema or the Internet and the World Wide Web' (p. 19); and he points out that, given proper equipment, people around the world can 'plug in' this system.

However, in spite of having plenty of English language programmes and information on TV, radio and the Internet, Chen et al. (2005) stress that young people such as college students habitually rely on Chinese subtitles or translation when participating in global culture in Taiwanese EFL contexts. Indeed, Yu (2008) reports that in Taiwan the majority of university level EFL learners still fall short of managing a daily conversation or expressing themselves freely in English. While research indicates that functional practices (social interaction in English) seem to be the most effective way to develop speaking proficiency, there appear to be social and cultural obstacles to speaking English

in EFL contexts, including Taiwan (Huang and Van Naerssen, 1987; Jin, 2005; Yang, 1999).

2.2.3.3 Lack of immediate relevance

In EFL environments, such as Taiwan, where English is not normally used for everyday purposes or as the medium of education, the level of English exposure is low and English language learning has little immediate relevance. Widdowson (1978) points out the critical difference between *usage*, emphasized in the classroom, and *use*, largely not available inside and outside the classroom in local contexts:

Usage, ...is one aspect of performance, that aspect which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules.

Use is another aspect of performance: that which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his skill to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication. (p. 3)

Vygotsky's (1934:305) earlier discussion of notions of 'sense' and 'meaning' appears to further indicate the key to effective communication underlying language *use* in everyday situations:

The sense of a word always turns out to be a dynamic, flowing, complex formation which has several zones of differential stability ...As we know, a word readily changes its sense in various contexts. ...The real meaning of a word is not constant. (cited in Wertsch, 1991: 42)

Widdowson (1978) pinpoints the discrepancy between teaching language as linguistic rules through drills, and as communication:

They [drills] have meaning of a kind, but this meaning which attaches to usage is not the same as meaning which attaches to use. ... Sentences have meaning as instances of usage: they express propositions by combining words into structures in accordance with grammatical rules. ... The second kind of meaning is that which sentences and parts of sentences assume when they are put to use for communicative purpose. (p. 11)

In other words, EFL learning and teaching, in essence, puts an emphasis on usage and full-sentence forms in a learning context where English use is very limited with a hidden assumption that by teaching *usage*, learners will be able to *use* automatically (Widdowson, 1978). This might explain why, when engaging in everyday spoken language, EFL learners tend to be more concerned with ‘correctness’ (linguistic rules) than ‘appropriacy’ (senses). Chen et al. (2005) and Kirkpatrick (2007) both note that this can be due to having little or no opportunity to use English face-to-face with English speakers outside the classroom, i.e., the lack of ‘immediate relevance of his language learning’ (Widdowson, 1978: 17). As Brown and Yule (1983: 21) contend, EFL learners need to ‘realize that speakers of this foreign language talk like human beings, like he talks in his native language.’ This realization perhaps can only occur when the EFL learner gets to use English in real-life communication, usually lacking in the local context.

2.2.4 Summary

This review has shown that, owing to the conceptualization of SLA, the investigation and discussion of LLS tend to be located in an ESL context. Due to the absence of a natural

English-speaking environment, for Mandarin-speaking EFL learners, speaking English is seldom a natural result of language acquisition/learning. In terms of LLS use, it may not be an issue of avoiding communication breakdown in language use but a matter of learning to speak English by coming to terms with the constraints and resources in their shared L1 learning environment. In the next subsection, I will discuss the need for contextualization in LLS research with a special focus on developing speaking skills.

2.3 Language use strategies, language learning strategies and contexts

There are various ways to categorize learner strategies (Cohen, 2011). When I began my search for speaking learning strategies, I was often frustrated to find that there are few SLSEs such as what I have in mind that could help adult learners in EFL environments. Speaking-related LLS research tends to be based on the assumed conditions of immediate language use in the environment (ESL-based) – *language use strategies*, instead of SLSEs based on the conditions of very limited language use, if any, in the environment (EFL-based) – *language learning strategies*. I have come to see how the above-mentioned hidden assumption of SLA has been reflected in the field of LLS research. In her efforts to map out ‘a critical mass of knowledge’ of LLS research, Oxford (2011) explains that, in the area of speaking strategies research, focus has been on: (a) communication strategies (see Nakatani and Goh, 2007 for a comprehensive review) and (b) pragmatics, or performance of speech acts. The former have been investigated either from the *psycholinguistic* view which ‘considers communication strategies narrowly ... as only a lexical-compensatory means of overcoming gaps in vocabulary knowledge’ or from the *interactional* view, which ‘centers on the interaction process between learners

and their interlocutors, often native speakers, especially the way meaning is negotiated' (Oxford, 2011: 253). The embedded view is learning to speak from a native speaker of the target language through language *use*.

Cohen (2011) stands up for this distinction not based on SLA theories but on the basis of learning situations that theories have not yet been able to explain:

For many language learners much of what they “learn,” especially in language classes, never makes it to real-world communication. So this learning vs. use distinction is based not on theory and on potential, but rather on the way language learning, and more importantly, language attrition actually show up in many instances. (p. 16)

I share the opinion of Cohen in this regard. Bearing in mind that this study focuses on the strategy use and development of learners in their home EFL contexts, I will begin with the speaking strategies found in Oxford's (1996) framework and context-related discussion on this most-used LLS model. This will be followed by my attempt to clarify the concept of a language learner from that of a language user. In so doing, I am hoping to make the point that SLSEs employed in EFL contexts by essentially learning-minded learners are different from speaking strategies used by communication-minded language users to negotiate meaning with English native speakers. After that, I will search for strategies for learning to speak in the GLL tradition, with a view to listing such strategies from the literature, and thence developing a contextualized view of strategy employment through Taiwanese EFL learners' everyday experiences.

2.3.1 Speaking strategies and their contexts

2.3.1.1 SLA traditions

Following the interlanguage approach (i.e., learners as deficient users move to a native speaker proficiency level), Tarone (1980) suggests a distinction between strategies of language *use* – communication strategy (i.e., negotiation of meaning) and production strategy (i.e., practising to produce) – and language *learning* strategies based on motivation and intention. Accordingly, she defines language learning strategies as ‘an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language’ (p. 419). It could be argued that production strategy and language learning strategy appear more learning-oriented than communication-oriented. Nonetheless, Ellis (1994: 530) points out that there is ‘no easy way of telling whether a strategy is motivated by a desire to learn or a desire to communicate’. In addition, language learning strategies and language use strategies or communication strategies (‘compensation strategies’ in Oxford’s terms) seem to overlap in the sense that learners can learn the target language in communicative situations. In other words, learning and communication do not seem to be mutually exclusive (Oxford, 2011).

As discussed previously in 2.2.2, SILL appears to be built on ESL-based assumptions, and here the focus is on its speaking strategies category. In *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*, Oxford (1990) first states that ‘Learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning’ (1990: 1). Later, she expands it to a fuller description as follows (ibid: 8):

Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.

Her definition indicates that the purpose of LLS use should be considered from a learner's perspective and it is learning behaviours as 'specific actions' that are considered as learning strategies. As a matter of fact, language learning strategies are also called *learner strategies* (Macaro, 2001). In cognitive frameworks, learners' actions are mostly discussed in a universal context – one learning environment, i.e., English-speaking environments, and one learning goal, i.e., to be native-like.

SILL is a six-category strategy classification system (Appendix 4) which is divided into direct strategies, those which contribute directly to developing language skills such as memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies; and indirect strategies, those which help develop all four skills indirectly such as metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. This direct-indirect categorization of strategies was first proposed by Rubin (1981). Oxford's extensive design sets out to serve as the basic structure for generating questionnaire items (Oxford, 1986 cited in O'Malley et al., 1990). It is worth noting that Oxford put ESL and EFL into a version of the questionnaire. Also, Oxford (1990) reports that compensation strategies, avoiding breakdowns in face-to-face communication with native speakers, are the most effective in terms of developing speaking skills. This appears to be in accord with the unstated assumption of SLA as discussed earlier. It also explains why so many EFL learners flock

to English-speaking countries to learn English (Wu, P. C., 2008). Note that in today's world most EFL learners are learning to speak English in their home contexts.

2.3.1.2 Contextual view

Hsiao and Oxford (2002) further report that Oxford's six-factor strategy framework, though being 'the most consistent with learners' strategy use', fails to produce a suitable fit to the data measured by SILL and collected from 517 Taiwanese university students as EFL learners. Distributing SILL to 418 Taiwanese non-English major university freshmen, Lai (2009: 271) reports that 'cultural setting and national origin can have an effect on students' strategy choice.' These cultural settings include their English language education system, students' awareness of their learning processes, teacher's methods and curricula emphases. In an EFL context in which communication in English is not a priority, what is interesting in Lai's research is that compensation strategies are shown to be more frequently employed than any other types of learning strategies:

The results are in agreement with the data collected by most researchers in Taiwan, who used students with different educational levels...it seems that regardless of proficiency level and learning strategy, EFL learners in Taiwan rely heavily on strategies that help them to overcome deficiencies in knowledge when using English. ... by using gesture, circumlocution, or synonyms. (p. 272)

However, the information about the situations in which these strategies were employed and their utilization was not provided. While interpreting the low usage of memory strategies, Lai (2009: 273) concludes that, 'It seems that the SILL is not perfectly useful for eliciting all the strategies Chinese students use.'

This seems to be the issue of ‘context’ in Naiman et al.’s model, the first GLL empirical research, which was not examined then. Yang, N. D., a Taiwanese LLS researcher, did a review on empirical LLS research in Taiwan carried out from the early 1990s to 2006 and she (2006: 87) reported that ‘there were few studies on speaking strategies’ and she did not present any. It is my belief that in an EFL environment such as Taiwan’s, locally developed SLSEs which reflect the resources and constraints in a specific environment may be more useful. The next question is: can SLSEs be classed as language use strategies or language learning strategies? I will tackle this by defining what I mean by the language learners with whom this research study is concerned.

2.3.2 Strategies for learning to speak and their contexts

2.3.2.1 Language learner vs. Language user

Though language learner and language user seem to have been used interchangeably in SLA, Yang, J. (2006: 4) views a language user as ‘someone who knows and uses the language’ and a language learner as ‘someone who learns English’. From her point of view, users of English should have achieved the following proficiency level: Speakers at the advanced-low level ... participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations (ACTFL, 1999: 4). Correspondingly, considering language learners and language users of English in the Taiwanese EFL context, it seems that elementary level and intermediate level learners employ *speaking* strategies which are primarily learning-based. According to their study of 517 Taiwanese university students, Hsiao and

Oxford (2002: 379) elucidate that ‘in daily reality the strategies for L2 learning and L2 use overlap considerably, especially for beginning and intermediate learners’.

According to the description of the GEPT system, which is aligned with the curriculum, senior high school graduates are supposed to have intermediate levels of English proficiency. Nevertheless, as I have shown in Chapter 1, the statistics indicate that college students may still struggle with speaking tests at elementary level. In effect, though not everyone would take TOEFL or IELTS, most Taiwanese students are encouraged to obtain GEPT certificates to prove their English proficiency. As the GEPT is the institutionalized local English testing system, I will conduct my discussion of proficiency levels accordingly in this study. In the present situation, it is possible that when learners speak English, they are more focused on learning to pass exams or obtain English proficiency certificates. As Macaro (2001: 19), specifically, concedes they are:

... primarily concerned with learning and not particularly with the strategies that students can use to ‘get by’ while they are communicating with others in a foreign language. ... [i.e.,] exploring the strategies that students can use in order to maximize their opportunities to talk in order to build up confidence, get feedback and bring about exposure to the L2.

Put simply, even if learners speak English in most cases they tend to be learning-minded. The next question is if there have been any discussions considering SLSEs in the GLL inquiry.

2.3.2.2 The good language learner and strategies for learning to speak English

Many researchers (e.g., McDonough, 1999; Naiman et al., 1996; Oxford, 1990; Griffiths, 2008) agree that the systematic inquiry into LLS began with Rubin's (1975) research entitled 'What the "Good Language Learner" Can Teach Us'. Bearing the underlying purpose of facilitating effective learning and teaching in mind, the words 'good', 'successful' or 'effective' tend to be used as synonyms for high language proficiency/achievement, i.e., the desirable outcome (e.g., Huang and Van Naerssen, 1987; Lai, 2009; O'Malley et al., 1990; Stern, 1975). Aiming at identifying a vast repertoire of effective language learning strategies, pioneer researchers started with lists of strategies used by 'the good language learner'. Rubin, an American researcher and an ESL teacher, described strategies as 'the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire language' (1975: 43). An individualized active learning approach was broadly depicted in her definition. Rubin generated her seven-strategy list (Appendix 5) from observing classrooms, including her own, and interviews with good language learners in English-speaking classroom contexts including California and Hawaii. Stern (1975), based in a Canadian context, listed ten strategies of good language learners (Appendix 6) based on his observation, his own teaching and learning experience, his reading of related literature and comparisons with Rubin's list.

The first empirical LLS research, *The Good Language Learner*, was conducted in 1978 in Ontario, Canada, by Naiman et al. (1996). While identifying through interviews 'general, more or less deliberate approaches' (ibid: 4) adopted by thirty-four adult learners, the majority of them native English speakers learning French as a second/foreign language, Naiman et al. present a five-strategy list and related techniques (pp. 30-33) based on the

Rubin-Stern inventory. I will focus only on those which are relevant to this study derived from their interviews (ibid: 36):

V. LEARNING TO TALK

- (1) basic principle: ‘don’t be afraid of making mistakes’
- (2) having contact with native speakers
 - (a) who are your friends
 - (b) talk to older people because they are more patient
 - (c) talk to anybody (e.g. teacher)
 - (d) talk to a variety of native speakers; it trains your ear
 - (e) participate in class
- (3) soliloquizing aloud or silently
- (4) asking for corrections and integrating them
- (5) learning by heart, e.g. dialogues
- (6) subvocalizing when reading
- (7) ...the students have to give instructions and the teacher corrects their pronunciation.

This list not only suggested the effectiveness of talking to native speakers of the target language but also reading aloud or memorizing dialogues.

Takeuchi’s (2003: 6) study using learner biographies to investigate Japanese EFL learning strategies for speaking, for instance, reports that:

Results show that EFL learners do share some of the strategies with ESL learners.

Some of them, however, are unique to the Japanese EFL context. For example,

memorizing basic expressions a lot, vocally repeating them, and pattern-practicing them are rarely mentioned strategies or strategies not emphasized in recent North American literature.

As discussed earlier, communication strategies focus more on the ‘strategic’ avoidance of communication breakdowns. This can be recognized as one of the EFL strategies for learning, rather than using, English. Context is one of the elements in Naiman et al.’s conceptual framework (Appendix 7). Nonetheless, though they showed their awareness of context as ‘a major influence’ (Naiman et al., 1996: 7), it was not ‘the subject of detailed and separate inquiry’ in their research. Secondly, they touched upon the difference of learning environments outside the classroom, but their main study was conducted in classrooms. In short, though this early list-making research on adult learners has evidently provided valuable insights and has been considered fundamental for subsequent LLS research, the strategies appear to be general in nature and may also seem isolated because they are taken out of the context in which they were developed and utilized.

Along this line of research, Bialystok (1978), a Canadian researcher, draws on these findings to develop her second language learning model with a special focus on the role of LLS in developing oral proficiency.

2.3.2.3 Bialystok’s model for oral proficiency

I share Bialystok’s (1978: 69) observation in my classroom and learning experience as an EFL learner:

First, it is always the case that some individuals are more successful than others in mastering the language, even though the language experience has in all cases been ostensibly identical. Second, for a particular individual, some aspects of language learning are mastered more easily than are others, for example, aural comprehension may be extremely good while productive competence is poor.

Her first observation guided her to a research interest shared with early GLL researchers, including Stern (1975) and Rubin (1975), as briefly mentioned above. Her second motivation led her to look into the learning strategies used to facilitate the progress of oral proficiency. She felt that the ultimate learning goal, in and out of the classroom, for individual learners is to acquire high oral proficiency. The correlation between internal characteristics and language learning strategies of GLLs has been the underlying quest of LLS research. For instance, Norton and Toohey (2001: 309-310) state that LLS research is carried out:

...on the basis of assumptions that learners had particular cognitive traits, affective orientations, motivations, past experiences and other individual characteristics, and that they used particular individual learning strategies, all of which affected their L2 learning.

Rather than simply focusing on these ‘unmodifiable’ characteristics of the learner, Bialystok (1981) argues that research views learners’ strategy use as a conscious effort:

While the articulation of these factors provides valuable information about the learning process and aspects of various learning situations, what is largely neglected is a consideration of what second language learners can do to facilitate mastery of the target language irrespective of these personal characteristics and

learning circumstances. Many of these variables are largely unmodifiable by individual learners. (p. 24)

Indeed, learning to speak English in the Taiwanese EFL context requires conscious efforts as discussed in Chapter 1.

Bialystok's model (Appendix 8), a cognitive model, gave an account of what the learner could do to accelerate learning. She categorized strategies, including Rubin's and Stern's strategies, into *formal practice*: a language learner's attempts to increase his/her exposure to the language, focused on form, e.g., language drills and exercises; *functional practice*: a language learner's attempts to increase his/her exposure to the language focused on the use of the language in communication, e.g., going to the movies or talking to a native speaker; *monitoring*: a learner's attempts to examine or correct his/her response; and *inferencing*: to increase comprehension of linguistic material. It is worth mentioning that the cognitive aspect of LLS appears to be the mainstream of searching for the best practice in second language learning. As a matter of fact, in the line of LLS research based on cognitive theories, cognitive and metacognitive strategies have been considered as the most effective learning strategies across all language skills (Rubin, 2008).

2.3.2.4 Huang and Van Naerssen's research and contextual Sensitivity

To find out how EFL Chinese learners learn to speak in the absence of a natural English language environment, Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) conducted research on Chinese EFL college English majors' SLSEs using Bialystok's model. This seems to be one of the few studies interested in Chinese adult learners' SLSEs. Their research context appears

similar to that with which I am familiar. They derived their questionnaire ‘Learning Strategies for Oral Communication’ from Bialystok’s classification. They highlight the importance of the study including a shift in focus from a *second* language to a *foreign* language context, strictly focused on Chinese first language speakers; their research is conducted by a Chinese-teacher researcher as an insider. The research study began with the following hypothesis:

Successful Chinese EFL learners (‘success’ defined in terms of oral communicative abilities) employ certain strategies which less successful learners do not employ or employ only weakly, and that these strategies are similar to those reported in other studies of other population types. (p. 288)

They used a questionnaire and an oral test with sixty English majors to select twenty participants (the highest ten and the lowest ten) for in-depth interviews. Though their main instrument was questionnaires, the in-depth interviews generated data that illustrate the English learning process in Chinese EFL context.

The result indicates that more successful learners used more functional practice strategies such as ‘thinking in English’, ‘speaking with other students, teachers and native speakers,’ which are ‘the most powerful predictors of success in oral communication’ (ibid: 291). This confirms Bialystok’s speculation and Naiman et al.’s (1978) statement that more successful learners are those who are willing to speak in English and are not afraid of making mistakes. Also, her ‘functional practice’ is close to their ‘learning to talk’ strategies and seems broader than communication strategies. For example, functional practice does not limit talking partners to native speakers of the target

language but extends the category to students, teachers, media, and self in the immediate context. This normally reflects the constraints (limited access to native speakers in the EFL environment) and the resources (peers, teachers, media, and self).

Importantly, their strategy use might relate to individual learners' personality or other 'third factors' (ibid: 293), e.g., their specific sociocultural contexts or a passionate English language teacher. Researchers indicate that fear of losing 'face' (making mistakes in front of others) in Chinese contexts can be an obstacle to speaking English (e.g., Jin 2005). Woodrow (2005: 97) also claims that 'there is growing evidence that CHC [Confucian Heritage Countries] learners differ in learning behaviours from western learners'. Gu's (2003) study of two successful Chinese EFL learners illustrates how their strategy use was 'highly flexible' and skilfully integrated, which 'may be due to a combination of Chinese concept of learning, traditional schooling, and literacy practice, the prevailing methods for teaching and learning English in China' (p. 73). Additionally, the relationship between reading practice and the advancement of oral communication abilities found in this study seems intriguing: reading practice stands out as the strongest and most significant predictor of oral proficiency in the three areas – listening, reading and speaking – examined (Huang and Van Naerssen, 1987). The researchers account for this correlation:

In a second-language setting, speaking techniques generally promote input and, if the input is comprehensible, will probably promote language acquisition.

However, in a foreign-language setting where there is a serious lack of native

speakers with whom to interact, or listen to, or view in the mass media, reading does become an important source of input. (p. 295)

However, correlation is not causality. Bremner (1999) also uncovers that the GLL studies more often than not assume that there is a causal relationship between strategy use and language proficiency; that use of effective learning strategies will lead to high language proficiency. Furthermore, he argues that the cause-effect relationship between these two could be the opposite way around: it may be that proficiency levels determine what learning strategies individual learners employ. Huang and Van Naerssen's study shows that less successful learners do not find their more successful counterparts' strategies very helpful (see Dörnyei, 1995 for a discussion on the teachability of LLS). Yamamori et al. (2003: 407) pinpoint that, 'The relationship between strategy use and achievement is complex, multi-factorial, and often non-linear. More than one route exists to success in learning a foreign language.'

Regarding formal practice strategies, memorization is commonly employed by both more and less successful students in the Chinese context. Based on the interview data, the authors point out that, 'Since there is almost no natural English-language environment in China, memorized input is an important source of language' (p. 294). In addition, they say that 'memorization in foreign-language learning is highly complex and individual' (p. 295). In this research and Lai's (2009) study, memorization strategies are commonly used by learners of different language levels, prevalently lower levels. Ding's (2007) case study with three high oral proficiency learners indicates that they find strategies such as memorization and imitation very effective. Wharton (2000) postulates, it may come from

their L1 experience. This suggests that future research should look into memorization in more detail by taking contextual factors into account. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

2.3.3 Summary

Due to the cognitive traditions of SLA, LLS tend to be investigated and discussed in an assumed universal context. There is a need to increase the contextual sensitivity of LLS research, arguably especially LLS research conducted in EFL contexts. The focus of this study is on *learners* in contrast to users. As far as Taiwanese EFL contexts are concerned, to the best of my knowledge, there is little research on SLSEs, if any. How ‘context’ is conceptualized to locate the development and use of EFL SLSEs will be explained in the sociocultural-ecological theoretical framework proposed in the following sections.

2.4 My theoretical framework: sociocultural-ecological perspective

To accelerate the SLA process is one of the fundamental goals for SLA research entailing LLS research. The assumption is: if language teaching methods could be more efficient, then learning would naturally be more effective (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991: 5).

The shift from teaching to learning took place in the 1960s after inconclusive findings of massive comparative studies on teaching methods (ibid). In a similar vein, LLS research not only has an applied purpose (Wenden and Rubin, 1987) but appears to come to terms with inconclusive findings following its initial pursuit of ‘universally good’ LLS used by the GLL. Di Pietro (1987) exhorts:

We should not assume that the world of second-language learners can be neatly divided into two camps of good and bad. Rather, let us work with the premise that anyone who is not suffering a learning disability is capable of successfully learning a foreign language. (p. 13)

After reviewing LLS research and practice of the last three decades, White et al. (2007), among others, conclude that there is a need to critically appraise local realities in their contexts and environments. The main reason is that to fulfil its applied purpose, LLS instruction often requires ‘a local report’ to lay the foundation for effective teaching and learning (Chamot, 2008). In effect, the mainstream questionnaire survey approach which aims to depict learning and strategy use as a universal phenomenon appears difficult to apply to classroom level, and a multi-method LLS research approach is favoured (Gao, 2004).

Indeed, the concept of context has become more and more important in LLS research (e.g., Gao, 2006; Gu, 2003; Oxford, 1996; Wharton, 2000; Yabukoshi and Takeuchi, 2009; Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide, 2008), as it has been in wider educational studies (Roth and Lee, 2007). It is worth mentioning that the concept of ‘context’ is, from a psycholinguistic perspective, likely to be reduced to classroom tasks, e.g., Oxford et al. (2004). To sociocultural researchers, this concept refers largely to the social context as, for example, in Gao’s (2007) four case studies which focus on agency. It appears that SLA learning theory in general has assumed the existence of a language use environment and that sociocultural approaches have tended to focus on social contexts. The significance of local learning environments has arguably been overlooked.

To critically appraise learning process and strategy development in Taiwanese EFL environments where the target language is seldom the medium for socialization, I adopt Gibson's (1986) concept of affordance, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1992, 2005) ecological systems theory and Wertsch et al.'s (1993) mediated agency to strengthen the explanatory power of Vygotsky's (1978) approach. As Van Lier (2002) argues:

Ecology is the study of the relationships between all the various organisms and their physical environment. ... Its primary requirement is, by definition, that the context is central, it cannot be reduced, and it cannot be pushed aside or into the background. The context is the focal field of study. (p. 144)

Therefore, in adopting this perspective, I am hoping that a learner's changing social network and material conditions/cultural practice (the technical tools, in Vygotsky's terms) can be presented in a fuller picture. This systematic dynamicity between learner, learning process, context and environment will be further discussed in the following sections.

2.4.1 The adult foreign language learner as developing person

2.4.1.1 Regulation: ability to know what to do

Vygotsky (1978) views consciousness as a fundamentally mediated mental activity. Human beings invent and use tools to control nature; and different cultures demonstrate how human beings interact with their own environments. The degree of control is called *regulation*. Children tend to be more object-regulated (distracted by objects in the environment) or other-regulated (under other people's guidance) and have little self-

regulation (control of self). Compared to children, fully developed adults generally have learned to use more self-regulation and relatively little object-regulation and other-regulation.

The tools used to gain more self-regulation include physical (e.g., cars) and symbolic tools (e.g., languages). Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes how these physical and psychological tools are used in *strategic* social interactions: while technical tools are oriented to the object of an activity (the goal of an action), e.g., reading English language learning magazines in an EFL environment, psychological tools are turned towards the subject (the person) and try to bring about changes in the behaviour (of oneself or others), e.g., first/second language acquisition and socialization. Note that tools are created by people on the basis of their conditions because they are often used to solve problems (Lantolf and Appel, 1994). For example, English language learning magazines target Taiwanese English language learners at all levels.

Importantly, as far as second language learning is concerned, Frawley and Lantolf (1985: 20) pinpoint that, 'Self-regulation is a relative phenomenon'. This is probably most obvious in the situation of adult learners learning to speak a foreign language, to regain 'control of self' through object-regulation (e.g., new vocabulary) and other-regulation (e.g., teachers who are available to him/her in different places at different times). Ellis (2008: 108) contends that EFL learners' learning paths are diverse and adult learners 'are very unlikely to achieve perfect mastery'. Compared with L1 acquisition, Ellis (2004: 525) explains:

In the case of L1 acquisition, children vary in their rate of acquisition but all, except in cases of severe environmental deprivation, achieve full competence in their mother tongue; in the case of L2 acquisition (SLA), learners vary not only in the speed of acquisition but also in their ultimate level of achievement, with a few achieving native-like competence and others stopping far short.

Based on SLA research, Ellis (2008) proposes that the differences are caused by the formal learning strategies (i.e., other-regulation through language teachers) because in informal learning situations, learners often demonstrate similar patterns of acquisition to children acquiring their native language. There are two more possible reasons for the differences which highlight the significance of person-environment interactions related to learning to speak, i.e., learning or socialization (ibid):

Adult L2 learners have access to a more developed memory capacity than L1 learners and when they use it (or are required to use it, as in many pedagogic learning activities), differences between the language they produce and that produced by L1 learners occur. ... Another obvious source of difference between L1 and L2 acquisition lies in the fact that L2 learners have access to a previously acquired language, in some cases to several. There is clear evidence to show that this results in differences between L2 and L1 acquisition. (p. 109)

In other words, the fact that adult EFL learners' processes are different from those of child L1 learners is supported in the SLA literature.

Rather than conceptualizing the learner by internal variables such as introvert or extrovert, Bronfenbrenner described human beings as developing persons from an ecological perspective (1992: 146):

No characteristic of the person exists or exerts influence on development in isolation. Every human quality is inextricably embedded, and finds both its meaning and fullest expression in particular environmental settings, of which the family is a prime example. ... the one cannot be defined without reference to the other.

The idea of personality traits here is a dynamic and developmental one. This can be understood from a societal structure perspective, i.e., a person embedded in a society has different roles to play at different stages in life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 6):

[Roles are] the expectations for behaviour associated with particular positions in society. Roles have a magiclike power to alter how a person is treated, how she acts, what she does, and thereby even what she thinks and feels. This principle applies not only to the developing person but to the others in her world.

In other words, there is an irreducible relationship between the person and his/her environment. Bronfenbrenner (1992) further elaborates on this interdependence:

It is true that individuals often can and do modify, select, reconstruct, and even create their environments. But this capacity emerges only to the extent that the person has been enabled to engage in self-directed action as a joint function not only of his biological endowment but also of environment in which he or she developed. There is not one without the other. (p. 144)

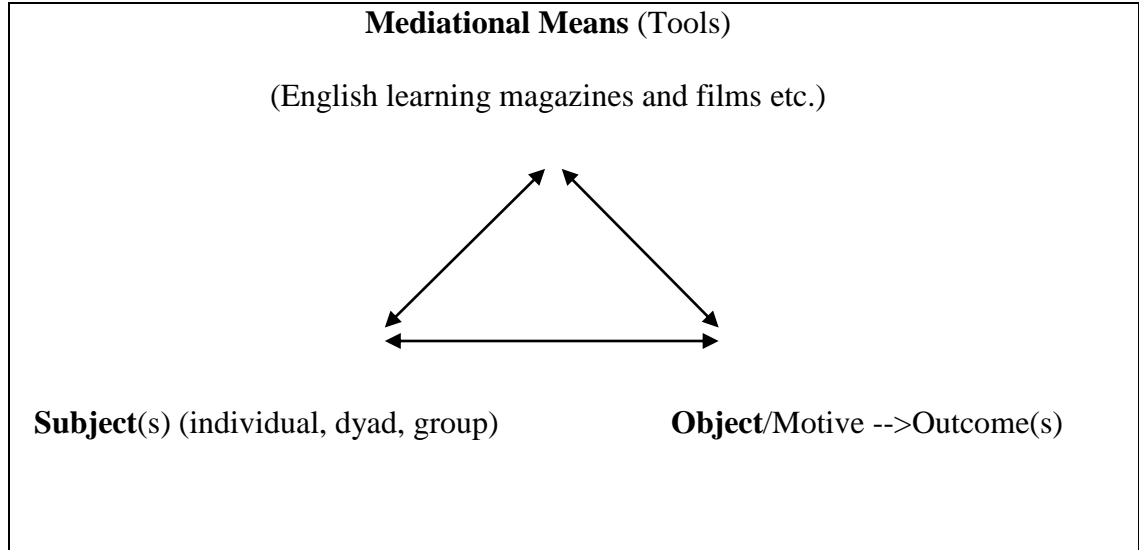
This will be discussed in greater detail when clarifying the concept of mediated agency which represents the dynamic process of the person knowing his/her local environment.

2.4.1.2 Mediation and mediated activities in the Zone of Proximal Development: a process of knowing the environment

Based on his research on child development, Vygotsky (1987) suggests that social interactions in meaningful social and cultural activities ‘guide’ human cognitive development. He explains that, while the human mind has a biological aspect which provides necessary human functions, it is culture that enables humans to manage these functions through interactions with the material environment and people in it. This process is called *mediation*. Wertsch et al. (1995: 22) write that ‘mediation is best thought of as a *process* involving the potential of cultural tools to shape action, on the one hand, and the unique use of cultural tools, on the other’. In a nutshell, mediation is an ongoing process of person-environment interaction as an individual develops. Its implicit aim is probably to cultivate socially and culturally competent individuals through learning and developing in the socialization process.

The interdependent relationship between the subject, mediational means and his/her object in a mediated EFL learning process may be as follows.

Figure 2.2 Mediation (adapted from Engeström et al., 1999, p. 30)



This mediation is a learning process which takes place in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978: 86) defines ZPD as:

The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

This means the developmental level is usually lower than the expected level of learning activities, i.e., ‘the only “good learning” is that which is in advance of development’ (ibid: 89). He also postulates that ‘an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development’ and its function is to help an individual accomplish his/her ‘independent developmental achievement’ (ibid: 90). Note that this ZPD is not a physical zone, but a metaphor used to explain the site of mediated learning and development.

According to Vygotsky (1978), learning first occurs in the inter-mental zone: complex interactions between the individual, other persons and/or artefacts; later, these are

transformed or appropriated into the intra-mental zone: the individual now has the higher psychological functions to carry out these mediated actions. This can be viewed as a lifelong process to achieve higher self-regulation in different tasks, especially for adult foreign language learners who have greater capacity to adapt between object-regulation, other-regulation and self-regulation:

An adult is not an autonomous, finalized knower, but an organism which recovers and utilizes earlier knowing strategies in situations which cannot be dealt with by self-regulation alone. (Frawley and Lantolf, 1985: 22)

In effect, Van der Veer and Valsiner (1991: 236) suggest that ‘adults’ attention is all mediated as a result of his/her historical and social development’. Furthermore, Kozulin (2005: 106) describes this person-environment developmental process as ‘a dynamic process full of upheavals, sudden changes, and reversals’. All in all, the development of higher mental abilities such as strategies for learning to speak a foreign language through mediated activities in learners’ everyday environments is considered as a continual and transformational process towards gaining more self-regulation.

2.4.2 SLSE as by-products in the mediated language learning process

The sociocultural theory is viewed as a holistic approach in the sense that it takes learning histories, motives, goals and beliefs about second language learning into consideration, which is in line with Bronfenbrenner’s concept of the learner as a developing person. This ongoing socialization process in the learners’ everyday learning practices determines to a large extent the way that they learn. Note that in an English-speaking environment, this socialization as first/second language *acquisition* is conducted

in English. In contrast, in most cases English is not the language for socialization in EFL *learning* environments such as Taiwan (see 2.2). Wertsch (1998: 34) underscores the social and historical situatedness of mediated action:

Mediated action is situated on one or more developmental paths ... Agents, cultural tools, and the irreducible tension between them always have a particular past and are always in the process of undergoing further change.

In other words, language learning is a complex and multi-dimensional and multisource phenomenon: both individual and collective, both psychological and social, both material and cognitive, and it entails both time and space since it is a developmental process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Larsen-Freeman, 2011). The role of strategy is formed in learners' everyday learning practices, in their interaction with their local learning environments and is a by-product in their learning processes (Donato and McCormick, 1994).

These strategies are considered to be a learner's decisions and behaviours aiming at desirable results (Gu, 2007), which do not exist in a vacuum but in person-environment units. Daniels (2008) elaborates on Vygotsky's description of the use of mediational tools in the ZPD:

Firstly, it speaks of the individual as an active agent in development. Secondly, it affirms the importance of contextual effects in that development takes place through the use of those tools which are available at a particular time in a particular place. (p. 60)

In the light of ZPD, Lantolf (2000) argues that 'the future of development' depends mainly on how sensitive individual learners are to their own proximal process in the ZPD,

i.e., negotiated assistance of available mediational means in different learning situations to achieve desirable results (see 2.4.1). In other words, the ‘self-construction’ nature of ZPD is based on a particular learner’s skill to know his/her environment, and to negotiate *appropriate* mediated activities in whatever environment. The environment is not ‘something to be *acted upon*’, but rather ‘*something to be interacted with*’ (Wertsch, 1998: 21).

In effect, Wertsch (1998) argues that mediated action may serve not one neat goal, but rather serves multiple purposes:

Furthermore, these multiple purposes, or goals, of mediated action are often in conflict. What this means is that in most cases mediated action cannot be adequately interpreted if we assume it is organized around a single, neatly identifiable goal. Instead, multiple goals, often in interaction and sometimes in conflict, are typically involved. (p. 32)

For instance, He (2002: 119) concludes that ‘effectiveness might not be the only concern’ for LLS choice because, ‘The strategies chosen have to be appropriate to the social role the learner is playing at that time in that position.’ Indeed, research has shown that relationship between learners and tasks are not fixed and *the same learner* can approach the same task differently when time and place change (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995). Also, this means that *no two learners* have exactly the same developmental process even if they learn in the same classroom and perform similar behaviours (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001). In other words, why learners do what they do in a certain way may be subject to change

across time and space. Moreover, the neglected ‘who’ (roles and expected behaviours in different situations) need to be considered (see 2.4.1; Michaels and Carello, 1981).

To sum up, ideally, the best way to learn to speak is in a language using environment in which socialization through the target language occurs. In reality, in EFL learning environments, owing to the lack of meaningful communication in English, the person-environment interactions may rely more on technical tools than on English native speakers. It should be borne in mind that this research is not looking at speaking strategies (i.e., language use), but strategies for learning to speak in EFL environments (i.e., strategy use). These learners are non-English major freshmen whose proficiency level is below intermediate (see 2.3.2). Also, the employment of strategies for learning to speak is formed through interaction with what is ‘available’ to them in their environments.

2.4.3 SLSE as niches as a result of person-environment negotiated interaction

From the ecological perspective, the environment exists earlier than the person and the person is embedded in the environment. According to Serpell (1993), the embeddedness, is constituted of:

Participation in a socioculturally structured activity involves adherence to the rules specifying correct performance [i.e., structure of participation]. Another dimension of embeddedness is *regulation* [i.e., location and timing]. (pp. 360- 361)

The embeddedness is largely magnified through different roles, i.e., expected behaviours of the particular positions he or she is associated with. However, this does not mean the person has no power to choose.

Dissatisfied with laboratory reports, Bronfenbrenner (1979) hoped to develop a theory that would shed light on our everyday life experiences and states that, in essence, ‘The child’s evolving phenomenological world is a “construction of reality” rather than a mere representation of it.’ (p. 10) That said, a person’s evolving construction of reality cannot be directly observed. He suggests that this constructed reality

... can only be inferred from patterns of activities as these are expressed in both verbal and non-verbal behaviour, particularly in the activities, roles, and relations in which the person engages. These three factors also constitute what are designated as the elements of the micro-system. (p. 11)

These three components of the micro-system will be further discussed later. It appears that in any given animal-environment ecosystem, the animal learns and evolves to meet the environmental requirements; the environment meets the needs of its animals (Michaels and Carello, 1981). Through describing the niches in which animals live, the animals can be understood. The main focus of this research is to depict and interpret non-English major college students’ emerging strategy use in this evolving and developing process by undertaking mediated activities to form niches within their local EFL environments.

In the following, I will discuss the agency-context relationship, i.e., the animal-environment system in ecological terms, entailing mediated agency, affordances, niches, and context as nested ecosystems, to gain insights of strategy development and use in EFL learning environments.

2.4.3.1 Mediated agency: person(s)-acting-with-mediational-means

Agency is most often assumed as an individual's property. For example, Carter and New (2004) and Gao (2007) designate agency as the will and self-regulatory capacity of a language learner's 'self'. Nonetheless, Wertsch et al. (1993) argue for *mediated* agency, namely, 'person(s)-acting-with-mediational-means', for two reasons:

Human agency extends beyond the skin first of all because it is frequently a property of dyads and other small groups rather than individuals. ... It extends beyond the skin in a second way owing to the involvement of cultural tools, or "mediational means"... inherently tied to historical, cultural, and institutional settings. (p. 337)

In other words, on the one hand, each individual was born into a social network which, although changing over time and space, provides a 'structure' for that individual as a social being. On the other, though their environments also change, each individual is constantly living in a physical environment. From the ecological viewpoint, the unit of analysis is not in an animal, but an animal-environment system (Michaels and Carello, 1981). That is, this mediated agency is not only the immediate dynamicity of situated learning activities but also learning as a developing and unfolding process throughout an individual's lifetime. The concept of 'affordance' can help to pave the way for descriptions of an individual's direct perception as micro-contextual experiences of resources and constraints in his/her local environment.

2.4.3.2 Affordances: social and material resources and constraints

According to Gibson (1986: 127), ‘The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill. ... It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment.’ Note that there are three facets of affordances: information about the environment, information for the animal, and different animals engaging in different behaviours (Michaels and Carello, 1981). The concept of affordances has to be considered in an animal-environment system: animals instinctively detect and learn to detect the affordances of their environments (ibid: 84). The importance of the theory of affordance is that it sheds light on things that are relevant to the behaviours of animals and it goes beyond the animal-environment dualism (Reed and Jones, 1982). Gibson (1986) defines affordances as

Properties of things *taken with reference to an observer* but not properties of the *experiences* of the *observer*. They are not subjective values; they are not feelings of pleasure or pain added to neutral perceptions. (p. 137)

That is, affordance is viewed as ‘a reciprocal relationship between an organism and a particular feature of its environment ... depends on what the organism does, what it wants and what is useful for it’ (Van Lier, 2000: 252). Simply put, in the sea of information in the environment, affordances are useful information to the animal that it engages in order to obtain more information in its process of knowing its environment. Information about affordances is, thus, “personal”; it is unique to particular animal-environment units’ (Michaels and Carello, 1981: 43).

Harré and Gillet (1994) illustrate this reciprocal animal-environment phenomenon in respect of a developing person and his/her environment:

Each person puts different interpretations on things accordingly as they find it useful to liken them to the contents of this or that other experience from their past and, on the basis of these conceptualizations, they plan their future interactions with these things, people, and situations. ... In this view, the “properties of things” [affordances] become dynamic, fluid, filled with anticipation, and almost limitless in their possible variety. (p. 136)

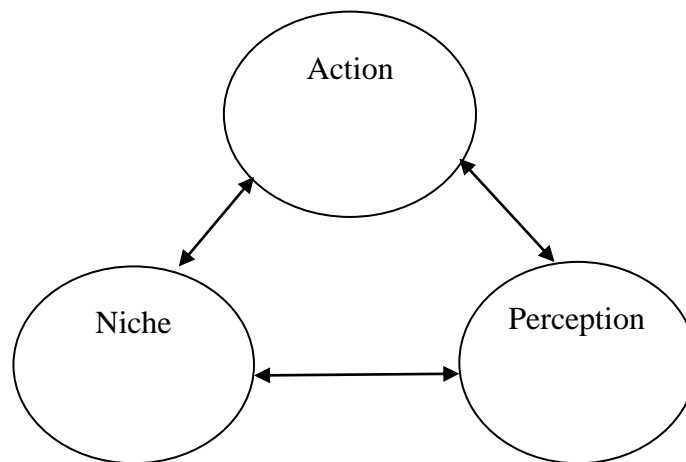
The animal is considered an investigator, not just an inhabitant. The nature of mediated agency emphasizes that an individual’s ongoing mediated activities and the environment are inseparable. LLSs emerging from this learning process are not inherently good or bad; they depend on what seems meaningful to a learner in different times and places. For instance, compared to language *using* environments, technical tools such as DVDs can prove to be a crucial aspect in language *learning* environments (see 2.2). Note that affordances not only enable action but also limit the forms of action we undertake (Wertsch, 1998). As Wertsch et al. (1993) explain, the importance of technical tools as mediational means, which appears less attended to in Vygotsky’s original discussion, is that they can shape the path of action and thus deserve careful consideration.

2.4.3.3 Environmental niche: a set of affordances

Gibson (1986: 128) explains that ecologists’ use of the word ‘niche’ refers to ‘how an animal lives’ both physically and psychologically. That is, a niche is a set of affordances which combine certain environmental features suitable to a particular animal. This explains ‘the complementarity of the animal and the environment’: the animal fits into the environment, the environment fits around the animal (Michaels and Carello, 1981). It

should be noted that ‘a niche is more than a location for the animal; it reflects and supports their way of life’ (ibid: 44). The concept of affordances brings action and perception together and that of niche describes the animal action and perception in the environment in a visible form.

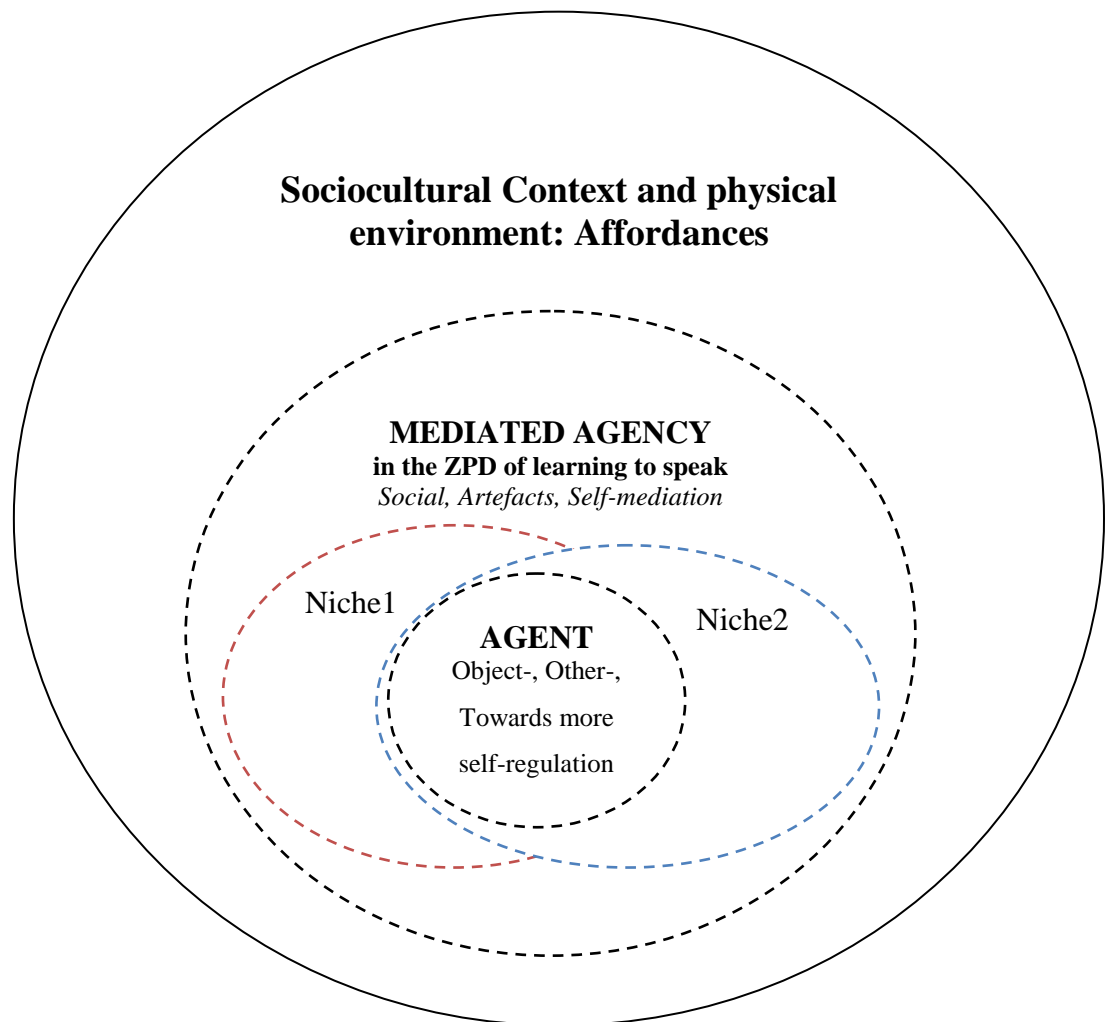
Figure 2.3 Schematic of the co-implicative relations among actions, perceptions, and the environmental niches (Michaels and Carello, 1981, p. 145)



In the natural environment, survival would be lower animals’ primary goal; people, as discussed earlier, can create a more complex human-made environment to change its affordances and expand the range of their goals (Michaels and Carello, 1981). Regarding the mediational resources as potential affordances for different individuals in their language learning environment, Lantolf (2000) and Gao (2007) both stress material resources, i.e., artefacts and material conditions with their associated cultural practices, social resources, i.e., social agents, and self, i.e., self-mediation and discursive resources.

It should be borne in mind that these affordances exist concurrently and are also often integrated (Gao, 2007). In the context of strategy use in EFL learning processes, the idea of a ‘niche’ is considered the minimal system that can be described through mediated activities in an individual learner’s ZPD. That is, strategy use is an individual learner’s direct detection of useful information in the environment when engaging in different mediated activities in constructing his/her own ZPD of learning to speak English.

Figure 2.4 Analytic framework I : strategies as environmental niches



2.4.3.4 Context as nested ecosystems

Bronfenbrenner (1979) considered a developing person as an inseparable part of his/her ecological system. He argues that the larger interpersonal structures, the complex social interconnections between settings, need to be taken into consideration when looking into human development. For instance, in a mother-child dyad, there are ‘third parties’ such as the father and the mother’s co-workers who could influence the development of the child, directly or indirectly. This is what he termed ‘N+2 systems’ (ibid: 5). In the case of English language learning, people who are not present in the immediate setting such as previous English language teachers or learners’ parents could have a lasting impact on learning in any situations.

To be more specific, Bronfenbrenner (1979) extends the theoretical conception of an environment beyond behaviours of individuals to include a dynamic and systematic view of settings which helps to illuminate ‘environmental obstacles and opportunities and the remarkable potential of human beings to respond constructively to an ecologically compatible milieu once it is made available’ (p. 7). The core of the ecological environment, i.e., micro-system, is conceived as an immediate setting of direct face-to-face interactions with the developing person. Bronfenbrenner (1992) states:

A micro-system is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical and material features and containing other persons with distinctive characteristics of temperament, personality, and systems of belief. (p. 148)

The social interconnections between settings in which the developing person can participate and have an influence on people in the immediate setting are called a meso-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1992):

The meso-system comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (e.g., the relations between home and school, school and workplace). In other words, a meso-system is a system of micro-systems. (p. 148)

At the level of local environments, every relationship appears unique, for example, one's family members and English language teachers at different learning stages. This research study asks questions considering everyday learning activities in local environments.

The settings in which the developing person may or may not be, but the events which take place there affects his/her immediate setting, are called an exo-system (ibid):

The exo-system comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not ordinarily contain the developing person, but in which events occur that influence processes within the immediate setting that does contain that person (e.g., for a child, the relation between the home and the parent's workplace; for a parent, the relation between the school and the neighbourhood group). (p. 148)

Examples of such events are the decisions made in teachers' offices or the administration buildings. Finally, the overarching patterns of ideology and organization of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture are referred to as a macro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1992):

The macro-system consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exo-systems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other broader social context, with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems. The macro-system may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture, subculture, or other broader social context. (pp. 149-150)

These inner systems of the nest demonstrate a striking similarity in terms of structure and functions within a macro-system, e.g., a society, and are markedly different between two societal or cultural systems such as China and the United Kingdom (Gao, 2006). The Taiwanese macro-system also appears to be structured in a particular fashion, including, for example, the implementation of the GEPT system and educational reforms in English language education as discussed in 1.1.

Specifically, this view of mutually embedded nested ecosystems of the environment makes it possible to ‘describe systematically and to distinguish the ecological properties of these larger social contexts as environments for human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 8).’ For instance, learners’ university major, the pressure of course – e.g., elective or required – and curricula can have a major influence in the EFL learning process (Oxford and Nyikos, 1989). Chamot (2005: 113) urges:

Learning strategies are sensitive to the learning context ...A particular learning strategy can help a learner in a certain context achieve learning goals that the

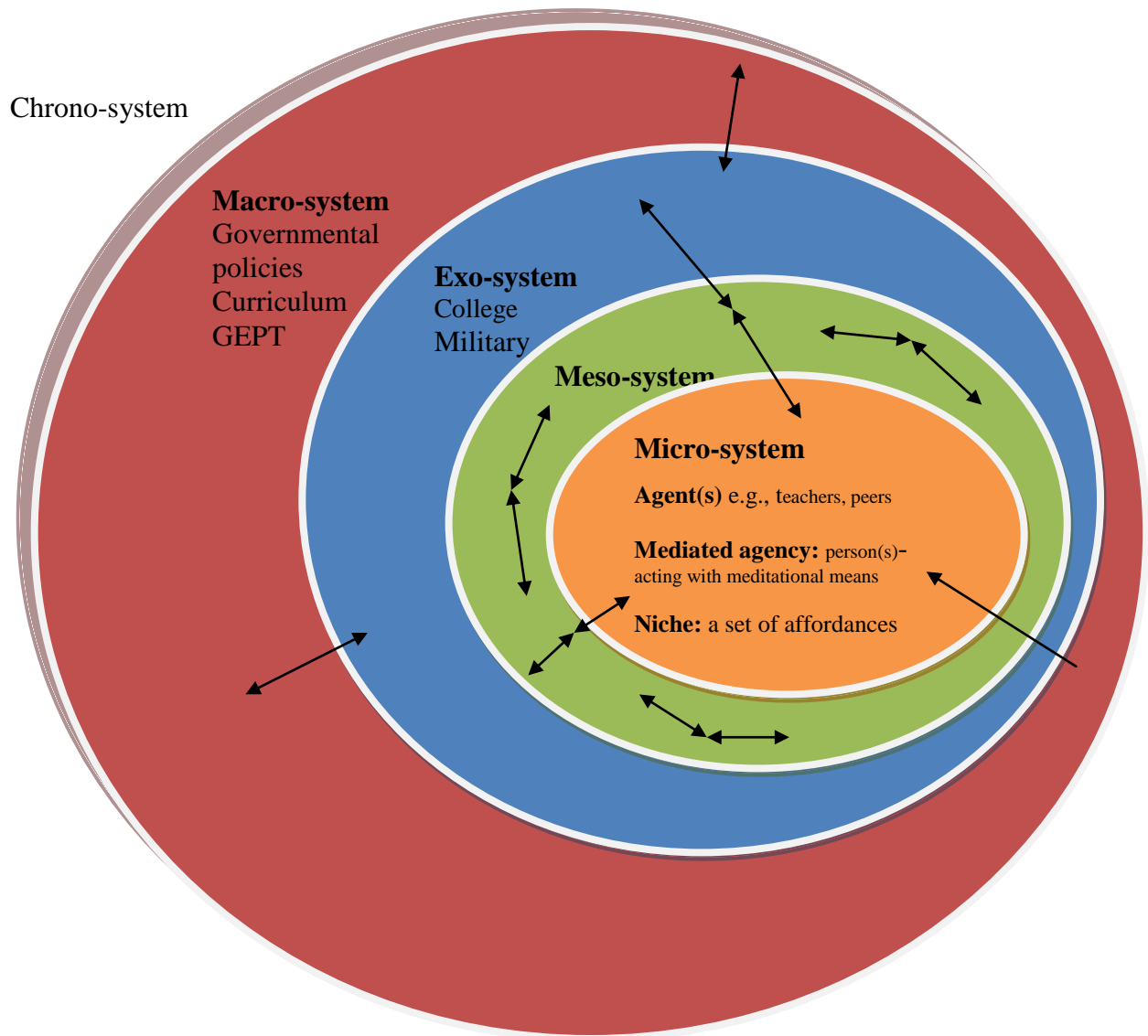
learner deems important, whereas other learning strategies may not be useful for that learning goal.

Bronfenbrenner (1988: 83) added chrono-system, i.e., the domain of time to this context view because 'its design permits one to identify the impact of prior life events and experiences, singly or sequentially, on subsequent development'. The historical perspective is also in line with the sociocultural perspective and the evolving and developing animal-environment system based on the ecological stance.

As we can see from the above discussion, although there are studies focusing on LLS use in social contexts, many of these are conducted in language-using environments and the agency may still seem the main focus. For example, after presenting a global view of his participants' strategy use in both contexts, China and Hong Kong, Gao (2007) presented four cases which focused on the changes in strategy use as the participants exercised their will and capacity to adapt to the new context, a Hong Kong English-medium education university. Parks and Raymond (2004) argue that some portraits of the good language learner appear to be simplistic and report their Chinese participants' strategy use on a MBA programme in Canada as an emergent, complex and socially situated phenomenon. That is where He's (2002) first-person account of her strategy use in different contexts at different stages of learning fills the gap between learning in EFL and ESL environments across time and space. In effect, she (ibid: 118) suggests that, 'A dynamic and developmental view should be applied to the design of studies to catch up with the ever-changing nature of LLS use, even among learners with similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds.' This research attempts to depict this dynamic and developmental view of

LLS use in respect to learning to speak English in Taiwanese EFL environments, which seems to have been overlooked.

Figure 2.5 Analytical framework II : a sociocultural-ecological perspective



2.4.4 Summary

English is most often not the language for socialization in EFL environments such as Taiwan. In LLS research, the conceptualization of ‘context’ appears mainly to refer to tasks and social context. Based on this framework, learners are considered as developing persons who play different roles in different situations; their evolving learning as a process of knowing the environment; their emergent strategies for learning to speak as niches formed in their local environments with constancy and change in their ongoing person-environment interactions, since these learners began their EFL learning in the Taiwanese environment.

CHAPTER 3 THE NATURAL HISTORY OF MY RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

Though I was aware of the difference between EFL and ESL environments, after coming to the United Kingdom for study, I myself became an ESL learner. Also, my initial reading on mainstream LLS research before data collection left the impression that strategy use was discussed in relation to classroom tasks in language classrooms as immediate learning environments. At this stage, I conceptualized SLSEs on the basis of my initial understanding and reading with an intention to ‘map out’ students’ learning activities both inside and outside the EFL classroom, and here is the set of questions used to guide my data collection in the field:

1. What opportunities to learn to speak English do students have outside the classroom (i.e., school settings, home, leisure time) and what speaking learning strategies do they employ?

- (1) What are the situations? (where, who, when, how often)

- (2) Why are they in these situations?

- (3) What problems do they report having encountered in the local learning context?

- (4) What do they gain from these situated learning experiences?

2. What opportunities to learn to speak English do students have inside the classroom and what speaking learning strategies do they employ?

- (1) What are the situations/language-related episodes? (where, who, when, how often)

- (2) What kind of classroom activities?

- (3) What problems do they report having encountered in the classroom learning

situations?

(4) What do they gain from these situated learning experiences?

3. What is the relationship between students' strategic learning outside the classroom and their strategy use in relation to classroom tasks?

(1) What are the individual students' goals for learning to speak English?

(2) Do their goals change over time?

(3) Does their use of speaking learning strategies change over time?

This research focuses on non-English majors learning to speak English in Taiwanese EFL environments. Five participants were chosen out of twenty-eight students who were taking a listening and speaking class in the school. Interviews were the main method and transcripts were the main source of data collected from 06 September 2010 to 25 January 2011. A semi-structured interview was used as the main method to elicit the five participants' self-constructed reality of learning to speak English in their local EFL environments. Two four-member focus group interviews with three participants and friends and family invited by the participants were used to examine the wider social context of these participants. The researcher observed the 15 classes taken by the focus students from 06 September to 29 December 2010. In addition, to obtain personal everyday learning experiences in the past, I asked the participants to write an English language learning autobiography. To record their ongoing everyday English language learning process individually, the participants were asked to keep learner diaries. Other documents were scrutinized, including English language learning magazines used by the

participants, their examination papers, longhand copies and test-books. The rationale of each method will be discussed below.

On reflection, data collection proved a turning point in my research journey. During my data collection, I was immersed in the once familiar environment and found it was made strange because of the transitions between my doctoral study in the United Kingdom and my new identity as a researcher in the research site. This ‘strangeness’ became more apparent when I began to listen and observe as a researcher, rather than as a teacher. My overseas experiences and hidden ESL assumptions, which arguably had ‘blinded’ me to a certain extent before data collection, were called into question. Through the process of working with and from my data I was able to be more critical towards the main-stream LLS research and the conceptualization of SLA theories which these studies stem from. The data challenged my assumptions and thus enabled me to think more deeply, along with the wide reading I engaged in to seek to explain the participants’ local reality. This will be further discussed later on.

In this chapter, I will firstly set forth the methodological approach and research design of this study. This will be followed by a description of how I identified my research site and selected my participants. Since ecological realism highlights the significance of direct person-environment interactions in local environments, the research site and the classroom setting will be described in detail. Next, I will address ethical issues and my role in the research process after presenting my data collection schedule and methods. I will also briefly discuss issues relating to the language used in my interviews, and how

the interviews were conducted and transcribed for further analysis. Finally, I will explain how my research questions were (re)formulated after the data collection period and how I analysed my data to answer these questions.

3.2 My methodological approach and research design

A recent survey reports that the number of qualitative research studies in the language teaching and learning area published in fifteen journals has been increasing since 2000 (Richards, 2009). With regard to LLS studies in Taiwan, Yang, N. D. (2006: 94) urges that research should go beyond strategy-counting questionnaire results. In fact, a shift in research from generalization (e.g., SILL-based research), which implies that LLS and strategy use are universally effective, to specificity and authenticity (e.g., case studies), which recognises LLS and strategy use as context-dependent, has been gaining ground (Chamot, 2004; Gao, 2007; Hsiao and Oxford, 2002; Oxford et al., 2004; Rubin et al., 2007; White et al., 2007).

This research is best viewed through the framework of phenomenography for four reasons. Firstly, phenomenography not only is developed from studies of learning in higher education (Marton, 1981) but is also ‘a method which so vividly portrays differing conceptualizations [that it] must have direct relevance to teaching and learning’ (Entwistle, 1997: 129). In other words, by revealing the complexity of the perceptions of the same phenomena, university students might be encouraged to reflect on how they learn. Marton (1994) defines phenomenography as:

The empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which

various phenomena in, and aspects of, the world around us are experienced, conceptualized, understood, perceived, and apprehended. (p. 4424)

That is, it is a relational, experiential, contextual and qualitative approach (Marton, 1988a). Svensson (1997: 162) stresses that the most important features of this approach include: the aim to generate categories of description (see Chapter 4), the open explorative form of data collection (see 3.4) and the interpretative character of the analysis of data (see also 3.6). Since its primary focus is on mapping the relations between human beings and the world around them, this fits with the research questions posed in this study considering the relationship between the strategy use of non-English major first-year cadets and the EFL environment they are in.

Secondly, it is worth mentioning that phenomenographers (e.g., Orenk, 2008) and LLS researchers (see 2.3) both have the pedagogical goal of facilitating teaching and learning in mind. For instance, Marton (1988a: 146) states that:

A careful account of the different ways people think about phenomena may help uncover conditions that facilitate the transition from one way of thinking to a qualitatively 'better' perception of reality.

Specifically, phenomenography seeks to answer the following questions (Marton, 1994: 4424): (1) What does it *mean* to say that some people are better at learning than others? (2) Why are some people better at learning than others? That is, researchers map the ways of understanding and conceptualizing people's lived world in order to look for better ways to facilitate learning in specific environments. This research shares the same goal of

finding ‘*better*’ ways to facilitate individual students’ learning to speak English in their local environments.

Thirdly, phenomenography is interested in depicting second-order perspectives (i.e., individual learners’ conceptions of the world) (ibid: 145). What is more, phenomenography started with dissatisfaction with an information-processing model of learning (Säljö, 1997) and this dissatisfaction is shared by the current research (see Chapter 2). This will be further discussed later on.

Fourthly, phenomenography assumes that ‘thinking is described in terms of what is perceived and thought about; the research is never separated from the object of perception or the content of thought’ (Marton, 1988a: 145). This non-dualistic stance is compatible with the ecological view which suggests that ‘knowings ...*must* stand in some sort of adaptive relation to the environment’ (Michaels and Carello, 1981:112). Moreover, Richardson (1999) pinpoints that prominent phenomenographers such as Marton and Booth (1997) advocate a realist interpretation. Svensson (1997: 165) puts his view of knowledge as follows:

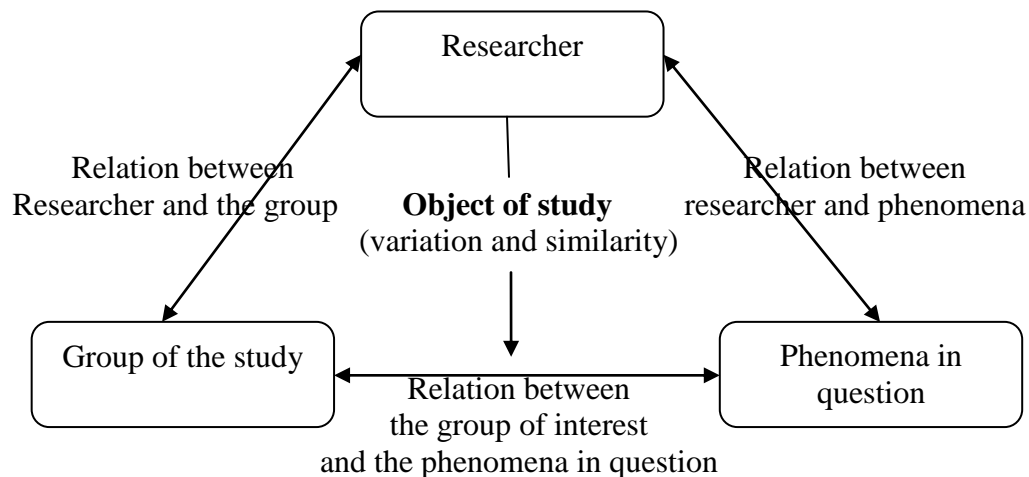
Conceptions are dependent both on human activity and the world or reality external to any individual. ... the view of knowledge is that it is relational, not only empirical or rational, but created through thinking about external reality.

Indeed, realists believe that there is an objective environment out there (being) which each individual can perceive only in part (knowing) (Carter and New, 2004; Sealey and

Carter, 2004). In effect, phenomenographers are interested not only in seemingly right conceptions of reality but also ‘mistaken’ ones.

In the process of mapping people’s hidden constructions of reality, the relationship between the researcher, the group of the researcher’s interest, the phenomena in question, and the object of study can be illustrated as follows.

Figure 3.1 Object of Study (adapted from Stamouli and Huggard, 2007, p. 182)



To describe these second-order perspectives, there needs to be a process of ‘bracketing’ the researcher’s presumptions in order to ‘learn’ from research participants in the *Researcher- Group of the study* relation (Booth, 1997; Marton and Booth, 1997; Ornek, 2008). This bracketing also requires the researcher to make her experiences and assumptions clear (see 1.3) in the *Researcher and Phenomena in question* relation (Webb, 1997). In respect of *the object of study*, the researcher’s role is to raise ‘aspects of the

subjects' awareness from being un-reflected to reflected' (Marton, 1994: 4427). This process will be discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

The qualitative multiple case study method allows the researcher to report multiple perspectives on learners' everyday situated learning practices, which is also the aim of phenomenography (Lucas, 2001) and appears too complex for the survey. Nevertheless, the case study method is often criticised for its lack of capacity of generalizing the research findings. In respect of this criticism, Yin (2009:15) explains:

In doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).

Furthermore, Yin (ibid) makes clear that in a multiple case design, the number of cases is not following a 'sampling' logic, but a 'replication' logic, i.e., the research findings of different cases can work together to enhance the trustworthiness of the research study. This means every case is considered in its own right. Each case needs to be carefully selected according to the focus and research questions of the study. The actual process will be discussed below.

3.3 The research site

3.3.1 The school setting

The Academy is a two-year junior college for volunteer soldiers and in-service sergeants or non-commissioned officers (NCOs). It is under the dual supervision of the Ministry of National Defence (MND), which is directly in charge of officers and NCOs and goal-

oriented military training, and the MOE, which is in charge of the evaluation of the teaching faculty, the Academy's teaching performance and academic standard and process-oriented future development. In Chapter 1, I have briefly introduced how the MOE has been promoting English learning and English medium education at university level in Taiwan as a macro-system. Here I will explain why the MND is also keen to promote English language learning and training in all military schools including the Academy as an exo-system.

The relationship between Taiwan and the United States in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act lays the foundation for cooperative security and military operations. As a result of the cooperation projects between Taiwan and the United States, the importance of learning English has often been emphasized, interpreters are in demand and speaking English is largely seen as the most important skill to learn. In-service NCOs who can meet the required score for a specific course on the English Comprehension Level (ECL) test held by the American Institute in Taiwan can have the privilege to be sent to the U.S. for intensive training and will be promoted after they come back to Taiwan. Though ECL does not test speaking, the opportunity and prospect of meeting English native speakers have made English language speaking a priority for those who set their goals on being eligible for overseas training.

The students have slightly different secondary school educational backgrounds, i.e., academic-oriented senior high graduates or skill-oriented vocational school graduates. They enrol in eight different engineering-related majors including Aircraft Engineering,

Power Mechanical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Computer Science and Communication Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Vehicle Engineering, and Civil Engineering. It is required that they live in campus dormitories belonging to different units. Generally, even number weeks have long weekends (from Friday 6:00 pm till Sunday 8:00pm) and odd number weeks have short weekends (from Saturday 8:00 am till Sunday 8:00 pm). In the year 2010, there were 1,466 first-year students (1,348 males and 118 females). Except for the in-service NCOs, all freshmen had an eight-week basic training boot camp from 5 July 2010 to 27 August 2010.

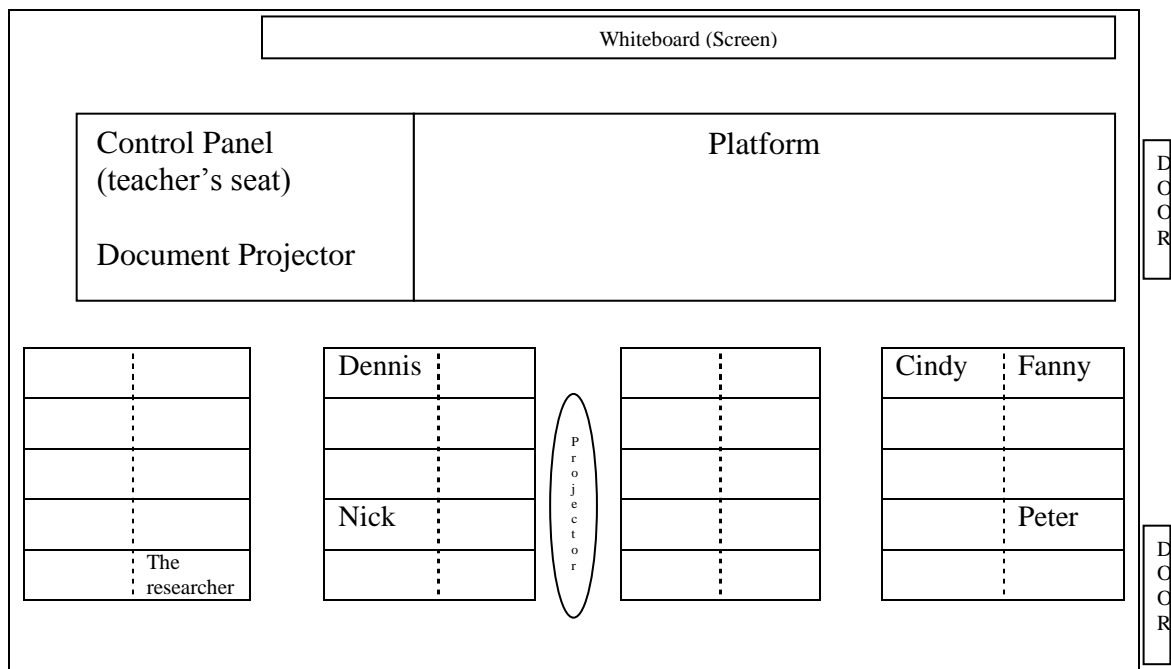
Conducting this research in a place with which I was familiar and had worked as a full-time lecture gave the capacity to understand things from the participants' perspective (Richards, 2003). However, by the time I started collecting data I had been away from my teaching post for two years. This, on the other hand, helped to raise my awareness of the activities and setting in the environment which I used to take for granted. This will be further discussed in 3.4. In short, the Academy was chosen because it was easier for me to gain access. To the best of my knowledge, there appears to be little LLS research conducted in military settings with cadets.

It should be borne in mind that, on the one hand, this research site shares the commonality of EFL environments as discussed in 2.2. On the other, the descriptions of the school setting and classroom setting demonstrate the unique features of this learning environment. For example, in a military school, the first and foremost ethic is obedience and the superintendent's approval is essential. A document approving my research was

signed by the superintendent, and the administration system then recorded this, before the data collection took place in September 2010. In fact, the apparently rigid and collective military routine sometimes made it difficult even for an ‘insider’. For example, normally I had to give my female participants proof of the approved document beforehand and had to ‘collect’ them in person before we could sit down and have our scheduled one-to-one interviews. Also, since they were following military routine, all the interviews were conducted either in the evenings or weekends. The classroom setting will be described in greater detail in the following section.

3.3.2 *The classroom setting*

Figure 3.2 The classroom setting



The fifteen classroom observations were undertaken in a computerized, air-conditioned, and internet-connected language laboratory. One desktop and a headset with a

microphone were furnished for each seat. The teacher could control the Internet access and what was shown on students' desktops. The tables were heavy and fixed to the ground. It was not easy to move around in the classroom because the aisles were narrow. Since this was an optional course, the students were from ten different original classes allocated according to their majors. There were twenty-eight students. There were forty seats. Some of the desktops broke down on occasions and the students were allowed to move to the seats where the desktops were working. The teacher normally talked from her seat with a microphone. She checked on the students and walked around while they were doing pair work and tests.

The teacher chose two English language learning magazines accompanied by DVDs for this course: one elementary level; the other intermediate level. Most of the time, she played the DVDs or asked the students to practise with the DVDs on their own desktops. This type of activity was usually followed up with an oral test or volunteer individuals/pairs acting out the material in front of the class. She gave written tests for mid-term and final examinations. She normally showed the quiz sheets on the computer screens and she used the document projector when correcting a writing assignment and revealing answers to quizzes to the class. She used video clips on YouTube through the Internet when teaching English songs.

3.4 Research participants and data collection process

Stake (2005: 443) states that, 'As a form of research, case study is defined by interest in an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used.' According to his definition of

case selection, this study is primarily an instrumental multiple case study. That is, though each case has its unique value and the researcher is genuinely interested in his/her emerging strategy development, the main focus is the phenomenon of their context-sensitive evolvement of SLSEs which demonstrates how they interact with the local environment both individually and collectively. Stake (2006) suggests that in a multiple case study design, the number of cases should be four to ten. After discussing with my supervisor, I decided to select five participants to begin with.

3.4.1 Phase I: purposive sampling

In qualitative research, purposive sampling is carried out with a specific group in mind (Flick, 2009). Here I will present how I gained access to the optional course, the teacher, and then, the participants.

With regard to the purpose of this research study, a two-hour-per-week optional class, called ‘Listening and Speaking in the Language Laboratory’, on Wednesday morning from 10:00 am to 11:50 pm in the freshman year was chosen. In a Confucianist society such as Taiwan, teachers are expected to be an authority in their classrooms and another teacher’s presence might bring some tension and uneasiness. To avoid this awkwardness of ‘being evaluated and supervised’ or at least keep it to a minimum, there needs to be a reasonable degree of mutual trust between the researcher and the teacher. After I learned she would be teaching this optional course, I sent an e-mail to the teacher to ask her if she would like to take part in this study. Since the teacher and I were similar in age, had worked together for two years and were both doing doctoral studies, the teacher felt

comfortable to let me sit in her class, and readily gave her consent by e-mail in March 2010. As mentioned earlier, there appear to be few, if any, speaking classes before college. By choosing to take the optional conversation class, it was assumed that all the twenty-eight students were interested in developing their speaking skills and my participants were no exception.

As I had been away for two years and since this is a two-year junior college, most students were new to me and vice versa. Based on the information of these twenty-eight students' GEPT performance report, I chose three male students and two female students who were categorized into 'holds GEPT elementary level certificate', 'passed first phase of GEPT elementary level' and 'none'. To ensure variation, the selection was based on the following criteria:

1. *Gender*: There were five females and twenty-three males taking the optional class. I decided to include both genders because this would allow me to reflect on my interaction with different genders. I chose the only two female students who were from the same original class in the hope that they might be able to support each other throughout the research process.

2. *English proficiency levels*: In the LLS literature, there appears to be a correlation between proficiency levels and strategy use. To maximize the variation, I asked for the students' GEPT results because this is the institutionalized English language proficiency test in Taiwan: thirteen students reported that they had GEPT elementary level

certificates (three females, ten males); three passed only the first phase (one female, two males); twelve had never taken nor passed it (one female, eleven males). Of the chosen female pair, one had a GEPT elementary level certificate, the other had passed the first phase. I then chose three male students from other original classes, one had a GEPT elementary level certificate, another had passed the first phase, and the third had not passed any GEPT elementary level tests.

3. Their military English class teachers: Because of my regular contact with my full-time colleagues, I felt that working with students from my full-time colleagues' classes could make it harder to maintain the anonymity of the participants, and should therefore be avoided. However, in the case of selecting a male with a GEPT certificate, I was left with little choice (Appendix 9) and I chose from one of my colleagues' classes. Fortunately, the participant was able to stay 'anonymous' throughout the process.

The second time the class met, I was introduced by the teacher to the students very briefly as a teacher and a doctoral student in the United Kingdom. My five potential participants belonged to four different companies (the two female students belonged to the same company). The next evening, in order to have the opportunity to meet them privately in the English section office, I had to go to the Cadet Command Office to make a request. Though I did explain to the officers, they did not tell my potential participants why they were singled out. At first, they assumed that they must have failed their English tests or assignments. After we sat down on the sofa, I revealed more about myself to them and explained what I was doing. I then gave them the consent forms (Appendix 10) to

help them understand what it meant to take part in this research study through more concrete descriptions. I asked if there were any questions they would like to ask me before making their decisions. I had thought they might avoid ‘complicating their life’ in a new environment, but to my surprise, they signed willingly on the spot without any further enquiries.

In the male group, Nick (nineteen years old) had a GEPT elementary certificate, Dennis (twenty) had passed the first phase of the GEPT elementary level test, and Peter (nineteen) had not passed GEPT elementary level. In the female group, Cindy (nineteen years old) had a GEPT elementary level certificate and Fanny (twenty-two) had passed the first phase of the GEPT elementary level. The assumption of their interest in speaking English and the group dynamics proved to be true to a large extent and all the participants worked with me till the end of the semester.

3.4.2 Phase II: in-depth investigation

3.4.2.1 Naturally occurring data

Observation: classroom and school settings

The main classroom observation took place in the conversation class from 08 September 2011 to 29 December 2010, fifteen classes in total. Below is my class observation schedule.

Table 3.1 Classroom observation schedule

Wednesday 10:00 am – 11:50 pm at the Language Laboratory			
Date	Observation Notes (written	Duration of audio	Note

	in English)	Recording	
08 Sep 2010	yes	no	Students attending their first optional class and some did not know which class they should go.
15 Sep 2010	yes	no	'Textbooks' not decided yet; Joy was introduced to the class by the teacher.
29 Sep 2010	yes	01:36:40	5 participants signed their consent forms on 16 Sep.
06 Oct 2010	yes	01:34:16	
13 Oct 2010	yes	01:47:07	
20 Oct 2010	yes	01:47:12	
27 Oct 2010	yes	01:55:46	
10 Nov 2010	yes	01:40:58	Mid-term exam.
17 Nov 2010	yes	01:43:09	
24 Nov 2010	yes	01:50:18	Joy as 'the other judge'. Cindy was absent.
01 Dec 2010	yes	01:47:01	
08 Dec 2010	yes	01:47:15	Dennis was absent.
15 Dec 2010	yes	01:48:22	Dennis was absent.
22 Dec 2010	yes	01:51:08	Final exam: oral test.
29 Dec 2010	yes	01:50:10	Final exam: written test.

Although classroom observation is one of the well-established methods in LLS research (Cohen, 1998, 2011), it has been shown to give limited access to learners' thought processes (White et al., 2007) and can only 'contribute to the recording of *overt* behaviour' (Naiman et al., 1996: 73). In the present research, it was used to gain a better understanding of the classroom atmosphere and to backup audio recordings at first. What I only realised later was, keeping observation notes (Cohen, 1998) helped to sensitise the researcher to the participants' learning experiences and to form a common ground between the researcher and the participants for the one-to-one interviews. For example, Cindy mentioned that the teacher paid special attention to her during her interview on 13 Oct 2010 and this interaction was observed as the excerpt shows:

Classroom observation 3

DATE: 13 Oct 2010		PLACE: Language Lab 1 (40 seats)	
CLASS TIME: 10:00am – 11:50am/28 students			
ABBREV.: the teacher – T ; the student(s) – S(s); the whole class -- C			
Time	Task	Activity Description	Notes

10:02am	Greeting	T was taking those Ss' information because they didn't do their homework.	Rewriting <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> in your own words within 200 words. [incl. Nick].
10:06am	An example assignment	T used the document projector to show Cindy's work and assigned Ss to read it sentence by sentence. T corrected Cindy's grammar in her writing with C.	Cindy's assignment was chosen by T.
10:20am	comment	T thought the writing was good, but it exceeded 200 words. Make the story shorter because stories need to be told, not just written.	One S was caught playing with his computer.

This indeed helped when doing individual (retrospective) interviews with the participants in relation to their course-related learning because there were times when they could not recall the classroom activities or the assigned homework. It also provided an opportunity to collect each participant's learner diary before his/her interview. This enabled me to observe the participants' out-of-class activities in the school settings including their dormitory, their original classrooms, their factories, and leisure areas such as the convenience store and the library.

3.4.2.2 Generated data

English language learning autobiography

Schumann (1997: 178) suggests that the merit of diaries and language learner autobiographies is that ‘they allow the learner to reveal what she believes is relevant’.

The participants were asked to write an English language learning autobiography before their first interview. I gave them a guide (Appendix 11) to facilitate their retrospective process, but not all of them followed the suggested structure. In fact, only Cindy tried.

The first round of one-to-one interviews with each participant was based on their written English language learning biographies. Though their writing may not be elaborative, the first interview helped not just to gain a better understanding of their past EFL learning experiences but to establish rapport with my participants.

Learner diary

They were also asked to keep a learner diary to record their thoughts and feelings in relation to their ongoing learning activities both inside and outside the classroom. The table below indicates the learner diary entries collected during this period.

Table 3.2 Learner diary entries

Participant	Sep 2010	Oct 2010	Nov 2010	Dec 2010	Total
Cindy	18,19,20,21,22,23,24,27,28,29,30	1,2,3,4,5,6,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,13,14,15,29	1,2,3,4,5,11,12,13,15,17,18,19,20,22,23,25,26,27,28	65
Fanny	23,24,25,26,27	1,2,3,4,5,10,11,16,18,20,21,23,25,26,28	1,3,6,8,9,11,14,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,26,27,28	1,2,4,6,7,9,11,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,22,23,24,25,27,28,29,30,31	62
Peter		2,5,6,9,10,13,17,20,23,27	4,7,8,9,13,17,20,22,26	8,10,14,18,20,21,22,25	27
Nick	27	1,4,6,12,20,22,23,27,28	6,8,9,10,15,16,21,23,26,29		20
Dennis	28,29,30	4,6,7,10,13,17,19,20,28	6,11,17,18		16

The learner diaries recorded the emergence of their strategy use in their process of knowing the environment. As Cohen (2011), Macaro (2001) and White et al. (2007) suggest, diaries are useful tools for collecting introspective data over a certain period of time and help to trace the learning process both inside and outside the classroom in this research. However, as Cohen (2011: 87) points out, one of the disadvantages is ‘many learners may not even mention their strategy use at all’. Therefore, the participants were given a suggested version of guided questions at the outset as a structure to help raise their awareness of their everyday learning activities. I hoped that this would help ensure learners’ the relevance of the data collected (Macaro, 2001: 46):

Date: Activity and situation (in class/outside class): With whom did I speak English: What was the topic? How do I feel? Things I found easy/things I found difficult: What should I do next?

To empower the participants, I explained that their learner diaries were used not only to record their thoughts and feelings but also to reduce the possibility of me imposing my agenda on them. In addition, their learner diaries would help both of us to be prepared for the interview. To use reciprocity to increase this participatory relationship between the researcher and the researched, I explained that I would be happy to comment on these diaries and that this would help their English language learning and give greater and useful insights into their own learning processes. Cindy, Fanny, Nick and Peter all tried to write in English. Dennis used English words from time to time. Nick, though keen at first, stopped writing at the end of November. Peter followed the guided-question pattern faithfully and gave short answers in English:

Date: 2010/10/6

Activities and situations:

In class: English class today

of class: The Beauty and Beast

Things I found easy: reading phrases

Things I found difficult: writing The Beauty and beast

What have I learned? grammar

do I feel the process? writing is important.

Cindy and Fanny took it most seriously and covered a wide range of their daily activities.

Cindy used both English and Chinese (when she did not know what they were in English)

in her diary; Fanny wrote in English only:

Cindy 24 Sep 2010

Today everybody can go home, but I can't. I have to stay at school. Although I envy them very much, I try to adjust my mood. I with my some classmates go to 中原大學附近的夜市, I eat lots of food, for example 壽司, 蜂蜜奶茶, 香烤杏鮑菇, 蔥燒包, 上海煎包. It's very delicious =) Also, I buy a pair of cute shoes. This is a beautiful night.

Fanny 18 Oct 2010

I got up early on Monday. We had a Army basic combat training in the morning. I so hungry that my spirit wasn't good. We didn't like Army basic combat training. I shared my trip about night market's local delicacies to my classmates. It was good that I thought did a happy thing in weekends.

But during mid-term and final examination weeks they both found it impossible to make time for this. They both reported that it took a lot of time to write in English. However, when looking back, they both agreed that the experience was helpful.

All in all, the balance between what I, the researcher, wanted and what the participants were willing to do was a delicate one. I did not want to take the risk of putting too much pressure on them. For example, I found that Peter and Dennis wrote all the entries in one

day because the dates were wrong. Though I decided to point it out, I encouraged them to keep on keeping their diaries. In fact, there were only two interviews conducted without the participant's diary entries: the last interview with Dennis who had been in intensive care and the last interview with Nick who was assigned as a student squad leader during that period. In most cases, I went to collect the learner diary entries from the participant the day before each interview.

Interview: semi-structured and focus group interviews

According to Brown and Dowling (1998: 72), doing interviews can be beneficial because:

Interviews enable the researcher to explore complex issues in detail, they facilitate the personal engagement of the researcher in the collection of data, they allow the researcher to provide clarification, to probe and prompt.

It seems widely accepted that the more unstructured the interviews are, the more they are likely to be considered as qualitative methods since researchers believe that every participant is different and should be approached as they are (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). Though phenomenographers are supposed to be open-minded, there should be 'a shared topic' between the researcher and the participants (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000). In this case, Richards (2003) suggests that when there is a clear topic or focus, semi-structured interviews might be more useful. Moreover, the contextualization of emerging SLSEs as environmental niches requires the participant to elaborate on his/her own unique learning process in his/her context. Therefore, a semi-structured individual interview, which is the preferred method in phenomenographic research (Marton, 1994; Ornek, 2008), was chosen as the main method for data collection.

Booth (1997) stresses that phenomenographic interviews are supposed to be open and deep. However, we must also bear in mind that these accounting practices may be socially and environmentally influenced (e.g., the students might say what they think the researcher wants to hear) (Orgill, 2002) and the details should be provided for examination. All interviews were audio recorded. The written-diary-entries-and-then-oral-interview pattern appeared to work reasonably well. The participants were invited to have at least four one-to-one interviews and one focus group interview when the researcher gave them the consent forms. Although later I e-mailed each of them a suggested ‘meeting-bi-weekly’ schedule for their interviews, most of the time I checked with them regarding the suitable date and time of the next interview through mobile calls and text messages. The interview schedules with all participants came out as below.

Table 3.3 Interview schedules

Methods Participant	1 st interview	2 nd interview	3 rd interview	4 th interview	5 th interview	6 th interview	Focus group interview
Cindy	30-09-‘10	13-10-‘10	29-10-‘10	07-12-‘10	11-01-‘11		22-01-‘11
Fanny	08-10-‘10	20-10-‘10	17-11-‘10	30-11-‘10	15-12-‘10	05-01-‘11	22-01-‘11
Peter	07-10-‘10	18-10-‘10	01-11-‘10	15-11-‘10	29-11-‘10	04-01-‘11	18-01-‘11
Nick	30-09-‘10	16-10-‘10	30-10-‘10	04-12-‘10	12-01-‘11		
Dennis	28-09-‘10	12-10-‘10	26-10-‘10	09-11-‘10	22-11-‘10	06-01-‘11	

The duration of audio recording of all individual interviews is as follows.

Table 3.4 Duration of one-to-one interview audio recordings

Methods	1 st interview	2 nd interview	3 rd interview	4 th interview	5 th interview	6 th interview	Total

Participant							
Cindy	00:42:07	00:32:24	02:43:37	01:55:39	02:35:28		08:29:15
Fanny	00:49:36	01:07:55	01:59:27	01:27:02	00:51:10	02:32:40	08:27:50
Peter	00:45:46	01:17:09	01:07:54	01:34:54	01:28:52	02:04:03	08:18:38
Nick	01:19:31	01:30:25	02:16:14	02:44:15	02:46:29		10:36:54
Dennis	01:00:38	00:43:46	00:39:45	01:39:28	01:02:31	01:12:06	06:19:14

Most of the interviews were held in the English language section in the teaching area on campus in the evenings because the participants were required to live on campus.

Whenever I held interviews, I would offer drinks and tried to make the atmosphere informal and relaxed. Though I had an interview schedule (Appendix 12), the interview questions were based on their individual learner diary entries between two interviews and their prior interview transcript(s). The exact examples of the interview transcripts including those on English language learning autobiographies are given in the findings chapter.

Focus group interviews

I asked the participants to find three members to form a four-person focus group and the only selection criterion was to find those with whom they discussed English learning or spoke English regularly. These included family, friends, current/past classmates.

However, Dennis and Nick could not identify such members and their focus group interviews were, therefore, cancelled. The duration of all focus group interviews is as follows:

Table 3.5 Duration of focus group interviews

Participant	Group members	Date	Duration
Cindy & Fanny	San and Amelia: classmates and Saturday conversation group members	22 Jan 2011	01:18:19
Peter	Peter's elder brother; his brother's girlfriend; his girlfriend	18 Dec 2010	00:58:58
Feedback sheets	5 participants	25 Jan 2011	5 sheets

The aim of conducting focus group interviews was to generate more information through discussions of their beliefs and experiences in learning to speak English in the same environment. While Dennis and Nick were not able to organize such a group, Cindy and Fanny suggested a combined group because they were not only classmates of the original class and the optional class but also Saturday English conversation class members. I held two focus group interviews: one with Peter's group; the other with Cindy and Fanny's group. The actual examples of the discussions are given in the findings chapter.

Group dynamics is an important aspect in focus group interviews (Flick, 2009). In Peter's group, he invited his girlfriend, his elder brother and his elder brother's girlfriend who he thought had influenced his English language learning. This was the first focus group interview I had ever held, I was more like a chairperson and I had to ask questions to keep the conversation going. Peter's girlfriend was too shy to utter a full sentence, and her answers were restricted to yes, no, or she simply smiled. In Cindy and Fanny's group, Fanny seemed to be the dominating voice. I was there to 'keep them on track', because I felt that they were so relaxed that they kept drifting away from the topic of English learning to leadership in the military. Also, I tried to engage the only male student in this group.

Other documents

In order to establish the phenomenon as experienced as fully as possible (Marton, 1994), it was suggested to the participants to bring their learning materials (textbooks or personal choices) along from the second interview on. The focus was on the learners' developmental process of person-environment interactions.

Table 3.6 Documents collected from each participant

Participant	documents
Cindy	Her English language learning magazines, examination papers, test-book, and longhand copies.
Fanny	Her examination papers, test-book and notes.
Peter	His English language learning magazines, examination papers, test-book and notes.
Nick	His examination papers and test-book.
Dennis	His examination papers, test-book and notes.

Summary of data collected in the study

A summary of the data collected during the study is given below:

- One-to-one interviews

A. Cindy: five interviews (total duration 8:29:15).

B. Fanny: six interviews (total duration 8:27:50).

C. Peter: six interviews (total duration 8:18:38).

D. Nick: five interviews (total duration 10:36:54)

E. Dennis: six interviews (total duration 6:19:14).

- Focus group interviews

A. Cindy, Fanny, Sam and Amelia (duration 1:18:19).

B. Peter, his girlfriend, Peter's older brother and his girlfriend (duration 00:58:58).

- Learner diary entries

A. Cindy: sixty-five entries.

B. Fanny: sixty-two entries.

C. Peter: twenty-seven entries.

D. Nick: twenty entries.

E. Dennis: sixteen entries.

- Other documents

A. Cindy: Her English language learning magazines, examination papers, test-book, and longhand copies.

B. Fanny: Her examination papers, test-book and notes.

C. Peter: His English language learning magazines, examination papers, test-book and notes.

D. Nick: His examination papers and test-book.

E. Dennis: His examination papers, test-book and notes.

3.4.2.3 Reflection

I learned from the classroom observation in many aspects. For example, when I first started, I found myself thinking about how I might teach the class. I had to remind myself of my role as a researcher and observer, not a teacher. Though I enjoyed being an observer in the classroom, the teacher seemed to feel under pressure because of my presence at times. To reassure her of my support and gratitude, I most often stayed for a quick lunch after the class.

Furthermore, because it was the individual participants' subjective reality that I was investigating, I practised the principle of putting the participant's view first while preparing for the interviews. This helped me not only bracket my presuppositions but develop 'empathy' which 'involves imaginative engagement with the world that is being described by the students' (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000:299). In the serial interviews, the participants and I worked together to refine the accounts of learning to speak English in their local environment. Though it was difficult for me to judge to what extent the accounts were factually accurate, learner diary and autobiography were useful in terms of indicating the individual participant's agenda before I talked to the participant face to face. Learner diary entries helped me not only to follow up their life in general and learning to speak English specifically, but also allowed time for me to see if there were repeated patterns or what might still be 'missing' in relation to the research questions raised.

The complexity increased as the data accumulated. I was made aware of the increasing possibility of confusing details about these five cases. I often needed to read through their prior interviews before the next interview. Apart from this, each participant demonstrated different abilities in elaborating their English language learning. In addition, my focus was not always their first priority. There were things competing for their time and attention such as other subjects, personal relationship issues with family and friends, and the new military lifestyle. For instance, at the end of the interview with Fanny on 30 November, I raised this exact question because there was nothing about English language

learning in her English diary entries that day. She then looked into her Chinese notebook and found me one piece of ‘relevant’ information.

Before I went to the field, my supervisor had reminded me of the importance of being flexible in respect to my research plan. This helped me to stay calm and patient when things were not going the way I had planned or anticipated. For instance, there were times when we had to cancel our scheduled interviews because the participants were busy with their mid-term exams or other events: in one extreme case, I could not be sure if Dennis would be able to continue when he was put in intensive care and subsequently hospitalized for about two weeks. Their learner diary keeping was not as I had expected; but still I learned from the entries which recorded the things that were meaningful to them. Indeed, flexibility was also required in the interviews, in which I was made aware of my own preferences and assumptions when listening to the participants. It helped develop a respect-the-participants’-right attitude as my fieldwork was carried out in the real world.

Before I left the field, I gathered my five participants together again to put an end to the data collection process. Because they were not so familiar with each other, I gave each of them a feedback sheet with questions to collect information on their individual viewpoints of this semester-long research process. Because I believe that research is an ongoing process in which there is no full stop, I compared my leaving the field to a ‘comma’ and encouraged them to stay in touch via facebook, e-mails and blogs.

3.4.3 Field identity and research ethics

To demonstrate mindfulness in the decision-making process of this research, this subsection is devoted to the discussion of my field identity and how the research ethics were fulfilled.

3.4.3.1 Field identity

I had two field identities during this research process. I was a doctoral student at the University of Warwick, which brought me closer to my participants in the sense of a student identity. I was also an English language lecturer at this school on study leave, who had returned for data collection for her research. When I worked in the military setting, it was required that I took my personal identity (a teaching faculty ID) and the permission signed by the superintendent with me. Indeed, the military management system made it difficult for me, if not impossible, to maintain my identity as a researcher, because it was obvious that I had to be an ‘insider’ to be allowed to do my data collection there. My teacher identity did affect how the participants addressed me and perhaps the way they interacted with me. For example, during the first few encounters, they called me Joy because that was how I introduced myself to them; later, they started addressing me as ‘teacher’, even in one-to-one interviews, because of the immediate contextual conditions of the school. Since I was very much aware of how our relationships were developing over time, I continued to call myself Joy. Also, I made it clear to them that I was not ‘their’ teacher and I tried to reply to their questions based on teaching from the class. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

In terms of the relational uncertainties, rapport with participants is essential in qualitative research. In general, there was an advantage in being recognized as a member of the teaching staff in the Academy. For example, the participants had more confidence in me as a researcher who was otherwise a stranger to them. Meanwhile, I had the responsibility for ‘protecting’ my participants by being sensitive to their military routines. For instance, Fanny asked me to hold our interviews in their regular military education class hours and I had to take the risk of losing Fanny as a participant by refusing to cooperate, because it was important that my participants were not being made too different from other cadets in the school context. In effect, I advised them not to tell others that they were taking part in this study because it could cause others to become jealous or curious, which might put unnecessary pressure on them.

In this dynamic process of interacting with my participants, I consistently sought to encourage them and helped them to simply ‘be themselves’, by reassuring them that there were no correct answers to my questions as it is required that the researcher should not evaluate the participants’ answers (Ornek, 2008). Apart from our interviews, I did not have many opportunities to socialize with my participants outside the school during the data collection period, because their limited leisure time at weekends was reserved for their family and friends. Though I did not have many opportunities to engage in their private activities, I would stop to talk to them whenever we met on campus because I wanted them to know that I was interested in them as individuals, instead of just ‘using them’ to gather data. I also gave information and shared my knowledge with my participants whenever I saw fit. For example, when the participants asked me about the

differences between English proficiency tests such as TOEFL, TOIEC and ECL, I shared not only information but my personal test-taking experiences with them.

3.4.3.2 Research ethics

Informed consent

As mentioned in 3.4.1, the informed consent of the teacher was obtained via e-mail at the planning stage. At the beginning of the semester, I gave each of my participants a written explanation about my research and concrete details about what it meant to participate in this research study. After I revealed more about myself regarding my relationship with the Academy and this doctoral research, I read through the written form with them, asked them if they had any questions and stressed that it was their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. They signed their forms individually to show that they had read and understood it.

Anonymity and confidentiality

I extended the discussion of research ethics further by explaining the use of pseudonyms and the researcher-only access to the data which can help to achieve the required confidentiality and anonymity. In every interview, I emphasized this again and told them I would never reveal their identity to anyone even if at the request of the superintendent of the Academy. When I reported the results, I would use fictional names for people, institutions and places that were mentioned in their interviews. Interestingly, at the closing meeting of my fieldwork, when asked to give themselves a pseudonym, one

participant wrote on her feedback sheet that she preferred her real name to be used in my thesis.

3.5 Languages and transcribing

3.5.1 Languages

My participants were considered English language learners whose language proficiency was below intermediate level during data collection. Since they could not express themselves clearly in English, all interviews with them were conducted in Chinese. Their English language learning autobiographies were written in Chinese as well. English and Chinese were both used in their learner diaries. In my account of the findings in Chapter 4, what my participants have said will be translated into English and those parts which they have said in English will be kept as original. In order to ensure the accuracy of the translations, I asked a friend in the United States, who is a retired English language teacher, to translate my English version back to Chinese. Also, she agreed to be the second coder of the data analysis.

3.5.2 Transcribing

As discussed earlier, I managed to transcribe each interview before the next interview with the same participant. It proved to be an intensive schedule. In addition, I tried different ways to complete the first few transcripts and it took some time for me to decide how detailed my transcripts should be. For example, I was trying to show overlapping and interruption in our conversation (I spent three hours transcribing the first 10-minute-34-second interview recording), but later I decided this was not only tiring but extremely

time-consuming and I was not doing conversation analysis. I learned to leave the linguistic details aside and focus on the content of conversation. I had twenty-eight one-to-one interviews (approximately 2,532 minutes) and doing transcription was like running a marathon. Bryman (2004) suggests that a one-hour recording takes about five to six hours to transcribe. I found I met that goal only when I became more familiar with transcribing. After I finished transcribing the one-to-one interviews, I moved on to the two four-member focus group interviews. I spent sixteen hours transcribing the two focus group interviews (approximately 137 minutes). The duration of the focus groups was relatively short, but because there were more people talking, there was more information, and so they took longer to transcribe.

3.6 Data analysis

Interview transcripts are the focus of the analysis (Akerlind, 2005). The results of phenomenographic research are categories of description, thematized views of the students' life-world. Specifically, Marton and Booth (1997) refer to phenomenography as ascertaining structures of awareness. Because SLSE is not only a multi-dimensional phenomenon but also considered a constructed reality (as discussed in 2.4), I felt the best way to introduce the results was to depict the thematized individual life-worlds in my findings chapter (Chapter 4) preceding the discussion on SLSEs in Chapter 5.

Within phenomenography, data analysis is viewed as a process of co-constituting meaning and structure of the object of research (Akerlind, 2005). Thematic analysis, a fundamental method for qualitative analysis, is a method for 'identifying, analysing and

reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 6). Marton (1981, 1988, 1994) argues that phenomenographic analysis is a discovery process (i.e., not replicable) and it serves the purpose of making the results useful and accessible to both specialists and non-specialists. In the process of bracketing prior presuppositions, I began by trying out different analysis techniques to find different ways of viewing the data. Later, I came to realize that I was losing sight of the complexity of the data because I was looking for isolated strategy items in them. As a matter of fact, due to the absence of an agreed definition and classification of LLS as discussed in Chapter 2, I gradually developed a theoretical framework to explain SLSE-in-context emerging in the data with a long and iterative process of working with and from the data, and wide reading. Accompanying the developing of the theoretical perspective as the underlying meaning of the categories, I decided to carry out a theoretical thematic analysis to thematize the participants' experienced world.

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose a six-phase thematic analysis to ensure rigour: familiarizing myself with my data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Because the last phase is about reporting the findings, here I will explain how this data analysis was carried out from the trial stage to defining and naming the SLSEs.

3.6.1 Trial stage: familiarizing myself with my data

I transcribed all the audio-recordings myself, as mentioned in 3.5.2. After I had all my transcripts ready, I started trying out different techniques, for example, repeated words, to identify themes listed in Ryan and Bernard's (2003) article manually. I started with Cindy's data because of the variety of her speaking-related learning activities. At this trial stage, I was analysing to see if any themes were emerging. As I 'followed my instinct' to map out the learning activities in context, I came up with a list of codes (Appendix 13). I sent this set of codes along with different participants' transcripts to the second coder. Three times we met in May and June on Skype to discuss and to compare our coding process. However, the list was getting longer and I was confused.

I then remembered my research questions and tried to see how Cindy's data could answer them (Appendix 14). Nevertheless, I caught myself trying to establish another list of 'isolated' learning strategies which was what I had found unsatisfactory (see Chapter 2). I was still confused and I asked myself how I could put these strategies 'in context', which is the primary aim of this research study. Since I was also familiarizing myself with NVivo 9, I started an initial coding process across five cases. I went through all thirty transcripts and coded points I found interesting. This turned the transcripts into everyday life fragments of the participants, which seemed even more confusing. However, this did help me to see how the participants kept referring back to their past learning experiences when making sense of what they were doing in college.

Moreover, I found that coding in English did not help to facilitate my thinking and was perhaps slowing the coding process. I decided to use Chinese as it was the language of

the transcripts. I kept my participants' real names at this stage because that helped to bring me back to their individual worlds which could increase my sensitivity to my participants as unique individuals. Therefore, when I started my initial coding with all the interview data on NVivo 9, I coded in Chinese and translated the codes after I had finished each coding process.

3.6.2 How I analysed my data

Conducting interviews was the main method I used for my data collection and most of the data was taken from these; therefore the process of my data analysis described here is focused on how I analysed the data of one case. This process was also applied to my data analysis through the other four cases.

The more I worked with my data, the more I felt the urge to search for an interpretative lens that could explain what I saw in the data. I went back to the literature and engaged myself in wide reading. As Carter and New (2004) point out:

In realist explanation, social scientists will move back and forth between theoretical description of things and their interrelationships at various levels, and discovery and explanation of their properties. (p. 9)

Based on the aim to depict SLSEs in an EFL learning context, I put together the theoretical framework which I was hoping could explain the everyday practices of the participants. At this stage, I was able to start looking for learning strategies as environmental niches: a niche is a set of affordances which not only provides resources

but also gives constraints at the same time. I then approached the data in a different way and, to a large extent, started anew.

3.6.2.1 Step 1: generating initial codes

To answer my first question (see 3.7), the optional course was considered as the centre of their ZPD of learning to speak English. This helped me to see how different participants made use of what was meaningful to them, that is, the affordances, to establish their own niches. To answer the second question (see 3.7), there was much more going on concurrently apart from course-related activities in the field. I had to decide to what extent these were relevant to their process of learning to speak English. This was not an easy decision to make because I found that the same statement could be interpreted differently and could include different people, times and places as well. Thus, they could be coded differently or assigned to more than one code. The analysing process turned out to be a recursive process of reading the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings. Moreover, where I could not decide which questions some statements answered, I put them in a higher category of ‘the hierarchy’ temporarily. At this stage, I also had codes that might not seem directly relevant but were reported by the participant in the interviews. Gradually, a tentative coding scheme for this one case emerged in the continual interaction between the data and me, the coder.

3.6.2.2 Step 2: searching for themes

After the initial coding was done, I left it for a while. When I came back to it, I started a second coding on the basis of the initial codes. I read through the transcripts again. Only

this time I began from the last interview of the same participant. I checked if there were any changes that needed to be made in terms of the dynamic engagement of affordances in his/her learning process or any significant statements that had been missed. I added, merged or changed the names of the codes when necessary.

Next, I gave three higher codes: past, present and (English language) skills. I put those codes that were about his/her prior learning experiences in 'past', his/her learning during this semester in 'present' and his/her attitude and belief about the four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in 'language skills'. Apart from these, I kept the codes which seemed important to each participant. For example, I kept 'English is important' from Peter's data and 'my ideal learning environment' from Nick's data.

At this stage, I began to write biographical accounts based on codes in the 'past'. Also, I was searching in their 'present' for themes of person(s)-acting-with-mediational-means, i.e., the affordances, which consisted of the niches under investigation. I read through the extracts of each code to identify the relationship between the participant and different people, and materials across time and space. During this time, I cross-examined interview accounts with classroom observation notes, my research journal, learner diaries, examination papers, test-books and course books.

3.6.2.3 Step 3: reviewing themes

It was at this stage that I was able to give my coding scheme to my second coder to carry out a parallel coding process. I asked her to carry out this exercise with one case (five

transcripts of Nick's). However, before she began, she asked me to give her some more explanation about what I was looking for in the data along with my codes. Since she did not have NVivo 9, she worked manually. I compared my results with hers, and we discussed the extracts of each code where we disagreed. We either reached agreement or I was in a position to reconsider my coding.

Thus I was able to draw a thematic map of each case at the end of this stage.

3.6.2.4 Step 4: defining and naming themes

The themes identified were in essence a person-environment process view of the individual participants' learning in the everyday learning environment. I learned from the participants that course-related activities were preparing them to speak English because the materials envisaged a range of settings. Therefore, I named these strategies as 'before speaking'; other strategies apart from the optional course as 'to speak' because I assumed that they took the initiative in preparing themselves for real life communication when speaking English in non-course-related situations. During this time, I began to plan my findings chapter and track the changes and constancy of each participant's strategy use in learning to speak English as a continual process across time and space.

3.7 Formulating my research questions

Phenomenographers, e.g., Marton and Booth (1997), view research as a learning process.

Cousin (2009) explains that researching itself is a non-linear learning process:

Much of the time, you need to be thinking *with* the data as much as you are thinking *from* it. ... move away from the conventional linear processes of ... a literature review ... question formation ... data collection...data analysis and ... the writing up. Increasing numbers of researchers recognize that all of these activities need to be dynamically linked and continually enlivened by an engagement with a wide reading. (pp. 2- 3 emphasis original)

As far as this study is concerned, before my data collection, I had reviewed the LLS research, understood the dissatisfaction of list-making and counting type of research, identified the need for contextualization and formed my first set of research questions on the basis of my understanding of sociocultural theory. My three provisional questions and sub-questions as objectives and as parameters to guide my data collection are presented in 3.1.

During my data collection, in the process of listening, transcribing, observing and thinking as a researcher, my own ESL assumptions acquired through my learning and teaching experiences became clear to me. The lack of using English in everyday life situations in EFL environments became real again while I was in the field. The struggles and triumphs reported by the participants in the local environment helped me to reflect on my own learning trajectory and assumptions. This has been briefly touched upon in 1.2. In short, I learned from my EFL non-English major participants how they carried out the task of learning to speak English in local Taiwanese EFL environments.

After data collection, I re-read my prior drafts while continually transcribing and organizing my data. The data pointed me to the gaps in my understanding of the underlying relationship between ESL learning and EFL learning. Specifically, I was seeking to understand the relationship between ESL theories and EFL practices. Unlike merely reviewing related literature to identify the gap, I was looking for theories that could help me explain and interpret the emerging themes in the data. There had been an iterative process as Cousin (2009) and phenomenographers such as Marton (1994) and Akerlind (2005) illustrate. It was at this stage when I was working *with* and *from* my data that theories began to make sense and my EFL position was clarified. I therefore made two major changes. Firstly, owing to the complex interconnections of affordances in the local environments, I realized that learning may not be best described as inside and outside the classroom, but may be based on the speaking course they were taking and what else they did apart from this. Secondly, classroom tasks were in the learning environment, but the environment was much more than classroom tasks.

At the last stage of data analysis, when a more focused literature review and the emerging themes were coming together to form a perspective of SLSEs, I had a discussion with my supervisor and I finalized my research questions for this thesis as follows:

1. What SLSEs were used by a group of non-English major cadets in relation to the optional course during the first semester in college? How were these strategies formed and to what purpose?

2. What SLSEs were used by a group of non-English major cadets outside their coursework during the first semester in college? How were these strategies formed and to what purpose?
3. In terms of the SLSEs used by this group of English learners, what was consistent over the period of their first semester in college and what appeared to have changed over time?

In the following chapter, instead of making a list of strategies, I will present my findings based on the above questions through thick descriptions of a person-environment dialogical process. Each participant's findings are structured according to the order of the research questions. I will present the findings about my participants individually.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

According to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, we are now at the stage of 'producing the report'. At this stage, I have each participant's thematic map and the coded extracts at hand. The aim is to present 'a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell – within and across themes' (ibid: 23). To align with the dimensions of describing the participants' learning experiences (see 3.6) and the sociocultural-ecological perspective (see 2.4), I have described the *what* aspect of learning to speak English in the Taiwanese EFL environment through the macro-system, that is, the background of English learning in Taiwan in Chapter 1, and the exo-system, the military school and classroom setting in Chapter 3. In this chapter, I attempt to depict each participant's individual strategy use in relation to *what* he/she found meaningful (i.e., affordances) in the environment, and *how* the SLSEs were engaged in everyday learning practices in the light of the chrono-system.

As previously mentioned, I had five participants in total for this study. The findings are structured on the basis of my research questions to demonstrate how the data answered my questions. I will first list the keys used for reference to the sources of data. Since courses are most often the core for EFL learners' ZPD construction in contexts such as this research, I will, then, describe the fifteen classes of the course observed from 08 September 2010 to 29 December 2010 here, including the materials and the classroom activities. This makes the backdrop for answering my first research question regarding the participants' perception and experience in relation to the course. Next, I will present

the findings for these five participants respectively. For each participant, I will firstly show when and how I collected the data. Secondly, I will provide a synopsis of each participant's family background and EFL learning experience before college. This will be illustrated in curricular order as reviewed in Chapter 1. Following this biographical account, I will present the participant's reported SLSEs and how these strategies evolved in the mediated process of learning to speak English in the local environment according to my research questions (see 3.7).

Before I present my findings, there are some points I would like to clarify.

(1) Apart from my participants, other names will be mentioned from time to time. These include Cindy and Fanny's classmates *Sam* and *Amelia*, and Nick's friend *Silvia*. Their teachers include Andrea (who taught the optional course), and Paul (an American who taught Cindy and Fanny's Saturday conversation class). Other names include the researcher Joy (me), and less frequently mentioned peers and friends.

(2) 'School' refers to the Academy if not specified.

(3) All the names and places mentioned here are pseudonyms.

(4) Key to data references: details of data sources are presented as below:

(participant/how data was collected/date/page of transcripts, their diary entries, their test-books, my class observation notes or my journal entries/my translation). For example, 'C/int.[1]/30sep10/p2/t' indicates that the quote was an extract from Cindy's first interview on 30 September 2010, which was recorded on the transcript page 2, and was translated by me. That is to say, C: (Cindy), int.[1]: (first interview), 30sep10: (30th September, 2010), p2: (page 2), t: (my translation). However, 'p' (page) does not appear

if no exact words are quoted, and ‘t’ (translation) does not appear if the quote was originally in English which is limited to Cindy’s , Fanny’s and Peter’s learner diary entries only.

• Methods of data collection:

int	interview	fg	focus group interview
co	classroom observation	ld	learner diary
rj	research journal	tb	test-book
od	other documents		

• Five participants:

C	Cindy
D	Dennis
F	Fanny
N	Nick
P	Peter

4.1 The optional course

Krashen (1981) argues that, unlike that of ESL acquisition, the order of EFL learning can be based on the course syllabus (see 2.2.1). Ellis (2008) points out that EFL learners tend to take diverse learning routes and the instruction could contribute to this diversity.

Furthermore, Michaels and Carello (1981) consider teaching as learning to detect useful information in the environment. As discussed in 1.1, there seem few, if any, conversation courses in school before college. The course called ‘Listening and Speaking in the

Language Laboratory’ was one of the few optional courses that focused on speaking English in the Academy. In view of the nature of EFL learning in Taiwanese contexts in general (see 2.2.3) and the gap between the objectives in the curriculum and the oral proficiency of college students (see 1.1), I chose to investigate how college students, who were taking the optional course, carried out their EFL speaking learning during the transitional first semester while in university.

The course consisted of fifteen classes including one midterm-examination class and two final-examination classes. The description of the course will be mainly focused on the recurring themes and the basic pattern of classroom learning that I observed. An overview of it is presented in the table below.

Table 4.1 An overview of the optional course

06 September 2010 to 29 December 2011 10:00 am – 11:50am				
Wednesday at the Language Laboratory: forty seats; twenty-eight students.				
Abbreviations: ‘T’ – teacher; ‘C’ – class; ‘Ss’ -- students				
	Date	Activity	Material	Homework
1	08 Sep 2010	English names, self-introduction, requirements and homework, and learning goals.	A unit of T’s language learning magazine CD-ROM.	Write a self-introduction.
2	15 Sep 2010	C on CD-ROM on the computers: listening and speaking.	Language learning magazine elementary level: <i>Grocery Shopping: Food to Go</i> Part A and Part B.	<i>Grocery Shopping: Food to Go</i> Part A, Part B, Part C and Part D.
	22 Sep 2010	Moon Festival		
3	29 Sep 2010	T played CD-ROM. Fill-in-the-blank test and acting out.	Review and <i>Grocery Shopping: Food to Go</i> Part C and Part D. <i>Tickets to the Show</i> Part A and Part B.	<i>Tickets to the Show</i> Part A, Part B, Part C and Part D.
4	06 Oct 2010	Fill-in-the-blank test and story-telling.	Review and <i>Tickets to the Show</i> Part C and Part D. <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> .	<i>Tickets to the Show</i> Part C and Part D.
5	13 Oct 2010	Story-composition and writing.	Ss assignments and <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> .	All that has been taught so far.
6	20 Oct 2010	Oral test: Listen and	Review and <i>Cereal for the</i>	Tell this joke.

		Repeat, story-telling and telling a joke.	<i>Ages.</i>	
7	27 Oct 2010	Listen and Fill-in-the-blank practices and sing an English song.	<i>Skip Dogsits Attlia</i> Part A, Part B and Part C and <i>Despicable Me</i> Part A and Part B.	Preparation for mid-term exam.
	03 Nov 2010	Mid-term week		
8	10 Nov 2010	Mid-term exam (Listen and Fill-in-the-blank test); four English songs for group work.		
9	17 Nov 2010	Results of mid-term, Ch-En translation, a quiz, singing in groups.	Four English songs, <i>Get it All in Guam</i> key sentences and Part 7.	Songs and <i>Get it all in Guam</i> Part 7.
10	24 Nov 2010	Oral test: Listen and Repeat and C's English song singing contest.	Four English songs, <i>Salt</i> .	<i>Salt</i> .
11	01 Dec 2010	Oral test: Listen and Repeat, Ch-En and En-Ch translation.	Review and <i>A Summer Job Hunt</i> Pat 1.	<i>A Summer Job Hunt</i> Pat 1
12	08 Dec 2010	Oral test: Listen and Repeat, a quiz,	Review and <i>A Summer Job Hunt</i> Pat 2.	<i>A Summer Job Hunt</i> Pat 2.
13	15 Dec 2010	Oral test: Listen and Repeat, En-Ch translation, a quiz,	Review and <i>The Sorcerer's Apprentice</i> .	<i>The Sorcerer's Apprentice</i> .
14	22 Dec 2010	Final-exam (Oral test): Listen and Repeat.		
15	29 Dec 2010	Final-exam (Written test): Listen and Fill-in-the-blank.		

It was a two-credit optional course, two hours per week, focused on listening and speaking English. Andrea, the course teacher, was doing a part-time PhD and I was collecting the data during her sixth year of teaching in the school. This was not the first time that she had used CD-ROM and language learning magazines to teach English.

Like most teachers at the beginning of new classes, she wanted to know her students and to introduce herself to her students. In the first class, she started by going through the register and checking if the students had English names (only three students had not). She then introduced herself in both English and Chinese as an example for the students to follow. The requirements for this course were given in the second hour. The rules and requirements became recurring themes throughout the course. These include:

1. The materials (Appendix 15)

- a. Purpose – to facilitate listening and speaking practice both in class and at home.
 - b. Price – NT 200 (two magazines and two CD-ROMs).
 - c. Content – ‘everyday life’ topics.
2. Learning goals – English is not just a subject, but a communication tool (J/co/08sep10; J/co/17nov10).
- a. Purpose – not for taking tests, but for practical use.
 - b. Grammar – does not have to be perfect.
 - c. Learning environment – self-constructed by paying attention to the English on everyday items such as shampoo.
3. The course result
- a. Students need to prepare a ‘test-book’ for homework and class quizzes.
 - b. Mid-term examination score thirty per cent, final examination score thirty per cent and assignments and class quizzes forty per cent.
4. The teacher’s e-mail address – the students were encouraged to ask questions via e-mails and take initiatives in solving their own learning problems.

Andrea, an EFL learner herself, promoted the use of CD-ROMs for learning to speak English and used the CD-ROMs every class for different activities. The CD-ROMs played a significant role in this course. In fact, they might to a large extent be considered as substitutes for native speakers of English and the target culture. For instance, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Tickets to the Show*, and the American customs’ experience illustrated in *Get it All in Guam* may be viewed as part of Western culture, but unrelated to Taiwanese

culture. Moreover, in all cases, the actors were Americans, and they used slang and appeared to demonstrate an American sense of humour, for example, *Cereals for the Ages*. These are probably the elements required to help EFL learners learn English in a foreign context. Therefore, the hidden assumption appears to be that learners are supposed to imitate the English in the magazines and CD-ROMs in order to communicate with ‘foreigners’ or simply ‘Americans’ (J/co/06oct10; J/co/13oct10; J/co/20oct10; J/co/27oct10; J/co/01dec10).

Andrea appeared to be well aware of the lack of real-life communication in English. She made it clear to the students that these materials were suitable for private study as well (J/co/08sep10; J/co/06oct10; J/co/01dec10; J/co/15dec10). Andrea addressed the issues of English as a subject and English as a communication tool openly at the beginning to encourage her students to set their goals on learning to advance their own English proficiency, instead of learning for tests. Though Andrea did expect her students to come to the class well-prepared for tests (J/co/29sep10; J/co/20oct10; J/co/01dec10), it was her belief that their ultimate learning goals should go beyond these ‘basic requirements’ (J/co/17nov10; J/co/01dec10). Moreover, instead of suggesting the deprivation of an English-speaking environment, she drew the students’ attention to English on everyday items in Taiwan (J/co/08sep10), and also emphasized the merits of CD-ROMs (J/co/08sep10; J/co/06oct10; J/co/24nov10).

The cycles of homework and tests were designed to help the students ‘stay on track’, i.e., to form a habit of listening and practising speaking English and how to do it. Regarding

Andrea's rule of having a test at the beginning of every class, she started with fill-in-the-blank tests with the Chinese translations in parallel (J/co/29sep10; J/co/06oct10). Later, she changed the tests to an English-only paper accompanied by her playing each sound clip twice to remind students of the missing words in the blanks (J/co/27oct10; J/co/10nov10; J/co/29dec10). For example, in the oral tests, each student was required to repeat the sentence after it was played twice. The teacher chose sentences from the units taught in the preceding class on the basis of her understanding of each student's English level (personal communication). The main pattern of this course demonstrated a listen-and-repeat feature. From the first time she used CD-ROMs to teach, the students were told to hide both English and Chinese subtitles while hearing CD-ROMs (J/co/15sep10). Also, she kept asking her students to put away their magazines and concentrate on listening because she believed that the students' reading skills far exceeded their listening skills (J/co/29sep10; J/co/20oct10; J/co/24nov10; J/co/01dec10; J/co/15dec10; J/co/22dec10).

In contrast to prior multiple-choice questions in examinations and preparation for the NCEE (National College Entrance Examination), Andrea wanted her students to understand that they were now learning English for everyday communication purposes. For instance, she spoke English as much as she could because she believed that this served the purpose of this course. However, she found it not very helpful because the students could not understand her in many cases (J/co/13oct10). As aforementioned in 1.2 and 2.2.3, indeed, Mandarin Chinese, the medium for education for all the subjects in the school, was the shared language of the teacher, the twenty-eight students and the

researcher. To facilitate learning in this L1 environment, Andrea made use of Chinese-English and English-Chinese translation in different ways:

1. Chinese translation was given, but with certain English words and phrases left blank for students to fill in (J/co/29sep10; J/co/06oct10).
2. Chinese to English translation: words (J/co/01dec10; J/co/08dec10) and sentences (J/co/17nov10).
3. English to Chinese translation: infer the Chinese words from their English definitions (J/co/24nov10; J/co/01dec10; J/co/15dec10).

Inasmuch as the students were taking two English language courses, the compulsory military English course and this optional course, Andrea differentiated the purpose and content of these courses: the former was English for a specific purpose and would be useful for their career development; the latter was English for practical use which would be the most important skill in face-to-face communication. She asked her students questions such as, ‘How long have you been learning English?’ (J/co/08sep10) and, ‘How much time and money have seemed to be wasted?’ (J/co/17nov10). Also, as ‘the good language learner’, she emphasized that the students ought to take on effective learning methods and she believed that EFL learning had a lot to do with problem-solving skills (J/co/20oct10).

In their first class after the mid-term examination, Andrea explained how the students could be more effective in learning: doing homework, and looking up new vocabulary in the dictionary and organizing it by writing phonetic symbols and their Chinese translation

(J/co/17nov10). Meanwhile, she gave her students an effective learning order for learning to speak: memorizing vocabulary, listening, and repeating (J/co/08dec10). This was ostensibly the basic structure of how each unit was taught. The pattern seemed even more established after the level of their learning material changed from elementary level to intermediate (17 November 2010 - 15 December 2010).

4.2 Cindy

Table 4.2 Data relating to Cindy

	Date	Methods of data collection	Key	Note
1	30 Sep 2010	First interview	C/int.[1]/30sep10	Based on her English learning autobiography submitted on 23 September 2010.
2	13 Oct 2010	Second interview	C/int.[2]/13oct10	Diary entries collected on 12 October 2010.
3	29 Oct 2010	Third interview	C/int.[3]/29oct10	Diary entries collected on 27 October 2010.
4	07 Dec 2010	Fourth interview	C/int.[4]/07dec10	Diary entries collected on 22 November 2010 and 7 December 2010. (Because Cindy had a sick leave on 23 November 2010, we had to cancel it.)
5	11 Jan 2011	Fifth interview	C/int.[5]/11jan11	Diary entries collected on 10 January 2011.
6	22 Jan 2011	Focus group interview	C&F/fg/22jan11	With Fanny, Sam and Amelia.
65 entries		Diary entries	C/ld/18sep10	See Chapter 3 learner diary section for dates.
14 classes		Classroom observation	J/co/08sep10	See Chapter 3 classroom observation section.
113 entries		Research journal	J/tj/16sep10	See Chapter 3 research journal section.
		documents		Her English language learning magazines, examination papers, test-book, and longhand copies.

4.2.1 EFL learning autobiography before college

This biographical account is based on the first interview with Cindy on 30 September 2010, except where specified.

Cindy was from south Taiwan and she was the second child in her family. She grew up with an elder sister and a younger brother. Her father was a car mechanic and her mother worked in a factory (C/int.[3]/29oct10). Her EFL learning started with English as a compulsory school subject in fifth grade in elementary school. The beginning of her EFL learning was frustrating for various reasons. Though this elementary school English class was the very first time she was exposed to English, it seemed that some of her classmates had learned English either in kindergarten or private language institutes. Cindy recalled that her elementary school English teacher was inclined to interact with those who could understand his teaching on grammar and tended to neglect those who were left behind. In one class, Cindy was asked to say an English word in front of the class and the class laughed at her because she could not pronounce it ‘correctly’. She felt extremely embarrassed.

The most popular phonetic system in Taiwan uses KK (Kenyon and Knott) phonetic symbols commonly used in English dictionaries. As she did not have the opportunity to learn this system from her first English language teacher, Cindy tried to memorize English spelling by letters and pronunciation by using the Chinese phonetic system used only in Taiwan. For example, a.p.p.l.e/ㄞㄉㄞ (C/int.[1]/30sep10/p1). This continued in her English learning in junior high school. She summed up her junior high school learning experiences by saying ‘it was all about memorizing what the teacher taught and taking tests’ (C/int.[1]/30sep10/p2/t’). She depended on the CD which accompanied the textbooks for pronunciation, partly because of her prior experience of failing to pronounce ‘correctly’ and partly because of the school’s Wednesday read-aloud draws,

i.e., the school chose 3 students each week to see if they were able to read aloud the textbook articles. She formed a habit of imitating the audio CDs during junior high school. Another experience, of taking part in an English contest in which she acted out an English conversation in a pair helped her to realize her potential in being expressive when speaking English (C/int.[3]/29oct10).

Though she made it to ‘gifted classes’, i.e., high-achievement classes, in the best public girls’ senior high school in the county where she lived, she considered herself a low achiever in English throughout her elementary school and junior high school years. In effect, her attitude towards English was completely turned around when she met her senior high school English teacher. After Cindy scored ninety-two in the first mid-term examination, Cindy gained confidence in learning English. ‘I am so fortunate to have been taught by her,’ she said (C/int.[1]/30sep10/p4/t’). The teacher was not only experienced but also had a passion for English. Cindy still remembered vividly the shock when the teacher spoke only English in the first class. Moreover, the teacher set an example of making learning and speaking English part of Cindy’s daily routine. On the one hand, the teacher worked hard to build such a routine into her students’ everyday life through quizzes in morning studies from Monday to Friday and encouraging them to listen to the radio and read English language magazines at home. Also, she kept stressing the importance of memorizing what they were learning, for example, correction of mistakes by copying (words, sentences and articles) at least a dozen times. On the other hand, while focusing on advancing reading skills as preparation for ‘the big exam’, the teacher urged students to know pronunciations of English words first, because this would

help them to retain what they learned. She also emphasized the significance of using English as a communication tool: she spoke English whenever she could with her students, being sensitive to her students' English levels, and encouraged her students to express themselves in English both in-class and out-of-class.

What is more, the teacher revealed a three-year plan at the outset to help her students set learning goals during senior high school years: to memorize '2000 vocabulary' in the first year, '3000 vocabulary' in the second and '7000 vocabulary' in the third year; correspondingly, pass GEPT elementary in the first year, GEPT intermediate level in the second and GEPT high-intermediate level in the last year. Although Cindy did not manage to fully realize the plan – she obtained GEPT elementary level in year two and tried GEPT intermediate level in the third year, Cindy felt that, 'She is the key person in my English language learning' (C/int.[1]/30sep10/p4/t'), and 'Her teaching has benefited me greatly' (C/int.[4]/07dec10/p3/t'). Also, in her third year, Cindy was very pleased to notice that she could manage to talk to the teacher in English.

Another person who had a major impact on her EFL learning was a Norwegian missionary whom Cindy met every other Sunday on her way to school for several months from the beginning of her senior year. When she first saw him, she recalled that her first thought was to avoid him. However, her desire to speak English with a foreigner made her slow down to wait for him. He greeted her in English first, which made it easier for her to respond. However, in spite of this good beginning, the initial experience seemed disappointing and stressful because English was the only common language between

them and she began to withdraw. It was the Norwegian missionary's friendliness and understanding that encouraged Cindy to keep on trying. For instance, he would start humming songs to avoid awkward silences during this ten-minute walk. Though most of the time Cindy listened and scarcely replied (e.g., yes, oh, hmm, you know), she did try to prepare questions before they met again and felt, 'He is my first foreign friend with whom I had talked so much' (C/int.[5]/11jan11/p7/t'). Cindy also noticed, 'The way other people looked at us tells me that they think my English must be so good that I can talk to a foreigner!' (C/int.[5]/30sep10/p5/t').

After Cindy entered college, another stage of her EFL learning journey began.

Affordances that she engaged mainly included her social network: classmates of her original class, members of the marching band, a roommate, English language teachers (past/present), and the researcher; and artefacts: magazines, CD-ROMs, a test-book, tests, learner diary, computers, laptops, and a CD-player walkman.

4.2.2 Strategies as part of the coursework

Based on the description of the course in 4.1, here I will present how Cindy went about learning to speak English in relation to the course. Even though Cindy and her pair (Fanny) belonged not only to the same original class but the same company, they did not speak English or study together after class.

4.2.2.1 Imitation before speaking: Andrea, CD-ROMs, tests, military environment and the CD-player walkman

Cindy was happy to take this optional course because she believed that it would improve her speaking skills. Andrea was one of the few people around her who spoke English (C/int.[4]/07dec10). Cindy was one of the most diligent students in class and her diligence paid off in the results of the class quizzes (C/tb/p5) and later other examinations (C/od/). When the teacher chose her assignment as an example to the class (J/co/13oct10), Cindy felt the teacher's special attention on her (C/int.[2]/13oct10).

With regard to using the CD-ROMs which accompanied the English language magazines, Cindy used to rely on the magazines and did not feel comfortable to 'just listen':

I used to read the magazine first; then I also follow the magazine while I listen to the CD. After this I understand what the article is about; I then put the magazine aside and just listen to see if I can really follow the article and repeat.

(C/int.[4]/07dec10/p2/t')

Following Andrea's instructions in the language laboratory, she gradually learned to put the magazine away, turn off all subtitles and just listen. 'The difference is now I can listen to the CD again and again without relying too much on the magazine'

(C/int.[5]/11jan11/p7/t'). When she listened to the CD-ROM, she made it a habit to repeat the words without hesitation. This meant she would keep practising the same sentence until she felt that she understood what she was saying. Apart from pronunciation and intonation, the speed of delivery and linking were among her main concerns (C/int.[4]/07dec10).

However, to listen to the CD-ROMs, she needed time and suitable equipment. In a military environment, for security reasons, access to computers and use of high-tech gadgets for information were limited. This meant she needed an approved laptop or a CD-player walkman in order to listen to the CD-ROM in her dormitory. After consulting one of the seniors, she decided to buy a CD-player walkman (C/ld/16oct10) instead of a laptop, because her main purpose was to listen (C/int.[3]/29oct10). Later, she found out that, ‘I am the only student who has bought a CD-player walkman’ (C/int.[4]/07dec10/p2/t’). At one time she complained that, compared to the speed on the CD-ROM, the audio clips at elementary level read at such a slow speed that it put her to sleep. As the CD-player walkman did not help her with the oral tests, she borrowed her classmate’s laptop when necessary (C/int.[4]/07dec10).

4.2.2.2 Read aloud before speaking: Andrea, tests, longhand copy and marching band practice

Cindy liked the magazines because of the everyday content and she found the intermediate level magazine more interesting (C/int.[5]/11jan11). Before she bought her walkman, though she knew she did not read every word correctly, she tried to read aloud the conversations and articles to herself. In the language laboratory, she would listen carefully to the CD-ROM and correct her pronunciation accordingly in class (C/int.[2]/13oct10). She only allowed herself to use English subtitles when she could not understand what she had just heard (C/int.[5]/11jan11). Before college, she used to read the English version and then the Chinese translation of the magazine articles to prepare for tests; now she learned to apply the ‘method’ taught in Andrea’s class: ‘I listen [to the

audio tracks] first without reading the magazine to see if I can understand and repeat all the sentences to myself' (C/int.[4]/07dec10).

As a member of the marching band, there were intensive practices before the National Day on 10 October. What Cindy did to make up her lack of time for study was to manually copy the articles and conversations on a piece of paper, take it with her, and read it aloud (or act it out) during her breaks between practices and dress rehearsals (C/int.[2]/13oct10). Cindy initially misunderstood that Andrea would test them by giving the Chinese translation and ask students to write English sentences, so she attempted to memorize the whole article while soliloquizing it aloud. While she appeared to be learning by rote, she explained that:

Take 'sorry' as an example. If someone memorizes for the sake of memorizing it, he or she might repeat s.o.r.r.y three times to remember the spelling of this word; on the contrary, if someone memorizes in order that he or she can apply it in his/her everyday situations, he or she would pay attention to the pronunciation and then the spelling of 'sorry'. The former is memorization for tests; the latter preparation for everyday use. (C/int.[4]/07dec10/p3/t')

Having had the first test, she realized that she would be tested only on vocabulary. In effect, after this period, she did not continue with this method because of the hectic nature of the military routine: 'When practising, we still had breaks; after we return to our military routine, there were a lot of tasks we needed to do and it is, thus, not possible to continue' (C/int.[4]/07dec10/p2/t'). Though she still carried her longhand copies and read through the whole article, she learned to underline vocabulary and focused on this. When

taking tests, she did not need to listen to the sound track while filling in the blanks. In fact, she used it only to double-check her answers when Andrea played it for the second time (C/int.[2]/13oct10).

4.2.3 Strategies apart from the coursework

Her relationship with members of the marching band was closer than that with her classmates. As for her life off-campus, home was less attended to at this stage and she spent most weekends with her classmates. I was one of the few around her who spoke English (C/int.[2]/13oct10). We did try to practise, but I switched back to Mandarin slowly because misunderstandings did occur when communicating in English (J/rj/05nov10).

Cindy was probably the most active learner among the participants both inside and outside the classroom. In an environment in which there was little spontaneous communication in English (C&F/fg/22jan11), she had a passion for using English to express herself and for her career (C/int.[3]/29oct10).

4.2.3.1 Speak English in a safe environment: members of the marching band and practices

Cindy played the trombone when she was in junior high (C/int.[2]/13oct10). She chose to pick it up again and joined the marching band (the biggest extracurricular club in the school; the band often performed in national and school events). Cindy had spent a lot of time with her club members since first entering this new military environment. Cindy

said that, compared with her original classmates, she felt more comfortable speaking English with these club members. Though they felt awkward and told her to stop speaking English, she believed that they understood her passion and kept inviting them to join her:

They cannot stand me because I keep speaking English to them, such as ‘Are you serious?’ I probably speak one English sentence in every three sentences I say. Some did not want to talk to me and even doubt if the English I say is correct. Yes, most of them perhaps cannot understand and think it is odd to speak English. However, there are others who would use single English words or jokingly mix English with Mandarin when they talk to me. (C/int.[3]/29oct10/p4/t’)

Though some of them thought she was a funny girl, she believed so much in the importance of learning English that she told them:

I want to make speaking English a habit. In today’s international community, English is so important that it is necessary that we speak English. And it is necessary that I train you to speak English with me. (C/int.[3]/29oct10/p4/t’)

4.2.3.2 Speak with someone who is also interested in speaking English: the roommate and her incident

Cindy lived in a four-person dormitory room. Though they belonged to different classes, they actually belonged to the same and only female company in the school. One roommate of Cindy’s had gone to two different universities to study law (for one year) and psychology (for three years). After they had shared the room for about half a year, one day this roommate came back and told Cindy what happened in the physical

education (PE) class that day: while the PE teacher was testing their tennis skills, he overheard that she spoke English to other students; the PE teacher said to her, ‘If you can speak English throughout this class, I will give you a good score’ (C/int.[5]/11jan11). She did and the teacher kept his promise. This roommate felt that English could ‘spice up’ any conversation. After sharing this event and other thoughts about speaking English, they found out that both of them were interested in developing their oral skills and believed that this would help advance their English proficiency. They agreed to start speaking English to each other whenever they could.

4.2.3.3 Speak to an English native speaker: class tutor, Paul and classmates

Paul was introduced to the students by their class tutor. Cindy was among those who were excited about the idea of a Saturday conversation class (C/int.[2]/13oct10). The class began shortly after the mid-term examination week. There was no charge for this class, but the tutor asked for a NT 1,000 (approximately £20) guarantee from each of the students who decided to join. The intention behind this was to ensure the students’ commitment: missing one class would mean a deduction of NT 100 from their guarantee. According to Cindy, this class might have been just an idea without the passion of her in-service sergeant classmate who was convinced of the importance of English in today’s army (C/int.[4]/07dec10).

This class was the first time for most of the ten group members to talk with an American in English. Learning English from a native speaker who did not speak Mandarin at all, in Cindy’s words, was ‘a special situation’ (C/int.[4]/07dec10/p4/t’). There were occasions

in which the students talked among themselves in Mandarin and Paul felt left out and asked them to speak English only. Moreover, Cindy was one of the few students that could manage to talk to Paul; for example, she asked Paul about his own language learning experiences (C/int.[4]/07dec). Nevertheless, the experience was, by and large, not what she had expected:

Every time I try to confirm whether we can manage to come to our next class or not, I have to say it at least three to four times. I will say, 'We don't have English class this week.' And Paul replies, 'We do.' I repeat, 'No, we don't have a class.' Like this kind of situation, I have to say several times to make him understand what I am trying to say. (C/int.[5]/11jan11/p2/t')

Later in focus group discussion, when asked about their experience of talking to Paul after several classes, Cindy echoed other members' experiences saying:

It has been quite the same really. He asked the same questions again and again, such as why I have chosen this military school, and I answered this same question at least three times. Also, he tends to forget what he has asked me before.

(C&F/fg/22jan11/p15/t')

4.2.4 Constancy and change

In view of learning to speak English as a developing process, it seems that Cindy's strategies use was slowly formed in her process of knowing the local environments she was in at different learning stages. Specifically, as Cindy pointed out, her first exposure to English, reading aloud draws in junior high school, her senior high school English language teacher's teaching and her Norwegian friend had a significant impact on her and

had been ‘guiding’ her strategy use. However, as the learning environments kept changing, she had to engage in different mediated activities in order to detect the affordances, i.e., things that were meaningful and useful to her, in the new local environment. To sum up, as described above, the constancy demonstrated in Cindy’s case is: the use of the CDs and CD-ROMs as part of the course through reading aloud; she willingly chose to speak English to people with whom she felt comfortable.

4.3 Fanny

Table 4.3 Data relating to Fanny

	Date	Methods of data collection	Key	Note
1	08 Oct 2010	First interview	F/int.[1]/08oct10	Based on her English learning autobiography submitted on 06 October 2010.
2	20 Oct 2010	Second interview	F/int.[2]/20oct10	Diary entries collected on 20 October 2010.
3	17 Nov 2010	Third interview	F/int.[3]/17nov10	Diary entries collected on 17 November 2010.
4	30 Nov 2010	Fourth interview	F/int.[4]/30nov10	Diary entries collected on 29 November 2010.
5	15 Dec 2010	Fifth interview	F/int.[5]/15dec10	Diary entries collected on 15 December 2010.
6	05 Jan 2011	Sixth interview	F/int.[6]/05jan11	Diary entries collected on 04 January 2010.
7	22 Jan 2011	Focus group interview	C&F/fg/22jan11	With Cindy, Sam and Amelia.
62 entries		Diary entries	F/ld/23sep10	See Chapter 3 learner diary section for dates.
15 classes		Classroom observation	J/co/08sep10	See Chapter 3 classroom observation section.
113 entries		Research journal	J/rj/16sep10	See Chapter 3 research journal section.
		documents		Her examination papers, test-book and notes.

4.3.1 EFL learning autobiography before college

This biographical account is based on the first interview with Fanny on 08 October 2010, except where specified.

Fanny was from central Taiwan and she was the youngest child in her family. She grew up with an older sister and an older brother. Her father had an animal farm and her mother was a housewife. Fanny was the oldest of the participants (F/int.[2]/20oct10) and the only in-service sergeant – she had enlisted in 2006 – among them (F/int.[4]/30nov10). Though English was not yet a compulsory subject in elementary school in her school days, she recalled that her EFL learning started in the third grade: ‘Our class tutor gave us some supplementary materials and asked us to memorize some very basic vocabulary’ (F/int.[1]/08oct10/p1/t’). The tutor taught them to read aloud a few sentences a few times every week. From the fifth grade, she began with her friends to attend English classes in a private language institute which she thought more helpful because the teacher there was more demanding. When English became a compulsory subject, she found the emphasis on grammar somewhat difficult. She attended the private language institute throughout her junior high school years. The teachers both in school and the private language institute were strict and her interest in English helped her keep on learning.

She managed to enter a public senior high school in the county where she lived. It took about one and a half hours to go to school by the school bus every morning. Under great pressure, she regretted that she had chosen senior instead of vocational high school. With regard to her English language learning in these three years, she found the tenses very confusing, especially in senior two. She felt as if the teacher assumed that teaching all that was in the textbooks was his only responsibility while she was feeling completely lost:

We were taught about the past perfect tense and the future perfect tense, and we should be able to tell if this did happen in the past or not. The teacher gave us everything at one go. It was extremely confusing. While I was busy taking notes, I missed his explanations. On the other hand, if I listened to him, I would not be able to jot down the notes on the blackboard before they were erased. ... Since the time when I was first taught the future tense, English has become tough. ... and my grade was pretty low. (F/int.[1]/08oct10/p4/t')

The purpose of senior high school education, to Fanny, seemed to be only about grades and to help students to enter universities. However, it was also in senior two that she passed the first phase of the GEPT elementary level. Three years after enlisting, she said that, 'I need to pick up the grammar I was taught in senior high school. ... Or I can say I have forgotten all of it.' (F/int.[3]/17nov10/p3/t')

When asked who had influenced her English language learning, Fanny remembered a private tutor, Grace, who was newly graduated from university when she was in junior high school. They first met in Grace's teaching demonstration as a job applicant seeking to teach in the private language institute Fanny attended. Grace reviewed phonics and the KK phonetic system with them. Fanny not only really enjoyed it but found it helpful. Grace shared her own EFL learning experience with her students. After Grace left the private language institute, Fanny and her classmate went to Grace's place for a six-student speaking class which lasted for about half a year. It was a weekly class from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Each class was about £ 6 (NT 300) per person and the age of the six students was varied. What Fanny liked most about Grace's class was the monthly movie-

viewing, draft-and-speech activities:

She would ask us to watch an English film. ... with Chinese subtitles ... after viewing, we should write about what we thought about the movie. ... Writing in English was very stressful and I was poor at speaking as well. ... I wrote my draft, gave it to Grace, she would correct it for me and I would recite it in front of the group. ... there were students younger than me. (F/int.[1]/08oct10/pp.3-4/t')

Since Fanny mostly used an electronic dictionary to translate her Chinese sentences to English and 'there were lots of corrections ... she [Grace] told me that was not right and why' (F/int.[1]/08oct10/p3/t'). After Fanny passed the first phase of the GEPT elementary level, she decided not to take the second phase of the GEPT elementary level, because Grace, who had done TOEFL and was going overseas for study, told them the GEPT was not recognized outside Taiwan.

After entering college, Fanny had a lot to catch up. The main affordances that she engaged included her social network: Cindy as her pair in the optional class, English language teachers (past/present), her boyfriend, and the researcher; and artefacts: magazines, CD-ROMs, a test-book, tests, a notebook, a learner diary, computers and laptops.

4.3.2 Strategies as part of the coursework

Here I will present how Fanny went about learning to speak English in relation to the course. Even though Fanny and her pair (Cindy) not only belonged to the same original

class but the same company, they did not continue their practice of speaking English or study together after class. Cindy also confirmed this.

Though Fanny was glad to take this optional course, the lack of time for studying in the military environment was manifest in her situation:

I feel that we do not have enough time to do private study in our company. ...

You have too many subjects to study ... most of the evenings, we are sweeping ... and the evening assembly at 9:00 pm can easily last until 9:50 pm ... and the night studies from 10:00 pm ...but after we have a shower, it's usually 10:30 pm, and lights out is at 11:00 pm. This means you have only about half an hour to study. What subject do you study? (F/int.[1]/08oct10/p5/t')

In fact, she had been asking her company leader for more time to study since October (F/int.[2]/20oct10). As an in-service sergeant, Fanny was not only aware of the military timetable but also the difference between the students recruited from the army and those just graduated from the senior and vocational high schools (i.e., they had been learning in school).

4.3.2.1 Read aloud, write and listen before speaking: Andrea, magazines, CD-ROMs, tests, and a notebook

Fanny was quite upset about the grades she got in the first two tests. She then decided that she would take the magazines home and study at weekends (F/int.[2]/20oct10/p4/t'):

After that, when I studied, I simply followed Andrea's instructions. ... I didn't get what she wanted this time. ... I thought she would give us fill-in-the-blank type of tests again ... but she simply asked us to repeat it.

Fanny described her approach as, 'I write down what I am listening to and then I read it aloud to myself' (F/int.[2]/20oct10/p4/t'). When asked to demonstrate her method, she opened the magazine and said:

I use both the magazine and the CD-ROM. ... I read the article in the magazine first; after that, I will copy the whole unit in a notebook once. ... I read aloud while copying it in the notebook ... in order to memorize it ... I do it paragraph by paragraph ... two or three times for each paragraph, but only once for the short conversations. ... Next, I will play the CD-ROM and I will simply listen two to three times. After this, I will double-check if my longhand copy is correct before I listen to the paragraph again. At the end I will read the whole unit aloud to myself. (F/int.[3]/17nov10/p8/t')

In so doing, Fanny could see if she could match the paragraphs she had memorized with what she was listening to. If she could not, she would go back to the magazine and focus on those 'missing words'; that is, she would continue to memorize these by reading and copying several times and then listen to the clip of this paragraph again. Every unit would take her about thirty minutes. Her goal was to be able to see every word in her mind and to be able to jot down most of the words when listening to each unit. This helped her to improve not only her class quizzes grade (F/tb/) but also that of her examinations (F/od/).

Though this was not the first time for her to see CD-ROMs, Fanny had to learn how to use CD-ROMs to study:

I think it is truly important that I listen to the CD-ROMs. ... It is a very well-planned design ... it has the transcripts ... videos ... I think it is convenient and serves multiple purposes. ... I would not see it as an extra and simply put it aside. Andrea uses the CD-ROMs in class and I think it makes English classes much more interesting. (F/int.[6]/05jan10/p16/t')

Though she made an application for permission to use her laptop in the company in October, the permission was not granted until the end of November. She decided to make a second application because 'sometimes I need to listen to the CD-ROM ... its speed is fast, not like my own delivery speed. ... If I haven't listened to it, I won't understand what it is saying [when the teacher plays it to me]' (F/int.[4]/30nov10/p3/t'). In fact, she felt that listening really stretched her patience because it was too difficult to understand and she would have to listen to it over and over again. She took *Salt* as an example:

When Andrea played it for the first time, I could not understand a word! I was shocked. Were there really sentences? ... Later she kept playing it so many times, I kept listening to it. ... It required my undivided attention. ... I listened to every word ... then I understood what it was saying. ... Their accent is so different to ours. (F/int.[6]/05jan10/p10/t')

Though her grades improved, she felt that it was not easy to learn to speak English because 'there is such a big gap' between what was on the CD-ROM and what she could do (F/int.[4]/30nov10).

4.3.3 Strategies apart from the coursework

English was not used in her family, but Fanny mentioned that her mother had junior high school education and used to check on her English learning at first (F/int.[1]/08oct10).

The only person who would ask her to translate was her boyfriend. For example, though he was not interested in learning English himself, he often asked for help when encountering English words in computer games (F/int.[2]/20oct10).

4.3.3.1 Write to learn to speak: learner diary and Joy

When asked to name five people who had an influence on her English language learning in this semester, Fanny named Joy, the researcher, as the person who had the most influence on her learning. In fact, she considered the opportunity to be a research participant ‘a big present’, in Fanny’s words (F/int.[6]/05jan10/p2/t’). Fanny further explained:

I think it is you who have influenced my learning most. Because I shared my diary with you, in our discussion, we shared our thoughts based on each diary entry. ... I feel that this one-to-one discussion is truly different. ... I feel it is really very special. (F/int.[6]/05jan10/p17/t’)

I was reminded that Fanny seemed to enjoy our warm-up conversation (F/int.[5]/15dec10) and our discussion on how to express what she wanted to say in English. For instance, when we were looking at her diary entry considering a gift-exchange activity, she said:

Oh, ‘stuff’ refers to the thing inside of it. So, this is a ‘stuffed dog’. Oh, dinosaur and things like that. So, Joy, do you like dolls? ... I just think that it’s not practical at all. (F/int.[6]/05jan10/p5/t’ and F/ld/16dec10)

Fanny enjoyed keeping an English diary (F/int.[2]/20oct10) and her growing interest was supported by the increasing entries in November and December which excelled all the others' entries (Table 3.2). She gave an example to illustrate this point: her classmates approached her and asked her what she was doing while Fanny was writing her English diary. Fanny told her classmates she needed to write to find out what she knew and what she did not know and a teacher would comment on her work. Her classmates simply told her that, even if a teacher would comment on their writing, it simply took too much effort to write in English and they would not do it (F/int.[6]/05jan10). After our last interview, though I was willing to continue commenting on her English diary, Fanny stopped writing.

4.3.3.2 Speak to an English native speaker: class tutor, Paul and classmates

Fanny was one of the three female students of this ten-person class – Cindy, Fanny and Amelia. Fanny considered the NT 1,000 guarantee a motivator to help her commit to attending this class from the beginning to the end (F/int.[2]/20oct10/t'). As a matter of fact, she was quite excited about this conversation class with a 'foreigner' because of the difference between course-related practices and real-life conversations:

You mean when Cindy and I are practising in a pair? ... It's not really speaking English because we simply recite the conversation in the magazine. We were not really communicating in English. I think, in November, we should be able to have a real conversation with that foreigner. ... He is supposed to teach us speaking and I am looking forward to it. (F/int.[2]/20oct10/p4/t')

However, the excitement turned into frustration and dissatisfaction after the first two classes. Though Fanny sat right in front of Paul, she felt that Paul was speaking far too fast. Also, though she wished that ‘English would simply flow out of my mouth’ (F/int.[3]/17nov10/p1/t’), she found she had backslidden because she stopped learning English after graduating from senior high school three years previously.

To be more specific, the dissatisfaction was because, though this was supposed to be a conversation class, most of the time it was Paul who did the talking and the students listened. Another disappointment was they came to realize that they had to memorize more vocabulary before they came to class. A third example was, in order to sort out the exact date for their next meeting with Paul, the students were engaged in counter-checking their individual schedules among themselves in Mandarin. Paul was offended because he did not speak Mandarin at all and felt left out (F/int.[3]/17nov10). The communication with Paul was not easy and there were ‘barriers’ (F/int.[6]/05jan10). In the last interview, Fanny, who had missed two of Paul’s classes because of other examinations, reflected on this experience as a whole:

Because we didn’t prepare for these classes, I don’t think I’ve made any progress.

The truth is we don’t know what questions to ask Paul. ... He would wait while we tried to think of a word which took a long time ... it was dry. (F/int.[6]/05jan10/p7/t’)

4.3.3.3 Listen to learn to speak: prior instructor, ECL preparatory class, sergeant, and schoolmates

Fanny had an opportunity to have in-service training in which the instructor shared his view on a military career with them. He had served in the army for twenty years and he had spent half of it abroad with full pay because of his English language skills. Fanny was convinced that this was what she wanted for her military career as well. There was a class managed by a sergeant major who had been to the United States for short-term military training. It was held from Monday to Wednesday every week, except mid-term and final-examination weeks. There were about 120 students in this evening class from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Fanny joined this ECL (English Comprehension Level) class in early November (F/int.[3]/17nov10).

Fanny talked about her first ECL class saying:

I attended the ECL preparatory class. I was quite upset because I had a test that day and I did very poorly. The listening test was very difficult. Also, the clip was played once, not twice. Just once! ... I need to improve my listening skill. ...

Besides, I should review senior high school English grammar. I really need to find it and study it again in order to refresh my memory. ... I'm afraid that I've forgotten it all. (F/int.[3]/17nov10/p3/t')

However, this was not recorded in her diary. Like Paul's class, Fanny was not fully committed to this class either (e.g., F/int.[3]/17nov10). This class was fully test-oriented in nature and Fanny started memorizing ECL vocabulary according to the instructions. Since going for overseas training was Fanny's dream, she found it very helpful when the sergeant shared his frustrations, struggles and fun during his training in the United States where he met and lived with sergeants from different countries (F/int.[5]/15dec10).

4.3.4 Constancy and change

With respect to learning to speak English as an ongoing process, Fanny felt that she stopped studying English after senior high school. Entering a college learning environment proved to be a challenge, she needed to be (re)connected to where she had left her English language learning. In her process of reconnecting, she not only thought of her senior high school English textbooks (the highest proficiency level she had experienced) (F/int.[3]/17nov10/p3 and p7), but also engaged in different learning activities provided in the new learning environment. She continually compared her grades and progress with her newly-graduated-classmates, but after attending ECL preparatory class and Paul's Saturday conversation class, Fanny came to realize that she had backslidden in these three years serving in the army. To sum up, her attitude towards CD-ROMs changed: before college, it seemed they were never an important part in examination-oriented classrooms; in college, Andrea's teaching depended on CD-ROMs. (F/int.[6]/05jan10). During this semester, Fanny stressed the significance of her being able to listen to long English sentences patiently (F/int.[6]/05jan10). The constancy shown in Fanny's case is: her writing to facilitate memorization and preparation for oral production, and her dependence on an electronic dictionary to do Chinese-English translation.

4.4 Peter

Table 4.4 Data relating to Peter

	Date	Methods of data collection	Key	Note
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1	07 Oct 2010	First interview	P/int.[1]/08oct10	Based on his English learning autobiography submitted on 06 October 2010.
2	18 Oct 2010	Second interview	P/int.[2]/18oct10	Diary entries collected on 15 October 2010.
3	01 Nov 2010	Third interview	P/int.[3]/01nov10	Diary entries collected on 01 November 2010.
4	15 Nov 2010	Fourth interview	P/int.[4]/15nov10	Diary entries collected on 15 November 2010.
5	29 Nov 2010	Fifth interview	P/int.[5]/29nov10	Diary entries collected on 29 November 2010.
6	04 Jan 2011	Sixth interview	P/int.[6]/04jan11	Diary entries collected on 04 January 2010.
7	18 Jan 2011	Focus group interview	P/fg/18jan11	With Peter's girlfriend, his brother and his brother's girlfriend
27 entries		Diary entries	P/ld/02oct10	See Chapter 3 learner diary section for dates.
15 classes		Classroom observation	J/co/08sep10	See Chapter 3 classroom observation section.
113 entries		Research journal	J/rj/16sep10	See Chapter 3 research journal section.
		documents		His English language learning magazines, examination papers, test-book and notes.

4.4.1 EFL learning autobiography before college

This biographical account is based on the first interview with Peter on 07 October 2010, except where specified.

Peter lived in the county where the school was situated. He was the second son and grew up with his older brother. His father was a car mechanic and his mother worked in a warehouse (P/int.[2]/18oct10). He felt that every learning stage began with the alphabet and phonics, from kindergarten to junior high school. The main difference was the amount of time spent on it: 'In junior high, it probably took one or two classes; in earlier stages, it could have taken one month' (P/int.[1]/08oct10/p1/t'). Peter's English language learning began at a bilingual kindergarten to which his older brother had gone. In fact, his parents, especially his mother, believed that their children should start learning English as early as possible. As well as attending compulsory English classes in elementary school,

he went to a children's English private language institute, first to learn KK phonetic symbols (P/int.[3]/01nov10) and then to have lessons with English native speaker teachers:

The teacher was a Canadian ... it was very special. I felt that English native speaker teachers were supposed to teach us speaking and to help us change our attitude towards foreigners. ... They normally asked you questions, spoke to you in English and you should reply in English. ... After the first half an hour, the Taiwanese teacher would take over and teach the second half an hour. During the first half an hour ... the Taiwanese teacher was there as well and would translate whenever we couldn't understand. (P/int.[5]/29nov10/p5/t')

He recalled that his attitude towards English became serious in junior high school because, following his older brother, his parents sent him to a private complete middle school in which English was emphasized. All students had to subscribe to an elementary level English language learning magazine to increase their vocabulary because it was not only broadcast in morning studies but an integrated part of their course, which took up thirty per cent in mid-term and final examinations; this listening test was composed of chosen clips from the magazine CDs. Peter's older brother who had gone to the same school was forced to take the GEPT elementary level in his last year and the mother told Peter to do likewise. The older brother passed, but Peter failed (P/fg/18jan11). Peter did not take the GEPT afterwards.

English became a challenging subject in the second year in senior high school. He mentioned that mostly the English teacher was talking about something other than English. She sat and taught most of the time. She would ask them to underline what she thought they would be tested on and there was an eighty per cent chance what she stressed were not in the tests. Fortunately, Peter's third-year English teacher changed his attitude towards English because he kept encouraging them by saying 'natural science majors can also be good at English' (P/int.[1]/08oct10/p2/t'). Knowing their experience in the previous year, this teacher put an emphasis on the relationship between pronunciation and the spelling of English words:

If you can pronounce this word, you know how to spell it. ...If a word has twenty letters ... while you try to spell it on a piece of paper ... if you know the sound of each letter, you know how to spell it. (P/int.[1]/08oct10/p3/t')

He also taught senior high English in an organized and textbook-based manner:

He usually began with vocabulary, sample sentences in the vocabulary list ... grammar points ... grammar focus in this lesson ... if he taught ten new words today, he would test us on these tomorrow and so on. ... When the vocabulary of a lesson was done, he would have a review test on all of them. ... After he finished teaching the article, he would distribute the exam sheets accompanying the textbook and ask us to practise with it. Hmm, it was a step-by-step sort of 'solid' learning. (P/int.[1]/08oct10/p2/t')

The importance of English proficiency in university was stressed by different teachers. Also, Peter had a friend who did well in Mathematics, but was poor in English. In their first meeting, his university tutor told Peter's friend he needed to improve his English

(P/int.[4]/15nov10). Peter was sent to an examination-oriented private language institute by his mother where he was asked to memorize a huge amount of vocabulary. This private language institute teacher made it clear to his students that to do well in the NCEE, they needed a 10,000 vocabulary, which was equal to, or above, that of GEPT high intermediate level (the expected level of non-English major university graduates) (P/int.[1]/08oct10/t').

However, what influenced Peter's perception of communicating with foreigners seemed to be his experience in France when he was a fifth grader:

At that time, because one of my cousins ... needed to go to the toilet ... but the shop clerk could not understand 'bathroom', 'restroom' or 'WC'. ... we kept trying at first ... we drew a flush toilet ... then they finally understood and took my cousin to the toilet. ... When shopping, all you need to do is to ask 'how much' and show him/her the items. ... They spoke French; English was useless there. Body language and gestures were more effective. (P/int.[5]/29nov10/p3/t')

Coming to the Academy meant a new stage of EFL learning. Though Peter was a member of the military band and they spent a lot of time practising together, unlike Cindy, he did not practise English there. His social network included family, his girlfriend, English language teachers (past/present), and the researcher. Artefacts mainly included magazines, CD-ROMs, a test-book, tests, a learner diary and computers.

4.4.2 Strategies as part of the coursework

Based on the description of 4.1, here I will present how Peter went about learning to speak English in relation to the course. Peter and his pair who belonged to the same original class and they were both in this optional course. However, they had little interaction concerned with this course after class.

4.4.2.1 Read, translate and review before speaking: Andrea, magazines, tests, breaks and night studies

Since Andrea started with a unit of her choice and showed it on CD-ROM, Peter thought that unit was not in the magazine. While waiting for the computer to start at the beginning of the next class, he flipped through the magazine and saw that unit. He normally read the English version first to see if he could translate it into Chinese. Whenever he had problems doing so, he would consult the Chinese translation in the last section of the magazine. When reading the Chinese translation, he would try to translate it back to English orally:

I will read the English article first. If there is new vocabulary, I will read this [the key vocabulary column]. After I understand the meaning of the words, I will consult the Chinese translation to see if I have understood it correctly ... if my translation is different, I will go back to the English article and read that sentence several times again...because I think the teacher likes to test us on [Chinese-English] translation ... so I need to be able to translate Chinese into English.
(P/int.[2]/18oct10/p1/t')

Basically, if he could produce English orally based on the Chinese translation, he did not need to play the CD-ROM; if he could not, he would wait until he went home or back into the language laboratory where he could play it on a computer (P/int.[1]/08oct10).

Peter put the magazine and the CD-ROM in his school bag every day so that he would not forget them. He usually relied on the magazine when in school because of the military routine and lack of access to computers. He liked to flip through the magazine during ten-minute breaks between classes, especially the break before the optional course (P/int.[3]/01nov10). The other time he studied was during night studies usually beginning at 10:00 pm. After his regular military band practice, there was on average less than half an hour for him to study, unless it was the week before the mid-term or final examination. The company rule was to keep quiet during night studies, so Peter ‘read’ silently to himself in the case of unfamiliar and long sentences (P/int.[2]/18oct10). Peter stressed the importance of reviewing what he learned. He thought it was normal to forget vocabulary (P/int.[3]/01nov10). He tried to spend about twenty minutes every day to review the vocabulary taught (P/int.[5]/29nov10). The importance of reviewing outweighed examination results, Peter said:

It’s useless to have tests but not to review afterwards. I need to review, so I can see what I understand and what I do not really understand. Or I tend to think I understand everything until the tests reveal to me those areas which I do not understand. That’s why it is so important to review what I have learned or been tested on. (P/int.[6]/04jan10)

4.4.2.2 *Read, listen, and write before speaking: Andrea, CD-ROMs, tests, computers, and weekends*

Peter liked the magazines. However, he would go to the Chinese translations directly if nothing caught his eyes while he was flipping through. Moreover, when at home with the computer in the lounge, he did not need the magazine because he could choose the ‘transcript’ page in which vocabulary and its explanations showed when he moved the cursor to the word. Compared with memorizing vocabulary, memorizing conversations was even more difficult. He usually played the clip nonstop twice or three times to prepare for the oral tests (P/int.[2]/18oct10). On one occasion, he had to borrow a laptop to study because there was no transcript of the movie trailer, *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, in the magazine (P/int.[6]/04jan10).

Peter compared the experience of reading the magazines with that of listening to the CD-ROMs:

After the first test, I read while listening to it, and then I read the Chinese translation to see if I can translate it back to the English version. ... It will normally take one hour or so to go through each unit while I am studying at home. However, because I read only the magazines at school, it takes only twenty minutes. ... Yes, I think listening takes longer because it takes about ten minutes to play a clip once. In contrast, if you only read the magazine, you can focus on key vocabulary directly and skip the rest. But when you listen, you will have to follow it sentence by sentence. Yes, that’s why it takes longer.
(P/int.[5]/29nov10/p1/t’)

Peter thought he could understand the clips after listening to them at home, but to repeat the exact sentence word by word posed a real challenge (P/int.[3]/01nov10). Also, he felt that foreigners spoke in a way that was not clear to him: ‘Because that is natural to them, they spoke really fast ... words are all linked together ... two words can sound like one word ... and the [native-speaker] accent is different from ours’ (P/int.[6]/04jan10/p2/t’).

It should be noted that his attitude towards listening and speaking gradually changed in the process:

I used to think that listening and speaking were not so important, but now I feel that listening and speaking is the main purpose of learning English. ... I used to think reading and writing were more important. ... I think you need to be able to write and read; then you can listen and speak. ... You need to know a word before you are able to speak it. (P/int.[6]/04jan10/p8/t’)

When preparing for oral tests, Peter would take a piece of paper, read one sentence aloud and write it on the paper; then move on to the second sentence and so on (P/int.[6]/04jan10). Writing it down not only helped him to memorize vocabulary but it was also required that students write those English words when taking tests. In effect, Peter had been studying this way since senior high school. Now he felt he could not memorize the words without writing them down (P/int.[4]/15nov10).

4.4.3 Strategies apart from the coursework

Peter went home during weekends. He spent most of his time with his family and his girlfriend. When Peter, his girlfriend, his cousin and his brother’s girlfriend were

travelling by train in Taipei, they had an unexpected encounter with an English native speaker, who was standing by the train door greeting all the passengers. Though the English native speaker was most friendly and noticed Peter, Peter did not have the courage to speak English in public. In Peter's own words (P/int.[5]/29nov10/p4/t'):

The foreigner was talking pretty fast ... a person who looked like a university student was chatting with him. ... I was standing quite close to him while talking to my girlfriend. Perhaps he sensed that I was peeking; he greeted me. I turned away immediately because I was too afraid that he would keep talking to me to even respond to his greeting. When we were approaching Taipei station, he turned to me and asked if we were getting off at Taipei station. ... I answered, 'Yes.' And he said, 'Oh, very good. Take [it] easy.' ... He spoke so fast that, in fact, I heard 'Taipei station' only and I simply replied, 'Yes.' ... He patted me on my shoulder and told me to relax. And I said, 'OK. OK.'

4.3.3.1 Memorize vocabulary: vocabulary booklets, and girlfriend

Peter's girlfriend was introduced to him through a friend during the summer vacation before he went to college. Peter spent most of his weekends with his girlfriend who was preparing to take the NCEE for the second time. She had a plan to memorize fifty English words every day and Peter would spend time memorizing English words with her at weekends (P/int.[1]/08oct10). They asked each other vocabulary to check if they had truly memorized these words (P/int.[4]/15nov10). Also, Peter mentioned that he taught her phonics and KK phonetic symbols (P/int.[3]/01nov10). Peter liked to study with his girlfriend because her companionship kept him motivated:

You know someone is here with you and you would be more motivated to learn.
Hmm, just that feeling would help me. If I am all alone, I usually don't feel like studying. (P/int.[3]/01nov10/p3/t')

4.3.3.2 Following an example: older brother, GEPT and TOEIC

Peter attended the same schools as his older brother, from kindergarten to the Academy. In fact, though they had different majors, Peter's older brother graduated the same year Peter registered in the Academy. His older brother appeared to be Peter's example for learning English and the consultant for his military career. For example, Peter said, 'I don't know if I will take the GEPT again, but I would like to join my older brother in preparing for TOEIC because the result will be more useful' (P/int.[6]/04jan10/p7/t').

Also, according to Peter, the only opportunity for him to speak English was with his older brother, his older brother's girl friend and his girlfriend (P/int.[1]/08oct10). However, he added that, 'I rarely use English with my girlfriend; even more rarely with my older brother and his girlfriend' (P/int.[4]/15nov10/p4/t').

4.4.4 Constancy and change

Peter was the only participant who had not passed the first phase of the GEPT. As far as his own practice for oral tests was concerned, he gradually changed from 'read and translate' to 'listen and repeat' sentence by sentence on CD-ROMs (with the English subtitles). Also, he would try to catch up with the speed of delivery (P/int.[6]/04jan10). Peter started to learn English at kindergarten, went to France when he was a fifth grader,

and was taught by English native speaker teachers in a private language institute. His real-life experience of communicating with foreigners left him the impression that:

If you know basic grammar and you've got enough vocabulary, you know how to communicate with others. Yeah, in fact, usually foreigners' grammar is not perfect. They are ungrammatical sometimes. When you talk to him/her, I think he or she listens only to key words. (P/int.[5]/29nov10/p2-3/t')

In respect of his continual learning process, he tended to rely on the Chinese translation and this was made clear while taking the optional course. In effect, when asked what he had learned from taking this course, Peter said:

I feel that I cannot go to Chinese translations directly without reading the English articles. ... I should listen first; then, try to repeat it and see how much I can understand. ... I shouldn't consult the Chinese translation whenever I have a difficulty understanding English. ... I should listen and read English ... be patient ... because if I read Chinese translations first, I tend to think I understand the English articles. ... I shouldn't rely on Chinese all the time simply because I am eager to know what the article is about. (P/int.[6]/04jan10/pp7-8/t')

During this first semester, Peter's attitude towards his own speaking skills was gradually changed and this awareness of his dependence on Chinese was raised through his engagement in listen-and-repeat and listen-and-write activities. Also, the constant influence of his brother and family featured in his learning process.

4.5 Nick

Table 4.5 Data relating to Nick

	Date	Methods of data collection	Key	Note
1	30 Sep 2010	First interview	N/int.[1]/30sep10	Based on his English learning autobiography submitted on 27 September 2010.
2	16 Oct 2010	Second interview	N/int.[2]/16oct10	Diary entries collected on 13 October 2010.
3	30 Oct 2010	Third interview	N/int.[3]/30oct10	Diary entries collected on 29 October 2010.
4	04 Dec 2010	Fourth interview	N/int.[4]/04dec10	Diary entries collected on 01 December 2010.
5	12 Jan 2011	Fifth interview	N/int.[5]/12jan11	No diary entries.
	20 entries	Diary entries	N/ld/28sep10	See Chapter 3 learner diary section for dates.
	15 classes	Classroom observation	J/co/08sep10	See Chapter 3 classroom observation section.
	113 entries	Research journal	J/rj/16sep10	See Chapter 3 research journal section.
		documents		His examination papers, and test-book.

4.5.1 EFL learning autobiography before college

This biographical account is based on the first interview with Nick on 30 September 2010, except where specified.

Nick was from middle-south Taiwan and he was the first son in his family. He grew up with his two older sisters and his younger brother. His father was a retired policeman and his mother was a life insurance agent. His parents had high expectations of him. His first English class began with an English-Chinese bilingual foreign teacher from grade 3 to grade 6 in elementary school. Nick concluded on his learning experience at this stage by saying: ‘These four years were simply wasted ... we played it away.’ To support his point, he said that, ‘After those four years I could not even recite the alphabet’ (N/int.[1]/30sep10/p3/t’).

However, from the first year of junior high school, the situation was very different. His parents sent him to an examination-oriented private complete middle school in the city where they lived. He also began attending private language institute English classes after school and he learned not only the alphabet but phonics there. In the last year of junior high school, he learned to read KK phonetic symbols. He did well in English in junior high school and obtained a full mark in English in the Junior High School Basic Competence Test. Nick demonstrated his test skills for multiple-choice tests: ‘Because there are only four choices, even if you do not really know the answer, you can cross out the other three which you know are not the answer’ (N/int.[1]/30sep10/p1/t’). It was not until senior high school that he found English challenging.

A typical day for Nick in his senior school years was (N/int.[1]/30sep10/pp.1-2/t’ my summary):

Get up at around 5 am; get on the school bus to school at 6:30 am; arrive at the school around 7:40 am; listen to the broadcasting of English language magazines during morning studies; follow classes on the class timetable [sleep in class, except Mathematics]; stay at school for charged evening studies under a teacher’s supervision; go home at 9:00 pm; study at home and go to bed at 3:00 am.

His health was affected by the reverse sleep-study daily routine and skipping breakfast. In fact, in the last interview, he said, ‘I ruined my health for nothing. I would rather have eaten well, slept well and have not given myself so much pressure. Then I would have come to this Academy without regrets’ (N/int.[5]/12jan10/p5/t’).

Specifically, his middle school had a well-planned schedule for tests in all ten subjects:

We had weekly tests at school, for example, Chinese on Monday, English on Wednesday, and Mathematics on Friday and so on for three weeks and the tenth subject is allocated on Saturdays. After several days, the first monthly exam comes. One week after that, the cycle of weekly tests starts again. And then the second monthly exam comes. ... In the last year of senior high school, students have to come to do private study in the school even at weekends unless the parents permit them to be absent. (N/int.[1]/30sep10/p9/t')

There was intense competition between schools and students. Nick's parents wanted him to go to one of the top three universities in Taiwan because Nick had higher scores than his siblings in school. When there were only 100 days before the big examination, Nick realized English was the subject that required more attention. He began reading English language learning magazines assigned by the school and memorizing an English dictionary. This effort paid off in his last mock test (he achieved thirteen on a fifteen-level system).

Nick was probably the participant who had the most comprehensive test-taking training and his one and only goal was to do well in order to go to one of the top universities. Nevertheless, the result of the NCEE (he achieved fifty-three on a seventy-five-level system) was not as good as expected (the sixty-five level or above). Nick's parents decided that Nick should try military schools and the police university. Unfortunately, he did not do as well as expected in these examinations either. Nick could still remember all the details and the emotions during this time when he took one high-stake examination

after another. It was a major setback for Nick and his parents that he could not study in one of the top universities. This disillusionment added to the long-term tension and conflicts between him and his parents. In fact, he seldom went home after he registered in the school. During the last interview, I gathered that we needed to discuss an issue on his mind before we could continue our discussion of English language learning: because it was the first winter vacation and Chinese New Year was approaching, he was under great pressure from his chief counsellor, because his mother wanted him home and he did not want to go (N/int.[5]/12jan10).

In fact, Nick's primary aim of coming to the Academy was to be able to manage his own money (N/int.[2]/16oct10). This meant he was no longer under the stress of study and could explore life more generally without his parents' interference (N/int.[4]/04dec10). He made friends with seniors who taught him how to ride a motorbike and they played basketball together (N/int.[4]/04dec10). However, when screening his social network for the focus group interviews, Nick had problems identifying and inviting three friends with whom he studied English or discussed English learning from the social environment, either currently or in his home town: 'There are few who would have influenced how I learn English because I seldom talk to anyone about my study' (N/int.[5]/12jan10/p2/t').

There were English listening classes (one-class-a-week) taught by four English native speaker teachers during senior one and two. It was a class of fifty or more students. Nick described the class he had:

It's up to you. You can talk to the [English native speaker] teacher ... but normally the class was noisy because students were playing in small groups. The teacher was surprised to find that we scored full marks, or almost, because he thought since we weren't paying much attention to his teaching, we weren't interested in learning English. That was because we studied the magazines at home. ... In class the teacher got mad because no one was listening to him.

(N/int.[3]/30oct10/p2/t')

In effect, though the teachers tried to keep to English, they were English-Chinese bilingual. Nick said that, 'In senior two, I talked to the foreign teacher in Mandarin after class. Though not fluent, he replied in Mandarin because he had a Taiwanese girlfriend' (N/int.[3]/30oct10/p2/t'). After students found this out, they did not want to make the effort to speak English to the teachers.

Silvia, Nick's junior high school classmate, went to Australia to study when she was fourteen years old. Silvia's life in Australia was Nick's dream come true in many ways, because Nick continually compared his learning in Taiwan with Silvia's in Australia. He appreciated Silvia's education experience and her English language skills: 'I cannot compare with her; she speaks English all the time there in Australia.'

(N/int.[1]/30sep10/p4/t'). When asked what a desirable English language learning environment for him would be like, Nick said:

As for listening, you have to spend time with foreigners, or go on a trip with them, so you can understand English in both spoken and written forms. ... I think if I listened to foreigners speaking and I spent enough time with them ... I would

... speak like they speak. I think this would be the best environment for me to learn in. (N/int.[1]/30sep10/p.4/t')

Nick gave an example to illustrate the gap between what he had learned in school and his one real-life conversation with the foreigner on the train (N/int.[4]/04dec10). Through this experience he found that his real-life speaking skills were at best junior high school level and his vocabulary was not everyday-life-like:

I have been memorizing dictionaries, grammar and articles continually ... but I am simply bad at speaking English. I might be able to understand articles, but I suddenly lose words if you ask me to speak. ... The words I memorized seem very old-fashioned ... no one uses them now ... and I feel so stupid.

(N/int.[1]/30sep10/p.4/t')

On entering the college, Nick joined the marching band for a while but left without developing a strong relationship. His social network mainly included English language teachers (past/present), company members, friends, and the researcher. Artefacts mainly included magazines (past/present), CD-ROMs, a test-book, tests, a learner diary and computers.

4.5.2 Strategies as part of the coursework

After the NCEE, Nick's learning goal in college needed to be re-thought. When asked what his goal for learning to speak English was, he said, 'There was little chance to learn listening and speaking in middle school' (N/int.[4]/04dec10/p3/t'). Now his aim was:

I want to be able to listen, speak and write in English. That is all I want. ... It is not simply to be able to understand what the teacher plays in the classroom ... when meeting people outside the classroom, just like the way I speak Mandarin, I want to be able to use English like I use Mandarin. (N/int.[4]/04dec10p9/t')

4.5.2.1 Classroom practice before speaking: Andrea, CD-ROMs, magazines, tests, and classmates

Andrea was one of three people (Andrea, his military English teacher and Joy), identified by Nick (N/int.[5]/12jan11), who would ask him to speak English. However, Nick and his pair (who was from a different original class and both took the optional class) were more interested in the Internet-connected computers than participating in classroom activities:

My partner and I take every opportunity to surf online and do what we want to do. When we have to practise English in pairs, it is usually me who take the initiative; we do it without thinking about what we are reading. ... Both of us are too shy to volunteer to go to the front and act out the conversations. In fact, we try to avoid volunteering ... because these classmates are not my close friends and acting out is like to 'fake' a conversation, which is nothing like natural conversations. (N/int.[2]/16oct10/p6-7/t')

Though Nick liked CD-ROMs because he could repeat the sentences until he understood them, he was well aware of a gap between English spoken in the CD-ROMs and English

spoken on various television programmes (N/int.[4]/04dec10). When commenting on the oral tests, Nick thought differently from Andrea (N/int.[1]/30sep10/p.5/t’):

The speed of the CD is too fast ... I think we should memorize key vocabulary ... but I do not see the point of memorizing sentences. ... Why should you memorize sentences? ... You can use different sentences to say the same thing, can’t you? ... I can just memorize the whole article in order to meet her criteria, but I do not like doing this. ... You will forget everything after two days. ... So, I simply do it my own way, though I know this may not be the right thing to do.

At first Nick assumed that there were no tests in optional courses. Although he agreed that these oral tests helped to develop his speaking skills to some extent, he prepared for them only in class (N/int.[5]/12jan10/p4/t’):

I only flip through rather than study carefully outside the classroom. ... I usually read and practise in class. ... It [mid-term examination] is not that I did not have time to prepare, but I just did not prepare for it. Because I did not want to, I just wanted a passing grade. ... [As for the final examination] I did my study in class because I thought I would be OK. I did not use my personal time to study for tests.

Regarding the magazines, Nick did not enjoy the elementary level magazine because, ‘I think these topics on buying groceries, cartoons ... I am not interested at all’

(N/int.[2]/16oct10/p1/t’). On the other hand, the intermediate-level magazine interested Nick because ‘There are some topics that seem fine ... I do not remember ... let me have a look ... the one on travelling’ (N/int.[4]/04dec10/p2/t’). However, he admittedly said

that, instead of reading the English version to learn English, mostly he read through the Chinese translations to get the information (N/int.[5]/12jan10).

4.5.3 Strategies apart from the coursework

Nick stayed on campus at the weekends (N/int.[2]/16oct10). Nick's main English language learning activity was reading. For example, because he liked the theme of travelling, Nick took with him an April 2010 magazine which he subscribed to in senior high school (intermediate to high-intermediate level) and read it when he felt like reading English. As for learning to speak English, he appeared to have more confidence in authentic materials than in English learning magazines.

4.5.3.1 Watch films to learn to speak: company leader, weekends, televiion, DVD player, company members

Nick described a typical day in the school (N/int.[1]/30sep10/p2; N/int.[4]/04dec10/p1 my summary):

After morning jogging, if you do not doze off in class, you are fit. ... After seven classes a day, you still have physical training in the eighth class. In the evening, you need to do other military tasks. When you can finally have some time for yourself, it's normally after 10:00 pm.

It was only at weekends or holidays that he could watch television or film DVDs in the common area of their company. Though he told himself that he was watching to learn to speak English, he admitted that most likely he relied on Chinese subtitles and soon forgot about his initial intention to learn English. However, because Nick's company leader

provided them with the equipment to watch films together, there were situations in which he and his company members did pick up some English words:

At that time, we were not learning English intentionally, but sometimes there were catchy words like ‘freak’. ... We had a good laugh about it and started to say that word to each other. ... I know it has a negative meaning, but just like ‘bullshit’... after you say it twice, though you cannot write this word ... you know when to use it. (N/int.[4]/04dec10/p5/t’)

Nick knew that he always started listening to English very attentively, but soon found it boring because, then he could not enjoy the film. The conflict stemmed from the fact, that when he chose to watch a television programme, it was mainly because he liked the topic rather than considering the English language learning. He also knew that he could only listen to the conversation once. In fact, he admitted that it was too demanding to understand the films in English, because he needed to be able to ‘think in English’ first. He often found himself using learning English as an excuse to start with, but ended up watching television with other company members.

4.5.4 Constancy and change

During the first semester in college, Nick came to terms with his weakness in English language learning in listening and speaking. He had a chance to take ECL (English Comprehension Level) and failed two-thirds of the listening questions: ‘I was totally shocked. Is my English really so poor?’ (N/int.[4]/04dec10/p6/t’). Though Nick had obtained his GEPT elementary level certificate in his senior two, he repeatedly said that his speaking was not good enough (N/int.[1]/30sep10; N/int. [3]/30oct10;

N/int.[4]/04dec10). As a matter of fact, Nick suggested to Silvia that they start a Chinese-English language exchange class. However, it did not work out because they had a shared first language (N/int.[2]/16oct10).

After the NCEE, Nick rethought his learning goal. His ultimate goal was to be native-like in English. However, compared with Silvia, there was a gap between Nick's ideal and his current environment. To sum up, the main changes in Nick's case include:

1. He wanted his English language learning to be for pleasure (English songs, films and travelling etc.), instead of for tests.
2. Because of Silvia, he kept comparing learning English in an English-speaking environment to his local EFL environment.

Both had an influence on his attitude towards learning activities in relation to the optional course, the teacher and his classmates. Interestingly, he came to realize at the end of this semester that, before he could achieve his ultimate goal, he needed a tangible goal to keep himself on track. It was in the last interview that Nick shared his thoughts about taking GEPT intermediate level in the near future (N/int.[5]/12jan10).

4.6 Dennis

Table 4.6 Data relating to Dennis

	Date	Methods of data collection	Key	Note
1	28 Sep 2010	First interview	D/int.[1]/28sep10	Based on his English learning autobiography submitted on 25 September 2010.
2	12 Oct 2010	Second interview	D/int.[2]/12oct10	Diary entries collected on 11 October 2010.
3	26 Oct 2010	Third interview	D/int.[3]/26oct10	Diary entries collected on 25 October 2010.

4	09 Nov 2010	Fourth interview	D/int.[4]/09nov10	Diary entries collected on 09 November 2010.
5	22 Nov 2010	Fifth interview	D/int.[5]/22nov10	Diary entries collected on 22 November 2010.
6	06 Jan 2011	Sixth interview	D/int.[6]/06jan11	No diary entries.
16 entries		Diary entries	D/ld/28sep10	See Chapter 3 learner diary section for dates.
13 classes		Classroom observation	J/co/08sep10	See Chapter 3 classroom observation section.
113 entries		Research journal	J/rj/16sep10	See Chapter 3 research journal section.
		documents		His examination papers, test-book and notes.

4.6.1 EFL learning autobiography before college

This biographical account is based on the first interview with Dennis on 28 September 2010, except where specified.

Dennis was from central Taiwan. Though he was the second child in his family, he was the only boy. He grew up with an older sister and a younger sister. His parents were farmers. His EFL learning started in fifth grade in elementary school. He could still recall this was the year when the fifth and sixth graders began learning English as a compulsory subject (D/int.[2]/12Oct10). Though he had not been exposed to English before this, he found learning a new language interesting and enjoyable, both in school and in a private language institute. Dennis remembered that his first English teacher was a newly graduated young man and his name was Ryan. The teacher used to put magnetic flashcards of the alphabet on the blackboard to teach capital letters and small letters and the alphabet. Practising writing the twenty-six letters was one of the main tasks. While he did not receive much attention in school, his private language institute teacher helped to build his confidence at this beginning stage:

It was the first time the private language institute teacher assigned this writing task of the alphabet. I took it quite seriously. Because I found my own

handwriting untidy and not straight enough, I kept erasing what I had written and redid it again and again...probably sixty or seventy times, I just kept writing the alphabet. ... Later, the teacher told me my handwriting was beautiful. ... I had a strong sense of achievement. (D/int.[1]/28sep10/p4/t')

He actually preferred his private language institute teacher's way of teaching because the teacher gave rewards, such as a packet of cookies or a drink, to encourage his students who did well in tests. 'He was the person who got me started learning English and who helped develop my interest in English,' said Dennis (D/int.[6]/06jan10/p3/t'). He was motivated to sit at his desk and memorize the vocabulary assigned by this private language institute teacher after class. However, he admitted that he did not manage to learn KK phonetic symbols in his class. He gave an example of how the private language institute teacher could teach in such a clear way: [when Dennis asked him a grammar-related question] the teacher simply said 'doesn't this sound right when you read it?' Though Dennis knew the teacher was not teaching him a grammatical rule, he found this method very enlightening and learned to answer multiple-choice questions accordingly. This relationship lasted from the fifth grade until junior high school.

Junior high school was the hardest time for Dennis's English learning (D/int.[6]/06jan10). His English teacher used to make his students memorize whole articles from their English textbooks (D/int.[2]/12oct10) and listen to the accompanying CDs (D/int.[6]/06jan10). Dennis still remembered the one time he had not prepared for the test and he failed it. He felt so frustrated. He never again came unprepared and that was the only time he failed an

English test [D/int.[5]/22nov10]. He described this teacher's 'a-hundred-box method' as follows:

At that time he would ask us to do this a-hundred-box vocabulary memorization practice. ... 'A-hundred-box' was a piece of paper which was divided into one hundred boxes ... double-sided ... Also, he ordered a one thousand vocabulary booklet for each one of us ... plus those in the textbooks. ... We were supposed to copy the Chinese meanings of the vocabulary, leave the parallel space blank for the English vocabulary on these a-hundred-box sheets ... after finishing copying the Chinese meanings, we were told to put our books away and start writing the matching English vocabulary. As the vocabulary accumulated, at the end we had to copy ten pages of the Chinese meanings and write the English vocabulary accordingly. ... [After three year's practising, this method] impressed in my mind that memorizing vocabulary is the most important thing (D/int.[1]/28sep10/p5/t')

Though a very demanding teacher, he also tried to encourage his students. Dennis recalled an incident at the school gate. Dennis was heading home when he bumped into the teacher. The teacher reminded Dennis that the mid-term examination would be the next day and wished him luck. Because of this attention, Dennis was motivated to study English that night. When announcing the mid-term results, the teacher praised Dennis in front of the whole class. Nevertheless, there was one thing Dennis could not understand:

The teacher always said that if you could pronounce the word, you should be able to spell it. ... Then, why was he testing us on spelling? ... When you hear a word,

you could suddenly ... feel strange because you don't know how to spell it ... it seems so strange to me. (D/int.[1]/28sep10/p6/t')

Since the phonetic relationship between letters and sounds did not make sense to him, Dennis developed his own way of memorizing vocabulary:

I would try to separate an English word based on the 'units' I saw in the word. For instance, 'secret' can be separated into 'sec' and 'ret'. If I changed 'ret' to 'ond', it became a new word 'second' and so on and so forth. In rare cases, when this method did not apply, I would simply memorize a word by its letters.

(D/int.[1]/28sep10/p6/t')

His English language learning at the vocational high school was disappointing. To Dennis, the first year went fine; but the second year was a waste and his interest in learning English was reduced significantly:

In my second year ... I was on the edge of giving up on English because it was only about memorizing the answers on the workbooks. ... Her teaching progressed very slowly because she could give sixteen similar words around one word encountered in one textbook article. She kept writing on the blackboard and explaining to herself. ... We were always behind our syllabus, but the scope of the monthly tests would still be the same for all students. So she would give us the answers to the workbook and ask us to memorize them. (D/int.[1]/28sep10/pp.8-9/t')

During this period, the school only broadcast English learning magazine CDs to volunteer classes. Though he was interested, his classmates were not. He summed up his vocational high school learning experiences saying:

Those three years were left blank ... it was all about taking tests. Vocational high school learning was all about managing tests and it was all about superficial memorization ... no need either to listen to English or to speak English.

(D/int.[6]/06jan10/p2/t')

Nevertheless, he took the first phase of GEPT elementary level through group registration organized by the vocational high school. He was the only one among a small group of students from his class who passed the first phase. But since the school did not help them to register for the second phase, he did not go (D/int.[2]/12oct10).

To make up what was missing in the English classroom and following a predecessor's advice, he bought himself a 2000 vocabulary booklet in the last semester. However, it was not until three months before the NCEE that he started to take it seriously. The unexpected motivator came in a family gathering, when a relative challenged him that he was not good enough for the college he said he wanted to go to. Dennis was so angry that he felt the need to prove himself to this relative:

I remembered my junior high school teacher's teaching on vocabulary. ... I began memorizing the 2000 vocabulary in the booklet I had bought. ... All the ten-minute breaks were used for this purpose. ... My friends thought it strange and they approached me to see what I was doing. 'Oh! You're studying! Seriously?!' ... Later, they started to check on my progress with it ... they chose words from the booklet

randomly to test me. ... They were surprised to find that I did memorize all this vocabulary. (D/int.[1]/28sep10/p7/t')

After Dennis left the vocational high school to study in college, his social network mainly included classmates of his original class, company members, teachers (past/present), his girlfriend, and the researcher. Artefacts mainly included magazines, CD-ROMs, a test-book, tests, learner diary, and computers.

4.6.2 Strategies as part of the coursework

Like Nick, Dennis was excited about learning to speak and thought that there would be no tests in the optional course (D/int.[6]/06jan10). Dennis and his pair (who was from the same original class and both took the optional course) interacted frequently because they came from the same original class and the same company, though there was little interaction in English.

4.6.2.1 Read and translate before speaking: Andrea, magazines, written tests, and night studies

Dennis felt listening and speaking was completely left out in his vocational high school (D/int.[6]/06jan10). Compared with Military English as a compulsory subject, Dennis did not take the optional course seriously at first. In fact, he chose Andrea's course because, to him, the course title suggested that this course should be practical, useful and fun. So, it was much to his surprise, when he found out there would be regular tests in class:

I originally thought there would be no tests because this is an optional course after all. ... Then I began memorizing ... I want to do well. But I don't want to merely study it. Hmm, I know this sounds contradictory. However, I don't know why I just don't want to score less than others or see a mark that is too low. ... So, what I do is I simply focus on what I think is important [to the teacher].

(D/int.[6]/06jan10/p3/t')

Dennis saw an English language learning magazine for the first time through a classmate going to the same private language institute in junior one and he found it interesting. It was used as the textbook for a higher level English class to which his junior high school classmate belonged. In Andrea's class, it was Dennis's turn to use English language magazines as textbooks and he learned to use the CD-ROMs for the first time (D/int.[6]/06jan10). Though he seemed inspired by Andrea's demonstration of the use of CD-ROMs and did take the CD-ROM home once (D/int.[4]/09nov10), he then decided to use it only in the language laboratory (D/int.[4]/09nov10/pp1-2/t'):

I took it home once because ... it was new to me. I have never used a CD-ROM to learn English before. It can repeat as many times as I like. I can practise listening and watch videos as well ... but, later, I feel that the CD-ROM isn't so useful. ... I just think playing the clips isn't so different from reading and studying on your own. ... It's perhaps a more 'interesting' way to teach, but ... the key to learning is [not the CD-ROMs but] if I really want to learn.

Andrea's emphasis on just listening did not persuade Dennis to take to this new habit of using CD-ROMs. When asked if the limited access to computers hindered his use of CD-

ROMs, he explained that his main concern was listening to them would take too much of his personal time. In fact, he did most of his studying during night studies in the school (D/int.[1]/28sep10; D/int.[2]/12oct10; D/int.[3]/26oct10; D/int.[5]/22nov10).

Dennis stressed his preference for everyday-life topic magazines (D/int.[4]/09nov10; D/int.[6]/06jan10). His interest in these magazines showed not only in carrying it with him in his school bag every day but also in how he interacted with the magazines:

Actually I read the article before class. When I get bored, I just flip through it to see which article seems to be more interesting. ... I read the Chinese translation and the pictures and English version. ... I read the Chinese translation to understand what it is about, so I am able to understand the English sentences because I've read the Chinese translation. (D/int.[4]/09nov10/p4/t')

When doing Chinese-English translation, Dennis found his mind 'fixed' on the Chinese words and could not find the English to express the same meaning (D/int.[5]/22nov10). Therefore, when preparing for written tests, he tried to do it the opposite way, that is, English first, then Chinese:

I will memorize the English version before I read its Chinese translation. Next ... with the Chinese translation in front of me, I begin to write the English version I've memorized. However, it's very easy to get confused when I try to memorize the English version. What I've found is ... when I have this Chinese translation in front of me, I feel much clearer [about what I'm writing]. That is, if I can write down the English sentences based on the Chinese translation, I know I've memorized it. ... However, I get stuck sometimes. (D/int.[2]/12oct10/p3/t')

4.6.2.2 Recite in mind and translate before speaking: Andrea, magazines, oral tests, and night studies

To Dennis, the pressure of tests, in effect, spoiled the fun of learning English:

I'm doing what I did in junior high school, that is, listen-and-write and sometimes speak. ... We listened to the textbook CDs and repeated after them. ... No, not in vocational high school, only in junior high. ... This optional course is fun when we don't have tests. But it's not fun when we have to take the tests.

(D/int.[6]/06jan11/p2/t')

Dennis's 'fun-seeking' attitude towards learning English was further confirmed when he compared his military English teacher's style to Andrea's (D/int.[5]/22nov10). The following was the type of teaching that Dennis thought would help him to integrate English into his everyday life:

It's about happy learning. It's about playing games. For example, 'the secret number' helps us to learn how to say numbers in English and helps us remember them. Because these are simple, once you play with them, you can remember ... I don't like to force myself to study simply for the sake of marks, which isn't happy learning. (D/int.[5]/22nov10/p3/t')

This also explained why he took Andrea's advice and started translating Mandarin into English in his mind while listening to the military leaders' lectures. Though he knew his grammar was incorrect, he simply enjoyed the practice (D/int.[1]/28sep10; D/int.[3]/26oct10).

Dennis mentioned that, compared with the written tests (which focused on vocabulary), the oral tests (which focused on sentences) were more difficult because he had to memorize English sentences to pass them. He also noticed that Andrea sometimes asked the class to translate whole sentences in written tests in order to make them aware of the importance of memorizing whole sentences (D/int.[6]/06jan10). Additionally, he distinguished the different ways he employed to memorize vocabulary and sentences:

As for vocabulary, I normally write it on a piece of paper. Keep writing, keep practising. ... As for sentences, I usually, no, I don't use my hand to write it on paper. Instead, I use my mouth to read whole sentences only.

(D/int.[4]/09nov10/p1/t')

The oral tests put him under great time pressure. Below is how Dennis prepared for them:

I just read through it ... and I will try to cover different English sentences and see if I can recite them in my mind. ... Though I move my lips when I recite in my mind, it's silent because I don't want to disturb others who are studying different subjects. ... One thing I realize is ... what goes really very smoothly in my mind can turn out to be so unnatural and broken when I actually produce it through my mouth. (D/int.[3]/26oct10/p2/t')

Dennis felt that the time pressure he experienced came from the fact that he could not repeat the English he heard right away. He needed to be able to understand the Chinese meaning of what he heard first, translate it into English next and finally he could speak these words to the teacher (D/int.[3]/26oct10/t').

4.6.3 Strategies apart from the coursework

In the first interview, Dennis recalled the experience of his junior high school classmate who played with the English words and phrases they learned by using them in their conversation when cycling home. They said English sentences such as, ‘Hey, what’s up?’, ‘Hey, you know I know’ and, ‘Hey, what do you say’, and correctness was not their concern. However, such a friend was not easy to find. (D/int.[1]/28sep10)

4.6.3.1 Play while learning to speak English: girlfriend, and an unexpected encounter

Dennis’s pair in the optional class was also his best friend at the beginning of the semester. Dennis sat right in front of him in their original class. Dennis’s English level was higher than his pair’s (D/int.[2]/12oct10). Dennis described how they used English sentences they learned from the magazine in everyday situations:

While our [military] English teacher was asking us to repeat after her, sentence by sentence, I turned around to chat with him. ... Because we had learned, ‘Hey happy birthday, how was your day?’ [*Food to Go*] in the first class [of the optional course], we started using the English sentences in a playful mood. He kept saying, ‘Hey happy birthday, how was your day?’ and I would reply, ‘Shhh the curtain is rising; it is starting’ [*Tickets to the Show*]. We simply used sentences that we could still remember and it was hilarious. ... We tend to do the same when we are in Andrea’s class as well. ... Later, every time I see him, I just greet him by saying these sentences. ... Because it becomes natural and it’s fun.

(D/int.[2]/12oct10/p3/t’)

Nonetheless, Dennis was not speaking English to other classmates.

The other person to whom Dennis spoke English was his girlfriend. They met in his vocational high school and he spent most of his leisure time with her. He would speak English to her and also encourage her to speak English, using phrases such as ‘OK’ and ‘I understand’. Though sometimes his girlfriend wanted to know what he was saying in English, she was not persuaded to practise speaking English with him (D/int.[4]/26oct10). Interestingly, there was an unexpected encounter with four foreigners in the electronic appliances shop where his girlfriend worked part-time. Though Dennis could not understand what they said word for word, he was able to translate most of what they said for his girlfriend:

He [a foreigner] walked to my girlfriend and asked her to accompany him to look at something he wanted to buy. My girlfriend turned to me and asked me what he was saying. I told her to follow him. ... I said, ‘Please wait a minute.’ ... I said, ‘Sir, yes.’ ... In fact, I tried to grasp the key words in what they said. I tried to look for and identify the key words. ... My girlfriend said to me ‘Wow, you’re so cool! You can understand what they say!’ (D/int.[6]/06jan10/p5/t’)

4.6.4 Constancy and change

Entering this military environment, Dennis was interested in learning more about military leadership while adapting to the military routines (D/int.[4]/09nov10). His initial interest in learning English was nurtured by his private language institute teacher who praised his handwriting. Later, English was one of Dennis’s best subjects in school (D/int.[6]/06jan10). His focus on vocabulary was most influenced by his junior high school English teacher who taught him the a-hundred-box method. At the end of the

semester, when I asked him what he had learned from this course, the first thing he mentioned was the magazines:

I learned how to read the magazines. ... I learned to highlight vocabulary first ... read the English version to see what it might be about; then, I will go to the Chinese translation to check my understanding of it. ... Since magazine conversations are more everyday-like, I think they are more useful.

(D/int.[6]/06jan10/p2/t')

To sum up, though Dennis did try to follow Andrea's teaching of using CD-ROMs to facilitate learning to speak, he did not continue with it. According to Dennis's experience, on the one hand, his tendency to focus on vocabulary and memorization and speaking English to his close friends continued; on the other, he learned to engage with the English language learning magazines in a different way by reading the English version first.

In this chapter, I have presented findings concerning each of my five participants. From these findings we can see there are similarities and variations in relation to the way they perceive the same phenomena, and in relation to how they interact with their learning environments. In the following chapter, I will discuss in detail the categories of EFL SLSEs that these participants appeared to use, in the light of the LLS literature with respect to speaking-related strategies and of the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In reality, the gap between the objectives in the curriculum and the annual reports of the GEPT speaking test, and that between the oral proficiency of college students and the younger generation suggest that there is a need for college students to learn how to speak English more effectively. In theory, it is worth noting that it is the absence of an English-speaking community that differentiates EFL learning contexts from ESL contexts. Instead of simply staying on the consumer end of the ESL producer- EFL consumer relationship, there appears a need to improve everyday EFL learning practice. To gain a better understanding of these EFL college students' experiences in terms of learning to speak English in a local Taiwanese environment, the purpose of this study was to look into the SLSEs as environmental niches embedded in this dynamic person-environment process.

It should be borne in mind that this study aims to provide a detailed description of students' life- worlds as constructed reality, not as representative (see 2.4 and 3.2). A phenomenographic approach with a multiple case study design was adopted to provide an in-depth and rich description of these participants' perceptions of the phenomena. Theoretical thematic analysis, which is analyst-driven with focus on a special aspect, was applied to organize this data into meaningful units, i.e., themes. By looking at the interconnectedness of these themes within an individual case, the learning-to-speak-English aspect of a participant's life-world was depicted in Chapter 4.

Having presented the findings individually in the previous chapter, in this chapter firstly I will summarize the commonality across the findings for my five participants in the light of the nested ecological systems, that is, the societal system of Taiwan, in which they were. Then I will discuss in detail some of the findings and emergent issues in this present study with reference to other LLS research: the good language learner tradition, issues concerning contextual sensitivity, and LLS research which has adopted a contextual approach. Finally, I will discuss to what extent the theoretical framework put together in 2.4 is useful in explaining the findings in this study and the qualitative differences of the SLSEs described in Chapter 4 will be discussed in greater detail.

5.2 Overview of my participants' language learning experiences in Taiwan

As I stated in Chapter 2, owing to the exchangeable use of ESL and EFL and the hidden assumption of a target language speech community in the SLA field, learners are expected to learn to speak from native speakers of the target language. LLS research has, thus, been mainly focused on speaking strategies, and relatively little attention has been paid to SLSEs in EFL environments. Indeed, for ESL learners who are learning English in an English-speaking environment, learning to speak is more about language use strategies such as Oxford's communication strategies; for EFL *learners* who are learning English in an environment where there is little use of English in everyday communication, language learning strategies such as SLSEs need to be investigated.

5.2.1 Local reality of EFL language learning

Although going to an English-speaking environment to learn English was desirable for them, my participants could not afford to do this. In effect, my participants most often had learned English in schools and private language institutes from non-native local teachers who, like their students, had limited access to English native speakers. In this research study, except Nick who was immersed in an examination-oriented environment, all participants reported that their local English language teachers (schools and private language institutes) influenced their English learning most. A complex picture of these influences emerged. Cindy's senior high school English language teacher, who had a passion for English, taught her for three years and helped her not only to build her confidence but also to develop an interest in learning to speak English. Fanny's private tutor, Grace, who had done TOEFL and taught her for half a year in junior two before she went abroad for study, helped Fanny to develop her approach to learning to speak English. Peter's English language teacher in senior three, who had majored in engineering science in university, inspired him to learn English. Dennis's English language teacher in a private language institute who praised his longhand writing of the alphabet gave him confidence, as did his junior high school English language teacher who trained him to use the a-hundred-box method. Nick, though he did not specify any English language teachers, had a great interest in the international student life of his friend, Silvia, who was his junior high classmate and went overseas to study in Australia at the age of fourteen. In short, people who were identified to have a significant influence on their English language learning were non-native speakers, with whom the participants had spent regular time. As Bronfenbrenner (1995: 620) points out, for development to take place, 'the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time'.

Importantly, in their reflection, these relationships were not considered ‘the past’ because the participants still drew on these experiences in the process of understanding their current learning environment.

5.2.2 Shared L1 and the lack of immediate relevance concerning speaking English

In this research context, there was a shared first language (Mandarin) between teachers and their students whether inside or outside language classrooms. Hence, English was not considered the most effective communication tool in this EFL context. In Nick’s case, even the English native speaker teachers he had, in elementary, junior and senior high school, could speak basic Mandarin. My findings also suggest that, because English was not required at home, in their social groups, their community, or in most school subjects, English learning was by and large not their first priority. Moreover, since there seemed to be an inevitable competition for their time between all the subjects in their Chinese-medium education, their EFL learning was most likely to be course-led. This meant they studied English based on what was required of them on the English language courses. In effect, all participants appeared to agree that their English level seemed to have reached its peak in their senior high school when their preparation for the national examinations was most intensive. Cindy and Nick explicitly expressed that they felt their English level started declining after that. Fanny felt she had ‘lost track’ in her English learning since she graduated from senior high school and began to serve in the army three years ago. Nevertheless, because speaking was not tested in the high-stake national examinations, it was not until the college stage that the participants, including Cindy, were able to give comparatively more time and attention to learning to speak English.

These situated learning experiences were repeated in the two focus group interviews as well. For example, in Cindy and Fanny's focus group, Sam's point considering the lack of immediate relevance of speaking English (see 2.2.3) was echoed by all the members:

English is rarely used. You don't normally speak to your friends in English. If you use English, your friends would probably say, 'Are you showing off your English skills?' and so on and so forth. [Cindy: True!] Yes, really. [Cindy: So true!] Or, [Amelia: That's my experience as well.] if you want to find an English native speaker to practise with, there seems to be no one around with whom you can practise. ... Having said that, if I see a foreigner on the street and if I am brave enough to go and talk to him, after two or three sentences, I will probably find myself running out of words to say. At the end, the only thing I can do is to run away in embarrassment ... because I can't understand what he's saying to me. (C&F/fg/22jan11/p10/t')

In fact, even if they had opportunities to talk to English native speakers, it was mostly within a learning context, such as a paid tutor who seemed more of a teacher than a friend in their everyday contexts. The participants in this study expressed that they found real-life face-to-face communication in English very demanding. For example, though Cindy and Fanny could understand most of what their English native speaker teacher said, they found it difficult to communicate with him orally. In Peter's focus group interview, his older brother and the brother's girlfriend talked about their unexpected encounter with a Korean girl who was on a self-guided tour in Taiwan:

Our English was not fluent ... it was extremely rare that we dared to talk to a foreigner in English. Yes, although she was not from an English-speaking country like the United Kingdom or the United States. The point is she didn't speak Mandarin. That's why we were able to have the opportunity to use English to communicate. (P/fg/18jan11/pp3-4/t')

In Nick's case, once he found out that English native speaker teachers in senior high school could understand Mandarin, he talked to them in Mandarin.

5.2.3 Local purposes for learning to speak English

An issue highlighted in my study in relation to this group was that, although they all expressed that they would like to be able to communicate in English, speaking had not been emphasized in their EFL learning experiences. It appeared that their English language learning before college was more about reading and writing because it was required in the examinations. Listening took up a small portion of their English language learning in school in all cases; however, it was almost always limited to ready-made multiple-choice tests accompanying the English language learning magazines to which they subscribed. Speaking seemed to be the weakest link in all settings both in and out of class. As Ur (1996) suggests, this might be because it is largely assumed that, once they could understand reading and listening, EFL learners should be able to speak. In reality, the participants chose the optional course to give themselves a reason to practise.

Interestingly, while Cindy was devoted to learning what was taught in the course and learning by using the approach she had developed, the other four pointed out that these practices were not the same as real-life conversations. The participants were well aware

of the lack of everyday language use in English in their local environments and the difference between ‘textbook English’ and ‘authentic English’.

The Taiwanese government’s effort in institutionalizing the GEPT to guide and facilitate four-skill English language learning on the island seems to have had a consolidating effect on my participants’ learning environment. All the participants were aware of this local testing system and all took at least the first phase of the elementary level test. Cindy and Nick both obtained their GEPT elementary level certificate in their senior two; on his mother’s instruction, Peter took it with his older brother when he was in junior one (he failed and had not taken it again); Fanny and Dennis both passed the first phase (reading and listening), but did not take the second phase (speaking and writing) for different reasons. In Fanny’s case, Grace suggested not wasting money taking the second phase because the GEPT was recognized only in Taiwan; Dennis did not take the second phase test because his vocational school did not organize a group registration for those who passed the first phase and he missed the registration period for the second phase.

Learning in a military academy can make English learning even more challenging, as all participants felt that they had little personal time for private study on campus. In fact, the military routine could be tight and tasks seemed endless. In an EFL environment, where learning to speak English might rely more on suitable equipment and private study time, the military routine and information security regulation did appear to make English learning, particularly listening and speaking, even more difficult. Sometimes, some of them dozed off in class. The optional course was no exception. For instance, Nick did not

know that the teacher announced a ten-minute break because he had dozed off (J/co.[6]/20oct10). Though the teacher asked the students to stand up occasionally to help them stay alert in class, Cindy and Fanny once found it unbearable because they thought classroom learning should be at an easy pace. Generally, all of them reflected on the issue of time management in order to balance their study and leisure and time spent with family and for his or herself.

5.3 My study and other studies

In this section, to carry out a critical reflection on how this investigation has contributed to the LLS knowledge field, I will follow the structure of LLS literature I reviewed in Chapter 2: the good language learner tradition, issues concerning contextual sensitivity, and the LLS research which adopted a contextual approach.

5.3.1 Strategies for learning to speak in the GLL tradition

5.3.1.1 Talk to native speakers of English

With regard to developing speaking skills, the mainstream LLS research reflects the unstated assumption of SLA and suggests that communication strategies are most effective when learners speak with native speakers of the target language. Although access to English native speakers is limited, in my data, Cindy and Fanny attended the Saturday conversation class with Paul, an English native speaker from the United States. However, this contact turned out to be somewhat disappointing as they did not learn to express themselves ‘naturally’ in a conversation with a native speaker of English. Cindy was one of the few able to communicate in English to some extent and this was

confirmed in her focus group interview. However, instead of circumlocution, she appeared to assume that she needed to produce correct English sentences in order to be clear and to avoid communication breakdowns (C/int.[5]/11jan11). Fanny illustrated how they resorted to drawing a calendar and used all the English they knew to communicate with Paul. As EFL learners, not only Fanny but also Cindy found it difficult to communicate in English in everyday-life situations. It may not be surprising that, though they were confused, Cindy and Fanny as learners of English immediately assumed the responsibility for all the communication breakdowns. This same attitude was confirmed in their focus group interview by the other two members of the conversation class with Paul. That is, the group saw themselves as deficient users and, thus, deficient learners of English (see 2.2).

5.3.1.2 Communication in English outside the classroom

What is more, spontaneous English communication was rare in the local environment of this EFL group. Based on their research in the English-French bilingual Canadian context, Naiman et al. (1996) suggested that, apart from native speakers of the target language, learners learn to talk with their teachers and peers in their immediate environments. However, as far as this study is concerned, there was little out-of-class interaction in English. My findings show that only two participants, Cindy and Dennis, reported speaking English with selected members in their everyday social group. Cindy demonstrated a great effort in learning to talk in English in her local social groups because of her learning experiences in senior high school. Nevertheless, the responses to her efforts were disappointing in the immediate EFL environment. Most of the time those

around her either did not know how to respond to her in English or simply did not understand and doubted if she spoke 'correct' English. In other words, though Cindy might be able to initiate an English conversation, apart from Paul, there seemed few with whom she could talk and have a meaningful conversation in English.

After her roommate and Cindy had shared a room for nearly half a year, through an incident in her roommate's PE class, they realized they could become English conversation partners. It was obvious that this had not been in Cindy's plans and it is impossible to say how long this newly built relationship would last. Cindy was also the only participant who reported having an English-speaking friend from Norway. This, though it may seem similar to Naiman et al.'s strategy of 'having contact with native speakers', was a different case. Though English was their only common language, Cindy's Norwegian missionary friend did not fall into the category of 'English native speakers'. The other participant who tried to use English to communicate with people around him was Dennis. Both Cindy and Dennis appeared very selective in terms of with whom they spoke English in their face-to-face environments. Namely, they spoke English only with those they felt most comfortable with. Cindy spoke English only with the members of the marching band and her roommate, but not with her classmates; Dennis spoke English only with his girlfriend and a few friends along his learning trajectory. Cindy and Dennis liked to do this in a playful mood; even though they knew their English was not correct, it was fun for them. This echoes Naiman et al.'s (1996) basic GLL principle of 'don't be afraid of making mistakes'. However, it was not easy to evaluate how far they could go with this 'good' attitude.

5.3.1.3 Learn to speak by engaging in conversation

In effect, owing to the limited access to English (native) speakers and few chances to use English in their learning environment, all the participants employed strategies in a synthesized way on the basis of their earlier experiences and their current learning environments. This group's different strategies emerged as a complicated picture; that is, it was the result of the intricate interweaving of their past experiences and the contingencies in their immediate learning environment across various settings. Strategies such as 'learning by heart, e.g. dialogue' and 'sub-vocalizing when reading' in Naiman et al.'s (1996) strategy list for learning to talk were common among these learners. Apart from Nick, who studied only in class and occasionally read his self-chosen magazine out of class, most participants combined reading, writing, listening, and reading aloud in various ways in their private study. Cindy copied the conversations in the magazine onto a piece of paper and read it aloud to herself. Fanny reported that, after reading and listening concurrently for a few times, she tried to jot down directly according to the clip she was listening to. Peter read and wrote at the same time. Dennis liked to recite the English article while reading its Chinese translation to see if he had memorized it. In a nutshell, though different language skills were used in an integrated fashion, these were all related to memorization to a large degree.

In the next section, since memorization strategies appear to be popular among Chinese and Taiwanese learners, I will focus on discussing different ways of memorizing revealed in the data.

5.3.2 Issues concerning contextual sensitivity: memorization

Memorization has been suggested as one of the keys to understanding EFL learning strategies, in this case strategies for learning to speak. Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) propose that, the correlation between reading and speaking is stronger in a Chinese EFL context than that between listening and speaking. Course-related reading is ostensibly an essential activity in my data. However, it seems to me that both Andrea and the participants believed that listening skills led to the development of speaking skills. This may explain why Andrea made it clear to the class that their reading skills were far better than their listening skills and kept reminding the class to put their magazines away and urged them to focus on listening to the CD-ROMs. On the other hand, in terms of places and time, reading the magazines was much more convenient than listening to the CD-ROMs. For example, Cindy even made her own longhand copy; Dennis read the first magazine from cover to cover including advertisements when he was feeling bored in school; Peter also reported reading it during his ten-minute breaks in school; Nick read an English language learning magazine he had subscribed to in senior high school because he liked its content.

Based on the classroom observation and their interview accounts, the participants were following Andrea's instructions in most cases. Andrea did time-keeping for pair work, group work and individual practices in class. She also asked the students to memorize conversations in pairs, so they could recite it and act it out in front of the class. She also gave limited time in class for the class to memorize new vocabulary before vocabulary

quizzes. The pace in class was fast in many cases. Nevertheless, the participants generally felt comfortable with memorizing vocabulary and English texts because they were used to this pattern. However, as Di Pietro (1987: 14) states, 'Formal instruction is only a start of a deepening involvement with speakers of the new language.' According to the data, what the participants did out of class reflected their individual approach. Though in this learning environment and their individual contexts, instead of the suggested 'a deepening involvement with speakers of the new language', it was their preparation for the course tests that seemed to deepen their involvement with learning English.

On the one hand, Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) identify functional practice such as 'think in English' and 'speaking with other students, teachers and native speakers' as the most powerful predictors of success in oral communication. On the other, their research and Ding's (2007) study, among others, note the complexity and individuality of memorization in Chinese EFL contexts. In Jiang and Smith's (2009) interview-based research on EFL learning in general (thirteen Chinese EFL learners), they provide valuable insights into memorization and rote learning in a Chinese EFL context:

1. Repetition and memorization;
2. Understanding and memorization;
3. Memorization and the need for review;
4. Word association and memorization;
5. Use of Chinese pronunciation and memorization. (pp. 291- 293)

Though the exact ways of carrying out memorization are different, what they found help to shed light on my findings. It should be borne in mind that these memorization

strategies are normally course-related and are not used in a ‘straightforward’ or linear manner. Their employment could be iterative in essence.

5.3.2.1 Cindy

Cindy resorted to the Chinese phonetic system before she was able to understand phonics. What Cindy did was similar to ‘Use of Chinese pronunciation and memorization’ on Jiang and Smith’s list. In addition, Cindy used to rely on reading Chinese translation to help her to grasp the meaning, which falls into the category of ‘Understanding and memorization’. Before she grew to be more familiar with KK, she had learned to imitate the textbook CDs from junior high school. When she first began college, she read aloud to herself. Later, with her CD-player walkman, she learned to just listen several times (listening repetition) and tried to repeat (oral and listening repetition) the words sentence by sentence. Sometimes she would repeat the same sentence until she could say it without hesitation. On reflection, Cindy commented that if she was memorizing the spelling of words, that would be rote learning and studying for tests; by contrast, if she was memorizing pronunciation, she was preparing to use the vocabulary for real-life communication. She did not stress the importance of review because she seemed to be able to retain what she had memorized for some time. Moreover, a pattern of ‘review’ was in-built in the course to keep them ‘on track’, e.g., oral tests in class, mid-term and final examinations. In other words, review was part of the course.

5.3.2.2 Fanny

Fanny recalled that reading was the skill that was stressed in her earlier English learning experiences. Fanny had three years army service after school before entering college. There her effort to memorize appeared to be a complex combination of four language skills. She usually read the English article first to understand it; then she would write and read aloud paragraph by paragraph from one to three times (copying/reading/listening/speaking repetition); next, she focused on listening to the CD-ROM two to three times (listening repetition); then, she would go back and check if her longhand copy was correct; if there were any 'missing words', she would read and write them several times (copying/reading repetition); after all the above, she would listen to the clip again (listening repetition). She knew it was necessary to listen to the CD-ROM because she had learned that her own oral production was much slower than that on the CD-ROM. This meant she might fail the tests if she had not practised with the CD-ROM beforehand. Apart from this, considering her learner diary, she liked the discussions we had on expressing her everyday life, thoughts and feelings in English. This could cover repetition (she wrote the diary entries first and we discussed them later), understanding (I gave her feedback, comments and translated what she mentioned into English) and review (we looked back on what had been written in her diary).

5.3.2.3 Peter

In his second interview, Peter mentioned that he normally read the English version first, but would tend to rely on its Chinese translation whenever he could not understand it. He would then go back to the English version and read those parts which he had not understood several times. Peter put a heavy emphasis on the importance of reviewing.

His way of reviewing included correcting his mistakes in tests and putting in twenty minutes every day to review what he had learned. Peter's strategy use, like Cindy's and Fanny's, changed over time. By the fifth interview, he had adjusted to do reading and listening to the CD-ROM at the same time and he did this repetitively two to three times; then he read the Chinese translation to check if he could translate it back to English. Like Fanny, he noticed that listening to CD-ROMs took more time. Also, he commented that, even if he was able to understand what he was listening to, he could not spell the words left blank on the test sheets most of the times. So, he developed the habit of copying English words on paper to memorize the spelling.

5.3.2.4 Nick

Nick wanted to learn authentic English in its natural environment and he wanted to be able to speak English the way he spoke Mandarin. However, that was not the environment he was in. In general, Nick followed Andrea's instructions in class which covered repetition, understanding and review to a large extent. He commented that it was justified for teachers to ask students to memorize vocabulary, but it was not a good idea to ask students to memorize sentences (which was required in Andrea's class). He did not try to memorize sentences, because he thought that people normally expressed the same idea using different sentences and therefore memorizing sentences was unnecessary (J/int.[1]/30sep10). In Nick's personal time, he was inclined to read the Chinese translations first in order to get the information in the English learning magazines. In the same way, he tended to rely on Chinese subtitles when he watched films to 'learn English'. It was a strategy that led to dissatisfaction (as discussed in 2.2.3). Later, he

came to realize he was using learning English as an excuse to watch TV without self-discipline. Another example is, Nick read Chinese novels for pleasure, whereas he had to read an English learner novel and finish a written report on it assigned by his Military English teacher.

5.3.2.5 Dennis

Dennis had a habit of writing vocabulary in order to memorize it. Though he was reluctant to memorize sentences at first, he followed Andrea's instruction and did what he could. During his personal time, he read the English language learning magazines for pleasure. However, he often started with reading the Chinese translations because this helped him to understand the English version afterwards. He would read the advertisements as well, simply because they were 'everyday English'. In terms of written tests, he usually tried to memorize the English version first and then turned to the Chinese translation to write down the English he had memorized based on the Chinese translation in front of him. When it came to oral tests, he normally read the English version first and then covered different sentences to see if he could recite the sentences in his mind. In the process of reciting and memorizing sentences, though he moved his lips, he was silent. He discovered that it was always smooth when he was 'speaking in his mind', but turned out to be somewhat problematic when he tried to produce these sentences through his mouth.

In sum, there was little repetition of English in terms of applying what they learned in class to their communication in the everyday face-to-face environment. Memorization

was at the centre of their EFL strategies for learning to speak in the study. Also, it could be argued that silent reading (one language skill is involved, i.e., reading) may not be as helpful as reading aloud (three language skills are involved, i.e., reading, listening and speaking) in relation to developing oral proficiency. Indeed, as far as this group of EFL learners are concerned, all four skills were involved in building up their language proficiency through repetition, understanding and memorization. However, when the focus was on speaking, oral repetition appeared to be more effective and it was not limited by the lack of access to English (native) speakers.

In the next section, I will discuss in more detail the qualitatively different ways of forming environmental niches, i.e., strategies for learning to speak, of this group of EFL learners in view of the environment in which they operated.

5.4 Revisiting the theoretical frameworks

The unstated assumption of the mainstream cognitivist SLA is a focus on ‘what is inside the mind’, and the learning process which takes place in the mind is considered universal. This has been reflected in the LLS research field in which local contexts have been largely overlooked and explains the increasing number of research studies taking sociocultural approaches. Corresponding with the sociocultural theory of EFL learning process and strategies as by-products of this process, Birdwhistell (cited in McDermott, 1993: 273) has a good analogy:

I like to think of it as a rope. The fibers that make up the rope are discontinuous; when you twist them together, you don’t make *them* continuous, you make the

thread continuous. ... The thread has no fibers in it, but, if you break up the thread, you can find the fibers again. So that, even though it may look in a thread as though each of those particles is going through it, that isn't the case. That's essentially the descriptive model.

In other words, each participant's learning process can be viewed as a thread which illustrates a unique relationship between his/her individual learning contexts and the participant him or herself. While cognitive theories attend to these fibres (i.e., isolated learner strategies) and aim to make a comprehensive list of them, it can be argued that the arrangement of the fibres can be best understood when looked at in the context of an individual's learning process. In this study, strategies are considered as negotiated dynamic interactions between perceived resources and constraints which show both constancy with past experiences and changes within present experiences. This is the perspective adopted to illustrate the cases and the role of English speaking learning strategies in this research.

In this section, first, I will discuss the concept of context as nested systems; in this case, the Taiwanese societal systems. Then, in contrast to the linear information-processing SLA model, I will discuss the EFL learning process described in this study. Next, learners as developing individuals and their mediated agency in context will be discussed. Lastly, I will depict their individual nested context systems respectively.

5.4.1 The Taiwanese EFL nested systems

Though they may be categorized as Chinese contexts, Taiwanese EFL contexts are unique in the sense that there is a blueprint for this society in particular. This blueprint is different from other Chinese contexts such as China and Hong Kong in a significant way (see 1.1). The research site of my interest is a military academy embedded in the above macro-system. To the best of my knowledge, there is little if any LLS research having a focus on EFL cadets. With its distinctive military routines and training/educational needs, this exo-system offers resources and constraints for its participants. My findings show how these five participants interacted with the environment in their local contexts (meso-system and micro-system) in relation to their employment of SLSEs.

In traditional psycholinguistic LLS research, the macro- and exo- systems may have been largely considered as factors that have neat relationships. The rising awareness of the wider context is demonstrated in LLS research taking sociocultural approaches, e.g., Gu's research study (2003) on Chinese learners and Gao's (2010) research based on 'agency and context'. Moreover, the research sites are mostly classrooms (e.g., Huang, 2008) or school settings (e.g., Gao, 2007). The complexity of the environment (both social and physical); the chrono-system (learning as a developing process) has not been taken into consideration. These include the research participants' relationships with people who may not be in their present learning environments, but can still be very much 'present' because of the long-term influence they have on the participants, such as prior English teachers.

5.4.1.1 Curriculum, GEPT and projects

In this research, all the participants were aware of the rapid changes in terms of English language learning made in the macro-system, i.e., English as a compulsory subject beginning in elementary school. Though she officially began in junior one, Fanny started with supplementary materials for learning English in elementary school. Cindy remembered she began as a fifth grader. Dennis started in the fifth grade and considered himself two years behind because the curriculum was lowered to the third grade later. Peter began at kindergarten because of his parents' decision, but his formal English learning started in the third grade. Nick had an English-Mandarin bilingual English native speaker teacher when he first started learning English in the third grade. It was clear that the educational reforms affected their English language learning at an individual level.

The curriculum and the summative NCEE appear to be a high-stake mechanism to ensure all students learn English as a compulsory subject. The earlier English learning in the curriculum proves the increasing importance of English in Taiwan. In Peter's focus group, the importance of the curriculum in relation to their EFL learning trajectory was elucidated more fully:

The language environment is a problem. ... It is especially difficult if you are in the military, you are in fact disconnected from English. The thing is my English proficiency reached its peak during my senior high school years. English language teachers asked you to memorize vocabulary and read your English textbooks and so on and so forth every day. But once you enter college, you tend to ignore it because there is no one pushing you [to study English]. (P/fg/18jan11/p5/t')

Nick's environment (mainly including school and family) in his middle school years appeared to help shape him into a hard worker for the big examination; afterwards, he needed to redefine his learning goal. In fact, during this transitional time, every participant was trying to adapt to this new environment. As Wertsch (1998) pinpoints, learning goals are not necessarily neat; instead there can be contradictory goals. This is illustrated in Huang and Andrew's (2010) research. They indicate that there seems a contradiction between the mastery goal for the future (e.g., speaking skills) and the explicit goal for immediate purposes (i.e., course-related activities) in EFL senior high school students which:

Presumably, the subordination of this hidden goal to the more immediate utilitarian purpose may illustrate why these Chinese students tend to be more willing to employ memorization strategies and formal, rule-related processing strategies and prefer non-communicative language practice and test-oriented tasks, while trying to avoid language use strategies and communicative tasks. (p. 30)

This 'embeddedness' (see 2.4.3) also showed in the participants' biographical accounts in my findings. However, was learning in college a time to pursue their mastery goal which had been largely postponed before the NCEE? As the learners developed, so did the complicated process of resetting their learning goals in a new environment.

Other built-in systems include the GEPT system, which was an important part of the participants' English language learning in Taiwan because the proficiency certificates it authorizes were useful; according to the data, the governmental projects of building an English-friendly environment (a Chinese-English bilingual environment) may seem static

as far as this group of learners is concerned. In effect, the participants were most likely to read the bilingual posts in the toilets and those on the room doors.

5.4.1.2 Military college environment

The military campus life proved to be a challenge for most of them (in-service or newly-recruited) (see 3.3.1). For instance, life in the military is more about groups and units than individuals; whereas learning may seem more individual-based. It may not be surprising that there were two sets of rules and different priorities: one among teaching staff and the other among military staff. All of the participants felt that our one-to-one interviews were their ‘free time’, because they could have some time away from the military routine. Cindy, a new recruit, pointed this out when she commented on the different activities they were allowed to do in the living area (student command) and the teaching area (classrooms). Fanny, an in-service sergeant, repeatedly addressed the distinctiveness of her previous experience in the army and the advantages and disadvantages of this experience. After going through a tough time, Dennis, a new recruit, seemed to be determined to make these two years in the Academy the beginning of his military career. Peter, a new recruit, was following his older brother’s path to some extent and he seemed to be at peace with the price (i.e., personal freedom) he had to pay to be in the military. Though Nick, also a new recruit, might not like the military environment, his priority was to be independent financially and keep learning. In fact, instead of going home, he chose to stay on campus during most weekends.

The military context introduced this group of learners to ECL and sponsored opportunities to be trained overseas. However, not everyone could join the ECL preparatory class. A sergeant major was in charge of this class and this class had a very test-oriented pattern: do a mock test, check answers, explain and underline key vocabulary. Cindy had wanted to attend, but did not because classes clashed with her marching band practices. Fanny went and felt a strong need to improve her listening. Nick went once, but did not continue because he was told that he was not on the class register. Peter went with friends, but did not seem to take it seriously. Dennis did not go at all. Different majors also proved to have an influence on the participants' attitude towards English learning. Some teachers in these departments emphasized the importance of learning English in order to master their subjects. For example, Cindy and Fanny's class tutor introduced Paul and the students to each other. Peter's teacher of one of the main subjects included English materials. Peter was fully aware of the English terminology required by some of their subjects because that was what he was tested in.

5.4.1.3 Social contexts and physical environment

The fluidity and dynamics of the contingent and interwoven person-environment interactions in their moment-by-moment immediate settings (meso- and micro-systems) presented a complex and discontinuous picture of strategy use. Van Lier (1996) indicates that students learn different things at different times in different places in their environment. Like He's (2002) micro-contextual learning experience, each participant demonstrated changes and constancy in their employment of strategies during the first semester in college. This was a new environment for all of them i.e., new school settings,

new teachers, new classmates, and military leaders, new relationships, new roles and routines. It seems that their strategy use was closely related to their direct perception of the resources and constraints in their local contexts at different times. Their perception (a reconstruction, not a representation of the reality) became their reality in many cases. It is worth noting that, as developing individuals, their perception in their changing environment changed over time. This is what the survey approach may not be able to catch. For example, all participants found CD-ROMs interesting at the beginning. Cindy, Fanny and Peter integrated the CD-ROMs into their learning at various paces and degrees gradually, whereas Nick and Dennis, although impressed with Andrea's demonstration and use of CD-ROMs in class, did not use them in their private study.

This interactive relationship between the social and physical world and the individual in it is a complex one. It appeared to be true that it is only possible to find out what has been learned when EFL learners use English with native speakers or other English-speaking people in real-life communication. All participants and those in focus group interviews mentioned that there were few opportunities to use English in their everyday situations. What seems more important is that even if they had the opportunities, some like Peter just shied away; some like Cindy and Dennis might take the opportunity; still others might make contact with minimum conversation, for example, Fanny's request for taking a photo. The issue of time pressure in real-time communication for EFL *learners* was described in a focus group interview:

[Sam:] When I want to talk to Paul, or want to reply, I have to think in my mind first. I need to translate what I want to say. Yeah, it's like I think of something I

want to say but I don't know how to say it. ... I cannot simply say what is in my mind. No, I cannot. (C&F/fg/22jan11/p11/t')

All in all, the resources and constraints are dependent on the participants' individual perception formed in their context to a large extent, and thus there are various and dynamic individual strategy uses in their learning processes as part of their personal development and growth. What is significant here is that these learners were in a language *learning* environment, not a language *using* environment. This may be even more evident when it comes to speaking. As a matter of fact, most of the time the learners had to register in a spectrum of examination-oriented to proficiency-oriented private language institutes to create a *learning* environment for themselves. In Peter's focus group, the difficulty in learning EFL without a course to follow was highlighted:

Let's take me [older brother's girlfriend] as an example. ... I bought English language magazines ... to listen ... but it's not the same as when you have a teacher to guide you, teach you and push you to do things like memorizing vocabulary. [p.7] ... I think the learning environment is more important. ...

[When in college] we decided that Wednesday would be our English Day and No Chinese, but the problem was we got stuck and couldn't really get our message across in English. We then had to switch back to Mandarin. (P/fg/18jan11/ p9/t')

5.4.2 My participants' ZPD: a dialogue between other-regulation and self-construction

The mainstream SLA seeks to depict a natural acquisition order and largely assumes that learners learn to speak from native speakers. This seems not the case in EFL learning

environments where learners are less likely to be engaged in spontaneous communications with English (native) speakers. Compared to language using environments, such as learning to speak English in English-speaking countries, the limited access and contact with English (native) speakers and the lack of opportunities to use English to communicate characterizes the learning environments in this study.

5.4.2.1 Learning English as a foreign language: other-regulation

In contrast to a language using environment, my participants were learning to speak English mainly in classroom settings, including schools, private language institutes and personal tutors. Owing to the fact that Mandarin was the shared L1 between local English teachers and the students and that the teacher usually taught in Mandarin either because they themselves did not speak fluent English or by the students' request, e.g., Cindy's senior high school English teacher, constraints were put on the learners' construction of their individual EFL learning ZPDs. It was clear that there was an assumed natural acquisition order reflected in the curriculum (see 1.1.1). However, speaking was rare outside the classroom, and also very much neglected inside it (see 2.2.3). As a result, the GEPT annual reports on speaking tests of adult learners, especially college students, were not aligned with the objectives of the curriculum.

In their course-centred ZPDs, all of my participants were taught mainly by Taiwanese non-native speaker teachers, and they reportedly learned different things from different teachers at different learning stages. Four out of five participants followed the curriculum implemented in 2001 in Taiwan. Since Fanny was three years older than the other

participants, she was in junior high school when the Grade 1-9 curriculum was put into action. However, she had supplementary materials for English language learning in elementary school because there was a trial stage before English learning was officially lowered to the fifth grade. The participants engaged in everyday conversations in Mandarin in their various social groups and little spontaneous English conversation took place. Their struggle to have conversations in English with Paul in a teaching setting was debatably different from everyday conversation.

5.4.2.2 ZPD: mediation and the process of knowing the environment

In this group of learners, there was a pattern to their curricular learning process: elementary school learning was usually aimed at helping learners to develop an interest in English; there was a significant increase of tests and requirement of memorization during junior high school; the most difficult time of learning English in general was during their senior high school when their English language proficiency was at its peak before the NCEE. Having said that, Cindy's learning process was quite the opposite of this general learning trajectory: she had a very frustrating beginning, an equally frustrating junior high school learning experience, and the turning point for becoming a high achiever in English came only in the first year of senior high school.

All the participants felt that they tended to forget what they had learned and encountered difficulties when trying to use what they had learned. What was worse, all participants felt that their English proficiency declined after senior high school, after which there were less hours dedicated to structured learning. After the NCEE, the importance of

speaking emerged. Since Fanny had left senior high school for three years before she entered college, her efforts in reconstructing her ZPD were manifested by her repeatedly saying that she needed to go back to her senior high school English textbooks in order to refresh her memory on grammar. It seemed that formal instruction and all the related mediational means, such as English textbooks played an important role in the EFL learning process. Due to the cognitivist tradition, mainstream SLA research tends to focus on teaching and learning activities in the classroom. With regard to speaking in an EFL environment, it seems clear that, for this group's learning, it was beyond the classroom walls. Their individual ZPDs presented a diverse picture when coming to terms with the lack of a naturally occurring English-speaking environment.

5.4.3 My participants' SLSE: mediated agency in the Taiwanese ecosystems

The theoretical framework underpinning LLS research has been cognitive in the main. This explains why LLS has also been called *learner* strategies. In mainstream LLS research, strategies are considered as learners' active learning behaviours when learning in general or doing classroom tasks specifically. Also, 'agency' tends to be considered as a personal possession. Therefore, the list-making description of learning strategies has been mostly presented without the context in which it is formed, used and developed, let alone a process view of strategy development in context. Recently an increasing amount of LLS research represents efforts to fill this gap. Attempting to reconcile psycholinguistic tradition to a sociocultural perspective, Huang (2008) focuses on Chinese senior high school students' strategy use and development in relation to their immediate classroom tasks, interpersonal interactions and their communities of language

learning practice. He categorizes their locally developed test-oriented language learning strategies into three categories: goal-oriented actions, task-focused actions and situated actions. The context of this research is simplified to the mainstream examination-oriented culture in China and its grade-getting goals.

Gao (2010) studies the changes of strategy use in an EFL Chinese environment and that in an English-medium education university in Hong Kong. Though emphasizing the employment of strategies as constrained choice which needs to be ‘enabled’ in the environment, his participants’ strategy use seems more a display of learner agency. He points out his participants’ enhanced agency after coming to Hong Kong and believes that ‘the differences among these study participants, in particular, the case study participants, can be attributed to different values, beliefs, and capacity that they had in learning English’ (p. 248). The relationship between agency and context still seems to be unbalanced in the sense that agency is often considered as learners’ autonomous, or independent, behaviours and thoughts. For example, their parents’ or prior teachers’ possible influences, though ‘quite influential’ in the past (p. 191), were not discussed in the case of participants’ immediate Hong Kong university learning context.

The context is an extremely complex concept and it needs to be described in a systemic way. Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes it as a set of Russian dolls, i.e., it is mutually embedded and it needs to be considered as an inseparable whole. The interaction between person and environment across time and places is a complicated one. He’s (2002) biographical and developmental account of her English learning process and the changes

of her strategy use at different stages provides a fuller view of person-environment interactions. Owing to the perceived resources and constraints in her changing environment across times and places embedded in her wider Chinese history and societal development, her strategy use changed along with her personal development and growth through her life experiences. Her account connects the dots in her personal context of times and places of her learning experiences from China to Australia to Hong Kong. Her micro-contextual learning experiences and the historical development of the Chinese society she was in were mutually embedded. In her case, strategies are described in her social and material environment in different times which demonstrated mediated agency (Wertsch, 1998).

The purpose of this study is to fill the practical and theoretical gaps in SLA and LLS research in terms of learning to speak English in Taiwanese EFL contexts and perhaps to suggest a more effective way of learning to speak. Therefore, it is of great importance to look at strategy use in the context of the blueprint of Taiwanese society and the EFL learning process as discussed. The participants' micro-context was highly fluid and dynamic. It was an interwoven mixture of their past and present, their own and others' thoughts and feelings and their moment-by-moment decisions in their individual contexts. Up to this day, sociocultural LLS research has given insights into strategy use and development in different contexts, but an ecological view which connects the past and the present, the sociocultural context and the physical environment should be able to connect more dots and help to understand Taiwanese adult EFL learners' learning to speak English both individually and collectively. Here I will focus on the qualitatively different

ways of strategy use which emerged in this group of learners in relation to two topics: course-related and non-course-related.

As Bronfenbrenner (1979) remarks, it is not possible to observe an individual's life-world because of its constructed nature. He contends that the construction of reality can only be inferred from patterns of activities, roles and relations in which the person engages (see 2.4.3). The tables below display the thematized aspect of my participants' life-world of learning to speak English. They show the patterns of mediated activities, roles and relations in which each participant engaged in their first semester in college. As discussed in 5.3.2, memorization featured in this group of learners' strategy use. I will focus on what was meaningful and useful to each participant in the local environment in order to shed light on the emergence of the features.

Table 5.1 An overview of course-related SLSEs

SLSE	A meaningful set of affordances	The intention
Cindy		
Imitation	Andrea, CD-ROMs, tests, military environment and CD-player walkman	Listen to imitate Listen to understand Listen to memorize
Read aloud	Andrea, tests, long-hand copy and marching band practice	Read aloud to correct pronunciation Read aloud to understand Read aloud to memorize
Fanny		
Write, listen and read aloud	Andrea, magazines, CD-ROMs, tests, and a notebook	Write, listen and read aloud to understand and memorize
Peter		
Read, translate and review	Andrea, magazines, tests, breaks and night studies	Read and translate to understand

		Review to memorize
Read, listen, and write	Andrea, magazines, CD-ROMs, tests, and computers	Read and write to understand Read and write to memorize Listen to understand
Nick		
Classroom practice	Andrea, CD-ROMs, magazines, tests, and pair/classmates	Minimum participation Listen and repeat to memorize
Dennis		
Read and translate	Andrea, magazines, CD-ROMs, written tests, and night studies	Read and translate to understand Read and translate to memorize
Recite in mind and translate	Andrea, magazines, oral tests, and night studies	Recite and translate to understand Recite in mind to memorize

Table 5.2 An overview of non-course-related SLSEs

SLSE	A meaningful set of affordances	The intention
Cindy		
Speak English in a safe environment	members of the marching band and practices	To use English in everyday situations
Speak with someone who is also interested in speaking English	roommate and her incident	To converse in English
Speak to an English native speaker	class tutor, Paul and classmates	To converse in English
Fanny		
Write to learn to speak	learner diary and Joy	To produce English
Speak to an English native speaker	class tutor, Paul and classmates	To converse in English
Listen to learn to speak	prior instructor, ECL preparatory class, sergeant, and schoolmates	To choose a career path
Peter		

Memorize vocabulary	vocabulary booklets, phonics and girlfriend	To be with his girlfriend
Following an example	older brother, GEPT and TOEIC	To follow his brother's path
Nick		
Watch films to learn to speak	company leader, weekends, TV, DVD player, company members	To have English language exposure
Dennis		
Play while learning to speak English	pair, girlfriend, and an unexpected encounter	To use English in everyday situations

5.4.3.1 Meaningful and useful past was present

All my participants were able to associate what they were doing at that time with a source in their past. Also, they compared the resources and constraints in the immediate environment with their prior learning environments. In effect, those who were influential in their past could be as influential in the present, as the data revealed. Specifically, Cindy was so profoundly influenced by her senior high school English language teacher that she constantly compared her current English language learning experience with her previous experiences. At the end of the first semester, she still identified that teacher as the person who had most influence on her learning to speak English. Fanny remembered Grace who taught her for a semester in junior two and she saw Grace as her role model for learning English. Since she had left school for three years, she kept comparing herself with her newly enlisted classmates. At the end of the semester, she still felt that she needed to review her senior high school textbooks. This was probably because she knew it was the formal English learning which kept her on track.

Nick was perhaps the most trained examination-taker because of his six-year private middle school learning experience. After entering college, presumably out of the frustration of failing his and his parents' expectations, he kept comparing his learning experience with Silvia's experiences in Australia. At the end of the semester, he was setting his goal on the GEPT intermediate level because he found his English skill backsliding. After the shock in senior two, Peter was impressed with his senior three English language teacher who managed to help Peter's class regain confidence in learning English. Peter compared himself with his older brother because he had been following his older brother's route in many cases. At the end of the semester, while considering what language proficiency test he might take, he believed that his older brother's choice would be a 'better' choice for him as well. Dennis was encouraged and inspired by his private language institute teacher and junior high school teacher; he compared his English learning in Andrea's class with his Military English class in order to explain why he preferred the latter. At the end of the semester, Dennis had adjusted to his military environment and, though English language learning magazines interested him, he stuck to his vocabulary approach i.e., the 'one-hundred-box method'. All in all, each participant's learning trajectory was intricately interwoven by past and present, and the interactions between person and environment continued in order to reach higher self-regulation capacity.

5.4.3.2 What artefacts were meaningful and useful to the participants

Green and Oxford (1995) suggest that ESL and EFL students might use different strategies as a result of their learning environments. After working with 517 Taiwanese

college students, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) pointed out the importance of environment in which learning takes place:

In this study, which was conducted in a formal, academic EFL context, mismatches could occur between strategies that learners really employ and strategies that are included in the SILL. For instance, strategy item 46, “I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk,” would be more practical and more likely to be employed in a natural ESL setting than in an EFL context because the former provides more such opportunities than the latter. (p. 379)

Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) also pinpoint the lack of chances for functional practice in everyday-life in EFL environments. What I found is that the group of learners in my research relied on CD-ROMs, English language learning magazines and English films to maintain their exposure to English. Being an EFL learner, most of the time he or she needs to listen to the words or practise the words over and over again to make up for the absence of an enormous amount of repetition in an English-speaking environment. Note that in real-time communication, people may not be patient enough or willing to repeat what they say again and again. This could partly account for the difficulty in making friends with English (native) speakers (W, P. C., 2008). People get tired; but more everyday-life-like language used in learning magazines and modern technology can offer alternative approaches to preparing and learning to speak. The data shows that CD-ROMs and English language learning magazines were often used by this group of learners as the main source of English exposure. These language learning activities included their classroom activities, tests and examinations, and private study both in and off the campus.

In other words, by taking this optional course, these learning materials became part of their everyday English language learning environment both individually and collectively.

To conclude, the framework I have discussed in 2.4 can apply to all my participants, although it may apply more to one person than another. For example, my data has revealed that Cindy was a type of learner who would like to learn through reading aloud and using English in her everyday life environment and she attributed this to her senior high school English language teacher. She showed that she was capable of using and creating learning opportunities within her social network. Therefore, the formation, development and use of her SLSEs could be better understood by the concept of mediated agency in her English learning context as nested systems. On the contrary, Nick seemed to believe that learning to speak authentic English in an English-speaking country could be ‘natural’. He, therefore, was not convinced of the value of doing classroom activities and private study which is arguably the EFL way of learning. Fortunately, he was able to reset his learning goal (i.e., the GEPT intermediate level) based on what was available to him by the end of the semester.

Generally speaking, the critique on the conceptualization of SLA, the differentiation of ESL and EFL, speaking strategies and SLSEs and the theoretical framework I have discussed in this thesis can help to contextualize and provide a better understanding of EFL learners’ strategy formation, development and use. With the sociocultural-ecological perspective, the resources and constraints in EFL environments and the person-environment relationship can be described. From my findings, I can also see how my

participants were adapting to their changing environment and the consistency in their individual approaches learning to speak English in an EFL environment. With this conclusion, therefore, I believe that the framework I have discussed in this study can apply not only to understanding my participants but also to other foreign language learners in general. The implications of the study will be presented in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate how EFL learners' SLSEs emerged, were used, and developed in an EFL environment where there was little use of English in everyday communication. In this chapter, I will conclude my study with implications that have emerged from my findings, advantages and limitations of this study, and suggestions for future research. Then I will complete this chapter by revisiting my personal experience as a former EFL learner in Taiwan, and a current ESL learner as an international student in the United Kingdom.

6.1 Implications of the study

6.1.1 Advantages and limitations of the study in terms of methodology

As I reviewed in Chapter 2, most LLS research studies have been conducted with a quantitative approach using questionnaires. The value in using multiple interviews and observation to investigate LLS is in seeing it as a by-product of a socio-cultural and situational learning process. I was therefore able to organize the themes (SLSEs as environmental niches) in their micro-contextual environments where many things happen at the same time. The reliability of the data was assured because the interviews and the classroom observation were conducted repetitively throughout the collection period.

I found the regular classroom observation helpful for data collection because the stability and familiarity over time helped to build the rapport. Also, the multiple interviews helped to address the limitations of interviews discussed in 3.4.3. For example, my participants

would add to what they had mentioned earlier which would enable me to develop a fuller picture of their previous and ongoing learning experiences. With the information I gathered through these interviews, I have found that there are still a lot of interesting findings in my data which I can analyze and interpret from different aspects. However, because of the limitations of the thesis, I was not able to present all of them here. But I hope I will be able to revisit this data in the future and discuss aspects not revealed in this study.

There was a limitation to classroom observation. Though my main focus was on the learners, I would attempt to interview the teacher after the classroom observation was completed.. However, to avoid influencing the optional course teacher's teaching style and taking too much of her time, I did not manage to discuss her experiences of learning to speak English in Taiwan and the reasons behind her decision-making when teaching this optional course.

6.1.2 Implications for policy makers, teachers and adult learners

6.1.2.1 Speaking is not a result of EFL classroom learning

As discussed in 1.1, the Taiwanese government's continual effort has seemed to pay off in the younger generation of Taiwanese EFL learners. However, it seems that college students are struggling with developing their English speaking skills. My findings show that individual EFL college students and teachers appear to have had limited access to English (native) speakers in their everyday life, both inside and outside school.

As far as teachers are concerned, in order to raise awareness, I suggest that EFL teachers share and discuss with their students what they can do to develop their English speaking skills. In so doing, teachers can encourage and help college students to reflect on their own English language learning process. EFL learners also need to bear in mind that ‘acquisition’ in an English-speaking country and building relationships with English native speakers has never been effortless. Facing the basic requirement of English proficiency for graduation from the universities in Taiwan, students are encouraged to take proficiency-oriented tests and know that their learning should not be limited to English classes.

Adult learners in higher education are expected to be able to think for themselves and learn how to learn. Learning to speak in an EFL context is different from learning to speak in an English-speaking environment. EFL college learners and teachers need to come to terms with what is available and is more effective in their current environment. Though the availability and accessibility of English in the world and in Taiwan has changed drastically, speaking skills are not a ‘natural’ result of classroom learning, and particularly since they have been, by and large neglected in the classroom. Adult learners need to learn to detect resources in the local environment.

6.1.2.2 Users of English

There may be a ‘saving face’ culture which is an obstacle for learning to speak. Indeed, EFL teachers can have a native speaker model of ‘correctness’ in their mind, because of lack of contacts with English (native) speakers in everyday situations and environments.

EFL teachers and their students may be too obsessed with being correct to see the fact that English (native) speakers speak like normal people. Being aware of the difference between a learner and a user, EFL teachers and learners should set being a user as the goal.

When not emphasized in the classroom, the speaking objectives in the curriculum may seem too ideal and linear. The findings of this study show that EFL teachers at all stages played a very significant role in individual learners' processes. In terms of learning to speak, Cindy's senior high school English teacher set a good example for her students to use English as a communication tool both in and out of class. Though students' proficiency levels are diverse, English use should be encouraged at all levels. In order to facilitate students becoming English users, teachers (i.e., environmental resources) need to avoid being people who teach the language without using it.

6.1.2.3 Context of English as an additional language

In my study, there appeared to be more emphasis on using English to learn other subjects as well. This suggests that the immediate relevance of English in the learners' everyday environment is increasing. In fact, not only are students encouraged to enhance their English proficiency but also university teachers are encouraged to use English as an education medium in Taiwan. In other words, EFL learners' ZPD can be expanded to include more aspects of their everyday life and more people in their immediate community.

Nevertheless, this appears a leap for both teachers and EFL college students in Taiwan who have received Chinese medium education. To face the challenge of English as the world's second language, the policy makers have been working on changing the macro-system and exo-system of Taiwanese society. It is not enough simply to recognize changes in these systems. Changes need to take place at an individual level in the meso-system and micro-system. When English is used as an education medium, Taiwan becomes an ESL rather than EFL learning environment, i.e., English obtains the status of a communication tool. This will radically transform the Taiwanese systems in which individual college students are embedded (Kang, 2012).

6.1.3 Implications for me as a researcher

Carrying out data collection in an environment with which I was familiar, I was reminded not to take things for granted. It was surprising for me to realize that, like my participants, I had assumed to a large extent that we learn to speak only from native speakers of English and learning English is all about being native-like in all language skills. In addition, being a researcher meant I learned about my participants' everyday learning experiences. I came to terms with the fact that English language learning was my focus and my interest; but it was not my participants' first priority in life in many cases. Also, I realized that there was much more to a researcher-participant relationship than I had imagined. There were situations in which the relationship seemed to be coming to an end, and I was grateful for my participants' willingness to continue.

6.2 Suggestions for future study

Speaking may be a layman's goal in learning a language, but this area of study has been less researched. From my study, I have found that individual EFL learners need more support and guidance in learning to speak English in their local learning environment.

Many LLS studies, including this one, have been conducted from learners' perspectives. While discussing in the focus groups, I came to realize that it is important to hear from the group of people to whom the participants were close. Because of the time limit of this one-person research, this study did not include all the people my participants mentioned on their learning trajectories. Although I focused only on the learners in my study, the findings can be valuable guidance for identifying and involving those 'key persons' in future studies.

To sum up, learners' earlier experiences and people that have influenced them in a significant way need to be taken into careful consideration. I think it would also be interesting to see how learners' ZPD and mediated agency operate in the process of adapting to their new learning environment during the full length in college. Therefore, if I have the opportunity to do similar research again, I would like to extend the data collection period and do in-depth interviews with those whom were identified as significant. As more and more cases are reported, our understanding of strategy use and development in context could increase.

6.3 Revisiting my experiences

In Chapter 1 I mentioned why I was interested in investigating EFL learners' SLSEs. One of the reasons was because of my own EFL learning background. As a matter of fact, at the initial stage of this project, I often identified myself as a Taiwanese EFL learner. However, in the later stages of my research, I began to recognize myself as an ESL learner. Therefore, I would like to complete this thesis by discussing some of my own experiences, which I have discovered were related to some of the empirical studies I have discussed.

Previously I myself was an EFL learner in Taiwan and I officially began learning English as a compulsory subject in junior one. My English language teacher in senior high school normally asked us to read aloud from the textbook. There was once when she asked us to recite while staring at the National father's picture hung on the top of the blackboard. I followed her instruction without thinking. After reciting, she singled me out and asked me to recite the sentence in front of the class. She was pleased with my performance and she turned to the class and said, 'Look! My strategy works! Now you can all look at our National father's photo when you have a problem memorizing!' This appears to echo Ding's (2007: 278) findings: years of practice in imitation, memorization and communication, which was usually first forced upon them by their teacher, but later came to be driven by motivation arising from initial success, teacher praise and personal interest.

My MA course in the United Kingdom (2005-2006) as Gao's research suggests not only changed my perception of effective learning but revealed to me the importance of being

able to ‘think in English’. Starting this EdD course in 2008, now I may not use memorization strategies as much as I did, but I still use them when I need to learn vocabulary in a very short time. However, the most significant change is the emerging use of social strategies which first developed in my face-to-face communication in various real-life settings. For example, the opportunity to share a living space with PhD students from India, Kenya and Syria was invaluable; the privilege of joining the local community through my Christian faith changed my perception of English native speakers. Through real-life communication in English with EFL speakers, ESL speakers and English native speakers, I am amazed by how people who have come from very different backgrounds in this international community are able to communicate in not necessarily native-like English!

All in all, though I still encounter new vocabulary and expressions, I am feeling more at ease when speaking English. As Brown and Yule (1983) argue, EFL learners need to understand English speakers talk just like the way he or she talks in his/her native language. I am benefiting from spending time with my friends both natives and internationals. On reflection, I realize I had begun to apply memorization strategies in Taiwan long before I could recognise them as LLS. In fact, they might have worked as well with the other subjects I needed to learn. In the process of adapting to the English-speaking United Kingdom environment, I had started employing social strategies before I came across them in the LLS literature. After experiencing context shifts myself and the long and winding academic journey, I hope to promote a more reflective way of learning to speak English as adult EFL learners learn to detect resources and constraints in their

local environments. As I finish this study, I look forward to viewing Taiwanese EFL environments in a new light.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Stages of English language learning in the Grade 1-9 Curriculum

[Translated and adapted from MOE, 2006 (pp. 3- 4; pp. 20– 23)]

STAGE	LANGUAGE ABILITY INDEX	KEY ABILITIES
First Stage	1. Can say the alphabet.	1.1 Can say the alphabet correctly. 1.2 Can say the 26 English letters in the correct order.
	2. Can read English phonetically.	2.1 Can say all the consonants. 2.2 Can say all the vowels. 2.3 Can read combinations of consonants and vowels in syllables.
	3. Can say vocabulary taught in class.	3.1 Can repeat the taught words and phrases correctly. 3.2 Can pronounce the words and phrases with correct stressed syllables.
	4. Can speak simple sentences in correct intonation.	4.1 Can repeat the intonation of the sentence just heard. 4.2 Can speak direct sentences and questions in their correct intonation.

	<p>5. Can conduct classroom dialogues as taught.</p>	<p>5.1 Can repeat the taught classroom dialogues correctly.</p> <p>5.2 Can use the taught classroom dialogues correctly.</p>
	<p>6. Can use simple English to introduce himself/herself.</p>	<p>6.1 Can use the taught words, phrases and sentences to introduce himself/herself.</p>
	<p>7. Can use simple English to introduce his/her family and friends.</p>	<p>7.1 Can use the taught words, phrases and sentences to introduce family and friends.</p>
	<p>8. Can use everyday English taught in class.</p>	<p>8.1 Can repeat the everyday English taught.</p> <p>8.2 Can use the everyday English taught.</p>
	<p>9. Can ask simple questions, give answers and describe things.</p>	<p>9.1 Can use the words, phrases and sentences to ask questions, answer questions and describe things.</p>

	<p>10. Can read aloud English rhymes and chants.</p> <p>11. Can use the English s/he is taught to describe a picture.</p> <p>12. Can conduct simple role play activities.</p>	<p>10.1 Can repeat the taught rhymes and chants correctly.</p> <p>10.2 Can read aloud and sing correctly.</p> <p>11.1 Can say correctly words and phrases that match a picture.</p> <p>11.2 Can use the words, phrases and sentences taught to express what s/he sees in a picture.</p> <p>12.1 Can conduct simple dialogues in role-plays.</p> <p>12.2 Can play a role in simple child plays or performances in reader theatres.</p>
Second Stage	<p>1. Can use the classroom dialogue properly according to different situations.</p> <p>2. Can use simple English</p>	<p>1.1 Can repeat the classroom dialogues taught.</p> <p>1.2 Can use the classroom dialogues according to different situations.</p> <p>2.1 Can use simple English to express</p>

	to participate in teacher-led discussions in class.	opinions with teachers' prompts.
		2.2 Can use simple English to participate in classroom discussions.
	3. Can use simple English to express his/her needs, wants and feelings.	<p>3.1 Can use English to express his/her needs (physical or psychological) and wants (future plans).</p> <p>3.2 Can use simple English to express his/her emotions (being happy, sad, angry, surprised and afraid, etc.).</p>
	4. Can use simple English to describe people, events, time, place and things in his/her everyday environment.	<p>4.1 Can use simple English to describe events (including people, things, time and place related to him/her).</p> <p>4.2 Can use simple English to describe people in everyday life (including his/her identity, age, appearances and habits).</p> <p>4.3 Can use simple English to describe things in his/her everyday environment (including size, new/old, shape and functions).</p>

	<p>5. Can ask and answer questions in English according to different people, events, time, place and things.</p> <p>6. Can express himself/herself and communicate with others properly in different situations and occasions.</p> <p>7. Can take part in simple English plays.</p>	<p>5.1 Can use correct English to ask questions (e.g., who, what, when, where, how, why).</p> <p>5.2 Can answer questions correctly when asked (e.g., who, what, when, where, how, why).</p> <p>6.1 Can use English to communicate with others according to different situations and occasions (e.g., discuss his/her family, room arrangements and hobbies).</p> <p>6.2 Can reply appropriately according to different occasions and different people.</p> <p>7.1 Can understand the lines of a short play and read each line correctly.</p> <p>7.2 Can act out the lines while interacting with others in a short play.</p>
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	<p>8. Can use simple English to introduce foreign cultures.</p>	<p>8.1 Can use simple English to introduce his/her local customs.</p> <p>8.2 Can use simple English to explain the similarities and differences between festivals, cultures and customs of his/her own country and other countries.</p>
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Appendix 2 English speaking ability in the Senior High School Curriculum (p. 25)

1. Basic abilities

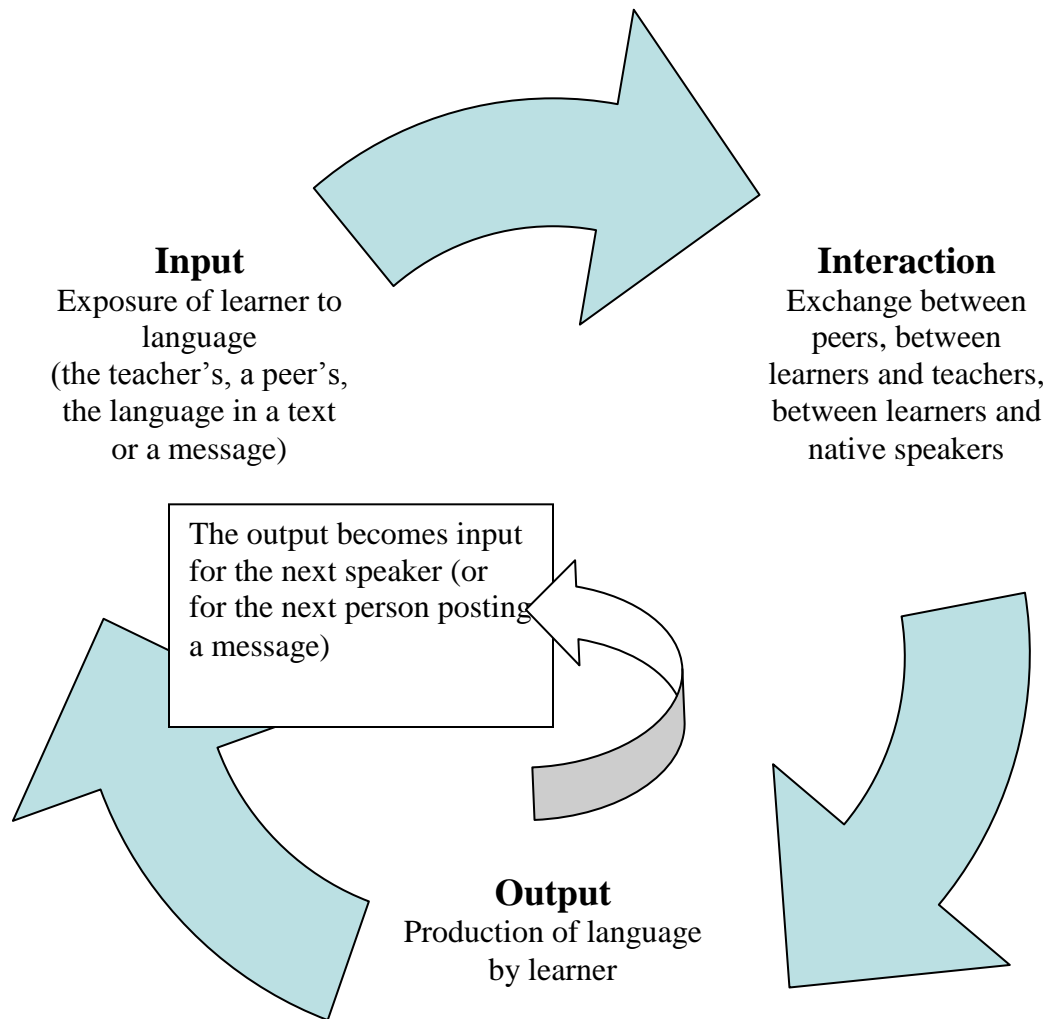
- (1) Able to conduct some main classroom dialogues.
- (2) Able to conduct English discussion in basic question-and-answer interaction in class based on the English lessons taught.
- (3) Able to take part in oral practices in class.
- (4) Able to conduct basic everyday communication in English.
- (5) Able to describe everyday life using basic English.

2. Advanced abilities

- (1) Able to discuss in English in class based on the English lessons taught.
- (2) Able to summarize the English lesson or stories in English.
- (3) Able to describe what is in a picture using English.
- (4) Able to conduct everyday communication in English.
- (5) Able to integrate verbal and non-verbal communication skills to achieve successful communication.
- (6) Able to introduce briefly local and foreign cultures.

Appendix 3

Input-output model of language acquisition (Lamy and Hampel, 2007: 20)



Appendix 4

Oxford's (1990) framework for Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Direct strategies	Indirect strategies
<u>1. Memory Strategies</u> Help learners store and retrieve new information (e.g., applying images and sounds, creating mental linkages)	<u>4. Metacognitive Strategies</u> Allow learners to control their own cognition (e.g., coordinating the planning, organizing, and evaluation of the learning process.)
<u>2. Cognitive Strategies</u> Applied by learners to better understand and produce the target language (e.g., summarizing, analyzing, reasoning)	<u>5. Affective Strategies</u> Refer to the methods that help learners to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes (e.g., taking emotional temperature, self-encouragement)
<u>3. Compensatory Strategies</u> Used for overcoming deficiencies in knowledge of the target language (e.g., guessing meanings from context, using synonyms to convey meaning)	<u>6. Social Strategies</u> Include interaction with others through the target language (e.g., asking questions, cooperating with native speakers, becoming culturally aware)

(Reproduced from Lai, 2009: 256)

Appendix 5 Rubin's (1975: 45- 48) GLL learning strategies

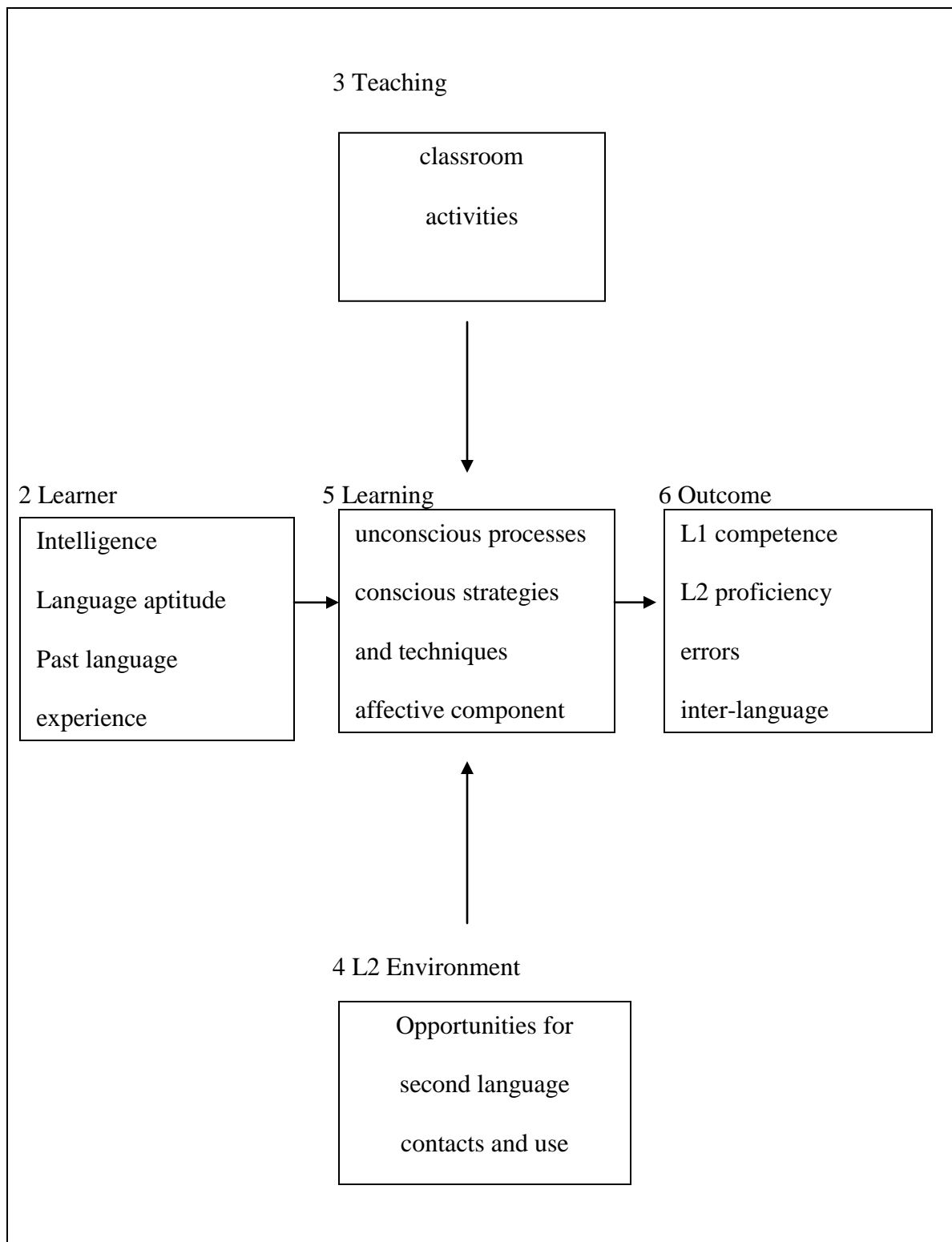
1. The good language learner is a willing and accurate guesser;
2. The good language learner has a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from a communication;
3. The good language learner is often not inhibited;
4. In addition to focusing on communication, the good language learner is prepared to attend to form;
5. The good language learner practises;
6. The good language learner monitors his own and the speech of others;
7. The good language learner attends to meaning.

Appendix 6 Stern's (1975: 311-316) GLL learning strategies

1. A personal learning style or positive learning strategies;
2. An active approach to the learning task;
3. A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers;
4. Technical know-how about how to tackle a language;
5. Strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system, and revising this system progressively;
6. Constantly searching for meaning;
7. Willingness to practise;
8. Willingness to use the language in real communication;
9. Self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use;
10. Developing the second language more and more as a separate reference system and learning to think in it.

Appendix 7

Model of the second language learner and language learning (Naiman *et al.*, 1996: 3)



**Appendix 8 Bialystok's Model of Second Language Learning (reproduced from
Bialystok, 1978: 71)**

Appendix 9 Some related details about students of the optional course

Seat no.	Original Class	gender	GEPT certificate
1	102	female	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
2	102	female	Passed 1 st phase of GEPT elementary level
3	102	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
4	102	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
5	102	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
6	109	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
7	110	male	None
8	110	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
9	110	male	None
10	115	female	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
11	116	male	None
12	118	male	None
13	118	male	Passed 1 st phase of GEPT elementary level
14	118	male	None
15	118	female	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
16	123	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
17	123	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
18	124	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
19	124	male	None
20	124	male	None
21	124	male	None
22	124	female	None
23	127	male	None
24	127	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
25	134	male	Obtained GEPT elementary certificate
26	134	male	None
27	134	male	None
28	134	male	Passed 1 st phase of GEPT elementary level

Appendix 10 The consent form used in this study

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

(參與研究的具體內容和同意書)

Why do this study?

I am interested in *how Taiwanese college students develop their speaking ability in the natural environment*. I need to collect data from college students to allow me to describe Taiwanese college students' speaking learning activities in the local learning context.

(研究目的: 我對台灣大學生如何在現有的環境中學習說英語的過程很有興趣。為了描述解釋台灣大學生在本有學習環境中的學習過程, 所以需要蒐集資料。)

What will participation involve? This research involves

- 1. the researcher's classroom observation in the Listening-and-Speaking-in-Lab class;**
- 2. one-on-one interviews with the researcher every fortnight;
(at the participants' convenience)**
- 3. two focus group interviews with three of your friends/classmates and you;**
- 4. keep a learner diary and/or e-mail correspondences with the researcher;**
- 5. a home visit .**

(參與研究的具體內容: 1. 會話課的課堂觀察 2. 每二週乙次的一對一訪談 3. 與你朋友一同參加焦點團體訪談 4. 日記或 e-mail 5. 家庭拜訪)

How long will participation take?

The entire procedure will last one semester (Sep 2010-Jan 2011).

(研究期程: 整個研究歷時一個學期, 也就是從 今年九月到明年一月)

As an informed participant of this research, I understand that:

(我決定參與此研究)

1. My participation is voluntary and I may cease to take part in this research at any time, without penalty.
(1. 我是自願參與, 而且隨時可以退出, 不受處份。)
2. I am aware of what my participation involves.
(2. 我了解參與研究的具體內容。)
3. All my questions about the study have been satisfactorily answered.
(3. 我個人關於這個研究的所有問題, 都已經得到滿意的答覆。)

I have read and understood the above, and give consent to participate:

(我已經讀過並了解上述內容, 並同意參與這個研究)

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____
(研究參與者簽名: _____ 日期: _____)

I have explained the above and answered all questions asked by the participant:

(我已經解釋上述內容, 並回答了所有研究參與者的問題)

Researcher's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____
(研究者簽名: _____ 日期: _____)

Appendix 11 The instruction for English learning autobiography used in this study

English learning autobiography instruction (no word limits)

英語學習自傳撰寫說明 (無字數限制)

1. when did you start learning English? Do you still remember the situation in which you spoke English for the first time?

(從何時開始學英文? 還記得第一次開口說英文的情形嗎?)

2. English learning is normally seen as a four-skill learning, can you tell me how your prior English language teachers taught English to you? Have you ever taken classes at cram schools? How do English teachers at cram schools teach English?

After learning English for all these years, can you tell me what works best for you?

(一般將英語學習分為聽說讀寫, 曾教過你的英文老師們強調如何學習英文? 曾有老師強調學習說英語嗎? 你在補習班上過課嗎? 補習班老師如何教英文? 經過這麼多老師的教導, 及經年累月的學習, 請談談你認為什麼樣的學習方式, 對你而言, 最有效)

3. do you speak English at home? If so, with whom? How do you do your self-study?

Which do you prefer, study alone or with friends?

(你在家說英語嗎? 如果有, 是跟誰呢? 你自習時如何學習說英語? 例如, 你喜歡自己念, 還是和同學朋友一起學習呢?)

4. is choosing this conversation class related to your goal and reasons for learning English at present?

(你/妳為何選擇”英語聽講”這門課? 你/妳期待這堂課可以如何幫助你/妳學習說英語?)

Appendix 12 The interview guide used in this study

Before interviews

Check: the interviewee is available/remember; an up-to-date version of interview schedule; digital recorder, paper and pencil; water/drink

Arrive 30 minutes earlier before the scheduled interview (preparations)

During interviews

Opening

- Describe how the interview will be conducted, how long it should last and the general subjects that are to be covered
- Ask for permission to audio-tape the interview (and listen attentively for responses and note body language)
- Make guarantees of confidentiality
- Reassure that there is no right or wrong, desirable or undesirable answers
- Ask if the respondent has any questions

Dos and Don'ts

Do	Don't
Listen carefully (e.g. nonverbally)	Close off interviewee space
Offer supportive feedback (e.g. hmm)	Interpret for the interviewee
Respond to emotion (give interviewee chance to talk about it)	Judge (e.g. offer moral comment, advice or consolation)
Let the interview take its own shape –	Stick rigidly to topics you think are

let interviewee discover things as well	important
Monitor your responses to give interviewee proper space	Interrupt unthinkingly

Do	Don't
Establish clearly what the interviewee thinks	Don't give an indication to the interviewee of <i>your</i> meanings and understandings or appear to judge their responses
Provide a balance between open and closed questions	Don't ask leading questions or questions to which it is easy for interviewees to simply agree with all you say
Listen carefully to all responses and follow up points that are not clear	Don't rush on to the next question before <i>thinking</i> about the last response
If necessary, either to gain interviewer thinking time or for the clarity of the audio recording, repeat the response	Don't respond with a modified version of the response, but repeat exactly what was said
Give the interviewee plenty of time to respond	Do not rush, but do not allow embarrassing silences
Where interviewees express doubts or hesitate, probe them to share their thinking	Avoid creating the impression that you would prefer some kind of answers rather than others
Be sensitive to possible	Don't make any assumptions about the

misunderstandings about questions, and if appropriate repeat the question	ways in which the interviewee might be thinking
Be aware that the respondent may make self-contradictory statements	Do not forget earlier responses in the interview
Try to establish an informal atmosphere	Don't interrogate the interviewee
Be prepared to abandon the interview if it is not working	Don't continue if the respondent appear agitated, angry or withdraw

5 types of questions to avoid

Question type	Example and recommendation
Double-barreled	Have you ever experienced burn-out and what do you do to prevent it?
	Ask one question at a time. Do not combine questions and expect an answer.
Two-in-one	What are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a private school?
	Do not combine opposite positions in one question. Separate out the parts and things will be much better.
Restrictive	Do you think the female school administrators are as good as male school administrators?
	The phraseology of this question eliminates the possibility that females might be better. Avoid questions which inherently eliminate some options.

Leading	Bill 101 which forces ‘immigrant’ children into French schools in Quebec has been challenged and the courts on the grounds that it violates the Canadian charter of Rights and Freedoms. What do you think of Bill 101?
	Do not precede questions with a position statement. In this type of question, the interviewer states a view or summarizes the position of a current or recent event and then asks for a response. This tends to lead the respondent in a given direction.
Loaded	Would you favour or oppose murder by agreeing with a woman’s free choice concerning abortion?
	Avoid questions which are emotionally charged and use loaded words.

Closing

Is there anything else you would like to add?

What you think I should have asked you but I didn’t?

THANK YOU♥

After interviews

Listen to the interview recording, make notes and develop specific follow-up questions.

Interview questions

Focused interview: personal learning history

(based on language learning autobiography—chronological order)

‘Bi-weekly’ interviews: retrospective account of learning process

1. during the previous weeks, what opportunities to learn to speak English did you have outside of the classroom (i.e. school settings, home, leisure time)? Did you make use of it?

If so, can you tell me more about it? If not, can you tell me the reasons? (wider context)

2. during the previous weeks, what opportunities to learn to speak English did you have inside the classroom? How was it? Have you found them helpful? If so, can you tell me more about what you learned from this experience? If not, can you tell me how it could have been more helpful? (classroom context)

3. Do you think the classroom activities help you to develop your speaking ability? If so, can you tell me more about it? If not, can you tell me the reasons?

(goal, attitude and belief)

4. Do you think the classroom tasks suit your learning goals and purpose? If so, can you tell me more about it? If not, can you tell me the reasons?

(goal, attitude and belief)

5. What about the problems you mentioned in the diary? Have you tried out the solutions you thought could work for you? How did you go about the learning tasks at hand? Have you discussed these with others or asked your (English language) teachers? (social context)

Appendix 13 The first set of codes

PAST 英文教學過程(curriculum)

不懂英文好笨(difficulties)

會英文好神氣 (*superiority*) [02.June2011]

教學與考試(升學) (Exam-oriented learning)

學習目標 (Learning objectives)

唱英文歌 (English songs)

唸英文 (read English aloud)

寫作 (English writing)

教文法 (English grammar)

聽力 (English listening)

背單字 (memorize vocabulary)

閱讀 (English reading)

國中 (junior high)

高中 (Senior high)

英語學習材料 (English teaching learning materials)

英文影片 (English films)

英語學習雜誌 (English language learning magazines CD/CD-ROM)

開始學英文 (Beginning of learning English)

PRESENT 學校教學環境 (Educational settings)

同儕 (peers)

安親班 (after-school care centre)

師生溝通 (Teacher-Student Interaction)

時間管理(軍事環境) (Military discipline)

同儕 (peers -- college)

學習目標 (learning goal -- college)

生涯考量 (career)

ECL

英培班 (ECL class)

英語聽講 (Listening and Speaking in Lab)

回家功課 (Homework)

夜讀 (night study)

假日 (holidays)

用/不用光碟 (CD-ROM)

英文雜誌 (English learning magazines)
課堂活動 (classroom activities)
學習目標 (Learning objectives) [13June2011]
唱英文歌 (English songs)
唸英文 (read English aloud)
寫作 (English writing)
教文法 (English grammar)
聽力 (English listening)
背單字 (memorize vocabulary)
閱讀 (English reading)

課堂管理 (classroom management)
隨堂及期考 (quiz&exams)
軍事美語 (Campaign)
課堂活動 (classroom activities)
課堂管理 (classroom management)
隨堂及期考 (quiz&exams)
補習英文 (English cram schools)
賞罰 (Punishment and rewards)
雙語幼稚園 (Bilingual kindergartens)

PAST 我的學習方式 (individual learning methods)
翻譯 (L1 mediation comprehension check)
英文名字 (English names)
英文字典 (English dictionary)
英文我這樣學(self-study)

PRESENT 我的學習方式 (individual learning methods)
翻譯 (L1 mediation comprehension check)
英文名字 (English names)
英文字典 (English dictionary)
英文我這樣學(self-study)

社會環境 (social environment)
家裡的環境 (family)
對學英文的態度(學校) (Attitude--School)

對學英文的態度(學生) (Attitude--Participant)

對學英文的態度(學生) (Attitude--Peers) [03May2011] [02June2011]

對學英文的態度(家人) (Attitude-Family)

對學英文的態度(老師) (Attitude--Teachers)

社會氛圍 (Social context: *individual's EFL learning*) [13June2011]

能力本位的考試 (Proficiency test)

GEPT

TOEIC

TOEFL

說英文的經驗 (English as a communication tool)

跟外國人講英文 (Talk to foreigners in English)

跟本國人講英文 (Talk to Taiwanese in English)

雙語環境 (English-friendly environment)

世界觀 (An international viewpoint)

Appendix 14 An example of the initial analysis of Cindy's data

Q1. & Q2. What opportunities to learn to speak English do students have inside and outside of the classroom (i.e. school settings, home, leisure time) and what speaking learning strategies do they employ?

What are the situations? (where, who, when, how often)	Why are they in these situations?	What problems do they report having encountered in the local learning context?	What do they gain from these situated learning experiences?	note
Family	home	Her parents couldn't afford to send her to English cram school	English was completely foreign	Family background
She was a fifth grader in her English class	Primary school education (at school)	Her fifth grade teacher taught English grammar (question forms) right after teaching the alphabet; she were among the minority who couldn't catch up with the class and her difficult situation was ignored by the teacher. She thought herself stupid	confused and considered learning English a daunting task; she hated English because she was a low achiever in English in her class	<i>Object-regulation</i>
She was a fifth grader in her English class	Primary school education (at school)	Her teacher asked her to say an English word which she had no idea what that was and the class couldn't understand what she was saying	Accurate English pronunciation is important	<i>Other-regulation</i>
She was a junior high student	Junior high education (class-home)	Exam-oriented learning: English grammar, read/write, little listening (included in mid-term exam), textbook articles read-aloud (randomly assigned on Weds) Failed to read in front of the teacher when assigned	Used *Chinese phonetic system to transcribe sounds to read English articles aloud all the way through junior high	L1-mediation
She was a junior high student	Junior high education (class-home)	This teacher emphasized KK again, but didn't give enough time to help her get familiar with the system. She still had trouble applying KK phonetic system or phonics to her English language learning	Using CDs which came with the textbooks to learn and imitate how each English words is pronounced	<i>Object-regulation</i>