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**THE BELIEFS AND LEARNER STRATEGY USE OF LOW-PROFICIENCY
CHINESE LEARNERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON LEARNING ENGLISH
IN A NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT**

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ABSTRACT

Research on learner beliefs is made on the assumption that learners' perspectives and thoughts guide their learning behaviours (e.g. Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Wenden 1987; Barcelos 2003) and determine the ultimate success of their learning (e.g. Ellis, 2004, 2008). Yet to date few studies have attempted to investigate the development of learner beliefs and the interactions among the three constructs: learner beliefs, learner strategy use and learning outcomes. This multicase study employed naturalistic methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to investigate the development of five low-proficiency Chinese ESL learners' beliefs, language learning strategies and English language proficiency over a 16-week period. The principal aim of the study was to examine the relationships between the learners' beliefs and learning strategy and the impact of both on learning outcomes. A number of data collection methods (e.g. interviews, diaries, class observations, stimulated recall, and a battery of tests) were employed to gather triangulated data.

Qualitative data analysis identified four major changes in their beliefs. First, the learners changed their beliefs about approaches to language learning from an initial analytical approach (e.g. learning grammatical rules) to a later more experiential one (e.g. watching TV). Second, they shifted the focus of their language learning from accuracy to fluency. Third, a new belief about group/pair work emerged after the learners were exposed to new approaches of language teaching in New Zealand. Finally, all the learners' self-efficacy beliefs strengthened as their language progressed. Like beliefs, some of the learners' strategies also developed over the observed period. At time 2, the learners increased their contact with English outside the institution. In addition, they started employing social strategies and higher order cognitive strategies.

Gains in the learners' proficiency were linked to their language learning strategy use, which was underpinned by their beliefs. Those learners who held beliefs about an experiential approach to language learning tended to advance more in speaking and vocabulary tests, whereas those who held

beliefs relating to an analytic approach showed moderate gains in a standardized general English test. However, this relationship did not hold when the learners failed to implement their beliefs. This suggests that beliefs do not have a direct impact on learning outcomes and that their influence depends on whether they have an effect on learning strategies.

This study sheds further light on the characteristics of the good language learner. One of the learners demonstrated language improvement across all the tests. She distinguished herself from the other learners in her concern for accuracy and fluency, her stronger self-efficacy beliefs, her empathy towards the target culture, her autonomous learning behaviours and her effective use of learning strategies.

The thesis concludes with a number of recommendations for policy makers and instructional practice.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BALL	Beliefs about Language Learning
BALLI	Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory
CE	Certificate in English
CLESOL	Community Language and English for Speakers of Other Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
LLS	Language Learner Strategies
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LLBs	Language Learner Beliefs
SILL	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why I chose the research topic

This thesis examines the beliefs, learning strategies and learning outcomes of five Chinese learners of English in New Zealand. I would like to begin by explaining why I chose this particular topic for my doctoral study.

Having taught English as an EFL teacher at a university in China for 13 years, I decided to immigrate to New Zealand with my family. Although I had obtained my Master's degree in linguistics and was an associate professor of English in China, initially I found it difficult to secure a teaching position in New Zealand. In order to teach again, I decided to go back to university and do a second Master's degree in applied linguistics. I recall one day in the class, a lecturer asked us, "What's language?" I answered immediately and with confidence, "It's a linguistic system". Since that was the way I had been taught to learn English in China, i.e. through doing numerous grammar exercises, translating and reading, I could not see any different ways of viewing language. It has been 12 years since then and I now have a different answer to that question. In China I perceived language as a system consisting of explicit morphological, grammatical and syntactic rules and thought that teaching English was about imparting that knowledge to my students, and helping them to pass a variety of grammar-loaded examinations. Then, to my mind, the content of my teaching was of much greater importance than my methodology. As a result, my students had barely any opportunity to communicate in the language. In contrast, in New Zealand, I view language more as a communicative tool. The aim of my teaching is to help my students to gain confidence in communicating by engaging them in a variety of communicative and authentic tasks and by providing them with sufficient opportunities to interact with each other. My teaching is more learning- and learner-centred. The changes in my beliefs

and teaching behaviours have come about as a result of postgraduate study in New Zealand and reflection on my own teaching.

Having noticed the changes in my own beliefs and teaching, I could not help wondering what happened to those Chinese adults who came to live in New Zealand. Do their beliefs and learning actions change as a result of their new learning environment? Do they take advantage of the opportunities available for communicating in English or do they still spend hours learning explicit grammar rules as I did when I studied English in China? Furthermore, since I started teaching in New Zealand, as one of the few teachers with an Asian background, I have often been approached by colleagues with questions about their Chinese learners - for example: “Why do my Chinese learners rote learn so much?” “Why do they rely on their dictionary so heavily?” “Why are they so quiet in class? and “Why are exams so important to them?” etc.

My first investigation of how beliefs influence action was a study of one teacher’s beliefs for my Master’s degree. Beliefs have intrigued me ever since. When I decided to embark on my doctoral study, I decided to make them the topic of my investigation and investigate them in the low-proficiency ESL learners that my programme was dealing with. In so doing, I hoped to find answers to many of my questions and also to be in a better position to help other teachers working in the same programme to better understand the Chinese learners in their class, particularly in terms of the beliefs those learners hold and the learning strategies they use.

1.2.Statement of the Problem

Research into learner beliefs in SLA is fairly new. It did not begin until the mid 1980s when it was first introduced into the field by Elaine Horwitz (1985; 1987; 1988). Learner beliefs are considered to be part of individual differences that learners bring to their learning process together with other attributes. Ellis (2004; 2008) grouped these attributes into four categories: (1) abilities consisting of intelligence, working memory and language aptitude, (2) propensities including such factors as learning

style, motivation, anxiety, personality and willingness to communicate, (3) learner cognitions or beliefs about L2 learning, (4) learner actions, i.e. learning strategies. Research studies on learner beliefs reflect the increased interest in SLA in individual learner differences and how these affect the process and product of learning.

The emphasis on learners' beliefs is made on the basic assumption that learners' perspectives, thoughts and ideas about learning guide their learning behaviors. The beliefs that learners hold constitute one of the factors that determines the ultimate success of learning (Ellis, 2004; Dörnyei, 2005). Over the last two decades or so, considerable development has taken place in research studies on learner beliefs. Most early studies focus on documenting and listing learner beliefs by using Horwitz's (1985, 1986) *Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI), which examines learner's beliefs in five major areas: (1) Difficulty of language learning, (2) Foreign language aptitude, (3) Nature of language learning, (4) Learning & communication strategies, (5) Motivations and expectations. The year 2003 saw the publication of the book, *Beliefs about SLA: New Research Approaches* edited by Kalaja & Barcelos. It reflects the recent developments that have taken place in the study of learner beliefs, particularly regarding how these have been researched. Whilst most early studies employed quantitative methods (e.g. BALLI) to examine learner beliefs, the majority of the studies included in this book were conducted in the qualitative tradition. The emphasis in research on learner beliefs has shifted from a normative to a contextual approach and from an etic to an emic perspective (Barcelos, 2003). Learner beliefs are seen as a contextual, dynamic and social phenomenon.

Another development in research on learner beliefs is the investigation of the relationship between beliefs and strategies on the one hand, and beliefs and L2 achievement on the other. The major findings are:

- Learner beliefs influence the choice of learning strategies. For example, students who put an emphasis on use of the language tend to use the language in a natural way and make an effort to practice the language while those who believe in the importance of learning about the language

focus on learning grammar and vocabulary and enrolling in a formal course. (Park, 1995; Wenden, 1986a, 1987; Zhong, 2008)

- Language learners' self-efficacy beliefs about learning English are strongly correlated with their use of different types of learning strategies, particularly functional practice strategies. Learners who hold self-efficacy beliefs and who are able to accept multiple and ambiguous answers to questions about language usually do better. (Yang 1992, 1999).
- There is also some evidence that learners who hold beliefs about experiential learning (e.g. seeking out opportunities for using English) tend to advance more in general English proficiency (Tanaka, 2004) and gain more in fluency (Zhong, 2008).

Unfortunately, there are still very few studies of this nature and the findings are somewhat mixed and inconclusive.

An overview of existing studies indicates the following gaps:

- 1) The nature of learner beliefs: Although there are a few recent studies that investigate the development of learner beliefs over a period of time (e.g. Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Barcelos, 2000; Tanaka, 2004), they are surprisingly few. The majority of studies examine learner beliefs as a static phenomenon. More studies are needed to examine the evolution of learner beliefs in order to better understand the conditions that lead to changes in beliefs.
- 2) Research methods: Most studies are cross-sectional, lacking in-depth analysis and understanding of the phenomenon. The data are collected from an etic perspective using a single instrument -typically a Likert scale questionnaire. The likelihood is that learners self-flatter when they respond to such a questionnaire or, alternatively, try to please the researcher by responding in ways they think are expected of them.
- 3) Relationships: There are only a few studies that have investigated the relationships between learner beliefs and learning strategies, and between learner beliefs and learning outcomes. As a

result, little is known about the relationships among these three constructs: learner beliefs, learner strategy use and learning outcomes.

- 4) Learning setting: Studies of Chinese learner beliefs in an ESL (as opposed to the Chinese EFL) setting are rare.

1.3. Research Questions

The present study is designed to address these gaps. It investigates the development of five Chinese learners' beliefs and learning strategy use in a New Zealand context over a 16-week period. Four research questions are addressed:

1. What changes occur in the learners' beliefs during the observed period?
2. What developments and changes occur in the learners' strategy use?
3. What developments and changes are evident in their language proficiency?
4. What relationships are there between the learners' beliefs and learning strategy use on the one hand and changes in their language proficiency on the other hand?

The overarching aim is to explore the relationships among learner beliefs, learner strategy use and learning outcomes. To achieve this I will collect data from five Chinese learners of English, using a number of different instruments, e.g. interviews, classroom observations, stimulus recall, diaries and language tests.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in terms of theory and practice. Theoretically, the empirical evidence provided by the study will help further understanding of the nature of learner beliefs, the source of learner beliefs, their strength and interrelatedness, and the reasons for changes in their beliefs. The study will also give some insight into the relationships among the three constructs: learner beliefs, learning strategies and learning outcomes. It is anticipated that the study will contribute to the ongoing effort to develop a theory of individual differences and the role they play in language learning.

More practically, this study will provide in-depth information about Chinese learners' beliefs and their learning strategy use. This will assist English teachers and managers to make better sense of what Chinese learners bring into the learning context and their approach to language learning. This knowledge can help teachers in three ways, (1) by detecting if there is a mismatch between their own belief system and their learners'. As learner beliefs influence the actions learners perform to learn an L2, a mismatch between the learner and teacher belief systems is likely to result in little learning taking place; (2) by helping them to make sound pedagogical decisions, especially where teachers feel it desirable to try to challenge those learner beliefs and learning behaviours which are deemed to constitute a potential barrier to successful language learning, and (3) by developing appropriate curricula and teaching materials and adopting effective methods of teaching for a particular group of learners.

Finally, this study will be useful for Chinese teachers of English and policy-makers. It can help them to evaluate to what extent they have prepared their learners to survive in an English speaking environment.

1.5.Overview of the Chapters

This chapter has introduced the research topic and explained my own interest in it. The remaining chapters are organized as follows: Chapters 2, 3, and 4 provide a review of the literature. Chapter 2 gives an overview of Chinese beliefs about learning and Chinese learning behaviours. This is followed by a description of the general background to EFL teaching in China. Chapter 3 first defines and classifies beliefs and then reviews previous studies of learner beliefs in SLA. Following the same structure as Chapter 3, Chapter 4 deals with learning strategies. Also included in this chapter is an account of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) which will be drawn on to explore the relationship between the learner beliefs and learning strategy use. Chapter 5 offers a detailed description of the research design and the methodology of the study. Chapter 6 answers the first three

research questions by presenting case studies of the five learners, focusing on the developments in their beliefs and use of learning strategies and the changes in their language proficiency. Chapter 7 identifies nine core themes that figure in the case studies and discusses the differences among the five learners in terms of these themes. Chapter 8 summarizes the major findings, discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the study, and presents suggestions for further research. This chapter also answers research question four by proposing a model that captures the relationships among learners' beliefs, learning strategy use and language learning.

CHAPTER TWO

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CHINA

2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to give an account of the English teaching and learning context in China. Such background knowledge is essential in order to understand the learners under investigation and to help interpret the findings in the later chapter. The chapter consists of three parts. I start with beliefs about teaching and learning in the Confucian tradition. Typical Chinese learning behaviour will then be discussed. Finally, I will focus on EFL teaching in China, giving a brief account of the development of EFL in China and also describing the key features of English teaching in China.

2.2. Beliefs about Teaching and Learning in the Confucian Tradition

Confucius, one of the greatest thinkers and educators in ancient China, has had an enduring impact on teaching and learning in East Asia (Littlewood, 2000; Watkins & Biggs, 1996). The core of the educational values in China and most of East Asia, e.g. Japan, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, etc. derives from the Confucian educational philosophy. Hence, it is worthwhile to review some traditional educational beliefs that have influenced Chinese teaching and learning for centuries.

2.2.1. Beliefs about Teachers and Teaching

Central to the Confucian tradition is the belief about respectful learning. Teachers are regarded as people who teach, answer questions and solve problems. Learners are expected to obey and respect teachers as authority figures.

In the Confucian tradition, teachers are generally expected to assume responsibility for two things. The first and most important one is to teach. Liu (1998) claimed that Asia in general and particularly China has ‘a long tradition of unconditional obedience to authority where the teacher is regarded as a ‘fount of knowledge’ (Liu, 1998:5). The primary role of teachers is to impart knowledge

to students and supply answers to questions from students. To fulfill this role, teachers should have an in-depth knowledge of their discipline and effective skills for transmitting that knowledge. This is reflected in the Chinese metaphor that “teachers must have a full bucket of water to dispense to give students a bowl of water” (cited in Hu, 2002). It is teachers’ responsibility to decide what is to be taught and ensure that students progress satisfactorily.

Secondly, teachers are expected to “cultivate people” (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p.11). That is, teachers have to cultivate good moral virtues such as loyalty, fidelity and modesty (Hu, 2002; Zhang & Watkins, 2007). It is not uncommon for Chinese teachers to make themselves available for pastoral care and give advice to their students on various issues ranging from their future career to their personal problems (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a; Hu, 2002; Li, 2004). The social and moral obligations that teachers are obliged to take on are evident in the various honorable titles that have been given to teachers in China, such as “the people’s teachers”, “engineers of the human soul”, “sculptors of the future”, “the gardeners” (Hu, 2002, p. 99).

In sum, traditionally teachers in China have a dual responsibility. One is to do with intellectual education where teachers are seen as the source of knowledge. Another is related to the moral education of learners. Teachers are expected to teach the book and cultivate the person (*jiao shu yu ren*). Thus, teachers are held in deference and deeply respected in the Confucian tradition. The loyalty and deference that one demonstrates to a teacher is expected to be on a par to that shown to one’s father (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Hu, 2002).

There are a number of empirical studies that have investigated Chinese learners’ beliefs about teachers and teaching. Jin and Cortazzi (1998) surveyed 129 Chinese and 205 British university students’ conceptions of what a good teacher entailed. They found a good teacher as described by Chinese students was someone who had deep knowledge, was able to answer questions and was a good moral model. In comparison, a good British teacher was described as someone who was able to motivate students, use effective teaching methods and organize a variety of class activities. It seems

that the Chinese participants put more emphasis on the importance of knowledge while the British focused on teaching methods and techniques.

Zhang and Watkin (2007) also conducted an empirical study of conceptions of a good teacher. This study involved three groups: 100 Chinese tertiary students, 20 Chinese teachers of English and 20 Western teachers teaching in China. They asked each participant to write a short essay in their L1 on the topic, *what makes a good English teacher at the tertiary level?* A content analysis revealed some significant differences between the three groups. While Western teachers placed great emphasis on adaptability to different teaching environments/cultures and the ability to work as a team, Chinese teachers attached importance to sound content knowledge about the subject, and Chinese students viewed teachers in accordance with their traditional roles, expecting teachers to be intellectual as well as moral models.

These empirical studies support the historical accounts and my own personal experience that teachers are held in high esteem and are expected to set a good example as a source of knowledge and in terms of their moral character.

2.2.2. Beliefs about Learners and Learning

2.2.2.1. Purpose of Learning

Lee (1996), in his historical account of core Confucian educational values, discussed two purposes for learning: personal improvement and social development. The former reflects Confucius' teaching of *Ren*. According to Confucius, *Ren* (sage or goodness) is the ultimate form of human virtue and the highest purpose of human lives. A person is not born but learns to become *Ren*. Such learning is called greater learning (Lee, 1996). The loftiest and ultimate purpose of life is to pursue human self-perfection and become a sage or attain goodness through personal commitment to learning. In other words, education and learning are meaningful only if they lead to perfection of the self and cultivation of oneself "as an intelligent, creative, independent, autonomous being" (Lee, 1996:34). Linked to self-

cultivation is another, more functional purpose for learning, that of bringing honor to one's family and promoting social status and mobility. This purpose reflects the historical influence of the Civil Service Examination, which originated in the 7th century, on the operations of society. According to this system, those people who scored highest in the examination were selected to serve the royal government regardless of their social backgrounds. Confucius believed that society required learned people to govern: "The officer, having discharged all his duties, should devote his leisure to learning. The student, having completed his learning, should apply himself to be officer" (Analects, 19.13 quoted in Lee, 1996, p. 27). Hence, for Confucius, a cultivated person should hold a civil service job in order to exert influence and reform society (Tweed and Lehman, 2002). Government officials were traditionally associated with fame, wealth, a beautiful wife and upward social mobility (Lee, 1996). This was not merely a vision but an achievable reality in the Confucian tradition.

Li's (2003a) study lent some empirical support to this account. In his comparative study of American and Chinese cultural beliefs about learning, Li (2003a) employed prototype methods (see D'Andrade, 1995; Rosch, 1978, cited in Li, 2003a; Shaver et al.1987) by asking 83 college students to provide free associations for the Chinese term *xue xi* (learning/learn). He obtained 478 terms. Then he asked 60 participants to rate the terms in terms of their relevance to learning. The rating process generated 225 terms as the core list. He then asked 100 college students to sort the terms into groups based on their similarity in meaning. Four main themes were identified: (1) perfecting oneself morally; (2) acquiring knowledge/skills for survival, self-sufficiency and careers; (3) contributing to society by linking learners' personal pursuit of knowledge to a higher moral and social responsibility, and (4) obtaining social respect/mobility. Li pointed out that these reasons for learning were all related to Confucian values and were actively promoted by families, communities, schools and society at large (Cheng, 1996; Gao & Watkins, 2001; Lee, 1996; Yu & Yang, 1994).

In sum, in terms of the Confucian tradition, learners have two types of motivation. Intrinsically they want to cultivate themselves to become perfect. Associated with personal improvement is the

practical and extrinsic purpose for learning, i.e. to have social mobility and to bring fame to one's family. Academic achievement leads to better job opportunities and higher social status. Both purposes are attainable by everyone. The supremacy of learning and the likelihood of upward social mobility have motivated Chinese for generations to strive to learn in order to realize their aspirations in life, regardless of their social status.

2.2.2.2. Emphasis on effort and self-determination

Although teachers are held in high esteem in the Confucian tradition, there is another element which is believed to be as important and possibly more significant for successful learning: learners' determination and their own continuous efforts. As discussed in the preceding section, human perfectibility is attained in *Ren* (goodness or sagehood) and it is within the reach of everyone. This suggests that differences in ability or intelligence do not inhibit one's success in education. In Confucius' view, people are all similar. Everyone is educable and everyone can achieve *Ren* (sagehood or goodness) if they make the effort to learn (Lee, 1996). Continuous effort and self-determination are perceived as immensely significant in the process of learning and in the pursuit of sagehood (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). They are closely tied to success and achievement and they can also result in changes in such aspects as intelligence and aptitude to perform. Although differences in intelligence and aptitude are acknowledged, they are not perceived as determinants of success. What really matters is effort, determination and steadfastness of purpose (Biggs, 1996; Hu, 2002; Lee, 1996). It is for this reason that Chinese learners tend to blame themselves and their insufficient effort if they fail to achieve.

A variety of maxims, proverbs and sayings in Chinese is testimony to the importance attached to personal efforts. For example, *zhi yao gong fu shen, tie chu ye neng mo cheng zhen* (a continuous effort can grind an iron bar into a needle), *Qin neng bu zuo* (Diligence can make up for the stupidity), and *Xue hai wu ya, ku zuo zhou* (The ocean of learning is beyond the reach that eyes can see. Hard work is the vessel to cross it). This belief in effort and self-determination has been seen as a key factor in the

academic achievement of Asians in the West (Hau & Salili, 1991; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992).

In another comparative study between Chinese and American learners, Li (2004) asked 62 Chinese and 65 US college students to describe their ideal learners, particularly in terms of what they did and how they behaved in the face of difficulty and failure. Instead of describing specific learning behaviours and actions, Chinese learners wrote extensively about what Li called 'learning virtues'. The five virtues were:

- (1) Resolve (i.e. the determination that learners manifest to follow through on their actions in order to reach their goals in spite of problems),
- (2) Diligence (i.e. emphasizing the time and energy invested in learning),
- (3) Endurance of hardship whether this entails physical drudgery and poverty, difficult learning tasks or lack of natural ability),
- (4) Perseverance (i.e. the ability to stay on course from beginning to the end in spite of the difficulties and obstacles one encounters),
- (5) Concentration (i.e. consistent dedication involving "earnestness, patience, carefulness, and thoroughness of learning" (Li, 2004, pp.141-142).

In contrast, the US students' notions of the ideal learner were more task-oriented, for example, active learning, applying scientific inquiry into the unknown world and task management and communication skills.

To conclude, Chinese students emphasize the importance of effort and self-determination in the learning process. Developing the so called "learning virtue" is perceived to be more critical than the actual learning activities. They believe that once they have established self-determination and commitment, they can apply themselves to any learning task and be successful in accomplishing it.

2.3. Chinese Learning Behaviour

2.3.1. Rote-memorization

Rote learning is defined as “learning things by repeating them without thinking about them or trying to understand them” (Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2001, p. 1350).

Gairns and Redman (1986, cited in Li 2004, p.9) describe the technique as follows:

This involves repetition of target language items either silently or aloud and may involve writing down the items (more than once). These items commonly appear in list form; typical examples being items and their translation equivalent, items and their definitions (e.g. Nap= short sleep), paired items (e.g. hot-cold, tall-short), and irregular verbs. A common practice is for the learner to use one side of the list as prompts and cover the other side in order to test himself.

Rote-memorization seems to have received a lot of criticism in the West (e.g. Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nelson, 2001). The strategy is regarded as simplistic and associated with a surface approach to learning. The distinction between a surface approach and a deep approach to learning was first proposed by Marton and Säljö (1976) after their study at a Swedish University. In this study, students were asked to read an academic article and then explain what they had learned and how they had achieved that learning. They found the students generally adopted two approaches to tackle the task. The surface approach involved reading at word and sentence level whereas the deep approach involved a focus on the themes and main ideas and processing the text for meaning. Marton and Säljö (1976) reported qualitative differences in learning outcomes depending on the approach. The students who adopted the surface, atomistic approach could only recall some isolated facts and could not explain the authors’ message. In contrast, the students who adopted the deep, holistic approach could provide a more detailed account of the authors’ intentions and frequently used extracts from the reading to support their reasoning. Therefore, a surface approach is reproductive, involving only a minimal degree of analysis or reflection. In contrast, a deep approach is more concerned with meaning and

understanding. It involves a critical analysis of new ideas, relating them to already known concepts and principles and leads to understanding.

Rote-memorization is a learning strategy that has been frequently associated with Chinese learners. It has received much criticism (see Samuelowicz, 1987; Barker, Child, Gallois, Jones, & Callan, 1991; Carson, 1992). For example, Prat and Wong (1999, cited in Tweed & Tehman, 2002) reported that Western instructors in Hong Kong sometimes criticized Chinese approaches to learning as overly instrumental and accused Chinese learners of being unwilling to think deeply and of adopting a surface approach to learning. However, there are a number of studies that have challenged the view that students from the Confucian Heritage Tradition (CHC) are merely reproductive, surface learners. Lee (1996), for instance, argued that rote-memorization should by no means be equated with mechanical rote learning, that is, learning without understanding. Lee claimed that the process of learning in the Confucian tradition also involved reflective thinking and thus entailed a deep approach rather than a surface approach to learning. According to Confucius, learning should be like this: “studying extensively, enquiring carefully, pondering thoroughly, sifting clearly, and practicing earnestly...” (The Mean, 20.19 quoted in Lee 1996, p. 35). In fact, Confucius considered critical thinking so important that he deemed learning without thinking a waste of effort: “seeking knowledge without thinking is labour lost; thinking without seeking knowledge is perilous” (Analects II.15). Although Lee also agreed that rote-memorization was a crucial aspect of the learning process in the Confucian tradition, he argued that it was never meant to be an end itself. Lee cited Wang Yangming, a neo-Confucian philosopher and educationist, who suggested three significant phases in learning: the first was memory; then it was understanding and digesting what was in books. The final phase was the most important part of learning, i.e. incorporating what one had got from books in one’s own experience. In other words, rote-memorization is only a stage in learning and the ultimate goal of true learning is to develop one’s own opinions and full comprehension. In this regard, rote-memorization precedes understanding and the purpose of using rote-memorization is to understand deeply.

Like Lee (1996), Li (2004) argued that Chinese learners believed that learning was a gradual process that required dedication. He observed four distinct steps in tackling learning materials: 1) memory, 2) understanding, 3) application, 4) questioning and modification of the original material. This corroborates the observation of Pratt, Kelly and Wong (1999) that Chinese students often felt frustrated and bewildered when they were confronted with a Western teacher “whose expectations and forms of assessment thrust them immediately to the far end of this chain (questioning and analysis)” (p.253).

However, in a diary study of the difficulties experienced in EFL learning, Huang (2005) found some students expressed the view that recitation and rote-memorization were ‘boring’ and ‘ineffective’. Some strongly complained that it was the teacher who forced them to recite and memorize. This suggests that although Chinese learners tend to use a lot of rote-memorization, it is by no means their personal choice. Rather it is a strategy that is reinforced by their teachers and the examination oriented educational system (Chyu & Smith, 1991, as cited in Yang, 1992).

These studies suggest that language learning actions must be understood in terms of the goals and setting. Rote-memorization in Chinese learning should not be equated with the Western idea of mechanical rote learning; it is not synonymous with surface learning. Instead it is used as a means to reflect, deepen and develop understanding. Rote-memorization is not an end in itself but a route towards understanding and a tool for creating meaning (Tweed & Lehman, 2002; Rao, 2006).

2.3.2. Repetition

Repetition is linked to rote-memorization. Because Chinese learners are normally required to rote-memorize their learning materials and texts in particular, by their teachers and test demands, repetition has become the strategy to help achieve it. Repetition helps learners understand a given text further which in turn enhances their memorization. Marton et al. (1996), for example, interviewed 20 teacher-educators from all over mainland China to explore their perceptions about learning and the

extent to which rote-memorization features in these conceptions. They found that repetition, rote-memorization and understanding were inter-connected and that they enhanced one other in the Chinese learning process. In other words, in the learning process, sometimes Chinese students memorized with understanding and at other times deepening understanding came through rote-memorization. One of the participants said, “In the process of repetition, it is not a simple repetition. Because each time I repeat, I would have some new idea of understanding, that is to say I can understand better” (Marton et al.,1996, p.81).

Dahlin and Watkins (2000) interviewed 48 Hong Kong Chinese (HKC) and 18 German senior secondary school students in Hong Kong about the role of repetition in the processes of memorising and understanding. They found that a similar number of participants from both groups remembered being encouraged to recite by their parents, but the HKC students frequently said they were made to recite by their teachers. While the HKC students focused on the value of the subject matter of these early memories, the German students focused on the value of the activity itself. In other words, they used repetition to check if they really remembered something, whereas HKC students used it to lay a foundation for deeper understanding. Another difference was that the German students tended to perceive understanding as a process of sudden insight while the HKC students viewed understanding as a long process which required attentive effort and discovering new meanings in the materials studied with each repetition.

It seems that there is a difference in interpretation when the terms repetition and rote memorization are used in the West and in Asia, e.g. China. According to Chan (1999), Chinese learners have been misinterpreted as rote learners when it is, “in fact, repetitive learning that has been adopted” (Chan, 1999, p.300). In contrast to rote learning, repetitive learning enables learners to attach meaning to the material learned. Two possibilities are inherent in repetition: a deep impression on the mind and discovering new meaning.

2.3.3. Learning for Exams

The exam culture has been predominant and influential in Chinese learning (Cheng, 2008; Gao, 2006; Kennedy, 2002). Lee (1996) claimed that the impact of exams could be traced as far back as the 13th century. Success in exams was traditionally associated with wealth, a highly-regarded government official position and personal and family fame. Today exams play an equally important role in the society, particularly in regard to university admission. Students learn in order to pass a variety of exams. Yang (1992) claimed that students in Taiwan did not commit to anything that was not relevant to passing an examination.

In her diary study, Huang (2005) found Chinese students were very exam oriented. They treated each exercise as if it were an exam paper. They did an enormous amount of practice test papers. They also developed effective strategies for taking tests, for example, reading questions before reading or listening to any materials. Most of the students' learning revolved around exams: improving reading and listening speed; memorizing word lists. The students were more interested in the product than the process of learning. Because speaking was not tested, most of the learners did not address it.

Gao (2006) employed a retrospective interview research method to investigate strategy use of 14 Chinese learners who were studying at a British university. All the learners reported investing enormous time and energy in memorizing words in order to pass exams and fulfill curricular requirements in China. They learned for exams - to get good test results and to pass the standard and gate-keeping exams in China.

Gan (2009) reported similar results. He found that mainland Chinese spent much more time than Hong Kong Chinese memorizing vocabulary because the vocabulary was assessed in the national English test.

These studies indicate that exams have a significant impact on shaping learners' approach to learning in China. Achieving well in exams is the driving force in their learning.

2.4. Teaching English as a Foreign Language in China

2.4.1. Development of EFL in China

Although China prides itself in its more than five thousand years of civilization, its EFL teaching history is much shorter. Based on previous accounts (e.g. Cortazzi & Jin,1996b; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Li, 2004), the history of English language teaching in China can be summarized in these three major periods: (1) before the Cultural Revolution (1949-1966), (2) During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1977), (3) the reformed and market economy era (1977- present).

Prior to the establishment of the communist New China in 1949, there were very few foreign language programmes available in schools (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Yao, 1993 as cited in Li, 2004). In the early 1950s, Russian became the widely taught foreign language in schools due to the political and economic support that China received from the (then) Soviet Union. The split between China and the former Soviet Union saw the replacement of Russian with English between the late 50s and early 60s, which resulted in a serious shortage of teachers of English. To meet the demand for more language teachers, a lot of teachers of Russian were retrained to teach English, most of them having learned English as the second foreign language.

During the Cultural Revolution, English language teaching along with all other subjects in schools was disrupted as political issues dominated. Many English teachers were persecuted, attacked or sent to the countryside.

The open-door policy in the late 1970s marked a new era in China. Education had its renaissance and resumed its past importance. Ever since then, English has become the most important subject in the school curricula from primary school through to university and has held a unique position in the education system in China. According to Jin and Cortazzi (2002), in the National Entrance Exam, while the full scores for all the other subjects are 100 points, the scores for English were increased “from 100 points to 120 points in the early 1990s and more recently to 150 points” (p.56). English is the compulsory foreign language for most universities in China. In order to graduate from universities,

most universities require their students to pass at least Band 4 of the College English Test. With the development of the Chinese economy and the role that China now plays in the world, English is no longer limited to school. More and more people start learning English to do business and for their future career. Many parents send their child/children to learn English abroad. Chinese interest in English has been boosted even higher since China entered the World Trade organization in 2001 and held the 2008 Olympic Games. This enthusiasm for learning English has attracted an increasing number of Western teachers to China.

2.4.2. Features of EFL Teaching in China

The approaches to English language teaching in China have been influenced by the grammar translation method, the structural approach and Confucian teaching and learning philosophy. The mixture makes EFL teaching in China distinctive. Rao (1996) summarized five features of ELT in China as follows:

1. Concentration on intensive reading as a basis for language study: using the model of their L1 learning, teachers devote almost all their class time to teaching a text where they spot some language points (e.g. tenses, sentence structures) to explain and analyze, which is followed by paraphrasing and translating the text, drilling the patterns in the text, reading aloud and retelling the text.
2. Use of rote-memorization and rote learning as a basic learning technique: students are required to memorize new English vocabulary every day and recite their textbook from memory.
3. Meticulous emphasis on linguistic details and a corresponding lack of attention to communicative skills: teachers focus on discrete grammar points and specific syntactical construction while all students are either listening or taking notes. There is little attention given to the development of learners' communicative competence.

4. Use of translation as both a teaching and a learning strategy: teachers see translation as a reliable way of measuring learners' mastery of the language and learners constantly use their L1 as a point of reference.
5. Teacher's authority and students' passive role: teachers are regarded as the authority, the center of classroom activities; learners listen and occasionally answer questions.

To this list, I will add the sixth feature - teaching for exams. Although a learner experiences a variety of exams in his or her time at school, three English exams are particularly vital: the high school English entrance exam, the university entrance English exam and the postgraduate English entrance exams. Yang (1992) described exams as a "filtering mechanism" which determines a candidate's eligibility for more advanced education. These high stakes exams mean that the key role of a teacher is to prepare their students to pass the competitive exams. The students' passing rate is often used as a significant criterion for determining a teacher's promotion and performance (Li, 2004; Rao, 1996, 2006). Consequently, English teaching materials and methods are all geared to exams.

Because English exams mainly test learner's grammatical knowledge, instruction focuses on prescribed grammatical forms rather than teaching language as a means of communication. The corollary is that learners can achieve well in their discrete grammar tests and comprehend written materials without difficulty but they are barely able to engage in real-life communication. This has been a concern of both educators and the government. In 1992, SEDC (the State Education Development Commission), the official authority for setting educational policy and determining the goals, curricula, course books and even teaching methods throughout the country, initiated curricular changes. As a result, the traditional structure-based national syllabus has been replaced with a more communicative approach to English language teaching (Liao, 2004; Yu, 2001).

The introduction of CLT in China has provoked some heated debate. While some emphasize the value of adopting CLT in China (e.g. Li, 1984), others (e.g. Hu, 2002) have noted the challenges and resistance that CLT has met with in the face of traditional Chinese teaching. The progress has been

slow. The implementation of CLT in Chinese contexts is constrained by many factors (Hu, 2002; Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Rao, 2002a; Yu, 2001). These include:

- Large class sizes: most English classes in primary and secondary schools have between 50 and 80 students. Non-English major university students vary from 40 to 100 depending on the type of university. Large classes make it difficult to use pair or small group work.
- Centralized curriculum (i.e. the curriculum set by the government): teachers have very tight teaching schedules and usually dominate the class talk.
- The need for oral proficiency: CLT requires teachers to have high oral competence. However, most teachers of English in China are non-native speakers. Not all of them find themselves capable of delivering the whole lesson in English.
- Diversity of learning contexts: teaching facilities and resources are different between cities and rural areas and between inland and coastal areas. Teaching innovations cannot easily be implemented in those rural and inland areas.
- High stakes exams: both teaching and learning activities are controlled by the high-stakes exams. Teachers have to help their students to pass exams, particularly the University Entrance Exams. Because the English exam mainly tests the students' explicit grammar knowledge and reading comprehension ability, other skills in English are ignored. Jin & Cortazzi (2002) reported that although greater emphasis had been put on adopting communicative principles and oral skills, in practice, both teachers and learners focused on grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary and translation rather than on communication.

Although the government has changed the curriculum, it has been observed that a lot of teachers still adopt the traditional methods in practice (see Hu, 2002, 2003). Leng (1997, cited in Li, 2004) described the phenomena as “new bottles, old wine.” In other words, the traditional instructional practices still predominate or exist side by side with CLT activities in most classrooms (Hu, 2005).

2.5. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has attempted to describe Chinese learners and their learning and teaching context.

The main points can be summarized as follows:

- Chinese learners show high respect and trust towards teachers because they are believed to have profound and solid knowledge and they are also moral models.
- Even though the Chinese endorse utilitarian benefits as part of their motivation for learning, their purposes do not end there. Individuals also seek learning to cultivate themselves as a whole in the moral domain and to aim at self-perfection. The purpose of learning is above all to become more fully and perfectly human, to acquire knowledge and to contribute to society. Learning is meaningful only when it leads to perfection of self.
- Chinese place a great score on constant and persistent effort, which is realized through five learning virtues: resolve, diligence, endurance of hardship, perseverance and concentration. The actual learning tasks are not of concern. When the learning virtues are cultivated and established, they are applicable to the learning processes and the learning tasks students are engaged in.
- Typically observed learning behaviors are rote-memorization and repetition. However, current research views them as not merely mechanical in nature. They are more subtle and complex than they appear to be. Rote-memorization and repetition initiate a learning process that enhances deeper understanding.
- Exams play a critical role in both teaching and learning. Examination-oriented behavior is context-specific.

The influence of Confucian educational values makes EFL learning and teaching in China unique. The special features of EFL teaching in China can be summarized as follows:

- Teaching relies heavily on translation, drilling and constant testing.
- Emphasis is placed on grammar, vocabulary and reading.

- Formal lecturing is a common delivery mode where teacher talk dominates and students keep notes. It is used to prepare students with the knowledge about English they need to pass the competitive and selective national university entrance examination.

The review of previous studies on Chinese learners indicates the following gaps. First of all, most of the studies use cultural frameworks to account for Chinese learners' beliefs and behaviours based on historical records (Lee, 1996) or personal and anecdotal accounts. This approach has a number of limitations. For example, it ignores individual differences in learners. Also, it treats culture as a static phenomenon. To address these issues, more qualitative studies are needed to cast light on Chinese learners' beliefs and to examine the interaction of learners' beliefs and strategy use in relation to the social context they are in. The second gap is that most studies of the Chinese learners have examined their approach to learning in general. Language learning has some unique features and is different from other school subjects, such as Maths or accounting. Empirical studies of Chinese learners' beliefs about language learning are lacking. Finally, empirical studies that examine the nature of Chinese learners' beliefs in an ESL setting and the relationship between their beliefs, learning strategies and learning outcomes are almost entirely missing. This study aims to address the above gaps.

In the next chapter, I will review the general literature on learners' beliefs about language learning.

CHAPTER THREE

LANGUAGE LEARNERS' BELIEFS

3.1. Introduction

This chapter comprises two main sections: the conceptual framework for investigating beliefs and a review of previous studies of language learners' beliefs in SLA. Due to a lack of theoretical accounts in SLA regarding the nature of beliefs and their formation, the conceptual framework is based on some key concepts drawn from social psychology including the definition of beliefs, the conceptual differences between “knowledge”, “attitudes” and “beliefs”, types of beliefs, and belief formation. The review of previous studies consists of selected empirical studies that have described and classified language learners' beliefs (LLBs) and also some studies that have investigated the dynamic nature of LLBs and the effect of LLBs on language achievement.

I will argue that by and large, the current research on LLBs has investigated beliefs as a static construct rather than as a dynamic phenomenon. I will also argue that studies on LLBs have to proceed from simply describing and categorizing beliefs to examining the interactions that LLBs have with other learner variables, e.g. personality, learning style, learning strategy in order to understand the nature of their impact on learning outcomes.

3.2. Definition of Beliefs

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined beliefs as “a person's subjective probability judgments concerning some discriminable aspect of his world; they deal with the person's understanding of himself and his environment” (p.131). They further specified that beliefs deal with “the subjective probability of a relation between the object of the belief and some other object, value, concept, or attribute” (p.131). In this definition, a belief relates an object to its associated attributes. “The object of a belief may be a person, a group of people, an institution, a behavior, a policy, an event, etc., and the associated attribute may be any object, trait, property, quality, characteristic, outcome, or event,”

(Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975:12). For example, the belief that ‘English is difficult to learn’ links the object ‘English’ to the attribute ‘difficult to learn’. For language learners, the object of their beliefs can be their teachers, class activities, the instructional materials or language learning as a whole. Another distinctive feature of beliefs is its subjective and individualistic nature. In other words, beliefs reflect the subjective reality of an individual. Therefore, the strength of beliefs varies from individual to individual. The more individuals perceive the likelihood that the object is associated with the attribution, the stronger the belief is and the more likely they will act on the belief.

Following Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), LLBs for this study are defined as learners’ subjective understanding of anything associated with their language learning, e.g. teachers, exams, their fellow classmates, class activities, etc.

3.3. Conceptual Distinctions: Knowledge, attitudes and beliefs

Pajares (1992) argued that “knowledge” is “based on objective facts” (p.313). This means if a proposition is considered as knowledge, it has an epistemological warrant and evidence can be provided to endorse the statement which is agreed to be true by the community. In other words, knowledge consists in large part of facts that are accepted by people in general. Woods (2003) claims that in the field of SLA, knowledge typically refers to one of two types of knowledge: linguistic knowledge and background or world knowledge.

Drawing on Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) definition, beliefs deal with a person’s understanding of himself and his environment and they are subjective and idiosyncratic in nature. In this sense, beliefs are relatively non-consensual or disputable in principle (Pajares, 1992; Abelson, 1979). Wenden (1999) concurred that the term belief implies a degree of subjectivity, something which is ‘value-related’ (p.435).

Oskamp (1991) made a distinction between beliefs and attitudes, arguing that “beliefs are cognitive, thoughts and ideas; whereas attitudes are affective – feelings and emotions” (p.12). Triandis

(1971) was of the same view that an attitude is charged with emotion. Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) argued that the distinctive feature of attitude is its evaluative or affective nature and that “affect is the most essential part of the attitude concept” (p.11). In other words, attitudes are associated with the degree of liking or disliking about some object. For example, the statement, “I really enjoy chatting with Kiwis”, can be considered as an attitude. The attitudinal object is Kiwis and the attitude is favourable. Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) further argued that a person’s attitude toward an object is based on his salient beliefs about that object. If those beliefs associate the object with primarily favourable attributes, his attitude will tend to be positive. In the above example, the learner’s positive attitude may be based on his belief that Kiwis are friendly and easy going.

In sum, knowledge and beliefs are both related to cognition, referring to what a person knows, believes and thinks about an object. The former is factual and objective while the latter is evaluative, judgmental and subjective, existing within one’s own experience. In contrast, the most essential part of attitude is affect. A person’s attitude toward an object is determined by his beliefs about the object and by his evaluation of the attributes that the object has (Ajzen, 2005), which may produce either favourable or unfavourable feelings towards and evaluation of the object.

Other researchers, however, do not make such distinctions between beliefs and knowledge. Woods (1996), for example, suggested knowledge and beliefs should be considered as interrelated constructs, rather than independent ones. He argued that knowledge and beliefs should not be treated as being qualitatively different, but rather as “extremes on a spectrum” (Woods, 2003, p.205) where at one end is “the more publicly accepted, factual, demonstrable and objectively” knowledge and at the other is “the more idiosyncratic, subjective and more identity-related” beliefs. The boundary between the two is “flexible, changeable and fuzzy” (p.206). Thus Woods (1996) proposed the inclusive term, BAK (beliefs, assumptions and knowledge). In the same vein, Wenden (1987; 1998; 1999; 2002) does not distinguish them. She treated beliefs as a synonym for metacognitive knowledge and used them

interchangeably. However, Kalaja (1995) challenged the position on the ground that it is possible to measure beliefs with Likert-type statements but impossible to do so for knowledge constructs.

3.4. Categorization of beliefs and belief formation

As discussed above, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined beliefs as the subjective probability of a relation between the object of the belief and some attribute. This definition implies that a belief is formed when the two aspects of an individual's world, an object and some attribute, are established. In line with this definition, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen (1991, 2005) distinguished three types of beliefs and identified three sources for the establishment of beliefs.

(1) Descriptive beliefs: these beliefs are formed through an individual's direct observations. For example, an individual may see a given person who has dark hair or he or she may taste the given water which is sweet. Because the relationship between a given object and its attribute is established with ones' own senses and by direct experiences with the object, Ajzen (2005) argued that descriptive beliefs are held with maximal certainty at least initially. Over time the belief strength may be reduced due to a lapse of memory and forgetting.

(2) Inferential beliefs: these beliefs go beyond merely direct observations. They are formed by making use of an individual's previously learned relationships or residues of past experience or by referring to various rules of logic. For example, at the end of a job interview, an employer may form a belief about the interviewee's friendliness, honesty, capabilities etc.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen (1991, 2005) proposed to view descriptive beliefs and inferential beliefs as a continuum. At the descriptive end of the continuum, a person's beliefs are directly related to the observed events or the stimulus situation, and at the inferential end, beliefs are based on these stimuli and also on residues of the person's past experience. The continuum represents the range from minimal to maximal use of the residues.

(3) Informational beliefs: these beliefs are formed by accepting information provided by an outside source, such as newspapers, books, magazines, radio and television, lecturers, friends, relatives, colleagues, etc. In other words, to form informational beliefs, an object-attribute relation is neither observed nor inferred but is linked by an outside source and will be accepted. For example, a person may accept the information from his friend that it is easy to learn English by listening to English songs.

To summarize briefly, a belief is formed as soon as a link is established between a given object and an attribute. Three processes may be involved in belief formation. They are direct observation, inference and the use of an outside source.

3.5. Research into Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning

Studies on LLBs in SLA are fairly new. The interest in learners' beliefs reflects the shift in focus in SLA to learners and their contributions to language learning along with other individual factors, e.g. learning styles, motivation, aptitude, personality (See Ellis, 1994; 2008 for a detailed discussion).

This section first reviews studies on LLBs focusing on the definitions and taxonomies of learner beliefs. Then it gives an account of studies on the dynamic nature of beliefs. Finally recent studies that investigate relationships between beliefs and learning outcomes will be discussed.

3.5.1. Definitions and Characteristics of Language Learners' Beliefs

The complex nature of learner belief systems and different agendas of researchers have seen the proliferation of terms used to describe learner beliefs in SLA. Barcelos (2003) listed the terms that have been used in SLA including *folklinguistic theories of learning* (Miller & Ginsberg, 1995), *learner representations* (Holec, 1987), *representations* (Riley, 1989, 1994), *learners' philosophy of language learning* (Abraham & Vann, 1987), *metacognitive knowledge* (Wenden, 1998, 2002), *learners' naïve psychology of learning* (Wenden, 1987), *cultural beliefs* (Gardner, 1988), *learning culture* (Riley,

1997), the *culture of learning languages* (Barcelos, 1995) and *culture of learning* (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a). To this list, I add *mini-theories* (Hosenfeld 1978), *preconceived ideas* (Horwitz 1987, 1988), *everyday knowledge* (Dufva, 1994), *learners' cognitions* (Ellis, 2004; 2008). Barcelos (2003) believed that existence of such numerous terms is “not necessarily negative” (p.8). However, the diverse terms sometimes may generate confusion and messiness and they may indicate disagreement among researchers.

Table 1 summarizes some key definitions in the field.

Table 1. Key definitions for learner beliefs about language learning

Researcher	Definition
Horwitz, 1987	Preconceived ideas about language learning, often differing radically from the current opinions of second language scholars (p.119)
Abraham & Vann, 1987	A <i>philosophy</i> of how language is learned. (p.96)
Gardner, 1988	Expectations in the minds of teachers, parents and students concerning the entire second language acquisition task. (p. 110)
Miller & Ginsberg , 1995, cited in Barcelos, 2003	Ideas that students have about language and language learning. (p.294)
Cortazzi & Jin ,1996	The cultural aspects of teaching and learning; what people believe about ‘normal’ and ‘good’ learning activities and processes, where such beliefs have a cultural origin. (p.230)
Kalaja ,1995	Socially constructed, emerging from interaction with others. (p. 196)
Wenden, 1998	The relatively stable information human thinkers have about their own cognitive processes and those of others. (p.516)
Wenden, 2002	What learners know about language learning: the nature of the task, how best to approach it, and personal factors that may inhibit or facilitate the process. (p.46)
Riley, 1997, cited in Barcelos, 2003	A set of representations, beliefs and values related to learning that directly influence [students’] learning behaviour. (p.122)
Dufva ,2003	A complex and multilayered collection of viewpoints and voices rather than a well-organised and coherent schema. (p.146)

The summary shows that the definitions of learner beliefs are varied and sometimes contradictory, indicating that there has been little agreement about the nature of beliefs. The current literature shows two polarized views regarding the actual construct of beliefs:

1. Static or dynamic? Wenden (1998), drawing on Flavell and Wellman (1977), defined metacognitive knowledge as “the relatively stable information human thinkers have about their own cognitive processes and those of others” (p. 516). Horwitz (1987) also regarded learner beliefs as preconceived notions. Beliefs are seen as static, stable and unchanging internalized knowledge stored in the mind while Goodwin & Duranti (1992) saw beliefs as a “socially constituted, interactively sustained, time-bound phenomenon” (Goodwin & Duranti 1992, p.5). Hosenfeld (2003) viewed beliefs ‘as embedded in experiences continually changing and dynamic’ (p.38). Likewise, Dufva (2003) described beliefs ‘as a complex and multilayered collection of viewpoints and voices rather than a well-organized and coherent schema’ (p.146).
2. Erroneous or subjective reality? Horwitz (1987; 1988) saw learner beliefs as ‘myths’, ‘naïve’ or ‘misconceptions’ and as being misguided or defective in comparison to ‘the current opinions of second language scholars’ (Horwitz, 1987, p.119). She viewed learner beliefs as ‘erroneous’ and ‘counterproductive’ and ‘detrimental’ to learning and to autonomous learning. Mantle-Bromley (1995) contended that learner beliefs may “constitute a serious impediment that could affect their language-related attitudes and behaviours” (p.373). Wenden (1987) also regarded learner beliefs as ‘fallible’ knowledge about language, learning and the language learning process. In contrast, Riley (1997) argued that some learner beliefs ‘may be wrong’ in terms of scientific truth. However, the aim in our research is not to find ‘the truth’ but learners’ subjective reality, ‘their truth’. He contended “it is their beliefs more than anybody else’s that will influence their learning” (p.127). Hosenfeld (2003) expressed a similar view that it is learners’ own beliefs that affect their learning behaviours. Barkhuizen (1998) even argued that students’ beliefs may not be necessarily

inferior to those of teachers and that some students' views are very similar to those of the literature in the field of applied linguistics.

3. Cognitive entity or socially constructed phenomenon? Some researchers perceived beliefs as cognitive entities, i.e. located in the mind. Different terms used in SLA literature are: 'ideas' (Miller & Ginsberg, 1995), 'assumptions' (Holec, 1987), 'beliefs' (Abraham & Vann, 1987), 'knowledge' (Wenden, 1998); 'expectations in the minds of teachers, parents and students' (Gardner, 1988). However, for other researchers, learner beliefs were seen as born out of their social experience and interactions with the environment and the situation they are in. Beliefs were defined as 'socially conditioned' (Sakui & Gaies, 1999, p.48), 'relational and responsive to context' (Benson & Lor, 1999, p.464) and contextual and culture-specific: "...cultural assumptions... based upon their previous educational experience, previous (and present) readings about language learning and contact with other people" (Barcelos, 1995, p.40, quoted in Barcelos 2003, p.9); they are 'the cultural aspects of teaching and learning' and 'have a cultural origin' (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a, p.230).

I argue that the different views on LLBs in current literature seem to arise from the choice of theoretical orientation and different approaches to beliefs, i.e. how beliefs are viewed and examined. While those who take the 'normative approach' (see Barcelos, 2003) have used a cognitive psychology framework and examined the end product of beliefs (what LLBs are), those who take the 'contextual approach' have investigated the process of belief formation (how LLBs are formed and developed). The different approaches highlight that beliefs are a complex, multi-faceted construct.

Drawing on the literature, I propose that LLBs are best understood as follows:

1. Beliefs are both static and dynamic. Some learners' beliefs are relatively stable and resistant to change. These beliefs are usually based on learners' direct experiences and related to their own identity. It takes time for those beliefs to change. These beliefs are classified as descriptive beliefs by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), who contended that because descriptive beliefs are based

on a person's direct experiences, they "are held with maximal certainty" (p.132). However, other beliefs, particularly informational beliefs are dynamic and susceptible to change. Because these beliefs do not have direct links with direct experiences, as people get new information about an object they may change their previous beliefs about that object.

2. Beliefs are both conscious and unconscious. Some beliefs are held consciously. When called upon, learners can articulate them. Argyris and Schön (1974) call these beliefs "espoused theories" - what 'an individual claims to follow' (Argyris et al. 1985, p.82) and "to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others" (Argyris & Schön 1974, p.7). Woods calls these beliefs "abstract beliefs" (Woods, 2003), i.e. "a set of propositions about 'the way things are' and 'the way things should be' that we claim we believe in" (p.207). In comparison, some beliefs are held unconsciously because they are deeply rooted in one's culture and up-bringing. They guide learners' actions without their awareness. They are "theories-in-use" (Argyris & Schön, 1974) or "beliefs-in-action" (Woods, 2003). These tacit beliefs have to be inferred from learners' actions.
3. Beliefs are cognitive constructs and are socially constructed and contextually situated. The acknowledgement of social dimensions in beliefs gives recognition to their dynamic nature in the sense that cognition does not only take place in one's head but emerges in the process as well. Context is not regarded as the external setting of internal cognitive phenomena but as an integral element of cognition. This view is clearly expressed in many post-positivist research paradigms of psychology, e.g. ecological psychology (Gibson, 1979) or dialogical psychology (Shotter, 1995). Thus, beliefs are socially (co)constructed and then internalized in their mind.
4. Beliefs are influential. There is a consensus in the literature that beliefs influence learners' approach to learning and the expectations they hold about the outcomes of their efforts (Wenden, 1998); beliefs influence their 'learning behavior' (Riley 1997) and 'the degree of success learners achieve' (Abraham and Vann 1987, p. 96).

3.5.2. Categorization of Language Learners' Beliefs

A number of studies have attempted to identify the types of beliefs held by language learners. In an early study, Wenden (1987) investigated 25 adults enrolled in a part-time advanced level class at an American university. The 25 learners displayed a variety of beliefs, which Wenden grouped into three areas: (1) the use of the language. This was further divided into five subthemes, such as learn the language in a natural way; practice as often as possible; think in the second language; live and study in an environment where the target language is spoken; don't worry about mistakes; (2) learning about the language. This included 4 subthemes: learn grammar and vocabulary; take a formal course; learn from mistakes and be mentally active, and (3) the importance of personal factors, including the emotional aspect, self-concept and aptitude for learning.

Horwitz (1985) used a free recall task to ask four groups of approximately 25 language teachers (both English and foreign language) to list (1) their beliefs about language learning, (2) other people's beliefs and (3) their students' beliefs. From the teachers' free-recall protocols and also focus group discussions, an instrument, *Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI), was developed. It assesses learners' beliefs in five areas: (1) the difficulty of language learning, (2) aptitude for language learning, (3) the nature of language learning, (4) learning and communication strategies, (5) motivations and expectations for language learning. A detailed account of the development of the BALLI will be given in the methodology chapter.

Sakui and Gaies (1999) developed a context-sensitive questionnaire after consulting a number of English teachers working at different educational levels in Japan. The questionnaire was intended to tap beliefs most relevant to the learning of English in Japan. After surveying 1300 Japanese university learners of English, they identified four categories of beliefs relating to their language learning: (1) beliefs about a contemporary (communicative) orientation to learning English, (2) beliefs about a traditional orientation to learning English, (3) beliefs about the quality and sufficiency of classroom instruction for learning English and (4) beliefs about foreign-language aptitude and difficulty.

Cotterall (1999), drawing on research in SLA, particularly on autonomous learning, developed a 90-item questionnaire which she administered to a group of students enrolled in an English for Academic Purpose course in New Zealand and identified six key aspects: (1) the role of the teacher, (2) the role of feedback, (3) the learner's sense of self-efficacy, (4) important strategies, (5) dimensions of strategies-related behaviour and (6) the nature of language learning.

Later research progressed from simply listing the different kinds of learners' beliefs to classifying them in relation to learning styles. Benson and Lor (1999), for example, interviewed 16 first year Arts Faculty undergraduates at the University of Hong Kong about their conceptions of language learning. From the data, they identified three broad domains of beliefs: (1) beliefs about language learning, (2) beliefs about self and (3) beliefs about the learning situation. Within beliefs about language learning, 14 discrete beliefs were identified relating to: work, method and motivation. Some of them were of quantitative nature, i.e. language learning was perceived as a process of accumulation of things to be learned. For example, 'you need to spend time'; 'you need to build a good foundation'. For these learners, language learning was perceived to be related to the amount of time expended. The more time they spend, the more they became competent. Other beliefs were of qualitative nature, i.e. language learning was conceptualized as responding to an unfamiliar environment. For example, 'you need to gain a sense of self-satisfaction from learning'; 'you need to be in an environment that forces you to learn the language'. For these learners, making sense of learning was crucial. Benson and Lor (1999) argued that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative conceptions of language and language learning was related to different learning styles: experiential and analytic learning.

In addition to experiential and analytic learning, recent studies have also suggested a third belief category – 'self-efficacy' which concerns learners' beliefs about their ability in language learning. Tanaka & Ellis (2003), for instance, drawing on extensive review of the literature on learner beliefs, revealed three factors that were related to learners' beliefs about language learning: (1) beliefs about analytic learning (e.g. I can learn well by following a textbook), (2) beliefs about experiential learning

(e.g. I can learn well by listening to radio or watching TV in English) and (3) beliefs about self-efficacy and confidence (e.g. it is possible for me not to get nervous when speaking English.).

The classification of LLBs is summarized in table 2.

Table 2. Classification of Language Learners' Beliefs

Study	Source of the categories	Categories suggested
Wenden (1987)	Learners' report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. importance of using the language in a natural way 2. importance of learning about the language 3. importance of personal factors e.g. feelings, self-concepts, attitude and aptitude.
Horwitz (1985;1987)	Views of teachers and students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. difficulty of language learning 2. foreign language aptitude 3. nature of language learning 4. learning & communication strategies 5. motivations and expectations
Sakui & Gaies (1999)	Views of English teachers in Japan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. contemporary orientation to learning English 2. traditional orientation to learning English 3. quality and sufficiency of classroom instruction 4. foreign language aptitude & difficulty
Cotterall (1999)	SLA theory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. role of the teacher 2. role of feedback 3. sense of self-efficacy 4. important strategies 5. dimensions of strategies related behaviour 6. nature of language learning
Benson & Lor (1999)	Learners' account	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. language learning: quantitative & qualitative conceptions 2. self 3. learning situation
Tanaka & Ellis (2003)	SLA theory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. analytic learning 2. experiential learning 3. self-efficacy & confidence

It appears that researchers follow their own agenda; therefore the categories of LLBs in current literature vary from researcher to researcher. LLBs can be anything relating to language learning, e.g.

the target language, strategies, teachers, motivations, learning styles and learner factors. It appears that more studies are needed in this area in order to better understand the nature of learners' beliefs and to generate a more widely accepted taxonomy about LLBs in SLA.

3.5.3. The BALLI-based Studies

A large number of studies of LLBs have been conducted by employing Horwitz's (1985) BALLI questionnaire. Since its development, it has been used with different learners, e.g. English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) learners as well as foreign language (FL) learners other than EFL, and in various parts of the world, e.g. in the U.S. (Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Kuntz, 1996; Oh, 1996), Australia (Bernat 2006), Taiwan (Yang, 1992, 1999), P.R. China (Su, 1995), Korea (Park, 1995; Truitt, 1995), Turkey (Kunt, 1997; Ariogul, 2009) and Lebanon (Diab, 2006).

3.5.3.1. Identifying the Strength of Learner Beliefs

Most BALLI-based studies have sought to quantify the strength of different beliefs in different populations of learners. In her early study of 32 ESL intermediate students in the U.S., Horwitz (1987) noted that the majority of students believed that 'it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language' and that 'it takes three to four years to learn a language'. These students also strongly believed that 'some languages are easier to learn than others' and they considered 'learning a language is about learning grammar rules or vocabulary words or translating from English'. An overwhelming number of students (94%) believed that 'it is best to learn English in an English-speaking country'.

In another study, Horwitz (1988) compared the beliefs of 241 first semester foreign language learners of German, French and Spanish. The results revealed that the overall pattern of responses was strikingly consistent across language groups. Although this study involved different learners (i.e. foreign language learners) than the previous one (i.e. ESL learners) (Horwitz, 1987), the results of the two studies were similar. For example, an overwhelming number of students supported the concept of a language difficulty hierarchy (i.e. some languages are easier to learn than others) and foreign language

aptitude or special ability for language learning (i.e. some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages). They were also generally optimistic about their own prospects as language learners. For example, 35% to 38% of learners believed that they could learn a second language well within 1-2 years and a minority of them (5%-8%) even estimated that they could learn a language in under a year. A majority of them were positive about their ability to learn to speak the language they were learning well. In Horwitz's view, these beliefs were detrimental to learners' expectation for and commitment to learning. She suggested teachers 'discuss with their own students reasonable time commitments for successful language learning' (p.286). In addition, all three groups believed that learning another language was merely a matter of translating from English or learning grammar rules or new vocabulary words. Accordingly they strongly endorsed the strategies of repetition and practice in the language lab. Horwitz predicted that preoccupation with translation was likely to distract students from the most important learning task and impede their successful learning. Horwitz concluded that learners came to language learning with definite preconceived notions.

Mantle-Bromley (1995) investigated learners' attitudes toward and beliefs about learning an L2. The study involved 208 seventh grade middle school students taking first-year French and Spanish in Kansas. Even though the participants were much younger, the results indicated similar patterns in terms of beliefs about language difficulty, language aptitude and also about the importance of learning new words and translation. For example, an overwhelmingly large number of students (85%) believed that some languages are easier to learn than others. More than half of the students (51%) believed that they would learn to speak another language well. A majority of them (69%) also believed that one could become fluent in an L2 in 2 years' time or less. Mantle-Broomley came to similar conclusions as Horwitz (1987; 1988), namely some learners came to the classroom 'with certain attitudes, beliefs, and expectations that may actually prove harmful to their success in the classroom' (p.383). Teachers should realize this and 'help their students overcome these blocks to language learning' (p.383).

Ariogul, Unal and Onursal (2009) administered the BALLI to a group of Turkish foreign language learners. The purpose of the study was to compare English, German and French language learners' beliefs and find out the similarities and differences in their beliefs. 343 English, German and French language students in Turkey participated in the study. All the participants were first year university students enrolled in an intensive language school of a large research university. The results revealed differences among the different language groups in some beliefs. For example, while 55% to 63% of French and German learners agreed that "it is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language", only 28% of English learners believed that culture was important in foreign language learning. Another statistically significant difference between the language groups was related to their beliefs about vocabulary learning. While 79% to 81% of English and German students agreed on the statement that "learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words", 68% of French learners supported this. The learners also gave conflicting responses relating to their beliefs about learning and communication strategies. 90% of French learners agreed with the statement that "if I heard someone speaking the language I am trying to learn, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language", compared to 57% of English and 75% of German learners. However, no statistically significant differences were found among the groups relating to the difficulty of language learning. The responses of each group about language aptitude were also similar to one another. For example, 88% of English students, 89% of German, and 97% of French students believed that some people possessed a gift for languages. Ariogul et al. concluded that some of the beliefs were detrimental to long-term language learning (e.g. all three groups supported the idea that it would take a maximum of two years to become fluent in a foreign language) and they suggested language teachers alleviate negative preconceived beliefs by implementing and discussing positive instructional practices and realistic expectations in the classroom.

What was common in all these studies was that they provided teachers with some important information about learners' belief patterns and helped teachers to make decisions if they wanted to help

students ‘to clear up’ and to rid themselves of some ‘misconceptions about language learning’. However, most of the studies merely identified the strength of the beliefs that learners held and/or compared them. In the next section I will examine studies that investigated the factors affecting learners’ beliefs.

3.5.3.2. Factors Influencing Language Learners’ Beliefs

Recent years have seen the BALLI researchers move beyond merely identifying the strength of LLBs to examining the interaction of beliefs with other variables. For example, Siebert (2003, cited in Bernat, 2006), aimed to explore similarities and differences between students and teachers and also examine the influence of national origin/ethnicity and gender on beliefs. The BALLI was administered to both students and teachers in an intensive English programme at institutions of higher education in the U.S. 156 students (91 males and 64 females) and 25 teachers participated in the study. The students came from diverse backgrounds including Angola, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Laos, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam. The results revealed that there were general beliefs among students about the existence of language aptitude, together with the importance of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. Siebert also noted several significant belief differences between males and females relating to language learning and strategy use. For example, male students were more likely to rate their language ability highly and were much more optimistic about the length of time it takes to learn a language. Siebert also found that national origin or ethnicity had a significant influence on beliefs about ability, the length of time it takes to learn a language and the difficulty of the English language. For example, students from the Middle East were confident about their language abilities and believed they could learn the language well in a short time while the opposite was true of Japanese students.

However, the findings regarding cultural influence on beliefs are not very consistent. In her review, Horwitz (1999) aimed to identify the cultural differences in beliefs among groups of learners from different cultural backgrounds. She chose 7 representative BALLI-based research across different learner cultural groups including American learners of German, French, Spanish and Japanese (Horwitz, 1988; Oh, 1996), US university instructors and students of French (Kern, 1995), and Korean EFL learners (Park, 1995; Truitt, 1995), Taiwanese EFL learners (Yang, 1992) and Turkish EFL students (Kunt, 1997). After considering the similarities and differences in these learners' beliefs, Horwitz found there were some instances of differing beliefs among the American, Korean, and Turkish heritage learners. For example, the major differences between the Americans and the Asian and Turkish heritage learners were that the latter were less supportive of the concept of relative difficulty of some languages but firmly believed in the importance of learning vocabulary. Despite these instances of differing beliefs, Horwitz reported that there was a large degree of commonality in the beliefs of different cultural groups and that an examination of the responses to individual BALLI items did not yield clear-cut cultural differences in beliefs. She argued that learning circumstances and individual differences rather than culture were accountable for the differences, suggesting there was not sufficient evidence to conclude that there were cultural influences on learners' beliefs. Ellis (1994; 2008) also contended that learner beliefs are more substantially influenced by general factors such as personality and cognitive style than culture.

Several studies have examined the impact of contextual factors on beliefs. Diab (2006) examined Lebanese EFL students' beliefs about language learning. Unlike most other EFL students, Lebanese learners were exposed to two foreign languages: English and French. The study was designed to compare learner beliefs about learning English and French and another intention was to explore factors that contribute to differences in beliefs. 284 Lebanese undergraduate students participated in the study. Among them 57% were males and 43% females; 45% attended English-medium schools and 43% studies at French-medium schools. Based on the results of his pilot study involving interviews with 20

Lebanese EFL university students, Diab made several modifications to the BALLI and developed a context-specific 35-item questionnaire consisting of four sections: (1) beliefs about foreign language learning in general, (2) beliefs about learning English, (3) beliefs about learning French and (4) beliefs about the learning of different languages in Lebanon, e.g. English, French and Arabic. After performing factor analyses and a MANOVA, three major beliefs were identified. The primary category was the beliefs about the importance of accuracy in speaking English and French. For example, 73% of students agreed that it is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation (69% agreed for French). The second category of beliefs is about the difficulty of learning English and French. 96% of students believed in the concept of a language learning difficulty hierarchy where the students viewed English as an easy language and French as a difficult one. The third category was the strong motivation for learning both English and French. Moreover, the MANOVA revealed that female students expressed stronger motivation to learn French and greater confidence in speaking it than male students. Diab's study revealed that beliefs seemed to be related to the political and socio-cultural context of foreign language education in Lebanon. Also it appeared that gender and language-medium educational background (English Vs French) seemed to affect beliefs.

However, in a recent study, Bernat (2006) examined whether beliefs were context-specific. She administered the BALLI to survey learner beliefs and then compared the results with a study conducted in the U.S. (Siebert, 2003). 262 university students were involved in the study. They were enrolled in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes at an Australian university and came from 19 different countries, Chinese (N= 153) being the predominant national group. Unlike Diab's (2006) study, Bernat's results revealed many similarities in all categories of the BALLI in the two different contexts. It seems premature to conclude that beliefs vary according to contextual setting. Instead of examining any single factor, she suggested looking at the combination of several factors in individuals e.g. cognitive, affective, social and personal factors.

The BALLI studies produced mixed results in relation to the impact of different variables on learners' beliefs, e.g. gender, culture, context. Current research is inconclusive regarding what influences learner beliefs and whether variation in beliefs is culture-and/or context-specific. Further research is needed.

Table 3 summarizes the BALLI-based studies.

Table 3 *Summary of Selected BALLI-based Studies*

Studies	Purpose	Participants	Results
Horwitz, 1987	To report on the responses of ESL students to the BALLI	32 intermediate level students at an intensive English program at the university of Texas, Austin	Most students believed in lang. aptitude, lang. hierarchy, the importance of learning vocabulary & grammar; the importance of translation.
Horwitz 1988	To compare common beliefs of foreign language students and to sensitize teachers to the variety of beliefs and to their possible consequences	241 students of German, French and Spanish	Consistent overall belief patterns were found. All three groups endorsed the concept of lang. aptitude, lang. difficulty hierarchy. Most students supported the strategies of translation and learning grammar and new words.
Mantle-Bromley, 1995	To investigate students' attitudes towards language and culture.	208 students of Spanish and French from a school district in Kansas.	Students believed in difficulty of certain languages, lang. hierarchy, and lang. aptitude.
Siebert, 2003 (cited in Bernat, 2006)	To compare the beliefs held by learners and teachers and examine the influence on beliefs of gender and national origin	156 students and 25 teachers	There were a number of statistically significant differences among teachers' and learners' beliefs; Gender and national origin influenced beliefs.
Diab, 2006	To compare learner beliefs about learning English and French and to explore factors that contributed to the differences in beliefs	284 Lebanese undergraduate students	Beliefs are related to the political and socio-cultural context in Lebanon; beliefs were found related to language-medium educational background and gender.

Table 3 (continued)

Bernat, 2006	To test if beliefs were context-specific by comparing with an American study (Siebert, 2003)	262 EAP students	Beliefs reported by both study groups were similar in all categories. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.
Ariogul et al. 2009	To examine the differences and similarities among English, German, and French language groups' beliefs about language learning	343 Turkish first year students	There were differences in beliefs among the groups.

3.5.4. The Situated and Dynamic Nature of Learner Beliefs

Most of the early belief studies, the BALLI-based studies in particular, were conducted on the assumption that beliefs were trait-like factors relating to the general personal features. Beliefs were seen as static and ‘a ready-made mental entity’ (Barcelos, 2003). Recent developments have rejected this idea and have argued that beliefs are context specific and dynamic. Kern (1995), for example, reported changes in the beliefs of 180 students studying first-year level French at a university in the US over the course of one semester (15 weeks). He administered Horwitz’s BALLI to measure changes in language learning beliefs during the first and last week of the semester. Kern found that the students’ beliefs did change over time. A significant change was observed in the response to the statement “if you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on”, with 37% of the students reporting greater agreement and 15% lesser agreement. The learners also changed their responses to the statement “Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules”, with 32% showing greater agreement and 20% lesser agreement. These changes suggested that the students were more conscious of mistakes they made and the importance of learning grammar relating to their general language performance. The belief which showed the greatest change was about their language ability. At the end of the course, 47% of the students had changed their perception of their own language ability. It suggested the effect of success in the classroom upon the

students' perception of themselves as learners. Another interesting finding in Kern's study was the source of belief changes. Kern found the methods in the classroom affected students' beliefs more than the teachers' own expressed beliefs did.

Gwynne (1997) investigated the changes in the beliefs of a group of ten immigrants in New Zealand over a period of twelve weeks and attempted to examine the factors that influenced learner beliefs. She used the modified BALLI (Horwitz 1987) and Willing's (1988) *Learning Style Preferences Inventory* to collect learner belief and learning style data on two occasions: at the beginning and at the end of the course. At the end of week 12, the post survey showed several changes. The results were similar to Kern's (1995). An increased number of learners became more confident about language learning and about themselves as learners. For example, initial responses showed half of the students believed successful students learned things quickly compared with 90% in the later survey. 80% of them considered themselves to be good language learners with good study habits compared to 50% in the pre-survey. The students also adopted a more autonomous attitude to their language learning after twelve weeks' study. At the beginning 90% of the students believed that the teacher was the most important factor in their English course but in the post survey all the learners agreed that they themselves were the most important, compared with 70% at the beginning. Finally the study found that students became more tolerant of ambiguity in language learning. 80% of the students agreed that it was okay to guess if they did not know a word in English, compared with only 30% at the beginning. However, when considering the factors responsible for belief change, Gwynne found that the belief changes in learners were not due to the influence of the teachers' beliefs but to other factors: the learners' language progress, their English level and their experiences both within and outside the classroom.

Unlike previous studies which used the BALLI questionnaire to examine general learner beliefs, White (1999) used qualitative methods to track the expectations and emergent beliefs of novice Japanese and Spanish distance learners' beliefs about self-instructed learning over a 12-week period. A

recursive, five phases of data collection cycle was used: (1) prior to course, phase, (2) weeks 1-2, (3) weeks 5-6, (4) weeks 8-10 and (5) week 12. The results revealed an overall shift in the learners' locus of control. At the beginning (week 2), the learners were not able to give a clear indication of the factors that determined their success in learning. By phase 4 (week 10), most learners reported that the determinants of successful learning were dependent on internal factors, such as, motivation, persistence, confidence, etc. rather than on external factors, e.g. course materials, tutors. The learners had become more confident about their own ability. In addition, as the learners gained more experience with the solo learning context, the learners' conceptions of self-directed learning changed from their initial beliefs that this type of learning would fit easily into their schedules to the later recognition that self-instructed distance learning required interacting with materials, setting up tasks to perform, and developing an effective response to cope with confusion and uncertainty.

Tanaka (2004) employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the development of 56 Japanese students' beliefs about language learning over 12 weeks during their study abroad in New Zealand. The quantitative method involved using his self-designed belief questionnaire, which was administered both at the beginning and at the end of the study. The questionnaire was composed of three sections. Section one aimed to obtain background information about participants. Section two included one open question requesting learners to write their opinions about the important factors or ways of leaning English well. Section three consisted of 27 items of closed questions on a 5-point Likert scale. The quantitative results showed there were no statistically significant differences in the scores for any of the 27 items in the learners' responses between two occasions but considerable individual differences were found in the degree and direction of the changes in their responses. For example, 64% of the students changed their responses to "I can learn English well if I live in an English-speaking country", with 43% showing a positive change and 21% showing a negative change. However, the qualitative data he gathered from 5 learners' diaries and an interview with 29 participants indicated two notable changes in the Japanese students' beliefs. One change was relating to learner's

perceptions about grammar and vocabulary learning. They rediscovered the importance of learning grammar and vocabulary. They began by rejecting grammar study but eventually came to recognize the need for ‘grammar’. This change may be a reaction to their grammar-focused teaching in Japan. However, as a result of communication problems in and outside the classroom, they gradually came to realize if they did not have sufficient grammar and vocabulary, they would not be able to communicate properly and accurately. They were aware that focusing on linguistic forms (analytic learning) and focusing on using the language (experiential learning) were equally important in language learning. In other words, these learners became more balanced in terms of their learning approach. Another change he found was that learners became more realistic. They understood the importance of their own efforts. Many of the learners in this study initially held ‘naïve’ beliefs that they would automatically learn English once they came to live in an English-speaking country but by the end of the 12 weeks they became more realistic about their expectations of learning overseas. They realized the significance of their own efforts and that language learning was a long and difficult process.

Amuzie and Winke (2009) combined both quantitative (survey questions) and qualitative introspective (interview) measures to explore the changes in 70 international students’ beliefs as a result of a study abroad program in the United States. The participants came from diverse language backgrounds including Korean, Chinese, Arabic, Japanese, French and Vietnamese. They were divided into two groups. Group one comprised the learners who had been in the United States for six months or less while group two included those learners who had been in the United States for more than six months but less than two years. A belief questionnaire was administered which consisted of 26 statements on a 10-point scale. Each belief statement appeared twice asking the learners to reflect on their beliefs back in their home country and at the time of the study. For example, the learners were first asked to respond to the statement, “when I studied English in my home country, I believed that it was important to repeat and practice.” They were then asked to respond to the statement, “Here in the US, I believe it is important to repeat and practice.” The results revealed statistically significant belief

changes in both groups relating to learner autonomy and the role of teachers. The learners in both groups reported that while abroad they came to more strongly believe that they themselves should find opportunities to use their L2 and that success in L2 learning depended more on their own efforts outside class. They came to believe less strongly in the importance of the teacher's role in learning. The study also revealed that those who were abroad longer developed significantly stronger beliefs in learner autonomy than those who studied abroad for less time, suggesting that the learning context and the length of exposure influenced belief changes. However, there is a major limitation in this study, i.e. the data on the learners' beliefs, at home and abroad, were collected at one time based on the learners' retrospective reports. Amuzie and Winke (2009) also pointed out the necessity of a longitudinal study that examined a single group at two different points of time to better capture the dynamic change of beliefs.

These studies have provided some empirical evidence that beliefs are dynamic, socially constructed, responsive to context and susceptible to change. However, as Woods (2003) observes "changing beliefs in a person is a little different from changing knowledge states – it is much harder.... beliefs seem to be held too closely to one's identity and sense of self" (p.226). More qualitative research is needed to explore the nature of and factors for belief changes.

3.5.5. The Relationship between Language Learners' Beliefs and Learning Outcomes

Whilst the majority of belief studies focus on documenting and classifying learners' beliefs, a handful of researchers have attempted to examine the effect of beliefs on language learning.

Mori (1999) investigated the beliefs of 187 university students enrolled in Japanese at various proficiency levels at two state and private universities in the U.S. She examined the relationship between epistemological beliefs (i.e., beliefs about learning in general) and beliefs about language learning and also the relationship between beliefs and L2 achievement. She used three instruments to collect data on the learners' beliefs: (1) a 40-item epistemological belief questionnaire, (2) a 92-item

language learning belief questionnaire and (3) a student information questionnaire. The students' achievement in Japanese was measured by daily quizzes, achievement exams, proficiency tests and course achievement. Regarding the relationship between epistemological beliefs and beliefs about language learning, the results showed that most of them were unrelated. However, she found some modest but statistically significant correlations between beliefs and learning achievement. The study suggested two beliefs were strongly correlated to high language performance. Learners who believed in their own high language abilities (i.e. Japanese is easy) and those who accepted multiple and ambiguous answers usually outperformed those who did not hold such beliefs. Lower achievers tended to attribute their failure in language learning to innate and uncontrollable factors.

Peacock (1999) carried out an investigation in Hong Kong to find out how far learner beliefs differed from those held by their teachers and whether those differences affected learner learning. In particular, he examined if mismatched beliefs between learners and teachers were related to lower proficiency levels. To this end, Peacock used the BALLI to survey a total of 202 learners on their beliefs about language learning and 45 teachers' beliefs to compare the beliefs of the teachers and learners. He also selected learners (a total of 121) for a semi-structured interview to enable him to collect data on the origin of their beliefs. To gather data on learner proficiency, Peacock asked selected (a total of 155) learners to sit a comprehensive proficiency test which consisted of four parts: listening comprehension, grammar, reading comprehension and essay writing. Peacock found many of the responses to the items in the BALLI were similar between teachers and learners apart from eleven beliefs. Four of the eleven 'mismatched learner beliefs' had negative effects on EFL proficiency:

- (1) learners who believed that 'learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules' were significantly less proficient (test scored 68) than those who thought otherwise (test scored 75).
- (2) learners who underestimated the difficulty of learning a foreign language were less proficient than those with a more realistic view. Learners, for example, who believed it took up to 2 years

to become fluent if someone spent one hour a day learning a foreign language averaged 68 in the test scores whereas learners who believed it took more than 5 years to become fluent scored 73 on average.

(3) the students who disagreed with the statement ‘if you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on’ were more proficient than those who agreed (test score 72 vs. test score 68).

(4) the students who disagreed with the statement ‘you shouldn’t say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly’ were more proficient than those who agreed (test score 71 vs. test score 66).

Peacock concluded that incorrect beliefs were detrimental to language learning and resulted in negative learning outcomes; they also caused dissatisfaction and frustration in students and affected their choice of language-learning strategies. He proposed that teachers should train learners and explain reasoning behind classroom methods.

Tanaka (2004), in the study discussed earlier, found those who held beliefs about experiential learning (e.g. using English) tended to advance more in general English proficiency but not in speaking ability. Tanaka attributed this surprising result to the oral task used in the study. Because the oral task was a monologic narrative story, learners might focus more on the accuracy and vocabulary rather than on the fluency. Tanaka’s study also showed that changes in the Japanese students’ beliefs about language learning appeared to have very little influence on changes in their English proficiency. Tanaka attributed the weak correlation to the short length of time that the learners were involved in the study. 12 weeks might not be long enough to detect the changes.

The weakness in all these studies is that they only investigated the relationship between beliefs and language proficiency. They did not investigate learners’ actual attempt to learn an L2. Learners may have held some beliefs but for various reasons, they were unable to act upon their beliefs, or the beliefs that guided their learning action did not appear in the research questionnaire. Therefore, more

research, of a qualitative nature in particular, is needed to examine the three constructs: beliefs, learning action and learning outcomes.

3.6. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter had two aims: to define the construct of ‘beliefs’ and to review previous studies of learners’ beliefs about language learning. Drawing on Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) theory, LLBs for this study are defined as learners’ subjective understanding of anything associated with their language learning. Thus, the best approach to uncovering learners’ beliefs is to give learners an opportunity to communicate their subjective reality - that is, to use their own accounts to discuss what they deem significant for their language learning. Although knowledge and beliefs are both cognitive, beliefs are evaluative and judgmental whereas knowledge is factual and objective. In contrast to both, attitudes reflect favourable or unfavourable feelings.

Research into learners’ beliefs in SLA is fairly peripheral, compared to research into other individual learner factors, e.g. motivation, aptitude, language learning strategies and personality. The main findings that emerge from this review of the literature are as follows:

- Most learners (across the different learner populations) endorse the concept of foreign language aptitude. For example, they strongly believed that “some people are born with a special ability for learning a foreign language” and that “it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language”.
- A majority of learners support a hierarchy of language difficulty. They feel overwhelmingly that “some languages are easier to learn than others”.
- A large proportion of learners manifest strong beliefs about the need to study grammar and vocabulary and also agree on the importance of translation.
- Beliefs have an impact on learning/proficiency. However, the studies to date have not shown a strong link between beliefs and learning.

- Learner beliefs are situation specific and dynamic.

However, a consensus has yet to be reached relating to the defining features of beliefs and how to classify them. Although a few studies have investigated the factors (e.g. culture and context) that influence learners' beliefs, the results are not conclusive and sometimes even contradictory.

Research into LLBs is still in its infancy. As Ellis (2008) points out, there are a lot of issues remaining to be explored. More research is needed to explore the impact that beliefs have on the process and outcomes of language learning, and the interactions of beliefs with other learner factors, language learning strategies in particular. This study attempts this by examining the relationships between learner beliefs and learning strategies on one hand and their impact on learning outcomes on the other.

CHAPTER FOUR

LANGAUGE LEARNER STRATEGIES

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I first present Ajzen's (1991, 2005) theory of planned behavior which I will draw on to explore the relationships between learner beliefs and language learner strategies in this study. I will then review previous studies of language learner strategies in SLA, focusing on the following four aspects: (1) definition of language learner strategies, (2) classification of language learner strategies, (3) factors affecting language learner strategy use and (4) the relationship between language learner beliefs, language learner strategies and learning outcomes.

4.2. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior

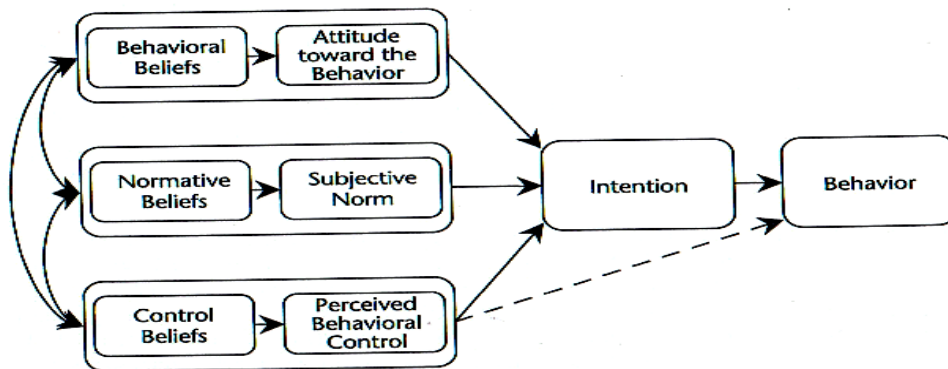
Ajzen's (1991; 2005) theory of planned behavior (TPB), an extension of Ajzen and Fishbein's theory of reasoned action (TRA), aims to identify the determinants of behavior, i.e. to understand why people do what they do. TRA addresses 'the causal antecedents of intentions to perform behaviors over which people have sufficient control' (Ajzen 2005, p.117). It postulates that people perform a behavior if they hold favorable attitudes to it and translate their plans into actions. TRA assumes that human beings usually behave in a consistent, logical and sensible manner. In other words, if a person intends to perform a behavior, then it is likely that the person will do it. People are expected to demonstrate consistency in their thoughts, feelings and actions. TRA has three constructs: behavioral intention (BI), attitude (A), and subjective norm (SN). Behavioral intention indicates a person's relative strength of intention to perform a behavior or how much effort an individual would like to commit to perform such behaviour. Higher commitment is more likely to mean that behaviour will be performed. The strength of a person's behavioral intention is determined by his or her attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms ($BI = A + SN$), which are determined by "the person's perception that most people who are important to him or her think he should or should not perform the behavior in question"

(Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975:16). To put TRA into simple terms: a person's attitude, combined with subjective norms, forms his/her behavioral intention, which results in overt behavior.

However, casual observations and some empirical studies (e.g. Conner et al. 2000; Sheeran, 2002, cited in Ajzen, 2005) have suggested some inconsistency in the human behavioral domain. In other words, people may behave differently from one situation to another or they may say one thing but do another. Ajzen (2005) argued that the inconsistency can be accounted for by personal factors, by situational/contextual factors and by factors that are associated with the action. All these factors may lead to incomplete volitional control of behaviors. In light of this, in his 1985 article "From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior", Ajzen extended the theory of reasoned action (TRA) to the theory of planned behavior (TPB) which incorporates an additional construct, "perceived behavioral control", a concept borrowed from Bandura's self efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977). According to the theory of planned behavior, human behavior is shaped by three basic determinants. One is behavioral beliefs which are personal in nature as they reflect an individual's subjective belief and probability about the consequences of a particular behavior. Based on an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a particular behavior, individuals have a favorable or unfavorable "attitude toward the behavior". Another determinant is "normative beliefs" which reflect the social influence on an individual's perception about a particular behavior. In other words, the judgment and perceptions of significant others, e.g. parents, spouse, friends, teachers, society etc. impose social pressure on the person and influence whether he or she should or should not perform such behavior. "Normative beliefs" result in subjective norms. Both attitudes and subjective norms are original constructs in TRA. However, Ajzen (1985) added a third determinant in TPB, "control beliefs" which are concerned with the sense of self-efficacy or ability to execute the given behavior. "Control beliefs" lead to "perceived behavioral control" which is presumed to affect actual behavior both directly and indirectly through behavioral intention.

In sum, the central construct in TPB is people’s intentions to perform a given behaviour. Intentions can be predicted with high accuracy from (1) attitudes toward the behaviour , (2) subjective norms, and (3) perceived behavioural control. These intentions, together with perceptions of behavioral control, account for considerable variance in actual behavior. Ajzen (1991) posited that “the more favourable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to a behaviour, and the greater the perceived behavioural control, the stronger should be an individual’s intention to perform the behaviour under consideration” (p.286). The theory of planned behavior is illustrated in Figure 1.

Fig. 1 *The Theory of Planned Behavior*



(Source: Ajzen (2005, p.126) printed with permission)

This study will draw on the TPB model to explore the relationship among the three variables: learner beliefs, learner strategies and learning outcomes. I chose the TPB because Ajzen (2002) claimed that the theory of planned behaviour was well supported by empirical evidence. Since its publication, the TPB model has been used in many empirical based research studies to predict behavior in various aspects of life, e.g. weight loss, election, drinking, job search etc (See Ajzen, 1991 for a review of those studies). The model is regarded as a very powerful, valid and predictive model for explaining human behavior.

4.3. Research into Language Learner Strategies in SLA

The study of language learner strategies started in the 1970s. The research interest was generated by two aims (Ellis, 2004; 2008; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). One was to shift research focus on inputs and teaching to a focus on learners by examining their proactive contributions to their own L2 learning. The second was to identify the strategies that successful learners deploy and then to train learners, especially less successful learners so that their performance can be enhanced and they can learn more efficiently. The growing interest in strategy research reflected this practical goal, i.e. empowering less successful learners to become more autonomous and self-directed (Macaro, 2006; Tseng et al. 2006). Thus, early research studies were mostly descriptive in nature, identifying the learning strategies deployed by good language learners and describing their characteristics (MacIntyre & Noels, 1994; Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern & Todeso, 1978; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Wong Fillmore, 1979). Later studies focused on comparing the strategies used by successful learners with those used by less effective learners (Chamot et al., 1999; Khaldieh, 2000; Vandergrift, 1997). Another strand of early studies was related to the influence of a variety of variables on strategic behaviour, e.g. age, gender, level of competence, the learning environment. The interests that a large number of researchers showed in the study of language learner strategies led to the publication of three books at the beginning of the 1990s (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; and Wenden, 1991), suggesting the study of language learning strategies had reached the mainstream of SLA. According to Grenfell & Macaro (2007), post-1990 LLS research continued to focus on learners and their responsibility for learning. However, research interest has moved away from a general profile of the good language learner to an individual's strategic reaction to a contextualized task or series of tasks. Another shift is from a focus on the quantity to a focus on the quality of learners' strategy use and their orchestration of strategies through metacognition in any given situation.

In this section I will first examine the definitions of learning strategies in the literature and the different systems for classifying them. Then, I will examine research studies that have investigated

factors affecting strategy use. Finally, studies investigating the relationship between learner beliefs, learner strategies and learning outcomes will be reviewed.

4.3.1. Definitions and Characteristics of Language Learner Strategies

Despite the fact that LLS have been studied for more than three decades, there is no agreed theoretical framework. As a construct, Baker and Derwing (1982) regarded it as ‘a terminology disaster’; Stevick (1990) considered it ‘ill-defined’; Ellis (1994; 2008) deemed it “fuzzy”, “ad hoc” and “atheoretical”; Cohen (1998) spoke of “conflicting views’. Table 4 presents some selected definitions in literature.

Table 4. *Selected Definitions of LLS*

Source	Definition
Rubin, 1975	The techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge. (p.43)
Stern, 1983 (cited in Stevick,1990)	General tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by a [particular] language learner. (p.405)
Weinstein & Mayer, 1986	Behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner’s encoding process. (p.315)
Chamot,1987	Techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistics and content area information. (p.71)
O’Malley & Chamot, 1990	Special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information. (p.1)
Wenden, 1987	Language learning behaviours learners actually engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second language... what learners know about the strategies they use, i.e. their strategic knowledge...what learners know about aspects of their language learning other than the strategies they use. (pp.6-7)
Oxford,1990	Specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations. (p.8)
Cohen,1998	Second language learner strategies encompass both second language learning and second language use strategies. Taken together they constitute the steps or actions consciously selected by learners either to improve the learning of a second language, the use of it, or both. (p.5)
Cohen (2003)	The conscious or semi-conscious thoughts and behaviours used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language. (p.280)
Griffiths (2008)	Activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning. (p.87)

A close look at the definitions reveals that there is some inconsistency and a lack of consensus among the researchers. Some of the unsolved issues underlying the differing views can be summarized as follows (see also Grenfell & Macaro, 2007; Macaro, 2006; Stevick, 1990):

1. Conscious or unconscious? Cohen (1998) and Oxford (1990; 2003) argued that LLS were consciously employed. Cohen (1998) asserted that conscious choice is the defining factor that differentiated strategic learning from non-strategic learning. However, in his later work (e.g. 2003, 2005) he also agreed that when a strategy becomes so habitual that it is beyond the learner's conscious awareness and control, it becomes a process. Chamot (2005), in her later work, also contended that "strategies are most often conscious and goal-driven" (p.112) and that although a strategy can become automated and unconscious through repeated use, learners can bring unconscious strategies to conscious awareness if asked to do so. It appears that learning strategies are conscious actions that learners take to manage their learning but that the degree of consciousness is debatable.
2. Mental entity or behavioural action? Another disagreement in the literature relates to whether learning strategies should be located inside or outside the brain. Stevick (1990) called this an "outside and in-side" problem (p.144). For instance, Weinstein and Mayer (1986), O'Malley & Chamot (1990) defined strategies in terms of both observable *behaviour* and unobservable *thought*. In the same vein, Griffiths (2008) included "mental (for instance visualising relationships) or physical (for instance writing notes)" (p.87) in her definition of strategies. In contrast, Oxford (1990) only viewed strategies as actions and *behaviour*.
3. Specific or general behaviour? Stern (1983) viewed strategies exclusively as 'general' and 'overall' approach while Oxford (1990) perceived them as specific actions.
4. Strategic learning or normal learning? Dörnyei (2005) observed that there was little agreement concerning the nature of learning strategies among the researchers. He questioned whether all the learning actions were to be treated as strategies or only some; if only some, what the

differences between strategic learning and general learning behaviour were (See Dörnyei, 2005 for a detailed discussion). Weinstein et al. (2000, cited in Tseng, Dörnyei & Schmitt, 2006) offered three characteristics of strategic learning: goal-oriented, intentionally invoked and effortful. However, Dörnyei (2005) argued that these attributes are applicable to motivated or hard learning in general. Cohen (1998) listed ‘choice’ as an essential feature of learning strategies, suggesting that strategies are employed voluntarily and selectively by the learner. However, as Dörnyei (2005) pointed out choice is still not distinctive enough as learners make other choices during learning which are not strategic in nature. Cohen (1998) maintained ‘with some exceptions, strategies themselves are not inherently good or bad, but have the potential to be used effectively’ (p.8). Macaro (2006) concurred, arguing there is no such thing as an effective strategy. For a strategy to be effective, it must be used in combination with other strategies to form strategy clusters which are appropriately orchestrated. A successful deployment of strategy clusters to a learning task enhances learners’ self efficacy which will in turn increase learner’s motivation to learn. Thus “successful learning is no longer linked to the individual learner’s frequency of strategy use. Rather it is associated with his or her orchestration of strategies available to him or her” (Macaro, 2006, p.332). It is the way the clusters of strategies engage the learning process and their relevance to the task at hand and to learners’ learning style that make the difference between successful and less successful learning.

5. Finally, the term ‘strategy’ in the current literature is so broad that it leads to confusion and becomes difficult to investigate. Stevick (1990) referred to this as the “size-abstractness dilemma” (p.144), meaning that in some definitions, LLS are used to refer to phenomenon larger and more abstract than others. For instance, in Wenden’s (1987) definition, strategy included three components: behaviours, metacognitive knowledge and beliefs. Likewise, Weinstein et al (2000) saw strategy as ‘thoughts, behaviors, beliefs or emotions’. Dörnyei (2005) questioned “how can something be either a thought or a behavior or an emotion?” (p.189)

Recent years have seen some new development in LLS studies that promise greater theoretical rigour. For example, Dörnyei & Skehan (2003) and Dörnyei (2005) proposed abandoning the term ‘learning strategy’ in SLA in favour of ‘the more versatile concept of self-regulation’ in line with the development in educational psychology. Self-regulation refers to the degree to which individuals are active participants in their own learning. It emphasizes learners’ own ‘strategic efforts to manage their own achievement through specific beliefs and processes’ (Zimmerman and Risemberg, 1997, p.105, cited in Dörnyei, 2005, p.191). The notion of self-regulation is a multidimensional construct that includes the cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, behavioural and environmental processes that learners engage in rather than the actual techniques or actions that learners use to enhance their learning. Therefore, it is a more dynamic and process-oriented concept. However, in Griffiths’ (2008) view, the term “self-regulation” does not resolve the issue because there is still a need for an answer to the question: what do learners do in order to regulate their own learning? That, she believed, brings the argument almost full circle.

Macaro (2006) proposed that strategies be described in terms of their essential features to avoid ‘semantic interchangeability and circularity of argument’ (Macaro, 2006, p.325). This position is similar to Ellis’s (1994, 2008). Early in 1994, Ellis suggested listing the main characteristics as the best way of defining ‘strategy’. He listed eight features of learning strategies:

- Strategies refer to both general approaches and specific actions or techniques used to learn an L2.
- Strategies are problem-orientated - the learner deploys a strategy to overcome some particular learning problem.
- Learners are generally aware of the strategies they use and can identify what they consist of if they are asked to pay attention to what they are doing/thinking.
- Strategies involve linguistic behaviour (such as requesting the name of an object) and non-linguistic (such as pointing at an object so as to be told its name).

- Linguistic strategies can be performed in the L1 and in the L2.
- Some strategies can be behavioural while others are mental. Thus some strategies are directly observable, while others are not.
- In the main, strategies contribute indirectly to learning by providing learners with data about the L2 which they can then process. However, some strategies may also contribute directly (for example, memorization strategies directed at specific lexical items or grammatical rules).
- Strategy use varies considerably as a result of both the kind of task the learner is engaged in and individual learner preferences.

(Source: Ellis, 2008, p.705)

The operational definition of LLS for this study will be based on the above eight features that Ellis (1994; 2008) proposed. Language learning strategies are perceived as any actions, including unobservable mental thoughts and observable overt behaviors, that learners take to help them comprehend, acquire and retain new information, to compensate for deficiencies in their language proficiency and to manage and enhance their learning.

4.3.2. Taxonomies of Language Learner Strategies

Despite the lack of theoretical rigour in learning strategy research in general, considerable effort has been made to identify and categorize the strategies that learners use, particularly strategies deployed by good language learners. Stern (1975) identified ten good language learning strategies

- (1) A personal learning style or positive learning strategies,
- (2) An active approach to the task,
- (3) A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers,
- (4) Technical know-how about how to tackle a language,

- (5) Strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system and of revising this system progressively,
- (6) Constantly searching for meaning,
- (7) Willingness to practise,
- (8) Willingness to use the language in real communication,
- (9) Self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use,
- (10) Developing the target language more and more as a separate reference system, and learning to think in it.

In her early work, Rubin (1975) identified seven strategies that good language learners use: (1) willingness to guess, (2) a strong drive to communicate, (3) willing to appear foolish, (4) attending to form and looking for patterns in the language, (5) taking every opportunity to practice, (6) monitoring their own and the speech of others and (7) attending to meaning. What Stern and Rubin did was merely listing the strategies learners used.

Later, Rubin (1981) classified strategies into direct and indirect strategies, a classification that Oxford later adopted. In Rubin's taxonomy, direct strategies consist of (1) clarification/verification, (2) monitoring, (3) memorization, (4) guessing/inductive inferencing, (5) deductive reasoning and (6) practice. Indirect strategies include (1) creating opportunities for practice and (2) production tricks.

Wenden (1982) examined how learners regulate their learning by focusing on metacognitive strategies. She identified several planning strategies: (1) assessing needs and preferences, (2) choosing and prioritizing what learners want to learn and how they should learn a language, (3) setting their own learning goals and (4) evaluating their learning strategies.

Two popular taxonomies were provided by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990). O'Malley and Chamot (1990), anchoring their work in a cognitive theory of information processing, distinguished three broad types of strategies:

- (1) Cognitive: strategies involving analysis, manipulation transformation or synthesis of learning materials, e.g. ‘translation’ (using the first language as a base for understanding and /or producing the second language).
- (2) Metacognitive: strategies involving an attempt to regulate learning through planning, monitoring and evaluating, e.g. ‘delayed production’ (consciously deciding to postpone speaking to learn initially through listening comprehension).
- (3) Socio-affective: strategies concerning ways in which learners interact with other users of the L2, e.g. ‘question for clarification’ (asking a teacher or other native speakers for repetition, paraphrasing, explanation and/or examples).

Perhaps the most widely-cited classification to date is the taxonomy proposed by Oxford (1990). The strategies in Oxford’s system are arranged hierarchically. In the first level, learning strategies are composed of two categories: direct and indirect strategies. Oxford defined direct strategies as those that ‘directly involve the target language’ in the sense that ‘they require mental processing of the language’ (Oxford 1990, p.151). These are further divided into 3 categories: (1) memory strategies, (2) cognitive strategies and (3) compensation strategies. In contrast, indirect strategies ‘provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy and other means’ (Oxford 1990, p.151). They consist of 3 categories: (1) metacognitive strategies, (2) affective strategies, and (3) social strategies.

Despite the popularity of Oxford’s classification, Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) challenged the inconsistency between Oxford’s definitions and her taxonomy. On the one hand, Oxford (1989, 1990) defined strategies as “behaviours or actions”, and on the other hand in the taxonomy she included mental and affective processes (e.g. cognitive and affective strategies). Also, they questioned the inclusion of compensation strategies which related to language use rather than language learning, and

the validity of separating memory and cognitive strategies. In their view, memory is undoubtedly a cognitive strategy.

I argue that some of the criticisms are open for further debate. First of all, it is legitimate to include cognitive strategies in the taxonomy. This comes down to the definition of “behaviours and actions”. The term, I argue, can encompass both overt/observable physical behaviours and mental/unobservable behaviours. Surely when a person comprehends and processes a new piece of information, there are some unobservable actions going on in his/her head. Also, I endorse Hsiao and Oxford’s (2002) defence relating to including strategies of language use in LLS. Hsiao & Oxford (2002) argued that language learning and language use are inseparable. I concur, believing language use is a part of learning. During language use, learners test, practice and confirm or reject what they have learned and at the same time they also learn something new. As Long (1983) proposed in his input hypothesis, discourse is an important source of comprehensible input and is perceived as having language learning potential. However, I agree with Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) that memory should be subsumed into cognitive strategies.

Dörnyei (2005) argued that ‘the strategy systems proposed by Oxford (1990) and O’Malley and Chamot (1990) are highly compatible’ (p.169). Thus he suggested combining the two models and creating four general categories:

1. *Cognitive strategies*, involving the manipulation or transformation of the learning materials/inputs (e.g., repetition, summarizing, using images).
2. *Metacognitive strategies*, involving higher-order strategies aimed at analyzing, monitoring, evaluating, planning, and organizing one’s own learning process.
3. *Social strategies*, involving interpersonal behaviours aimed at increasing the amount of L2 communication and practice the learner undertakes (e.g. initiating with native speakers, cooperating with peers).

4. *Affective strategies*, involving taking control of the emotional (affective) conditions and experiences that shape one's subjective involvement in learning.

(Source: Dörnyei 2005, p.169)

To this classification, I will add compensation strategy. Thus, the categories of LLS in this study include: (1) cognitive, (2) metacognitive, (3) social, (4) compensation and (5) affective strategies.

4.3.3. Factors Affecting Language Learner Strategy Use

Learners vary considerably regarding the quality, quantity and frequency of strategy use. The variation is due to a range of different factors. As Dörnyei (2005) pointed out the most fruitful research in the area of learning strategies has been to examine the variables that affected the strategy use. By and large, these factors can be classified into two major categories: individual learner factors and social/contextual factors.

4.3.3.1. Individual Learner Factors.

Many learner variables have been identified influencing the choice of learner strategies. Among them are age, gender, motivation, beliefs, career orientation, cognitive style and language proficiency (See Takeuchi, Griffiths and Coyle, 2007 for details). Due to the scope of the literature review, I will only focus on the learner factors that are relevant to my research study – beliefs and proficiency.

Beliefs.

Dörnyei (2005) contended that conscious strategy use was logically influenced by beliefs. A number of studies have suggested that the beliefs that learners held influenced their choice of learning strategies. Wenden (1986a), for example, carried out a study to understand the relationship between learners' prescriptive beliefs and their use of strategies. Learners' three prescriptive beliefs were beliefs about using the language, beliefs about learning about the language and the importance of personal factors (i.e. beliefs about the feelings that facilitate or inhibit learning, self-concept, and aptitude for

learning). Wenden found that the students who emphasized the use of the language tended to use the language in a natural way and made an effort to practice the language while those who believed in the importance of learning about the language spent more time learning grammar and vocabulary and took a course. In other words, communication strategies were related to beliefs about using the language and cognitive strategies to beliefs about the language. She concluded that learners' beliefs about how best to learn a language provided the logic for their choice of learning strategies.

Yang (1992, 1999) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between Taiwan college EFL students' beliefs about language learning and their use of learning strategies. In her study she used Horwitz's (1987) *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI) and Oxford's (1990) *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) and her own self-designed open questions to collect data on learners' beliefs and their use of learning strategies respectively. 505 university students in Taiwan were involved in the study. She found that language learners' self-efficacy beliefs about learning English generated positive reactions towards learning English and these beliefs were strongly related to their use of all types of learning strategies, particularly their functional practice strategies. The learners with strong self-efficacy beliefs, for example, were reported to enjoy practising English. They reported actively increasing their exposure to English outside the classroom, e.g. by watching TV shows or movies or listening to English radio programs or looking for opportunities to read English as much as possible and reading for pleasure. She also found that learners' beliefs about the value and nature of learning spoken English were closely linked to their use of formal oral-practice strategies. Learners who believed that repetition and practice were important and that excellent pronunciation was essential emphasized formal aspects of English rather than the functional or communicative use of English. They reported having practiced English pronunciation, trying to imitate native English speakers, saying new English words repeatedly and paying attention when someone was speaking English. Yang (1999) suggested that the relationships among learners' beliefs, motivation and strategy use were "cyclical",

i.e. “appropriate strategy use will lead to an enhanced self-perception of language proficiency and, in turn, increases motivation” (p.531).

Most of the studies have restricted their investigation to the links between beliefs and reported strategy use. Few studies have examined the impact of beliefs on actual action. Brown (1996), however, employed a qualitative approach to examine the effects of beliefs on classroom-related learning strategies of adult Japanese learners in a U.S. ESL programme. Seven learners were involved in his study. Data were collected over two semesters. Each learner was video-taped and audio-recorded in one of his or her regular classes for a week in a total of five class sessions. Based on the video-tapes, Brown then conducted two stimulated recall interviews where learners were invited to comment on the language learning strategies they used during specific moments of classroom learning. Also he conducted one follow-up interview with each learner to further investigate the learner’s beliefs and concepts related to language learning. He found two beliefs had the most noticeable impact on the learners’ choice of strategies in class. One was activity goal beliefs relating to specific sub-goals that a learner believed were needed to accomplish a class activity. For example, if the class activity was to summarize a story from the tape, three corresponding activity goal beliefs were found: 1) to understand the tape, 2) to summarize the story, and 3) to write the summary. Brown found some clear correlations between learners’ goal beliefs and their strategy use, i.e. strategy choice was contingent upon the specific goals in each activity. When the sub-goals of a task were easy to achieve, the learners’ tendency to choose certain strategies stayed the strongest. Again this provided empirical evidence that self-efficacy beliefs affected strategy use directly. Another type of belief was success beliefs that had a direct impact on the choice of learning strategies. Success beliefs were those beliefs that learners held about their success or failure in attaining the activity goals. He found the learners varied their choices of strategies when they believed they were failing to reach a goal. To overcome failure, learners reassessed their beliefs and/or chose learning strategies that they believed were the most effective. This suggested that learners’ perception of success or failure in a classroom activity determined and shaped

the type of strategies they deployed. Finally, Brown found that learners used a lot of metacognitive strategies due to the setting, i.e. the classroom, of the investigation. Brown's study suggested that learners' classroom related beliefs were context specific and were influenced by the type of classroom activities.

The findings about the impact of beliefs on strategies are significant, particularly the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and strategy use. They may be accountable for the incongruity between beliefs and actions and also the weak link in some studies that only examine the relationship between beliefs and learning outcomes (e.g. Tanaka, 2004). As Ellis (2008) pointed out, learners need to feel comfortable and competent enough to implement their beliefs. Learners are more likely to implement actions that they feel capable of and confident about and to avoid actions that exceed their ability to perform.

Proficiency

Proficiency is another learner factor that has been reported to influence strategy use. O'Malley et al. (1985) found that although students at all levels reported extensive use of strategies, higher level students reported greater use of metacognitive strategies. In other words, students at a higher level spent more time managing, evaluating and exercising control over their learning. In their large scale (N=374) study of strategy use by students at three different course levels at the University of Puerto Rico, Green and Oxford (1995) used the SILL to examine the impact of both gender and proficiency on the overall strategy use as well as the use of individual strategies. They found significant differences according to gender and proficiency level. There was a significant greater overall use of language learning strategies among more successful learners and higher overall strategy use by women than by men. However, they failed to find any overlap between the strategies that were used more often by women and those used more often by more proficient students, suggesting gender differences diminished when it came to successful learning, i.e. more successful learners regardless of whether they were male or female used similar strategies. In Park's (1995) study of EFL Korean students, post

hoc tests indicated a linear relationship between strategy use and language proficiency, i.e. the high strategy group had significantly higher scores in TOEFL than the medium strategy use group, which in turn had higher language proficiency than the low strategy use group. Wharton (2000) affirmed a linear relationship between strategy use and self-rated proficiency i.e. a greater strategy use accompanied perceptions of higher proficiency. Griffiths (2003a), who looked at patterns of strategy use by 348 ESL students in New Zealand, reported that advanced students reported nine times more strategy use than did elementary students. She discovered that strategies typical of higher level students seemed to be both sophisticated and more inter-related, which led her to the conclusion that the differences between successful and less successful students were due to both the quantity and the quality of strategy use. Another study of hers (Griffiths, 2003b, cited in Griffiths, 2008) affirmed that higher proficiency learners used much more learning strategies and they also used strategies more frequently. Hong-Nam & Leavell (2006) employed the SILL to examine the language learning strategy use of 55 ESL students with diverse cultural backgrounds, focusing on differences in strategy use across proficiency, gender and nationality. Unlike previous studies where a linear relationship was reported, they discovered a curvilinear relationship between strategy use and English proficiency where students at the intermediate level reported greater use of learning strategies than those at the beginning and advanced levels. Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) suggested this was because when advanced learners reached high levels of language proficiency, their need to consciously administer and deliberate about their learning choices became less necessary unless they were confronted with a very difficult or novel learning task. This was because application of language strategies had become so internalized that they did not report what had become for them an automated process.

By and large, the results suggest that the quality, frequency and quantity of strategy use are significantly related to language learning success. In most of the studies, the relationship between proficiency and strategy use is linear, showing that more advanced or more proficient students use more learning strategies more frequently. Nevertheless, some studies (Green and Oxford, 1995; Oxford

and Nyikos, 1989; Wharton, 2000) have suggested that the relationship is more bidirectional than causal. In other words, strategy use helps develop proficiency which in turn creates high self-esteem and “leads to strong motivation, spiralling to still more use of strategies, greater actual and perceived proficiency, high self-esteem, improved motivation’ (Oxford and Nyikos 1989, p.295).

4.3.3.2. Social and Contextual Factors.

In addition to individual learner factors, studies have also shown that social and contextual factors affect learner strategy use. These include learning context, learning tasks, teaching methods and country of origin. What is deemed appropriate learning strategy in one culture or learning context may not be valued in another culture and context (Olivares-Cuhat, 2002; Wharton, 2000). In a qualitative study, Takeuchi (2003) analyzed the strategy use reported by successful language learners in the Japanese FL context. The analysis was based on 67 books written by good Japanese language learners reporting how they had learned a foreign language. Takeuchi found that some strategies were context-specific and environment-unique. For example, due to the nature of foreign language learning and input-poor environment, most of the authors used ‘reading aloud many times and reading a lot’ to improve reading. To improve their speaking, they most often used strategies like ‘memorizing basic sentences by vocalizing many times’ and ‘pattern-practicing them thoroughly’.

Rao (2006) employed the SILL to investigate the impact of cultural and educational background on the strategy use of Chinese learners. 217 non-English major Chinese university students were involved in the study. Rao found the most frequent strategies belonged to the affective category and the least frequent to the social category. The choice of learner strategies was affected by the education system in China where competition was very high and examinations were frequent and demanding. The students had to resort to a variety of affective strategies to manage their emotions when they were in a difficult situation and mentally weak. They had to encourage themselves to keep working towards their goals. However, they did not use social strategies frequently. Rao attributed this to two reasons. One

reason was that English was a foreign language in China and there was no need to use the language for daily communication. Another reason was the high-stakes exams, which focused on discrete grammar and reading comprehension. In such an education system, learner strategy use was dictated by the demands of examinations. For example, a large number of the participants (71%) reported using reviewing vocabulary, texts and notes before examinations and 53% of them spent time doing lots of exercises before examination. In contrast, strategies that were not associated with exams were reported to have been used much less frequently. For example, only 6% of the participants reported using communication strategies (e.g. “speak English with my classmates and teachers”). Another preferred strategy was repetition for memorizing vocabulary (63%), which reflected the belief that repetition was one of the most efficient ways of learning. Rao’s study provided some evidence that cultural and educational factors have an impact on strategy use.

Studies have suggested that LLS are highly variable and that language strategy use can be affected by both learner and social factors. Thus, it is necessary to examine these factors and have a better understanding of the nature of their influence on learning strategies.

4.3.4. Relationships between Learner Beliefs, Learner Strategies and Learning Outcomes

In a case study of two learners, Abraham and Vann (1987) compared one successful learner, Gerardo, with one less successful learner, Pedro. They employed interviews to obtain information on background and motivation. The Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT see Witken et al., 1971) was used to assess learners’ cognitive style (field independence/dependence) and the Matching Familiar Figures Test (MFFT, see Kagan et al., 1964) to measure reflection/impulsivity. The learners’ intelligence was assessed by means of Raven’s Standard Progressive Matrices (see Raven, Court, and Raven, 1983). The learners’ strategies were identified in two ways. One was by observing learners’ strategy used during the interviews and the other by asking learners to think aloud while they were doing four tasks (a verb tense, an article usage, a cloze test and a composition). Abraham and Vann

found evidence that beliefs might affect the use of learning strategies and learning outcomes. Gerardo appeared to take a broad view about language learning. He believed that language learning required attention to both form (e.g. vocabulary and grammar) and function. Consequently he was more flexible in using strategies and used a greater range of strategies. Abraham and Vann suggested this might have contributed to Gerardo's better TOEFL score (523 vs. 473) at the end of a course of instruction. Pedro, however, took a relatively narrow view of language learning. He seemed to believe that learning a language equated with learning vocabulary and that it was relatively unimportant to understand how the words should be structured to communicate meaning. Acting in accordance with this view, he adopted strategies to enable him to be successful in oral communication. For example, he created situations for using English. Consequently he did better on a test of spoken English.

As discussed earlier, Park (1995) investigated 332 Korean university EFL students' beliefs about language learning, their language learning strategies, and the relationships among their beliefs, strategy use, and L2 proficiency. The BALLI and SILL were administered to collect data on learner beliefs and strategies respectively. The learners' English proficiency was measured by the FOEFL. Park found self-efficacy and beliefs about social interactions were related to L2 proficiency and also to the reported use of learning strategies. He also found that those who held beliefs about spoken English tended to use more communication strategies which were significantly related to L2 proficiency. Based on his findings, Park concluded that beliefs, strategy use and L2 language proficiency were related.

Wen and Johnson (1997) examined the relationship between learner variables and the language achievement of 242 second-year Chinese students majoring in English in tertiary institutions. Proficiency was measured by nation-wide standardized tests. There were 16 learner variables, i.e. sex, previous L1 proficiency, previous L2 proficiency, learning purpose, the amount of time in learning outside class, five types of beliefs, six types of learning strategies. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to gather data on beliefs and strategies. The statistical analysis showed that three antecedent variables (sex, L1 proficiency, and existing L2 proficiency) and three strategy

variables (vocabulary strategies, tolerating-ambiguity strategies, and mother-tongue-avoidance strategies) directly influenced their English outcomes. None of the belief variables had a direct impact on English achievement. However, there was a strong, positive correlation between beliefs and reported use of learning strategies relating to focusing on form (e.g. memorising and repeating a text), focusing on meaning (e.g. using L2 for actual communication), management of learning (e.g. planning study and setting goals), and avoiding use of the L1. In particular, students who believed in the importance of avoiding thinking in L1 were most likely to report using mother-tongue-avoidance strategies which had a direct effect on English achievement. The findings suggest that beliefs affect learning outcomes indirectly via learning strategies.

The studies of the relationship between beliefs, strategies and learning are illuminating. They help to understand the interactions of different variables during learners' learning process. However, studies of this nature are very thin. More studies are needed to examine the nature of the relationships.

4.4. Summary of the Chapter

The claims made by the LLS researchers can be summarized as follows:

- Learners are different in terms of their strategy use. Many factors can affect their choice of strategies. Some are related to individual variables and others to social and contextual factors.
- Beliefs underpin learner strategy use, particularly self-efficacy beliefs.
- Proficient learners use more learning strategies and some strategies are only available to more advanced learners. However, there is a lack of consensus concerning whether it is the range and frequency of strategy use, or the combinations and orchestrations of strategies that are the key to successful language learning.
- Strategy use and learning achievements are inextricably linked. The relationship is bidirectional rather than causal. In other words, learner strategies promote successful language learning, which in turn motivates learners to deploy more strategies in their learning.

- The relationship between beliefs and learning outcomes is very weak, suggesting that the impact of beliefs on learning outcomes is indirect via learner strategies.

The research into LLS has been referred to as a ‘gold mine’ by Ellis (2008). However, the research followed what Skehan (1989) described as ‘research-then-theory’ tradition. Chamot (2005) considered LLS research to be ‘sporadic’ and Grenfell & Macaro (2007) called the style “ad hoc” with researchers providing their own particular definitions. The issue of theoretical soundness, especially the inconsistency and elusiveness in the definitions and categorizations of strategies has yet to be resolved. Although substantial research studies were carried out in the 1980s and early 1990s, the focus has been to identify the frequency of learner strategy use and describe the strategies that the good language learner deploys. Little is known about the role that strategies play during the process of learning. If LLS affect learning outcomes directly and beliefs shape learning actions, more research studies are needed to investigate the interactions among the three variables. Moreover, there have been barely any studies to date investigating the development of LLS over a period of time and the effect of changes in strategies on learning outcomes. Finally, most of the previous studies investigated reported strategy use, equating reported strategy use with the actual learning actions and assuming there is a congruity between what people say and what they do. However, in reality, it is observed that there are often some discrepancies between what learners claim to do and what they actually do due to various circumstances. Studies in this area are very scanty in the literature. This study aims to fill in the gaps identified above, focusing on the evolving of learning strategies through self-reports as well as class observations, aiming to examine the relationships of the learners’ beliefs and learning strategies on one hand and their impact on the learners’ ultimate learning outcomes on the other hand.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

5.1. Introduction and Research Questions

This chapter presents the methodology used in the study. I first address the research questions which are followed by a review of research methods for investigating language learner beliefs and learning strategies in SLA. I then discuss my research design and give a detailed description of the setting and data collection procedures. Next, I report the major findings from the two pilot studies. Finally, I discuss the methodology and analysis procedures for the main study.

The literature review in Chapters Three and Four indicates that there are some major findings regarding learner beliefs and learning strategies and yet some areas remain unexplored while others need further investigation:

- (1) The nature of beliefs and strategies: most of the research to date uses cross-sectional methods to collect data on learner beliefs and strategies. Beliefs are mainly examined as stable phenomena and strategies as an end product. Recent studies focus on the dynamic and socially constructed nature of beliefs. However, studies that examine the paradoxical nature of beliefs and the role of learning strategies in the process of language learning over a period of time are scant.
- (2) Methods for investigating learning strategy use: most of the studies in the literature rely on the reported strategy use from learners. There are a few studies (e.g. Brown, 1996) that observe learner behaviours in the classroom. Both methods have some inherent drawbacks. The former assumes learners' actual behaviours from their self reports. Therefore, it is not clear if the reported strategies are congruent with their overt behaviours or they are merely behavioural intentions which have yet to be executed. The latter ends up with a partial picture of learning strategy use as most of the strategies are internal and mentalistic. In other words they are not observable.

- (3) The relationships between learner beliefs, learning strategies and language proficiency: to date little empirical evidence has been gathered on the relationships between learners' beliefs, learning strategies and their proficiency.
- (4) Learners and setting: by and large, research studies on Chinese learner beliefs and learning strategies are under researched. Furthermore, most of the studies that have been conducted to date are in EFL settings. Although Gao (2002; 2006) is one of the few people who examined Chinese learner strategy use in an ESL setting, e.g. Britain, uncovering three variables, learner beliefs, learning strategies and language performance of L2 learners in an ESL setting have been barely researched.

The current study was designed to fill in the lacunas identified in the literature. Specifically it addressed the following questions:

1. What changes occur in the learners' beliefs during the observed period? Two subquestions are followed up in order to answer the question:
 - 1.1. What are the initial beliefs that the learners hold about language learning?
 - 1.2. What are the learners' beliefs towards the end?
2. What developments and changes occur in the learners' strategy use? Two related questions are:
 - 2.1. What is the learners' strategy use at time 1?
 - 2.2. What is the learners' strategy use at time 2?
3. What developments and changes are evident in their language proficiency over the period?
4. What relationships are there between the learners' beliefs and learning strategy use on the one hand and changes in their language proficiency on the other hand?

5.2. Methods Used to Investigate LLB and LLS in SLA

5.2.1. Methods for Investigating Language Learner Beliefs in SLA

Barcelos (2003) identified three approaches to investigating learner beliefs in SLA relating to

the belief definition and methodology:

- (1) Normative approach where learners' beliefs are defined as preconceived notion, myths or misconceptions and as being misguided or defective (Horwitz, 1987, 1988). In this view, beliefs are seen as mental, fairly fixed and stable representatives. Consequently, in the normative approach, questionnaires are typically used; beliefs are measured out of context and quantitative methods, particularly descriptive statistics, are employed to analyze data. The purpose is to describe and classify learner beliefs.
- (2) Metacognitive approach where learners' beliefs are viewed as metacognitive knowledge which is stable, storable and sometimes fallible (Wenden 1987). Semi-structured interviews are used to collect data and content analysis is used to analyze data.
- (3) Contextual approach where learners' beliefs are characterized as contextual, dynamic and social. In the contextual approach, a variety of methods are used to collect data, e.g. interviews, observations, and diaries. Qualitative methods, especially interpretative analysis, are used to analyze data. Ellis (2008) adds a fourth approach, metaphor analysis where learner beliefs are identified indirectly by analyzing the metaphors used by learners to describe their learning (Ellis, 2001; Kramsch, 2003). However, Barcelos (2003) subsumes this in the contextual approach.

Useful as Barcelos's (2003) three approaches are, there is a problem in application. For example, she grouped all the studies which used Likert-scale questionnaires in the normative approach where 'beliefs are seen as synonymous with preconceived notions, misconceptions, and opinions' (p.26) and as static phenomena. However, not all studies that used questionnaires perceived beliefs as static and erroneous. Tanaka & Ellis (2003), for example, used their self-designed questionnaire to examine the changes in Japanese learner beliefs over 12 weeks. Which approach should Tanaka & Ellis' (2003) study be categorized as in Barcelos's paradigm (2003)? It could be categorized as a normative

approach, in terms of methodology but it can be considered an example of the contextual approach, in terms of definition of beliefs.

To avoid this, I argue it is more practical to group current approaches to investigating learner beliefs according to the assessment methods. A search of the literature in SLA reveals the following methods:

5.2.1.1 Questionnaires

Most of early belief studies investigated learner beliefs either by using the BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) questionnaire (Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Tumposky, 1991, cited in Barcelos, 2003; Yang, 1992; Su, 1995) or by adapting and modifying the BALLI (Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Diab, 2006; Ariogul, 2009) or by researchers developing their own questionnaires (Cotterall, 1995; Kuntz, 1996; Wen & Johnson, 1997; Sakui, 1999; Tanaka 2004). The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The most widely used questionnaire is the BALLI.

The BALLI was designed ‘to assess student opinions on a variety of issues and controversies related to language learning’ (Horwitz 1988:284). According to Horwitz (1985; 1987), the development of the BALLI underwent several stages. In a free recall activity, four groups of approximately 25 foreign language and ESL teachers of different cultural backgrounds were asked to list their beliefs, other people’s beliefs, and their students’ beliefs about language learning. After idiosyncratic beliefs were eliminated, a 30-item belief list from the free-recall protocols was compiled. Then teacher educators and student focus groups were invited to examine the list to add more beliefs. Two versions of the questionnaire were written, one in Standard English for use with American foreign language students and the other in simplified English for ESL students. The two versions were then pilot-tested with 150 first semester foreign language students and 50 intensive English students at The University of Texas at Austin (Horwitz, 1987).

The resulting inventory includes 34 items assessing learning beliefs in five major areas:

- (1) The difficulty of language learning: items 3, 4, 6, 14, 24, 28.
- (2) Aptitude for language learning: items 1, 2, and 10, 15, 22, 29, 32, 33, 34.
- (3) The nature of language learning: items 8,11,16,20, 25, 26.
- (4) Learning and communication strategies: items 7, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21.
- (5) Motivations and expectations for language learning: items 23, 27, 30, 31

The self-report questionnaire is in Likert-scale format: learners are asked to indicate their responses to statements ranging from “strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree”. According to Horwitz (1988), there was no single composite score derived from the BALLI. Instead, descriptions of discrete student beliefs about language learning were obtained from individual items.

The BALLI has been used in many research studies. To quote Horwitz (1999), the BALLI had been used in at least 13 published studies and dissertations and theses at master’s and doctoral level. Currently it still remains *the* research tool in the area of learner beliefs (see BALLI-based studies in Chapter Three for details).

Questionnaires offer several advantages. For a start, they are the most economical tool if the researcher has limited time and resources. It is especially suitable for large samples to investigate and compare general trends. In addition, they are less threatening than observations. They allow access across different times and locations.

However, there are some limitations. Firstly, all the beliefs in the questionnaires are measured out of context and isolated sentences are presented for learners to agree or disagree. In addition, beliefs in questionnaires are imposed upon learners by the researchers. Dufva (2003) questioned the validity of the information gathered from a Likert-scale questionnaire because it does not measure beliefs but, rather responses to the researcher’s formulation of beliefs. Because the approach employs an etic perspective, learners are given the discrete beliefs in the questionnaires to passively respond to and the beliefs in learners’ own terms are rarely considered. Furthermore, beliefs in questionnaires are treated as a set of discrete static entities which are separate from other items in the questionnaires. This design

does not do justice to beliefs in reality where they are interrelated and structured. Also Woods (2003) contended that beliefs were not separable or separate from other aspects of a learner's cognitive processes, but integrated to a larger dynamic model of thought and action in which all the learning took place. Finally, there are some obvious problems with the validity of learners' responses. Tarone and Yule (1989) argued that the choice of response to the questionnaire from learners reflected an individual's interpretation of the entailment of each statement. For example, Sakui & Gaies (1999) reported in their study of beliefs of almost 1300 Japanese university learners of English that respondents did not always interpret items as the researchers had intended, irrespective of the care that researchers took at the development stage. For example, the item, 'I cannot improve my English by speaking English with my classmates', was meant to tap beliefs about classroom interactions, e.g. pair work or group work. During the interview, Sakui & Gaies found that a student interpreted it as interactions outside the classroom. Cotterall (1999) also conceded that it was problematic to administer a belief questionnaire to a group of learners of English and it was possible that "subjects misunderstood items or interpret them in ways other than those intended by the researcher" (Cotterall 1999, p.507). Therefore, researchers should be wary of taking information elicited via questionnaire at face value and the data should be submitted to further independent verification.

5.2.1.2 Interviews

Later, more studies use semi-structured and open-ended interviews to investigate learner beliefs (e.g. Wenden, 1987; Benson & Lor, 1999; White, 1999). More emphasis is placed upon learners' own perceptions. The methodology is based on the assumption that learners think about their learning process and are able to articulate their thoughts.

As Barcelos (2003) observed, the advantages of using verbal reports were that learners were invited to talk about their learning experience and about their conceptions of learning. Interviewers can probe to encourage learners to elaborate on the topics being investigated. However, one of the biggest

drawbacks is that interviews like questionnaires can only tap reported beliefs, i.e. beliefs that learners are conscious of and are able to articulate but not those beliefs that learners hold unconsciously. In addition, the interviews, retrospective in particular, rely heavily on learners' memories. Finally, the voluminous data and the time-consuming nature of interviews are very taxing.

5.2.1.3 Context and situation specific methods

The more recent developments have seen researchers investigate learner beliefs in specific contexts and interpret findings by using various theoretical frameworks and from different perspectives in line with mainstream research in SLA. They explored a variety of methods to investigate learners' beliefs including (1) classroom observations followed by stimulated recall (e.g. Barcelos, 1995, cited in Barcelos, 2003; 2000), (2) diaries and narratives (e.g. Hosenfeld, 2003), (3) metaphor analysis (e.g. Ellis, 1999, 2001; Kramsch, 2003) and (4) discourse analysis (e.g. Kalaja, 1995). The idea is to interpret students' beliefs in their own specific context where students interact (Barcelos 2003). All methods allow researchers to focus on the emergent nature of beliefs and draw a portrait of learners who interact with their learning environment as social and dynamic beings. The results are arguably more useful and illuminating. They have yet become main research tools due to the long, time-consuming process of data collection and data analysis. However, they offer very promising and interesting alternatives for investigating learner beliefs because they can provide a much richer and more personalized account of learning (Ellis, 2008).

In summary, research methods on learner beliefs in SLA began with an etic (outsider) perspective relying primarily on survey instruments such as questionnaires where learners' voices are rarely heard, then moved onto an emic (insider) perspective using interviews where the focus shifts to what learners bring to their learning process. Recent studies explore wider approaches where learner beliefs are examined by resorting to diverse methods, such as observations followed by stimulated

recall and personal narratives in the form of journals or diaries. Learner beliefs are viewed as dynamic and taking shape in the social context of learning.

5.2.2. Methods for identifying language learner strategies in SLA

Cohen and Scott (1998) synthesized six methods out of a variety of instruments for assessing language learning strategies in SLA: oral interviews and written questionnaires, observations, verbal reports which are further divided into self-report, self-observation, i.e. the inspection of specific language behavior, either introspectively or retrospectively, and self-revelation, e.g. think-aloud protocols, diaries and dialog journals, recollective studies and computer tracking. In Cohen and Scott's (1998) categories, there is some overlapping where self-reports are subsumed into verbal reports but on the other hand, oral interviews and written questionnaires are listed separately. To my mind, these are self-reports. Macaro (2001) suggests two ways to find out about learner strategy use: asking and observing.

Drawing on the work of Cohen and Scott (1998), Macaro(2001), and also the review of literature, I group the methods for the investigation of language learning strategies into five categories: (1) self-reports which consist of both oral and written reports gathered from learners directly, e.g. questionnaires, interviews, diaries, (2) observation, (3) think-aloud protocols, (4) document studies which obtain data on strategy use indirectly by examining recollections written by past learners and (5) computer tracking which uses computers to track learner learning. Each method will be discussed in detail along with its advantages and disadvantages.

5.2.2.1. Self- reports

Self-reports have surfaced as the most popular tools from the literature. Researchers get information about learner strategy use by asking learners to respond to written questionnaires, to write dairies and to participate in oral interviews.

(1) Questionnaires

The most popular and widely used questionnaire for assessing LLS is the one developed by Oxford (1990), the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL). The SILL measures the reported frequency of language learning strategy use. The strategy descriptions on the SILL are drawn from Oxford's six taxonomies of language learning strategy, i.e. memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategy (see Chapter Four for the details). There are six parts in the SILL which corresponds to Oxford's (1990) classification of learning strategies. Part A surveys memory strategies, part B, cognitive strategies; part C, compensation strategies; part D, metacognitive strategies; part E and F, affective and social strategies. The SILL is a standardized measurement with two versions: one for foreign language learners whose native language is English (80 items) and another for learners of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL, 50 items). A typical SILL item, e.g. 'I practice English with other students' or 'I think about my progress in learning English', asks respondents to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale (1,2,3,4,5) how frequently they use the said strategies ranging from 'never or almost never true of me' to 'always or almost always true of me'. Once completed, for each strategy category, the SILL provides a composite score which is then divided by the number of items in each part. This will give the average score for each part. A reporting scale can be used to tell teachers and students which groups of strategies they use the most in learning English: (1) 'High Usage' (3.5-5.0), (2) "Medium Usage" (2.5-3.4), and (3) 'Low Usage' (1.0-2.4).

Because the SILL is a self-scoring survey, the instrument has enjoyed immense popularity and has been used widely in the world. The SILL has an enormous impact and, by the mid 1990s, it is estimated that it has been used to assess the strategy use of more than 10,000 learners worldwide (Grenfell & Macaro, 2007). It has been translated into many different languages, e.g. Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean and Russian to name a few. It has been used on a large number of learners and in many major studies including master's and doctoral studies to provide a broad picture of learner strategy use and/or to investigate the correlations between strategy use and other variables, such as learning styles, gender, proficiency level, culture (Bedell & Oxford, 1996; Green & Oxford, 1995;

Nyikos & Oxford, 1993; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Oxford, Cho, Leung, & Kim, 2004;Wharton, 2000).

Despite its popularity, several issues remain unsolved with the SILL as a research tool. Most of them are related to the construct validity since the results of factor analysis of learners' response to the SILL have consistently failed to support either the two higher order categories or subcategories. For example, in their factor analytic study, Nyikos and Oxford (1993) produced a five factor solution that was particularly salient to classroom-based foreign language learning: (1) formal, rule-related processing strategies, (2) functional practice (authentic language use) strategies, (3) resourceful, independent strategies, (4) standard academic study strategies and (5) conversational input elicitation strategies. In their confirmatory factor analysis study, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) also acknowledged that "empirical research on the underlying constructs of L2 learning strategies has reported neither the three factor pattern theorized in O'Malley and Chamot nor the six factor solution implied in Oxford" (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002, p.372). In addition, Dörnyei (2005) levelled criticism at the psychometric properties of the SILL, i.e. the scales in the SILL are not cumulative and thus computing mean scale scores is psychometrically not justifiable. Learners may have a variety of memory or cognitive strategies, but if they do not have the strategies listed in the SILL, they will be rated low on their strategy use. For example, Carson and Longhini (2002) employed both the SILL and diary entries to identify strategy development. Data were collected over three intervals. The data analysis produced different results. The SILL results indicated compensation strategy as the most frequently used and strongest strategy and metacognitive strategy decreased modestly at the end of the study while the diary entries put metacognitive strategy as the most common (40%) amounting to the total use of memory, cognitive, compensation and conversation strategies together (42%). Another flaw of the SILL has to do with the rationale of its design in that it appears the SILL corroborates the notion that the more frequent the use of a strategy is the better. However, this is not in line with learning strategy theory where it is the quality of strategy use not the quantity that matters. Quality of strategy use concerns whether the

strategy used is appropriate to the task at hand and to the individual's learning style and whether it is effective (Yamamori et al., 2003; Gardner et al., 1997). Yamamori, Isoda, Hiromori and Oxford (2003) also argued low reported strategy use was not always a sign of ineffective learning and high frequency use of strategy did not guarantee successful learning. They believed “‘the more, the better’ is not always the case in strategy use” (Yamamori et al. 2003, p.384). In Dörnyei's view, the SILL may be an effective classroom tool to raise learners' awareness and investigate their own strategy use profile but it was flawed and unsatisfactory as a research instrument. Furthermore, like any self-report methodology, it has a possible ‘social desirability response bias’ (SDRB) i.e., a tendency for participants to answer in the way they think the researcher would like, or to present a favourable image of themselves by conforming to socially acceptable values (Anastasi, 1989, cited in Ehrman & Oxford, 1995). Finally, LoCastro (1994, 1995, cited in Macaro, 2006) doubted that a large and general learner strategy inventory like the SILL was transferable across socio-cultural domains and thus the results and conclusions might not be valid. Oxford and her team also recognized the need for different versions of the SILL for second and foreign language situations and are working towards it.

Despite the criticisms, the SILL still remains the most extensively and widely used tool in the field (see the SILL-based studies in Chapter Four for details).

(2) Interviews

A major difference between interviews and questionnaires lies in the degree of structure in the questions and probes. Unlike questionnaires, e.g. the SILL, which are highly structured and do not invite learners to elaborate on their answers, interviews provide opportunities for learners to discuss in depth the topics under investigation and give some personalized information on many types of strategies that would not be available otherwise.

Interviews can be used to prompt learners to talk about their learning strategies in general and/or recall a recently completed task and describe what they did to complete it. The former is characterized by generalized statements about learning behavior, e.g. ‘when I come across a new word,

I tend to guess the meaning in the context'. There is usually a time lapse between the interview and the strategy use. The accuracy of the data relies on the learners' memory whereas the latter is targeted at specific rather than generalized learning behavior. Learners are asked to report strategy use immediately after the completion of a specific learning task while the event is still contemporary and the memory is fresh. This type of interview taps into strategy use associated with a specific task. Cohen and Scott (1998) named interviews of this kind as 'self-observation' (p.34) whereas Macaro (2001) called it task-based self-report. The biggest drawback of interviews is the amount of time involved.

(3) Diaries and Journals

In these methods, learners write diary entries where they record their learning experiences, particularly how they solved their learning problems (e.g. Carson & Longhini, 2002). According to Macaro (2001), diaries and journals can provide a broad picture of learner strategy development over time. They are a useful tool to obtain valuable individualized, rich and detailed data about the microprocesses of language learning that are not accessible via direct observation. Most importantly, diary studies enable researchers to understand language learning variables from the learner's perspectives. Bailey argued (1991) 'diary studies are absolutely essential to advancing our understanding of classroom learning' (p.87).

However, like any research tool, diaries have some disadvantages. According to Carson and Longhini (2002), the first disadvantage is that because diaries are retrospective, the data collected are subject to memory constraints and unconscious editing. The second problem is related to the subjectivity of the learner's perceived experience and the data do not provide direct comparisons between students due to the open-ended nature of the diaries and journals. In addition, the quality of diary entries varies from rich, deep and detailed accounts to sketchy, thin and shallow descriptions depending on the diarists' metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness. Thus, the consistency of quality in diaries cannot be ensured. Finally, like any other qualitative data, diary data are also subject to the

problems of data reduction, definition of categories, the open-ended nature of the data and reliability in coding and interpretation (Bailey, 1991)

5.2.2.2. Observations

Unlike all other methods, observational methods enable the researcher to obtain data on actual and overt learning behaviors. In this case, the researcher can function as a participant or non-participant observer to observe what and how learners behave in the classroom and during class activities. The researcher can use structured observation schedules or field notes. Getting meaningful data from observations of learning strategy behavior entails the investigator visiting the same class over an extended period. Cohen and Scott (1998) argued the major advantage of using observational methods was that they “lend a more impartial, objective perspective to the research study, rather than having the study rely solely on data provided by learners” (p.33). In other words, observational methods may help the researcher investigate whether the reported strategies match actual behaviors. However, the key drawback is that they rely on obvious behavior to describe strategies. It means the descriptions may present a largely incomplete picture of the learner’s strategy use since many of language learning strategies are mental and not behavioral, e.g. reasoning, inferring. Another drawback is that data collection is likely to be limited by variables in the classroom, e.g. class activities, the teacher’s teaching styles and the learner’s personality with extroverted and outspoken learners providing richer data (Naiman, Frölich, Stern, and Todesco, 1978; Brown, 1996).

5.2.2.3. Think-aloud protocols

I argue that think-aloud protocols should be made a separate category because the investigator is able to observe the learner completing a task when he or she is gathering the data. Neither should they be part of observational methods as proposed by Macaro (2001) because the learner is actually verbalizing the strategies they are using to the investigator. Think-aloud protocols combine asking with observing to provide data on strategy use.

Think-aloud protocols have been widely used in the elicitation of strategy use in recent years as they allow the inquirer to access learners' mental processes concurrently with the learning task that learners are engaging in. According to Macaro (2001), the procedures of a typical think-aloud protocol are as follows:

- Explain and demonstrate to a participant how to articulate thought processes with a similar task.
- Provide a learner a language task.
- Prompt the learner if they are not verbalizing their thoughts and actions sufficiently using phrases like: “What are you thinking at the moment?” “What made you do that?” “Please keep talking”.
- Listen to the recording of the think-aloud process after the session and make a list of all the strategies used by the student.

The think-aloud protocols enable researchers to access learners' online learning and thinking processes. It has been claimed to be effective by L2 strategy researchers and has gained considerably in sophistication and popularity (e.g. Chamot & Keatley, 2003; Cohen, 1998; N.J. Anderson & Vandergrift, 1996; Phakiti, 2003). Some drawbacks are that it can only be used on a one-to-one basis, so it takes a great deal of time. In addition, the data reflect strategies related just to the task at hand and do not provide a general picture of the individual's strategies. Finally, they are not summative across students for group information (Cohen and Scott, 1998).

5.2.2.4. Recollective Studies

According to Cohen and Scott (1998), recollective studies “involve thinking back to some prior language experience and attempting to reconstruct what it was like” (p.42). In other words, recollective studies rely on the information a learner provides about his or her learning experience that took place earlier. The time lapse could be months and even years. The account could be an oral response to an

interview or in the form of written narratives (see Oxford et al., 1996). Takeuchi (2003), for example, examines 67 Japanese books on ‘how I have learned a foreign language’ published in Japan. The books were written by successful language learners, based on the writers’ foreign language learning experiences, about how they had learned a foreign language. Takeuchi (2003) read and underlined the descriptions that included language learning strategies which were then categorized according to pre-determined definitions.

The advantage of using recollection to study LLS is that learners may add some insights to those learning strategies that have worked for them. The obvious disadvantage is the time lapse between the learning experience and the inquiry. Deterioration of memory may cause distortion in the account of the learning experience.

5.2.2.5. Computer tracking

Using computers to track strategy use constitutes a promising research tool although it is still in its embryonic stage. According to Cohen and Scott (1998), computer tracking has the potential to enable the investigator to obtain data on learning strategy ‘associated with the use of resource functions accompanying word processing programs, the order of processing the elements in reading text for comprehension or in producing written text and the choice of speed for reading and writing tasks’ (p.45). Currently, the use of computer tracking is limited to investigating strategies that are supplied by the computer programs in the form of resource functions. Bailey (1996) reported her exploration of using a French word processing program as an assessment tool to track individual student use of compensation strategy while students were working on their essays. The word processing program was called *Système-D* which had the normal functions of all the word processing programmes plus the following additional learning tools: a dictionary, sets of vocabulary and phrases and a reference grammar. The learning tools enabled learners to request assistance with regard to words and grammar during composing. For example, if a student needed to look up a word in the dictionary, a

function key popped up the dictionary screen which the writer could then make an inquiry of. The Système-D Tracking Device, a computer log, maintained a list of each of the inquiries that a writer made, e.g. looking up a word, checking examples of words in sentences, looking up grammar points or calling for topical groupings of words. Based on the computer log, Bailey was able to track the use made by 21 adult learners of French of four types of compensation strategies: synonyms, circumlocutions, coining of new words and approximating the message.

Researchers are still exploring the use of computers in tracking strategy use. According to Bailey (1996), it would appear computer tracking was useful in certain types of research owing to its unobtrusive nature but its use was limited by its on-line nature. It means it is easy to collect data from reading and writing tasks. However, it would be very difficult to collect data on listening and speaking. Another limitation is its inability to uncover strategies that do not result in the use of a resource function on the computer, e.g. inferencing. Finally, the type of strategy under investigation is limited by the availability of commercial computer programs.

None of these methods reviewed is without problems. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Because of the time-consuming nature of observational methods and their limitation to observable strategies only, to date almost all the studies with a few exceptions (e.g. Brown, 1996) have employed self-reports to get data on learning strategy use. However, as discussed in the previous section, the methods have their own drawbacks. Chamot (2005) pointed out that what was identified with self-reports was merely reported strategy use, the accuracy of which relied on the truthfulness of learners and their memory. Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) also noted the problem of 'social desirability' biases inherent in self-reporting where the responses may be over-subjective; some learners may be unable to verbalize clearly and have low self-awareness, and some learners may 'fake the result' in order to present themselves in a good light. Hence, a well-designed study should use the technique of data triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2007) 'to get stabilization of the data and interpretive clarity' (McDonough, 1999, p.2). Having taken this into

consideration, I used multiple sources in my study to collect data on three variables: learner beliefs, learning strategies and learning outcomes. The details of the research design and methodologies will be discussed in the succeeding sections.

5.3. Research design

The investigation was a case study that examined three variables: language learner beliefs, language learner strategies and language proficiency. Data was gathered longitudinally over one semester (i.e.16 weeks) involving a number of data collection methods: interviews, classroom observations followed by stimulated recall, diaries, a general English skills test, vocabulary tests and an oral narrative task. Data were collected from the same individuals on two occasions, at the beginning and end of the study. To address the issue of practice effect from repeating the same task, two equivalent vocabulary tests originally designed by Nation (1983, 1990) but revised and expanded by Schmitt, Schmitt, & Clapham (2001b) were administered along with two parallel Oxford Quick Placement tests. However, the same composition picture story was used for the oral narrative task. Its justification will be found in the section reporting the pilot studies.

Qualitative methods were employed to analyze the data for learner beliefs and language learning strategies. Quantitative methods were employed to present the scores from the language proficiency tests taken on two occasions. The aim of the study was to detect the changes in learner beliefs and learner strategy use, to explore the extent that their choices of learning strategy reflected their beliefs, and to examine the relationships between learners' beliefs, learner strategy use and their learning outcomes.

5.4. Setting

Both the pilot studies and the main study were carried out at a language school, which I have called "School of Languages" (SOL) for confidentiality, at a large government-funded institute in New

Zealand. SOL was chosen for the study because it represents a typical language school in New Zealand where learners choose to study and also for the sake of convenience.

5.4.1. Description of SOL

SOL was located at the center of the institute. Most of the teaching took place in two three-floor buildings. The facilities included 18 classrooms, 3 language labs, 4 computer labs, a student common room and a self-access language learning center which was located in the library for students' easy access. All the classrooms were equipped with a white board, a computer, a data show and an overhead projector. Apart from these, a few classrooms were also equipped with a smart board.

SOL offered a variety of programs ranging from the certificate in English program for migrants only, the certificate in intensive English for international students, diploma in English program and the teacher education program to the BA in English as an additional language. It also offered some short evening courses for international languages where some foreign languages, e.g. Spanish, German, Italian and Chinese, were taught.

SOL had about 25 permanent teaching staff, two associate heads of school and one head of the school. The teachers in the school were all qualified and experienced. The minimum qualifications they held were certificate in English Language Teaching to Adult (CELTA) or Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA); most of them had the masters in applied linguistics and a few held the doctorate.

There were two major groups of language learners in the department. One was overseas students who came to New Zealand either to pursue their degrees after achieving the required English proficiency or simply to learn or improve their English. The bulk of international students came from China, Korea and Japan with a few from Europe, Saudi Arabia and Russia. Immigrants constituted the other major type of learners. They were mostly from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. A minority of

students were native English speakers who either enroll in the teacher education program to be trained as ESOL/ESL teachers or in short courses to learn a foreign language.

5.4.2. Description of the Program

The learners involving in the pilot and main studies were all from the certificate in English program for migrants. The program was designed to help migrants to ‘gain language skills to pursue their further studies in a tertiary institute in New Zealand or to find a job to settle down or to get involved in their community (Program handbook 2007). There were two types of courses offered in the program: Employment Skills English (ESE) and General English. The former focused on job-related English. It offered three job-focused courses: office skills, trades (e.g. carpentry, plumbing) and healthcare. The purpose was to help students find a job in the trained area. The latter was a traditional general skills-based English course: listening, speaking, reading, writing, language study. It had six levels: beginners’ one, beginners’ two, Elementary one, Elementary two, pre-intermediate and intermediate. Each level consisted of two courses: a text-based course focusing on reading, writing and language study and an oral-skilled course where the primary focus was on speaking, listening and also language study. Most of the students who were enrolled in the general skills English course intended to further their education at a polytechnic/university or to learn English for social and communicative purposes. A full time student had to take both text and oral based courses at each level. The number of students in a class was between 16 and 24.

The certificate in English program ran on a semester basis. The academic year consisted of two semesters of sixteen weeks each. The first semester ran from February to June and the second semester from July to November. Sometimes some courses were delivered during the summer period from November to February depending on enrollments. Students enrolled into the program at the beginning of each semester. They were assigned to one of the levels based on an in-house designed placement test, which consisted of multiple choice structure tests and a writing task. A full time student had 18

classroom-based contact hours per week and they were expected to do 12 hours of self-directed study outside the contact hours. There were fifteen teaching weeks with the last week for assessment where students were required to sit a battery of in-house assessments which tested four English skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and also grammar. After students had passed all the assessments, they were allowed to move up to the next level.

5.5. Data Collection Procedures

As indicated earlier, the setting was chosen because the SOL represented a typical language school where immigrants go to learn English in New Zealand. After I had received ethics approval from the Auckland University ethics committee (Ref. No.2007/261) in August, 2007, I wrote a letter to the head of the school explaining the aim of my study and what was involved, asking for permission to access potential participants, teachers and students alike. The head of the school welcomed the idea and gave a full support to the research.

To protect the potential participants, the same procedures were followed strictly when approaching the potential learners for the two pilot studies and the main study. I approached the program administrators in the first place. They held all the contact details of the potential participants in their people soft database. As sampling for the study was purposeful, the criterion was that the potential learners should study in a New Zealand language school for no longer than 6 months. After the potential participants were identified, they were then approached by their class teachers and were given the Participant Information Sheet (PIS, see Appendix A for the English version and Appendix B for the Chinese version). After that, students who were interested in the study contacted me. It was not until this point that I started to know my participants. I then explained to them in detail about my research and they were given time to ask further questions to clarify. They then signed a consent form (see Appendix C for the English version and Appendix D for the Chinese version) and were assured of the right to quit the project at any time. This process took place on a one-to-one basis and the

participants did not have any chance to meet each other. After the learners had agreed, I then approached the class teachers to get their permission to observe their intact class on two occasions. They were all very supportive and interested in the study.

5.6. Two Pilot Studies

Two pilot studies were conducted before the main study. The main purpose of the two pilot studies was to test the research methods. Specifically, I tried out the research instruments and examined the focus of the research questions. The same setting as the main study, i.e. the Certificate in English Program at SOL, was chosen for both studies in order to get the feel of the research site and the students in the program. For reasons of space, the emphasis in this section will be placed on the major results and amendments to the design I made after each pilot study. The details of instruments and methods for data analysis were similar to those of the main study and a full description will be given in the later section of this chapter. However, a full report for the first pilot study can be accessed in the paper, “Learner Beliefs, Learning Strategies and their Effect on Language Proficiency: A Case Study of Two Chinese Learners”, which I presented at 2008 CLESOL (Community Languages and ESOL) conference held in New Zealand.

5.6.1. Pilot Study One

5.6.1. 1. Participants

The first pilot study was conducted over a ten week period between September and November in 2007. Four learners were identified and approached. Two learners agreed to participate voluntarily: one, a female, Ling and another, a male, Feng. Their names are pseudonyms for confidentiality. Ling was 26. She graduated from a vocational school in China. Although she started learning English at a secondary school in China, she felt that the English she learned at that time was very simple and basic. She did not feel that she had learned much; English was just one of the subjects she had to learn at secondary school. When the study was conducted, Ling had been in New Zealand for six months. She

lived with her aunt and a cousin. Her cousin had been in New Zealand since she was eleven years old, so Ling could get some help in English from her cousin. After Ling came to New Zealand, she did not enroll in a language school. Instead she found two part-time jobs: one in a Chinese emporium and another in a Chinese restaurant. Every day she worked very late and went home at about 9pm. She wanted to change her life, so she decided to learn English, hoping she could find a decent job or set up her own boutique shop (she owned a boutique shop when she was in China). It was her first English learning experience in New Zealand. Ling was a full-time student at the pre-intermediate level. The class had 25 students and they were from different cultural backgrounds: one third of the students in the class were from China; another third from Africa and the rest were from Iran, India and other countries.

Feng was 43 years old. He held New Zealand residency but was working in a university in China teaching interior design. Feng came to New Zealand for a year to visit his wife. So he took the opportunity to learn English. Feng learned some basic English as a general subject at a university in China in 1981. It was a time when China had just resumed its educational system after the Cultural Revolution, so the country was seriously short of English teachers. As reviewed in Chapter Two, the deterioration of the relationship between China and the former Soviet Union in the 60s saw a lot of teachers of Russian turn to teaching English. Feng learned English from one of those teachers. Grammar translation was the main teaching method. Feng felt he hardly learned English at that time. Since graduation from the university, he had barely used English in his work. However, from time to time he read English in his free time to get some information about his discipline. Just before he came to New Zealand, he went to a three month intensive English training programme to brush up on his English. After he came to New Zealand, he immediately enrolled in the language school to learn English. When the study was conducted, Feng was in the second semester of his language study in this school. Feng studied in the same class as Ling. Like Ling, he was also a full-time student.

5.6.1.2. Research Questions

The research questions were:

1. What developments occur in the learners' beliefs over 10 weeks?
2. What relationships are there between the learners' beliefs and learning strategies?
3. What developments and changes occur in their language proficiency?
4. What relationships are there between the learners' beliefs, learning strategies and language proficiency?

5.6.1.3. Data Collection

Data were collected twice, one at the beginning and again at the end of the study. Triangulated data was gathered by using a number of instruments. Belief and learning strategy data were collected through two interviews, two class observations followed by two sessions of stimulated recall, diary entries, ten from Ling with an average of 250 words for each entry and twenty three from Feng with an average of 120 words for each entry, as well as a questionnaire designed by Cotteral (1999). Proficiency data were gathered through three tests: (1) the Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation, 1990), the Oxford Quick Placement test and oral narrative task. Two versions of each test were used to minimize any practice effect.

5.6.1.4. Major Findings

1. The study suggested that learner beliefs were both stable and dynamic. Most of the beliefs in the learner belief systems remained unchanged. However, some beliefs changed as a result of self reflection, direct and indirect observations and language progress. The most noticeable changes between the two learners were found in Ling. Her beliefs changed over the time, especially those relating to her self-efficacy. At the beginning she was doubtful about whether she could learn English well. She admired people who could speak fluent English and she was very doubtful if she would ever be able to talk fluently at all. She wished she had come to New

Zealand when she was little. By time 2, she had developed into a very confident learner. She had no doubts about herself and her ability. She was ready to chart her own language journey. She was transformed from a surface learner (i.e. quantitative accumulation and reproduction of learning) into a deep learner, a learner who was willing to take personal responsibility for her own learning. It appears that progress in the learning was pivotal to the changes in her beliefs.

2. Within a belief system there was a difference in the degree of intensity. Some beliefs were more intense than others. The learners were likely to enact those beliefs they firmly believed in, which would influence their learning outcomes. In Ling's belief system, a dominant belief was that learning was about using the language. Underpinned by her beliefs, Ling focused on using the language and communicating with others. She made every effort in real life to create opportunities to use the language: making Kiwi friends on the internet; talking to customers in the shop; sitting next to students from different countries. Consequently she improved remarkably in her speaking. Feng, however, held a strong belief that doing well in the tests was critical and good scores would save him from 'losing face'. Consequently he spent a lot of time in the library preparing for his tests, studying his past test papers and reflecting on what he did not do well in the past tests and how he could improve in the next one. His learning was confined to the institution, either in the classroom or in the library. He judged his progress in terms of test results rather than what he was able to do in real life. The tests showed Feng's vocabulary size and speaking barely improved. The most noticeable improvement was in his general English proficiency, which increased by 19%.
3. The results revealed that both learners made progress in their learning at time 2. However, they progressed differently due to the differences in their beliefs and learning strategies, suggesting a linear relationship among the three constructs, i.e. beliefs influenced learning strategy use which determined the type of learning outcomes.

5.6.1.5. Proposed Changes

The first pilot study recommended retaining the following research tools as they proved effective and useful: diaries, interviews, class observations and stimulated recall, the Oxford Quick Placement Test. The following changes were made:

1. Questionnaire: the questionnaire proved less useful. There were some issues. First, the questions in the questionnaire were from the questionnaire designer rather than from the learners. Therefore, quite a lot of belief questions in the questionnaire were not mentioned in the diaries or interviews. This made it difficult to give a coherent account of the beliefs that the learners held. In addition, because the questionnaire did not give the participants opportunities to elaborate on their opinions, the data collected were not rich enough and hard to fit into the overall picture of beliefs collected from other sources. Finally, the learners sometimes interpreted the intention of the questions differently. Therefore, the data was not usable. The study was designed as a case study. It was the participants' own (emic) perceptions that were deemed important in the study. The goal should be to describe and explain the insiders' perspectives. Based on those reasons, I decided to drop the belief questionnaire from this study.
2. Some questions were added to the core interview questions which tapped into learners' self-efficacy beliefs, e.g. "How confident are you about learning English well?" "How would you like to rate your confidence on a scale ranging from 1 to 10?"
3. Although class observations were useful, some issues arose due to the limited classroom activities. Some teachers gave more time for the students to participate while other teachers dominated the class and left little time for the students. Even the same teacher varied from one observation to another with regard to the class activities depending on the teaching contents. To make the most out of the observations I decided to consult the teachers earlier to ensure the time for the observations was appropriate in terms of the teaching contents and class activities. For example, observations would not proceed if the teachers went through answers for test results.

4. Adding task-based interviews to the instruments. The task-based interviews would be conducted immediately after the narrative speaking task to tap into the learners' specific learning strategies. The interview guide was developed accordingly.
5. Vocabulary Levels Test: The vocabulary consisted of the 2,000 word-level words, 3,000, 5,000 word-level words, the university word list level and the 10,000 word-level words. Because the students involved were at intermediate level and below, the pilot study showed the 5,000 level words and the 10,000 word level tests were very difficult and the data collected were not very useful. In light of this, it was decided to use the modified versions of the Vocabulary Levels Test by Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham (2001b) in place of the original Nation's versions. The change was made based on the participants' English level. Schmitt, Schmitt et al.(2001b) modified versions of the 2,000 Word Level, 3,000 Word Level, University Word Level sections of the Vocabulary Levels Test retain Nation's original format, i.e. three definitions with six words.
6. Monologic narrative oral test: the pilot study showed that the level of difficulty between the two sets of pictures was not the same in terms of the vocabulary required. The pictures used for the second occasion required active use of some vocabulary which proved to be difficult for the students, e.g. 'ruler', 'measure'. To solve this problem, I decided to use two composition pictures at time 2. The first composition picture was the same one as at time 1 and the second composition picture was a different one to avoid practice effect.
7. Research questions: two changes were made. The first was to change research question two to 'what changes occur in the learners' learning strategy use?' The change was made based on the fact that the original question was addressed twice. The question had already been addressed in the last research question. Another change was to fine tune the last research question to "what relationships are there between learners' beliefs and learning strategies on the one hand and

changes in their language proficiency?” Therefore, the research questions that the second pilot study addressed had become:

- What changes occur in the learners’ beliefs during the observed period?
- What changes occur in the learners’ strategies?
- What changes are evident in their language proficiency?
- What relationships are there between learners’ beliefs and learning strategies on the one hand and changes in their language proficiency on the other hand?

5.6.2. Pilot Study Two

The purpose of the second pilot study was to try out the revised research instruments for the main study. Data were collected over 16 weeks, between March and June, 2008.

5.6.2.1. Participant

Two learners were approached and agreed to be part of the studies. Due to the complexity of the research design and the volume of data it generated, I decided to focus on one learner, Mei, in the second pilot study.

Mei voluntarily participated in the study. She was 27. She started learning English at junior high school in China. She did not go to high school. Instead she went to a nursing vocational school and at the vocational school she did not learn much English.

Mei had been in New Zealand for a year. She had been staying at home looking after her six-month-old daughter. She had barely had any contact with N.Z. society since her arrival. Not surprisingly, she did not have any Kiwi friends. Her husband first came to New Zealand as an international student and later was granted residency. When the study was conducted, Mei’s mother had just arrived in New Zealand for a short visit. Because Mei was able to get help from her mother for child care, she decided to do a language course. She said, “I’m learning English because I want to be

independent. I can live a fuller and happier life if I am independent” (Interview I: 27/03/08). The language school was her first New Zealand learning experience.

5.6.2.2. Data collection

The reworked instruments were used. The same procedures of data collection and data analysis as the first pilot study were followed.

5.6.2.3. Major Findings

1. A noticeable change in Mei’s beliefs concerned her beliefs about learning a second language. At time 1, her beliefs were limited to speaking. She believed that learning English was about improving her speaking. At time 2, learning English had a broader sense. It meant improving her speaking and listening, increasing her vocabulary size and expressing ideas more accurately. She expressed her concerns about both accuracy and fluency. She became a more balanced learner. The results were similar to Tanaka’s (2004) where he reported that some Japanese learners emphasized the importance of speaking and did not like learning grammar at the beginning because of their excess of grammar teaching back in Japan. At time 2, they changed their beliefs and started to appreciate the value of grammar in their learning.
2. The major change in Mei’s strategy use was the increasing use of compensation strategies to overcome her ‘timid and shy’ personality as well as her limited language proficiency. She also used more affective strategies to encourage herself whenever she felt down, e.g. “Don’t give up on this, Mei”; “Go, Mei!”
3. The most intense beliefs of Mei’s involved speaking which she saw as the most important skill of all. She also believed that the best way to improve speaking was to practise English with Kiwis. However, she did not act on her beliefs. She did not try to find opportunities to communicate with Kiwis in real life. Even worse, when she saw her Kiwi neighbours, she walked away. She was worried in case she could not understand them and could not herself be

understood. In class she was quiet and did not take the opportunity to speak out unless she was very sure of her answers. Her most salient class behaviours were copying, consulting dictionaries and listening quietly. When asked to reflect on her class behaviors and why she remained quiet, she said ‘I was afraid to make mistakes and lose my face.’ (Stimulated recalls I & II). Not surprisingly, she did not gain much in fluency. Her overall language proficiency remained much the same between the two occasions. The study lent support to Ellis’s (1994, 2008) argument that learning actions have a direct impact on learning outcomes and the effect of beliefs upon learning is indirect via learning actions. In Mei’s case, although Mei espoused the belief that it would help her to learn English by talking to Kiwis and talking with a ‘thick face’, she did not execute this belief and her learning behaviors remained unchanged. Consequently her spoken English did not have a noticeable change.

5.6.2.4. Proposed changes

1. All the revised instruments worked well to get the intended data. Especially interviews and diaries were very effective tools to obtain valuable information on beliefs and learning strategies. Class observations and task-based interviews provided useful data on specific learning strategies. They were all retained as the research tools for the main research.
2. Based on the results of the first pilot study, it was decided to use two composition pictures at time 2. One was identical to the one used at time 1. Another one was different. The purpose of using two pictures was to take any practice effect into consideration but the method made analyzing the results problematic. It was not easy to detect the source of the differences in speaking between the two times, e.g. whether the differences were from the learners’ language progress or from the pictures. Having considered the following factors, I decided to use only one picture at both times to gather data on speaking: (1) an oral task based on a composition story was not the only test in this study. When considering the learners’ language proficiency,

other tests had to be taken into account. (2) it is not uncommon in SLA research studies to use one picture at two times to get data on oral skills (e.g. Ellis, 1992; Tanaka, 2004; Yuan 2003).

The two pilot studies showed that some of the learners' beliefs developed during the observed period while others remained unchanged. The learners' strategy use was underpinned by their beliefs but the nature of the relationships was complex. It was clear that a qualitative approach was needed to explore the nature of the relationships between beliefs and strategy use on one hand and language proficiency on the other before any conclusions could be reached. Overall, the pilot studies indicated that the methodology was valid.

5.7. Methodology of the Main Study

For this main study, data were collected between August and later November, 2008. The same site and same procedures as the pilot studies were followed. Ten learners were approached. Seven agreed to participate in the study but two dropped out in the middle (week 8) due to family issues. Five learners stayed till the end of the study.

5.7.1. Participants

One of the criteria for selecting participants was that they had to be recent students from China who had been in the New Zealand education system for no longer than 6 months, which Patton (1990) called a purposeful sample. The rationale was that because they were recent new students, they might be more sensitive and reactive to the new system so that I could get more meaningful data for the study. As Creswell (2007) argued, the purpose of a case study is to provide an in-depth understanding of the events and phenomena under investigation rather than generalization. The five learners who were voluntarily involved in this study were all full-time students. They were chosen on the basis of their availability, convenience and willingness to get involved in the study.

Table 5 summarizes the key information about the five learners. A detailed description of their background information will be presented in the succeeding results chapter. All the names used were pseudonyms for confidentiality.

Table 5. *Summary of background information about the participants*

Name	Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female
Age	25	35	21	41	28
Educational background	University graduate	Art academy graduate	High school graduate	University graduate	University graduate
Length of time in New Zealand	10 months	6 years	12 months	18 months	Added up for 6 months
First time learning English	Primary school	A few months before coming to New Zealand from a private tutor.	Primary school	High school	Intermediate school
Length of Time Learning in CE program	First semester	Second semester	First semester	First semester	First semester
Course taken in CE program	Elementary II	Elementary II	Pre-intermediate	Pre-intermediate	Pre-intermediate

5.7.2. Data Collection Methods

Data were collected longitudinally between August and November, 2008 over 16 weeks on two occasions, at the beginning and end of the study. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, a number of data collection instruments were used to gather information regarding the learners' beliefs and learning strategy use and also their levels of language proficiency. These instruments are described below:

5.7.2.1. Instruments for Collecting Data on Language Learners' Beliefs and Strategies

(1) Interviews

Two interviews were undertaken for the study. The first interview was carried out at the beginning of the study. The data were used to analyze the initial beliefs that the learners held about language learning and the other interview was conducted at the end of the study and used to examine the changes and developments of their belief systems. At each interview the learners were asked a set of semi-structured core questions about their beliefs and also about their learning strategy use. Some supplementary questions were added to the second interview. These additional questions were derived from their diaries and class observations. The purpose of the interviews was twofold: to get learners' perceptions about language learning and to obtain their reported strategy use. Therefore during the interviews, I remained quiet and attentive to what learners had to say. Probing techniques were used if I wanted learners to elaborate on what they said. For example, "Could you give me some examples of what you said?" "Can you be more specific?" "How do you mean?" Also clarification techniques were used to ensure that I understood the message accurately. For example, "Do you mean...?" "Iswhat you meant?" The core interview questions had been tried in both pilot studies. No major changes were made.

The data from the two interviews were used to answer research question one: "What changes occur in the learners' beliefs during the observed period?", research question two: "What developments and changes occur in the learners' learning strategy use?" and research question four: "What relationships are there between learners' beliefs and learning strategies on the one hand and changes in their language proficiency on the other?" All the interviews were conducted in Chinese. The core interview questions were translated into English and can be found in Appendix E. Each interview lasted approximately an hour.

(2) Diaries

The five learners were asked to keep a journal of their thoughts about anything that they considered to have an effect on their language learning. It could be the courses, their teachers, their fellow-students, the course materials or the class activities. The purpose was to gain some insight into

the learners' perspectives about their language learning experiences. They were issued with an exercise book and a set of guidelines (see Appendix F for the English version) about how to keep their diaries and what to look out for. They were assured of full confidentiality for their diaries. The learners were allowed to write the diary entries in their own language, i.e. Mandarin. The diaries were collected every week, photocopied and then returned to them immediately. The learners were asked to enter one or two journal entries per week for 16 weeks. Data were used to answer research question one: "What changes occur in the learners' beliefs during the observed period?", research question two: "What developments and changes occur in the learners' strategy use?" and research question four: "What relationships are there between learners' beliefs and learning strategies on the one hand and changes in their language proficiency on the other hand?" Table 6 provides a summary of the entries that each learner entered and the approximate total words.

Table 6. *Summary of the Learners' Diary Entries*

Learner	Bing	Peng	Ding	Shan	Fei
Entries	9	8	18	21	28
Approx. Words	2780	2664	6240	4942	22812

(3) Classroom observations

Two class observations were conducted in their intact classrooms in week six and week twelve. As discussed in the preceding section, there are limitations to using observations to investigate strategies. One is their reliance on behavior when many language learning strategies are mental and not behavioral. Another drawback is that whatever strategies are observable in the classroom will depend on the teacher's teaching style and the kinds of interactions that take place. For these reasons, after consulting with those teachers' whose learners were involved in this study, I decided to limit the number of observations to just two. Each observation was 120 minutes' duration. The purpose was to obtain data on the learners' overt behaviors in the classroom rather than rely solely on their reported strategies,

so that I could get a more comprehensive and complete picture of the learners' strategy use. The data gathered from the class observations were used to supplement the data collected from their diaries and interviews. During the observations, a self-designed observation task sheet was used to keep track of every behavior of the learners (see Appendix G). The observations were either audio or video-recorded depending on the teachers' preferences.

(4) Stimulated recall

Stimulated recall was utilized to 'seek to uncover cognitive processes that are not evident through simple observation' (Gass & Mackey 2000, p.20). In this case they were used to get data on the learners' beliefs that underpinned the learning behaviors in the classroom. The video/audio-tapes, class documents (e.g. handouts, worksheets) and class observation notes were used to help learners recall and verbalize their thought processes at the time of the original classroom activity. There were two sessions of stimulated recall, and they were both conducted in Chinese.

Gass and Mackey (2000) claim the chances of accurate reporting are greater when the time between the event reported and the reporting itself is short. In light of this, the two sessions of stimulated recall were both conducted soon after the classroom observations while the lessons were still fresh in the minds of the learners. I watched/listened to the tape beforehand and pre-selected the relevant parts that I wanted to explore further. When it came to the actual recall, standardized stimulated recall procedures were followed: first, the learners were given instructions in Chinese about what they were expected to do (See appendix H for the English version). Then, a brief description of the class observations was given to refresh their memory. After that, the pre-selected video/audio clips were played and paused for the learners to comment on their experience and what was going on and to elaborate on their beliefs and choice of learning strategies involving the observed behaviours. While watching/listening to the videotape/cassette, the participants were also given the chance to pause the tapes at any time if they wished to comment on any thoughts about their language learning and learning behaviours at the time. General open-ended questions were asked (see appendix H for the questions).

The purpose was to help the learners provide recall comments without leading them. These recall sessions were audio taped with their permission and the data were incorporated into the data analysis and were used to answer research question one about the development of their belief system , question two about their choices of learning strategy and question four about the relationships between learner beliefs, learning strategies and language proficiency. During this process, the classroom video/audio recordings and observation notes were used as stimuli to elicit their responses.

(5) Task-based interviews

Two task-based interviews were conducted immediately after each speaking task. They were intended to assess the learners' specific rather than generalized strategies. During this process the learners reflected retrospectively on their specific strategies during the 10 minute's planning time and while they were carrying out the speaking task, e.g. "what I just did was to skim through the composition picture, thinking of what words I could use to describe them" (Peng, Task-based Int I). The data were then incorporated into all the other data gathered about learning strategies and were used to answer research question two: "What developments and changes occur in the learners' learning strategies?" and research question four: "What relationships are there between learners' beliefs and learning strategies on the one hand and changes in their language proficiency on the other hand?" The interviews were conducted in Chinese and the English version of the interview questions is provided in Appendix I.

5.7.2.2. Instruments for Collecting Data on Learners' Proficiency

(1) Monologic oral narrative task

Many researchers have used narratives to analyze learners' language (Ellis 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Lennon, 1990a, 1990b; Tarone & Yule, 1989; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). A picture composition was chosen from a lower level composition book (Heyer, 1994) (See Appendix J). The story was about a single and lonely man in search of love. Every day when he finished work and came

home, he ate dinner by himself and went to bed alone. He was not happy and he wanted a wife but how could he find one? One day, he came up with an idea: he painted these words on his truck: 'Wanted – a wife.' He received a lot of letters from women. When he had read all the letters, he liked one letter very much, so he rang the woman. They arranged for a time and a place to meet. Soon after that, the man wiped the words off his truck because he had found his love. A year later they got married.

This study used picture tasks to assess spoken English under a 'watch-then-tell' condition (i.e. they told the story after they had finished viewing the picture) (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.33). The learners were first shown the pictures and then narrated the stories in as much detail as possible. They were allowed to prepare for ten minutes. No detailed guidance was provided except that they had to give a minimum of three sentences for each picture and use the past tense. They were given a sheet of paper to jot down their thoughts and they were reminded not to write out the whole story. The notes were then taken away when the participants started the oral task. They were allowed to view the pictures as they spoke and there was no time limit for the completion of the task. The instructions to the participants were given in Chinese and the English version of the instructions can be found in Appendix K. The oral narratives were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and transcribed. As discussed above, at the end of each oral narrative task, there was a task-based interview to gain some insights into their specific learning strategies and self evaluation of their task performance. The interview was audio-recorded. The interview was broadly transcribed and the data were used to analyze their specific learning strategies.

(2) Vocabulary Levels Test

Two versions of the Vocabulary Levels Test (Schmitt et al.2001b) were used to assess the learners' vocabulary knowledge. The tests consisted of three levels of vocabulary: the 2,000-word level, the 3,000-word level and Academic vocabulary. Each frequency level of the test consisted of six words and three definitions. The test required learners to match target words with their corresponding definitions, as in this example:

1. business
2. clock _____ part of a house
3. horse _____ animal with four legs
4. pencil _____ something used for writing
5. shoe
6. wall

The purpose of the Vocabulary Levels Test was not to measure depth of vocabulary knowledge (e.g. common collocations, associations, level of word formality, etc.). Rather, it was designed to estimate the learners' breadth of knowledge of common word meanings. Therefore, the target words were tested out of context to minimize the chance of guessing and to increase the number of items which could be administered in a limited amount of time (Nation, 1990, 2001; Schmitt, 2001a).

Schmitt et al. (2001b) revised and expanded the original Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation, 1983, 1990) as "this test has never been properly validated" (p.55). The original format was retained, i.e. three definitions with six words. However, the revised tests were subjected to the item discrimination and reliability validation test. The reliability indices (Cronbach's alpha) for all of the Levels sections achieved .92 and above. According to Henning's (1987) criteria (i.e. means, variance and covariance), the two versions are equivalent.

The learners were given a maximum of 50 minutes to complete the test. However, most of them completed the test in less than 30 minutes.

(3) Oxford Quick Placement Test- QPT

The Oxford Quick Placement Test (QPT) (paper-based tests) version 1 & 2 (2001) were used to assess learners' general language proficiency. QPT 1 and 2 function as parallel tests. Test 1 was used at time 1 and test 2 at time 2.

QPT versions 1 & 2 were developed for the purpose of placing students into appropriate levels. The tests include all levels from elementary to post-proficiency. There are two versions available, a

computer-based version and a paper and pen version. The latter was used in this study. The paper-based QPT is composed of two task types. Task one is a reading task. Students are required to read a variety of short texts, e.g. a notice, a memo or a letter. From a number of options, they choose the phrase that most closely matches the meaning of the text. Task two tests use of English / grammar through (1) multiple choice questions where the students choose the best word or phrase to complete a sentence, and (2) a multiple-choice cloze where students complete a gapped text by choosing the best word or phrase for each blank from a selection of words presented. It takes 30 minutes to sit the paper-based Test. The total score is 60.

I decided to use the QPT for this study because it is more flexible, manageable and quicker than other standardized proficiency tests like IELTS and TOEFL. In addition, the test scores from the QPT have been shown to correlate strongly with IELTS band scores, which may be appealing to the potential subjects. The QPT (2001) claimed that all the test items in the test had been through a quality control procedure. The material was first assessed at a pre-editing meeting. Then commissioned item writers produced the test items for an editing meeting. Later, new materials were sent out for trialing with representative groups of students. The QPT (2001) also reported that the test had gone through two phases of validation. Phase one involved deciding how accurate the tests were in terms of identifying the current level of the students. Phase two focused on determining score equivalence between different versions of the test and between two successive administrations of the QPT to ensure the reliability of the test scores. To date the test has been validated in 20 countries involving more than 5,000 students. As a result, the QPT scores have shown a high level of consistency in discriminating learners' proficiency levels and a high level of correlation with scores on other proficiency tests, such as the IELTS.

Table 7 summarizes the data collection instruments.

Table 7.

Summary of Data Collection Instruments

	Instrument	Frequency & Length	Purpose
Language Learner Beliefs and Learning Strategies	1. Interview	Two interviews: at the beginning and at the end of the study. One hour each.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To uncover the learners’ beliefs & learning strategies. • To trace the developments of the learner beliefs & learning strategies
	2. Diary	Every week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain an in-depth understanding of the learners’ beliefs and strategy use. • To examine the developments of the learner beliefs & learning strategy use
	3. Class observation	Two: six weeks in between. 120 minutes each.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To observe the learners’ overt behaviors • To examine the learners’ actual learning strategy use
	4. Stimulated recall	Two: the next day subsequent to the class observation. 30 minutes each.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get the learners’ interpretations of their class learning behaviours. • To elicit the learners’ views about their learning in the classroom setting
	5. Task-based interview	Two: immediately after the speaking tasks. 30 minutes each	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To investigate task specific learning strategies
Language Proficiency	6. Oral narrative task	Two: at the beginning and end (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess the learners’ oral English.
	7. Vocabulary levels test	Two: at the beginning and end (50 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess the learners’ vocabulary size.
	8. Oxford Quick Placement test.	Two: at the beginning and end (30 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess the learners’ general English.

5.7.3. Data Analysis Procedures

The data were analyzed mainly using qualitative methods which were complemented with quantitative methods.

5.7.3.1. Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative methods were employed to answer research questions one, two and four: (1) what changes occur in the learners’ beliefs during the observed period? (2) What developments and changes occur in the learners’ strategy use? 4) What relationships are there between learners’ beliefs and learning strategies on the one hand and changes in their language proficiency on the other hand?

For research question one and two, the data collected from the first semi-structured interview and task-based interview were used to account for the learners' initial beliefs and learning strategies; the data collected from the second semi-structured interview and task-based interview plus diary entries, two class observations and subsequent stimulated recall were utilized to make sense of the developments and changes in the learners' beliefs and choice of learning strategy. For research question four, all the data collected for the learners' beliefs and strategies as well as data from the language proficiency tests were drawn on.

Identifying learner beliefs

As is previously explained, the working definition of learner beliefs was the learners' subjective understanding of anything associated with their language learning. Drawing on Wenden's study (1987), any statements in the following forms were identified as learners' beliefs and were used for analysis:

- General statements relating to language learning that expressed opinions: for example, "I believe/think...", 'in my opinion...', 'to my view...', 'It's important to...'
- Statements that contained modal verbs: for example, "you/I need...", "you/I must/have to...", "students should..."
- Definitions about language learning and teaching: for example, 'learning English is mainly about learning the grammar rules.'
- Hypothetical statement: for example, 'if I were younger, I would learn English faster'.
- Statements that included superlatives or comparatives: for example, 'The best way to learn is...'

Identifying learning strategies

Learning strategies in this study were defined as any actions, both mental/unobservable and overt/observable, that learners take to comprehend, acquire and retain new information, enhance their learning and compensate for any deficiency in their language competence. The data collected from a number of resources: diary entries, interviews, class observations and task-based interviews were

analyzed line by line for specific as well as general descriptions of each of the major strategy categories (cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, social and affective). Each mention of a strategy type was counted.

Methods used in qualitative analysis

Data analysis was based on the principles of qualitative research methods and followed the inductive process of coding for themes→looking for patterns →making interpretations→building theory (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In order to get the feel of the data, I first transcribed and translated all the data gathered from the two semi-structured interviews (see Appendix N for a sample of transcripts), the two task-based interviews, and the two sessions of simulated recall. Then I reviewed all the data generally while jotting down notes in the margins. This involved reading repeatedly all the transcripts and diary entries and unitizing them. After several readings, I started to establish the unit for the study. A unit was defined as the ‘smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself, that is, it must be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p.345). The basic units of analysis for this study could be single words, short phrases, complete sentences, utterances or extended discourse. They expressed the learners’ beliefs about language learning and the strategies they engaged in their language learning. Each unit was identified by source, participant, and particular data collection episode. During the line-by-line scrutiny of the data, codes were affixed to the units of analysis. Data reduction followed after that. Similar themes were then grouped into one category. Propositional statements were made for each of these categories. Then all the categories were read numerous times and reviewed for patterns. Finally, theory was built to interpret the findings. This was a process of recursive analysis where data was read repeatedly; new codes were added until saturation was reached, i.e. no new themes were found, and salient themes, categories or recurring patterns began to emerge. During this process, research

questions were frequently referred to, literature was revisited, and negative evidence and contradictions were watched for and accommodated.

In brief, the qualitative analysis in this study involved the following steps:

1. Generally reviewing all the data and immersing myself by reading them repeatedly.
2. Reducing the data by unitizing them.
3. Establishing codebooks and open coding the units.
4. Grouping the open codes denoting similar themes/concepts into a category.
5. Looking for patterns within and between the different categories.
6. Generating a theoretical framework to explain learners' beliefs and the developments and changes in learners' beliefs

The main source books were Lincoln and Guba (1985), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Strauss & Corbin (1998). Other research methods books were also consulted, e.g. Creswell (2007), Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), Merriam (2009), Patton (1990).

Credibility, Transferability and Dependability

Qualitative research methods are different from quantitative research methods. Instead of internal and external validity and reliability, alternative terms - credibility, transferability and dependability are used. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Drawing on Lincoln and Guba (1985), the following procedures were used to ensure credibility, transferability, and dependability of the qualitative analysis in this study:

- Prolonged engagement and persistent observation: the data were collected over a period of 16 weeks in the field to build trust with the participants.
- Triangulation of data and analysis: A number of instruments were employed to collect data on each of the three variables: the learners' beliefs, learning strategies and language proficiency.
- Rich and thick description: detailed descriptions of the participants, setting, and results were provided and a typical setting where migrants learn English was chosen, hoping that readers of

this study can reflect on the similarities to and differences with their own practice and see whether and how the findings of this study can apply to their own contexts. Thus the determination of generalization was left to the reader.

- Member checking: Each interview was transcribed and returned to the participants for member checking, in terms of its credibility and accuracy in particular. Corrections were made to each transcript where noted by the participants and their comments were incorporated in the data analysis.

Presentation of the Qualitative Data

The qualitative data were presented in quotes from all the interview transcripts and diary entries. In compliance with the ethics committee guidelines, all names of the learners and of the school were pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and to protect the participants' anonymity.

Although the five learners were from similar backgrounds and they shared similar cultural values, I made no attempt to report their beliefs in terms of the themes they shared. I believe even though they talked about the same subject, e.g. pair work, they may have perceived and interpreted it differently. Each individual was treated as unique and their beliefs reflected their own experiences. Each belief emerged from their own stories, not from the researcher's pre-determined categories.

Based on Weisse (1994, pp. 197-198), some of the interview quotes were modified in the following ways:

1. Starters and fillers (e.g. "Hum", "erm", 'you know) were deleted from the quotes. My own encouraging and echoing words (e.g. 'uh-huh', 'yeah', 'right') were not be presented, as they were regarded as distracting factors to readers and were not significant.
2. False starts and unnecessary repetitions of a phrase were usually excluded.
3. Interview excerpts were reorganized. As Weiss (1994) pointed out it was not uncommon for a participant to start talking about a topic, go off into something else, and then revert to the original topic (p.198). Therefore, all the materials dealing with a single topic were brought

together. Square brackets are used to signal explanatory notes where necessary.¹

All the transcripts and diary entries were quoted in Chinese and in italics in the first place followed by an English translation in brackets {...}. In most cases, quotes were integrated and woven together with interpretation to produce a smoother text. To ensure the accuracy, all the translations were checked and confirmed by a Chinese lecturer who holds a Master's degree in English linguistics and has been teaching English for more than 20 years.

5.7.3.2. Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis was only used to complement qualitative methods and to answer research question three: (3) what developments and changes are evident in their language proficiency over the period? It involved a descriptive summary of learners' language tests on the two occasions. The data collected from the oral narrative tasks, the QPT and the Vocabulary Levels Tests were used. The measurements for each test are described below:

Oral Narrative Task

Skehan (1998b) proposed that learner oral performance be examined in terms of meaning (i.e. fluency) and form (i.e. accuracy and complexity). Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005) concurred that it was promising and helpful to measure these three aspects of language (see Skehan and Foster 1999; Yuan & Ellis, 2003; Tanaka, 2004). Thus, in this study, oral production was measured in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity.

- Fluency measures: Fluency 'concerns the learner's capacity to produce language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation' (Skehan, 1996, p. 22 quoted in Yuan and Ellis 2003, p.2). Ellis (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) summarized two principal methods of measuring fluency. One is to measure temporal variables (e.g. speech rate, length of run, pause length) and another is related to dysfluency factors such as false starts, repetitions, replacements and reformulations (see Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005, p.157 for details). Like many other studies (e.g. Tanaka, 2004; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), fluency in this study was measured in terms of number of syllables per

minute, which was calculated by the number of syllables within each narrative, divided by the number of seconds used to complete the task and multiplied by 60.

- Complexity: complexity ‘concerns the elaboration or ambition of the language that is produced’ (Skehan, 1996, p.22 quoted in Yuan and Ellis 2003, p. 2). Ellis (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) grouped complexity measures into five categories: 1) interactional, 2) propositional, 3) functional, 4) grammatical and 5) lexical. As Ellis (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) pointed out the most commonly used measures of complexity were grammatical in nature (see Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:153 for details). This study measured complexity in terms of syntactic variety. The amount of subordination was calculated by the total number of separate clauses divided by the total number of AS-units (or C-units)². An AS-unit (the analysis of speech unit) consists of ‘*an independent clause, or sub-clausal unit*³, together with any *subordinate clause(s)* associated with either.’ (Foster *et al.* 2000, p. 365). False starts, repetitions, self-corrections, uncompleted words, and pause fillers⁴ were excluded from the calculations (see Foster *et al.*,2000)
- Accuracy measures: accuracy refers to ‘how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language’ (Skehan 1996b, p. 23 quoted in Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Research to date has reported various methods to measure accuracy. Some focused on specific grammatical features, e.g. verb tenses, articles while others measured the general features such as the percentage of error free clauses (Skehan and Foster, 1999). Due to the level of the language proficiency of the participants, accuracy in this study was measured by percentage of error-free past tenses: the number of error-free past tenses divided by the total number of verbs multiplied by 100.

Vocabulary Levels Test

Each correct answer was allocated one point; incorrect answers or unanswered questions did not receive a point. A total score was 90 points.

Oxford Quick Placement Test

There was a total of 60 marks. Each correct answer was allocated one mark; incorrect answers, double answers and unanswered questions did not receive any marks.

Notes

1. Transcription key (based on Van Lier, 1988, pp243-244)

<u>Underline:</u>	Stressed word
...	Pause
/ /	Overlapping or simultaneous listening, responses, and brief comments.
(())	Non-verbal actions; ((unit)): indicates a stretch of unintelligible word.
[]	Explanatory note and comments
{ }	Translation
[...]	Indicates that a stretch of talk not related to a specific quote was suppressed.
(for)	A word within single parenthesis indicates unclear or probable item.
The:::	One or more colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound.

2. Foster *et al.* (2000) reported that the most popular unit in research for analysis of both written and spoken data was the T-unit. Hunt (1966, 1970) defined the T-unit as a main clause plus any other clauses which depended upon it. Foster *et al.* argued T-unit was 'inadequate to deal with a full analysis of spoken discourse' (2000, p.360), especially in analyzing elliptical utterances.
3. Foster *et al.* (2000) defined an independent sub-clausal unit consisted of two kinds: 1) one or more phrases which could be elaborated to a full clause by means of recovery of elliptical utterances from the context:

A: How long have you been in New Zealand?

B: Seven years.

2) minor utterances which are either ‘irregular sentences’ or ‘nonsentences’:

Thank you very much

4. Foster *et al.* (2000) defined the terms as follows

- A false start: an utterance which is begun and then either abandoned altogether or reformulated in some way (e.g. {table} the size of the table should be fit.)
- A repetition: the speaker repeats previously produced speech (e.g. {you lost} you lost your money)
- A self-correction: the speaker identifies an error either during or immediately following production and stops and reformulates the speech; it includes an element of structural change (e.g. {it make better} it made it better to look at.). Foster *et al.* (2000) also suggested that where self-correction occurs the final version is counted as an AS-unit with previous versions excluded.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS: CASE STUDIES

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the results for five learners, based on the data that were collected over 16 weeks from a number of sources. In order to capture the multiple reality perceived and experienced by each individual, the results will be presented on a case-by-case basis and according to the English levels they were enrolled in at the school, starting from elementary (2 participants) to pre-intermediate (3 participants). The aim of the chapter is to provide a distinctive picture of each learner in line with the first three research questions.

I start each case with the learner's background information. I then report results relating to research question 1, "What changes occur in the learners' beliefs over the observed period?" The developments of the learners' beliefs were investigated by comparing the belief data I gathered at time 1 (the first interview and the first task-based interview) and at time 2 (the second interview, the second task-based interview, diary entries, two class observation notes and two sessions of stimulated recall).

Five categories of learners' beliefs were identified inductively from the data. As discussed in the methodology chapter, the process of data analysis began with open coding of the data-set gathered for the first learner. The open coding was then followed by category construction where I grouped the codes that denoted similar themes or concepts into tentative categories. They were then tested against the second set of data that were collected for case two to see if the tentative categories existed and held up. When new tentative categories were identified, I would re-examine the previous case and add the new provisional categories to the subsequent data analysis. The recursive process continued until all the data had been analyzed and saturation point had been reached, i.e. there was no more new information or insights forthcoming. During this process, some categories remained while others were added, collated or renamed. In the end, five categories of beliefs were established for this study. The

categories were exhaustive (i.e. all instances could be assigned to a category) and exclusive (i.e. all instances should be assigned to only one category).

- (1) *Beliefs about the learning situation* referred to the learners' overall views about learning and teaching in New Zealand and in China, e.g. "Teaching in China was not flexible while teaching in New Zealand was motivating" (case one: Peng).
- (2) *Beliefs about external factors* referred to a range of external factors that had an apparent impact on learners' language learning, particularly classroom-related factors. These external factors included:
 - a. error correction, e.g. "Error correction is a very important part of learning and I want to be corrected whenever I make mistakes" [case three: Ding].
 - b. teachers, e.g. "Teachers should detect the gaps in my learning" [case 4: Shan].
 - c. exams, e.g. "Exams were an effective way of learning." [case four: Shan].
 - d. class activities, e.g. "When I work in pairs/groups, I can use the language" [case one: Peng].
 - e. setting, "Learning at school is better than learning by myself." [Case 4: Shan].
 - f. native speakers, i.e. Kiwis, e.g. "Kiwis are friendly" [Case 5: Fei].
- (3) *Beliefs about personal factors* consisted of two subcategories. One referred to those individual learner factors relating to age, language aptitude, memory and self-efficacy. Another included learners' beliefs about their own language proficiency, i.e. their own strengths and weaknesses in English.
- (4) *Beliefs about learning a second language* referred to those beliefs concerning English grammar, vocabulary and the four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as their beliefs about the importance of accuracy and fluency.
- (5) *Beliefs about the nature of language learning* refer to those beliefs about general approaches to language learning (e.g. "Learning English is about using it in real life" [case five: Fei]) as well

as their epistemological beliefs about learning (e.g. “Learning is a cumulative process where I have to accumulate my English knowledge gradually” [case two: Bing]).

Third, I report results relating to research question 2, “What developments and changes occur in the learners’ language learning strategy use?” The presentation will follow the same structural pattern as in the belief section, that is, I compare the learner’s learning strategy use at both times to detect if there have been changes.

As indicated in the Chapter Four, the categories of the learners’ language learning strategy use were pre-determined based on the literature review. They fall into five categories:

- (1) *Cognitive strategies* related to manipulating, transforming learning materials and storing and retrieving new information;
- (2) *Compensation strategies* dealt with overcoming deficiencies in knowledge of the language;
- (3) *Metacognitive strategies* were concerned with directing, planning and evaluating one’s learning;
- (4) *Social strategies* were involved in increasing learning experiences with other people;
- (5) *Affective strategies* concerned regulating emotions.

Finally, I present the results for research question 3, “What developments and changes are evident in the learners’ language proficiency over the period?” I examine the changes in language proficiency by comparing the learners’ three test results at times 1 and 2: Vocabulary Levels Test, The Oxford Quick Placement Test (paper and pen version) and the oral narrative task.

The aim of this chapter is to report the results as objectively as possible. My interpretation of the results will be the focus of the subsequent chapter.

6.2 Case one: Peng

6.2.1 Background Information

Peng, a 25-year-old male student, had been in New Zealand for approximately 10 months when the data were collected. He immigrated to New Zealand with his parents under the general skills category. After he arrived, he learned English for 3 months in an evening community class. He felt the community class was not very formal and also learning in the evening did not accommodate his learning style - he learned better during the day. So he decided to come to the SOL because he was told that the school was more formal and offered morning classes.

Peng started learning English at the time when English teaching at primary and secondary school was experiencing some reforms in China. In place of the traditional grammar translation methods, English teaching involved extensive mimicry and over-learning of language patterns and expressions without teaching grammatical rules explicitly. Therefore, Peng did not learn grammar formally and explicitly until he went to high school. He recalled that English teaching followed a similar pattern throughout his learning: vocabulary, drilling, listening to tapes, reading texts aloud. His homework was to rote-memorize wordlists. At university he majored in tourism. English became less important. He learned English for one year as a part of his first year foundation study. Although he had learned English for a long time, he said he had never been interested in the subject and had just managed to pass exams. He said “now I have to learn English in order to survive in New Zealand and to be able to converse with people in daily life’ (Int I: 06 Aug’08). He did not have long-term goals with regard to what he wanted to do with his life in New Zealand.

Having sat the placement test, Peng was placed at the elementary level. There were 17 students in the class: 6 Chinese, 2 Koreans, 2 Pakistanis, 4 Africans and 3 Iranians.

6.2.2 The Evolution of Peng’s Beliefs about Language Learning

At both times 1 and 2, Peng held a negative view of teaching in China:

我觉得英语教学不能引起学生的兴趣，教学方法也过时了... 课堂活动很有限 ... 我记得有很多同学考试打分很高但他们不会用英语，我的意思是要是让他们听和说什么都不让看，肯定应付不了，不会用。

{I felt the English teaching couldn't motivate the students and the teaching methods were obsolete... the class activities were limited... I remember I had a lot of classmates who scored high in their test papers but couldn't use their English [for communication]. I mean if they were asked to listen and speak without anything to look at, they couldn't handle it. They couldn't apply.} (Int I: 06 Aug'08)

On the contrary, he was impressed with teaching in New Zealand, especially the variety of 'invigorating and interactive class activities':

有很多有趣的课堂活动，比如把一篇文章分成几段贴到墙上，然后把学生分成小组去读，找答案，这对说和读都有好处。

{There are a lot of interesting class activities, for example, an article was split in several paragraphs and put on the wall. The students were divided into groups to read and find answers, which was really good for speaking and reading.} (Int II: 07-Nov'08)

Regarding external factors, at both times he perceived exams differently when he was in China compared to when he was in New Zealand. In China he saw exams as the driving force in his learning. His learning behaviour was governed by exams. He learned in order to pass exams whereas in New Zealand he believed that exams were meant to give him feedback on "which part I am not good and how I can improve" (Int I: 06 Aug'08). Likewise, he did not change his beliefs about teachers' roles in his learning. At both times, he was of the view that teachers were vital in his learning. Teachers played several roles: as motivators where they motivated learners to learn, as activity organizers/creators where they organized or created opportunities for learners to use the language, as supervisors where they ensured learners did their homework and as knowledge givers where they taught what learners were not clear about. He commented,

我认为老师应该引起学生学习兴趣，留作业，让他们课后学习...老师应该教会你不懂的东西，把你不清楚的概念解释清楚，他们还应该创造机会让你使用语言。

{I think teachers should motivate students, give homework and make sure students learn after the class...teachers should teach what you don't know and explain the difficult concepts more clearly and also they should create opportunities for you to use the language.}

(Int I: 06 Aug'08)

However, his beliefs about error correction underwent some changes. At time 1, he wanted to be corrected whenever he committed errors:

我认为要是有人给我改错的话，至少我知道我错了，我可以把规则用到其他类似场合里，知道这是正确的 ... 我认为学语言最好是马上给更改，要是你养成习惯的话，以后就难改了。

{I believe if I am corrected, at least I know I am wrong. I can extrapolate the rules to other similar occasions, knowing this is correct... I think learning a language is better to be corrected right away. When you have formed a habit, it will be difficult to be corrected later.}

(Int I: 06 Aug'08)

At time 2, although he still acknowledged the importance of error correction in clarifying confusing areas in his learning, he was more relaxed about errors. He believed errors should be treated differently depending on the tasks he was involved in. In speaking he was more concerned about fluency and getting the message across:

如果我的发音正确，说得流利，词汇恰当，我就能和人交流，如果我太在意语法，考虑正确的形态，我就会说得很慢。

{if I have correct pronunciation, speak fluently and use appropriate vocabulary, I am able to communicate with people. If I care too much about grammar thinking about the correct forms, I will speak much more slowly.} (Int II: 07-Nov'08)

When it came to writing, he believed accuracy was the priority: "I should express what I want to express accurately in writing" (Int II: 07 Nov'08).

As the course progressed, he experienced more dynamic class activities. Consequently, a new belief emerged about pair/group work. He liked working in pairs and groups. In his view, it was enjoyable and provided opportunities to learn from other students and exchange ideas:

我喜欢小组活动，因为要是我一个人学，我会感到枯燥无味，当我们和别人一起做活动，我们会讨论问题，思考答案，促进理解.....有人可能词汇量大，他们可以教我。

{I like group work - if I learn by myself I will feel bored. When we do some activities with partners, we can discuss questions and contemplate answers and promote understanding... some may have larger vocabulary and they can teach me.} (Stimulated recall I: 08-Sept'08)

He also perceived pair/group work as an occasion to use the target language. Therefore, he preferred working with students from different countries where he could force himself to speak in English:

你要是和从中国来的学生一起做活动，当你不知道怎么用英语说，你就想用汉语说，但是要是你的伙伴是从别的国家来的，你就是不知道怎么用英语解释，你也得强迫自己用英语。这样的话，你就多用英语了。

{If you work with students from China and you don't know how to communicate in English, you tend to use Chinese. But if your partner is from other countries, even when you don't know how to explain in English, you have to force yourself to communicate in English. In that case, you can use more English.} (Stimulated recall I: 08-Sept'08)

Also, at time 2 Peng perceived his role in the process of learning differently. He regarded himself as an active player rather than a passive learner. He became more autonomous. Although at both times 1 and 2 he was of the view that the success of learning was contingent on such personal qualities as self-determination or strong will and effort, at time 1 he placed a greater emphasis on the importance of other factors, e.g. the learning environment and teachers, whereas at time 2 he shifted the focus to himself, believing he should take more responsibility and exert more effort. In tandem with his new emergent belief that learning English was about using it and nurturing the feel for English, he believed that it was he who 'should watch more English TV programmes and listen to more English radio' (Diary: 10 Aug) to nurture his feel for L2; he was the one who 'should

communicate with Kiwis more and create more opportunities to use' what he had learned (Diary: 17 Aug) and who 'should read more authentic materials from real life' (Int II: 07 Nov'08). He confessed

[在新西兰]我给自己更多的压力, 比如, 我得大量地读, 大量地听, 我写得更多, 认真地想很长时间哪个是正确的。在中国我不给自己这样的压力, 我得过且过, 有时我抄别人的作业, 我得通过考试, 但现在我知道我得付出更多的努力。

{[in New Zealand] I give myself more pressure. For example, I have to read more and listen more. I have to write more carefully thinking for a long time about what is accurate. In China I didn't give myself such pressure. I got by and sometimes I copied others' homework. I had to pass exams. But now I know I have to put in more effort.} (Int II: 07-Nov'08)

He did not change his beliefs about learning a second language. At both times he equated learning English with learning vocabulary which was complemented with more listening and speaking. In his opinion,

掌握大量的词汇是学英语的首要任务, 词汇掌握得多了, 听力自然也跟上去了, 听力好了, 跟别人聊天时, 自然也更有信心.....如果没有一定的词汇基础, 别人跟你说什么你都不知道, 那又怎么能进行互动交流呢?

{... the first and foremost important task in English learning is to have a large vocabulary size. If vocabulary is large, listening improves in its wake. If listening is good, [you] become more confident when chatting with others... without a certain amount of vocabulary, how can you communicate when you don't even understand what other people are talking about?}

(Diary 27 Oct'08)

Peng's beliefs about language learning at times 1 and 2 are summarized in table 8.

Table 8. Peng's Beliefs about Language Learning at times 1 and 2.

Belief category	Time 1	Time 2
1. Learning situation	<p>In China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching was not motivating • Learning was not applicable to life • Obsolete teaching methods • Limited class activities <p>In N.Z.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good pace • A lot of different class activities • Motivating & enjoyable 	<p>In China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching was in Chinese most of the time and dominated by teacher talk <p>In N. Z.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class activities were interesting. • Learning was relaxing
2. External learning factors	<p>Exams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests were there to give him feedback in N.Z. <p>Role of teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • motivators • activity organizers • supervisors • knowledge givers <p>Error correction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was important to be corrected whenever he made mistakes 	<p>Exams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They could inform him of his learning <p>Role of teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exerting pressure on students • Delivering interesting lessons & getting students involved • Explaining and clarifying what he was confused about <p>Error correction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It helped him clarify his confusion and made sure he would not make similar mistakes next time <p>Working in pairs/groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He could learn from others and discuss • He could force himself to use English
3. Personal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success in learning depended on determination, persistence and effort. • He was confident to learn English well because his goal was achievable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was more actively involved in his learning • Success depended on determination and effort • He put in more effort • He was confident about learning English well
4. Learning a second language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary and listening were the most important skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning English was about learning vocabulary, listening more and speaking more but vocabulary was the most important of all. • In speaking, he should focus on fluency while in writing he should focus on accuracy.
5. Nature of language learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning was a cumulative process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing a habit of thinking in English • Using the language in real life and with Kiwis • Learning took time

6.2.3 The Development of Peng's Language Learning Strategy Use

Cognitive strategies dominated Peng's LLS use at both times 1 and 2. At both times, Peng spent a lot of time on vocabulary. At time 1, he copied the texts he learned, which, in his view, helped him 'have a better memory of the text and a better understanding of the sentence structures' (Int I: 06-Aug'08). Another strategy he used frequently at time 1 was to rote memorize wordlists, whereas at time 2 he attempted to combine rote memorizing with learning words while reading. He described the strategy like this:

如果我不懂一个词，我就把它抄到笔记本上，我把汉语意思写下来，我边读边记，我不硬背，因为我觉得太没意思，我看看词，然后再读别的东西，当我遇见熟悉的词，我再返回看词汇本，这样好些，要是硬背，很容易忘掉。

{if I didn't know a word, I would copy it down in my notebook. I wrote the Chinese meaning next to the word. I remembered it while I was reading. I didn't rote-learn word lists because I felt it was boring. I read the vocabulary and then I read something else. When I came across a familiar word, I'd go back to the vocabulary book and it would be better. If I just rote-learn, it will be easily forgotten.} (Int II: 07 Nov'08)

At time 1, his learning activities were limited to doing test preparation exercises and revising the contents of the curriculum. His learning effort was minimal above and beyond the course work whereas at time 2 he gave himself 'more pressure' in learning and put in more effort. He 'read more and listened more and wrote more' (Int II: 07 Nov'08). For example, he read more short articles which he felt 'helpful because I had time to think about the use of tenses and sentence structures' (Int II: 07 Nov'08) and attempted to "read flyers in the mailbox" (Int II:07 Nov'08). In addition, at time 1, he relied heavily on Chinese to help him learn. For example, he wrote the Chinese translation for every word he learned. When he spoke and wrote, he formulated his ideas in Chinese first and then translated them into English. Although he still relied on Chinese at time 2 due to his limited linguistic resources, he tried to nurture his feel for English, e.g. by watching English TV programmes and DVDs, listening

to the radio and thinking in English in his daily life. His goal was “to forget Chinese eventually.” (Int II: 07 Nov’08)

Regarding his compensation strategy use, at both post oral narrative task interviews, Peng reported using substitution and avoidance strategies to compensate for his lack of vocabulary:

研究员：你说当你讲述故事时有许多未能表达的东西，那你怎么办？

鹏：我用其他办法，用简单词来替代。

研究员：要是你找不到简单词，怎么办呢？

鹏：比如说我知道刷油漆这个动作但我找不到这个词来表达所以我得跳过这个词。

{Researcher: You said you had many things that you couldn’t express when you told the story. What did you do then?

Peng: I used other methods and some simple words to substitute.

Researcher: If you couldn’t find a simple word, what did you do?

Peng: For example, I knew the action of “刷油漆” (painting) but I couldn’t find the word to express it so I had to skip it. } (Task-based Int I: 06 Aug’08)

At time 2, Peng exposed himself more to English. Consequently he employed more compensation strategies to combat his deficiencies in English. For example, he focused on key words and used the story and picture clues to guess the meanings:

研究员：你能看懂节目吗？

鹏：不能。有时是词汇的缘故，有时是速度的问题，我试着听懂主要意思，猜是关于什么的。

{ Researcher: Are you able to understand the programmes?

Peng: No, I’m not. Sometimes it was due to the vocabulary and sometimes it was due to the speed. I tried to understand the key words and guess what it was about. }

(Int II: 07 Nov’08)

In class, he was observed to stay quiet and seldom initiated questions or volunteered due to a lack of confidence in his English and concerns for ‘a loss of face’. Instead he reported giving answers subvocally while others were supplying answers.

Regarding social strategies, at time 1 he did not attempt them due to the limited class activities and foreign language learning environment in China whereas at time 2 Peng attempted to employ such

strategies as “ cooperating with others” and “asking for clarification”. During two class observations, he was observed to be actively involved in pair/group work. He was very co-operative while contributing to the group and pair task completion. When he worked with students from other countries, he normally found it hard to comprehend their English due to their accents, so he ‘asked them to repeat’. He viewed the experience positively, believing ‘when I listened more, I could tell the difference between their English and standard English’ (Stimulated recall II: 07 Nov’08). Unfortunately, his social strategies did not go beyond the classroom. In other words, he seldom interacted with native speakers in real life. He explained that ‘I didn’t have many speaking opportunities... when I come home I don’t speak English...I really don’t know where to start’ (Int II: 07 Nov’08).

Peng’s metacognitive strategies remained unchanged. At both times, he employed metacognitive strategies to plan, evaluate and monitor his general language learning process as well as when he was confronted with a specific learning task. For example, at time 1, when he was engaged in the oral narrative task for this study, he first evaluated the situation he was in and then decided to write the beginning of the story because he believed “if I couldn’t narrate the beginning well, I would not be able to complete the whole story.” (Task-based Int I: 06-Aug’09). In other words, the beginning part of the narration had a big impact on the whole task completion. Consequently, he centered his planning time on the first part. After he completed the oral task, he reflected on his performance, stating “it was not satisfactory due to my limited vocabulary.” (Task-based Int I: 06 Aug’08). He then set a goal for himself:

我认为词汇很重要，我今后应该学些更多，记更多的单词。

{I think vocabulary is very important. I should learn and memorize more vocabulary in the future.}

(Task-based Int I: 06 Aug’08)

Peng’s language learning strategy use is summarized in table 9.

Table 9. Peng's Language Learning Strategy Use at Times 1 & 2.

Strategy Category	Time 1	Time 2
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorizing wordlists • Transcribing English pronunciation with Chinese characters. • Copying the texts • Doing exercises • Revising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorizing wordlists & learning words while reading • Revising & doing exercises • Fostering the feel for English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ watching English TV programmes and DVDs ➢ listening to the radio ➢ making a mental picture of daily situations
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substituting a complex word with a simple word • Skipping the words Thinking in L1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to key words • Guessing meanings • Using L1 • Using simple sentences • Clarifying • Looking up new words in the dictionary • Staying quiet • Giving answers sub vocally
Social	Not attempted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperating with others • Asking for clarification
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating • Setting goals and objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting goals and objectives • Planning for his learning and learning tasks • Evaluating

6.2.4 The Changes in Peng's Language Proficiency

Figure 2 compares Peng's vocabulary and QPT test results at times 1 and 2. It shows that his vocabulary size improved by 11% (time 1 = 37%; time 2= 48%). He also made some progress in the QPT. He gained 10% (time 1= 32%; time 2= 42%) This indicated Peng had moved up one level from elementary to lower intermediate level and one band in IELTS from band 3-4 to band 5.

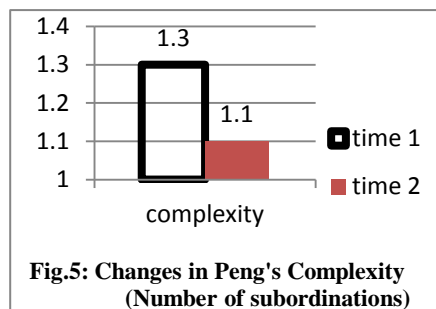
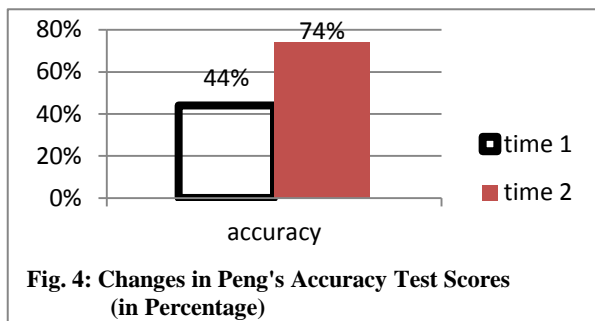
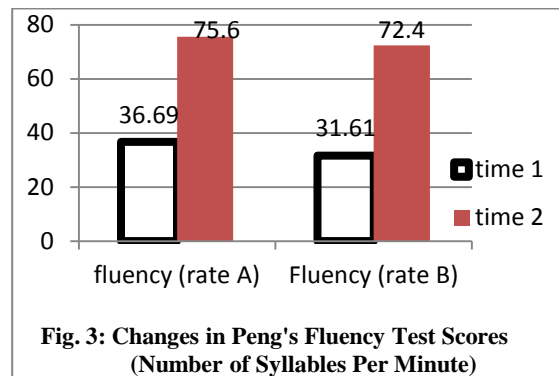
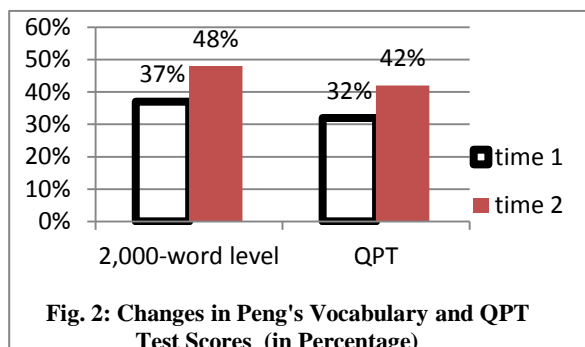


Figure 3, 4 and 5 show the changes in his oral narrative task at times 1 and 2. The biggest improvement was his fluency. In Rate A (the total number of syllables per minute), he was able to utter 38.91 more syllables per minute (time 1=36.69 syllables; time 2=75.60 syllables), meaning he spoke faster and became more fluent. He also improved his rate B by 40.49 syllables at time 2 (time 1= 31.61 syllables; time 2= 72.40 syllables). This suggests he did not repeat himself as much and used fewer self-corrections and fillers, e.g. er, hmm. Another noticeable improvement was the accuracy in his oral task. His accurate use of verb forms was improved by 30% (time 1=44%; time 2=74%). However, he did not improve the complexity of his language in the oral task. On the contrary, he used fewer subordinate clauses.

6.2.5 Case Summary

Peng came to learn at the school as a passive learner who perceived exams as the driving force to push him to learn and rated teachers as the most influential factor to promote successful learning. By the end of 16 weeks of instructional experience in New Zealand, he had become a more self-

regulated learner. He saw himself as an active player in the process of his learning. Instead of placing a great emphasis on the importance of external factors (e.g. learning environment, teachers) as at time 1, he shifted the focus to himself, ready to take more responsibility for his own learning and exert more effort. He saw that the aim of language learning was to be able to use English for communicative purposes. Therefore, he became more relaxed about the errors he made and the exams he sat. The locus of control in his language learning had shifted from outside to inside.

In line with his belief changes, Peng became a more active learner. For example, in the classroom he actively participated in class activities and made them an opportunity to use the language and learn from his fellow classmates. He voluntarily read some short articles and attempted some authentic materials. He also started listening to the radio and watching English TV programmes and DVDs. However, his strategy use was still limited, especially in terms of social strategies.

6.3 Case two: Bing

6.3.1 Background Information

Bing, a 35-year-old male student, was different from the rest of the participants in that he did not learn English formally at school in China. He went to an art academy to learn singing immediately after he graduated from primary school. There he learned singing and other key high school subjects, e.g. maths, Chinese. Foreign languages were not part of the curriculum. After five years of specialized training, he worked for a city symphony orchestra for another five years. Then he set up his own advertising agency. He ran the business successfully until he decided to immigrate to New Zealand under the business category. Just before he came to settle down in New Zealand, he learned English from a Chinese private tutor for 6 months. He met the tutor two hours a day, five times a week. They followed a textbook, *New Concept English* by L.G. Alexander. They managed to cover book 1 *First things First* before he left China. According to Bing, the lessons mainly focused on grammar and

vocabulary. Every day, the tutor translated the text into Chinese first, followed by explicit explanation of grammar rules. He was then left with a lot of grammar exercises to do and vocabulary to memorize.

After he arrived in New Zealand, he learned English at a private language school for 3 months. Due to financial pressure, he decided to stop learning and started his painting business. The business mainly served the Chinese community, so he did not have any language barriers. Bing wanted to change his business direction intending to establish his own advertising agency in New Zealand, catering for the needs of the Chinese as well as the mainstream community. Therefore, he decided to return to school to learn English full time. He wanted his English to be good enough to enable him “to communicate freely with his prospective customers, understand their intentions and implement them in the commercial ads” (Int I: 04 Aug’08).

He had learned at the SOL for one semester (16 weeks) and passed Elementary One level. When the data were collected, he had just started at Elementary Two level. He was in the same class as Peng. As described earlier, the students were from diverse cultural backgrounds.

6.3.2 The Evolution of Bing’s Beliefs about Language Learning

Because Bing did not learn English at school in China, his beliefs about the learning situation were limited to the school in New Zealand. At both times, he was extremely unhappy about the way the school streamed the classes where the students with different profiles were put in one class. He considered it irrational:

我认为分班不合理，这个班上学生的技能都不一样...有的口语强，但一点语法知识都没有，还有的语法特厉害，词汇量大，但不会说也听不懂，所以我认为学校应该把有同样需求的学生编到一班... 这样对老师也容易。

{I think streaming is not rational. In this class, the students are different in their skills... Some have strong oral skills but with no explicit grammatical knowledge at all while others have very solid explicit grammar knowledge and a large vocabulary size but are unable to communicate. Neither are they able to understand while listening. So I believe the school should group the students whose needs are similar in one class...it will be easier for teachers, too}

As the course progressed, the belief that his learning needs were not met by the school was strengthened. For example, he wanted more explicit instructions on ‘complex’ grammar which, to him, “is the foundation” (Int II: 24 Nov’08) but he received “simple and easy grammar” that he had already learnt. Although he appreciated that he had more listening opportunities, he was very concerned about the quality of the listening inputs ‘from teacher talk and from those fellow students who spoke non-standard English like me’ (Diary:15 Aug’08). He found that ‘the opportunity is quite limited and the teachers don’t think about how to help us learn after the class.’ (Int II: 24 Nov’08). Finally, he did not believe he was pushed to learn in New Zealand. When he was in China, teachers gave students frequent practice tests before sitting the national matriculation exams while the exams at the school “don’t have the level of difficulty” (Int II:24 Nov’08) and “they don’t test your competency” (Stimulated recall II:28 Oct’08). Therefore he concluded, ‘to me, they were not exams’ (Int II:24 Nov’08). Considering the fact that he had closed his business to focus on English learning, he could not help feeling that his learning “was not effective” (Diary:15Aug’08), “not targeted” and “a waste of time” (Diary:12 Aug’08).

In terms of the role of external factors in his learning, at both times 1 and 2, Bing held a firm belief that it was critical to have his errors corrected. To his mind, errors were ‘problems’ in learning that had to be tackled immediately and consistently. He believed that “only after errors are corrected can I make progress.” (Int I: 04 Aug)

When it came to the role of teachers in his learning, at time 1, Bing was of the view that a good teacher should address the needs of students:

老师应该因材施教，应该教我们惯用法。比如，A 老师教我们怎么连读快说，怎么像洋人那么发音，这就是有针对性，要是课都像这样，我们就能学得快，进步得快。

{teachers should tailor their teaching to their students’ needs. They should teach us idiomatic expressions. For example, teacher A taught us how to link sounds together to speak faster and taught us how to pronounce sounds like native speakers do. This is targeted. If all the lessons

were delivered like that, we could've learned faster and improved more quickly.} (Int I:04 Aug)
His beliefs about the importance of teachers were reinforced at time 2. In addition to being a needs' analyst, he claimed that teachers should also be a guide who "direct our way to efficient learning" (Int II:24 Nov'08). Teachers should give feedback on learners' work and explain the errors they made. In addition, he believed that 'people need pressure. Teachers should give you pressure to learn' (Int II:24 Nov'08). Exams were a typical type of pressure. Bing believed that "exams are an important part of learning... if you have a test to sit, you will make extra effort before the test and it's always beneficial for an individual" (Int II: 24 Nov'08). To him, a good teacher gave regular tests to push learners to learn.

At time 2, a belief about group/pair work emerged. Bing had a mixed feeling about group/pair work. On the one hand, he believed he benefited from it because group/pair work was not nerve-racking and was less threatening whereby "you are forced to speak ... you can communicate freely with people from other countries and you can use what you have learned" (Stimulated recall I:25 Sept'08). On the other hand, he was not convinced that group/pair work helped his accuracy. He doubted the impact of the inputs from his fellow students on his learning and their ability to correct his errors. He commented,

我发现很难听懂来自其他国家同学的发音，特别是班上的印度，韩国，非洲，巴基斯坦等国的同学他们的发音确实很难听得清楚，跟他们沟通起来的确很困难。还有一个疑问就是这样会不会影响到我们发音的正确学习呢？

{I found it really hard to understand the pronunciation of those students from other countries, especially those from India, Korea, Africa, Pakistan. It is very difficult to communicate with them. Another doubt is that I am uncertain if they might affect my correct pronunciation.}

(Diary:16 Sept'08)

老师让我们和同伴一起活动，但我们的水平都差不多，要是我们有问题，我们不能彼此纠正。要是我们都错了，我们就不能发现彼此的错误。

{teachers asked us to work with our partners but we are at a similar level. If we have problems, we can't correct each other. If we are both wrong, we won't find each other's errors.}

(Stimulated recall I: 25 Sept'08)

At both times¹ and 2, Bing regarded himself as having an aptitude for language owing to the fact that he was a fluent speaker of two other Chinese dialects (Shanghai dialect and Cantonese). Therefore, he was very confident he could learn English well. Bing also considered a good memory essential to learn a language but believed that he was losing it. He said:

我以前记忆力很好...在中国我的工作需要很多思考...自从到新西兰以来,我的工作不需要大量脑力挑战,我很少读什么,也不必读,我的记忆退化很快。

{I used to have a very good memory...my work in China involved in lots of thinking...since I came to New Zealand, my work hasn't required a lot of brain challenges. I barely read anything and I don't have to read. My memory is deteriorating very quickly.} (Int I:04 Aug)

Bing also believed that learning success was contingent on such personal factors as determination and effort. By nature he was ambitious, competitive and wanted to excel.

In terms of his own language skills, at both times Bing believed that he was strong in listening and grammar. He did not have difficulty carrying out simple conversations for his level. His issue was his small vocabulary size, which was the main barrier that prevented him from engaging in deeper conversations.

Bing's beliefs about learning a second language showed some changes at time 2. At time 1, despite the advice he received from his friends that he should 'listen more and speak more' (Int I:04 Aug'08), he held a firm belief that vocabulary was his weakness and that it should stay as the primary focus of his learning. He expected that all the other skills would be improved when he had increased his vocabulary:

对我来说是我的词汇量,只有知道词了,才能提高听力和说...要是我这学期有大量的词汇,我就能跳级...所以我得巩固词汇,背更多的词。

{for me it is vocabulary size. Only after I have learned words can I improve my listening and speaking. ...if I have a larger vocabulary this semester, I can jump up to the next level...so I have to consolidate vocabulary and memorize more} (Int I:04 Aug'08).

However, towards the end of the study (week 14) he changed his view, believing that listening, reading and speaking were equally important. He perceived the relationship of vocabulary with other skills like this:

读能帮助记词汇，说能帮助用词汇，听帮助理解词汇。

{Reading can help you memorize vocabulary. Speaking can help use vocabulary. Listening can help comprehend vocabulary.} (Int II: 24 Nov'08)

Bing's view about the significance of explicit grammar instruction remained consistent. At both times, he was of the view that grammar rules were the foundation of English learning. If he had a solid foundation, it would be easier for him to improve his overall English later on. Related to this, Bing believed he should prioritize accuracy over fluency in his learning. Many errors showed that “we didn't learn formally, systematically and gradually through the education system” and “it was embarrassing and a loss of face” (Int II: 24 Nov'08).

Finally, at both times 1 and 2, Bing believed “learning has stages” (Int I: 04 Aug'08). Each stage had its own focus and goal. Therefore, he was realistic about the time it took to learn a language. At time 2, he also formed a new belief about the best approach for learning a language, which was through studying in “extracurricular learning groups”. According to Bing:

依我们现有水平，很难跟 Kiwis 交流，但我想我们可以组成课外学习小组互相帮助学习。在学习小组里，我们可以复习课上学过的，我们可以讨论学过的语法，可以依靠彼此的强项互相帮助，可以背半个小时的单词，然后每隔五分钟彼此考试。学习小组的人要是同一个国家的，要是你跟别的国家的人组成小组，那很难交流，你不能和他们讨论问题，也不能把事情弄清楚。

{It is very difficult to communicate with Kiwis with our current English level. However, I believe we can form extracurricular learning groups to help each other learn. In the learning groups, we can revise what we've learned in the class; we can discuss the grammar we've learned; we can rely on each other's strength to help each other; we can also rote-learn vocabulary for half an hour and then test each other every five minutes. The learning group members should be from the same country. If you form a group with people from other

nationalities, it is difficult to communicate. You can't discuss issues with them and can't clarify things. } (Stimulated recall I:25 Sept'08)

Bing's beliefs about language learning are summarized in table 10.

Table 10. Bing's Beliefs about Language Learning at Time 1 and 2.

Belief category	Time 1	Time 2
1. Learning situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement and streaming was not rational • His needs were not met • Placement tests needed improving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not targeted to the needs • Teaching was more interesting but shallow • There was not enough pressure
2. External factors	<p>Error correction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only after errors were corrected could he make progress <p>Role of teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the needs of learners 	<p>Error correction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Errors were embarrassing. They were problems and had to be corrected immediately <p>Role of teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding and directing learners • Exerting pressure • Giving feedback & explaining errors <p>Class activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group/pair work was less threatening but he was concerned about the inputs he received
3. Personal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He had an aptitude for languages • His memory was deteriorating • His listening and grammar were all right but his vocabulary was limited • Determination and effort determined the success of his learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was competitive & ambitious • He had good grammar but limited vocabulary size • Determination and effort were the key to successful learning
4. Learning a Second Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary focus in learning was to learn vocabulary • Understanding English sentence structures was essential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary was important but listening and speaking were more important
5. Nature of Language Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning had stages and took time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying and practicing what he learned • Learning was about using the language • Thinking in L2 • Learning had stages

6.3.3 The Development of Bing's Language Learning Strategy Use

The strategy that Bing employed most frequently at both times was cognitive, especially vocabulary learning. Bing wanted to make the most of his learning at the school. Every day after class, he stayed in the library in the afternoons doing grammar homework first and then spending hours rote

memorizing the word lists that his teachers assigned for self-directed study. He set himself a goal of memorizing 20 to 30 words a day. Initially he rote-learned words by writing the words down on a piece of paper repeatedly but he was getting frustrated about “forgetting them the next day” (Task-based Int I:04 Aug’08). Later he tried other strategies. For instance, he recorded words onto a tape and then listened to them. He also memorized new words in discrete sentences, which he found much ‘better than rote-learning wordlists’ (Task-based Int I:04 Aug’08). However, he found it time-consuming. Because the sentences contained some other new words that he had to look up in the dictionary, it would take him “three to four hours to memorize 20 to 30 words” (Task-based Int I:04 Aug’08). In the end, he had to revert to memorizing the word lists again. At time 2, added to the memory strategies at time 1 was the use of vocabulary flash cards on which he wrote the target word on the front and their meaning in Chinese on the back. It seemed none of the methods helped him retain the words. He felt the time spent was ‘futile’ and ‘wasted’. In addition, the time he spent was not efficient, either. Sometimes he was distracted by other things in his life. He confessed,

我上课时集中精力，下课后，当我在图书馆学习时，有时我走神，精力不集中... 我常常溜神。我是个家庭感很强的人，我得考虑下顿饭该吃什么。

{I stayed attentive in the class. After the class when I worked in the library, sometimes I was absent- minded and distracted...I often went off the task. I am a family man and I have to think about what I can bring to the table.} (Int II:24 Nov’08)

In the end, he started trying another strategy which he felt was ‘better’:

直到学期末我才感到阅读更重要，我才试着读，很多我记得好的词都是通过读记住的。

{it wasn’t until the end of the semester that I thought reading was more important and that I tried learning words while reading. A lot of vocabulary that I remembered well was through reading texts.} (Int II:24 Nov’08)

Another new cognitive strategy was to watch TV every day. Although he could not understand, his purpose was to familiarize himself with the sounds and to nurture his feel for English.

Due to his English level, at both times, Bing had to resort to some compensation strategies to cope with language use. When he was engaged in writing and speaking tasks, he relied on his L1. When he planned the tasks, he normally formulated his ideas in Chinese first and then translated them into English. If it was a written task, the translating process involved looking up the Chinese words in the dictionary. If it was a speaking task, it involved substituting the complex Chinese words with simple and easy English words. In the class the strategy he used to compensate for his lack of vocabulary and oral skills was to “speak less and stay quiet” (Stimulated recall I: 25 Sept’08). Other reasons that he gave for his quiet behaviour in the classroom were a lack of time to respond to teachers’ questions:

当老师问问题时，我先在脑子里想答案，还没等我组织完答案，别人已经答完了。

{when teachers asked questions, I had to think about the answers in my head first, but before I finished organizing my answers, others had supplied the answers.}

(Stimulated recall I: 25 Sept’08)

and also his concerns for accuracy and self-esteem. He said:

当你给答案或者在课上主动发言，你得百分百肯定，不然会丢面子，人都有自尊。要是老师点名叫你说，你经不起让人说你语法不好，说得乱七八糟，没有词汇，你不能让人瞧不起你。

{when you supply answers or volunteer in the class, you have to be 100% sure. Otherwise, it will be a loss of face. People all have self-esteem. When teachers nominate you to speak, you can’t afford to have people say that you are not good in your grammar, messy in your speaking and you haven’t got enough vocabulary. Neither can you afford to have people look down upon you.}

(Stimulated recall I: 25 Sept’08)

In sum, his concerns for accuracy and self-esteem plus his lack of vocabulary gave rise to his observed quietness in the classroom.

Bing relied heavily on his Chinese-English dictionary, especially during the class time. He wanted to ensure that he understood what the teacher was talking about. Although teachers encouraged them to use an English-English dictionary, he found it difficult because he was not able to understand

the definitions and ‘sometimes I can’t understand the grammar. It [English-English dictionary] made me feel more confused’ (Stimulated recall I: 25 Sept’08). However, his learning behaviour changed when it came down to completing exercises in class. In this case, his competitiveness prevailed and he ignored the unknown words since he did not want to fall behind other fellow students. He explained

我通常在老师上课时查单词，我想知道老师在说什么，我很少再做练习时查，做练习时我很要强，我不想最后一个做完。

{I normally looked up words in the dictionary when the teachers were teaching. I wanted to know what the teachers were talking about. I seldom looked up words when we did exercises. When I did exercises, I became competitive. I didn’t want to be the last one who completed them.} (Stimulated recall I: 25 Sept’08)

At both times 1 and 2, Bing frequently planned and evaluated his learning and strategy use. For example, when he was engaged in the oral narrative task for this study, he first ‘searched for words and then spent time thinking about sentence structures’ (Task-based Int: 04 Aug’08) i.e. how he could put words together to make sense. In his general English learning, he kept evaluating his strengths and weaknesses as a learner. When he was aware that vocabulary was the main barrier in his learning, he focused primarily on learning vocabulary and made every effort to increase his vocabulary.

At time 2, a major development was that he attempted a social strategy by participating in pair/group work in the class, though the class observation notes indicated that he was not very active or willing to get involved.

Bing’s language learning strategy use is summarized in table 11.

Table 11.

Bing’s Language Learning Strategy at Times 1 & 2

Strategy category	Time 1	Time 2
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorizing vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Rote-learning vocabulary lists ➢ Writing down the words repeatedly ➢ Listening to recorded vocabulary ➢ Contextualizing vocabulary in sentences • Doing homework • Revising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revising and doing grammar homework • Writing compositions • Memorizing vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Rote –memorizing wordlists ➢ Using vocabulary flash cards ➢ Through reading • Watching TV everyday
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substituting a complex word with a simple one • Looking up new words in Chinese-English dictionary • Thinking in L1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking in L1 • Substituting a complex word with a simple one • Staying quiet • Looking up unknown words • Using Chinese-English dictionary
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Self-evaluating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Self-evaluating
Social	Not reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operating with fellow students by participating in group/pair work

6.3.4 The Changes of Bing’s Language Proficiency

Figure 6 shows Bing’s vocabulary and QPT test scores at times 1 and 2. His improvement in grammar was evident. He gained 12% in the QPT test (time 1=23%; time 2=35%). In accordance with the Oxford Quick Placement test interpretation, he shifted one level up. His 2,000 level vocabulary test scores improved only by 7% (time 1=19%; time 2=26%). Although Bing spent a lot of time and energy learning words by heart, it appeared he had been struggling to retain the words.

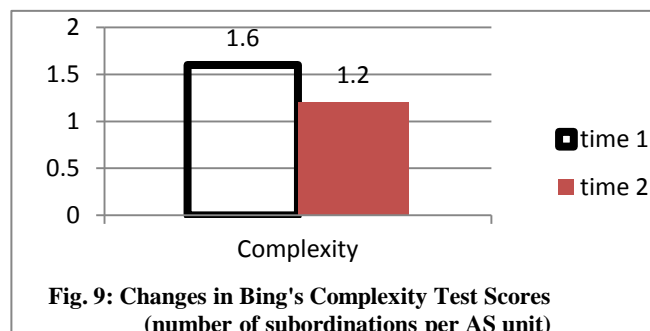
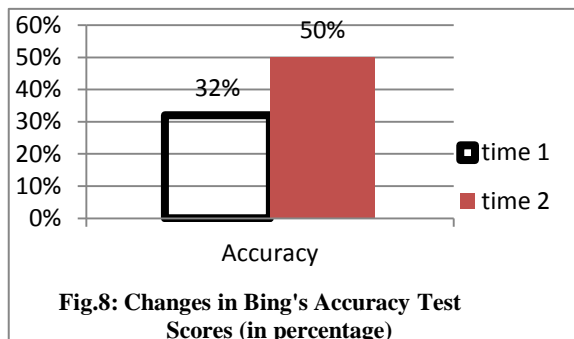
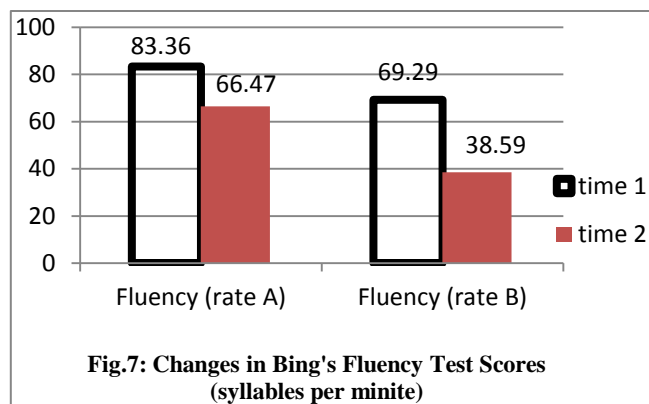
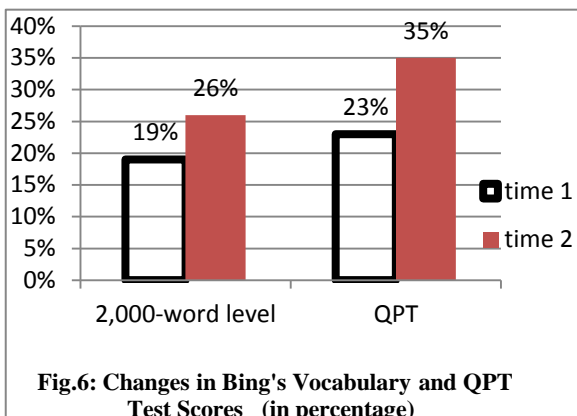


Figure 7 compares Bing's fluency test scores in the oral narrative task at times 1 and 2. His decrease in fluency was remarkable. The rate A (the number of syllables per minute) dropped by 16.89 syllables (time 1= 83.36 syllables; time 2=66.47 syllables). The rate B (the number of meaningful syllables per minute) also declined by 30.70 syllables (time 1=69.29 syllables; time 2= 38.59 syllables) because he used a lot more repairs, reformulations and false starts when he narrated the story at time 2. His focus on accuracy was apparent. Figure 8 confirms this. He gained 18% in his accurate use of the verb forms at time 2, with 32% correct use of the past tense at time 1 but 50% accurate use at time 2. However, his complexity did not improve. On the contrary, Figure 9 indicates that he used 0.4 less subordination in his speech.

6.3.5. Case Summary

Bing was an analytical learner. He showed a great concern for the accuracy of his English. Being accurate was associated with his self esteem. Inaccurate English, in his opinion, was disgraceful. This belief about the supremacy of accuracy was reinforced over the observed period. At time 2, he expected teachers to play an active role in this. He was not satisfied with the 'simple grammar' he

received from his teachers and expected more ‘complex grammar’ instructions, which he regarded as ‘fundamental’. He believed that teachers should give him more corrective feedback and explain errors. Although he found group/pair work useful for his speaking and listening, he expressed concerns about the impact of the inaccurate English inputs from his fellow students and about their ability to correct his errors.

Bing was also a self-regulated learner. He constantly planned, monitored and reflected on his learning. For example, in his vocabulary learning, he employed a number of memory strategies which were the outcomes of evaluation of his LLS use. Also, the change in his belief that learning was about constant application and use of what he learned at time 2 arose out of his reflection on his successful learning of two Chinese dialects. However, he did not execute this belief for reasons which will be discussed in the next chapter.

6.4 Case three: Ding

6.4.1 Background Information

Ding started learning English in primary school. She had been a high achiever until she lost her balance in the subjects she learned. For example, she was a top student in Chinese but failed maths every time. Consequently, she did not pass the national matriculation exams and stayed at home after high school. When she turned 20, her parents sent her to New Zealand to learn English for six months. She did not take learning seriously at that time and often played truant. She confessed “I only went to school when there were exams. So I hardly learned anything.” (Int I: 7Aug). She returned to China six months later.

This was her second visit to New Zealand and she had now turned 25. She came to join her partner who started as an international student and later was granted permanent residency. Ding had been in New Zealand for 18 months but she travelled frequently between China and New Zealand. Because her parents ran their own business back in China and she was an only child in the family, she

did not have any financial pressure. Later she decided to stay put in New Zealand for a while. She thought it might be a good idea to go back to school to learn English.

Having sat the placement test, she was placed at the pre-intermediate level. Ding's class was dominated by Chinese. Among the 16 students, 10 were from China, 2 from Korea, 2 from Iran and 4 from Africa.

6.4.2 The Evolution of Ding's Beliefs about Language Learning

Ding was not very impressed with her learning experience in China. She considered it 'inflexible'. Although teachers taught in Chinese, she felt very 'confused about the teaching contents'. She believed not only students learned for exams but teachers taught for exams:

每天老师给我们一些带十个问题的小测验，我们要在十分钟内答完，我们一切都为考试... 在中国是填鸭式的教学，连上八九节课，最后我都记不住啥了。

{Every day our teachers gave us a quiz with 10 questions. We were asked to complete the task in 10 minutes. Everything we did was for exams... Teaching in China was crammed with contents. [A lesson] lasted 8 or 9 sessions and in the end I couldn't remember anything.} (Int I:7 Aug'08)

Because of the high stakes of exams in Chinese society, Ding was of the view that "most teachers and schools ignore and even prejudice against those low-achievers" (Diary: 30 Aug'08) and that her teachers were very biased towards her and some other lower achievers. She believed that the exam system in China had a very detrimental influence on her. Whenever she sat an exam, her mind went blank. Consequently she usually performed badly especially in subjects she was not good at. She felt "till today they [exams] still give me nightmare" (Int II:18 Nov'08).

In comparison, Ding believed that 'learning is completely different [in New Zealand], like in two different worlds' (Int I: 7 Aug'08):

新西兰学语言考试到不错，就是看看自己进步的程度，心理压力好多了。

{Exams are all right in New Zealand. [They] are to see how far I have progressed. It is much

better in terms of the psychological pressure they place on me.} (Diary: 30 Aug'08)

在新西兰学习更轻松些。我没有太大压力，我知道即使我做不好，老师也不会谴责我。他们很友善。

{Learning in New Zealand is more relaxing. I don't have much pressure ,knowing if I don't do well [in the exams], the teacher will not reprimand me. They are very friendly.}

(Int II:18 Nov'08)

According to Ding, learning in New Zealand was relaxing and “teaching is easy to understand and the course contents are very practical and useful in real life” (Int I: 7 Aug'08).

At both times 1 and 2, Ding regarded error correction as important in her learning and expected to be corrected all the time. She equated error correction with learning. According to her,

要是我错了，没被纠正了，就意味着我没学着任何东西...只有被改了，才学着了。

{if I make a mistake and am not corrected, it means I haven't learned anything... only after they [mistakes] have been corrected do I learn}. (Int I:27 Aug'08)

She held a traditional view of the role of teachers at times 1 and 2. In her opinion, delivering clear, ‘comprehensible’ and ‘attention grabbing lessons’ was the primary responsibility of teachers. A good teacher “explains well why an answer is correct or wrong” (Diary: 3 Sept'08) and “clarifies confusion in your mind” (Diary: 10 Apr'08). She insisted that “a good lesson incorporates some language points” (Stimulated recall II: 28 Oct'08) by which she meant either grammatical structures or lexical usage and collocations. Another role of teachers was to encourage and motivate learners to learn. Finally, teachers should “give some tests and explain them afterwards...give homework to students to do at home” (Int II:18 Nov'08).

Ding did not have a very good opinion of Kiwis. At both times she believed that Kiwis were not willing to accept migrants, Chinese in particular. She also believed that ‘the way they speak is very arrogant’ (Int I: 27 Aug'08). She had a few contacts with a few Kiwis. The experience was not a pleasant one. Based on this, she came to the conclusion that

他们看起来衣着整洁，挺善良的，但他们并不像想得那么好，我不喜欢他们我也不觉得和他们有什么可谈的。

{they looked well-dressed and kind but I don't think they are as good... I don't like them...I don't think I have anything to talk about with them.} (Int I: 27 Aug'08)

Ding's belief about the role of exams in her learning was conflicting. On the one hand, she did not like sitting exams. She described exams as scary. On the other hand, she considered them 'important' and regarded them as 'a kind of learning' (Int II:18 Nov'08) because she believed exams could inform her of the gaps and weaknesses in her learning. Also 'exams can make a stronger impression and I won't easily forget' (Stimulated recall I: 15 Sept'08). Therefore, she wanted to have more exams which could give her feedback on her progress.

At time 2, she expressed an interest in pair/group work. However, she held a conflicting view. She liked pair/group work because she believed working with others could help improve listening and speaking. It could also provide her with opportunities to use what she had learned. However, she doubted if she learned anything during pair/group work. She commented,

当我们说的时候，大多数人都说错的英语，错的时态，错的句子结构，没有动词。没有说的意义，因为说的都是错的。

{When we speak, most people spoke wrong English: wrong tenses, wrong sentence structures, no verbs. There was no point speaking because what we said was wrong anyway.}

(Stimulated recall II:28 Oct'08)

She would rather her teachers asked them to write sentences. She believed that when she was sure of correct sentences, she "could apply them to speaking so that we can improve". (Stimulated recall II: 28 Oct'08)

At time 1, Ding regarded herself as a poor language learner. Her "low capability" was not due to her aptitude but to the fact that she did not work as hard as she should have. Her problem was that she thought ambitiously but could not execute her plans. However, at time 2, as she learned more explicit grammar rules, her self-confidence increased:

过去我从不信我说的是正确的，因为我确实不知道。但现在我学了很多的语法规则，我知道为什么，虽然我还不是很清楚，我现在有自己的想法了。

{In the past I had never believed what I said was correct because I really didn't know. But now I have learned a lot about grammar rules and I know the reason why...although I am still not clear, I have my own opinion now.} (Stimulated recall II:28 Oct'08)

At both times, Ding believed strongly in the importance of grammar and vocabulary in language learning. The primary goal she set for herself was to communicate in good English which, in her definition, meant being accurate in grammar. She believed grammar was the foundation. It helped her “express ideas clearly”, “understand reading better and more clearly... comprehend the text.” (Int II:18 Nov'08). She commented

我希望学的正式点儿，传统点儿，我不想要我的句子缺词，现在当我想问题时，我比以前想更多的时态。

{I hope to learn more formally and traditionally. I didn't want my sentences to miss out some words. Now when I think of a question, I think more about tenses than before.}

(Stimulated recall II: 28 Oct'08)

Another goal in her learning was to increase her vocabulary size. She believed her small vocabulary size prevented her from communicating with others:

我觉得单词很重要，因为我经常出门买东西时，能听或猜明白人家说什么，但是自己没有适当的词汇表达。

{I believe that vocabulary is very important. This is because when I went out shopping, I could often understand or guess what others were talking about, but I didn't have appropriate vocabulary to express myself.} (Diary:25 Aug'08)

According to Ding, accuracy was paramount. All other aspects of English could wait.

我想要先说正确的英语，然后再注意许多其他事情，比如说你得背生词，想特殊用法。

{I want to speak correct English first. Then I have to attend to many other things. For example, you have to memorize new words and think about special usage.} (Int I: 7Aug'08)

Ding's beliefs about language learning at times 1 and 2 are summarized in table 12.

Table 12. Ding's Beliefs About Language Learning at times 1 & 2

Belief category	Time 1	Time 2
1. Learning situation	In China <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflexible • Confusing • Teaching for exams 	In China <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and teachers ignored & even prejudiced against low-achievers • Teaching and learning for exams
	In New Zealand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster but easier to understand • Teaching was practical and useful 	In New Zealand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exams tested your progress and for self-improvement • Learning was relaxing
2. External factors	Error correction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping the wrong forms meant she didn't learn anything 	Error correction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When she made mistakes, they left deeper impressions, which in turn ensured that she would not make the same mistakes again.
	Role of teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching • Clarifying confusions 	Role of teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching well <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Explaining the errors ➢ Clarifying confusion ➢ Teaching some language points • Giving tests & homework • Motivating learners to learn
	Kiwis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not willing to accept migrants • Arrogant • Unkind 	Exams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She did not like sitting exams as they were scary • Important part of learning
		Kiwis Same as time 1 Pair work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidating what she had learned • Helpful for speaking but did not help accuracy

Table 12 (continued)

Belief category	Time 1	Time 2
3. Personal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low in capability • Lazy • Think ambitiously but could not implement • Ok aptitude but did not make enough effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not a balanced learner • knowing better about herself
4. Learning a second language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning was about grammar and vocabulary • Accuracy was her primary focus 	Same as time 1

6.4.3 The Developments of Ding’s Language Learning Strategy Use

At both times, most of Ding’s cognitive strategies concerned vocabulary and grammar learning.

Her learning activities revolved around rote-learning new words:

每天我有大约十多个词要记，我觉得我承受不了了。要是我有时间，想的话，我会复习当天学过的资料。

{Everyday I have about more than 10 words to remember. I’m feeling that I’m not able to handle them anymore...if I have time and if I’m keen, I revise the materials I learned during the day.} (Int I: 27 Aug’08)

She kept a vocabulary book:

我先把所有的新词写到本上，我写发音，在词的旁边写意思，我没时间造句，我查过去式和过去完成式。

{I first write all the new words in the notebook. I write the pronunciation and definition next to the word. I don’t have time to make sentences. I also check the past form and past participle form.} (Int I: 27 Aug’08)

The strategy she used to rote-memorize wordlists was to ‘write each word down more than 10 times’ (Diary: 6 Sept’08). She acted on her plans for a while, i.e. memorizing 10 words a day, but they did not last long because she was overwhelmed with the amount of vocabulary. She felt “my passion

for learning is decreasing. [I] become lazier” (Diary:19 Oct’08). In the end, she gave up. Instead she started noticing words in real life, e.g. from the billboards, street signs. She carried a Chinese English electronic dictionary with her. Wherever she went, whenever she saw a word that she did not know, she would consult her dictionary. In this way she found it “easier to memorize and the words are practical and useful” (Diary:10 Sept’08).

Another daily routine of hers at both times was to do homework and ‘read some Chinese grammar reference book to revise the grammar I learned and sometimes to clarify what I am not sure of’ (Stimulated recall I:15 Sept’08). At time 2, she also frequently synthesized and summarized what she learned. For example, she ‘put all the question forms together’ (Int II:18 Nov’08) and “summarized all the tenses and made a sentence in each tense’ (Diary:19 Sept’08).

Because Ding seldom used English outside the class, most of her compensation strategies were course related. At both times, she relied heavily on her L1 to help her in speaking and writing. She ‘first formulated ideas in Chinese and then found the equivalent words in English’ (Int I: 27 Aug’08). When she could not find a word, she either ‘changed to another word’ or ‘avoided’ it (Task-based Int I: 27 Aug’08). Occasionally she watched English films but she said:

我听不懂...以前我看图片, 现在我听声儿, 当我集中听时, 我能懂得更好。

{ I can’t understand...before I looked at the pictures on the screen and now I listen to the sounds. When I focus on listening, I can understand better. } (Int I: 27 Aug’08)

She used her electronic Chinese-English dictionary frequently to compensate for the lack of vocabulary. Her typical class behaviour was to look up new words in the dictionary. The reasons she gave were that

... 要是我真想理解课文, 我得懂词汇, 要是我不懂, 我会误解。

{ ... if I really want to comprehend the text, I have to understand the words. If I don’t, I may Misunderstand [the text]. } (Int I: Aug 27 ’08)

At time 1, every time she finished her homework, she would ask her tenant to check her homework. However at time 2, Ding stopped asking him to check accuracy:

我过去根本就不懂...可现在我有自己的想法了...我觉得他还不如我好呢, 我干吗要信他呢?

{I didn't understand [grammar] at all in the past...but now I have my own opinion ...I feel he [her tenant] is not as good as I am and why should I believe in him?} (Stimulated recall II: 28 Oct'08)

She also used metacognitive strategies to plan her learning at both times. For example, when she was engaged in the oral narrative task, she planned to “focus more on the feelings of the character”. She also consciously used some of the words she had learned. She frequently evaluated her learning and set objectives:

我认为我英语进步的障碍是词汇, 语法比过去好了, 所以我下半学期的目标是记单词。我要花两小时在单词学习上。

{I believe the barrier in my English progress is vocabulary. [My] grammar is better than before. Therefore the goal for the second half of the semester should be to memorize vocabulary. I will spend 2 hours on vocabulary study.} (Diary:10 Oct'08)

At time 2, Ding also employed an affective strategy to deal with her emotions by encouraging herself. Because she was very scared of exams, before the exams, she wrote ,

要坚持, 争取考好, 千万别一正式考就全忘记了。

{Hang in there and try to do well in the exams. Please don't forget during the exams.}

(Diary: 19 Nov'08)

When she felt bored with her study and wanted to give up, she encouraged herself:

你已经学了很多, 你应该坚持下去, 你能学更多。

{You have learned a lot. You should carry on. You can learn more.} (Int II:18 Nov'08)

Social strategies were another new category that Ding employed at time 2. She was observed to participate in pair/group work in class and contribute to group/pair task completion, although she was not particularly keen.

Table 13 summarizes Ding's language learning strategies at times 1 and 2.

Table 13

Ding's Language Learning Strategy Use at times 1 and 2

Categories	Time 1	Time 2
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rote-learning new words • Revising • Reading grammar books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorizing new words • Doing homework • Revising • Reading grammar books • Synthesizing
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking in L1 • Looking at pictures & listening to the sounds when watching TV/DVDs • Substituting a complex word for a simple one • Looking up new words in the dictionary • Getting people to check her homework and explain grammar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using L1 • Substituting • Looking up new words in the dictionary • Looking at pictures & listening to the sounds when watching TV/DVDs
Affective	Not reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging herself
Social	Not reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in group/pair work

6.4.4 The Changes in Ding's Language Proficiency

Figure 10 compares Ding' vocabulary and QPT test scores at times 1 and 2. She increased her vocabulary size in the 3,000-word level vocabulary test by 7% and by 15% in the university word level vocabulary test. However, her vocabulary size in the 2,000-word level test remained unchanged, 48% at both times 1 and 2. Her improvement in the QPT was noticeable. She gained 14% with 33% at time 1 and 47% at time 2.

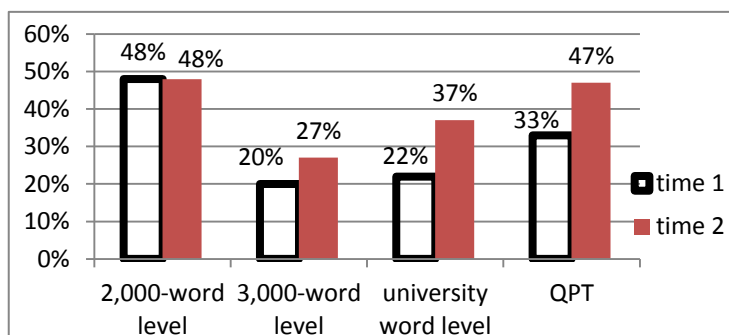


Fig. 10: Changes in Ding's Vocabulary and QPT Test Scores (Percentage)

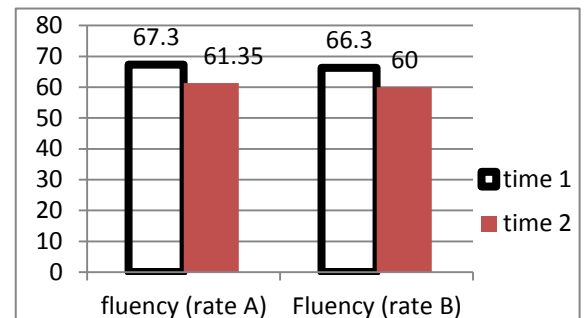
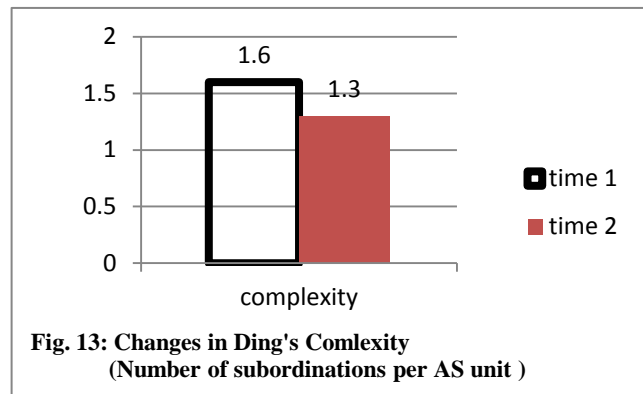
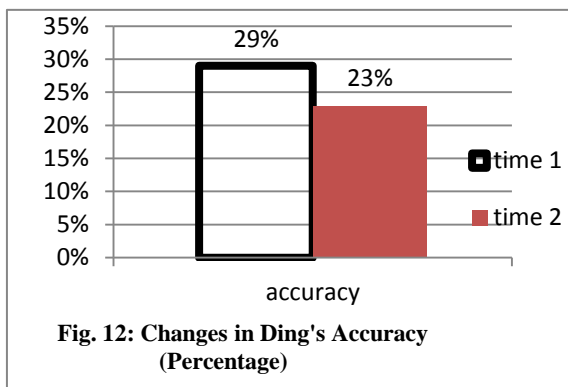


Fig. 11: Changes in Ding's Fluency (number of syllables per minute)



Figures 11, 12 and 13 compare her test scores in the oral narrative task at times 1 and 2 in the areas of fluency, complexity and accuracy. They show her scores decreased in all three aspects. In fluency, the number of total syllables she uttered per minute (rate A) dropped by 6.05 syllables (time 1= 67.30; time 2 = 61.35). The meaningful syllables she produced per minute (rate B) declined by 6.30 syllables (time 1= 66.3; time 2= 60). In complexity, the ratio of the total number of clauses and subordinate clauses reduced by 0.3 clauses (time1= 1.6; time 2= 1.3). Finally in accuracy, the error free verb forms made up 29% of the total infinitive verbs she used in the narration at time 1 but the figure dropped to 23% at time 2.

Overall, Ding made some progress in her general English tests and in two of the vocabulary levels tests. However, the fluency, complexity and accuracy of her speaking regressed.

6.4.5 Case summary

During Ding's language learning, accuracy was paramount. In her view, the purpose of learning at school meant learning the correct forms and being accurate. She perceived language as the accumulation of discrete grammatical items and the addition of words rather than as a communication tool. Therefore, she invested most of her energy and effort in reading grammar books, doing grammar exercises; reviewing her test papers and rote-memorizing wordlists. She was not particularly keen to understand the target culture.

Ding started her learning at the school as someone who was not confident about herself and who was scared of exams to a fault. Over the observed period, she changed her self-efficacy belief. With the increase of her explicit grammar knowledge, she became more confident about herself and more independent. Moreover, at time 2, she started taking on another perspective about the role of exams, believing they were an important part of learning and they could help her learn. Most important of all, at time 2, she started noticing the English around her. She carried an electronic dictionary with her and consulted words even if she was on a bus or in a restaurant or in a shop. Her vocabulary learning started taking place outside the classroom.

6.5 Case four: Shan

6.5.1 Background Information

Shan was a 41-year-old female student. She was a lecturer teaching interior design at a university in China. She came to New Zealand to join her husband and son. When this study started, she had been in New Zealand for one and a half years. Her husband had been working in New Zealand for 5 years as a deputy-principal at an institute owned by a local Chinese. After Shan came to New Zealand, she secured a job as an administrative manager at the language school of the same institute as her husband. Her job did not require her to use English because nearly all the customers at the school were Chinese and most of the tutors were bilingual Chinese teachers. Outside her work, she relied on her husband and son to communicate, so she did not have a sense of urgency to learn English. However, the language school she worked for experienced a downturn in enrollments due to the new government regulations about the operation of private language schools. As a result, she was made redundant. Her husband persuaded her to take an English course.

Shan started learning English in high school in 1980s when the traditional grammar translation teaching methods dominated English teaching in China. Shan had not used English in China since she

graduated from university 20 years ago. She said, “I can barely remember what I learned” (Int I: 01 Aug).

She was enrolled on a pre-intermediate course at the SOL. It was her first English learning experience in New Zealand. There were 20 students on the course: 3 Koreans, 6 Chinese, 8 Africans, 2 from the Middle East, 1 Tibetan Indian.

6.5.2 The Evolution of Shan’s Beliefs about Language Learning

At both times, Shan held similar views about the learning situation in China where learning activities were limited; English teaching was no different from any other subjects - learners played a passive role in the learning process:

我们很被动，大部分时间老师说我们很少有机会说和参与。

{We were very passive. Most of the time teachers talked and we were seldom given opportunity to speak and participate.} (Int I: 01 Aug’08)

Her overall opinions about learning in China were that “grammar and reading were better but there was little listening and speaking” (Int I: 01 Aug’08). In comparison, she believed in New Zealand “English teaching is about the language and about communication. Learning is more flexible and spontaneous” (Int II: 25 Nov’08). She also felt the teaching approach made learning easier. One of the key differences between learning in China and in New Zealand was the opportunity to work with her fellow classmates:

在中国我觉得学习和老师，同学没什么关系，你得靠自己学。现在我和其他同学有很多东西可以交流...这帮助我们使用语言。

{In China I didn’t feel learning had anything to do with teachers and fellow students. You learned on your own. Now I have a lot to communicate with other students...it helps us use the language.} (Int I:01 Aug’08)

Shan believed it was important to enrol in an English course. This belief was reinforced as the course progressed. At time 2, Shan continued to believe that schools were the best place to learn English, especially for people like her who did not have much motivation and lacked persistence. She wrote,

有些人可以在家自学，但我做不到。学习是件苦差事，特别是学英语，随着时间的推移，有时我真想放弃。现在在学校学习真好，每当你想放弃时，老师会想各种办法引起你的兴趣。

{Some people are able to learn English at home and on their own, but I can't. Learning is a hard job, especially learning English. With time passing by, sometimes I really wanted to give up. Now it is really good to learn at school. Whenever you were thinking about giving up, teachers tried various ways to motivate you.} (Diary: 22 Sept'08)

Related to this was her belief about the significant roles that teachers played in her learning. In her view, teachers should not only teach but also provide her with some learning strategies, which she believed could make her learning more efficient. In addition, she believed teachers should create opportunities in class to let learners practice using the language until they were confident enough to carry out conversations by themselves in the real world. Her belief about teachers strengthened. At time 2, she added that

一个好老师在一个学生的学习中起着至关重要的作用，她总能发现你的不足，引起你注意，这样你今后才能在这方面努力。

{a good teacher plays a crucial role in a learner's learning. She can always detect your weakness and draw your attention so that you can work on it in the future.} (Diary: 17 Oct'08)

Another important role of teachers was to encourage, inspire and motivate learners, especially when they had lost confidence in learning.

At both times, Shan deemed error correction critical, although her view varied depending on the context. She commented,

我希望在课上让老师给纠正，这很值得，因为要是你不知道错在那儿，你就会总犯同样错误，要是在课堂上，那没关系，因为是课上，但在其他场合下，那就非常尴尬，没面子。

{I wish to be corrected by teachers in class. It is worthwhile because if you don't know what your mistakes are, you will repeat the same mistake. If you are in the classroom, that is all right. But on other occasions, that will be very embarrassing and a loss of face.} (Int I: 01 Aug'08)

In her view, error correction was important to avoid repeating the same mistakes and to ensure her accurate and proper use of English. In this respect, she believed she “would like to be corrected all the time in class” (Int II: 25 Nov'08).

Shan saw exams as an opportunity to summarize and revise the course materials. She believed “tests can enhance your learning because every test forces you to prepare...it is necessary” (Int I: 01 Aug'08). Her needs for exams increased as the course progressed. She wrote in her diary,

我认为考试对我影响很大，它能给我压力，同时也能给我动力。此外，考试也能发现我的不足之处，尤其是在英语学习方面 ... 考试对于像我这样的人非常适合。

{I think that exams have a great impact on me. They gave me pressure as well as a drive. In addition, from exams I can spot my gaps, especially in English learning... exams work very well for a learner like me.} (Diary: 26' Oct'08)

In addition, exams were an important tool to assess her learning:

它们[分数]衡量我进步有多快，要是我总是不及格，那就意味着我学习没进步。

{they [marks] evaluate how fast I have progressed. If I always fail, it means I haven't progressed in my study.} (Int II: 25 Nov'08)

Emergent at time 2 was her belief about class activities. Shan was of the opinion that open discussions were the most beneficial “because it can give me the freedom to consolidate and apply what I have learned” (Stimulated recall I: 03 Sept'08) and also “in the discussion you can talk things

beyond the texts. Your thoughts and topics are not limited by the texts” (Simulated recall II: 20 Sept’08). She also believed working with others was helpful because she had an opportunity to use the language.

Regarding personal factors, Shan was of the view that a good memory was essential to learn a language well. But she thought her own memory was poor. Consequently learning English was not easy for her:

我学设计的，我擅长形象，视觉，但记忆不好...让我学好英语很难，因为我记忆不好，这是我的主要问题，但是有些人记忆力很好。

{I learned design, so I am good at images and visuals but I do not have good memory...it will be very difficult for me to learn English well because of my poor memory. This is my main problem but some people have good memory} (Int I:01 Aug’08)

She believed the advantage she had over others was her ‘good comprehension ability’, by which she meant she was able to ‘comprehend and absorb what was delivered by the teachers without any difficulties’ (Interview I: 01 Aug’08). She credited it to the high education she had received.

The biggest change in Shan concerned her self-efficacy beliefs, i.e. her beliefs about herself and her ability to learn English well. Her confidence about learning English changed from 4 at time 1 to 8 at time 2 on a self-rating scale where 10 was the highest:

过去我没信心，对学英语没兴趣，我拒绝它...现在我知道只要我不停止学习，我就有信心学好语言。

{In the past, I didn’t have the confidence and I was not interested in learning English. I denied It.Now I know as long as I don’t stop learning, I’m confident that I can learn the language well.}
(Int II: 24 Nov)

She attributed the change to the school and the teachers.

Another personal factor that was regarded as important was effort. At both times, Shan believed effort was the key to successful learning. However, when it came down to herself, she confessed that “I haven’t made as great effort as I should have” (Int I: 01 Aug’08).

In terms of her own language proficiency, she believed she had a good explicit knowledge of English grammar and her sight vocabulary size was considerable, i.e. she could recognize a lot of words in reading. But when it came to writing, she believed she had spelling problems. The most problematic skill was speaking. She confessed

当我说的時候，我总是集中在我是不是对，我想太多的语法，时态还有其他的東西，我是老师，我不想让人觉得为什么我话里有错。

{When I speak, I always focus on if I'm correct or not. I think a lot about grammar, tenses and a lot of other things...I was a teacher, so I don't want people to think why there are errors in my speech.} (Int I:01 Aug'08)

In Shan's opinion, grammar was the most important aspect in language learning. She believed grammar was the foundation of her English learning:

语法就像大楼的框架，如果框架结实牢固，大楼就会长久的挺立在那儿。

{grammar is like the framework of a building. If the framework is sturdy and solid, the building will stay there for a long time.} (Stimulated recall I:03 Sept'08)

Unlike her firm belief in grammar, Shan's beliefs about speaking and using English went through a few changes. At the beginning, although she realized that "the main function of language is to use [for communication]. It is a skill. You have to use it and practice it" (Int I: 01 Aug'08), she was of the view that speaking could wait until she had mastered grammar and achieved accuracy:

人和人不一样。对我来讲，要等到学好我才使用语言。我认为要是没学好，我不会用它[交流]。

{People are different. For me, I won't use the language until I have learned it well. I think if I haven't learned it well, I won't use it [in communication].} (Int I: 01 Aug'08)

Despite this belief, she really admired people who could speak English effortlessly. She became concerned about the fact that she could not speak fluently. She started questioning her own beliefs. She wrote in her Diary:

以前我总是认为必须准确才能说，要是错的，我宁愿不说。可是要是我太注意了就张不开嘴...在我现阶段的学习，我是先说不过分注意准不准呢，还是只说我肯定的句子呢？我也拿不准。

{Previously, I always believed [my English] must be accurate when I speak. If it was wrong, I'd rather not speak. However, [I] can't start communicating if I am too concerned [about accuracy]...at my stage of learning, do I speak first without being overly concerned about accuracy or do I only speak sentences that I'm sure of? I don't have the answer.}

(Diary 15 Sept'08)

When the last interview was conducted, she changed her views about the relative importance of accuracy in speaking, indicating that she now considered fluency more important. She said:

以前我认为准确性很重要，我不想让人感到我的话出自一个没教养的人口中，但现在我改变了，在我和老师讨论之后我改变了我的想法.....我觉得我应该说，当我能流利地说了，我才能自我更正。

{In the past, I considered accuracy to be of the primary importance. I didn't want people to think that my utterances came from an uneducated person. But now I have changed. After I discussed with my teachers, I have changed my mind... I believed I should try talking. When I am able to speak fluently, I can correct myself.} (Int II: 25Nov'08)

At both times, Shan held a similar belief about the nature of language learning. In her opinion, learning was 'a cumulative process' (Int II:25 Nov'08) where she had to 'memorize the words every day' and constantly use what she learned in oral and written communication. If she kept doing this, her English would improve eventually.

Table 14 summarizes Shan's beliefs about language learning at times 1 and 2.

Table 14. Shan's Beliefs About Language Learning at times 1 and 2

Belief Category	Time 1	Time 2
Learning Situation	In China <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching was traditional • Learning was passive • Grammar and reading were better but little listening and speaking 	In China Same as time 1
	In New Zealand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching was more interactive • Learning was enjoyable and motivating 	In New Zealand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on communication • More flexible
External Factors	Setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning at school was better than by herself 	Setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School was a better place to learn
	Error correction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to be corrected in class to avoid making the same mistakes • Correction outside the class was embarrassing 	Error correction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding making the same mistakes • She wanted to be corrected all the time • Helping improve her English
	Role of teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching • Providing learners with learning strategies • Creating opportunities to use the language 	Role of teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detecting the gaps in her learning and working on them • Motivating and inspiring her to learn
	Exams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crucial and they enhanced learning 	Exams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pushing her to learn • Giving her feedback on her progress • They were effective
		Class activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open discussion was better • Working with fellow students helped her use the language

Table 14 (Continued)

Belief Category	Time 1	Time 2
Personal Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her memory was not good • She had good comprehension ability • Effort was the key to successful learning • She was not fluent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She did not have good memory • She was not self-regulated • She had good comprehension • She had become more confident about her ability to learn English well • Successful learning was contingent on effort
Learning a Second Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar was the most important • Language was for communication but she had to wait until she was ready • Vocabulary size affected reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar was like a framework of a building • In speaking, she should focus more on fluency while monitoring accuracy • In writing she should focus on accuracy
Nature of Language Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language was a skill that had to be used and practised but she had to wait until she learned it well • Learning was a cumulative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning was a cumulative process • Using and applying what she learned in communication

6.5.3 The Development of Shan’s Language Learning Strategy Use

At both times 1 and 2 cognitive strategies dominated in Shan’s strategy use. Shan reported using four typical learning strategies at time 1: rote-learning wordlists, doing course-related exercises, revising the course materials and consulting grammar reference books. At time 2, her cognitive strategies expanded. In addition to ‘rote-learning wordlists at the back of the textbook’ (Stimulated recall I: 03 Sept’08) and “writing the words down many times to help memorize” (Stimulated recall II: 20 Sept’08), she also attempted other strategies, e.g. “grouping those words which are similar either in spelling or in pronunciation, e.g. ‘career with Korea, carrier with courier’” (Diary: 14 Aug’08); “learning vocabulary through texts” (Diary: 14 Aug’08 & 20 Sept’08). Before each class, she prepared her lessons in advance. After the class, she revised and summarized what she learned and did practice exercises. Shan also used the internet to help with her learning. For example, she used it to “look up new words” (Diary:28 Aug’08), “do vocabulary and grammar exercises” (Diary:22 Sept’08) and “get

help in writing” (Diary:28 Aug’08) where she typed her own sentences first and then searched on the internet. She described the strategy in her diary like this:

我先把要写的句子输入电脑，在网上 search 一番，如果能找到同样的句子，那就说明我这样用是 没有错的。如果没有，那就得看看别人是怎么用的。

{I first typed my sentence in the computer. Then I searched on the internet. If I found a similar sentence, it meant I was correct in writing this way. If I failed to find one, I had to study how others wrote the ideas and how the words were used.} (Diary:28 Aug’08)

Sometimes she also downloaded “some English songs to listen to” (Diary: 28 Aug’08). She considered it “effective” to learn on the internet because “you can find a lot of resources you need” (Diary: 28 Aug’08).

By and large, a lot of Shan’s cognitive strategies revolved around course work and exams. Exams pushed her to learn. Before exams, she normally revised, summarized what she learned and then memorized things like irregular verbs, verb patterns and spellings in order to do well in the exams (Diary: 14 Oct’08). She also adjusted her learning strategies according to the demand of exams. For example, at the beginning of the semester, her teacher gave the students a weekly vocabulary quiz which included a spelling task. Before the test, she always “spent time at home dictating the words myself 3 or 5 times” (Diary: 01 Sept’08). When her teacher replaced the spelling task with matching words with definitions, she stopped attending to spelling. Instead, she resorted to using an English-English dictionary:

考试题里，老师给的定义包含一些我不懂的词，所以我想我现在不应该再用汉英字典了。

{the definition given by the teacher in the test included some words that I didn’t know. So I think I should stop using Chinese-English dictionary now.} (Stimulated recall I:03 Sept’08)

Later, she “did not take time memorizing vocabulary anymore” (Diary: 26 Oct’08) because the teacher stopped giving them vocabulary quizzes. Other cognitive strategies she employed included staying focused and taking notes in class to help her revise after class.

In terms of compensation strategies, at both times she relied on her L1 to formulate ideas when she was engaged in using English, particularly in speaking (Task-based Int I: 01 Aug'08). When it was difficult to translate her complex ideas into English due to her limited linguistic resources in L2, she “used another simple word to replace the complex one” (Task-based Int I: 01 Aug'08). Listening was another area where she resorted to compensation strategies. Due to her ‘weak listening skills’ (Int I:01 Aug'08), when she engaged in communication, she “often asked people to write down” as she “could read well but couldn't get it from listening.” (Int I: 01 Aug'08 & Int II:25 Nov'08)

At both times, Shan used planning and monitoring frequently in her general learning as well as in specific tasks. For example, when she engaged in the oral task for this study, she decided to use her planning time for “key words, the story and grammar” (Task-based Int I: 01 Aug'08) and also writing down “the first part of the narrative” (Task-based Int I: 01 Aug'08). During the narrative, she kept monitoring her tenses and reformulating her sentences. In the end, she evaluated her task completion. She concluded the main barriers came from “the tense use and vocabulary” (Task-based Int I: 01 Aug). Based on this evaluation, she then set an objective for her future learning, i.e. to work more on vocabulary.

At time 2, Shan started employing social strategies. In class she actively participated in group/pair work. Her typical classroom behaviours included voluntarily answering questions and she “grabbed the opportunities to speak and participate in the class activities” (Stimulated recall I: 03 Sept'08). She saw the classroom as a social setting to be made the most of. As her English progressed, her confidence in using the language increased. She even attempted to use English in real life. She described her experience of getting involved with a survey at a shopping mall as follows:

从前我看我自己是个不懂英语的人，在这种调查的情况下都是我丈夫替我说。现在我发现我能听懂他们问的每一件事，我也能回答他们，我成了整个调查的中心，我很激动，有种成就感。

{In the past I saw myself as someone who didn't know English. On such survey occasion, it was my husband who talked on my behalf. Now I found I could understand everything they asked and also I could answer them. I became the centre of the whole survey. I was excited and had a sense of achievement.} (Int II: 25 Nov'08)

Shan's language learning strategy use at times 1 and 2 is summarized in table 15.

Table 15. Shan's Language Learning Strategy Use at Times 1 and 2

Strategy Category	Time 1	Time 2
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rote-learning vocabulary lists • Doing exercises • Revising • Consulting grammar books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting grammar books • Memorizing vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ rote-learning vocabulary lists ➢ grouping ➢ reading ➢ writing words down many times • Preparing lessons before class • Revising and summarizing for exams • Doing exercises • Using the internet to learn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ looking up new words ➢ listening to English songs ➢ searching and comparing writing
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Monitoring and evaluating 	Same as time 1
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking in L1 • Substituting a complex word with a simple one • Asking people to write down what they said 	Same as time 1
Social	Not reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operating with her fellow classmates • Using English in real life

6.5.4 The Changes in Shan's Language Proficiency

Figure 14 shows that Shan's vocabulary size at 2,000-word level words improved by 12% (time 1= 56%; time 2= 78%). However, her 3,000-word level words decreased by 13% (time 1=50%; time 2=37%) and her university-word level words remained unchanged with 41% at both times. Her general English test scores barely improved (time 1= 43% ; time 2=45%).

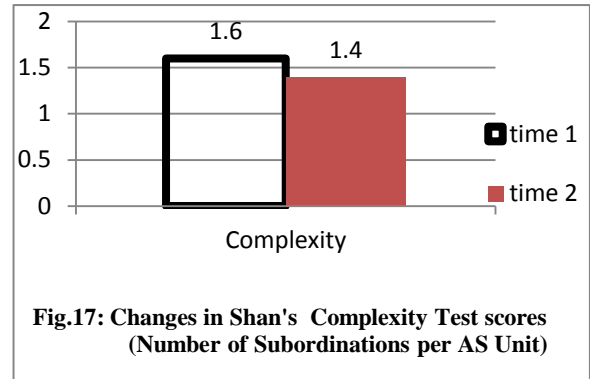
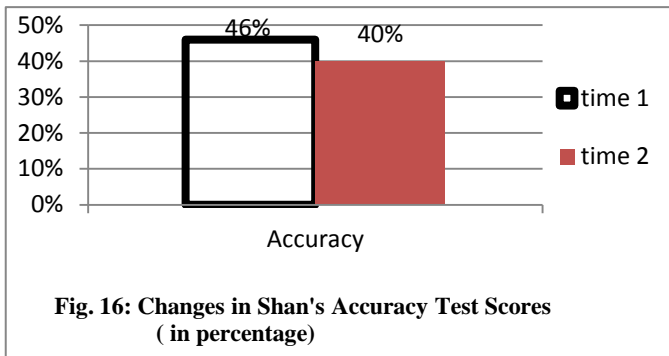
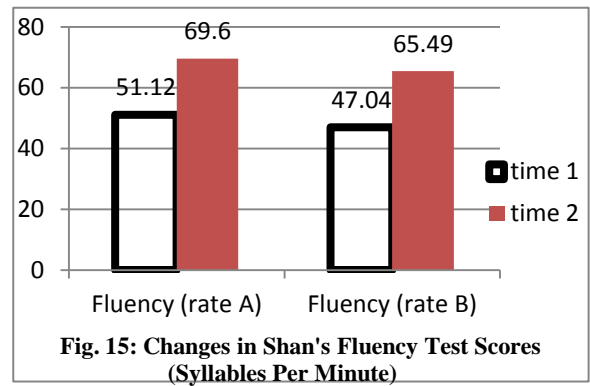
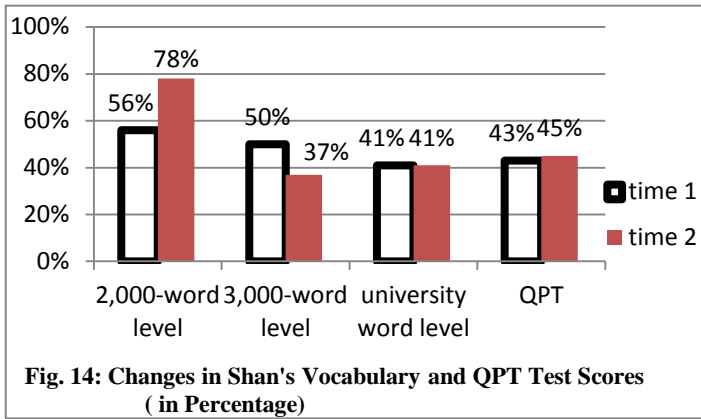


Figure 15 shows that she made a noticeable improvement in fluency. The total number of syllables she was able to produce (rate A) improved by 18.48 syllables per minute (time 1=51.12; time 2=69.60). The meaningful syllables she was also able to produce per minute (rate B) improved by 18.45 at time 2 (time 1=47.04; time 2=65.49). This shows that she was able to talk more fluently and used fewer false starts, repairs and repetitions in her speech. However, the improvement in fluency was not matched by a similar improvement in accuracy and complexity. Figure 16 shows the number of correct past tense verbs that she used was decreased by 6% (time 1=46%; time 2= 40%). Figure 17 shows that the ratio of the total number of clauses and the number of subordination dropped by 0.2 (time 1=1.6; time 2= 1.4).

6.5.5 Case Summary

Shan did not consider herself to be a self-regulated learner. Although she believed in her own effort, she needed teachers to create opportunities for her to use the language, to provide her with

learning strategies and to motivate her to keep on learning. As the course progressed, her demand for more exams increased. She relied on exams to give her feedback on her progress and detect the gaps in her learning. Her learning actions revolved around the tests and course requirements.

The biggest change was her growth of confidence in her ability to learn English. At time 1, she doubted if she was able to learn it well. At time 2, with the progress in her English and the encouragement from her teachers, her self-efficacy belief had grown subsequently. Another change was her belief about speaking and the best approach to learn the language. At time 1, she was of the opinion that her speaking could wait until she had achieved accuracy. She was reluctant to communicate in English just in case she made mistakes. She considered it to be “a loss of face” to speak English with errors. However, at time 2, she believed she should focus more on fluency in speaking. In line with this change was an emergent belief about the best way to learn English, which was to apply what she had learned in communication. As a result, at time 2, Shan employed some social strategies to communicate with her fellow classmates in the classroom. She even attempted to communicate with native speakers although only occasionally.

6.6 Case Five: Fei

6.6.1 Background Information

Fei was a 28-year-old female student. She visited New Zealand twice between 2007 and 2008. Each time she stayed for approximately 3 months and then returned to China. When the study was conducted, she had been in New Zealand for only a month and it was her third visit. This time she decided to stay in New Zealand for a longer period as she felt the need to investigate her career opportunities.

Fei learned English from secondary school to university. At university her major was accounting and her minor was journalism and the Chinese language. Because she loved writing and getting involved with social and cultural issues, she chose to become a journalist after graduation. She

had worked for a Chinese government news agency since graduating from university. She was very ambitious and had a very successful career in China.

Fei had never enrolled in a New Zealand language school. This was her first experience in New Zealand as a fulltime student. She had two purposes for learning English. One was instrumental where she wanted her English to be good enough to enable her to ‘pursue further education and secure a new career opportunity’ (Int I:08 Aug’08). Another motivation was integrative. She wanted to learn English in order to be able ‘to integrate into the mainstream society and not to be limited to the Chinese community’ and ‘to communicate with people from all walks of life’ (Int I:08 Aug’08).

When she first enrolled in the programme, she was placed at the elementary two level based on her results in the placement test. After a week’s study, her class teachers recommended she move up to the pre-intermediate level. She was in the same class as Shan. As reported earlier, students came from diverse backgrounds.

6.6.2 The Evolution of Fei’s Beliefs about Language Learning

Fei described the English she learned in China as ‘dumb English’ in the sense that she “was able to read and comprehend a difficult text but unable to understand other people and engage in simple daily conversations” (Int I:08 Aug’08). She regarded teaching in China as inflexible as there were barely any communicative opportunities. She described a typical English class in China as follows:

老师用汉语教，让我们抄黑板上的语法笔记，然后领读... 每天我们背惯用法，句型，很少应用，因为考试集中在语法和阅读。

{the teachers taught in Chinese. They asked us to copy a lot of grammar notes from the blackboard. Then they drilled us... everyday we rote-learned idiomatic expressions and sentence patterns but with little application [in communication] since our exams focused on grammar and reading.}

(Int I:08 Aug’08)

Because learning and teaching were exam-oriented, she regarded her whole learning experience as passive and dry since she was compelled to learn simply for the exams:

我只能完成那些不同类型的考题但却不能在现实生活中运用它们。

{I could only complete those different types of test tasks but I couldn't use them in real life}

(Int II:24 Nov)

In contrast, teaching in New Zealand was very “learner-centered” (Diary: 16 Aug) and “teachers are very friendly and they cater for the needs of the students” (Diary:10 Sept). Teaching emphasized communication:

课堂上很自由，老师与学生不是以往在概念里的那种教与学的关系，而是一种用同一种语言英语彼此了解，互相交流的过程。

{in the class [we] are freer. The relationship between the teachers and the students is not that of teaching and learning as it was in the past. The learning process is that of communication and getting to know each other through the same language – English.} (Diary: 10 Spet'08)

She felt she was more in control of her destiny and she learned for specific purposes. Her whole learning experience was enjoyable:

教学很引人参与，让每个人都觉得学习英语是个快乐。现在我对英语真感兴趣... 学习英语真有趣。

{the teaching is so engaging that it makes everyone feel learning English is a joy. Now I'm really into English...learning English is so interesting.} (Int I:08 Aug'08)

At both times, Fei regarded error correction as essential and considered it a learning opportunity. In her opinion, “error correction is a kind of learning” (Int I:08 Aug'08). Therefore, she was not afraid of making errors and considered it natural to make errors during the learning process. According to her, “the most important thing is to face up to mistakes” (Int I: 08 Aug'08). She welcomed error correction from anyone if they helped her use more appropriate words and more accurate sentence structures.

我很高兴接受任何帮助我学习的建议...只要帮我学，我愿意随时改正错误。

{I'm happy to accept any suggestions if they help me learn... I'm willing to be corrected all the time if that helps me learn.} (Int II: 24 Nov'08)

Fei was willing to take responsibility for her own learning. She did not want to rely on teachers. At both times, Fei was of the opinion that teachers played two roles in her learning, as a “guide” or a “compass” and as an adviser. In the role of the former, they “guide your direction” (Int I: 08 Aug’08) and “direct your attention” (Int II: 24 Nov’08). Her job was to follow teachers’ guidance. She said:

中国有句俗语叫做 ‘师傅领进门，修身在个人’。

{In China we have a saying, ‘Masters lead you to the door and self-cultivation is at the individual’s hand.’} (Int I:08 Aug’08)

In the role of the latter, “they give you good suggestions about learning and good learning methods that you can follow so that you don’t have to fumble your way through” (Int II: 24 Nov). In this respect, she believed teachers in New Zealand have set a good example because “they play the role of guides and inspirers” (Int I:08 Aug’08).

Fei believed exams played different roles in her learning in China compared to in New Zealand. In China, she believed the role of exams was to “check what was missing in my learning” and “from every test we sat I could always find something that I hadn’t known before” (Int II:24 Nov’08). However, in New Zealand, she viewed the role of exams differently:

我认为考试对我学习没有很大影响...我不愿意因为考试改变我的学习行为，因为考试结果不影响我的工作及进大学。

{I think tests don’t have much impact on my learning...I don’t change my learning behaviour due to the tests as the test results won’t affect my jobs and my admission to the university.}
(Int II: 24 Nov’08)

She was of the view that in New Zealand exams “are more important to teachers because they enable them to assess if students have grasped what they learned and how effective their teaching is” (Int I:08 Aug’08); exams also provided another “channel of communication between teachers and students” in addition to face-to-face communication (Int I:08 Aug’08). For herself, exams helped her evaluate her

progress. However, they were not the only means. She relied on a variety of other sources, e.g. through reading and communication.

Fei experienced more English in real life at time 2. She had some direct contact with Kiwis. Based on her experiences, she formed some positive opinions about Kiwis. According to her,

他们非常友好彬彬有礼...他们总是鼓励我，这样我也愿意和他们交谈。

{they are very friendly and polite...they always encourage me so I was very well motivated to talk with them.} (Stimulated recall I: 03 Sept)

Her experience also changed her belief about the best place to learn the language. Unlike time 1, at time 2, her learning space went beyond schools and classrooms. She was of the view

随时都学习的时间，随地都是学习的空间。

{every time is study time and every place is study space.} (Diary: 12 Nov)

Another emergent belief at time 2 concerned pair/group work. According to her:

我喜欢小组活动或俩人活动，这样我可以趁热打铁，我可以使用我刚学的东西，和同学练习，可以巩固所学的东西。当我独自一人时，我可以会想起更多学过的东西。

{I like working in groups/pairs where I can strike the iron while it is hot [meaning practising what she has just learned while memory is still fresh]. I can use, practise and consolidate what I have learned with my classmates. When I am alone by myself, I can recall more of what I have learned.} (Stimulated recall I: 03 Sept)

She also viewed working in groups/pairs as an occasion where she could learn and share views with her fellow students.

Fei rated herself as “an OK learner” in terms of aptitude but she was of the view that personal qualities, e.g. persistence, strong determination and effort, played a decisive role in the success or failure of learning:

学海无涯，不断进取，持之以恒才是学习的真正途径。

{the ocean of learning is boundless and the only way to cross it is through constant work and persistence.} (Diary: 12 Nov)

At both times, Fei held a strong self-efficacy belief. She was absolutely confident that she could learn English well:

要是十是满分，我学好的信心是十。我认为没有学不会的东西，只有不学的东西。

{if 10 is the max number, my confidence to learn English well is at 10. I believe there is nothing that cannot be learned but something that is not learned.} (Int II: 24 Nov)

She also regarded herself as competitive and she welcomed challenges in learning. For example, when her teacher recommended her to do some online pronunciation exercises, she found it interesting but challenging, particularly the tongue twisters. She had to practise 7 to 8 times until she could get them right. She wrote in her diary,

因为题目有难度，我感到受到激励，只有攻克困难，我才有一种成就感。

{because the task was difficult, I felt stimulated. Only after I had overcome the difficulties did I have a sense of fulfilment. I like being challenged.} (Diary: 26 Aug)

As far as her own English skills were concerned, she was of the view that she had good explicit grammar knowledge and that her reading and writing were strong but she had limited vocabulary and her oral skills were weak:

我可以很容易看懂比我现有水平高的文章，但是我不能跟人谈论他们，我很难准确，恰当表达，我感到我就像茶壶煮饺子有话说不出。

{I can easily understand articles that are higher than my current level but I can't talk about them. I found it hard to express accurately and appropriately. I felt stuck with words just like boiled dumplings in a teapot.} (Int I:08 Aug'08)

At time 1, she also considered her listening to be the most problematic as she found “when I talk with Kiwis, I can't gather the meaning” (Int I:08 Aug'08). At time 2, listening was not an issue for her anymore as she believed she had made remarkable progress in that area. However, speaking continued

to be a difficult skill for her. She felt frustrated about the lack of opportunity to chat with native speakers. Another barrier was her nervousness:

...但是当我说的時候，我仍感到緊張，特別是和 Kiwis 交流時，我找詞匯，想語法。

{...but I still felt nervous when I talked, especially when I communicate with Kiwis. I grope for words and think about grammar.} (Int II: 04 Nov)

Fei held the same beliefs at both times that vocabulary was fundamental to all the skills:

要是沒有足夠的詞匯，你會有種巧婦難為無米之炊的感覺。

{if you don't have enough vocabulary, you will have a feeling that you cannot make an omelette unless you break eggs.} (Int II: 24 Nov)

To tackle her problem of vocabulary, she believed reading was the key. She believed only after she had enough vocabulary would she be able to express herself more accurately and appropriately both in writing and speaking.

At both times she believed she should show a concern for both accuracy and fluency. She was of the view that “accuracy and fluency go hand in hand” (Int I: 08 Aug). She should not achieve one at the price of the other. However, when it came to speaking, she changed her priority from fluency at time 1 to accuracy at time 2. She admitted that

現在我更多注意語法，我認為口語中把語法搞準確很重要...要是你不使用正確語法，恰當詞匯，你就会被認為是沒受過教育的。我希望人們把我看成是接受過良好教育的。

{now I pay more attention to my grammar. I believe it is very important to get grammar correct in speakingUnless you use correct grammar and appropriate words, you will be considered as uneducated . I hope people will consider me as well-educated.} (Stimulated recall I:03 Sept)

At both times, Fei was of the opinion that learning a language involved using it constantly. According to her,

使用语言有双层意义：首先，你口头使用语言，因为与外界交流很重要；然后，要是你想表达深刻意思，你得使用书面语言，但是首先你得克服口头障碍。

{Using the language means two things. Firstly, you use the language orally because it is important to communicate with the outside world. Then if you want to express deeper meaning, you have to use the written language. But first of all you have to overcome the oral barrier.}

(Int I: 08 Aug)

To her, the best approach was to expose herself to English in real life until she gained the feel for the language:

我觉得既然学语言，就该到一个不断地用它的地方去锻炼自己，才可能有进步。

{I believe learning a language means going to a place where I can keep using the language so that I can improve it.} (Diary 16 Aug)

At both times, Fei believed that learning was a cumulative process and that it would not happen overnight. She wrote,

学语言真是要多用，多练，多说，多听，没有捷径，只有日积月累，滴水穿石。

{learning a language really requires more use, more practice, more speaking and more listening. There are no short cuts but accumulation over a period of time: constant water dripping will wear a hole in a rock.} (Diary: 11 Sept)

Fei's beliefs about language learning at time 2 are summarized in table 16.

Table 16.

Fei's Beliefs about Language Learning at times 1 and 2

Beliefs category	Time 1	Time 2
Learning situation	<p>In China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She learned ‘dumb’ English • English learning was very dry • Teaching and learning were both exam-oriented • She was passive in learning <p>In New Zealand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English learning was fun and interesting • She was active and in charge of her own learning 	<p>In China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She was passive in learning • Her motivation was to score high but she was unable to use the language • Teaching was inflexible • There were no communicative activities <p>In New Zealand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She was active in learning • She was encouraged to use the language • Teaching was learner-centred
External factors	<p>Setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School was the best place to learn a language <p>Error correction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was critical to be corrected • Error correction was a learning process. She was ready to face up to errors. <p>Role of exams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exams were more useful to teachers in N.Z. • They were channels of communication between teachers and students in N.Z. <p>Role of teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers were a guide who she shouldn't overly rely on 	<p>Setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning could take place everywhere <p>Error correction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was a learning opportunity • She welcomed error correction all the time and from everyone <p>Role of exams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exams did not have any impact on her learning in N.Z. • Exams were informative <p>Role of teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding the directions in her learning • Suggesting learning strategies <p>Kiwis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly, polite and encouraging <p>Group/pair work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It provided opportunity to use, practise and consolidate what she learned • She could learn from her classmates • She could share views with people from different countries
Learning a Second Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary and speaking were the most important skills • Reading helped vocabulary • Learning should focus on fluency as well as accuracy but speaking should focus more on fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary was fundamental to all the skills. • Reading was the key to vocabulary learning. • She should spend similar amount of time on accuracy and fluency but speaking should focus more on accuracy.
Nature of Language Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning was about using the language and nurturing her feel for English • Learning was a cumulative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning was about using the language for communication and nurturing her feel for English • Learning was a cumulative process

6.6.3 The Development of Fei's Language Learning Strategy Use

At both times, cognitive strategies remained dominant in Fei's strategy use. The memory strategy she used to tackle vocabulary was what she called “going back to texts” and “going back to the reading” (Diary: 12 Nov) which she believed worked the best for her. As she firmly believed that

reading was the best way to learn vocabulary, every afternoon she went to the library to read books in English. The reading materials ranged from her own course book to topics of her own interest, e.g. history, politics, geography, culture etc. Before she went home, she copied texts to help her memorize, a strategy encouraged by her teachers in China. She described the strategy as follows:

*我通常把我读的东西每隔一行抄下来，我用蓝笔在不懂的词下面画个线，这样我回家后
再查这些词...我在空白线上写下生词，这样的话当我再读课文时，我能把词理解得更
好...我用句子帮助记。*

{I normally copied what I read in alternate lines. I used a blue pen to underline the words that I didn't know so that I could look up those words after I arrived at home... I wrote the new words in the blank lines. In this way, when I read the text again, I could understand the words much better...I used the sentences to help memorize.} (Int I: 08 Aug)

In order to increase vocabulary size quickly, at time 2, she employed more memory strategies. For example, she combined rote-memorizing word lists with learning through reading. The word lists were from the first 1,000 word level words that her teachers at the elementary level gave to her. She was familiar with most of the words on the lists. She set herself a goal to 'go through 100 words a day' (Diary: 16 Aug). She found that "apart from some unknown words most of the words are not a problem" (Diary: 16 Aug). Another strategy was to go to the Chinese website and read the Chinese newspaper that was translated from English. She "first read the translation and then the English version" (Int II: 04 Nov). To make vocabulary learning more interesting, she also used tongue twisters taken from the pronunciation software to help memorize some words and practise saying them, e.g. "The dog caught his paw when he tried to crawl along on the lawn." (Diary: 30 Aug).

To improve her listening and nurture her feel for English, every afternoon, she went to the Language Learning Centre in the institution where she listened to English tapes and sometimes English songs in order to train herself to respond in English. It was not an easy process. She described her frustration as follows:

每天下课后，我都去图书馆，我先写作业，然后听磁带，我试着不看稿，我得听两到三遍才能听懂内容，我需要翻译的过程，这让我很恼火... 我越让自己不考虑汉语，我越得翻了才懂，希望这个过程很快就过去。

{every day after the class I go to the library. I first write my homework and then listen to tapes. I tried not to read the transcripts. I had to listen to the tapes for a minimum of 2 to 3 times before I could understand the contents. I needed a translation process, which annoyed me a bit...the more I forced myself not to think in Chinese, the more I had to translate to understand. I hope this process passes away quickly.} (Diary: 11 Aug)

She also tried to write less Chinese in her homework and avoid translating English into her own language. At time 2, she employed more strategies. She reported watching English TV every day. She avoided the Chinese TV programmes by installing Sky TV so that she could force herself to be exposed to English. Initially she could only pick up a few words. After a while, she found she could understand the gist. She also kept using as much English as possible in her homework and in her note taking. She continued to use an English- English dictionary to record word definitions. Her experience was like this:

以前我全用汉语记生词，虽然有些结果，但我觉得我只记得词的一些用法。自从改成用英、英记忆，我觉得不仅我能从视觉上懂了词而且还能有机会使用以及弄懂其他词，这叫一箭双雕。我觉得记词挺有意思。

{previously I used Chinese to remember words. Although it had some outcomes, I found I could only remember some of the word usage. After I have changed to use English-English memory strategy, I found not only could I understand the words visually but also I had more opportunity to use and understand other words, which was like killing two birds with one stone. I felt it interesting to memorize words.} (Diary: 20 Aug)

Her typical class behaviours were to involve herself actively in class activities, focus on teaching and take down some notes. She constantly revised what she had learned. Also she copied the sentences the teacher had corrected so that she could “use the correct one next time”. (Int II:24 Nov)

Relating to her use of compensation strategies, she “guessed the meaning from the context” (Int I:08 Aug) when she came across new words. Although she tried to nurture her feel for English by thinking in the L2, she did not have enough linguistic and semantic resources to cope with communication in the real world. Thus when she was engaged in a speaking or written task, she had to resort to her L1 frequently at time 1 whereas at time 2 she only used it “occasionally”. At time 2, Fei used English more in real life to communicate with people, native and non-native speakers alike. She used two strategies to compensate for the deficiency in her English: when she did not have the right word, she explained the meaning (Interview II: 24 Nov) and when she did not understand, she asked people to repeat (Stimulated recall I: 03 Sept).

To create speaking opportunities, at time 1, she went to the student café after the class and chatted in English with her fellow students from other countries. If she could not follow them, she asked them to clarify. At time 2, although Fei was still concerned with the lack of opportunities to use English in real life and to ‘make more friends who can speak English’ (Int II: 24 Nov), she took every opportunity available to use the language while she was at school:

在课上我不停地说，愿意说，下课后我也试着和同学说，在学校期间我不停地说。

{In the class I kept talking and was willing to talk. After the class I tried to talk with fellow students as well. During the time I was at school, I have never stopped talking.} (Int II:24 Nov)

Apart from school, she also looked for communication opportunities in real life. She saw shopping as an occasion where she could “communicate and chat away with native speakers” (Stimulated recall I: 03 Sept). She also went to various shows, e.g. gift show (Diary: 08 Oct), home show (Diary: 12 Sept), seminars (Diary: 19 Oct) and the market (Diary: 09 Nov) and got involved with different community events in order to “learn English, communicate in English and experience the culture” (Diary: 03 Nov).

At both times, Fei used metacognitive strategies to plan and monitor her general English learning as well as when she was engaged in specific learning tasks. After she watched the 2008

Beijing Olympic opening ceremony on an English channel, she found she “could understand almost all the commentaries in English” (Diary:13Aug), which set her thinking why. Then she concluded

...但是明白的基础是我对每一幕历史的了解，这种了解支持了我的听力理解程度。因此这个事实也支持了我之前的一个想法 ‘只有了解一个地域的过去，才会理解这个地方的现在’，看来我要阅读NZ历史的计划势在必行。

{...but it [listening comprehension] was based on my understanding of the history of each act. That endorsed my previous thought that only after you have understood the past of a place can you understand its present. It seems that the plan to read about N.Z. history have to be implemented imminently.} (Diary: 13 Aug)

Based on this reflection, she started reading a book about the history of New Zealand.

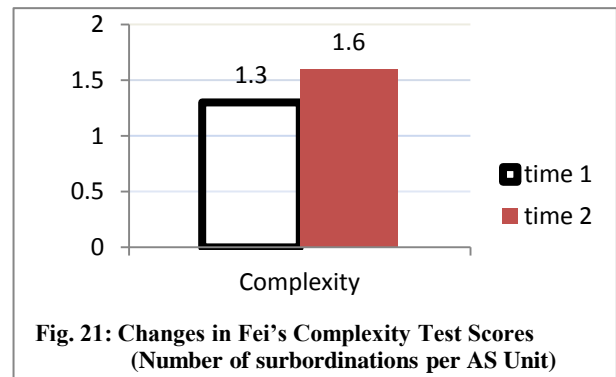
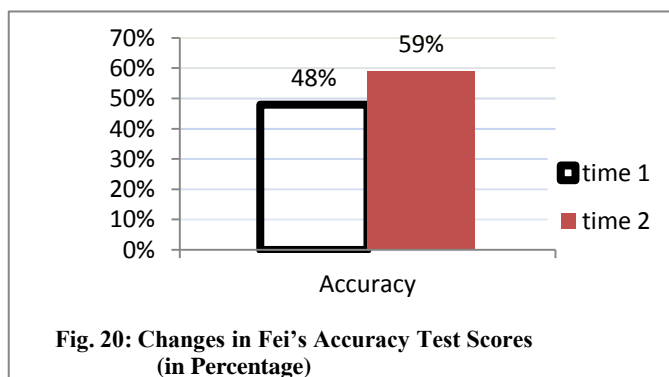
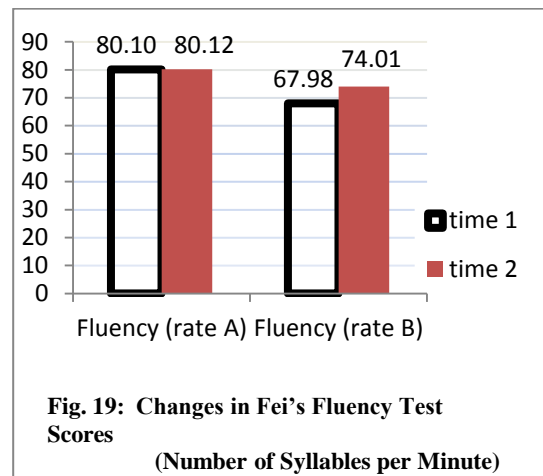
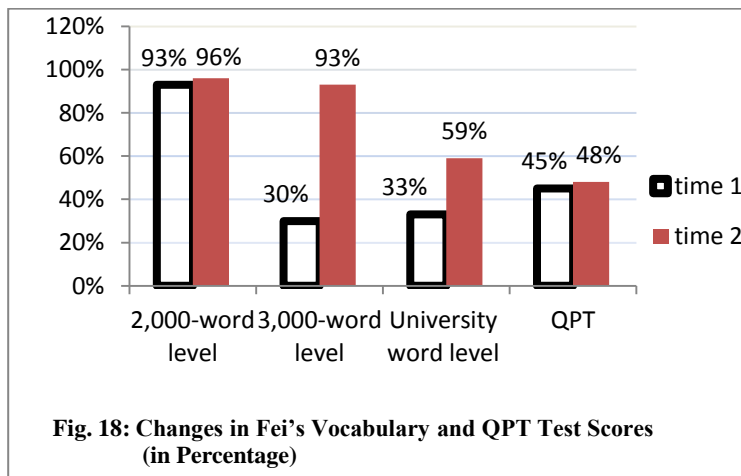
Fei’s language learning strategy use at times 1 and 2 is summarized in table 17.

Table 17. Fei’s Language Learning Strategy Use at times 1 and 2

Strategy	Time 1	Time 2
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning vocabulary through reading • Copying texts to help memorize • Listening to tapes and then reading transcripts • Doing homework • Revising • Staying focused in class • Nurturing her feel for English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Using English – English dictionary ➢ Using less Chinese in homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorizing word lists as well as learning words through reading • Using tongue twisters to memorize words • Comparing Chinese newspapers with English ones • Nurturing her feel for English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Watching TV ➢ Listening & responding in L2 ➢ Using an English-English dictionary ➢ Using more English in her course work • In class staying active & focused and keeping notes • Revising • Completing homework, • Copying corrective sentences
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for clarification • Chatting with fellow students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in communication in and out of the class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Initiating topics • Developing cultural understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Going to various shows ➢ Getting involved with the community
Metacognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning her English learning and learning tasks • Monitoring and evaluating her learning progress 	Same as time 1

6.6.4 Changes in Fei's Language Proficiency

Figure 18 compares Fei's vocabulary and QPT test results at times 1 and 2. It shows she improved in all the tests at time 2. The most noticeable change was the increase in her vocabulary size in all three Vocabulary Level Tests. For the 2,000 level test, she gained 3% (time 1 = 93%; time 2= 96%). The highest increase was for the 3,000 level test where she improved by 63% (time 1 = 30%; time 2= 93%). The highest increase was for the 3,000 level test where she improved by 63% (time 1 = 30%; time 2= 93%). For the university level test, she gained 26% (time 1 = 33%; time 2= 59%). However, her improvement in the general English proficiency test was minimal (time 1 = 45% ; time 2 = 48%).



Figures 19, 20 and 21 show her test scores in the oral narrative task. She improved in all three measurements: fluency, complexity and accuracy. Although her rate A barely improved at time 2 (time 1 =80.10 syllables /minute; time 2 = 80.12 syllables/minute), she made some progress in rate B, by 6.03 syllables (time 1 = 67.98/minute; time 2=74.01/minute). The difference between rate A and B had narrowed by 6.01 syllables (time 1 = 12.12 syllables; time 2 = 6.01). This means that she was able to

speak with fewer reformulations, repairs and false starts at time 2. Figure 20 indicates an 11% increase in accuracy (time 1= 48% ; time 2= 59%). Likewise her complexity improved by 0.3% (time 1 = 1.3; time 2=1.6). Fei had become a more balanced speaker at time 2. In other words, she was able to speak not only fluently but also more accurately and with greater complexity.

6.6.5 Case Summary

Fei was a balanced, confident and self-regulated learner. She showed a concern for both form and meaning in her learning. She regarded error correction as being critical and yet a natural process of learning. Therefore, she was willing to be corrected all the time. While she was cautious of accuracy in her English, she was fully aware of the communicative function of the language. When she was engaged in communication, she attended to meaning and focused on getting the message across. Fei held a strong self-efficacy belief. She did not have the slightest doubt about her ability to learn the language well. She was willing to take full responsibility for her own learning, believing self-determination and effort were the key to successful learning. She saw teachers as guides and advisors upon whom she should not rely too heavily.

Over the 16 weeks, the most remarkable development in Fei's beliefs was her view about the best place to learn. At time 1, she was of the view that school was the place where learning took place. However, at time 2, she believed she could learn "every time and everywhere" (Diary: 12 Nov). This belief development appeared to bring about behaviour changes. At time 1, her social strategy use was limited to 'going to the student café to chat'. At time 2, her communication and learning happened in real life as well as at school. At school, she was actively involved in class activities and chatted with fellow students after the class. Outside the school, she took every opportunity to use the language, immersed herself in English and experienced the target culture and community. Her language learning strategy use had changed qualitatively.

6.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter reported the findings of five case studies. Data from two belief and strategy use interviews, two sessions of stimulated recall, two task-based interviews and two 120 minute classroom observations were used to identify the participants' beliefs about language learning and their language learning strategy use. The scores from three tests were used to examine the changes in their language proficiency. My aim in this chapter was to represent the reality of the participants and situations as accurately and objectively as possible.

I found that some of the learners' beliefs remained the same and were even strengthened while others changed or emerged during the 16 weeks of study. The most significant belief developments included the emergence of a new belief about the value of group/pair work, their realization that language was essentially a communicative tool, the shift of focus from accuracy to fluency and their growing self-efficacy beliefs about themselves as language learners. At time 2, all of the learners had come to regard working in pairs/groups as a learning opportunity and an occasion to use, practice and consolidate what they had learned. However, Bing and Ding held conflicting beliefs about group work. While appreciating the opportunities for speaking in an unthreatening context, these two learners also expressed their concerns about the impact of the quality of the input they received from their fellow classmates. Three learners (Peng, Bing and Shan) realized the importance of speaking skills and acknowledged the primary communicative function of language at time 2, compared to only one learner (Fei) at time 1. Associated with this belief, Peng and Shan also changed their views about the focus in speaking. They both came to believe that they should focus more on fluency and getting the message across in speaking. At time 1, they placed greater emphasis on accuracy. Finally, all the learners held a strong self-efficacy belief at time 2, compared to only two learners (Fei and Peng). That is, they became more confident about learning English.

The learners' language learning strategies also showed some developments. At time 1, none of the learners watched English TV or listened to the radio whereas at time 2, four learners (Peng, Bing,

Fei and Ding) endeavoured to nurture their feel for English by looking for opportunities, such as watching TV, to expose themselves to English. Also all the learners expanded their memory strategies. Whereas initially they relied on rote-memorizing word lists, they later tried to learn new words while reading (Peng, Bing, Shan, Fei), reading authentic materials (Peng), learning from the street signs (Ding), using vocabulary flash cards (Bing), grouping (Shan), using tongue twisters and comparing newspapers in Chinese and in English (Fei). The biggest change for all the learners was their employment of social strategies. At time 1, only one learner (Fei) used them at school. However, at time 2, all of the learners employed them in the classroom. Most important of all, at time 1, none of them tried to communicate with native speakers in real life whereas at time 2, most learners attempted to do so although they varied considerably in the extent to which they practised this strategy.

Most of the learners showed some improvement in vocabulary size and in the QPT test scores although the extent of their development varied considerably. The oral narrative results were more complex. While three learners (Peng, Shan, Fei) showed noticeable improvements in fluency in both rate A and B, two learners (Bing and Ding) regressed. Three learners (Bing, Peng and Fei) improved in accuracy whereas two learners' scores (Shan and Ding) decreased. In the measurement of complexity, all the learners except Fei decreased.

Thus, it is clear that over the observed period, the learners progressed differently. Some learners made greater progress in one language aspect but regressed or barely improved in the other (e.g. Bing, Ding and Shan) while others made noticeable progress in almost all aspects (e.g. Peng, Fei).

What makes a learner more or less successful? The next chapter will explore the findings reported in this chapter with a view to explaining why some of the learners progressed considerably and others much less.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MAJOR THEMES: INTERPRETING THE CASE STUDIES

7.1. Introduction

This study employed qualitative inquiry to collect triangulated data on five Chinese learners over 16 weeks. Within case analysis was first used to analyze each individual learner. The results were reported in the preceding chapter. The aim of this chapter is to present the salient themes that were extracted from the belief and strategy data across the five cases and to provide interpretative insights into the major findings and their significance. To this end, I relate the findings to the theoretical framework and the literature that I presented in chapters 2, 3 and 4.

Themes are defined as abstract constructs or concepts that describe the characteristics of beliefs, learning strategies and changes in these over time. The process of discovering the themes was recursive and inductive, following standard procedures of qualitative data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I first immersed myself in the set of data that were collected for case one by reading over the data transcripts a few times. I then identified quotes and words that were used frequently against belief and strategy categories from within case analysis. I cut out each quote and on the back wrote down the participant's name and the data source. I repeated the procedures for the other cases. I then sorted all the quotes and key words by displaying them randomly on the floor. Similar quotes from different participants were collated and piled together. I then searched for the recurring major themes that were distributed across the five cases. I aimed to respect convergences and divergences among participants. In other words, I recognized ways in which accounts from the participants were common but also different. During the process, I frequently revisited the data. Some new themes were discovered; some old themes were collated; some themes were renamed and some were merged into one. In the end, nine major themes were identified and

labeled. The names of the themes came from a number of sources: literature, my understanding of the subject matter and consultations with my supervisors.

1. *Learning experiences in China and in New Zealand* concerns the learners' overall views about their learning experiences in China and in New Zealand. For example, most of them were of the view that in China the class activities were limited and dominated by teacher talk. In comparison, they were very positive about learning in New Zealand, believing teaching was more learner-centered and interactive.
2. *Exam orientation* refers to the learners' belief about the role of exams in their learning and their exam driven learning behaviours. Most of the learners regarded exams as crucial to giving feedback on their learning progress and pushing them to learn. As the course progressed, the beliefs were reinforced.
3. *Approach to language learning* captures the learners' belief development from regarding language as a system at time 1 to viewing it as a communicative tool at time 2. At the outset of the study, most learners perceived the language as a system. They shared the view that the nature of language learning was to master the whole system cumulatively and bit by bit. However, at time 2, all the learners recognized the communicative function of the language.
4. *Emphasis on vocabulary and rote-memorization* refers to the learners' intense belief about the importance of vocabulary in their learning and their commitment to vocabulary learning. All the learners considered vocabulary as fundamental. They were of the view that the improvement of other aspects of English was contingent on their vocabulary size. Rote-memorization was prevalent in their strategy use.
5. *Contact with English outside the classroom* concerns the actions that the learners took to learn English beyond the classroom. A qualitative change in all the learners' strategy use was their exposure to English outside the institution. They started noticing English around them and took

advantage of the learning environment, for example, by watching English TV, listening to the radio and reading flyers in the letter box.

6. *Attitudes towards group work* deals with the emergence of the learners' belief about working with peers and their collaborative learning actions in the classroom. None of the learners expressed a view about pair/group work at time 1. As the course progressed, a new belief emerged about working collaboratively in the class. Some learners viewed working with peers positively while others were more negative about it. Their involvement in group/pair work in the class also differed.
7. *Class participation* concerns the learners' class behaviours in the teacher-led context. Whilst some learners were observed to be willing to volunteer, others were very passive and silent.
8. *Autonomous learning* concerns the learners' conflicting beliefs about the importance of their own effort and their consistent use of metacognitive strategies on the one hand, and their need for teachers to direct their learning on the other hand. All the learners held a firm belief at both times that their effort determined the success of their learning. Consequently, all the learners employed metacognitive strategies significantly. On the other hand, they expected their teachers to transmit knowledge about the language, provide learning strategies, give regular tests and homework and push them to learn.
9. *Growth of self-efficacy* refers to the increase of the learners' beliefs about themselves and their ability to learn the language well. At the end of 16 weeks, to a varying extent, all the five learners became more confident.

7.2. Discussion of the Major Findings

7.2.1. The learners' perceptions about learning experiences in China and in New Zealand

In this section I first compare the major differences between English teaching and learning situation in China and in New Zealand. Learners' perceptions about their learning experiences in China

and in New Zealand are then discussed.

As discussed in Chapter Two, English teaching in China is predominantly influenced by the grammar translation method, the structural approach and Confucian teaching and learning philosophy, whereas English teaching in New Zealand is characterized by learning/learner-centredness and focused on developing learners' communicative competence. The language school which the learners attended claimed in their school document that CLT was the predominant teaching method. Nunan (1991, p.279) listed five features of CLT: (1) an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language; (2) the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation; (3) the provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself; (4) an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning, and (5) an attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom. These five features were made manifest in the NZ classroom where they were studying. For example, although most of the courses used British textbooks, they were always supplemented with localized and authentic materials in response to the needs of their learners and focused on the connection between the language as it was taught in the class and as it was used outside the classroom. In the classroom, teachers played more the role of facilitators where they assisted learners to learn, and of class managers and organizers where they managed and organized class activities to promote and enhance learners' learning experiences. Typical classroom practices took the form of pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners, fluency-based activities that encouraged learners to develop their confidence, and role-plays in which students practiced and developed language functions.

Table 18 compares the major differences in teaching between China and New Zealand.

Table 18. Comparison of English Teaching between China and New Zealand

	China	New Zealand
1. Role of teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A performer, a director and a knowledge giver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A facilitator, a class manager and organizer
2. Teaching materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbooks are mandated by the central government. They are objects to learn and have to be followed through religiously. • Texts are carefully selected, mostly from literary or classical works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on authenticity of the teaching materials which are chosen by teachers so as to be more meaningful to learners
3. Class activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominated by teacher talk with occasional questioning time • Focus more on accuracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less teacher talk, more learner talk with a variety of activities in pairs and groups • Focus more on fluency
4. Interaction pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominantly teacher with whole class and individual work • Occasional teacher with individual student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominantly students with students • Occasional teacher with whole class and individual work
5. Role of exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-stakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-stakes
6. Class size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small

It is apparent that there are a number of differences in the way that English is taught and learned in New Zealand and China. What were the learners' views about their learning in the two environments? A salient theme that surfaced across four out of the five learners (Bing did not comment as he learned from a private tutor) was that they were very critical of their learning experiences in China. They considered the teaching methods to be "obsolete" (Peng) and "traditional and old-fashioned" (Shan). The presentation was "inflexible" and "monotonous" (Peng), following a similar procedure every day:

教学很死板，通常老师把生词写到黑板上，然后让我们大声读，还有他把课文翻译一下，解释一下文中的语法，然后我们做词汇和语法练习，因为我们考试主要是语法... 课堂活动很有限，我们很少有机会参与... 英语教学跟其他科目，例如化学或数学，没什么不同。

{Teaching was inflexible. Normally the teacher wrote new words on the board. Then he asked us to read aloud. Also he translated the text and explained the grammar in the text. Then we did vocabulary and grammar exercises because our exam mainly focused on grammar..... Class activities were limited. We were seldom given any opportunity to participate...English

teaching was not different from other subjects, say chemistry or maths.} [Shan, Int I]

The limited class activities and repetitive presentation made them feel that learning in China was ‘dry’ (Fei), “passive” (Shan, Ding, Fei) , “not motivating and boring” (Peng).

Another source of their discontent was related to the pressure that the high-stakes exams placed on their learning. As Ding pointed out, “in China, exams dictate both teaching and learning” (Ding, Int I). Fei described her last year at high school like this:

高中高考的最后一年，每天我们抄很多的笔记，重复同样的词汇和语法要点... 我们背固定表达法和句型，但很少去应用... 我讨厌学英语，不喜欢学它，但为了考试我得学。

{ During the last year at high school and before we sat the national matriculation tests, every day, we copied heaps of notes from the board, repeated the same vocabulary and grammatical points...we rote memorized fixed expressions and sentence patterns but with little application... I was sick of learning English. I didn’t like learning it, but I had to for the sake of passing exams. }

(Fei, Int I)

The learners’ views about exams will be discussed further in the next section.

As the high stakes exams tested learners’ explicit grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension ability, teaching and learning activities were almost entirely form-focused and ignored speaking and listening (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996a, 1996b; Hu, 2002). This led to students having “good mechanical grammar knowledge but weak oral and listening skills” (Fei, Int I). They felt disconnected between what they learned in the classroom and real life:

在中国我每天都不停地写，不停地抄笔记，可是我不能把所学的用到现实生活中去，我不能交流，也不能听懂。我能做的就是完成那些考题。

{ In China, every day I kept writing and taking notes but I couldn’t apply what I learned to real life. I could not communicate. Neither could I understand. All I could do was to complete those test tasks. } (Fei, Int II)

They called the English they learned in China ‘deaf and dumb English’ (Fei, Shan, Peng), which became problematic when they lived in New Zealand:

我们英语学了很久，但当我们来这里的时候，我们听不懂我们知道的东西，但别人写下来，我们就能认出来。我能读，但是听不懂，我常常让人写下来。

{We learned English for a long time but when we came here [in New Zealand], we couldn't understand what we had known but when it was written down, we could recognize. I can read but am unable to understand what I heard. I often ask people to write down what they said.}

(Shan, Int 1)

The problems they faced in New Zealand intensified their negative views about their learning in China. However, they did acknowledge that education in China gave them a solid foundation in explicit grammar rules and reading comprehension.

In contrast, all the learners except Bing held a very positive view of their learning experiences in New Zealand. They believed teaching was more learner-centered and responsive to their needs; class activities were more interactive and diverse; teaching was intriguing and easy to follow. All these factors made them feel “motivated” (Shan and Peng) and “fascinated” (Ding and Fei) about learning:

我现在对英语真感兴趣。那天我对我班上的同学说，要是我早知道学英语这么有趣，我就会上北 大学英语了，学英语真是有趣。

{I'm really into English now. I told my classmates the other day that had I known learning English is such fun, I would've enrolled into the English major at Beijing University. Learning English is so intriguing.} (Fei, Int II)

我现在真愿意学，我喜欢我的老师，他们都很容易让人接近，友善，愿意帮助。我也喜欢与同学为伴。每天上学的路上，我都觉得心情愉快，我愿意来上学，学习新东西，与人交流。学习不再是负担了，而是件乐事，我从没有像这样的感觉。

{I really enjoy learning English now. I like my teachers - they are so approachable, friendly and willing to help, and also the company of my classmates. Every day on my way to school, I feel light-hearted. I enjoy coming to school and am eager to learn new things and communicate. Learning is not a chore anymore. It's fun. I have never felt like this before.} (Shan, Int II)

Finally, they felt connected between what was taught in the classroom and what was happening outside the classroom:

...新西兰的教学很实用，也很有趣，比如我们学新西兰的文化，教育系统，卫生系统等等的东西，这些都很有用。

{...teaching in New Zealand is more practical and more interesting. For instance, we learned about the culture in New Zealand, the education system and health system, etc. They are all very useful in real life. They helped me settle down in New Zealand.} (Ding, Int I)

我认为在新西兰和在中国学，最大的不同就是理论和现实之间的联系，一个是根本没关联，而另一个却是紧密相连。在新西兰教学更注重应用及交流，鼓励到现实生活中用所学的东西，也有环境让我这样做，这确实很好。

{I believe the greatest difference in learning between New Zealand and China is the links between theory and reality. One [China] is completely separate and another [New Zealand] is so close. In New Zealand, teaching focuses more on application and interactions. I am encouraged to use what I learned in real life and I have the environment to do so. That is really good.}

(Fei, Int II)

Unlike the rest of the participants, Bing had mixed feelings about his learning experience in New Zealand. On the one hand, he appreciated the interesting and interactive class activities; on the other hand, he was discontented with the streaming system at the school, believing “it is not rational” (Int I & II). In his view, his needs could have been better met if students with similar needs were put in one class:

我认为学校本该把有同样需求的学生分到一个班，那些口语强但没有语法知识的学生应该花更多的时间学语法规则，做练习；那些语法强的人应该给他们更多的听说...或者，课程按技能分不同的级别，这样，学生可以选择他们想要攻克的技能。

{I think the school should've put students who have the similar needs in one class. Those students who have strong oral skills but no explicit grammar knowledge should spend more time on grammar rules and practice; those who have good explicit grammar knowledge should be given more listening speaking...alternatively, courses can be organized in accordance with different levels of skills so that students can choose which skills they'd like to focus on.}

(Bing, Int I)

Overall, the learners were negative about their learning experiences in China due to a lack of variety in class activities and teaching methods, the high pressure from exams and their inability to communicate in real life. On the other hand, their views about learning experiences in New Zealand were favourable. They were motivated by the class dynamics, the interactional opportunities and the connection between their classroom learning and real life.

In her case study of three Brazilian learners' beliefs in America, Barcelos (2000) reported similar findings: the learners held a positive view of learning in the U.S. but were negative about their learning experiences in Brazil. They perceived the English they learned in Brazil as "bookish" as it was not used by native speakers and did not prepare them well for their lives in the target country. Both studies suggest that learners from traditional teaching and learning backgrounds seemed to regard favourably towards CLT, as it satisfied their need for communicative competence.

7.2.2. Exam orientation

As was discussed in the preceding section, examinations and tests played a major role in the learners' response to their learning situation in both China and New Zealand. In this respect they are no different from many other learners.

The role played by tests is referred to as "washback" in the literature on testing. Shohamy et al. (1996) defined "washback" as "the impact tests have on teaching and learning" (P.298). Messick (1996) elaborated on the definition as "the extent to which the test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise necessarily do" (p. 241). As Alderson and Wall (1993) pointed out 'the term "washback" is itself a neutral one' (p.117), however, the power and influence of tests on teaching and learning can be negative or positive. Some of the "positive" influences cited in the literature include:

- ensuring that the curriculum be put into effect (Morris, 1972),
- using tests as a tool for curriculum innovations (Alderson, 1986),
- motivating students ‘to do things they would not otherwise do, such as paying attention to the lesson, preparing more thoroughly, learning by heart, and so on’ (Alderson & Wall, 1993, p.117),
- encouraging the use of beneficial teaching and learning processes (Pearson, 1988) where tests will be used directly as teaching-learning activities and vice versa.

Examples of negative washback include

- ‘distorting the curriculum’ and excessive coaching for exams (Vernon, 1956),
- causing anxiety in learners (Alderson, 1993),
- teaching to the test leading to ‘narrowing of the curriculum’ (Smith, 1991).

Shohamy et al. (1996), based on the different patterns of backwash of two different tests in Israel, argued that the nature of a test’s impact was complex, depending on the nature (high vs low stakes), purpose (achievement vs survey test) and other characteristics of the test, e.g. test format and skills tested.

As discussed in Chapter Two, tests have played a powerful and influential role in the Chinese educational system and in society at large since the Han dynasty (206 BC to AD 220) (Cheng, 2008; Higgins and Sun, 2002; Li, 2004; Lee, 1996; Zhang, 1988). In ancient China, the imperial examinations (科举) were used to select the highest officials. Good test results could lead to higher social status, wealth and glory. They could change the fate of a candidate as well as that of his entire family. Tests in China have remained high-stake ever since. Their importance ‘is still evident in the current education system in China’ (Cheng, 2008). The National University Entrance Exams are adopted as **the** criterion for admission into university, and the wider society regards them as the “fair measurement for selection of the best talent into the social hierarchy” (Cheng and Qi, 2006). Not only that, the quality of teaching

is also measured against the passing rate of the tests. The consequences of such high-stake tests are that students come under enormous social pressure to perform and achieve well in exams from their parents, teachers and schools. Low achieving students are “ignored and even prejudiced against” at school (Ding, Dairy: 30 Aug’08).

All the learners in this study reported washback effects of the tests on their learning when they were learning in China. For example, they “learned for tests only” and “learned to pass” (Shan, Fei, Peng, Bing, Ding); teachers “taught to tests” (Shan, Fei, Peng, Bing) and “gave us a 10-minute quiz everyday” (Ding); “we had to learn extremely hard for the tests” (Bing, Peng, Shan, Fei, Ding); ‘we did not learn anything that was not tested, esp. in the last year before sitting the exams.’ (Fei). In addition, they all reported experiencing ‘anxiety’. For Shan and Fei, the anxiety was more facilitating in nature as they enjoyed the process of competing and achieving while Ding regarded it as ‘debilitating’:

我通常在考试情况下都考不好，考试让我感到恐惧，我的脑袋一片空白，什么都记不住，我甚至不能完成我能做的题，我总是考得很糟，最后，我都不想学了，我不想上学，恨考试，直到现在，它们还让我做噩梦。

{I normally under performed in test situations. Tests made me feel so petrified that my mind went blank and I couldn’t remember anything. I even couldn’t complete tasks that I was otherwise able to. I always did worse in exams. In the end, I didn’t want to learn anymore. I didn’t want to go to school. I hated tests. Until now, they still give me nightmare. (Ding, Int I)

It seems that the influence of tests on their learning was predominantly negative in China.

The learners’ response to tests in New Zealand was more mixed. They were all of the view that exams played a different role in their learning in New Zealand. Fei’s comments were typical of their views about the different role that tests played in their learning in China and New Zealand:

在中国考试更难，考前，我们不知道考试的题型。要是没考好，那是你不知道题型，考完试，你学会一个新题型。考试的作用是检测你学习上的漏洞，每次考完试我都能发现我不知道的东西，然后，我会集中那些地方做大量练习。我得学去通过考试，而且要考好，因为我考的好坏能决定

我的未来。可在新西兰，考试没惊奇，要是你没考好，有可能是你粗心，你会有种感觉“哦，我知道这个，我本该做对的。”还有就是考试成绩对我没什么太大影响，它不影响我上大学或找工作。

{In China exams were more difficult. Before exams, we didn't know what the task types in the exams were like. If you didn't do well in an exam, it meant you didn't know a task type. After the exam, you would learn it. Exams played a role of checking what was missing in your learning. I could always find something that I didn't know from each test we sat. Then I could focus on those areas and do heaps of practice tests. I had to learn to pass the tests and pass it well. My future was determined by my test results. However, in New Zealand, there are no surprises in the test papers. If you didn't do well, it might be because you were not careful. You had a feeling that "Oh, I knew it. I should've got it right in the first place". Also, test results don't have much impact on me as they don't affect my enrolment into university or my future job.} (Fei Int I)

In general, the learners were more relaxed about sitting tests in New Zealand because of their informative and low stakes nature. An exception was Ding, who confessed that her fear for tests still lingered: "I don't want to come to school after tests because I'm scared to fail" (Ding, Int II). But overall the learners realized that the test results would not impact on their future jobs and admission to university so they used the test results as a source of feedback on their progress.

In spite of the differences, there was one aspect where examinations in New Zealand served the same purpose as in China. That is, they constituted an external incentive to learn. As the course progressed, four of them (Bing, Ding, Shan, Peng) were keen to have more exams. According to Bing,

考试是学习的一个重要部分... 要是考试，你就会有考前多下功夫，这对人总是有益的。

{Tests are an important part of learning...if you have tests, you'll make extra effort before tests. You always benefit from it.} (Bing Int II)

These learners were of the view that exams could exert pressure and "push" them to "revise" and "summarize":

...考试总会给我一些压力，人天性懒惰，要是考试，我会很认真对待，考前复习会对我产生很大影响，会很不一样...要是考前复习了，我会考好，考试帮你学习，给你压力学更多东西，考试对我最适用。

{...tests can give me some pressure. Humans are lazy by nature. But if I have tests, I will treat them seriously. The revisions before the tests had a big impact on me. They made a great difference....if I revise before exams, I can perform better. Tests help you learn and give you some pressure to learn more. For me it works very well. } (Shan, Int II)

In this respect, the impact of their previous learning experiences continued. For example, Shan's learning actions were primarily directed at preparing for tests. She admitted that "if a subject is not part of exams, I won't make any effort." (Shan, Int II). According to her,

我这个人愿意让人推，我不自立，因此，考试对我最好，它让我感到兴奋，开学初，我们每周有词汇考试，我每周都记生词，后来老师不考了，我就放松了，不再记生词了，我真希望老师能继续考我们。

{I'm a learner who prefers to be pushed. I'm not self-reliant. Therefore, tests are right for me. They make me feel excited. At the beginning of the semester, we had a weekly vocabulary test, I memorized words every week. After the teacher stopped testing vocabulary, I felt very relaxed and I didn't memorize vocabulary anymore. I wish the teacher could continue to test us.}

(Shan, Int II)

Bing's attitude towards tests in New Zealand was also shaped by his view about exams in China. He complained that 'exams in New Zealand are too easy. They don't test your real competency' (Bing Int II). He wanted to have more challenging rather than course-based, achievement tests, concluding that "tests in New Zealand are not tests at all." (Bing, Int II). For the four learners, the role of tests was primarily to motivate them to study harder. The implication is that they found it difficult to take responsibility for their own learning.

This implication is supported by other studies of Chinese learners studying overseas (Gan, 2004; Gao, 2006; Kennedy, 2002; Zhang 2005, quoted in Lê & Shi, 2006), that reported Chinese learners learned for exams and were more interested in the result of their learning than in the process of learning. In Gao's (2006) investigation of 14 Chinese learners' learning strategies in Britain, he found that the learners engaged in doing endless test papers in China. When they came to learn in Britain, "without exams, learning English became an amorphous phenomenon" (Gao, 2006, p.62). Lê & Shi (2006) also

found the mainland Chinese learners in Australia considered academic results to be the most important aim in their learning. In short, perhaps as a result of their experiences of learning English in China, Chinese students were generally not regarded as fully autonomous in the Western learning context.

There was, however, one exception to this – Fei. At both times, she was of the view that “exams don’t have a lot of impact on my learning in New Zealand. I learn at a pace that suits me. I don’t change my learning behaviour due to exams.” (Fei, Int II). In her opinion, although ‘exams provide very important evidence for my progress, there are many other ways. For example, “if I don’t look up new words as often after reading for a while, I think this is a progress.” (Fei, Int I). It is obvious that Fei became a much more autonomous learner. She assumed control over her own learning. The topic of learning autonomy will be discussed further in a later section of this chapter.

7.2.3. Emphasis on vocabulary and rote-memorisation

In this section, I first provide some background about vocabulary learning, drawing on literature on learners’ beliefs about the importance of vocabulary and on vocabulary learning strategies. Then I investigate the vocabulary learning strategy that an overwhelming majority of the learners in the study employed, rote-memorisation. Finally, I examine the vocabulary strategies used by Fei in an attempt to gain some insights into what makes her a more successful learner.

The results of research into learners’ views about vocabulary learning have been fairly conclusive: learners regard vocabulary learning as critical in their language learning. Cortazzi & Jin (1996), for example, revealed that vocabulary acquisition constituted the major learning activities of Chinese learners. This is also evidenced by the large number of supplementary books on vocabulary learning and vocabulary practice exercises in the bookstores in China. Horwitz (1999) reviewed representative studies (including American learners of French, Spanish, German, and Japanese, US university instructors of French, and Korean, Taiwanese, and Turkish heritage English as a Foreign

Language English [EFL] students) that used the BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) to identify similarities and differences in learner beliefs across cultural groups. She found that all the groups of EFL students agreed that the important part of learning a language was learning vocabulary (agreement ranging from 42% to 79% of the learners).

Given the importance of vocabulary, many language learners have been found to employ vocabulary learning strategies to help obtain, store, retrieve and use learned words (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nation 2001; Sanaoui, 1995; Schmitt 2001a). Most research on vocabulary learning strategies aims to explore the effectiveness of different strategies (Meara, 1980). Schmitt (2001a) claimed that learners usually favour mechanical strategies (e.g. simple memorization or rote learning, repetition and taking notes on vocabulary). Rote memorization involves “learning things by repeating them without thinking about them or trying to understand them” (Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners 2001: 1350). Gairns and Redman (1986, cited in Li 2004:9) described the technique like this

This involves repetition of target language items either silently or aloud and may involve writing down the items (more than once). These items commonly appear in list form; typical examples being items and their translation equivalent, items and their definitions (e.g. Nap= short sleep), paired items (e.g. hot-cold, tall-short), and irregular verbs. A common practice is for the learner to use one side of the list as prompts and cover the other side in order to test himself.

Views about rote learning vary. One view argues that “shallow strategies” like rote learning are effective for learning a great deal of vocabulary in a short time (Nation, 1982, cited in Li, 2004) and they should be put to good use if students are accustomed to using them (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). Other researchers regard rote-memorization as primitive, surface and shallow, ineffective and not conducive to creativity (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Nelson, 2001). Schmitt (2001a) argued that shallow strategies like rote learning may be more suitable for beginners and that intermediate and advanced learner can benefit from more complex and deeper strategies which require active manipulation of information. He contends that “the more one engaged with a word (deeper processing), the more likely

the word will be remembered for later use” (p.121). Research into vocabulary learning strategies has provided some evidence that some “deeper” strategies, e.g. forming associations and using the keyword method, enhance word retention better than rote repetition (Avila & Sadoski, 1996; Cohen & Apeck, 1981; Hulstijn, 1997; Joe, 1998; Meara, 1980).

Like most language learners, all the participants in this study considered vocabulary to be a fundamental aspect of their English learning. They equated English learning with learning vocabulary. They were of the view that the improvement of other aspects of English learning, e.g. listening, speaking, reading was contingent on the expansion of their vocabulary:

...只有我有足够的词才能提高听力，练习说，所以，我得巩固词汇，背更多的生词...我单词不够，要是够的话，我就能跳到上一级 [pre-intermediate],我就能听懂更多，说的更多，就像别人告诉我的那样。

{...only after I have known enough words can I improve my listening and practice speaking. So I have to consolidate my vocabulary and memorize more new words... I don't have enough vocabulary. When I do, I can jump to the next level [pre-intermediate] and I will listen more and speak more just as others have told me.} (Bing, Int I)

我相信英语学习最重要的就是要有大量的词汇做基础，要是我有大量的词，即使我语法不正确，我相信别人也能懂。

{I believe the most important aspect of English learning is to have large vocabulary as foundation. If I had plenty of words and even if I was not accurate in grammar, I believe I could be understood.} (Peng, Int I)

The data collected for this study revealed that almost all of the learners except Fei relied exclusively on rote-memorizing word lists to aid vocabulary learning at time 1. At time 2, their memory strategies expanded slightly. For example, most of them started using texts to help memorize. However, rote-memorizing word lists still remained the predominant vocabulary learning strategy. As Bing admitted

我试过很多不同的方法，比如，听录过的磁带，用句子记单词，现在我又返回到死记硬背

开学初老师发给的单词表，因为别的方法太浪费时间了。

{I tried many different ways, for example, listening to recorded tapes, memorizing words in sentences. Now I have fallen back on rote-memorizing the word lists that the teacher gave us at the beginning of the semester. That's because other methods were very time-consuming.}

(Bing, Int II)

The memorization techniques the four learners used were either visual repetition where they reported memorising a word's spelling and meaning by writing the unknown word on a piece of paper repeatedly or oral repetition where they read the word silently several times:

老师给我们一个单词表，每天下课我都到图书馆，我通常花两小时做作业，剩下的两小时背单词，把词反复写很多遍，一天要花很多时间记十到二十个单词。

{Teachers gave us a word list. Every day after class I went to the library. I normally spent two hours doing homework and the rest two hours memorizing the word list by writing the words down many, many times. It took me long time to memorize 10 to 20 words a day.}

(Bing, Task-based Int I)

每天回到家，我要把阅读材料上的单词抄到词汇本上，这包括汉语翻译和英语发音，然后，我再背，有时，我默读单词，有时我把词写下十几遍。对我来说，记单词最难，最辛苦，我总是过一两天就忘了，而且，每天阅读记听力都有更多的生词，我真想记住，可是它们好像不在脑子里扎根。

{Every day when I come home, I copy all the new words from the reading materials in my vocabulary notebook which includes Chinese translation and English pronunciation. Then I memorize them. Sometimes I read the words silently; at other times I write the words down ten times or so. For me, rote memorizing wordlists is the most difficult and the hardest. I always forget them after a couple of days of memorization. What's more, more new words from reading and listening are added each day. I really want to remember them but they seem not to sink in my memory.} (Peng, Diary: 30-08)

Why were they so fond of rote-memorization? The use of the strategy can be linked to their exam system, the transfer of their L1 vocabulary strategy to L2, the influence from their previous education and the limited vocabulary learning strategies available to them. Tracing back to ancient China, the imperial examination (see Chapter Two) mainly required candidates to memorize the *Four*

Books and Five Classics of the Confucian doctrines (Li, 2004). Even in the 21st century, “today’s university entrance system is an impact heir to its imperfect father, the imperial civil service examinations....the National University Entrance Examinations still emphasize rote learning far too much” (Crozier, 2002, p.6, cited in Li, 2004). The annual National University Entrance Examinations mainly require students to reproduce what they have learned. The high-stake exams encourage Chinese students to use rote-memorization strategies. Apart from the demand of exams, some researchers claim (e.g. Kennedy, 2002; Li, 2004) that the learning of the Chinese written system also reinforces the use of rote-memorization. Because the Chinese writing system is based on characters where there are no associations between phonetics and characters, learners have to rely primarily on repetition and rote learning to become familiar with the written form of “approximately 50,000 Chinese characters, each of which is written with specific strokes and in a specific order.” (Li, 2004, p.84). When Chinese learn a new language, particularly its vocabulary, they tend to fall back on their familiar L1 rote learning approach. Furthermore, society and teachers also promote the use of rote-memorisation:

那时老师告诉我，学英语没别的办法，就是要背，做大量练习。

{In those days, the teacher told me that there were no other ways of learning English but rote memorizing and doing ample exercises.} (Bing, Int II)

A household saying in China illustrates the importance of rote-learning:

熟读唐诗三百首，不会作诗也会吟。

{He who memorizes 300 Tang poems is able to chant a poem even if he is unable to compose one.}

All the learners in the study reported being directed to rote-memorize by their teachers throughout their education. This overwhelming emphasis on rote-memorization in their previous education means that their choice of vocabulary learning strategies was limited. Nor did their new learning experiences in New Zealand provide them with many other alternatives. All the learners reported having been provided with word lists for self-directed study but they were not given many

vocabulary learning strategies to deal with the lists. Occasionally some teachers mentioned a few strategies, e.g. grouping, miming. However, the learners did not feel competent enough to use them. As Nation (2001) pointed out, knowing a strategy does not guarantee its application, it takes time for learners to become competent users of a strategy.

Rote-memorization being central to their vocabulary learning strategy, did it assist the learners to retain the words? The answer to this question appears to be negative. Despite the efforts they expended, most learners found it problematic to retain the words they had memorized. They reported forgetting the words they memorized:

我当时能记住十到二十个词，可是第二天就忘了，我总是忘，这让我很烦。

{I can remember 10 to 20 words on the spot but I forget them the next day. I keep forgetting. It really annoys me.} (Bing, Int II)

背单词对我来说总是个问题，刚记住的词，一会儿就忘。

{Rote learning words has been a big issue for me. I forget the words immediately after I have just memorized them.} (Shan, Diary 14 Aug, 08)

我花了整个周末背单词，我把每个词写十遍左右，可还是忘...我背单词的热情在渐渐消失，随着新词的增加，我觉得记起来就更难了，真丧气。

{I spent the whole weekend to rote-memorize word lists. I wrote down each word ten times or so but I kept forgetting... My passion for memorizing words is dying gradually. With the increase of new words, I found it even harder to memorize. It's so discouraging. }

(Ding, Diary 06-08)

The results of the vocabulary tests they sat for this study also revealed that the gains in their vocabulary were minimal for most learners except Fei. In fact, Shan's 3,000-word level words even regressed. In their study of vocabulary learning strategies used by 850 Chinese university learners of English, Gu & Johnson (1996) also found that "visual repetition of new words was the strongest negative predictor of both vocabulary size and general proficiency" (P.644). The finding also supports

Schmitt's (2001) contention that "techniques that only require relatively shallow processing, such as repeatedly writing a word on a page, do not seem to facilitate retention as well" (p.121).

Like the four learners, Fei also reported relying on rote-memorization in China. However, after she came to New Zealand, she changed her view. She regarded rote-memorization as "boring", "inflexible" and "primitive" (Diary 20-08). She found it especially problematic to use words that had been memorized in isolation in communication. She questioned "even though I have rote learned some words, what is the use of them if I can't use them?" (Diary 20-08) Therefore, she chose not to do "what I did in China – rote learning word lists" (Int I). At time 1 and time 2, she employed what Oxford and Crookall (1990) classified as "fully contextualizing technique" where reading, listening, speaking and writing were used to provide full context for learning vocabulary. Fei named it as "returning to the text" and "returning to the story":

学词汇最有效的方法就是回到课文中，回到故事里，因为课文都是老师在课上讲过的，有了深刻的理解，所以就容易记，有时我在阅读中遇到熟悉的词，查过字典后，我就会想起在哪儿学过这个词，然后我再返回去，再把课文读一遍，下次就忘不了这个词了。这个方法对我很适合，前提是我得利用各种机会在其他阅读中再遇到我已经知道的词。

{...the most efficient strategy to learn vocabulary is to return to the text and return to the story. As the text was explained by the teacher in class, it is easier to memorize the words with a deeper understanding. Sometimes I encountered a familiar word while reading a story. Having looked the word up in the dictionary, I would be reminded of in which text I had learned the word. I would then go back to read the text again. Next time I wouldn't forget the word. The strategy works well for me on the condition that I have taken every opportunity to come across the words that I have recently learned in other readings} (Diary: 12 Nov)

As she found "memorizing new words through reading much easier" (Int II), she reported spending most of her time in the library reading "interesting English books" of the kind that she also enjoyed in Chinese, e.g. books on biography, history, geography etc. The technique she used was as follows:

我通常把我读的东西抄下来...当我抄课文的时候,我会空一行,我用蓝笔把我不懂的词画上线,哦,对了,在我读的时候,我尽量不查字典,我猜意思,然后,回家后,我再查我不认识的词看看我猜的对不对,这很有意思,然后,我把不认识的生词在空行里用英语把生词的意思写上,在把课文读过几遍之后,我就能把课文及生词理解得更好...最后,我把所有的生词都抄到词汇本上,我写上音标,主要的意思,特殊的表达法,有时还写上有趣的用法...因为我是从课文中抄的句子,还有字典中的例句,我就用那些句子帮助记忆。

{I normally copied down what I read... As I was copying the text, I left a line in between.

I used a blue pen to underline the words that I don't know. Oh, I tried not to look up the meaning in dictionary while I was reading. I guessed meaning. I then looked up those words that I didn't understand after I arrived at home to see if my guessing was correct. This was more interesting. Then I wrote the meaning of the new words in English in the blank line. After reading the same text for several times, I could understand the text and the words much better... Lastly, I copied all the new words in a vocabulary notebook where I recorded their pronunciation, their main meanings, special expressions and sometimes interesting usage... because I copied sentences from the text and also example sentences from the dictionary, I would then use those sentences to help memorize.} (Fei, Int I)

In addition to using “memorizing new words through texts” and “guessing from context”, she also used what Schmitt (2001) refers to as a social vocabulary learning strategy to help her “learn new words from other people and use the words I have learned before in communication” (S.R. I, 03-09). She also used rote learning, particularly for collocations, e.g. “cater for”, “participate in” (Diary: 16-08).

Fei's commitment to vocabulary learning and the varied and deeper nature of her vocabulary learning strategies were reflected in her remarkable gains across the three vocabulary tests: 3% for 2,000- word level test (the small gain was because she almost reached the ceiling at time 1), 63% for 3,000-word level test and 26% for university word level test.

Fei was clearly a more successful learner and her approach involved in a deeper level. This was evident in:

- (1) The number of strategies. Fei had a number of strategies to draw on in her vocabulary learning. These included reading, natural exposure, memorization, use of English-English dictionary, guessing words in the context, etc. Rote-memorization formed only one part of her actively used strategies.
- (2) Active orchestration. She was conscious of her learning and actively involved in the management and orchestration of her strategies to cater for the learning tasks at hand.
- (3) A good reader and user. Unlike other learners in the study, Fei's learning was not confined to the course materials. She read extensively and was actively involved with the new words in other contexts, e.g. reading and communication. The number of encounters enhanced the retention of the words she learned.

To sum up, all the learners in this study regarded vocabulary as critical in their language learning. Four of them resorted to rote-memorization to tackle the problem due to the influence of their cultural and educational experiences in China and their limited resources of vocabulary learning strategies. Fei outperformed the others in all three vocabulary tests. The difference seems to lie in their use of vocabulary learning strategies. While Fei employed deeper processing strategies, the rest relied on surface rote-memorization strategies. The study supports the general findings in the literature that vocabulary learning strategies that involve the depth of processing are better for word retention (e.g. Cohen & Apheck, 1981; Hulstijn, 1997).

7.2.4. Approach to language learning

In this section, drawing on the theory of cognitive dissonance by Festinger (1957), I first discuss the changes in the learners' approach to language learning which shifted from focusing on the formal properties of the language, e.g. grammar, to emphasizing its communicative function. I will then account for the changes. In the end, I discuss two exceptions to the general trend of changes.

The theory of cognitive dissonance was developed by Festinger (1957). It concerns the relations which exist between cognitive elements. These elements of cognition refer to “any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one’s behaviour” (Festinger, 1957, p.3). Examples of cognitive elements of a language learner can be: “I know I am a language learner” (about oneself); “I know I read grammar reference books a lot” (about one’s behaviour); “I know I live in an English speaking country” (about the surroundings). Festinger (1957) states that three relations may exist between the elements: irrelevance, dissonance and consonance. He argues that individuals tend to seek consonance among their cognitive elements. When there is a dissonance, psychological discomfort will motivate the person to resolve the dissonance and achieve consonance. For example, if a learner holds a belief that it is wrong to cheat, yet he finds himself cheating on an exam, he will feel uncomfortable about this and be motivated to eliminate the dissonance. There are three ways to reduce dissonance:

- (1) Change the dissonant beliefs so that they are no longer inconsistent. For example, the dissonant relation between the two cognitive elements “I know it is wrong to cheat” and “I know that I cheat on an exam” could be changed to a consonant relation in one of two ways. The person might change the first cognitive element to “I know it is OK to cheat”, or he might change the second to “I know that I will never cheat again”.
- (2) Add new cognitive elements that are consonant with the dissonant elements. Thus, in the example above, a new cognitive element “I know that the test results will be invalidated” may be introduced.
- (3) Reduce the importance of one or both elements in the dissonant relation. A person might decide that the test where he cheated was not significant. Or he may say to himself that everyone cheated, so what? In other words, the person rationalizes his action in a different manner or context so that it no longer appears to be inconsistent with his beliefs.

The learners' beliefs about language learning in this study underwent a noticeable change between time 1 and time 2. At the outset of the study, all the learners except Fei adopted an analytical approach to language learning, perceiving language as a system which was made up of discrete grammatical rules. They shared the view that the aim of language learning was to master the explicit grammatical system and memorize vocabulary lists cumulatively, bit by bit:

我学语言就是要学好语法规则。要是懂这些规则，你就会照更多类似句子，要是没语法知识做基础，你最终没法把英语提高上去。

{I think language learning is about learning the [explicit] grammar rules. If you understand them, you can generate more similar sentences. If you don't have this knowledge of grammar as foundation, you can't improve English ultimately.} (Shan, Int I)

我认为语言学习的首要就是要背单词，学语法，特别是句子结构...要是有足够的词汇和语法知识，我就会听的更多，说的更多，就像别人说的那样。

{I believe the most important of all in language learning is to memorize the words and to learn about its [explicit] grammar rules, esp. sentence structures...after I have had enough vocabulary and grammar knowledge, I will then be able to listen more and speak more like what other people have said.} (Bing, Int I)

Horwitz (1987) pointed out when learners held "a restricted view of language learning", they would almost certainly "invest the majority of their time in memorising vocabulary lists and grammar rules at the expense of other language learning activities" (p.123-124). In the same vein, Stern (1990) claimed people who adopted analytical approaches focused on specific features of language, e.g. grammar and pronunciation and paid close attention to accuracy and error avoidance. At time 1, the four learners (Peng, Bing, Shan and Ding) all attended to the formal properties of the language and showed a great concern for accuracy. In the classroom, they expected their teachers to correct errors all the time. Outside the classroom the typical learning actions that the learners reported taking included consulting grammar books to clarify grammar rules they learned in class; doing discrete grammar

exercises; memorizing vocabulary lists; going through the corrective feedback from teachers; revising their grammar test papers and summarizing the types of grammar errors they made.

However, at time 2, three of them changed their beliefs about the nature of language learning. They started noticing the communicative function of the language, believing that language learning involved more than memorizing and learning rules in the classroom and that it was vital to use L2 for communication. They were of the view that speaking constituted an important part of their language learning and that they should learn the language by using it through communication:

我认为用英语应该是首要。这是英语国家，要是我英语不好，生活就会很艰难，学好英语，你要大量使用它，要多听，多读，不停地说，对我来说，最好的办法就是使用它，你得找机会练说。

{ I think using the language in communication should stay the primary focus [in language learning]. This is an English speaking country. If my English isn't good, life will be hard and difficult. To learn English well, you have to use it in real life extensively. You have to listen extensively, read widely and speak continuously...The best way for me is to use it. You have to find opportunities to practise speaking. } (Bing, Int II)

以前我认为语法是英语学习的基础，我应该把精力集中在英语的准确性上，可问题是当我出去时，我听不懂别人说什么，我也不能流利地交流，我学的越多就越感到听说的重要性，最终，他们是交流的基本手段。

{ Before I thought grammar was the foundation of English learning. I should focus on the accuracy of my English. But the problem is I can't understand people when I go out. Neither can I communicate fluently. The more I learn, the more I realize the importance of listening and speaking. At the end of the day, they are the basic and fundamental means of communication. }

(Shan Int II)

What triggered the changes? In line with Festinger's theory of dissonance, at time 1, the beliefs they held were that "learning English was about mastering its grammar rules" (Shan) and that "I have to read grammar books and do heaps of grammar exercises" (Ding). These beliefs reflected the education they received in China and the social environment they had been in. As discussed earlier,

instruction in China focused on forms, aiming to enable learners' mastery of grammatical and lexical items rather than develop their communicative competence. When learners invested their time and energy in learning explicit grammar rules and doing grammar exercises, they would be rewarded in the exams. The EFL setting meant English was barely used socially. Therefore, their beliefs about learning and learning behaviours were consonant with the Chinese context. However, when they came to the new environment, New Zealand, they all realized the need to be able to communicate with people in English in real life. The classroom teaching also aimed to foster learners' communicative competence. The learners had to engage in communication with their teachers, their fellow classmates and in the outside community. In this new learning and social environment, the learners found that the explicit grammar rules they had learned did not help them much in speaking and listening most of the time. On the contrary, they became less fluent when they focused on accuracy. The dissonance between the existing belief that "learning English was about mastering grammar rules" and the new belief about the need to develop communicative skills exerted pressure on the learners to change their existing beliefs or bring "*the appropriate cognitive elements into correspondence with that reality*" (Festinger, 1975, p.11, italics original). Consequently, the beliefs that "learning English was about using it for communication" (Shan) and that "you have to find opportunities to use the language" (Bing) were introduced in place of the previous beliefs.

Ding and Fei were two exceptions to this pattern. Their views about the nature of language learning remained similar between times 1 and 2. However, they held contrasting views. In Ding's opinion,

学就是要知道我用的时态是否正确...我希望学得更正规些, 更传统些, 我不想我的句子缺词少字的。

{The important thing in English learning is about its grammar and vocabulary. All the other skills are OK. I want to know if the tenses I use are correct or not...I hope I can learn more formally and more traditionally. I don't want my sentences to miss out some words.}

(Ding, Int I)

把句子搞准确太重要了，你要学的就是准确，纠正错误的写法，错误的时态，是用正确的时态让别人听懂你的意思，那也就是我来这儿学的原因。

{It is very important to get sentences correct. What you are learning is about accuracy, to get your wrong writing and wrong tenses corrected, and to let others understand your meaning by using different tenses correctly. That's why I came here [the school] to learn.} (Ding, S.R. II)

At both times 1 and 2, grammar remained the focus of her learning. Her learning revolved around the formal aspects of the language features, e.g. grammatical and lexical items. Unlike all the other learners, she did not regard New Zealand as a place where she would live permanently. In the long run, she wanted to go back to live in China. In addition, she did not like Kiwis, regarding them as “racists”(Int I & II). She confessed that “I am not interested in engaging in conversation with Kiwis” (Ding, Int II). She was resistant to changing her belief about the environment: “I live in an English speaking country” and other cognitive beliefs, e.g. “I need to communicate with people”. In that sense, she still lived in her own reality where no need arose for changing her existing beliefs.

Like Ding, Fei's beliefs remained similar at times 1 and 2. But her views about the nature of language learning were the opposite of Ding's. At both times 1 and 2, Fei was of the view that learning English was about using it through communication:

我认为使用语言有两层含义，一是口头应用，这很重要，因为你要与外界交流，你首先要口头使用语言，然后，你要想表达深层意思，就得使用书面语言，口头和书面语言同等要，但你得首先克服口头语言障碍。

{I believe the most important part of learning is to be able to use the language. Using the language means two things. Firstly, it is in the oral application. It is very important because if you want to communicate with outside world, you first use the language orally. Then if you want to express profound meanings, you have to use written language. Oral and written forms of the language are equally important. But you have to overcome the oral language barrier first. }

(Fei, Int I)

现在我在说英语的环境学英语，我不再死记硬背了，反之，我在日常生活中学，通过和我周围的人交流学，我得利用这儿的英语环境。我相信即使我不到学校学，只要我和当地人交流，我的英语也会提高，特别是听和说。

{Now I'm learning English in an English speaking environment. I don't rote learn anymore. Instead, I learn through daily life, through communicating with people around me. I have to utilize the English environment. I believe even if I don't come to learn at school, my English will improve as well, especially in terms of speaking and listening as long as I talk with locals.}

(Fei, Int II)

From the very beginning of her learning, she was very clear about the ultimate goal of her language learning, that is, "to express myself freely when I have conversations with Kiwis" (Int I). To achieve the goal, she took every opportunity in real life. Fei's beliefs about the communicative function of the language and her learning behaviours are consistent with each other and also with the reality at both times. As the course progressed, they were reinforced.

To sum up, four learners came to school endorsing the importance of learning grammatical rules and memorizing vocabulary lists explicitly. As the course progressed, three of them found their beliefs were dissonant with the reality. They felt uncomfortable about their inability to communicate freely and adequately in real life. To reduce the discomfort, they changed their belief from grammar oriented to communication oriented.

7.2.5. Contact with English outside the institution

In this section, I discuss the effect of learning settings on the learners' contact with English outside the institution. A number of SLA theories have been established to account for the role of social factors in L2 acquisition. Schumann's (1975; 1976; 1986) acculturation model seeks to explain the acquisition of an L2 by immigrants in majority language settings. Specifically, it accounts for differences in learners' rate of language development and their ultimate level of achievement in terms of the extent to which they adapt to the target-language culture. Because all my participants were immigrants learning English in an English-speaking country, New Zealand, and the purpose of this section is to examine the impact of social context on their L2 learning, I chose Schumann's model as well-suited to throw light on this phenomenon. Drawing on this model, I will examine the nature of the

contact that the different learners experienced and account for the factors that influence the extent to which learners achieve contact with English speakers.

In recent years, researchers have shown a growing interest in the social aspects of SLA (Atkinson, 2002; Brown, 1980; Norton, 1997, 2000; Schumann, 1975, 1976, 1978b). The aim has been to “afford an integrated account of the social and cognitive dimensions of L2 use and acquisition” (Ellis, 2008, p. 279). Among different variables that sociolinguistic SLA investigated, settings or contexts have been the focus of many studies (Batstone, 2002; Collentine & Freed, 2004; Lafford, 2004). Ellis (2008) defined settings as “the milieu in which learning takes place” (2008, p.286). The milieu that the learners under this study experienced was what Ellis (2008) classified as natural settings which “arise in the course of the learners’ contact with other speakers of L2 in a variety of situations – in the work place, at home, through the media, at international conferences, in business meetings, etc.” (p.288). Specifically they live and learn in majority-language settings (Judd, 1978, cited in Ellis, 2008) where L2 is used in both informal and institutional communication and their L1, Chinese, has very limited functional value.

In majority-language settings, many factors affect the extent to which learners achieve contact with English speakers. Schumann (1978b, 1986) contended that second language acquisition was determined by the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target-language group. In accordance with Schumann’s acculturation model, learners’ acculturation, defined as “the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language (TL) group” (Schumann, 1986, p.379), depends on two sets of factors which determine their level of social distance and psychological distance (Schumann, 1975, 1976, 1986). Social distance deals with the extent to which individual learners become members of the target-language group and gain contact with them. It consists of a number of parameters:

- (1) Social dominance: in terms of political, cultural, technical or economic status, the L2 group can be dominant, non-dominant or subordinate in relation to the TL group. Both dominant and

subordinate relationships limit contact between the two groups whereas non-dominant or equal relationships facilitate intergroup contact and enhance L2 acquisition.

- (2) Integration pattern: In terms of cultural patterns involving life-style and values, the L2 group might adopt assimilation (i.e. give up its own life-style and values), acculturation (i.e. adopt lifestyle and values of TL group, while maintaining its own) or preservation (i.e. the L2 group completely rejects the life-style and values of the TL group). Schumann argues that the first two patterns are equally effective in promoting L2 acquisition; however, preservation increases social distance and thus impedes L2 acquisition.
- (3) Enclosure referring to structural aspects of integration where low enclosure (i.e. the L2 group shares the same social facilities) is more conducive to intergroup contact and to L2 acquisition than high enclosure (i.e. the L2 group has separate social facilities).
- (4) Cohesiveness: The L2 group may be cohesive where they stay separate from the TL group and thus cause social distance.
- (5) Size: If the L2 group is large, the members may keep more intra group contact than inter group contact, which may be unfavourable to L2 acquisition.
- (6) Cultural congruence: The culture of the L2 group may be similar or different from that of the TL group. If it is similar, it encourages integration and facilitates L2 acquisition.
- (7) Attitude: The L2 group and TL group may hold positive or negative attitudes towards each other. Favourable attitude increases contact and enhances L2 acquisition and vice versa.
- (8) Intended length of residence: longer stay of the L2 group is likely to develop more extensive contacts with the TL group, reduce social distance and promote L2 acquisition.

Psychological distance, on the other hand, focuses on personal rather than group dimension including language shock, culture shock, motivation and ego-permeability. Schumann (1978a, 1986) posited that social factors are primary. The psychological factors mainly become significant when the influence of social factors on acculturation is neither clearly positive nor negative.

In his early work, Schumann (1976) argued a given learning situation could be “good” or “bad”, depending on the extent to which social distance is promoted. He assumed that the greater the social distance between the TL and the L2 group, the more difficult it is for the L2 group to acquire the language. In other words, the amount of contact that L2 learners have with TL speakers affects the extent that L2 acquisition takes place.

A close examination of the data collected for this study indicated that a change took place in terms of contacts with English outside the institution for all the learners. At time 1, all the learners reported watching Chinese TV, listening to the Chinese radio and that they barely used English for communication in the real world. Their English learning activities revolved around the course requirements and the demand from exams and were limited to the institution and home:

我课后根本没有用英语的机会，现在我是全职上学，我早上和老师学，下午呆在图书馆，大多数同学都是这样，要是他们没去图书馆，他们就呆在家学...回家后，全是中文，我们没有很多Kiwi邻居。

{I don't have any chance to use English after class. I'm a full-time student now. I learn with teachers in the morning and in the afternoon I stay in the library. Most students are like this. If they don't go to the library, they stay at home to study...after I go home, everything is in Chinese. We don't have many Kiwi neighbours.} (Bing, Int I)

我课后很少有机会用英语，在家我们说汉语，我的朋友都是中国人...多数情况下，我看中文电视节目，偶尔我看英语新闻，但很难，我听不懂。

{I have little opportunity to use English after class. At home we speak Chinese and my friends are all Chinese...most of the time I watch Chinese TV programmes. Occasionally I watch English news but it was too difficult. I couldn't understand.} (Peng, Int I)

However, at time 2, they had all started using social learning strategies. Specifically they consciously exposed themselves to English outside the institution. All of them reported noticing English around them. Ding, for instance, reported learning words from the real world:

当我出去，走在大街上，我四处瞧瞧，看看哪些词我不认识...只要我在饭店，大街上的宣传广告，或是车身上的广告看到不认识的词，我就问Jason或查字典，我觉得这办法挺有

用，学到的词也实用。

{When I go out walking on the street, I look around me and see which words I don't know... Whenever I saw some new words in the restaurant menu, on the billboards or on the bus body, I'd either ask Jason [her boy friend] or look them up in the dictionary. I found the method useful. The words are very practical. } (Ding, S.R. 1)

Peng reported attempting to read English newspapers and commercial flyers in his letterbox. Four learners (Peng, Bing, Fei and Ding) reported watching English TV programmes, hiring English DVDs and listening to the English radio programmes. By doing so, they aimed to nurture their feel for the L2:

想看电影很有趣，因为有情节，即使你不懂英语，也能懂。要是我看一段时间，看很多遍，我相信我的听力渐渐会提高，我会培养一种语感。

{I think that watching movies is very interesting. There is a plot. You will understand it even if you can't follow their English. If I watch movies for a while and for many times, I believe gradually my listening will improve and I will nurture the feel for the language.} (Fei, Int II)

英语学习是一种养成习惯的过程，要是我坚持看电影，我就会知道他们是怎样表达日常生活发生的事情，这样将来有一天我就有可能做同样事情。

{English learning is a process of forming a habit. If I keep watching films, I will know how they [native speakers] express what happens in daily life. I will then be able to do it myself one day.} (Peng, Int II)

The most remarkable change of all was that at time 1, none of them attempted to communicate in L2 with native speakers or with people from other countries, whereas at time 2, all of them except Ding tried to do so both in and outside the institution. They all reported employing some compensation or communication strategies to make up for their linguistic deficiency which neither of them except Fei did at time 1. Some of the compensation/communication strategies they used included asking people to write down what they said (Shan), asking for clarification (all of them), using gestures (all), substituting complex concepts with simple words (all), resorting to L1(all) and paraphrasing (Fei).

Despite the changes, the learners varied remarkably in both the quantity and quality of their exposure to the target language and commitments to language use. For four of them (Peng, Shan, Ding,

Bing) the contact with L2 was minimal, while for Fei, it was a conscious and concerted effort. Several reasons are accountable for their lack of contact with speakers of English. Drawing on Schumann’s acculturation model, table 19 illustrates the social distance between the TL group and Chinese group in the eyes of these learners.

Table 19. An Analysis of Social Distance of the Chinese Group in New Zealand

Social dominance			Integration pattern			Enclosure		Cohesiveness		Size		Cultural Congruence		Attitude		Intended length of residence	
Dominant	Subordinate	Equal	Assimilation	Acculturation	Preservation	High enclosure	Low enclosure	Cohesive	Non-cohesive	Large	Small	Similar	Different	Positive	Negative	Longer stay	Shorter stay
	√				√	√		√			√		√	√		√	

Using Schumann’s (1976) criteria for “good” and “bad” learning situations, the L2 learning situation in New Zealand for the learners can be described as bad. Although their attitudes towards Kiwis were predominantly positive; they intended to stay in New Zealand longer, and their size was small, they lived in a highly enclosed and cohesive community where they maintained their own culture and life-style. For example, the community was very self-sufficient as far as its social facilities were concerned. It had its own supermarkets, law firms, churches, TV and radio stations, accounting and travel agencies etc. When it came down to the shared social facilities, e.g. banks, libraries, hospitals, a person of Chinese origin could either find a Chinese speaking staff member or ask for a translator for help or select the Chinese language line when talking to government agencies such as IRD (Inland Revenue Department). This implies that they had little opportunity for contact with the TL community and that there was neither urgency nor immediacy for a Chinese speaker to use English for survival needs. In this regard, the social distance between the two groups is great and the extent to which the Chinese and Kiwi groups maintain contact is minimal. This may explain why none of them

made a Kiwi friend, even though some of them had lived in New Zealand for a number of years (e.g. 6 years for Bing). The following quote indicates the kind of frustrations they experienced:

我真想交许多 Kiwi 朋友，可怎么交？我周围全是中国人，当我回家时，我用中文聊天。看中文节目，因为我们家里人都看中文，我也想过在网上交些 Kiwi，可是，我担心我的安全，要是我被人欺骗了怎么办？除了课上的机会外，我真的没机会用语言交流。

{I really want to make more Kiwi friends but how? Around me are all Chinese. When I come home, we talk in Chinese and watch Chinese programmes because the family do. I thought about finding some Kiwis on the internet but I was concerned about my safety. What if I was cheated? I really don't have opportunities to communicate in the language except at the school.}

(Peng, S.R. II)

In addition to the social factors, their limited language proficiency level may also contribute to their lack of contact with the TL group. For example, Bing got to know a Kiwi student in the institution library. Later he was invited to play football with him. But the contact was short lived, lasting only two weeks. He described the experience as follows:

开始时，当你不认识时，你会会有很多交谈，随着交流的深入，你的话题就会变得越来越窄... 我可以和一个中国人聊很多话题和时势，可要我和他们用英语交谈，我不行，我没有足够的词汇，以我有限的词汇，每和他交流一次，话题就窄一次，最后，你就没有任何话题可谈，就像这样... 所以那天我再和他通电话，他不再想跟我一起出去了。

{At the beginning, when you were a stranger, you had a lot to talk about. As the communication went deeper, the topics became more and more narrow....I can talk with a Chinese for a long time on a range of topics and current affairs but I can't talk about them in English. I don't have enough vocabulary. With the limited vocabulary that I had, the topics were narrowed down each time I had a conversation with him. In the end, you [meaning we] didn't have anything to talk about. It was just like this... so the other day when I rang him, he didn't want to go out with me anymore.}

(Bing, S.R. I)

That was Bing's one-off brief L2 experience with a Kiwi. Clearly the deficiency in his linguistic resources, vocabulary in particular, constituted major barriers to maintaining the relationship.

Finally, all of them except Fei were concerned about their accuracy rather than fluency. This meant that they were not willing to take risks in their language use. According to Shan,

当我们出去时，通常都是我丈夫或我儿子替我说，我不说，除非我非常确认我说的是正确的，我才肯说，我经不起由于我的错误让别人嘲笑，那会是很丢脸。

{When we went out, it was usually my husband or my son who talked on my behalf. I didn't talk unless I was very sure what I said was correct. I couldn't afford to be laughed at due to my errors. It would be a loss of face.} (Shan, S.R.I)

Their unwillingness to take risks, the lack of language proficiency and the considerable social distance between the Chinese and Kiwi community mean that most of them missed informal learning and communication opportunities in naturalistic settings. Even though they lived in a country where the target language serves as the native language, they had to resort exclusively to the educational, formal setting to provide opportunities for language use.

Fei experienced similar social distance as the other learners but her psychological factors were different. In terms of language shock, while the other learners were concerned about getting their English accurate to avoid losing “face”, she prioritized fluency over accuracy in language use. She said,

我脸皮厚，说的时候，我不怕出错，丢脸，重要的是我能从错中学，取得进步。

{I have a thick-skinned face. I'm not afraid of making errors and losing my face when I speak. The important thing is to learn from the mistakes and make progress} (Fei, S.R.II)

Instead of experiencing culture and language shock or staying distant from the Kiwi community, she was excited about the differences between the two cultures and keen to explore the differences and foster understanding of each other. She reported reading books about New Zealand history, getting involved in local events and taking every opportunity to communicate with native speakers. She went to home shows, seminars and concerts to experience and understand the target culture. She even saw shopping as an occasion to start up a social conversation with Kiwis and talk about Chinese culture:

我没Kiwi朋友，我经常上街，买东西很容易，可是当他们不忙时，我就主动找话题和他们交谈 我很高兴和Kiwi交流。很多Kiwi都没去过中国，所以不是很了解中国，有些去过的，也是很久以前去的，我会用这个机会跟他们讲述中国的文化，历史，及中国的变化，他们很感兴趣，我也有一种成就感。

{I don't have Kiwi friends. I go shopping a lot. Shopping is easy but when they [shop assistants] were not busy, I initiated topics to talk with them. Many Kiwis have never been to China and don't know much about China. I would take the opportunity to talk with them about Chinese culture, history and recent changes in China. They were interested and I also had a sense of achievement.}

(Fei, S.R.I)

In terms of motivation, unlike the other learners who seemed to be motivated only instrumentally, e.g. getting a job or continuing to study, Fei seems to have had both an integrative and instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). She wrote in her diary

其实，作为一个外来者，总是把自己置身于一个外人的角色也许并不是多明智的一种做法，我的几个这里的朋友，几乎都是这样，虽然来了好多年，但是依旧徘徊在中国人的圈子里，我不想这样，我认为既然我到了外国，那末我就要打造一个完全不同的生活圈，在中国我有中国式的圈子，在这里我就该拥有这里的生活圈，也许生活才更丰富多彩。

{Actually, as an immigrant, it may not be wise to place yourself in the role of an outsider. A few friends of mine are all like this. Although they have been here [New Zealand] for many years, they are still hanging around the Chinese circle. I don't want to be like this. In my view, since I am in another country, I will establish a completely different circle. In China I had a Chinese circle. Here I should have a local circle, which may enrich my life.} (Diary 18-09-08)

Even though she lived in the Chinese circle, she challenged the social factors that inhibited her learning and created opportunities to establish contact with the TL group.

These psychological reasons may contribute to Fei's improvements in all three measurements in the oral task: fluency, accuracy and complexity. In contrast, Ding regressed in all three measurements; Shan and Bing only progressed in one measurement (Shan in fluency, Bing in accuracy) and Peng in two measurements.

This study revealed that although the learners reported having more contact with English outside the institution, their contact appears to be non-interactive in nature due to the social distance between the Chinese and Kiwi community, their concerns for accuracy and their limited language proficiency. In contrast, Fei utilised the learning environment and sought out opportunities outside the

institution. The contact and communication opportunities she created seem to have contributed to her language gains, particularly in oral proficiency.

7.2.6. Attitudes towards pair/group work

The notion of collaborative learning has now become an integral part of a learning or learner-centred classroom. Pair/group work is perceived as an effective instructional technique to help learners develop communicative competence. The use of pair/group work has received much support from both theoretical and pedagogical arguments (Ellis, 2008; McDonough, 2004). The most frequently cited benefits are the amount of interactional opportunities it provides for learners to develop L2 fluency as opposed to other teacher-fronted classrooms (Long, 1980b; 1981; 1983; 1985b; Pica & Doughty, 1985b) and the practice it offers students for forming hypotheses about the target language (Swain, 1985). Another advantage is the variety of sociolinguistic discourse that pair/group work exposes learners to (Pica & Doughty, 1985b; Jacobs, 1998, cited in Ellis, 2008). When learners engage in meaningful communications, they take on a wide range of roles. This may allow their discourse to move beyond sentence-level and increase their chance of using a variety of speech acts, such as requesting and clarifying. Added to these interactional and social linguistic benefits are affective advantages of using pair and small group activities. These include reducing learners' anxiety, providing a supportive and secure learning environment, catering for different learning styles, increasing motivation and enjoyment, involving learners actively in the learning process. Finally, pair/group work is also claimed to promote learner autonomy and self-directed learning and foster social integration (Davis, 1997; Jacobs, 1998, cited in Ellis, 2008).

However, researchers have also expressed some concerns about the use of pair/group work (Pica, 1994a; 1994b). Ellis (2008) pointed out the ephemeral nature of spoken discourse means that learners may find it difficult to process input they have received from their partners and turn it into intake. Another problem concerns the interlanguage or peer input that may increase the availability to

L2 learners of non-native, potentially ungrammatical samples of target English produced by their peers, which may lead to “a stabilized non-target variety” (Pica & Doughty, 1985a, p.246). However, some findings provide evidence that this may not be the case (Porter, 1986; Pica & Doughty, 1985b). Another related issue is the possibility that learners rarely attend to grammatical accuracy while performing communicative tasks (Williams, 1999, cited in Ellis, 2008). There is also a concern about inequality of contribution and effort among group members (Foster, 1998). Despite its limitations, Pica (1994a) claimed that group work has a definite role in the classroom. Ellis (2008) also argued that “group work can provide the interactional conditions which have been hypothesized to facilitate acquisition more readily than can interaction involving teachers” (p.815).

Although the use of pair/small group has become increasingly popular in the ESL classroom, empirical research studies into learners’ perspectives are surprisingly thin. Even less is known about Chinese students’ perceptions. Comparative studies of teacher and student views about the usefulness of classroom activities (Alcorso & Kalantzis, 1985; Ellis & Low, 1985; Hawkey, 2006; Nunan, 1988; Peacock, 1998b) have shown that there is a considerable mismatch between the two. While learners often favour traditional activities (e.g. error correction, grammar instruction), teachers favour communicative activities (e.g. pair and group work). Peacock (1998b), for example, compared teachers’ perceptions about the degree of usefulness of eleven classroom activities with those of learners in a Hong Kong university. He found, among other things, that group work was ranked bottom by the learners but second by the teachers; pair work was ranked top by teachers but sixth by the learners. Hawkey (2006) found similar results. The perceptions of learners and teachers varied in terms of the importance of grammar and pair work in their classes.

A handful of studies have focused exclusively on learner’s perceptions of classroom activities. Barkhuizen (1998), for example, investigated high school ESL learners’ perceptions of fifteen classroom activities in a South African context. The results were similar to those of other comparative studies: learners preferred traditional activities focusing on mechanical language skills to

communicative-type activities. However, different results were reported by Rao (2002a). In his study of thirty Chinese EFL university students' views about communicative and non-communicative activities, he found that most of the students favoured a combination of communicative and non-communicative activities. Six out of ten non-communicative activities were endorsed by a majority of students in comparison to four out of nine communicative activities. What was more interesting was that almost all the students stated they liked group work and pair work and getting involved in student-student interaction, considering it an opportunity to practice spoken English.

Léger & Storch (2009) took a different approach by examining thirty-two learners' (French L2) attitudes to oral activities to detect their readiness for willingness to communicate (WTC). The study suggests that the learners' perceptions affected their WTC in a range of ways. As learners' self-confidence grew, their WTC with teacher-fronted interaction increased. However, their WTC with peers in small groups was not consistent and was affected by their mixed perceptions of small group work. Some students felt more vocal with peers in small group work and perceived it as an opportunity to speak more while others considered it 'unauthentic', 'a little embarrassing', 'awkward' to speak in the L2 with their classmates and their WTC was affected by group affiliation. For example, some group members were not willing to speak in the L2 or to remain focused on the task.

In sum, previous studies suggest that learners' attitudes towards pair/group work have not been straightforward. More studies are needed with a focus on the links between their views and their interactional behavior.

All the learners in the study did not express their views about pair/group work at time 1 as they had never experienced it in China. As Shan pointed out, "In China I didn't feel learning had anything to do with my fellow students. Teacher talk dominated and you learned on your own" (Shan, Int I). As their learning experience expanded, they experienced more group/pair work in their new learning context in New Zealand. Consequently, at time 2, a new belief emerged about collaborative learning in the classroom. Similar to the results in Léger & Storch (2009) study, the learners' views about working

in pairs/groups were not uniform. There were two opposing views. One view (Peng, Shan, Fei) was positive, regarding pair/group work as a learning and social opportunity:

我喜欢俩人或小组活动，因为要是我一个人学，我会很容易枯燥，要是我和人一起做活动，我们可以讨论问题，想答案，促进理解...有些人比我的词汇大，我可能不知道一些词的意思，他们会教我。

{I like pair/group work because if I learn by myself, I will easily get bored. If we do some activities with partners, we can discuss the questions, think of answers, deepen understanding and form an agreed solution...some of them may have larger vocabulary than me. I may not know the meaning of some words and they can teach me.} (Peng, S.R.I)

This view conforms to the notion of mediation through social interaction in socio-cultural SLA (Lantolf, 2000a, 2000b, 2006). Learning was not perceived as an individual activity but as a process of sharing with other persons through collaboration, joint scaffolding and co-construction. During the process of collaborative dialoguing (Swain, 2000), Peng found himself assisting (e.g. ‘discuss questions’, ‘think of answers’) and being assisted (e.g. ‘teach’ each other) to achieve a goal (e.g. ‘form an agreed solution’) which he was not able to perform independently. In this sense, working with peers may have helped him cognitively (e.g. building his vocabulary knowledge about the L2) as well as socially and affectively (e.g. increasing enjoyment and social integration).

Another advantage was the opportunity that pair and group work provided for using what had been learned in class and focusing on form. According to Fei,

它能帮我巩固学过的知识，特别是当我们俩人一起做那些语法为中心的说的练习，我强迫自己注意我的准确性，这很好。

{it [pair and group work] can help me consolidate what I learned. Especially when we did those grammar focused speaking activities in pairs, I forced myself to pay attention to my accuracy. It is really good.} (Fei, S.R. I)

Fei's comments have lent support to the argument that pair and group work can provide learners with opportunities to focus on form and produce pushed output (Swain, 1985). In his study of learners' participation in a Thai context, McDonough (2004) reported that learners who participated more during the pair and small group activities demonstrated improved production of the target form.

Finally, the three learners, Peng, Fei and Shan, all regarded pair/group work as a communication opportunity they were keen to make full use of. As discussed in the previous section, although they were all eager to achieve communicative competence, the learners did not have much contact with the TL group due to the high enclosure of the community they lived in. To fill the gap between their needs for language use and their lack of opportunities outside the classroom, they regarded classrooms as an important platform where they felt secure, less anxious and willing to communicate. They preferred to work with people from other countries in order to avoid using their L1 and maximize speaking opportunities. In their view, working with fellow students who were from other cultural backgrounds could not only "force [them] to use English" (Peng, S.R. I) but also "reshape" their thinking:

我喜欢和来自不同国家，不同文化背景的人一起活动，这会更有趣，因为我们可以从不同角度看同样问题，观点会是多层次的，我和人交流的越多就会懂的越多。

{I enjoy working with people from other countries and from different cultural backgrounds.

It's more interesting because we may look at the same thing from different perspectives. The view can be multiple. The more I communicate, the more I will know.} (Fei, S.R. I)

This finding seems to be similar to Kang (2005) and Léger & Storch's (2009) study. In both studies, their participants did not want to interact with fellow L1 students because they felt "weird", like "wearing a mask" (Kang, 2004:284) and "pretentious" (Léger & Storch, 2009, p.279).

The class observations showed that these learners acted upon their beliefs by engaging in and participating in class activities actively and enthusiastically. The results of the oral narrative task for

this study also provided evidence that the three learners all improved in fluency, which may be related to their active participation in group/pair work.

The view of the other participants (Bing and Ding) about pair and group work was more negative. While appreciating the less threatening speaking opportunity pair/group work offered, these two learners also expressed their concerns about their fellow students' ability to correct them:

老师告诉我们和 partner 一起活动，可我们水平差不多，要是我们有问题，我们不能彼此纠正，要是我们都错了，我们不能发现彼此问题。是，我们会使用语言，但我们不知道我们英语是不是正确。

{Teachers asked us to work with our partners. But we are at a similar level. If we have problems, we can't correct each other. If we are both wrong, we can't find each other's problems. Yes, we can use the language to communicate but we don't know if our English is correct or not.} (Bing, S.R.I)

In Ding's view, the product of learning (i.e. what she learned and accuracy) matters more than its process (i.e. how she learned) :

我来这儿是学的，是否有趣要取决于发生的一切能否帮我学习...我宁愿老师让我们用新词造句而不是做俩人活动...说没什么意义，因为我们说的都是错的。

{I came here to learn. Whether it [learning] is interesting or not, it depends on whether what is going on helps me learn...I'd rather teachers asked us to make sentences by using new words than work in pairs. ..There is no point speaking because what we said was wrong anyway.} (Ding, S.R.II)

Consequently, they both questioned the effectiveness of collaborative learning, particularly group work because no one took responsibility and the turn distributions were not even:

当我们做小组活动更糟糕，人太多，都彼此依赖，没人负责，人人都写，没人先说...小组活动没俩人活动有效，可要是俩人一起用学过的结构，不如一个人造句。

{When we worked in groups, it might be worse. There were too many people. Everyone relied on others and no one was responsible. Everyone wrote and no one initiated talking... Group work was not as effective as pair work. However, if two worked together to use the target structures, it was not as good as working individually to make sentences.} (Ding, S.R.II)

小组活动对有些人好，对有些人不实用。那些弱的学生，他们不能说任何东西，可对强的学生，活动不够有挑战性，因为没有竞争，他们控制着讨论。

{Group work is good for some but not appropriate for others. For the weaker students, they were not able to say anything but for the stronger students, the activities were not challenging because there was no competition and they dominated the discussions.} (Bing, S.R. II)

Similar learner concerns about uneven turn distributions and group affiliation have also been reported in other studies (e.g. Cao & Philp, 2006; Léger & Storch, 2009).

Consequently, both learners were reluctant to participate in pair/group work in the classroom. Neither were they willing to contribute to the group activities. They were observed either to look up new words in their dictionaries or check notes frequently during pair/group work. The regression in their fluency in the oral narrative task may be related in part to their negative views and low participation.

It is evident that the learners' views about group work were not uniform. The differences in their views seem to be related to their beliefs about other aspects of language learning. Those learners who held positive views about group work regarded meaning as paramount in their learning. The process of negotiating and interacting with peers was regarded as important for learning. They all benefited from the interactional opportunities offered and thus improved their oral fluency. The opposite is true of the other two learners. They equated learning with accuracy and being correct. Therefore, they believed they could only learn from experts or teachers, not from their fellow students. They were more conscious of the end product of an activity. That is, they focused on whether they got the answers correct but missed out on opportunities for language use. It is apparent that the different views they held about pair/group work affected their willingness to participate.

This section uncovered learners' attitudes to pair/group work and their learning behavior when they engaged in pair/group work. The focus of next section will be on their beliefs and behavior in the teacher-fronted context.

7.2.7. Class participation

The previous section discussed the learners' attitudes to collaborative learning and their interactional behaviours when they worked in pairs/groups. How did they interact in the whole class teacher-fronted situation? Are there any differences among the learners? If the answer is affirmative, what can account for the differences? As was indicated in Chapter Four, central to Ajzen's TPB (theory of planned behaviour) (Ajzen, 1985; 1988; 1991; 2005) is people's intentions to perform a given behaviour. Intentions can be predicted with high accuracy from (1) attitude toward the behaviour (2) subjective norm and (3) perceived behavioural control. These intentions, together with perceptions of behavioral control, account for considerable variance in actual behavior. Drawing on the TPB, this section will explore the answers to these questions.

The two sessions of 120 minutes' class observation revealed that the learners' oral participation in the teacher-fronted context were different. Table 20 summarizes the learners' participation in the two observation sessions in terms of the number of times that the learners volunteered an answer to a teacher elicited question and the number of times the learners initiated a question. It is evident that the learners were divided into two groups, which I named as low-interactors (Peng, Bing, Ding) and moderate-interactors (Fei and Shan). The former refers to those learners who barely volunteered in class (between 0-2 times) whilst the latter includes those learners who were moderately active in the class (between 3-5 times)

Table 20. *Summary of the learners' class participation*

		Bing	Peng	Ding	Fei	Shan
1 st observation	Volunteering questions	0	0	0	4	3
	Initiating questions	0	0	0	4	4
2 nd observation	Volunteering questions	0	1	0	5	5
	Initiating questions	0	0	0	4	4

What makes one group willing to speak up and another reluctant to do so? In light of the TPB, to perform an actual behaviour, i.e. to participate orally and voluntarily, the learners are expected to have the intention of participating and also the perceived behavioural control. That is, not only should they hold favourable attitudes to participating orally but also the perception that they were capable of doing so. The data from the two sessions of stimulated recall gave some insights into their perceptions.

When asked the reasons for their reticence, the most common one provided by the low-interactors was their concern for accuracy and a loss of face. Speaking up in front of others with errors in their English was perceived as running the risk of being judged negatively by their peers and losing face:

有时我不确定我的答案...我不是不管对不对都说的那种人，要是我知道我对，我才会主动回答。

{Sometimes I wasn't so sure of my answers....I'm not that type of person who speak out regardless if the answer is correct or not. If I know I'm correct, I'll volunteer.} (Peng, S. R. I)

当你说出来，你得百分百确定，不然会很丢脸。当你那天来听课的时候，老师对答案时，我没志愿发言，那是因为我没信心，我不知道我是不是对的，要是我不确定我的答案，我通常不回答。

{When you speak out, you have to be 100% sure. Otherwise you will lose your face. When you [the researcher] came to observe us the other day, I didn't volunteer when the teacher checked the answers. That was because I didn't have the confidence and I wasn't sure if I was correct or not. If I wasn't sure of my answers, I normally didn't speak up.} (Bing, S.R. II)

Mianzi [face] concerns “the respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself from others, by virtue of the relative position he occupies in his social network and the degree to which he is judged to have functioned adequately in that position as well as acceptably in his general conduct” (Ho, 1976, p.883). All the low-interactors in the study expressed their desire to be regarded as “well-educated”(Peng) and “prestigious” (Bing) and “respectful” (Ding). In their view, the way to gain “face” [honour; dignity; respect; status] was through using accurate and correct English. Inaccurate

English will lose their face, tarnish their reputation and bring shame on them. This fear of making mistakes and losing face meant they did not have the intention to speak up but chose to remain silent in class.

These findings support other studies reporting that fear of high-exposure and risk of self-esteem are associated with low class participation and low motivation (e.g., Clement et al., 1994; Léger & Storch, 2009; Morita, 2004; Tsui, 1996). Liu and Littlewood (1997), for example, reported that students in Hong Kong had a strong concern to speak English well when speaking up in class in order to be judged as competent. In their study of thirty-two English learners of French (L2), Léger & Storch (2009) also found that learners felt threatened by whole class discussions as they were perceived as an activity where they publicly displayed their skill and knowledge. Consequently, students worried about linguistic accuracy and tended to hold back.

Another reason common to the three learners was their lack of perceived confidence or perceived behavioural control. In other words, they did not perceive themselves to have the competence to speak up with ease in front of others. The lack of confidence was associated with their low language proficiency and the demand for on-line processing which required them to think on the spot in the L2 and thus impeded participation:

当我独自想老师问题的答案时，要是我不知道词，我会用中文想，跳过不知道的词，可要是我志愿发言，我要不知道词时，我就会卡在那个词上，一切都乱了，我的大脑会一切空白，我什么都想不起来，老师也不知道我想要说什么，我不能说汉语，我不想要把自己放到这种尴尬，窘迫的境地，我不想经历那种我不能表达自己的时刻。

{when I was thinking about answers to teachers' questions by myself, if I didn't know the word, I could think in Chinese or skipped the word. But if I volunteered and I didn't know the word, I would get stuck with the word. Everything would be out of control. My mind went blank and I couldn't think of anything. The teacher wouldn't know what I wanted to say. I couldn't speak in Chinese. I didn't want to put myself in this awkward and embarrassing situation. I didn't want to experience the moment that I couldn't express myself.} (Ding, S.R. I)

Wait time, i.e. the time between teachers' questions and learners' responses, was also problematic. Their low language proficiency meant they had to resort to their L1 to formulate their answers first. They needed more time to restructure their ideas in English and search for appropriate words in English. By the time they completed the translation process and gathered courage to speak up, it was too late either because someone else had supplied answers or because the conversation had moved on:

当老师问问题时，我得先在脑子里用中文想答案，可还没等我组织完答案，他们就给了答案，因为我没有足够的词汇，要把答案想好要花很长时间。

{When the teacher asked questions, I had to think about answers in my head in Chinese first. But before I finished organizing my answers, they [his classmates] had given the answers. It took me longer to formulate answers because I didn't have enough vocabulary.} (Bing: S.R.I)

In their study, Lèger & Storch (2009) also reported that less proficient students felt that they could not participate.

Although these three learners were reluctant to speak up in the whole class activity, considering it face-threatening, intimidating, putting them in a vulnerable position, they also believed they learned by active listening and by comparing their answers with those who volunteered:

我没自愿回答，可我不是完全被动，我积极地听，默默地给答案...当别人说的时候，我也在想怎么说，我就是不想在大庭广众下说。

{I don't volunteer but I'm not wholly passive. I listen actively and give my answers covertly...when others speak up, I am thinking about how to say as well. I just don't want to speak up in public.} (Ding, S.R. I)

The learners' account implies that non-participation is not equivalent to not learning. They may appear to be reticent on the surface but they are not entirely passive. Socio-cultural theory considers private speech to be a means of self-mediation and to facilitate L2 development (see Ohta, 2001b, cited in Ellis, 2008).

Fei and Shan were different in that they both were observed to be more active in class. The drive behind the action appeared to be associated with their motivation to improve their fluency. As

was discussed in the previous section, both learners considered the classroom a safe haven where they could practise using English without fear of making mistakes and losing face. On the contrary, errors were perceived as an opportunity to learn:

课上我不怕出错，我来这儿是学的，要是我出错，老师会给我改正，这样我会学更多... 课堂是唯一我能用英语的地方，我要充分利用课堂活动，抓住机会说，这样做，我相信我才能提高我的听和说。

{I am not afraid of making mistakes in the classroom. I come here to learn. If I make mistakes, teachers can correct me. I will learn more in this way... The classroom is the only place where I can use English. I made the most out of the class activities and grabbed the opportunity to speak. By doing this, I believe I can enhance my speaking and listening.} (Shan, S.R.II)

Ajzen (1991) claimed that intentions are the immediate antecedent of behavior and they are “assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior”. He argued further that the stronger people’s intentions to engage in a behavior or achieve their behavioural goal, the more likely they are to perform the behavior. Fei and Shan’s wish to improve their fluency were so strong that they were willing to exert more effort. Because they believed active participation in the whole class context offered them an opportunity to achieve their goal, they participated actively. In addition, they were both very confident about themselves, knowing that they had the ability to contribute to class interaction:

老师问的问题通常都与我们学的有关，我通常课前预习，课后复习，所以，都很简单，我的问题是不能流利的说，我需要参与，这样才有更多的机会练习。

{The questions that teachers asked were normally related to what we were learning. I normally previewed before the class and revised after the class. So they were easy. My problem is fluency. I need to participate in order to have more opportunity to practise.} (Fei: S.R. II)

However, Fei also admitted that she had not volunteered as much as she would have liked to due to her wish not to be perceived as “showing off”, i.e. over-ready to contribute, by other students:

我本应该发言更多，可是，我想我最好还是把机会让给其他同学，让他们有更多的机会参与，不然的话，我就会占领课上的时间，别的同学会想我在显示，他们会感到气恼，所以，我只对那些有挑战性的问题，或是没人准备好的问题举手发言。

{I should have volunteered more but I thought I'd better give other students more opportunities to participate. Otherwise I would end up with dominating the class time and other students may think I am showing off and feel resentful. So I only volunteered those challenging questions or questions that no one was ready to answer.} (Fei: S.R. II)

Wong (1984, cited in Liu & Littlewood, 1997) argued that Chinese learners' avoidance of being regarded as "showing off" was influenced by Confucian "maxims of modesty". In other words, it is regarded as improper to shine in public in Confucian culture. In her observation of Hong Kong secondary students, she found unspoken rule governing class participation: speaking English frequently equaled showing off. Similar results were also reported in Jackson's (2002) ethnographic study investigating the reticence of Chinese students in four sections of an English-medium undergraduate business course in Hong Kong. She revealed some Chinese students did not volunteer as they were concerned about "how their peers would regard them if they spoke up frequently in class or had lengthy responses" and "they did not want to be labeled as a 'show-off'" by their classmates (p.77).

The study suggests that learners' reticence in the classroom is a complex issue. Their reluctance to participate in the teacher-fronted situation can be related to a mix of linguistic, affective, and sociocultural factors, as shown in other studies (e.g. Jackson, 2002; Liu, 2000; Liu & Littlewood, 1997). The learners' fear of making mistakes, their lack of confidence due to the low language proficiency and their socio-cultural perceptions of the need to avoid showing off and losing face are collectively accountable for their reticence. The study also confirms other studies reporting that students who displayed greater motivation and higher perceived competence or behavioral control were more likely to participate and use the L2 more frequently in the classroom. (e.g. Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre et al.2001; MacIntyre & Charos ,1996)

7.2.8. Autonomous Language Learning.

In this section I will first examine the nature of these learners' autonomous language learning, drawing on Littlewood's (1996; 1999) work on autonomy. I then point out ways in which the learners' ability to function as autonomous language learners were limited and explore the reasons for this by tracing the sources of their beliefs.

Littlewood (1996) defined an autonomous person as "one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions" (p. 428). The definition highlights two important aspects of autonomy: 1) learners' ability to take charge of their own learning; 2) their independence in decision making; that is, they are able to regulate their learning without the control and support of others, e.g. teachers. Littlewood (1999) further argued that autonomy is a matter of degree. He distinguished two levels of autonomy: proactive and reactive autonomy. The former "affirms [learners'] individuality and sets up directions in a world which they themselves have partially created." (p.75). In this level of autonomy, learners take partial or total ownership of many processes 'which have traditionally belonged to the teacher, such as deciding on learning objectives, selecting learning methods and evaluating progress.' (p.71). The latter level, on the other hand, 'does not create its own directions, but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organize their resources autonomously in order to reach their goal.' (p.75). Learners' going through past examination papers on their own initiative and learning vocabulary without being pushed are some examples of this form of reactive autonomy. Littlewood (1999) argued that although proactive autonomy is regarded as 'the only kind that counts' when the concept is discussed in the West, it is useful to consider reactive autonomy as well either as 'a preliminary step towards the first or a goal in its own right' (p.75), particularly for learners in East Asian contexts.

All the learners held a firm belief at both times that their own effort was pivotal to the success of their language learning:

你得努力，要是你不努力，外在因素不能改变你的状况。

{You have to work hard. If you don't work hard, external factors can't change your situation.}
(Fei, Int I)

你的努力最重要，你得努力，要是你不自助，没人会帮你。

{Your own effort is the most important. You have to work hard. No one can help you unless you help yourself.} (Shan, Int I)

Their beliefs in the value of their own effort meant that these learners were willing to take individual responsibility and strive to achieve their goals. This was evident in their substantial use of metacognitive strategies to regulate their learning by (1) determining their own learning goals:

多数人说我应该多听多说，但我的听还行，要是我知道的词，不管是怎样说的，在什么情况下说的，我都能听懂。所以对我来讲是词汇阻止了我，只有我有了足够的词我才能提高听力和说，所以我得巩固词汇，记更多的词。

{Most people say I should listen more and speak more. But my listening is okay. If I know the word, I will understand it regardless how it was said and in what environment. So for me it is my vocabulary size that prevents me. Only after I have had enough words can I improve my listening and speaking. So I have to consolidate vocabulary and memorize more vocabulary.}
(Bing, Int I)

(2) selecting their learning methods:

我的主要障碍是词汇，就是我记不住拼写，这很恼火...我想要是我能组织一个课后学习小组，那会很好，除了课上学，我们可以在课后以小组学习，在一起我们讨论语法，记词汇，练习说和语法，运用词并互相帮助。

{my main obstacle still lies in vocabulary, i.e. I can't remember spellings. It is very frustrating...I think it would be great if we could form learning groups. Apart from learning in class, we could learn in groups outside class where we could discuss grammar, memorize wordlists, practise speaking and grammar, use words and help each other learn.}

(Bing, Diary 23-09)

and (3) self-assessing their progress:

...在和 Mohamud 交流过程中，我得问他写下他说的一遍...这意味着我的英语还差得远，不然的话，为什么我们的老师能听懂而我却不能呢？

{...during my conversation with Mohamud [her classmate], I had to ask him to write down what he said in order to understand...this means that my English is still far behind. Otherwise, why are the teachers able to understand [him] but not me?} (Shan, Diary 13-08)

During this process of self-regulated learning, most of the learners demonstrated proactive autonomy, that is, they made independent decisions about their learning objectives, learning methods and self-assessment. Gan's study (2009) compared students from the mainland and Hong Kong. He also found that the mainland students used more self-directed strategies, which he attributed to their institutional context and social environment, e.g. under-resourced teaching staff and teaching facilities.

While they believed their own effort would lead to successful learning and they employed metacognitive strategies to regulate their learning in accordance with their beliefs, all the learners except Fei held a predominantly traditional view of the teacher as an authority figure. In their views, the key role of teachers was to teach and transmit knowledge. They expected teachers to deliver interesting lessons, clarify any confusion they had in their English learning and assist them with learning strategies. These beliefs about teachers as authority figures were reinforced as the course progressed. At time 2, four of them (i.e. Peng, Bing, Ding, and Shan) believed that teachers should exert some pressure to push them to learn by giving more exams and homework and by monitoring their learning:

老师应该给学生压力，督促他们，例如，他们的作业及课上的表现。压力要适当，学生能达到。课要有趣，你不会感到乏味，这样你能集中精力，他们教的具有启发性，他们能把概念搞清楚，他们能用课堂活动及各种教学手段让学生参与，虽然教的内容是书里的，但他们能用不同的方式给讲述。

{Teachers should give pressure to students and monitor them, for example, their homework and class performance. The pressure should be moderate so that students are able to achieve it.

Lessons should be interesting and you won't feel bored so you can focus on them. The way they

teach should be heuristic. They can clarify concepts. They can use class activities and a variety of teaching techniques to get students involved. Although the teaching content is from textbooks, they can present it differently.} (Peng, Int II)

It seems that the learners relied heavily on their teacher to take charge of their learning and that their beliefs about the importance of their own efforts and of the role of teachers were in conflict. How could they emphasize their own efforts on the one hand and yet require their teachers to take responsibility for their learning on the other hand? The paradox is only on the surface. It can be understood if I examine the source of the conflicting beliefs. Most Chinese grew up, believing that diligence is a virtue. This belief is inculcated at home, at school and at work. Working hard is a desired social behaviour. There are a lot of sayings in China about hard work. For example, “只有功夫深，铁杵磨成针。” (Constant grinding can turn an iron bar to a needle); “书山有路，勤为径。” (Diligence is the pathway to the mountain of books). This belief underlies the behaviour of these learners – for example, Bing committed three or four hours every afternoon to learning vocabulary in the library while Fei put hours into her reading.

On the other hand, China also has a long tradition of having reverence for teachers. Teachers today may not have the same status as reflected in the ancient saying, “一日为师，终身为父。” (He who has taught a person for a day deserves the same respect as his father for a lifetime.). However, the traditional view of teachers is still deeply rooted in Chinese society. Teachers are revered but along with this are also expected to “为人师表” (set a good example) and “教书育人” (teach and build the moral characters of students). Teachers are compared to “蜡烛” (candles) where their role is to ‘burn themselves to light up the lives of their students’ (meaning ‘to do everything they can to help their students’) and “园丁” (gardeners) where they are expected to take the responsibility to nurture and look after their students. Therefore, teachers in China have to live up to such expectations. Their responsibility for their students goes beyond the curriculum requirements. For example, they are also

expected to involve themselves in the pastoral care of their students and are expected to prepare everything necessary for their students, particularly in terms of helping them succeed in exams. The role of students, on the other hand, is to work hard using the resources they have been given and persist in pursuing the goals that have been set for them. The learners in my study need to be understood against this background. In such a social context, learners are barely given opportunities to make independent choices regarding their learning objectives and resources. Learners were not expected to manifest proactive autonomy but they had to demonstrate a high level of reactive autonomy.

When the learners came to the new learning context, New Zealand, they expected teachers to play the same roles as their counterparts in China. Whereas teachers in New Zealand embrace the notion of learning centredness or learner-centredness (see Nunan, 1996 for details). They see themselves more as a facilitator, a class manager and organizer rather than as an authority figure in the classroom. A mismatch between teachers and learners results:

在中国，教书不仅是个职业，随之而来的是神圣的责任，他们为学生着想，以及课后要做什么。在新西兰，老师不这样想，他们来教些简单的课，仅此而已。

{In China, teaching is regarded more than as a job. It comes with solemn responsibilities.

Teachers think for their students as to what to do outside the classroom. In New Zealand, teachers don't think about this. They came to deliver some simple lessons. That's it.} (Bing, Int II)

In summary, most of the learners in this study demonstrated some features of proactive autonomy in some of their learning activities, e.g. planning and monitoring their learning. However, most of the time, they expected teachers to take the initiative in directing their learning and providing them with the resources they needed. Therefore, their autonomous behaviours were mainly limited to the level of reactive autonomy through responding to course and exam requirements. They had not developed full proactive autonomy, even though this was expected of them in their new learning context.

An exception to this general conclusion was Fei. She demonstrated that she had the ability to take full charge of her own learning. At both times she was of the view that “one shouldn’t overly rely on teachers” (Fei, Int I). “Teachers were a guide. How far you can go as a learner is entirely at your disposal” (Int II). She planned her learning goals on her own, selected her own materials (e.g. reading materials) and self-assessed her learning progress (e.g. communicating in real life). The following quote illustrates how Fei set her learning goal and chose her own learning materials:

我想以我现有的英语水平，我应该从基础做起，比如，我该扩大词汇，练习语法，做更多的听说练习，欲速则不达，我得一个个地来做，将来我想要学更多，读更多，最终我能把两个文化结合在一起 …我相信最好的起步是要读一些比我现有水平高的书，读些有价值的书是最好的办法。

{I think with my current English level I should act from the basics. For example, [I should] enlarge my vocabulary, practise grammar and do more speaking and listening. More haste less speed. I have to do things one at a time. In the future, I’d like to learn more and read more. Eventually I can combine the two cultures together...I believe the best thing to start off is to read some books which are higher than my current English level. Reading valuable books is the best way.} (Fei, Int I)

Fei, then, was self-directed, not needing to rely on her teachers or her fellow classmates. She demonstrated a high level of both reactive and proactive autonomy. The greater improvement in her proficiency may be related to her high level of learning autonomy, supporting the finding that good language learners are also autonomous learners (Cotterall, 2008; Griffith, 2008; Zhong 2010).

7.2.9. Growth of Self-Efficacy

In this section, drawing on Bandura’s work on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Bandura & Schunck, 1981), I first examine the difference in the learners’ self-efficacy at time 1. I then investigate the changes in their self-efficacy at time 2 and discuss the factors that can account for the changes.

Bandura (1977, 1997, 1998) defined perceived self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of actions required to produce given levels of attainments” (Bandura,

1998, p.624). In this definition, it is clear that self-efficacy deals with personal judgements about one's control over behaviour itself. Perceived self-efficacy reflects how confident individuals are about performing tasks. He further suggested that self-efficacious students work harder, persist longer and have fewer adverse emotional reactions, e.g. stress, anxiety and depression, in the face of difficulties (Bandura 1993, 1995).

One of the questions that I asked the learners in the two open-ended interviews was “how confident are you to learn English? Please rate your confidence on a scale ranging from 1 to 10. 10 is the maximum”. Table 21 compares the learners' perceived self-efficacy at times 1 and 2. It shows that the five learners' perceived self-efficacy about learning English varied at time 1. While Peng and Fei were very confident about their abilities to learn English well, Bing, Ding and Shan held a low self-efficacy belief about their capabilities. Their self-rated self-efficacy ranged between 3 and 4. The interview data provided some insights into the reasons for the different views. Bing's low self-efficacy seems to be related to his belief that “I don't have good memory” (Int I). Shan also believed that poor memory constituted a major barrier in her language learning. In addition, she considered herself to be lacking in perseverance. She was not sure: ‘if I can persist with my learning to the end’ (Int I). Finally, Ding considered herself to be ‘very low’ in aptitude. Her ‘unsuccessful’ learning experiences in China made her doubtful about her ability and thus she lost hope of learning successfully.

Table 21. Comparison of the learners' self-rated self-efficacy at times 1 and 2

	Bing	Peng	Ding	Shan	Fei
Time 1	4	8	3	4	10
Time 2	6	8	6	8	10

* The self-rating scale ranges from 1 to 10. 10 is the maximum.

In comparison, Peng and Fei's self-efficacy was very high. At both times, Peng rated his capability at 8. His confidence seems to come from the realistic goal he set himself:

我的目标是能进行日常交流，我认为这是能达到的。

{My goal is to be able to communicate in daily life. I think it is achievable.} (Peng, Int I)

That corresponds to Bandura and Schunk's (1981) argument that setting proximal goals enhances self-efficacy and provides evidence of growing capability. Fei's high self-efficacy seems to be related to her past successful experiences of learning. Success built an unshakable belief in her self-efficacy and helped her develop into an extremely confident person. At both times, she rated her ability to learn English well at the maximum of 10. In her view,

我认为你得信自己，这样才能进步，我认为你唯一能依赖的人就是你自己。

{I believe you have to believe in yourself so that you can make progress. I believe the only person you can rely on is yourself and your effort.} (Fei, Int I)

To sum up, the learners' level of self-efficacy is different at time 1. The low self-efficacious learners (Bing, Shan, Ding) doubted their capabilities and tended to focus on their perceived personal deficiencies or things that they were unable to control or alter. For example, Bing and Shan blamed their memory and Ding, her aptitude. In contrast, the high self-efficacious learners either set proximal goals to enhance self-efficacy (i.e. Peng) or believed in themselves and their own efforts (i.e. Fei).

While displaying the differences in the learners' self-efficacy at time 1, the table also shows that the learners' self-efficacy underwent a noticeable change at time 2. To a varying degree, Bing, Ding and Shan all demonstrated increased self-efficacy at time 2. According to Ding,

现在我完全不一样了，我对自己了解得更多了，我知道我擅长哪个技巧，哪个不行，虽然我还不清楚，但我现在有自己的观点了。

{Now I'm completely different. I know better about myself. I know which skills I am good at and which I am not. Although I am still not very clear [about grammar], I have my own opinions now.} (Ding, Int II)

Shan considered the increase in her self-efficacy to be "the most important gain" in her learning. At time 2, she did not 'feel English difficult to learn anymore' (Shan, Int II). She believed "if I work hard, I can handle it [English]" (Shan, Int II).

What gave rise to the changes? Bandura (1997) suggested that perceived self-efficacy is readily affected by four types of experiences. The first and most influential source is from enactive experience which is based on personal experience. Success raises self-efficacy and failure lowers it. The next source is vicarious experience. It involves comparing oneself with someone else, e.g. a model. For example, if a model that is perceived as having similar ability succeeds, this will usually increase an observer's self-efficacy. Observers persuade themselves that "if others can do it, I can do it as well". Vicarious experience is indirect, based on observations. The third source comes from verbal persuasion where "people are led, through suggestion, into believing they can cope successfully with what has overwhelmed them in the past" (Bandura, 1977, p.198). As the outcomes of actions are described and conveyed verbally, the increase in people's self-efficacy depends on the credibility of the persuader. Positive persuasion increases self-efficacy. Finally, people base their self-efficacy judgments on their emotional arousal. Their perceptions of their physical responses to stressful and taxing situations, e.g. stress, fatigue, fear, and other emotions will alter their self-efficacy. For example, if a person gets nervous before sitting exams, those with low self-efficacy may take this as a sign of their own inability, thus decreasing their self-efficacy further, while those with high self-efficacy are likely to interpret such physiological signs as normal and unrelated to their actual ability. Thus, it is the person's belief in the implications of their physiological response that alters their self-efficacy.

Drawing on this, three main sources seem to be related to the growth of the learners' self-efficacy in this study. The first is their enactive experience, i.e. their English learning. Shan, for example, had an extremely pleasant learning experience at the school. The outcome of this positive personal experience increased her self-efficacy. She said:

我认为这和老师及学校管理有关，这是我第一次在新西兰学习，正式学它...要是我遇到不认真的老师，不管出勤，我很可能半途而弃...我学了三个月了，但我觉得我进步很大，现在我变得有信心了，我知道只要我不停止学习，我有信心把语言学好。

{I believe this [self-efficacy] has a lot of to do with teachers and school management in this school. This is the first time that I have studied in New Zealand and learned it formally. If I

came across a teacher who didn't take teaching seriously and who didn't care about attendance, I would've given up half way through...I have studied for only three months but I feel that I have made huge progress. Now I became more confident. I know as long as I don't stop learning, I'm confident that I can learn the language well. } (Shan, Int II)

Language progress is also linked to the growth of their self-efficacy. Evidence of their language accomplishments helps increase their self-efficacy. According to Ding,

我以前从来不信我说的是对的，因为我确实不知道。现在，我学了很多语法，我知道为什么是对的，我不问他帮助了，我感到他还不如我呢，为什么我要信他呢？

{In the past I never believed what I said was correct as I really didn't know. Now I have learned a lot of grammar and I know the reason why it is correct. I don't ask him [her tenant] for help anymore. I feel he is not as good as I am. Why should I believe in him?} (Ding, S.R.II)

It seems that when learners see some tangible changes after comparing where they were before and where they are now, they become more motivated to learn and their confidence about their ability increases. This suggests that language proficiency enhances the learners' self-efficacy and autonomy.

The third factor for the change in their self-efficacy comes from verbal persuasion. In this case, the persuader was teachers. As discussed in the earlier section, Chinese learners usually hold teachers in high esteem. They have faith in what teachers say to them. Thus, the encouragement from teachers helped increase their self-efficacy significantly:

要是老师说一句“你做得很好”，我就会对学习更有信心了，心想“原来我还行。”

{ When teachers said “you are doing well”, I would become more confident about my learning, thinking “it turned out that I could do it.” } (Ding, Diary: 15/08)

The findings about the changes in the learners' self-efficacy lend support to Bandura's (1997) argument that self-efficacy deals with performance capabilities rather than with personal qualities, such as one's physical or psychological characteristics and thus it is responsive to changes in personal context and readily influenced by experience.

7.3.Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter is to interpret the major findings about the learners' beliefs and learning strategy use. Although there were considerable individual differences in their beliefs and learning strategies, nine results were yielded from this study, indicating that some of the learners' beliefs and learning strategies underwent some noticeable changes over the sixteen week period. The most remarkable changes of all concerned their beliefs about approaches to language learning. Three out of four learners changed from an initial analytical approach, perceiving language learning as memorizing rules and words explicitly, to an experiential approach, emphasizing the importance of using the language in real life. This shift in belief led to an increase in contact with English outside the classroom. All of the learners exposed themselves more to English outside the classroom at time 2 by watching English TV programmes and listening to English radio. However, all of them except Fei limited their experiential approach to non-interactive activities due to their limited language proficiency, their enclosed Chinese community which reduced opportunities to communicate with Kiwis in real life, and their fear for losing face. Associated with these changes was the fact that three out of the five learners became less concerned about accuracy at time 2, believing fluency should stay the primary focus in their language learning. Further change was the evolvement of a new belief about pair/group work. Their positive attitudes towards collaborative learning saw three out of the five learners participate actively and willingly in pair/group activities in the classroom. These changes suggest that both learner beliefs and learning strategies are dynamic and context specific. The new teaching methods and learning environment required them to form congruent beliefs. Finally, all the learners became more self-efficacious at time 2 as a result of their increased language proficiency, their pleasant learning experiences and the encouragements from teachers.

Along with the developments in their beliefs and learning strategy use, the study also revealed that some of their beliefs and strategies remained consistent between time 1 and time 2. For example, all the Chinese learners continued to hold a belief about the significance of their own efforts and they reported using metacognitive strategies consistently and predominantly. Other salient learning strategies that the Chinese learners adopted included the use of rote-memorization for vocabulary learning and exam-oriented behaviours, indicating that their previous learning had an impact on their beliefs and strategy use.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1. Aims of the Study and Main Results

This multicase study investigated the development of five Chinese learners' beliefs, language learning strategy use and English language proficiency over a 16-week period. Another aim was to examine the relationships between their beliefs and learning strategy use on the one hand and the impact on their learning outcomes on the other hand. It was hoped that the study would help to better understand the nature of Chinese learners' beliefs and the pattern of their language learning strategy use, and also provide some insight into the interactions between learner beliefs, learning strategy use and language learning. The main findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. The learners' beliefs were influenced by their previous learning experiences. They were context and situation specific. However, they were not immutable. The qualitative analysis of the data collected from the interviews and diary entries identified four major changes in their beliefs over the observed period. Firstly, three out of five learners changed their beliefs about approaches to language learning from an initial analytical approach to a later experiential one. They started with the belief that the best way to learn a language was to focus on the formal properties of the language, e.g. grammar rules. However, at time 2, they became more conscious of the importance of using the language, exposing themselves to English in real life and nurturing the feel for English. They realized that in order to learn the language well, they needed to learn both formally from teachers and books as well as informally, for instance, by watching TV programmes, listening to the radio and communicating with native speakers. Related to this was the change in the focus of their learning. At time 1, four of them (Peng, Ding, Shan and Bing) were of the view that accuracy was more important than fluency and should be the focus of their learning, whereas at time 2, only two (Bing and Ding) continued to hold this view. The

other learners shifted the focus in their learning to fluency. They believed that they should pay more attention to fluency and meaning, particularly in speaking. However, Fei differed from the other learners at both times as she believed that fluency and accuracy were equally important in learning and that she needed to focus on both. Thirdly, a new belief about group/pair work emerged after the learners had been exposed to new approaches and techniques of language teaching in New Zealand. At time 1, none of the participants commented on this class activity as they had no previous experience of it. As the course progressed and their learning experiences expanded, the new belief emerged. At time 2, three of them expressed positive views about working in groups/pairs, although two of them also were concerned about its impact on accuracy. Finally, three out of the five learners became more confident about their ability to learn the language at time 2. Their enhanced self-efficacy arose from the progress they had made in English, their pleasant learning experiences and the encouragement from their teachers. Unlike these learners, two learners' self-efficacy beliefs were high at both times 1 and 2. Peng's sense of self-efficacy was based on the fact that he set himself a realistic goal while Fei's strong self-efficacy beliefs had grown out of her previous success as a language learner.

2. Like beliefs, some of the learners' strategies developed over the observed period, too. The main change in their strategies derived from their increased contact with English outside the institution. At time 1, they all limited themselves to the Chinese medium whereas at time 2, four out of five learners started watching English TV programmes and listening to English radio. However, their contact was mainly of a non-interactive nature. Another change was the use of social strategies. At time 1, only one learner reported communicating with fellow classmates and none of them attempted to communicate with native speakers. In contrast, at time 2, all of them reported co-operating with their fellow classmates. They even attempted to engage in conversations with Kiwis, although the effort they put in varied a lot (e.g. Ding, Peng, Shan, Bing only made sporadic efforts whereas Fei was persistent). The other change involved the use

of higher order cognitive strategies. At time 1, none of them reported using synthesizing and summarizing whereas at time 2, three of them applied these strategies to their learning. In addition, at time 1, only one of them used the strategy of contextualizing vocabulary, while at time 2, four of them started using it.

3. The learners progressed differently over the 16 weeks' study. The oral narrative task indicates that three learners (Shan, Fei, Peng) made some progress in fluency in the oral narrative task and three learner (Bing, Peng, Fei) in accuracy. While Fei made noticeable improvements across all three measurements in the oral task, Ding regressed in all three measurements. In terms of the learners' general English proficiency, as measured by the Oxford Placement Test (QPT), three learners (Peng, Bing and Ding) gained slightly. With regard to the growth in vocabulary, the gains for most of the learners were minimal. The exception was Fei who gained significantly in all three vocabulary tests.
4. The test results suggest that the changes in the learners' language proficiency were linked to their language learning strategy use which was underpinned by their beliefs. Those learners who held beliefs about an experiential approach to language learning tended to advance more in speaking and were better at remembering new words, whereas those learners who held beliefs relating to an analytical approach seemed to gain more in the paper-based general proficiency test. The learners (e.g. Bing, Ding) who did not act on their beliefs about the best way to learn a second language did not gain in fluency in the oral task, suggesting that the impact of beliefs on learning outcomes depended on whether they resulted in the use of learning strategies. The study suggests that the relationship among the three constructs was linear when the learners acted upon their beliefs. However, a linear relationship did not hold when the learners failed to implement their beliefs or when their actions were delayed and inconsistent, i.e. they applied a strategy only erratically.

5. The study reveals that the learners held some common beliefs and used some similar strategies. For example, at times 1 and 2, they all believed that vocabulary was fundamental in learning a second language and that their efforts should be directed at this. All of them reported doing grammar exercises and revising what they learned. Due to their limited vocabulary, they all switched to their mother tongue for help and substituted a complex word with a simple one when they engaged in a specific task. Also, they all employed metacognitive strategies to plan evaluate and reflect on their learning. Despite these commonalities in their beliefs and strategy use, the study reveals that there were considerable individual differences among the five learners. For example, while at time 1, one learner (Fei) believed that learning was about using the language in communication, the other four learners did not share the same view. At time 2, while three learners (Peng, Bing, and Fei) were of the view that learning was about nurturing the feel for the language, the other two learners (Shan, Ding) did not hold that view. Also, the learners were clearly different in their strategy use. For example, at both times 1 and 2, three learners used the strategy of writing down new words repeatedly to help memorize, while the other two learners did not employ this strategy. Appendix L and M summarise the individual learners' beliefs and strategy use at times 1 and 2. The differences among the five learners outweighed the commonalities. This study and previous studies (e.g. Tanaka, 2004; Zhong, 2008) have lent support to Ellis's (2008) argument that beliefs constitute a major area of individual differences as "clearly learners do vary considerably in their beliefs about language and language learning" (p.699).

8.2 . Theoretical Contributions

The findings of this study contribute to the field of SLA and other areas, e.g. education, teacher development and pedagogy, in a number of ways, particularly relating to learner beliefs about language learning, learner strategy use and the interactions between them.

8.2.1 The Characteristics of Learner Beliefs

This study has provided a deeper understanding of learner beliefs. It reveals that learner beliefs about language learning had the following characteristics: they were inter-connected, variable in intensity, paradoxical and contradictory, and both stable and dynamic. Firstly, learner beliefs constitute a system consisting of a set of interrelated beliefs. The learners' beliefs about language learning emerging from the data of this study were composed of five sub-beliefs: (1) beliefs about learning situation (e.g. "Learning in China was not applicable to real life"), (2) beliefs about external factors (e.g. "Exams can push me to learn") , (3) beliefs about personal factors (e.g. "My memory is deteriorating."), (4) beliefs about learning a second language (e.g. "Vocabulary is fundamental in my learning."), and (5) beliefs about the nature of language learning (e.g. "Learning is a cumulative process."). The qualitative data collected from the five learners' interviews and diary entries provided evidence of these five distinctive and yet related categories. For example, the learners' belief about the significance of error correction (an external factor) was related to their belief about accuracy (learning a second language). Because they deemed it paramount to learn grammatical rules, they expected teachers to do more error correction in the classroom.

Another characteristic of learner beliefs was that they varied in intensity. Some beliefs were held with greater intensity than others. Learners did not act on all the beliefs they held. They tended to implement those beliefs that they believed in with the greater intensity and those that they had resources for and sufficient confidence to act upon. For example, Ding believed that it was important to learn grammatical rules so that she could speak and write more accurately and comprehend better when she was reading. She also believed that memorizing a lot of words would help her learn English and that speaking well would help her settle in New Zealand. However, among all these aspects of English, she believed that learning grammatical rules should come first. She acted on this belief by consulting grammar reference books, completing grammar-related exercises and asking for help with grammar from her friend. In comparison, she did not work on her speaking skills. Although she attempted to

memorize new words for a few weeks, she gave up in the end as she was overwhelmed by the amount of vocabulary she needed to memorize.

Furthermore, not all the beliefs in a learner belief system were in harmony with each other. Sometimes learners held conflicting beliefs. For example, Shan emphasized the significance of fluency, wishing to improve her communicative competence. In the meantime, she also believed that she should not say anything until she was sure she was accurate. Likewise, Ding believed that she needed English to survive in New Zealand. On the other hand, she held a negative view about Kiwis and did not want to communicate with them.

Finally, this study and my two pilot studies demonstrated that learner beliefs could be both static and dynamic. Apart from the four noticeable belief changes summarized in the previous section, the majority of the learners' beliefs remained unchanged over the observed period. For example, all of the participants believed at both times 1 and 2 that vocabulary learning was fundamental to their learning, their own efforts were central to successful learning and that learning was a cumulative process. In the review of the literature on belief in Chapter Three, I noted that previous studies of learner beliefs in SLA have failed to provide a complete account of them. They treated learner beliefs either as stable (e.g. Horwitz 1987; Wenden, 1986b), "cognitive entities to be found inside the minds of language learners" (Kalaja, 1995, p.192) or as dynamic (e.g. Barcelos, 2000; 2003). Barcelos (2003) argued that beliefs can change "within the current situation, i.e. in the course of an interview" (p.232). In contrast to these studies, this study suggests that learner beliefs had dual features. Some beliefs were relatively stable as they were deeply rooted in learners' cultural values and identity. Therefore, they were held with greater intensity. It takes longer to change beliefs of this kind, sometimes even a whole lifetime. In comparison, other beliefs were more dynamic and contextual. They evolved with learners' experiences and learning contexts.

8.2.2 Factors for Belief Changes

Although some previous studies (e.g. Tanaka, 2004) have investigated changes in learner beliefs, the factors accounting for learner belief changes have not been studied seriously. This study indicates three reasons for the learners' belief changes. Cognitive dissonance was the first and the most important reason for a belief change. As Festinger (1957) pointed out human beings seek consonance. Dissonance causes psychological discomfort and drives individuals to resolve the incongruity in order to achieve consonance. At time 1, four out of five learners believed that English learning was about learning more grammatical rules due to their prior learning experiences in China. When they came to their new learning environment, they found themselves in a difficult situation where they were unable to communicate and function effectively in their daily lives. Their existing belief about learning grammatical rules was not compatible with the new environment. Hence it was replaced by a new belief, namely "learning a language was about using it for communication".

Another reason for the belief change came from the teaching methods the learners were exposed to. In their new learning context, all the learners were taught predominantly by the communicative approach. For example, every day they were encouraged to learn collaboratively in groups or pairs. This led to them forming a new belief about learning in groups/pairs.

Finally, the learners' own language progress gave rise to the change in their self-efficacy belief. Bandura (1997) posited that self-efficacy deals with performance capability rather than personal qualities, such as physical or psychological characteristics. As the course proceeded, three out of five learners noticed that they were able to perform better than initially and so their confidence grew. Their language progress enhanced their belief in their own performance capability.

8.2.3 Factors for the Development in Language Learner Strategies

Although research into LLS has a 30 year history, most previous studies focused on the end product of LLS (i.e. what LLS learners employed in their learning). Studies of the development of LLS

and of the interactions of LLS with other individual factors in the process of language learning have been very thin. Consequently, not much is known about how LLS are developed during learning and what factors contribute to change. This study has revealed that although the majority of the learners did not change their strategies over time, some strategies evolved and developed over the sixteen-week period. Four factors seemed to account for this. To begin with, changes in beliefs and learning context brought about development in the use of strategies. For example, in line with the changes in their beliefs about the nature of language learning, all the learners made greater efforts to expose themselves to English outside the classroom by watching English TV programmes and listening to English radio. This suggests that learners' learning actions are shaped by their beliefs. Another factor for change was the new teaching methods that the learners were exposed to in class. As their teachers organized class activities mostly in groups/pairs, all the learners had to deploy social strategies to co-operate with their fellow students. Furthermore, progress in the learners' language proficiency enabled three out of the five learners to employ some higher order cognitive strategies, e.g. synthesizing and using an English-English dictionary. This suggests that some strategies are only available to more proficient learners. Finally, the learners' own metacognitive strategy use helped them to evaluate and monitor their existing strategies and this evaluation also prompted some changes. For instance, all the learners except Fei in the study relied solely on rote-memorization to memorize word lists at time 1. However, at time 2, four of them reported attempting to learn new words through reading and inferring from context to help retain new words.

8.2.4 The Good Language Learner

Ever since Rubin's (1975) seminal work, *What the Good Language Learner Can Teach Us*, researchers have been investigating the strategies that the good language learner employs in the hope of helping less successful learners to learn more effectively (e.g. Griffiths, 2008; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; White, 2008). Ellis (2008) summarized five major aspects of successful language

learning, based on the results of the good language learner studies: (1) a concern for language form, (2) a concern for communication (functional practice), (3) an active task approach, (4) an awareness of the learning process, and (5) a capacity to use strategies flexibly in accordance with task requirements (p.708).

This study sheds further light on the characteristics of the good language learner. Fei outperformed the rest of the learners. She demonstrated language improvement across all the tests. Particularly she made remarkable gains in the three vocabulary tests and in the three measurements derived from the oral narrative task. At time 2, she could speak not only more fluently but also more accurately and with a wider range of complex structures. Given that she experienced the same classroom context and broader social context over sixteen weeks as the other learners, what made Fei more successful? In terms of strategies and beliefs, Fei distinguished herself from the other learners in the following ways:

- (1) More balanced views about language learning. Unlike all the other learners who were more concerned about accuracy at time 1 and fluency at time 2, Fei showed concern for both accuracy and fluency at times 1 and 2. She spent time reviewing grammatical rules as well as looking for opportunities to communicate. Similar results have been reported in previous studies (see Ellis, 2008 for details).
- (2) Higher self-efficacy. At both times 1 and 2, Fei was a very confident learner and was absolutely sure of her ability to learn English. In contrast, three learners were doubtful about their ability at time 1. Other empirical studies in SLA have also indicated that there is a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and academic achievement (Graham and Weiner 1996; Graham, 2006; Mills et al. 2007; Park, 1995; Victori, 1999; Yang, 1999).
- (3) More empathetic towards the target culture. Like the other learners, Fei lived in an enclosed Chinese community. However, while the other learners were not interested in the target culture, Fei was curious about Kiwi society and was keen to know about its values and customs. She

made efforts to involve herself in what was happening in mainstream society by going to various shows and seminars and by helping with community events.

- (4) More autonomous. While the other learners held a traditional view of teachers as knowledge givers and limited their learning activities to the course work set by their teachers, Fei regarded teachers more as advisors and guides. She believed in her own effort and was willing to take full responsibility for her learning and chart her own learning path (Benson, 2007; Cotterall, 2008; Littlewood, 1999). Therefore, her learning was not confined to the classroom and course work. Instead she extended her learning to real life. She learned everywhere from everyone.
- (5) An effective strategy user. Fei exceeded the other learners in strategy use in both quantity and quality. For example, she used more social and compensation strategies due to her contact with Kiwis and fellow students from other countries. She was also able to orchestrate different strategies to achieve her learning goals and complete tasks at hand. While all the other learners used mainly rote-memorisation for vocabulary learning, she was able to orchestrate different strategies (e.g. rote-memorisation, tongue twisters, using an English-English dictionary, contextualizing new words in reading materials, reading bilingual newspapers) to help her learn new words. Depending on the words and the goals she set for herself, she chose an appropriate strategy for the task. Studies of good language learners have yielded similar results: successful learners tend to use strategy clusters, tailoring their strategies to the learning task they are engaged in, to the learning materials and in accordance with their own learning style and proficiency (e.g. Chamot & Keatley, 2003; Ehrman and Oxford, 1990; Griffiths, 2003, 2008; Goh, 2002; Marco, 2006; Abraham & Vann, 1987; Wharton, 2000).

8.2.5 Relationship among Learner Beliefs, Learner Strategies and Language Learning

To date, relatively few studies have investigated the relationships among learner beliefs, learner strategies and learning outcomes. This study offers some insights into the interactions among these

three variables. Firstly, it suggests a linear relationship among the three constructs with beliefs influencing learner strategy use which in turn determines the type of learning outcomes that the learner achieves. For example, Ding believed that learning a language was primarily about achieving accuracy and that language learning involved learning explicit grammatical rules. Her learning activities revolved around reading grammar reference books, revising past test papers and doing a lot of grammar exercises. In her view, communicating with Kiwis in real life came second and could wait until she had grasped all the grammatical rules and sentence structures. Her views grew stronger as the course progressed. Consequently, she gained more in the paper based proficiency test which measured her explicit grammatical knowledge but regressed in all three measurements in the oral task. In contrast, Fei was a balanced learner who believed that she should give attention to both accuracy and fluency. She spent time on grammar and vocabulary and she also created opportunities to use the language. Therefore, she improved in fluency, accuracy and complexity in the oral task and in all the three vocabulary tests. Ding and Fei were both pre-intermediate students. Due to the different beliefs they held and the different strategies they used, they progressed differently. The findings are consistent with my two pilot studies (Zhong, 2008), reporting that the experiential approach was related to greater gains in oral fluency while the analytical approach was associated with improvements in grammatical accuracy.

Secondly, the data also suggest that the relationships among the three constructs were complex. Learners did not always act on all the beliefs they held due to a variety of reasons, such as a lack of proficiency and confidence. When the learners did not act on their beliefs, they were unlikely to achieve the learning outcomes they intended to achieve. For example, the data revealed that Bing changed his beliefs about approaches to language learning. Initially he adopted an analytical approach to language learning. At time 2, he placed a greater emphasis on the importance of using the language in communication. However, he did not make a conscious effort to seek out communication opportunities in real life. Neither did he participate actively and willingly in the classroom. Although

he changed his belief, he did not act on it and hence failed to show increased fluency in the oral narrative task. On the contrary, his fluency regressed. This finding supports Ellis's argument (2008) that "the fact that learners hold a particular belief is no guarantee they will act on it; conflicts with other strongly held beliefs, situational constraints, or personal reasons may prevent them" (p.703).

The question that follows is what makes learners more or less likely to act on their beliefs. The data suggest that self-efficacious learners were more likely to act on the beliefs they held. Fei was a very confident learner. At both times 1 and 2, her reported self-efficacy belief was at the maximum 10. Because she had no doubt about her ability to learn English well, she was more persistent and motivated in her learning and more likely to act on her beliefs. Although four out of the five learners were of the view at time 2 that the purpose for learning English was to be able to communicate, Fei was the only one who continued seeking out for opportunities to communicate with Kiwis. Consequently, she gained in all the tests. In contrast, the progress of all the other learners was minimal; in some cases, they even regressed. This suggests that beliefs do not have a direct impact on learning outcomes and that their influence depends on whether they are acted on. This finding lends support to Ajzen's TPB (2005) which claims that perceived control beliefs are an important predictor of overt behaviours. In the same vein, Ellis (2008) also argues that "learners' strategies are governed by self-efficacy beliefs, as quite naturally they opt for an approach they feel comfortable with and able to implement and avoid actions that they consider exceed their ability to perform" (p.703).

Thirdly, the study suggests that both the type and quantity of learning strategies have a direct impact on the level and rate of learning. For example, all the learners in the study believed that vocabulary was critical in their learning. Shaped by this belief, they all emphasised vocabulary learning. However, while four learners (Ding, Shan, Peng and Bing) used rote-memorization exclusively at time 1 and predominantly at time 2, Fei employed depth of processing strategies at both times. Specifically, she used context to help learn the meanings of words and then tried to use them herself. Occasionally she also employed rote-memorization. She reported having a range of strategies at her disposal and

using them flexibly and appropriately. This appears to have assisted Fei's improvement in all three vocabulary tests while the other learners' gains in vocabulary were minimal. Also, the study confirmed the findings of previous studies (Green and Oxford, 1995; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Wharton, 2000; Zhong, 2008) that have demonstrated that the relationship between learning strategies and learning outcomes is bidirectional. That is, strategy use helps develop proficiency which in turn promotes more use of strategies. For example, Fei employed using L2 in communication to enhance her fluency. Initially, her communication was limited to the classroom and the school. The positive outcomes motivated her and encouraged her to extend the strategies she used to the real world, which facilitated her learning further. As her proficiency developed, she was able to employ more sophisticated strategies, such as using an English-English dictionary and watching English TV.

Fourthly, the study suggests that learning outcomes may also have an impact on the beliefs that the learners held. For example, three out of the five learners changed their self-efficacy beliefs due to the improvement in their English.

Finally, the study suggests that the learning contexts that surround learners also exerted some influence on the beliefs they held, the strategies they used and their language proficiency. The learners in this study were faced with two contexts. The classroom was the context for all the learners. All of them seemed to draw on this context to help them learn. Most of the learners' beliefs were related to the classroom context, such as their beliefs about exams, error correction and role of teachers. Their learning actions revolved around class requirements, e.g. revising learning contents, copying corrective sentences, completing homework and working with fellow classmates. There was, however, the wider social context. The study has shown that learners made very varied use of this. Although all the learners lived in an English speaking country, four out of the five learners hardly made use of the broader social context at time 1. Although they attempted to use it at time 2, their effort was sporadic and limited to non-interactive activities, such as watching TV and listening to the radio. The only exception was Fei who drew on both the class and social contexts.

Based on the proceeding discussion, I propose a model, aiming to capture the interactions among these three variables and the learning contexts. See Figure 22

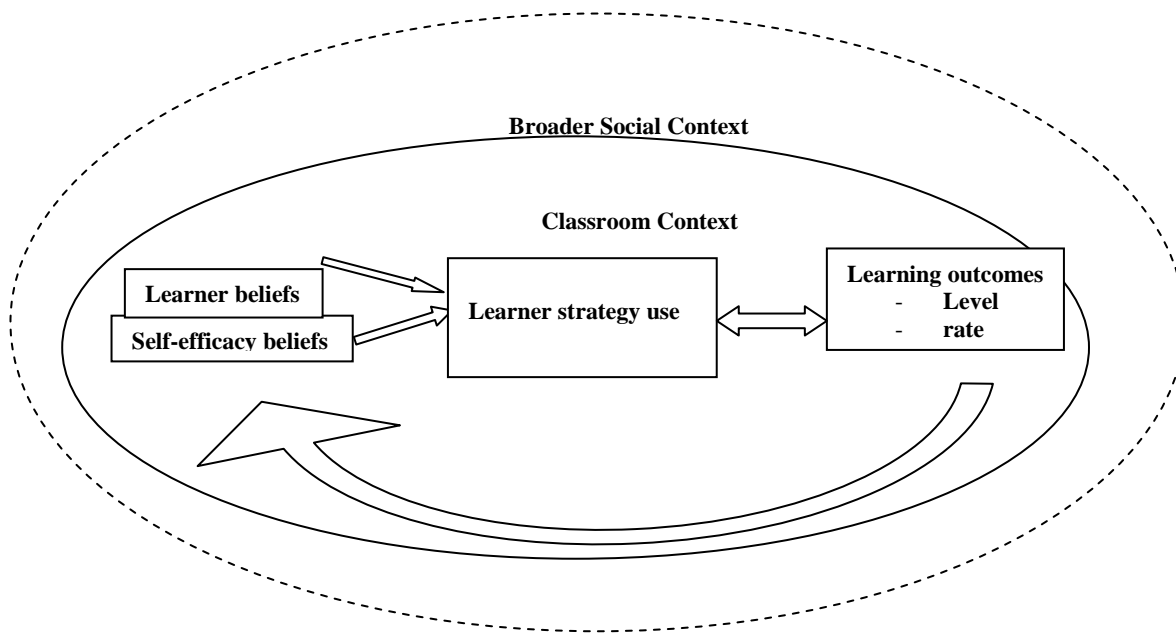


Fig. 22: Proposed Model of the Relationships among Learner Beliefs, Learner Strategy Use and Learning Outcomes

Figure 22 suggests the following:

- (1) There is a linear relationship among beliefs, learning strategies and learning outcomes where learner beliefs influence learner strategy use which in turn determines both the level and the rate of learning.
- (2) Self-efficacy beliefs are essential for a belief to be acted upon. When learners have confidence in their ability to perform, they are more likely to act upon their beliefs.
- (3) The number of strategies available to a learner and the type of strategies a learner uses will have a direct impact on learning outcomes, which, in turn, will promote and enhance learner strategy use.
- (4) Successful learning outcomes reinforce the beliefs that learners hold and enhance their self-efficacy.

- (5) The classroom context influences learners' beliefs and learner strategy use. This is a learning context that holds for all the learners in this study and that they all made use of (as shown by the solid line). In comparison, the learners differed markedly in how they used the social context for language learning (hence this is shown by a dotted line).

8.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several implications for language teaching. The recommendations that follow are for: (1) policy makers in China, (2) the programme in SOL and (3) instructional practice.

8.3.1 For Policy Makers in China

This study reveals that the Chinese learners were not well prepared to live in a society where English is the language of daily communication. Although all of them except Bing started learning English as a foreign language when they were in primary or secondary school, they were not able to conduct basic conversations in the target language or establish friendships with Kiwis or join the workforce in New Zealand. They were able to read and write in English but they had very limited listening and speaking ability. They were of the view that the English they had learned in China was “dumb English” (Fei) and did not help them to survive. My 25 years' teaching experience also supports this finding. It is not uncommon to find a Chinese learner with reasonable reading and writing skills but unable to carry out very simple communication in English.

In light of this, policy makers in China should consider taking some measures to ensure the actual implementation of communication-oriented curricula in the classrooms. As discussed in chapter two, although the new communicative curricula were introduced in the earlier 90s, traditional teacher-directed practices still prevail in most classrooms. Therefore, policy makers should consider:

1. Adding a compulsory and practical speaking component to exams. Due to the pressure from high-stakes exams in China, both learning and teaching revolve around them. Testing speaking would produce a positive wash back effect on learning.
2. Incorporating state-of-the-art teaching methodologies. Teachers, particularly those in rural, disadvantaged and underdeveloped areas (Hu, 2002, 2003, 2005) should be equipped with a variety of teaching methodologies and techniques to ensure they are able to deliver communication focused lessons.
3. Increasing funding for teacher development. One of the challenges of implementing CLT successfully is that it requires teachers to have high oral competence. English teachers should be given opportunities to upgrade their qualifications, go overseas and attend professional development workshops so that they will become confident enough to deliver lessons in English.

8.3.2 For the programme in SOL

This study offers two implications for the language programme that the learners were enrolled in.

1. By and large, the participants were satisfied with their learning experiences in the school. Four out of five participants held positive views about the teaching methods, teachers and class activities. However, Bing was of the view that his needs were not met. He wanted to improve his listening and speaking but what he received was mostly instruction in the same grammar that he had learned in China. So he decided not to re-enrol into the programme after two semesters of study. In order to better accommodate the needs of learners from diverse backgrounds, the programme should consider changing the curriculum. One of the possibilities could be to restructure courses in accordance with English skills, e.g. speaking, listening, reading, writing and language study, which could be further divided into different levels, e.g. speaking, level 1...5, reading, level 1....5. Learners could then be placed into different courses

at a level appropriate to their proficiency level. A full-time student's course profile might look like this: speaking level 1, listening level 2, reading level 3, writing level 2, and language study level 4. In this way, the learner will be placed in the right course and at an appropriate level.

2. A salient theme emerging from the data was the learners' need to find native speakers to practise speaking with. The data suggest that although they were staying in an English speaking country, the learners lived in an enclosed Chinese community and their opportunities to use English and make contact with native speakers outside the institution were minimal. The programme should consider helping learners increase real world contact by:

- Inviting native speakers to the class regularly.
- Providing learners with sufficient information of local events for them to participate in.
- Appointing a member of staff to liaise between local communities and learners.
- Pairing language learners off with competent L2 or L1 learners who are enrolled in other programmes in the institution and who are willing to help the language learners practise speaking.
- Designing contact tasks as a link between the classroom context and social context, e.g. asking for bus information, applying for a community library card, interviewing people, completing a questionnaire, etc.

8.3.3 Instructional Practice

This study has a number of implications for classroom practice. Firstly, this study indicates that all the learners held beliefs about how to best learn and what a good teacher should be like. These beliefs shaped their learning behaviours. This result implies that it is critical to understand the beliefs that learners hold if teachers want to find out the reasons why learners do what they do and if teachers wish to change learners' behaviours and promote learner autonomy. Both Cotterall (1995) and Zhong

(2010) argued that before promoting autonomous learning, it was essential to investigate learners' beliefs and gauge their readiness for learning autonomy.

There are a number of ways in which teachers can uncover the beliefs that their learners hold about language learning. Some of my suggestions include:

1. Asking learners to write. In my experience, most language learners are keen to write in the target language and would like their teachers to read and correct their writing. The writing can take different forms, e.g. learning journals, letters to the teacher, compositions or paragraphs. Learners can be asked to write about their perceptions of language learning or of a certain class activity. Some of the writing topics could be:

- My views of a good teacher
- The best way to learn English
- What I like best about learning in this school
- My favourite class activity
- My strengths/weaknesses in language learning
- Why I learn English

Through reading their learners' writing, teachers can become aware of the beliefs that their learners hold and help them to make informed decisions about teaching. For example, after identifying their learners' beliefs, teachers may decide to do more error correction or use more collaborative editing.

2. Asking learners to talk. Teachers could invite their learners to talk about their beliefs. This could be conducted one-on-one with a student privately or with the whole class. The purpose is to create an opportunity for learners to talk about their learning and for teachers to become aware of their learners' perceptions.
3. More formally, administering a simple questionnaire to survey learners' beliefs.

Secondly, although researchers hold different views regarding the effectiveness of learner strategy training (See Ellis, 1994, 2008; Dörnyei, 2005), this study reveals that the quantity and quality of strategy use affected learning outcomes. One of the factors in Fei's successful learning was the fact that she had more strategies at her disposal and that she was able to orchestrate them according to the tasks at hand. Also, all the participants in the study commented that they expected their teachers to provide them with more learning strategies. They believed that a good range of LLS could help them learn more effectively and quickly. In their opinion, LLS were important tools for learning independently. Although it is not easy to find universal strategies that work for everyone, making more strategies available to a learner may help him/ her to select one that is compatible with his/her learning styles and that is appropriate for the task.

However, due to time constraints and the scope of curricula, most English courses may find it difficult to provide intensive strategy training. As I mentioned earlier, research studies on strategy training have produced mixed results. Therefore, it may be more practical to provide learners with strategies whenever demand arises. The demand could be from course materials or from the learners themselves. The purpose should be to raise learners' awareness of a variety of strategies available so that their learning can be enhanced. There are a number of techniques that teachers could consider:

1. Asking learners to share the strategies they used to complete a task immediately after the task has been completed while their memory is still fresh and the strategies are still relevant.
2. Providing learners with a list of strategies for a task either before or after the task.
3. Asking learners to list the barriers in their learning and then brainstorming what strategies can be used to tackle them. During this process, learners can share their strategies and teachers can evaluate their learners' strategy use and suggest additional strategies if necessary. A class strategy list could be produced as an outcome of the discussion.
4. Referring learners to some reading materials on strategy use in which successful language learners, for example, talked about the strategies they used when they learned a language. In my

experience, learners usually respond positively to successful learning stories and are eager to know and try what has worked for other learners.

Another clear finding of the study was that among all the aspects of English learning, vocabulary was the most important for these learners (Schmitt, 2001; Nation, 2001). Although all the learners spent a lot of time and effort memorizing word lists, they struggled to retain the words they had learned. This suggests that giving learners wordlists to learn on their own was not very effective and that teachers should consider helping learners ease their vocabulary learning burden by:

1. Using mixed presentation modes. Baddeley's (1986) theory of working memory distinguishes three separate components (a phonological loop and a visual/spatial sketchpad coordinated by means of a central executive) for processing verbal information. Presentation-modality effects suggest that presenting materials in a mixed rather than a unitary mode may increase effective working memory and reduce cognitive load (see Sweller, 1988, 1989). There is evidence (e.g. Mousavi et al, 1995) supporting this hypothesis. Hence, teachers may consider using both visual (e.g. reading texts, pictures, videos) and auditory (e.g. tapes, narrations, dictations) materials to present new words to increase the amount of information processed by working memory.
2. Increasing the amount of engagement with new words. Schmitt (2001) argues that "the more one engaged with a word (deeper processing), the more likely the word will be remembered for later use" (p.121). A variety of exercises could be used to expose learners to the words they learned in their learning materials, e.g. gap fills, cross words, making sentences, finding synonyms and antonyms, spelling exercises, matching word meanings etc. Each encounter in different contexts will help learners memorize the words and eventually retain and store them in their long term memory.
3. Providing learners with more memory strategies. The study reveals that Chinese learners did not have any memory strategies other than rote-memorization. In my own teaching experience, I have been often approached by learners from diverse backgrounds, looking for effective

memory strategies. Some examples of other memory strategies apart from rote-memorization are forming associations or mind mapping, grouping, miming, the key word method, etc.

Finally, this study endorses the previous finding (e.g. Yang, 1992; 1999) that self-efficacy beliefs are related to all aspects of strategy use. Also it reveals that learners may hold similar beliefs but only the self-efficacious learners were likely to implement their beliefs. This offers empirical support to Ajzen's (1991, 2005) TPB where he posited that control beliefs, e.g. self-efficacy, are a strong indicator of overt behaviour. Therefore, class teachers should consider helping learners develop a more positive image of themselves as language learners and seek to foster learners' self-efficacy by:

1. Giving learners verbal or written positive appraisals during their learning. Although learners may have a variety of ways to assess their learning, experts' (e.g. teachers) opinions are highly regarded by learners. Praise from teachers will help boost their confidence, particularly at the time when they are doubtful about their ability to learn the language and when they are feeling like giving up on learning.
2. Helping learners set more realistic learning goals. When the goals are realistic and achievable, learners will notice the progress they make. In addition, teachers should encourage them "to measure their success in terms of self-improvement rather than triumph over others" (Bandura, 1995:4, cited in Graham, 2006). When they know they are able to perform a task that they were not able to previously, they will become more confident.
3. Providing role models. This is what Bandura (1977; 1997) called vicarious learning. The role model should have similar experience that learners are able to relate to. When learners observe that others (i.e. models) have succeeded, they will be inspired, persuading themselves: "if they can do it, I can, too."
4. Establishing a supportive learning environment. Stress and debilitating anxiety have a negative effect on learners' performance and consequently lower their self-efficacy. Teachers should

establish a friendly and non-threatening learning environment to optimize learning through scaffolded instruction and providing peer support.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

This study has provided empirical evidence of how the beliefs, learner strategies and language proficiency of five low-proficiency Chinese ESL learners changed over a sixteen-week period and it has shed light on the relationship among these three constructs. However, there are several limitations that need to be mentioned. First, due to the qualitative nature of this study, the sample size was small and the participants were all low- proficiency learners from the same cultural background. Although the study provided an in-depth understanding of beliefs and learning strategies of this group, one has to be cautious when generalizing the results, particularly to learners from different cultural backgrounds and in different learning contexts.

Second, the quantity of the data collected from the diary entries varied considerably from 2,664 words to 22,812 words. The variations arose from the differences in learners' ability to articulate their beliefs and learning strategy use and also from the differences in their commitment to keeping the learning journals. Therefore, some of the learners' diary entries were highly informative while others merely duplicated what had been gathered from other methods. Future research should consider ways of motivating learners to write illustrative diary entries.

Third, I used verbal reports, mostly retrospective (e.g. interviews and diaries), to collect data on beliefs and strategy use. In hindsight, I would have gathered more useful data on their strategy use had I incorporated think aloud, a concurrent method while they were performing the oral narrative tasks. This would have provided information about the learners' specific strategy use.

Fourth, other individual learner factors, e.g. personality and learning style, may also influence learner strategy use and learner beliefs. However, an investigation of these factors was not included in this study as to have done so would have made the data collection even more onerous for the

participants. Hence, this study was not able to investigate the role played by individual learner difference factors in their beliefs, learning strategy use and proficiency development.

Finally, I employed three tests (OPT, oral narrative test, vocabulary tests) to measure learners' proficiency in grammar, speaking and vocabulary. If I could do it again, I would also include a listening test. In this way, I would have gained a better understanding of the impact of the social context on their learning.

8.5 Suggestions for Future Research

As already noted, this study has made some contributions to the field of SLA, particularly relating to the development of learners' beliefs and learner strategies and the relationships among these. However, this is only a beginning. There are still some topics that need further investigation. First, this study has shown the dual nature of learner beliefs. That is, some of the learners' beliefs developed over the sixteen weeks while the majority of them remained stable. More studies are needed to examine the dual nature of learner beliefs in different contexts and with larger samples. Future research needs to examine what type of learner beliefs change. What factors are accountable for the changes? What type of learner beliefs are resistant to changes? Why are they resistant to change? Furthermore, future research could design an intervention programme and then examine the effect of the interventions on belief changes.

Second, regarding language learner strategies, this study suggests that social context, teaching methods, and the learners' progress were the factors that accounted for changes in learners' strategy use. Future research needs to identify what other factors might contribute to changes in strategies in order to deliver more effective learner training programmes. In addition, future research could investigate the relationship between the kinds of factors and types of changes in strategy use, i.e. what factors bring about what type of change in strategy use. Furthermore, this study examined the strategies that all the learners deployed, not just those of good language learners. It suggested that both the quality and

quantity of Fei's strategy use accounted for her successful learning. More studies are needed to investigate and compare strategies used by both successful and less successful learners by means of both self-report and observing them performing different tasks. Only in this way can we gain access to the role that strategies play during the process of learning.

Third, relating to the relationship among the three constructs, this study suggests that beliefs underpinned learning strategy use which had a direct impact on the type of learning success. Based on the findings of this study, a model is proposed of the relationship among the three constructs. More quantitative studies are needed to test the model proposed by this study and to examine the relationships among the three variables. In addition, this study reveals that if a belief was not acted upon, it did not affect learning outcomes. More qualitative studies are needed to investigate what factors are responsible for a lack of action. I believe investigations of this nature will shed light on the role of individual factors (e.g. motivation, personality, learning strategies, beliefs) and provide a more comprehensive account of L2 learning.

Finally, although one of the aims of the paper was to contribute to the understanding of Chinese learners studying in an ESL context, it was not my intention to treat them as a homogenous group. The study reveals that the learners were different in terms of their beliefs, learning strategies and learning styles. However, does culture affect beliefs and strategy use? If the answer is affirmative, the follow-up question is to what extent does culture affect beliefs and learning strategy use? Future research could investigate this by examining and comparing learners from different cultural groups.

APPENDIX A: Participant Information Sheet for Students (English Version)



THE UNIVERSITY
OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau

Department of Applied Language Studies and
Linguistics

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland New Zealand
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599
Email: aplang@auckland.ac.nz

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (STUDENTS)

Title: Chinese language Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning and Their
Language Proficiency: in a New Zealand Context.

To: participants

My name is Qunyan Zhong. I teach English to migrants in the School of Language Studies at Unitec, I am also studying for my doctorate in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics at The University of Auckland. I am currently undertaking a study of the relationship between changes in Chinese language learner beliefs about language learning and their language proficiency over one semester.

You are invited to participate in this study and I would appreciate any assistance you can offer me. As part of my research, I need to get data from six Chinese learners who have recently enrolled in an English programme in a New Zealand language school. Your school is not involved. Therefore, the results will NOT affect your school tests or your school records.

What are the benefits if you agree to take part in the research?

1. If you wish, you could have a copy of any publications based on this study.
2. A \$30 voucher will be offered to you as an acknowledgement of your assistance at the completion of the study.

If you would like to participate in the study, you will be expected to do the following things:

1. You will be asked to keep a journal in Chinese about your English learning. You have to keep a minimum of two journal entries per week. Each entry will take you about 20 minutes. I will come to collect your journal every Monday and the journal book will be returned to you immediately after I have made a photocopy of it.
2. You will be observed in your classroom while you are engaging in your normal language learning. The observations will be video-taped with your teacher's and your permission. There will be two class observations and each observation will take approximately 120 minutes.
3. Soon after the classroom observations, you will be interviewed in Chinese about your learning experiences and behaviours by watching the video-tapes together with me. The interviews will be audio-taped with your consent but you can choose to have the recorder turned off at any time. There will be two interviews and each will take 30 minutes.
4. You will be interviewed about your language beliefs in Chinese on two occasions: at the beginning and at the end of the study. The interviews will take about half an hour to three quarters of an hour and will be audio-recorded with your permission.
5. You will sit a general English proficiency test and a vocabulary test and also complete a speaking task on two occasions. The proficiency test will take 30 minutes; the vocabulary test will take a maximum of 50 minutes and the speaking task will be about 10 minutes. The speaking tasks will be audio-taped with your consent.

You will not be offered the opportunity to edit the transcripts of the recordings; neither will you be offered the tapes. All the data I have collected for this research can only be accessed by me and my supervisor and will be destroyed when my doctoral thesis has been completed and accepted.

If you wish to take part in this study, please fill in the consent form. Your participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the research at anytime and request that any data involving yourself be destroyed at any time. All the information you provide in the research will remain strictly confidential and your name will not appear in any reports or publications based on this study.

If you have any queries or concerns (or you wish to know more), please phone me on 8154321 ext. 8089 or e-mail me at mzhong@unitec.ac.nz or write to the following address:

Qunyan Zhong
School of Language Studies
Unitec New Zealand
Private Bag 92025, Auckland

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Professor Rod Ellis
Department of Applied Language Studies & Linguistics
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand
Phone: 373-7599 ext. 84876
Email address: r.ellis@auckland.ac.nz

The Head of Department is: Assoc Prof. John Read
Department of Applied Language Studies & Linguistics
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand
Phone: 373-7599 ext. 87673
Email address: ja.read@auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee,
The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142.
Tel. 373-7599 ext. 87830

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSTIY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
on 15 August, 2007 for a period of three years from 15 August 2007. Reference number 2007/261.**

APPENDIX B. Participant Information Sheet for Students (Chinese Version)



Department of Applied Language
Studies and Linguistics

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland New Zealand
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599
Email: aplang@auckland.ac.nz

参与者信息 (学生)

题目: 在新西兰的中国语言学生对语言学习的信念和他们的语言水平 之关系

致参与者 :

我叫钟群雁。我在奥克兰理工大学语言学院教移民英语, 同时我也在奥大应用语言与语言学系做博士。目前我正在研究中国语言学生在一学期里对语言学习的信念改变与他们语言水平的变化之关系的研究。

我邀请你参与这项科研 并感谢你的协作。做为我科研的一部分, 我需要向六位最近在新西兰英语学校注册学习英语的中国学生收集信息。你所在学校并没参与此项研究, 因此, 研究结果并不影响你在校的考试成绩及在校及在校纪录。

如果你同意参与此项科研, 你会有什么益处?

1. 作为语言学习者, 你会对你自己有更好的了解, 特别是对你有关英语学习信念及学习行为有更好的了解。
2. 你会有机会做两次口试及笔试, 益于检测自己英语学习进展。所有考试都是免费的, 不构成你学校成绩的一部分。
3. 我教英语的教龄有20余年, 我有数年在海外及在新西兰教授英语经验, 你可以向我询问英语语言的问题。
4. 如果你愿意, 你会得到基于此项研究发表的任何刊物。
5. 项目结束时, 我会给你一张价值30 纽币的购物卷。

如果你同意参加, 你要做以下事宜:

1. 你要用中文写关于英语学习的日记, 每周至少要写二篇日记, 每篇日记大约要花20 分钟左右。我每周一要来你班收日记, 复印后, 日记马上 退还给你。
2. 我要在你正常上课期间到你班观察你上课, 经过你和你老师的同意后还要录像。
一年内我要听两次课, 每次大约120 分钟。
3. 听课后, 你和我要一起看录像, 我要用中文寻问你学习经历及学习行为。经你允许后, 谈话要被录音, 你在任何时候都可以要求把录音机关掉。一年内要进行两次谈话, 每一次要花三十分钟。
4. 我要对你语言学习的信念采访两次, 一次在学期初, 最后一次在学期末。

采访要花三十至四十五分钟，采访经你允许后要被录音。

6. 你要做两次测试（学初和学末），测试包括全能英语水平测试（30分钟），词汇测试（最多50分钟）和口试。口语要花十分钟并经你同意后要被录音。

你没有机会编辑录音稿，也不会给你磁带。我收集的资料只有我和我的导师能接触，当我博士论文完成并被接受后，所有资料都会被销毁。

若你希望参与此项研究，请你在同意书上签字。你的参与是自愿的，你可以随时退出此研究并可以随时要求任何关于你的资料销毁。你为此研究提供的任何信息都会绝对保密，你的名字不会出现在任何基于此研究的报告及发表刊物上。

若你有任何疑问或疑虑或想知道更多，请打电话找我，我的电话是8154321转7037，或到办公室找我，办公室在182-3003，或发电子邮件给我，网址是mzhong@unitec.ac.nz 或给以下地址写信：

Qunyan Zhong
School of Language Studies
Unitec New Zealand
Private Bag 92025, Auckland

我导师的联系详情如下：

Professor Rod Ellis
Department of Applied Language Studies & Linguistics
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand
Phone: 373-7599 转84876

电子邮件: r.ellis@auckland.ac.nz

系主任是： Assoc Prof. John Read
Department of Applied Language Studies & Linguistics
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Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand
电话：373-7599转87673
电子邮件：ja.read@auckland.ac.nz

有关任何职业道德事宜，请联系：

The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee,
The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland.

电话：373-7599 转87830

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSTIY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
on 15 August, 2007 for a period of three years from 15 August 2007. Reference number 2007/261.**



APPENDIX C. Consent Form for Students (English Version)

Department of Applied Language
Studies and Linguistics

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland New Zealand
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599
Email: aplang@auckland.ac.nz

CONSENT FORM (STUDENTS)

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD IN A LOCKED FILING CABINET FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS AFTER WHICH TIME IT WILL BE DESTROYED

Title: Chinese language Learner Beliefs about Language Learning and
Their Language Proficiency: in a New Zealand Context.

Researcher: Qunyan Zhong

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I agree to be a participant in the research and understand that my participation is voluntary.

- I understand that the research will take one semester.
- I understand that I will be asked to complete a speaking task (which will be audio taped) and a written English language proficiency test at the beginning and at end of the study.
- I understand that I will be interviewed by the researcher on a number of occasions and that the interviews will be audio recorded.
- I understand that I will be observed and video-taped in the classroom.
- I am aware that all the data collected for this study will be stored in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed when the research project has been reported and accepted.
- I understand that my name will not appear in any publication about the research.
- I understand that I can cease to take part in this research at any time and request that any data involving myself be destroyed at any time.
- I understand that I can request and be given a copy of any publications based on this research.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 15 August, 2007 for a period of three years, from 15 August, 2007 Reference Number 2007/261



APPENDIX D. Consent Form for Students (Chinese Version)

Department of Applied Language
Studies and Linguistics

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland New Zealand
Telephone: 64 9 373 7599
Email: aplang@auckland.ac.nz

同意书

这份同意书将被锁在文件柜六年，六年后将被销毁。

题目：在新西兰的中国语言学生对语言学习的信念和他们的语言水平 之关系

研究员：钟群雁

我已读过参与者信息，并且了解了此研究的性质，以及我被选中的原因，我有机会 询问并 给予令我满意的解答。我同意参加此项科研，同时我也知道我是志愿参加的。

- 我知道这项科研要持续一学期。
- 我知道在这项科研初，科研中 及科研末我要做口试 而且要被录音，同时我还 要做全能 英语水平笔试。
- 我知道我要被研究员采访数次，并且 采访要被录音。
- 我知道在课堂我要被观察，而且要被录相。
- 我意识到此项研究的数据要被锁在文件柜里，科研报告写完并被接受后， 数据会被销毁。
- 我知道我的名字不会出现在任何基于此项科研的发表刊物上。
- 我知道我可以在任何时间停止参加此科研， 并且可以在任何时间要求销毁关于我的 任何 数据。
- 我知道我可以索取一份基于此项研究发表的任何刊物。

签名：_____

姓名：_____

日期：_____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 15 August, 2007 for a period of three years from 15 August, 2007. Reference Number 2007/261.

APPENDIX E

FIRST INTERVIEW GUIDES (English Version)

1. How did you learn English in China?
2. Could you describe a typical English lesson for me, e.g. your instructional materials, your classroom activities, your role in the lesson and your teacher's role?
3. Each person has their particular way of learning English. Could you tell me some of the things you did to help you learn English then? And why?
4. How did you like your English learning experience in China?
5. Let's talk about your learning experience in N.Z:
 - Why did you choose to study here?
 - Are there any differences in teaching between N.Z. and China? What about learning?
 - How are you enjoying your study?
 - What are some of the things about learning and teaching in N.Z. that surprised/impressed you?
6. Why are you studying English?
7. Have you made progress in English? What skills, in your opinion, have you improved a lot? And what helped you improve?
8. What do you think of English language? What is the most difficult part in your learning English? And why?
9. In your opinion, what is the best way to learn English well?
10. Do you have any kiwi friends? What do you think of Kiwis?
11. How often do you use English outside the classroom?
12. How good would you like your English to be? And why?

13. What do you think of yourself as a language learner? Do you think you can learn English well ultimately? How would you rate yourself between 1 and 10 ranging from the least confident to the most confident?
14. What do you expect teachers to do help your English learning?
15. When you make a mistake in your English, how important is it, in your opinion, to be corrected?
- 16.** Please describe what you do every day to help you learn English.
- 17.** What do you think you should do to improve your English further?
18. Which is more important for the success of your language learning? Your teachers? Your own efforts? Your practice or using the language? Could you arrange them in the order of importance?
19. How do you think of the role of tests in your learning?
20. How do you assess your English progress?
21. What do you think of vocabulary in your learning? Is it important to look up every word?

APPENDIX F

GUIDELINES FOR DIARY ENTRIES

(English Version adapted from Richardson (1994))

1. Recall any events relating to your English learning that occurred in and outside the classroom during the week. These events could be your school, English classes, English teachers, classmates, learning materials you used, class activities, contents you learned, TV programme you watched, homework, self-study, things that you do to help you learn English etc...
2. Write about how you feel about these events and your experiences. Write your feelings and opinions honestly and frankly because I would like to listen to YOUR VOICE and your diary will be treated in full confidentiality.
3. Write your diary either in English or in Chinese or in a mixture of both.
4. Write your diary in the notebook I provided to you.
5. Write freely. You can write as long as you wish and as often as you wish. But remember you have to write a minimum of two entries each week.
6. Set a regular time to write your diary. It is a good idea to write your journal entries whenever you have feelings or comments that you would like to share with someone. Don't keep the time for too long between your feelings and your journal entries.
7. Treat your journal as someone that you can trust and that you share your feelings and opinions with. Keep your diary in a safe and handy place.
8. Pass your diary to me at my office at 12pm every Monday and I will return it to you immediately after photocopying your diary entries.

APPENDIX G
CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

Observation objective

The purpose of the classroom observations is to observe learner behaviours or actions in the classroom and investigate the links between their behaviours and their beliefs.

Student's name: _____

Class activities	Learner's behaviours		Comment
	What did the learner do?	What did the learner say?	

Overall behavioural Patterns:

APPENDIX H

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STIMULATED RECALL

(English version adapted from Gass & Mackey 2000)

Instructions for research participants:

We are going to watch the video last time when I observed your class. What I am interested in is your beliefs and thoughts that underpin what you said and what you did **at the time**. I can watch your behaviours in the classroom, but I don't know your beliefs and thoughts. So, what I'd like you to do is to tell me what was in your mind and your reasons for what you did **at that time**.

I'm going to give you a remote control and we are going to watch the video together. While we are watching if you want to tell me something about your reasons and your thoughts for what you did and said, you can push the pause button. If I have a question about your thoughts and reasons, I will pause the video and ask you to talk about that part of the video.

General questions for the researcher:

- What were you thinking here/at this point/right here?
- Can you tell me why you said this then?
- I see you are laughing/looking confused, what were you thinking then?
- Can you tell me what you thought when you said that?
- Can you tell me what you thought when you did that?

APPENDIX I

TASK-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. During the 10-minute planning period, how did you plan?
2. When you do narrative speaking tasks on other occasions, e.g. in the classroom, do you use the same approach?
3. What were the major problems in preparing for the story?
4. What strategies did you use to help you deal with the problems?
5. While you told the story, what did you focus on? Did you think about grammar? Vocabulary? The content of the story? Please specify them.
6. What were the major problems while you were telling the story?
7. What strategies did you use to complete the task?
8. Do you always use these strategies?
9. What do you think helped you to tell the story well and what did not help?

APPENDIX J

THE PICTURE FOR THE ORAL NARRATIVE TASK (Heyer, S. 1994, p.26)



APPENDIX K

ORAL NARRATIVE TASK INSTRUCTIONS (English Version)

You will see a set of pictures. These pictures tell a complete story. You will describe the story while looking at the story.

Before you start telling the story, you are allowed to prepare for 10 minutes. I will give you a piece of paper to jot down your ideas. Please don't write the whole story because you will not have enough time. You have to give the paper back to me when you start.

For each picture you have to say a minimum of three sentences. There is no time limit. You can tell the story as much detail as possible. You have to tell the story in **past tenses**. The main character in the story is _____.

You can start preparing for the story now.

APPENDIX L

Summary Table of Belief Data Relating to Research Question 1

Learning situation		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
China: learning was not applicable to life/passive/rote-learning	Time 1	x			x	x	3	
	Time 2	x			x	x	3	
China: teaching was obsolete/inflexible /confusing/traditional /dry	Time 1	x		x	x	x	4	
	Time 2	x		x	x	x	4	
China: limited class activities/teacher talk dominated	Time 1	x			x	x	3	
	Time 2	x			x	x	3	
China: teaching/learning for exams	Time 1	x		x		x	3	
	Time 2			x		x	2	
China: ignored and prejudiced against low-achievers	Time 1							
	Time 2			x			1	
China: grammar and reading were better but little listening and speaking/dumb English	Time 1				x	x	2	
	Time 2				x	x	2	
China: English was taught in the same way as other subjects/in Chinese	Time 1	x			x	x	3	
	Time 2	x			x	x	3	
N.Z. teaching was motivating/relaxing/practical/useful/faster but easier to understand/good/focusing on communication/flexible/good pace/learner-centered/interesting/made learning easier	Time 1	x		x	x	x	4	
	time 2	x		x	x	x	4	
N.Z. a lot of (interesting/communicative) class activities	Time 1	x			x	x	3	
	Time 2	x				x	2	
N.Z. placement and streaming was not rational/needed improvements	Time 1		x				1	
	Time 2		x				1	
N.Z.: did not meet the needs/not effective	Time 1		x				1	
	Time 2		x				1	
N.Z.: there was not enough pressure (homework/tests)	Time 1						0	
	Time 2		x				1	
N.Z.: exams tested your progress and for self-improvement	Time 1						0	
	Time 2			x			1	
N.Z. Learning was interesting/enjoyable/motivating/fun/a joy/in control/active	Time 1	x			x	x	3	
	Time 2	x			x	x	3	
N.Z. tests were too easy/didn't test learners' competency	Time 1						0	
	Time 2		x				1	

Appendix L (Continued)

2. External factors		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
<u>Exams:</u> Exams gave feedback/information on progress /	Time 1	x	x		x		3	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x		4	
<u>Exams</u> Pushing to learn	Time 1		x	x	x		3	
	Time 2		x	x	x		3	
<u>Exams</u> Effective/important/useful	Time 1		x		x		2	
	Time 2		x	x	x		3	
<u>Exams</u> More useful to teachers	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2						0	
<u>Exams</u> Channels of communication between teachers and students	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2						0	
<u>Error correction:</u> Important to be corrected immediately/whenever he/she made mistakes/in class	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2		x	x	x	x	4	
<u>Error correction</u> Made sure not to repeat the same mistakes/avoid making the same mistakes/learning from errors/ensure progress/avoid fossilisation	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	
<u>Error Correction</u> It was embarrassing/ a loss of face to be corrected outside the classroom	Time 1				x		1	
	Time 2						0	
<u>Error correction</u> it didn't matter if he/she made mistakes	Time 1	x					1	
	Time 2						0	
<u>Error correction</u> Errors were a natural process of learning	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2						0	
<u>Role of teachers</u> Detecting gaps in learning	Time 1						0	
	Time 2				x		1	
<u>Role of teachers</u> Motivating learners/inspiring	Time 1	x	x	x	x		4	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x		4	
<u>Role of teachers</u> Organizing activities to use the language	Time 1	x			x		2	
	Time 2	x			x		2	
<u>Role of teachers</u> Giving feedback/explaining errors	Time 1	x				x	2	
	Time 2		x	x			2	

Appendix L (Continued)

2. External factors		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
<u>Role of teachers</u>	Time 1	x	x	x	x		4	
Giving knowledge/delivering lessons/clarifying confusion/solving problems/teaching	Time 2	x	x	x	x		4	
<u>Role of teachers</u>	Time 1	x	x	x	x		4	
Placing pressure on learners by giving homework and exams/monitoring learners	Time 2	x	x	x	x		4	
<u>Role of teachers</u>	Time 1		x				1	
Meeting learners' needs	Time 2		x				1	
<u>Role of teachers</u>	Time 1				x	x	2	
Guiding and directing learners/giving learning methods	Time 2		x			x	2	
<u>Kiwis</u>	Time 1			x			1	
Not willing to accept migrants	Time 2			x			1	
<u>Kiwis</u>	Time 1			x			1	
Arrogant/unkind	Time 2			x			1	
<u>Kiwis</u>	Time 1						0	
Friendly, polite, encouraging	Time 2					x	1	
<u>Working in pairs/groups</u>	Time 1						0	
Learning from fellow classmates	Time 2	x			x	x	3	x
<u>Working in pairs/groups</u>	Time 1						0	
An opportunity to use the language	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	x
<u>Working in pairs/groups</u>	Time 1						0	
Useful but concerned about the inputs/did not help accuracy	Time 2		x	x			2	x
<u>Working in pairs/groups</u>	Time 1						0	
Consolidating what he/she had learned	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	x
<u>Other class activities</u>	Time 1						0	
Asking questions to the whole class was not helpful	Time 2		x				1	
<u>Other class activities</u>	Time 1						0	
Open discussion was better	Time 2				x		1	
<u>Setting</u>	Time 1	x			x	x	3	
Learning at school was better than by herself/himself	Time 2			x	x		2	

Appendix L (Continued)

3. Personal factors		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
Had aptitude for languages	Time 1		x	x			2	
	Time 2		x	x			2	
Memory was deteriorating /not good	Time 1		x		x		2	
	Time 2				x		1	
Good explicit grammar knowledge	Time 1		x		x	x	3	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	x
Limited vocabulary	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	
Competitive & ambitious	Time 1		x	x	x	x	4	
	Time 2		x	x	x	x	4	
Low in capability	Time 1			x			1	
	Time 2						0	
Slow in action	Time 1			x			1	
	Time 2						0	
Not balanced	Time 1						0	
	Time 2			x			1	
Confident about oneself	Time 1	x				x	2	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	x
Good comprehension	Time 1				x		1	
	Time 2				x		1	
Self-regulation	Time 1						0	
	Time 2				x		1	
Not fluent/limited oral skills	Time 1	x			x	x	3	
	Time 2	x			x	x	3	
Not interested in English and not confident	Time 1			x	x		2	
	Time 2						0	x
Strong writing and reading	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2					x	1	
Listening was the most difficult skill	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2						0	
Speaking was the most difficult skill	Time 1						0	
	Time 2					x	1	
Good listening	Time 1		x				1	
	Time 2		x				1	
Large sighted vocabulary	Time 1				x		1	
	Time 2						0	
effort/hard working was an important factor for the successful learning /did not work hard	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	

Appendix L (Continued)

4. Learning a second language		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change?
Vocabulary was important skills/fundamental	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	
Listening was important	Time 1	x					1	
	Time 2	x	x				2	
Accuracy/grammar/sentence structure was important	Time 1	x	x	x	x		4	
	Time 2		x	x			2	x
Accuracy and fluency were both important	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2					x	1	
Speaking should focus more on fluency	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2	x			x		2	
Speaking should focus more on accuracy	Time 1				x		1	
	Time 2		x			x	2	
Writing should focus on more accuracy	Time 1				x		1	
	Time 2	x			x		2	
Reading help vocabulary	Time 1			x		x	2	
	Time 2		x	x		x	3	

5. Nature of Language Learning		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
Learning was about using/applying the language in communication	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2	x	x		x	x	4	x
Learning was a cumulative process/had stages	Time 1	x	x		x	x	4	
	Time 2	x	x		x	x	4	
Nurturing the feel for English	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2	x	x			x	3	x
Learning by practising in extra curriculum learning groups	Time 1						0	
	Time 2		x				1	

APPENDIX M

Summary Table of Strategy Data Relating to Research Question 2

Cognitive strategies		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
Rote-learning wordlists	Time 1	x	x	x	x		4	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	
Learning words through reading	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2	x	x		x	x	4	x
Writing down words repeatedly	Time 1		x	x	x		3	
	Time 2		x	x	x		3	
Learning words from street signs	Time 1						0	
	Time 2			x			1	
Transcribing English pronunciation with Chinese Character	Time 1	x					1	
	Time 2						0	
Copying texts to memorize	Time 1	x				x	2	
	Time 2	x				x	2	
Listening to recorded words to memorize	Time 1		x				1	
	Time 2						0	
Memorizing words in sentences	Time 1		x				1	
	Time 2						0	
Using vocabulary flash cards to help memorize	Time 1						0	
	Time 2		x				1	
Grouping to memorize	Time 1						0	
	Time 2				x		1	
Preparing lessons before class	Time 1						0	
	Time 2				x		1	
Using tongue twisters to memorize	Time 1						0	
	Time 2					x	1	
Synthesizing & summarizing	Time 1						0	
	Time 2			x	x	x	3	x
Reading grammar reference books	Time 1	x		x	x		3	
	Time 2	x		x	x		3	
Doing grammar exercises	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	
Revising	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	
Watching English TV & DVD	Time 1						0	
	Time 2	x	x	x		x	4	x
Listening to the radio	Time 1						0	
	Time 2	x	x			x	3	x
Making a mental picture of daily situations and self talking	Time 1						0	
	Time 2	x					1	
Using English-English dictionary	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2				x	x	2	
Using less L1 in homework/using more English	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2					x	1	

APPENDIX M (Continued)

Cognitive strategies		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
Comparing Chinese newspaper with English one	Time 1						0	
	Time 2					x	1	
Writing compositions	Time 1						0	
	Time 2		x				1	
Using the internet to learn	Time 1						0	
	Time 2				x		1	
Listening to tapes	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2					x	1	
Staying focused in class	Time 1		x		x	x	3	
	Time 2		x		x	x	3	
Copying corrective sentences	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2			x		x	2	
Taking notes	Time 1				x	x	2	
	Time 2				x	x	2	

Compensation strategies		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
Guessing word meanings through context	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2	x				x	2	
Substituting a complex word for a simple one	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	
Switching the mother tongue to help	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	
Explaining the meaning when s/he does not have the word	Time 1						0	
	Time 2					x	1	
Asking to write down when s/he does not understand in listening	Time 1				x		1	
	Time 2				x		1	
Looking at pictures / listening to sounds when watching English TV & DVD	Time 1						0	
	Time 2		x	x			2	
Looking up new words in the dictionary when s/he comes across new words	Time 1	x	x	x	x		4	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x		4	
Getting help	Time 1			x			1	
	Time 2						0	
Staying quiet	Time 1						0	
	Time 2	x	x	x			3	
Using Chinese-English dictionary	Time 1		x	x			2	
	Time 2		x	x			2	
Skipping unknown words	Time 1	x					1	
	Time 2						0	
Listening to key words	Time 1						0	
	Time 2	x	x			x	3	
Using simple sentences	Time 1						0	
	Time 2	x					1	

Appendix M (Continued)

Compensation strategies		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
Giving answers subvocally	Time 1						0	
	Time 2	x					1	
Asking people to repeat when she/he did not understand	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2	x				x	2	

Metacognitive strategies		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Change
Evaluating and monitoring	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	
Planning and Setting goals and objectives	Time 1	x	x	x	x	x	5	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	

Social strategies		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Changes
Co-operating with fellow classmates	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	x
Asking for clarification	Time 1					x	1	
	Time 2	x				x	2	
Communicating with native speakers	Time 1						0	
	Time 2	x	x	x	x	x	5	x
Developing cultural understanding	Time 1						0	
	Time 2					x	1	
	Time 1							
	Time 2							

Affective strategies		Peng	Bing	Ding	Shan	Fei	Total	Changes
Encouraging herself	Time 1							
	Time 2			x			1	
Write down new words in vocabulary book to ease anxiety	Time 1				x		1	
	Time 2							
	Time 1							
	Time 2							

APPENDIX N

Sample of Interview Transcripts

Case four: Shan

1st Interview

01 Aug'08

R= Researcher

S=Shan

R: Could you tell me about your English learning background?

S: I learned English at university but due to the nature of my work, I haven't used English for ages. I worked overseas [in China] and haven't been here [New Zealand] for long. Although I had a job here, I didn't use English as much. At home I rely on my family so I don't have any pressure. I believed it was all right. Unlike others who came here alone, I arrived here with family. Also I have to look after family and children so I haven't learned English seriously. Although I learned English at university, it was long time ago. I had worked in China for a long time and I didn't need English at all.

R: When did you start learning English?

S: from secondary school until university. It's been 20years now. Since I don't have any pressure, I feel my English isn't progressing. I believe when I came to learn at school, things will become better because there are study plans that I have to accomplish. I think learning [herself] has just started now.

R: Why do you learn English now?

S: I might go to study a major. I might look for a job. I'm not sure but I feel it's good time for me to learn now and I can look after family at the same time of learning.

R: could you describe a typical English class in China?

S: it's been a long time. The memory was vague. Generally the teacher used to write the new words on board. Then he/she asked us to read aloud. Also he translated the text and explained the grammar [tenses, etc] in the text. Then we did exercises about the words and grammar. Very traditional.

R: As a student were you involved in the class?

S: Normally we were very passive. Most of the time teachers talked and we seldom were given opportunity to speak or participate. Usually teachers gave us dictations of new words and did some exercises. I think we didn't have any opportunities to speak, which was about 20 years ago. It might be different now.

R: what did you think of learning in China?

S: I think grammar and reading were better but there was little listening and speaking which were not very helpful. We learned (English) for a long time but when we came here, we couldn't understand what we knew but when written down, we could recognize. (I) could read but couldn't listen. I often asked people to write down

R: How did you learn English when you were in China?

S: rote learned vocabulary.

R: Is this your first learning in New Zealand?

S: yes, it is.

R: it's only about two weeks now. Is there anything that struck you?

S: I believe it's very good that teachers use English to teach English. No matter what the teachers say, it is in English and I received English. This is very good. I thought there was no difference between learning English, Maths, Chinese and any other subjects. But I think I'm learning English now. No matter what the teacher is talking about, he/she is using English. I have the language environment. Another thing that struck me is that learning in the class is different from learning by yourself. After teachers explained, it was very easy to understand [grammatical rules]. If I learned by myself, it would take a long time and I might be still confused [about the rules]. For example, the other day, the teacher talked about the differences between "have" and "have got". I had always been unsure [of the differences] and confused. Now I'm very clear after the teaching. I believe it was right to come to school to learn. It will take longer and I had to make a greater effort to understand by yourself. I'm very happy about my decision to come to school to learn. It was only a week or so but I

APPENDIX O

Sample of transcripts of the oral narrative task

Case four: Shan

1st speaking

01 Aug. 08

Mm Michael had his dinner mm but the food is not good mm is not delicious then Michael hmm got to the bed on 11 o'clock but Michael could not to sleep Michael always mm thought m if if if mm if he has mm has got ahah he if if he had hmm a beautiful wife mm he is very happy Michael mm thought some way some way to find his wife he decided to mm painted his car oh he's a driver so have a car he paint painted his car then write a senten mm it said " want a wanted a wife" after then he mm received a lot of letter from different mm girls mm na na girls hmm different different face different hobby he choice some girls make a appointment to meet them finally he found his wife so he don't hmm need na car mm show some senten so he c clean the senten 'wanted a wife' finally he ma got married his wife is very beautiful so they are very happy mm they are enjoying mm their life.

Time= 4 min 10 seconds

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