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**International Chinese students' strategic
vocabulary learning:**

Agency and Context

By

Isobel Kai-Hui Wang

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

University of Warwick, Centre for Applied Linguistics

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Contents

Acknowledgements	vi
Declaration and Inclusion of Material from a Prior Thesis	vii
Abstract	viii
List of Abbreviations	ix
List of Figures	x
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background and context of the study.....	1
1.2 Overview of the study.....	4
1.3 Structure of the thesis.....	6
Chapter 2 Literature Review	8
2.1 Cognitive accounts of language learning strategies.....	8
2.1.1 Definitions of language learning strategies.....	8
2.1.1.1 Observable behaviours or not?.....	9
2.1.1.2 The degree of consciousness.....	11
2.1.1.3 Language learning and language use strategies.....	12
2.1.1.4 Fuzziness of the term of ‘strategy’.....	13
2.1.2 The ‘good language learner’.....	15
2.2 Cognitive accounts of strategic vocabulary learning.....	19
2.2.1 What is involved in learning a word?.....	19
2.2.2 Classification of vocabulary learning strategies.....	21
2.2.3 Theoretical basis of vocabulary learning strategy research.....	24
2.2.4 Empirical work on vocabulary learning strategies.....	26
2.3 Sociocultural accounts of strategic vocabulary learning.....	34
2.3.1 A Vygotskian view of strategic vocabulary learning.....	34
2.4 Theoretical framework.....	50
2.4.1 Strategic self-regulation.....	53
2.4.1.1 Cognitive views of strategic self-regulation.....	54
2.4.2 A dynamic understanding of strategic vocabulary learning.....	58
2.4.2.1 Interaction between learner agency and context.....	58
2.4.2.2 Situated learner agency at a micro-contextual level.....	60
2.4.2.3 Goal-directed processes.....	65

2.4.2.4 Strategic learning related to culture at a macro-contextual level.....	66
2.4.3 Vocabulary learning strategies.....	68
2.4.4 Strategy combinations	70
2.5 Gap in the literature	72
Chapter 3 Methodology	81
3.1 Research Design	82
3.1.1 A multiple-case design.....	84
3.1.2 Sampling	86
3.2 Ethics	88
3.3 Data collection methods and procedures	92
3.3.1 Observation	95
3.3.1.1 Conducting the observation	99
3.3.2 Interviews.....	99
3.3.2.1 Conducting the interviews	103
3.3.3 VOCABlog	106
3.3.3.1 Photovoice	106
3.3.3.2 Diaries	109
3.3.3.3 VOCABlog	110
3.4 Data analysis.....	112
3.4.1 Analysing classroom observation	113
3.4.2 Analysing the interviews	116
3.4.3 Analysing the VOCABlog.....	117
3.4.4 Data synthesis	118
3.5 Data Presentation.....	118
Chapter 4.....	122
Strategic vocabulary learning in context: two cases in the Ryder site	122
4.1 Context of the two cases.....	122
4.2 Past vocabulary learning experiences.....	125
4.2.1 Dialogic strategy circle	126
4.2.2 Goal-directed strategy clusters.....	130

4.2.3 The influence of past learning experiences.....	131
4.3 Strategic vocabulary learning in the UK	133
4.3.1 Classroom setting: interactive activities	133
4.3.2 Classroom setting: teacher’s presentation.....	144
4.3.3 Learning vocabulary outside classroom	156
4.3.3.1 Enlarging, discovery and improvement	156
4.3.3.2 Recoding and consolidation.....	168
4.3.4 Learning vocabulary through enjoyment.....	177
4.3.5 Strategic learning as a dynamic system	180
4.3.5.1 Varying degrees of consciousness	180
4.3.5.2 Inconsistencies in strategy use.....	183
4.3.5.3 Changes in strategy use.....	185
Chapter 5.....	188
Strategic vocabulary learning in context: two cases in the Opal site	188
5.1 Context of the two cases.....	188
5.2 Past vocabulary learning experiences.....	191
5.3 The first semester in the UK.....	195
5.3.1 Classroom setting.....	195
5.3.2 Out-of-class settings	208
5.4 The second semester	217
5.4.1 Academic English class	217
5.4.2 Subject-related modules.....	229
5.4.3 Setting: at accommodation.....	237
5.4.4 Other out-of-class settings	244
5.5 Changes in strategy use	249
Chapter 6.....	252
Strategic vocabulary learning in context: two cases in the Wolfson site.....	252
6.1 Context of the two cases.....	252
6.2 Past vocabulary learning experiences.....	255
6.3 Strategic vocabulary learning in the UK	264
6.3.1 The first term: classroom setting	264

6.3.2 Out-of-class settings	271
6.3.3 The second term: in and outside classroom settings.....	281
6.3.4 The summer term	316
6.4 Changes in strategy use	320
Chapter 7 Discussion.....	323
Introduction	323
7.1 Management of vocabulary learning in relation to context.....	324
7.1.1 In relation to milieus in the classroom settings.....	328
7.1.2 In relation to milieus in the out-of-class settings.....	337
7.2 Strategy selection and combination for effective vocabulary learning	345
7.2.1 Ways of and reasons for strategy clusters.....	348
7.2.1.1 Dialogic sequential cluster.....	349
7.2.1.2 Strategic circle	351
7.2.1.3 Recycled strategy cluster(s)	353
7.2.1.4 Combinations of strategy clusters.....	355
7.2.2 Reasons for ineffective strategic vocabulary learning.....	358
7.2.3 To enhance the effectiveness of strategy cluster(s)	360
7.3 Strategic vocabulary learning as a dynamic system.....	364
7.3.1 Dynamic management of strategic vocabulary learning in the UK.....	365
7.3.1.1 Changes in strategy use.....	365
7.3.1.2 Varying degrees of consciousness	370
7.3.1.3 Inconsistencies	373
7.3.2 Dynamic strategic learning from the Chinese to the British context.....	376
Chapter 8 Conclusion	386
8.1 Recommendations for vocabulary learners	387
8.2 Suggestions for strategy instruction	391
8.3 Limitations of the study and directions for future research.....	392
References	395
Appendices	417
Appendix 1 (for Chapter two <i>Literature Review</i>)	417
Appendix 1.1 Selected definitions of language learning strategies	417

Appendix 1.2 Data presentation.....	418
Appendix 1.3 Studies on de-contextualised vocabulary learning strategies.....	420
Appendix 2 (for Chapter three <i>Methodology</i> and <i>Finding</i> chapters)	422
Appendix 2.1 Introduction to IFP in each site	422
Appendix 2.2 Consent forms	423
(1) Participant-consent form	423
Appendix 2.3 A reflective journal for my research	425
Appendix 2.4 Observation	426
Appendix 2.4.1 Format for my fieldnotes.....	426
Appendix 2.4.2 A sample of my fieldnotes	427
Appendix 2.4.3 A sample of the classroom observation data.....	428
Appendix 2.5 Interview	429
Appendix 2.5.1 A sample of the follow-up interview guides.....	429
Appendix 2.5.2 A sample of follow-up interview data	430
Appendix 2.5.3 A sample of the general interview guides.....	431
Appendix 2.5.4 A sample of general interview data.....	432
Appendix 2.6 VOCABlog.....	433
Appendix 2.6.1 Guidelines for using VOCABlog.....	433
Appendix 2.6.2 A sample of VOCABlog data	436
Appendix 2.6.3 A sample of data analysis.....	437
Appendix 2.7 Participants' background information.....	438

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Declaration and Inclusion of Material from a Prior Thesis

I declare that the thesis is my own work and it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

I have also incorporated work already submitted for my Master's degree into the current thesis and the material has been indicated clearly in the text. I declare that such material provides support for the thesis but it will not be taken into account in evaluating the achievement of the requirements for the degree for which the thesis is being examined.

Abstract

During the past thirty years, a large body of second language research has targeted vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) from a cognitive perspective and most of this research tends to treat them as de-contextualised phenomena. In order to develop and broaden the scope of the current VLS research, I explore strategic vocabulary learning from both cognitive and sociocultural approaches and focus on its dynamic, complex and contextually situated nature. The present study, based on a multiple-case study design, investigates the processes of strategic vocabulary learning of six Chinese students who were from a pre-university course in three British universities, using three data collection methods: classroom observations, interviews and VOCABlog (including photovoice and diaries). The analysis of these six student cases shows that they managed their strategic vocabulary learning in relation to their particular settings, milieus and the British culture; they tended to select and deploy a number of strategies rather than individual strategies to improve their learning, and various types of strategy combinations were found; they appeared to operate their strategic vocabulary learning as a dynamic system and this was particularly supported by the findings about their varying degrees of consciousness, the inconsistencies between their strategic approach and their strategy use and the changes in their strategy use. Theoretical contributions for the VLS research and some practical recommendations for vocabulary learning are also provided.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Full name
E-dictionary	Electronic dictionary
E-notebook	Electronic notebook
FI	Follow-up Interview
GI	General Interview
GLL (s)	Good Language Learner (s)
IC	Intercultural Communication
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IFP	International Foundation Programme
LLS(s)	Language Learning Strategy (ies)
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SVL	Strategic Vocabulary Learning
TC	Think Critically
VL	Vocabulary Learning
VLS(s)	Vocabulary Learning Strategy (ies)
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 A cognitive-sociocultural framework for strategic vocabulary learning ..	51
Figure 2.2 Social agents	59
Figure 2.3 Artefacts.....	65
Figure 3.1 A multiple case study design.....	84
Figure 3.2 Design of methodological triangulation	93
Figure 3.3 The links between different methods and their sequencing.....	94
Figure 3.4 The process of analysis (adopted from Richards 2003: 271)	113
Figure 3.5 An approach to analysis (Richards, 2003: 276).....	115
Figure 3.6 Cross-case analysis	118
Figure 4.1 A strategy cluster used in one specific out-of-class activity.....	128
Figure 4.2 Xia's strategy clusters within different activities.....	129
Figure 4.3 A dialogic strategy circle	130
Figure 4.4 A dialogic sequential cluster of strategies to the word 'obesity'	141
Figure 4.5 Xia's sequential cluster of strategies to the word 'iconic'	142
Figure 4.6 Wu's dialogic sequential strategy cluster to consolidate vocabulary.....	147
Figure 4.7 Xia's dialogic strategy circle to the word 'marginalise'	151
Figure 4.8 A cluster of recording strategies	156
Figure 4.9 Wu's recycled cluster of strategies for improving vocabulary	162
Figure 4.10 Xia's cluster of dictionary look-up strategies	166
Figure 4.11 A strategic circle of vocabulary recording.....	173
Figure 5.1 Qa's recycled strategic circle.....	193

Figure 5.2 Ji's sequential cluster of contextualised strategies for IELTS	195
Figure 5.3 Ji's sequential cluster used in the pair work 'Use in Sentence'	198
Figure 5.4 Qa's sequential cluster used in the activity 'Word Discovery'	199
Figure 5.5 Qa's dialogic strategy circle across in-class and out-of-class settings ...	202
Figure 5.6 Qa's recycled cluster of strategies through using the notebook	205
Figure 5.7 Qa's dialogic cluster of strategies across out-of-class settings.....	210
Figure 5.8 Qa's sequential cluster of strategies used in the restaurant.....	211
Figure 5.9 Qa's strategy cluster used in the activity 'Vocabulary Revision'	220
Figure 5.10 Qa's strategy cluster used in the group discussion	224
Figure 5.11 Ji's strategy cluster used in the group discussion	226
Figure 5.12 Qa's recycled strategy cluster to record and memorise words	228
Figure 5.13 Ji's recycled strategy cluster to record and memorise words	228
Figure 5.14 Qa's sequential cluster of strategies for Think Critically	231
Figure 5.15 Qa's recycled strategy cluster for subject-related vocabulary	233
Figure 5.16 Ji's (dialogic) recycled cluster for subject-related vocabulary	233
Figure 5.17 Ji's cluster of strategies for the IELTS listening test	236
Figure 5.18 Ji's dialogic strategy cluster used in the homestay	238
Figure 5.19 Ji's strategy cluster used with her pen friend.....	241
Figure 5.20 Ji's strategy cluster of strategies used with her host family.....	241
Figure 5.21 Qa's sequential cluster of strategies to learn vocabulary for pleasure	244
Figure 5.22 Ji's recycled sequential strategy cluster through visiting museums	246
Figure 6.1 Bo's cluster of social strategies used in the listening/speaking class	256

Figure 6.3 Bo's recycled strategy cluster for subjected-related vocabulary	258
Figure 6.4 Bo's strategy clusters used in and out-of-private school settings.....	260
Figure 6.5 Ke's sequential cluster of strategies used for IELTS in China	264
Figure 6.6 A sequential cluster of strategies for the English module vocabulary	271
Figure 6.7 Bo's recycled sequential cluster of strategies	275
Figure 6.8 Bo's cluster of strategies to build more general vocabulary.....	276
Figure 6.9 Ke's clusters of strategies used across out-of-class settings.....	278
Figure 6.10 Ke's recycled cluster to consolidate the subject-related vocabulary	280
Figure 6.11 Ke's sequential cluster to enlarge the subject-related vocabulary	281
Figure 6.12 Bo's and Ke's dialogic strategy circle	288
Figure 6.13 Ke's cluster of social strategies in one specific interactive activity	291
Figure 6.14 Bo's sequential cluster of strategies in one specific activity	293
Figure 6.15 Ke's recycled sequential cluster of strategies for the speaking test.....	309
Figure 6.16 Ke's recycled sequential cluster of strategies for the writing test	312
Figure 6.17 Bo's recycled strategic circle for the subject-related vocabulary	314
Figure 6.18 Ke's sequential strategy cluster for subject-related vocabulary	316
Figure 6.19 Ke's dialogic sequential cluster used in the Gym.....	320
Figure 7.1 Interaction between learner's strategy use and context	327
Figure 7.2 Strategy use in different settings through the help of various resources	338
Figure 7.3 Interaction between strategic learning, context and out-of-class opportunities.....	344
Figure 7.4 Xia's cluster of discovery strategies deployed in stores.....	346

Figure 7.5 A cluster of recording strategies	347
Figure 7.6 Xia's cluster of dictionary look-up strategies for presentation.....	348
Figure 7.7 Xia's dialogic sequential cluster of strategies to the word 'obesity'	350
Figure 7.8 Ke's dialogic sequential cluster used in the gym.....	351
Figure 7.9 Qa's dialogic strategy circle across in-class and out-of-class settings ...	352
Figure 7.10 Wu's and Xia's strategic circle of vocabulary recording	353
Figure 7.11 Bo's recycled strategic circle for the subject-related vocabulary	354
Figure 7.12 Ji's recycled cluster of strategies through visiting museums.....	355
Figure 7.13 Xia's strategy clusters within different activities.....	356
Figure 7.14 Bo's strategy clusters used in and out-of-private lessons.	357
Figure 7.15 Bo's circle of metacognitive strategies in relation to his context	361
Figure 8.1 A circle of metacognitive strategies.....	389

List of Tables

Table 1 Selected 'good language learner' studies	16
Table 2 The extent of the data collected and the time scale	112

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background and context of the study

Due to the increasing internationalisation of UK higher education, the issue of international students studying abroad is receiving greater research attention. In particular, weakness in language skills is perceived as an important source of academic and social problems by international students (Stephens, 1997; Gao, 2003; Andrade, 2006; Turner, 2006). There is a clear need for exploring the processes of strategic language learning of international students. Thereby, both students and language teachers are likely to be able to gain insights which can help students improve their language ability and adjust to academic and social life in the UK.

The transition from a non-English to an entirely English learning environment is not easy. As an international Chinese student studying in the UK for over eight years, I also encountered many linguistic challenges like many others, particularly during the early period when enrolling on an international Foundation programme. This is a type of pre-university course offered by UK higher education institutions (HEIs) which provides international students with the academic training, language and study skills to prepare them for undergraduate study in the UK (IFP_ Prospectus, 2009). The largest group of international students joining such courses comes from China (UKCISA, 2012). According to my previous study on academic adjustment of Chinese students at British universities (Wang, 2010), Chinese students who took

this course often have just entered the UK and had limited prior knowledge of studying in the UK higher education. Therefore, they tend to experience many more differences and difficulties within the British learning environment during the early phase (i.e. the first year students study in the UK) than the later phase (i.e. the period when students have studied in the UK for more than three years). They devoted a great amount of time to learning English as they had to pass both an IELTS test and coursework in order to enter British universities successfully. They were more likely to use and explore language learning strategies during the early phase, and their intrinsic motivation in improving English seemed to decrease during the later phase. This led me to conclude that it is worth exploring the strategic language learning experiences of Chinese learners on international foundation programmes in the UK and on this basis offering advice on how to be an effective language learner in order to accelerate their adjustment to UK higher education. To further the depth and validity of my research, I situate it in one particular learning domain, vocabulary learning (VL), which has a significant role in relation to both the receptive (reading and listening) and productive (speaking and writing) skills in association with effective communication (Cohen and Macaro, 2007; Schmitt, 2010).

During the past thirty years, a large body of second language research has targeted LLSs (including VLSs) from a cognitive perspective (e.g. Rubin, 1981; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Chamot, 2005). However, the critics of the cognitivist approach of LLSs continue to increase in number in the literature. For

example, scholars (e.g. Wertsch, 1991; Ellis, 2008) criticise the fact that the cognitive approach focuses on the individual organism, and the individual, mental processes and skills tend to be studied in isolation. As a result, strategies tend to be treated as de-contextualised phenomena and character traits of learners seem to be depicted as relatively fixed. For example, ‘the Chinese learner’ is often viewed as culturally determined; however this seems to stereotype Chinese learners (Watkins and Biggs, 1996; Lee, 1997). In terms of VLSs, repetition and rote learning were often believed as the preferred strategies to facilitate Chinese learners’ VL (Bedell and Oxford, 1996; Fan, 2003; Gu, 2003). However, faced with different contexts or learning goals, their use of VLSs can vary or change. In relation to my personal experience, my vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) have gradually developed within the different cultural and learning environment and vary across different settings in the UK. In my Masters study (Wang, 2010) on Chinese students’ transitional experiences in the UK, I also found that the strategic vocabulary learning of the Chinese students seemed to be dynamic rather than static. I therefore became interested in exploring the dynamic processes of strategic vocabulary learning of Chinese students over time in British universities.

One way of developing and broadening the scope of the current VLS research therefore seems to be to study strategic vocabulary learning in context and understand it from a more interactional and dynamic perspective. In this thesis I propose a theoretical framework derived from both cognitive and sociocultural approaches and

use this framework to guide research into the VLSs of Chinese learners in two Foundation Programme contexts. The aim of this framework and related research is not to deny cognitive views of learner strategies. Rather, it creates a synthesis between the two approaches and uses it to understand strategic vocabulary learning better and deeper. Furthermore, the framework and related research place the target phenomenon in context and shifts the current focus in VLS research from the learning outcome to the process of strategic learning (learners' capacity for strategic self-regulation, such as their capacity for metacognition and for combining strategies effectively in any given situation), and from the quantity of strategy use to the quality of strategy use. It therefore suggests that 'strategic vocabulary learning' (SVL) is a more appropriate term than the term 'VLS' to be used in the current VLS research.

1.2 Overview of the study

The aims of this study are to explore the experiences of Chinese students learning English vocabulary, to analyse their processes of SVL from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective and to gain a dynamic understanding into their capacity for strategic self-regulation in British universities. Three research questions are used to guide this study:

1. In order to learn vocabulary strategically, how do Chinese learners manage the relationship between their mental processes, agency and other aspects of their UK context (both milieu and setting)?
2. In what ways and for what reasons do Chinese learners select and combine strategies to enhance the process of strategic vocabulary learning in the UK?
3. How do Chinese learners manage their strategic vocabulary learning dynamically:
 - a) during the academic year in the UK
 - b) as these learners move from the Chinese to the British context

Drawing on my previous study (Wang, 2010), intrinsic motivation of my participants in learning and improving English was high during the early phase in the UK and seemed to decrease later in their university life. Therefore, participants in the present study were selected from a pre-university programme at three British universities. These students who took this course just entered the UK and tended to devote more time and energy to developing their vocabulary as they had to pass both an IELTS test and their coursework.

I believe that my study will provide insights about SVL which will facilitate learners' VL. It will help both learners and teachers to realise that SVL is a dynamic process and

students need to select appropriate VLSs in relation to their own contexts and goals. This study also makes us aware of the importance of learner agency in the process of SVL and reveals that this process requires their efforts not only to regulate their cognitive and metacognitive processes but also to manage a plethora of social processes and various aspects of their contexts. Although this study focuses on the learner, I hope that teachers will also recognise the value of collaborative learning and social interaction in developing VLSs when providing strategy instruction.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This piece of work is comprised of eight chapters. The second chapter is the Literature Review which looks at major theories and related empirical studies into LLSs and VLSs. In particular, at the end of the chapter, I propose a cognitive-sociocultural framework to help understand and research the target phenomenon, SVL. Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study in terms of the research questions, design, sampling, ethical issues, methods of data collection and data analysis. Chapter Four, Five and Six present the findings that emerged from analysis of the data set from six Chinese students based on three British university sites. Firstly, these three distinctive finding chapters provide a fine-grained description and interpretation through triangulating the data from different time, settings, participants' perspectives and various sources of evidence (including interviews, observations, photovoice and diaries). Incorporating the learners' voices into findings increases the richness and transparency of the data. Secondly, the thick and deep description gives a solid

foundation for the theoretical conclusions which I will put together in the synthesis and discussion chapter. These are the principles behind these three finding chapters. Chapter Seven is the Discussion which relates the findings from the previous chapters back to the literature, synthesises the findings across the six different cases in relation to the research questions and generates new theories to contribute to knowledge in this field. Finally, the concluding chapter summarises the key findings from this study and some suggestions for vocabulary learners and teachers are provided. In addition, directions for future practice and research are proposed and the limitations of this study are also acknowledged.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents a critical literature review, covering theories and research findings relating to the theoretical framework of my study. The first part of the chapter deals with cognitive accounts of LLSs. It continues by focusing on VLSs and discussing their theoretical and empirical basis from a cognitive perspective. A link is also established between VLSs and other variables in relation to some empirical studies. Thereafter, sociocultural accounts of VLSs are looked at. Lastly, a gap in the literature is identified and then a synthesis between a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective on SVL is proposed.

2.1 Cognitive accounts of language learning strategies

During the past thirty years, a large body of L2 research has targeted LLSs from a cognitive perspective (e.g. Rubin, 1981; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, Macaro, 2006). It is first worth reviewing the literature on cognitive accounts of LLSs and exploring how it can contribute to the understanding of SVL.

2.1.1 Definitions of language learning strategies

The definition of LLSs has been proposed in different ways (e.g. O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Griffiths, 2008, etc. see Appendix 1.1). Having looked at the views of

the above authors; there still seems to be a lack of an agreed definition of LLSs. I do not intend to provide a comprehensive review of the problems of their definitions (e.g. Dörnyei, 2005; Grenfell and Macaro, 2007), but highlight and discuss some of the important issues in relation to my study.

2.1.1.1 Observable behaviours or not?

There has been a long-standing debate about whether LLSs should be regarded as ‘observable behaviours or inner mental operations, or both’ (Ellis, 1994, 2008; Dörnyei, 2005, cited in Tseng, Dörnyei and Schmitt, 2006: 80). This issue is closely related to the research methods of my study (see more in Chapter Three). Seliger (1983) pointed out that strategies were cognitive in nature, and it was unlikely for us to be able to access learners’ inner mental processes. However, early LLS researchers (Stern, 1975; Wesche, 1975; Wong-Fillmore, 1976; Naiman et al. 1978/1996; Rubin, 1981; Chesterfield and Chesterfield 1985) indicated that LLSs can be identified from learners’ physical behaviours through observation and this research method helps exemplify the mental process of the learners and identify some observable strategies. For example, from their observation, Naiman et al. (1978/1996) suggested that cognitive processes (e.g. *memorisation*, *monitoring* and *guessing*) can be identified through some observable behaviours (e.g. Memorisation was associated with writing down new items; Monitoring was associated with reviewing word knowledge through asking L2 native speakers for

feedback).

Nevertheless, LLSs are cognitive in nature and, from a cognitive perspective, researchers (e.g. O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Macaro, 2006) argue that, for the most part, LLSs are associated with unobservable inner mental operations. Therefore, in order to ascertain unobservable mental learning strategies, research in this area still tends to rely on learners' self-reports (e.g. interviews, questionnaires and diaries) in which the learners are asked to reveal their thinking processes (Chamot, 2001). Numerous studies (e.g. Park, 1997; Wharton, 2000; El-Dib, 2004) have used Oxford's SILL to investigate the use of LLSs of language learners around the world.

By contrast, some writers have claimed that strategies should not only be described as a set of mental operations but also deal with specific actions of the body (e.g. Weinstein and Mayer, 1986; Nyikos and Oxford, 1993; Cohen, 2011). For example, Winke and Abbuhl, (2007) used classroom observation together with interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and diaries to explore VLSs deployed by nine learners of Chinese. They showed that VLSs are not exclusively part of an inner mental process and strategic behaviour can be observable (e.g. checking unknown words in a dictionary and recording a new word in a notebook). Therefore, SVL appears to be a complex process, involving learners' mental operations and their capacity for controlling a plethora of cognitive, social and affective

factors. With their learning goals, their plans and evaluative knowledge, they also carry out observable strategic actions to facilitate their language learning. This dual nature of strategies is explored in my study through use of multiple research methods.

2.1.1.2 The degree of consciousness

Within the cognitive paradigm, the degree of consciousness in strategic learning is seen as another important aspect – however, the issue as to whether LLSs are conscious or unconscious activities is still viewed as an unresolved problem (Ellis, 1994/2008; Griffiths, 2008). One view is that strategies can be conscious, sub-conscious or even unconscious (Selinker, 1974; Faerch and Kasper, 1983; Oxford, 1990). In particular, O’Malley and Chamot (1990) suggest that learning strategies are cognitive skills and knowledge of strategies can move from the conscious to the unconscious. However, some authors (e.g. Rabinowitz and Chi, 1987; Cohen, 1998; Griffiths, 2008) argue that strategies can only be consciously involved in the learning process. Macaro (2006) further explains that strategies must contain not only an action, but also a goal, evaluative knowledge about strategies and a learning situation. Although learning behaviour might be subconscious, a strategic action undertaken with a goal and evaluative knowledge against a learning situation can only be conscious. The evidence from empirical research (see more in section 2.2.4) also supports the idea that learners intentionally use strategies for language learning and these strategies help the students gain more control of their learning if they are used

effectively. For example, Huang and Andrews (2010) explored the use of LLSs from 47 Chinese senior secondary students through conducting seven focus-group interviews in mainland China. They found that strategies were goal-directed actions and the strategies reported by the students particularly aimed at high grades in a variety of English tests. The results also showed that the students tended to select a strategy or a number of strategies appropriate to their particular learning situations. Their evaluative knowledge about strategies played an important role in the processes of strategy selection. Therefore, it would appear that strategies are conscious actions towards achievement of a learning goal. A learner's conscious intention is also important to determine whether something is a strategy and not a behaviour (Cohen, 1998; Macaro, 2006; Ellis, 2008). To explore the consciousness of learners' strategic processes, in my study, each of the classroom observations is supplemented by follow-up interviews. The researcher needs to know whether students see their SVL as conscious processes.

2.1.1.3 Language learning and language use strategies

LLSs are often distinguished from language use strategies (Selinker, 1974; Tarone, 1980; Cohen, 2011). Looking at their primary purposes, Tarone (1980) proposed a conceptual framework to distinguish between learning and communication strategies. However, the author also claimed that it was difficult to establish precise distinctions between them in practice, in particular learning strategies and communication strategies often overlapped.

As learners' intentions are not fixed, it would be difficult to recognise whether strategies are led by their motivation to learn or communicate (Chesterfield and Chesterfield, 1985; Ellis, 2008). My previous study (Wang, 2010) also showed that some students deployed language use strategies (e.g. using new words with local people) for both facilitating communication and learning vocabulary. The results indicate that the intention of language learners for employing language use strategies can be both to learn and use. While they communicate, learners can be aware of the chances for language learning and thus they might deploy strategies for learning through language use (Oxford, 2011). MacIntyre et al. (2003) conducted research using questionnaires with fifty-nine university students in a French language learning programme, the results also show a relationship between learning French and the frequency of communication in French, and strategies aiding language use can also foster language learning (see also Leaver et al. 2005). Therefore, I consider the possibility that VLSs may contain some language use strategies in my study and it appears to be unhelpful to accept a strong distinction between language learning and language use strategies.

2.1.1.4 Fuzziness of the term of 'strategy'

The term 'strategy' remains ambiguous and different authors have different interpretations of it. Some have attempted to make a clear distinction between the terms 'strategy', 'technique' (Stern, 1983), and 'tactic' (Seliger, 1984, Winne, 2001), although the last two

were often agreed more or less equally as ‘learning strategy’ (Chamot, 1987). Although the authors above have tried to make the term ‘strategy’ clear, there is still no consensus regarding its definition. Some other writers have tried to explore broader terms to define ‘strategy’. For example, the term ‘action’ which includes both specific techniques and general approaches is used to refer to ‘strategy’ (Oxford, 1990). However, the term seems to be more concerned with learners’ observable behaviours and lacks consideration of their mental processes. By contrast, the term ‘activity’ which seems to reflect both physical and mental behaviour is proposed by Griffiths (2008). Yet, Oxford and Cohen (1992) also pointed out that too many ‘fuzzy synonyms’ could cause confusion in the conceptualisation of LLSs.

From the preceding discussion, in order to go beyond the fuzziness of the concept of LLSs, I support Dörnyei’s (2005) and Tseng et al.’s (2006) view of broadening the concept of LLSs. Thus, I propose the term ‘strategic vocabulary learning’ (SVL) to address the nature of strategy use (see details in section 2.5). It seems more useful for researchers to explore a strategic process (including learners’ actual strategic behaviours and their mental processes) rather than only specific techniques. Therefore, my study focuses on the process of how learners manage their VL strategically and how they select strategies for more effective VL.

2.1.2 The ‘good language learner’

Over the past thirty years, a great number of strategy research studies have been conducted on what could be learned from the ‘good language learner’ (GLL). A summary of the main GLL studies is provided in the table below.

Table 1 Selected 'good language learner' studies

Study	Participants	Method	Results
Rubin 1975	Students in classroom settings (mixed ages)	Observation	Discovering some general strategies: a) willing to guess; b) willing to communicate; c) being not afraid to make mistake; d) preparing to attend to form; e) practising; f) monitoring own and others' speech; g) attending to meaning
Naiman et al. 1978	1) 34 successful and 2 unsuccessful adult learners; 2) Students of L2 French in grades 8, 10 and 12	Interview plus classroom observation	Five general strategies were identified
O'Malley et al. 1985	70 students in ESL classes (high-school-age)	Both student and teacher interview and classroom observation	There is a close relationship between strategy use and learners' proficiency level. The more successful learners seemed to use more metacognitive than cognitive strategies.
Halbach 2000	12 undergraduate students of English in a term-long English language course	Learning diaries	There exists a great difference between successful and less successful students, the former being the ones that use strategies to a greater extent.
Norton&Toohey 2001	One immigrant women and one 5-year-old ESL child	Secondary data analysis	The strategy use of good language learners were related not only in what they did individually but also in the possibilities their various communities offered them. Both learning communities and learner identities appeared to play an important role in strategic reactions.

Early studies on GLLs (e.g. Rubin 1975, 1981 and Naiman et al. 1978/1996) tended to identify common learning strategies shared by successful language learners and on this basis suggestions were made for teaching these GLL strategies to less good learners. Compared with these earlier studies, some later GLL studies used fewer observation-based instruments and tried to integrate more varied qualitative methods. For example, Halbach (2000) highlighted the importance of using diaries in the LLS research and identified differences in strategy use between successful and less successful learners. Unfortunately, the researcher simply analysed the data quantitatively and addressed few qualitative aspects. Therefore, classroom observation is needed in conjunction with in-depth interviews and learner diaries to reveal further complexities about strategy use (e.g. changes in strategy use and strategy combinations), rather than simply reporting what LLSs learners use and how often they use them.

However, many authors argue that 'good' strategies which are used by successful learners might not be appropriate to other learners and such transfer is not possible because there appears to be considerable variations in strategy use among learners. Such authors tried to look beyond the good/poor learner strategies dichotomy and assess LLSs in terms of gender (e.g. Choi and Silverman, 2003; Lin, 2011; Saeedeh et al. 2012), age (e.g. Ehrman and Oxford, 1989), proficiency level (e.g. Bialystok, 1981; Green and Oxford 1995; Griffiths, 2003; Lai, 2009) and affective factors (e.g. MacIntyre and Noels, 1996; Kaylani, 1996; Yang, 1999). For example, Oxford and her

colleagues (e.g. Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Ehrman et al. 2003) drew particular attention to the relationship between LLSs and learners' learning styles. Based on their findings, they suggested that learning strategies did not operate independently, and LLSs and learning styles are often interrelated. One variable which is often related to strategy use is motivation. For example, MacIntyre and Noels (1996) conducted a study on 138 students of mixed ages in the Modern Language Department at a large university using Oxford's SILL, using variables defined by Gardner's social-psychological model (1985) to assess the frequency of use for 50 LLSs. They showed that more highly motivated students seemed to know and use more strategies. Also, if used effectively, strategies could motivate learners in learning vocabulary. More specifically, they showed an increase in the use of cognitive and social strategies among the highly motivated students.

Some authors (e.g. Palfreyman, 2003, 2006; Grenfell and Macaro, 2007) further problematise the view that strategies exist as de-contextualised phenomena, and argue that such de-contextualisation might be disempowering for learner development and reinforce a static picture of learners' strategies. Drawing on the work of Vygotsky, Norton and Toohey (2001) examine two cases of immigrant language learners in Canada and look at their strategy use in relation to their particular contexts. They indicate a relationship between the learners' active participation in the process of strategic learning and good language learning. In particular, they made an attempt to analyse GLLs from a new perspective, and shifted away from a focus on the general

profile of the good language learner to a focus on individuals' strategic responses to their particular social communities. Gao (2006) also puts forward a notion that learners' strategy use is dynamic across contexts and it is a temporally and contextually situated phenomenon. Therefore, it would appear that strategies are not inherently good or bad and if strategy use is being recommended for learners, then it is important to research it within the context and think about 'how and in what circumstances, and perhaps for whom the strategies being recommended actually work' (McDonough, 1995: 81). I address this important point in my study and explore strategy use across different settings.

2.2 Cognitive accounts of strategic vocabulary learning

To further the depth and validity of my research, I have decided to situate my study in one particular learning domain, that of vocabulary learning, which has a significant role in both the receptive and productive skills in association with effective communication (Cohen and Macaro, 2007). The following sections review the literature on the VLS research. It starts by exploring what learners need to know in order to learn a word and then reviews the literature in relation to how they learn words from a cognitive perspective.

2.2.1 What is involved in learning a word?

There are various aspects of vocabulary knowledge to consider when learning a word,

including its meaning, spelling, pronunciation, grammatical patterns, collocations, register, formation, connotations and frequency (Hedge, 2000: 112-6; Hulstijn, 2001). However, learners can decide what aspects of knowledge they need to know in relation to their own learning goals and contexts. They might need to learn some or all of them.

Researchers often emphasise two kinds of learning which are involved in the process of VL, receptive and productive learning (Nation, 1990: 5). Receptive mastery involves being able to recognise and understand a word. Productive mastery refers to the ability to produce a word when speaking and writing. To explain how learners acquire vocabulary, the traditional view is often that they get words receptively first and later achieve productive mastery (see the review from Schmitt, 2000). Some researchers (e.g. Melka, 1997) found that VL appears to be a complex process and it does not always follow the traditional view. Learners appear to have different purposes for learning vocabulary in everyday life. In relation to my previous study (2010), I found that when the quantity of vocabulary was the main goal (e.g. for language tests), receptive mastery seemed to be more important for the students. When the quality of vocabulary was the main goal (e.g. for using it in writing), productive learning was perceived as more important. According to Chamot (2005), LLSs including VLSs are goal-directed; and this will be explained more in my theoretical framework. Therefore, depending on their different learning goals, learners may choose different VLSs to achieve either receptive or productive mastery, or both.

Coady (1993) argued that the receptive/productive distinction should be seen as a continuum rather than a dichotomy, because no very clear distinction exists between these two. To learn a word, I agree that it is important for the learner to be able to know and use a word rather than concentrate on the distinction between these two. However, drawing on my previous study (2010), some students pointed out that sometimes it was more effective to distinguish between receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary and choose different VLSs for each type of vocabulary. They often intended to master every word both receptively and productively. Yet, when faced with different tasks and contexts, they tended to decide whether they need to master a word receptively, productively or both. This aspect is also explored in my study (e.g. whether students distinguish productive vocabulary from receptive vocabulary).

2.2.2 Classification of vocabulary learning strategies

Different kinds of LLS classification schemes have been proposed (e.g. Rubin 1975/1981; Stern, 1975; Wong Fillmore, 1979; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). In particular, compared with the earlier ones, O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) and Oxford's (1990) schemes appear to be more comprehensive and theoretically motivated, and also play an important role in helping researchers to identify various patterns of VLSs (Cohen, 1998; Nyikos and Fan, 2007). In order to have a better understanding of the classification of VLSs, I will first review these two schemes.

O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) identified twenty-six strategies which were divided

into three broad categories: a) metacognitive strategies for planning and managing the language learning process; b) cognitive strategies for directly operating incoming information and controlling this process; c) social/affective strategies for regulating affect to interact with other learners and native speakers. Oxford (1990) defined Direct Strategies (including *memory strategies*, *cognitive strategies* and *compensation strategies*) as those directly contributing the language learning process and Indirect Strategies (*metacognitive strategies*, *affective and social strategies*) as those which do not directly involve the target language but support the learning process.

I agree with O'Malley and Chamot (1990) who treat memory strategies as one type of cognitive strategy because they naturally serve cognition (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002). Oxford (1990) also makes a significant contribution to the breadth and the organisation of a hierarchical structure for many VLS classification schemes. In particular, the social strategies which she identified provide some insights into researching SVL (see more in section 2.5.3). According to Oxford (1990, cited in Williams and Burden, 1997: 153), the main goal of LLSs is to develop learners' communicative competence; thus she broadens the conceptualisation of LLSs to go beyond many cognitive processes and distinguishes social and affective strategies. Affective strategies help learners control their emotions and attitudes about language learning. Social strategies support language learning through increasing cooperation and empathy with others. The purpose of these strategies is to increase interaction with the target language. By contrast, O'Malley and Chamot do not draw specific attention

to these two types of strategies, and list fewer social/affective strategies in their scheme.

In my study, I separate affective strategies from social strategies and explore both how affective control influences VL and also how social interaction influences the learning process. Although Oxford did not theorise them at that time, she later pointed out the importance of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in understanding these two categories (e.g. Hsiao and Oxford, 2003; Oxford and Schramm, 2007). Furthermore, Macaro (2006) suggests that affective strategies need to be placed in the category of metacognitive strategies, because they also require knowledge of oneself as a learner through the monitoring of one's learning via metacognition. In my view, although affective strategies require learners' metacognitive knowledge, learners also need to make further strategic efforts to explore and deploy some ways which could help them directly optimize their emotions and attitudes, and deal with their affective problems (such as low motivation and frustration) for the purpose of language learning. The affective side of language learning is a complex phenomenon which is not simply part of metacognition and cannot be fully explained by theories in relation to metacognition (Oxford, 2011: 66-7). Therefore, in my view, affective strategies should be separated from the category of metacognitive strategies.

Based broadly on O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) and Oxford's (1990) classifications, researchers have made a number of attempts to classify VLSs, for example, Ahmed's

(1989) macro-strategies and micro-strategies; Sanaoui's (1995) structured and unstructured strategies; Gu and Johnson's (1996) cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

However, compared with other classification schemes, Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy seems to be the most extensive one specifically focused on VLSs (see reviews from Segler et al. 2001; Ghazal, 2007; Akbari and Tahririan, 2009). He incorporated cognitive, metacognitive, memory, determination and social strategies adapted from Oxford's (1990) classification scheme, and introduced two more major classes: discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. This scheme provides some insights into researching SVL and the strategic discovery and consolidation processes are also important aspects to be incorporated in my study. Schmitt also recognises the value of social interaction and incorporates social functions in his scheme. According to Schmitt (2000), learners' VLS use needs to be explored on the understanding that learners are located in specific social and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, Schmitt and other researchers seem to mainly address VLSs from a cognitive perspective, which sheds little light on how social interaction facilitates VL. This aspect is explored in my study.

2.2.3 Theoretical basis of vocabulary learning strategy research

VL has been viewed as an individual cognitive process in the literature, and VLS research has been deeply rooted in cognitive and psycholinguistic traditions. This

seems to be the reason why many studies (Cohen and Aphek, 1981; Brown and Perry, 1991; Avila and Sadoski, 1996; Hulstijn, 1997; Schmitt, 1997) concentrate on strategies such as associative strategies. Within this cognitive paradigm, in particular, the depth of processing theory (Craik and Lockhart, 1972) plays an important role in guiding VLS research. It would appear that the deeper the active manipulation of information involved, the more vocabulary acquisition can be promoted. Indeed, compared with surface processing strategies (e.g. repetition and rote memorisation), the research does support that some deep processing strategies have more positive influence on learners' VL, for example, the effectiveness of the keyword method (Brown and Perry, 1991; Hulstijn, 1997). However, some researchers have also challenged the depth of processing theory and provided counter-evidence. For example, Cohen and Aphek, (1981) and Gu (2003) found that repetition can be effective and its effectiveness was closely correlated with learners' cultural background and language proficiency.

Apart from research on those de-contextualised VLSs above, strategies used to learn new words from context has also attracted much attention in the VLS research. In particular, most research on contextualised VLSs has been carried out through reading comprehension (e.g. Fraser, 1999; Gu, 2003; Horst, 2005). One of the most influential theories supporting the research is schema theory. Schemata are viewed as the 'building blocks of cognition' stored in hierarchies in long-term memory (Rumelhart, 1980). Based on the notion of lexical entries as schemas, Coady et al. (1985) propose

that both high-frequency and low-frequency words can be learned through contact in context (with the need of some strategic training) via the medium of reading. In particular, high-frequency words have been successfully learned through repeated exposure because of more distributed recognition, recall and practice (Nation, 1990; Coady, 1993). Also, O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 18) claim that 'the information from long-term memory can be used to enrich the learner's understanding or retention of the new ideas by providing related information or schemata into which the new ideas can be organized'. This context appears to offer a more meaningful way to learn collocations and prepositions rather than placing learners in abstract situations (Oxford and Scarcella, 1994; Nyikos and Fan, 2007).

Drawing on schema theory, the researchers above suggested that contextualised VLSs (e.g. guessing meaning from textual context; using a dictionary to search the contextual and grammatical clues of vocabulary) can be more effective than de-contextualised VLSs (e.g. rote memorisation). However, the empirical evidence in the following section has been put forward to argue that contextualised VLSs are not always superior to de-contextualised strategies.

2.2.4 Empirical work on vocabulary learning strategies

Reviewing the literature, it would appear that VLS research mainly covers three areas, a) patterns of VLS use b) effectiveness of different kinds of VLSs, and c) factors affecting specific strategy choice.

a) Patterns of vocabulary learning strategy

As mentioned above, many researchers tried to propose different VLS taxonomies, and some of them (e.g. Gu and Johnson, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Fan, 2003) in particular used a quantitative approach and conducted large-scale studies to find patterns in VLS use. For example, Schmitt (1997) suggested a tendency for the learners with higher proficiency levels to be likely to use complex and contextualised VLSs (e.g. inferencing from context) compared with those with lower proficiency level.

However, more recently criticism of the VLS research in this area was put forward. For example, Gu (2003) and Nyikos and Fan (2007) argue that the VLS research concentrates on what strategies the individual learners use, yet the actual process of VL seems to be a more crucial for learners. While it is useful to identify some specific strategies and general patterns, it is more important to investigate how and why participants employ these strategies. Also, quantitative studies have been predominantly employed in the VLS research above, with a heavy reliance on questionnaires (Ehrman et al. 2003). These existing instruments, e.g. Gu and Johnson's (1996) 'Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire', tend to focus on the quantity rather than the quality of the strategies, and thus learners' character traits are often assumed as being relatively fixed (Tseng, et al. 2006). Therefore, a qualitative approach needs to be integrated into VLS research in order to provide a deeper understanding of strategy use and development (Gu, 2003). Drawing on these critical observations, my study places more emphasis on the qualitative approach and shifts its

focus away from frequency lists on to the processes of learners' SVL (see more in Chapter 3).

b) The effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies

The effectiveness of VLSs is another area that has been investigated for over twenty years. There appears to be three aspects that have been studied: 1) examining the effectiveness of de-contextualised VLS strategies (e.g. Cohen and Aphek, 1981; Brown and Perry, 1991); 2) comparing the effectiveness of de-contextualised strategies with contextualised strategies (e.g. Hulstijn et al. 1996; Folse, 2006); 3) exploring how effective learners actually perceive VLSs (Schmitt, 1997; Fan, 2003).

Firstly, drawing on the depth-of-processing theory, a considerable amount of research (see a review in Appendix 1.3) has been carried out since the early 1980s emphasising associative strategies, particularly the 'keyword method' (Atkinson, 1975), and suggests that associative strategies are effective for VL.

However, some researchers also found limitations to the research into associative strategies. For example, Wang et al. (1992) reported inconsistent findings regarding the studies (see Appendix 1.3). Although the keyword method did reinforce short-term vocabulary retention, the results showed that long-term rate of forgetting was faster for learners instructed to use the keyword method by comparison with the rote learning. Also, although associative strategies might be effective in the studies

reviewed in Appendix 1.3, these results may not be necessarily applicable to other contexts and researchers need to take account of individual differences, such as proficiency levels, learning environments and cultural backgrounds. For example, Laufer and Osimo (1991) suggested that the keyword and associative strategies highly depended on individuals' imagination and learning styles and learners needed much time to look for an association. O'Malley et al. (1985) also showed that Asian learners could not take advantage of the keyword method. Due to their learning culture, rote repetition appeared to be their more preferred way of learning.

Secondly, most research on contextualised VLSs has been studied through reading comprehension (e.g. Parry, 1993; Huckin and Bloch, 1993; Horst, 2005). This is an area which has received extensive attention in recent years because incidental learning through reading appears to be a more meaningful way to reinforce VL (see Huckin et al. 1993; Nyikos and Fan, 2007, for reviews). However, some VLS studies also show the shortcomings of contextualised vocabulary inferencing strategies (e.g. Hulstijin, Hollander and Greidaunus, 1996; Wesche and Paribaknt, 2000). In particular, summarising the work, Hulstijin et al. (1996: 327-8) identify a number of reasons for this:

1. Learners may only pay attention to the meaning but ignore the form of new words. (see also Coady, 1993; Wesche and Paribaknt, 2000)
2. Learners may make errors in inferencing the meanings of unknown words
3. Usually, a single encounter with a new word does not guarantee its acquisition.

Thirdly, much of the research (e.g. see Appendix 1.3) seems to focus on what happens when learners are trained to use de-contextualised and contextualised VLSs. Yet, the role of learner voice is often neglected (see also Nyikos and Fan, 2007). Nevertheless, a number of studies (e.g. Schmitt, 1997; Harley and Hart, 2000; Fan, 2003) have been conducted to explore learner perceptions regarding the actual effectiveness of VLSs. For example, although the benefit of using vocabulary notebooks has been suggested by many studies (e.g. McCarthy, 1990; Fowle, 2002), Walters and Bozkurt (2009) gained insights from the learner's perspective. The results from student interviews showed that some participants did not have a positive attitude towards its usefulness. By contrast, Fan (2003) presents a more complex picture and explores the relationship between learners' perceived effectiveness and actual usefulness of VLSs. The researcher found three kinds of relationships: a) strategies which were perceived to be useful and were often used; b) strategies which were perceived to be useful, but were seldom used; c) strategies which were rarely used and also perceived as not useful.

c) Factors influencing vocabulary learning strategy use

Like much of the LLS research, VLS research also looks at individual variation in strategy use. A number of studies have been carried out into the relationship between gender and VLSs (Grace, 2000; Catalan, 2003; Gu, 2005). For example, Catalan (2003) showed that while male and female students differed significantly in the number of strategies used, similar patterns which were shared in the types of VLSs between males and females could also be found. However, this study only focused on the

gender variable and other variables were left out. The reasons for these gender differences in strategy use also need to be investigated.

VLS researchers often associate strategy use with learners' proficiency levels (e.g. Ahmed, 1989; Sanaoui, 1995). In particular, emphasis has been put on the students who have higher levels of English proficiency and researchers have tended to identify what specific strategies they employ (Gu, 2003). In Fan's (2003) study, the results showed that the students who were most proficient in English tended to use a variety of VLSs. A considerable amount of evidence (e.g. see Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown, 1999; Nation and Moir, 2008) also indicates that advanced learners are more conscious of their VL and employ more metacognitive strategies. However, the value of the VLS research on this theme has been questioned. For example, authors such as Harley and Hart (2000) and Nyikos and Fan (2007) have argued that greater overall frequency of strategy use by higher proficiency learners does not necessarily apply to all learners, because there is individual variation in strategy use even among advanced learners.

VLSs are influenced not only by learners' individual differences (also called internal factors), but also by the effect of their learning context (also called external factors). From a sociocultural perspective, some studies have explored this theme. Firstly, a few studies explore differences in VLS use across environments with a particular focus on the comparison between EFL and ESL settings. Many of these studies were conducted

in North American settings (e.g. Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown, 1999). Wang and Gieve's (2008) study seems to be one of few studies to compare VLS use between EFL (in China) and ESL (in Singapore) settings in Asian contexts. The Chinese students were found to use more memorisation and rehearsal types of VLSs. In contrast, the Singapore students reported greater use of social interaction and daily communication strategies. They also suggested that other variables (such as cultural differences and motivation) needed to be considered. The findings from both studies (Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown, 1999 and Wang and Gieve, 2008) showed that the amount of exposure to the target language and the teaching emphasis (e.g. whether it was communicatively based) were important considerations to understand the VLS use of EFL and ESL learners.

Secondly, researchers have tried to explore the changes or development in VLS use within a different learning context. For example, Leeke and Shaw's (2000) study focuses on VLS development, but their investigation is limited to only one kind of VLSs, keeping vocabulary records. One major change was that only a few students continued to make vocabulary lists when they were learning vocabulary in an L2 environment. In particular, two factors appeared to influence their strategy use, learners' motivation and the stage of learning reached.

Thirdly, some studies (e.g. Sanaoui, 1995; Schmitt, 1997; Gu, 2003) focus on one homogeneous group of learners and explore whether their own sociocultural contexts

affect their VLS choice. In particular, Gu (2003) argues that neither the strategic vocabulary learning behaviours nor the approaches of the Chinese learners should be stereotyped. His research findings challenge other studies (e.g. Ballard and Clanchy, 1984; Watkins and Biggs, 1996) and show that the Chinese learners do not always rely on rote learning or repetition strategies. A complex of sociocultural variables, such as task, learning culture and educational background, influence their VLS choice. In my study, I focus on the international Chinese students and explore their differences in strategy use across cultures within a different learning environment.

From the preceding discussion, a large body of research has focused on VLSs from a cognitive perspective during the past forty years. As mentioned above, there appears to be a number of weaknesses in applying a mainly cognitive approach to VLS research. In particular, the cognitive approach focuses on the individual organism and strategies which tend to be treated as de-contextualised phenomena. It is argued that such de-contextualisation might be disempowering for learner development within a social setting (Palfreyman, 2003; Macaro 2006). Many cognitive researchers also focus on the constructs of different kinds of VLS taxonomies or discrete-item lists. Yet, variables within individual learners lead to many problems in the classification of VLSs. Thus there is a need to shift the focus of VLS research to the quality of strategy use and address individuals' learning experiences within their contexts.

2.3 Sociocultural accounts of strategic vocabulary learning

One way of developing and broadening the scope of the current VLS research would be to consider learners in their contexts and understand VLSs from a more interactional and dynamic perspective. In this regard, Vygotskian sociocultural theory in particular has the potential to make a great contribution towards enriching cognitive accounts of VLSs, although these two paradigms are often treated as ‘incommensurable’ (e.g. Platt and Brooks, 1994; Zuengler and Miller, 2006; Gao and Zhang, 2011). Vygotsky’s original works (1978; 1981) are principally theories of child development. He argues that children do not develop in isolation; rather that learning takes place when the child is interacting with the social environment. Although his theories are developed from children’s learning processes, other sociocultural researchers later note that many of his ideas (e.g. mediation, internalisation and the zone of proximal development (ZPD)) can be applied to L2 adult learning processes and play an important role in the field of second language learning (Lantolf, 2000; Ellis, 2008). Combining a cognitive approach with a sociocultural approach, it is hoped that ‘a fuller picture emerges of the potential of interactive language learning and that our combined analysis illuminates more in the data than either approach would do on its own’ (Foster and Ohta, 2005:423).

2.3.1 A Vygotskian view of strategic vocabulary learning

Vygotsky (1981) does not deny that individuals are guided by their own mental

processes. However, he argues that these alone cannot provide a coherent picture and explain the nature of learning. He creates an account of human mental processes which recognises an ‘interpsychological’ relationship between these mental processes and their cultural, historical and institutional settings. In particular, this interpsychological functioning is reflected in his well-known ‘general genetic law of cultural development’:

Any function in the child’s cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then with the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory...Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships. (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 163)

Vygotsky’s genetic analysis seems to contribute to a broader understanding of VLSs from two particular aspects. Firstly, it stresses the social origins of higher mental functions such as memory, rational thinking and learning (including LLSs). For example, as mentioned above, in most cases, VLSs are deployed consciously. Consciousness, which is used as one of the key elements to characterise VLSs. Drawing on Vygotsky’s notion of consciousness, it is argued that intellectual side of human consciousness cannot be isolated from social context. It is mediated by culturally constructed semiotic artefacts and sociocultural practices (Wertsch, 1985). The literature review in the previous section shows that some VLS research focuses on associative strategies, and tends to study the individual in isolation. However, there seems to lack consideration of the relationship between associative strategies and

other sociocultural factors. To overcome this weakness, researchers need to see that VLSs exist or develop not only as the result of individual cognitive choice but also of the mediation of particular social communities.

Vygotsky's (1981) genetic analysis also emphasises the process of transformation from a social influence outside the individual to a social influence within the individual, and thus provides a dynamic organisation of learners' consciousness rather than focusing on the actual product of learning. For example, according to Wertsch (1985), although the development of memory conventionally tends to be viewed in terms of learners' quantitative increments (e.g. looking at their information-process capacity), Vygotsky argues that memory is not a single process and it changes at different stages of development. Therefore, a static formation of human consciousness should not be reinforced. The sociocultural approach appears to go beyond the current VLS research that focuses on the constructs of different kinds of language strategy taxonomies and actual techniques which individual learners employ, to show a deeper understanding of how VLS development takes place over the course of a particular interaction in a specific sociocultural setting.

As mentioned above, Vygotskian sociocultural theory appears to provide a different view of an individual's cognitive development. By comparison with a purely cognitive approach, it stresses the important role social interaction and cultural institution(s) play in the individual's cognitive growth. It is a development of

cognitive theory, although it takes a different perspective. More importantly, it enables us to bridge the gap between a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective by showing the theoretical contributions from each perspective (Cohen and Macaro, 2007, see more in section 2.4). The sociocultural approach has the potential to contribute towards the understanding of strategic learning. In his own writing (1978, 1981), Vygotsky did not directly conceptualise the term ‘strategy’. However, from the perspective of strategy theory, it could be said that an individual’s strategic functioning grows into self-regulation as a result of the initial production of their mental processes in social interaction. Drawing on the Vygotskian sociocultural theory, some authors (e.g. Donato and McCormick, 1994; Parks and Raymond, 2004; Gao, 2010) have incorporated sociocultural theory with LLSs, although LLSs are mainly conceptualised from cognitive and psycholinguistic perspectives.

L2 strategies first refer to Vygotsky’s higher order functions (Donato and McCormick, 1994; Oxford, 1999). Drawing on Vygotsky’s genetic approach, LLSs are generated from socioculturally constructed practice (Donato and McCormick, 1994). In other words, language learners are initially inexperienced but gradually develop their strategies in social practice (e.g. schooling and language courses). For example, within a given English language course, various kinds of VLSs, such as the keyword method, word inferencing and repetition, can be taught through strategy instruction. Students can gradually develop a capacity for strategic learning with their teachers’ or peers’ help (or scaffolding) and find more appropriate VLSs to suit their different purposes

(e.g. contextualised vocabulary inferencing strategies may be more efficient for extensive reading). Based on Vygotsky's genetic analysis, it would appear that two of the many phenomena in this connection seem to play an important role in understanding VLS development: the concepts of mediation and internalisation. These two will be discussed in the following sections.

2.3.1.1 Mediation

The concept of ZPD was conceived by Vygotsky as a metaphor to represent the way in which less capable learners could be directed from their actual developmental level to the level of their potential development towards becoming more strategic learners. Mediation can occur externally, for example when a novice is scaffolded by mediated 'tools' (e.g. a stick) and 'signs' (especially language) to the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). In this transformational process, scaffolding from symbols (especially language), tools (e.g. books) and agents (i.e. more capable others) plays a crucial role and promotes these less capable learners' potential development (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

The metaphor of 'scaffolding' was first introduced by Wood et al. (1976) and was used to explore the nature of the support that an adult gives to a child to learn how to perform a task in the context of heuristic interactions. It primarily emphasises verbal interaction and reflects an interrelationship between the individual and other persons (Ellis, 2008). Although scaffolding has been viewed as one of the main ways of considering the role of external mediation, it has also been recently criticised. It has often been argued that the idea of scaffolding focuses on a 'one-way' process and ignores negotiation between novice and more advanced partners (Daniels, 2001;

Wood and Wood, 2009). Scaffolding is difficult to apply in peer-peer interactions, although it is often used in teacher-student interactions (Ellis, 2008). In order to stress this process of negotiated learning, ‘collaborative dialogue’ (Swain, 2000) has been used as a preferable term to explain the mediating function of interaction in language learning. In relation to VLSs, the development of SVL can be seen as a social process whereby learners are able to question their old strategies and develop more appropriate strategies through collaborative dialogue with more capable others (e.g. their teachers and peers). This is why the importance of VLS instruction has been often stressed in the literature (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990; Atay and Ozbulgan, 2007; Mizumoto and Takeuchi, 2009). Parks and Raymond (2004) also investigated the development of Chinese students’ learner strategies in a MBA programme at a Canadian university, data was collected through interviews, classroom observation and students’ course work from this longitudinal study. The results showed that Native-English-speaking students played an important role in mediating the Chinese students’ strategy use. As they increasingly interacted with their Canadian coursemates, their learning strategies in reading, class lectures and team work developed.

Interpersonal interaction is not only a way in which social resources can mediate strategic learning, but also other kinds of artefacts can play a mediational role in strategic learning (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). For example, not only did Gao (2003) look at the impact of mediating agents (such as language teachers and friends), but also the impact of the mediating discourse and mediating artefacts (assessment methods) on the development of VLSs. Through interviewing 13 Chinese students in

one British university, the results of his study showed that in Britain the Chinese students adopted different strategies from those in China and developed their own VLSs in order to adjust to the new assessment types in the British university. Huang and Andrew's (2010) study of 47 Chinese senior secondary school students in China also found that their processes of strategy use and development were mediated by cultural artefacts in the form of tasks. In particular, task goals, as sub-goals embedded within the general goals of learning, helped students to make sense of why they were working on a particular task and influenced their strategy choices for a specific task. As a result, the strategy use of the students tended to vary across the task types, task stages and task demands. From a sociocultural perspective, both studies show the potential power of mediation in learners' strategy use, and suggest that learner strategies are a by-product of mediation and appear to be not fixed; rather, they continually grow or change through interacting with their specific contexts.

2.3.1.2 Semiotic mediation in vocabulary learning


In this section, special emphasis will be placed on the role of psychological tools (what Vygotsky also termed 'signs' or words) in VL. For Vygotsky (1978), 'word' does not simply correspond to the general meaning of word; rather it is more semiotically oriented and refers to a 'meaning unit'. Words which appear to be culturally and socially constructed play an important role in mediating human action (e.g. language learning) (Wertsch, 1985).

Meditational tools include both signs (also called psychological tools, such as language, mnemonic techniques and diagrams) and literal 'tools' (also called technical or physical tools, such as hammers and shovels). Although he regards tools and signs as the same phenomena, Vygotsky also demonstrates some fundamental differences between these two:

1. A tool is externally oriented, but a sign is a means of internal activity aimed at humans mastering themselves (Lantolf, 2000).
2. A technical tool changes the process of natural adaptation on the basis of labour operation. The sign, on the other hand, changes the entire structure of mental functions (Wertsch, 1985).
3. Tools are used to alter the material world. While signs are in themselves not able to influence such changes, they can reconstruct a human's mental operations (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

As explained above, unlike literal 'tools', Vygotsky (1978) views the operation of signs as playing a central role in the reconstruction of mental functions and giving rise to a fundamental transformation of higher mental functions, such as learning and planning. Drawing on his genetic analysis of mental processes, signs could therefore play a mediational role in the both interpsychological and intrapsychological planes.

On the interpsychological plane, sign systems are used to mediate cognitive activities. Through these sign operations, external interactions are internalised and help to communicate and understand cultural and social meanings (Wertsch, 1985). In relation to VL, Vygotsky (1978) shows how children use signs to learn words. He

demonstrates that signs (e.g. pictures or figures) can act as memory aids to facilitate VL and retention of new words. For example, children would attempt to make a connection between the figure  and the word 'bucket', and this kind of connection helped them memorise the word. They interacted with the sign and formed a mediating link between the sign and their mental operations. Like children, L2 adult learners can also learn new words through mediated symbolisation. This idea of semiotic mediation could provide a deeper understanding of VL. For example, creating memory aids to facilitate VL could be viewed as forms of associative strategy. Forming associations with new L2 words is not merely an individual process. Rather, it is also a process of social interaction between culturally constructed signs (e.g. L1 words) and an individual. Vygotsky's sociocultural approach suggests that individual learners are active agents engaged in mnemonic activities, and this is developed in my theoretical framework later.

Semiotic mediation plays an important role not only in the interpsychological plane, but also in the intrapsychological plane. Mental processes are transformed into potential development through internalising signs. As mentioned above, for Vygotsky, the word itself can be a form of sign and can act as an internal mediator, playing a central role as a means for mediating consciousness as a whole. In other words, as a psychological sign, the word also affects VL and cognitive development. Through semiotic mediation (the word itself), a transition from actual development to the level of potential development of VLSs is looked at in my study.

Oxford appears to be the first researcher to associate social strategies (such as asking questions and cooperating with others) with semiotic mediation. According to Oxford (1999, cited in Oxford and Schramm 2007: 52-3), social strategies help higher order functions (e.g. analysing and synthesising, also called ‘cognitive strategies’; monitoring, planning and evaluating, also called ‘metacognitive strategies’) to be internalised through collaborative dialogue. Social strategies can be viewed as a form of social mediation which plays a crucial role in the process of internalisation. In particular, Donato and McCormick (1994) in their study show that individual learners’ mental processes can be mediated by the language of another human being in social interaction, and through this speaking activity they develop from other-regulation to self-regulation, including strategic orientations to problem solving. The problem-solving processes verbalised in collaborative dialogue become part of their learning (Berk and Winsler, cited in Oxford and Schramm 2007: 53). In this speaking activity, assistance (or scaffolding) from more capable others (e.g. teachers and peers) becomes a form of semiotic mediation which help the construction of VLSs. Through the verbal interaction, learners can increasingly gain voluntary control of the intrapsychological plane over natural mental functions. Therefore, social strategies appear to be important ways of developing learners’ vocabulary knowledge and supporting the process of strategic vocabulary learning. However, less attention has been drawn to them in the literature, and there also seems to have been insufficient LLS research into the usefulness and limitations in the use of social strategies from a sociocultural perspective.

2.3.1.3 Internalisation

Vygotsky (1978) views internalisation as the process whereby a person's interpsychological mental functioning transfers into intrapsychological functioning, and focuses on the genetic relationship between external and internal activities. He proposes that the crucial element for determining the nature of intrapsychological functioning is social reality rather than physical reality, and associates the notion with higher mental functions rather than with the early stages of mental development (Wertsch, 1985). Therefore, Vygotsky's notion of internalisation relates to my research study since it has the potential to explain the development of L2 adult learners' VLSs (a higher mental function) in a different socioculturally constructed learning environment (social reality). In particular, in the LLS literature, one of the potential contributions to deepening the understanding of LLS development is that Vygotsky's notion of internalisation is developed in relation to the idea of self-regulation.

Self-regulation is typically considered as a cognitively-based concept (Zimmerman, 2000). For example, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) apply their cognitive information processing approach to self-regulation, and argue that knowledge of strategies moves from the declarative (conscious and fact-oriented) to the procedural (autonomous and habitual) through learning. To broaden this, a sociocultural approach stresses the importance of internalisation in self-regulation and implies that learners undergo a more dynamic process of transformation. As a consequence of internalisation, humans gained voluntary control of the plane over natural mental functions by converting socioculturally formed mediated signs into thinking activity (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). To further clarify their claim, Ellis (2008) points out that internalisation is the

process of moving from object/other regulation to self-regulation. Although Vygotsky primarily applies his approach to child mental development, Ellis has suggested that L2 adult learners would also experience this transformational process, where they are finally capable of independent 'strategic functioning' (p. 533). In relation to VL, for example, at an early stage of learning, a L2 adult learner constantly looks up unknown words by using a dictionary (this is object-regulation). Later on, the learner might learn to use the strategy of inferring word meanings influenced by teacher-led VLS instruction and gradually develop VLSs through this other-regulation. Finally, the learner is able to use more appropriate VLSs in relation to different learning objectives and make the strategies his/her own (this is referred to as 'self-regulation').

In relation to sociocultural views of strategic self-regulation, some researchers' interest in VLS instruction has shifted from a predominantly teaching-oriented perspective to one that stresses the learner's active role in the process of strategic learning, from simply other regulation to the processing of moving from other regulation to self-regulation. For example, Atay and Kurt (2006) tested the effects of post-reading activities on vocabulary learning with a total of 62 elementary school EFL pupils in Turkey. In particular, the researchers compared the effects of two types of task-based instruction: interactive and non-interactive task-based instruction. The results of this study showed that jigsaw activities based on reciprocal teaching techniques proved to be a more effective way of enhancing young learners' L2 vocabulary knowledge and provided more opportunities to train learners to use metacognitive strategies in vocabulary learning. Based on the findings, the researchers

suggested that Vygotsky's (1978) socially interactive learning, using scaffolding and collaboration, has the great potential to contribute to VLS instruction. Such a pattern of teaching could promote students' collaborative relationship towards developing more effective strategic approaches. In Mizumoto and Takeuchi's (2009) study, teachers did not only teach memory and metacognitive strategies for vocabulary learning, but also created an interactive environment and a dynamic atmosphere through group discussions and tasks (e.g. vocabulary learning journal). The teachers observed the interactions of the groups and provided the students with scaffolding when necessary. The researchers found that the social interaction, including the peer-peer and teacher-student interaction, helped to promote scaffolding in the ZPD wherein learners themselves can help each other with different kinds of VLSs by sharing how they approached the task. This is not to say that the explicit teacher-led instruction is not important, however, based on their research findings, the researchers suggest that task-based instruction would allow vocabulary learners to play a more active role and discover their own appropriate VLSs and strategic approaches.

This process of self-regulation needs to be emphasised in VL, because it is viewed as a broader and more versatile notion of strategic learning (Cohen and Macaro, 2007). In relation to VLSs, most researchers (e.g. Ahmed, 1989; Nation, 1990; Oxford; 1990; Sanaoui, 1992; Schmitt, 1997, 2000) still draw much attention to what specific VLSs individuals use. Cohen and Macaro (2007: 23) suggest that there is a need to shift the LLS research from 'an interest in the quantity of strategy use to an interest in the quality of strategy use'. In other words, researchers need to draw more attention to the

process of self-regulation itself rather than the actual techniques. Vygotsky's 'transformative model' of cognitive development is crucial to my research because it takes account of the individual with a sense of 'self', which is continually developing and changing through social interaction (also called external activity) and internalisation. Reviewing the previous studies above, it would appear that strategic learning can be regarded as a learner's socially mediated plan which implies a dynamic movement from social to self (Oxford and Schramm 2007). The realisation of this trajectory of change in learners' strategy use is explored in this research.

Another way of looking at the role of internalisation in strategic vocabulary learning is to consider how private speech plays a part in the process of self-regulation. According to Ellis (2008), like children, adults also employ private speech when they learn a second language. Private speech functions such as repeating words; covertly answering a question and repairing another's errors strategically assist learners to master new words (adapted from Ohta, 2001: 40). For example, Borer (2006, cited in Ellis, 2008: 531) found that adult EAP learners memorised words better when they privately involved deeper processing to form mnemonics. Although associative strategies are predominantly looked at from a cognitive perspective, sociocultural theory recognises that learners play an active role in the process of remembering words rather than rely on their information-processing capacity. Thus, learners can gain control over their mental functions and construct themselves dialogically through the mediation of private speech. However, the evidence from some studies (e.g. Centano-Cortes and Jimenez-Jimenez, 2004) also shows that not all L2 learners employ private speech, and the researchers argue that the frequency of using private speech depends on the nature of the task.

2.3.1.4 Activity Theory

The sociocultural approach has given rise to another conceptualisation of LLSs. Based on the Vygotsky's (1978) work, Leont'ev (1981) proposes a theory of activity to explain human thinking and action. For Vygotsky, cultural tools which are constructed objectively in society primarily mediate the human mind. Leont'ev accepts Vygotsky's idea of the importance of cultural mediation. However, he reemphasises activity as the principle that mediates human consciousness and leads to the internalisation of external human actions (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). He places Vygotsky's work from the development of human behaviour in a specific hierarchy. According to Leont'ev's (1981) Activity Theory, the hierarchy structures human activity into three levels. These are 1) the *activity* level that is motive-oriented and is carried out by community or society; 2) an *action* that is goal-oriented behaviour; and 3) the *operation* level that is the way an action is carried out, and depends on the social-material conditions under which actions are executed. Incorporating Activity Theory, Oxford and Schramm (2007) redefine LLSs as a specific pattern of action towards achieving a particular social purpose. For example, to achieve an objective (e.g. learning a new word), a student (a subject) can carry out different kinds of actions (e.g. VLSs) and these actions are always goal-directed, object-oriented within a particular social setting. This activity pattern allows researchers to define strategies more dynamically and completely, rather than characterising them with reference to static categories and discrete-item lists (Donato and McCormick, 1994).

Donato and McCormick (1994) were the first to set LLS research within a sociocultural framework derived from Activity Theory. The participants were asked to take part in a project and reflect upon their changes in LLSs through the use of a performance-based, portfolio assessment procedure. The results showed a cyclical pattern in strategy development, and implied a movement from the unfocused/general to the focused/specific goals and strategies. Using strategies is based on the goal setting and this project also helps the students' LLSs expand from the general to highly specific plans of action through time. They emphasise activity as the principle that mediates learners' strategy use and indicate that LLSs are a specific pattern of action towards achieving a particular social purpose.

Activity Theory is further developed by some writers (e.g. Engeström, 1999) as an interactive system and in particular they emphasise the importance of the notion of 'agency' in the activity system. Agency does not only mean carrying out actions or doing something, but it also relates to the significance of these actions for the human agent. Agency is socially and culturally constructed and thus specific sociocultural environments matter for human actions and each individual action has its own meaning and interpretation (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001; Oxford and Schramm 2007).

In relation to LLSs, Norton (1995; 2000) examined two cases of successful language learners in Canada and indicated the relationship between strategy development, learner agency and their social context. After entering Canada, sociocultural factors (e.g. social networks) enabled both learners to exercise their agency in forming and

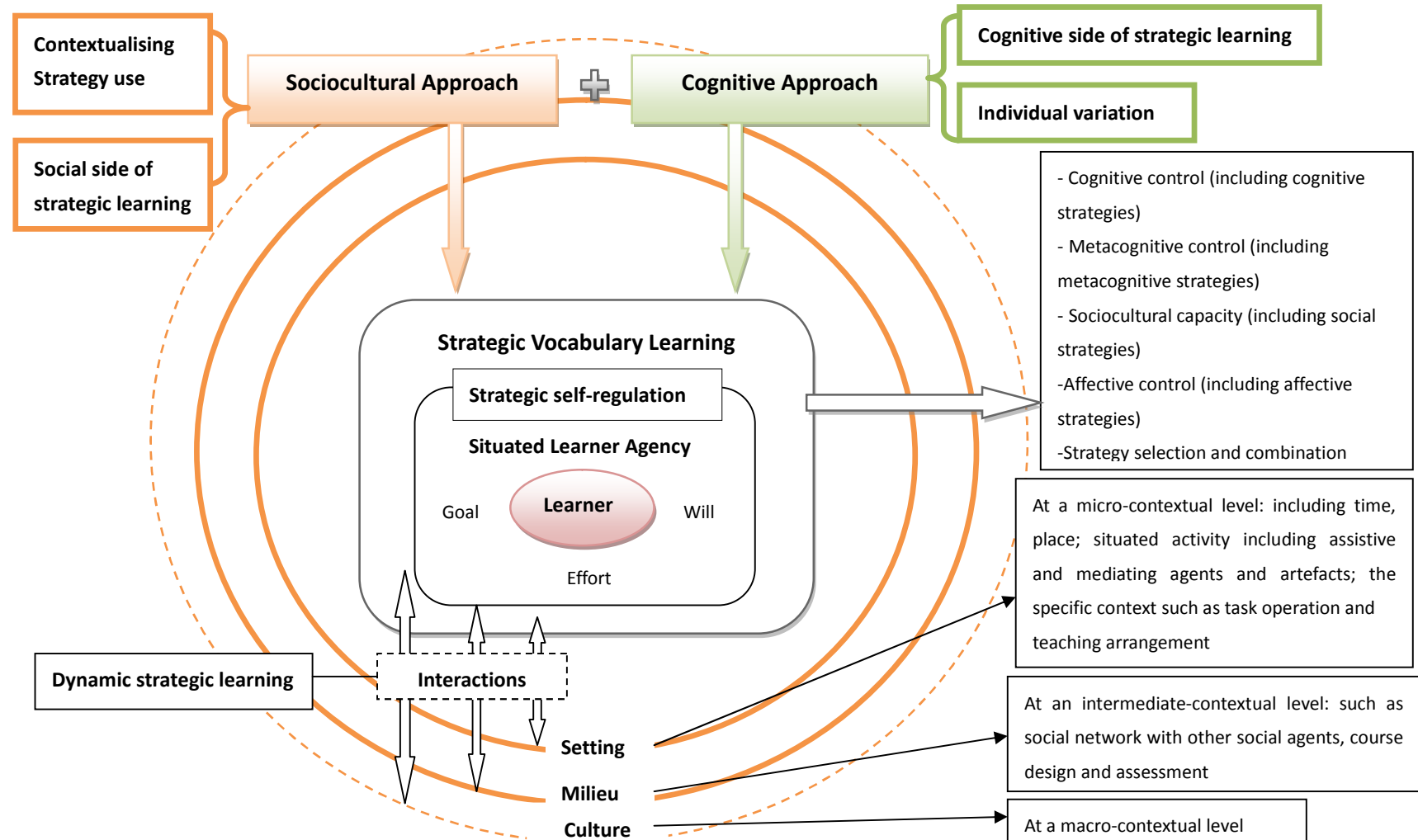
reforming their identities. Because of the high need for achievement, they showed high levels of willingness to learn English and wanted to be active language learners. This made them ‘invest’ more in their language learning and develop their LLSs. The researcher focuses on the processes of strategic language learning and explains how they exercise their agency as a learner and how their LLSs improve due to their developed identities within the particular circumstances of their learning situations. This brings a new insight to current LLS research and shifts from the notion of the quantity to the quality of strategy use.

2.4 Theoretical framework

I propose a theoretical framework which synthesises the literature review above from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective. The aim of this framework is not to deny cognitive views of learner strategies. Rather, the current approach by Cohen and Macaro (2007:49) which aims to ‘honor both approaches and attempt to show how they can enrich and be enriched by the other’ is taken into consideration, and an attempt is made to explore the potential compatibility and complementary of the two perspectives. Within this framework (see Figure 2.1 below¹), it creates a synthesis between the two approaches in order to understand SVL better and deeper.

¹ Colour scheme: the aspects which are related to sociocultural approach are represented in ORANGE; the aspects which are related to cognitive approach are represented in GREEN

Figure 2.1 A cognitive-sociocultural framework for strategic vocabulary learning



The framework takes into account that both cognitive and sociocultural approaches in order to make a theoretical contribution towards understanding strategic vocabulary learning. Instead of using the term vocabulary learning strategy (VLS), the framework suggests the term ‘strategic vocabulary learning’ (SVL) because this is seen as a term which emphasises the process of VL rather than merely the product (i.e. techniques or strategic behaviours). From the preceding review, it is clear that there is no consensus regarding the definition of LLSs. In order to avoid this circular argument, the framework does not define the term ‘VLSs’, rather, it describes important features of SVL from both a sociocultural and a cognitive perspective.

With regard to previous work (e.g. O’Malley and Chamot, 1990; Cohen, 1998, 2011; Macaro, 2006), the cognitive perspective (represented in green) suggests that learners play an important role in strategic language learning in terms of the different levels of consciousness involved in the process. In relation to this, cognitivist research plays an important role in studying the influence of internal factors on VLS use and the importance of learners’ perceptions of the usefulness of VLSs (Zimmerman, 2001). The sociocultural perspective (represented in orange) describes ‘strategic learning’ as a learner’s socially mediated action or plan and focuses on the transformed process from external activities (the social) to internal activities (the individual). Socioculturally oriented researchers (e.g. Donato and McCormick 1994; Norton and Toohey, 2001; Gao, 2006; 2010) have shed light on the mediational role of context on learners’ development (e.g. situated VLS use in a particular sociocultural context). In

my theoretical framework, drawing on both approaches (see more in the previous sections), SVL is not located solely within the individual and cannot be isolated from learners' context. Moreover, it does not neglect individual variation in strategy use. The framework suggests that SVL is not determined by context, but rather takes place through a more dynamic interaction between learners' own efforts (agency) and their contexts. The following subsections will provide a more detailed explanation of this framework and a deeper understanding of some important themes from both perspectives including strategic self-regulation, learner agency, vocabulary learning strategies and strategy combinations.

2.4.1 Strategic self-regulation

The previous sections show that variables amongst individual learners have caused many problems in the definition of 'learner strategy' and it has been also proposed that there is a theoretical 'fuzziness' in the research that has been undertaken (Hsiao and Oxford, 2002; Tseng et al. 2006). In order to address these problems, the framework shifts the focus from the product (learner strategy) to the L2 learning process (learners' capacity for self-regulation, such as capacity for metacognition, for combining strategies effectively in any given situation), from the quantity of strategy use to the quality of strategy use. Therefore, it proposes that 'strategic self-regulation' (Oxford and Schramm, 2007) is a more important notion to be considered in the process of SVL, since both cognitive and sociocultural approaches place an emphasis on

self-regulation. These two approaches discuss the concept from different perspectives, and they seem to be both valuable; thus the framework adopts a multiperspectival viewpoint.

2.4.1.1 Cognitive views of strategic self-regulation

From the cognitive perspective, self-regulation refers to a process whereby learners metacognitively, motivationally and behaviourally participate in their own thoughts, feelings and actions through goal setting, planning, monitoring, evaluation and affective control (Zimmerman, 1986). According to Zimmerman (2001), models of self-regulation are psychologically based, and self-regulated strategic learning often refers to a cyclical process in which language learners purposefully employ specific LLSs, monitor their effectiveness, evaluate and modify their strategy choice/use (such as replacing one VLS with another). For example, in relation to my previous study (2010), one of the participants regularly used repetition strategies which were efficient for remembering massive numbers of words within a short time. They seemed to be very common in an exam-oriented academic culture. However, after coming to the UK, the purpose for VL was shifted from simply passing English tests to improving communicative competence more holistically. Repetition learning became marginalised as the student found that it was less useful in communicative activities. Instead, social strategies were increasingly deployed.

Information processing is one of the most prominent cognitive ways in which of self-regulated learning is modelled from a cognitive perspective. According to Winne (2001), individuals can increasingly develop their capacity to construct information and regulate their own responses. His model of strategic self-regulation involves four phases: defining the task, setting goals and plans, enacting strategies and adapting metacognitive strategies. Control is also increased through use of acquired learning strategies. Another aspect which is developed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) in particular relates the notion of self-regulation to LLSs. They argue that knowledge of strategy moves from declarative (conscious and fact-oriented) to procedural (autonomous and habitual) through learning, as well as learners' own practice and evaluation. In other words, learners select information (in this case, VLSs), monitor its usefulness and make modification in appropriate contexts. In my theoretical framework, both models of information processing which describe strategic self-regulation address the notions of cognitive and metacognitive control in the process of SVL.

Based on the models above, my framework also stresses that the notion of 'learner agency' can broaden a cognitive perspective of learner strategies. Strategic learning is not only about the knowledge of mental processes but also about knowledge of the self, and involves the process in which individuals manage all sorts of their own psychological factors (such as emotion and motivation) (Williams and Burden, 1997; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009). This framework takes account of vocabulary learners

with their own sense of being self-regulated agents, who are continually developing and increasingly take control of their vocabulary learning/building towards learning as autonomous learners.

2.4.1.2 Sociocultural views of strategic self-regulation

The framework also addresses the importance of social mediation and interactive dialogue in the development of learners' strategic self-regulation. Vygotsky (1962) suggests that learning is mediated through dialogue with more capable others, and explains an underlying process: social interaction with others (as a form of dialogue) involves turning thought into words and through internalisation words turn into thoughts. Strategic self-regulation is possible when learners actively co-construct and internalise the essential features of the dialogue that occurs with the more capable others (Kozulin et al. 2003, cited in Oxford and Schramm, 2007: 52). The framework also incorporates McCaslin and Hickey's (2001) 'model of co-regulated learning' which is a development of Vygotsky's model and places an emphasis on the co-regulation. Co-regulated learning plays an important role in the growth of strategic self-regulation. The more capable others (e.g. teachers) provide supportive scaffolding opportunities to promote learners' mediation processes of strategic learning, motivation and self-evaluation. Co-regulated learning between more capable others and learners provides a link to eventual learner self-regulation.

Like cognitively oriented researchers, sociocultural theorists, such as Vygotsky (1978) also view the eventual goal of learning as being autonomy. According to Little (1991: 4), autonomy is viewed as the learner's capacity for 'detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action'. Self-regulation is closely linked to autonomy. The strategic individual is capable of autonomous functioning, such as planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning process, which is self-regulation (Mitchell and Myles, 1998). As a self-regulated agent, eventually the learner should be able to appropriate and reproduce his/her own strategic approaches towards becoming an autonomous learner. However, the sociocultural approach argues that the term 'autonomy' does not mean learning without teaching or interaction (Ushioda, 2003). The framework supports this view and suggests that unskilled or dependent students can gradually develop strategic competence to become autonomous learners through the processes of social mediation and interactive support. During these processes, interactive dialogue is used as an important mediational tool to scaffold them from other-regulation to self-regulation (Myers and Mitchell, 1998).

As mentioned above, the framework shows that both approaches contribute towards the understanding of strategic self-regulation. More importantly, it creates a positive dialogue between the two perspectives to help expand or modify their theoretical understanding of SVL from the other viewpoint.

2.4.2 A dynamic understanding of strategic vocabulary learning

My framework also provides a dynamic understanding of SVL and suggests that it is a temporally and contextually situated phenomenon. In particular, it stresses the dynamic relationship between learners' SVL, their agency and their contexts.

2.4.2.1 Interaction between learner agency and context

My theoretical framework features another notion, learner agency, from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective. Before explaining the notion, it is necessary to define what I mean by a self-regulated agent and a mediating agent. One view is that learners themselves are the social agents who actively engage with other people and contexts in their language learning process (Toohey and Norton, 2003; Ushioda, 2008). The other view is that a social agent is a type of mediator ('social resource' e.g. their teachers, peers and parents) to help learners learn language (Donato and McCormick, 1994). Gao (2010) associates the term 'social agent' with both views, but there seems to be a lack of clarification of this term in his book. Readers may be confused whether a social agent means the language learner or other social resources. Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding, I suggest two terms, 'self-regulated agent' and 'mediating agent' (see Figure 2.2). A self-regulated agent refers to the learner self who is actively managing his/her SVL and inter-relationships with other people. 'Mediating agents' means the other social resources which can help individual learners transfer from other-regulation to self-regulation and mediate their learning experience.

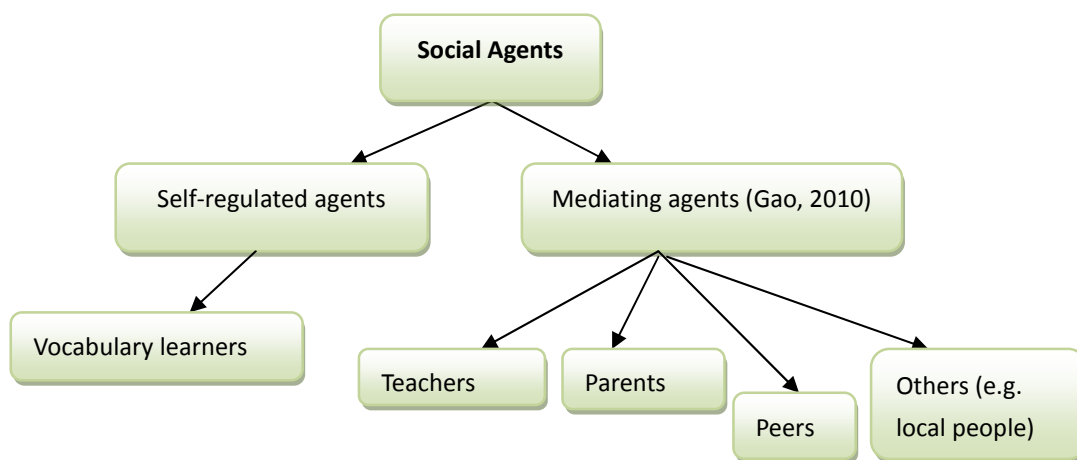


Figure 2.2 Social agents

To avoid the de-contextualisation of a purely cognitive approach to SVL, my framework situates learner agency in context. Here, the term ‘context’ includes three levels. Firstly, it refers to particular settings at a micro-contextual level which include place, time and situated activities, and looks at how learners exercise their agency to manage their SVL in relation to their specific learning situations. Secondly, it also refers to ‘milieus’, e.g. social, learning and academic milieus (adapted from Bourdieu, 1984). By comparison with the term ‘environment’, ‘milieu’ appears to be more conceptual and generalised, and includes aspects such as assessment and the teaching approach in general. It is well matched to the intermediate-contextual level. Whereas environment reflects more tangible aspects, such as landscape and building, are more related to ‘setting’ at a micro-contextual level. Thirdly, ‘context’ also broadly refers to a culture at a macro-contextual level. My framework suggests that these three levels are interrelated and the processes of SVL need to be interpreted through learners’

interaction within the nexus of these three contextual levels. Therefore, learner agency refers not only to individual learners themselves and their efforts to regulate their language learning process, but also to a ‘sociocultural capacity’ (Gao, 2010: 26). In other words, apart from regulating their cognitive and metacognitive learning process, agency is also applied to learners’ efforts to manage a plethora of sociocultural contexts in order to achieve their goals.

As mentioned above, researchers (e.g. Norton and Toohey, 2003; Gao, 2010) have begun to stress the importance of context and agency in their studies. In particular, Gao (2010) shows the dynamic interaction between learner agency and contextual mediation underlying the Chinese undergraduates’ strategic learning processes. He focuses on the interaction between individuals’ strategy use and ‘macro contextual elements’ (such as popular societal discourses, economic conditions or policies). By contrast, my theoretical framework shifts the focus from the mediation of context in strategy development at a macro level to a more micro level and draws more attention to interactive processes between learners’ strategic efforts and particular settings.

2.4.2.2 Situated learner agency at a micro-contextual level

At a more micro-contextual level, on the one hand, a particular setting (e.g. the environmental conditions of a class including the light, seating arrangement and noise) could provide opportunities for learners either to practise and develop, or to restrict their agency in VL (Toohey and Norton, 2003; Palfreyman, 2006). On the other hand,

learners' agency in terms of their own goals and will also lead to variations in their strategy choice and use (see also Benson, 2001; Gao, 2010).

From a cognitive perspective, learners can consciously decide which particular VLSs to use before engaging in specific situations. For example, one of my participants in my previous study (2010) regarded watching a football match as an important opportunity to practise his vocabulary. In relation to his learning goal, he consciously chose to use more social strategies (e.g. use the words learned before) with local people. Not all students would think what strategies they want to deploy before going to a particular setting. Sometimes, students might not decide what strategies they want to use until they are involved in that setting. For example, one student from my previous study (2011a) mentioned that when he walked on the street and found unknown words from somewhere (e.g. shop signs), he then used his mobile phone to check the word meanings. Being on the street, the mobile phone was the only tool for him to use and he was not able to ask his teachers or check a conventional dictionary.

Furthermore, learners can select different VLSs across different settings. For example, in relation to different seating arrangements in the class, one participant from my previous study (2010) chose different VLSs to discover word meanings. Referring to his past experience, he often sat in rows. In this case, he tended to check a dictionary by himself to explore the word meaning. By contrast, in the new learning environment, he often sat in a circle and had more opportunities to ask help from other students.

Learners tried to choose appropriate VLSs to suit their particular settings.

Situated learner agency also refers to how a self-regulated agent interacts with other social resources to support his/her SVL in a particular setting or across different settings. From a sociocultural perspective, individual learners' mental processes can be mediated by social interaction (a kind of psychological tool) with other mediating agents (e.g. their teachers, peers and friends) and through this interactive dialogue their actual development is transformed into a higher mental process. However, socially mediated agency does not mean that mediating agents (e.g. their teachers) are responsible for controlling learners' actions. Rather, it means that as a self-regulated agent, individual learners continue to play a major role in planning and carrying out their VLSs, although certain of their problems might be solved by interacting and incorporating other mediating agents into their VL (see also Wertsch et al. 1996). With external help, learners can increasingly gain voluntary control of the intrapsychological plane over natural mental functions, from other-regulation to self-regulation towards autonomy.

Learners can also exercise their agency to choose some artefacts which are available, accessible and meaningful to them in a particular setting, and use them to assist their SVL. Before discussing what role different artefacts play, it is necessary to define what I mean by the term 'artefact'. Some writers (Gibson, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981; Cole, 2005) have contributed towards the understanding of this term from

different perspectives.

Gibson (1977) points out that an affordance is what the environment offers human beings. He argues that an artefact has an inherent meaning which could affect behaviour and its affordance can be perceived by the direct observation and exploration from human being's point of view (Jones, 2003). For example, based on their exploration, when students see a dictionary, they are able to know directly that it affords, i.e. explaining word meanings as directly as a mailbox affords the mailing of letters, even though they might use the dictionary differently. I agree that the perception of the affordance of an artefact can be direct and influence human behaviour; however, I would argue that an artefact does not only have its 'direct' affordance (also called 'natural affordance', Tomasello, 1999: 158) but also other 'indirect' affordances. For example, a restaurant menu affords the listing of food names ('direct' affordance) with a direct and immediate observation. Yet, besides this affordance, a language learner can also explore its other function which other people might not perceive directly. It can afford the listing of vocabulary ('indirect' affordances) to help enlarge someone's vocabulary size and this person may see it as an English learning tool. Therefore, artefacts do not merely act upon human beings, people can also actively engage with them. However, not everyone can discover their 'indirect' affordances. In the case of a menu, some students may only perceive it as a menu showing food names. If a student intends to seek more opportunities to build his vocabulary, he can create a new affordance for the menu. Therefore, apart from natural

affordances, indirect affordances of artefacts can be created in terms of people's different goals.

By comparison with Gibson's direct-perception view, Vygotsky (1978, 1981) considers more social and cultural dimensions to the understanding of the term 'artefact' (or what he called 'tool'). Tools are used for social purposes, and the operation of tools plays an important role in the reconstruction of mental functions. Through the aid of tools, external interactions are internalised and they help to communicate and understand cultural and social meanings (Wertsch, 1985). For example, in order to judge the number or amount of something, a calculator can be used as a tool (or an artefact) to mediate people's thinking and the calculating process, as well as helping in an independent problem-solving activity. In relation to VL, a dictionary can also be an important cultural artefact to help students learn a word or understand spoken or written texts. Through the aid of a dictionary, learners can discover the meanings of unknown words, though they still need to check whether different meanings fit in the context.

Furthermore, I argue that not all artefacts play a mediational role in the thinking and learning process. For example, a leaflet can be useful to help learners come across new words. However, this artefact may not mediate students' learning experience or strategy use. It seems to be helpful for vocabulary building but it may not regulate mental functions resulting in problem-solving. Therefore, artefacts (see Figure 2.3

below) can refer to both *mediating artefacts* (e.g. dictionary, course assessment, interactive dialogue and diagram) which can help mediate VL experience or strategy use, and *assistive artefacts*, which may not play a mediational role but benefit and affect their vocabulary learning (e.g. restaurant menu, leaflet and word list). The meaning of artefacts is created for their learning purposes by vocabulary learners through their participation in various cultural activities (e.g. vocabulary tests) and their meaning can be changed or developed in cross-cultural or intercultural situations.

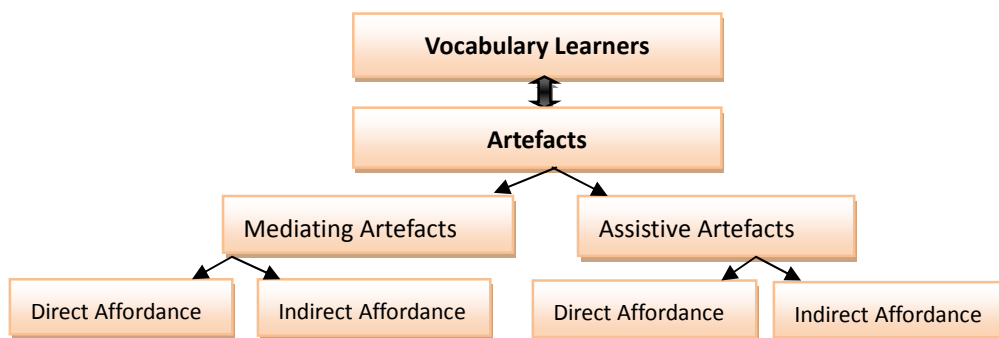


Figure 2.3 Artefacts

2.4.2.3 Goal-directed processes

In the framework, SVL is constructed as a dynamic process within Activity Theory (see more in section 2.3.2). It addresses the importance of objectives and goals in motivating people's strategic actions, and explains how their SVL develops or changes from participation in culturally-specific organised activities (see also Vygotsky, 1978; Leont'ev, 1981). L2 learners' goals and motives can change through social interaction with a different socioculturally constructed activity. They can make efforts to modify their previous VLSs in order to achieve new goals and adjust to the

local condition. In Volet and Renshaw's (1995) study, the findings highlighted the mediating role of international students' learning goals. The students modified or developed their LLSs in order to adjust to the specific academic requirements of the host country. In relation to Activity Theory, my framework is used to understand how academic and social milieus affect goal settings, and the mediational role goals play in strategy development. Vocabulary learners are treated as social beings interacting with their milieu and learning goals.

2.4.2.4 Strategic learning related to culture at a macro-contextual level

Culture is often viewed as a form of cognitive behaviour which includes people's attitudes, beliefs and values, and it affects people's behaviour and interpretations of behaviour (Matsumoto, 1996; Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009). Some researchers also find that culture differences can result in different learning behaviours (including strategic behaviours). For example, the preferred learning strategies (e.g. repetition strategies) of Chinese learners have been discussed in many cross-cultural studies which claim that their cultural values strongly influence their ways of learning and choice in LLS use (Reid, 1987; Melton, 1990; Gu, 2003). Due to the influence of Confucian traditions, in China the book is viewed as containing all knowledge, and memorising scholars' work is supported by many Chinese teachers and students (Redding, 1990). Moreover, the idea of Chinese mechanical learning without meaningful understanding is often questioned by western researchers (Martinsons and Martinsons, 1996). However, the influence of cultural factors (e.g. L2 learners'

cultural and educational backgrounds) on learners' SVL cannot be overemphasised. My framework looks at the concept of culture from both a cognitive and sociocultural perspective and suggests culture is not simply a set of people's beliefs and values relating to their cognitive process, but cultural meanings are also socially constructed and interact with other contextual elements.

My framework stresses a dynamic interaction between culture, social contexts and people's behaviour. Although the Confucian conception of learning seems to be an important cultural factor which helps researchers understand Chinese students' learning behaviour, they also need to understand SVL in relation to students' specific contexts, and be aware of the complexities involved. 'The Chinese learner' is often viewed as culturally determined; however this seems to stereotype Chinese learners (Watkins and Biggs, 1996; Lee, 1997). Their attitudes and beliefs can vary in different contexts. As mentioned above, some empirical studies (e.g. Volet and Renshaw, 1995; Biggs, 1996; Gu, 2003) show that faced with different settings, Chinese learners do combine repetition strategies with other kinds of LLSs or VLSs and form creative mental associations in language learning. In relation to both my Masters research study (Wang, 2010), international Chinese students' strategic learning appeared to develop or change within a different cultural environment. This view is particularly supported by both a sociocultural approach and theories of cross-cultural adaptation. Because of the external influence (e.g. the influence of British learning environment and other mediating agents), student sojourners can gradually adjust to the new

cultural system although they experience confusion and rejection towards adjusting to the new learning culture. This process is called ‘acculturation’ (Marden and Meyer, 1968). Meanwhile, as new learning occurs, at least some of the old cultural elements (e.g. previous learning strategies) start to be lost. The processes of acculturation and deculturation are intertwined and student ‘sojourners’ undergo this internal transformation (Kim, 2001). During the process, the concept of social mediation plays an important role and helps to explain how these learners’ VLSs develop within a different learning environment (see more in the previous section).

2.4.3 Vocabulary learning strategies

It can be seen that my framework stresses SVL as a process and this is often neglected in the VLS research (see the literature review above). However, it does not ignore the product and also includes what strategies and techniques learners employ in the process. Therefore, both ‘what’ (the product) and ‘how’ (the process) types of questions are addressed in my research (see the Methodology chapter). My theoretical framework draws on both a cognitive and sociocultural perspective to understand and theorise VLSs (including cognitive and metacognitive strategies, social strategies and affective strategies).

In the light of Schmitt’s (1997) VLS classification scheme, in my framework I incorporate *cognitive* VLSs which are directly concerned with the processing of information, and also include *metacognitive* strategies which are concerned with

knowledge of one's self (e.g. language learning attitudes and language aptitude); knowledge of VL tasks and knowledge of managing and regulating the use of different kinds of VLSs. Metacognitive strategies are important for effective VL and help learners become active participants in their own performance rather than passive recipients of strategy instruction (Paris and Winograd, 1990; Wenden, 1998; Cohen, 2011). Therefore, my framework emphasises the crucial role metacognitive strategies play in learners' self-regulation, although cognitive strategies are also important from the cognitive perspective.

Schmitt's (1997) VLS classification scheme appears to be the most extensive one so far. He incorporates *social* strategies in the scheme and recognises the social functions in VLSs in his adaptation of Oxford's (1990) LLS classification scheme (Nyikos and Fan, 2007). However, he does not theorise this category. Social strategies are incorporated into my framework, but more importantly the framework addresses this weakness by providing a theoretical contribution towards understanding of this category from a sociocultural perspective. Social strategies are viewed as a form of social mediation which helps cognitive and metacognitive functions to be internalised through interactive or collaborative dialogue (see more in section 2.3.2).

According to Wertsch (1985), individual mental and affective functions should not be treated in isolation, although traditional psychology devoted little effort to exploring the dialectical relationships between these two functions. Therefore, I include

Oxford's (1990) *affective* strategies for motivation and emotion-control (e.g. strategies for encouraging oneself, such as rewarding oneself and making positive statements) into my framework and recognise a relationship between VL and affective factors. Although the affective strategies which Oxford (1990) identifies are mainly viewed from a psychological perspective, the framework argues that there is also a need to view them from a sociocultural perspective in order to enrich the current understanding. From a sociocultural approach, for example, actively participating in some social-interactive activities can be an important strategy for motivating oneself in VL. According to Ushioda (2003), natural inspiration for learning can be developed through social-interactive processes. When individual learners participate in some meaningful activities (e.g. a jigsaw reading activity), mediating agents (e.g. their teachers and peers) can help them set 'optimal challenges' (Deci, 1995) to achieve their own goals (in this case, learning new words). These new challenges are set to not only explore the meaning of the target words, but also to increase learners' motivation for learning in this problem-solving process. Although researchers draw little attention to sociocultural views of affective strategies, this framework brings some new insights to this area and enriches the current VLS classification schemes.

2.4.4 Strategy combinations

For a strategy to be effective in enhancing learning and learner performance, it has been argued that it can be combined with other strategies to form strategy clusters (Macaro, 2001, 2006, Cohen, 2011). Previous studies (e.g. Green and Oxford, 1995;

Graham 1997; Gu, 2003; Vandergrift, 2003) also support that learners tend to deploy or select a number of strategies rather than individual strategies to improve their learning. Therefore, to shift the focus from the quantity to the quality of strategy use, strategy selection and combination are important features of SVL to be addressed in my theoretical framework.

Macaro (2001, 2006) suggests that strategy clusters appear to occur either simultaneously or in sequence (also called ‘strategy chains’ see Oxford, Lee and Park, 2007; Cohen, 2011) and one cluster could also in turn be combined with another cluster of strategies. Taking the notion of strategy clusters further, drawing on both cognitive and sociocultural approaches, individual differences in forming different strategy clusters tend to occur and the choice of what strategies to select and how to combine them results from a more complex interplay between learners’ agency (e.g. their efforts, will and metacognitive control) and their contexts (e.g. a particular setting, the type of activities and accessible social and material resources).

In conclusion, this theoretical framework looks at strategic language learning and SVL from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective, and discusses their different views but in a positive and negotiated way. Both approaches focus on the same themes (e.g. the theme of strategic self-regulation), but from different perspectives, hence making the understanding of SVL richer and more meaningful (Oxford and Schramm, 2007).

2.5 Gap in the literature

In this section I will set out the gap in the literature and also explain how I develop my research questions in relation to the gap. As mentioned above, research into VLSs originated from more general cognitive and psycholinguistic traditions into learning strategies. However, a number of weaknesses in applying an exclusively cognitive approach to LLS research (including VLS research) have been proposed (see section 2.2). Thus, more recently, several researchers (e.g. Donato and McCormick 1994; Norton and Toohey 2001; Parks and Raymond, 2004; Gao 2006, 2010; Huang and Andrews, 2010; Jang and Jiménez, 2011), have approached LLSs, and VLSs in particular, from a sociocultural perspective, drawing on the work of Vygotsky and others (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; Lantolf, 2000).

Reviewing their work (see section 2.3), they use the sociocultural approach to help understand LLSs and VLSs more dynamically and explore how other ‘social resources’ (such as peers, teachers and assessment, Palfreyman, 2006) mediate learners’ language learning experiences. This shift from specific strategic behaviours to context-related strategic learning has been seen as an important development for the future of LLS research (Grenfell and Macaro, 2007). It would appear that a sociocultural approach brings new insights to LLS research; however, some limitations and difficulties can be also encountered. Firstly, although those researching from a sociocultural perspective criticise the fact that cognitive

researchers overemphasise the individual organism and only treat LLSs and VLSs as individual skills, the researchers above using a sociocultural framework place a strong emphasis on the influence of context on strategy use. They in turn can neglect the dialectic between the individual and the social, between learners' own strategic efforts and sociocultural settings. This seems to be a limitation on LLS sociocultural research reaching a careful balance in assessing learning agency and learning context (Gao, 2010). Very few studies were conducted to address the complex interplay between learners' strategy use, their agency (e.g. their efforts, will and metacognitive control) and their specific contexts.

A second concern is that sometimes sociocultural LLS researchers neither offer a clear link between their research claims and their research findings, nor do they establish a precise cause and effect relationship between strategy development and social mediation (Mitchell and Myles, 1998; Gao; 2010). For example, Parks and Raymond (2004) claimed that Canadian students played a mediational role in the development of learning strategies of Chinese students in a MBA programme in Canada. However, drawing on the actual evidence, it seems unclear whether strategy development is a result of students' personality or the mediational role of the Canadian students. A possible solution is proposed by Gao (2010) who, following Palfreyman's (2003) suggestion, went beyond simply documenting LLSs. In broadening the research focus, not only did he explore social mediation and strategy development, but also looked at the experience of language learning in the contexts

of both the classroom and everyday life.

To address the above two issues, my study shifts from merely focusing on the cause and effect relationships between learning contexts and VLSs to focus on the dynamic relationship between strategic vocabulary learning, learner agency and learning contexts. As I have argued above, LLS researchers need to break down boundaries by indicating potential synergies between both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective and show how they can enrich each other (Oxford and Schramm, 2007). However, relatively little LLS research, and even less VLS research, has been conducted relating to pre-university international Chinese students which draws on both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective. The studies reviewed above (e.g. Donato and McCormick 1994; Parks and Raymond, 2004; Gao 2010) on LLSs might in fact be ‘too broad to encompass diverse language acquisition processes’ (Tseng et al. 2006) and, in my view, it might be more powerful to focus on one specific language learning domain. In this case, my study will focus on VL only, not only because enriching vocabulary can benefit other language skills but also mastering vocabulary is crucial for effective communication (Nation, 1990; Folse, 2004). In my experience, this is also one learning area in which strategies can be successfully negotiated through collaborative effort and dialogue. Therefore, my first research question that follows (p. 79) explores how Chinese learners manage the relationship between their mental processes, agency and other aspects of their UK context (both milieu and setting) in order to learn vocabulary strategically. It looks at the process of strategic

vocabulary learning from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective and, most importantly, uses the term ‘relationship’ to highlight the complex interaction among these three elements: a) the learner’s mental process; b) the individual learner as agent, with the cognitive perspective stressing his/her active role in the language learning process; c) other contextual elements which from a sociocultural perspective, play a mediational role in the process of strategic vocabulary learning.

While Gao (2010) also tried to build a link between the cognitive and sociocultural perspectives in his theoretical framework, he ultimately interpreted the framework mainly from a sociocultural perspective, and analysed his findings accordingly. Gao and Zhang (2011) further used both concepts of agency from a sociocultural perspective and metacognition from a cognitive perspective to re-interpret and analyse the previous study. My study also looks at strategic learning from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective and bridges the gap between learners’ mental processes and social context. Like their approach, my approach to strategic learning refers not only to individual learners themselves and their strategic efforts to regulate their cognitive and metacognitive learning processes, but also refers to their strategic efforts to manage a plethora of sociocultural contexts in order to achieve their learning goals. However, there are a number of differences between their work and my own. Firstly, their work tends to focus on the interaction between individuals’ strategy use and ‘macro contextual elements’ (such as popular societal discourses, economic conditions or policies). By contrast, my study shifts the focus from the

mediation of context in strategy development at a macro level to a more micro level. In particular, my study explores the flexible use of VLSs across various settings and specific activities, thus providing a richer picture of strategy use at a micro-contextual level than Gao's work. Secondly, Gao's (2010) study was conducted to capture Chinese undergraduate students' LLS use at only one Hong Kong university. My study explores international Chinese students' VLSs use at three British universities. So far, there seems to have been insufficient VLS research into the deeper understanding of learners' strategy use in relation to their specific milieus of teaching and learning (e.g. teaching approach, assessment types and course and module design) at different university contexts. Thirdly, my study also explores the organisation of multiple VLSs and strategy combinations which the Chinese students generate both within a particular learning situation or across different situations. These aspects of strategy use have not been investigated in depth in Gao's work.

As mentioned before, most VLS research to date has concentrated on what strategies individual learners actually use. However, more recently, criticism of VLS research in this area has been put forward. Researchers such as Gu (2003) and Nyikos and Fan (2007) argue that it seems to be more crucial to investigate the actual process of strategic vocabulary learning in order to provide fresh insights. However, while it is useful to identify some specific strategies and general patterns, it is more important to explore how and why participants employ these strategies. Also, quantitative studies

have been predominantly employed in the VLS research above, with a heavy reliance on questionnaires (Ehrman et al. 2003). Existing instruments such as the 'Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire' (Gu and Johnson, 1996) appear to focus on the quantity rather than the quality of strategy use, and taxonomies of VLSs (e.g. Schmitt, 1997) are generated, which tend to artificially separate strategies into different classificatory levels. Yet, learners' character traits are often assumed as being relatively fixed (Tseng, et al. 2006). There seems to have been insufficient qualitative research into the deeper understanding of the quality of strategic vocabulary learning, particularly the creative role of learner agency in strategic vocabulary learning. Drawing on these critical observations, to shift the focus from the quantity to the quality of strategy use, from frequency lists of strategies to the actual processes of learners' strategic learning, strategy selection and combination are important features of strategic vocabulary learning to be addressed. Furthermore, Cohen and Macaro (2007) stress that the reasons why learners choose or combine certain strategies and why certain learners combine strategies more effectively than others are worth to be explored but are often neglected in the LLS research. Therefore, my second research question that follows (p.79) explores in what ways and for what reasons Chinese learners select and combine strategies to enhance the process of strategic vocabulary learning in the UK.

Previous studies (e.g. Green and Oxford, 1995; Graham 1997; Vandergrift, 2003) also explore different ways strategies are combined. They were more likely to report on

what strategies have been selected to generate a strategy cluster or strategy clusters. However, little or no research has been conducted to explore the sequence in which these strategies (particularly VLSs) occurred, and the reasons why learners manage strategies in such sequences. In order to address this gap, this study places an emphasis on the discrete organisation of strategy clusters which each student generates within different settings. Furthermore, consideration of strategic language learning as a dynamic system has so far been neglected in in these studies. Researchers tend to report on the use of certain strategy clusters in a particular learning situation, but they were less likely to explore how learners organise their strategy clusters dynamically across time and settings. As mentioned before, my theoretical framework argues that strategic vocabulary learning is not fixed but need to be viewed as a temporally and contextually situated phenomenon. Therefore, the third question in my study (following p.79) explores how the six Chinese students manage their strategic vocabulary learning dynamically both temporally, during the academic year in the UK; and interculturally, as they move from a Chinese to a British context of teaching and learning.

As mentioned before, some researchers (e.g. Gao, 2003, 2010; Parks and Raymond, 2004; Wang and Gieve, 2008) have looked at changes or development in the use of LLSs and VLSs of Chinese students in shifting contexts. Like my study, their work is also conducted to explore changes and differences in strategy use over a period of time as the Chinese students move from China to a different language learning

environment, as well as the causal factors for these changes. However, they were less likely to conduct an in-depth investigation of how the students' strategy use changes or varies across different English modules in different academic terms, and how their strategy use in the classroom differs from their strategy use outside the classroom in the host country over time. These are aspects which are particularly explored in my study. Moreover, the previous studies above have tended to explore undergraduate or postgraduate students' strategy use in a host country, but have neglected to research the strategy use of pre-university students along with their dynamic management of strategic vocabulary learning over time. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, it is worth exploring the strategic learning experiences of this particular group of Chinese students and offering advice on their strategic vocabulary learning in order to accelerate their adjustment to UK higher education.

The three research questions that follow have therefore been developed in relation to this gap in research, relating to the LLS and VLS literature, and are used to guide my study.

1. In order to learn vocabulary strategically, how do Chinese learners manage the relationship between their mental processes, agency and other aspects of their UK context (both milieu and setting)?
2. In what ways and for what reasons do Chinese learners select and combine strategies to enhance the process of strategic vocabulary learning in the UK?
3. How do Chinese learners manage their strategic vocabulary learning

dynamically:

- a) during the academic year in the UK?
- b) as these learners move from the Chinese to the British context?

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, the theoretical framework which I have proposed is interrelated with the process of designing my research and data analysis. Here I provide an account of the research design, methods of collection and procedures, and analysis of the data. In the final section, I also explain how the data is presented in the following three finding chapters and justify the decision to structure the presentation of data.

3. 1Research Design

A qualitative case study research design was used within my study. Although it is often referred as a research method (Dörnyei, 2007; Yin, 2009), I treat it as a research tradition more than a method because it covers a generally recognised territory and a generally accepted set of research methods and analysis (Richards, 2003). There were several reasons to choose this approach for my study. In particular, some of its essential characteristics suited my research aims. Firstly, according to Merriam (1998), case studies focus on a bounded unit or units and provide a rich description of the target phenomenon and an in-depth analysis. As mentioned above, the aim of this study is not to generalise the pattern of strategy use. Rather, focusing on an in-depth analysis of a case study of the international Chinese students, it aims to have a deeper understanding of their processes of SVL during their transition within the UK. In addition, the particularisation of this case study tries to offer insights which can be transferred to other similar contexts (see also Richards, 2003).

Secondly, the study argued against de-contextualising SVL, and it aims to understand learners' SVL under different contextual conditions and explore their interaction with various aspects of their contexts. One of the essential characteristics of case studies is that they allow researchers to work with temporally and contextually situated phenomena (Duff, 2008, Richards, 2011). Although case studies focus on a particular unit or units, it is important not to separate the phenomena from their contexts. This

approach is very closely related to the sociocultural aspect of my theoretical framework.

Thirdly, case studies can show the complexities of the phenomena under investigation through drawing on multiple data resources (Merriam, 1998; Richards, 2003). In relation to my study, multiple data sources can help reveal the complexities of the target phenomenon from different perspectives. While some traditions such as ethnography have to contain certain core data collection methods, case studies seem to be more flexible in terms of what kind of research methods can be used. They can use any combination of qualitative methods, quantitative methods or mixed methods.

In relation to my research aims above, a case study design which employs a set of qualitative methods was chosen for researching the process of SVL. In particular, this approach is useful for researching learners' development in complex phenomena over time (van Lier, 2005: 195). In relation to my research questions, the case study approach enables me to explore the dynamics underlying students' SVL. Although the ethnographic tradition also covers some of the characteristics above (e.g. in-depth and complexity), this study is not considered to be within this tradition. According to Richards (2003, 2011), it is possible and legitimate for researchers to use 'ethnographic' methods, particularly observation and interviews; but this does not mean that they are working within this tradition. Ethnography demands extended immersion in one site and participant observation is essential. My research did not fall

into this tradition, although the core ethnographic methods of observation and interviews were used in my study.

3.1.1 A multiple-case design

This study used a multiple-case study design. By comparison with the single case design, the multiple-case study design is used to study a number of cases together in order to explore differences and similarities within and between cases and provides more compelling evidence of particular phenomena (Duff, 2008; Yin, 2009). In relation to Yin's (2003) proposed case study designs and my research questions, I have developed my own design (see Figure 3.2).

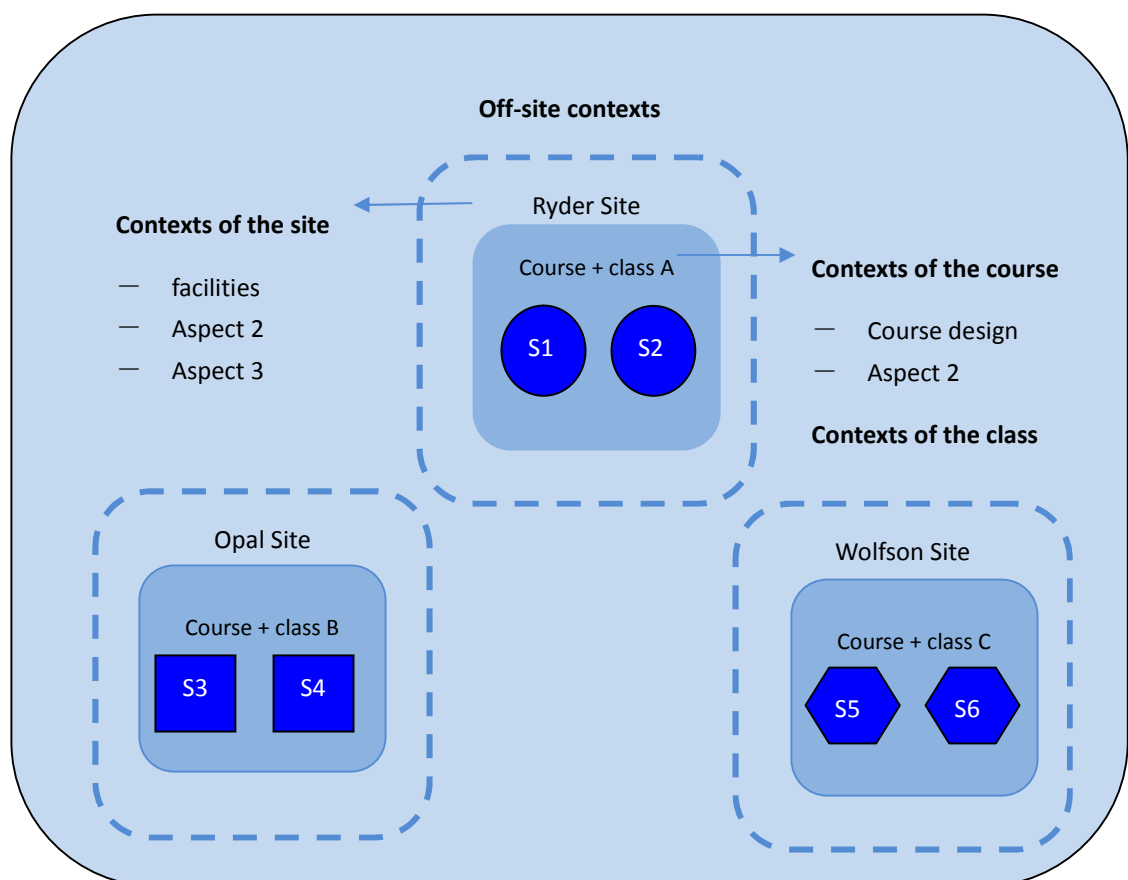


Figure 3.1 A multiple case study design

As mentioned before, the aim of this study is to investigate the strategic processes of Chinese students learning vocabulary in the UK. To study this phenomenon, the student needs to be the focus of this case study, because the mental process and observable behaviours for SVL; and agency for managing and interacting with a plethora of cognitive and contextual factors all need to be studied through the student. Therefore, the six students presented in the heart of the diagram above were selected as principal cases as part of this multiple case study.

Most importantly, these six student cases were not isolated from their contexts. Both my theoretical framework and propositions stress that SVL is a temporally and contextually situated phenomenon and there seems to be a dynamic interaction between learner agency and contextual mediation underlying the strategic learning process. It is important to draw on the ways in which aspects of their contexts interact with students' SVL and this can help have a better understanding of the nature of the individual student cases. Therefore, in relation to my theoretical framework, their processes of SVL were studied in contexts at different levels (see Figure 3.2). At the class level, I looked at how the students interacted with various aspects of a lesson (such as group processes and activity requirements) to manage their SVL, and their strategy use across different lessons (such as different lesson structures). The interaction between contextual factors at the level of the course (such as the course design in each site) and that of the university site (such as the facilities in each university) and the students' strategy use was also examined. As the course design was

closely related to the classroom structure and lesson plan, contextual factors of these two levels were looked at together. At the site level, each site addressed more than classroom learning and encompassed the wider time and space within which VL took place. In other words, each site involved the students' SVL in not only classroom/course settings, but also other settings located on campus (e.g. their on-campus accommodation and library) and their interactions with different mediating agents (such as flatmates and university staff) to facilitate their VL. In addition, off-site settings (including physical settings, such as a restaurants, situated activities and interactions between the student and these aspects) also played an important role in supporting their SVL. Furthermore, both on-campus and off-site settings were also embedded within the broader context of British culture at a macro level. As mentioned before, my theoretical framework suggests a complex interplay between SVL, learners' agency and their contexts. Hence, looking at this multiple-case design, six student cases were endogenously related to contexts of teaching and learning at different levels, but the contexts did not determine their SVL.

3.1.2 Sampling

Three British universities, which were selected, were located in different UK cities, and all provided a pre-university programme (also called International Foundation Programme, IFP) but with different course designs (see more in Appendix 2.1). The particular course designs and different university contexts enabled deeper insights to be gained into the phenomenon (see also Stake, 1995). Qualitative research also aims

at depth of understanding rather than statistical generalisation. For example, Miles and Huberman (1994) claim that qualitative sampling is likely to be *purposeful* rather than random. The reason why the participants were all chosen from the IFP at three universities was because the students who took this course often have just entered the UK and they tended to experience differences in the different learning environments. They tended to devote more time and energy to learning English as they have to pass both an IELTS test and coursework in order to enter British universities successfully. In addition, drawing on my previous study on academic adjustment of Chinese students at British universities (Wang, 2010), intrinsic motivation in improving English was high during their early phase, and seemed to decrease through later their university life. For example, my participants showed stronger willingness to practise new vocabulary through socialising with the local people during their early period in the UK.

Before conducting the actual study, I visited several IFP classes in each site and found time to informally talk with the students. One important step was to identify participants who were willing to share their voices with the researcher and have experienced the phenomenon under research (Creswell, 2008). I got permission to observe two groups of IFP students in each site. In total six Chinese students who indicated their willingness to be interviewed, observed and use VOCABlog² were

² A research tool combines both photovoice and diaries in a multimedia online environment, see more description later.

recruited from three groups of IFP students³.

3.2 Ethics

Classroom observations, interviews, diaries and photovoice were used to collect the data in these three sites (see details in the next section). Some essential ethical issues needed to be considered before and during the data collection, including the consideration in entering the field, informed consent, representation, field relationships, anonymity and confidentiality.

Before conducting the study, an Ethical Approval Form provided by my university was completed. To find out whether I can gain access in the first place, I first contacted the IFP course co-ordinators via my supervisor's personal contact, and gave them a brief introduction about my project. Based on their replies, I found three universities where the gatekeepers showed willingness to take part in my research. I met each IFP course co-ordinator formally and permission was granted indicating reference to my research purposes, the process of data collection and my undertaking not to cause harm to the participants and keeping anonymity and confidentiality for them.

³ My study initially involved twelve participants in three sites in order to avoid the risk of attrition: each class involved two of my participants and four students were recruited from two classes in each site. However, during my data collection, one participant decided to leave UK to another country. Another two participants also informed that they were too busy with their academic workload to participate in my study. Therefore, I had to remove these cases. In order to compare the cases in the same class, I also removed some participants who were from the same class as those students. Finally, six participants were selected to be studied and each site involved two participants who were from the same class.

As the classroom observation focused on the participants' strategic behaviour rather than the teaching performance or other students' learning behaviour, I sought an oral consent from the teachers and other students in the groups. In order to secure teachers' oral permission and support, I also spent time with the teachers who indicated their willingness to participate in the study. I explained to them what I intended to do and got their agreement to observe and video-record their classes but let them know that the video camera was positioned to face the focal students. In particular, I stressed that the aim of my classroom observations is to explore how the learners learn vocabulary strategically not to judge either their teaching or the students' learning performance.

I also visited each group informally and approached all international students asking for their oral consent. As they were all adult students, they were able to make their own decision whether or not to participate in the research. In order to obtain their permission for observation and video-recording, I explained to the students the purpose of the research as well as what would be involved and what I would do with their information. I also let them know the camera would face particular students rather than the whole class, although the whole lesson was recorded, and the video and audio recording would not be disclosed to others other than for research purposes. With the teachers' and students' permission, fifteen lessons were video and audio recorded. However, the focal participants might behave differently when they were observed. To improve this, I visited the classes more often, so they could be more familiar with me and the observation. Furthermore, I tried not to observe them in a

fixed time, so that they could not predict which lesson I actually observed.

I found time to meet all Chinese students in each group, ask for volunteers who were willing to be my participants. In each meeting, the research process was explained in a more detailed way. I would also happy to share my findings with them and offer some feedback on their VL if they wanted, and let them know what expected benefits associated with their participation. Their motivation for participating in my study was raised this way. I provided these participants with several consent forms (see Appendix 2.2) to sign and offered them the right to withdraw from the investigation at any time. The participants also signed the photo release form and all of them gave me permission to observe, analyse and release their photos. Some of them did not want to show their faces but accepted their photos with faces pixelated. When other people, who were not my participants, appeared in the photos, they were also pixelated in order to protect their privacy.

I also let them know that I would keep the data secure in my accommodation. The video and audio data was kept in the computer which was only be used for research purposes and other written data was kept in separate files. The data would be stored for ten years until all subsequent publications are in press. I would show them any work based on this research which might be published, where we can check the accuracy of my interpretation and it can be edited through our negotiation.

I realised that building relationships with the participants was important and this affected the ways how they reacted when collecting the data (see also Richards, 2003). An emic (or insider's) perspective was taken to help the researcher explore more meaningful and in-depth data from the participants. A transition from an etic (or outsider's position) to a more emic perspective was experienced through the research process. Initially, the incentive which was provided for the participants was that I could offer some support to help them settle down and provide some advice for their daily life difficulties. This worked well during their early period in the UK, but later on they asked much more extra help for VL and their academic life.

I kept a research journal of what intervention I had with what effects (see my diaries in Appendix 2.3). For example, they sometimes asked for strategic advice for VL. I normally suggested some possible ways for them to choose. From their data, I found that they might not use the strategies which I suggested. However, some students indeed modified their strategy use in related to my advice. In these cases, the researcher also became a 'social agent' to give some insights to their SVL. I also found that it was better to build a close relationship with the participants rather than to be a total 'outsider', because this made participants more willing to participate in the research process and share their experiences with the researcher. I also added some regular informal conversations and offered extra help to them (such as proof-reading of their essays, and giving advice for applying to universities, also see Appendix 2.3). To reduce our distance, I let them know that I also attended the IFP before and

experiences similar difficulties and problems like them. It was also important to make more efforts including triangulation and member checks with participants (see more in the sections below) in order to co-construct knowledge with them.

All information which they provided in the study was treated with confidentiality. This means both not discussing information provided by the participants with others and anonymisation of the data (Wiles et al. 2008). To protect their anonymity, I did not include information about any individual participant and university site that enabled them to be identified (Walford, 2005). Therefore, a pseudonym was assigned to each participant and university site.

3.3 Data collection methods and procedures

About nine months were spent collecting the data using three data collection methods: classroom observations, interviews and VOCABlog (see more in Table 2 below). In addition, in order to improve the validity and reliability of the research findings, *methodological triangulation* (Patton, 2002: 247) (see Figure 3.2) was used to apply different methods to the same subjects in the study; and to apply the same methods to different aspects that are considered in my study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998: 42). For example, further triangulation which was provided by interviews with participants brought evidence of the validity of research outcomes through their diary posts.

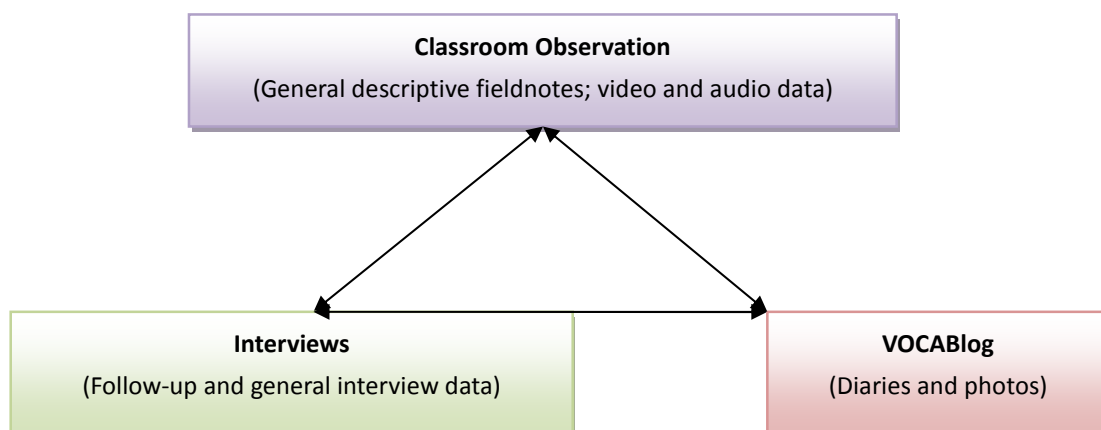


Figure 3.2 Design of methodological triangulation

The methods of classroom observation, general interviews, follow-up interviews and VOCABlog (including photovoice and online diaries) were all used to explore the participants' use of VLSs in the classroom (see their links in Figure 3.3). In particular, classroom observation and follow-up interviews were conducted in relation to their strategy use in particular English language lessons. General interviews and the VOCABlog were used to investigate the participants' strategy use across different English language lessons and in the other subject-related classes (e.g. the class of Mathematics). Both general interviews and VOCABlog were also used to explore their strategic vocabulary learning outside the classroom (e.g. in their accommodation and in the street).

General interviews were conducted first with the participants at the very beginning of the academic year (see the sequences in Figure 3.3). These initial interviews were used to know more about the participants themselves and their previous vocabulary learning experiences. They were conducted to help the researcher generate some

more meaningful interview questions to the participants later. Also, through the initial interviews, the participants became more familiar with the researcher and their anxiety of being observed in the classroom for the first time was reduced. After initial interviews, the classroom observations started during the middle of October in 2011 at three universities (also see the time scale in Table 2 below). With regard to follow-up interviews, they were conducted after each classroom observation and were used to explore their strategy use in that particular lesson (see more details in 3.3.2.1). By comparison with the interviews and classroom observations, I used a much longer time to get the VOCABlog started, because I needed to explain to each participant about how to use the VOCABlog and provide extra time for them to try it. Most students started to use it in the middle of November, 2011 and two students started to use it in December, 2011.

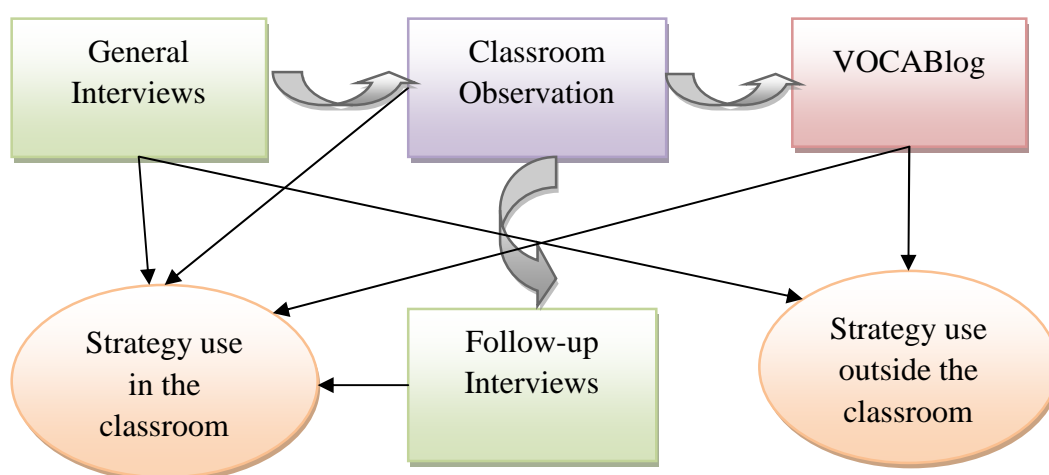


Figure 3.3 The links between different methods and their sequencing

3.3.1 Observation

From the mid 70s to the mid 80s, observation was used frequently for investigating LLSs. In particular, some researchers (Stern, 1975; Wesche, 1975; Wong-Fillmore, 1976; Naiman et al. 1978/1996; Rubin, 1981; Chesterfield and Chesterfield 1985) used it as a main method to identify what strategies might be employed either by successful language learners or young learners.

Two main features of classroom observation can be identified. Firstly, although it was difficult to record learners' mental operations, early LLS researchers indicated that LLSs can be identified from learners' physical behaviours through observation and such observations helped them to exemplify the mental process of the learners and elicit some observable strategies. For example, in Rubin's (1981) study, cognitive processes (e.g. memorisation, monitoring and guessing) were identified through some observable strategies (e.g. Memorisation was associated with taking notes of new items; Monitoring was associated with correcting error in own/other's vocabulary.) From their observation, Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1985) provided many examples to elicit LLSs in a productive way. For example, "When the aide corrects someone else, saying 'only' in a correcting tone, one learner repeats 'only' was used to exemplify the strategy *repetition*."

The second main feature is that many observed strategies are related to social dimensions of language learning. For example, Wong-Fillmore (1976) identified some

social strategies (e.g. join a group) through her class observation and stressed their importance in language learning. Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1985) expanded the conceptualisation of LLSs and combined both communication strategies and strategies for developing sociolinguistic competence in their observation schedule. Based on their class observation, they found that some social-related strategies (e.g. role play: spontaneous practices of the target language in interaction with others) and communication strategies (e.g. practising the target language with others) increased learners' exposure to the target language and enhanced their motivation to learn.

However, LLSs are cognitive in nature, and, from a cognitive perspective researchers argue that, for the most part, LLSs are associated with unobservable inner mental operations. Therefore, observation is still seen as a limited research tool (Rubin, 1981; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Cohen, 1998). More recently, researchers have reconsidered observation and stress its importance in strategy research. To overcome the limitation above, White et al. (2007) suggest that combining classroom observation with other research methods can be an efficient way to capture both observable and unobservable learners' strategies. In relation to my study, some unobservable VLSs and mental processes can be identified from learners' physical behaviours through observation. These were further explored and compared with the follow-up student interviews. Here, observation and interviews interacted together. The observation suggests probes for interviews, while interviews offer leads for the researcher's observations (Tjora, 2006). In addition, Macaro (2001: 66) suggests that

it is useful to take fieldnotes, because it is a less time-consuming way of observing strategy use compared with think-aloud protocol. In particular, he highlighted that this technique can make a contribution in classroom-based action research on LLSs. For example, teachers could use fieldnotes to observe how their learners are learning for a shorter duration from which some sort of systematic pattern in strategy use may start to emerge. Also, researchers can observe which students are taking notes of what is being said during the lesson. They can also observe which students ask peers for help and in general which students like to collaborate in their language learning. Teachers can assess such observations to impact on their strategy instruction.

More recently, LLSs have been viewed (e.g. Parks and Raymond, 2004; Lamprakaki, 2007; Winke and Abbuhl, 2007; Al-Busaidi, 2009) not only from a cognitive perspective but also from a sociocultural perspective. In other words, LLSs are not exclusively part of an inner mental process; social processes (e.g. a strategy like interacting with native speakers) also facilitate language learning. Therefore, the researchers above use classroom observation together with other research methods (e.g. interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and diaries) to investigate LLSs. Observations in previous studies (Parks and Raymond, 2004; Lamprakaki, 2007; Al-Busaidi, 2009) were recorded based on fieldnotes in the form of detailed descriptions of the behaviours of the learners. In contrast, based on their (input-based, output-based and cognitive-based) taxonomy, Winke and Abbuhl (2007) developed an observation schedule and applied a more structured observation procedure in their

research. One common feature among these four studies is that the role of social processes in LLS development is seen as one particularly important aspect; and the observations focus on the student/student and student/teacher verbal interaction, the teachers' or peers' feedback to students' response and the correction of errors made both in oral and written form. Observation seems to help both capture learners' verbal interaction with others and identify their social strategies. Hence, in my view, observation still holds an important place in strategy research and thus it was used in this study together with interviews and VOCABlog.

I used a less structured observation approach into the main study. The fieldnote format (see Appendix 2.4.1) was divided by different classroom activities. For each activity, I left much free space to write the notes, and I also wrote several aspects down on the first page of my fieldnotes every time, including the participants, the teacher, peers and artefacts. This format allows the researcher to have much more flexibility to explore learner's strategic behaviours, raise more questions for the follow-up interview and also provide some focuses to enhance the reliability of the data. Furthermore, it ensured that the participants were not treated in isolation. They were observed within the context of teaching and learning (i.e. their interaction with the teacher, peers and artefacts). I did not note down very detailed information about focal students' learning behaviour because the use of video-recording and audio-recording can help capture observable behaviours and record the verbal interaction. Rather, fieldnotes were taken in the form of a description of the focal students' strategic

behaviours which I had questions about, and I also recorded these questions, which were used in the follow-up interview, next to the description in the fieldnote (see a sample in Appendix 2.4.2). For example, I identified some questions about their unobservable strategic behaviour. In addition, the fieldnotes included my own reflections and comment but were kept separate from the main notes.

3.3.1.1 Conducting the observation

The classroom observation was carried out in three groups with a particular focus on six participants from October 2011 to April, 2012 at three sites. Fifteen lessons were observed and two participants were observed in each lesson (see Table 2 below). I normally sat at the back of the classroom but sometimes the teacher and students invited me to sit with them together so as not to interrupt the classroom activities and interactions. Both video-recording and audio-recording were used to supplement my observation (see a sample of my observation data in Appendix 2.4.3). In addition, a voice-recorder was given to each participant to help record their oral interaction with others. The purpose was to explore what social strategies they used to help them learn vocabulary. Immediately after each observation, I identified and developed the 'writable' notes into 'readable' interview questions and used them in the follow-up interviews.

3.3.2 Interviews

By comparison with questionnaires, a major advantage of interviews is to allow

interviewers to follow up ideas, discover and develop responses, examine feelings (Altschuld and Lower, 1984; Bell, 1987) and produce a deeper understanding of data (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990: 118). In particular, retrospective interviews are considered as an important tool offering opportunities for 'exploration and elaboration of aspects of strategy use' (White et al. 2007). Since I wanted to explore how the students varied their strategy use across different settings, conducting general interviews in a retrospective way helped them to retrieve their thoughts regarding their processes of SVL both inside and outside the classroom, recall and reflect on any changes, and discuss their feelings about VLS use (see also Gao, 2003: 44).

Interviews have been also viewed as a useful method to obtain information about the cognitive and psycholinguistic processes underlying language performance (Cohen, 1998; Dörnyei, 2007). For example, students may make mental connections between the new vocabulary and their first language, and use these as a strategy to enhance their VL. However, they may not necessarily express this strategy explicitly in the class. Therefore, besides the classroom observation, I also conducted some follow-up interviews through using stimulated recall to elicit their unobservable strategic behaviour occurred during the classroom and carried out some general interviews in a semi-structured way to explore their strategy use outside the classroom. As suggested before in the literature review (see Chapter 2), many researchers have supplemented oral interviews with a written questionnaire in VLS studies (e.g. Leeke and Shaw, 2000; Mizumoto and Takeuchi, 2009). They tend to use interviews to gain a

deeper understanding of LLS use and provide an interpretative context for the quantitative results from the questionnaires. In my study, follow-up interviews were used to supplement the classroom observation, because a more objective and impartial perspective could be provided by external observational records rather than having the study only rely on data offered by learners (Cohen, 1998).

The simulated-recall interviews were carried out in order to ask the participants to recall their strategy use in the previous lesson. A stimulus was used to help them to retrieve their relevant thoughts, such as watching their own performance on the video recording of the classroom observation, listening to an audio recording of their verbal interaction with their peers in one particular group activity or showing them the handouts and worksheets they used during the lesson. The advantage of stimulated recall is that it can improve the accuracy of recall and it can be also used as a means of triangulation and further exploration (Gass and Mackey, 2000). However, some potential pitfalls and problems have been also identified in association with this method. One potential pitfall in conducting stimulated recalls relates to the duration of time between the event itself and the stimulated recall. As time passes, participants' memory becomes less accurate or they reflect on a combination of experience and other related memories (Gass and Mackey, 2000; Lyle, 2003; Baker and Lee, 2011). In order to improve the quality of the stimulated-recall data, Dörnyei (2007) suggests that researchers need to keep the interval as short as possible and should not exceed two days. In the light of this, I

tried as far as possible to conduct most follow-up interviews within the same day of the classroom observation. However, sometimes the participants felt too tired to do the follow-up interview on the same day of the classroom observation, in which case I asked them to suggest a time on the next day. However, I always kept the duration within two days. Another limitation to stimulated recall is that participants may feel discomfort with the stimulus which the researcher selects which may negatively influence their recall processes (Lyle, 2003). For example, although video recording is often considered as the strongest recall stimulus, Yinger (1986) claimed that participants may be distracted by their image appearing on video. In order to reduce the anxiety of the participants in this present study, I discussed the stimulus which I selected with the participants and also encouraged them to select their own stimulus to support their recall. Only one participant was not willing to use the video recording as the stimulus. Instead, she chose to aid her recall with an audio recording of her verbal interaction. Furthermore, the language of the recall sessions is often considered as another potential procedural problem (Gass and Mackey, 2000). If the event is carried out in the L2, lower-proficiency participants might misunderstand some interview questions, or they may concentrate on speaking L2 correctly. Both of these might limit their cognitive capacity to recall their previous strategic learning experiences (White, Schramm and Chamot, 2007). This was why I conducted all stimulated-recall interviews in the first language of all the participants in my study (i.e. Chinese).

3.3.2.1 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way from October 2011 to June 2012. Unlike structured and unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews can ensure the respondents follow the interview guide and answer crucial questions. They also allow both researchers and respondents to have flexibility to ask or talk what is important to them (Robson, 1993; Bryman, 2001). Thirty follow-up interviews were carried out to provide more in-depth data for the classroom observations and forty-two general interviews were conducted to explore the experience of SVL generally (see Table 2 below). The six participants were interviewed separately and the interviews were audio-recorded with their permission. They all preferred to use their mother tongue during the interview, i.e. Chinese rather than English, because they felt more comfortable using their mother tongue to talk about their experience and feelings. Moreover, as they are all English language learners, using their mother tongue helped them express themselves more clearly and accurately.

Before conducting the main interviews, I arranged some initial individual interviews with these participants. The initial interviews were kept open and less-structured. The purposes of conducting these were to know more about the participants themselves and find out about their previous experience of learning vocabulary in China and how they learned English vocabulary in general. I also elicited information from each of them relating to their personal approach to learning vocabulary. These initial interviews helped generate some useful questions of general interviews later and made

the questions more meaningful to the participants.

Each of the follow-up interviews ranged between 40 and 60 minutes. After observing the class, I tried to conduct the follow-up interview with the participants on the same day or the following day. This is because the longer the duration, the more errors in prior thoughts would occur (Dörnyei, 2007). I often observed the morning class, prepared the interview guide and interviewed the students in the afternoon. I tried to provide richer contextual information (e.g. watching their video recordings and giving them some examples) to help jog their memories (see also Mackey and Gass, 2005).

The purpose of conducting follow-up interviews was to provide a deeper understanding of their SVL in the classroom setting and elicit some unobservable mental processes in the class from the respondents. The interview questions, derived from the research questions and the propositions, include four themes: a) learners' strategic behaviours, b) interaction with their teachers, c) interaction with their peers and d) interaction with other material resources in SVL. Based on my initial interviews, I found that the students naturally talked about their learning experience outside the classroom although the follow-up interview focused on their SVL in the class. Therefore, I added one theme in the guide, e) attempts to learn vocabulary outside the classroom. Each interview guide (see a sample in Appendix 2.5.1) differed because each participant was in a different teaching and learning setting. Derived from the five themes above, each interview guide was generated from the classroom

observation and fieldnotes for every participant. This helped make the interview questions more meaningful for each participant. These guides were not used to place them in a structured setting. Rather, they guided them to describe their SVL processes during the previous lesson (see a sample of follow-up interview data in Appendix 2.5.2).

Forty-two general interviews in total were conducted through the academic year to find out how six Chinese students learnt words strategically, particularly outside the classroom. Each of the interviews ranged approximately 60 minutes. The participants were interviewed separately in their free time in a semi-structured way. Derived from the research questions above, a number of interview topics were generated in relation to their attempts at learning words; efforts to consolidate vocabulary; their agency in terms of strategic self-regulation; their interaction with social resources (e.g. language teachers and peers) and material resources (e.g. vocabulary notebook and dictionary) in VL; vocabulary learning improvement and modifications in relation to the unfamiliar contexts which arise from the changes in their learning milieus. The interview guide (see a sample in Appendix 2.5.3) included some general questions which were generated from the topics above and were similar to each participant and some specific questions which were generated from their diaries and photos from VOCABlog (see a sample of general interview data in Appendix 2.5.4).

After all data collections, I also carried out member checking through interviews in

June and checked my interpretations of the data with the participants again. The purposes of doing this were to co-construct the knowledge with the participants and improve the accuracy of my interpretations.

3.4.3 VOCABlog

Both photovoice and learning diaries were considered as useful methodological approaches to elicit learners' voice about their experience of SVL and their changes in strategy use. Yet, they also have their limitations. The advantages and limitations of using these two approaches will be discussed in relation to relevant empirical studies and a VOCABlog in which a combination of both photovoice and diaries was used to try to overcome some of the problems in my study.

3.3.3.1 Photovoice

Photovoice is a community and participatory research method that gives a voice to people (e.g. vocabulary learners) through a photographic technique so that they can act as recorders to identify and represent their concerns and strengths (Wang and Burris, 1997). In my study, six participants were asked to photograph objects, activities, events, anything which they thought were relevant to their SVL. They then made a choice to select the photographs and also described their SVL processes through the photographs to the researcher.

Although there seems to be little or no LLS research (including VLS research) which

uses this method, I believe that photovoice can offer a number of distinctive contributions to VLS research. In relation to my study, drawing on both a cognitive and sociocultural perspective, the relationship between the individual and other social resources in learners' SVL can be shown. Photovoice stresses consciousness of self in learning and the active voice of the participant of knowledge rather than the researcher of knowledge. Most importantly, this bottom-up approach is also social in nature and reconnects the self and society (Chio and Fandt, 2007). It encourages participants to engage with a variety of social settings (e.g. everyday conversation and educational settings) and tells the researcher how they interact with other social factors in SVL including the meanings and experiences behind the photographs.

Photovoice can not only be a useful method in VLS research, but also an important strategy for learning vocabulary itself. It offers more opportunities for learners to verbalise their processes of VL and make their learning process explicit. The students play a central role in the research and make their choices to take and select photographs for representing their ideas. This open lens provides learners with a way to share their voice with the research (Wang and Burris, 1997). This openness can increase their willingness to use and practise new vocabulary through communicating and interacting with the researcher. Furthermore, the way of taking, selecting and representing their photographs becomes a part of a process of strategic self-regulation.

By comparison with other approaches (e.g. surveys and interviews), photovoice can

be also an important mediational tool to raise learners' metacognitive awareness. It does not simply offer students a way to tell their stories, but also it is a kind of 'retrospective engagement and self-reflection' between students and photographs (Chio and Fandt, 2007: 490). In relation to my study, the participants reflected critically on the process of SVL (how to combine VLSs for improving their vocabulary) and changes in strategy use. Through the mediational tool of the photograph, they also appeared to take more responsibility for their own learning and consider potential solutions to the challenges (e.g. learning vocabulary more effectively). By comparison with diaries, it is also easier to keep a record of their experience and more motivating for them to make and select digital photographs.

However, the reliability of photovoice is often questioned because personal judgement might be involved at different levels of representation, for example, what the participant chose not to photograph and who selected which photograph to discuss. Therefore, one of the purposes for using photovoice was to explore the reasons why they took and chose these photographs to represent and what social factors influenced their decision-making. As their personal choice was already part of their learning process and seemed to play an important role in their self-regulation. Furthermore, a forum was set up in the VOCABlog to open a further discussion about their photos between participants and the researcher and promote negotiation and co-construction of knowledge. Chio and Fandt's (2007) procedure for planning and implementing photovoice is adapted in my study. I first designed a photovoice guide including

relevant themes and topics; second, asked students to take photographs over time in relation to the themes and topics, and keep useful notes if necessary; third, they selected and presented the photographs including their descriptions; and finally I discussed the important issues with them either in the forum or in the interviews.

3.3.3.2 Diaries

The participants were asked to keep a learner diary in which they recorded all the activities that brought them into contact with SVL and describe those events they thought of interest. The purposes of using learning diaries were similar to photovoice and were to discover students' perspectives on how they acquired new vocabulary and how they managed the learning difficulties and combined VLSs to achieve learning goals over time, and to encourage them to reflect on their changes in strategy use. The advantages of using diaries in LLS research is that their writing can be analysed from different perspectives, to provide evidence of the influence of mediating agents and cultural artefacts and to note changes in strategy use (Cohen and Macaro, 2007). In addition, diaries themselves can be a new form of mediation to enable the participants to reflect on their processes of SVL and think about how to learn language effectively via which methods (see also Lantolf, 2000; Rubin, 2003). Most importantly, combined with other research methods, written diaries have been used as an important introspective tool in LLS research (e.g. Oxford et al., 1996; Parks and Raymond, 2004). The use of diaries is likely to apply in real-time and record learners' actual changes over time rather than purely report their changes in strategy use after the process (Dörnyei, 2007).

One difficulty of using this method is that it is not easy to require students to maintain high quality diaries over time since after a period of time they might lose their interests and willingness to write. More recently, writing online blogs seems to be a new trend which is becoming very popular among the young generation in China (*China Daily*, 2011). International Chinese learners would be more motivated to keep online diaries through their blogs.

3.3.3.3 VOCABlog

Reviewing the methods above, photovoice and diaries, they appear to have both advantages and limitations for researching SVL. One way of improving the quality of this study was by creating a blog which combined both photovoice and diaries in a multimedia online environment. This online social network was used to elicit learners' own voices about SVL, explore their strategy use and improvement in strategic self-regulation. From a sociocultural perspective, it was also used as a mediational tool to interact with the researcher and participants, and help them reflect on their changes and learning processes. Since it was designed for researching VL, I called it 'VOCABlog'.

The VOCABlog was trialled with five students over four weeks before the actual study (Wang, 2011a, b). I also carried out some informal interviews about the design of the VOCABlog with these students. Based on their feedback, the initial design of

VOCABlog was modified. For example, they suggested that it would be better to provide a guideline in Chinese rather than English for them to write their diaries and describe their photos. These guidelines also needed to be put in the home page rather than a different web page so it was more convenient for them to follow these guidelines (see my revised version in Appendix 2.5.1).

The participants in this study could access the blog anytime to upload their photographs and write their diaries, but they were encouraged to use it at least twice a month. The VOCABlog uses internet technologies to: a) upload their photographs about their SVL, post their comments and either upload their voice recording or post their written form of more detailed descriptions and explanations of the photographs (e.g. reasons of taking and selecting the photograph), b) write online diaries and c) exchange ideas or feelings about their SVL or ask questions between the researcher and participants. Some guidelines (see Appendix 2.6.1) and online tutorials for explaining how to take and describe the vocabulary photos, keep e-diaries and instructions for using this site are put in the VOCABlog. Subjects' queries about using the site or VL can be emailed internally through the VOCABlog.

Subjects' written description of the photos and diaries could be written in either English or their mother tongue, Chinese. As they had higher motivation to use English, most participants preferred to write in English rather than Chinese or use a code-switching. 90 diary entries and 48 photographs including the students' written

explanation of the photographs were collected from November 2011 to June 2012

(see Table 2 below and a sample of VOCABlog data in Appendix 2.6.2).

3.4 Data analysis

Methods / Students	Classroom observation	Follow-up and General interviews	VOCABlog (Diary entries and Photos)
Student Xia (Ryder site)	5 lessons observed	5 Follow-up + 6 General interviews	15 Entries + 7 Photos
Student Wu (Ryder site)		5 Follow-up + 6 General interviews	16 Entries + 8 Photos
Student Ji (Opal site)	5 lessons observed	5 Follow-up + 8 General interviews	12 Entries + 9 Photos
Student Qa (Opal site)		5 Follow-up + 8 General interviews	17 Entries + 8 Photos
Student Bo (Wolfson site)	5 lessons observed	5 Follow-up + 7 General interviews	18 Entries + 9 Photos
Student Ke (Wolfson site)		5 Follow-up + 7 General interviews	12 Entries + 7 Photos
Total number	15 lessons observed	30 Follow-up + 42 General interviews	90 Entries and 48 photographs
Time scale	October 2011 to April, 2012	October 2011 to June 2012	November 2011 to June 2012

Table 2 The extent of the data collected and the time scale

The data which was collected from classroom observation, interviews and VOCABlog (see Table 2 above) was analysed at two levels. Firstly, I carried out a direct and explicit analysis of data gained from each instrument. During this process, I decided to analyse the data manually and inductively because I believe that the researcher could provide more meaningful analysis through directly interacting with the data compared with an analysis done by computer programmes. The direct analysis includes thinking

about the data in relation to the aims of the project in order to inform categorisation, coding the data in order to put it into categories, reflecting on the data, organising the data in order to look for connections, relationships, patterns and themes, connecting discoveries to analytical and conceptual framework in order to seek explanations and understanding (Richards, 2003, see Figure 3.4). Secondly, after drawing on initial conclusions, I consolidated the coded and categorised data from different sources in the first level and sought a synthesis and interpretation of my results.

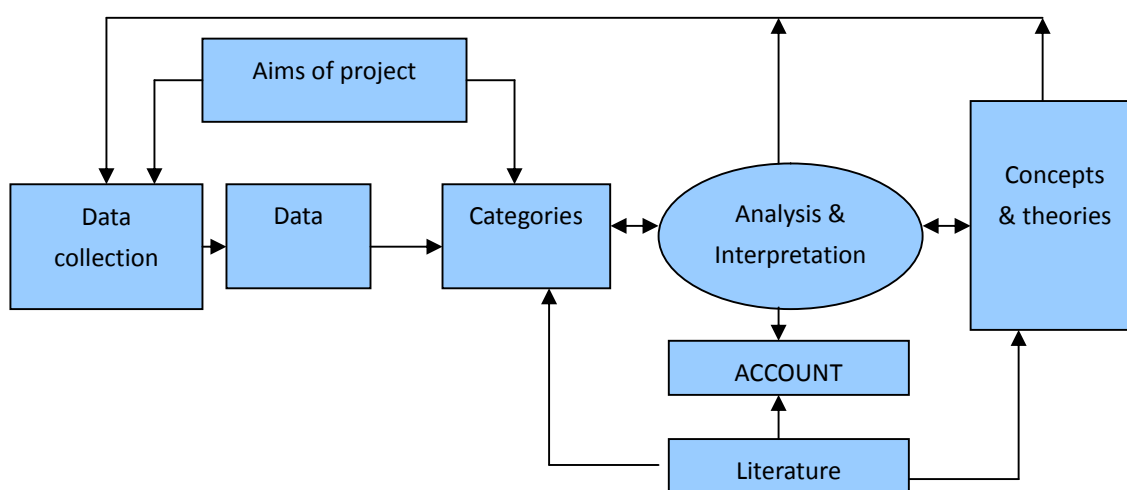


Figure 3.4 The process of analysis (adopted from Richards 2003: 271)

3.4.1 Analysing classroom observation

The video-recording of the classroom observations along with their audio-recording and fieldnotes were transcribed and combined together (see a sample in Appendix 2.6.3). As mentioned above, I also gave each participant a voice-recorder to record their verbal interaction with others. The audio-recording of each participant's oral interaction was transcribed and integrated into the main transcription of classroom observation. Through transcribing their verbal interaction, the video-recording was

also used to find out some non-verbal aspects where were added into the transcription. I analysed the data following the procedures suggested by several researchers (e.g. Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Creswell, 2003 and Richards, 2003). The transcriptions of classroom observations started with initial detailed coding. They were worked through line by line and coded freely in order to explore any emergent themes or issues within the data and generate initial labels. These initial labels were used to identify categories (Creswell, 2003; Richards, 2003).

The initial coding was followed by developing categories. An adequate category includes a number of essential features, and it needs to be analytically useful, conceptually coherent, empirically relevant and practically applicable (Richards, 2003: 276). Although coding the data itself was used as a major source to develop categories, some other sources, including memos and notes on observations and theoretical context and ideas from reading, also helped the process. A systematic organisation stresses the importance of two steps, splitting categories in order to look for greater resolution and detail and slicing them to seek greater integration and scope (Dey, 1993). I separated, sorted and recombined them manually and inductively and this is because using this technique could provide more opportunities to arrange information and notice the relationships between the categories (see also Wolcott, 2001).

To develop my analysis, I integrated Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach (see Figure 3.5) into my direct analysis. Although their approach is based on grounded theory, it

seems to be a more broadly integrated approach which also allows flexibility for the researcher to organise the data in a practical way not to constrain the process into a specific set of procedures (Richards, 2003). The themes gradually emerged through the process of coding which involved *open coding*, *axial coding* and *selective coding* (See Figure 3.5).

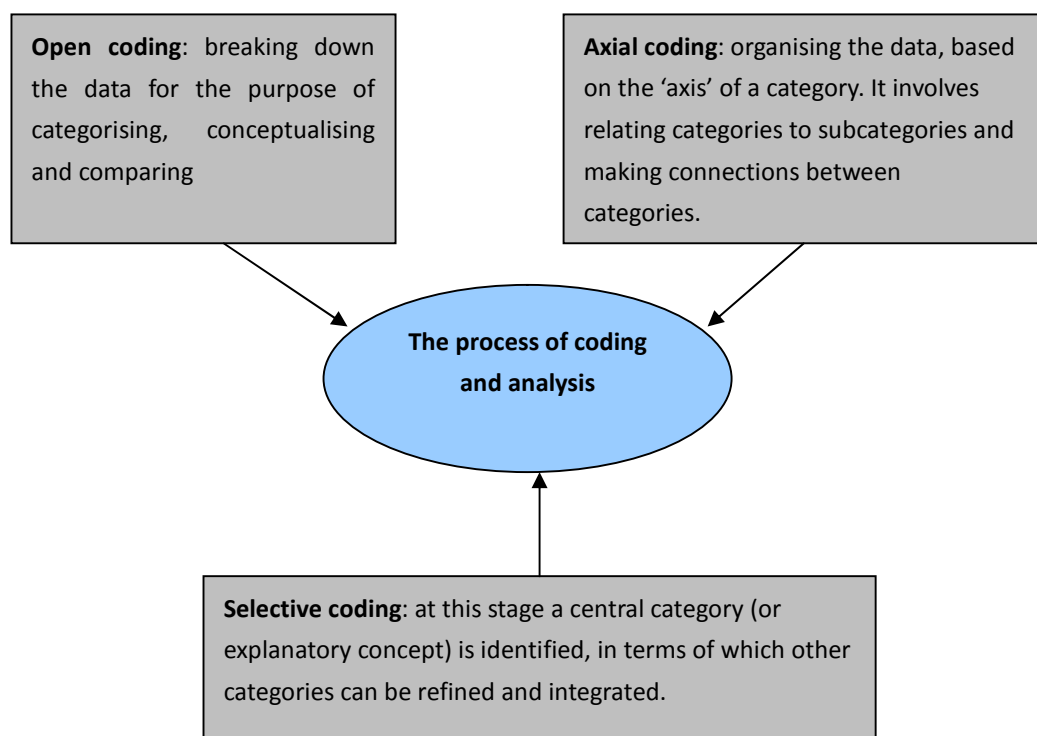


Figure 3.5 An approach to analysis (Richards, 2003: 276)

The careful analysis is needed in order to get perspectives on the data which leads to interpretation. In relation to my research questions and purposes, I contrasted different themes and interconnected them. Then, I stood back and looked for common or different patterns and themes in order to ‘cluster’ key issues in my data and take steps towards drawing conclusions (Bell, 1987). Finally, to make meaning of the data, it also included the researcher’s personal interpretation but supported by evidence, a

comparison of the findings with information from the literature or theories and suggestion of further questions raised by the data (Creswell, 2003).

3.4.2 Analysing the interviews

The audio-recordings of the student interviews were transcribed in Chinese (see a sample in Appendix 2.6.2 and 2.6.4). The interview data was also analysed in their original language (Chinese). The purpose for doing this is to make my interpretation closer to the interviewees' original ideas and increase the reliability of the data analysis.

Drawing on the criteria proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), I collected each respondent's answers together and read them through. Notes and relevant comments were also looked at in order to retrospectively structure the responses. A rough summary of each interview was prepared and this was used to simplify the process of constructing each respondent's overview. Coding both follow-up and general interview data adopted a similar approach to that of the classroom observation (see section 3.6.1 above). The direct analysis looked at participants' processes of SVL in relation to different settings and milieus, and their perceptions and reflection about their strategic use from their interview data, where it can be anticipated that both similar and different perspectives were gained from them. Then, the follow-up interview data was also compared with and matched to the general interview data. In addition, it was necessary to do some member checks with the interviewees again in order to present more accurate and reliable interpretation of the data. Finally, the

important points of the analysis were selected and transcribed in English.

3.4.3 Analysing the VOCABlog

The data for the VOCABlog included the visual data (photographs) and written data (the data from their diaries and comments on their photographs). Analysing the photographs which the participants uploaded to the VOCABlog mainly relied on an analysis of the transcription of their written description and explanation of the photographs (see a sample in Appendix 2.6.2). Moreover, only looking at the photographs cannot tell students' stories; and their description and explanation gave the photographs voice. It is useful to initially analyse the photographs together with students' description in terms of some general questions (Silverman, 2000). In relation to my study, these were: a) what the content of each photograph is? b) what the relationship is between the student (photographer) and the people or objects which are shown in the photograph? and c) why they take and select this photograph?

In order to improve on Halbach's (1999) study (see Chapter 2), I drew more attention to the qualitative aspects of the data, and the analysis of written description of the photographs and the online diaries was carried out in the similar way to that of the classroom observations and interviews. The data began with open-minded initial coding, and then was categorised and compared in relation to my research questions to develop the analysis and look for patterns and emerging themes.

3.4.4 Data synthesis

After the direct analysis of the data gained from each instrument, the next level of data analysis includes a synthesis and interpretation of different data sources. During this process, I identified the essential features, consolidated themes among the different sources, and recombined the data in an effort to build a picture that responded to the research questions (Richards, 2003: 270; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009: 280-1).

Student cases were not only studied individually; but I also compared and contrasted cases combining some of them to compare with other cases in order to look for similarities and differences in strategy use/choice and the reasons behind them (see Figure 3.6).

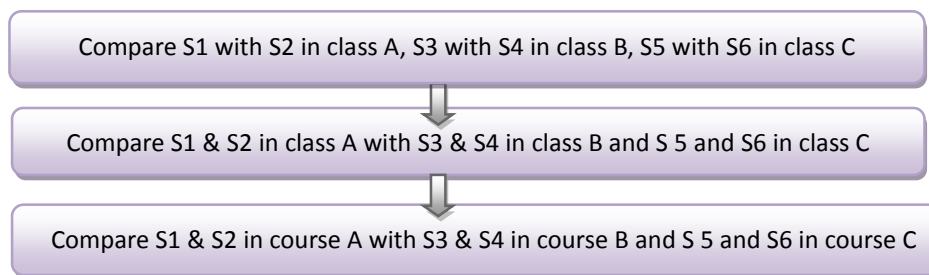


Figure 3.6 Cross-case analysis

3.5 Data Presentation

The following three distinct findings chapters provide a fine-grained description and interpretation of six student cases at three British universities through triangulating the data from different times, settings, participants' perspectives and various sources

of evidence (including interviews, observations, photovoice and diaries). Besides providing an in-depth interpretation of each individual case, the data is presented in the form of three different chapters which correspond to three different university contexts. These accounts of three specific, discrete contexts offer a breadth of strategic vocabulary learning experiences and provide a relatively rich and contextualised picture of learners' strategy use. Moreover, incorporating the learners' voices into the findings increases the richness and transparency of the data. The 'thick description' of their strategy use within three different university contexts also gives a solid foundation for the theoretical conclusions which I will put together in the synthesis and discussion chapter later.

As mentioned above, the data was analysed across six cases. As it involves considerable contextual difference across three university sites, it is difficult to make close and explicit comparisons between students from different universities. Nevertheless, I was able to compare the students who were from the same class, the same course and the same university. Therefore, in each findings chapter, not only do I present the strategy use of each individual student, but I also draw a comparison between the two students who were from the same university, reporting their differences and similarities in strategy use/choice and the reasons behind them.

In each findings chapter, the data is grouped and presented in two ways (see Appendix 1.2). Some sections confirm the categories of data which were generated

in relation to my research questions and theoretical framework. For example, in order to have a better and deeper understanding of the nature of the individual student cases, my theoretical framework stresses the ways in which aspects of their contexts interact with the students' strategy use. Therefore, in each findings chapter, much of the data is grouped and presented in relation to different settings, such as strategy use in the classroom setting and in the out-of-class settings.

Some other sections correspond to the categories which emerged from the data (see Appendix 1.2). However, not all categories which emerged from the data are presented in this thesis and I select some of them particularly in relation to the research questions and my theoretical framework (see Figure 2.1). For example, in Chapter 4, a number of stages of strategic vocabulary learning which were emphasised by the students in the Ryder site closely link to the first research question and thus it is worth reporting them (see Section 4.3.3.1 and 4.3.3.2). The category 'Learning vocabulary through enjoyment' also emerged from the data and is related to the themes 'learning vocabulary through using assistive tools' and 'learners' affective control' in the theoretical framework. The categories 'Varying degrees of consciousness' and 'Inconsistencies in strategy use' which are presented in Chapter 4 show the students' dynamic management of strategic vocabulary learning and are closely related to the third research question. In the Opal site, besides their strategy use in the English language class, the data shows that the two participants made different strategic efforts to learn vocabulary in other modules.

Therefore, it is worth presenting data about their ‘Strategy use in other subject-related modules’. This category reveals an important aspect of my theoretical framework, the interactive process between learners’ strategic efforts and their milieus.

In these three findings chapters, the main headings are all arranged by time, from the time when the students in China to the different terms when they studied in the UK (see Appendix 1.2). The purpose of arranging the main headings in this way is to help readers see the development or changes in their strategy use across time and settings. In both Opal and Wolfson sites, their module designs differed from each academic term and the students tended to vary their strategy use in relation to different module designs. Therefore, the data about their strategy use in each term is presented under each main heading. Unlike the Opal (Chapter 5) and the Wolfson sites (Chapter 6), the IFP course was designed and the modules were arranged in the same way across three terms in the Ryder site. Therefore, the sections of the Chapter 4 are not divided by different academic terms. Rather, the data is presented within the whole academic year (see the heading 4.3) and as mentioned above the subheadings are arranged in relation to the settings and categories emerging from the data.

Chapter 4

Strategic vocabulary learning in context: two cases in the Ryder site

4.1 Context of the two cases

This section provides a background introduction to the two students and their milieus of teaching and learning in the International Foundational Programme (IFP) at Ryder University. Its purpose is twofold: a) to study these two cases in context b) to help to facilitate data analysis in the next section.

The University of Ryder is located in the South-East of England. They offer courses and research in the specialist areas of agriculture and construction management. Its business school is also one of the top ranking business schools based in the Europe and this tends to be an important aspect to attract many Chinese students to choose this university. The university consists of three campuses and the IFP is based on the main campus. The two participants also stayed in the campus accommodation which is close to the town.

The IFP at the Ryder site is a one-year access course which has been especially designed for international students without British A-level qualifications or the equivalent. The IFP provides students with the academic training, language and study skills to start their undergraduate studies with knowledge and prepares them for

undergraduate study in three ways: by providing them with academic training; by developing their English language abilities; and by enabling them to acquire the study skills which they will need on their degree programme (IFP_ Prospectus, 2009).

For these students, the IFP began in late September 2011 and the academic year consisted of three terms of around 12 weeks each, with a two-week vacation in December 2011 and April 2012. The programme offered a range of subjects, such as Economics, International English and Mathematics, and had a similar module design in each term. Students took the module in English and Academic Skills and chose three modules according to their intended degree programme. However, if their English was below a specified level, they had to take an extra module in International English. Their modules were taught through a combination of lectures, small group seminars and individual tutorials. Students were also expected to undertake homework, private study and group discussions after class. In the next section, interaction between their strategy use, individual factors and their learning context will be explored. At the end of the academic year, they were assessed at a standard equivalent to A-level, providing their results were satisfactory, they could then enter their intended undergraduate programmes in this university.

As vocabulary tends to be taught in the module in English and Academic Skills, the classroom observations and follow-up interviews were all conducted within this

module. To find out about the participants' SVL in other subject-related modules, they were invited to talk about it in the general interviews and write about it in the VOCABlog. The English module had a specific content focus on 'Urbanisation and Globalisation' which was applied to its lesson planning. Based on this content, the module was designed to develop students' abilities in four areas: listening, speaking, reading and writing. By the end of the module, students were expected to present ideas and argument with reasonable accuracy both orally and in written form using appropriate academic conventions.

Participants

Two Chinese students who were enrolled in the same group volunteered as my participants to take part in the whole process of my data collection. A brief introduction about their background information is provided below (see also Appendix 2.7):

Wu, who was an 18-year-old male student, came to the UK straightaway after completing his high school in China. He also used one month to prepare for and take the IELTS exam before entering the UK, and went to a private language school and took an IELTS-oriented course to help him improve his English and exam skills. Before coming to the UK, he reached the English level of IELTS 5.5.

Xia was an 18-year-old female student and had also gained a high school diploma before coming to the UK. After completing her high school, she had been to a private language school to prepare for the IELTS exam for three months. Compared with Wu, she obtained a higher IELTS score and reached the English level 6.

This chapter sets out the findings of the two student cases that related to their SVL during the academic year from Oct. 2011 to June 2012 in the Ryder site. The previous VL experiences of these two learners before entering the UK are first presented with the aim to show to what extent the experiences influenced their SVL in the UK. Next, looking across the data set, I present the findings that related to how they managed their VL in relation to their milieus and particular settings in the UK.

4.2 Past vocabulary learning experiences

The two participants reported that intensive reading was seen as the most common way to learn vocabulary both inside and outside their classrooms in China. The findings (see the evidence in the following section) also demonstrated that they tended to combine a number of strategies rather than use any individual strategy, and formed different strategy ‘clusters’ (after Macaro, 2001, 2003, see more in Chapter 2) to suit their contexts and achieve their learning goals. Thus, their SVL seemed to be context-specific and goal-directed.

4.2.1 Dialogic strategy circle

Both Wu and Xia described their VL in their high school before entering the UK. Their Chinese English language teachers normally integrated strategy instruction with explicit instruction of vocabulary through explaining and analysing structures, meanings and usage of both new and useful words:

Extract 4.1

21 ... my teacher selected some useful words in the texts and
22 suggested that it's better to memorise them related to
23 the sentences in the texts...(Wu, GI, 18 Oct. 2011)

Extract 4.2

32 Xia: my teacher usually selected some words from the
33 newspaper, analysed them in context...keeping a
34 vocabulary notebook was often suggested...
39 IR: Did you use a notebook to build vocabulary?
40 Xia: Yes I read this newspaper at home...chose some good
41 words and added them into my notebook. Everyday we
42 had a vocabulary test...she corrected my errors, I
43 compared her corrections with my mistakes. If I
44 wasn't sure I would ask her...Later I reviewed my
45 notebook, recorded my errors (Xia, GI, 18 Oct. 2011)

Extract 4.1 and 4.2 above show that their teachers in China tended to select words for Wu (line 21) and Xia (line 32) and analyse the words through reading (Extract 4.2, line 33). They also offered some strategic advice, such as memorising words in sentences (Extract 4.1, lines 22-3) and keeping a vocabulary notebook (Extract 4.2, lines 33-4). The strategic advice influenced their ways of learning vocabulary; but the participants could also form their own cluster of VLSs to suit their specific contexts. For example:

Extract 4.3

32 IR: Did you follow your teacher's ways of learning words?
33 Wu: Yes, they're good ways...at home I also found some
34 original versions of English reading ...Everyday I'd
35 like to memorise some words from there and underlined
36 their usage in the texts...
39 IR: how did you deal with the unknown words?
40 Wu: I normally checked my E-dictionary first...still not
41 sure about their meaning, then I'd like to ask my
42 teacher... (Wu, GI, 18 Oct. 2011)

To improve his VL, Wu made his own effort to look for more English reading materials after class (see Figure 4.1⁴) and learned vocabulary through reading and underlining and memorising words in context in response to his teacher's suggestions (Extract 4.3, lines 33-6). When encountering unknown words in the text, he combined the strategies which were suggested by his teacher with other discovery strategies (lines 40-42, i.e. checking a dictionary or seeking his teacher's support).

⁴ In relation to my theoretical framework in Chapter 2, I developed a colour scheme to represent participants' strategy use in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. All the aspects in relation to their context were represented in ORANGE; cognitive control (including cognitive strategies) was represented in GREEN; the social side of strategic learning (including social strategies) was represented in RED; metacognitive control (including metacognitive strategies) was represented in BLUE.

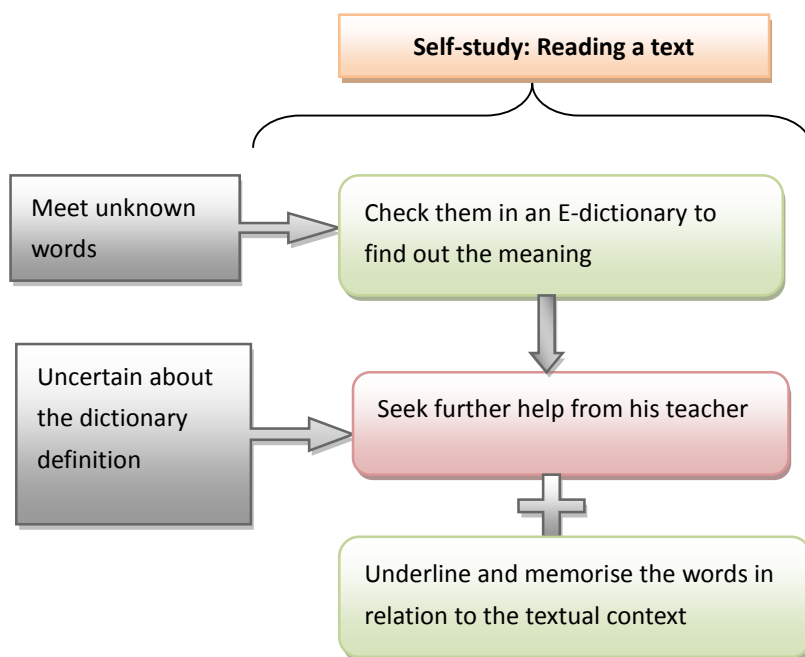


Figure 4.1 A strategy cluster used in one specific out-of-class activity

Looking at Figure 4.1, depending on how certain about the meaning of unknown words after checking a dictionary, he would then decide whether it was necessary to ask for further help. Both Figures 4.1 and 4.2 also illustrate the way in which individual strategies or sequences of strategies do not appear to exist in isolation but emerge in the nexus of particular settings. In response to her teacher's strategic advice, Xia tried to build general vocabulary through choosing some useful words from the newspaper and recording them in her notebook at home (Extract 4.2, lines 40-2). In order to improve her vocabulary knowledge, she also performed another sequential strategy cluster through reviewing her past exam papers (lines 43-7, see Figure 4.2).

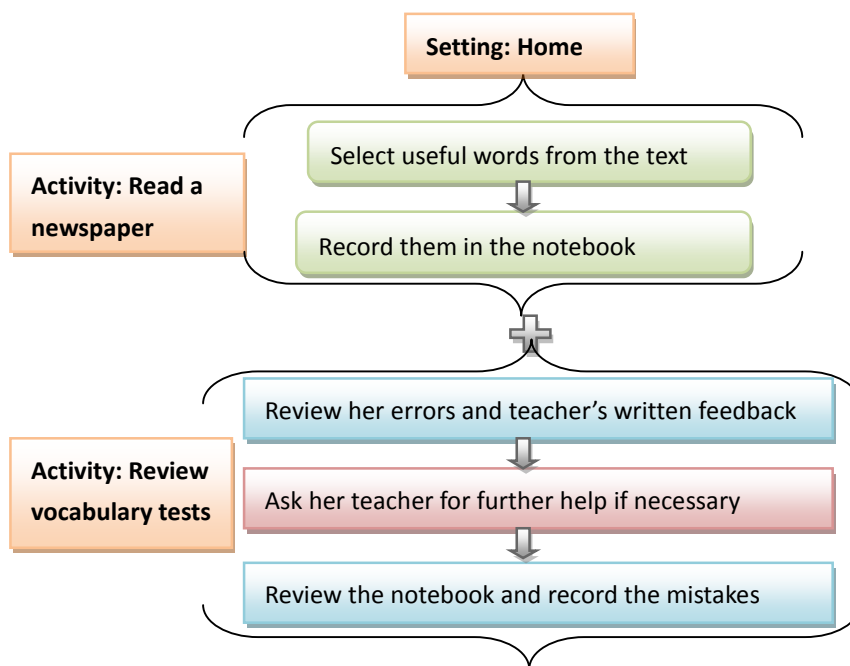


Figure 4.2 Xia's strategy clusters within different activities

Their clusters of strategies did not merely occur in sequence (Figures 4.1 and 4.2), but also as a dialogic strategy circle. Figure 4.3 below illustrates four stages which were involved in their strategic circle. During the process of their SVL, both Wu and Xia were able to interact with their teachers' strategy instruction, and then modified or developed their own strategy clusters through the help of their teachers (as mediating agents). All stages were followed in sequence. They did not simply follow their teachers' strategic advice, and also returned to their teachers and sought further help when encountering difficulties. These interactions between them and their teachers enabled successful VL to take place in the dialogic strategy circle below. Their examples suggest a dynamic interaction, which shapes a learner's SVL, and is located in a nexus of learner agency, social resources (e.g. their teachers' advice) and contextual conditions (e.g. different learning activities) (also Gao and Zhang, 2011).

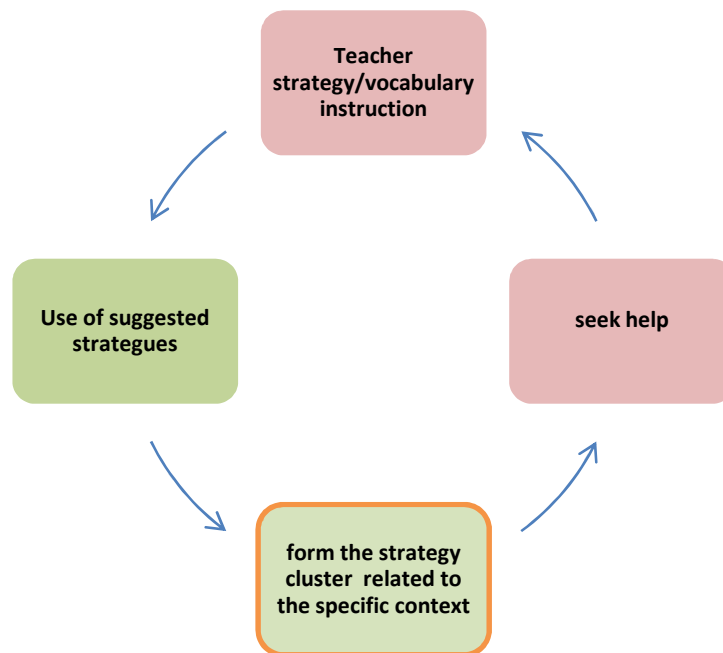


Figure 4.3 A dialogic strategy circle

4.2.2 Goal-directed strategy clusters

As mentioned above, Wu and Xia both needed to take the IELTS examination and obtain at least a score of 5.5 before entering the UK. Faced with this new learning goal, they attended a private IELTS preparation course and made different strategic attempts to improve their vocabulary. Their teachers of the course created a word list of high-frequency IELTS vocabulary and designed a daily vocabulary study plan for them. To memorise the words, they both followed their teachers' plans and strategic approaches of 'reciting' and 'repetition'. Xia commented:

Extract 4.4

43 Xia: This way was effective. I remembered many words in
 44 in a month and got an IELTS score of 6.0. I was pleased,
 45 however, I don't want to go back again because
 46 it's so boring. I would use this way only for
 47 passing exams. (Xia, GI, 18 Oct. 2011)

Although the learning outcome was largely satisfactory through using repetition strategies, Xia showed little willingness to use them again as it was seen as a ‘boring’ way (Extract 4.4). Therefore, besides enhancing learning outcomes, learners’ enjoyment can also be a factor which affects their choice of strategy use; and this is also reflected in their learning experiences when studying in the UK.

4.2.3 The influence of past learning experiences

When studying in the UK, both Wu and Xia still considered their previous vocabulary learning experiences when choosing what VLSs to be used, although there appeared to be other factors to be taken into consideration, e.g. individual differences and contextual factors. These will be explained in section 4.3. Wu and Xia might select their previous strategies again (Extract 4.5, lines 61-3) when the strategies were still effective and appropriate in the current context. For example, when I asked about his ways of recording vocabulary in the UK, Wu responded:

Extract 4.5

61 I used the same way which I used in my high school. Record
62 new words, their meaning, parts of speech and example
63 sentences in my notebook. This way still helps me to learn
64 words better, more than its meaning. (Wu, GI, 18 Oct. 2011)

Their previous strategic experiences had an effect on their current strategic approaches (Extract 4.5). However, faced with different learning goals and assessments in the UK, the participants also appeared to modify their strategic approaches or replace the previous strategies by forming new strategy clusters (see

more evidence later). For example, the dialogic strategy circle (see Figure 4.3 above) was no longer followed by Xia during her early period in the UK (Extract 4.7 below). For example, in Extract 4.6, her teacher explained how to guess the meaning or parts of speech of unknown words through analysing their prefixes or suffixes (lines 99-104), and also suggested that this could be both a useful building and discovery strategy (lines 199-202):

Extract 4.6

099 T: To exhale. It's a nice example ((writes it on the
100 board and Xia records)) something to do with 'out'
101 ...like exit ((Xia keeps noting)). There's another
102 meaning of 'ex', e.g. ex-wife...what does it mean?
103 S3: former
104 T: yes...be aware that it can be two meanings...
...
199 T: ...we learned some prefixes and suffixes...these can
200 help you build words (...) also help to change the form
201 of words...You can keep a record of what we've learned
202 it'll be useful when you guess their meaning...
(Classroom observation, 31 Oct 2011)

Xia followed her teacher's suggestion, and used the strategy (i.e. analysing roots) to discover the word's meaning when reading a text. She also encountered some difficulties through analysing the word parts (Extract 4.7, lines 12-3). However, she was less likely to get back to the teacher and ask for clarification as she did in China. Instead, she preferred to check a dictionary or ask her Chinese friends:

Extract 4.7

12 ...I guessed the meaning of the word 'feedback'... I wasn't sure
13 whether 'back' was its suffix. I asked my teacher, but I still
14 felt confused. English is not our mother tongue so it's
15 difficult to understand her explanation...I still need to
16 check my dictionary and ask my Chinese flatmate later...
(Xia, GI, 22 Nov. 2011)

Because of the language barrier, Xia indicated less willingness to ask the teacher for further support (lines 13-5). Rather, she combined the social strategy (line 13) with other discovery strategies (i.e. checking a dictionary and asking her Chinese friends, line 16). Therefore, language weakness seemed to be one factor which could restrict a dialogic strategy circle to perform with her teachers in the early phase.

4.3 Strategic vocabulary learning in the UK

This section first presents how the learners interacted with various aspects of their settings or milieus to shape their SVL through the academic year in the UK. It also looks at another two aspects, SVL as a dynamic system and learning vocabulary through enjoyment.

4.3.1 Classroom setting: interactive activities

The data shows that the participants were engaged in a more communicative way in comparison with their learning experiences in China. Their language teacher often set up pair/group work activities and Wu and Xia appeared to learn vocabulary through

interaction with their peers and their teacher during these kinds of activities (see Photo 4.1 below). In particular, they selected different VLSs according to their specific situations, and three different situations in which the participants tended to deploy VLSs were found:

Situation one: hearing or encountering new words when interacting with other peers

Extract 4.8

20 SD⁵: ...It's a kind of horror film...
21 Xia: What is horror? Horror film?
22 SD: ...horror film is like monsters, frighten you
23 Xia: I see (..) can you pronounce it again?
24 SD: ((pronounces it))
25 Xia: Am I right? ((types it her mobile))
26 SD: No, h-o-r-r-o-r ((spells it))(Xia, classroom observation, 21 Nov. 2011)

Extract 4.9

08 IR Did you ask all the new words in that pair work?
09 Xia: No, only the common words, so I'll have chance to
10 use them, e.g. 'horror', I learned it from my partner
11 I also recorded and checked it again at home.
12 Relating to our interaction, this also helps remember
13 the word⁶. (Xia, FI, 22 Nov. 2011)

⁵ Xia's partner in this pair work

⁶ The original transcript in Chinese:

IR: 在那个两人互动中, 当你遇到不懂的单词都会问吗?

Xia: 不会, 那个单词一定要是我们经常能用到的, 就像是 horror 这个单词, 我从 SD 那里学到的, 我还记下来了, 下课后好好查了一下看看字典的其他的解释。联系当时的实际情况, 帮助我记得很深了。



Photo 4.1 (Class observation, 21 Nov. 2011)

Xia did not ask every unknown word when hearing them in the pair work; rather, she chose the words which seemed to be commonly used. For example, she performed a sequential cluster of strategies to learn the word ‘horror’ (Extract 4.9, lines 10-1 and Extract 4.8). She first asked her partner SD to clarify the word and then checked its pronunciation and spelling with SD to help her record the word accurately (Extract 4.8, lines 21, 23 and 25). She tried further consolidation after the class, including checking the word again in a dictionary and memorising it in association with their interactive moment (Extract 4.9, line 12-4). This interactive engagement seemed to take place in order to mediate her process of memorisation.

Both Xia and Wu asked their partners about words’ meaning during their interaction. Their partners gave simple and explicit explanations (e.g. Extract 4.8). By contrast, when they inquired about words’ meaning, their teacher tended to offer implicit help rather than a direct answer to their questions:

Extract 4.10

251 Wu: prosperous? What does this mean?
252 T: ... ((reads the sentence))what do you think?
253 Wu: have a bright future
254 T: yes when a country is prosperous, it can have
255 a bright future because it's↑
256 SJ: rich?
257 T: yes...what's its noun form?
258 Wu: prosperity?
259 T: say it again?
260 Wu: ((pronounces it))
261 T: ((pronounces it)) everybody↓((Ss repeat))
(Classroom observation, 21 Nov 2011)

In Extract 4.10, instead of an explicit explanation, Wu's teacher read the sentence and became a mediating agent to encourage him to infer the meaning first from the textual context (line 252-3). Afterwards, based on his inference, the teacher continued to provide an implicit prompt to help him guess the meaning until another student SJ volunteered the right meaning (lines 254-7). By comparison T-S with S-S interaction, their teacher tended to lead further questions to help them build other kinds of word knowledge such as its word class and pronunciation (e.g. Extract 4.10, lines 257-61). During the S-S interaction, the participants appeared to initiate more questions about the word by themselves and have more negotiation between them and their partners (e.g. Extract 4.8).

Wu and Xia both combined social strategies with a dictionary look-up strategy to look for the word meaning. However, unlike Xia, Wu checked the dictionary via his iPad during the interaction and did not wait to do this after the class. He further mentioned

in the FI interview (23 Nov. 2011) that his intention was to directly check whether his understanding of his partner's explanation was accurate through comparing with the definition of the dictionary, and he could then discuss it with his partner if his understanding was not consistent with the dictionary. Both Wu's iPad and Xia's mobile were used as important artefacts to support their VL. For example, Xia used her mobile to record the new word so she could check it again after class (Extract 4.8 and 4.9). Wu brought both an E-dictionary and an iPad to the class. He compared his iPad with his E-dictionary:

Extract 4.11

51 I prefer to use my iPad in a pair work...compared with the
52 E-dictionary, the definition which iPad provides is simpler
53 and straightforward. it helps you save the word automatically
54 so it saves your time to record the word. (Wu, FI, 24 Nov 2011)

Extract 4.11 indicated that iPad was used as a mediating artefact which combined two functions, E-dictionary and E-notebook. The mediational role of artefacts has been pointed out that it can supplement the ability of humans to perform particular actions (see also Wertsch, 1985; Cole, 2005). In this case, Wu used his iPad to mediate his VL. He found the word definitions from his iPad easy to understand. It also automatically kept his checking history and saved time during the activity (lines 53-4). However, the iPad was not used all the time. He also compared different dictionaries and tried to select an appropriate one or combine them in order to suit a particular setting. His dictionary use will be showed more later.

In another learning situation, both Wu and Xia were likely to apply VLSs to the unknown words which they felt familiar with rather than a totally new word. However, the examples below also show that they formed a different cluster of strategies to learn words according to their learning purposes:

Situation two: when hearing or encountering a word exposed earlier in the pair/group work

Extract 4.12

40 Wu: ...I think it's a bay?
41 SJ⁷: we call it a seaside
42 Wu: Any differences between seaside and bay?
43 SP: not sure?
44 SJ: ((opens his E-dictionary)) I find it, bay means a part
45 of coast...seaside means...((reads the definition))
46 seaside is the better word here..
47 Wu: ((checks his iPad)) Yes, I agree, seaside is the right
48 one...(Wu, classroom interaction, 17 Oct. 2011)

In Extract 4.12, when Wu heard two familiar words 'seaside' and 'bay' through the interaction and felt confused about them; he then combined a social strategy to seek further clarification from his group members with a dictionary look-up strategy to check the difference between the two words. During this discovery process, one group member, SJ, became a mediating agent who clarified the two words explicitly and supported his learning and thinking process.

⁷ SJ and SP were Wu's group members in this group work.

Unlike Wu, instead of asking a direct question (Extract 4.12, line 42), Xia tried to indicate to her partner that she was not clear about the target word 'obesity' through repeating it (Extract 4.13, line 04). Like the other partners mentioned above, her partner also offered a direct explanation. Furthermore, during this process, her partner ST mediated her strategy use and led her to seek further explanation from the contextual clues of the text (lines 05-06).

Extract 4.13

03 ST: ...one article is about obesity...
04 Xia: Obesity?
05 ST: Yes, it means fat...((indicates to Xia in the text))
06 Xia: ((reads the sentence)) Yes I agree...
...
53 T: Obesity means?
54 Xia: a kind of problem being very fat
55 T: what's the article about obesity?
56 Xia: It tells the number of people who are obese...
(Xia, classroom observation, 20 Feb. 2012)

Extract 4.14

97 IR: You rarely answered the teacher's question, but
98 you talked about 'obesity' quite a lot. How do you
99 find about this overt participation?
100 Xia: I only answer a question which I'm sure about its
101 answer. As I knew the word earlier, I'm sure about
102 it. I also used this chance to practise it. it's a
103 useful way to reinforce my memory.
(Xia, FI, 21 Feb. 2012)



Photo 4.2 (Class observation, 20 Feb. 2012)

After learning this word's meaning, both Extract 4.13 and 4.14 show that Xia made further strategic attempts to consolidate the word. When encountering this word again, she overtly participated in the interaction with her teacher and played with the word (also Photo 4.2). She considered this overt participation as a useful opportunity to consolidate and memorise the word (Extract 4.14, lines 102-3). Her teacher emphasised and repeated the target word, otherwise she might not have had chance to re-encounter and learn it (Extract 4.13). The indirect teaching of the word also encouraged students to actively engage in the learning process. This more interactive teaching arrangement mediated Xia's strategy choice and helped her form the strategy cluster (see Figure 4.4).

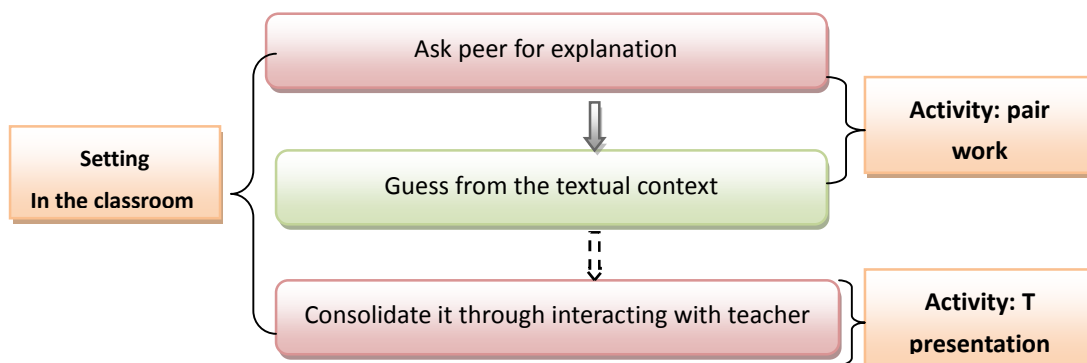


Figure 4.4 A dialogic sequential cluster of strategies to the word ‘obesity’

In another academic module, Xia heard the word ‘iconic’ which she felt was familiar when interacting with other peers (Extract 4.15). She then deployed social strategies to ask them for word explanation and check her understanding through the group work (lines 14-5).

Extract 4.15



Photo 4.3

12 ...When I finished the sketch⁸, showed it to my group...one said
 13 the ‘iconic’ building was good...I felt familiar with ‘iconic’
 14 I asked them...they explained it through the sketch...I confirmed
 15 the meaning with them again...it’s a useful word in my field.
 16 I checked it again at home, the ‘iconic’ is the adj. of
 17 ‘icon’, it’s easy to understand and remember to relate it
 18 to my sketch and its noun. Others e.g. ‘iconically’... are also

⁸ As the students wrote their diaries in an informal style, I remained their original versions unedited. They might also make some grammar mistakes in their diaries; I also kept them unedited but might provide additional information in order to make them understandable

19 easy to use. (Xia, diary and photo, VOCABlog. 26 Mar, 2012)

Xia also realised that the word was a useful one for her major (line 15), and thus she also consolidated the word through combining the dictionary look-up and associative strategies at home (lines 16-9). She was performing as a self-regulated agent in order to manage both social (lines 14-5) and cognitive processes (lines 16-9) and formed a sequential cluster of strategies to suit particular settings (also Figure 4.5). During her learning process, the sketch (see Photo 4.3) operated as a mediating artefact to help her know and remember the word (lines 13-4 and 17-8).

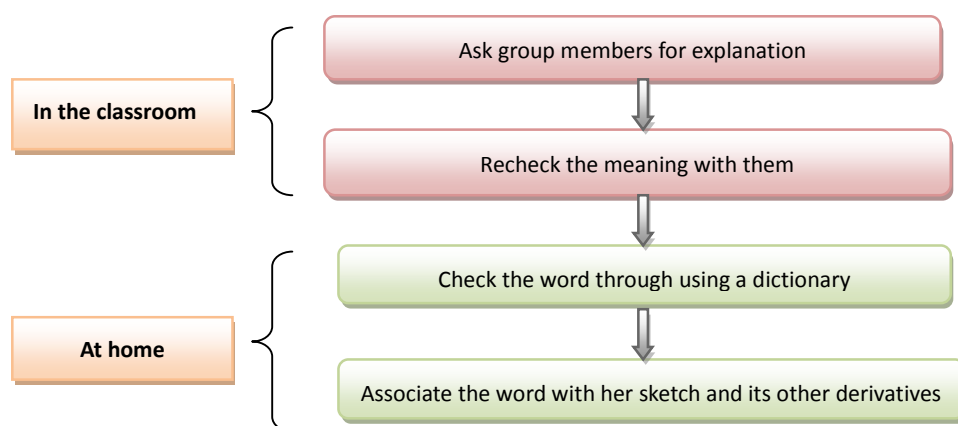


Figure 4.5 Xia's sequential cluster of strategies to the word 'iconic'

Situation three: when they do not know how to express a word

When Wu did not know how to express a word in an interactive activity (Extract 4.16), he combined social strategies (i.e. paraphrasing the word and asking his group members, lines 101-2) to find out the English expression of the word 'puzzle' with a cognitive strategy to record it in his notebook for further review (lines 103-4). In particular, relating the word to this interactive process was seen as a helpful

associative strategy to memorise the word (line 105).

Extract 4.16

101 When I didn't know how to express a word, I often paraphrased
102 it to my classmates and sought their help, e.g. I learned
103 'puzzle' through this way...I also recorded it and reviewed
104 it after the class...it's a good way to build words... as this
105 happened in a real situation, it also reinforced my memory.
(Wu, FI, 22 Nov. 2011)

Furthermore, although the social strategies mentioned above can be viewed as communication strategies in this specific context, Extract 4.16 also indicated that Wu's intention was to learn a new word (see lines 103-5). This was why he then recorded and reviewed the word after the class (lines 103-4). Therefore, depending on learners' intention, these communication strategies were also considered as strategies for learning vocabulary and were part of this sequential cluster of VLSs. Compared with Wu, when Xia did not know how to express a word during their S-S interaction, she was less likely to ask her peers for help and tended to paraphrase unknown words into familiar expressions or use her E-dictionaries to translate Chinese to her intended English words. As Xia mentioned in her interview (15 Mar. 2012), *'my purpose was to keep the conversation going rather than learn a word'*, therefore, the communication strategies might not be VLSs, unless checking dictionaries helped her discover more about the words or reinforce her memory of them.

Compared with their learning experiences in China, Wu and Xia tended to combine more social strategies with other strategies (such as checking a dictionary and recording the word) to help their VL in the communicative activities above. They tried to ask the interlocutors to explain the meaning of unknown words, or to tell them a word which they did not know how to express (e.g. Extract 4.8 and 4.16). During their learning processes, their peers and teachers became mediating agents who helped them learn vocabulary (e.g. Extract 4.10 and 4.15). Their mental processes, such as thinking about the meaning of unknown words and how to express a word were mediated by their teacher and other peers, and an interactive dialogue helped them solve the problem (e.g. discovering the meaning of the word). The learners were also agents who managed their SVL in relation to their learning intention and particular settings (e.g. Extract 4.8, 4.15 and 4.16).

4.3.2 Classroom setting: teacher's presentation

Apart from interacting with their peers in the pair/group work, Wu and Xia also made other strategic efforts to learn vocabulary during their teachers' presentation. Compared with Xia, Wu sought many more opportunities to interact with their teacher and participate in her language to share knowledge of a word. When they met unknown words, Xia rarely asked their teacher to explain them or initiate a discussion about them, but Wu often did during the lessons, for example (also Photo 4.4):

Extract 4.17

126 T: ...keep your language mild.
127 Wu: what does mean by mild ((pronounces it inaccurately))
128 JS: Mild? ((repeats))ice cream?
129 T: ((pronounces it again))it means gentle...e.g. how to say
130 'excuse me' in a mild way. JS wanted to say melted
131 ice-cream, something becomes soft... ((writes it on the
132 board, Wu records and checks his iPad))



Photo 4.4 (Wu, class observation, 17 Oct. 2011)

When their teacher chose some useful words to teach, she was less likely to give an explanation directly. Rather, she tended to question the students first to check their comprehension and explore the word's meaning through their collaboration (e.g. Extract 4.18, lines 25, 28, 30 and 32). In this case, Wu often participated in the interaction. He shared his thoughts with the teacher and other peers and learned the word co-constructively (lines 26, 31 and 33).

Extract 4.18

25 T: what is a superbug?
26 Wu: ...means a kind of bacteria ((looks at the text)) because...
27 T: Yes that's right but not superb-er-g((pronounces it))
28 can you pronounce it again?
29 Ss: ((repeat it))
30 T: anti means
31 Wu: against?
32 T: how about bio?
33 Wu: small?
34 T: it means life (.)connects with our living...(Wu, classroom
observation, 20 Feb. 2012)

He also evaluated these social strategies (i.e. asking the teacher to explain the word or initiating a discussion) concluding that the interactive processes could improve his word knowledge including word meaning and pronunciation and their verbal explanation helped him understand the word meaning and aid his retention (Extract 4.19, lines 163-6, also Extract 4.18).

Extract 4.19

159 IR: ...I found you often initiated an answer about a word, do
160 you find that this way helps you learn it?
162 Wu: yes...I often knew the word earlier...when the teacher asked
163 about it, I felt unsure...I tried to be the first person
164 to respond her, my teacher and other peers could improve
165 my understanding of the word, its pronunciation and
166 reinforce my memory...
171 IR: Do you record their explanation?
172 Wu: No, they are not new words...they were in my notebook
173 I can find and review them at home(Wu, FI, 23 Feb. 2012)

Extract 4.19 also showed that Wu only chose new words to record in his notebook in the class. For the words exposed earlier, he tended to look it up in his notebook and review it again after the class (lines 172-3). Drawing on Wu's data above, a dialogic sequential strategy cluster emerged:

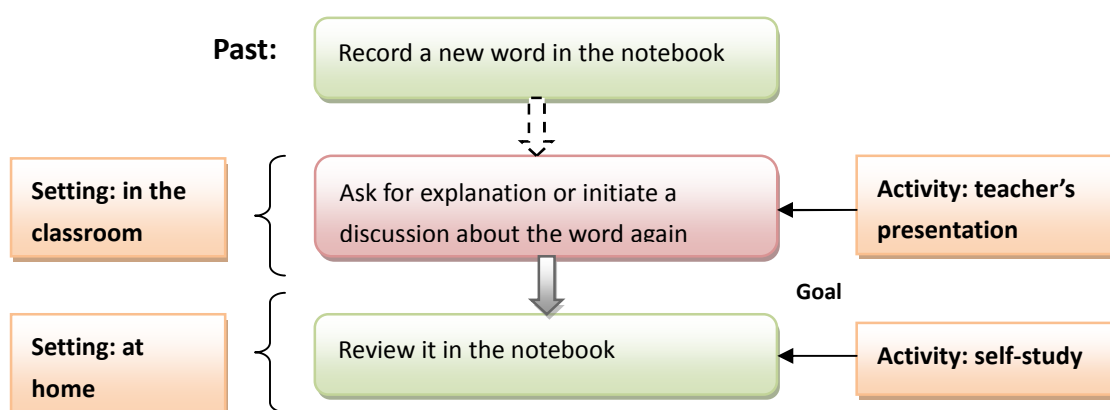


Figure 4.6 Wu's dialogic sequential strategy cluster to consolidate vocabulary

Xia also started to participate more in the teacher's talk to learn vocabulary from the end of the second term, for example:

Extract 4.20

304 T: what is the main source of power in China?
 305 Xia: electricity?
 306 Wu: no it's coal
 307 Xia: what's coal?
 308 Wu: Black...under the earth
 309 T: ((writes it on the board and draws a picture)) makes fire
 310 and they have coal mines. In Chile some coal miners...
 311 ((Xia records))(Classroom observation, 19 March 2012)

Xia later commented:

Extract 4.21

175 Xia: yes, I rarely asked about unknown words before, but

176 now I try to ask more...the teacher explained it in a
177 detailed way, often drew a picture to help me
178 understand and told us how to use it. other peers joined
179 our discussion sometimes, you could learn more from
180 them... (Xia, FI, 20 March 2012)

Both Extract 4.20 and 4.21 revealed that asking unknown words in the class seemed to be a more helpful way to learn them. The verbal explanation of her teacher and peers and the whiteboard drawing of her teacher, mediated Xia's learning process and helped her expand word knowledge.

Both Wu and Xia reported that they felt more willing to ask their unknown words in the class from the second term. Their teacher appeared to be an important mediating agent to improve their relationship and classroom atmosphere in order to encourage them to interact with her and other peers more in the class and then to contribute to more active participation (also Photo 4.5):

Extract 4.22

309 IR: Why do you want to ask more questions in the class?
310 Xia: Our teacher often invites us to visit her house and
311 provides chances to socialise with each other after
312 class. We become closer...During the lesson, she often
313 sits next to us, we are like friends and I feel relaxed
314 to ask when I'm unsure. (Xia, GI, 23 March 2012)



Photo 4.5 (Class observation, 19 Mar. 2012)

Xia and Wu were more likely to manage their VL dialogically due to this relaxed classroom atmosphere and a closer social relationship with their teacher and other peers. After experiencing the benefits of using social strategies in the second term, Xia continued to deploy more social strategies to learn vocabulary in and outside the classroom during the third term. In particular, she exercised her agency and created more opportunities to socialise with other group members, such as travelling with them, playing basketball with them and watching matches together, because she realised that a closer friendship could motivate her to seek support from them and get better feedback (Extract 4.23, lines 01-02).

Extract 4.23

01 ...Once you got closer, you'd like to ask more questions...they
02 also like to answer you. E.g. we went to Cardiff...The first
03 word I learnt was "marginalize"...I asked my group member to
04 explain it. He gave me a very vivid explanation. It's useful
05 to ask your friends directly because they know exactly what
06 you want at that time...(Xia, diary, VOCABlog, 20 Apr. 2012)

11 IR: How did you do with this word afterwards?
12 Xia: I used it on the other day...I pronounced it and imitated
13 him how to use it. See whether I can use it accurately.
14 If not, he would not understand me or correct me.
15 Luckily, he told me that I used it well...(Xia, forum,
VOCABlog, 24 Apr 2012)

In Cardiff, when communicating with her group member, Xia did not merely focus on the content of their conversation, but she also learned vocabulary through asking him for explanation and was consciously aware of how he used them through her attentive listening (Extract 4.23, lines 03-04; 12-3). She found this social strategy particularly helpful because he gave a vivid and direct explanation of words (lines 04-06). She also practised using the word with this group member, and viewed this as a useful way to consolidate this word. During this process, she internalised the word's meaning and usage and used it again in relation to her own context (lines 12-5). She appeared to perform the dialogic strategy circle to discover and consolidate the word 'marginalise' across two different settings (Figure 4.7).

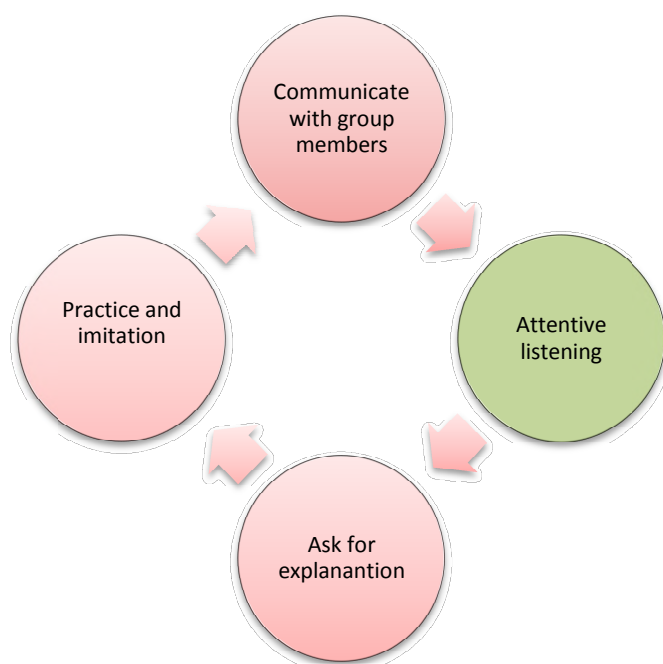


Figure 4.7 Xia's dialogic strategy circle to the word 'marginalise'

Like Xia, the data indicates that Wu also tried to convert an external activity to an internal activity (e.g. Extract 4.24). He reviewed his teacher's oral explanation of unknown words and internalised her initial explanation and checked whether he understood it. Therefore, referring to Extract 4.23 and 4.24, Wu and Xia became self-regulated agents who managed the relationship between their mental processes and other mediating agents and selected appropriate strategies to suit their specific contexts.

Extract 4.24

89 IR: Did you review your notes?
 90 Wu: Yes, I took some time to think about my recording again
 91 during the lesson. I still found some uncertainties.
 92 I asked her again in the break for further clarification...
 (Wu, FI, 21 Nov, 2011)

Gaining initial information about a new word, such as the meaning, word forms and pronunciation is viewed as the fundamental task during the processes of learning it (see also Schmitt, 1997). The strategies for exploring such word information are labelled as discovery strategies. As mentioned above, the participants discovered the unknown words through using various social strategies in the interactive activities or during the teacher's talk. They also made different strategic efforts to gain word information within the same activity:

Extract 4.25

93 T: What does mean surge? ((Xia underlines in the text
94 and checks it through her mobile))
96 S2: Abandon?
97 Wu: I'm not sure. Increase?
98 T: Yes, lots of growing ((writes on the board; Wu checks his
99 iPad and records in his notebook; Xia records in the text))
(Classroom observation, 21 Nov. 2011)



Photo 4.6 (Class observation, 21 Nov. 2011)

In Extract 4.25, Wu shared his guess in the class and explored the correct meaning through checking with the teacher (a social strategy) and his iPad (a look-up strategy). By contrast, instead of using a social strategy, Xia chose to listen to others' explanation and used an E-dictionary (her mobile, a look-up strategy) to supplement her understanding.

The data (e.g. Extract 4.17, 4.20 and 4.25) suggests that the process of discovering word information seemed to be often related to the process of recording it (also Photo 4.6). In relation to their particular settings and learning purposes, Wu and Xia both built their own strategic awareness of what, where and how to record. They tended to record them when their teacher highlighted the words and wrote them on the whiteboard. These are supported by Extract 4.17 and 4.20. In particular, the use of the whiteboard was viewed as a useful way to help them learn vocabulary. They gave two reasons for this: *'this allowed me to have time to record unknown words. If my teacher did not stop, I had to ignore them otherwise I cannot follow the pace of her teaching.'* (Wu, FI, 17 Oct. 2011) and *'because they were key or useful so the teacher wrote them on the board'* (Xia, FI, 21 Mar. 2012).

However, they did not passively record all the words which their teachers put on the board. They also established their own criteria to select what words they should record. Xia tended to choose productive words; in this case, academic words can be used in her writing (e.g. Extract 4.26). Attending his English classes was seen as an important

opportunity to enlarge his vocabulary and thus Wu only selected the new words to record from the board (Extract 4.19 and 4.27).

Extract 4.26

95 Xia: like rural...the teacher told us that they are academic
96 words (.)I could use them in my essay. Like air-borne...
97 although I checked their meaning via my mobile but I
98 didn't record them because I won't use them frequently.
(Xia, FI, 21 Oct. 2011)

Their learning goals appeared to be an important factor which affected their choice of which words to be recorded and where to record the words. Different assistive artefacts (i.e. notebook and handouts) were used to record vocabulary:

Extract 4.27

114 Wu: I only recorded new words in my notebook...I normally put
115 the words with few comments in one side, left one side
116 blank. After the class, I will add more information in
117 the notebook. It's a convenient way to review the words
118 because you don't need to spend extra time finding
119 them from your handouts(Wu, FI, 21 Feb. 2011)

Extract 4.28

284 IR: Where did you record other subject-related words?
285 Wu: I don't normally record them, because the key
286 vocabulary is already in the glossary of my books
(Wu, GI, 5 Mar. 2012)

Extract 4.29

164 Xia: ...I prefer to underline the word in my handouts (.)just
165 record my explanation under them. This way saves my time,

166 I don't need to write the words again. when reviewing
167 them, the surrounding information helps me recall the
168 memory of what I learned about them. It's better to
169 remember them in context.
170 IR: how about the words for other subjects?
171 Xia: record them in the handouts. The same reasons...
(Xia, GI, 22 Nov. 2011)

In order to save recording time in the class, Xia did not to rewrite the words in a notebook. Rather, she tried to underline them and record their information in the handout (Extract 4.29, lines 164-6). Although Wu chose to record vocabulary in a separate notebook, he only wrote down the words with few comments, but he left a blank page where he would add more information after the class (Extract 4.27). They also used different ways to record subject-related vocabulary. Wu used a glossary for each subject rather than keeping a notebook (Extract 4.28). Xia chose to record unknown words in the handouts of each module (Extract 4.29, line 171).

Their recording choice also appeared to be closely associated with their ways of reviewing vocabulary after class. For example, the convenience of reviewing outside the classroom seemed to be the reason why Wu chose a notebook to record vocabulary (Extract 4.27, lines 117-9). Unlike Wu, Xia found that association with a textual context was an effective way to help her review and memorise a word (Extract 4.29, lines 167-9). In the English class and other modules, that was why she chose to record vocabulary in her class materials which were used as mediating artefacts to place the words in a context and provide their instances of usage. Thus, the words could be more meaningful and better remembered. Through analysing their recording processes, they

tended to deploy a cluster of recording strategies (see Figure 4.8).

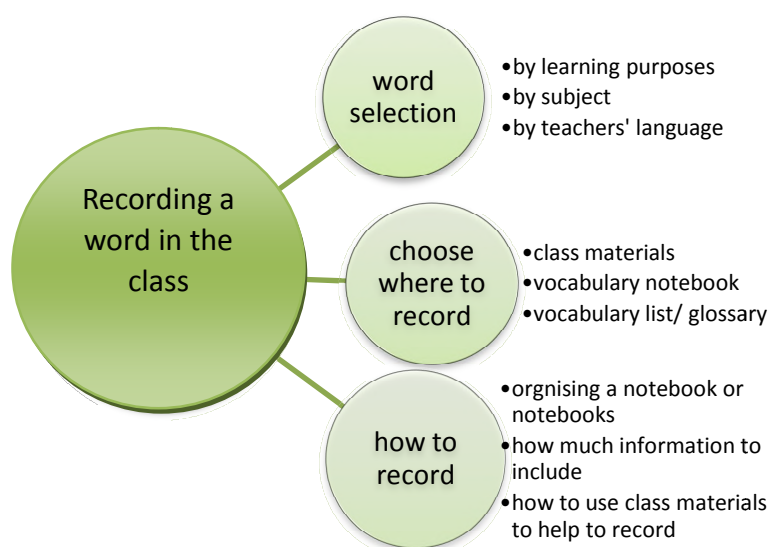


Figure 4.8 A cluster of recording strategies

4.3.3 Learning vocabulary outside classroom

The learners' strategy use varied across different out-of-class settings and different combinations of strategies were deployed to help them learn vocabulary. Their SVL appeared to be dynamic, and involve the processes of enlarging, discovering, recording and consolidating vocabulary.

4.3.3.1 Enlarging, discovery and improvement

Seeking chances to build vocabulary appeared to be followed by the processes of discovering the initial information of new words and improving the knowledge of the words learned earlier. Their SVL outside the classroom was also analysed in a chronological way and the following sections will present their strategy use within different phases.

4.3.3.1.1 Strategy use in the early phase

Wu and Xia tended to use fewer social strategies (e.g. seek help from others) outside than inside the classroom during the first term. One of the reasons was that they found a lack of opportunities to socialise with foreign students after class (e.g. Extract 4.30). As mentioned above, although their teacher did not offer explicit strategy instruction on social strategies, she increased communicative demands for them to practise the use of social strategies and became a mediating agent who managed activities and influenced their strategy use.

Extract 4.30

58 Wu: When I went back to my accommodation, I felt isolated...
59 I found difficult to find common topics to chat with
60 my flatmates... really difficult to make real friends who
61 were from different cultures. (Wu, GI, 22 Nov. 2011)

Wu reported that his interaction with foreign friends was limited by cultural distance and different interests. When they stayed at their student accommodation, instead of social strategies, Wu and Xia showed that they were likely to select other kinds of strategies. For example:

Extract 4.31

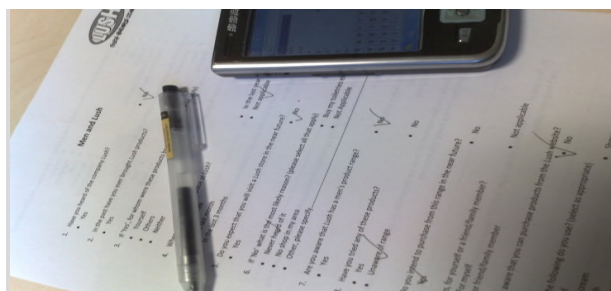


Photo 4.7

01 ...when seeing all of the words about the cosmetics, e.g.
02 'moisturizer'...it helped me enrich my vocabulary (Wu, photo
and description, VOCABlog, 03 Dec. 2011)

IR: Did you check their meaning via the mobile?

04 Wu: No, it's my E-dictionary which tells about their Chinese
05 translation, so I could recognise them if I meet them
06 later, but some words, I may use them in my writing.
07 I like to check another online dictionary which shows
08 many examples, so I can know both meaning and usage.
(Wu, forum, VOCABlog, 04 Dec. 2011)

Extract 4.32

07 IR: How did you deal with the unknown words in a text?
08 Xia: When encountering them several times, I thought that they
09 were important, then checked them in a dictionary. I
10 recently tried to check their Chinese translation as
11 well as English explanation. I found the English one
12 is more precise and detailed... (Xia, GI, 22 Nov. 2011)

In their accommodation, Extract 4.31 (also Photo 4.7) and 4.32 suggest that Wu and Xia tended to discover the meanings of unknown words through checking dictionaries rather than having to resort to other people's expertise. They established their own criteria for the selection of words to be looked up in dictionaries. Wu in Extract 4.31 (lines 04-08) showed that he intentionally distinguished receptive vocabulary from productive vocabulary in relation to his learning purposes. In terms of choosing what types of dictionaries and checking what kinds of word information (e.g. meaning and example sentences), he also made different efforts to discover these two kinds of vocabulary. By contrast, Xia checked the unknown words of high frequency which appeared in the text. In order

to understand the meaning better, she checked both their Chinese translation and English explanation in the dictionary (Extract 4.32).

During the early phase, although Wu and Xia reported a lack of opportunities to socialise with local students, they still benefited from the milieu where there were various demands for using the target language, for example:

Extract 4.33

01 Without consulting anyone, I bought this cleansing lotion.
02 I guess cleansing lotion is to help moisture skin...Until one
03 day, one sales assistant said '...cleansing lotion first, and
04 comes with this facial wash...' When I heard this, I thought,
05 what? does it mean make-up remover? then I stated my doubts
06 to her, sadly, I got a definite 'yes'..., during the past time,
07 every cell in my face was tortured by that stupid lotion,
08 all of these contribute to lack of curiosity for those
09 mysterious words From that time on...When I wanted to purchase
10 products, when I found any unfamiliar words, I always asked.
11 fortunately, most of them explained the words clearly and
12 patiently. Since I really wanna know the words-meaning in
13 such specific occasions, I can easily remember them.



Photo 4.8

(Xia, diary and photo VOCABlog, 21 Nov. 2011)

In Extract 4.33, a lesson was learned from Xia's real life experience and the outcome of her wrong guess raised her awareness of how important to make sure the accurate meaning of unknown words (lines 01-09) and made her realise that it was necessary to: express the doubts about her understanding of unknown words to local people; check her guess whether it was accurate with them; and ask them for clarification in those situations. She commented that the usefulness of these social strategies depended on the clarity of local people's explanation and their patience to explain in such situations (lines 11-2). As VL happened in authentic situations, she showed great enthusiasm to discover the meaning of unknown words (line 13). She also found that an interaction with shop assistants can help not only to learn the new words but also to reinforce her memorisation of the words.

Extract 4.34



Photo 4.9

01 In my opinion, guessing the meaning of new words is a good
02 start to explore our vocabulary...if you're really into the
03 meaning, you then need to look up into a dict or ask local
04 people for answers would make you learn those words more
05 deeply. (Xia, diary and photo, VOCABlog. 26 Nov. 2011)

She compared and evaluated the usefulness of different discovery strategies in Extract 4.34. Guessing strategies can allow her to explore a general meaning of a new word. To know the precise meaning requires deeper understanding of the word, and she found that it was important to combine the inferencing strategy with dictionary look-up and social strategies. Her attempt to evaluate and monitor the strategies was considered as a set of metacognitive strategies which were attached to the cluster of discovery strategies in order to enhance her learning process.

4.3.3.1.2 Strategy use in the later phase

From the second term, Wu and Xia appeared to seek more support from other people to improve vocabulary after class, particularly their teacher and peers. As mentioned above, because of closer friendships with their teacher and peers, their willingness to deploy social strategies increased (Extract 4.22 and 4.23). Extract 4.35 also shows that Wu tried to make appointments with his teacher and work interactively to develop his word knowledge:

Extract 4.35

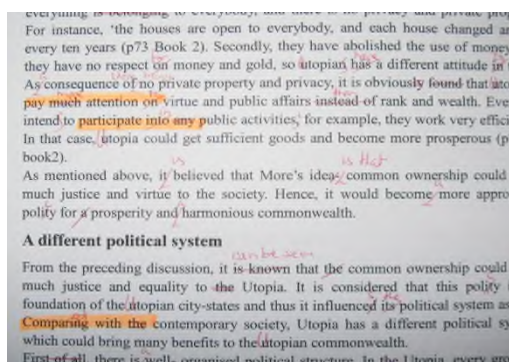


Photo 4.10

06 ...I had few chances to meet local people...but I think my teacher

07 can be my local 'friend'...I often reviewed her written feedback
 08 at home. Anything I felt unsure after I checked a dictionary.
 09 I tried to see her in her office...e.g. yesterday I asked why
 10 she underlined the word. She said it's better to say 'young
 11 students *put pressure on*...'She helps enrich my word knowledge...
 (Wu, photo and diary, VOCABlog, 26 Mar. 2012)

To deal with the problem of having few local friends, Wu tried to ask support from his language teacher in his free time (Extract 4.35, line 06-09). For example, across different settings, Wu deployed a sequential cluster of strategies and tried to use it repeatedly in order to improve his knowledge of vocabulary (lines 07-08; 09-11; also Figure 4.9). By contrast, Xia sought much support from her group members across various out-of-class settings (e.g. Extract 4.23 and Figure 4.7).

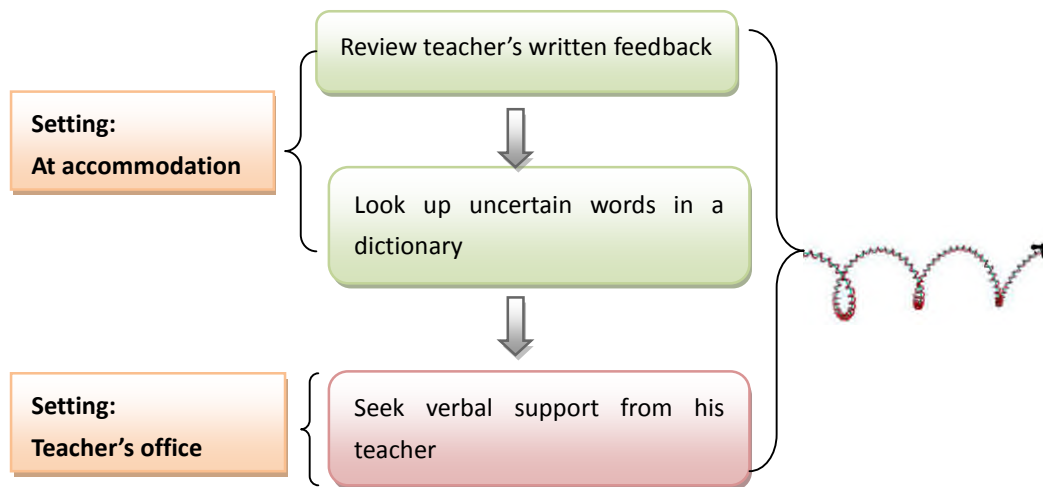


Figure 4.9 Wu's recycled sequential cluster of strategies for improving vocabulary

Moreover, Wu and Xia reported other clusters of strategies to build vocabulary, particularly, academic and subject-related vocabulary:

Extract 4.36

01 I'd like to share a skill which I found useful, when you're

02 unsure about an academic word in a article...u can firstly
03 find it in the index then allocate it in the specific page
04 and then understand it related to their explanation...it's
05 targeted searching.(Wu, diary, VOCABlog. 23 Nov. 2011)

Extract 4.37

213 IR: how do you deal with the subject-related words?
214 Xia: If we have a meeting soon, I would ask my peers about
215 the unknown words, this way is more direct, or I use the
216 search tool to explore their instances of use in the
217 relevant articles in a PDF version at home. This way is
218 also effective. (Xia, GI, 03 May 2012)

In Extract 4.36, Wu called the way ‘targeted searching’ in which the index of a book was used to help find out where the target word was mentioned and then he looked for instances of its use. He also intended to introduce his learning experience to other members of VOCABlog and used VOCABlog as a communicative tool to share his thoughts (lines 01-02). In this respect, the VOCABlog transcended its original purpose as a data collection tool. His strategic approaches also benefited from other members, for example:

Extract 4.38

01 I quite agree with Bo... he asked native speakers for help
02 I think it's the most efficient way to learn how to use it
03 ...I think we need to imitate (learnt from CR)...(Wu, diary,
VOCABlog. 23 Nov. 2011)

Xia also exercised her agency and selected different strategies to discover subject-specific vocabulary in relation to different settings (Extract 4.37). When she was involved in the group work, she tended to ask her peers for explanation, and this

was considered as a more direct way to know the words. When engaging in her self-study at home, she tended to use a look-up strategy instead of the social strategy, and using the search tool was viewed as an effective way to explore instances of word usage from the electronic version of the articles.

From the preceding analysis, checking a dictionary appeared to be often combined with other kinds of strategies (e.g. guessing the meaning and ask others for explanation) to help the students discover or enrich word information. Also, when checking a word in a dictionary, Xia and Wu seemed not to deploy a single strategy, but a number of dictionary look-up strategies (e.g. Extract 4.31, 4.32, 4.34 and 4.35, see also Cohen, 2003). Analysing their data, a cluster of dictionary look-up strategies might include: ‘selection of word: decide whether the word is necessary for them to check dictionary’; ‘selection of dictionary: choose an appropriate dictionary to use or combine different kinds of dictionaries’; ‘look at and compare all definitions given’; ‘choose the right meaning’; ‘check the meaning if it fits in the context’; ‘think about what other word information needs to be looked at, such as example sentences and parts of speech’. However, they might not deploy all the dictionary look-up strategies above and seemed to include some of them and form their own dictionary clusters in relation to their learning goals and particular settings. For example, Wu’s cluster of strategies relating to dictionary use included ‘word selection’; ‘choose a right dictionary for receptive and productive vocabulary’; ‘look at Chinese definitions’ and ‘look at example sentences and analyse the usage of words’ (Extract 4.31).

Xia also reported:

Extract 4.39

403 Xia: e.g. the word 'succinct' I checked it in a dictionary
405 via my mobile. It only provided the common meaning...
406 we didn't have time to see more meaning...after class
407 I had time to use another E-dictionary which showed
408 more information and checked other aspects for
411 consolidation. (Xia, FI, 22 Nov. 2011)

In Extract 4.39, strategies were deployed in clusters appropriate to both in-class and out-of-class settings. The specific context was taken into consideration influencing her choice of dictionary use. During the lesson, because of limited time, Xia had to combine several dictionary look-up strategies which can help her save time to discover the word meaning: 'select a dictionary which only contains few definitions'; 'scan the definitions given'; 'look for a general meaning of the word'. After the class, this cluster was in turn combined with another cluster of dictionary look-up strategies pertaining to consolidate the word: 'choose a dictionary which contained more detailed word information' and 'look at other information'.

From the second to third term, faced with a more challenging academic milieu, the participants made efforts to find a more effective dictionary or combine different kinds of look-up tools to learn vocabulary. Look-up tools, including electronic, bilingual, monolingual and online dictionaries, dictionaries for thesaurus and collocations, Google translate and Wikipedia, were mentioned in the data and had different impacts on their VL:

Extract 4.40

25 Xia: If I go out, I think the YD dictionary is convenient,
 26 but recently I'm preparing for my presentation. Drawing
 27 on our guideline, I need to draw more attention to my
 28 pronunciation and usage...I often first check them in the
 29 YD and find its Chinese translation...then check the
 30 Cambridge online dictionary.
 31 IR: is the Cambridge dictionary helpful?
 32 Xia: yes, because it has a British pronunciation with an audio
 33 recording, so I can listen to its stress and imitate...
 34 I also use the Co-build dictionary to check their
 35 collocations and make sure I can use them properly.
 (Xia, GI, 03 May, 2012)

Compared with their previous experiences, presentation appeared to be a new type of assessment for the students, and they made strategic efforts to enrich the aspects of vocabulary relating to the focuses of the assessment. For example, Xia combined with different kinds of dictionaries and deployed a cluster of look-up strategies to achieve her learning purposes (Extract 4.40 and Figure 4.10).

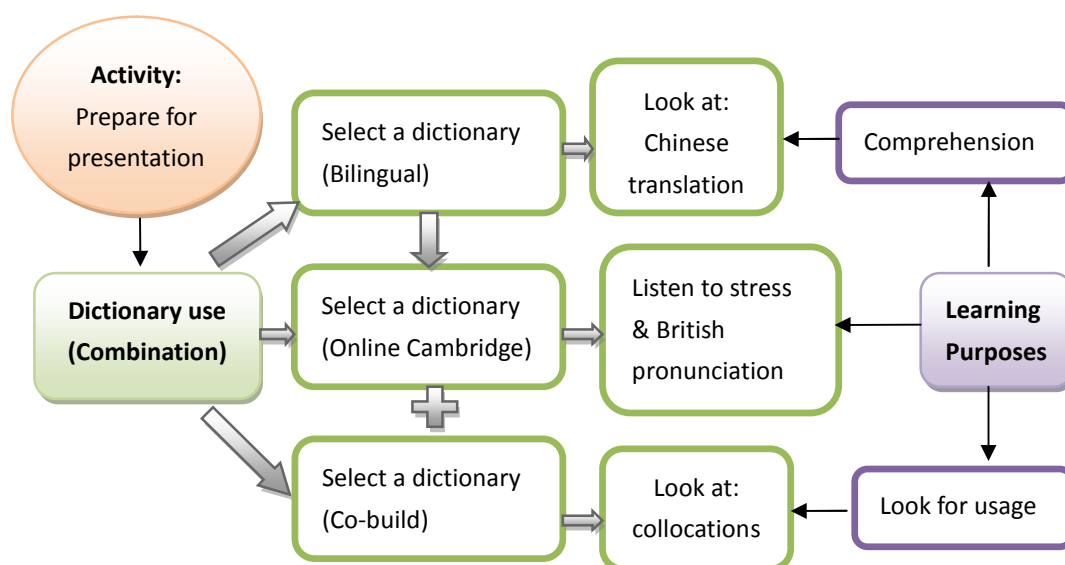


Figure 4.10 Xia's cluster of dictionary look-up strategies

It was difficult to find out which dictionary was more useful than others, because her data showed that they were used for different purposes and their effectiveness also depended on a particular setting, for example, the electronic YD bilingual dictionary can be more effective in the setting where Xia was restricted by time and space (line 25). The participants also explored other kinds of mediating artefacts (such as Google-translate, Wikipedia, journal articles and videos) to help them gain the information of the subject-related vocabulary (e.g. Extract 4.36 and 4.37). When encountering a greater amount of new subject-related vocabulary from the second term, they realised that it was not clear enough to learn the words through reading their definitions in a dictionary and thus they tried other artefacts to find out more information, such as their origin, theories and pictures, to help them understand the words better:

Extract 4.41

01 When I did my coursework...‘piazza’ I didn’t know the exact
02 meaning until I searched it in the Wikipedia. I guessed
03 its meaning first related to its picture...also looked at
04 its background information and explanation...When I still
05 felt unsure any words in the text, I checked Google-translate.
06 Finally, I knew the exact meaning (Wu, diary, VOCABlog, 30 Jan.
2012)

From the preceding analysis, the dictionaries and some artefacts seem to support their VL in relation to their particular settings and serve different learning purposes. In particular, their learning goals and settings appear to be two main factors influencing

their selection of dictionaries.

4.3.3.2 Recoding and consolidation

Both Wu and Xia reported that they used vocabulary notebooks (including both conventional and electronic notebooks) to help them record and memorise vocabulary outside the classroom. Their recording processes which include what, how and where to record vocabulary reflect their own learning purposes, and the data also show various organisations of notebooks which have a different impact on their VL processes. For example:

Extract 4.42

- 142 IR: How do you organise your notebook?
143 Wu: by the date. This way could remind me where I learned it
144 it's easier to go back to find them and other information
145 related to it in a text or handout (Wu, GI, 25 Oct. 2011)

Extract 4.43

- 01 I often selected some useful words from my E-notebook for
02 my writing or speaking, put them in my paper notebook in the



Photo 4.11

03 photo...words on the page are written by two colors, While I
04 put my professional vocabulary in black, other words e.g.
05 daily words in blue...when reviewing them, I will focus on
06 black ones, as compared with daily words, professional words
07 are more difficult to remember. (Xia, diary and photo,
VOCABlog,02 April, 2012)

Setting up the notebook by date was viewed as a useful way to help Wu recall his memory of in what situation he learned the word and memorise vocabulary in context (Extract 4.42). By contrast, Xia distinguished academic from general vocabulary in her conventional notebook (Extract 4.43, lines 03-05, also Photo 4.11). Depending on their usefulness and importance, she decided to how to review them and how much attention needed to be paid.

The data (e.g. Extract 4.11 and 4.43) above show that they both combined their E-notebooks (in mobile or laptop versions) with their conventional notebooks. In particular, Extract 4.44 indicates that Xia used the E-notebook as a mediating artefact to help her regulate both recording and reviewing processes and to remind her to recycle words on a regular basis.

Extract 4.44

	单词	音标		复习完成度	收藏时间	分类
<input type="checkbox"/>	145	encryption	[in'kriptʃən]	加密术	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	146	crave	[kreɪv]	vt. 渴求; 渴望 vi. 渴望; 恳求	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	147	chase	[tʃeɪs]	vt. 追逐; 追捕; 试图赢得; 騷擾 vt.	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	148	malicious	[mə'liʃəs]	adj. 恶毒的; 恶意的; 蓄意的; 怀恨	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	149	sever	['sevə]	vt. 割断, 断绝; 分开; 使分离 vi.	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	150	crooked	['kru:kɪd]	adj. 弯曲的; 歪的; 不正当的	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	151	jaws		n. 口; 狭口; 咽喉	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	152	incriminate	[in'krɪmɪneɪ]	vt. 控告; 暗示...有罪	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	153	hatchet job			2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	154	legit	[lə'dɪt]	n. 正統劇; 正統劇院 adj. 合法的	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	155	footage	['fʊtɪdʒ]	n. 连续镜头; 英尺长度; 以尺计算长	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	156	time slot		时间空档; (电视或广播电台的)播前	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	157	disavow	[,dɪsə'vaʊ]	vt. 否认; 否定; 抵赖; 拒绝对...的	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	158	utterly	['ʌtəli]	adv. 完全地; 绝对地; 全然地; 彻底	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	159	vengeance	['vendʒəns]	n. 复仇; 报仇; 报复	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	160	pinched	['pɪntʃt]	adj. 痛苦的; 困难的; 压紧的; 收缩	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	161	obsessive	[əb'sesɪv, ət]	adj. 强迫性的; 分神的; 着迷的	2012-01-09	
<input type="checkbox"/>	162	allocation	[,æləu'keɪʃən]	n. 分配; 配置; 安置	2012-01-08	
<input type="checkbox"/>	163	remand	[rɪ'mɑ:nd, -]	n. 送还, 遣回; 还押 vt. 还押, 还	未加入复习	2012-01-02
<input type="checkbox"/>	164	hunch	[hʌntʃ]	n. 预感; 大块; 肉峰 vt. 耸肩; 预	未加入复习	2011-12-29
<input type="checkbox"/>	165	booth	[bu:ð, bu:θ]	n. 货摊; 公用电话亭	未加入复习	2011-12-29
<input type="checkbox"/>	166	drum	[drʌm]	vt. 击鼓; 大力争取 vi. 击鼓; 大力	未加入复习	2011-12-29
<input type="checkbox"/>	167	glide	[glɑɪd]	n. 滑翔; 滑行; 滑移; 滑音 vt. 滑	未加入复习	2011-12-29

Photo 4.12

01 My E-notebook helped me save all the words which I checked
 02 ...I don't need to put any word information, it includes it
 03 already...it tells me how frequent I have reviewed them
 04 ((The column next to the recording date))...reminds me how
 05 much attention needs to be paid next time. (Xia, photo and
 description, VOCABlog, 21 Jan. 2012)

Both Xia and Wu used their E-notebooks and conventional notebooks but for different purposes. Wu (GI, 21 Feb, 2012) further commented that ‘... *I still put some useful words in my paper notebook... when you actually wrote them down, this process helped me remember them more deeply.*’ The act of writing a word down in a notebook was viewed as a more useful strategy to reinforce his memorisation. By contrast, Xia used her conventional notebook for further categorisation.

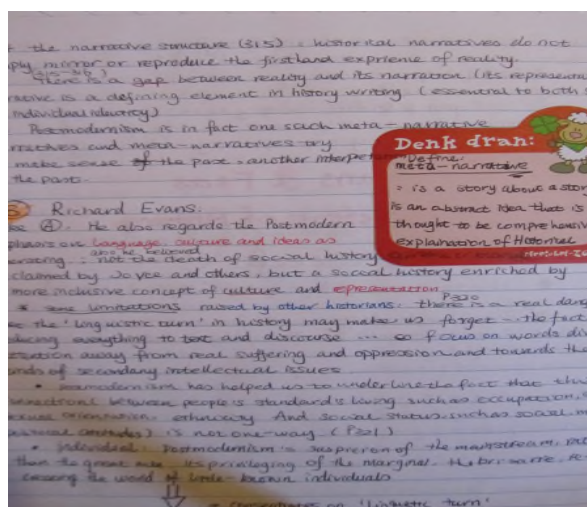
Once they started to set up their notebooks, they both mentioned that their first step was to discover the target word's meaning from their class notes, dictionary or other learning materials and then recorded a Chinese translation in the notebook. Apart from a word's meaning, they also made different attempts to enrich their vocabulary notebooks at home:

Extract 4.45

01 Recently my teacher taught many academic words, encouraged us
 02 to know a word whether it's positive or negative. This can bring
 03 a different association with the word. E.g. 'cause' tends
 04 to link with a negative result. This made me realise the
 05 importance of this information so I include it in my notebook...
 (Wu, diary, VOCABlog, 22 Feb, 2012)

Extract 4.46

351 IR: Do you still follow the same way to record vocabulary?
 352 Xia: No. when I met more subject-related words...they're often
 353 difficult to understand and memorise so I recorded their
 354 English explanation, instances of use, Chinese
 355 translation, to help me learn them. (Xia, GI, 02 Mar. 2012)



(Photo 4.13, VOCABlog, March 05 2012)

Extract 4.45 and 4.46 indicate that their notebooks were enriched with different kinds of word knowledge, such as teacher's suggestion (Wu) and instances of use (Xia, also Photo 4.13). Within this current academic milieu, they realised that learning vocabulary entailed more efforts and they needed to make a further enrichment in their notebooks. As the students prepared for their future undergraduate studies in this IFP course, their teacher provided them with the academic training and enabled them to speak and write more academically. In this milieu, the teacher became an important agent to raise their awareness in learning vocabulary from different perspectives. Drawing on his teacher's advice, Wu started to include one additional kind of word knowledge to help him adjust to this academic life, a word's connotations (Extract 4.45). As they dealt more with the subject-related vocabulary, Xia also commented that it would be more helpful to include its Chinese translation as well as English explanation and contextual information (Extract 4.50).

In order to adjust to a more challenging academic milieu, the participants made continuous efforts to modify their previous recording styles and enrich their notebooks through reviewing their notebooks (e.g. Extract 4.43, 4.45 and 4.46). These seemed to be important metacognitive strategies to improve their learning. Analysing their processes, they appeared to perform a similar strategic circle of recording vocabulary in a notebook/notebooks (Figure 4.11 below), although they selected different strategies relating to their specific recording process within this circle. As they had more time and resources to supplement their recording in the

notebooks at their accommodation, this circle tended to occur there rather than outside it.

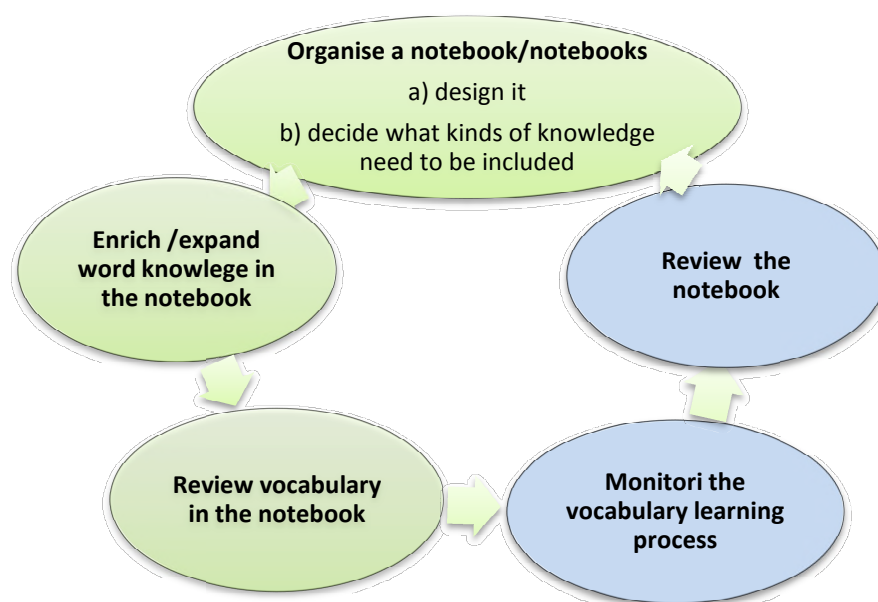


Figure 4.11 A strategic circle of vocabulary recording

Although they acknowledged the usefulness of vocabulary notebooks for storing vocabulary, they also found some weaknesses in only using vocabulary notebooks to consolidate and memorise vocabulary. For example, Xia commented (GI, 09 Dec. 2011) that *'reviewing their notebooks can be a useful way to know a word at a receptive level but I still found difficult to master it productively'*. Another weakness which was mentioned by both participants was that reviewing vocabulary in their notebooks was seen as a dull way to remember words. Therefore, besides using their vocabulary notebooks, they explored other ways to consolidate words (see more in the next section).

Strengthening both memory and knowledge of a word can play an important role in the process of VL; the strategies which were used to reinforce learners' retention were labelled as 'consolidation strategies' (after Schmitt, 1997). As mentioned above, the process of consolidation appears to involve vocabulary improvement through: seeking social support, enriching word knowledge through checking dictionaries and reviewing notebooks and memorising and practicing vocabulary in the out-of-class settings. Compared with their previous learning experiences in China, Wu and Xia discovered more consolidation strategies in the UK, and this English-speaking milieu also provided them with more opportunities to practise using these strategies (e.g. Extract 4.31 and 4.33). They tried to combine repetition with other kinds of consolidation strategies, such as associative strategies and social strategies. They found them more enjoyable than simple repetition. For example:

Extract 4.47



Photo 4.14

01 With wonderful scenery...which made me unforgettable. This

02 called 'Suspension Bridge'...

IR: why did you select this photograph related to VL?

03 Wu: ... in the picture that there are no bridge piers beneath
04 the bridge...This picture helped me remember why it called
05 'suspension'...when I think of the word again I'll remember
04 the bridge, the explanation of my friend as well as the
05 time my friends and I spent there...the meaningless become
06 meaningful...it's the trip brought for me. (Wu, photo
and forum, VOCABlog, 8 Nov, 2011)

Extract 4.48



Photo 4.15

01 ...The picture helped me know the word 'grain' better...I
02 didn't know what the picture called in English until
03 I showed it to my coursemates. Later, I put it on my wall...
04 In relation to this picture, the word has become one of
05 my most impressive words...(Xia, photo and description,
VOCABlog, 10 May. 2012)

In relation to their specific activities, Wu and Xia discovered a number of mediating artefacts to reinforce their memorisation and increase their motivation for VL. After the trip, Wu tried to generate several associations to help him recall the meaning of the target word including associating the word with the image of the word, his friend's explanation and the trip itself (Extract 4.47). Thus the photograph operated not only as a research tool for recording his SVL, but also as an artefact to mediate his VL. Through accessing the photograph, its visual image was recalled and this enabled the

learner to remember the word meaning in association with the image (lines 03-06 and Photo 4.14). In this strategic learning process, Wu became a self-regulated agent who managed his VL through interaction between his mental process and the image. Extract 4.48 also shows that Xia learned the subject-specific word ‘grain’ through using a picture (Photo 4.15). She first showed the picture to her peers and sought their help to discover the word. At home, she also used the picture as a mediating artefact to recall her memory of the word and strengthen her retention (lines 03-05).

Apart from relating with some concrete artefacts (e.g. a picture), they also formed other associations to consolidate vocabulary and enhance their learning, such as relating with synonyms (Extract 4.49) and other derivatives (Extract 4.15).

Extract 4.49

01 ...This cruise has 10 floors...I also tried to recall my memory
02 of other ships, e.g. the dugout, which is a canoe...a whaler
03 is a ship aiming to whale fishing...this analogy method cannot
04 only used in the Science, but also word learning...



Photo 4.16

(Xia, photo and description, VOCABlog, 18 Feb 2012)

As mentioned above, Wu and Xia both improved their VL in relation to their particular settings (e.g. on a cruise) through the help of various mediating agents (e.g. classmates) and artefacts (e.g. a photograph).

4.3.4 Learning vocabulary through enjoyment

Wu and Xia both showed that the moments which they felt were boring and not enjoyable, particularly when talking about the experiences of using rote memorisation and repetition strategies, for example:

Extract 4.50

```
01 I haven't picked up my notebook for a while. I found that  
02 remembering the words repeatedly a bit tiring...also if I didn't  
03 use them I still forgot...(Wu, diary, VOCABlog, 10 Apr, 2012)
```

This kind of feeling seems to be an important factor to influence their choice of strategy use. From the second term, they started to realise the importance of enjoyment which can motivate them to keep consolidating vocabulary and enhance their learning outcomes; although they also acknowledged the effectiveness of rote learning strategies (e.g. Extract 4.4 and 4.5). There were fewer formal classes during the third term and students could have more free time to plan their life. In relation to this different milieu, the participants tended to learn vocabulary for pleasure. For example:

Extract 4.51

87 Wu: In this term I had fewer modules and more time to learn
88 the words which I like or I need, and could enjoy the
89 learning process more. (Wu, GI, 30 June 2012)

In this case, vocabulary rote learning became marginalised or was combined with some affective strategies to help them learn vocabulary more effectively and enjoyably. One of the affective strategies which Wu reported in the data is the use of games to increase his intrinsic motivation in learning vocabulary, for example:

Extract 4.52

183 IR: Do you still play the game Word feud?
184 Wu: Yes. Recently I found another friend to play it with me.
185 His English is really good so it's interesting to see what
186 the words he played and learn from him...as his opponent,
187 I eager to learn more words from him so can achieve a higher
188 score to beat him. (Wu, GI, 30 June, 2012)



(Photo 4.17, VOCABlog, 13 Nov. 2011)

The data showed that Wu tried many different word games (e.g. ‘Word feud’ and ‘Blueprint3D’) to help him learn words. These games were used as mediating artefacts to raise his enjoyment when learning vocabulary. When he realised that his VL became dull and repetitive, he would then explore a new game. Because of this continuous exploration, he was able to keep his interests in VL. In Extract 4.52, Wu’s friend who played the game with him seemed to be an important agent to help him enlarge his vocabulary size, and they co-constructed a context to encourage him to learn more words (also Photo 4.17). In particular, their competitive relationship seems to be an element to generate his motivation for developing vocabulary. Engagement in creative and playful vocabulary practices appears to contribute to the process of learning and consolidating vocabulary.

Apart from games, they also sought other ways to increase their motivation for learning vocabulary. For example, as mentioned above, they tended to explore different associative strategies to make the process of memorising and reviewing vocabulary more enjoyable. Furthermore, listening to some podcasts or watching some English language programmes which they found interesting can be an affective strategy to enhance their VL processes (see also Oxford, 2011), for example:

Extract 4.53

01 One interesting measure drew me attention, called ‘SUDS’
02 (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems)...I searched it online,
03 a video came out...I learned some words from it e.g. ‘drainage’,

04 the one I knew but couldn't spell or say, 'sewerage' totally
05 new to me...Videos are helpful that give u intuitive information
06 which also increases our interest in learning. (Xia, diary,
VOCABlog, 01 May, 2012)

Extract 4.53 indicated that Xia learned vocabulary for her own interests. To discover word information, she tried a video and used it as a mediating artefact to consolidate the words exposed earlier (including its spelling and pronunciation) and help her know some new words (lines 03-05). In addition, using videos was seen as a useful way to raise her motivation to learn vocabulary (lines 05-06).

4.3.5 Strategic learning as a dynamic system

The data above also shows a dynamic interaction between the learner's strategic learning, learning goals and particular settings including the specific situation, mediating agents and artefacts. In terms of SVL as a dynamic system, this section presents more findings about it and includes three aspects, varying degrees of consciousness in the process of SVL, inconsistencies in strategy use and some noticeable changes in strategy use across the academic year.

4.3.5.1 Varying degrees of consciousness

The participants did not appear to be fully aware of when and how to learn a word and which words needed to be learned all the time and they showed varying levels of consciousness to learn vocabulary across different settings. For example:

Extract 4.54

01 ...When I wanted to say that 'Hong Kong was a colony...' to my
02 friend, at that time I forgot the word 'colony' though I knew
03 it before...I had to find another word to replace it. On Fri,
04 when listening to radio I heard this word again. I stopped...
05 wanted to know it! then tried to spell it through its sound,
06 found it in a dictionary and put it in my notebook. (Wu, diary,
VOCABlog, 25 Jan, 2012)

Extract 4.55

01 Once I saw CM's blog, she said 'learning can be everywhere...'
02 This reminded me to be more aware of off campus which can be
03 fantastic environment to learn words. e.g. On the train,
04 the announcement said '...Today the train is overcrowded...'
05 I knew 'crowded' but rarely used it. A good word can be used
06 next time. Later, I texted my friends...At the beginning, I
07 used 'full' to describe the train. suddenly, I remembered
08 'crowded'... this is a good opportunity to practise it...I kept
09 using it in other texts...

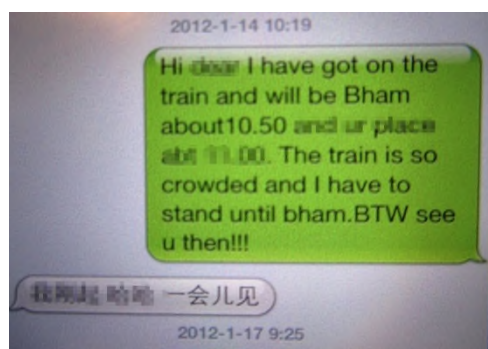


Photo 4.18

(Xia, diary and photo, VOCABlog, 18 Jan 2012)

The data above shows dynamic degrees of consciousness in learners' strategic processes. Looking at Extract 4.54, when Wu encountered a word which he forgot how to express in English, he was not aware of how to consolidate it, although he realised that it was exposed earlier. Instead, a communicative strategy was used to help him carry on the conversation (lines 01-03). The moment when he heard the word

again in a radio programme raised his consciousness to consolidate it. Afterwards, a sequential cluster of strategies (including a dictionary look-up strategy → recording it in the notebook) was consciously deployed to help him recall the word (lines 04-06). Xia's consciousness of SVL varied across different settings (Extract 4.55). VOCABlog seemed to be a useful artefact to develop her strategic awareness. When she read other member's blog, she became more aware that VL did not only take place in a formal setting, but also outside the classroom (lines 01-03). This strategic awareness had an impact on her strategy use later. This was why she did not simply listen to the content of the train announcement, but also consciously deployed a strategy of attentive listening to learn vocabulary. However, after knowing the word 'crowded', she was not consciously aware of how to practise this word (lines 06-07). When she wrote a text message and used its synonym, this moment reminded her that the word 'crowed' was useful and can be more appropriate to the context. She then decided to remember it and practise using it repeatedly in other messages to aid her retention (lines 07-09, also Photo 4.18).

The data above indicates that a number of factors could raise their consciousness, although the degree was varying, such as mediating agents (e.g. Extract 4.45 and 4.52) and the frequency and usefulness of a word (e.g. Extract 4.54 and 4.55). Their learning milieu was also seen as an important factor which influenced their consciousness of how to learn a word. For example, compared with their learning milieu in China, they faced with many more communicative demands in the UK. They became more aware

of the importance of usage and pronunciation of vocabulary and consciously deployed different clusters of VLSs to enrich these aspects of word knowledge (e.g. Extract 4.23, 4.35 and 4.40). Furthermore, Xia reported that a strategic action (e.g. reviewing their vocabulary notebooks) can become automatic through repeated practice, but it does not mean that they were unconscious about the strategic process and no longer evaluated the practice (see Figure 4.11above). When they found it ineffective, they were able to consciously modify the current strategy use or explore other strategies (see the section 4.3.4).

4.3.5.2 Inconsistencies in strategy use

The participants' strategic use, approaches and awareness are not always consistent and their SVL seems to vary across the time. For example, there appeared to be some inconsistent elements in Xia's use of vocabulary notebook through the academic year. As mentioned above, she tended to record vocabulary in her textbooks or handouts rather than a vocabulary notebook, because these materials could provide a textual context to help her understand and remember the words (Extract 4.29). However, she restarted to use the vocabulary notebook during the end of the second term and commented on it:

Extract 4.56

01 I noted not only the meaning ...also more example sentences
02 ...so when reviewing them, I knew under what circumstances
03 I can use them...when writing them on the notebook, you had
04 impression, when reviewing it repeatedly, impression was
05 deeper (Xia, diary, VOCABlog, 02 April, 2012)

Xia showed that the vocabulary notebook can also be meaningful by adding example sentences in it. This strategic action appeared to be inconsistent with her previous strategic approach and his negative view of using this strategy turned to be more positive (Extract 4.56). However, the last general interview (05 June 2012) indicated that reviewing the vocabulary notebook became marginalised during the third term and she evaluated ‘*when you keep using it for a long time, you find the process really boring and rigid...it’s difficult to keep reviewing it regularly*’. Keeping the vocabulary notebook demotivated her and she was not consistent with her previous strategic use again. Furthermore, both Xia and Wu stressed that avoiding thinking Chinese can be a useful way to develop their vocabulary in their interviews but they still translated Chinese into English words in the actual learning process, for example:

Extract 4.57

01 I came up with an idea to think everything in English instead
02 of Chinese...e.g. we know we should say 选课, 拿东西, 举多重. All
03 with different verbs. But in English, we can simply use
04 “take”, Take module, take things, take what Kg. The problem
05 is how we match English with Chinese? Sumptuous and ornate
06 both mean 华丽 in Chinese, but any differences in between?
(Wu, diary, VOCABlog, 04 Feb, 2012)

It is clear that Wu was not consistent with what he stated at the beginning of his diary and matching Chinese with English words seemed to be used as a private speech to help him think which word can be more appropriate to the context and how to use a word.

Wu also pointed out that it can be an effective way to enrich his word knowledge through interacting with others (e.g. Extract 4.38) so that was why he actively participated in the classroom activities and sought lots of social support from his teacher and peers (e.g. Extract 4.16 and 4.19). However, in the out-class settings, he was reluctant to use social strategies and an isolated social network with his foreign friends also restricted him using them (Extract 4.30). Therefore, there seemed to be some inconsistencies between their strategic awareness and actual strategy use outside the classroom.

4.3.5.3 Changes in strategy use

The participants' SVL appeared not to be static. Their strategic use can vary across different milieus and be modified to suit their particular settings and learning goals. From the preceding analysis, a number of noticeable changes in the students' strategy use during the academic year were summarised below.

Compared with their learning milieu in China, Wu and Xia seemed to have more interactive activities in the class and communicatively based opportunities outside the classroom in the UK. They tended to combine more social strategies (e.g. ask others for explanation) with other strategies (e.g. checking a dictionary) in the UK⁹. Also, their VL was largely influenced by their teachers' suggestion on what words

⁹ See examples: Wu's Extract 4.17 and 4.19; Xia's Extract 4.16 and 4.33

needed to learn and how to learn before coming to the UK¹⁰. They became more autonomous and purposeful to check, record and review vocabulary in relation to their learning milieu in the UK¹¹.

Wu and Xia also made more strategic efforts appropriate to a new academic milieu in the UK. For example, in order to adjust to their future degree programmes, their language teacher focused on the teaching of academic vocabulary and encouraged them to use words more academically. These influenced their strategy use. In particular, they became more aware of academic words and tended to discover, record and consolidate more information about them, such as their stylistic qualities and connotations¹². Besides their English module, there were also other subject-specific modules which were taught through the medium of English. Faced with this more challenging academic milieu, they made various efforts to aid their retention of subject-related vocabulary during the academic year¹³. After the first term, both Wu and Xia's language teacher seemed to be an important social agent to mediate their relationship with her and other peers. Their classroom atmosphere tended to be more relaxed and active and this encouraged both Xia¹⁴ and Wu¹⁵ to interact more with their teacher and peers and use more social strategies to learn vocabulary.

¹⁰ See Extract 4.3 and 4.4

¹¹ See examples: Xia's Extract 4.26 and 4.43; Wu's Extract 4.27 and 4.31

¹² See examples: Wu's Extract 4.36 and 4.45; Xia's Extract 4.43

¹³ See examples: Wu's Extract 4.36 and 4.41; Xia's Extract 4.30 and 4.46

¹⁴ See examples: Extract 4.22 and 4.23

¹⁵ See an example: Extract 4.35

Furthermore, they tended to learn vocabulary in association with its textual context or their learning situations¹⁶. By contrast, de-contextualised VLSs (e.g. rote memorisation) became marginalised during the third term. One of the reasons was that they both felt bored through keeping using these strategies and also realised that enjoyment was crucial in VL. Hence, they explored more interesting ways to learn vocabulary and deployed some affective strategies to maintain their motivation (see examples in the section 4.3.4 above).

¹⁶ See examples: Extract 4.16, 4.29 and 4.47

Chapter 5

Strategic vocabulary learning in context: two cases in the Opal site

5.1 Context of the two cases

The University of Opal is located in the South East of England. It is widely acknowledged to be the UK's leading modern university and the specialist areas, such as Business, tourism, and hotel management, are the strength of this university. It consists of three campuses. Although the campus which the IFP is based on is not near the city centre, the university offers bus services for students to travel to the city.

The IFP consisted of both compulsory and optional modules that built on students' language and academic skills and reflected their own subject and career interests. The programme ran for either two semesters (if the students' English level is IELTS 5.0) or three semesters (if the students' English level is IELTS 4.5). Both participants had an English level of IELTS 4.5, so they attended the three-semester course. During the first semester from September to December 2011, they needed to first improve their English language skills on the modules, Grammar and Vocabulary Skills, Academic Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking. In their final two semesters (from Jan to August 2012) they needed to take the modules which further developed their knowledge of using English for academic purposes (three compulsory modules for this) and their subject knowledge through the modules related to their future course of

study (three optional modules for this). One or two of these modules were at undergraduate level to give them the experience of studying at a higher level with British and international students. In particular, during the final semester, most of the time they needed to complete a focused independent project in relation to their future course of study or interests with the support of their personal tutors. If they successfully completed this programme, they would receive a certificate for the International Foundation Diploma and be placed on an undergraduate course in this university. The students could then also apply for other British universities but apart from successful competition of this programme they needed to retake the IELTS exam to achieve an English level of IELTS 6.0 or 6.5.

During the first semester, as mentioned above, the modules were designed to improve students' English abilities and strategies in four skills. Unlike other two sites, there was one module which specifically focused on vocabulary and grammar. The students were given plenty of opportunities to practise and consolidate vocabulary and develop their pronunciation. As my aim was to explore their SVL, so lessons from this module were chosen to be observed. By comparison with the first semester, only one module, Preparation for University Studies, had a specific content focus on English skills including vocabulary over the following two semesters. I observed two lessons from this module to find out how they learned vocabulary generally in this module and also explored how they learned subject-related vocabulary in other modules through interviews.

Two participants

Two Chinese students (one male and one female) volunteered as my participants in the whole process of the data collection. These two participants were in the same group for all the English modules, although they took some different optional modules from the second semester. Their background information is briefly provided below (also Appendix 2.7).

Qa is a male student at 18 years old and came to the UK straightaway after completing his high school in China, and didn't attend any courses for IELTS preparation. He took the IELTS exam before coming to the UK and reached an English level of IELTS 4.5. In the IFP, apart from three compulsory modules for English, he also chose Business and Hotel Management, Intercultural Communication (IC) and Thinking Critically (TC) as his optional modules. If he could pass all the modules, he would stay at Opal University and study a business management course for his future degree.

Ji was an 18-year-old female student and she had also gained a high school diploma before coming to the UK. After completing her high school, she had been to a private language school to prepare for the IELTS exam for one month. She obtained the same IELTS score of 4.5. She intended to study an Accounting and Finance course for her future degree. From the second to third semester, she chose Foundation Economics, IC and TC as her optional modules. Unlike Qa, she planned to study her future degree at a

different British university, so not only did she need to successfully complete the IFP at this university, but also she needed to re-take an IELTS exam during the term time and reach an English level of IELTS 6.5 in order to apply for other British universities.

5.2 Past vocabulary learning experiences

Both Qa and Ji described similar VL experiences at their high school in China. Their language teachers tended to integrate vocabulary teaching with intensive reading through the use of their high school textbooks. From Extract 5.1 and 5.2, their teachers appeared to play a central role in their English classes and focused on teaching vocabulary and grammar translation.

Extract 5.1

03 Qa: My teacher normally used our textbook and translated
04 sentence by sentence and chose some important words
05 to teach and we recorded them..
09 IR: Did you ask if you can't understand?
10 Qa: No...our teaching was intensive, no time to interrupt her..
17 IR: Did your teacher offer any advice for VL?
18 Qa: No, she only told us which words should be remembered...I
19 normally memorised them repeatedly (Qa, GI, 26 Oct. 2011)

Extract 5.2

07 Ji: I recorded everything she taught because she said that
08 the words were important...the important thing was to
09 memorise them, because she said at the end of each lesson
10 'memorise today's vocabulary and test them tomorrow'
11 IR: Did your teacher suggest other ways for VL?
12 Ji: No. She only asked us to memorise. Rote learning is a
13 rigid way...I felt bored and no any interests in learning
14 words at that time...(Ji, GI, 26 Oct. 2011)

In relation to their teaching style, the participants tended to record the words and other information which their teachers emphasised and did not mention any other VLSs used in the class (Extract 5.1, lines 03-05; 09-10; Extract 5.2, lines 07-08). Their teachers stressed the importance of memorisation in learning but rarely offered other strategic advice for their VL. As a result, SVL outside the classroom tended to be mainly associated with rote memorisation and repetition (e.g. Extract 5.1, lines 18-9; Extract 5.2, lines 08-09; 12-3). Extract 5.2 (lines 12-4) also shows that this way of VL appeared to demotivate Ji, however, she could not find any better strategies to help her learn vocabulary because this was still appropriate to her context at that time. In particular, two aspects of the milieu influenced her strategy choice, (1) the format of the vocabulary test and (2) teacher's requirement (lines 09-10 and 12). Qa was also not positive about rote memorisation, but because of the satisfactory learning outcome, he still perceived it as a useful strategy to help him learn vocabulary receptively:

Extract 5.3

17 Qa: rote learning is still effective. When reading the texts,
18 I found I could recognise many words which I memorised
19 earlier... (Qa, GI, 26 Oct.2011)

They tended to memorise vocabulary for homework or English tests rather than learning vocabulary for pleasure. Their SVL seemed to be more goal-directed; in particular, their extrinsic motivation played an important role in their learning. They both mentioned that their workload increased greatly throughout the final year

because they needed to prepare for national examinations. Hence, they had little time to build vocabulary in which they were interested. Nevertheless, Qa still tried to learn more words through watching English films:

Extract 5.4

33 Qa: When I found an unknown word was interesting, I stopped
 34 the film and checked it in my E-dictionary, recorded
 35 it and its Chinese meaning in my notebook.
 36 IR: how about other information, e.g. collocation?
 37 Qa: meaning is enough, I didn't need to use it...
 39 IR: Did you review the words?
 40 Qa: Yes, every Sunday...when I feel not sure, I checked them
 41 again in my dictionary (Qa, GI, 26 Oct. 2011)

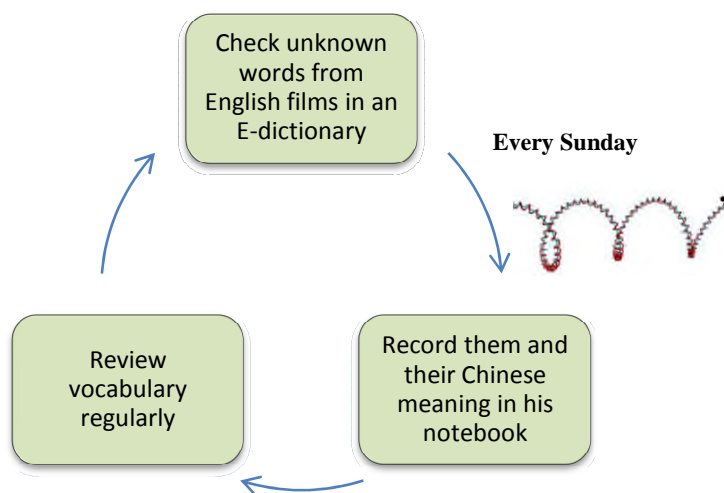


Figure 5.1 Qa's recycled strategic circle

Qa first deployed the strategies in sequence (discovery → recording → consolidation, Extract 5.4, lines 33-5; 39-40). He checked the words again in his dictionary when he found any uncertainties and kept using this cluster of strategies at regular intervals (lines 40-1). Therefore, the recycled strategic circle (see Figure 5.1) was formed to

learn more vocabulary after class. During this period, Qa only checked and recorded the Chinese meaning of an unknown word. As English was not used for communication in China, he thought that it was enough to know it at a receptive level (lines 36-7).

Unlike Qa, Ji did not take an IELTS exam straightway after completing her high school. Instead, she went to a private school to prepare for the IELTS exam. In the school, she learned many words when doing reading exercises and found her teacher's strategic advice useful:

Extract 5.5

40 Ji: The IELTS teacher recommended us to remember words
41 through reading...I knew many words and had more interests
42 in using this way than rote memorisation...
47 IR: how did you deal with unknowns words in a text?
48 Ji: I found my teacher's suggestion helpful...First, I decided
49 if they needed to be checked...if I can't guess...it's also
50 a key word, then checked it in my E-dictionary, recorded
51 its Chinese meaning in the text...reviewed it in the text
52 again...(Ji, GI, 26 Oct. 2011)

Within a new learning milieu, Ji compared her teacher's strategic advice with her previous strategy use and then decided which strategies were more helpful (Extract 5.5, lines 40-2; 48). As a result, she found that learning and remembering an unknown word in context can be a more interesting way than rote memorisation and decided to deploy a sequential cluster of 'contextualised' strategies (lines 48-52) which the teacher suggested to help her build vocabulary (see Figure 5.2).

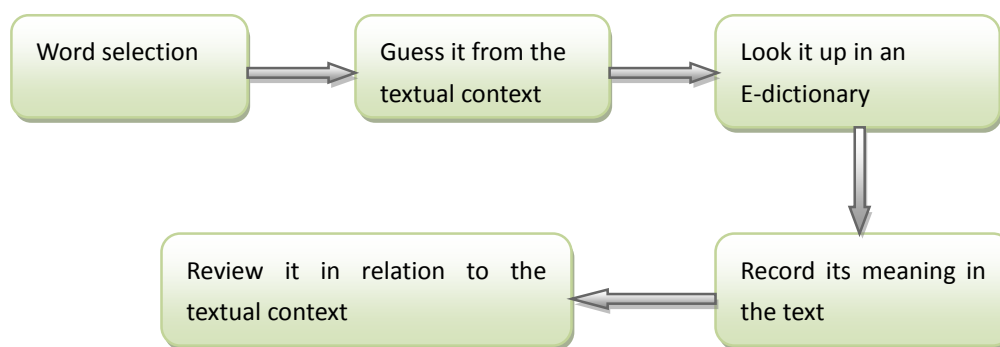


Figure 5.2 Ji’s sequential cluster of contextualised strategies for IELTS

5.3 The first semester in the UK

As mentioned above, unlike other two university sites, the IFP of the Opal site prioritised English language learning during the first semester and four modules were all related to English language skills; in particular, one of the modules focused on vocabulary and grammar. Until the second semester, besides the English module, they also had some optional modules in relation to their future degree. As the participants who chose this course had a lower English level in terms of their IELTS score, the aim of this course design was to improve their English language abilities and help them adjust to their academic life from the second semester.

5.3.1 Classroom setting

In one particular lesson, the teacher Eva arranged three interactive activities related to VL. Eva’s arrangement (Extract 5.6 lines 01-02; Extract 5.7 lines 46-7) became an important aspect of this setting to facilitate the students’ use of social strategies:

Extract 5.6

01 T: ...this exercise, you have to describe the word...to help
02 your partner to guess...does everybody get a partner?
03 Ss: Yes...
90 PS: ((describes the word))do you know it?
91 Qa: successfully?
92 PS: No not only successfully also quickly
93 Qa: I don't know
94 PS: efficiently
95 Qa: I forgot it, any differences between sufficiently and
96 effectively?
97 PS: efficiently means working quickly and well...sufficiently
98 means enough...(Qa, class observation, 09 Nov. 2011)

Extract 5.7

046 T: work with your partner, write some sentences to use the
047 words. Discuss↓ and write↓((manages Ss into pairs))...
129 Ji: rely? How to make it into a sentence?
130 JS: we can check our dictionaries
131 Ji: ((checks it in her E-dictionary, reads its definition))
132 JS: ((reads his sentence about the word))
133 Ji: it's good
134 T: please record your sentences, they help you remember the
135 words((speaks to Ji))
136 Ji: ok ((records in her notebook))



Photo 5.1(Class observation, 09 Nov. 2011)

In the first activity, students were asked to help each other to recall the words which they learned in the previous lesson (Extract 5.6). Qa forgot the word after his partner described it. In order to get to know it better, he asked his partner for further clarification (lines 95-8). He also commented on his partner's explanation:

Extract 5.8

23 Qa: In this activity, asking my partner was a more direct
24 way. Although I had my E-dictionary, I had no time to check
25 ...his explanation was also easier to understand...This kind
26 of interaction really reinforced my memory...(Qa, FI,
10 Nov. 2011)

In relation to this particular setting, he chose to use a social strategy which was considered as a more direct way than a dictionary look-up strategy due to a time constraint. His partner became a mediating agent to help him know and remember the word better (Extract 5.8).

Extract 5.7 also shows that Ji combined a social strategy with other strategies to learn how to use the word 'rely' in the second activity. Meanwhile, their teacher monitored their learning process and guided them towards more effective VL (see Photo 5.1). Eva's strategic advice (lines 47 and 134-6) mediated Ji's strategy use and she performed a sequential cluster of strategies related to the advice (see Figure 5.3).

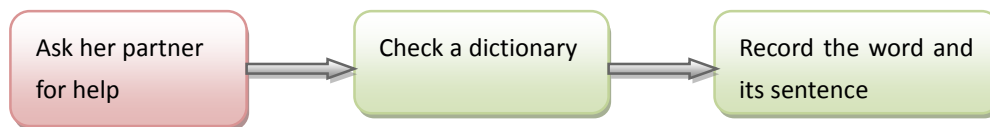


Figure 5.3 Ji's sequential cluster used in the pair work 'Use in Sentence'

However, in her FI (10 Nov. 2011), Ji commented that *'we had little discussion about the usage. The sentence was not made collaboratively; instead, I simply accepted my partner's sentence...This was why I still forgot how to use it'*. Direct feedback did not help her learn words deeply. The more discussions or collaboration she had, the more satisfactory learning outcome she seemed to have.

Ji and Qa did not choose social strategies to help them learn words in the different classroom setting:

Extract 5.9

108 T: please re-read the text, explore some useful words(.)
 109 collocations...(puts a dictionary next to each student)
 110 ...work with your dictionary and next neighbour...
 (Classroom observation, 21 Nov. 2011)

46 IR: Why didn't you work with your partner?
 47 Qa: ...Eva didn't put us in groups so we didn't have to work
 48 together...most students still worked individually so I
 49 also decided to work alone...The task was not difficult,
 50 I could learn them through using the dictionary which
 51 Eva provided, then recorded them in my notebook so I
 52 can review them later(Qa, FI, 21 Nov.2011)

By comparison with the activities from the first classroom observation, Extract 5.9 shows that the teacher did not manage the students in pairs in this activity. He might choose social strategies if Eva organised the learning groups for them (lines 47-8). In this particular setting, although the teacher encouraged students to learn words together, most students still chose to work individually (also Photo 5.2 below); and this working style of his peer also influenced his strategy choice (lines 48-9). Eva provided the conventional dictionaries for students, so he could use a dictionary look-up strategy to check the words (lines 50-1). Furthermore, as the task was not difficult, he was able to solve the problems through using a dictionary without seeking help from others. The dictionary became an important mediating artefact to support his VL. During this process, Qa performed a sequential cluster of strategies (see Figure 5.4). He appeared to be a self-regulated agent to manage his SVL in relation to this particular setting.

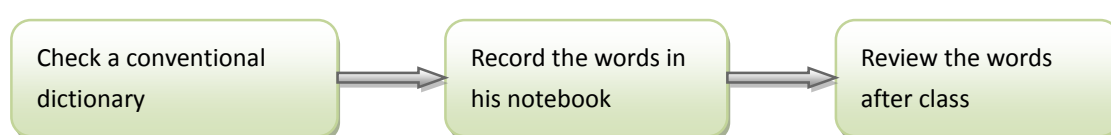


Figure 5.4 Qa's sequential cluster used in the activity 'Word Discovery'

Like Qa, Ji also chose to use a dictionary look-up strategy to discover the word rather than to seek a social support from her partner (s).



Photo 5.2 (Classroom observation, 21 Nov. 2011)

Yet, her reason for choosing this strategy was different from Qa's. From her FI (21 Nov. 2011), Ji reported that she was willing to work with her partner, but the partner responded little to her in the previous activity and worked with other students in this activity. Therefore, she had to work alone and use a conventional dictionary to help her find out the meaning and pronunciation of some useful words. Interpersonal behaviour of the peer appeared to be the factor to influence her strategy use.

From Extract 5.10 and 5.11, compared with their previous learning experiences, the participants in these two lessons seemed to play a central role in the process of VL rather than the teacher. The teacher spent less time on vocabulary teaching and tended to offer her teaching after each activity. She acted as a prompter to help students learn and consolidate the word knowledge (e.g. Extract 5.10, lines 115, 120 and 128) and opened for questions during her teaching (lines 113 and 132). This design of vocabulary teaching can facilitate Qa's efforts to learn vocabulary interactively and helped him form a dialogic strategy circle.

Extract 5.10

113 T: ...any words you had trouble with?
114 Qa: efficient?
115 T: what does it mean? ...
119 S2: well-planned?
120 T: Yes anything else? ...
127 Qa: effective? similar with efficient?
128 T: anybody can help him?
129 S2: Aspirin is a highly effective treatment...
130 T: good...what this means?
131 S2: it works
132 T: Yes ...understand?
133 Qa: Yes ((records them in his notebook))
(Classroom observation, 09 Nov. 2011)

Extract 5.11

01 ...Eva didn't talk all the time...gave us freedom to learn words
02 together and generate questions...the teacher in China kept
03 talking...no chance to ask... Eva's explanation was clear
04 I liked recording it...e.g. 'effective' when reviewing my
05 notes at home, I also practised using it...Next lesson,
06 I asked her again if I used them correctly...
(Qa, diary, VOCABlog, 10 Nov. 2011)

Qa found more questions through sharing his ideas with the teacher or listening to the interaction between the teacher and other peers in the class (e.g. Extract 5.10, line127). As Eva was open for questions, Qa kept seeking support from her and deployed a dialogic strategy circle to discover and consolidate the words (Figure 5.5). In particular, when reviewing the words, he also tried to practise using them through making them into sentences at home and went back the teacher in the next lesson and checked whether he really understood the words (Extract 5.11, lines 03-06).

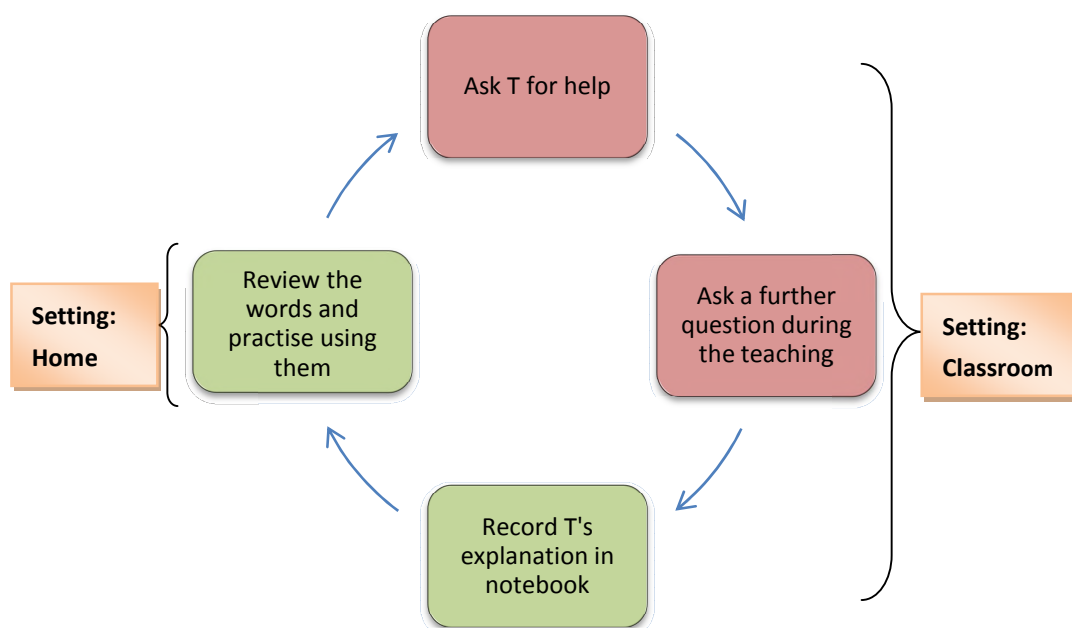


Figure 5.5 Qa's dialogic strategy circle across in-class and out-of-class settings

Like Qa, Ji also showed her uncertainties about unknown words during the teaching. However, she was not willing to be the first person to ask questions unless other peers started to ask related questions (e.g. Extract 5.12). Compared with Qa, Ji asked fewer questions when encountering uncertainties due to the influence of her past learning experiences (Extract 5.13).

Extract 5.12

58 T: ...is there any vocabulary you're not sure?
 59 Qa: invent?
 60 S2: [evaluate]? ...
 64 Ji: cite?
 65 T: let's talk through these words (Ji, Classroom
 observation, 21 Nov. 2011)

Extract 5.13

78 Ji: high school teachers often asked us to ask after the class
 79 ...they had a lot of things to teach. If they answered our

80 questions, they would had less time to teach so I often
81 ask after class or try to solve by myself...
(Ji, FI, 21 Nov. 2011)

The two classroom observations also showed that their teacher integrated strategy instruction with her vocabulary teaching and helped students develop new strategies or strengthen existing ones. In particular, she increased their knowledge of how to make use of a vocabulary notebook and the monolingual dictionary to build vocabulary sets. She offered both strategic advice (Extract 5.14, line 51 and Extract 5.15, line 141) and evaluative advice (Extract 5.14, line 52; Extract 5.15, line 142) to students and these seemed to have a direct influence on both Qa's and Ji's strategy use during the lessons. Their teacher appeared to be a mediating agent to raise their strategic awareness of when it was useful to deploy what VLSs.

Extract 5.14

051 T: keep a record of the words and your sentences...it's a
052 useful way to help you build vocabulary((Ji and Qa
053 both record in their notebook))
After this activity
133 T: who has a vocabulary notebook?
134 Ss: ((many students hand up))
135 T: ((selects one of them and shows it to the class)) when
136 you find new words...you need to record something like her
137 e.g. word forms...it's important to build your own words
(Classroom observation, 09 Nov. 2011)

Extract 5.15

141 T: if you got a dictionary you can use it...dictionary is
142 your best friend ((Qa and Ji check their E- dictionary))
After this activity

152 T: ...any strategies for VL...tell me
153 Ji: remember it
154 T: only remember it?
155 S3: speak it
156 T: good...how to use your dictionary?
157 Qa: check its meaning...
158 T: only meaning?
159 S4: pronunciation
160 T: good ... check their meaning in English...for some important
162 words, it's useful to look at their collocations...these
163 helps you use them (Classroom observation, 21 Nov. 2011)

Looking at Extract 5.14 (lines 133-7) and Extract 5.15 (lines 152-63), she engaged students in sharing and evaluating their strategies and offered evaluative feedback in order to enhance their strategy development.

Ji and Qa showed their different strategic and evaluative responses to their teacher's strategic advice when learning vocabulary outside the classroom. Qa had used a vocabulary notebook to build vocabulary before coming to the UK and Eva's strategic advice increased his motivation to reuse it (Extract 5.16). However, his purpose was not to build new vocabulary this time. Rather, he wanted to consolidate the words which were learned before (lines 39-41).

Extract 5.16

39 Qa: keeping a new notebook is useful but I've recorded many
40 words in the old one in China...I want to review some words
41 which I forgot or felt confused there... as Eva suggested
42 I'd like to use my dictionary...look at more information
43 about them, such as pronunciation...I don't record
44 everything she suggested. I only record what I need...
45 I look at my recording once a week to reinforce my
46 memory (Qa, GI, 21 Nov. 2011)

Extract 5.16 indicated that Qa deployed a sequential cluster of strategies repeatedly to consolidate vocabulary (Figure 5.6).

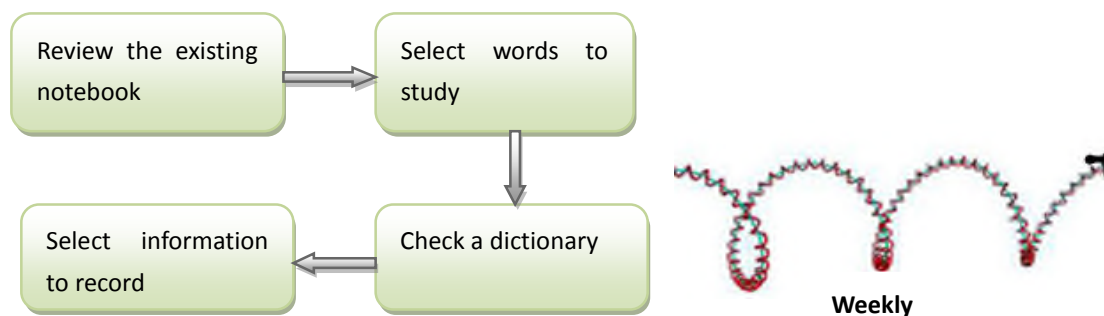


Figure 5.6 Qa's recycled sequential cluster of strategies through using the notebook

Extract 5.15 and 5.16 also show that Eva's strategic instruction mediated his use of a dictionary and Qa started to look at more word information from his dictionary. However, Qa did not simply follow Eva's strategic advice; he also modified it to appropriate his own needs. For example, he tried to review and rewrite the words which he learned before in his existing notebook rather than recording new words. In addition, he selected some word information which he found important to record rather than every aspect of word knowledge from a dictionary.

By contrast, Ji did not use a vocabulary notebook in China and Eva's strategic advice provided her with a new way of learning words. She made both strategic (Extract 5.17, line 41) and evaluative response (lines 41-4) to the teacher's advice.

Extract 5.17

40 Ji: I'm glad that Eva taught how to organise a vocabulary
41 notebook... I'm following her way... I found useful to record
42 different aspects of word information...my notebook looks
43 systematic, this made me feel more motivated to review
44 it. (Ji, GI, 21 Nov. 2011)

Looking at Extract 5.14, 5.15 and 5.17, Eva's strategic instruction seems to play an important role in helping her develop new VLSs. In particular, she showed a strong willingness to keep a vocabulary notebook and try the organisation which the teacher suggested (Extract 5.17). Photo 5.3 below shows that she drew more attention to the word pronunciation which was written in red comparing with other aspects of word information, and started to record the meaning of words in English in relation to her teacher's suggestion and needs (Extract 5.15 and 5.16), although she still focused on their Chinese translation.

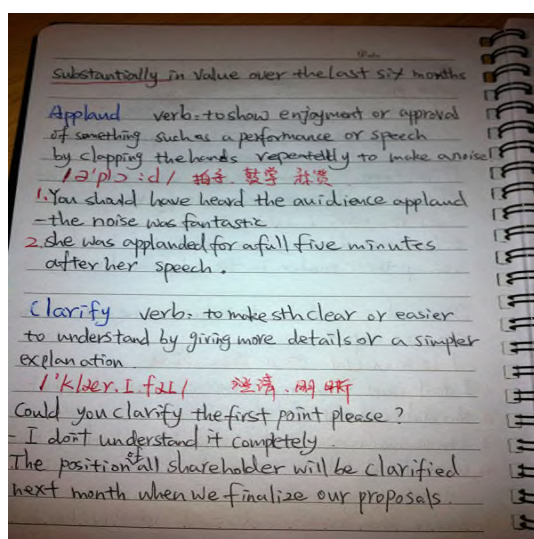


Photo 5.3 (Ji, GI, 21 Nov. 2011)

However, at the end of the first semester, when I asked them again what they thought about keeping a vocabulary notebook, they seemed to become less positive about this strategy. In particular, the way that their teacher required them to hand in their notebooks and checked them every week appeared to demotivate them to use this strategy:

Extract 5.18

133 Qa: keeping a notebook becomes homework, not a learning
134 strategy, As Eva requires, I have to include all
135 the information she suggested, but I feel this
136 unnecessary...actually I've started another notebook
137 which is my 'real one'. I only record the information
138 I think useful. (Qa, GI, 05 Dec. 2011)

Extract 5.19

154 Ji: Eva checks the notebook every week...I have to do it
155 otherwise she would send a letter to my parents...I still
156 forget to use many words which I recorded, although I've
157 revised them. (Ji, GI, 05 Dec. 2011)

Although their teacher's requirement generated pressure on their VL, Qa still showed his willingness to use this strategy. However, besides the existing one, he decided to create another new vocabulary notebook which was close to his own needs (Extract 5.18, lines 136-8). From Photo 5.4 below, he did not follow the teacher's requirement about what information should be included in this new notebook. He recorded the word prefixes and also grouped them by different topics to help him build and remember vocabulary.

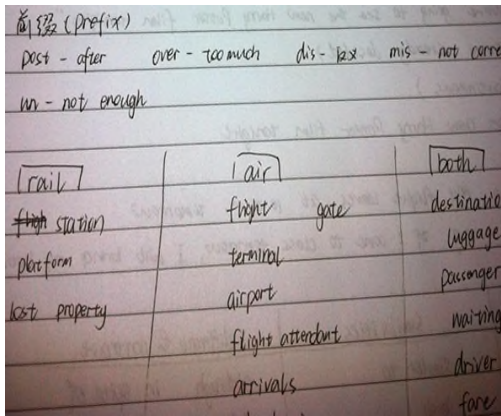


Photo 5.4 (GI, 05 Dec. 2011)

Ji found that keeping a notebook was not a useful way to learn vocabulary productively (Extract 5.19). The reason why she still kept using it seemed to be the pressure from her teacher rather than her own intention (lines 154-5). Her motivation of keeping it appeared to be dynamic and her teacher seemed to be an important agent who could reinforce or demotivate her use of this strategy (Extract 5.17 and 5.19).

5.3.2 Out-of-class settings

By comparison with their previous learning experiences in China, both Qa and Ji appeared to take more advantage of the milieu where there were more opportunities for them to learn and use vocabulary. Living in this English-speaking milieu, Qa believed that it would be a great way to learn vocabulary through authentic interaction with local people. In particular, he mentioned two ways to improve or practise vocabulary with other agents (such as a waiter and a shop assistant) through engaging himself in an English conversation across different settings (such as a

restaurant and a shop), for example:

Extract 5.20

177 Qa: I normally think what words would be used before speaking...
178 when I'm unsure, I'd like to ask my teacher. If she's not
179 there, I have to check my E-dictionary..
185 IR: please give me an example
186 Qa: ...my dictionary suggested some words. I tried them
187 with the office staff...he can't understand me until
188 I said 'switch', he clarified it. I confirmed and
189 put it in my mobile...I also practised it with my flatmate..
194 IR: do you find this way useful?
195 Qa: yes, it's important to try them with local people in real
196 situations. You could know whether you use them
197 appropriately...(Qa, GI, 15 Nov. 2011)

Qa tended to predict what words would be used in relation to the context of a conversation and tried to use this private speech as a mediating artefact to help him perform well in a real situation (Extract 5.20). During this process, when he found any words which he did not know how to express in English, he might choose a social strategy or a dictionary look-up strategy to help him discover the words depending on what resources available to him in that particular setting. If his teacher as a social resource was available, he preferred to ask her help rather than check a dictionary (lines 178-9). He also stressed that practising using the words with local people in real situations was necessary because they could be important mediating agents to help him find out whether the words were appropriate to the context and what words should be used (lines 188; 195-7). He also consolidated it through practising with others again (line 189). Across different out-of-class settings, Qa

exercised his agency and deployed a sequential cluster of strategies which took place in the verbal interactions with other people:

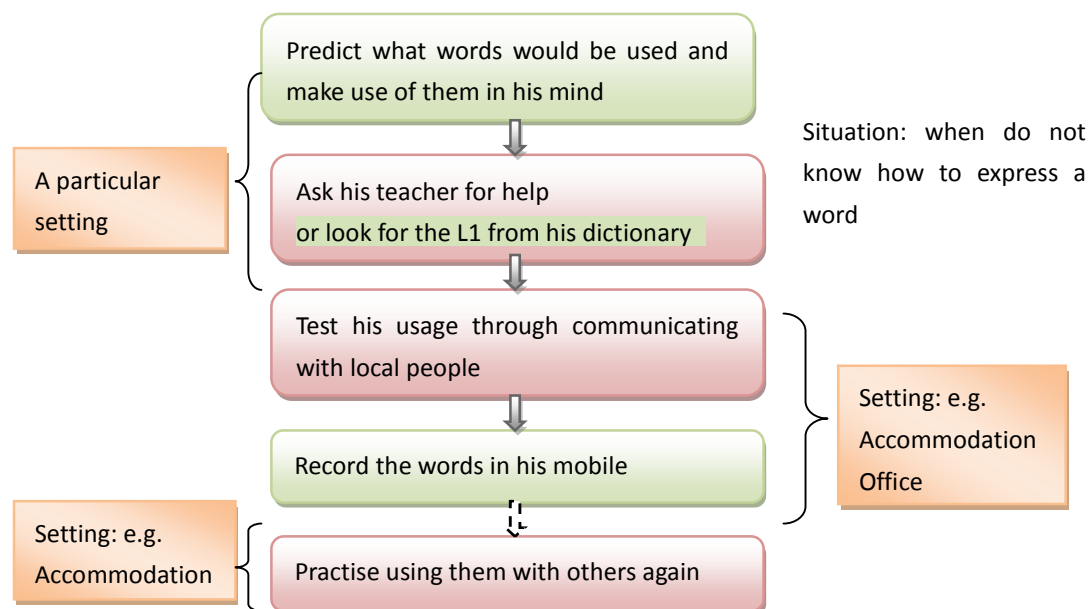


Figure 5.7 Qa's dialogic cluster of strategies across out-of-class settings

Extract 5.21

130 Qa: ...when having a dinner with my friend, the waitress asked
 131 me if I wanted to refill...I didn't know 'refill', I asked
 132 her to explain...because this was a great chance to learn
 133 from local people...I think it's a useful word so I recorded
 134 it in my mobile, very convenient...every time, when having
 135 a meal in a restaurant, I'd like to use this word.
 136 After using it again and again, I remembered it deeply
 (Qa, GI, 30 Nov. 2011)

Faced with a different situation, when hearing an unknown word from the waitress in the restaurant, Qa combined different strategies to discover the word's meaning (Figure 5.8). Asking the waitress for explanation was not only a communication

strategy but also he used it as a social strategy to help him discover the word. This was because he stated that his intention of using it was to learn this new word although his SVL was problem-oriented (Extract 5.21, lines 132-3). Both Extract 5.20 and 5.21 indicate that he used his mobile as an assistive artefact to help him record vocabulary rather than a conventional notebook outside the classroom due to its convenience. He also found that constantly practising vocabulary with other people can be a useful way to strengthen his memory of the words learned before (Extract 5.20, line 189; Extract 5.21, line 136).

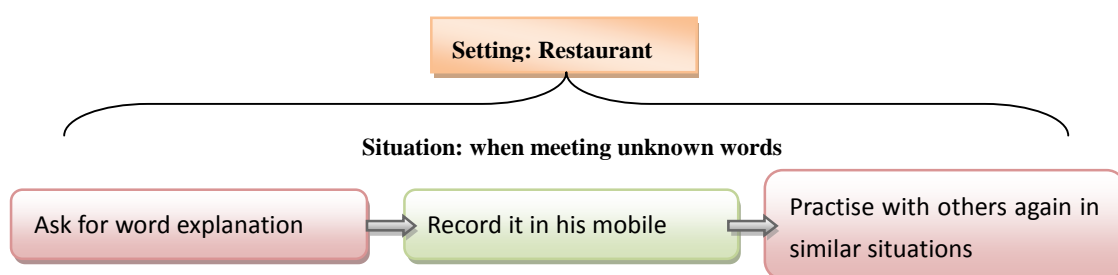


Figure 5.8 Qa's sequential cluster of strategies used in the restaurant

There seemed to be many communicative opportunities available for a learner in this learning milieu, but not every learner, like Qa, made use of them to learn vocabulary. For example, Ji reported that she rarely used the social strategies which Qa employed when communicating with local people. There were two reasons for this (Extract 5.22a): she was not consciously aware that interacting with local people was a VL opportunity. She tended to ignore the unknown words when hearing them from local people; she did not like to ask local people for clarification because she did not want to show her English weaknesses to strangers. Instead, she preferred to learn more

words through reading online BBC news (e.g. Extract 5.22b and 5.22c).

Extract 5.22

a)

135 Ji: ...I focused on whether I can express clearly or I can
136 understand what they talked...I didn't pay much attention
137 to new words...I often ignored them and didn't want to ask...
138 My speaking is not good, keeping asking them even would
139 make them look down on me...(Ji, GI, 15 Nov. 2012)

b)



Photo 5.5

01 ...I tried to read news during the journey back home. I used
02 my mobile to access BBC. e.g.in this photo: I checked 'ban'
03 ...No time to check a detailed explanation, just used an
04 E-dictionary. It's easier to understand their Chinese
05 meaning. This dictionary can save words automatically.
06 so useful to review them at home.(Ji, photo and diary,
VOCABlog,20 Nov. 2011)

c)

01 Every week I like to study one online news at home. Select
02 useful words and phrases to record...I first check a Cambridge
03 online dictionary E.g. ...B) it is certainly the case that(use
04 it in my academic writing)...C) diehard(n): a conservative
05 (synonym) person OR a diehard (adj) fan of sb...

IR: Do you review them in your notebook?

06 Ji: Sometimes...I prefer my E-notebook. It's easy to copy and
07 paste what you want to record but I have to use my paper
08 one because Eva checks it...(Ji, diary and forum, VOCABlog,
07 Dec 2011)

Ji learned words through reading online BBC news in different settings (also Photo 5.5). When she was on a bus, she chose to use an online dictionary and E-notebook because of their convenience, and checked unknown words' Chinese translation which was more easily understood than an English explanation (Extract 5.22b). These were because she had limited time and material resources to help her discover and record new words during her journey on a bus. By contrast, she learned words and phrases in a more detailed way at home (Extract 5.22c). She built various aspects of word knowledge, such as parts of speech, synonyms and example sentences (lines 03-05). She found that E-notebook was more convenient to use (lines 06-08). However, she had to continue to use the conventional notebook due to her teacher's requirement (also Extract 5.19).

The data above indicated that Qa made more attempts to immerse himself in the sociocultural milieu than Ji after class. He also posted many diaries and photographs in the VOCABlog to show what words he learned and how he learned through travelling many different places in the UK. For example:

Extract 5.23



Photo 5.6

01 I love travelling. Every weekend I go to nearby towns, love
02 to explore new words...e.g. I saw this noticeboard...'wilful'
03 was new to me...I guessed at that time, later checked it in
04 'Lingro' at home, it means...everywhere, everytime you can
05 learn. It's upon if you can make good use of chances or not...
(Qa, diary and photo, VOCABlog 17 Nov. 2011)

IR: Why did you choose 'Lingro'?

10 ...As Eva suggested, I found an English explanation more
11 detailed than the Chinese translation...You suggested both
12 Cambridge and Lingro in VOCABlog. They both provide English
14 meaning but Lingro uses more simple language and also has
15 Chinese meaning. This helps me understand better...(Qa, forum,
VOCABlog 18 Nov. 2011)

Comparing Extract 5.18 with 5.23, learning vocabulary through visiting places seemed to be more enjoyable than keeping a notebook. In relation to one particular setting, the 'noticeboard' was not simply an object to show information about the place, but also Qa operated it as a useful artefact to learn new words (Extract 5. 23, also Photo 5.6). He first tried to guess the meaning of the unknown word 'wilful' (line 03). As dictionaries were not available in this setting, he had to check its exact meaning again through using an online dictionary 'Lingro' until he went back home (line 04). His choice of what kind of dictionaries to be used was also not static. The strategic advice of his teacher and the researcher influenced his decision making and developed his use of dictionary look-up strategies (lines 10-12). However, he did not simply follow their suggestions, but also tried to compare different dictionaries and evaluate their usefulness, and selected 'Lingro' according to his English proficiency level (lines 12-5). In the light of this learning experience, he realised that VL can take place everywhere, but it was important that he can seize these opportunities to

build his vocabulary (lines 04-05). This strategic awareness seems to be a result of his reflective engagement as a participant in my study.

Extract 5.24

03 ...I learned new words without dictionary because there were
04 illustration and pictures besides them...‘dreaming spire’
05 which were beautiful words to describe the tower. I love them..



Photo 5.7

(Qa, diary and photo, VOCABlog. 01 Dec, 2011)

Bearing the strategic awareness in mind, Qa continued to engage his SVL within the British culture (e.g. Extract 5.24). The data indicated his real enjoyment of VL. Not only could he learn some new words from different fields but also useful collocations and authentic expressions which British people used. Furthermore, the artefacts in different settings played important roles in supporting his VL. Compared with Extract 5.23 (see Photo 5.6), the ‘noticeboard’ (see Photo 5.7) provided more information including pictures and illustration to help him explore the meaning of unknown words. In this case, he did not need to check a dictionary because he could discover the words in relation to their illustration.

At the end of this semester, there were many summative language tests including vocabulary tests, and this change of their academic milieu appeared to have influenced both students' choice of strategy. Compared with their SVL in the early phase, Qa and Ji both devoted more time to using 'timely vocabulary memorisation' (see also Jiang and Sharpling, 2011) during this time rather than other strategies mentioned above:

Extract 5.25

90 Qa: We will have vocabulary tests soon...my teacher underlined
91 some key words which may be tested, I try to memorise
92 them everyday...boring but this way worked well for the
93 tests I had in China...
94 IR: recently still build words through travelling?
95 Qa: ...no time to do this but I'll continue this after my exams
(Qa, GI, 12 Dec. 2011)

Extract 5.26

113 Ji: ...recently I revise the previous vocabulary exercises,
114 every night remember the words which the teacher
115 stressed...it's a useful way for the tests..
116 IR: do you still read BBC news?
117 Ji: no I want to concentrate on my test preparation now
(Ji, GI, 12 Dec. 2011)

Extract 5.25 and 5.26 both indicated that their SVL was more exam-directed. They tended to use some strategies which could help them have satisfactory results in the coming vocabulary tests, such as memorisation, repetition and working with some vocabulary exercises. In order to prepare for the tests, they stopped using the strategies which helped them build more vocabulary outside the classroom. Rather, they tended to intensively consolidate the words which their teacher emphasised and

were learned from the course.

5.4 The second semester

By comparison with the first semester, there were several changes in the milieu of teaching and learning during the second semester. Firstly, four English language modules were reduced into one module in which students had a different teacher from before and the lesson content focused more on the development of their academic English skills than vocabulary and grammar. Secondly, students started to have more optional modules in relation to their future degrees, so they had more opportunities to meet and learn subject-related vocabulary. Thirdly, their learning performance tended to be assessed by written assignments and presentations rather than vocabulary tests. These changes of their milieu interacted with the participants' strategy choice in and outside the classroom.

5.4.1 Academic English class

In one particular Academic English lesson, the teacher Ruth arranged three activities:

a) group work on vocabulary revision b) studying a model essay with students to improve their academic writing skills and c) group discussions on their presentation.

Compared with the lesson content in the last semester, this lesson placed more emphasis on students' academic writing and presentation skills, and had only one

activity which helped them revise the vocabulary learned before. In the first activity, students were arranged into two different groups and were asked to define the words which Ruth taught before and show their synonyms and example sentences to help the other person guess them. By contrast, Qa and Ji made different strategy choices to learn vocabulary in their own groups. Qa did not revise these words before the lesson and thus did not know many of them when his partners worked with him. In this case, he tried to combine several social strategies (Extract 5.27, lines 47 and 51) with a dictionary look-up strategy (line 53) to learn the unfamiliar words again.

Extract 5.27



Photo 5.8

46 S1: ...it includes many tiny things
 47 Qa: Sorry, what is tiny?
 48 S1: many small things...((describes more))
 49 Qa: ((silence))
 50 S1: ((shows the card to Qa))
 51 Qa: fiddly I don't know (..)can you explain?
 52 T: ((tells the meaning)) writing a statement can be fiddly...
 53 ((Qa checks his iPhone)) you won't find this in a
 54 bilingual dictionary, you need an E-E¹⁷ dictionary
 55 Qa: this is quicker
 56 T: but you can't find this, can you? An E-E dictionary gives
 57 you more definitions...a bilingual one just gives you

¹⁷ An E-E dictionary stands for an English to English dictionary, i.e. a monolingual dictionary

58 one word but you don't know if that's the right one
59 Qa: Yes ((records the word in his notebook))(Classroom
 observation, 17 Feb. 2012)

Compared with his peer's and teacher's explanation, his teacher's explanation was more detailed and included an example to help him understand (line 52). Therefore, he commented:

Extract 5.28

101 Qa: I'm glad that my teacher walked around the class so I can
102 ask her often...she explained and pronounced the word
103 clearly with examples you often can't get these from my
104 peers as good as her. (Qa, FI, 17 Feb. 2012)

The way of monitoring classroom activities enabled Qa to seek more support from the teacher and he also showed a preference to ask the teacher than his peers through comparing the quality of their explanation (Extract 5.28). Besides social strategies, Qa also used an electronic Chinese-English dictionary to discover the word's meaning. When noticing his strategic action, Ruth made both evaluative (Extract 5.27, lines 53 and 56-8) and strategic advice (line 54, also Photo 5.8) to the use of the bilingual dictionary and encouraged him to use an English-English dictionary to look at its meaning in English. Although Qa agreed with his teacher's advice (line 59), I found that he still kept using his electronic bilingual dictionary throughout the lesson. He further explained:

Extract 5.29

130 Qa: it's convenient...during the lesson, you didn't have much
131 time to use a hard copy, it's also heavy to bring it
132 here...my English is not good, I often can't understand
133 the English meaning...if Ruth offered the hard copy, I may
134 use it like what I did in the Eva's lesson. (Qa, FI,
17 Feb. 2012)

He made an evaluative response to his teacher strategic advice (Extract 5.29).

Because of the constraints of time and his English ability, using an electronic bilingual dictionary seemed to be a more convenient way to discover words' meaning in the classroom setting. Nevertheless, he might use a conventional English-English dictionary during the lesson if the teacher could provide it for them (Extract 5.9 above). He also recorded the word in his notebook (Extract 5.27, line 59) and deployed these strategies in sequence in this activity (Figure 5.9).

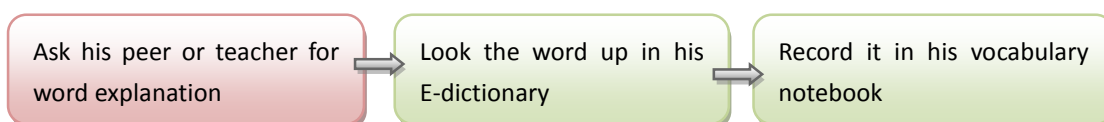


Figure 5.9 Qa's sequential strategy cluster used in the activity 'Vocabulary Revision'

Although both Qa and Ji recorded vocabulary in their notebook during this lesson, they established different criteria to choose what words needed to be recorded:

Extract 5.30

237 T: 'important' synonym?
238 S3: significant↑

239 T: this's a good academic word you should really record
240 it ... ((Ji records))(Classroom observation, 17 Feb 2012)

Extract 5.31

145 IR: Did you record 'significant' which Ruth stressed?
146 Qa: No, I knew it already.....this term our teachers often stress
147 the importance of academic words, so I record some new
148 academic words... (Qa, FI, 17 Feb. 2012)

Extract 5.32

127 IR: why did you record 'significant'?
128 Ji: ... it's useful because Ruth stressed, although I knew
129 it. This can remind me to use it in my writing when
130 revising it...
133 IR: did you record all the unknown words?
134 Ji: no, I chose some words which were really useful, esp.
135 Ruth emphasised (Ji, FI, 17 Feb. 2012)

Comparing Qa's with Ji's responses, their teacher's suggestion seemed to play an important role in Ji's choice of which word needed to be recorded in her notebook (Extract 5.32, lines 128 and 135), but not Qa. Qa's decision making was influenced by his prior knowledge. In other words, if he knew the word, he would not record it, although his teacher stressed its importance (Extract 5.30 and 5.31). In addition, the focus of vocabulary teaching, which shifted from general to academic vocabulary, seemed to engage with his choice of recording and he drew more attention to new academic vocabulary (Extract 5.31).

During this group work on vocabulary revision, unlike Qa, Ji did not use any discovery strategies (e.g. ask their teacher for explanation and check a dictionary) and only kept using a recording strategy when Ruth explained some words in their group, for example:

Extract 5.33

17 S4: another word for vocation
18 Ji: holiday
19 S4: yes
20 T: do you know their differences
21 Ss: ((silence))
22 T: holiday is a British expression (.) vocation is an
23 American one ((Ji records))(Ji, classroom observation,
17 Feb. 2012)

In her FI (17 Feb. 2012), she explained that before this lesson she had revised all the words, so she remembered the words when her partners described them and did not need to use any discovery strategies. However, she thought that it was still necessary to record some words and their information which her teacher emphasised.

In a different activity, Ruth asked students to brainstorm ideas and come up a topic for their group presentation. Unlike the previous activity, students needed to form their own groups and its focus was not on VL (Extract 5.34). Rather, the aim was to develop their discussion skills and generate their own topic in the end. Both participants seemed to make fewer strategic efforts towards VL compared with the previous activity. Qa and Ji joined a different group. In the Qa's group, his group

members were all Chinese and used L1 to exchange their ideas. When I asked him why he used L1 instead of English to discuss, he explained that:

Extract 5.34

164 Qa: ...our aim was not to practise vocabulary or English, it
165 was easier to speak Chinese and get clearer ideas... we
166 are all Chinese (.)it's more natural to use it...(Qa, FI,
17 Feb. 2012)

Qa's SVL seemed to be goal-directed (Extract 5.34). As he did not consider their group discussion as a VL activity, he decided to speak Chinese to ensure the clarity of their understanding. Another reason was because his group members were all Chinese students. They felt more comfortable to use their mother tongue to exchange their ideas. However, his strategy choice differed and his consciousness in learning vocabulary increased when his teacher joined their discussion and his SVL became problem-oriented:

Extract 5.35

209 T: ...discuss these together, e.g. farming is booming in
210 China?...((T goes to another group and Ss discuss))
((Later T comes to his group again))
232 Qa: you mentioned earlier, China's industry is booming,
233 what's the meaning of booming? doing well?
234 T: yes, developing, to become more successful, it's a good
235 word, you can use it in your presentation and writing
236 ((Qa records)) (Classroom observation, 17 Feb. 2012)

Qa used a social strategy to ask his teacher for clarification after the unknown word 'booming' caused a problem in his understanding (lines 232-3). Yet, this strategy was not merely a communication strategy but also a VLS. This was because:

Extract 5.36

203 Qa: I only asked the words which caused my difficulties in
204 understanding...e.g. the word 'booming', I also thought
205 that it would be a nice word for my presentation so when
206 Ruth came to our group, I asked her about it...she also
207 said it's a good word so I recorded her explanation in
208 my notebook for a review after class (Qa, FI, 17 Feb. 2012)

In this group work, Qa did not ask every unknown word and selected the words which caused his problems in understanding and were useful for his presentation (Extract 5.35 and 5.36). For example, he deployed a sequential cluster of strategies to learn the word 'booming' (Extract 5.35 and 5.36, lines 206-8, see Figure 5.10):

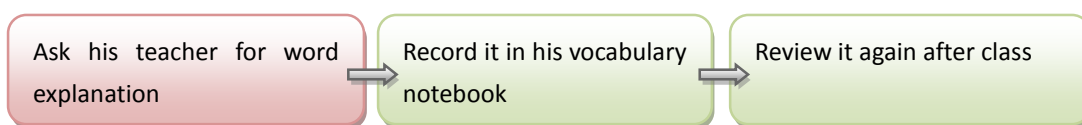


Figure 5.10 Qa's strategy cluster used in the group discussion

Unlike Qa, Ji worked with the students with different nationalities so they used English to discuss about their presentation. She was more likely to encounter unknown words and make strategic efforts to learn them, for example:

Extract 5.37

64 S1: I will talk about the infrastructure...
65 Ji: what is infrastructure?
66 S1: the facilities the city could provide e.g. London eye...
69 Ji: do you think London Eye is the infrastructure, I think
70 it's a place of interest...
71 S1: Yes I agree but they're more famous than this...
(T joins their discussion)
74 Ji: Ruth, London Eye is called infrastructure?
75 T: I think you mean landmarks, like Eiffel tower, right?
76 S1: yes ((Ji records))
(Ji, classroom observation, 17 Feb. 2012)



Photo 5.9

Extract 5.37 shows that not only did Ji deploy a social strategy to discover the meaning of ‘infrastructure’ (line 65), but also she discussed the word with S1 to explore a more accurate word to appropriate the linguistic context (lines 69-71, also Photo 5.9). When they were still unsure, Ji sought further help from her teacher (lines 74-6). Compared Extract 5.35 with 5.37, as they operated the task and interacted with their group members differently, Ji performed a different sequential cluster of strategies from Qa.

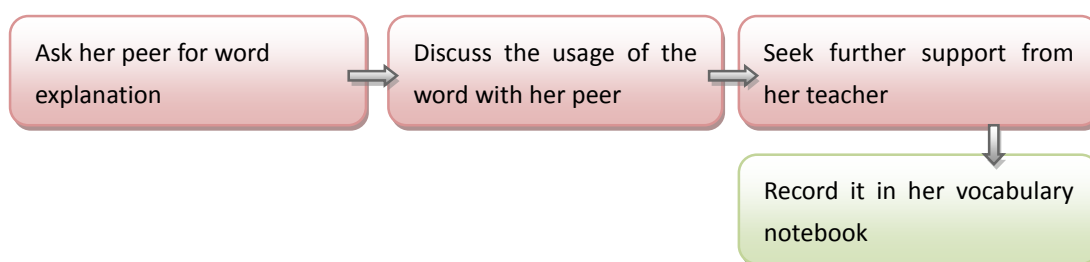


Figure 5.11 Ji's strategy cluster used in the group discussion

Although they all recorded some useful words in their vocabulary notebooks, they made different choices as to how to organise their notebooks and how to review their notebooks outside the classroom. There seemed to be a noticeable difference in Qa's recording style from the last semester. He tended to record only new words and their English explanation in his notebook and was no longer including other word information, such as parts of speech and example sentences:

Extract 5.38

01 unlike Eva, Ruth doesn't ask us to follow her way of recording.
 02 We can record what we think useful. I'm using a new way...last
 03 lesson, Ruth asked us to exchange our notebooks and comment
 04 each other. I looked at Tom's notebook. His English is good
 05 so wanted to learn from him...he only recorded words and their
 06 English meaning...he said that it's important to simplify the
 07 information...too much information, he felt unwilling to look
 08 at it again...yes I got a similar problem... (Qa, diary, VOCABlog,
 20 Feb. 2012)

Extract 5.39

01 I enjoyed using that way of recording words. It's simple and
 02 feel less stressful to review them. English explanation is
 03 also good esp. from Ruth's, very clear! This helps me learn
 04 words in a British way... (Qa, diary, VOCABlog, 31 March. 2012)

During this semester, Ruth's requirement was different from his previous teacher and did not ask students to follow a certain format to record vocabulary (Extract 5.38, lines 01-02). She gave them more freedom to record the information which they thought useful and also encouraged them to share their recording strategies during the class. This kind of strategy-sharing instruction seemed to strengthen Qa's autonomy to evaluate and choose strategies according to his personal needs (lines 03-08, see also Holliday, 2003). During this strategy-sharing process, Tom appeared to be a 'more capable other' to help him modify his recording strategy (lines 04-07). Because of its satisfactory learning outcome, he continued to use this way of recording (Extract 5.39). In particular, reducing the unnecessary information seemed to be an affective strategy to maintain his motivation to memorise vocabulary repeatedly. He also found that it was more helpful to learn vocabulary through its English explanation than Chinese translation.

By comparison with Qa, Ji still kept using the previous format which their teacher Eva suggested in the last semester, but she became more selective about which word needed to be reviewed (Extract 5.40). In particular, her current teacher's suggestion appeared to influence her choice of selection (lines 92-4).

Extract 5.40

- 89 IR: how do you record vocabulary recently?
90 Ji: I still use the way Eva suggested. It's useful to include
91 more information about a new word...I've recorded many

92 words but no time to memorise them all so I normally choose
 93 some which Ruth said important, e.g. useful words for
 94 academic writing... and reviewed them every week (Ji, GI,
 23 Feb. 2012)

In this more autonomous milieu of teaching and learning, Qa and Ji seemed to play a more central role in regulating their processes of SVL in relation to the strategic advice of their teacher and peers during this semester (Extract 5.38-5.40). They both formed a recycled sequential cluster but there were still some differences in their clusters.

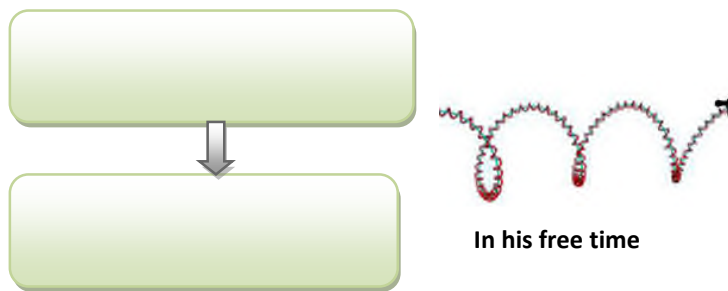


Figure 5.12 Qa's recycled sequential strategy cluster to record and memorise words

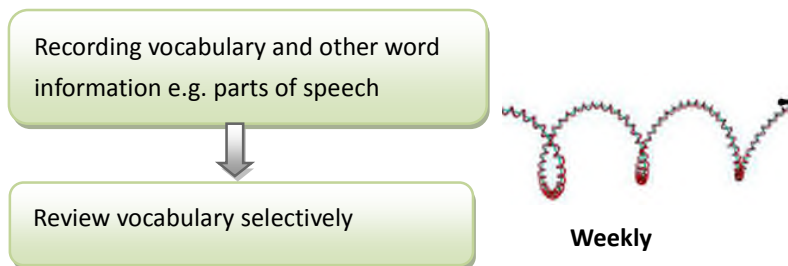


Figure 5.13 Ji's recycled sequential strategy cluster to record and memorise words

Figure 5.12 and 5.13 show that they both used their sequential cluster of strategies repeatedly but in different intervals. They also made different choice to decide what

information needed to be included in their notebooks and which word would be reviewed.

5.4.2 Subject-related modules

As mentioned above, optional modules in relation to their future degrees started to be provided during this semester. Compared with their language-based modules, the contents of these modules tended to focus on their subject-related knowledge (e.g. Extract 5.42). Therefore, the focus of their teaching was no longer on vocabulary. Although their teachers sometimes tried to teach or explain some subject-related words, their explanation was not in detail and they tended to recommend some reading for students to explore by themselves (Extract 5.41, lines 48-9; Extract 5.42, line 13). These changes in their academic milieu interacted with the participants' strategy choice and use:

Extract 5.41

48 Ji: I had to read some articles before IC module otherwise
49 I can't understand the lesson, my teacher spoke fast and
50 many unknown words (.) rarely explained them...I tried to
51 guess them in relation to our handout...underlined them,
52 checked them after class. If I checked a dictionary,
53 I wouldn't follow her pace...after checking them at home,
54 if I still felt unsure, I tried to read some related
55 articles and explored more explanation, instances of
56 use(Ji, GI, 24 Feb. 2012)

Extract 5.42

11 Qa: in the TC class, my teacher mainly teaches how to discuss
12 critically...Sometimes she writes some academic words on
13 the board with a brief explanation. I often record it
14 but if she doesn't explain, I have to check my dictionary
15 I also ask her after class when I feel unsure. (Qa, GI,
 24 Feb. 2012)

Ji tried to use a dictionary look-up strategy to learn vocabulary through reading some subject-related articles. This vocabulary preparation could help her understand better about the teaching because her teacher was less likely to stop and explain vocabulary during the lesson (Extract 5.41, lines 48-50). Nevertheless, she still needed to guess the meaning of unknown words during her teacher's presentation. The teacher seemed to put an emphasis on her own talk and this teaching arrangement can be an important factor to restrict Ji's strategy use, particularly dictionary look-up strategies (lines 52-3). During the teaching, the handout became a useful artefact to help her discover the unknown words (line 51). Due to the time constraint during the lesson, Ji was likely to deploy dictionary look-up strategies to explore more word information at home (lines 53-6).

Sometimes the teacher of the module of TC¹⁸ taught some important academic words and wrote them on the board (Extract 5.42). In this case, Qa could learn them through his teacher's explanation and record them in his notebook. However,

¹⁸ The module of TC stands for the module of Think Critically see the list of Abbreviations

compared with the vocabulary lessons in the last term, the teacher did not arrange any interactive activities for VL due to different teaching focuses. Engaging with this milieu of teaching, he was less likely to use social strategies to discover the word's meaning in the class. Instead, he used a sequential cluster of strategies across different settings (Figure 5.14).

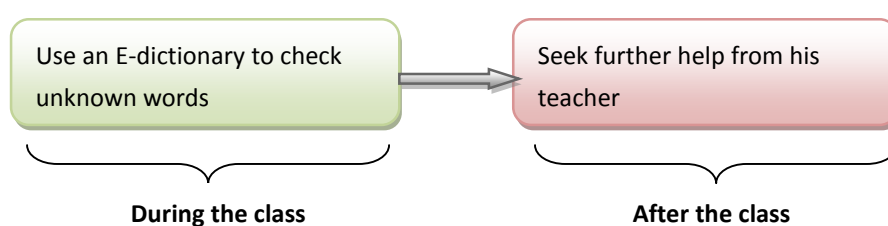


Figure 5.14 Qa's sequential cluster of strategies for the module of Think Critically

Assessment type seems to be an important aspect of the academic milieu to interact with their strategy choice. During this semester, they tended to be assessed by formative written assignments for these subject-related modules. In order to prepare for these assignments, they spent more time reading and writing and used more contextualised strategies (e.g. remember words in the meaningful context) than de-contextualised strategies (e.g. rote memorisation, see also Nyikos and Fan, 2007) to consolidate the subject-specific vocabulary (Extract 5.43, lines 104-6 and Extract 5.44, lines 123, 125-6).

Extract 5.43

- 101 IR: how do you consolidate vocabulary recently?
102 Qa: ...For other modules we won't have final tests, so no need

103 to memorise many words in a short time. we have time to
104 prepare for the essays and read...I underlined useful
105 subject-related words in the reading (.)understood and
106 remembered them better in relation to the context, also
107 reviewed them in the text next time. I find this way
108 helpful, their instances of use also teach me how to
109 use them (Qa, GI, 03 Mar. 2012)

Extract 5.44

123 Ji: to prepare my essays, I revised my handouts, selected
124 key subject-related words (.) checked them in my
125 dictionary again to know them better (..)practised
126 using them in my own journal. When I felt unsure about
127 their meaning or usage, I then asked my teachers later
128 their explanation often helped me understand them or know
129 how to use them ...(Ji, GI, 03 Mar. 2012)

Looking at both Extract 5.43 and 5.44, for their written assignments, they made many efforts to read and study different English materials and their subject-related vocabulary seemed to develop gradually during this process. In relation to this academic milieu, their SVL tended to be more process-oriented (after Jiang and Sharpling, 2011). By contrast, they were more likely to memorise vocabulary from their notebooks and use repetition strategies for their end-of-term vocabulary tests in the last semester (e.g. Extract 5.25 and 5.43 lines 102-3).

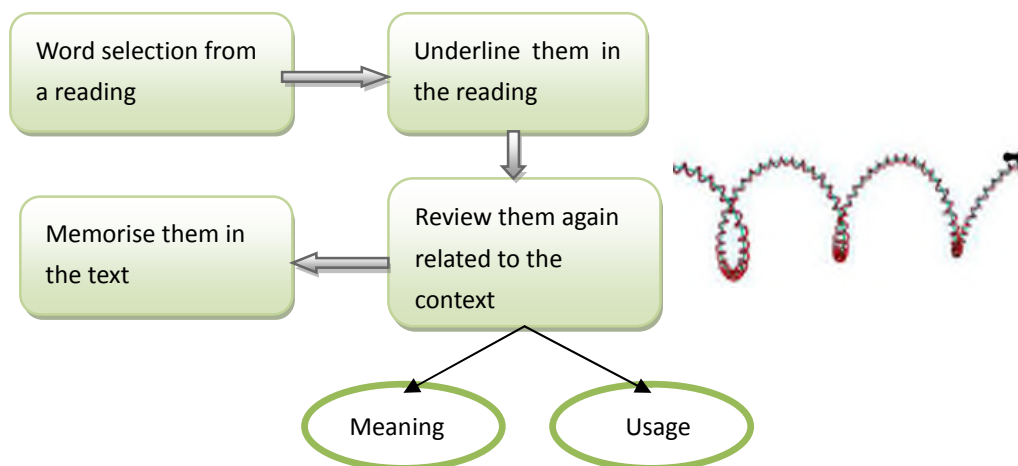


Figure 5.15 Qa's recycled sequential strategy cluster for subject-related vocabulary

During the preparation for his written assignments, Qa deployed some strategies in sequence repeatedly to learn subject-related words (Extract 5.43, lines 104-7, also Figure 5.15). When repeating exposure to the words in the text, he positively commented that the textual context could help him know the words' meaning better and develop an insight to vocabulary use (Extract 5.43, lines 105-9). Ji also employed a recycled cluster but she combined different strategies (Extract 5.44):

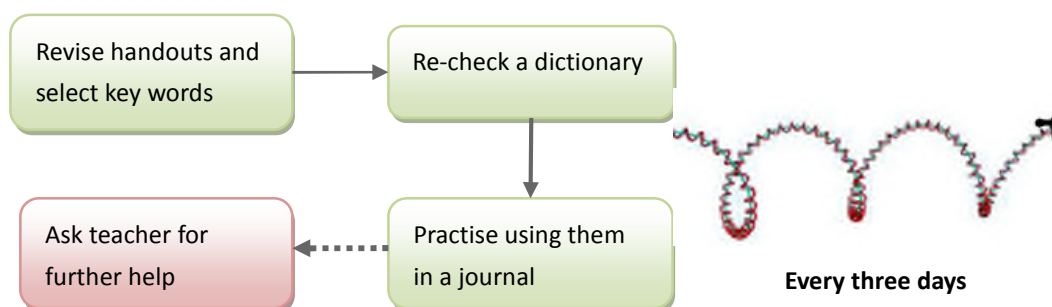


Figure 5.16 Ji's (dialogic) recycled sequential cluster for subject-related vocabulary

She consolidated some key subject-related words through practising using them in a written text and might seek further support from her teacher if she encountered some difficulties. Therefore, this can be regarded as a dialogic sequential cluster. She also found that her teacher's verbal explanation could mediate her understanding and promote her VL (Extract 5.44, lines 128-9).

Unlike Qa, as mentioned above, Ji intended to apply for other British universities for her future degree, so she needed to re-take an IELTS exam during this semester and reach an English level of IELTS 6.5. In order to perform well in this test, her SVL became more exam-directed than Qa especially when the exam time got nearer:

Extract 5.45

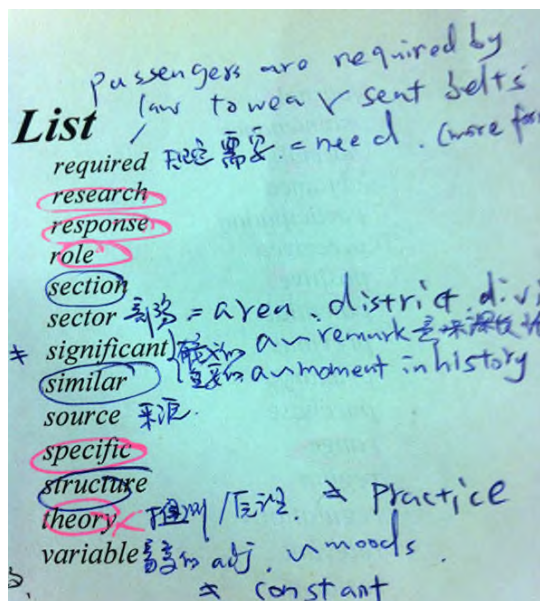


Photo 5.10 Academic vocabulary

IR: a) Do you find this list useful?

01 Ji: yes, my weaknesses were particularly about writing and

02 listening...from my past experience in China, intensively
03 memorising words from a list was very useful before the test...

b) Why did you choose this list?

08 Ji: Some people already got a good score in writing, recommended
09 this list in their blogs. I also find it good...it doesn't
10 include many words and they are the most frequently used in
11 the academic writing..

c) How to use it?

13 Ji: for writing, I mainly learn how to use these words, so I first
14 checked them in the Cambridge online dictionary and then
15 recorded their meaning, parts of speech, example sentences...
16 synonyms so won't use the same word repeatedly (Ji, photo
and forum, VOCABlog, 14 Mar. 2012)

Reviewing the format of the IELTS writing and listening tests, Ji realised that they played a role in different aspects of VL. According to their focuses, she made different strategic efforts to learn the vocabulary for her writing test from the vocabulary for the listening test. For the writing test, she found that it was important to know how to use a word and remember to use it in the writing through reflecting on her previous experience in China. Therefore, she commented that it was necessary to learn words from a vocabulary list by heart (Extract 5.45). More capable others' strategy advice also helped her choose a vocabulary list which she also found useful (lines 08-11). She combined a dictionary look-up strategy, a recording strategy with a memorisation strategy and used this cluster repeatedly before the exam. In particular, she recorded and remembered the information which could help her master vocabulary productively, such as example sentences and parts of speech (see Photo 5.10 and lines 13-6).

By comparison with the preparation for the writing test, she looked at and recorded different aspects of word knowledge for the listening test, including the meaning, spelling and pronunciation (Extract 5.46, lines 02-04). She combined a number of strategies to help her improve these aspects (lines 05-09, 15):

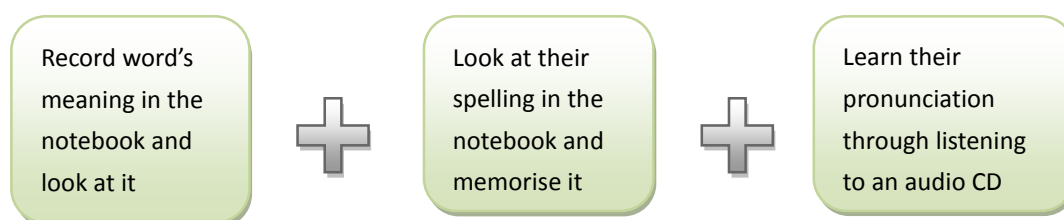


Figure 5.17 Ji's cluster of vocabulary learning strategies for the IELTS listening test

Extract 5.46

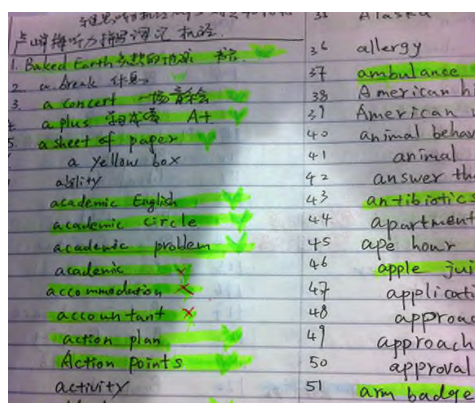


Photo 5.11 'Notebook for IELTS listening'

b) IR: Why did you record different things from the word list you posted?

02 Ji: Unlike writing, my focus is on the meaning, spelling
 03 and pronunciation rather than usage so I can understand and
 04 correctly spell them in the test...I knew most of them in this
 05 notebook, my purpose is to help me remember their spelling,
 06 for meaning I only recorded their Chinese meaning. This is
 07 enough for the listening test...These words were selected from
 08 a vocabulary book particularly for the IELTS listening with
 09 a CD, I can also listen their pronunciation repeatedly...

c) Why did you highlight some words?

15 Ji: everyday I try to review them. These words are the ones
 16 which I often forget so need to draw more attention next time
 (Ji, photo and forum, VOCABlog 25 Mar. 2012)

Her response indicated that her recording style was problem-oriented. As her weakness was spelling in the listening test in relation to her previous experience, she only recorded the spelling without other word information (lines 04-05, Photo 5.11). She used a repetition strategy to memorise their spelling, in particular, she drew more attention to the words which were highlighted (Photo 5.11, lines 15-6). Compared Photo 5.10 with 5.11, Ji recorded Chinese meaning instead of an English explanation in her notebook for the listening test. She seemed to concern more about how to pass the test rather than to develop her vocabulary knowledge (Extract 5.46, lines 06-07).

5.4.3 Setting: at accommodation

Ji and Qa made different strategic attempts to build vocabulary at their accommodation in relation to their own interests and learning purposes. From this second semester, unlike Qa, Ji did not continue to stay at their university accommodation and chose to live with a local family in order to adjust to a British life better and improve her language ability. She reported that many unknown words were learned through interacting with her host family across different situations, for example:

Extract 5.47

- a) 94 Ji: host family is different from flatmates (.)care me more.
95 when I ask them, they are happy to teach me any words which
96 I don't know how to express, so I like to ask them.
(Ji, GI, 24 Feb. 2012)

- b) 143 Ji: I tend to ask them about any unsure words before I use
 144 them...every learner should try this, asking more you will
 145 know more, and then practise using them in your life.
 (Ji, GI, 03 Mar. 2012)
- c) 205 Ji: when having a dinner together, I said can you pass me
 206 fork and knife, my homema corrected me 'knife and fork'...
 207 I wanted to know why, then I asked them, they told me
 208 that British people used to saying this order. I learned
 209 a new thing...I feel more local. (Ji, GI, 03 Mar. 2012)

After moving to the homestay, there appeared to be more opportunities to learn words (e.g. Extract 5.47). Her host family played a different role from her flatmates, and tended to treat Ji as their daughter and they were willing to help her develop language ability.

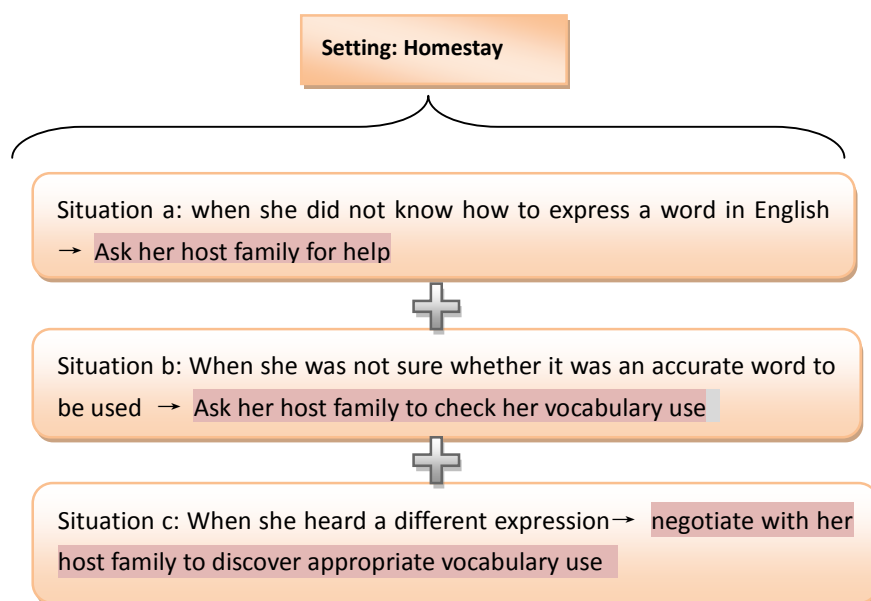


Figure 5.18 Ji's dialogic strategy cluster used in the homestay

This kind of relationship encouraged her to interact with them and use more social strategies to learn vocabulary (Extract 5.47a, b and c, see Figure 5.18). Ji realised that it was important to learn vocabulary through employing the dialogic sequential

cluster of strategies in a daily life, i.e. asking questions and practising using it (Extract 5.47b). Faced with a different situation, when hearing that her host family used the words in a particular order, Ji's consciousness of learning vocabulary increased and she explored authentic vocabulary use. She seemed to develop her sociolinguistic appropriateness from their feedback (Extract 5.47c).

Like the last semester, Ji continued to build more vocabulary through studying online BBC news; however, several modifications were made to improve her SVL after evaluating the strategies used before:

Extract 5.48

126 IR: Do you still learn words through reading BBC news?
127 Ji: yes, but I don't use my conventional notebook, now I can
128 record useful words in my E-notebook because this teacher
129 doesn't require us to use a particular notebook.
130 E-notebook is more convenient. When typing a word, it
131 links to an online dictionary which contains word
132 information...rote memorisation is useful but I find it
133 boring and I still can't remember to use many words...
(Ji, GI, 04 Apr. 2012)

Reflecting on her previous learning processes, Ji realised that it was more effective to use an E-notebook than the conventional one because the E-notebook itself contained word information and users did not need to spend time writing down the information (Extract 5.48, lines 130-2). As her teacher gave students more freedom to their recording style, Ji could try and use a more appropriate notebook for herself

(lines 127-9). Furthermore, she found that memorising vocabulary from the notebook repeatedly was also no longer enjoyable and was a less useful way to master words productively, although it helped her learn them receptively (lines 132-3). Her teacher's strategic advice also provided her with insights into another way of VL:

Extract 5.49

01 Teacher taught a circle: listening-checking-writing-using
02 I think it's a good way to learn vocabulary, but depending
03 on different circumstances, I didn't follow the exactly same
04 order...e.g. after reading news, I knew "albeit" through an
05 online dictionary, an academic word. I also used it and
06 and asked my penfriend if I used it well. As he is a local
07 people, he often teaches me language use and some examples..
08 I also asked unknown words to my host family when watching
09 news. I often recorded these words, so I also asked their
10 spelling. I tried to use these words with them again, I found
11 that I remembered these words more deeply. (Ji, diary,
VOCABlog, 14 Mar. 2012)

She decided to use the strategies which her teacher suggested instead of rote memorisation and considered them as more effective ways to learn and remember vocabulary (Extract 5.49 lines 01-02). The suggestion appeared to mediate her strategy use, however, she did not totally imitate the strategic 'circle' (lines 03-04). In the light of the teacher's advice, she exercised her agency and modified the strategic 'circle' to appropriate her own specific context. For example, when encountering an unknown word from the BBC news, she checked its meaning in an online dictionary and then practised using it with her pen friend (lines 04-07, also

Figure 5.19). Her pen friend became a more capable other to help her develop the vocabulary use.

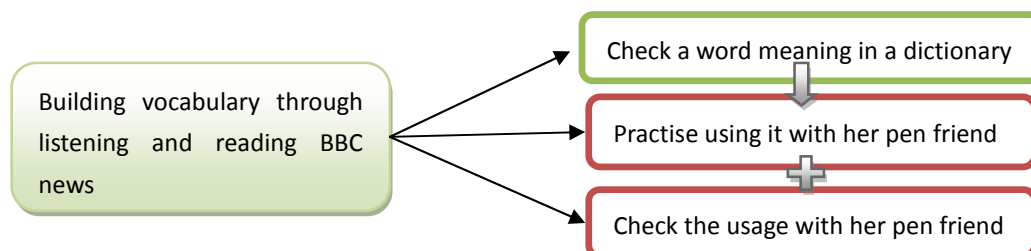


Figure 5.19 Ji's strategy cluster used with her pen friend

At a different time, she tried to check the words' meaning with her host family and asked them for explanation. She also recorded them in her E-notebook and practised with her host family verbally in order to consolidate them (Extract 5.49, lines 08-11, Figure 5.20).

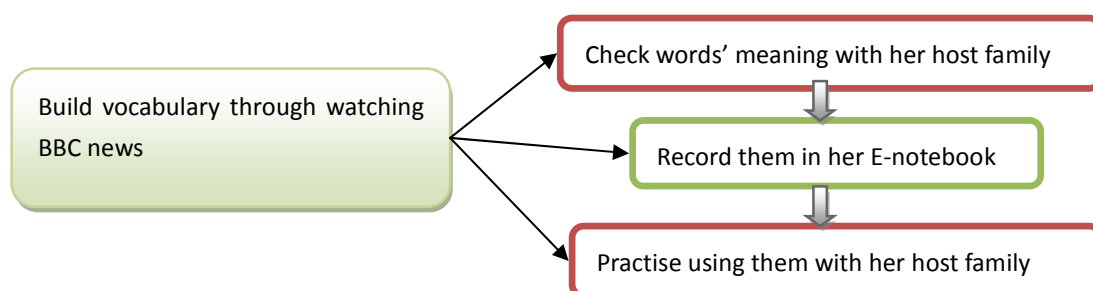


Figure 5.20 Ji's strategy cluster of strategies used with her host family

By comparison with Ji, Qa had fewer interactive opportunities to learn vocabulary at his university accommodation, but he tried other ways to build words. In particular, he tended to choose the ways (e.g. playing games and reading sports news) in

relation to his interests and learn vocabulary for pleasure (Extract 5.50, lines 138-9 and Extract 5.51, lines 01-03).

Extract 5.50

- 137 IR: do you learn words through reading BBC news?
138 Qa: I tried but it's quite boring...but e.g. sports news, I
139 really like it...select some words which I want to know,
140 check them and put them in my E-notebook...
147 IR: you don't use your conventional notebook?
148 Qa: no, E-notebook is more convenient...it's a feature of my
149 E-dictionary, when checking the dictionary, it helps you
150 save the word...but I still use the conventional one
151 to record the words which I learned in the class..
153 IR: Do you review your E-notebook?
154 Qa: yes, it's a useful way...when reviewing the words, I still
155 find some confused, create a new category, put them in
156 it, will only review them next time...(Qa, GI, 03 Mar.2012)



Photo 5.12 E-notebook (GI, 03 Mar. 2012)

He evaluated the way of reading BBC news to build vocabulary and realised that enjoyment played an important role in the process of VL. It seems to be difficult to continue using a strategy without pleasure. This was why he chose to learn more

vocabulary through reading sports news instead of other news and selected the words in which he was interested (Extract 5.50, lines 138-40). Also, the E-notebook appeared to be more convenient than the conventional notebook to record the words which he learned outside the classroom and facilitate her recording process (lines 148-50). He reviewed the words in his E-notebook and focused on some of them which he found confused and put them into different categories for further consolidation (lines 154-6; Photo 5.12).

Extract 5.51



Photo 5.13

01 ...I love this sitcom, but new words I have learnt from watching
02 it can be numbered...because I dont have too much feeling for
03 most of the new words...in this image, the expression 'get sb
04 in line' really makes me feel for it. It's a vivid expression
05 to describe sb has done sth wrong...this what I found from E-dict
06 and I recorded it in my E-notebook. On day, when reviewing
07 my E-notebook, I found the word 'disordered'. They're similar
08 and then put them together in a new category and like to look
09 at them again...(Qa, photo and diary, VOCABlog, 02 Apr, 2012)

Qa did not learn every unknown word when watching the sitcom and showed willingness to explore the words in which he was intrinsically interested (Extract 5.51, lines 01-03). Looking at Extract 5.50 and 5.51, he deployed a similar sequential

cluster of strategies to learn the words in these two activities (see Figure 5.21).

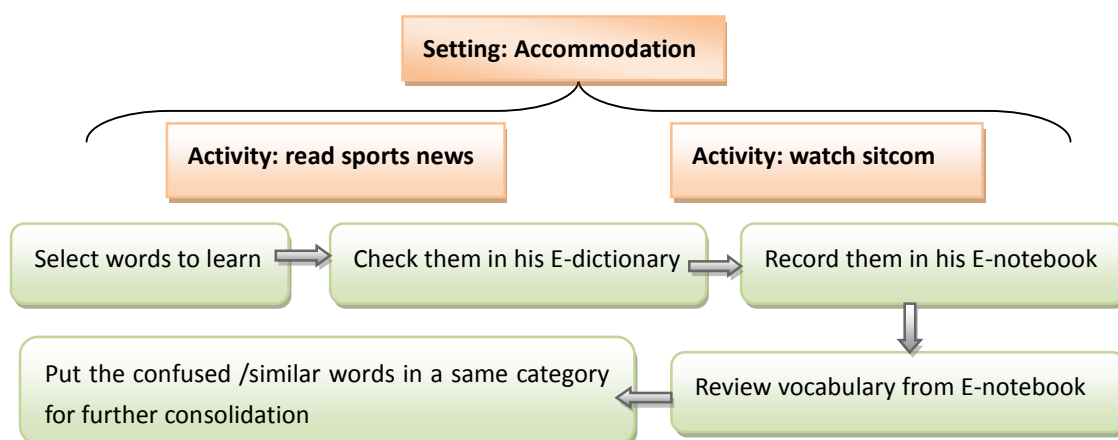


Figure 5.21 Qa's sequential cluster of strategies to learn vocabulary for pleasure

5.4.4 Other out-of-class settings

During their early period of the second semester, both Ji and Qa intended to increase contact with the milieu where learners could interact with everyday life in order to benefit their VL. As they had little coursework during this time, they could also spend time immersing the British culture and build more vocabulary through this way. For example, Ji mentioned that she tried to visit different museums every week across the UK and posted both photos and diaries in the VOCABlog about what words and how she learned:

Extract 5.52

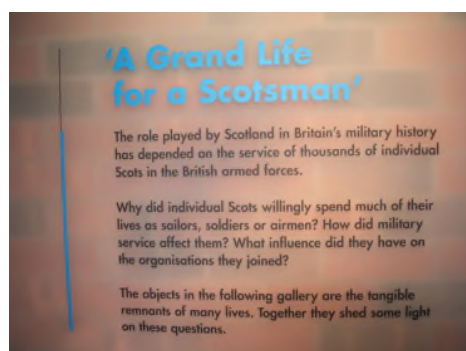


Photo 5.14

01 My Japanese friend's vocabulary size is large, I often learn
02 some from her...we visited one museum, when I read a leaflet
03 and found new words. I asked her to explain some which I was
04 eager to know or really caused problems in my understanding
05 but felt not polite to ask her often, most time I took photos
06 of them or brought the leaflets back home. Use these as
07 resources to build more words. e.g. 'tangible' in this photo
08 I first checked it in the E-E dictionary, but still not clear.
09 I had to use a bilingual dictionary again. Looking it in the
10 sentence again, I understood better...'although history is
11 past these tangible objects...'VOCABlog is a good place to
12 practise new words, that's why every week I tried to write
13 a diary about my vocabulary. (Ji, photo and diary, VOCABlog,
05 Feb. 2012)

In this particular setting, her Japanese friend was seen as a more capable other to help her discover some unknown words, however, her perceived politeness was a factor to restrict her use of this social strategy (i.e. asking her friend for word explanation, Extract 5.52, lines 01-06). She only chose the unknown words which she was interested in and caused difficulties in her understanding to ask. In most cases, she did not seek help from her friend; rather, she used photos and leaflets as assistive artefacts to help her record unknown words (Photo 5.14, lines 05-07). Further efforts were made to learn these unknown words at home, including deploying dictionary look-up strategies and using the textual context to explore their meaning and practising using them in diaries (lines 06-13). In relation to these different settings, she regulated his VL and deployed the strategies in sequence and tried to use this strategy cluster repeatedly every week (lines 11-13, also Figure 5.22). He might not check a bilingual dictionary or textual context from photos or leaflets every time if he could understand their English meaning in a monolingual dictionary.

Furthermore, VOCABlog seemed to be used as not only a research tool to record her SVL, but also a learning tool for her to practise the words exposed earlier and reinforce her memory.

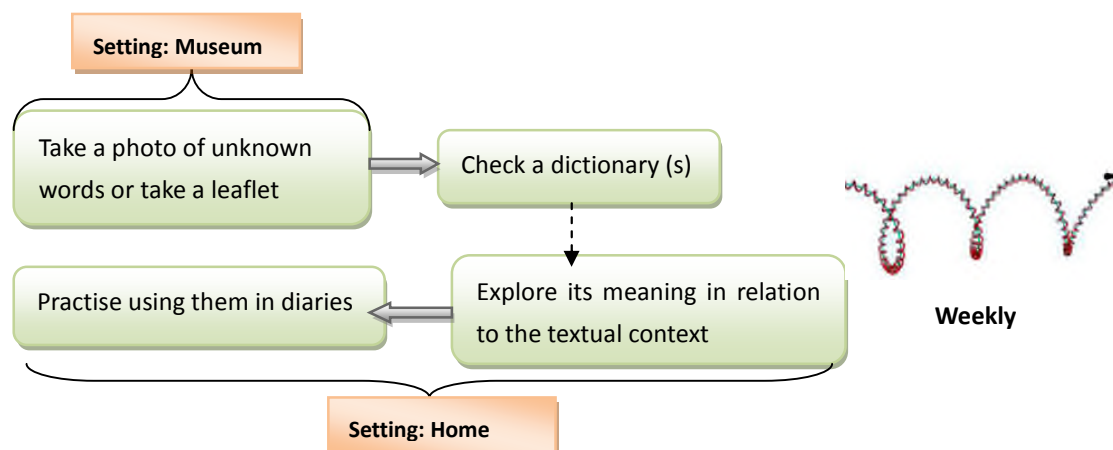


Figure 5.22 Ji's recycled sequential strategy cluster through visiting museums

Qa also created some opportunities to build more vocabulary through travelling. Like the last semester, he continued to take photos of noticeboards and used them to discover and record new words (e.g. Photo 5.15, Extract 5.53, lines 01-03).

Extract 5.53



Photo 5.15

01 ...I saw a noticeboard in Plymouth...I still found some unknown
 02 words so I took a photo of the board. I checked Lingro after

03 back home and looked at both English and Chinese meaning
04 because these helped me understand and learn better, e.g.
06 "flock" it can be noun or verb and has over 10 English meanings
07 like my teacher said, it has only 2 to 3 Chinese meanings
08 If I have enough time, I agree with her, it's better to check
09 English meanings as well...
IR: Do you look at more word information than before?
13 Qa: yes, based on my teacher's feedback on my writing, I found
14 I often didn't know that a noun can also be a verb...check
15 more aspects, I can use the word more accurately (Qa,
photo, diary and forum, VOCABlog, 13 Feb.2012)

Like the last semester, Qa still used the online dictionary 'Lingro' which the researcher recommended in the VOCABlog and looked at both English and Chinese meaning to help him know the new word better and understand their English explanation (lines 03-04). He also found that an English explanation was more detailed than a Chinese translation. Without time constraint, he thought that it would be more helpful to learn a word from its English explanation (lines 06-09). Drawing on his teacher's feedback, he started to look at more information when checking the Lingro, including word forms and different word meanings. The teacher's feedback appeared to raise his strategic awareness of what kind of information needed to be explored more and interact with his strategy choice (lines 13-5).

From the end of the second semester to their Easter holiday, they had little time to enlarge their vocabulary through visiting other places due to the increased academic workloads. As mentioned above, Ji also needed to prepare for her IELTS exam and even had less free time (Extract 5.54, lines 140-1). Her host family appeared to help

her learn more words and develop her sociolinguistic appropriateness:

Extract 5.54

139 IR: recently have you sought other chances to build words?
140 Ji: Yes. I'm very busy, always stay at home and prepare for
141 IELTS. my host family often encourages me to immerse the
142 local community and says that it's the best way to improve
143 English e.g. go to Church. I went there with them, people
144 are nice, liked to talk to me, any unknown words from
145 bible, I felt free to ask them. They all wanted to help
146 and explain...when you kept using the words, you can
147 remember them deeply. I enjoy this way, so every Sunday
148 I go there (Ji, GI, 20 Apr. 2012)

Drawing on her host family's strategic advice, she increased more contact with the local community, although she tended to improve vocabulary at home during this time (Extract 5.49 and 5.54). In the church, she learned new words through interacting with other people and deployed some social strategies, i.e. asking for explanation and practise using them with others verbally (Extract 5.54, lines 145-8). In this particular setting, the friendly atmosphere and these people's willingness to help also seemed to encourage her to use social strategies and she also enjoyed the process of VL (lines 143-8).

Like Ji, Qa had little free time to build more general vocabulary and consolidate the general vocabulary learned before due to the amount of coursework (Extract 5.55, line 33). Rather, he focused on learning and memorising the academic and subject-related vocabulary in order to adjust to the current academic milieu (e.g.

Extract 5.39 and 5.43). For daily words, his vocabulary growth tended to occur in both incidental (Extract 5.55 lines 33-6) and intentional learning (lines 36-42):

Extract 5.55

32 IR: have you created chances to learn more words recently?
33 Qa: I'm busy with my assignments so I have no time to go out
34 ...recently I normally check my E-dictionary to know a
35 new word, I may meet it again, and will check it again
36 if I find it unfamiliar. If the third time, I still find
37 it unsure, this time I realise that I need to remember
38 it. Then I record it in my E-notebook...when I met a word,
39 I felt familiar but felt confused with another one,
40 I then recorded both words...I don't have much time to
41 revise all the words which I recorded, but I only revise
42 the words which I easily forget or feel confused (Qa, GI,
21 Apr. 2012)

During this period, Qa did not intentionally create further opportunities to build general vocabulary outside the accommodation, and did not draw much attention to the unknown words which were met in the first and second time (Extract 5.55). His consciousness of learning these words raised until they were encountered frequently or because he realised that they were confused with other words (lines 36-40). In these cases, they decided to make further efforts to remember them, including recording them in his E-notebook and revising them (lines 40-42).

5.5 Changes in strategy use

From the preceding analysis, the participants appear to manage their SVL dynamically in relation to their milieu in the UK, some noticeable changes in their

strategy use during the academic year were summarised below.

Compared with their learning experiences in China, Qa and Ji appeared to take more advantage of the milieu where there seemed to be more opportunities to learn and use vocabulary outside the classroom in the UK¹⁹. However, after the middle of the second semester, they had little time to enlarge their general vocabulary through visiting other places and immersing the local life due to the increased academic workloads. Rather, Qa made more strategic efforts to build and consolidate the academic and subject-related vocabulary in order to adjust to the academic milieu²⁰. Although Ji also shifted the focus from learning general to academic vocabulary²¹, there appeared to be more communicative opportunities for her in the homestay setting and she employed various social strategies to learn general vocabulary from her host family²². By contrast, Qa deployed fewer social strategies to learn words with his flatmates in the university accommodation.

Compared with their Chinese language teachers²³, the language teachers, Eva and Ruth, in the Opal site seemed to provide more strategic advice for VL. For example, in the first semester, Eva increased students' knowledge of how to keep a vocabulary notebook²⁴. The strategic instruction seemed to play an important role in developing

¹⁹ See examples: Extract 5.20, 5.52 and 5.53; Photo 5.14 and 5.15

²⁰ See examples: Extract 5.39, 5.43 and 5.55

²¹ See an example: Extract 5.54

²² See examples: Extract 5.47a, b and c; Figure 5.18

²³ See Extract 5.1 and 5.2

²⁴ See Extract 5.14 and 5.15

the participants' new strategies or strengthening existing ones. Ji did not use a notebook in China, but she started to use it and tried the organisation which Eva suggested²⁵. Although Qa stopped keeping a notebook for a while, Eva' suggestion increased his motivation to re-use the notebook and include more word information in it²⁶. However, at the end of this semester, the ways that Eva checked their notebooks every week appeared to demotivate them to keep a notebook. In the second semester, unlike Eva, Ruth did not ask students to follow a certain format to record vocabulary and gave them more freedom. She asked them to share their ideas about their recording strategies. This kind of strategy-sharing instruction seemed to develop their autonomy and choose strategies according to their personal needs²⁷.

Furthermore, assessment type seemed to be an important aspect of the academic milieu to interact with their strategy choice. They were likely to memorise vocabulary from their notebooks in the first semester and use a rote memorisation for their end-of-term vocabulary tests²⁸. By contrast, in the second semester, they tended to be assessed by formative written assignments. In order to prepare for these assignments, they spent more time reading and writing and used more contextualised strategies (e.g. remember words in context) than de-contextualised strategies (e.g. rote memorisation) to learn the academic and subject-related vocabulary²⁹.

²⁵ See Extract 5.17

²⁶ See Extract 5.16

²⁷ See Extract 5.38, 5.39 and 5.40

²⁸ See examples: Extract 5.25, 5.26 and 5.43

²⁹ See examples: Extract 5.43 and 5.44

Chapter 6

Strategic vocabulary learning in context: two cases in the Wolfson site

6.1 Context of the two cases

The University of Wolfson is located in the heart of England and it is a leading UK university which consistently ranks in top ten British universities. By comparison with the size of IFP in both Ryder and Opal sites, the number of IFP students in the Wolfson site was much larger. Therefore, in order to provide enough learning and residential facilities, this pre-university course was not based on the main campus. According to their future subjects, the IFP students stayed and were taught at two colleges which were located at two different towns near the site. College A was the home of the Law, Mathematics & Economics and Science & Engineering students and College B was the home to the Business Studies and Social Science students. The students who participated in my research all intended to choose Science & Engineering related subjects for their future degrees, and thus they and their accommodation were placed in the College A which was located in a local town. Although this town provided good shopping facilities and had easy access to major cities, the students reported that their accommodation was not close to the town centre and they had to walk to the town around 20 minutes.

The Science & Engineering Foundation Course started from September, 2011 to the completion of their examinations in the final week of May 2012. Students studied three core subjects, English and Study skills, Mathematics and Physics and also chose one further course option, IT or Economics. There was a short holiday over the New Year and in the spring. Unlike the Opal site, the course had a similar module design from the first to the second term, and students studied the same subjects (three compulsory and one optional subjects) over the two terms. The teaching took place five days a week totally for 25 hours per week of small class intensive tuition and students also needed to have 10 hours per week for private study, preparing for test and writing assignments. They attended lectures of smaller group teaching where their tutors provided them with the core information of the subjects and also contributed to small group discussions to express their opinion on a text. During the third term, they had few formal classes; instead, they had more preparation classes for final examinations. Furthermore, unlike the students in other two sites, the students in the Wolfson site were required to do IELTS at the end of the programme. Apart from the coursework, IELTS results were also a big factor to decide whether they were accepted by British universities including Wolfson University. Therefore, not only was the English module designed to improve their English for academic purposes, but also included some lessons to help students prepare for IELTS tests.

Two participants

Two male Chinese learners volunteered as my participants in the whole process of the

data collection. These two learners stayed in the same groups for the core and optional modules during the academic year. Their background information is briefly provided below (also Appendix 2.7).

Learner Bo

Bo is a male student, 18 years old. Unlike other participants, he took a one-year A-level programme while studying at a high school in China. Subjects (e.g. Mathematics, Physics and Business Studies) were mainly taught via the language of English in the A-level programme. English was a compulsory subject for students throughout the programme and he also needed to meet the language entrance requirements (IELTS) for entering foundation courses at British universities. Meanwhile, he took extra English classes for improving his general English and IELTS skills in a private language school after his A-level classes everyday. Before coming to the UK, he reached an English level of IELTS 6.0 and got the highest score among the participants. He intended to study an Engineering course for his undergraduate degree and took four modules in the IFP, English and Study skills, Mathematics and Physics and Economics.

Learner Ke

Ke was a 20-year-old male student. Unlike other participants, he had already had one year's experience at a Chinese university before entering the UK. As he was not satisfied with the course which he took for his undergraduate degree in China, he

decided to choose a different course at a British university. In order to meet the language entrance requirement (IELTS) of the IFP at University of Wolfson, he spent his free time preparing for the IELTS test during the first year of his undergraduate study and also had been to a private language school to improve his English and IELTS skills during a two-month period before taking the test. Finally, he obtained an IELTS score at 5.5 before coming to the UK. He intended to study a Mathematics course for his future degree and took the same modules as Bo in the IFP.

6.2 Past vocabulary learning experiences

As mentioned above, Bo and Ke had a different educational background before coming to the UK. Bo took a one-year A-level programme to prepare for his future degree. In this programme, subjects were taught by both native and Chinese teachers mainly via the language of English and he experienced both communicative and teacher-centred ways of teaching:

Extract 6.1

08 IR: How did you normally learn vocabulary in English classes?
09 Bo: In the listening/speaking lessons, we often worked with
10 other peers and reviewed the words learned earlier...when
11 I forgot them or didn't know how to use them...I normally
12 asked my peers. If we can't solve the problem, I asked
13 my teacher...In the reading classes, my teacher mainly
14 taught some good words from our reading...I always recorded
15 her explanation, reviewed it after class. (Bo, GI,
15 Oct.2011)

According to the language skills, their teachers applied different teaching approaches into their lessons and these seemed to be an important aspect of the milieu to interact with Bo's strategy choice across different classroom settings. For example, his teacher tended to manage the listening and speaking lessons in a more communicative way and gave students vocabulary practice in interactive activities. In relation to this setting, Bo tended to deploy a cluster of social strategies to learn vocabulary (Extract 6.1, lines 09-13):

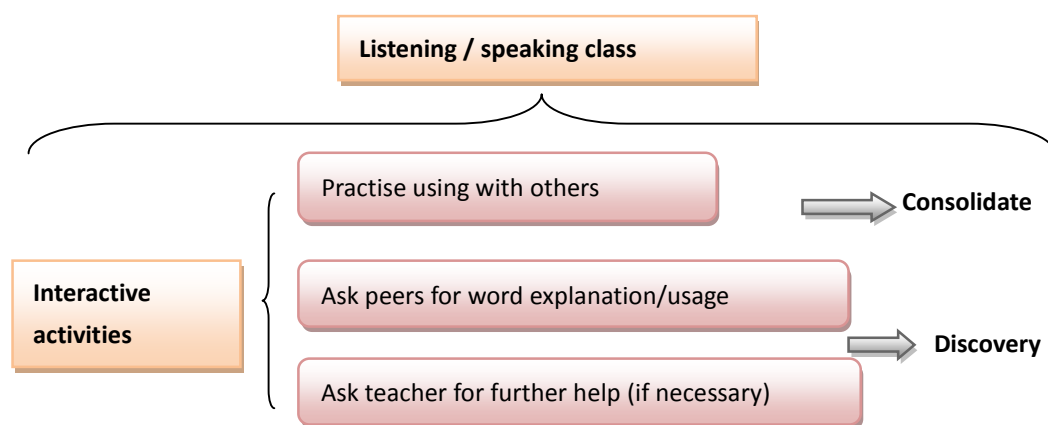


Figure 6.1 Bo's cluster of social strategies used in the listening/speaking class

By contrast, in the reading classes, his teacher focused on her own presentation and taught vocabulary explicitly through intensive reading. In relation to this setting, Bo tended to listen to his teacher's explanation and record it in his notebook for further consolidation (lines 13-5):

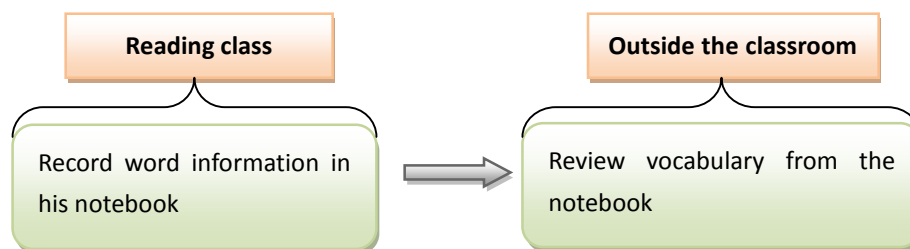


Figure 6.2 Bo's sequential cluster of strategies used in the reading class

In the IELTS preparation class, he also experienced a teacher-centred teaching approach and his teacher emphasised explicit vocabulary teaching during the lessons (Extract 6.2, lines 30-2). In order to achieve better results in the IELTS test, she integrated strategy instruction with vocabulary teaching to help students build more vocabulary and enhance their strategic competence (lines 32-5).

Extract 6.2

30 Bo: we rarely had group work, as the class was for IELTS,
 31 she emphasised the words which often appeared in the past
 32 exam papers. She suggested some IELTS vocabulary books.
 33 The books include many example sentences, she suggested
 34 that it's a good way to understand and remember words
 35 through the sentences...I tried to use this way to memorise
 36 a certain amount of vocabulary everyday. (Bo, GI,
 15 Oct. 2011)

Her vocabulary teaching and strategy instruction seemed to be exam-directed. The vocabulary which she taught and the learning materials which were used were all associated with the IELTS test (lines 31-2). Her strategic advice also appeared to mediate Bo's strategy choice (lines 33-6). Following his teacher's advice, he tried a more meaningful way to memorise vocabulary in relation to its example sentences.

In other subject-related modules, Bo learned many subject-related words in English. In order to adjust to his future degree study in British education, his teachers suggested memorising a certain amount of subject-specific vocabulary everyday and tested them the next day:

Extract 6.3

103 Bo: I learned many subject-related words from my A-level
 104 course so I feel not difficult to understand the lessons
 105 in the UK...teachers always selected some key words, asked
 106 us to remember them and tested us in the next lesson,
 107 after class, I always put them and their Chinese meaning
 108 in my notebook, then read and wrote them repeatedly.
 109 Afterwards, I normally did some exercises where I can
 110 practise the words. We had tests everyday, I also must
 111 memorise them before the lesson. (Bo, GI, 15 Oct. 2011)

In relation to his teachers’ requirement and vocabulary tests (lines 105-6; 110-1), he formed a recycled sequential cluster of strategies to help him learn subject-related vocabulary (see Figure 6.3). In particular, the vocabulary tests reinforced the frequency of the use of this strategy cluster during that time.

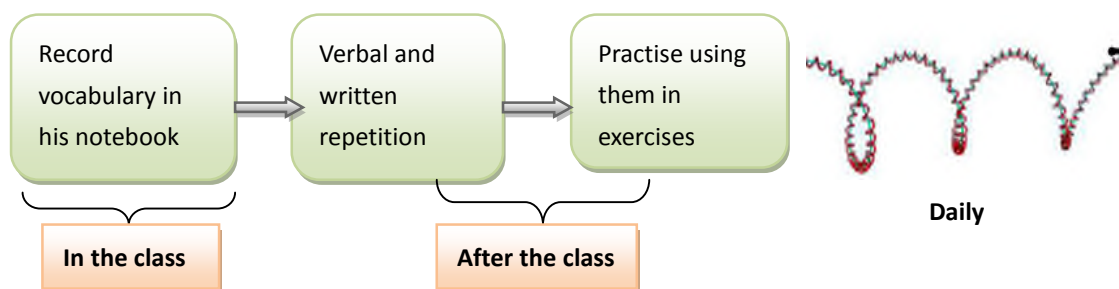


Figure 6.3 Bo’s recycled sequential strategy cluster for subjected-related vocabulary

As a result, he knew many subject-related words through his strategic efforts, and this is why he did not encounter difficulties in understanding the subject-related lessons and made few strategic efforts to learn subject-related words during the IFP course (lines 103-4, see more in the next section).

Apart from the A-level programme, Bo also attended a one-to-one English speaking practice session everyday in a private language school and saw this session as an important communicative opportunity to consolidate the vocabulary learned earlier. In the light of his teacher's strategic advice, Bo exercised his agency and regulated his own VL strategically after the session (Extract 6.4, lines 210-2). For example, he built general vocabulary through watching an English sitcom which was recommended by his tutor, and selected some words to practise with his tutor (lines 215-8).

Extract 6.4

210 ...everyday we met once...she always emailed a topic before
211 our session, and suggested that I can prepare any
212 words I wanted to use, e.g. check a dictionary...
214 IR: how did you prepare?
215 Bo: she suggested that watching the series 'Friends' was
216 an useful way to build general vocabulary, so I watched
217 it everyday, learned many words...I often chose some of them
218 and practised using them with her in our session.
(Bo, GI, 15 Oct. 2011)

During the session, he also made other strategic efforts to improve his vocabulary knowledge and learn new words from his tutor:

Extract 6.5

225 Bo: ...when I felt uncertain how to use some words, I tried
 226 to use them and then asked my tutor if I was right...I
 227 also heard some unknown words from her, I then asked her
 228 to explain them. She is a British but she can speak
 229 Chinese. it's helpful to use Chinese to explain them again
 230 when I can't understand her English. Through negotiating
 231 the meaning, I learned them better. (Bo, GI, 15 Oct. 2011)

The tutor's verbal explanation and their interaction mediated his VL process (Extract 6.5, lines 226-8, 231). In particular, the Chinese explanation enhanced his understanding of the word meaning (lines 228-30). Both Extract 6.4 and 6.5 showed that he regulated his learning process in relation to the teacher's advice and his own learning purposes. He combined a sequential cluster of strategies and a dialogic strategy circle to learn vocabulary more deeply:

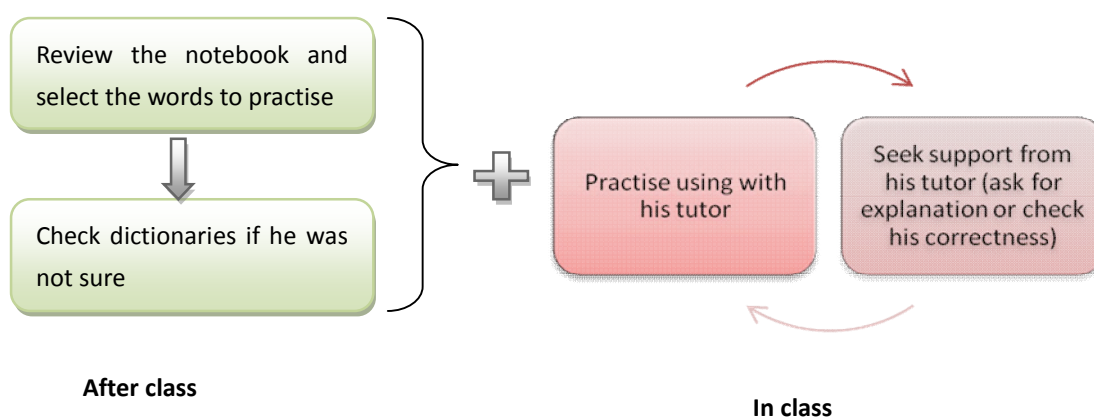


Figure 6.4 Bo's strategy clusters used in and out-of-private school settings.

He was very satisfied with the outcome of the use of this combination of the strategy clusters and acknowledged a big improvement in mastering vocabulary both receptively and productively. By contrast, he realised that his VL was regressing during the period when taking the IFP course, and his learning, social and living milieus in the UK became important factors to restrict the use of this strategy combination (see more in the next section): ‘...*Although I’m in the UK now, my private tutor provided me with more communicative opportunities to talk English and practise vocabulary. I felt that I made more progress in China than here*’ (Bo, GI, 15 Oct. 2011).

Compared with Bo’s VL experience in China, Ke was exposed to a more teacher-centred way of teaching, focusing on the translation, explanation and grammatical forms of vocabulary (Extract 6.6, lines 14-6). He had fewer opportunities to work and discuss together at his high school due to the heavy teaching load and its time-consuming nature (lines 20-1). Faced with this learning milieu, he tended to use a recording strategy rather than social strategies to learn vocabulary during the lesson (line 17).

Extract 6.6

14 Ke: Our teaching was highly structured...she translated each
15 sentence, explained key words and their grammatical
16 rules particularly related to our national exam so
17 I often recorded what she taught...
19 IR: Did you have any interactive activities?

20 Ke: Rarely, she needed to teach many things in a 40-minute
21 lesson, so we didn't have much time to do that.
(Ke, GI, 18 Oct, 2011)

His English teacher rarely provided strategic instruction during the teaching. Therefore, his strategy use was still strongly influenced by his previous learning experience and concentrated on rote memorisation (Extract 6.7, line 32-3). In order to gain good results for the university entrance exams, his teacher provided many English exam papers for them to improve their English and exam skills. Although this learning process was exam-directed, Ke commented that undertaking examination practice everyday, which emphasised vocabulary and grammar, was a useful strategy to consolidate the words learned earlier (lines 34-6). When he encountered any difficulties in terms of vocabulary, he tried to first check his E-dictionary. If he could not solve the problem, he then asked his teacher for help on the other day (lines 36-8).

Extract 6.7

31 IR: did your teacher suggest any VLSs?
32 Ke: No, from my primary school we already learned and used
33 the rote learning so now my teacher wouldn't teach it
34 again. She always gave us exam papers which focused on
35 vocabulary and grammar. Doing them was a good way to
36 practise the words learned earlier...when I found any words
37 unsure, I checked my dictionary. If I can't solve the
38 problem, I then asked my teacher. (Ke, GI, 18 Oct, 2011)

After high school, he successfully enrolled on the Chemistry course at a Chinese university. However, he did not enjoy the course after a half year and then planned to study a different subject in the UK. In order to meet the language requirement (IELTS) for entering the IFP course, he took a two-month IELTS preparation course in a private school. During this period, the teacher became an important mediating agent to influence his strategy choice of which words needed to be learned and how to memorise them:

Extract 6.8

110 IR: Did your VLSs develop when taking the course?
111 Ke: Yes, I learned other VLSs...the teacher suggested keeping
112 a vocabulary notebook...she also told us that it's useful
113 to choose the words from the IELTS materials, especially
114 the words appeared frequently in these materials. I drew
115 more attention to these 'IELTS words'. I could remember
116 them better related to the texts. This way also suggested
117 by him. I also recorded them and the places I found them.
118 when reviewing them again, I can link them with their
119 contexts. (Ke, GI, 18 Oct, 2011)

Based on the strategic advice of his teacher, Ke developed his strategic self-regulation (see also Oxford and Schramm, 2007) to improve his VL (Extract 6.8). As his learning goal was to achieve a good result in the IELTS test, he used the IELTS learning materials as the main resources to build his vocabulary and formed his own cluster of strategies to learn vocabulary (lines 113-9).

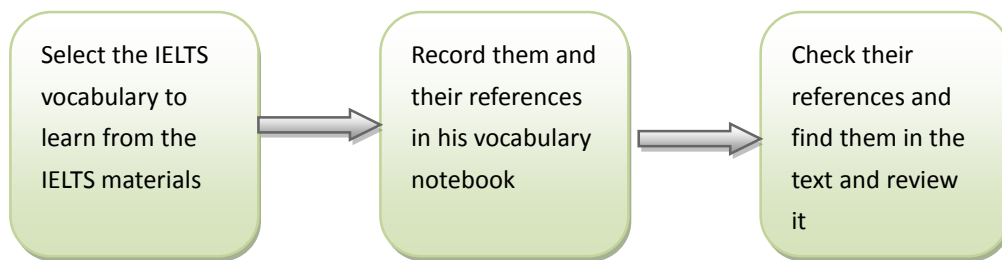


Figure 6.5 Ke's sequential cluster of strategies used for IELTS in China

6.3 Strategic vocabulary learning in the UK

By comparison with the Opal site, the course design of IFP in the Wolfson site seemed more stable over the academic year. As mentioned above, Bo and Ke studied three core subjects as well as one further course option from the first to the second term. However, the teaching arrangements were more intensive than the IFP in other two sites (Opal and Ryder). Apart from the coursework, all students' English ability needed to be assessed by IELTS at the end of the second term in order to be accepted by future degree courses. The course design, teaching arrangement and assessment appeared to be three important aspects of the academic milieu to interact with the strategy choice of Bo and Ke. Supporting evidence for this as well as its analysis are looked at in detail later.

6.3.1 The first term: classroom setting

Their teacher operated most activities in a communicative way and encouraged students to work interactively (see Extract 6.9a, lines 20-1; Extract 6.9b, lines 215 and 226). However, the mediation of the teacher seemed not to be very successful.

Both Bo and Ke used few or no social strategies to learn and practise vocabulary in these activities (Extract 6.9a, lines 22-3; Extract 6.9b, lines 222-3; Photo 6.1):

Extract 6.9a

18 T: ...see whether you can match them up in the definitions
19 you got dictionaries to help you ((distributes hard copies
20 every two Ss have one copy))...if you're not sure, discuss
21 with your partner related to the text. ((Bo and Ke are
22 in the same group, but work individually...Bo checks his
23 iPhone; Ke checks the hard copy))



Photo 6.1 (classroom observation, 15 Nov. 2011)

Extract 6.9b

215 T: ...discuss with your partner...I want you to talk in English...
222 Ke: 你是怎么想的?(what do you think?)
223 Bo: 我觉得像是 iPhone 给其他电器产品带来了巨大技术革命(I think
224 iPhone brought a revolution...)
226 T: I want to hear that you both speak English, ok?
227 Ke: ok...I think his digital movie was...
228 Bo: ...what's digital?
229 Ke: 数码的 (Chinese translation)((Checks the hard copy))
230 I'm right ((shows it to Bo))
231 Bo: yes ((records in his handout)) (Classroom observation
15. Nov. 2011)

Looking at Extract 6.9a, Ke and Bo still worked on their own, although their teacher expected them to discuss the word's meaning together. They provided different

reasons for this working style:

Extract 6.10

24 Bo: I think he didn't want to work together, even didn't
25 turn his face to me, so I worked alone...I can guess from
26 the context, and check my iPhone when I felt unsure...
27 I also used the time to learn more words from the text.
28 as my teacher suggested, including their usage. This
29 aspect is also important.
35 IR: Why didn't you use the hard copy?
36 Bo: Ke used it...only one copy between us...iPhone was
37 convenient, although I knew that the hard copy was more
38 reliable (Bo, FI, 15 Nov. 2011)

Extract 6.11

79 Ke: I knew most of the words...I also found the meaning of
80 unknown words from the hard copy which had clearer and
81 more accurate explanation than the peer's.
(Ke, FI, 15 Nov. 2011)

During this activity, Ke's reaction appeared to be a kind of negative mediation to restrict Bo's use of social strategies (Extract 6.10, lines 24-5). Instead, Bo tried to combine an inferring strategy with dictionary look-up strategies to discover the word (lines 25-6). Also, Bo did not just end up doing this vocabulary exercise, but built more words and enriched his vocabulary knowledge. This time, his teacher's strategic advice mediated his strategy use (lines 27-9). Apart from the convenience of his E-dictionary, the distribution of hard-copy dictionaries also restricted his use of them, although his teacher suggested using hard copies and he knew that the E-dictionary was less reliable than the hard copy (lines 36-8).

Ke's prior knowledge seemed to be one of the factors influencing his strategy choice. He decided not to discuss with Bo as he already knew the words (Extract 6.11). Evaluating the usefulness of a dictionary look-up strategy and the social strategy (asking for explanation), he found that the dictionary look-up strategy would be more helpful in terms of the clarity and accuracy of its word explanation (lines 80-1) than his peer's verbal explanation.

Like Extract 6.9a, Ke and Bo did not follow their teacher's strategic advice at the beginning of the activity in Extract 6.9b and used L1 to help them complete the task (lines 222-4). However, they started to discuss the question through the language of English after their teacher nominated them and emphasised her instruction again (lines 226-7). During the interaction through L2, VL appeared to take place when Bo heard an unknown word from Ke. He tried to know its meaning through asking Ke for explanation, and L1 was used as a mediating artefact to help Bo' understanding (lines 228-9, see also Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). Ke also used a dictionary look-strategy to confirm their understanding, and then Bo recorded this new word in his handout (lines 229-31). They appeared to learn the word collaboratively.

The teacher did not place an emphasis on her own explanation of the words, rather, gave more indirect feedback and encouraged students to share more their own understanding (Extract 6.12, lines 49, 52-53, 61, 63).

Extract 6.12

49 T: mourns it comes from which verb?
50 S2: mourn
51 T: yes ((writes it on the board, Ke checks it in the hard
52 copy; Bo checks his iPhone)) you also can talk about the
53 family is in what?
54 S2: mourning
55 T: Yes you can be mourning ((writes this on the board, Bo
56 looks at the board and records in his work sheet))...
61 this is a good adjective, extremely advanced? ...
62 S3: cutting-edge ↑
63 T: right...it gets a positive sense? Or negative?
64 S3: positive↑
65 T: Yes positive ((Ke checks the hard copy and records in his
66 handout; Bo checks his iPhone and records))



Photo 6.2 (Classroom observation, 15 Nov. 2011)

Bo and Ke deployed recording and dictionary look-up strategies in relation to the teacher's feedback (lines 51-52, 55-56, 65-66; also Photo 6.2). They chose different dictionaries to look up and selected different words to record. They made own choice of what information to look up in the dictionary in relation to their teacher's questions:

Extract 6.13

52 IR: What information did you check via your iPhone?
53 Bo: normally the Chinese translation, because sometimes
54 I can't understand my teacher's explanation...she also
55 questioned about other aspects e.g. word forms...positive
56 or negative? but my iPhone didn't show this aspect but
57 I can guess through looking at its meaning... she later
58 also confirmed my guess. (Bo, FI, 15. Nov. 2011)

Extract 6.14

117 Ke: When my teacher asked about different aspects of word
118 knowledge, I normally looked up the things which I didn't
119 know or she introduced too simply. (Ke, FI, 15. Nov. 2011)

Bo checked his understanding of the teacher's explanation again through using his E-dictionary and the Chinese definition appeared to be a mediating artefact to help him understand the word's meaning better (Extract 6.13). Their teacher tried to co-construct the word knowledge with the students. Although Bo and Ke did not participate in the verbal interaction (Extract 6.12), the teacher's indirect feedback still raised their questions about word knowledge (e.g. word forms and a connotational meaning) which seemed to help them think what information they needed to look up in their dictionaries (Extract 6.13 and 6.14). As mentioned above, they tended to use recording strategies during their teachers' presentation in China (Extract 6.1 and Extract 6.6). In this lesson, this kind of an indirect teaching approach seemed to lead them to employ dictionary look-up strategies more frequently in order to enrich their word knowledge.

Looking at Extract 6.15 (lines 71-2), the teacher also appeared to be a mediating agent who influenced Bo's recording choice and he tended to record the words' information which his teacher emphasised on the board (also Extract 6.12). By contrast, the teacher's suggestion seemed not to have a big influence on Ke's recording choice. He only recorded new words and his prior knowledge seemed to constrain him in recording more information, although his teacher suggested that the words were useful (Extract 6.16, lines 139, 141-2).

Extract 6.15

71 Bo: I normally recorded the things which my teacher stressed,
72 they're useful so she emphasised them..
74 IR: Do you record them in a notebook?
75 Bo: ...unlike China, the teacher here didn't explain a lot
76 so I didn't have much things to record. Now I recorded
77 them in my handout. this way saved time. I moved them to
78 my notebook after the class so had more time to check
79 dictionaries again and can add other information in it
(Bo, FI, 15. Nov. 2011)

Extract 6.16

139 Ke: I normally recorded the words which were new to me..
141 IR: how about the words you knew, but your teacher stressed?
142 Ke: no, I already knew it..
145 IR: where did you record them?
146 Ke: my handout, because the handout can provides me with the
147 textual context which helps me understand and remember
148 them after class. (Ke, FI, 15. Nov. 2011)

Both Bo and Ke kept a record of vocabulary and related information in their handouts but for different reasons. In relation to his previous learning experience in China, Bo evaluated the effectiveness of using a vocabulary notebook to record during a lesson and found that keeping a record in his handouts could be more

appropriate to the classroom setting (Extract 6.15, lines 75-7). However, he still used his vocabulary notebook after class in order to consolidate the words. Without a time constraint, he could check them again in his dictionary and add more information in the notebook. The reason why Ke recorded vocabulary in his handout was because it provided a textual context which benefited his VL process and helped him understand and memorise vocabulary (Extract 6.16, lines 146-8). Analysing their data, both Ke and Bo appeared to perform a sequential cluster of strategies to the words which they learned during the lesson:

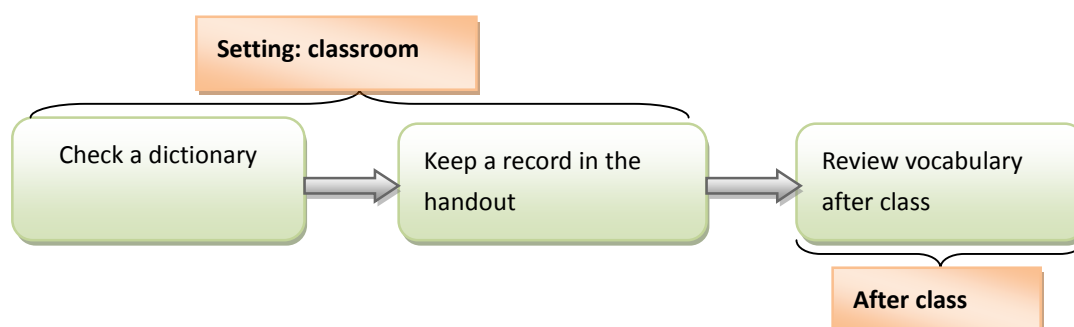


Figure 6.6 A sequential cluster of strategies for the English module vocabulary

6.3.2 Out-of-class settings

The intermediate context of learning, or milieu, in the UK appeared to play an important role in mediating Bo's strategy choice (e.g. Extract 6.17 and 6.18). By comparison with his previous learning experience in Chinese schools, there seemed to be fewer English-speaking opportunities to practise English in the current milieu which constrained him in deploying social strategies to learn vocabulary:

Extract 6.17

01 ...in China I can find more opportunities to practise words with
02 my foreign teachers. But since I came to England ...I'm no longer
03 able to practise my vocabulary with my teachers for an hour
04 after class like what I did in China...(Bo, diary, VOCABlog, 10
Nov. 2011)

Extract 6.18

096 IR: Why do you have less chance to practise words in the UK?
097 Bo: in the class, most coursemates are Chinese, we often speak
098 Chinese...in my accommodation, my flatmates are also
099 Chinese, we still speak Chinese...our classes start from
100 9 to 5 Monday to Friday, our accommodation is quite
101 far from the town so I have little time to go out and
102 learn words from local people... (Bo, GI, 24 Nov. 2011)

The large number of Chinese students in the classroom and the accommodation appeared to be an important aspect of the milieu which restricted his English-speaking opportunities (Extract 6.18, lines 97-9, also Extract 6.9b). Furthermore, because of the intensive tuition and geographical position of his accommodation, he was also lacking free time to build more vocabulary through socialising with local people after class (lines 100-2). As mentioned above, he could meet some native teachers in China and improved vocabulary through interacting and practising with them everyday (Extract 6.4, 6.5 and 6.17).

Faced with the different learning milieu, instead of social strategies, Bo tried to learn vocabulary through self study in his accommodation (Extract 6.19, lines 276-7). As mentioned above, unlike Ke, Bo had already taken an A-level course in China and

had learned many subject-related words through the course. He found that he could understand his subject-related lessons and performed well in the coursework, so he made fewer strategic efforts to review the subject-related vocabulary after class (lines 290-2).

Extract 6.19

276 Bo: I can practise words with my tutor in China but now it's
277 different, I have to review them by myself at home...
280 IR: how about the subject-related words?
290 Bo: I knew many of them in China already. I can understand
291 the lessons and use them to do my homework so I don't
292 consolidate them (Bo, GI, 24 Nov. 2011)

In particular, due to its satisfactory learning outcome in China (see Extract 6.4), he continued to watch the series 'Friends' to learn more words and collocations:

Extract 6.20

05 ...I try to watch one episode everyday, I write some useful
06 words and phrases in my sticky notes and put them on my wall
07 so I can always see them. Although I can't practise them with
08 other people now, this still helps me memorise them...

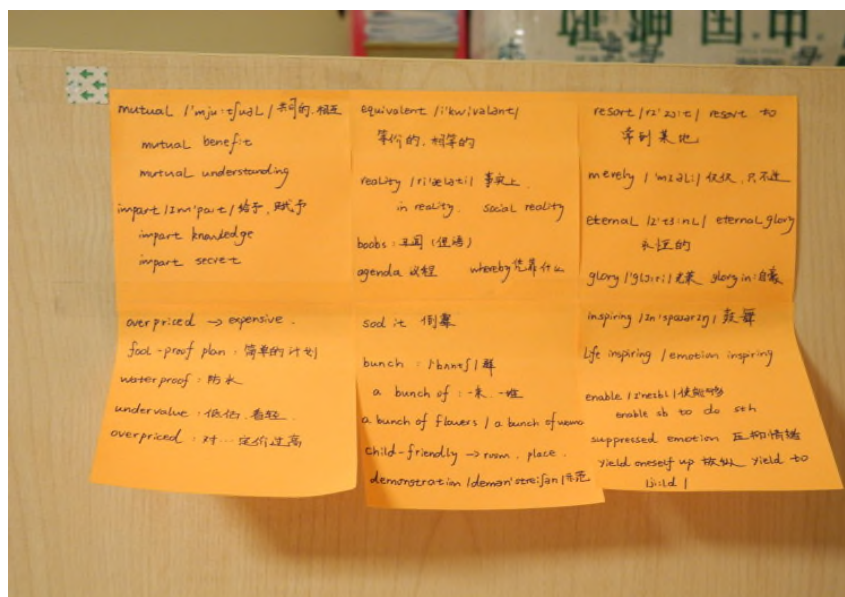


Photo 6.3(Bo, diary and photo, VOCABlog, 01 Dec. 2011)

IR: apart from their meaning, what else information do you check?

- 09 Bo: I check both Chinese and English meanings in my dic.
 10 but I only write the Chinese in the sticker. When
 11 reviewing it, the Chinese translation helps me remember
 12 it quickly, I also check their related phases and
 13 grammatical rules...(Bo, forum, VOCABlog, 02 Dec. 2011)

After exploring the useful words, Bo used the sticky note as an assistive artefact to help him record and memorise them (Extract 6.20; Photo 6.3). During this learning process, he employed a recycled cluster of strategies to build his vocabulary and reinforce his memory of the words (see Figure 6.7):

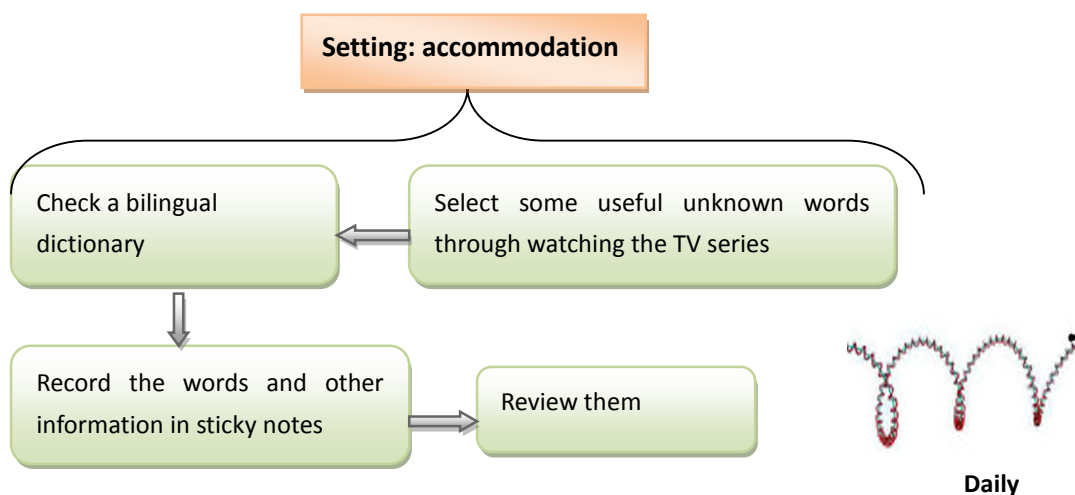


Figure 6.7 Bo's recycled sequential cluster of strategies

Not only did his previous experience give an insight to his current strategy choice (e.g. learn words through watching 'Friends'), but also he exercised his agency and explored other ways of developing his vocabulary, for example:

Extract 6.21

01 I always checked weather conditions here...some words and
 02 phrases I'd never heard of...I checked their meaning in the
 03 dic. and wanted to know in what other contexts they've been
 04 used...I also used 'Google' to search 'sleet', there're
 05 12,700,000 results. I spent time reading about 'sleet' and
 06 seeing pictures of sleet. Google is useful. I can read
 07 information from various sources e.g. journals, songs...these
 08 help improve my words.(Bo, diary, VOCABlog, 10 Dec. 2011)

Through checking the British weather forecast, he discovered some new words and phrases and combined a number of strategies to learn them (Extract 6.21; Figure 6.8 below). Bo discovered their meaning through looking them up in a dictionary. He was also aware that words can be used differently in different contexts (lines 02-04)

and used 'Google' as an assistive artefact which provides various sources (e.g. pictures, journal articles and songs) to search, explore and learn their usage in different linguistic contexts (lines 05-08).

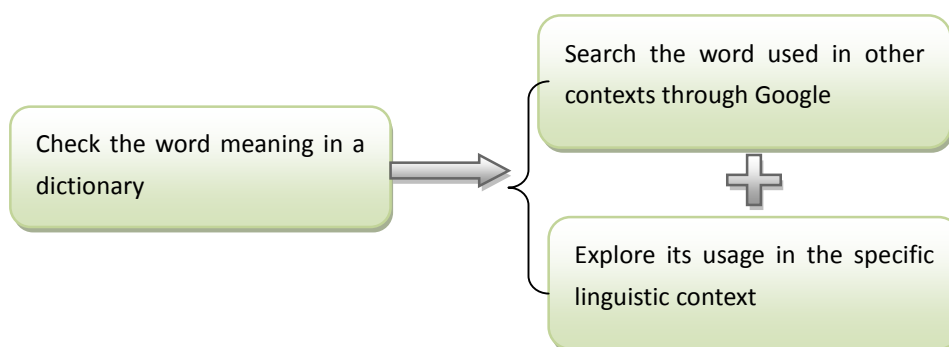


Figure 6.8 Bo's cluster of strategies to build more general vocabulary

As mentioned above, Ke and Bo had a different milieu of teaching and learning in Chinese schools. Bo already experienced a communicative teaching style in his A-level course and many of his teachers taught the English module and other subjects through the medium of English. Furthermore, Bo had many more opportunities to interact with his native teachers and frequently performed social strategies to learn and consolidate vocabulary. By contrast, Ke lacked opportunities to communicate with other proficient speakers of English in the high school and university and tended to learn vocabulary for passing tests. Therefore, comparing his previous experience with the current one, Ke commented that he could take greater advantage of the intermediate context of teaching and learning (milieu) and its authentic relationship with the wider, macro-context of English culture (Extract 6.22a, lines 222-4), although he also acknowledged the negative aspects of the

current learning milieu (Extract 6.23) like what Bo reported before (Extract 6.18).

Extract 6.22a

222 IR: do you have more chances to learn words here than China?
223 Ke: yes, although the foundation course is intensive, I still
224 can find time to travel and learn words from many places..
228 IR: how do you learn them?
229 Ke: when I saw unknown words on the street, checked them in
230 my iPhone and saved them for further review...in the train,
231 I tried to listen to what local people said and think
232 what good expressions they used, how they used the words
233 in which I'm interested. I tried to save them in my mobile
234 for later review. It's convenient to check and record
235 words via iPhone outside home (Ke, GI, 25 Nov. 2011)

Extract 6.22b



Photo 6.4

01 ...the juicy was on sale...one flavour is -'elderflower'..
02 from the word itself, I think it's the flower of elder
03 but what is the elder? look at the picture on the bottle;
04 it seems the small red fruits, I then checked my iPhone,
05 it showed '接骨木的花' never heard this flower, After going
06 back home, I checked the oxford dic again, then I knew
07 that it can be used to make wines...interesting!
(Ke, photo and diary, VOCABlog, 03 Dec. 2011)

Analysing Extract 6.22a and 6.22b, Ke appeared to explore various everyday life opportunities for VL from this English milieu. His strategy choice interacted with

different out-of-class settings at a micro-contextual level and he deployed different sequential strategy clusters to appropriate the specific contexts (see Figure 6.9).

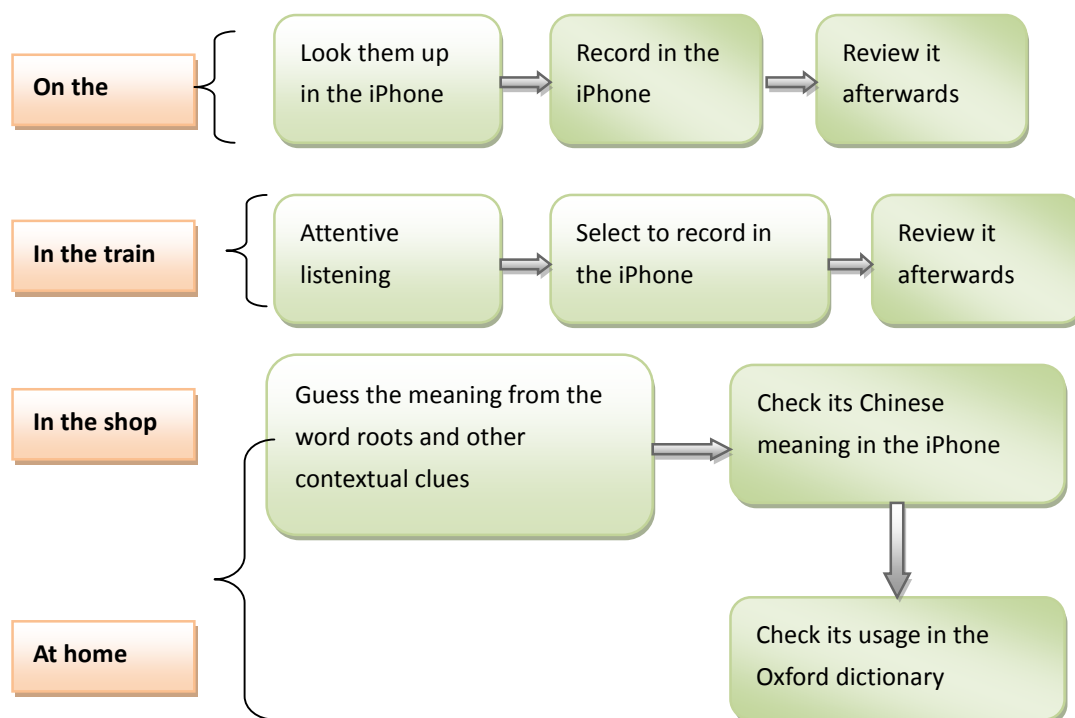


Figure 6.9 Ke's clusters of strategies used across out-of-class settings

For example, Ke only used dictionary look-up strategies to know the words on the street and tried both inferring and dictionary look-up strategies to find out the word's meaning in the shop. Because of the convenience, he chose the E-dictionary (i.e. his iPhone) as the mediating artefact to help him discover the words in out-of-home settings (e.g. street and shop). If he was still uncertain about them, he would also explore more through using the English to English dictionary at home. His SVL appeared to be a temporally and contextually situated phenomenon.

However, like Bo, Ke also mentioned the negative aspects of their current learning milieu (Extract 6.23), and these raised his strategic awareness that incidental SVL was not enough to develop his vocabulary. In order to accelerate the process of adjustment of academic, social and daily life in the UK, he needed to make further efforts to regulate his VL in a more intentional way (e.g. Extract 6.22 a, b).

Extract 6.23

01 I expected that my vocabulary could have a big improvement
02 before coming to the UK...but most time I'm at school and still
03 talk with my Chinese peers. I feel difficult to understand
04 lessons and talk to my teachers and local people in English
05 ...so I still need to work on vocabulary seriously...(Ke, diary,
VOCABlog, 10 Dec. 2011)

Unlike Bo, Ke did not take any subject-related courses through the medium of English before coming to the UK, and thus a lack of subject-related vocabulary appeared to be the main factor that caused his difficulties in understanding his subject-related classes. In order to improve his subject-related vocabulary, he combined a number of VLSs after class:

Extract 6.24

185 IR: How do you learn subject-related vocabulary?
186 Ke: ...I found when I can't understand their teaching
187 was often because of unknown subject-related words
188 so I tried to review and memorise the key words learned
189 from the classes every night...to build more words, I chose
190 the subject-related words which caused difficulties in
191 doing the coursework, checked and recorded their Chinese

192 meaning...reviewed them every week...
 197 IR: Did you record them in your notebook?
 198 Ke: No,...the work sheet provides me with the context which
 199 helps me remember. (Ke, GI, 25 Nov. 2011)

Analysing Extract 6.24, Ke performed two kinds of recycled clusters of strategies. In order to consolidate the subject-related words learned from the classes, he combined a review strategy with a memorisation strategy in a repeated way after class (lines 188-189):

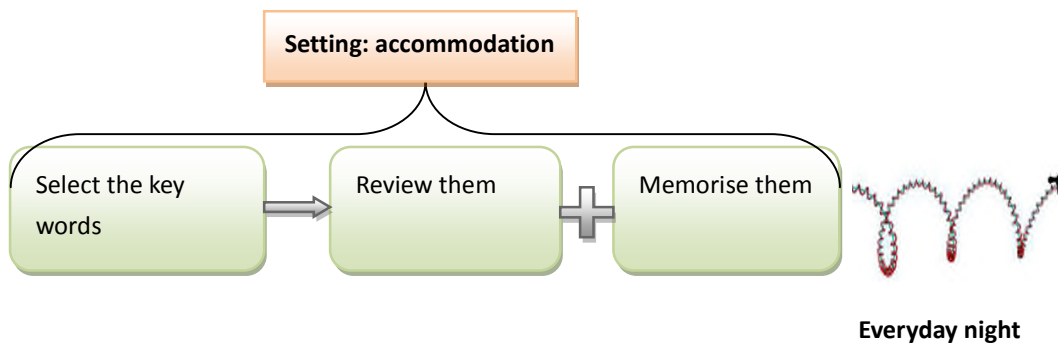


Figure 6.10 Ke’s recycled cluster to consolidate the subject-related vocabulary

He also made further efforts to build more subject-related vocabulary; in particular, he focused on the words which caused his difficulties in doing the coursework (lines 189-92). He deployed a dictionary look-up strategy to discover the Chinese meaning of these words and combined a recording strategy with a review strategy to consolidate them later (Figure 6.11). During this process, the work sheet was used as a mediating artefact to help him memorise the words (lines 198-9).

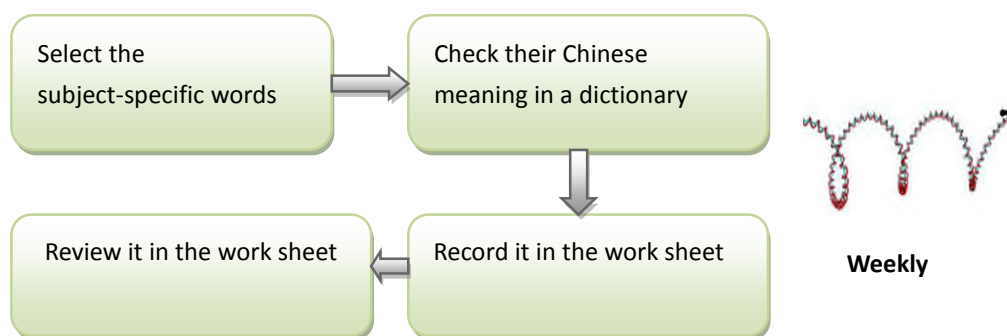


Figure 6.11 Ke's recycled sequential cluster to enlarge the subject-related vocabulary

6.3.3 The second term: in and outside classroom settings

Apart from some general English language skills, the English module tended to focus on another area of academic English skills, presentation during the second term; and relevant vocabulary and grammar were taught through the content area. Students were not only assessed by essays and report writings, but also presentations. Also, all students needed to take IELTS exams and reach an English level of IELTS 6.5 in order to be accepted by British universities. The two participants appeared to modify their previous strategy use to appropriate their new academic milieu.

Their teacher integrated vocabulary teaching with the content area, and tried to teach different aspects of vocabulary knowledge in order to help students make their presentation more understandable. One of the lessons which I observed focused on the signpost language which can make a presentation easier to follow; and another lesson focused on the word pronunciation and helped students speak vocabulary clearly and accurately. According to different teaching focuses, the teacher arranged different activities to support their VL. Within these two different classroom settings, both Bo and Ke exercised their agency through the help of their teacher, peers and

other material artefacts (e.g. a dictionary); and selected different strategies to help them learn vocabulary. For example, drawing on the first classroom observation, their teacher did not offer direct teaching about signpost words and phrases, rather, she arranged a collaborative activity for students themselves to discover what kinds of vocabulary and expressions can be signpost language (Extract 6.25, lines 26-8).

Extract 6.25

26 T: I want you work in groups...give you some word cards, you
27 need to find some words or phrases which have a similar
28 purpose and group them together...
(Ke, Bo and CS are in the same group; T walks around))
60 Bo: 'Furthermore', 'what's more', 'in other words'
61 CS: 它们一样吗? (are they same?)
...
66 Ke: I think they are different 中国老师讲过 (my Chinese told
67 me this before)问题是 furthermore,它好像是跟它们一组, 你们说呢?
68 ('furthermore' it seems to be the same group with one
69 of them, how do you think?)
70 Bo: but I think 'what's more' and 'in other words' are similar,
71 I'm also not sure about 'furthermore'



Photo 6.5

(Classroom observation, 11 Jan. 2012)

The students discussed these signpost words and phrases together and managed them

into different groups (see Photo 6.5). In relation to this particular setting, both Bo and Ke employed social strategies (e.g. asked questions for verification) to help them discover the differences between the signal word and phrases (lines 60-71). Three Chinese students used both L1 and L2 to facilitate this problem-solving process. However, Ke and Bo seemed not to be satisfied with each other's responses and still felt uncertain about their questions:

Extract 6.26

24 Ke: I still felt confused, e.g. 'furthermore'...if the teacher
25 can tell us which words belong to which groups straightway
26 I feel better, because signal words are new, we didn't
27 know before, but if she taught us first, I may not have
28 such many questions...I might just follow and record
29 what she taught...(Ke, FI, 12 Jan. 2012)

Extract 6.27

08 IR: How do you find your peers' responses?
09 Bo: not very helpful, we often had a different thought,
10 they didn't provide a clear explanation to persuade
11 me, so I still felt unsure... (Bo, FI, 12 Jan. 2012)

The social mediation of their peers seemed to be not always successful (Extract 6.26 and 6.27). In particular, when the partners were lacking prior knowledge, Ke commented that the peer interaction might not be helpful as much as direct teaching of signpost words and phrases (Extract 6.26, lines 24-7). The teaching approach seemed to be an important element of this particular setting to interact with his strategy choice (lines 27-9). By comparison with direct teaching, the interactive

process can raise more linguistic awareness and help him generate more questions and thus he tended to seek more help from his group members. Yet, he was likely to rely on the teacher's grouping if she taught different groups of signpost words and phrases directly. Instead of social strategies, he might mainly use a recording strategy to record what he learned from the teacher. Therefore, his strategy use seemed to vary across different teaching arrangements and he tended to manage it in relation to the particular setting. Although the peer interaction might not be helpful, Ke and Bo could seek further support from their teacher to help them solve their uncertainties:

Extract 6.28

085 Ke: ...but we're not clear with the main body? they look
086 like very similar...
089 T: ok let's think about the purposes...
091 Ke: 'finally' and 'thirdly' both turn to another topic right?
092 T: they're slightly different, 'finally' is changing the
093 topic (.) 'thirdly' is ordering the topic...
094 Ke: [Yes I see ((records))
095 Bo: [oh yes ((records))(...)what about 'furthermore'?
096 T: so what're you doing if you use 'furthermore'?
097 Bo: give more details
098 T: yes so you're giving extra information you're emphasising,
099 they're slightly different again ((both Bo and Ke record))



Photo 6.6



Photo 6.7

(Classroom observation, 11 Jan. 2012)

When the teacher came to their group and monitored their interaction, both Ke and Bo asked her and looked for more clarification and verification (Extract 6.28, lines 85-6, 91, 95; also Photo 6.6). The teacher's both direct (lines 92-3) and indirect feedback (lines 89 and 96) successfully mediated their thinking and helped them find the answers (e.g. line 97) and learn the vocabulary knowledge. They also combined the social strategies with a recording strategy (lines 94-5, 99; also Photo 6.7). Both of them mentioned that the way in which their teacher monitored their interactive processes was important to encourage them to seek support from her, for example:

Extract 6.29

- 38 IR: later during her teaching, did you ask more questions
39 in relation to signpost vocabulary?
40 Bo: no, I felt nervous to interrupt the teacher's speaking
41 but she always walked around the room during the
42 activities I felt more conformable to ask her when she
43 came to my group. (Bo, FI, 12 Jan. 2012)

This learner-centred teaching style appeared to provide a more relaxed atmosphere

for him to ask questions and the way of monitoring also increased his opportunities to ask (Extract 6.29). By contrast, his anxiety about using social strategies increased during the teacher's presentation (line 40). Hence, interaction between his strategy use and her teaching arrangements (an aspect of the setting) is evident (also Norton and Toohey, 2001).

Furthermore, their teacher also arranged another activity in which each student was given a topic, and was asked to structure and give their presentation to their group members through using the signpost vocabulary. Ke and Bo selected different signpost words and phrases to practise according to their own criteria:

Extract 6.30

161 Ke: ...I selected some which I made mistakes in the previous
162 activity. Through using them, I remember them more deeply
163 and accurately so I won't make the same mistake again...
168 IR: Did you ask any questions to your peers when using them?
169 Ke: yes, I knew how to use them but sometimes I still check
170 with them whether I used correctly (Ke, FI, 12 Jan. 2012)

Extract 6.31

75 Bo: I tried to practise the signpost words which I haven't
76 met before...I hope I could remember some new words to
77 order my presentation...
81 IR: Did you ask more questions to your peers when using them?
82 Bo: yes, I still found some unsure, so asked them to check
83 my usage (Bo, FI, 12 Jan. 2012)

Ke chose the signpost vocabulary which he did not group correctly in the previous activity to practise (Extract 6.30, lines 161-2). By contrast, Bo did not practise the vocabulary with which he was familiar; rather, he only selected the new signpost words to practise (Extract 6.31, lines 75-7). They both asked their peers for help when they were uncertain about the words (Extract 6.30, lines 169-70, Extract 6.31, lines 82-3).

Looking across the data (Extract 6.25-6.31), both Ke and Bo appeared to interact with various aspects of the classroom setting (e.g. the teaching approach, activity arrangements and mediating agents) and deployed a dialogic strategy circle (see Figure 6.12) to help them learn the signpost vocabulary. The mediation of their teacher and peers seemed to play an important role in their learning processes.

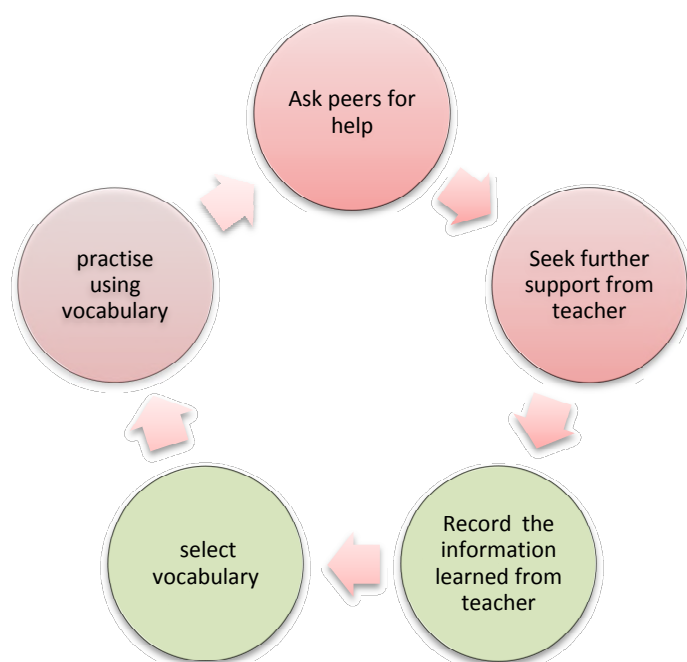


Figure 6.12 Bo's and Ke's dialogic strategy circle in a particular classroom setting

By comparison with the previous lesson, the objective of the second lesson was to help students improve a different aspect of vocabulary, pronunciation, particularly the word stress. This was also closely related to the teacher's another objective which was to help them express vocabulary more accurately in their presentation. Like the previous lesson, the teacher placed the students in a central role in this lesson. She encouraged them to find out the word pronunciation and other aspects of word knowledge by themselves through the help of material and social resources, such as the hard copy of a dictionary and the teacher herself:

Extract 6.32

218 T: ok, you'll be responsible for one word...check the sound
219 of the word, look at its word stress and word forms...you
220 can use your dictionary, if you're not sure, you also can
221 ask me...((Ke and Bo work on their own word and check their
222 dictionaries)) (Classroom observation, 22 Feb. 2012)

Drawing on their teacher's strategic suggestion (Extract 6.32, line 220), both Ke and Bo discovered word knowledge through using dictionary look-up strategies (lines 221-2). Because of its convenience, Bo used his iPhone to look for the information which his teacher suggested, including its pronunciation, meaning and word forms (Extract 6.33). By contrast, Ke combined his iPhone with the hard copy of an English-English dictionary. He used iPhone as a mediating artefact to know how to

speak the word through listening to its pronunciation, and also checked the hard copy to explore more meanings of the word and learned the word stress in relation to its different word forms (Extract 6.34). Therefore, their teacher's suggestion seemed to mediate their dictionary use but they also made their own decisions on what dictionary they preferred to use and how detailed information they wanted to look at.

Extract 6.33

79 IR: Why didn't you use the hard copy?
80 Bo: iPhone was more convenient, the pronunciation, word
81 forms... it has all the information which I wanted, there's
82 no need to use the hard copy. (Bo, FI, 23 Feb. 2012)

Extract 6.34

124 IR: what information did you look at in your dictionary?
125 Ke: I used my iPhone to listen to the sound and the word
126 stress of 'transport', but it had only the common meaning
127 which we knew already. I then used the hard copy to check
128 other meanings and found that it can be both a verb and
129 a noun associated with a different word stress.
(Ke, FI, 23 Feb. 2012)

After they studied the words on their own, the teacher asked them to teach their words to other peers, particularly the pronunciation, meaning and word forms of the words. This time she did not help them set up groups, instead, students were given freedom to find their group members. In relation to this activity arrangement, Ke did not choose to work with his previous partner, Bo, and went to the other side of the classroom and formed a group with a foreign student (also Photo 6.8):

Extract 6.35

134 Bo: 不愿意跟我一起坐? (you don't want to sit next to me?)
135 Ke: 不是...和外国人一组能够多一些机会说英语, 多练这些词 (no...if we can
136 work with a foreign classmate, we can speak more English,
137 practise more words)((leaves his seat to find other
138 partners))
...
277 Ke: I don't know this one
278 FS: this means copy
279 Ke: can you explain a little bit more?
280 FS: ...make an copy of this document or say 'duplicate' it...
282 Ke: can you pronounce it again?
283 FS: ((pronounces it)) its verb and noun forms are the same...
285 Ke: Do they have the same pronunciation?
286 FS: no, verb is /kɛrt/ but noun is /kət/

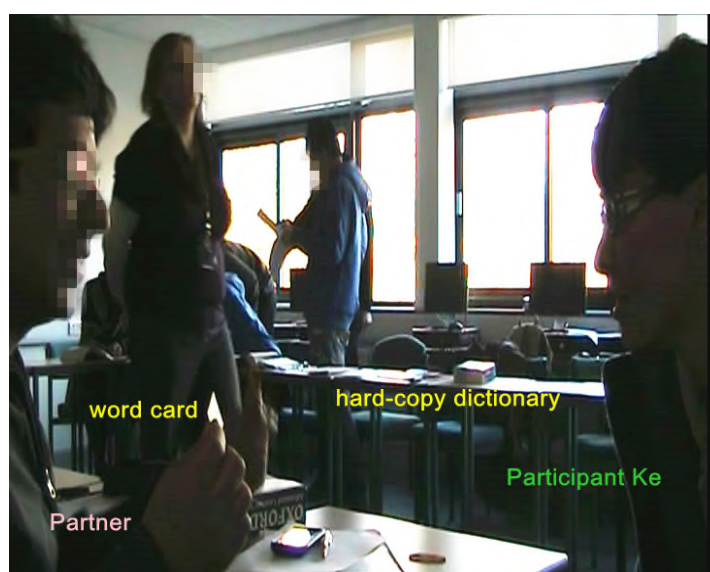


Photo 6.8 (Classroom observation, 22 Feb. 2012)

This more learner-centred arrangement encouraged Ke to work with someone who he considered more helpful to his vocabulary practice (Extract 6.35, lines, 136-8). His partner did not offer a detailed explanation at the beginning of their interaction, and this did not meet what he expected earlier (Extract 6.36). He then exerted his

agency and employed a number of social strategies (see Figure 6.13) to encourage his partner to explain more about the word ‘duplicate’ (Extract 6.36 and Extract 6.35, line 279; 282 and 285).

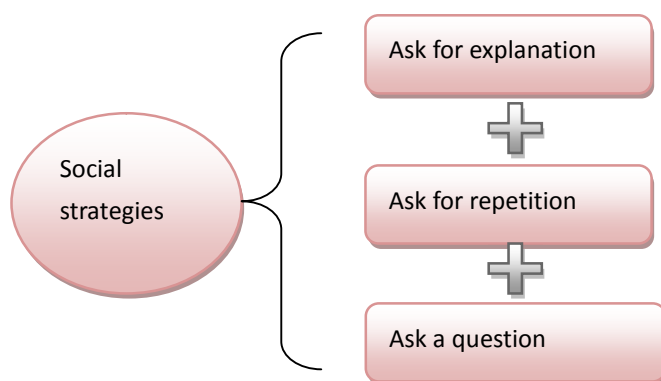


Figure 6.13 Ke’s cluster of social strategies in one specific interactive activity

Extract 6.36

105 Ke: I tried to work with a foreign classmate, but he didn’t
106 teach me a lot, it’s quite disappointed...I had to ask him
107 more questions, I could learn more through this way (Ke,
FI, 23 Feb. 2012)

Unlike Ke, Bo did not intentionally choose his partner and formed a group with other two Chinese students who sat near him (see Photo 6.9). During the interactive process, Bo became the person who taught the word to other members. His partners questioned his pronunciation of the word ‘rebel’ in both noun and verb forms (Extract 6.37, lines 313 and 315) and then they discussed the answers and checked the word again in a conventional dictionary (lines 316 and 318, see Photo 6.9). After using dictionary look-up strategies, he was still uncertain about the pronunciation of the word in its noun form. His partner CS2 suggested him trying an E-dictionary

which could pronounce the word for them and the advice mediated Bo's strategy choice (lines 321-4). He finally learned the correct pronunciations through listening to the E-dictionary and repeating the sound and keeping a record of the correct pronunciation (lines 324-5). Looking at Extract 6.32, 6.33 and 6.37, Bo performed a sequential cluster of strategies to learn this word's pronunciation in this activity (Figure 6.14).

Extract 6.37

311 Bo: ...re^lbel, a verb ((pronounces it))...
 313 CS1: how about its noun?
 314 Bo: also rebel, I think it pronounces ^lrebel /bel/
 315 CS2: are you sure? I think ^lrebel /^lrebel/
 316 Bo: 不可能吧(I don't think so)((checks the hard copy))...
 318 CS2: ((points to the dictionary))
 319 Bo: No this (/ə/) pronounces /e/
 320 CS2: 不是, 这个发/ə/ (No it's /ə/) noun /^lrebel/ verb /^lrebel/
 321 不相信你拿手机听听发音 (if you're unsure, you can use your
 322 iPhone to listen to their pronunciation)...
 324 Bo: ((checks and listens to his iPhone))... you're right...
 325 ((repeats the pronunciation and records))

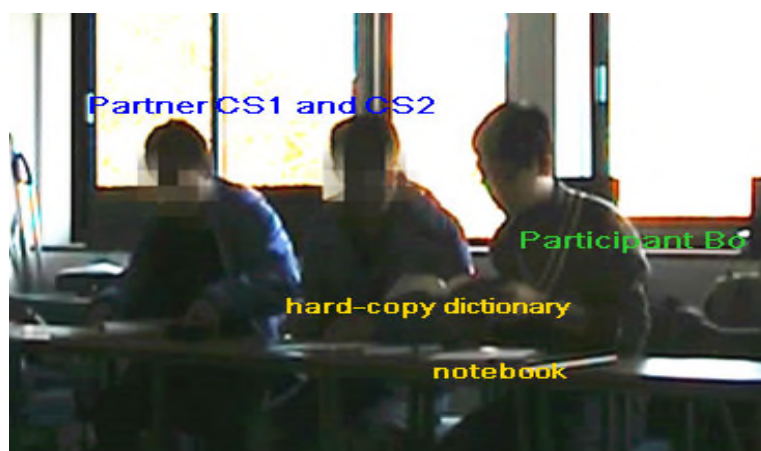


Photo 6.9 (Classroom observation, 22 Feb. 2012)

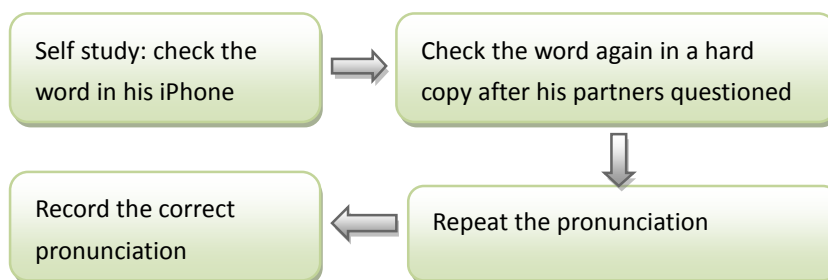


Figure 6.14 Bo's sequential cluster of strategies in one specific activity

The teacher later also taught the words in an interactive way. Apart from the word meaning and pronunciation, she also guided them to discover other aspects of word knowledge, such as word affixes and collocations, for example:

Extract 6.38

379 T: S1 ↑ teach us about your word?
 380 S1: verb permit and noun permit as well...
 382 T: what's the noun, say it again?
 383 S1: ((pronounces it again))
 ...
 387 T: what kinds of situation you would need to get a permit?
 388 Ke: to enter some places?
 389 T: yes, ((Ke checks the hard copy and notes down)) ...often
 390 collocations for permit are parking permit... ((Bo records))
 (Classroom observation, 22 Feb. 2012)

Looking at Extract 6.38, the teacher encouraged the students to share their word knowledge with others and participate in the interaction. Ke commented that he preferred this communicative way of teaching, because he became more willing to ask questions and suggest answers through interacting with their teacher and peers (Extract 6.39, lines 216-8). He also realised that this kind of interaction seemed to be

a useful way to reinforce his memory of the words (line 219).

Extract 6.39

215 IR: ...I noticed you engaged more with the teacher's questions?
216 Ke: yes, our teacher spent less time to teach, used more time
217 to question the words and let us explain them...in this more
218 relaxed atmosphere, I wanted to suggest ideas...I found I
219 can remember them more deeply after I talked about them...
(Ke, FI, 22 Feb. 2012)

By contrast, Bo was less likely to engage in the interaction, but he also made a strategic effort to keep a record of the word information which their teacher expanded and planned to review it after the class (Extract 6.40; also Extract 6.38, line 390 and Photo 6.10).

Extract 6.40

189 IR: what information did you record?
190 Bo: I knew these words from the previous activity so I just
191 recorded the information which the teacher suggested,
192 e.g. ...parking permit she said that it's a common
193 collocation so recorded it to review it after the class
(Bo, FI, 23 Feb. 2012)



Photo 6.10 (Classroom observation, 22 Feb. 2012)

Ke also employed a recording strategy (Extract 6.38, line 389), but wrote down different word information from Bo. For example, through looking up the word 'permit' in the dictionary (see Photo 6.11), he discovered more word collocations than their teacher's suggestion. Owing to lack of time, he only kept a record of the word during the lesson but decided to check the word in a dictionary again and record more collocations after the class (Extract 6.41).

Extract 6.41

254 IR: Did you record 'parking permit' ?
255 Ke: no, she asked how to use 'permit', I then checked the
256 hard copy, it showed more collocations...I just recorded
257 the word because I have more time to check it and record
258 its collocations after class...(Ke, FI, 23 Feb. 2012)



Photo 6.11 (Classroom observation, 22 Feb. 2012)

Their teacher also seemed to influence their view of VL through the English lessons.

Both Ke and Bo realised that learning a word did not merely mean learning its

meaning, but also other aspects of word knowledge:

Extract 6.42

01 Our teacher did not only teach meanings but many other things
03 ...now I know that if we want to truly learn a word we need
04 to master many things...(Bo, diary, VOCABlog, 03 Mar. 2012)

Extract 6.43

32 Ke: When checking a word...recently I look at more information,
33 e.g. collocations...As our teacher said how useful these
34 aspects are, I also find that they are important to learn...
(Ke, GI, 26 Feb. 2012)

Because of their developed view of VL, they made other strategic attempts to enrich their vocabulary knowledge outside the classroom. In particular, one of the aspects which they both tried to improve was their pronunciation, for example:

Extract 6.44

01 ...I used BBC to find some interesting programmes...e.g. I watched
02 Top Gear: open the subtitles (can see words and their
03 spelling) repeat what they said...In Youtube, I find some videos
04 that explain the difference between British-english and
05 American-english, their spelling and usage...the most useful
06 aspect of the videos is to improve my pronunciation...I also
07 enjoy watching them, funny...

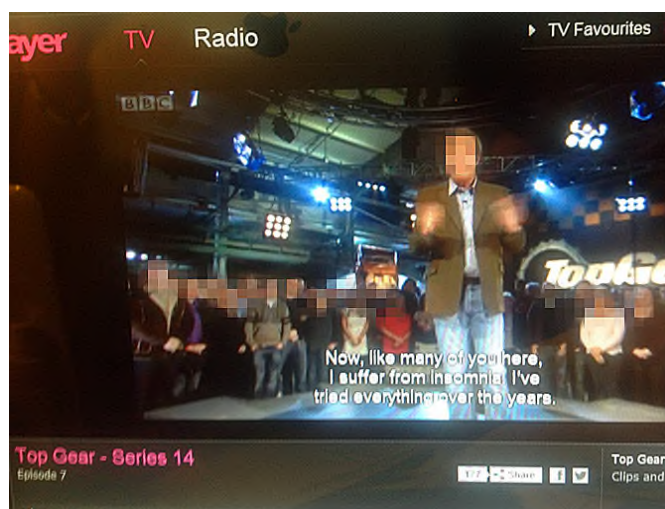


Photo 6.12 (Ke, diary and photo, VOCABlog, 19 Mar. 2012)

Ke explored some online programmes (e.g. ‘Top Gear’) which could increase his motivation in learning British pronunciation (Extract 6.44). In relation to a multimedia setting, he learned the British pronunciation from the presenters of the programme and deployed a repetition strategy to improve his pronunciation and spelling through the assistance of its subtitles (lines 02-03, also Photo 6.12). Therefore, his SVL appeared to be a contextualised phenomenon and exist in this particular setting. Some videos which he found in YouTube were also used as mediating artefacts to improve his pronunciation in a British way and also raised his linguistic awareness of the difference between British and American English (lines 04-06).

Bo found the news from the BBC Learning English website which provided learning resources, including the video recording of the news, transcripts and word explanations, to enrich his vocabulary knowledge (see Photo 6.13). Like Ke, Bo also

performed a repetition strategy to practise the British pronunciation of the words appeared in the text (Extract 6.45, line 29). Furthermore, he learned other aspects of word knowledge from the text and then recorded them in his E-notebook for further review (lines 30-1).

Extract 6.45

28 Bo: ...you can listen to their British pronunciation. I often
29 repeated the words which were highlighted...I learned their
30 phrases, grammatical rules from the site...I also record
31 them in my E-notebook so I can review them later...(Bo,
GI, 05 Mar. 2012)

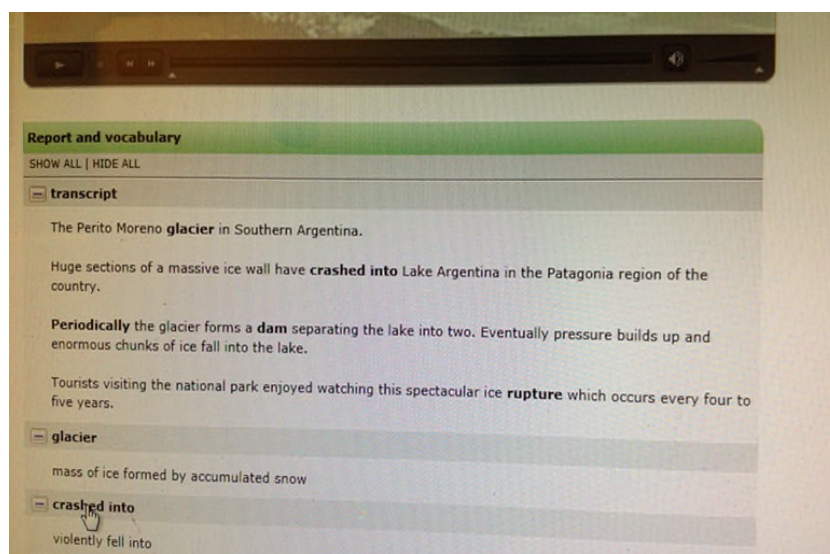


Photo 6.13 (VOCABlog, 07 Mar. 2012)

From March to April 2012, students were required to undertake a number of assessments for their modules as well as the IELTS test. Faced with this amount of the assessments, their VL became more goal-directed. In particular, in order to be accepted by British universities, both Ke and Bo viewed that performing the IELTS

test well appeared to be the most difficult and important goal to achieve during this period:

Extract 6.46

01 ...Preparation for IELTS is SO difficult...IELTS also plays a
02 pivotal role in applying university...For me, IELTS is not only
03 an exam but also an excellent way to improve my English level...
(Ke, diary, VOCABlog, 14 Mar. 2012)

Extract 6.47

01 IELTS is an important test for entering a good university. It's
02 a big challenge for me. Many students think that it just tests
03 our exam skills. But preparing the IELTS is also a good way to
04 improve my English ability...(Bo, diary, VOCABlog, 09 Mar. 2012)

They did not just want to gain good exam skills for passing the test, but also considered the process of preparing for the test as a useful way to improve their English language ability (Extract 6.46 and 6.47). In order to achieve these learning goals, Bo and Ke made various strategic efforts to enlarge their vocabulary size and improve their word knowledge. During this period, the assessments became an important aspect of their academic milieu to interact with their strategy choice and use.

During this period, Bo explored different strategies, and modified his plan and strategy use to make his VL more effective. In his early period of IELTS preparation, his previous experience provided some insights into his SVL (Extract 6.48, lines

171-2). In order to make his VL effective, Bo planned and arranged the learning process according to his metabolism and outside of class hours (lines 172-5).

Extract 6.48

171 Bo: I used two IELTS books which my teacher suggested...they
172 worked for me in China...I plan to memorise 20 words from
173 them every morning. It's the best time for me to remember
174 words...everyday we have many classes...in the night, I need
175 to do homework so morning is the only time to study..
178 IR: how do you implement this plan?
179 Bo: I looked at, wrote the words and other information
180 from the books repeatedly...but doing this is boring so
181 now I have a rest during the weekends rather than
182 follow this plan everyday. After the break, I'd like
183 to continue this plan.(Bo, GI, 15 Mar.2012)

Bo combined a silent with a written repetition to memorise the target words from the vocabulary books (lines 179-80). However, monitoring his learning process, he also found that this intensive learning started to reduce his willingness to memorise vocabulary. Faced with this problem, he modified his learning plan and made a balance between VL and leisure time. This seemed to be used as an affective strategy to maintain his motivation in learning (lines 180-3). Looking through this learning process, he combined a number of metacognitive strategies to regulate his VL, such as planning the learning, implementing the plan and reviewing it (also Oxford, 2011).

Compared with his previous experience in China, Bo did not have any personal teachers with whom he could practise using vocabulary after class. In order to overcome this limitation, he tried to discover other communicative opportunities to help him consolidate the words learned earlier. For example:

Extract 6.49

219 IR: Did you make any attempts to consolidate these words?
220 Bo: yes, recently our teacher offers a 'help class'...we talk
221 about the topics which we like...I always practise some
222 words with other peers. I also ask my teacher when I'm
223 unsure how to use them, I can remember them better when
224 using them...it is only held once a week, I want more...
(Bo, GI, 15 Mar. 2012)

The IFP programme provided an extra English class which increased students' speaking opportunities after their formal classes. Bo had more chances to practise vocabulary with others and sought further support from his teacher (Extract 6.49, lines 221-3). Evaluating this cluster of social strategies, he found it useful to reinforce his memory of the target words (line 223). However, these kinds of communicative opportunities were still not enough for him to consolidate the words (line 224). Faced with this learning milieu, he had to make other strategic efforts to enhance his VL:

Extract 6.50

01 I found that many words are often related each other so I
02 review them in a more associative way. e.g. 'Landmark',

03 I also think what sorts of words are related to it...this
04 way particularly helps me remember more words to use for
05 the part two of the IELTS test. (Bo, diary, VOCABlog,
09 Mar. 2012)

Apart from practising with others, Bo also deployed an associative strategy which could reinforce his memorisation and increase more productive vocabulary to be used in the IELTS speaking test (Extract 6.50). After performing these strategies for a period of time, Bo modified his VL plan again and discovered other ways to develop his vocabulary. He stated several reasons why he changed his VLSs:

Extract 6.51

097 Bo: I stopped the rote memorisation, because I found that I
098 still can't remember many of the words learned earlier
099 and felt very boring...
102 IR: do you still go to the 'help class'?
103 Bo: rarely, recently because of many exams, most students
104 went there to ask questions, but I wanted to practise
105 words with them... They had no time to do this...
108 IR: ...do you still use the associative strategy?
109 Bo: no, I spent much time thinking the associations but the
110 IELTS is coming so I need to remember many words in a
111 a short time...(Bo, GI, 16 Mar. 2012)

Bo monitored and evaluated his strategy use and found that the strategies (i.e. memorising vocabulary from the vocabulary book and the associative strategy) were not effective enough to help him learn vocabulary (Extract 6.51). As the IELTS test was coming, he realised that the associative strategy cannot help him memorise many words during a limited period of time because forming associations seemed to be a time-consuming task (lines 109-11). Although he re-arranged the schedule for

learning words from the vocabulary books, the repetition of using this strategy still demotivated him. As a result, he stopped using this memorisation strategy (lines 97-9). Furthermore, during this time, students were faced with heavy workloads and many different assignments. They tended to use the 'help class' to help them solve their questions in order to perform well in the coursework. As a result, Bo cannot find some partners to practise using vocabulary together (lines 103-5).

Due to these limitations, Bo exercised his agency to explore more appropriate and effective strategies to suit the current situation. In particular, there were two ways which he found useful and kept using until the IELTS test. In relation to his previous learning experience, he developed his vocabulary through listening to the BBC news again, but this time he discovered a different website which provided him with more features to facilitate his VL (also Photos 6.14-6.16):

Extract 6.52

01 ...I want to know what happened so everyday morning I listen to
02 BBC news...it's also a great way to learn various aspects about
03 a word for the IELTS...I found a better website than 'BBC learning
04 English'...it provided more information e.g. Chinese
05 translation...It also highlighted the useful words in the text...I
06 can listen to every sentence repeatedly. This helps me remember
07 the words deeply and improve my listening...(Bo, diary and photos,
VOCABlog, 20 Mar. 2012)

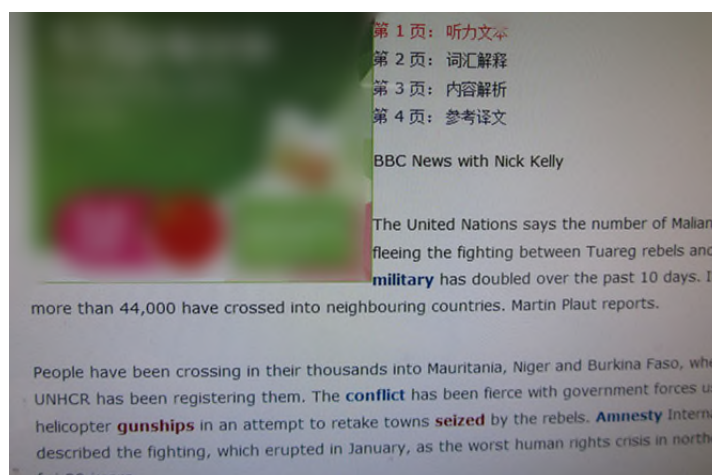


Photo 6.14

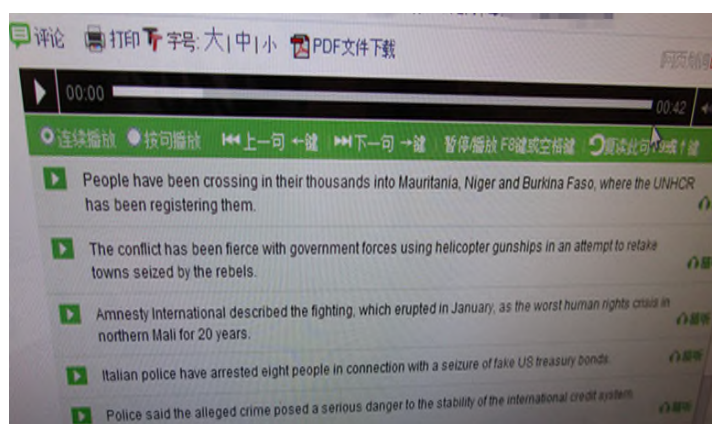


Photo 6.15

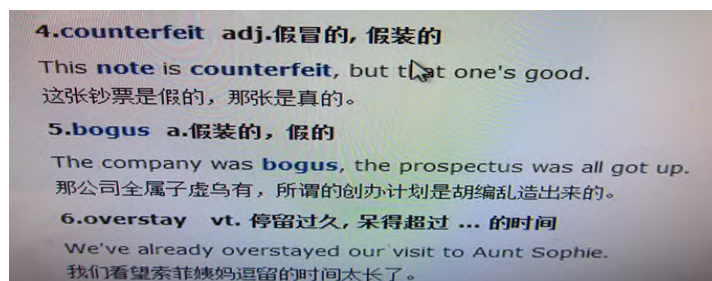


Photo 6.16

His diary indicated the process by which he looked for a more useful website through comparing with the BBC Learning English website which he used before (Extract 6.52). The new website seemed to be used as a mediating artefact to help him enlarge his vocabulary, remember the target words and enrich his word knowledge (lines 04-07). He performed a cluster of strategies to learn words. He first focused on the words which were highlighted in the news and learned them in

relation to the textual context (line 05). He also consolidated them through listening to them repeatedly (line 06). Owing to his interest in reading news, this seemed to be another reason to maintain his motivation in keeping using this cluster (lines 01-02).

Besides listening to the BBC news, he also discovered some useful online VL lessons where the teachers specifically taught IELTS vocabulary. When I asked how he learned vocabulary through these lessons, he responded:

Extract 6.53

15 Bo: ...I wanted to try some more relaxed ways so I found this
16 online lesson website...The teachers taught IELTS words
17 in very interesting ways. They linked the words to other
18 words...They formed associations for me, this saved my time
19 to learn more words...They also taught words through some
20 jokes...The ways they taught help me know and remember word
21 information and are effective for preparing the IELTS.
(Bo, GI, 11 Apr. 2012)



Photo 6.17

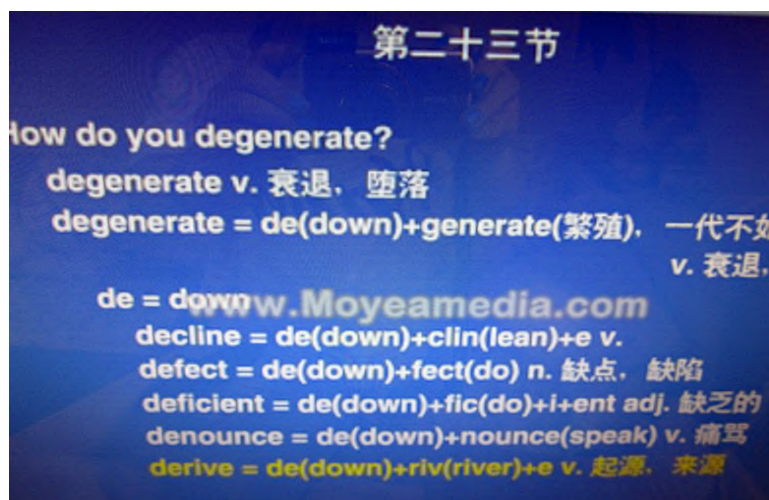


Photo 6.18 (Bo, Photos, VOCABlog, 12 Apr. 2012)

Bo found that the online lessons in which the teachers already formed word associations could save more time for his VL (Extract 6.53, lines 17-9). Photo 6.17 and 6.18 showed that the teachers decomposed the words into different lexical parts and taught them in relation to their roots. The teachers became important mediating agents to facilitate his VL and reinforce his memorisation (lines 19-21). Furthermore, like listening to the BBC news, Bo also felt that it was enjoyable to build his vocabulary through watching these online lessons because they tended to teach vocabulary in a more entertaining way (lines 17, 19-20).

Like Bo, Ke also regulated his VL for the IELTS test. During this short period of time, in order to perform well in the IELTS test, there appeared to be a noticeable change in his SVL which shifted to be more exam-directed, focused and intensive (Extract 6.54, also Figure 6.15 and 6.16). He stopped watching the BBC programmes and YouTube videos in which he was interested, and rearranged his VL according to

his weaknesses and the emphasis on the IELTS test:

Extract 6.54

01 I stopped using BBC and Youtube temporarily in order to focus
02 on IELTS. I only have one month left so need hard work for
03 vocabulary...my reading and listening are ok but speaking and
04 writing are weak...so I decide to build and improve the words
05 specifically related to the IELTS writing and speaking..
(Ke, diary, VOCABlog, 17 Mar. 2012)

In order to improve his vocabulary in this short period, He carefully selected two books through reading other people's reviews in the internet (Extract 6.55, lines 56-60) and used them as mediating artefacts which provided a large number of useful words for the IELTS writing and speaking tests and guided him how to learn them (lines 62-8, also Extract 6.56, lines 73-4 and Photo 6.20 below).

Extract 6.55

55 IR: Why did you choose these two books?
56 Ke: These two books are 'ten-day step-by-step guide to the
57 IELTS speaking and writing tests', from the titles, it's
58 very suitable to my current situation, I don't have much
59 time to prepare the IELTS test. I also read many book
60 reviews about them, they said that they're good books.
61 IR: how did you use them to help you improve your vocabulary?
62 Ke: The writer selected the common words which
63 appeared in the past IELTS speaking test, grouped them
64 into different topics, e.g. crime, because in the part
65 two of the test, you need to choose a special topic to
66 speak. After reading their grouping repeatedly everyday,
67 I also selected some of them which I think I might use
68 and recorded in my notebook and then practised using them
69 by myself like what I'll do in the IELTS speaking test..
(Ke, GI, 15 Apr. 2012)

话题	排序	词汇	词性	含义
Government	41	alleviate = ease	vt.	减轻、缓解
	42	invest in = allocate money to		对……投资
	43	the authorities		当局
	44	ban = forbid = prohibit	vt.	禁止
	45	scrutinise/monitor	vt.	监督
	46	administer = regulate	vt.	管理
	47	tax revenue		税收
	48	democratic	adj.	民主的
	49	demand	vt. & n.	需求
	50	efficient	adj.	高效率的
Tourism	51	broaden one's horizons/ expand one's outlook		开阔人的眼界
	52	conflicts	n.	冲突
	53	explore	vt.	探索
	54	promote	vt.	促进 (反义词是 restrict)
	55	tourist attraction		旅游点
	56	local residents = local inhabitants		当地居民
	57	mutual understanding		相互了解
	58	enrich one's experience		丰富人的经历

Photo 6.19

Vocabulary	
Crime =	
犯罪	break (or violate / flout / disobey) the
犯罪	commit a crime
罪行	offences, crimes, criminal acts
罪犯	criminal, offender, culprit, perpet
从犯	accomplice, accessory ①
憎恨社会	resent society
	hold a grudge against society.
囚犯	inmate, convicts ①
受害者	victim ①
心理创伤	trauma ①
牢房	cell ①
监禁	imprison (or incarcerate) someone
被绳之以法	be brought to justice
宽宏的	lenient (adj)

Photo 6.20 (Ke, photos, VOCABlog, 17 Apr. 2012)

The writer helped readers categorise the target words into different groups according to some topics which might appear in the IELTS speaking test (Extract 6.55, lines 62-5, also Photo 6.19). Based on its daily plan, Ke read the words and their explanation which the book provided and used a repetition strategy to help him

remember them. To consolidate these words, he also recorded and organised them again in relation to the topics which the writer suggested in the book (lines 67-8, also Photo 6.20). Drawing on the component of the speaking test, he made further efforts to practise them verbally and used them to describe certain topics (lines 68-9, also Figure 6.15). Looking at the process, he exercised his agency to manage his SVL in relation to the writer's suggestion.

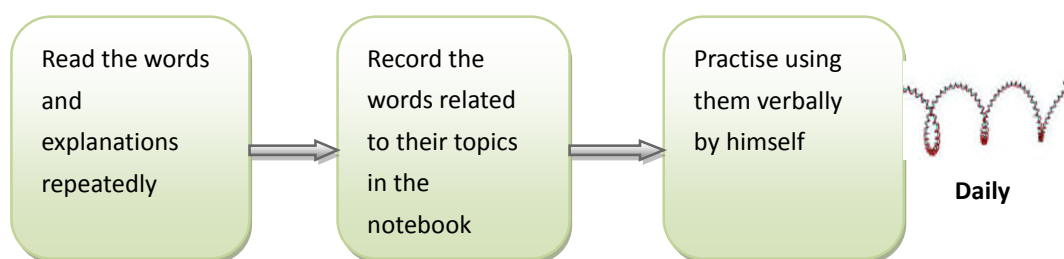


Figure 6.15 Ke's recycled sequential cluster of strategies for the speaking test

He also selected some words from a vocabulary book for the IELTS writing test and learned them (Extract 6.56). The writer was also an important mediating agent who taught him how to use the target word appropriately in the IELTS writing (lines 76-7). In order to enhance his VL, he kept a record of their example sentences which were copied from the book and reviewed them (lines 78-9, also Photo 6.22).

Extract 6.56

- 72 IR: how did you use the book?
- 73 Ke: I also followed the writer's daily plan to learn some
- 74 words which he recommended. They're useful words for the
- 75 IELTS writing...I selected 10 words from the book everyday...
- 76 Besides their meaning, the best thing is that the writer

77 tells you when to use, how to use them...I always recorded
 78 example sentences so I know their usage when reviewing
 79 the notebook...(Ke, GI, 17 Apr.2012)

单词	词性	含义	例句
chronic	adj.	指某种坏事“持续存在的”，这个抽象形容词在雅思作文中用于描述长期存在的坏现象很常用	In these countries has been a chronic age of teachers.
mechanism	n.	这个词在写政府类话题时常用，指某种“机制”	The government has set up mechanisms that the tax (收) can be used.
incidence	n.	这个抽象名词的意思与 rate 接近，但它一般是指某种坏事的发生率	There is an incidence of bullying (学) in schools, which made both teachers and parents very concerned.
virtual	adj.	虚拟的，这个词在写与互联网有关的话题时很常用	Parents must ensure their children learn other kinds of skills and not simply at home, learning in a virtual world.

Photo 6.21

a give priority to sth 把...放在优先考虑
 The government should give priority to the optimisation of its financial resources.
 = Of crucial importance to someone is sth. 例：
 dedicate money / time / energy to... 把(时间/金钱/精力)
 The government should dedicate itself to protecting of the old, the sick and the homeless.
 commit ... to ...
 be vulnerable to ... 易受...的受害者
 Without proper parental guidance, children were vulnerable to the violent or pornographic content those TV shows.
 be likely to fall prey to ...
 be immune to ... 免于...的受害者

Photo 6.22 (Ke, photos, VOCABlog, 17 Apr. 2012)

Furthermore, Ke practised using the target words again in the writing in order to consolidate them (Extract 6.57, also Photo 6.23). As he intended to improve his writing skills, everyday he selected one essay question which was used in the past

IELTS writing test from the book and practised using these words (lines 01-04).

Sometimes he also sought further support from his English teacher and asked her to

check his vocabulary use (lines 04-06). He formed a recycled sequential cluster of

strategies to help him improve the vocabulary for the writing test (see Figure 6.16).

Extract 6.57

01 ...Everyday, after reviewing my notebook, I then practised them
02 in writing...The book 'XX' is great. It gives you some essay
03 questions which were used in the past papers so I could use
04 them to improve my writing skills and words. If I'm not sure
05 any words, I tried to ask my teacher to check my writing...she
06 often corrected my errors...(Ke, diary, VOCABlog, 24 Apr. 2012)

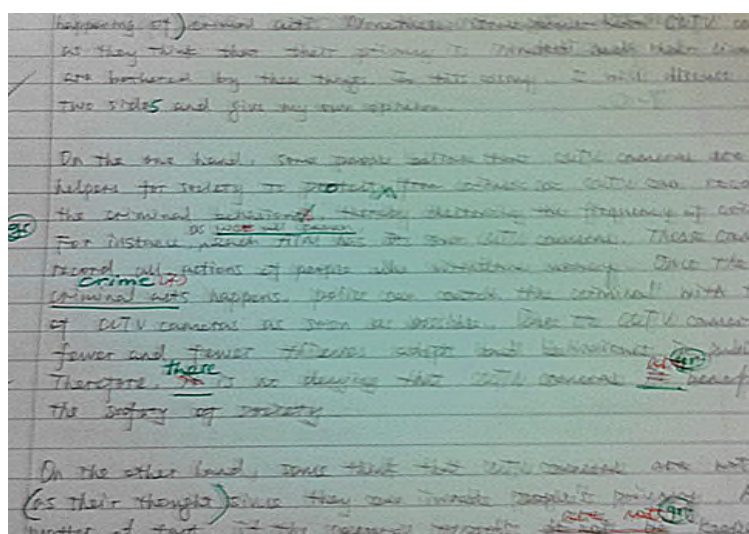


Photo 6.23 (Ke, Photo, VOCABlog, 24 Apr. 2012)

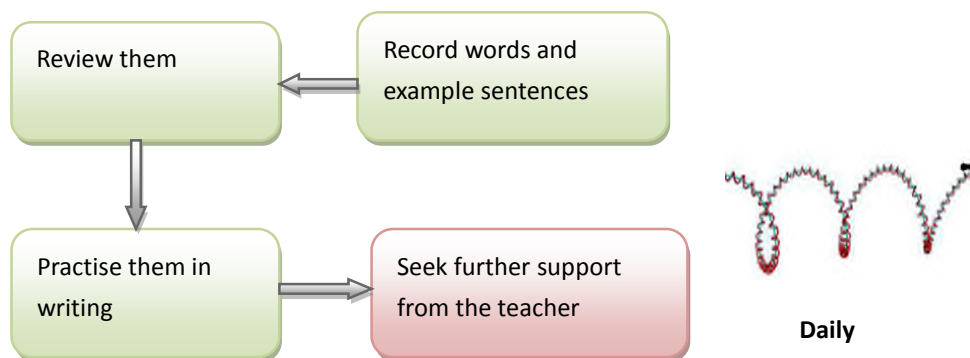


Figure 6.16 Ke's recycled sequential cluster of strategies for the writing test

As mentioned above, both learners viewed the IELTS test as a more important and difficult task during this period and thus they made great efforts to build the vocabulary specifically for the test. As they had a two-week Easter holiday, Bo and Ke also could spend some time consolidating their subject-related vocabulary which was learned from other modules (Extract 6.58). Their subject-related VL tended to be more content-based and they mainly built and consolidated these kinds of words through reviewing their lesson handouts and writing their assignments (Extract 6.58, 6.59 and 6.60).

Extract 6.58

01 Thanks to the Easter holiday, I have more time to prepare
 02 for assignments for other modules apart from the IELTS.
 03 Following last week's plan, everyday night, I looked at the
 04 words which I wrote in my handouts...this is the most basic
 05 method to learn the key words more deeply...
 (Bo, diary, VOCABlog, 19 Apr. 2012)

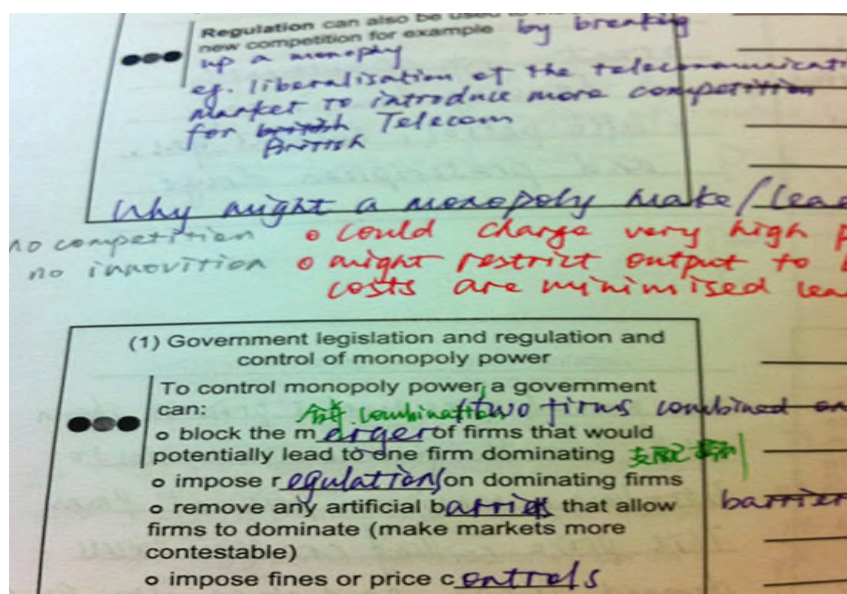


Photo 6.24 (Bo, photo, VOCABlog, 19 Apr. 2012)

Faced with the heavy workloads, Bo regulated his learning, and exercised his agency as a learner. He arranged different time to learn the vocabulary for the IELTS test and other modules; and improved and implemented his learning plan (Extract 6.48, 6.51, 6.52 and 6.58). He deployed this cluster of metacognitive strategies to enhance his VL. In both Extract 6.58 and 6.59, he found that reviewing the lesson handouts appeared to be an effective way to revise the subject-related vocabulary as well as the module content. During this process, he reviewed the target words in relation to their textual context, including their examples, definitions and other explanations in the handout (Extract 6.59, lines 02-04). In particular, he checked the uncertain words again and recorded their Chinese translation for his further review (lines 04-06, also Photo 6.24 above). He performed a recycled strategic circle to consolidate the subject-related vocabulary during the Easter holiday (Figure 6.17 below).

Extract 6.59

IR: how do you review the words from your handouts?

01 Bo: after Easter holiday, I have many exams...the best way
02 is to review the key words which I wrote in a different
03 colour, understand and remember them related to their
04 definitions, examples and my notes. If I feel not sure,
05 I will check their Chinese meaning and write it down
06 in the handout...I try to review them twice a week...(Bo,
forum, VOCABlog, 20 Apr. 2012)

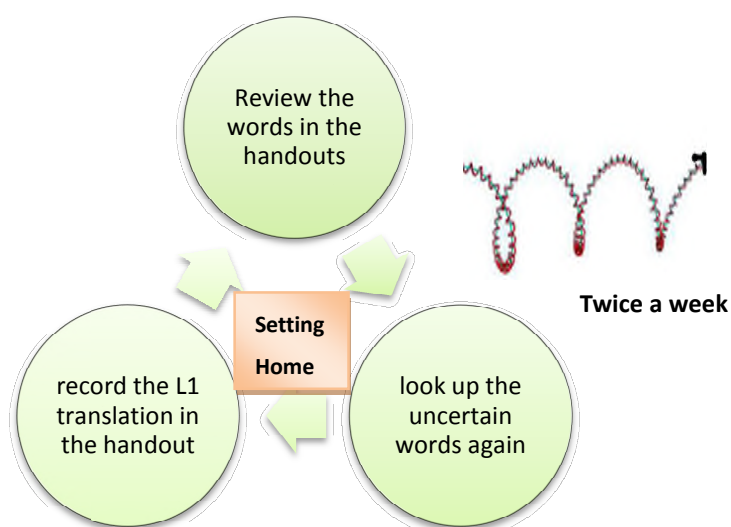


Figure 6.17 Bo's recycled strategic circle for the subject-related vocabulary

Apart from reviewing their lesson handouts, Ke also reported another way which he often used to build more subject-related vocabulary. During this time, students were required to complete several written assignments, and Ke learned many subject-related words through preparing for these assignments:

Extract 6.60

117 Ke: ...before you write, you need to read some materials. Then
118 I encountered some subject-related words which I would
119 use in my writing. I first checked their Chinese meaning
120 in the YD dictionary.
121 IR: only their Chinese translation?

122 Ke: yes, these kinds of words are often abstract, Chinese
123 meaning is easier to understand
124 IR: Do you record them?
125 Ke: yes, the online dictionary can help me save these words
126 automatically, remind me to memorise them everyday.
(Ke, GI, 15 Apr. 2012)

Through reading the relevant literature, Ke selected some useful subject-related words to learn and used a dictionary look-up strategy to discover their meaning (Extract 6.60, lines 117-20). As they were often abstract concepts, he found that the L1 explanation appeared to be helpful for his understanding (lines 122-3). In order to remember them, he also used the YD dictionary as a mediating artefact to help him keep a record of these words (lines 125-6), remind him to memorise them (Extract 6.61, lines 06-07) and regulate his learning process (lines 01-05, also Photos 6.25 and 6.26). He formed a recycled sequential cluster of strategies to build and memorise the subject-related vocabulary through the help of the YD dictionary (see Figure 6.18).



Photo 25



Photo 6.26 (Ke, photos, VOCABlog, 14 Apr. 2012)

Extract 6.61

IR: how did you use the dictionary to remember subject-related words?
 01 Once I open my laptop, it then shows how many words I need
 02 to remember e.g. the photo showed 13 words which need to be
 03 remembered...When I click it, the words appear one by one. If
 04 I remember, I press the green button, continue the next one.
 05 If I forget, I press the red button, it then shows its meaning
 06 in the blue box...when I felt lazy, this dic pushed me to keep
 07 reviewing them everyday. (Ke, forum, VOCABlog, 14 Apr. 2012)

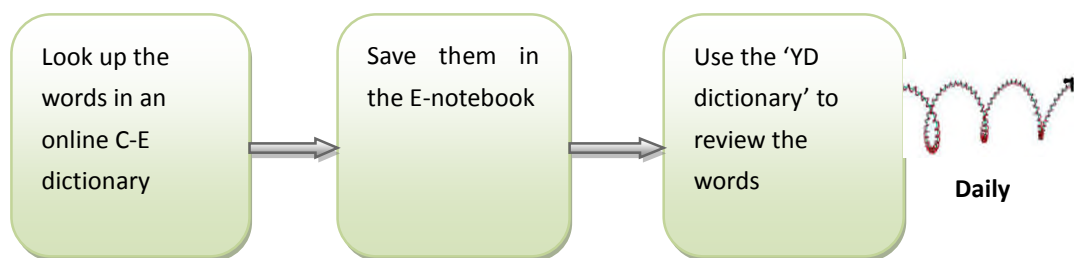


Figure 6.18 Ke's recycled sequential strategy cluster for subject-related vocabulary

6.3.4 The summer term

After finishing the IELTS test and other assignments, Bo and Ke had more free time after class. In the summer term, they were mainly assessed by their final writing project which required them to discuss a topic in relation to their intended academic field. The course provided them with more time for self study and there were fewer

classes and less coursework by comparison with the first and the second terms. In relation to this different module design and assessment type, they modified their strategy use again and made different attempts to learn vocabulary during this period.

In order to achieve a better result in the written project, not only did Bo read many articles to prepare for his argument, but also built more academic vocabulary to improve his writing:

Extract 6.62

01 I had to check academic words very frequently during my writing
02 because of lack of them...from the web, I found some tips for
03 academic writing and also some academic wordlists. I learned
04 many new words frequently used in academic writing by checking
05 their definitions, example sentences and pronunciation...(Bo,
diary, VOCABlog, 10 May. 2012)

IR: Do you still use the C-E dictionary?

06 Bo: No, now I have more free time to explore more information
07 in an E-E dictionary...Oxford thesaurus is also brilliant
08 when I look for synonyms...Collocation dictionary is also
09 useful when I need to use the word in my writing... (Bo,
forum, VOCABlog, 11 May. 2012)

Bo raised his strategic awareness through monitoring his writing process and realised that he lacked academic vocabulary (Extract 6.62, lines 01-02). He discovered some academic wordlists through browsing the website and used them as assistive artefacts to build academic vocabulary (line 03). He also combined both Oxford

thesaurus and collocations dictionaries to support his learning process (lines 07-09).

As the course provided more time for self study after class, Bo could also spend more time enriching different aspects of word knowledge through using the dictionaries, such as their synonyms and collocations, which could help him express his opinions more clearly and accurately in the writing (lines 05-09).

By contrast, Ke created more opportunities to learn vocabulary for pleasure than Bo outside the classroom. As mentioned above, due to the change in their workloads and assessment type, his SVL was no longer exam-oriented and he had more free time to learn some words in which he was interested (Extract 6.63 and 6.64).

Extract 6. 63

01 The last assignment has finished and IELTS ended eventually.
02 I will never touch IELTS again...I don't need to learn words
03 just for exams. I enjoy learning them for fun or whatever,
04 apart from for exams...(Ke, diary, VOCABlog, 13 May. 2012)

In order to improve his vocabulary, Ke chose to watch the BBC programmes and YouTube videos again in which he was interested and used the strategy clusters which were formed before preparing for the IELTS test (Extract 6.64, lines 13-4, also Extract 6.44 and 6.54).

Extract 6.64

13 Ke: I continued watching BBC and YouTube videos. I enjoy
14 learning words from some interesting programmes.
16 IR: any other ways to build your vocabulary?

17 Ke: Now I have my own free time, so I can go to Gym...I made
18 a Malaysian friend who is a fluent English speaker...today
19 he offered me a pear and described it as 'xx and crunchy'...
20 Other 'y' adjectives he frequently used when describing
21 food are such as milky, chewy. I guessed they are derived
22 from milky-milk, crunchy-crunch. I still asked him to
23 repeat and spell the word and looked it up in my iPhone
24 to check my guess...later I used it again with him because
25 this way can help me remember it and how to use it. (Ke,
GI, 20 May. 2012)

As mentioned above, from the first to the second term, Ke was less likely to learn vocabulary through socialising with other people outside the classroom due to the heavy workloads and lack of free time. However, this situation changed and he had more free time to enjoy his personal life (Extract 6.64, line 17). He sought further opportunities to expand his vocabulary through interacting with his foreign friends. For example, he made a foreign friend who was a fluent English speaker. When encountering the unknown words which his friend used in the Gym, he analysed their word roots to guess their parts of speech and meaning (lines 19-22). In order to confirm his guess, he asked this friend to repeat and spell the word again and used a dictionary look-up strategy to check its meaning (lines 22-4). Furthermore, he tried to practise using it in their conversation to enhance his memory (lines 24-5). During this learning process, He performed a dialogic sequential cluster in this particular setting to help him discover and remember the target word (see Figure 6.19), and his friend became a mediating agent to support his VL.

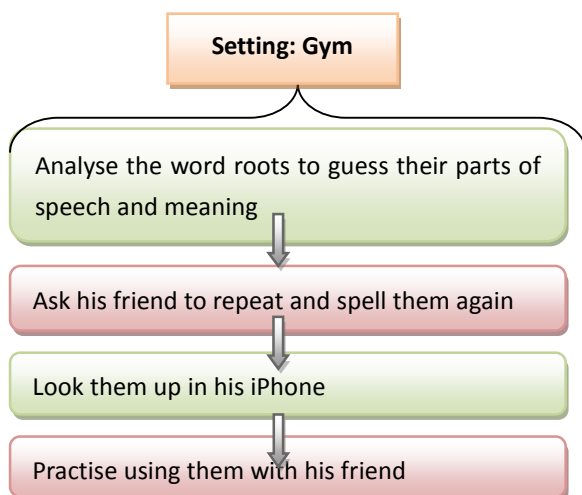


Figure 6.19 Ke's dialogic sequential cluster used in the Gym

6.4 Changes in strategy use

From the preceding analysis, the two participants seem to operate their SVL dynamically, and a number of noticeable changes in their strategy use in shifting contexts, i.e. from China to Britain, and throughout the academic year: in the UK are summarised below.

As mentioned above, Bo and Ke tended to use recording strategies during their teachers' presentation in China³⁰. In the Wolfson site, their language teacher appeared to teach vocabulary in a more communicative way³¹. Although sometimes Bo and Ke did not participate in the verbal interaction³², the teacher's indirect feedback helped them think what information they needed to check in their dictionaries and record³³. Apart from recording recordings, they seemed to employ dictionary look-up strategies more frequently in order to enrich their word

³⁰ See examples: Extract 6.1 and 6.6

³¹ See examples: Extract 6.9b, 6.12, 6.25 and 6.28

³² See an example: Extract 6.12

³³ See examples: Extract 6.13 and 6.14

knowledge. Moreover, compared with their Chinese teachers, the language teacher in the Wolfson site was more likely to walk around the class. The way of monitoring their learning processes seemed to facilitate their use of social strategies and increase their opportunities to seek further support from her³⁴.

Bo had a private language teacher in China, so he could practise vocabulary verbally with her and ask questions about his uncertainties everyday³⁵. He monitored his VL in the Wolfson site³⁶. The large number of Chinese students in the classroom and the accommodation appeared to be an important aspect of the milieu which restricted his English-speaking opportunities. Furthermore, because of the intensive tuition, he lacked free time to build more vocabulary through exploring the British culture. Faced with the different learning milieu, instead of social strategies, Bo tried to learn vocabulary through self study in his accommodation and formed a recycled cluster of strategies to consolidate the words learned earlier³⁷. Although Ke also acknowledged the negative aspects of the learning milieu in the Wolfson site³⁸, he tried to overcome them. In particular, he made strategic efforts to build vocabulary in various out-of-class settings and selected the appropriate strategies for the specific contexts³⁹.

³⁴ See examples: Extract 6.1, 6.28, 6.29 and Photo 6.6

³⁵ See examples: Extract 6.4 and 6.5

³⁶ See examples: Extract 6.9b, 6.17 and 6.18

³⁷ See Extract 6.15 and 6.19; Figure 6.7

³⁸ See Extract 6.22a and 6.23

³⁹ See examples: Extract 6.22 a and 6.22 b; Figure 6.9

Compared with the first term, there appeared to be a shift in the focus on the English module from general language skills to academic English skills during the second term. In particular, their teacher offered several lessons to develop students' presentation skills and also taught different aspects of vocabulary knowledge in order to help students make their presentations more understandable. In relation to this teaching content, apart from words' meaning, Bo and Ke were more likely to check the pronunciation of vocabulary during the lesson⁴⁰. Outside the classroom, they also drew more attention to this aspect and made different strategic efforts to improve their pronunciation⁴¹.

From March to April 2012, students were required to undertake the IELTS test. Compared with their preparation in China, the IFP programme rarely offered the lessons specifically for the IELTS test. The two participants became more autonomous and regulated their SVL in relation to their own needs and previous experiences. Bo kept reviewing his plans of VL and deployed different clusters of VLSs at his different stages⁴². By contrast, Ke stopped learning vocabulary for pleasure, and rearranged his SVL according to his weaknesses in the IELTS test⁴³.

After finishing the IELTS test, Bo's and Ke's SVL was no longer exam-directed and

⁴⁰ See examples: Extract 6.33, 6.34, 6.35 and 6.37

⁴¹ Ke's strategic efforts to develop his pronunciation, for example Extract 6.44 and Photo 6.12; Bo's strategic efforts to develop his pronunciation, for example Extract 6.45 and Photo 6.13

⁴² See examples: Extract 6.48-6.53

⁴³ See examples: Extract 6.55 and 6.56; Photo 6.20; Figure 6.15 and 6.16

had more free time to learn vocabulary for their own needs and interests. For example, Bo discovered some academic wordlists. When dealing with unknown academic words, he consulted different kinds of dictionaries for meanings and usage of the words (e.g. collocations)⁴⁴. By contrast, Ke sought more opportunities to expand his general vocabulary through socialising with his foreign friends⁴⁵.

Chapter 7 Discussion

Introduction

The previous three chapters have demonstrated the tactics and techniques that six Chinese learners employ in British universities to learn vocabulary strategically. From this, it is evident that their SVL tended to be temporally and contextually situated, with their strategy choice and use resulting from the complex interplay between their mental processes and their contexts of teaching and learning. During the learning process, the participants were less likely to use a single VLS. Rather, owing to different reasons, they tended to select and combine sets of strategies to make their learning more effective. Furthermore, their SVL was not static, and varied across different settings. They operated this more as a dynamic system which developed during their transition from the Chinese to British context, and throughout the

⁴⁴ See Extract 6.62

⁴⁵ See an example: Extract 6.64 and Figure 6.19

academic year they spent in the UK. The aims of this chapter are to synthesise the findings across the six different cases, relate the findings from the previous three chapters back to the literature, and generate some new theories to contribute to the knowledge in this field. It is divided into three main sections in order to synthesise and discuss each set of findings in relation to my research questions, set out under each main heading: management of VL in relation to context; strategy selection and combination for effective VL and SVL as a dynamic system.

7.1 Management of vocabulary learning in relation to context

1st RQ: In order to learn vocabulary strategically, how do Chinese learners manage the relationship between their mental processes, agency and other aspects of their UK context (both milieu and setting)?

With regard to the first research question, which addresses the relationship between learners' mental process and other aspects of their context within the process of SVL, my evidence suggests that the six students exercised their agency as learners and managed their SVL in relation to each of their distinct context of teaching and learning. As we saw in the literature review, theories of LLSs (including VLSs) tend to focus on strategies as the cognitive skills and personality traits of individual learners (e.g. Nation, 1990; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Diane and Long, 1991; Zhang and Li, 2011). As a result, studies on VLSs tend to treat them as relatively de-contextualised phenomena. A large number of researchers have investigated the effects of internal factors on strategy use (e.g. Catalan, 2003; Fan, 2003; Nassaji, 2006; Lin 2011; Saeedeh et al. 2012). Some have also made great efforts to construct different kinds of

VLS taxonomies which place an emphasis on the quantity of strategy use (Ahmed, 1989; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Schmitt 1997; Fan, 2003) or examine the effectiveness of different kinds of VLSs which focus on the learning outcome rather than the process of SVL (Brown and Perry, 1991; Folse, 2006).

However, evidence from my study supports the notion that SVL is not located solely within the individual and cannot be isolated from the context of the learner. Although my findings suggest what strategies the learners used (e.g. the tactics and techniques) in a way similar to previous research, they also show the detailed processes whereby learners interact with their specific contexts and make different strategy choices across various settings. From a sociocultural perspective, other researchers (e.g. Donato and McCormick, 1994; Gao, 2006; Huang and Andrews, 2010; Jang and Jiménez, 2011) also suggest that LLSs are contextually situated phenomena, and shed a new light on the understanding of LLSs. Here, a strong emphasis appears to be placed on the influence of context on strategy use but they tend to neglect individual variation, and especially the dialectic between the individual and the social, between learners' own strategic efforts and sociocultural settings.

The findings in my study demonstrate that SVL is not totally determined by the context, but rather takes place through the interaction between learners' own efforts (agency) and their contexts (see also Toohey and Norton, 2003; Gao and Zhang, 2011).

The students who participated in my project appear to play an active role in operating

the process of SVL. On the one hand, individual differences occur among them. For example, in the Ryder site, Wu and Xia established their own criteria to select what words they needed to record when their teacher emphasised the target words in one English lesson. Xia chose productive words to learn, so she could use them in her writing⁴⁶; whereas Wu's strategy choice was influenced by his prior knowledge and he only selected the new words to record⁴⁷. On the other hand, all six students also appear to experience the development from interpsychological to intrapsychological interaction with their contexts towards strategic self-regulation. Therefore, in the light of my research findings, I suggest an interpretation of SVL from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective. The following sub-sections provide a more detailed discussion about their management of SVL in two kinds of settings, classroom settings and out-of-class settings (e.g. accommodation and gym). Furthermore, the learners' milieus (at an intermediate-contextual level), situated learning experiences in particular settings (at a micro-contextual level) and the broader British culture (at a macro-contextual level) appear to be interrelated and cannot be isolated. Therefore, the processes of their SVL are discussed through their interaction within the nexus of these three contextual levels (see Figure 7.1).

⁴⁶ See Extract 4.26 in Chapter four

⁴⁷ See Extract 4.19 and 4.27 in Chapter four

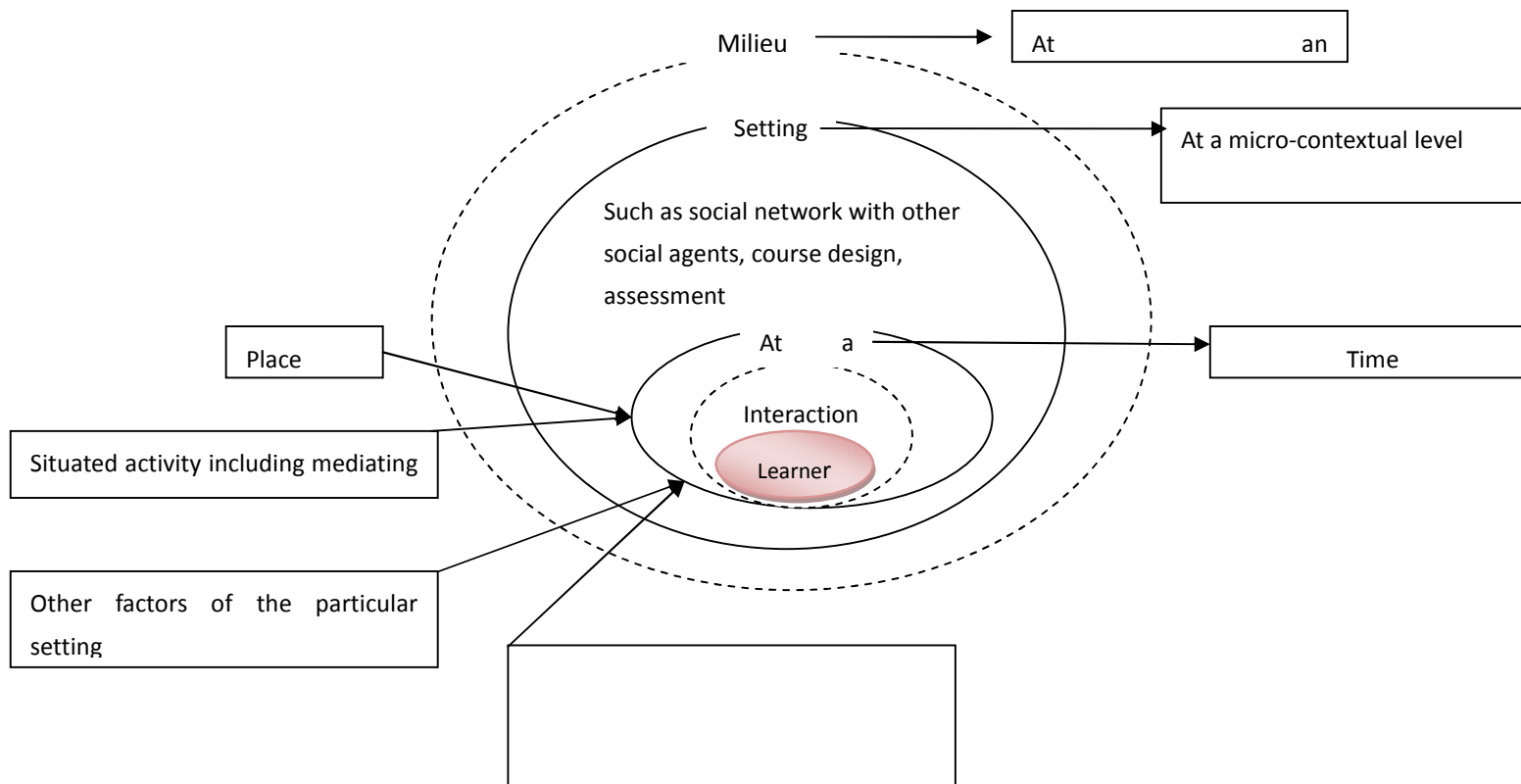


Figure 7.1 Interaction between learner's strategy use and context

7.1.1 In relation to milieus in the classroom settings

To address the first research question, here I discuss the relationship between learners' strategy choice and use in relation to their learning milieus, particularly in the classroom settings. All six students studied on the IFP courses from three British universities (each university includes two student cases). In relation to Figure 7.1 above, these are distinct milieus of teaching and learning in which they develop their vocabulary at these three university sites. In particular, specific aspects of each milieu - such as the course design, module content, teaching arrangement and assessment - are in a dynamic relationship with their specific classroom settings at a micro-contextual level. These aspects seem to have either direct or indirect interplay with the learners' strategy choice through the classroom settings, although there are individual differences in their strategy use. This accords with Gao's (2010) work which also suggests a dynamic picture of learners' strategy use as a mediated choice from a sociocultural perspective, and it reveals an interactive process between learner agency and contextual conditions. His study was conducted to capture mainland Chinese university students' LLS use at only one Hong Kong university. By contrast, my study focuses on a different group of Chinese students (i.e. pre-university students) in the UK and explores their strategic vocabulary learning at three British universities. The accounts of three specific, discrete contexts offer a breadth of strategic vocabulary learning experiences and provide a richer and more contextualised picture of learners' strategy use than Gao's studies (2003; 2010). In particular, my study provides more detailed description of learners' strategy use in relation to their specific milieus of teaching and learning (e.g. teaching approach, course and module design) at different university contexts (see the evidence in the next paragraph).

Gao's findings stress the interaction between individuals' strategy use and 'macro contextual elements' (such as popular societal discourses, economic conditions or policies). These contextual elements may directly impact on learners' strategy use or be reflected through the arrangement of material conditions (such as material artefacts) and affect learners' practices and behaviours at a local level. The social and material resources (or individual access to them) at local levels also reflect social relations in the broader social context (macro-contextual level). Thus, the contribution to VLS research made by the findings from my research is that they provide a deeper understanding of interactive processes between learners' strategic efforts and their milieus and particular settings at intermediate and micro levels. By comparison with the Gao's work, It shifts the focus from the mediation of context in strategy development at a macro level to a more micro level. For example, unlike the Ryder and Wolfson sites, the Opal IFP prioritised English language learning during the first semester, in particular, one of the modules focused on vocabulary. Within this course design, the content of vocabulary lessons focused on different aspects of word knowledge and the teacher, Eva, tended to arrange vocabulary-related activities and provide strategic advice in relation to VL. Here, both Ji and Qa were more likely to use VLSs in relation to this milieu of teaching. Moreover, their strategic efforts varied across different classroom settings. For example, in one particular activity, Eva did not help students arrange their learning groups. Students tended to work individually, although she verbally encouraged them to learn words in a collaborative way. Qa commented that he would choose social strategies if Eva organised the learning groups for them⁴⁸ like he did in the previous lesson. In this particular

⁴⁸ See Extract 5.9 in Chapter 5

setting, the working style of his peer also influenced his strategic choice. The conventional dictionaries which Eva provided were available for them as a useful material resource. This material condition seems to facilitate the use of another strategy, so he is able to use dictionary look-up strategies to help him know the words. The level of task difficulty is considered as another factor to affect his strategy use. As the task was not difficult, he could solve the problems through using a dictionary without seeking help from others, and the dictionary became an important mediating artefact to support his VL. The way the teacher organised her activities, the mediating agents involved (i.e. teacher and peers), the material resources that were available (i.e. dictionary) and difficulty of the task are all taken into consideration by Qa. He appears to play an active role in the process of strategy selection and be a self-regulated agent to manage his VL process and make own strategic response to his teacher's strategic advice in relation to the aspects of this particular setting.

Like Qa, Ji also chose to use dictionary look-up strategies to discover unknown words rather than seek support from her partner in the same activity. Yet, her reason for choosing this strategy is different from Qa's, and her strategy choice seems to be mediated by involvement in her specific social context. The evidence indicates that she was willing to deploy social strategies, but her partner only responded a little to her in the previous activity and worked with other students in this activity. Therefore, she had to work alone and use a dictionary to help her find out the meaning and pronunciation of some useful words. Thus the interpersonal behaviour of her peer appears to be an important aspect of this specific context to restrict the use of social strategies. The desire to interact with their interlocutors seems not be merely

dependent on the will of the individual learners, but also the willingness of their interlocutors (Parks and Raymond, 2004).

In the second semester, four previous English language modules were reduced into one module. By comparison with the first semester, the module content placed much less emphasis on vocabulary and grammar but focused more on the development of their academic English skills (e.g. academic writing and presentation skills). This change in their milieu of teaching (at an intermediate-contextual level) influenced their particular classroom settings at a micro-contextual level (e.g. the focus of the teaching and the aims of activities). The learners also made different strategy choices in relation to different classroom settings. In a particular lesson, the activities aimed at developing students' discussion skills and encouraged them to work collaboratively and generate their own topic. Compared with the previous lesson mentioned above, both Qa and Ji seem to make fewer strategic efforts towards VL in these activities. For example, in the Qa's group, his group members were all Chinese and used L1 to exchange their ideas. In relation to the requirements of the activities, he did not consider their group discussion as a VL activity, and thus he decided to speak Chinese to ensure the clarity of their understanding rather than use any VLSs to build his vocabulary⁴⁹. Here, his strategic awareness is influenced by specific objectives of the activity. The action (i.e. using L1 to communicate) is still strategic and appears to be a communication strategy to help them operate the tasks. However, the goal no longer seems to be towards VL and also seemed to avoid engagement in the process of VL (see also Donato and McCormick, 1994) .

⁴⁹ See Extract 5.34 in Chapter 5

By comparison with the Opal site, the course design of the Wolfson site did not prioritise the English language learning during the first semester, rather it focused on both English and subject-related modules during the academic year. Students studied the same modules from the first to the second term. By contrast, its teaching arrangements were more intensive than the IFP in other two sites (Opal and Ryder). Also, apart from the coursework, all students' English ability needed to be assessed by IELTS at the end of the second term. Teaching arrangements and assessment appear to be two important aspects of its milieu to interplay with their strategy choice and use at an intermediate-contextual level. Because of the intensive tuition (9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday), both Bo and Ke lacked free time to go out and build more vocabulary through exploring the British culture and socialising with local people after classes. Faced with this learning milieu, they were more likely to consolidate the words learned earlier and build new vocabulary through various self-study activities in relation to their accommodation settings. By contrast, the IFP course of the Ryder site did not offer full-day classes and students normally had one or two days off in a week. The evidence in my study reveals that the two students (Wu and Xia) appear to have more free time to learn vocabulary for pleasure and explore various ways, such as travelling and playing games, to increase their motivation in building more daily words. In practice, the milieu of teaching and learning appears to be two sides of the same coin. It could facilitate or restrict learners' SVL. Toohey and Norton (2003) also suggest that learners participate in local contexts in which specific practices could create or block possibilities for them to participate in particular language learning activities. In the light of Norton's (2000) study, they show how the language learning opportunities of an adult learner, Eva,

are limited and increased by different communities of practice. In her workplace, as Eva was a newcomer and an English language learner, her boss allocated her solitary work tasks which tended to limit her opportunities to engage in conversations with her co-workers. However, outside the workplace, relationships with her co-workers and role possibilities were different. Eva was able to participate in more social contact with them and deploy more social strategies to improve her language. Palfreyman's (2006) study focuses on the influence of the context outside the university on strategy use and shows that a social network with learners' family members and friends seems to be an important aspect of their specific contexts to influence their accessibility to these 'social resources' who can support their language learning.

During the second term, students in the Opal site were required to complete a number of assignments for their modules as well as the IELTS test. Faced with this amount of the assessment, their VL became more goal-directed. From both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective, learning goals appear to play a central role in LLS use (Donato and McCormick, 1994; Zimmerman and Schunk, 2001; Oxford et al. 2004). In particular, in order to be accepted by British universities, both Ke and Bo observed that performing the IELTS test well appeared to be the most difficult and important goal to achieve during this period. They did not just want to gain good exam skills for passing the test, but they also considered the process of preparing for the test as a useful way to improve their English language ability. In order to achieve these learning goals, they both made various strategic efforts to enlarge their vocabulary size and improve their word knowledge. During this period, the IELTS test became an important aspect of their academic milieu to interact with their

strategy choice and use. In order to make his VL more effective, Bo planned and arranged his VL process according to his metabolism, to take place after class. He combined a number of metacognitive strategies, a category that has also been identified within the LLS literature (Oxford, 2011), to manage his VL, such as planning the learning, implementing, reviewing and modifying his plans. Ke also made a great effort to regulate his VL for the IELTS test. During this short period of time, in order to perform well in the IELTS test, there appears to be a noticeable change in his SVL which shifts to be more exam-directed, focused and intensive. He stopped watching the BBC programmes and YouTube videos in which he was interested, and rearranged his VL according to his weaknesses and the emphasises on the IELTS test. In this respect, Huang and Andrew (2010) also suggest that learner strategies are goal-directed actions. In particular, the goal of getting grades seemed to be powerful, and strongly influenced the Chinese senior secondary students' general orientation of strategies for a variety of classroom learning tasks (e.g. test-taking, formal practice, or skill-specific strategies). They view learning goals as the predominant determiner of learners' strategy use and choice and this seems to overemphasise the importance of learning goals. This view might be appropriate to the learning context which they investigated; however, learning goals might not determine learners' strategy use in different contexts. For example, as mentioned above, although Bo and Ke intended to enlarge their general vocabulary through immersing themselves in the British culture after class, the intensive tuition restricted their access to this kind of out-of-class activities. Therefore, from the preceding discussion, while neither learning goals nor context (including particular settings, milieus and culture) could determine learners' strategy choice and/or use, they appear to be interrelated to the process of SVL.

Compared with their milieus of teaching and learning in China, the evidence in my study also suggests that the language teachers of the IFP courses in these three university sites tend to manage their lessons and teach vocabulary in a more communicative way and co-construct knowledge with the students (see more in section 7.3). In the more communicative classrooms, their language teachers often set up pair/group work activities and the participants could learn vocabulary through interaction with other peers and their teachers. Although the teachers did not offer explicit strategy instruction on social strategies, they increased the communicative demands for the participants to practise the use of social strategies and became important mediating agents, who enhanced the dialogic processes of SVL. By comparison with direct teaching, this interactive process appears to raise the participants' linguistic awareness more, and help them generate more questions and make more strategic efforts to solve the problems, particularly the use of social strategies. This finding suggests that learners can gradually develop a capacity for strategic learning through the scaffolding of more capable others (e.g. their teachers) who could direct them from their actual developmental level to the level of their potential development towards becoming more strategic learners (see also Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). With external help, learners can increasingly gain voluntary control of the intrapsychological plane over natural mental functions, from other-regulation to strategic self-regulation towards problem solving (Donato and McCormick, 1994; Oxford and Schramm 2007).

The students also exercise their agency to make their own strategic responses to particular communicative classroom settings. For example, with regard to one

particular lesson in the Ryder site, when choosing some useful words to teach, their language teacher was less likely to give an explanation directly. Rather, she questioned the students first to check their comprehension and then elicited some instances from them and also explored the word's meaning through their collaboration⁵⁰. Wu often participated in this, and shared his thoughts with the teacher and other students to help him learn the words co-constructively. By contrast, Xia rarely asked their teacher to explain unknown words or initiate a discussion about them. Although she did not participate in the verbal interaction, the teacher's indirect feedback to other students still raised her questions about word knowledge (e.g. word forms and a connotational meaning) which seemed to help her think what information she needed to look up in a dictionary. By comparison with her previous learning experience, she tended to use recording strategies in relation to a teacher-centred approach in China, but this kind of an indirect teaching approach appeared to encourage her to use dictionary look-up strategies more frequently in order to enrich her word knowledge during the lesson. Therefore, individual differences occur in the learners' strategy use. However, their strategy use occurs not only as a result of their individual cognitive choices; it is also related to the mediation of particular learning communities (see also Norton and Toohey, 2001; Parks and Raymond, 2004; Gao and Zhang, 2011). Furthermore, although their teachers all tried a communicative teaching approach, they operated differently at a micro-level. The findings show that the students' SVL varied in relation to different teaching operations. For example, unlike her previous learning experience, Xia participated more in the teacher's talk to learn vocabulary in a different lesson. An

⁵⁰ See Extract 4.18 in Chapter 4

important reason why she felt more willing to ask unknown words in the class was because their teacher tried to build more relaxed classroom atmosphere and closer relationships among students, for example sitting with the students when she taught, which encouraged her to use more social strategies with the teacher and other peers in the class and contributed to more active classroom participation.

From the preceding discussion, various aspects of their context from an intermediate level (e.g. course design, module content, assessment and teaching approach) to a micro level (e.g. activity arrangement, teaching operation, classroom atmosphere and mediating agents) appear to facilitate or restrict their SVL, but most importantly, the participants exercised agency as learners to appropriate their specific context through the use (or non-use) of VLSs and regulated their SVL through interaction with their particular study-oriented settings.

7.1.2 In relation to milieus in the out-of-class settings

Another aspect of the first research question is to consider the relationship between learners' SVL and milieus outside the classroom. Compared with classroom (study-oriented) settings, everyday life appears to offer a range of different opportunities to learn vocabulary. After class, their VL can take place in more varied settings (e.g. the accommodation, a supermarket, a museum) in which the participants can build vocabulary through the use of quite different social (e.g. local people and host family) and material resources (e.g. leaflets and noticeboards) from the resources available in the classroom settings (e.g. teacher and handouts). The context of everyday life in the UK provides the six learners with a rich sociocultural milieu to meet unknown words and facilitates their SVL. My evidence suggests that they try to

discover and make use of various resources which can be accessible in their particular out-of-class settings to support their learning processes. For example, Figure 7.2 brings together various out-of-class settings where they manage their SVL in relation to their activities and accessible resources.

Real-life settings	Activities	Accessible resources	VLSs
Tourist attractions ⁵¹ (e.g. Bristol bridge, a cruise, a Roman Villa; churches; museums)	Visiting places of interests	e.g. friends, local people; photos, noticeboards and illustration; leaflets	e.g. Seek help from more capable others; guess; associative strategies; recording strategies
On the public transports ⁵² (e.g. train and bus)	e.g. Listening to the announcement; reading news	Mobile (including E-dictionary and E-notebook)	e.g. Practise using the words in the text messages ;dictionary look-up and recording strategies
In the homestay ⁵³	e.g. Talking to host family; watching TV; having a meal	Host family	Ask them for help (e.g. discover more appropriate vocabulary use and pronunciation)
In the supermarket or department store ⁵⁴	Shopping	Food packing; iPhone; shop assistances	Guess; dictionary look-up strategies; ask others for explanation
In the local communities ⁵⁵ (e.g. church)	Joining the church service	Local people	Learn words through interacting with and asking them
In the gym ⁵⁶	Doing exercises	Local people ; iPhone	Ask them for help; dictionary look-up strategies; practise using words with them
On the street ⁵⁷	Immersing local life	iPhone; local people	Attentive listening; dictionary look-up and recording strategies

Figure 7.2 Strategy use in different settings through the help of various resources

⁵¹ See examples: Extract 4.47 and 4.49 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.23, 5.24, 5.52 and 5.54 in Chapter 5

⁵² See examples: Extract 4.55 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.22 in Chapter 5

⁵³ See an example: Extract 5.47 in Chapter 5

⁵⁴ See examples: Extract 6.22b in Chapter 6; Extract 4.33 in Chapter 4

⁵⁵ See an example: Extract 5.54 in Chapter 5

⁵⁶ See an example: Extract 6.64 in Chapter 6

⁵⁷ See an example: Extract 6.22a in Chapter 6

For example, Xia⁵⁸ deployed a number of social strategies to discover the word's meaning through the help of shop assistants (social resource) in the department store. By contrast, during his visit to a place of interest, Qa⁵⁹ explored new words through using a different kind of resources (material resource, the 'noticeboard') which was available in that particular setting. He tried to guess the meaning in relation to the textual context of the board. As dictionaries were not available in that setting, he checked its exact meaning again through using a dictionary until he went back home. Therefore, this evidence in my study supports the notion that SVL appears not to be solely an individual process, but also depends on resources (including material and social resources) being available, accessible and meaningful to the learners (Palfreyman, 2006).

Although the British context makes various opportunities available for the participants to build vocabulary in different out-of-class settings, my evidence suggests differences among the learners in accessing to these everyday-life opportunities to help them improve vocabulary knowledge (see also Crabbe, 2003). For example, not every learner in this study devoted much time and effort to building their vocabulary through interacting with local people and communities. A number of aspects of their milieus and personal factors, which are identified, interact with their strategy choice of selecting and seeking learning opportunities to develop vocabulary outside the classroom. Indeed, their social network seems to be an important aspect of their social milieus to facilitate or restrict their SVL outside the classroom. For example, by

⁵⁸ See Extract 4.33 and 4.34 in Chapter 4

⁵⁹ See Extract 5.23 in Chapter 5

comparison with other participants, Ji was the only person who left the university accommodation and moved to the homestay. During her stay with her host family, Ji's social network with British people expanded and this expansion seemed to enhance her use of social strategies in the process of SVL outside the classroom. Not only did she keep practising vocabulary with her pen friends⁶⁰ who she made when staying in the university accommodation, but her host family⁶¹ also became important mediating agents to support her VL and help her participate in more social activities (e.g. joining the church service). The homestay setting offered a rich environment where she could learn the appropriateness of vocabulary use as well as the culture through using social strategies (e.g. negotiating the usage) with her host family (see also Iino, 2006). Most importantly, she also perceived these activities as useful learning opportunities and deployed different social strategies to develop her vocabulary knowledge when interacting with the host family and local people within different social settings. By contrast, in the Wolfson site, the large number of Chinese students who were in their classes and accommodation play a central role in both Bo's and Ke's social network which appears to restrict their English-speaking opportunities. As mentioned above, by comparison with the participants in other two university sites, the more intensive teaching arrangements and heavier workloads which they have in the Wolfson site seem to be other aspects of their learning milieu which limit their free time to build more vocabulary. Faced with these social and learning milieus, Bo and Ke tend to consolidate and build vocabulary through self-study in their accommodation setting rather than outside it. In a different context, where the Emirati students learn English in their home country, Palfreyman (2006) also suggests that

⁶⁰ See Extract 5.49 in Chapter 5

⁶¹ See Extract 5.47 in Chapter 5

their family members play an important part in their social network, and the students tend to see them as sources of English expertise and ask their help for language learning. Therefore, different social networks seem to be available and accessible in different contexts, and it would be important for learners to consider how to build and enhance their social network to contribute to their SVL.

In relation to their specific contexts (e.g. the aspects of their milieus mentioned above), the participants appear to play a crucial role in deciding how to enhance out-of-class opportunities for SVL. Firstly, their agency in terms of their will and efforts seems to be an important aspect leading to variations in their strategy choice and use (see also Benson, 2001; Gao, 2010) although contextual conditions are also taken into consideration. As mentioned above, Ke's vocabulary building was constrained by his social network in the Wolfson site. In order to improve this contextual condition, Ke made more efforts to meet local people outside the accommodation (e.g. the gym) and created learning opportunities to develop his vocabulary through interacting with them⁶². In the Ryder site, compared with Ke's social milieu in the accommodation, most of Wu's flatmates were not from China. Although communicating with them was also considered as a way of improving his vocabulary, Wu still created few opportunities to make friends with them and learn from them. My evidence⁶³ suggests that his interaction with foreign friends is constrained by cultural distance and different personal interests. Therefore, he showed little willingness to select social strategies to learn vocabulary. Furthermore, in the Wolfson site, by comparison with Ke, Bo was less likely to learn vocabulary through socialising with other people

⁶² See Extract 6.64 in Chapter 6

⁶³ See Extract 4.30 in Chapter 4

although they both had more free time during the third term due to a decrease in their workload⁶⁴. Instead, he tried to improve his academic vocabulary through studying the wordlists in order to achieve a better result in the written project. Bo and Ke made different strategic efforts according to their own learning goals although they faced with similar learning and social milieus in the Wolfson site.

Secondly, my evidence also revealed that the participants appeared to exercise their agency in terms of how they managed their different out-of-class learning opportunities between their own accommodation and out-of-home settings (e.g. a department store and tourist attractions) to support their VL. Previous research (e.g. Pickard, 1996; Hyland, 2004) found that language learners tended to engage in strategic efforts in their private domain (e.g. the home) than in a public domain (e.g. a department store). They suggest that the private domain may be a more valuable setting than the public domain for out-of-class language learning, since it is less threatening to students' identity and is also easier for them to control. However, with regard to my evidence, private and public domains appear to be both valuable settings for learning vocabulary after class and their SVL tends to be more dynamic across both accommodation and out-of-home settings during the academic year. It seems to be problematic to suggest which domain learners tend to build and practise vocabulary without considering their specific contexts. For example, in relation to his academic workloads, Qa modified his plans of how often to build his vocabulary through being in contact with the British culture in the public domain. During the first semester, as he had little coursework, he could spend more time visiting different places in the UK and also was very willing to learn vocabulary more enjoyably in this way. By contrast,

⁶⁴ See Extract 6.62, 6.63 and 6.64 in Chapter 6

from the second semester, he had less free time to build more general vocabulary outside the home due to the amount of coursework. Rather, he focused on learning and memorising academic and subject-related vocabulary to adjust to his current academic milieu⁶⁵. In relation to Xia's case, during the early period she learned vocabulary through self-study activities at her accommodation after class. However, she tried to create more opportunities to socialise with other group members from the second term, such as travelling and playing basketball with them in a public domain, because she found that interacting with them was a useful way to improve vocabulary. Also, closer friendships motivated her to seek more support and get better feedback from them⁶⁶. The contribution to VLS research made by my study is that not only does it look at SVL in the context of the classroom, but also provides a deeper understanding of the interaction between learners' strategy choice and use in relation to various out-of-class settings at a micro-contextual level (e.g. see Figure 7.2 above). Based on the evidence mentioned above, the preceding discussion about strategy use outside the classroom suggests a more dynamic relationship between SVL; learners' contexts (at macro-contextual and intermediate-contextual levels) and their out-of-class VL opportunities (at a micro-contextual level) (see Figure 7.3).

⁶⁵ See Extract 5.39, 5.43 and 5.55 in Chapter 5

⁶⁶ See an example: Extract 4.23 in Chapter 4

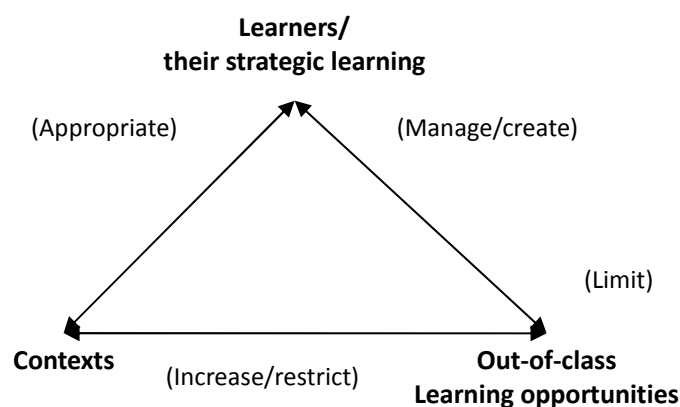


Figure 7.3 Interaction between strategic learning, context and out-of-class opportunities

In contrast with my findings, although Norton and Toohey (2001) shed some light on the interplay between learner agency and context, they did merely focus on the strategic language learning of one adult learner in type of setting, the workplace. Palfreyman's study (2006) also focused on contexts outside the university; however, unfortunately, it was mainly conducted through questionnaires and did not show the detailed process of how learners make use of learning opportunities across different out-of-class settings. This is provided by my study through its in-depth analysis of detailed participant data including interviews, diaries and photographs. Gao (2010) also used multiple methods to explore the Chinese students' strategy use outside the classroom and how they made use of different out-of-class resources to support their strategic language learning. By contrast, as mentioned above, I made a further effort to compare the students' strategy use in their accommodation with their strategy use in the out-of-home settings and investigate how they exercised their agency in terms of how they managed their different out-of-class learning opportunities between their own accommodation and out-of-home settings (e.g. a department store and tourist attractions) to support their VL. Gao (2010) has not compared the learners' strategy

use in private settings with their strategy use in public settings and reasons why they select and combine certain strategies in relation to these two kinds of out-of-class settings. Furthermore, although Gao's (2003; 2010) studies suggest that the learners tended to select multiple strategies and combine them to enhance their language and vocabulary learning, he has not provided a detailed account of how these learners combined strategies in relation to different settings, the sequence in which these strategies occurred and the reasons why they manage strategies in such sequences. These aspects were particularly explored in my work and this also considered as an important contribution to VLS research. The findings in relation to these aspects will be discussed in the next section.

7.2 Strategy selection and combination for effective vocabulary learning

2nd RQ: In what ways and for what reasons do Chinese learners select and combine strategies to enhance the process of strategic vocabulary learning in the UK?

Responding to the second research question, there are three main aspects of the findings to be discussed in this section: the ways of and reasons for selecting and combining strategies, the reasons for modifying or stopping the use of previous strategies or strategy clusters, and the ways of enhancing the effectiveness of SVL. From the preceding discussion, the participants' strategy choice and strategy use appear to result from the complex interplay between their learner agency, contexts (including the British culture, learning milieu and particular settings) and personal factors (e.g. learning goals). Also, during their learning process, they tend to deploy or select a number of strategies rather than individual strategies to improve their learning, is also supported by previous studies (e.g. Green and Oxford, 1995; Graham 1997; Gu,

2003; Vandergrift, 2003). With regard to my study, for example, Figure 7.4 below illustrates the strategy combinations which one of the participants deployed to learn general vocabulary outside the home. A lesson was learned from Xia's real life experience⁶⁷, she evaluated the usefulness of different discovery strategies and the outcome of her wrong guess raised her strategic awareness of how important it was to make sure of the accurate meaning of unknown words through combining the strategy (i.e. guessing) with some social strategies or a dictionary look-up strategy when shopping in stores. As a result, she formed her own strategy clusters and deployed them differently according to her learning intention as well as different settings⁶⁸.

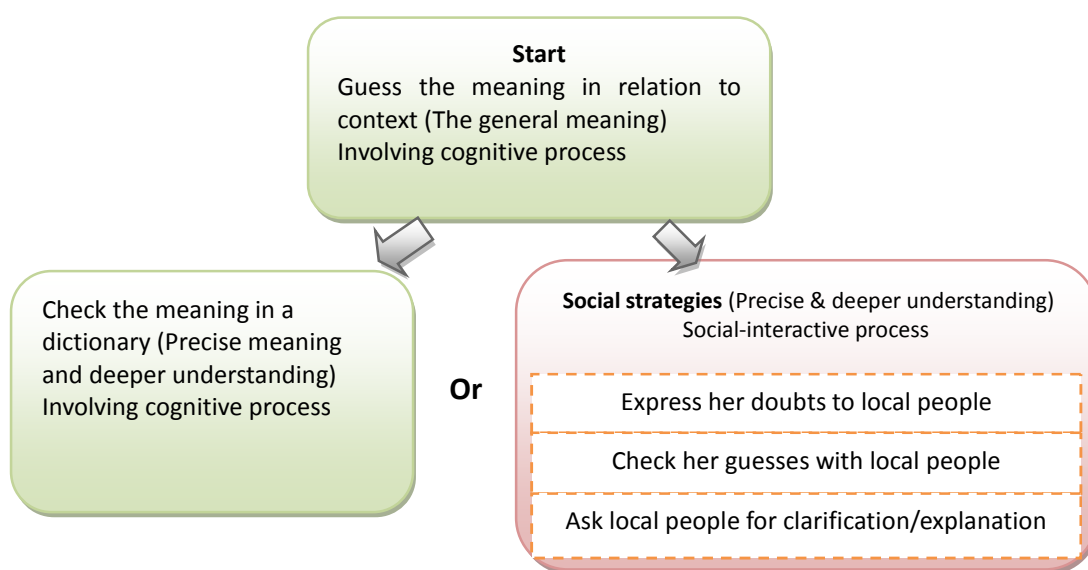


Figure 7.4 Xia's cluster of discovery strategies deployed in stores

For a strategy to be effective in enhancing learning and learner performance it needs to be combined with other strategies, thus forming a strategy cluster (Macaro, 2001, 2006, Cohen, 2011). Taking the notion of strategy clusters further, the contribution of this study makes to VLS research is that I have identified more types of strategy

⁶⁷ See Extract 4.33 in Chapter 4
⁶⁸ See an example: Extract 4.34 in Chapter 4

combinations which the learners formed (see more later); and have revealed their SVL with greater complexity at a micro-contextual level in order to address the quality rather than the quantity of strategy use. Attempts need to be made to identify strategy behaviours at the most minute level possible although there is still considerable uncertainty as to the nature of sophisticated strategic behaviour (Macaro, 2006; Grenfell and Macaro, 2007: 28). In my study, for example, with regard to the process of recording vocabulary, as shown in Figure 7.5, strategies are identified in a more specific way in terms of their strategic efforts to select which words and what information to keep a record, choose where to record and how to organise their recording.

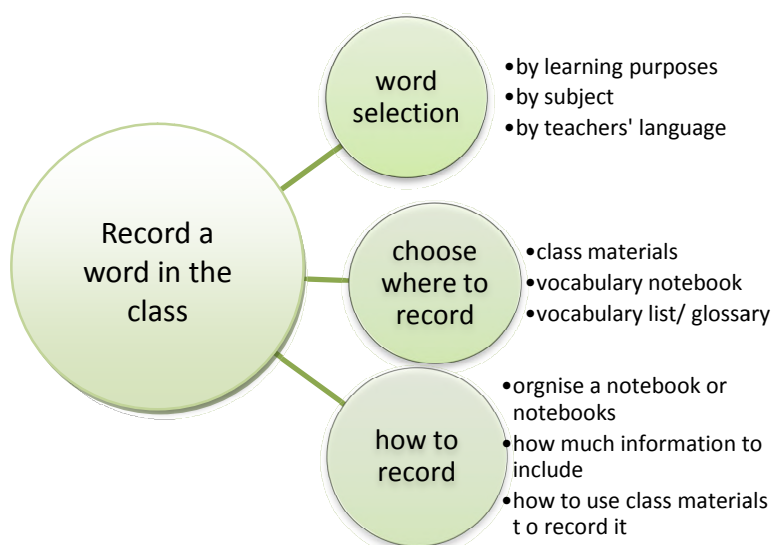


Figure 7.5 A cluster of recording strategies

When looking up a word in a dictionary, the participants also seem not to deploy a single strategy, but a number of strategies which might include: ‘selection of word’; ‘decide whether the word is necessary for them to check dictionary’; ‘choose an appropriate dictionary or combine different kinds of dictionaries’; ‘look at and compare all definitions given’; ‘choose the right meaning’; ‘check the meaning if it

fits in the context'; 'think about what other word information needs to be looked at, such as example sentences and parts of speech'. Referring to the recording and dictionary look-up strategies above, the participants may not deploy all the strategies, but they tend to select and combine some of them and their strategic combinations vary according to their learning purposes and specific contexts⁶⁹ (see also Gu, 2003). For example, compared with her past experience in China, presentation appeared to be a new type of assessment for Xia. As Figure 7.6 shows, in relation to the focuses of the presentation (such as pronunciation and grammatical correctness), she combined different kinds of dictionaries to explore the aspects of vocabulary knowledge for achieving her learning purposes⁷⁰.

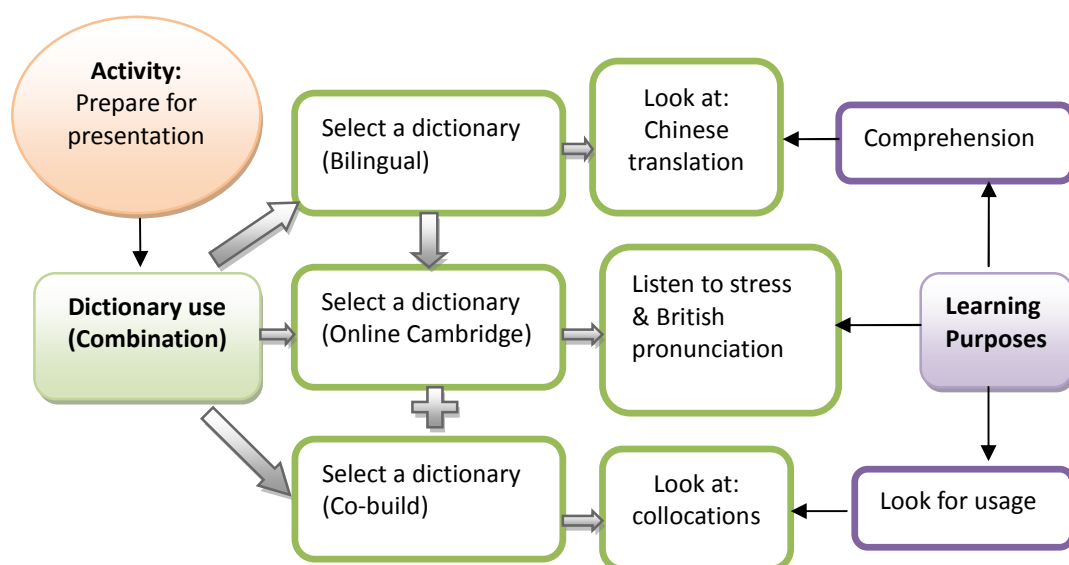


Figure 7.6 Xia's cluster of dictionary look-up strategies for presentation

7.2.1 Ways of and reasons for strategy clusters

The first aspect of my second research question is to look at how and why the

⁶⁹ See more evidence: Extract 4.20 and 4.32 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.9 and 5.16; Photo 5. 3 and 5.4 in Chapter 5; Extract 6.15, 6.16, 6.33 and 6.34 in Chapter 6

⁷⁰ See Extract 4.40 in Chapter 4

participants selected and combined certain strategies in a particular setting or across different settings. Macaro (2001, 2006) suggests that strategy clusters appear to occur either simultaneously or in sequence (also called ‘strategy chains’, see Oxford and Lee, 2007; Cohen, 2011) and one cluster could also be in turn combined with another cluster of strategies. Based on Macaro’s (2001, 2003, 2006) notion of strategy clusters, more varied types of strategy clusters which the participants deploy are proposed in the subsections below including dialogic sequential clusters, strategic circles, recycled strategy clusters and combinations of strategy clusters; and some reasons for deploying these strategy cluster (s) are also suggested.

7.2.1.1 Dialogic sequential cluster

The evidence from my study reveals that some participants deploy their VLSs in sequence; I call these ‘sequential clusters of strategies’. Crucially, these sequential clusters of strategies sometimes take place in verbal interaction, which arise from the interrelationship between the learners and more capable others, thus forming what I propose here as a ‘dialogic, sequential strategy cluster’. Here learners’ problem-solving processes become verbalised, and an interactive dialogue appears to mediate their VL through assistance (or scaffolding) from more capable others (see also Vygotsky, 1978; Williams and Burden, 1997; Oxford and Schramm 2007). For example, in the Ryder site, Xia checked the unknown word ‘obesity’ with her partner during a particular moment of the pair work (see Figure 7.7 below). Her partner then offered a direct explanation and also encouraged her to seek more explanation from the contextual clues of the text⁷¹. Xia also later learned the word through overtly participating in the verbal interaction with her teacher and considered this overt

⁷¹ See Extract 4.13 in Chapter 4

participation as a useful strategy to consolidate the word⁷².

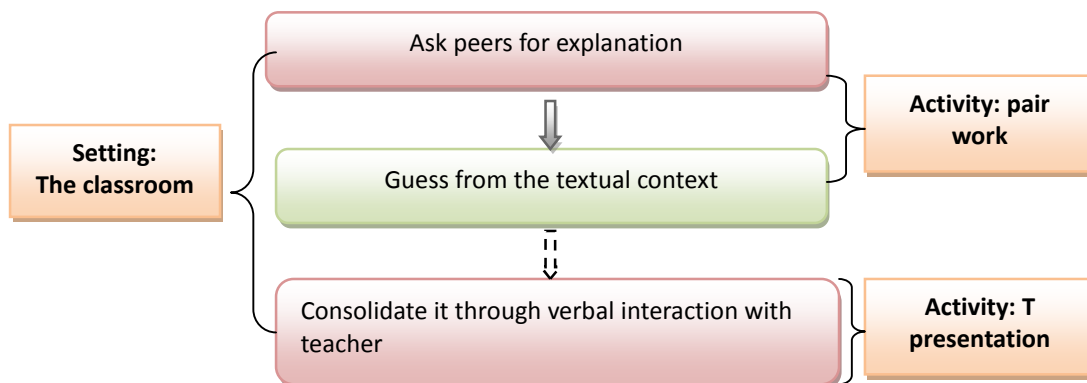


Figure 7.7 Xia’s dialogic sequential cluster of strategies to the word ‘obesity’

By comparison with Xia, Ke also explored the unknown words through deploying a dialogic sequential cluster of strategies, but chose a different social resource (i.e. his local friend) which was available in a different setting (i.e. the gym) and included different strategies in the cluster as shown in Figure 7.8. He analysed the word roots of unknown words to guess their parts of speech and meaning. In order to confirm his guesses, he then asked his friend to repeat and spell the words again and deployed a dictionary look-up strategy to check their meaning. Both Xia’s and Ke’s examples also suggest that it seems to be ineffective to merely use inferencing strategies (i.e. guessing the meaning or parts of speech in relation to context) to discover the word meaning (see also Li, 1988; Hulstijn et al. 1996), but it is useful to combine them with a social strategy (i.e. ask others for explanation), a dictionary look-up strategy (i.e. checking the meaning in a dictionary), or both in order to avoid making errors in inferencing. Furthermore, Ke practised using them in their conversation to consolidate

⁷² See Extract 4.14 in Chapter 4

these words⁷³.

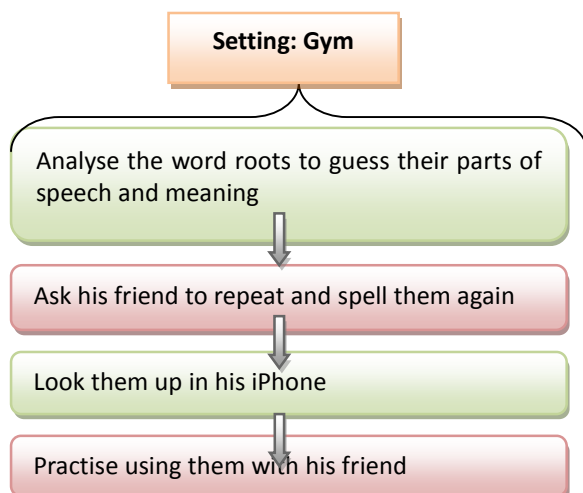


Figure 7.8 Ke's dialogic sequential cluster used in the gym

As mentioned above, the learners' agency in terms of their own will and efforts seems to play an important role in their strategy choice. The data suggest that their particular settings could also facilitate or limit their use of certain strategies. In relation to Xia's case mentioned above, it is important that her teacher emphasises and repeats the target word during the presentation; otherwise she may not have chances to re-encounter and consolidate it. The indirect teaching also encourages her to actively engage in the learning process and helps her form the dialogic strategy cluster.

7.2.1.2 Strategic circle

My evidence also suggests that some learners do not merely deploy their strategies in sequence, but also return to previous strategies at different stages of their VL, thus forming what I call a 'strategy circle'. For example, Figure 7.9 below illustrates four strategies which Qa deployed in sequence across two different settings. He first

⁷³ See Extract 6.64 in Chapter 6

asked some questions about the unknown words in a particular lesson⁷⁴. As the teacher was very open for questions, he kept seeking further support from her and recorded her explanation in his notebook. After the class, he also reviewed the words and practised them through making them into sentences at home. Most importantly, he went back to the teacher again in the next lesson and checked whether he really understood the words. The dialogic strategy circle was thus performed through verbal interaction with his teacher.

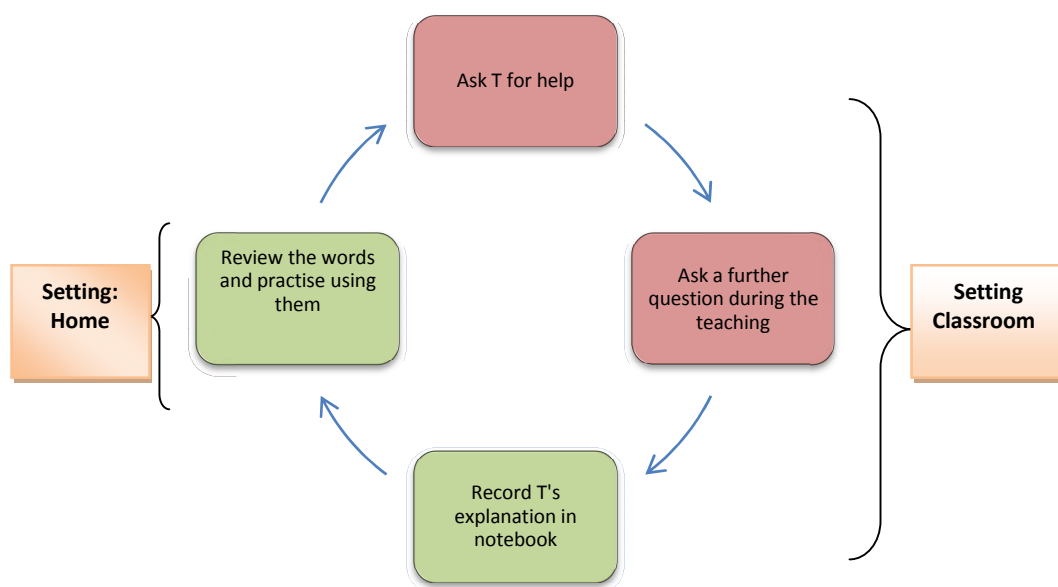


Figure 7.9 Qa’s dialogic strategy circle across in-class and out-of-class settings

Referring to Wu and Xia in the Ryder site, they formed a similar strategic circle of recording vocabulary in a notebook(s) as shown in Figure 7.10 below during the second term, although they selected different strategies relating to their specific recording process, learning purposes and prior knowledge⁷⁵ within this circle. They also made further efforts to add more information about the words in their notebooks,

⁷⁴ See Extract 5.10 and 5.11 in Chapter 5

⁷⁵ See Extract 4.18 in Chapter 4

monitor their VL and review the notebooks. In order to adjust to a more challenging academic milieu, they tried to improve their vocabulary through modifying their previous recording styles and enriching the word information in their notebooks. As they appear to have more time and resources to supplement their recording in their accommodation, this circle tends to occur at there rather than outside it.

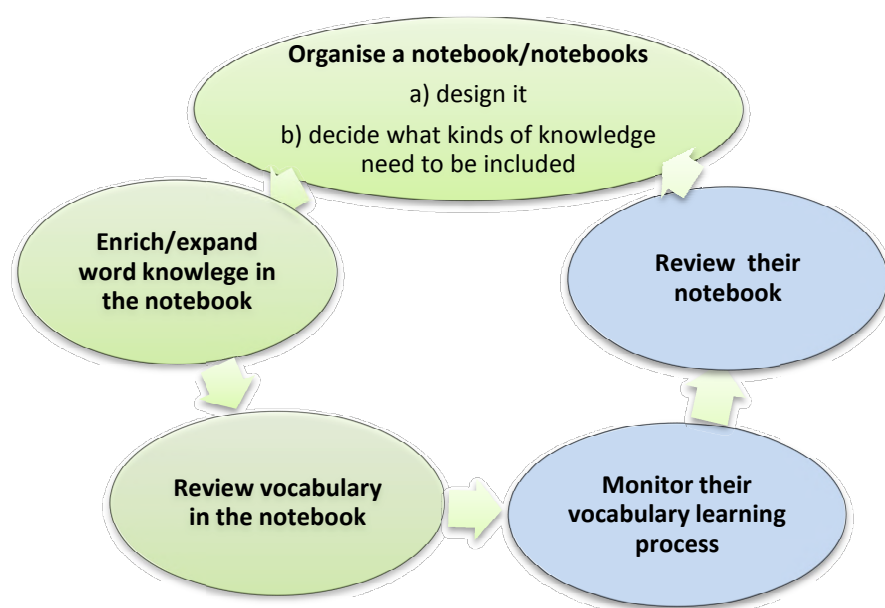


Figure 7.10 Wu’s and Xia’s strategic circle of vocabulary recording

7.2.1.3 Recycled strategy cluster(s)

In order to enlarge their vocabulary and reinforce their memory of the words learnt, my evidence suggests that the participants tend to deploy certain strategy clusters at regular intervals over a period of time. I call this kind of strategy cluster a ‘recycled cluster of strategies’. For example, faced with heavy workloads during the Easter holiday, Bo who was from the Wolfson site regulated his VL and arranged time to improve his subject-related vocabulary through employing the strategic circle (see Figure 7.11) twice a week. In the light of his previous learning experience, he found

that reviewing the lesson handouts appeared to be an effective way to revise subject-related vocabulary as well as the module content. During this process, he reviewed the target words in relation to their textual context. In particular, when he was uncertain of some words, he also checked their meaning and recorded the Chinese translation for his further review⁷⁶.

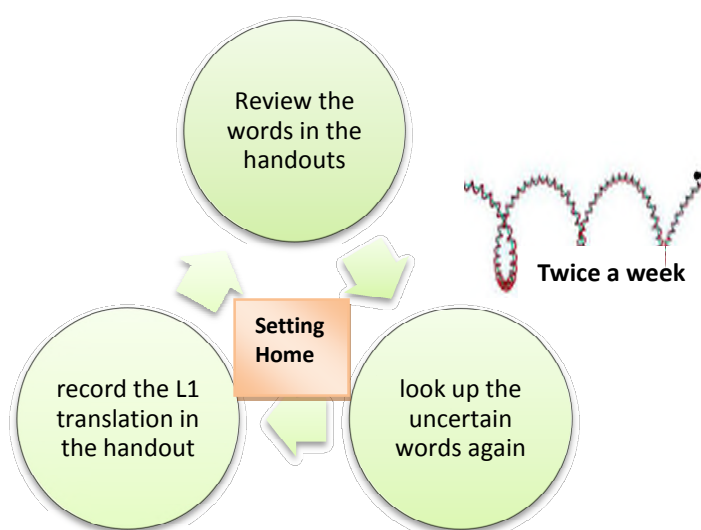


Figure 7.11 Bo's recycled strategic circle for the subject-related vocabulary

By comparison with Bo, Ji deployed a sequential cluster of strategies rather than a strategic circle repeatedly in a different setting (i.e. museum). During her early period in the Opal site, Ji showed a great willingness to build her vocabulary through exploring different British museums. In most cases, she tended to use photographs and leaflets as assistive artefacts which were accessible in the museums to help her record unknown words. Further strategic efforts were made to learn these unknown words at home, including checking the words in a dictionary(s) and relating them to the textual context of the photographs/leaflets to explore their meaning and practising using them in diaries. Figure 7.12 illustrates her strategy use during and after her visit one

⁷⁶ See Extract 6.58 and 6.59 in Chapter 6

particular museum. However, she does not follow this sequence every time. Although she deploys this strategy cluster at regular intervals, it appears to be dynamic. In relation to these particular settings (different British museums), some strategies may be applied in sequence and other strategies may be applied more randomly (see also Macaro, 2006).

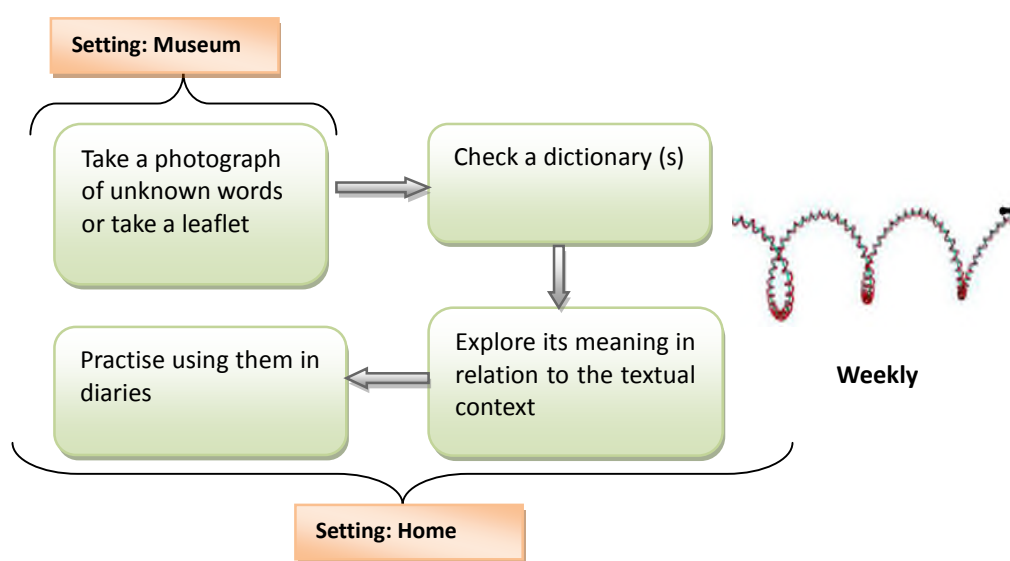


Figure 7.12 Ji's recycled sequential cluster of strategies through visiting museums

7.2.1.4 Combinations of strategy clusters

In order to achieve their different learning intentions (e.g. to build some general vocabulary or to consolidate the academic words learned earlier), my evidence suggests that the learners sometime seem to arrange more than one VL activity in relation to their particular settings and deploy several strategy clusters during their learning processes. For example, as Figure 7.13 shows, Xia combined two sequential clusters of strategies in relation to different learning activities at home. In order to build some general vocabulary, she chose some useful words from the newspaper and recorded them in her notebook at home. In addition, in order to improve her

vocabulary knowledge, she performed another sequential cluster through reviewing her past vocabulary exam papers and recording the errors in her notebook⁷⁷.

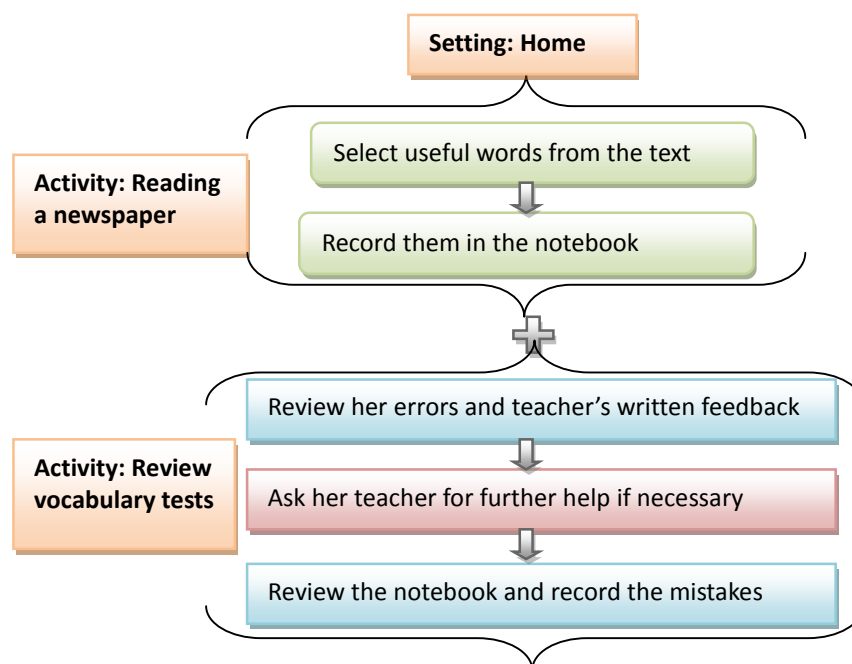


Figure 7.13 Xia's strategy clusters within different activities

Some problems or questions may still remain unsolved although a strategy cluster is applied earlier. In this case, my evidence suggests that some learners appear to combine other clusters of strategies to deal with the problems and enhance their learning. For example, Bo had a quite different learning experience from other participants in China and had a personal language teacher to offer him extra English lessons everyday. In relation to that particular learning milieu, Bo exercised his agency as a learner, before the session, he tended to deploy a sequential cluster of strategies to consolidate the words learned earlier (as shown in Figure 7.14). During this process, he identified the problems which could not be solved. During the session, he then applied a dialogic strategy circle to deal with the problems through

⁷⁷ See Extract 4.2 in Chapter 4

seeking support from his teacher and practise the words with the teacher verbally⁷⁸.

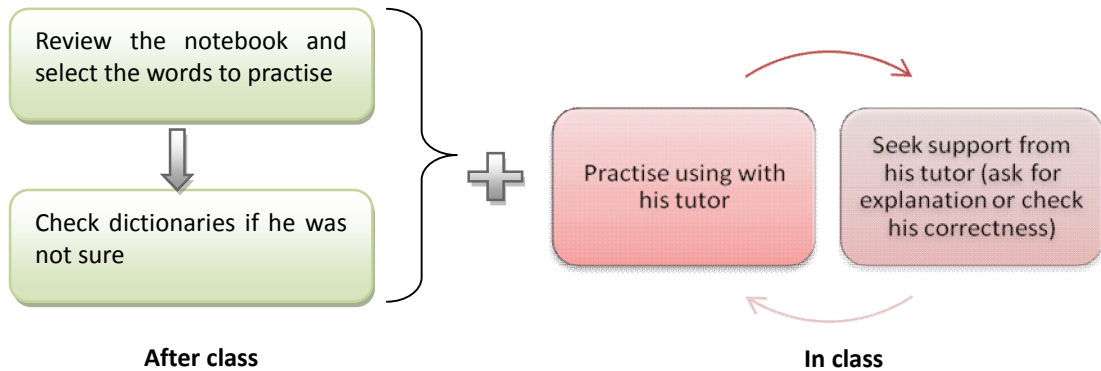


Figure 7.14 Bo's strategy clusters used in and out-of-private lessons.

As I identified above, there appears to be four types of strategy cluster which the participants tend to form: a sequential cluster (including a dialogic sequential cluster), a strategic circle (including dialogic strategy circle), a recycled strategy cluster, and a combination of strategy clusters. Most importantly, individual differences in selecting what strategies to form these types of clusters at a micro-contextual level also occur. Within a particular setting or across different settings, each learner's strategy choice results from an interaction which is located in a nexus of learner agency (e.g. strategic self-regulation), contextual conditions (e.g. social and material resources), learning purposes (e.g. to build general vocabulary or subject-related vocabulary) and prior knowledge (e.g. previous learning experiences). Thus, the contribution to VLS research is that the dynamic and highly individual organisation of strategy clusters which each learner generates is indication in itself of the creative role of learner agency in SVL. Furthermore, although the taxonomies of LLSs and VLSs (e.g.

⁷⁸ See Extract 6.4 in Chapter 6

O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 2011; Schmitt, 1997) help me identify specific strategies, the researchers tend to introduce their taxonomies by the way of the predetermined questionnaires imposed on their data and artificially separate strategies into different levels. The strategy clusters which I have identified from the data seem to challenge their taxonomies and unite the separation. In particular, the data shows that strategy clusters do not only combine strategies from the same levels⁷⁹, but also from different levels⁸⁰ (i.e. metacognitive, cognitive, social and affective levels).

7.2.2 Reasons for ineffective strategic vocabulary learning

As mentioned above, although the use of strategy clusters could promote VL, my evidence also suggests that the learners might not always satisfy their learning outcomes or enjoy the process of strategic learning. Macaro (2006: 327-8) and Cohen (2011: 27-8) point out that an inappropriate orchestration of individual strategies seems to be the main reason which leads to the ineffectiveness of strategy clusters. In particular, they both stress that strategy clusters can become ineffective because learners did not involve a range of metacognitive strategies in the clusters (such as monitoring and evaluating the strategy use). Apart from an inappropriate orchestration of strategies, some more possible reasons were identified for ineffective SVL in this section.

From the preceding discussion, SVL tends to be a temporally and contextually situated phenomenon. Therefore, one of the reasons why the participants find their previous

⁷⁹ See examples: Figure 6.1 in Chapter 6 and 7.15 in Chapter 7

⁸⁰ See examples: Figures 7.4, 7.13 and 7.14 in Chapter 7

strategy clusters ineffective is because the clusters become less appropriate to the unfamiliar contexts which arise from the changes in their learning milieus, such as changes in the type of assessment or the amount of coursework (see also Leeke and Shaw, 2000). Furthermore, at a micro-contextual level, some participants often find lack of resources in a particular setting which affects their learning outcomes. For example, both Bo and Ke reported that they tended to learn vocabulary through watching films at home rather than in a cinema. Reflecting on their previous experiences, they realised that they could not access any resources to help them discover unknown words which they heard during the film. Although they tried to guess the general meaning of the words in relation to the stories or pictures, they did not satisfy the learning outcome. By contrast, at home, they could stop the film at any time when they encountered unknown words and checked them in a dictionary(s) to enhance their understanding of the words.

Apart from the reasons in relation to their contexts, my evidence⁸¹ also suggests that enjoyment appears to play an important role in the process of SVL. As mentioned above, the participants tend to recycle their clusters of strategies at different stages of their VL. However, after using them for a period of time, they tend to modify or stop using them. One of the reasons for this is because they are no longer able to enjoy the learning process and lose their motivation to use the same strategies at repeated intervals. This is also supported by Leeke and Shaw's (2000: 6-7) finding that many participants gave up making vocabulary lists and memorising the words on a long-term basis due to a decrease in their intrinsic motivation.

⁸¹ See examples: Extract 4.50 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.48 and 5.50 in Chapter 5; Extract 6.48 and 6.63 in Chapter 6

7.2.3 To enhance the effectiveness of strategy cluster(s)

In order to deal with the problems above, there appears to be a number of ways in which the learners enhance the effectiveness and the usefulness of their strategy clusters. Firstly, my evidence supports the notion that it would be important for learners to add metacognitive strategies to their strategy clusters to maximise their effectiveness (Vandergrift, 2003; Macaro, 2006; Cohen, 2011). For instance, with regard to the example mentioned in the previous section, both Bo's and Ke's SVL appears to be ineffective due to the contextual constraint in the cinema. To improve their VL, they further evaluated the strategy use in the cinema and developed their strategic awareness that it would be better to watch films at home if they wanted to learn vocabulary, because it seemed to be easier to control the learning process and they had more resources to use at home. Looking across the data in my study⁸², a range of metacognitive strategies are included into the learners' strategy clusters to enhance their VL, such as planning VL, reviewing learning performance, monitoring and evaluating strategy use. Most importantly, by comparison with Macaro's and Cohen's work, the contribution to VLS research is that the evidence from my research study suggests that metacognitive processes in managing VL do not only occur in learners' mental operations, but also appear to involve more complex interplay between their agency in terms of capacity for strategic self-regulation and learning contexts. For example, in order to enhance his performance in the IELTS tests, Bo's orchestration of clusters of VLSs involve a high level of metacognition. As Figure 7.15 shows, he regulates his VL via a circle of metacognitive strategies in relation to his metabolism, learning outcomes and various aspects of his context at both an

⁸² See examples: Extracts 4.34, 4.40, 4.45 and 4.46 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.5 and 5.45 in Chapter 5; Extract 6.48, 6.51, 6.52 and 6.58 in Chapter 6.

intermediate-contextual and a micro-contextual level.

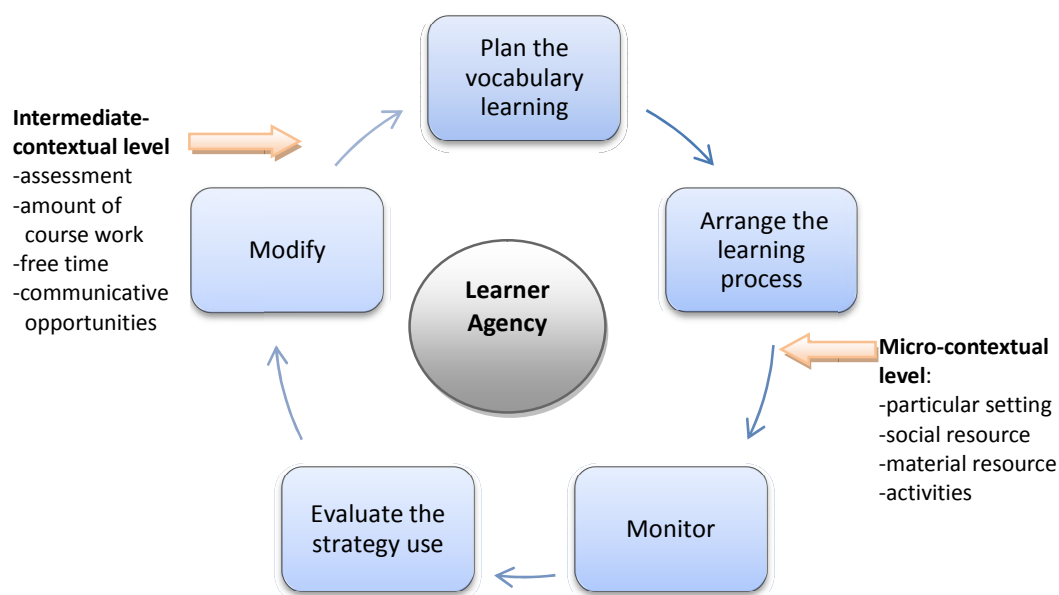


Figure 7.15 Bo's circle of metacognitive strategies in relation to his context

Similarly, Wu and Xia also evaluate and modify their previous strategy clusters in relation to a more challenging academic milieu (see Figure 7.10 above). Therefore, it is important to understand learners' metacognitive processes for learning vocabulary from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective (see also Gao and Zhang, 2011).

As mentioned above, the participants tend to lose motivation through using a strategy cluster(s) at repeated intervals. Therefore, some of them made further strategic efforts to explore various enjoyable ways of learning vocabulary and involved them in their clusters of strategies to maintain and generate their motivation for VL over time, including the use of games⁸³ (see also Oxford 2011: 128), associating with some mediating artefacts (e.g. pictures) or a textual context⁸⁴, choosing some English

⁸³ See an example: Extract 4.52 in Chapter 4

⁸⁴ See examples: Extract 4.29 and 4.47 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.24 in Chapter 5

programmes which they found interesting to watch⁸⁵, simplifying the learning process to make it easier and faster⁸⁶ (see also Oxford, 1990; Cohen, 2011: 30) and balancing VL and leisure time⁸⁷. My evidence suggests that the participants exercise their agency and appear to play a crucial role in exploring some strategies to make their VL more enjoyable. However, during this process, they need to devote much free time to exploring these strategies after class, and thus their contextual conditions which also play an important role in deciding how much free time they can have appear to interact with their strategy choice. For example, by comparison with the participants in other two sites, Bo and Ke - from the Wolfson site - had much more intensive tuition and heavier coursework; as a result, they were less able to look for enjoyable ways to enhance their VL after class.

The preceding discussion also suggests that sometimes it is necessary to combine some social strategies with other strategies to enhance the effectiveness of strategy clusters and the quality of VL (see the section 7.2.1.1 above). However, to form a dialogic strategy cluster, my evidence reveals that it appear to depend on whether social resources are available in the learners' particular settings, their own willingness and linguistic ability to communicate as well as their relationship with the interlocutor (s)⁸⁸. Furthermore, a dialogic strategy cluster might not always help solve the problems in VL successfully, and the quality and types of feedback seem to be important factors to influence their dialogic strategy clusters' effectiveness. For example, my evidence suggests that direct feedback seems not to help the participants

⁸⁵ See examples: Extract 4.53 in Chapter 4; Extract 6.44 and 6.53 in Chapter 6

⁸⁶ See an example: Extract 5.39 in Chapter 5

⁸⁷ See an example: Extract 6.48 in Chapter 6

⁸⁸ See examples: Extract 4.7, 4.22 and 4.34 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.10 and Photo 5.2 in Chapter 5; Extract 6.64 in Chapter 6

learn words deeply and more discussions or collaboration they have the learning outcome may become more satisfactory⁸⁹. Both direct and indirect feedback can play a mediational role in aiding their VL from a sociocultural perspective, but indirect feedback tends to require the learners to engage more in the thinking process and thus promotes VL and reinforces their memorisation⁹⁰ (see also Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994; Mitchell and Myles, 1998).

Furthermore, evidence from my study suggests that flexibility in strategy use may have a positive influence on vocabulary learning. For example, when she went shopping, Xia found that she often made errors in knowing the meaning of unknown words through only relying on inferencing strategies. In particular, one lesson was learned from real life experience⁹¹ and she realised that it was important to combine inferencing strategies with dictionary look-up and social strategies to help her learn more accurate meaning of new words, in this case asking shop assistants to explain unknown words. To decide whether to select dictionary look-up strategies or social strategies or both types of strategies, she found that it depended very much on what resources were available to her in relation to that particular setting, and whether she felt satisfied with the learning outcome⁹². For example, she sometimes could still not understand the explanations of local people, and as a result she needed to use her electronic dictionary in order to gain a cleaner understanding of the words that were being used. From this we can see that strategic vocabulary learning cannot be pinned down, and it is important to keep reviewing the effectiveness of strategy use and

⁸⁹ See an example from Ji's follow-up interview (10 Nov. 2011) presented in Chapter 5, p. 189.

⁹⁰ See examples: Extract 6.13, 6.14 and 6.28 in Chapter 6

⁹¹ See examples: Extract 4.33 and 4.34 in Chapter 4

⁹² See an example: Extract 4.34 in Chapter 4

modify it in relation to different settings when it is no longer effective.

The cases of Ji and Qa also demonstrated the importance of flexibility, particularly in relation to the strategic advice they gained from their language teacher. While this turned out to be of some use, it proved more important for them to adapt it and make it meaningful for themselves, rather than simply following it strictly⁹³. For example, their language teacher encouraged them to build vocabulary through keeping a vocabulary notebook. She suggested a format for organising vocabulary in a notebook. Qa tried it, but he found this format did not help him remember the words greatly so he changed it to a different organisation and grouped the words by different topics. He found it more helpful to memorise words in relation to his categories than just simply learning them without grouping them. Moreover, he did not stop developing his vocabulary notebook throughout the academic year. Later on, he also found that he often confused one word with other words that looked or sounded similar (e.g. ‘contrast’, ‘contact’ and ‘contract’). Therefore, he added an additional section to his notebook where he specifically recorded these words, and found this section very helpful. In relation to the examples of Xia and Qa, it would appear that it is important for learners to keep modifying strategic vocabulary learning flexibly in relation to their own contexts and needs.

7.3 Strategic vocabulary learning as a dynamic system

3rd RQ: How do Chinese learners manage their strategic vocabulary learning dynamically:

- a) during the academic year in the UK*
- b) as these learners move from the Chinese to the British context*

⁹³ See Qa’s examples: Extract 5.50 and Photo 5.12 and 5.4 in Chapter 5; Ji’s examples: Extract 5.46 and 5.51; Photo 5.11

Responding to the third research question, in this section I synthesise my findings across the six different cases in relation to the literature and provide a detailed account of SVL as a dynamic system over time. Hence, I discuss two aspects of learners' dynamic management of SVL throughout the academic year: in the UK (at a more micro level), and in shifting contexts, i.e. from China to Britain (at a more macro level).

7.3.1 Dynamic management of strategic vocabulary learning in the UK

With regard to the first aspect of the third research question, my evidence suggests that the participants appear to operate their SVL dynamically during the academic year in the UK. In particular, three aspects are addressed in the subsections below: first, changes in strategy use at an intermediate-contextual level; secondly, varying degrees of consciousness in their processes of SVL at a more micro-contextual level; and finally their inconsistencies between learners' strategic approach and their strategy use.

7.3.1.1 Changes in strategy use

As mentioned above, SVL seems not to be static, because the participants tends to make it appropriate to the unfamiliar contexts which arise from the changes in their learning milieus throughout the academic year (see also Norton, 2000; Gao, 2003; Parks and Raymond, 2004). As the data from my study focuses on their strategic learning during the academic year rather than in China and after the IFP course, it is difficult to examine with certainty the degree of their changes in strategy use from China to the UK or whether their changes after arrival in the UK would turn into more

permanent ones later. Instead, this subsection will consider some changes in SVL that took place throughout the time participants were enrolled on the IFP courses at different sites. Moreover, some differences in their strategy use have been identified through comparing their previous VL experiences with their current ones, as participants moved from China to Britain (see section 7.3.2 below).

Throughout the academic year, the six participants are likely to modify their SVL in relation to three aspects of their learning milieu: assessment, amount of workload, and school hours. In the Wolfson site, during their early phase, although the intensive tuition constrained their time that was free to have regular contact with local life, both Bo and Ke still explored some ways in which they were interested to enlarge their general vocabulary. For example, Bo formed a recycled sequential cluster of strategies⁹⁴ through watching the TV series in his accommodation. By contrast, Ke built vocabulary through reading the British weather forecast⁹⁵. However, during the second term, faced with the IELTS test, both Bo and Ke made fewer strategic efforts to build general vocabulary by comparison with what they did in the last term. Rather, their SVL tended to be more exam-directed and focused in relation to their own weaknesses and the focuses of the IELTS test. In particular, they were more likely to combine memorisation with repetition strategies to enlarge their vocabulary specifically for the IELTS test⁹⁶. The findings above support previous research by Jiang and Sharpling (2010), who stress that types of assessment are an important aspect to influence students' strategy choice. During the summer term, the two

⁹⁴ Select some unknown words through watching the TV series → Check a dictionary → record them → review them (repeat this cluster everyday): see more in Extract 6.20 and Figure 6.7 in Chapter 6

⁹⁵ The strategies Ke deployed to learn the words and phrases: check the meaning of unknown words in a dictionary and explore their usage through using 'Google' search. See more in Extract 6.21 and Figure 6.8 in Chapter 6

⁹⁶ See examples: Extract 6.51, 6.52, 6.54 and 6.55; Photo 6.15, 6.16, 6.19 and 6.20 in Chapter 6

participants finished the IELTS test. There were also fewer classes and less coursework by comparison with the first and second terms. Their SVL was no longer exam-directed and both students drew more attention to the words in which they were interested. For instance, in order to improve his academic writing, Bo wanted to build more academic vocabulary. He used some academic wordlists and enriched various aspects of word knowledge through checking dictionaries⁹⁷. By contrast, Ke sought more opportunities to learn vocabulary for pleasure⁹⁸ and built more words through watching some TV programmes and socialising with his friends.

In the Ryder site, during the early phase, Wu and Xia made some strategic efforts to learn the academic and subject-related vocabulary which they encountered and caused problems in their comprehension. For example, Wu often asked his teacher to explain the meaning of unknown words during the lesson and sometimes reviewed them after the class⁹⁹. Unlike Wu, Xia tended to check unknown words in a dictionary during the lesson and was less likely to consolidate them after the class¹⁰⁰.

During the second term, they encountered much more subject-related vocabulary and had more opportunities to use academic vocabulary in their essays and presentations. Faced with this more challenging academic milieu, both Wu and Xia made more attempts to consolidate the words learned earlier and appeared to form a recycled strategy cluster¹⁰¹. Compared with their previous strategy use, they tried other artefacts rather than only dictionaries to look for more information related to

⁹⁷ See Extract 6.62 in Chapter 6

⁹⁸ See Extract 6.63 and 6.64 in Chapter 6

⁹⁹ See an example: Extract 4.16 in Chapter 4

¹⁰⁰ See an example in Extract 4.7 in Chapter 4

¹⁰¹ For example: Figure 4.9 and Extract 4.44 in Chapter 4

subject-related vocabulary, such as their origin, theories and pictures, to help them understand it¹⁰². They also drew more attention to other aspects of word knowledge to enrich their learning of academic vocabulary, e.g. their collocations and pronunciation¹⁰³. Similarly, there were fewer formal classes during the third term in the Ryder site, where Wu and Xia were able to have more free time to plan their learning as well as their daily life. Like Ke, the two participants exercised their agency to discover the strategies in which they were interested during this period, and tended to learn vocabulary for their pleasure. They both realise the importance of enjoyment which can motivate them to learn and enhance their learning outcomes. Ushioda (2008: 21-2) also points out that the learners who are able to sustain their own pleasure, enjoyment, interest and challenge of learning are likely to display much higher levels of involvement in learning and interact with the learning process more effectively. In relation to their strategic awareness, Wu and Xia both explored more enjoyable ways of learning vocabulary and rote learning became marginalised during the third term. For example, Wu tried many different word games (e.g. ‘Word feud’ and ‘Blueprint3D’) to help him learn words¹⁰⁴. When he realised that his VL became dull and repetitive, he would then explore a new game. Because of this continuous exploration, he could keep his interest in VL and showed great involvement in SVL. This supports Ushioda’s (2008) statement above. His motivation in VL also appears to be dynamic over time (see also Alexander, 2006).

By comparison with the Wolfson and Ryder sites, conversely there was an increase in students’ workloads and teaching hours during the last semester in the Opal site.

¹⁰² For example: Extract 4.37 and 4.41 in Chapter 4

¹⁰³ See examples: Extract 4.40 and 4.45; Figure 4.10 in Chapter 4

¹⁰⁴ See examples: Extract 4.51, 4.52 in Chapter 4.

In particular, some revision classes were added to help them prepare for exams and assignments and students had much more coursework from the middle to the end of the second semester. During the early period of their second semester, both Ji and Qa still intended to increase contact with their daily life in order to benefit their VL. As they had less coursework during this time, they could spend more time immersing in the British culture and building more vocabulary¹⁰⁵. However, from the middle of the second semester, they appeared to spend much less time learning vocabulary through visiting other places due to their increased academic workloads. In order to adjust to this new academic milieu, they tended to deploy more VLSs or strategy clusters to improve their subject-related vocabulary rather than studying general vocabulary at home¹⁰⁶.

From the preceding discussion, the milieus of teaching and learning appear to differ in each university site. The participants modify their SVL to be appropriate to the changes in the course design, school hours and assessment of each specific university site over time. However, individual differences in strategy choice/use between the two participants who are from the same university site still occur as result of their different agency as learners and specific contexts¹⁰⁷. Their dynamic SVL throughout the academic year reflects both cognitive and sociocultural influences. This supports the recent work of Oxford and Schramm (2007) and Gao and Zhang (2011) in which they all suggest using interrelated theoretical perspectives to explore learners' strategic learning in a richer way. From a cognitive perspective, my evidence suggests not only

¹⁰⁵ See examples: Extract 5.52 and 5.53; Figure 5.22 in Chapter 5

¹⁰⁶ See examples: Extract 5.54 and 5.55 in Chapter 5

¹⁰⁷ For example: compare Bo with Ke, see Extract 6.55 and 6.62 in Chapter 6; compare Ji with Qa, Extract 5.45, Figure 5.18 and Extract 5.50, Photo 5.13 in Chapter 5; compare Wu and Xia, Extract 4.52, 4.48 and 4.55 in Chapter 4

that the participants have the will and capacity to modify their strategy use, but also that they applied their agency to improve and regulate their SVL in relation to their own goals and interests. Their choice of how to modify their strategy use also appears to result from the interaction which, from a sociocultural perspective, is located in a nexus which comprises both agency and their specific context of teaching and learning. Their improvement in strategy use seems to be an ongoing process as long as there are new environmental challenges. Therefore, the contribution to VLS research made by my study is that different university milieus enable deeper and more varied insights to be gained into SVL (see also Duff, 2008: 113; Yin, 2009: 53) and it also sheds light on the complexity of their dynamic strategic processes through incorporating the concept of agency and discussing their individual differences from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective.

7.3.1.2 Varying degrees of consciousness

The evidence from my study reveals that the participants do not appear to be fully aware of when and how to learn a word and which words need to be learned all the time, and they show different degrees of consciousness during the process of learning vocabulary in a particular setting or across different settings at a micro-contextual level. Previous work such as Ellis (1994) and Hulstijn (2003) tends to focus on either conscious or unconscious processes in VL, but dynamic degrees of consciousness involved in the process of SVL appear to be relatively neglected addressed. For example, in my study, Xia was conscious of employing a strategy of attentive listening to learn the word ‘crowded’ when listening to the announcement in the train¹⁰⁸. Initially, she did not plan to combine this strategy with other strategies to practise the

¹⁰⁸ See Extract 4.55 in Chapter 4

word. Until she later wrote a text message in the train and used its synonym, this moment reminded her of the usefulness of the word and raised his consciousness to deploy a strategy to consolidate it. She then practised using it repeatedly in the message to reinforce her memory¹⁰⁹.

By contrast, Ji reported that sometimes she was not able to be consciously aware that some situations, like interacting with local people, were VL opportunities, and tended to ignore the unknown words (e.g. when hearing them from local people). As a result, she did not make any strategic efforts to learn the words in these situations¹¹⁰. Like Ji, Wu also had no intention of employing any strategies to discover the unknown word when encountering it which he forgot how to express in English in the conversation with his friend¹¹¹. Instead, he deployed a communication strategy to help him carry on the conversation. In a different setting, the moment when he heard the word again in a radio programme raised his strategic awareness that it was useful to learn this word and then consciously deployed a sequential cluster of strategies to enhance his learning. Therefore, consciousness appears to play an important role in learners' SVL. My evidence above suggests that a strategic action undertaken with a goal, a plan and evaluating knowledge which all involve learners' conscious awareness (see also Macaro, 2006: 327). If the participants cannot be consciously aware that an activity is a VL opportunity, they would not make any strategic effort associated with VL. If they were not able to consciously identify any strategies associated with VL, the actions should probably be simply referred to as learning behaviour and not strategies (see also Dörnyei, 2009: 132-5).

¹⁰⁹ See Extract 4.55 and Photo 4.18 in Chapter 4

¹¹⁰ See an example in Extract 5.22a in Chapter 5

¹¹¹ See Extract 4.54 in Chapter 4

From the preceding discussion, word frequency and the perceived usefulness of a word appear together to influence the learners' consciousness relating to their SVL¹¹². Most importantly, from a sociocultural perspective, their consciousness seems to be raised through interacting with their particular settings at a micro-contextual level or milieus at an intermediate-contextual level. In particular, their teachers can be important mediating agents who promote their awareness of learning vocabulary and develop their consciousness to deploy certain strategies. For example, in one particular lesson, Qa participated in the group discussion with his peers who were all from China. As he did not consider the discussion as a language learning activity at the beginning, he decided to speak Chinese to ensure the clarity of their understanding. However, his strategy choice changed and his conscious awareness of learning vocabulary was growing when his teacher participated in their discussion¹¹³. The teaching approach also appears to be an important aspect of a particular setting to interact with the participants' strategy choice. For instance, the indirect vocabulary teaching developed Bo's and Ke's linguistic awareness which led them to consciously employ a number of strategies to improve their word knowledge in a particular lesson¹¹⁴.

Furthermore, from an intermediate-contextual level, their consciousness of what kinds of word information to learn and how to learn it appears to be closely related to their learning milieus. For example, by comparison with their learning milieu in China, most of the participants tended to face with many more communicative demands in the

¹¹² See another example: Extract 5.55 in Chapter 5

¹¹³ See Extract 5.35 in Chapter 5

¹¹⁴ See Extract 6.12, 6.13 and 6.14 in Chapter 6

UK. In relation to their new learning milieu, they became more aware of the importance of usage and pronunciation of vocabulary and consciously deployed various clusters of VLSs to enrich these aspects of word knowledge¹¹⁵.

One contribution to VLS research made by my study is that it suggests a more complex process associated with VL i.e. a movement from having lower levels of consciousness of learning behaviour to higher levels of consciousness of strategic actions discussed above from interrelated theoretical perspectives, although this is mainly examined from a cognitive approach in the previous research (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Cohen, 1998; Macaro, 2006; Griffiths, 2008). Not only does the study look at the dynamic degrees of consciousness involved in the process of SVL from a cognitive perspective, but also suggests that learners' conscious awareness cannot be isolated from their sociocultural context and can be mediated through culturally constructed artefacts (e.g. VOCABlog¹¹⁶) and sociocultural practices (see also Wertsch, 1985).

7.3.1.3 Inconsistencies

My evidence also suggests that their strategic approaches, awareness and strategy use are not always consistent in the process of SVL. For example, Wu stressed that avoiding thinking Chinese can be a useful way to develop his vocabulary knowledge in his data but he translated Chinese into English words in the actual learning processes¹¹⁷. He seemed not be consistent in what he perceived as useful. Because of

¹¹⁵ See examples: Extract 4.23, 4.35, 4.40 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.47 in Chapter 5; Extract 6.44 and 6.45 in Chapter 6

¹¹⁶ See examples: Extract 4.38 and 4.55 in Chapter 4

¹¹⁷ See an example: Extract 4.7 and 4.57 in Chapter 4

his linguistic weakness, he could not learn every new word through the mediation of the target language, and matching Chinese with English words seemed to be used as a private speech to help him think which word can be more appropriate to the textual context (see also Lantolf and Thorne, 2006: 90-4).

The inconsistencies between the participants' strategic approach, strategic awareness and their actual strategy use seem to occur as a result not only of their personal factors (e.g. linguistic weakness and perceived cultural differences¹¹⁸), but also the complex interplay between their strategy choice and specific contexts. For example, Bo perceived a hard copy monolingual English dictionary to be more useful than his E-dictionary because he found that the information in the hard copy, which his teacher provided in the class, was richer and more reliable. However, he actually explored the word information through using his E-dictionary in one particular lesson and his strategy use was inconsistent with his strategic approach and awareness. This was because the distribution of the hard-copy of dictionaries (one copy between two students) restricted his access to the hard copies in that particular setting¹¹⁹.

Wu's strategy use was also not consistent with his strategic approach. He pointed out that it was an effective way to enrich his word knowledge through interacting with others but he rarely employed this social strategy outside the classroom because of the isolated social network with his foreign friends. During his early period in the UK, he tried to make some foreign friends but his willingness to maintain his friendship with

¹¹⁸ See an example: Extract 4.30 in Chapter 4

¹¹⁹ See Extract 6.10 in Chapter 6

them was restricted by his perceived cultural distance and different interests¹²⁰. Therefore, the inconsistency between his strategic approach and actual strategy use outside the classroom appears to result from the interplay between his own willingness and social milieu.

My evidence also suggests that the participants' inconsistencies between their strategic approach, strategic awareness and strategy use appear to be dynamic during the academic year. For example, in the first term, Xia who was from the Ryder site believed that recording vocabulary in her textbooks or handouts was more useful than in a vocabulary notebook, because she found that these materials could provide textual context to help her understand and remember the words but the notebook cannot¹²¹. However, she started using the vocabulary notebook again during the end of the second term and showed that the notebook can also be meaningful by adding example sentences in it¹²². This strategic action was inconsistent with her previous strategic approach and the negative view of using this strategy turned to be more positive. However, using the vocabulary notebook became marginalised again during the third term when she found that reviewing the notebook repeatedly was no longer enjoyable. Her perceived usefulness and actual usefulness of VLSs appear to vary over time and her agency seems to play an important role in managing the SVL dynamically.

The inconsistencies between learners' strategic awareness and strategy use can also vary across different settings. As mentioned above, Bo's actual dictionary use was not able to be consistent with his strategic awareness due to the constraints of one

¹²⁰ See Extract 4.30 in Chapter 4

¹²¹ See Extract 4.29 in Chapter 4

¹²² See Extract 4.56 in Chapter 4

particular classroom setting. However, in a different lesson, when his teacher provided each student with a hard copy of a dictionary, he used it to discover the word information instead of his E-dictionary. In this particular arrangement of the material resources, the strategy use can be consistent with his strategic awareness.

My evidence confirms the findings of Fan's (2003) early work. The author conducted a large scale study on the vocabulary strategy use of Hong Kong learners in general through a VLS questionnaire and showed that discrepancies existed between the frequency of use, perceived usefulness and the actual usefulness of VLSs. Like Fan's (2003) work, the evidence from my study also sheds light on the complexity involved in strategy use which relatively little empirical VLS research has investigated. Most importantly, my qualitative data collected from different methods provides a deeper understanding from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective of why this complexity occurs; it suggests a dynamic relationship between strategic approach, strategic awareness and actual strategy use over time and across settings.

7.3.2 Dynamic strategic learning from the Chinese to the British context

Strategy use of Chinese learners has been examined in many cross-cultural studies, and the authors suggest that the learners' cultural and educational background seems to have a strong influence on their ways of learning and choice in strategy use (Reid, 1987; Melton, 1990; Bedell and Oxford, 1996; Gu, 2003). In particular, depending on their cultural background, it has been claimed that many Chinese learners have a preference for repetition and memorisation strategies (Gu and Johnson, 1996; Gu, 2005). My study does not undervalue these previous studies, but argues that my small, but rich, sample of Chinese learners are not culturally determined (see also Watkins

and Biggs, 1996) and suggests that we should look at their SVL from a more dynamic perspective.

Indeed, my evidence reveals that some participants are likely to relate to their previous VL experiences in China when making their strategy choice in the UK, particularly during their early phase¹²³. However, the influence of their previous experience(s) should not be overemphasised. As mentioned above, the participants in my study appeared to manage their SVL dynamically in relation to their particular settings, milieus in the UK as well as the British culture more generally. They were likely to modify their strategic approaches and replace their previous strategy use by deploying new strategies or strategy clusters appropriate to the British context (see also Volet and Renshaw, 1995; Parks and Raymond, 2004).

By comparison with the participants' previous experiences in China, the results of my study suggest differences in findings of their SVL in shifting contexts from China to Britain at a more macro level. A number of previous research studies also show differences in VLS use between SL and FL environments or L1 and FL learning environments (e.g. Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown, 1999; Leeke and Shaw, 2000; Parks and Raymond, 2004; Wang and Gieve, 2008). They tend to report some general patterns of differences or changes in strategy use across contexts, but the degree of variability among individual learners appears to be relatively neglected. In this subsection, with regard to the results of my study, I suggest some differences in their strategy use in shifting contexts, which are shared amongst either all the participants

¹²³ See examples: Extract 4.5 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.13 in Chapter 5; and Extract 6.21 in Chapter 6

or some of the participants. Most importantly, I stress their dynamic processes of SVL after moving from the Chinese to British contexts and discuss their variations in strategy use among the individual learners at a more micro-contextual level. As they study in three different university sites, I also contextualise their strategic learning and compare it with their previous experiences in China. These are the contributions which my study makes to VLS research.

Firstly, compared with their learning experiences in China, all the participants except Bo¹²⁴ tend to experience more classroom interaction with their peers and a more inductive way of teaching in the IFP programme¹²⁵. In relation to this more communicative teaching approach and interactive teaching arrangement, they tend to combine more social strategies (e.g. asking their teachers for word explanation or seeking support from their peers) with other strategies (such as checking a dictionary and recording the target word) to support their VL in the classes compared with their previous experiences at Chinese schools, particularly in the interactive activities which their British teachers arranged¹²⁶.

The results of my study confirm the finding of Wang and Gieve's (2008) study that the learners were likely to deploy social strategies in a more communicative classroom.

However, my results are inconsistent with their another finding that they were more

¹²⁴ As mentioned in Chapter 6, unlike other participants, Bo attended a one-year A-level programme before coming to the UK. In this programme, subjects were taught by both British and Chinese teachers mainly via the language of English. He also took a one-to-one English speaking practice session every day in a private language school. He experienced both communicative and teacher-centred ways of teaching in these two courses in China.

¹²⁵ See examples: Extract 4.1, 4.2, 4.13 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.1, 5.2, 5.9, 5.10 in Chapter 5; Extract 6.6 and 6.12 in Chapter 6

¹²⁶ See examples: Extract 4.12 and 4.16 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 in Chapter 5; Extract 6.9b, 6.25 in Chapter 6

able to access daily communicative opportunities after moving to the target language environment and employed more social strategies in their VL outside the classroom. Their study appears to lack consideration of individual differences in strategy choice and use. In relation to my study, for example, unlike other participants, Bo had greater opportunities to learn vocabulary through communicating with proficient speakers of English in both an A-level programme and a private school before coming to the UK. In particular, he had a personal English tutor and they practised English including vocabulary verbally together everyday. He was very satisfied with the learning outcome and acknowledged a big improvement in learning vocabulary through the dialogic strategy processes. However, by contrast, he was aware that his VL was regressing during the period when taking the IFP course in the UK, and his learning, social and living milieus in the Wolfson site became important factors to restrict his access to communicative opportunities outside the classroom¹²⁷. Therefore, individual differences need to be taken into consideration, and not every learner is able to or is willing to learn vocabulary in a more communicative way outside the classroom after moving from the FL to the target language environment in relation to their different educational background, agency, and milieus¹²⁸.

Furthermore, Wang and Gieve also neglected variations in the use of social strategies among individual learners over time or within a particular setting and did not address the complexity involved in their strategy development. In relation to my study, for example, Ji, Xia and Wu demonstrated less willingness to select social strategies during their early phase in the UK. In particular, their language barrier and uneasy

¹²⁷ See examples: Extract 6.17 and 6.18 in Chapter 6

¹²⁸ See examples: Extract 4.30 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.13 and 5.22a in Chapter 5

relationships with their teachers or peers seem to be two factors which could restrict their strategy choice of social strategies¹²⁹. However, they became more willing to select social strategies after their language ability improved and they had closer and friend-like relationships with their teacher and peers. They increasingly realised that their VL could benefit from social interactions¹³⁰. This confirms the finding of Winke and Abbuhl (2007)'s study which shows that interacting with teachers or peers can allow students to test their hypotheses about the target vocabulary and receive feedback on those hypotheses. Drawing on sociocultural theory, vocabulary learners' problem-solving processes are verbalised in an interactive or collaborative dialogue which can mediate their thinking process by assistance (or scaffolding) from more capable others and help them enhance their VL (see also Vygotsky, 1978; Williams and Burden, 1997; Swain, 2000).

Secondly, according to the participants, their high school teachers or the teachers of IELTS preparation classes tended to play a central role in their English lessons. The teachers selected vocabulary and word information which they perceived was important to teach, or for students to study after class. In relation to this teaching approach, they were likely to choose recording strategies and noted down the words which their teachers emphasised in their classes¹³¹. In contrast, their British teachers appeared to offer them more opportunities to explore vocabulary with other peers or discover by themselves. The teachers encouraged students to make own interpretations and share ideas, and tried to provide feedback and input related to

¹²⁹ See examples: Extract 4.7 and 4.21 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.13 and 5.22a in Chapter 5

¹³⁰ See an example Extract 4.21 and 4.22 in Chapter 4

¹³¹ See examples: Extract 5.1 and 5.2 in Chapter 5

students' actual needs in the presentation stage. My evidence¹³² suggests that the participants are likely to exercise their agency in relation to this more learner-centred teaching and make more varied strategic efforts to discover the words which they needed in the classes. Therefore, a more collaborative teaching approach can raise learners' awareness of problematic aspects of their vocabulary knowledge and enable them to make more of own decisions of how to deal with the problems and improve the knowledge. Through negotiation with their teachers or peers, learners' motivation in deploying VLSs can be mediated by the social setting and a sense of 'personal agency' also appears to develop in this interactive learning process. This reflects the work of Rueda and Moll (1994: 120) and Ushioda (2007: 13).

With regard to the IELTS preparation, most participants (except Qa) took an IELTS-oriented course before coming to the UK and the strategic advice of their language teachers seemed to mediate their strategy choice of what kinds of vocabulary need to be learned and how to memorise the words¹³³. After enrolling in the IFP programme in the UK, some participants intended to (Ji and Wu) or were required (Bo and Ke) to take the IELTS test in order to continue their further degrees in the British universities. By comparison with their previous learning milieus, there were no lessons provided for the IELTS test by the IFP programme in the Opal and Ryder sites. Although the IFP programme in the Wolfson site offered several IELTS preparation lessons during the third term, their foci tended to be on exam skills rather than vocabulary or VLSs. Faced with their new learning milieu, these four participants made more of their own strategic efforts to improve vocabulary for the IELTS test. In

¹³² See examples: Extract 4.13 and 4.17 in Chapter 4; Extracts 5.10 and 5.11 in Chapter 5; Extract 6.9b and 6.12 in Chapter 6

¹³³ See examples: Extract 4.3 in Chapter 4; Extract 5.5 in Chapter 5; Extracts 6.2 and 6.8 in Chapter 6

particular, unlike the participants in the other two sites, in the Wolfson site Bo and Ke were required to take the IELTS test at the end of the programme. Apart from the coursework, IELTS results were also a big factor in deciding whether they were accepted by British universities, including the University of Wolfson. In relation to this different entrance requirement, they appear to devote more time and effort to developing their vocabulary for the IELTS test and their SVL tends to be more intensive than other participants¹³⁴, although they both had a lot of coursework to do after class during this period. Achieving the exam success seems to be an important extrinsic goal which motivates them to learn IELTS vocabulary specifically and display greater involvement in the processes of SVL. This result is inconsistent with the findings of some previous research (Fransson, 1984; Amabile and Hennessy, 1992) which suggest that extrinsically motivated learners are less likely to engage in creative thinking processes and make strategic efforts. Therefore, it seems to be more important that learners are able to internalise them whether motivational factors are intrinsic or extrinsic and then can apply their agency to manage their SVL effectively (see also Ushioda, 2008: 22).

My evidence also suggests that strategic advice which was offered by their language teachers in China and other friends gave some insights into their SVL for the IELTS preparation in the UK. In the light of their teachers' strategic advice, Ji, Bo and Ke all tried to identify their own weaknesses and manage their SVL in a more selective and purposeful way. Their capacity for strategic self-regulation, including the capacity for metacognition, for combining strategies effectively in a particular setting, appears to

¹³⁴ See examples: Extract 6.49 to 6.57, Figures 6.15 and 6.16 in Chapter 6

develop by comparison with their previous VL for the IELTS in China¹³⁵. From a sociocultural perspective, strategy instruction/advice seems to play a supporting role in learners' strategy development. This is why the importance of VLS instruction has been often stressed in the literature (e.g. Nation, 1994; Schmitt, 2000; Nyikos and Fan, 2007; Mizumoto and Takeuchi, 2009). Most importantly, to develop their SVL, like Bo, eventually learners should be able to internalise strategy instruction/advice, and reproduce their own strategic approaches in relation to their contexts rather than being passive recipients of strategy instruction and shift from other-regulation to strategic self-regulation. Therefore, both sociocultural and cognitive approaches seem to contribute to the understanding of the development of learners' strategic self-regulation (see also Oxford and Schramm, 2007: 50-5).

Thirdly, compared with the teaching content and assignments of English classes in China, the four participants (Wu, Xia, Bo and Ke) in the Ryder and Wolfson sites were much less likely to have English lessons or assignments specifically related to vocabulary. As mentioned above, their language teachers were also less likely to decide the vocabulary they should study after class, although the teachers emphasised useful words and offered some strategic advice during the lessons. Within this learning milieu, my evidence suggests that they appeared to have more freedom to build the words which they thought necessary or were interested in outside the classroom¹³⁶. In relation to their learning goals, needs and specific contexts, they made their own choice of what vocabulary to learn and how to learn it¹³⁷.

¹³⁵ See examples: Extract 5.45 and 5.46, Photo 5.13 and 5.14, Figure 5.17 in Chapter 5; Extract 6.51 and 6.55, Figure 6.16 in Chapter 6

¹³⁶ See examples: Extract 4.49 and 4.53 in Chapter 4; Extract 6.21 and 6.23 in Chapter 6

¹³⁷ See examples: Extract 4.37 and 4.41 in Chapter 4; Figure 6.10 and 6.11 in Chapter 6

Unlike the other two university sites, in the Opal site there was one module during the first semester which specifically focused on vocabulary. According to the two participants (Ji and Qa) and my observation data, their language teacher combined strategy instruction with her vocabulary teaching. This integration seems to help the learners develop new strategies or strengthen existing ones (see also Oxford and Schramm, 2007). In contrast, their high school teachers tended to focus on teaching word knowledge and grammar translation and were less likely to provide strategic advice for VL. In the light of their British teacher's strategy instruction¹³⁸, my evidence suggests that their knowledge of how to make use of a vocabulary notebook and a monolingual dictionary to help them build vocabulary develops. However, there also appears to be some individual differences in using their vocabulary notebooks in relation to their different previous experiences and learning goals¹³⁹.

However, at the end of the first semester, Qa and Ji seemed to become less positive about the use of vocabulary notebooks. They commented that the ways that their teacher decided what kinds of information needed to be recorded and checked their vocabulary notebooks every week demotivated them. This suggests that strategy instruction needs to support the learner through interactive dialogue, sharing and observation; and provide necessary assistance rather than judge the learner's strategies according to teachers' own values. In particular, learners' strategy sharing through group discussions or group work can be beneficial. For example, in the second semester, Ji and Qa had another language teacher whose requirement was different

¹³⁸ See example: Extract 5.15 in Chapter 5

¹³⁹ See examples: Extract 5.16, Figure 5.6; Extract 5.17, Photo 5.3 and 5.4 in Chapter 5

from their previous teacher and did not ask students to follow a certain format to record vocabulary. She gave them more freedom to record the information which they thought useful and also encouraged them to share their ideas about how to organise their vocabulary in the class. This kind of strategy-sharing instruction seems to help them learn strategies from others and strengthen their autonomy to evaluate and choose strategies according to their personal needs¹⁴⁰. This finding supports the study of Hourigan and Murray (2010) in which they suggest that the students develop their LLSs through sharing and discussing them with their classmates in their blogs which are integrated into the language teaching. Therefore, to improve their strategy instruction, teachers need to encourage learners to share strategic approaches with them and other peers in a positive and non-judgemental way and seek feedback from students about their strategy instruction (see also Holliday, 2003).

¹⁴⁰ See examples: Extract 5.38 and 5.39 in Chapter 5

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This thesis reported on a multiple-case study exploring six international Chinese students' SVL during the academic year when taking the IFP course at three British universities. A synthesis between cognitive and sociocultural approaches was created, and interrelated theoretical perspectives were applied to understand learners' processes of SVL and enrich previous theories of VLSs. In order to improve the reliability of the research findings and enrich the results, methodological triangulation was used to apply different research methods to each student case, including classroom observation, interview, online diary and photovoice. In the light of my interrelated theoretical framework, the six cases were not only studied individually, but also were related to their contexts at different levels, including the learners' milieus (at an intermediate-contextual level), their particular settings (at a micro-contextual level) and the broader British culture (at a macro-contextual level).

The analysis of the data illustrates the processes whereby the participants managed their SVL in relation to their contexts through incorporating the concepts of agency and mediation from both a cognitive and a sociocultural perspective. Summarising the key findings, my evidence suggests that their SVL appeared to be a temporally and contextually situated phenomenon, and their strategy choice and strategy use result from the complex interplay between their agency, contexts (including the British culture, learning milieu and particular settings) and personal factors (e.g. learning goals). To enhance their VL, the participants tended to select or combine a number of VLSs rather than individual strategies, and various types of strategy clusters which

they tended to deploy were identified including dialogic sequential clusters, strategic circles, recycled strategy clusters and combinations of strategy clusters. Individual differences in selecting what strategies formed these clusters at a micro-contextual level also occurred as a result of different agency (e.g. willingness and self-regulated capacity), contextual conditions (e.g. social and material resources), learning purposes (e.g. to build general vocabulary or subject-related words) and prior knowledge (e.g. previous learning experiences). Furthermore, the results of my study suggest that the participants appeared to operate their SVL as a dynamic system. Firstly, they tended to construct their strategic learning appropriate to the unfamiliar contexts which arose from the changes in their learning milieus throughout the academic year in the UK (at a more micro level) and the differences in shifting contexts (i.e. from China to Britain at a more macro level). Secondly, participants' conscious awareness of strategy use appeared to vary within a particular setting or across different settings at a micro-contextual level. Thirdly, their strategic approaches, awareness and strategy use were not always consistent and might contradict each other in the process of SVL.

Based on the research findings, there are some recommendations and implications to be provided to both vocabulary learners (esp. international students) and language teachers.

8.1 Recommendations for vocabulary learners

As we have seen, the context of everyday life in the UK (including British culture) can provide vocabulary learners with a rich sociocultural milieu to encounter unknown words and facilitate SVL. However, in practice, their specific contexts

might facilitate or restrict their accesses to VL opportunities. Therefore, international students should exercise their agency and discover and make use of various resources (including both socially mediating agents and material artefacts) which can be accessible in their particular settings to support their learning processes. To improve their SVL, it would be also useful to reflect on their learning experience in that particular setting and evaluate their learning outcome. These metacognitive efforts could help them develop their strategic awareness and select more useful learning settings to learn vocabulary later.

After entering the UK, international students tend to encounter differences in their academic, daily and social life from what they had in their home countries. Therefore, it would be important for them to monitor their SVL and modify their previous strategy use to be appropriate to the unfamiliar contexts which arise from the changes in their learning milieus (e.g. changes in the type of assessment, the requirement of coursework and teaching approaches and arrangements). In the light of my research findings, involving a range of metacognitive strategies into the process of SVL is necessary and they can be deployed to maintain their orchestration of strategies appropriate to their context. In particular, a circle of metacognitive strategies is suggested to improve the effectiveness of their VLSs.

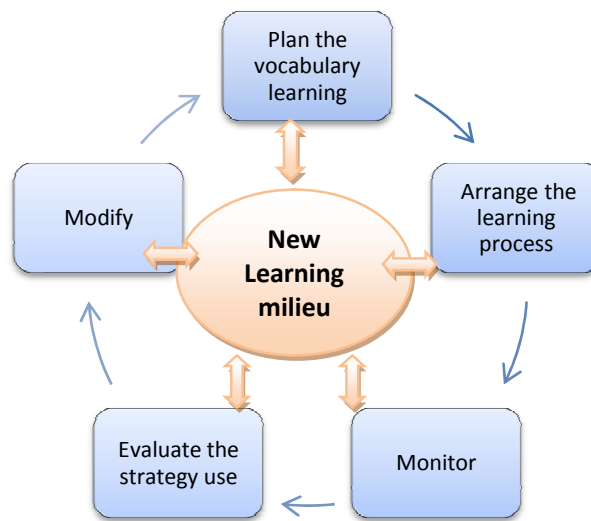


Figure 8.1 A circle of metacognitive strategies

Moreover, if social resources are available, it is useful to combine some social strategies with other strategies (i.e. dialogic strategy clusters) to enhance the effectiveness of strategy clusters and the quality of VL. Interacting with others (e.g. their teachers or peers) could allow students to test their hypotheses about the target vocabulary and receive feedback on those hypotheses. Their problem-solving processes are verbalised in an interactive or collaborative dialogue which can mediate their thinking process by assistance (or scaffolding) from more capable others (e.g. teachers and peers) and help them enhance their VL. From my study, perceived cultural differences and lower linguistic ability seem to be two main factors to restrict the participants to seeking help from the people who are not Chinese. Therefore, international students need be open to cultural differences and not to have any preconceptions of a country or culture. It is better not to worry too much about face and be confident to mix with local people especially in social occasions rather than keep isolated. For example, they can also join different students' societies (e.g. sport clubs, religious societies; art and music societies) in which they are interested so they can have more opportunities to speak English to people from different cultures. They

also can build more vocabulary and improve their language ability through increasing social communication with others.

Based on my findings, strategy instruction/advice seems to play a supporting role in students' strategy development. Therefore, to develop their SVL, students need to be open to one another's strategy advice and learn from others. Most importantly, eventually learners should be able to: internalise strategy instruction and advice; reproduce their own strategic approaches in relation to their contexts rather than being passive recipients of strategy instruction; and shift from other-regulation to strategic self-regulation. It is also necessary to seek further opportunities to share, reflect their strategic learning experiences and discuss their problems with other learners or more capable others when they feel dissatisfied with their learning outcome or they realise that they are no longer to enjoy their current process of SVL.

The results of my study also suggest that enjoyment appears to play an important role in the process of SVL. Therefore, students need to make further strategic efforts to explore some affective strategies and involved them in their clusters of strategies to maintain and generate their motivation for VL over time, for example, as my data suggested: the use of games; associating with some mediating artefacts (e.g. pictures, street signs) or a textual context; choosing some interesting English programmes; simplifying the learning process to make it easier and faster; and balancing VL and leisure time.

8.2 Suggestions for strategy instruction

Although this study focuses on the language learner, some suggestions for strategy instruction in the IFP or the pre-sessional English courses can be drawn out of the classroom observations and the participants' reflections. Firstly, it is necessary to integrate language teachers' strategic advice or their strategy instruction into their vocabulary teaching and this could help international students develop new strategies or strengthen existing ones. However, when suggesting VLSs, teachers need to be open to other students' strategies and consider students' previous learning experiences and learning goals and specific contexts. They should not judge students' strategic approaches according to their own experiences or values and be aware of individual differences in strategy use among students. My research findings also suggest that strategy instruction needs to support the student through interactive dialogue, sharing and observation; and provide necessary assistance rather than requiring them to use certain strategies. In particular, students' strategy sharing through group discussions or group work can be beneficial. Through negotiation with the teacher or peers in a positive and non-judgemental way, not only can students' motivation in trying new VLSs be raised, but also a sense of personal agency appears to develop in this interactive learning process. Furthermore, it is important to provide further care to seek students' feedback about their strategy instruction/advice which can help teachers improve it. From the feedback, they might also know what problems or difficulties which students encountered and can offer further advice which ensures their students develop from other-regulation to strategic self-regulation towards autonomy.

8.3 Limitations of the study and directions for future research

As a reflexive researcher, I experienced a transition from an etic (or outsider's position) to a more emic (or insider's) perspective through the research process, and I was also aware that there are a number of limitations in this study, including the probable influence of being a reflexive researcher, use of video in the classroom and the language choice of writing diaries.

Initially, the incentive which I provided for the participants was that I offered some support to their daily life difficulties. Later on they also asked more extra help for language learning. I did share my language and vocabulary learning experiences with them. Such sharing may have influenced their strategic awareness in ways that had an impact on the research findings. However, sharing my experience with the participants enabled me to get close to them and retain their engagement in the research. This also enhanced the richness and depth of my findings.

Secondly, the participants had varied interests in keeping diaries or monitoring the quality of diaries over a period of time. I tried to spend extra time developing a good rapport with them; however, attrition in the number of participants while keeping diaries still occurred. Thirdly, although the classroom observation made an important contribution to my study, sometimes the students might have behaved differently when they knew that their behaviour was recorded by a video camera. This might affect the findings from the classroom observation when I carried out during the very early phase. However, after a few sessions, the students became naturalised into the video camera and many of them told me that they forgot that it was in the classroom.

Fourthly, as they had higher motivation to practise and use English, most participants chose to write their online diaries in English rather than Chinese. However, they might have had a limited English language ability to express themselves and not be able to truly reflect their thought processes through using English. Their writing in English may limit the quality of the diary data. In order to improve the quality, I tried to ask them to write an extra explanation in Chinese in the VOCABlog and also conducted some more interviews to ask them to explain the points which I felt uncertain about.

Furthermore, as the data from my study focused on the participants' strategic learning during the academic year in the UK rather than in China or after the IFP course, it was difficult to explore the degree of their changes in strategy use from China to the UK or whether their changes after arrival in the UK would turn into more permanent ones later. However, these can be also directions for future research. Longitudinal studies would be very helpful to trace learners' strategic learning experiences from their home country to an English speaking country and understand better their changes in shifting contexts. More attempts can be made to collect their data at different phases from both contexts and look for their actual changes. Besides investigating international students' strategy changes during their early period in the UK, long-term student sojourners' strategy development over time in the target-language environment would be also an important aspect for future researchers to explore. Although this multiple-case study reflected the perspectives of a relatively small sample of international Chinese learners, the findings might well be extended through a mixed method study of a greater number of students on different types of courses at more universities as well as the view of their teachers on these students' strategy use

to enrich the findings and provide more insights to the VLS research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 (for Chapter two *Literature Review*)

Appendix 1.1 Selected definitions of language learning strategies

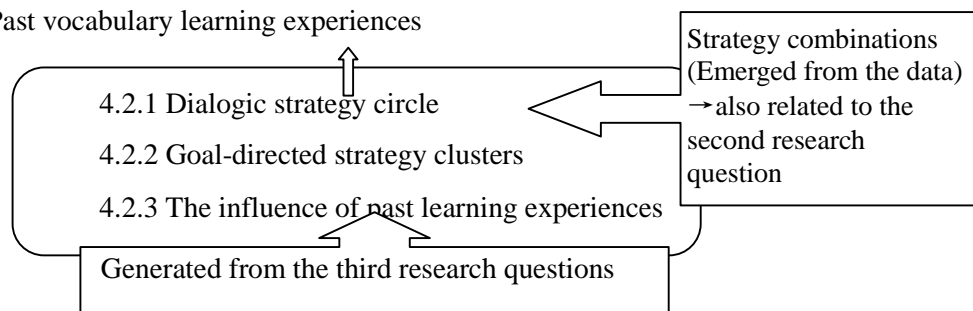
Source	Definition
Selinker 1974 p. 40	<i>Learner strategies are culture-bound to some extent and are either conscious or sub-conscious.</i>
Rubin 1975 p. 43	<i>The techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge.</i>
Tarone 1980 p. 419	<i>An attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language.</i>
Weinstein and Mayer 1983 p. 316	<i>Learning strategies can be defined as behaviours and thoughts in which a learner engages and which are intended to influence the learner's encoding process.</i>
Stern 1983 p. 405	<i>In our view strategy is best reserved for general tendencies or overall characteristic of the approach employed by the language learner, leaving techniques as the term to refer to particular forms of observable learning behaviour.</i>
Chamot 1987 p. 71	<i>Learning strategies are techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information.</i>
Oxford 1990 p. 8	<i>Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations.</i>
Griffiths 2008 p. 310	<i>Activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning.</i>

Appendix 1.2 Data presentation

Chapter 4 Student Xia and student Wu in the Ryder site

Grouping the main categories by time (generated from my research questions and theoretical framework):

4.2 Past vocabulary learning experiences



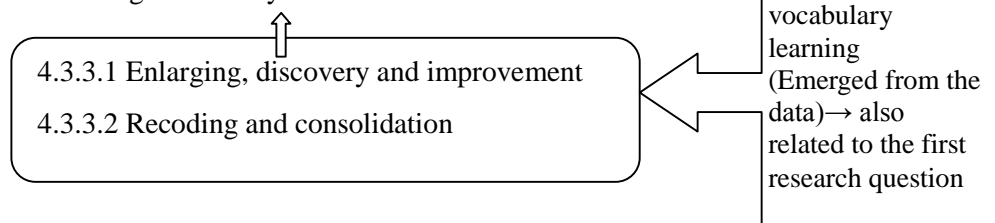
4.3 Strategic vocabulary learning in the UK

Grouping the subcategories by settings and activities (generated from my theoretical framework):

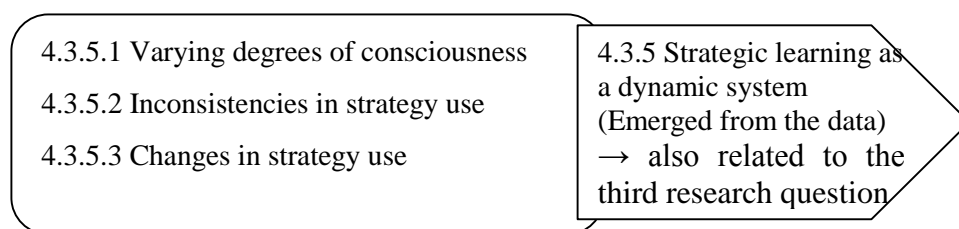
4.3.1 Classroom setting: interactive activities

4.3.2 Classroom setting: teacher's presentation

4.3.3 Learning vocabulary outside classroom



4.3.4 Learning vocabulary through enjoyment (Emerged from the data → also related to my theoretical framework)



Chapter 5 Student Qa and student Ji in the Opal site

Grouping the main categories by time (generated from my research questions and theoretical framework):

5.2 Past vocabulary learning experiences

5.3 The first semester in the UK

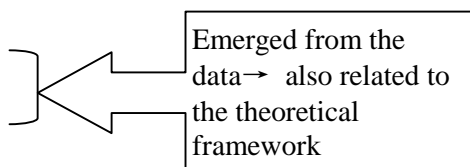
5.4 The second semester

Grouping the subcategories by settings (generated from my theoretical framework):

- 5.3.1 Classroom setting
- 5.3.2 Out-of-class settings
- 5.4.3 Setting: at accommodation
- 5.4.4 Other out-of-class setting

Grouping the subcategories by modules

- 5.4.1 Academic English class
- 5.4.2 Subject-related modules



- 5.5. Changes in strategy use (generated from the third research question)

Chapter 6 Student Bo and student Ke in the Wolfson site

Grouping the main categories by time (generated from my research questions and theoretical framework):

- 6.2 Past vocabulary learning experiences
- 6.3 Strategic vocabulary learning in the UK

Grouping the subcategories by academic terms and settings (generated from my theoretical framework):

- 6.3.1 The first term: classroom setting
- 6.3.2 Out-of-class settings
- 6.3.3 The second term: in and outside classroom settings
- 6.3.4 The summer term
- 6.4. Changes in strategy use (generated from the third research question)

Appendix 1.3 Studies on de-contextualised vocabulary learning strategies

Study	Participants	Method	Results
Cohen and Aphek, 1980 (Longitudinal study in 5 weeks)	26 trained native-English-speaking learners of Hebrew (23 males and 3 females; ave. age 23)	Learners' self-report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Using previously formed associations most frequently. b) Generally high success rate across all four tasks for recall of words that were learners through association. c) There was a relatively high correlation between general second language proficiency and performance on recall based on association. d) A relationship was found between language aptitude and the ability to form associations
Brown and Perry, 1991 (Experimental design)	Six intact classes from the English institute at an American university (three were upper level and three were lower level)	A 40-item, multiple-choice test was constructed to test retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The combine keyword-semantic strategy increased retention and have better effect than employ the strategies (the keyword and semantic processing) alone. b) The keyword method facilitated VL for lower proficiency students.

Laufer and Osimo, 1991 (Experimental design)	Thirty university students of an English for Academic purposes (native speakers of Hebrew and Arabic)	An unexpected test was conducted to test their long-term retention	<p>a) The words that had been submitted to the second-hand cloze task were better remembered than the words that had not been submitted to it.</p> <p>b) The second-hand cloze embodies some characteristics of other memorization strategies, but is also avoids some of their limitations.</p>
Wang, Thomas and Ouellette, 1992 (Experimental design)	79 adult students (target language: French; native language English); 40 adult students (target language: Tagalog); 60 learners of Tagalog	Immediate and delay tests to compare the effectiveness between the keyword mnemonic and rote rehearsal	<p>a) Greater forgetting was found for the keyword condition than for the rote learning</p> <p>b) The keyword could serve as an effective retrieval cue for a brief time but pre-experimental associations may interfere retrieval of mnemonic image over time.</p>

Appendix 2 (for Chapter three *Methodology and Finding* chapters)

Appendix 2.1 Introduction to IFP in each site

IFP in Site A (Ryder)
English language requirements: Science: IELTS 5.0 Business I, Social Sciences and Arts & Humanities: IELTS 5.5, Law: IELTS 6.0
Course design: Modules which are chosen in terms of students' academic background and their intended degree programme are taught through the whole academic year from October 2011 to 2 June 2012, including: Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Economics, Mathematics, Law, Politics and Sociology, Business. At the same time, a module in Academic Skills which provides students with effective language and skills support through the three terms
Module in English language: Content-based approach The module has a specific content focus: urbanisation and globalisation. Based on this content, the module is designed to develop students' abilities, techniques and strategies in the use of English for academic purposes. The teaching materials are related to the concept of urbanisation and globalisation. The use of Blackboard, an online English learning platform, is also embedded in the module.
IFP in Site B (Wolfson)
English language requirements: IELTS 5.5
Course design: Discipline-specific approach: The programme includes several courses which are designed in terms of students' intended discipline. For example: The course which I chose to do the fieldwork is for Science and Engineering Course modules include Physics, Maths, IT or Economics, English and Study Skills. Another course is for Bio Medical Science . The course modules include: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, and English. These modules are taught through the three terms.
Module in English language: Every week also offers some extra English support lessons in the night The first term: it focuses on academic English skills The second term: it includes both the lesson for developing students' academic English skills and the lesson for preparing IELTS exams. The third term: Individual project
IFP in Site C (Opal)
English language requirements: IELTS 4.5
Course design Semester one: University English Semester two and three: a) compulsory modules: developing students' English and academic study skills in preparation for your future courses b) Optional modules: developing students' knowledge of academic subjects through modules related to your future course of study, e.g. Foundation Economics; Foundation Media studies. The use of Blackboard, an online learning platform, is also embedded in the semester two and three.
Module in English language Semester one (basic English skills): Improving students' English language abilities: writing, reading, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary. Semester two and three: focus on more academic English skills. For example, Reading skills: reading for specific academic purposes; comprehension at sentence and paragraph level; text analysis; skimming, scanning; and coping with new vocabulary. Writing skills: planning and drafting; paragraph structure; essay/report structure; Speaking skills: participating in discussions and expressing opinion; presentation skills. Listening skills: note-taking; listening for key words

Appendix 2.2 Consent forms

(1) Participant-consent form



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

Centre for Applied Linguistics

Dear Students,

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to take part in the present study. The purpose of this study is to understand how you learn vocabulary in a British learning environment and explore the process of your strategic vocabulary learning in the both formal setting (in your class) and outside of your classroom over your Foundation year.

Data collection of this study will involve:

- ✧ Attending your English classes to observe, video and audio record your strategic behaviours
- ✧ Interviewing you individually in your free time
- ✧ Using an online social network to load your vocabulary pictures and diaries about your vocabulary learning

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the project, either before participating, or during the time that you are participating. You are also free to decide not participate or to withdraw at any time.

If you want, I would be happy to share my findings with you after the research and offer some feedback for your vocabulary learning. I hope that you could understand better about your strategic vocabulary learning, use more appropriate strategies to help you learn vocabulary and develop your capacity for strategic self-regulation. These are the expected benefits associated with your participation.

If you are willing to participate in my research project, please sign and date the agreement in the space provided below.

Signature of participant:

Date:

Thank you for your participation,

Yours sincerely,

Isobel Kai-hui Wang, PhD Student, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL

Email: Kaihui.Wang@warwick.ac.uk

(2) Consent form for photovoice

The researcher has my permission to observe and analyse the photographs which I took.

-----Yes -----No

The researcher has my permission to access the photos, photo descriptions and reflections.

-----Yes -----No

The research has my permission to use the photographs and my audio-recording which record my descriptions and explanations of the photographs for her research purposes, as long as they do not identify me by name or thought other background information without my consent.

----Yes -----No

Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research.

Participant name (Please print):

Email address:

Participant signature:

Date:

(3) Photo release form

Return release to:

Isobel Kai-Hui Wang

PhD student,

Centre for Applied Linguistics,

University of Warwick,

Coventry,

CV4 7AL

Email: Kaihui.Wang@warwick.ac.uk

I give to _____ (Name of the researcher), its unlimited permission to copyright and use photographs that may include me in presentations, as long as they do not identify me by (tick your preferred way):

Name or through other background information _____

Both name and face (will block your face when present the photo)_____

I have the right to the right to withdraw my data from the investigation at any time.

Name of person photographed (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2.3 A reflective journal for my research

Diary one:

Some students started to explore the tools which I suggested for vocabulary learning and language learning in general in the VOCABlog and they also asked me to teach them how to use these tools to help them learn. For example, Ji asked me to teach her how to use Lingo (an online dictionary) to look up a word and record a word. I found a teaching video about Lingo and put it in the site so that allows all members could view it how to use Lingo. (03 Jan 2012, from my reflection journal)

Diary two:

This week, after our interview, the interviewee Bo asked me to listen to his presentation and give some comment as well. I decided to listen to his presentation on Sunday and try to give some feedback to help him. (22 Feb 2012, from my reflection journal)

Appendix 2.4 Observation

Appendix 2.4.1 Format for my fieldnotes

P1. Lesson _____ Time: _____ Class: _____ Teacher _____ Setting: _____
Class Activity One _____ (Participant A and B, Teacher, Peer and Objects and questions)
Comment:

Appendix 2.4.2 A sample of my fieldnotes

04/11/2011 Focus: WJ & CC

Classroom Activity One

a) Explain Vocabulary Individual Learner; T: Peer to ask your partner, then open the paper up & read

Activity 1. a):

CC: Explains E-E / also Guess the partner's description. * What problems

WJ: Explains → but the partner not sure her explanation → T came say: use sim

→ WJ then tried this way.

T: Give more information. Keep helping (Information - Gap)

(Remember note down at the end if you don't know the word, because you need to learn)

↳ Strategy instruction: * Would you do this? (Write the synonym)

Activity 1. b): Open up the paper, reads the instruction: Find the word

Peer: LWJ & LCQ work with their partner together: collaborating work

LWJ: check dictionary * T: Why use dictionary: use your brain better

LCQ & ...

Appendix 2.4.3 A sample of the classroom observation data

Observation 3 Ke and Bo 01 Feb 2012 sitting: CS1 + CS2 + Bo xxx Ke

151	Ke:	Yes it's pre'sent, we often heard Jo you	
152		pre'sent an idea ((writes down))this one 'our	
153		'refuse is collected...' its verb re'fuse,	
154		right?	
155			
156	Bo:	Yes 'refuse and re'fuse ((writes down))	
157		How about this one 'I can't refund your money'	
158		This is re'fund fund but how about its noun	
159			
160	Ke:	(...)oh I know if it's noun, stress is put on	
161		the first syllable and if it's verb, the	
162		stress is put on the second syllable, for	
163		example we just talk about the words record,	
164		and refuse ((speaks in Chinese))	
165			
166	Bo:	Yes, but does it work for every word? ((speaks	
167		in Chinese, checks his I-phone and shows to	
168		Ke))yes you are right, this is 'refund for	
169		its noun	
170	Ke:	Look at the dictionary (I-phone) you see	
171		((they both note down))	
172		((T walks around the room))	
173			
174	T:	Ok everyone finishes? I gonna to ask Bo to	See photo 9
175		read the first one out, Bo? everyone listen	
176		and see if you agree his word stress	
177			
178	Bo:	'I'm sorry but I re'fuse to ...'((read the	
179		sentence))	
180			
181	T:	Right good, the other one which goes with that	
182		is number 9, Ke you can do the number 9	
183	Ke:	'all our 'refuse is collected...'	
184			
185	T:	Ok very good what's the meaning of 'refuse?	
186			
187	Ke:	Rubbish	
188			
189	T:	Yes it's the rubbish so you got re'fuse it's	
190		the verb and 'refuse it's the noun (...)are you	
191		noticing a pattern?	
192			
193	S6:	All the nouns stress is on the first syllable	
194		and all the verbs stress is on the second	
195		syllable	
196			
197	T:	Yes ok did you all hear that?	
198			
199	Ss:	Yes	

Appendix 2.5 Interview

Appendix 2.5.1 A sample of the follow-up interview guides

In the classroom setting

Class Activity 1: Free talk/speaking: talk about the problems

1. Talk about 'superbug' and antibiotics: did you know them before? If not, How did you discover their meanings? When the teacher asked about these two words, you then shared your explanations to other students, do you like this way of sharing? Why?

Class Activity 2: Discussing the problems whether can be solved by technology and whether they exist in your country.

2. The teacher wrote: renewable energy, obesity and superbug: how did you do with these words? Do you think teachers' handwriting on the whiteboard helped you understand these words, how? Have you tried to use them in the discussion? Did you like discussing with your next neighbour? Why? Any support did you seek from your peers?

...

Outside of the classroom

Plan

- *Improving*
- *Monitor*
- *motivating yourself*

Attempts in learning vocabulary (General/Academic and Subject-specific) :

- *Build*
- *Discover: Dictionary*
- *Memorising: Similar way as before? Spend more time to memorise if not what did you do instead for vocabulary??/English?? Do you still try to remember them in the morning??*
- *Any memorable people friends, teachers or other people or artefacts—Help class?? Still go? What support did you seek from the teacher?? How useful to you??*
-

Attempts in consolidating vocabulary

- *How do you consolidate your vocabulary: like before you showed me that you reviewed the words in your IELTS MATERIALS?? (academic/daily life/subject-related)? How*

Strategic learning in different CONTEXTS (in class/home/outside home)--

- *Are the attempts used at home different from used in the class? (e.g. the ways of discovering/learning/building)*
- *How to practise? (orally, silent and written)*
-

Reflecting on your vocabulary learning process

- *Any good ideas or new ways you learned from your teacher or classmates in the class/ outside the classroom? Have you used it? Helpful?*

...

Appendix 2.5.2 A sample of follow-up interview data

Activity one:	001	IR:	我想跟你回顾一下关于第一个课堂活动，你在解释或是猜的词语的时候，又遇到任何困难吗？
	002		
	003	Ji:	有啊每当我在想enough的同义词的时候我一开始说的是efficient，但是后来Elaine过来
	004		
	005		后她就发出了质疑，我就觉得不对，但是我学
	006		sufficient这个词，但是当时就是想不起来
	007		后来Elaine提请我the letter starts
	008		with 's'，我这时突然想起来了。
	009	IR:	所以你对这些词是有印象的？
	010	Ji:	嗯是的，我都学过这些词又一个大概的印象
	011		再加上partner并没有给我很多信息知识在
	012		重复说一个单词，就很难猜了
	013	IR:	关于这些没猜出来的词，后来当答案的时候
	014		你都认识吗？
	015	Ji:	认识，我觉得我大部分是认识只不过partner
	016		再解释的时候不太充分
	017	IR:	那你在每次上这个课的时候会复习一下这些单词
	018		吗？
	019	Ji:	会，像是昨天晚上，我就看了看老师说过得key
	020		words，告诉说出现频率比较高所以就再记了记
	021	IR:	你都怎么复习？
	022	Ji:	notebook比较少，主要是看handouts，因为
	023		老师上课以强调很容易就在上面勾一下，回家
	024		主要看它的意思还有拼写

English translation

	001	IR:	I'd like to talk about your first activity,
	002		when you explained or guessed the words with
	003		your partner, any difficulties you met?
	004	Ji:	Yes, a lot, e.g. when I explained the word
	005		'enough', I wanted to say its synonym
	006		'sufficient' but I didn't remember it clearly
	007		I said 'efficient', when the teacher heard it
	008		she questioned me and reminded me the correct
	009		one starts the letter 's', then I suddenly
	010		remembered it.
	011	IR:	so you knew 'sufficient' before?
	012	Ji:	yes, we learned it before
	013	IR:	how did you deal with these words with which you
	014		had problems?
	015	Ji:	Normally I first asked my partner, but he
	016		didn't explained clearly or told a little
	017		about the words, so felt difficult to guess
	018	IR:	as you said, these words were actually taught
	019		before, did you revise them before this lesson?
	020	Ji:	Yes, I did, I often review them the day before
	021		the lesson, like yesterday night, I selected
	022		some key words which my teacher stressed in
	023		the class before and reviewed them
	024	IR:	How did you review them?
	025	Ji:	I normally kept a note of them in my handouts
	026		in particular I highlighted the points which
	027		the teacher emphasised and then mainly looked
	028		at their meaning and spelling when reviewing
	029		them at home...

Appendix 2.5.3 A sample of the general interview guides

Ke's general interview based on his recent diaries

Plan: *'Following last week's plan, I read my notes what I already write in every class. To be honest, there is no denying that this is the most significant and basic method to learn vocabularies!!'* 1) Reading notes: what kinds of notes from the class 2) why do you think it is significant and why it is basic?? 2) **Plan:** *'After finishing every class, I spent about ten minutes to review what I learnt in this class this way only helps me to review what I already learnt, so in the following weeks, I will try to continue read BBC news.:* you started to plan your vocabulary learning process. how do you find this planning process: useful? Are there differences in your plan? What make you modify your plan?

Build notebook? How do you enlarge your vocabulary size (textbook/ outclass materials??) Record and review them?? Any other ways to build your vocabulary?

Discovery: *'When I wrote my essay, there was always have new word I did not know how to use it or the meaning of the word.'*—when you knew the Chinese but you didn't how to express in the writing how did you do ? still used an E-E dictionary?? *'but now I try to use online english-english dictionary, because it can let me know the correct meaning ??'* Do you mean C-E dictionary is not correct?? 'in British English and below the meaning?' What do you mean by this , I could find the example sentence, it will help me use this word in a correct way.—Any difficulties in using an E-E dictionary??

Memorising: *'I knew a good method through a book. It needs imagination to combine your home-language and foreign -language word to remember easily. I hope this method can help you to remember more words':* have you tried it and do you still think useful and would you like to keep using it?? How would you think this method by comparison with your previous methods?

Socio-cultural resources: Any **memorable people** friends, teachers or other people or useful **artefacts (e.g. IELTST VOCABULARY materials)** related to your vocabulary learning? How helpful? Do you try to create more opportunities to socialise with other people in English?

Assessment: Recent: Any assignments *affect your strategy use in learning/ memorising and improving vocabulary? In what ways??*

Subject-related –academic vocabulary: If you didn't know some subject-related vocabulary in the class how did you do?? How did you do with them after the class—How do you use dictionary to help you know them? Do you use different ways or similar ways to consolidate Subject-related –academic vocabulary?

Improvement: Have you identified any weaknesses/problems in vocabulary recently? Have you created any opportunities to solve these problems (e.g. *enlarge your vocabulary*). *Did you ask for other help? How useful? How do you do with teacher's feedback and errors?*

Appendix 2.5.4 A sample of general interview data

001	IR:	我记得你提过去 cinema 看电影不是一个很好的方法学习单词因为没有 subtitle, 你没办法查你不你不知道的单词, 是吗?	
002			
003			
004	Ke:	对刚开始的时候不是, 但是现在英语能力提高, 听力好了, 单词量提高了, 这样去看电影的话变成一种巩固单词的方法, 同时有些词也可以猜出来了通过语境。	
005			
006			
007			
008	IR:	你在这篇日记里也提到在看 steve jobs 的自传来学习单词, 你都是怎么学习的?	
009			
010	Ke:	现在不做这个了, 前一段时看, 我都是一边看, 遇到不知道的单词我就查英英词典还有有道的中文解释, 但是这样花时间特多, 现在没事间去这样看, 还有我都是晚上睡觉之前这样看, 有的时候在床上读到不知道的单词可能就查一下有道, 不想起来再去记到本子里, 也不想看英英解释了, 太慢了。还有最近要考雅思了, 我是要记更多的单词, 但是我觉得这类书不适合, 里边用的很所词不是很 academic, 所以我还是要找一些别的资料去准备雅思的单词。	
011			
012			
013			
014			
015			
016			
017			
018			
019			
020	IR:	那你能我讲一讲你都是怎么准备雅思单词的?	
021	Ke:	我是主要准备雅思的写作单词还有阅读单词是主要的一部分, 写作我会看一些好的例文从网上找, 然后看看他们都用什么好的词, 怎么用, 我也会查查英英的词典, 看看解释还有例句, 阅读的话我是听我的朋友说有一个网站, 上边有很多文章, 雅思出题的很多文章都是从那里找的, 我会每天看一篇, 从里面学单词...	
022			
023			
024			
025			
026			
027			

Translation

001	IR:	I remembered you mentioned before that it was not a good way to learn words through watching films in the cinema, right?	
002			
003			
004	Ke:	Yes, I wrote this in the diary before, I thought so before, but recently I feel my English improves and vocabulary size also increases, now I think it can be a nice way to build vocabulary as well, because when I knew many words already, you can guess and learn unknown words in relation to the context of the film	
005			
006			
007			
008			
009			
010			
011	IR:	Yes, you are right, and I think you also mentioned in the diary that you tried to build more words through reading the autobiography of Steve Jobs, can you explain more about your learning process?	
012			
013			
014			
015			
016	Ke:	Actually I stopped reading it now, I did this before, every night before I went to bed, I read it and when I found unknown words, I then checked them in both E-E and YD dictionaries But I found that it took too much time to check, understand and record these words, it was too slow. In particular, I need to take the IELTS soon, so I need to spend more time building IELTS vocabulary rather than this general vocabulary...	
017			
018			
019			
020			
021			
022			
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024			
025			

Appendix 2.6 VOCABlog

Appendix 2.6.1 Guidelines for using VOCABlog


a) Guidelines in Homepage

C) 在这一两周你都使用了工具去学习单词或发现单词。(比如: 你的单词本; 字典; 看的电影; 宣传册; 任何物品) 你可以谈谈你如何使用它学帮你学习单词或从它那里学到了什么?

B) 写照片解释的指南:

主要两点: 1) 这个照片与你单词学习的关系是? 2) 在这个照片所显示的情境中你你如何学习单词的, 你怎样学的, 学到了什么?

希望参考这个指南在你每一次准备上传时, 只有根据这些我才能看到你的学习过程, 给予你相应指导。谢谢

 Edit

- Keeping a **diary** is a very useful way to improve your vocabulary learning and reflect on your learning process. It is simple to post your diary. Find the **Blog Posts** option in the main page and click 'Add a Blog Post' button. Please post your diary twice or once a week. Please click on this link, [this will guide you to write your diaries](#)
- Using **photos** can be an important tool to raise your awareness and develop your capacity for self-regulation. I hope through your photographs, you can take responsibility for your own learning and consider potential solutions to the challenges which you meet in vocabulary learning. Please select your photos and post one of them each week and we can discuss them through *Forum*. Please click on this link, [this will guide you to take your vocabulary pictures](#)
- Help on how to **load your photographs** to the VOCABlog, [click here](#)
- **Guidelines for recording your oral explanations** of the photographs: you may talk about a) What is the content of the photograph? b) What is the relationship between you (photographer), the people or objects which are shown in the photograph and vocabulary learning? c) Please also give explanations of the photographs, for example, giving reasons of taking and selecting the photograph in relation to vocabulary learning or vocabulary development.
- [Click here](#) and you can see how to use **Vocaroo**, an online tool for you to record oral descriptions of your photos. If you want to use Vocaroo, find the link in the *Useful Websites*.
- [Click here](#) and you can see how to **post your voice-recording** to the site.
- To know more about **Forum** option, [click here](#)

b) Guidelines for writing an online diary

VOCABlog

strategicvocabularylearning.ning.com

main invite my page members forum videos photos • blogs my network

All Blog Posts My Blog Edit Blog Posts Options + Add Isobel Wang

Sign Out
Inbox
Friends - Invite
Settings

About

Isobel Wang
Ning Network
Create a Ning Network

Members

Invite More

Guidelines for e-diary writing

Posted by Isobel Wang on July 12, 2011 at 10:00 View Blog

Dear Student,

Your diary will be only used for my research purposes but it will be kept confidentially and you will not be identifiable in my report.

Guidelines for writing your diaries

Please keep a learner diary in which you can record all the actions, attempts, plans and activities that bring you into contact with vocabulary learning outside of classroom and describe those events you think of interest over your academic year. Please post your diary twice or once a week.

Please write about:

- What conscious actions or attempts were given to help you learn vocabulary (meaning and usage of a word), memorise or improve vocabulary? What were the contexts and situations in which you used these attempts or actions, please describe. Why did you combine or select these strategies? How effective were they?
- Have you tried to work or socialise with other people (e.g. local people or your friends) to improve your vocabulary? If yes, please give examples and describe how helpful they were. If no, what did you do to practise your vocabulary?
- Have you used other objects (e.g. notebooks, dictionary or vocabulary learning materials) to help you learn vocabulary better? If yes, what were they and describe how you used them and comment on how effective they were.

You might also include:

- If you could do more to improve your vocabulary, what are you going to do?
- What do you do to motivate yourself to learn more vocabulary?

Views: 54

Like

c) Guideline for taking a vocabulary photo



The screenshot shows a Ning blog page for 'VOCABlog' at 'strategicvocabularylearning.ning.com'. The page has a navigation bar with links for 'main', 'invite', 'my page', 'members', 'forum', 'videos', 'photos', 'blogs', and 'my network'. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for 'All Blog Posts', 'My Blog', and 'Edit Blog Posts'. A user profile for 'Isobel Wang' is visible in the top right corner. The main content area features a post titled 'Guidelines for taking your vocabulary photographs' posted by Isobel Wang on July 13, 2011 at 9:00. The post includes a list of seven guidelines for taking vocabulary photographs and a note about selecting photos for uploading. At the bottom of the post, there are 'Views: 13', a 'Like' button, a 'Share' button, and a 'Like' button with a count of 0. Navigation buttons for '< Previous Post' and 'Next Post >' are also present.

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All Blog Posts My Blog Edit Blog Posts Options + Add

Guidelines for taking your vocabulary photographs

Posted by Isobel Wang on July 13, 2011 at 9:00 View Blog

Guidelines for taking your vocabulary photographs

Please take photographs over time in relation to the themes and topics below:

- strategic behaviour for vocabulary learning outside of classroom
- memorising vocabulary
- consolidating the words
- social mediators for improving vocabulary learning
- semiotic and object mediation
- the way for self-reflection and self-monitoring
- combining and selecting strategies

Also, you could take photos of objects, activities, events, anything which you think are relevant and important to your vocabulary learning. You will then make your choice to select the photographs for uploading to the VOCABlog.

Views: 13

Like

Share Like 0

< Previous Post Next Post >

Appendix 2.6.2 A sample of VOCABlog data

strategicvocabularylearning.ning.com

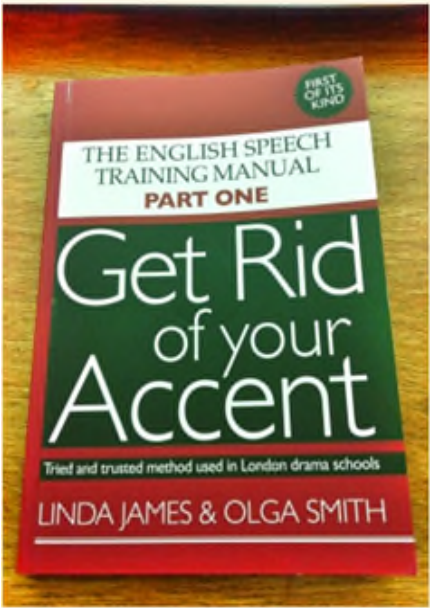
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All Blog Posts My Blog Edit Blog Posts Options + Add

Speak correctly

Posted by [redacted] on February 19, 2012 at 15:30 Send Message View Blog

Clearly, our intention to learn vocabulary is not limited in writing, reading and listening. We want to speak. Particularly when we live here, we NEED TO and HAVE TO speak. Yet, how many times have you felt frustrated when the person who you spoke to couldn't get what you said?



There have been uncountable times for me. One profound memory is that I tried so hard to pronounce iPad so as to let my British friend understand but he couldn't get such a single word after me repeating it for so many times until I told him that's the new product of Apple.

Therefore, last year, I bought this book called Get Rid of your Accent. I really recommend this book to anyone who wants to speak words clearly and correctly. After reading through book and doing some practices, I was very surprised to see there are some different vowels that are similar to each other but in fact are different. Let's do a little practice, can you tell the difference between æ, a:, ɔ:, and ʌ? And which [ɪ] sound is for iPad?

What I found most interesting (my BIG MISTAKES) while I was learning were sounds eɪ and əʊ. Words such as take, late and pay all use eɪ but I usually only speak e and omit

i. Moreover, words such as hope, home, focus and open all use əʊ but I usually use o instead of the correct sounds. No wonder people find my pronunciation hard to understand.

I do not understand why but a tiny pronunciation difference can make a big misunderstanding for British people to decode. Therefore, when I have to learn a new vocabulary, I always check the correct pronunciation for the word. After all, unless I can successfully put them into practices, I can't really say that I have learnt the word, can I?

Views: 5

Appendix 2.6.3 A sample of data analysis

Class observation on the Wolfson site on 01 Feb 2011

311	Bo:	来吧互相教 (Let's teach each other) 就这个	80C .teach each other
312		re'bel (this one re'bel)	
313			
314	CS1:	re'bel /bil/ /bil/	use L1
315			pronunciation
316	Bo:	wait, it's /bel/ or /bil/ 我再查查 (I need to	
317		check it again) ((checks the conventional	Dictionary use
318		dictionary)sorry re'bel /bel/	FROM THE VIDEO
319	CS1:	rebel ((repeats))	See photo 15-Bo and photo 16-Ke
320	Bo:	noun is 'rebel /bel/	Compare
321	CS2:	are you sure I think it is 'rebel /'rebel/	parts of speech
322	Bo:	不可能吧这也太不同了吧 I don't think so such a	
323		big difference (checks the conventional	
324	Artefact	dictionary))	Dictionary use
325	CS1:	You see ((points to the dictionary))here is	FIELDNOTES
326		/ə/	FROM AUDIO RECORDING
327	Bo:	No this (/ə/) pronounces /e/	
328	CS2:	不是, 这个发/e/ 你看这个词典 No, it's /ə/, it's	parts of speech
329		rebel /'rebel/ noun and verb rebel/'rebel/	Agents
330		you see the dictionary 不相信你拿手机听听发音	Strategic actions
331		(if you are not sure, you can listen to its	
332		sound through your i-phone)	lock-up tool
333		((checks his i-phone))oh my god, you are	Listen to pronunciation
334	Bo:	right it's rebel /'rebel/ noun and verb	
335		rebel/'rebel/ ((repeats and modify his notes	Recording
336		on the paper))	Interaction,
337	CS1:	意思还不知道呢? (I don't know the meaning)	Ask
338	Bo:	反抗	
339			
340			
341	CS2:	Speak English	
342	Bo:	Against the government	↑
343	CS1:	((laughs))	
344	CS2:	Only government?	change use English to communication
345	Bo:	You can say against CS2	toLa.
346	CS1:	Haha ((laughs))ok ok I see	↓
347			
348			
349		((Both LB and CK walk around the room and talk	
350		to other students))	

Appendix 2.7 Participants' background information

Participants	Gender	Age	Educational background	Past IELTS score	Current University	Relationships between the two students who were from the same site
Wu	Male	18	Gained a high school diploma; had been to a private school and used one month to prepare for the IELTS test	5.5	Ryder University	They were coursemates, but they were not quite close each other. They often worked with other group members when they had a group work. After class, they rarely contacted with each other.
Xia	Female	18	Gained a high school diploma; had been to a private language school to prepare for the IELTS exam for three months	6.0	Ryder University	
Ji	Female	18	Gained a high school diploma; had been to a private language school to prepare for the IELTS exam for one months	4.5	Opal University	They were coursemates, but after class they rarely contacted with each other. They often worked with other peers in a group work or pair work. Their strategy use did not also influence each other.
Qa	Male	18	Gained a high school diploma; did not attend any courses for IELTS preparation	4.5	Opal University	
Bo	Male	18	took a one-year A-level programme while studying at a high school in China; and went to a private language school everyday and had a personal tutor to help her improve English	6.0	Wolfson University	They were coursemates and friends. They sometimes worked together in a group work or pair work. They sometimes shared their life and study experiences each other.
Ke	Male	20	Gained a high school diploma; had one year's experience at a Chinese university before entering the UK and had been to a private language school to prepare for the IELTS exam for two months	5.5	Wolfson University	