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# **Constructing Concepts of Learner Autonomy in Language Education in the Chinese Context:**

A Narrative-based Inquiry into University Students'  
Conceptions of Successful English Language Learning

**By**

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

**University of Warwick, Centre for English Language Teacher Education**

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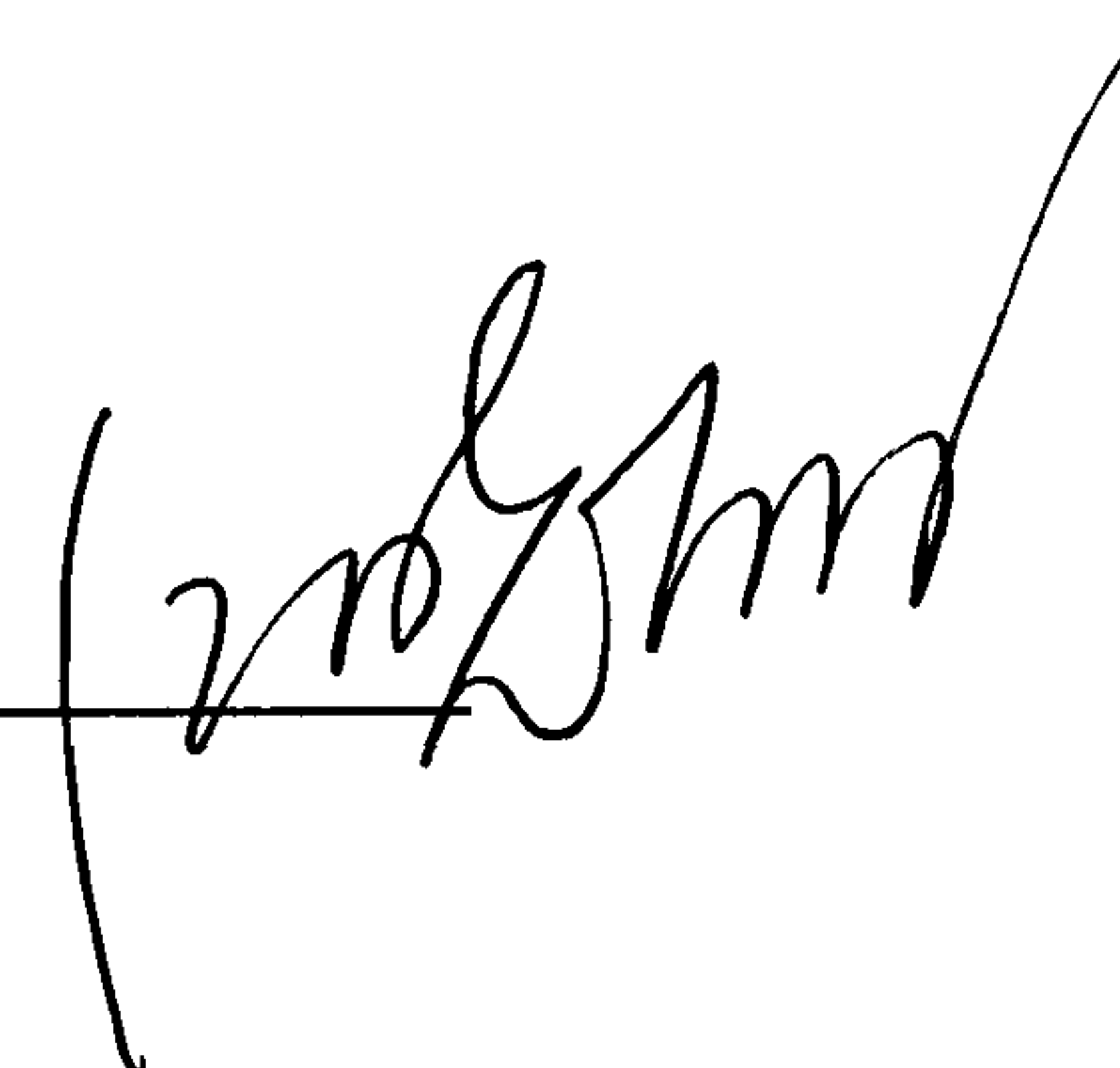
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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made. It has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation, or report submitted to this university or any other institution for a degree, diploma, or other qualifications.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jiang Xiaoli', written over a horizontal line.

JIANG Xiaoli (江晓丽)



## ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore Chinese learners' conceptions of learner autonomy from learners' perspective since researchers in language education argue that concepts of learner autonomy may bear cultural imprints and recent college English language education reform in China sets learner autonomy as a prime goal.

The study first presents general background and an introduction to the research context. There follows a comprehensive literature review, tracking origins of the concept of learner autonomy in the fields of philosophy, general education, and language education, with distinctive 'Western' and 'Chinese' emphases. This is followed by a review of relevant research on learner autonomy in language education, which consists of research on learner autonomy as a concept, as a means for effective learning, relationships with culture, and methodological issues. To investigate Chinese learners' conceptions of learner autonomy, the study adopted a mixed research approach to collect data: with a qualitative method as the main research method to capture in-depth understandings of learners' conceptions, and a quantitative method as a supplementary one to support qualitative data findings and at the same time reveal further diversity. Moreover, to avoid any imposition of learner autonomy theory pre-occupied in the researcher's mind, the study does not ask directly about learner autonomy to learners but instead examines whether concepts of learner autonomy are embedded in students' accounts of successful English language learning.

The study involved 27 interviews and a questionnaire survey of 450 college English language learners among three different Chinese universities. The main findings of the study are as follows: 1) Both 'Western' and 'Chinese' emphases and core elements of learner autonomy are found in Chinese learners' conceptions of successful English language learning; 2) Chinese learners' conceptions of learner autonomy are found to exist in two distinctive domains: learner autonomy for academic success (LAAS) and learner autonomy for communicative competence (LACC). 3) Learners' conceptions of learner autonomy can be influenced by different sources: political, economical, social, cultural, and individual. 4) Learners' conceptions of learner autonomy are dynamic, and subject to various factors such as progress of level of education and individual language learning experiences.

Based on the data findings, a reconsideration of concepts of learner autonomy drawn out from students' conceptions of successful English language learning is discussed, which combines 'Western', 'Chinese' emphases and core elements of learner autonomy, associated behaviours, and sources of influences on them. This reconstruction of the concept of learner autonomy in the Chinese context contributes to a better understanding of learner autonomy theory. The research has important implications for policy makers, teachers, parents, and students in understanding learner autonomy from learners' perspectives and for research into concepts of learner autonomy in different contexts.



## Abbreviations

BBS Bulletin Board system

CECR College English Curriculum Requirement

NECS National English Curriculum Standard

MOE Ministry of Education

WTO World Trade Organization

Centre de Recherches et d'Applications en Langues CRAPEL

ZPD Zone of Proximal Development

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

LAAS Learner Autonomy for Academic Success

LACC Learner Autonomy for Communicative Competence

SDAS Self-directed learning for Academic Success

SDCC Self-directed learning for Communicative Competence

ESOL English to Speakers of Other Languages

BALLI Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory

# **CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background of personal motivation for the research**

My motivation for the present research on learner autonomy was a natural interest extending from my Master's study, along with my experience of being an English language teacher and learner.

### **1.1.1 Why learner autonomy?**

The concept of learner autonomy aroused my attention during my engagement in my Master's thesis. By the end of my Master's course (2003-2004), I was motivated to explore Chinese learners' strategy use in their English language learning since I found that the literature on Chinese language learners' learning behaviours was contradictory and apt to attribute them, via the anecdotal descriptions or limited research findings, to Chinese cultural influences. During this process, I touched upon a new concept, learner autonomy, in reviewing Wenden's (1991) well-known book 'Learner strategies for learner autonomy: planning and implementing learner training for language learner'. With the expansion of my reading about 'learner autonomy', I realized it was a popular concept although it received strong criticism of various kinds. For example, one typical debate regarded the generalizability of such a concept across cultures. For most learner autonomy proponents, autonomy is 'Western' in its origins and possibly inimical to 'Asian/Eastern/Chinese' culture. This discovery aroused my initial interest to fight against overgeneralization of culture, just as I was doing in my Master study. Frankly speaking, my interest was more an instinctive reaction than a mature thought at that time. However, this instinct was coupled with my own experience of being an English language teacher and learner.



I never doubted that there were autonomous learners on the soil of China during my six years of English language teaching in a university in China. These learners often were active participants in classrooms but also demonstrated a wide range of learning in their after class learning. For quite some time, I kept wondering why: these learners had high concentration in classroom instruction; they completed all teachers' recommended tasks with sufficient effort and quality; they seemed to explore more about the subject area in their own time. This question was further complicated by my other observation: those students who were not so active in ways teacher might prefer had clear opinions on what they wanted to learn or how English should be learned. However, when teachers' ways failed to meet their expectations, they chose to be 'passive'. As a language teacher, the first type of 'autonomy' was always my favourite whereas the latter was my headache. Nevertheless, reading literature on learner autonomy for the first time fundamentally challenged my definition of learner autonomy. Was the first type that was transmitted from my parents and teachers since I was a young learner the right one for all students to aim at?

I took for granted that my own learning was an example of learner autonomy since this term was often heard and used when I was a learner. Ever since my entrance into formal education, I was often seen as a model 'autonomous' student by both teachers and parents. I demonstrated a strong capacity to manage my learning as well as myself, and perhaps importantly I always obtained the highest marks in all subjects in most of my school education. This in turn became a positive complement that motivated me to behave in that way. I endeavoured to learn well in order to enter into a first-class university in China, just like all other examinees each year. However, on the day I succeeded I felt at a loss since my goal I never doubted for years of education was largely designed by parents, and



expected by others. I did not mean that I regretted my acceptance of such choice but I realized that I felt helpless when they suddenly asked me to decide from that time on. I did not think I had the capability to make decisions since I was used to following teachers' and parents' directions. Moreover, such feeling was shared by many of my counterparts.

In relation to the limited literature I explored, I felt that I needed to understand what learner autonomy meant in the Chinese context: I needed a proper explanation for the learner autonomy I as well as many others demonstrated during our learning process; I needed to find out what lay behind 'passive' learners' choices; more importantly, I needed research evidence before I was able to argue against a culturally essentialist view of learner autonomy. All these drew my research interest towards the concept of learner autonomy.

### **1.1.2 Why Chinese learners?**

Chinese learners became my research focus for four reasons. First, literature on learner autonomy remains contradictory as to whether learner autonomy is a concept of Western origin (e.g. Sinclair, 2000; Benson, 2001) or Chinese origin (e.g. Hsu, 2005) and answers will be found out through examination of Chinese students' conceptions. Second, as mentioned earlier, when the cultural appropriateness of learner autonomy was discussed in the literature, a contrast was often sought between 'Western' and 'Chinese' culture. I attempted to explore whether there was any evidence of 'Chinese' characteristics as described by the literature. If the answer was positive, then I would like to know whether they could be used to account for different Chinese individuals. Second, being a language teacher and learner myself, I well understood the Chinese educational system and how most Chinese students learned English. I thus was able to understand learners' learning process in relation to the actual contexts, which made my interpretation fair and justifiable. Third, being a Chinese

person who at the same time had the experience of studying in an English speaking country, I had both insider and outsider's perspective on 'Chinese' culture. As an insider, I knew what were valuable traditions that elder generations expected younger ones to follow; as an outsider, I was aware of what were features treated as 'Chinese' by researchers in the relevant literature (e.g. Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Hu, 2002; Jin and Cortazzi, 2006).

### **1.1.3 Why now?**

In a review of the literature on autonomy in language teaching and learning, Benson (2006a) reported a revival of interest in autonomy at the turn of the century. China seemed to be no exception to the 'global trend' (Schmenk, 2005) of implementing autonomy-oriented practice in its English language education. In 2004, the College English Curriculum Requirement (CECR, provisional, 2004) in China was reinforced. It outstandingly states that 'the main objectives for the reform are... to enhance learners' comprehensive abilities in English language use and to promote learner autonomy' (ibid P1). Along with it are seven guidelines specified as follows:

- to strengthen competences of language use, with particular reference to listening and speaking abilities, to stress reading skills, and to train basic translation and writing skills.
- to facilitate reform in teaching approaches from traditional teacher-centred to learner-centred, with the assistance of multimedia and internet technology.
- to incorporate basic educational reform into College English language teaching planning on teaching contents and teaching approach.
- to diversify guidance with regard to various needs due to geographical and institutional differences.



- to recognize the function of English language as not only a tool to enrich intercultural understanding but also a channel to increase students' comprehensive competences.
- to complete a test and assessment system with particular emphasis put on formative assessment, to guide College English teaching reform through construction of multiple means of assessment.
- to optimize teaching and learning resources and encourage cross-disciplinary and interlibrary resources sharing.

Concrete guidelines regarding teaching requirement, teaching approach, and assessment measures are further provided as follows: first, taking into consideration geographical and institutional differences, the teaching requirement is roughly divided into three levels pertaining to learner differences. Level 1 is a compulsory level for all learners and the other two are for learners that are more competent. Nevertheless, all three levels of requirement include language knowledge and skills in language use, learning strategies and intercultural competence. Second, a shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches and encouraging both teachers' and learners' active participation into the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the learner-centred approach is characterized by autonomous learning that is individually different and not constrained by time and space. In detail, four types of combinations are proposed: whole class instruction with small class training; classroom teaching with independent learning; multimedia assisted teaching with on line learning; in class and out of class learning. Third, assessment consists of both formative and summative forms but with an emphasis on the former. Formative assessment includes learners' self-assessment, peer-assessment, and teacher-learner assessment and summative

assessment is composed of term examinations and language proficiency tests such as CET-4.

Emphasis on aspects of learner autonomy as stated in CECR undoubtedly gives rise to the necessity of my research. At the same time, it also stimulates my research interest from a new perspective. According to Hu (2004: 349), one of the leading experts in the team to draft CECR, four major theories and practices in the West contributed to the rationales for CECR, namely, 'individualized learning, collaborative learning, module-pattern teaching and learning and the application of hypertext', which is exemplified in the following model:

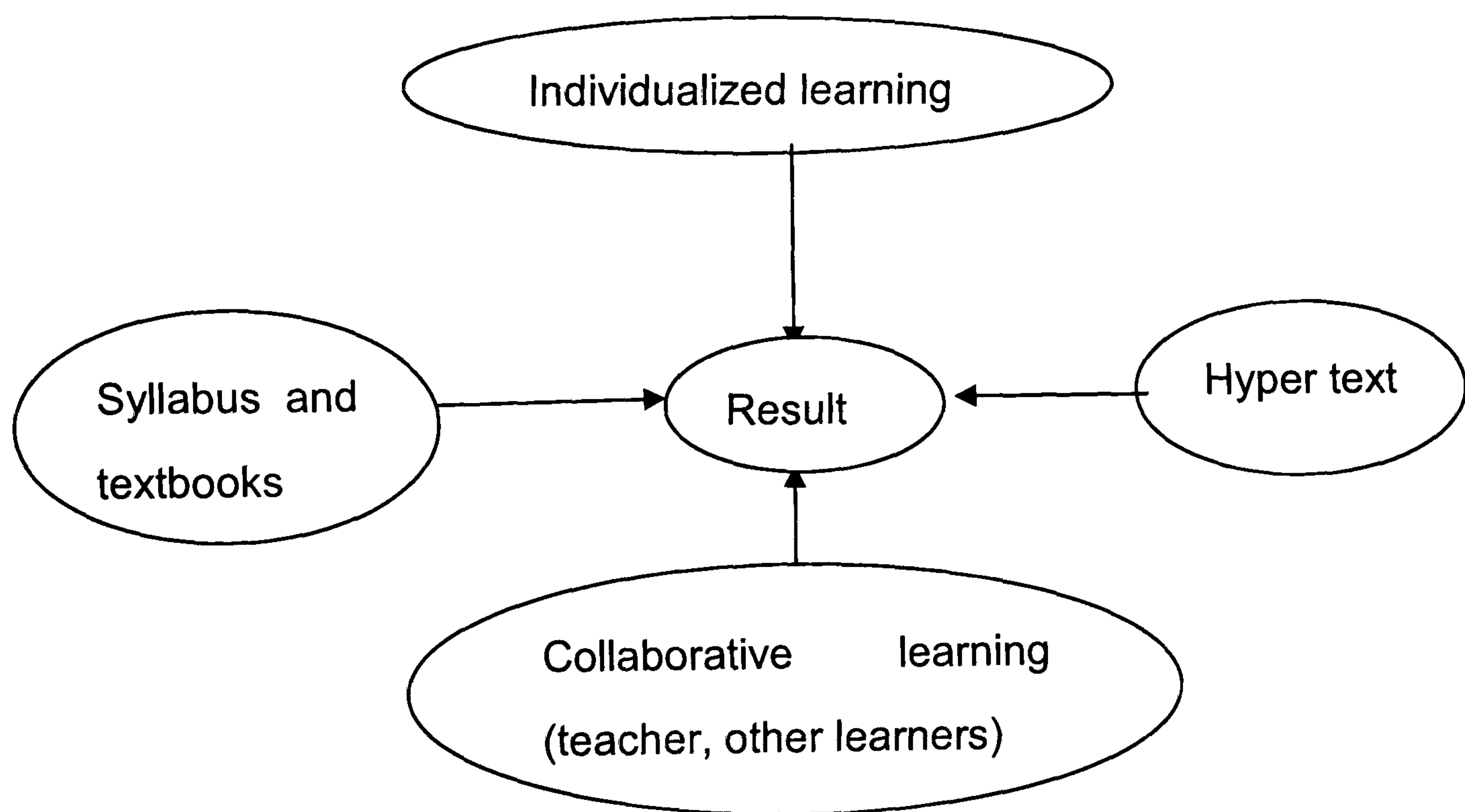


Table 1-1 Model of English language learning in CECR

This raised another concern for me: the idea of associating self-access centre with promotion of learner autonomy originated in Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques En Langues (CRAPEL), a Western place (Benson, 2001; Little, 2007a; 2007b). To what extent it is feasible to be applied in Chinese context is worth examination since some researchers, for example, Holliday (2005) criticized simply transplanting



'Western' theories and practice to 'other' cultures without consideration of their origin in the West and local conditions in the 'other'. I was curious about how the recommended mode of autonomy-oriented practice might form part of students' conceptions of English language learning at tertiary level.

## **1.2 Background of the educational system in China**

Since my teaching experience is mainly in College English language teaching in China and my research is focused on English language learners at tertiary level, it is necessary to provide relevant background about the Chinese educational system at tertiary level, Chinese foreign language policy and English language education at tertiary level.

### **1.2.1 The Chinese educational system at tertiary level**

According to statistics published by the Ministry of Education (MOE1, 2007), the number of universities and colleges in China soared from 20 in the 1950s to 1794 in the 21st century, with a development from being accessible to an exclusive few to being available for the common citizen. For the most of its history, the scale of tertiary level education and candidates for admission were determined by the Chinese Communist Party. Those who had opportunities to receive higher education became the first privileged group who enjoyed both high social status and better welfare. The situation was changed at the end of the Cultural Revolution when the Chinese government decided to select excellent students from the general public through the National Entrance Exam, which brought about a major change for tertiary level education (Hu, 2001).

One of the major characteristics regarding the growth of Chinese tertiary level education is the various modes of establishment, benefiting from the policy change. As indicated by Bulletin Board System (BBS, 2007),



Chinese tertiary level education had three stages of development: central planned and central management (1950-68); central planned but diverse management (1978-93); and a mixture of central planning and local flexibility (1990- now). It is in this latest stage that the higher education has flourished in three aspects: promotion of key universities or colleges, emergence of new universities or colleges and recruitment of new students (MOE2, 2003). In the first place, the MOE set up a blueprint for the 21st century with its famous 211 Project in 1993. The project aims to promote around 100 universities and colleges to a high standard regarding teaching quality and research competence as well as to improve management level and income. Second, a growing number of new universities was established by either governmental or non-governmental forces under the guidelines of MOE. Third, the MOE carried out an important policy on recruitment to higher education, which allows an increase by 5% of the planned recruitment for each university or college in 2001 (MOE2, 2003). As a result, higher education in China presents an outlook of different levels and more students have opportunities to enter into higher education.

Although the expansion of universities and increase of recruitment endow more students with the opportunity to receive higher education, the National Entrance Exam actually exerts high pressure on students in terms of what types of university education they can pursue. There are various factors to take into consideration: firstly, the admission scores required for entrance to universities or colleges vary from province to province, depending on local admission scores for different levels of universities or colleges, university recruitment plans, and the number of actual applicants. Secondly, the core process to determine successful applicants for each university or college remains centrally controlled. Except for a few special universities that are eligible to process admission at an early stage, the main procedure is simultaneously done nationwide and it follows a



sequence of university ranking, for example, national key universities or colleges are entitled to recruit first, and ordinary universities or colleges next. All of these attach great importance to university ranking and the growing research on Chinese university ranking has become a powerful resource for Chinese students to choose their ideal universities or colleges (Wu, 2007).

It should be acknowledged however, that some adjustment has been gradually applied to the National Entrance Exam along with the development of scales of higher education (MOE3, 2007). For example, it has moved from being carried out with national unified papers to diverse local ones under the guidelines. Moreover, some universities are entitled to provide examinations on their own prior to the National Entrance Exam, thus assuring certain candidates provisional places that are conditional upon obtaining the final entrance score for the National Entrance Examination. These changes indicate signs of more flexibility about the National Entrance Examination with regard to geographical differences in educational levels. Nevertheless, this is unlikely to relieve Chinese examinees of the pressure of the National Entrance Examination because the gross enrolment rate for tertiary education was only 11% in 2000 (Yang, 2001) after these measures. The strong Chinese tendency to associate good universities with better future prospects remains unchanged. As pointed out by Hu (2002), even if the acceleration of economic growth in recent years in some parts of the country raises doubts about Chinese education, there is never a lack of parents who expect or push their children to join the fierce competition in entrance examinations.

### **1.2.2 The status of English in Chinese society**

The status of English in Chinese society has waxed and waned according to China's political, economic, and educational needs. In modern Chinese history, China's relationship with the Soviet Union, the Cultural Revolution



and the modern strategic relationship with the rest of the world are seen as the main indicators accounting for fluctuations in the status of the English language (Lam, 2002). According to Lam (2002), the break up with Russia and the end of the Cultural Revolution twice helped create a favourable environment for English language education. Apart from political reasons, China's own economic growth since the open-door policy in 1979 has also contributed to the rise of English language education since more and better English translators, interpreters, and teachers of English are called for due to the increased international contacts (Hu, 2001). Although the development of other foreign languages was also reinforced, the English language still enjoys a privileged status among other foreign languages (Hu, 2001). As pointed out by the previous Vice Prime Minister in Charge of Education: 'to popularize foreign language learning, and improve foreign language teaching methods and quality is rather an important issue which has a strong effect on our practice of open policy and helps the overall development of the whole nation' (Li, 2006: 3). The most recent success in becoming a member of World Trade Organization (WTO) and winning the opportunity to host the Olympic Games in 2008 has given rise to this whole nation's enthusiasm for English language learning. In a word, English language education has recently enjoyed its highest status in Chinese history.

The political and economical interests in the role of English in Chinese society have drawn great attention to English language education in both institutional and non-institutional contexts. In formal school education, English is not only integrated into the compulsory curriculum, starting from primary school, but also scheduled as a consistent and coherent learning agenda with considerations of the nature of language learning and language use. Outside of formal school education, various language courses and communities are crowded with English learners of all ages.



According to an officially published figure, about 8 million primary school pupils and 67 million middle school and high school students were estimated to study English in 1998, and the number has been continuously growing, with an increase of roughly one million every year since 1994 (Liu and Gong, 2002). Although the number of English learners outside formal education is hard to calculate, countless English language training schools, media, and public English learning forums can somehow reveal the popularity of this language.

As English has been perceived as one of the determinants for the Chinese nation's prosperity and valuable individual assets (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Gao et al., 2002), language proficiency has become an urgent demand (Wu, 2001). According to Hu (2003: 308), the rapid economic growth forefronts the need for English language use, which results in, 'a growing recognition of the importance of communicative competence in the language'.

However, the popularity of English language learning and the growing emphasis put on communicative competence seems not to bring dramatic change to Chinese students' English language learning since high stakes English exams that are book knowledge oriented (Rao, 2006; Hu, 2002) are linked with critical aspects of their lives such as graduation, career, promotion etc. From primary school onwards, it is a compulsory subject in important examinations such as school-leaving examinations and the National Entrance Examination. Although the English educational reform in basic education proposes changes of English language assessment from grammar and vocabulary to overall abilities of language use (NECS, 2001), little has been done in the most important exam, the National Entrance Exam (Li and Wang, 2006). Therefore, on the one hand, there is a growing recognition of the paramount status of English language learning and communicative competence; on the other hand, Chinese school students

undergo high pressure of exams that are primarily focused on linguistic knowledge.

### **1.2.3 English language education at tertiary level**

English language education at tertiary level bears Chinese-specific characteristics. For example, it is central-plan guided. Although universities or colleges have a certain flexibility in organizing teaching and assessment, this should be combined with national assessment, that is national College English Test Band 4 by the end of two years' compulsory study for most non-English major students following their English language learning in secondary education. For years English language education at tertiary level has received strong criticism for being problematic. A recent report of College English Language Teaching and Learning (Zhang, 2003) summarized four main issues as follows:

First, its development is uneven. From the national level, teaching quality varies in universities and areas, which results in an overlap of teaching and learning. For example, despite the fact that students from more developed areas can employ foreign language teachers to teach spoken English and those from less developed areas never have such a course, they start listening class at the same level. Moreover, the general teaching quality is comparatively low.

Second, teaching prevalingly prioritises knowledge over actual competence. Many universities or colleges adopt teacher-centred knowledge transmission approaches. Although students' reading skills are improved, their listening and speaking skills develop fairly slowly, which cannot meet the needs of society.

Third, there is an apparent lack of teacher supply. It is estimated that there are currently 55,000 teachers for college English courses and the ratio of teachers to students is 1: 130, which means that college English language



teachers are generally overburdened with taught courses. In addition, most of these teachers' qualifications remain relatively low and there are few opportunities for them to take in-service training. Obviously, the accelerating rate of development in higher education produces increasing pressure on teaching resources and the traditional teaching approach is no longer suitable for the new situation.

Fourth, there is insufficient variety of courses in college English language teaching, which fails to meet the need for different types of graduation qualifications in accordance with social, economic, and technological development. For example, teaching is predominantly driven by examinations (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006). Students' certificate for their undergraduate study in most universities or colleges is conditional upon passing CET-4 (College English Test, band 4) exam, which is however inadequate in terms of assessing students' actual communicative competence.

These problems seemed to be well dealt with by the CECR as mentioned earlier. Moreover, the National College English Testing Committee incorporated oral exams in 1999 and expects future reform to aim at measuring candidates' ability to use English for communicative purposes (Jin and Yang, 2006). However, to what extent these official guidelines are understood by teachers and learners, who in turn are able to make positive changes, still remains unknown.

### **1.3 Summary**

To sum up, I encountered 'learner autonomy' coincidentally during my MA research. The cultural essentialist view of learner autonomy aroused my initial interest to explore the topic with research evidence. My personal experience of being an English language teacher and learner motivated

me to know more about my students and myself in terms of learner autonomy. Moreover, my identity of being a Chinese person provided me with the opportunity to investigate Chinese learners on the topic. The present research was further underpinned by English language education reform undertaken at tertiary level.

It is worth mentioning that the tertiary English reform, as indicated in CECR, seems to well acknowledge western theories that contribute to the recommended model for English language teaching and learning and aims to promote learner autonomy. However, the development of autonomy is individual and sensitive and involves personal significance (Little, 1991; Benson, 2001; Smith, 2003; Ushioda, 2007). In other words, learners' voices cannot be underestimated in any intention to promote learner autonomy.

#### **1.4 Research aims**

All of the above concerns are shaped into my broad research aims: to find out how Chinese learners see their experience of English language learning; to explore whether there are links with learner autonomy theories; and to investigate possible influences behind them. To avoid any imposition of learner autonomy theories that I have known from reading the literature, my research questions were initially framed as follows:

1. What are Chinese learners' conceptions of English language learning relatable to learner autonomy?
2. What are some of the influences on their conceptions?

These broad questions will be further developed and complexified later.



## **1.5 Overview of the thesis**

The thesis consists of eight chapters. The present chapter introduced my motivation and background for the current study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on learner autonomy. It starts from the historical origin of the concept, and then moves to development in education and more specifically, language education, along with debates and controversies centred on the concept. Relevant research is also reviewed. Then issues arising from this review are raised for further investigation. Chapter 3 provides the framework of the research design. Based on the research questions, it justifies the research methodology employed in the present research. This is followed by a description of data collection procedures and process of data analysis. At the same time, important issues such as the ethics and trustworthiness of the research and the researcher's role are honestly presented and discussed. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 present general findings from the data, with Chapter 4 focusing on students' reported language learning behaviours, chapter 5 on students' conceptions of successful English language learning and chapter 6 on influences on students' conceptions of successful English language learning and reported behaviours. Drawing on these findings, Chapter 7 provides general discussions of concerns about the concept of learner autonomy. It ends with suggestions for a better understanding of learner autonomy in a Chinese context. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis with a summary of main contributions and implications of the research.



## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

As pointed out in chapter 1, the present study aims to explore Chinese learners' conceptions of learner autonomy and to identify some of the possible influences on their conceptions. This is for three main reasons. First, relevant literature remains contradictory as to whether learner autonomy is a concept of Western origin (e.g. Sinclair, 2000; Benson, 2001; Athanasiou, 2006) or Chinese origin (e.g. Hsu, 2005). If the answer is the former, then it is necessary to examine whether promotion of learner autonomy is appropriate in the Chinese context; if the answer is the latter, it is worth exploring what the characteristics possibly are. Second, the recent reform in College English education in China explicitly sets learner autonomy as one of the main objectives (CECR, 2004). It appears that the recommended mode for developing learner autonomy is well supported by theories established in the West (Hu, 2004) and takes into consideration four major aspects: individual learning, interaction with teachers, textbooks and self-access resources, which also has a history of Western practice. However, to what extent these are feasible in practice is worth exploration. Third, the nature of learner autonomy suggests learners' voices are of paramount importance since only through examination of learners' own agendas can we understand better their autonomy and inform learner autonomy oriented practices.

The purpose of this literature review is to lay a theoretical foundation for investigating Chinese college learners' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy, and for exploring possible influences that have mediated and shaped their conceptions along with their English language learning experiences. Since learner autonomy in 'Western' and 'non-Western' contexts is one of the major concerns in the relevant literature, the present

literature review is informed and organized by such a distinction. However, 'West' is strictly used, with reference to the geographical origins of publications on learner autonomy (see Table 2-1)

Time	Europe	North America	Australia	Other places
Before 90s	127	43	3	none

Table 2-1 Geographical locations of publications on autonomy with reference to Benson, 2006b

As can be seen from the diagram, early work on learner autonomy was much established in the West, mainly in Europe and North America (Benson, 2001; Schmenk, 2005). Therefore, the 'West', in the present study is limited to Europe, North America and Australia and the 'non-West' is confined to China.

This chapter starts from tracking the historical origins of the concept of autonomy in both the 'West' and 'China' and discusses possible different emphases within the concept. Then it moves on to the development of autonomy in general education and focuses on three main perspectives: learner autonomy and early educational thoughts, learner autonomy and full development of educational theories, and learner autonomy in modern educational trends. Then it briefly reviews how learner autonomy has emerged and risen in language education, which is roughly divided into two stages: learner autonomy as a 'Western' construct, and as a globalized construct in language education. This is followed by highlighting the main controversies centred on learner autonomy. Afterwards, a comprehensive description of learner autonomy in different fields is presented: its philosophical origin, general education, and language education. Then it moves to review relevant research on learner autonomy in language education. As the focus of the present study is to look at learners' conceptions, research that concerns learners' conceptions is focused on



and carefully reviewed. Issues arising from the literature review are then presented and discussed and rationales for the present study are provided.

## **2.2 Autonomy: historical origin of the concept**

In this section, the historical origins of autonomy are traced in both 'Western' and 'Chinese' literature because they were seen to have shaped modern and contemporary theories of learner autonomy. As mentioned in section 2.1, the distinction between 'Western' and 'Chinese' is used in a restrictive sense in the present study. Since the core component of autonomy is often considered to be individual freedom, how 'self' and 'freedom' are understood in both 'Western' and 'Chinese' philosophy is discussed. Moreover, philosophical perspectives on personal autonomy are presented and compared and their influences on ideologies about learning are explored. It is expected that in this way a better understanding of cultural commonalities and different emphases on learning can be gained.

### **2.2.1 Etymological origin**

Quoting the definition given by Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary '*Autonomy*' means

1. the ability to make your own decisions about what to do rather than being influenced by someone else or told what to do
2. the control or government of a country, organization, or group by itself rather than by others

Benson and Voller (1997: 4) argue that *autonomy* entails both individual responsibility and right. According to Athanasiou (2006: 5), '*autonomy*' is composed from the ancient Greek words 'autos' and 'nemo', which means 'to live according to one's own rules/laws'. This, suggests, at least literally, 'each individual/nation acts according to his/her own rules, not abiding by

any other rule/law set by the nation/international organization, respectively' (ibid, p5).

At the lexical level, 自主 (*zi zhu*) has similar definitions and connotations as its English equivalent, *autonomy*. For example, the definition given by Xinhua (2006) Dictionary suggests 自主 (*zi zhu*) is a phrase composed of 自 (*zi*) that means 'self, oneself or one's own' and 主 (*zhu*) that means 'be in charge, direct or keep one's initiative'. The phrase, as a whole, therefore can be interpreted as self in charge, self directs or oneself to keep his/her initiative.

In the etymological sense, *autonomy* and 自主 (*zi zhu*) both stress the active role of the individual; however, they slightly differ in usage in a political sense. For *autonomy*, it entails self-rule or individual freedom; to start with, however, 自主 (*zi zhu*) had no place in thousands of years of feudal history in China. It is not until the foundation of the People's Republic of China when the Chinese government announced its independence, that 自主 (*zi zhu*) has become associated with national freedom or self-rule by ordinary civilians as a whole, which is called Chinese People's Liberation. Although there is no difference in dictionary definitions, *autonomy* has had the connotation of individual freedom since ancient Greek times whereas 自主 (*zi zhu*) focuses on collective rights in the context of the foundation of New China since 1949.

### **2.2.2 Philosophical thoughts on personal autonomy**

The difference in the etymological history of *autonomy* can be accounted for by different philosophical thoughts on personal autonomy in the West and China. The concept of personal autonomy or individual autonomy is of vital importance to Western liberal-democratic and liberal-humanist ideals (Lindley, 1986; Pennycook, 1997; Benson, 2006a). However, it has been



absent from Chinese philosophy for a considerable time span since both 'individual' and 'freedom' is submerged by 'others' and 'authority' in most of Chinese history (Chai and Chai, 1965; Yang, 1981; Tu, 1985; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996).

In the West, essential conceptions of personal autonomy have been well discussed by Lindley (1986). According to him, three schools of thoughts on personal autonomy, that is, Kantian (1724-1804), Humean (1711-1776), and Mill's (1806-1873) greatly contributed to the Western liberal tradition.

The Kantian view could be described as an extreme rationalist conception of autonomy, since it claims that rationality is not merely necessary, but also sufficient for autonomy, and identifies rationality (the avoidance of irrationality) with pure rationality (being untainted by desire or inclination) (Lindley, 1986: 27)

The Humean view holds that people should be left alone, as far as possible to run their own lives; for it is a minimalist conception of autonomy. To be autonomous is simply to do as one chooses, provided one is not acting irrationally—and irrationality is avoided so long as one does not, in deliberation, use faulty reasoning. (Lindley, 1986: 43)

The Millian approach to autonomy has the virtue of combining the Kantian insistence on rational activity with the Humean recognition that the ultimate ends of human beings may be as diverse as their sentiments. (Lindley, 1986: 61)

The first two traditions have involved many theoretical debates on whether personal autonomy means the authoring of one's own life that is subjected to social rationality or pure freedom of exercising one's free will within the ideal democratic society. Whereas pure rationality requires individual ability to act upon opposite will, individuals' genuine inclination presupposes an ultimate goal that has sound ground (Lindley, 1986). Both

of them are credited to contemporary learner autonomy theory, yet they are problematic in that the Kantian view neglects individual free will and the Humean view fails to provide sound explanations for ultimate goal that is full of controversial definitions. Apparently, the third opinion on personal autonomy permits the coexistence of individual freedom and rationality; moreover it brings into light a perspective on social constraints that is inseparable from discussions of personal autonomy by philosophers such as Lindley (1986) and Raz (1986) and theorists in language education (e.g. Little, 1991; Benson, 2001; 2006a).

According to Lindley (1986), personal autonomy entails two main aspects: a form of self-mastery through a continuously developed self-consciousness and relative freedom from social and political constraints. Likewise, Raz (1986: 372) argues that the ideal of personal autonomy is only feasible when three conditions are met: 'appropriate mental abilities, an adequate range of options, and independence', which requires the government to provide a variety of options available for individuals and citizens to be responsible for their choice of perceived goods. These philosophers' ideas on personal autonomy are recognized by authorities in language education. For example, according to Benson (2001: 46), personal autonomy is understood as 'not only the authoring of the individual's life, but also of the social realities that constitute our collective lives'. Such argument is further strengthened by Benson (2006a) who proposes that the goal of personal autonomy is to make collective decisions and push the democratic societies to move to their ideal state.

At first thought, there is no place for the concept of personal autonomy in traditional Chinese philosophy, notably, the Confucian tradition that is encumbered with respect for prescribed authorities. According to Chai and Chai (1965), 仁 (*ren*, *benevolence*), 义 (*yi*, *righteousness*), and 礼 (*li*, *rites*) stand as three cardinal virtues that shed light on Chinese ways of



living over thousands of years. These three virtues altogether assume a 'rational sense of duty and moral sense of obligation' through upholding the ideals of 'perseverance, obedience, duty, and loyalty' (Pratt, 1992: 303). In the first place, as an extension of the family (Tu, 1985), an individual's sense of self largely lies in relationships with others, which leads to the loss of self (Kessing, 1974; Yang, 1981; Ting, 1987; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). Moreover, such a social structure is rationalized into morality principles for modelling 'a well-balanced individual, well-ordered family, well-governed state, and a happy and harmonious world' (Chai and Chai, 1965: 4). It is hardly persuasive that the concept of personal autonomy can have fertile ground in such philosophical thoughts since not only is no voice of individual freedom found but also social choices appear to be extremely limited following a strict authoritarian order. However, I want to argue, by contrast, that personal autonomy has validity in such a philosophy if we accept that personal autonomy is the product of interaction between freedom and social constraints, and it is 'the struggle to become the author of one's own world' (Pennycook, 1997: 39).

In mainstream Western philosophy, individual freedom, diversity of choices and a liberal-democratic society are keywords associated with personal autonomy, even though social constraints are mentioned in some cases. Moreover, they are considered to be the only legitimate presentation of the concept. This is all based on a fundamental assumption that more choices are superior to limited choices, or freedom is better than limitation. Certainly it offers a plausible account for the value of pursuing personal autonomy. Nevertheless, it is deficient to explain happy Chinese beings who are satisfied with their living no matter how negative it seems to be. In fact, just as it is questionable whether Chinese philosophy is supportive to personal autonomy, Western philosophy cannot fully account for the

example given above if personal autonomy essentially takes personal choice on board. All these require a re-examination of personal freedom.

According to Callan (1988), freedom has both positive and negative dimensions: the positive aspect of freedom stresses a self-governing society; therefore, individuals are **free to** do something. The negative aspect of freedom emphasises individual **freedom from** the interference of others that might impede them from doing something. With reference to the philosophical thoughts on personal autonomy in the West and ancient China, it seems that a positive sense of freedom prevails in Western political thoughts and a negative sense of freedom is highlighted in Confucian philosophy since the former prioritizes individuals' rights and the latter concerns obstacles from others.

However, Callan (1988) further argues that a self-governing society may constrain its individual members and removal of others' interference does not necessarily imply obtaining freedom. This implies that personal autonomy, though possibly being emphasised differently from different philosophical stances, is not a unique and absolute state, rather, it is coupled by constraints at various levels. For Callan (ibid.), it is therefore, not freedom itself but the value attached to freedom that appears to be salient. Moreover, such value includes both instrumental and intrinsic dimensions and is constitutive to the larger social complex. As both Western and Chinese philosophy support the idea that the activity of human learning is particularly relevant to personal autonomy and the prime concern of the present study is also autonomy in relation to learning, it is worth exploring what values underlie philosophy of learning in both Western and Chinese literature.



### 2.2.3 Philosophical thoughts on values of learning

In both the Western and Confucian philosophy (as seen in the Analects) of learning, the activity of learning is seen as a type of virtue. Moreover, the development of virtue rests solely on learning. Such an ideology is spread on to even modern people through many sayings by great ancient philosophers in both the West and China. We can take the following quotes as examples,

If virtues, as considered by men, are examined, they will be found to grow through learning and studying  
(Xenophon, 427-355B.C., cited by Athanasiou, 2006:7)

There are learning extensively, and having a firm and sincere aim; inquiring with earnestness, and reflecting with self-application: virtue is in such a course (Analects, XIX)

As can be seen from the above quotes, in either Greece or China, these ancient scholars share the belief that virtue is derived from constant learning. In other words, they both hold that learning has intrinsic value. However, they seem to differ in the rationales for developing such virtue. Again we can take some ancient philosophers' sayings as examples:

Each individual has in his soul the power to learn and the appropriate means for learning, if only each one's soul has to take the appropriate direction (Socrates, 470-399 B.C. cited by Athanasiou, 2006:7)

Virtue, through learning, experiencing and practicing, sets the soul free.  
(Epictitus, 50-138 B.C., cited by Athanasiou, 2006:7)

Cultivate himself, then regulate the family, then govern the state, and finally lead the world into peace (Analects, IV)

It seems that the instrumental value of learning is considered differently: for Greek philosophers, virtue functions to free one's soul or direct one's own chosen course. Confucius, on the other hand, encourages such virtue for the purpose of taking charge of family and the state. As indicated in the quotes in Greek learning philosophy, the instrumental value of learning mainly comes from individuals' experiential payoff, but in the Confucian tradition, it has been attached to the benefit of gaining a higher position in the hierarchical relationships. Although Lee (1996: 37) argues that the proposal can be interpreted as 'if a person has cultivated himself sufficiently well, he should seek to influence the outside world', the best evidence is numerous historical records on how the whole family, siblings and relatives got promotion and increased standards of living simply because one member gained a governmental position. The service exam that was followed for thousands of years was the only channel for an ordinary civilian to change their social status and therefore became extremely popular and competitive. Even today, the strong expectation for better exam results to make a life difference strongly indicates an instrumental value attached to learning in Chinese society.

Another important message drawn out from the quotes is the different emphasis on the role of the individual and the measures they should take to achieve the goal of learning. In explaining the necessity to obtain virtue through learning, the Greek learning philosophy stresses the freedom of an individual's soul whereas in Chinese learning philosophy, concerns about 'others' such as family or state override the individual's sense of 'self'. In illustrating how to best achieve learning goals, both highlight the salience of genuine aim and knowledge application except that 'experiential learning' is mentioned in Greek literature whereas an enthusiastic attitude of mind towards self-cultivation is implied in Chinese literature.



It should be pointed out, however, that the intrinsic value placed on learning in both learning philosophies justifies the socially structured goal of personal autonomy. At the same time, different emphases on the instrumental value of learning reflect both different means and ends of pursuing such autonomy in different contexts. All of these have laid a sound foundation for ideologies in modern education in the West and China, which will be further discussed in the following sections.

### **2.3 Learner autonomy: development in education**

As stated in the previous section, learning being a virtue is commonly recognized by both Western and Chinese philosophers. However, different emphasis on the value of learning yields diverse ideologies of the locus of learner autonomy: in the West, it consists in the intrinsic motivation that comes from genuine interest (Callan, 1988); in China, the intrinsic value of interest is acknowledged but is strongly shaped by instrumental motivation. Therefore, whereas both express the important role of individuals in the learning process, special attention is paid to the learners' genuine inclination in the West and to learners' rationalized choice in China. The following sections review literature that is relevant to learner autonomy in education in both Western and Chinese literature.

#### **2.3.1 Learner autonomy in education—early germination**

In the West, the emergence of learner autonomy in education is closely connected with early thoughts on the concept of learner-centeredness and educational reforms as proposed by many great thinkers (Benson, 2001). The educationist Comenius (1592-1670) perhaps was the first person in the Modern era to propose the importance of children's autonomy in learning, drawing on ancient learning philosophy. For Comenius, children are naturally inclined to seek knowledge; therefore, teachers should

respect such nature and assist the process of their natural development. His ideas on respecting children's natural interest in learning were further strengthened by Rousseau (1712-1778) with his well known *Emile*. In this book, Rousseau not only reiterates children's inborn inclination to explore nature but also develops the basic principles for good education to foster children's interest along with their natural development and supporting their learning with necessary methods.

The problem is not to teach all kinds of knowledge but to foster their interest in learning. Along with the increase of such interest, teach them methods of learning. Undoubtedly, this is the basic principle for any good education (Emile, introduced by Boyd, 1956: 73-76)

Rousseau's educational proposal was principally absorbed by later educators such as Dewey (1859-1952), Piaget (1896-1980), and Rogers (1902-1987) who further developed the thoughts and made various contributions to modern understanding of learner autonomy. In the first place, they all agree with Rousseau that learners' individualized learning needs should be catered for in education, which offers one of the strongest rationales for promotion of learner autonomy in education. Secondly, they all stress that learners' interest and natural stages of development should be seriously considered. In line with such belief, the embryo of constructivist theory was initiated by Piaget, which has had great impact on contemporary discussions on learner autonomy (see section 2.3.2). Likewise, Rogers supports Rousseau's view on the human nature of perfectionism through self-actualization and became the founder of humanistic psychology that has become another important source for current learner autonomy theory (see section 2.3.2). However, Dewey rejects the ideal of education isolated from a social environment and argues for the need for problem-solving in real situations. Moreover, he



insists on directed learning based on learners' interests (Dewey, 1956). This also arouses dynamic debates on whether teachers' roles should be as permissive facilitators or not, as argued by Rogers (1994) in learner autonomy oriented practices in language education.

In China, notions of learner autonomy by many scholars can be dated far back to ancient times. For example,

One can only obtain profound knowledge by his or her own self-directed learning; through self-directed learning, one can grasp the essence of the knowledge, accumulate rich knowledge, and feel free to apply it to real life use. (Mengzi, 371-289 B.C., Cited by Pang, 2003: 40)

The best learning is the one he does for himself. To initiate one's own learning shows one is good at learning. Moreover, this kind of learning helps retain the knowledge gained. (Cheng Yi, 1032-1085 Cited by Pang, 2003: 40)

These sayings all explicitly stress the importance of learners' responsibility for learning. Moreover, with an emphasis on learners' own learning goals, individual learning needs are implied in these early educational ideas. Besides that, Pierson's (1996: 56) quote of Zhu Xi (1130-1200), is a well-known historical track of learner autonomy.

If you are in doubt, think it out by yourself. Do not depend on others for explanations. Suppose there was no one you could ask, should you stop learning? If you could get rid of the habit of being dependent on others, you will make your advancement in your study. (Zhu Xi, 1130-1200, cited by Pierson, 1996: 56)

As pointed out by Pierson (1996), learner autonomy could not be more clearly described in these statements. Such an opinion is shared by Pang (2003:40) who provides a comprehensive review of ancient Chinese

literature relevant to concept of learner autonomy, which is summarized as following four basic principles:

## 1. Establishment of learning goals

It is generally agreed that to set up a learning goal is of pre-eminent significance in learning.

For Mencius (371-289 B. C.), 不专心致志，则不得也  
(‘Now chess-playing is but a small art, but without his whole mind being given, and his will bent, to it, a man cannot succeed at it’, translated by Legge, 2006)

For Zhang Zai (1020-1077), 人若志趣不远，心不在焉，虽学无成 (‘a person needs to set up a long term goal. If his goal is trivial, one achieves nothing even if he learns’, my translation)

For Zhu Xi (1130-1200), 学者大要立志 (‘a learner needs to have a long term goal’, my translation)

In these sayings, not only is the importance of having a learning goal stressed, but also the need of having a long-term goal is pointed out. It is implied that only a long-term goal can help provide sustainable motivation for learning.

## 2. Self-reflection

To learn without thinking is labour in vain, to think without learning is desolation (Analects II)

For Cheng Yi (1032-1085), 思则得之，不思则不得也 (‘the principle of learning is rooted in thinking: to think about it, you gain it; not to think about it, you lose it’, my translation)



For Wang Shouren (1472-1528), 学须反己...若能反己, 方见自己有许多未尽处 ('learning requires self-reflection...one sees insufficiency when he reflects', my translation)

These learning proposals highly value the role of self-reflection. Although there is no evidence on how reflection works to facilitate learning, it is certainly believed to be an important process to internalize learned knowledge, to examine learning deficiency and therefore inform a new round of learning.

### 3. Being sceptical and questioning

For Zhang Zai (1020-1077), 在可疑而不疑者, 不曾学。学则须疑 ('if you are not sceptical where you should, you do not learn. To learn is to doubt', my translation)

For Zhu Xi (1130-1200), 读书无疑者, 需教有疑。有疑却要无疑, 到这里方是长进 ('if one reads without being sceptical, he should be taught so. However, if one is sceptical, he should remove the doubts to move ahead', my translation)

These opinions allow different opinions from book knowledge. Moreover, they suggest different opinions should be handled before they move forward. It is similar to what contemporary researchers call critical thinking.

### 4. Interdependence

According to *Xue ji* (2006), 独学而无友, 则孤陋而寡闻 ('When one learns alone, one has no friend; when one has no friend, he is narrow-minded', my translation)

*Xue Ji*, the ancient Bible of Chinese educational theory, emphasises that learning is gained through interaction with friends. Otherwise it has limitations.

In brief, these principles present basic principles of how to learn better, which are valid in contemporary concerns about learner autonomy in various aspects. However, one point worth noting is that learners' interest is rarely mentioned when compared with literature in the West. This by no means suggests that learners' interest is ignored by ancient Chinese scholars. Instead, there is evidence showing the contrary. For example,

'Learners' independent thinking should be encouraged. Learners' interest and motivation should be promoted'. (Wang Yangming, 1472-1528, my translation)

However, such a proposal seems not to come to the mainstream educational thoughts due to the long tradition of respect for teachers' authority. This can be explained from two aspects: on the one hand, under the Confucian doctrine of appropriate social order, teachers naturally take the authoritative role of being the more knowledgeable, the more experienced, and the more virtuous (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). On the other hand, the long tradition of the Chinese National Service exam, with prescribed contents and format, since the Sui Dynasty (581-618) legitimized teachers' authoritative position in didactic education. This explains why China has seemed to lag far behind the West in modern and contemporary theories in education especially when learner autonomy is concerned.

To sum up, both Western and Chinese early educational thoughts stress learner responsibility in learning, which sets a fundamental basis for modern and contemporary learner autonomy theory. However, they put different emphasis on aspects such as the nature of learning, learners' interest, and teachers' roles in education. In the West, learning is experiencing the world; learners' interest is the essential drive for learning and teachers take a facilitating role in the teaching and learning process. In



China, learning is to accumulate knowledge, learners' interest can be replaced by strong will, and teacher authority should be respected. These similarities and differences are woven into later educational ideologies and theories.

### **2.3.2 Learner autonomy in education—full blossom**

As can be seen from the above discussion, learner autonomy is centred on learners' responsibility in both Western and Chinese literature. However, a large proportion of attention is paid to learners' individualized learning experience, learners' interests, and natural stage of development in Western educational thoughts in the early stage. Chinese literature, instead, emphasises long-term goal setting, self-reflection, interdependence, and respect for teacher authority. Such differences lead to a sharp contrast in the modern development of educational theories that reinforce understandings of learner autonomy. In the West, Piaget's constructivist theory, Vygotsky's (1962) socio-constructivist theory, Roger's (1969) humanistic psychology and information-processing theory in the early 60s have laid a sound foundation for understanding learner autonomy. In addition, other theories such as operant theory, social cognitive theory and volitional theory have been elaborately discussed in association with self-regulation by researchers in general education (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2001). In China, however, the concept of learner autonomy still remains in the form of ancient educational thoughts that have undergone less development.

Since constructivist theory, socio-constructivist theory, humanistic psychology and information-processing theory are often referred to by researchers in language education in discussions of learner autonomy (see section 2.4); the present review mainly focuses on these four aspects. Moreover, researchers in general education tend to use the term

self-regulation, which is however contradictory in researchers' usage. For example, Pang (2003) holds self-regulation as the equivalent to learner autonomy; Benson (2001) claims that self-regulation is a narrower concept than learner autonomy; Dörnyei (2005) reaffirms the close link between self-regulation and learner autonomy. The present review adopts learner autonomy to keep consistency.

### **Constructivist theory and learner autonomy**

Based on a series of experiments, Piaget (1970) concludes that children's cognitive development follows certain essential stages, which means that each learner only learns when his/her internal system is ready. This view contends that knowledge is experienced and constructed by learners rather than given or taught by others (Candy, 1991). Constructivist theory was used by Paris et al. (2001) to explain learners' self-regulated learning. They (ibid.) hold that students can regulate their own learning because they can construct their own learning theories. According to them (ibid.) four crucial elements determine students' ability of self-regulation: students' understanding of the role of competence and effort in learning; exercising necessary agency and control in learning process; awareness of the nature of the learning tasks and monitoring learning strategies used.

### **Socio-constructivist theory and learner autonomy**

Unlike Piaget, who stresses the central role of learners' cognitive development sequences but ignores the potential influence of social environment, Vygotsky (1978) brings learners' interaction with the social environment based on the concept of 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) to the fore. For Vygotsky, learners' existing mental readiness provides the starting point for learning. With the assistance of more capable others through social interaction, they can reach new levels of



conceptual understanding (ibid.). This theory is linked with self-regulation by McCaslin and Kickey (2001) who maintain that the nature of self-regulation is the development of self-directed inner speech, which can be mediated by learners' interaction with other social agents.

### **Humanistic psychology and learner autonomy**

Rogers (1969) borrows humanist ideas of the learner as a whole person who tends to fully actualize their capacities through a natural motivation for growth. In the process of learners' self-fulfilment, teachers are supposed to provide non-judgemental and facilitating help to assist learners' natural learning. Moreover, such ideology is built in to the 'humanistic curriculum' which 'puts high value on people accepting responsibility for their own learning, making decisions for themselves, choosing and initiating activities, expressing feelings and opinions about needs, abilities, and preferences' (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986: 75). Based on humanistic psychology theory, McCombs (2001) believes that teachers should take an encouraging role to help develop the individual's self-system including self-concept, self-value, self-image etc., which finally contribute to the promotion of self-regulated learning.

### **Information-processing theory and learner autonomy**

Information-processing theory can be dated back to early 60s when the computer was used as a metaphor for the human brain (Miller, 1956) and it has an impact on learner autonomy theory. By this theory, learning is pictured as a recursive cycle of control and monitoring processes that involve four phases: 'perceiving the tasks, setting the goals of plans, enacting study tactics and adapting the tactics' (Winne, 2001: 155). The idea of negative feedback leading to new input was linked with effective

learning management (Zimmerman, 2001), and thus it can be associated with the concept of learner autonomy.

In sum, self-regulation is about 'whether the learner displays personal initiative, perseverance, and adaptive skill in pursuing it' (Zimmerman, 2001: 1) and is a cyclically interactive process that echoes Bandura's (1986) triadic model: person, behaviour, and environment (Zimmerman, 2001). Moreover, Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) point out that extremely few learners demonstrate a complete lack of or total self-regulated learning and the majority stays in the middle. As pointed out by Pang (2003), Zimmerman and his colleagues' work not only indicates individual factors such as cognitive level, metacognitive knowledge, and volition but also take external factors such as school and family education and cultural background on board. According to Strage (1998), these factors are worthy of exploration when promotion of learner autonomy is considered.

These theories reinforce a renewed interest in learner autonomy under the global trend of educational reform or policy change, which is further elaborated in the following section.

### **2.3.3 Learner autonomy in education—contemporary trends**

As stated in the previous sections, learner autonomy is associated with powerful implications such as individualized learning, learning for one's own needs, individual responsibility towards intellectual standards (Dearden, 1984), transcending social constraints, exercise of moral virtue and achievement of justifiable self-respect, and permission of self-rule (Callan, 1988). Moreover, the development of theories in education offers the feasibility of promoting learner autonomy through educational intervention. All these features do best justice to learner-centred ideology



in education and it is not surprising that learner autonomy is proposed as an educational aim (Dearden, 1984).

Such a notion is further underpinned by the annual report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) addressed by Faure, et al. (1972). In this report, learning for living is highlighted and each individual's need for life-long learning is emphasised. It sees that the concept of learner autonomy well fits into the proposal in the report. Consonant with the report, Boud (1981) argues that autonomy should be the educational outcome in order to prepare independent individuals for life long learning. He (ibid.) further proposes some working assumptions for autonomy-oriented practice in school education, which are valid in language education. For example, his notion of interdependence in autonomous learning and the feasibility of such learning in formal school institution are further highlighted by Little (1991) (see section 2.4.3.1).

It should be pointed out that learner-centred education has received strong criticism in the past decade or so (Darling, 1994). Due to the factual ineffectiveness in practice as reported by some researchers in both the U.S. and the U. K., attention has returned to issues such as learners' school attainment and the assessment system (Wang, 2007). Work done by Zimmerman and others in North America that aims to improve learners' school record by enhancing students' self-regulated learning seems to be the peak of the relevant research. Moreover recently, however, doubts have been cast on autonomy as an educational aim (Hand, 2006).

Nevertheless, this seems not to have affected the development of learner autonomy in language education. Instead, learner autonomy has increasingly been considered as an essential goal in national curricula

(Little, 2007a) and continues to prove Little's (1991: 2) prediction that learner autonomy has become a 'buzz' word.

## **2.4 Learner autonomy: development in language education**

Development of learner autonomy in language education benefits both from fields beyond it and within. In the first place, it has a historical background that extends beyond the field of language education (Gremmo and Riley, 1995; Benson, 2001). For example, Gremmo and Riley (1995) identify seven factors that shed light on autonomy theories in language education: learner-centred educational reform, communicative language teaching approach, development of humanistic and cognitive psychology, minority rights for adult education, developments in technology, increased international communication and commercialization of language. Likewise, Benson (2001) thoroughly describes how educational reforms, practices in adult education, psychology of learning and political philosophy have informed theories of learner autonomy in language education.

Moreover, major theories developed in education are often referred to by researchers in language education to discuss learner autonomy. For example, constructivist theory is used by Little (1991) to justify the psychological dimension of learner autonomy (see section 2.4.3.2); the influence of socio-constructivist theory on learner autonomy theory in language education includes the idea of collaboration (Benson, 2001), attention to socio-cultural contexts (Palfreyman and Smith, 2003) and motivational ZPD (Ushioda, 2007), by which, Ushioda (2007) suggests that learners' potential motivation for learning can be encouraged to the maximum through the more capable others' intervention. Likewise, in light of humanistic psychology, the notion of teachers being facilitators is essential to 'classroom-based approaches to autonomy in language



learning' (Benson, 2001: 33). In addition, informed by information-processing theory, the metaphor of the human brain and the computer allows researchers to access to learners' cognitive process of language learning (Wenden, 1991), which provides a strong rationale for learner strategy research and inform theories of learner autonomy from the 'technical perspective' (Benson, 1997: 19).

The present review focuses on a brief history of learner autonomy in language education, its contemporary development, and existing controversies.

#### **2.4.1 Learner autonomy as a Western construct in language education: a brief historical review**

Literature in language education commonly considers the project within Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques En Langues (CRAPEL) as the birthplace for the extension of concept of learner autonomy to language education (e.g. Benson, 2001; Little, 2007a; 2007b). The impact of CRAPEL seems to be seen from three aspects: first, theoretically, the definition of learner autonomy given by Holec (1981), who was involved in the project, is the most widely cited one in language education (Benson, 2001); second, practically, it has inspired initial designs of self-access language centres that have been considered as effective sites for supporting for learner autonomy for some time in language education (Little, 2007b); third, within CRAPEL, it turned out that adult learners were not ready for self-directed learning until they had been trained with certain skills such as 'self-management, self-monitoring, and self-assessment' (Benson, 2001: 10). These factors made the self-access centres and learner training becomes the main focus of early development of learner autonomy in language education (Benson, 2006a).

However, in this early time, there is no absolute agreement on the pedagogical implications of promoting learner autonomy, for example, whether the educational setting has to be dramatically changed into self-access mode. Some researchers (e.g. Allwright, 1988) argue the feasibility of applying autonomy-oriented practice within classrooms. Further, Dam (1995) has proved the possibility by illustrating her work in classrooms. Others, instead, endeavour to work on self-access centres (e.g. Gardner and Miller, 1999).

It should be pointed out that in this early period of development, the concept of learner autonomy largely remained as a Western construct. As mentioned in section 2.2, early work on learner autonomy was almost exclusive to the West. However, the situation changed radically at the edge of 21<sup>st</sup> century, which will be discussed in the following section.

#### **2.4.2 Learner autonomy as a globalized construct in language education—contemporary development**

Schmenk (2005: 107) was the first person to express concern about 'globalizing learner autonomy'. Her argument seems not to be unwarranted if we consider two basic facts: global educational reform and the proliferation of autonomy research and practice (Benson, 2006a).

First, taking a few examples of educational reform for reference, autonomy has been written into the school curriculum in England and Wales (QCA, 2000), European Language Portfolio (2000), Turkish University (Palfreyman, 2003a) and China in basic education (NECS, 2001) and higher education (CECR, 2004). Moreover, one important sign of learner autonomy-themed educational reform is the investment in language centres where students can work in self-access mode. The increasing number of self-access centres also indicates the popular adoption of one



version of learner autonomy ideology. Although they are more to do with economical, technological and educational concerns than teacher practitioners' wish (Benson, 2006a), such top-down implementation at the material level is common in educational practices.

Second, the concept of learner autonomy has spread through language teaching professionals in education through conferences, publications, and academic dialogue. According to the History of Learner Autonomy Archive (Smith, 2006), in the 1970s, autonomy-themed conferences were limited within France. However, they started to move towards Northern Europe including Denmark, Finland, and other parts of Europe such as Portugal, Portland, and Sweden in the 1980s. In the 90s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, learner autonomy themed language teaching conferences extend to many countries or regions outside of Europe such as Japan, China, Latin America, and Australia. In 2006, the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) at Harrogate renamed its Independence Special Interest Group the *Learner Autonomy* Special Interest Group. Moreover, publications on learner autonomy number over 1000 entries, covering different continents such as Asia and South America (Benson, 2006b), which is almost 4 times that before the 1990s (Benson, 2006a). In addition, day to day academic dialogue on learner autonomy is also a powerful drive for expansion of learner autonomy. Typical examples are the ongoing Auto\_L email discussions and the increase of autonomy related websites (e.g. Reinders, 2007).

However, the growing spread of the concept of learner autonomy does not mean that it has gained universal common understanding and is not problematic. For Schmenk (2005: 116), globalizing learner autonomy is dangerous since this means reducing concepts of learner autonomy into certain neutral elements and possibly sacrificing the 'personal, institutional, social, and cultural environment' where development of learner autonomy



is implemented. Likewise, Benson (2006a: 33) also alerts us to the danger that implementation of learner autonomy might 'slip out of the hands of teachers' who are the actual practitioners of the concept.

In fact, disagreement and contradictions have existed in learner autonomy theory and practice ever since it came to the language education field. The accrued interest in learner autonomy, however, does not seem to provide a clear and consistent understanding of the concept (Oxford, 2003). To gain a better understanding of the concept, it is worth looking at the main controversies on learner autonomy theory within language education.

### **2.4.3 Learner autonomy in language education: four pairs of controversies**

In view of learner autonomy theory in language education, four pairs of controversies are found to shuttle back and forth: the individual/social dimension, psychological/political dimension, and universal commonality/cultural particularity. In a review of the literature from the 1980s to recent years, debates over learner autonomy are invariably centred on these contradictions depending on the position where the focus is put. For example, whereas advocates of autonomy in the 1990s endeavour to distinguish autonomy from individualisation, the recent resurgence of interest in individual differences draws attention to the individual learner (Benson, 2006a). Likewise, Little (1991) made proposals for a psychological dimension of learner autonomy that emphasises personal capacity to transcend constraints. However, Benson (1997; 2001) and Pennycook (1997) argue for a political dimension of learner autonomy that stresses rights and freedoms that one can enjoy. In the literature, learner autonomy is often considered as a Western concept (Jones, 1995; Sinclair, 2000; Moreira, 2007) that might be inappropriate to non-Western contexts; nevertheless, some theorists such as Little (1999) and Holliday



(2005) rebut the idea that learner autonomy is only confined to its Western territory. Moreover, research reveals its validity in non-Western contexts though it possibly may have particular characteristics (Ruan, 2007; Huang 2007). These concerns will be reviewed in the following sections.

### **2.4.3.1 Individual vs. social dimension of learner autonomy in language education**

Although in general education, the social dimension of autonomy has already been noted (see section 2.3.3), it only came to researchers' awareness at a later stage, prior to which, it was the individual dimension that was often stressed. In the first place, the individual dimension of autonomy is axiomatic almost by definition. Take the earliest and most widely cited Holec (1981) definition in language education for example; he (1981:3) holds autonomy to be the ability to take charge of one's own learning.

To take charge of one's own learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e.:

- determining the objectives
  - defining the contents and progressions
  - selecting methods and techniques to be used
  - monitoring the procedure of acquisition...
  - evaluating what has been acquired
- (Holec, 1981:3)

Individual responsibility and capacity for learning is self-evident. Moreover, Holec (1985: 180) insists that 'autonomy can only be developed through the practice of self-directed learning'. For Benson (1996), both autonomy and self-directed learning, have been strongly associated with individualization, even learning in isolation. For example, Candy (1991: 23) describes 'self-directed learning' as: a personal attribute (personal autonomy), the willingness and capacity to conduct one's own education (self-management), a mode of organizing instruction in formal settings (learner-control), and the individual, noninstitutional pursuit of learning

opportunities in the 'natural societal setting'. Dickinson (1987: 11) presents autonomy as 'complete responsibility for one's learning that carried out without the involvement of a teacher or pedagogic materials'. However, researchers soon realized that individualization did not generate learner autonomy.

One of the most challenging developments in the theory of autonomy in language education is the argument for interdependence as a necessary component (Benson, 2001). For example, Little (1991: 5) remarks:

Because we are social beings our independence is always balanced by dependence; our essential condition is one of interdependence. Total detachment is a principal determining feature not of autonomy but of autism.

The notion of interdependence that autonomy entails is further stated by Kohonen (1992: 19):

Personal decisions are necessarily made with respect to social and moral norms, traditions, and expectations. Autonomy thus includes the notion of interdependence, that is being responsible for one's own conduct in the social context: being able to cooperate with others and solve conflicts in constructive ways.

The social dimension of autonomy is further displayed by a Bergen definition provided by Trebbi (1990 cited by Dam, 1995: 1):

Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person.

Drawing on a Vygotskian social-interactive view of cognition, learning and language, theorists increasingly recognize the social dimension of



autonomy. Taking the example of children's first language acquisition through interaction with more capable others, Little (1996: 211) argues that 'the development of a capacity for reflection and analysis, central to the development of autonomy, depends on the development and internalization of a capacity to participate fully and critically in social interactions'. Moreover, Little (2000: 18) argues that autonomy and dependence are polarized ends which are clearly presented in Vygotsky's definition of the Zone of Proximal Development: 'autonomy as the goal of learning (independent problem solving), new levels of autonomy are achieved only through interaction with others (under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers). Therefore, the second language classroom needs to be a collective learning community to practice autonomous language learning and language use thus to equip learners with necessary capacity to transcend their immediate learning environment (Little, 2000). The notion of social dimension of learner autonomy is further underpinned by recent resurgence of attention to sociocultural theory in understanding individual learner autonomy (Benson, 2006a). Notably, Oxford (2003: 87) argues for the 'socio-cultural' dimension of learner autonomy, by which social contexts or situations of autonomy are emphasized.

For researchers such as Holliday (2003; 2005), both individual and social dimensions of learner autonomy co-exist within concept of learner autonomy regardless of its geographical situation. Moreover, there is some research evidence showing that individual learner autonomy is developed through social interaction with the immediate community. For example, Toohey and Norton (2003: 59) argue that learner autonomy is not so much 'individualized performance' as 'socially oriented agency'. For them (ibid.), learner autonomy is embodied in individual experiences of cultivation of learner identities through exercise of agencies in certain contexts. It



suggests that learner autonomy has both individual and social dimensions and often lies in the process of constructing individual identities in language learning experiences.

### **2.4.3.2 Psychological vs. political dimension**

In the 1990s, learner autonomy shifted its attention to the psychological dimension, which is signified by Little's (1991: 4) definition (see below). Moreover, different psychological variables have been associated with the concept of learner autonomy in language education (e.g. Ushioda, 1996; Littlewood, 1996; Wenden, 1991). However, Benson (2001) argues that the move to the psychological dimension of learner autonomy overstates individual factors and underplays the social and political dimensions that learner autonomy deserves.

In language education, Little (1991:4) is the pioneer researcher who draws attention to the psychological dimension of learner autonomy:

Essentially, autonomy is a capacity—for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts.

With reference to child developmental learning and psychology of personal constructs, Little (1991) argues for the existence of learners' natural autonomy with a development that is not subjected to external forces. However, he (ibid.) also recognizes the critical role of conscious autonomy in supplementing natural autonomy through raising learners' awareness of their personal constructs in school education and thus facilitating learning. Benson (2001: 49) points out that such a definition gives rise to the cognitive processes involved in effective learning and thus 'adds a vital



psychological dimension that is often absent in definitions of autonomy'. As such, psychological variables such as motivation, affective state, and beliefs are linked with learner autonomy (Benson, 2001), which will be further discussed respectively below.

The link between motivation and autonomy can be understood from two perspectives: first, the self-evident relationship between autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985); second and most importantly, the association between autonomy and motivational management (Ushioda, 1996). The first type of view is not difficult to understand since intrinsic motivation comes from genuine interest that assures self-determined and sustainable learning (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000), which supports autonomy. The second type notably takes the angle of two aspects: degrees of motivation and the feasibility of motivational management. As argued by Ushioda (1996: 39), learner autonomy entails both 'a capacity for effective self-management of motivation' and 'a degree of motivation to the learning situation since without motivation there is no autonomy'. Her (ibid.) opinion not only allows the space for motivational change along with the motivation continuum, for example, from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000), but also emphasizes an individual's psychological effort to manage motivation that is favourable for learner autonomy.

In illustrating 'affective state' as a psychological variable for learner autonomy, Benson (2001: 71) does not define the term, but he particularly discusses learner anxiety that counters learner autonomy. Shi (2002: 16) uses the term to mean 'feelings, moods, and emotions toward the attitude subject'. By this definition, affective state should include another important aspect, confidence. According to Littlewood (1996), confidence is an important element in promoting autonomy. It seems little research has been done regarding how to minimize learner anxiety and enhance learner



confidence in the development of learner autonomy. However, this is certainly an area worth investigation.

Due to the confusing relationship between belief and attitude (e.g. Wenden, 1991), the connection with learner autonomy can be understood in two ways. First, when belief is described as a type of affective factor, its association with learner autonomy tends to focus on the factor of willingness. For example, Wenden (1991: 15) points out that learners are autonomous not only because they have acquired certain learning strategies but also because their attitudes enable them to use them 'confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher'. This is supported by Ushioda (2007) who emphasizes that learners' willingness is essential to the exercise of learner autonomy. Second, when belief is used to refer to cognitive state, its link with learner autonomy is suggested by how learners conceive language and language learning (Benson and Lor, 1999; Benson, 2001). For example, Benson and Lor (1999) maintain that how learners conceive language and language learning can be related to their readiness for autonomy, for example, those who consider language as a collection of linguistic items are less likely to be autonomous in their English language learning whereas those who see language as an environment to which to respond to tend to be more autonomous.

However, Benson (1996: 31; 1997; 2001) sounds the alarm that the shift from situational to psychological and social to individual dimensions of autonomy encourages 'passive acceptance of dominant ideologies of language', which disagrees with the core connotation of autonomy. From the perspective of critical language pedagogy that is characterized by power relationships between teaching and learning, he (1996) argues for the political dimension of autonomy at three levels of control: learning process, resources, and language since autonomy transforms individuals, the social situations, and structures in which they participate. This view is



shared by Pennycook (1997: 49) who expresses doubts about the tendency to associate autonomy merely with individualistic self-development, following the Western discourses of applied linguistics, and argues that a real sense of learner autonomy is learners' voices in English that 'in opposition to the local and global discourses that limit and produce are the possibilities that frame their lives'. He (ibid.) uses English language learning in colonized areas such as Hong Kong as an example and suggests that it is the learners' own choices of language use in local contexts that allow them to be authors of their own lives. The argument is further put forward by Holliday (2005) who conceives of social autonomy as residing in learners' own background where it is rooted, an aspect that however, is often neglected by educators who are engaged with English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

The distance between the psychological and political dimensions of learner autonomy is narrowed by Oxford's (2003) two layers of sociocultural perspectives in her model of learner autonomy: 'sociocultural I' perspective, which is based on Vygotskian learning theory that learning is situated with a more capable and mediating person in specific context, and 'sociocultural II' perspective, which emphasises individual participation in community practices. According to her (ibid.), an individual's exercise of autonomy cannot be separated from the context and at the same time his/her active participation in the community practice helps gain access to political alternatives.

### **2.4.3.3 Universal commonality vs. cultural particularity of learner autonomy in language education**

Another pair of controversy within learner autonomy theory lies in the conflicting ideas regarding its generalizability. On the one hand, some researchers (e.g. Little, 1999; Sinclair, 2000; Benson, 2001) hold that there

is universal commonality among the discussions of concepts of autonomy. Such an opinion has both an extreme and a mild version. For the extreme version, Little (1999) strongly argues that learner autonomy is a universal concept since it essentially entails an individual's capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning, which constitutes part of any human being's overall capabilities. For the mild version, researchers (e.g. Sinclair, 2000; Benson, 2001) have summarized certain features of autonomy that have been commonly recognized and broadly accepted by the language teaching profession. The following is a list of characteristics adapted from Sinclair's (2000: 6) summary:

1. Autonomy is a construct of capacity that involves learners' willingness to take responsibility for their own learning
2. Such a capacity is not necessarily innate
3. There are degrees of autonomy that are unstable and variable, and complete autonomy is an ideal
4. Promoting autonomy cannot be reduced to independent learning situation or strategy training but requires learners' consciousness of the learning process
5. Autonomy has social and individual, psychological and political dimensions
6. Autonomy has cultural interpretations

The list indicates that the core and stable elements of autonomy are capacity and responsibility and the unstable components are degrees of autonomy and individual, social, psychological, and cultural dimensions of autonomy. Benson (2006a: 23) confirms that consensus in the field has been achieved on the following:

1. Autonomy is about capacity therefore is a learner attribute rather than learning situation
2. There are degrees of autonomy

He (ibid) also adds that:

3. Autonomy in learning entails freedom that is constrained
4. There is a range of potential meanings for learner autonomy.



The core elements of learner autonomy as summarized by these researchers are shared by scholars from other parts of the world such as in China, which can be evidenced from the wide citations of learner autonomy definitions given by Holec (1981) and Little (1991). For example, all 12 publications (e.g. Wang, 2002; Xiao, 2002) on learner autonomy in three core journals in China between 2002-2004 referred to Holec (1981) and/or Little (1991) in introducing concepts of learner autonomy.

However, this by no means suggests that learner autonomy is agreed as a universal concept since learner autonomy in formal learning is not 'externally imposed as a form of behaviour modification, it must grow, quasiorganically, out of the ongoing encounter between the critical goals of the educational enterprise and the particularities of cultural context' (Little, 1999: 16). As argued by Schmenk (2005), globalizing learner autonomy will only result in a reductionist view that glosses over specific social, cultural, and institutional contexts. In fact, there are two considerations on cultural aspects of learner autonomy. First, some researchers (e.g. Sinclair, 2000; Holliday, 2003; 2005) hold a cautious attitude towards learner autonomy in non-Western contexts. For example, Sinclair (2000) claims that individual autonomy has largely been a focus in the West whereas social autonomy is more common in collective societies that are rooted in Confucian philosophy. For Holliday (2003; 2005), features that are different from mainstream autonomy concept (e.g. West) may well be socially 'authentic' to learners (e.g. non-Western) where autonomy springs from. In other words, '...autonomy may mean different things to different people in different settings', as articulated by Benson (2007: 2). Second, reflecting the concern of some Western researchers, Chinese characteristics of autonomy are argued for by some Chinese scholars (Xu, et al., 2004; Hsu, 2005) or researchers working in a Chinese context (e.g. Littlewood, 1999) even though they accept Western definitions. For example, Xu, et al. (2004)



argue that in China, autonomy includes the ability to understand teachers' objective that is an addition to Holec's (1981) classic definition. Similarly, Littlewood (1999) proclaims reactive autonomy to be an initial stage for Asian learners and it can be developed into proactive autonomy as indicated in the Western literature. According to Littlewood (ibid), self-direction consists of two levels: broad direction and activity. While proactive autonomy refers to direction involving both, reactive autonomy only involves the latter. Moreover, from the perspective of Chinese traditional culture, Hsu (2005) argues that in addition to the Western notion of learner autonomy such as control and learning strategies, it contains specific cultural imprints, with a combination of capacity, willingness, will power/sustained motivation/persistence.

As can be seen from the above discussion, even though learner autonomy is conceived as a multifaceted concept (Benson, 2001; 2006a; Smith, 2003) that involves conflicts and contradictions (Oxford, 2003), for example, there are levels of autonomy, versions of autonomy, stages of autonomy (Nunan, 1997; Littlewood, 1996; 1999), mainstream autonomy (Benson, 2006a), and possible cultural alternatives (Pennycook, 1997; Holliday, 2005), core components of learner autonomy still seem to be universally shared. At the same time, cultural particularity is researchers' concern, including traditional culture and educational settings.

#### **2.4.3.4 Language learner autonomy: a general capacity or communicative competence?**

In addition to the controversies within concepts of learner autonomy, disagreement is found regarding the broad objectives of learner autonomy in language education and the approaches to be implemented developing it. For example, there are different perspectives on whether communicative competence or learning management should be the objective, and on



whether to develop autonomy through learning strategy training to improve learners' capacity of learning management or to engage learners in communicative language use.

For Little (2007a; 2007b), language learner autonomy and communicative competence are two sides of one coin, that learner autonomy is best developed through the process of involving learners in communicative language use. However, he (2007a: 16) argues that this has been largely ignored in the field for two reasons: first, as rooted from Holec's (1981) definition, linguistic and communicative goals and becoming autonomous are set as two different goals. Second, teachers tend to misuse the concept of communicative language use by asking students to imitate tapes or involving students' in non-meaningful conversations in the actual teaching practices. There is some research evidence showing that the dual purposes of developing learner autonomy through dynamic communicative language use are feasible. For example, Dam's (1995) well-known project is often considered as the successful case of this kind. Moreover, the recently revised European Portfolio strongly calls for such an integration in practice (Little, 2007b).

On the other hand, other researchers (e.g. Wenden, 1991; Holec, 1996) seem not to view the development of learner autonomy in language education as being only focused on engaging learners in communicative language use. Moreover, learners might have their own learning objectives other than communicative competence. For Wenden (1991), once learners know how to learn, they are supposed to learn effectively. In respect of language learning, it is expected that once learners are equipped with necessary knowledge and skills of learning strategies, they can become successful including becoming competent language users. Although emphasis is put on learners' general capacity to manage their learning, it by no means suggests that researchers do not pay due attention to

communicative competence in developing learner autonomy in language education as claimed by Little (2007a). In fact, Holec (1996) himself gives a detailed description of students' ability to learn. In particular, he (ibid.) states the need for students to know their learning objectives in language learning, for example, linguistic competence, communicative competence, special needs, or the process of language learning. It seems Holec (1996) not only shows concern about communicative competence, but also is aware of the other possible objectives that learners might wish to choose.

It is reasonable for Little (2007a) to draw our attention to communicative competence being the objective and communicative language use being the appropriate approach in the development of learner autonomy in language education. However, it seems dangerous to associate language learner autonomy solely with these two in language education. If the essence of learner autonomy is learners' own responsibility to take charge of their own learning, learners have the right to decide their own learning objectives and these will not necessarily be communicative competence only.

## **2.5 Learner autonomy—a comprehensive description of the concept**

Based on the review on its philosophical origin, development in education and language education both in the Western and Chinese literature, concept of learner autonomy can be presented in the following Table 2-2.

As explained in section 2.1 and 2.4.1, 'Western' and 'Chinese' are fairly restricted in use in the present study. However, the distinction as drawn out from the relevant literature helps illuminate possible different focuses in various fields in understanding the concept of autonomy. The philosophical stand of personal autonomy in both 'Western' and 'Chinese' focus provides



a broad rationale for developing learner autonomy in language education, which is accompanied by the value attached to learning. However, due to different focuses, it seems 'Western' philosophy stresses an individual's right and genuine inclination whereas 'Chinese' philosophy emphasizes a received right and external drive. In line with such differences, learner autonomy in language education also appears to follow divergent trends. For example, in the 'West', attention is paid to an individual's personal preference, process of learning and equal relationship between teachers and learners. However, the 'Chinese' focus is on individuals' capability for self-cultivation, interdependence, and respect for teacher authority. Despite these differences, both 'Western' and 'Chinese' ideas on learner autonomy agree on learner responsibility for learning and sustainable learning. It is noteworthy that owing to the development of various educational theories, the concept of learner autonomy in general education has become well established in the 'Western' literature, although this is missing from the 'Chinese' counterpart. It was not until the global trend of incorporating concepts of learner autonomy in language education that attention was paid to its overall appropriateness in different contexts. As a result, within the debates on different dimensions of learner autonomy, the 'Western' and 'Chinese' distinction again becomes a concern. For example, Sinclair (2000: 13) claims that 'the Western view of autonomy, for instance, has become one which largely focuses on the individual and psychological dimensions of autonomy'. This is coupled by Benson's (2001) 'political' notion of learner autonomy that is used by researchers (e.g. Pennycook, 1997; Holliday, 2003; 2005) who argue for alternative autonomy in non-Western contexts. However, other researchers, mainly from China (e.g. Xu, et al., 2004; Hsu, 2005) or Chinese perspective (Littlewood, 1999) recognized some shared characteristics of learner autonomy with its Western counterparts and simultaneously state cultural particularities. For example, capacity is also considered as a core element of learner

autonomy. However, for other elements, there seem to be differences in terms of emphases, which are summarized in table 2-2. Moreover, for language learner autonomy, there is no comparable literature found from the Chinese perspective except that comprehensive language use and learner autonomy have been proposed to be dual objectives in CECR (2004).

It should be pointed out that this comprehensive description by no means dichotomizes understandings of learner autonomy according to its geographical location: the West and China. In fact, it would be an oversimplification to consider learner autonomy in the West and China as polarized terms. As already revealed from the table, there are some commonalities as well as differences along with the evolution of the concept from philosophical thoughts, educational principles, to modern theories. According to Sinclair (2000: 13), 'autonomy can be viewed as a concept which accommodates different interpretations and is universally appropriate, rather than based solely on Western, liberal values'. In line with such a view, the historical, cultural roots and social contexts where learner autonomy is conceived and implemented have to be considered when the concept of learner autonomy is to be discussed.



Learner autonomy in different fields		'Western' (Europe and North America) focus	'Chinese' focus
Philosophical stand of personal autonomy		Freedom to	Freedom from
Philosophical thoughts on values of learning		Virtue (intrinsic value)	Virtue (extrinsic value)
Learner autonomy in education	Early germination	Individual interest and experience of learning; equal relationship between teacher and learner	Establish learning goals, self-reflection, sceptical and questioning, interdependence, respect for teacher authority
	Contemporary trends (contributing theories)	Constructivist theory (psychological dimension of learner autonomy) Socio-constructivist theory (social dimension of learner autonomy) Humanistic psychology (teachers' role being a facilitator) Information-processing theory (learner training in learner autonomy)	
		Learner responsibility; lifelong process	
Learner autonomy in language education	Four pairs of controversies	Individual dimension (self-direction)	Social dimension
		Psychological dimension (willingness, intrinsic motivation)	Psychological dimension (internalised willingness, extrinsic motivation)
		Political dimension (freedom)	Political dimension (manageable freedom)
			Cultural (strong will, persistence, teacher-direction)
		Language learner autonomy: capacity vs. communicative competence	
	Universal capacity		

Table 2-2 A comprehensive description of learner autonomy

## **2.6 Relevant research on learner autonomy in language education**

As stated in the previous sections, learner autonomy is not a concept confined to language education. However, to review all the relevant research will go beyond what the present study can accommodate. Therefore, the ongoing sections will only focus on relevant research into learner autonomy in language education.

### **2.6.1 Areas of research**

Benson (2006a) suggested four main kinds of research on learner autonomy in language education: definitions of learner autonomy in relation to ideas of autonomy beyond language education, methods to foster learner autonomy, autonomy and effective language learning in various autonomous learning programmes, and understanding issues of learner autonomy from insiders' perspectives such as teachers and learners' from their engagement in the educational process. Since the present study does not look at learner autonomy in practice, this review of areas of research will exclude various autonomous learning programs (for details, see Benson, 2001) and focus on the other three aspects. Moreover, although culture is excluded in Benson's four-type classification, since he instead treats culture as an individual area in theoretical debate (Benson, 2006a), the present study sees the need to incorporate it into the review since it is part of the research concern. Last but not least, the present study primarily is concerned with learners' conceptions. Therefore relevant research in this area will be reviewed.



### **2.6.1.1 Research on learner autonomy as a concept in language education**

According to Benson (2001), research on learner autonomy as a concept is centred on relationships between definitions of learner autonomy in language education and relevant theories outside it. With reference to his three-fold model of learner autonomy, what he means is research on learner autonomy as a type of control over learning management, as control over cognitive processes and as control over learning contents. Each aspect is further linked with theories outside language education. However, I found such a classification was problematic. First, his (ibid) model tends to emphasise action rather than conception. In other words, research of this kind is more associated with learner autonomy as a means to effective language learning, which I will further discuss in section 2.6.1.2. Second, definitions of learner autonomy in language education and its possible sources in other fields such as historical roots and education largely remain as theoretical debates rather than actual research, and these have already been reviewed in section 2.2 and 2.3. As an alternative, my review will focus on investigations that testify to concepts of learner autonomy within language education.

In the few studies that attempt to examine concepts of learner autonomy, those carried out by Littlewood (1999) and Xu, et al. (2004) seem to be revealing. For example, Littlewood (1999: 75) proposes that learner autonomy consists of two levels, 'reactive', and 'proactive', residing in four domains: communication, collaboration, task performances, and learning management. Accordingly, he designed a questionnaire with these elements and distributed it to 50 Hong Kong Chinese students. Data analysis suggested that for these students, learner autonomy is multifaceted rather than having the homogenous representation that is



often mistakenly put forward in the literature. Likewise, Xu et al. (2004) combined definitions of learner autonomy by Western researchers such as Knowles (1975), Holec (1981) and Dickinson (1992, 1993), theories of metacognitive knowledge and strategy in relation to learner autonomy as discussed by Wenden (1991, 2002) with their own adaptation to a Chinese context (see section 2.4.3.3). The overall questionnaire covers five aspects: understanding teachers' teaching objectives; identifying learning objectives and making learning plans; using learning strategies; monitoring strategy use; monitoring learning process and evaluation. The questionnaire was piloted and distributed to 1340 non-English major college students from 14 colleges or universities. Data analysis showed that Chinese non-English major learners at tertiary level are poor in learner autonomy. This is supported by a group of figures: 83% of the participants fail to understand teachers' objectives; over 80% of them do not know the concept of learning strategy; hardly any of them has their own learning plans, monitors their strategy use, or evaluates the learning process.

The common features of such research are: first, that they refer to the mainstream learner autonomy theory in language education but with slight adaptations in accordance with specific research contexts; second, that they testify existing theories held by learners about autonomy; third, that they employ questionnaire instrument as the main research method.

### **2.6.1.2 Research on learner autonomy as a means to effective language learning**

Learner autonomy has been linked with North American learning strategy research for over two decades (Wenden, 2002; Benson, 2006a). Research of this kind is based on the premise that learner autonomy leads to effective language learning and it therefore focuses on various ideas of learner training in order to facilitate learner autonomy. The most notable



aspects of learner training are: first, to equip learners with effective learning strategies (e.g. Wenden, 1991; Yang, 1998; Sinclair, 2000; Wang, 2002; Zhang, 2005); second, to create classroom environment (e.g. Ho and Crookall, 1995) or design classroom tasks (Crabbe, 1993) that supports learner autonomy; and third, to develop learners' metacognitive knowledge, which consists of enhancing students' metacognitive knowledge through teacher counselling (Victori and Lockhart, 1995) or metacognitive knowledge training (Huang, 2006) and investigation into learners' conceptions/beliefs (e.g. Cotterall, 1995; Benson and Lor, 1998; 1999; Wenden, 1999) that will be further discussed in section 2.6.1.5. The present section is focused on studies that aim to promote learner autonomy through strategy training.

Although there is a considerable amount of learner strategy theory and research in the literature of language education, to the best of my understanding, Wenden (1991) is the first researcher who links learner strategy with learner autonomy. According to her (*ibid.*), without learning strategies, learner autonomy can hardly take place. This view is shared by Oxford (2003) and Sinclair (2000) who consider that strategies are prerequisite for learner autonomy. Because of its intimate relationship with learner strategy research, learner autonomy research of this kind has undergone two phases: from treating learners as pure 'consumers of pedagogy' (Palfreyman, 2003b: 245) to learners as contextualized individuals (Huang, 2006).

For the former, research is often based on designing a set of learner training programmes according to learner strategy theories and using pre- and post- tests to examine the effect of learner training and its relationship with learner autonomy. For example, Wang (2002) carried out a longitudinal experiment with regard to the relationship between learner strategy training and the promotion of autonomy. After a questionnaire

survey aiming to find out learners' current strategy use, he (ibid.) performed an experiment with 6 freshmen classes through strategy training. His (ibid) post-experiment questionnaire result in relation to students' academic record shows that learner strategy and learner autonomy have a positive correlation. This research finding is verified by Zhang (2005) who carried out a similar piece of research but with follow-up interviews to track learners' understanding of learner autonomy. Like Wang (2002), Zhang (2005) not only suggests that there was an increasing use of learning strategies by the learners but also apparent indication of learner autonomy among students in the experimental classes.

For the latter, research is grounded in the learners' learning contexts and attempts to interpret the process of learners' interaction with strategy training programmes. For example, Huang (2006) used multiple methods such as students' diary, class observations, informal group interviews, and a questionnaire to investigate students' views of the effect of a metacognition training programme. He (ibid.) reported that learners to some extent resisted the training programme, which resulted from both pressure received from institutions and societal expectations and internalized pressure from exam-oriented classroom practice.

The first type of research generally confirms the theoretical assumption of the positive relationship between learner strategy and learner autonomy. However, an important issue remains unsolved as to how these researchers measure the level of learner autonomy development. The second type of research provides useful insights in understanding learners in specific contexts, which nonetheless, is still in its experimental stage and thus calls for more similar research.



### **2.6.1.3 Relevant research on learner autonomy and culture**

As stated in section 2.4.3.3, concepts of learner autonomy may have cultural characteristics (e.g. Sinclair, 2000; Palfreyman and Smith, 2003), which arouses research interest in different cultural settings, for example, Sonaiya (2002) in Africa, Palfreyman (2003a) in Turkey, and a growing body of research in mainland China (e.g. Ho and Crookall, 1995; Gan, et al., 2004, Huang, 2006). However, as culture can mean both 'big' culture and 'small' one (Holliday, 1999), research of this kind also covers learners' immediate learning situations such as classroom contexts (e.g. Dam, 1995; Smith, 2003), Self-access contexts (Gardner and Miller, 1999; Gardner, 2007), and institutions (e.g. Aoki, 2001; Palfreyman, 2003a). Therefore, the present review takes into consideration both senses of culture and focuses on research done on learner autonomy and Chinese culture or social context, and learner autonomy and institutional culture, which are the most relevant to the current study.

This type of research assumes that learners' background culture plays an important role in an individual's learner autonomy, which however, often tends to be complex. For example, Ho and Crookall's (1995) research on changing learning environments through simulation activities suggests that some Chinese cultural traits run counter to learner autonomy whereas others facilitate its attainment. Similarly, in the study carried out by Gan et al., (2004) among 9 successful and 9 unsuccessful Chinese English language learners, a dynamic interplay between both learners' individual attributes and social contexts was found. It is worth noting that the College English Course in China and College English Test Band 4 or 6, which are firmly embedded in Chinese universities have respective impact on these learners' motivation for learner autonomy.



Different from such research assumptions, Huang (2007) reserves his attitude towards possible Chinese cultural influence on learners' autonomy since the literature presents conflicting, even contradictory, arguments. He (ibid.) on the other hand, attempts to find out the answer through empirical evidence. Through an open-ended questionnaire and follow-up interviews with 24 Chinese university students and 10 university English language teachers, he concludes that Chinese students' learner autonomy is multifaceted in nature. For example, students in his study demonstrated strong learner responsibility in learning. However, they also displayed expectations of teacher-direction. For Huang (ibid), this latter feature seems to be much influenced by the exam system rather than Chinese traditional culture as is commonly portrayed in the literature. He (ibid.) thus concludes that students' lack of autonomy is more context-based rather than culturally determined as does Pierson (1996) in Hong Kong.

In addition to research on learner autonomy and national culture, other researchers such as Aoki (2001) and Palfreyman (2003a) draw attention to the institutions where learning takes place. For example, Palfreyman (2003a) reports that different interpretations of learner autonomy by various stakeholders exist in a Turkish university, and that this potentially affects implementation of autonomy-oriented practices. Aoki (2001) proves such an opinion with an opposite example. In her study, the institution seems to undertake a curriculum that is defective for promotion of learner autonomy. However, her case study with one student provides a positive result with regard to autonomy because of her own effort to make the necessary adjustment that utilized the system, and at the same time considered students' needs.

As can be seen from the above review, research of this kind often focuses on one aspect of culture, for example, national culture (e.g. Ho and Crookall, 1995), social context (e.g. Gan, et al., 2004; Huang, 2007),



institutional culture (Aoki, 2001; Palfreyman, 2003a). However, given that culture is broad and complex, including various layers (Holliday, 1994) and is dynamic and discursive (Kubota, 2006), research that takes into consideration national culture, social context and institutional context is called for.

#### **2.6.1.4 Relevant research on learner autonomy in relation to learners' experiences of language learning**

One important reason for researchers to attempt to understand learner autonomy in relation to learners' experiences of language learning is that the latter is considered as the site where learner autonomy springs from and is nurtured (Benson, 2006a). Research of this kind holds that learner autonomy possibly means different things to different people in different settings (Benson, 2007; Chik, 2007; Murray and Kojima, 2007) and access to learners' language learning experience is considered to be the most appropriate way to better understand learner autonomy and its development.

This kind of research commonly centres on learners' construction of their identities and the development of learner autonomy through longitudinal learning experiences. For example, Benson et al. (2003) report two English language learners who experienced both English as a foreign/second language and English as a native language contexts. By retrospective self-report, the study shows how learners' autonomy develops along with their construction and reconstruction of identities in both home and the target culture. It is found that learners' strong desire to engage with the target culture facilitates their personal autonomy. For Chik (2007), in the language learning process, learners consciously make their own space, which helps create individual learner identity, which affects the development of learner autonomy. In her study, one learner identified

herself as a fluent speaker whereas the other as an unfocused learner, and such different perceived identities led to different manifestations of learner autonomy. It is worth noting that learners' conceptualization of their identities is not static but rather evolves with various language learning experiences at different times. As pointed out by Murray and Kojima (2007) based on the case study of Kojima's language learning experiences, Kojima changed her identity of a poor score maker to that of a fluent language user, moreover, to a multilingual language user. Like participants in Benson's et al. (2003), study, Kojima desired to connect with target language resources such as native speakers, in which process her changed identity and the development of learner autonomy are interwoven.

This type of research draws attention to the unstable nature of learner autonomy and attempts to unravel the complex process of its evolution in relation to individuals' educational experiences and social-cultural background. Moreover, the study of life history is considered an effective approach to undertake in such research. Nevertheless, such a method limits the research scope to individual cases, which possibly hinders researchers from gaining a broader picture of the development of learner autonomy.

#### **2.6.1.5 Relevant research on learner conceptions/beliefs and their relationships with learner autonomy**

As stated in section 2.6.1.2, the present study is mainly concerned with learners' conceptions, so it is necessary to explore its background in language education. In the literature, the terms learner 'conceptions' or 'beliefs' are used interchangeably except that Benson and Lor (1999: 464) attempt to differentiate the two. Moreover, the terms are often used to mean different things such as 'learners' philosophy of language learning'



(Abraham and Vann, 1987: 95), 'opinions' (Wenden, 1986: 5), 'expectations' (Gardner, 1988: 110). However, researchers generally reach consensus on two main features of the terms with regard to language learning: first, they are about the 'nature of language and language learning'; second, they entail both 'individual cognitive dimension and social dimension' (Barcelos, 2003: 9). A brief review of learner belief research in English language learning is summarized in the following table (see Table 2-3).

The table here is by no means exhaustive in demonstrating all the studies done in the field but serves to exemplify the diverse research instruments employed in the learner belief research. In fact, BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) questionnaire, as invented by Horwitz (1987) and interviews are reported as typical methods among relevant studies in 10 countries and areas (Sakui and Gaies, 1999).

Research Instrument		Researcher	Time of Research	Research
Case study		Wenden,	1986	Learner belief
Interview		Wenden	1987	
		Benson and Lor	1998	Learner belief and readiness towards autonomy
			1999	Conceptions of language and language learning
		Questionnaire	BALLI	Horwitz
Kern	1995			Learner belief and Teacher belief
Cotterall	1995			Learner belief and readiness for learner autonomy
Wen and Johnson	1997			Learner belief and achievement
Adapted from BALLI	Yang		1999	Learner belief, strategy use and learner background
Improved questionnaire	Sakui and Gaies		1999	Learner belief
Mixed (i.e. interview, Observation, Questionnaire)		White	1999	Learner expectation change

Table 2-3 Learner belief studies in English language education

Research on learners' beliefs/conceptions was integrated into learner autonomy research for two concerns: certain sets of beliefs determine autonomous language learning (Cotterall, 1995; Benson and Lor, 1998; 1999); necessary metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1998; Sinclair, 2000) facilitates development of learner autonomy.



For example, Cotterall (1995) investigates the possible relationship between learners' beliefs and learner autonomy from four main aspects: teachers and learners' respective roles in language learning, the role of feedback, learner independence and learner confidence. She (ibid) uses a questionnaire based on these themes and reports positive evidence of learner autonomy in those who view teachers as counsellors or facilitators of learning, who take responsibility for seeking and using feedback from various sources, and who have clear goals, and are willing to take risks and overcome difficulties. Likewise, Benson and Lor (1998: 57; 1999), based on their interview study of Hong Kong students' conceptions of English language learning, draw the conclusion that those who hold a qualitative conception (see Table 2-4) tend to exhibit learner autonomy in the future.

Nature of conceptions	Conceptions of language learning	Readiness for LA.
quantitative	Language is seen as a collection of things Process of accumulation Pieces of language are passed to the learners by the teacher	
qualitative	Language is seen as an environment Process of exposure Learner comes to terms with the unfamiliarity of the language environment with or without teachers	Identified with shift from quantitative to qualitative.

Table 2-4 Learners' conceptions and readiness for learner autonomy (Benson and Lor, 1998: 57)

Besides that, learners' metacognitive knowledge is especially considered relevant to learner autonomy by researchers such as Wenden (1991; 1998) and Sinclair (2000). By metacognitive knowledge, Wenden (1986: 188) means cognitive knowledge of 'person, strategy, and task'. This is further elaborated by Sinclair (2000) who adds an important dimension, knowledge of the learning context, to the concept. On the one hand, they

both hold that without explicit knowledge of the learning process, learners are less likely to make informed choices that are essential to learner autonomy. On the other hand, the core components of learner autonomy, according to Wenden (1998: 516), are 'planning, evaluating and monitoring' which are also important constituents of metacognitive knowledge on 'strategy' and 'task'. In her study, Wenden (1991) reports that difference in learner autonomy can be explained by learners' various degrees of metacognitive knowledge. Due to these concerns, metacognitive knowledge is often written into various learner training programs aiming to develop learner autonomy (see section 2.6.1.2).

As can be seen from the discussion, this type of research tends to assume a positive correlation between learners' conceptions/beliefs with actual autonomous learning behaviours. However, solid research evidence is often difficult to find.

## **2.7 Issues arising from the relevant research**

Based on this literature review regarding both theories of learner autonomy in different fields and relevant research in language education, the present section raises three main issues that need to be tackled:

- given that learner autonomy may have cultural characteristics, where is the place of cultural roots in understanding learner autonomy?
- following the first question, can learner autonomy be treated as an educational goal regardless of its educational contexts and if so how?



- if it is true that only by understanding learners' conceptions of learner autonomy can it be properly developed, how can we access these conceptions?

The following sections will discuss the three questions in more detail.

### **2.7.1 Where is the place of cultural roots in understanding learner autonomy?**

From section 2.2 to 2.5, I reviewed the concept of learner autonomy from the perspective of historical origin, development in education and language education in both Western and Chinese literature. It is also important for us to know that the cultural roots in which the concept of learner autonomy is embedded cannot be ignored.

As argued by Barcelos (1995: 40 cited by Barcelos, 2003: 9), particular cultures possibly have certain 'culture of learning languages' that are limited by 'one's age, social economic level, previous educational experience, previous (and present) readings about language learning and contact with other people like family, friends, relatives, teachers and so forth'. Likewise, Hu (2002; 2005) and Cortazzi and Jin (1996: 230) contend that there are cultural aspects of teaching and learning such as what people believe about 'normal' and 'good' learning activities and processes. Since the concept of learner autonomy is so closely linked with successful learning (e.g. Wenden, 1991; Little, 1996), it is reasonable that such a concept also carries cultural imprints.

However, as I emphasised in section 2.5, we need to avoid two dangerous stances in attempting to understand the concept: first, we should not over generalize literature descriptions to each individual within the national/ethnic boundaries; second, we should not dichotomize conceptions of learner autonomy according to geographical locations.

Moreover, if culture is considered as a set of beliefs, then beliefs entail both stability and variety. According to Alanen (2003: 67), beliefs are variable because they 'are constructed in social interactions in specific contexts of activity', at the same time, they are stable since 'they are appropriated/internalized and (re)constructed in mediated action to become part of individual's knowledge reservoir'. The complexity of conceptions/beliefs themselves plus numerous individual factors mean that we need a more delicate way to position cultural influence when interpreting the concept of learner autonomy.

### **2.7.2 Can learner autonomy be treated as a universal goal in language education?**

In recent years, doubts have been cast on whether/how learner autonomy can be set as a universal goal in language education because of the criticism in both education and language education. In education, strong objections to autonomy being an educational aim have recently put forward by Hand (2006). His argument is based on the two ordinary senses of autonomy: circumstantial and dispositional autonomy, which according to him are both factually submissive to others' direction. For circumstantial autonomy, it is dependent on the circumstances which one lives in, and for dispositional autonomy, it is only desirable if individual decisions are 'more effective, appropriate, or worthwhile' than other-directed performances. However, the criteria for the judgement often lie in the hands of the more capable, which also denies the basic claim that 'autonomy is to be free to determine one's own actions'(Hand, 2006: 538). Such theoretical scepticism is also heard in language education. In addition to Pennycook (1997) and Holliday's (2005) respective argument against the 'Western' cultural essentialist view of learner autonomy and imposition of it on non-'Western' contexts, Schmenk (2005: 111) warns that globalization of



the concept of learner autonomy will result in various deficiencies: first, a 'homogenization' of learner autonomy that ignores factors such as people, situation, institution and culture; second, a 'technologization' of learner autonomy that reduces the concept to technologies such as self-access centres; third, a 'psychologization or naturalization' of learner autonomy assumes that learner autonomy is human being's inborn nature.

As summarized by Benson (2006a), the current criticism that learner autonomy receives comes from philosophical, social, and educational debates: in contemporary philosophy, the notion of individual self is challenged by the perspective of social self. Moreover, autonomy is condemned by its dominant association with stereotypically 'masculine' features such as independence and self-sufficiency. In addition, social debates over whether autonomy is self-contained are not without problems; and the globalization of educational reform is apt to essentialize the idea of autonomy and its link with individuality (ibid.).

However, as I stated in chapter 1, the MOE in China reinforces the CECR that aims to promote learner autonomy in Chinese universities regardless of these debates. As stated by Hu (2004), the reform is justified by Western theories. Whether/how this had an impact on learners' conceptions is worth exploring. It is particularly worth noting that this Western package of learner autonomy considers communicative language use (see 2.4.3.4) as the goal in language education at school. Whether/how this is accepted or realized by learners in China is unknown, given that high stakes exams are a compulsory factor in Chinese higher education whereas much of the 'Western' research concerns non-forced education or contexts in which exams are not such a big factor as that in China.

### **2.7.3 How can learners' own understanding of learner autonomy be accessed?**

Learner autonomy research in language education has brought great insight into the understanding of learner autonomy. However, gaps and deficiencies exist in each area of the research that is discussed in previous sections. As discussed in section 2.6.1.1, research on learner autonomy as a concept tends to use literature-based theories to examine learners' autonomy. This is deficient in two aspects: first, it imposes opinions rather than elicits learners' own knowledge that may possibly be related to theories. Second, it ignores both the learners' language learning process and the learning contexts in which their conceptions are developed.

Similarly, for research on learner autonomy as a means to effective language learning, pitfalls are evident when researchers attempt to identify observable behaviours with learner autonomy or connect strategy use with learner autonomy. First, this line of research often entraps itself given that autonomy is not necessarily always exercised. Second, strategy use is unlikely to be universally applicable to any individual in the same way. As warned by Palfreyman (2003b), apart from the problematic issues of strategy categorization, it is dangerous to treat all learners as if they had the same cognitive equipment, unshaped by personal experience.

In research on learner autonomy and culture (see section 2.6.1.3), in addition to the insufficient research into small cultures such as institutional culture, research on national culture also remains unexplored. Possibly because of the rising voice against cultural essentialism (e.g. Holliday, 2005) and overgeneralization (e.g. Cheng, 2000), researchers tend to interpret findings by use of contextual factors (e.g. Huang, 2006). While acknowledging the importance of contextual factors, I, on the other hand,



would argue that national cultural influence should have the position it deserves if research evidence is found.

In research on learner autonomy and conceptions/beliefs (see section 2.6.1.5), researchers often fall into the trap of pre-assuming a cause-effect relationship between beliefs and actions. As stated by Nix's self-reflection (2003: 201),

I realize I've been wrong about trying to focus students' metacognition on their use of language skills as the starting point for developing their academic literacy autonomously. I see again that it is the students' interest in learning about the topics themselves that motivates them and provides the springboard for the development of autonomy.

This is also voiced by Benson (2003: 282) who suggests that it is inappropriate to 'equate empirical research with the measurement of causes and effects'. He (2003: 282) suggests that:

perhaps what we need, then is a view of empirical research that does not necessarily involve "answering questions"—one that is more suited to the concept of autonomy as an aspect of the teaching and learning process that is ambiguous in terms of cause and effect. Research is a matter of gaining a better understanding of (or theorizing?) some process or situation (or practice?) through engagement with data arising from it.

This notion supports the current research that tends towards understanding learner autonomy in relation to learners' experiences of language learning (see section 2.6.1.4). According to Benson (2006a: 30), to date, research has shifted to 'the construction of individual identities and achievement of personal autonomy in long-term language learning experiences'. Nevertheless, research of this kind is far from sufficient to inform theories and practices. On the one hand, this kind of research normally focuses on one or two cases, which may contribute to the

understanding of the intricate nature of learner autonomy, yet provides little evidence for research comparison; on the other hand, random selection of individual cases can hardly offer sufficient insights to inform educational practice in certain contexts.

## **2.8 Rationale for the present study**

The present study is justified by the need to resolve the issues addressed in section 2.7 through understanding concepts of learner autonomy from learners' perspectives in relation to their social, educational, and cultural background.

Firstly, this does not mean that learners' opinions are better than those proposed by theorists in the language education field. Rather, it is believed that learners are in a better position to describe how learner autonomy emerges and develops along with possible educational experience, social and cultural influences. Learners' conceptions or beliefs (used interchangeably in the literature, see section 2.6.1.5) are thought of as mirrors reflecting the complex interaction between themselves with external factors. In doing so, they are not imposed on by learner autonomy theories or pre-assumptions of cultural influences by the researcher, either 'big' or 'small' culture. Instead, cultural roots only come in when they are part of learners' own accounts.

Secondly, theoretical debate on whether learner autonomy should be a global goal in language education seems to be undertaken as mere hindsight if it has already been written into the educational reform. However, it is still necessary for researchers to examine to what extent it is accepted/realized by learners. Particularly in language education, promotion of learner autonomy is bound up with the communicative approach in the Western research and practice. Whether it is suitable for



English as a compulsory subject in Higher Education contexts such as in China can also be answered by learners' voices.

Thirdly, from the perspective of methodology, the present study follows the current innovation of adopting a narrative method to approach participants. Moreover, it attempts to overcome the limitation of case studies as normally adopted by this kind of research. By involving 27 students and 3 universities, the present study allows both individual diversity and possible common grounds to be recorded if they emerge.

## **2.9 Summary**

This chapter started by tracing the historical origin of the concept of autonomy. Then it continued to track how it shed light on ideologies on personal autonomy and values of learning and impacted on the development of learner autonomy in education in both the 'West' and 'China'. Then there was an exploration of how early educational thoughts were developed into modern theories on learner autonomy. The chapter then moved to the development of learner autonomy in language education, including a brief review of its being a 'Western' construct, a globalized construct and existing controversies: individual/social, psychological/political, universal/cultural dimensions of the concept of learner autonomy, and conflicting objectives of developing learner autonomy in language education. Afterwards, a comprehensive description of learner autonomy was presented. Then relevant research on learner autonomy in language education was reviewed. Attention was paid to five particular areas of research: learner autonomy as a concept, as a means to effective language learning, learner autonomy and culture, learner autonomy and learners' language learning experiences, and learner autonomy and learners' conceptions/beliefs. Issues arising from the research were pointed out and the rationales for the present study were

provided. This leads to my research questions, which will be discussed in chapter 3.



## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter concerns the methodology of the study. First, research questions are presented. Then justifications for research design and subsequent research methods are discussed. This is followed by concrete descriptions of research instrument preparation and data collection procedures. In addition, ethical issues in the process of data collection are discussed and data analysis procedures are provided. Afterwards, the trustworthiness of the research is defended and my role in the research is described. The chapter ends with a brief description of my decisions on data presentation in the finding and discussion chapters.

### **3.2 Research questions**

As stated in Chapter 2, there are three issues for investigation centred on the concept of learner autonomy: first, how to position possible cultural roots, given that concepts of learner autonomy bear cultural imprints and may vary from context to context; second, Western practice of learner autonomy has been incorporated into the current college English reform in China, but to what extent it is understood by students still remains unknown; third, traditional learner autonomy research is problematic and the new narrative turn is limited. All these issues inform the necessity of the present research to understand learner autonomy from learners' perspectives. My research questions are proposed as follows:

1) What, if any, are Chinese university students' conceptions of English language learning relatable to learner autonomy?

2) What are the influences on students' conceptions?

To answer these questions, different research methods were employed in the study, which will be discussed below.

### **3.3 Research design**

Research methodology is determined by research questions (Berg, 2004). In order to understand Chinese learners' conceptions and examine possible influences on them, the research endeavoured to capture in-depth accounts from maximum possible sources of data that can be handled by the study. Apart from the qualitative approach that aimed to obtain rich information, the study also considered a quantitative approach to verify findings yielded by qualitative methods as well as to allow further possible diversity through open-ended items. To sum up, the research primarily adopted a qualitative approach yet considered a quantitative approach to be an appropriate supplement.

Combination of two approaches is justified by quite a few researchers (e.g. Bryman, 1988; Pattern, 1990; Gorard and Taylor, 2004; Prasad, 2005) who hold that presence of two approaches permits the strengths of both while avoiding their respective weaknesses. As stated by Prasad (2005: 6), 'the tenets of positivism are somewhat inadequate for the understanding of complex, nuanced, and context-dependent social processes. A completely open-ended approach, on the other hand, is careless in its neglect of theoretical foundations and in its failure to acknowledge its own meta-theoretical assumptions'. There are various ways to combine the two approaches (e.g. Bryman, 1992; Creswell, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994), for example, equally mixed, or adding one on to another. This, according to Punch (2005: 241), is conditioned by 'particular situations in the light of the practical circumstances and context of the research' (Punch, 2005: 241).



The present research adopts what Creswell (1994) calls the dominant/less-dominant design. In the first place, the interpretive nature of the present study justifies the suitability of a qualitative approach as the main approach. As commonly espoused by researchers in social sciences, one of the most outstanding features of qualitative approach is that it allows the researcher to obtain rich information without being constrained by pre-determined categories (Pattern, 1990). Richards (2003: 8) further states the strength of the qualitative approach as to help explore the complexity of the social world, to be person-centred and provide insights that enrich understanding, and to ensure the researcher has the opportunity to address his or her own role in relation to the context. At the same time, the current research was concerned about the validation and possible generalizability of the findings revealed by the qualitative approach and employed a quantitative approach as a complementary means of data collection. It is worth noting that a quantitative method can complement a qualitative paradigm if the purpose is properly justified (Guba and Lincoln, 2006). Moreover, according to Punch (2005), a quantitative approach helps answer certain types of important questions systematically.

### **3.4 Methodological issues**

Before carrying out the actual research design, however, methodologically, I have to refine my research questions from two perspectives. First, I cannot make direct use of questions on learner autonomy for two reasons: it might impose answers on students; they do not necessarily have the term in their metacognitive knowledge. Second, students cannot talk about conceptions in a vacuum. Instead, they need a solid medium to show their conceptions, which suggests that language learning experiences will be the most appropriate and concrete channel.

Due to these two concerns, it is necessary to adjust my research questions in two ways: first, to break down the original research questions into specific and tangible questions; second, to add another question on students' language learning behaviours since students' account of language learning experiences cannot be separated from descriptions of concrete learning behaviours. As a result, my research questions are reframed as follows:

1. What, if any, are Chinese university students' conceptions of English language learning relatable to learner autonomy?

1) What are Chinese university students' conceptions of successful language learning?

2) Do students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy form part of their conceptions of successful language learning?

2. How might students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy correspond with actual learning behaviours?

1) What behaviours do students associate with successful language learning?

2) To what extent are students' behaviours consistent with students' conceptions of learner autonomy?

3. What are the influences on students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and corresponding behaviours?

1) What influences their conceptions of successful language learning and what behaviours do students report?

2) What are the influences on students' conceptions of learner autonomy and actual associated behaviours?



### **3.5 Research methods**

The present study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative method is composed by narrative-based interviews and follow-up interviews and the quantitative method comprises questionnaire surveys. Triangulation was formed in two senses: internally, among interview participants and the researcher; externally, interview participants, questionnaire participants and the researcher.

#### **3.5.1 Narrative-based interviews**

There were four reasons for the choice of narrative-based interviews in the present study. First, the present research aimed to examine Chinese learners' conceptions but with caution in these aspects: 1) to leave open as whether or not they articulate concepts of learner autonomy; 2) not to impose pre-determined theories of learner autonomy on them; 3) to avoid abstract and decontextualized answers. Second, the present research was concerned that 'autonomy is not grounded in substantive individual identities, but in identities that become individual through narratives involving self-reflection and self-thematization' (Straub et al., 2005, cited by Benson, 2006a: 32). In order to explore learners' conceptions of learner autonomy, it was necessary to search learners' long-term experiences of language learning and investigate how they make sense of such processes and exercise learner agency (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). Third, narrative has been considered as a useful research method in applied linguistics to obtain insights that are 'inaccessible to experimental methodologies' (Pavlenko, 2007: 164) from holistic and diachronic perspective (Nekvapil, 2003; Benson and Nunan, 2004). Last but not the least, in research on learner autonomy in language education, narrative method has been increasingly recognized by researchers (Benson, 2007; Murray and Kojima, 2007; Chik, 2007) who hold that learner autonomy

possibly means different things to different people, which can be better accounted for in relation to their educational experience and social, cultural background.

### **3.5.2 Follow-up Interviews**

Although interview as a research method fits into almost all the qualitative research tradition (Richards, 2003), adoption of it as a follow up method is essentially because it gave me the opportunity to probe more the focused questions that arose from the narrative-based interviews. As indicated in the previous section, my design for the narrative-based interview aimed to capture learners' general retrospective account of their language learning experiences, which avoids the problems that a normal semi-structured interview has, such as lack of diversity (Wengraf, 2001) or insufficiently detailed answers (Seidman, 2006). However, such a method takes the risks of not obtaining the necessary data for my research questions. A follow-up interview was thus considered significant in that it not only helped to clarify issues and dig deeper into the meanings of certain descriptions in the narrative-based interviews, but also allowed me to obtain further information relevant to my research questions.

### **3.5.3 Questionnaires**

As stated above, the decision on using questionnaire was to further examine findings obtained from the qualitative data, explore their possible generalizability of qualitative findings, and allow further diversity by open-ended items. First, as discussed in chapter 2, learner autonomy is a multifaceted concept which involves both core features that are shared across boundaries and peripheral characteristics that might be unique to individuals, and a questionnaire survey is considered as a powerful instrument to examine the scope in which certain concepts are shared



while others are not. In other words, both commonality and diversity are considered in the questionnaire design (see section 3.8.1). Second, there is a significant number of Chinese learners who learn English in formal education. Although a questionnaire instrument cannot capture all necessary information to generalize research findings, it can factually help represent, to a limited extent, certain patterns of descriptions. After all, they are 'information about the world, in the form of numbers' (Punch, 2005: 55). Third, open-ended questionnaire items were thought to allow possible responses different from interview data among a larger population.

### **3.6 Qualitative data collection**

Qualitative data collection consists of three stages: pilot interview, making improvements based on pilot interviews and the main study interview data collection, which are described in chronological order in the following sections.

#### **3.6.1 Pilot interview**

The pilot interviews involved two main stages: designing an interview guide and concluding taking pilot interviews, improving the interview guide and undertaking another round of pilot interviews.

##### **3.6.1.1 Design of interview guide**

The initial interview guide (see Appendix I) design was done with considerations of research questions and relevant literature. As stated in section 2.6.1.2, learner autonomy has been tightly associated with successful language learning by researchers such as Wenden (1991), and Little (1999). With regard to my research questions (3.2), I intended to target interviews at successful English language learners who were

expected to be able to articulate concepts of learner autonomy. In order not to impose my criteria for successful language learning, I suggested participants should give their own definitions of successful English language learning.

A general practice in China is that English language learning comes after students' several years of school learning. I felt it was necessary to ask their general conceptions of successful learning before probing specifically successful language learning (e.g. Q2. Q3). At the same time, to avoid the difficulty of abstracting descriptions of successful English language learning, I incorporated a question that offers the opportunity for participants to give concrete examples from their own language learning experiences (Q4).

### **3.6.1.2 Pilot interviews**

I tried them out in my interviews with three Warwick Master students who were recommended by friends as successful English language learners. The language used in the interviews was Chinese, their native language, which was more convenient for detailed narration.

However, quite a few problems were revealed from the practice of the three trial interviews. First, the criteria for successful language learners varied: two by academic scores and the other by good oral English. Second, since my questions consisted of both conceptions of successful learning and language learning, there were hardly any focused opinions on successful language learning. Third, it proved difficult for interviewees to answer questions such as 'what is successful learning or language learning?' Fourth, my sub-questions 'is there any teacher that influenced your opinions?' tended to impose my assumptions on interviewees. Fifth, my question regarding 'what is the difference between good learning and good language learning' was confusing. Interviewees felt uncertain as how



to answer. Sixth, my question on their own reflective thinking about their learning experience was too broad for them to retrieve information. In general, each of them had received more than 10 years' of formal education, so it was indeed difficult for them to summarize into short accounts.

### **3.6.1.3 Improving interview guide**

Based on feedback from these trial interviews, I made some changes to my interview guide (see Appendix II). First, I removed questions regarding participants' attitudes towards English language learning at the beginning because it might disturb participants' whole accounts. Second, rather than asking the participants to describe successful learning and successful English language learning in an abstract way, I asked participants to describe their own language learning success after they gave a full account of the whole language learning experiences in Q1. In this way, how participants see success would be revealed. Third, Q4 was added to further elicit participants' opinions on language learning success. Fourth, Q5 was added to increase perspectives on participants' English language learning from teachers or classmates' views. Fifth, Q6 was added in order to compare participants' future plan for their English language learning in the past, which could help reveal more information on their conceptions of English language learning.

With this revised interview guide, I did a second round of pilot interviews with three Master students at the University of Warwick. Improvements based on these interviews are further described in the following sections.

### **3.6.2 Improvements based on pilot interviews**

The pilot interviews provided valuable insights and experience for my main study in three main aspects: changing sample participants, improvements of interview guides and techniques of inquiry, and practical issues such as necessary preparation, and methods of initial data analysis.

#### **3.6.2.1 Change of sample participants**

Decisions on changing sample participants were due to the following two concerns: first, it limited the research scope. In principle, any English language learner has conceptions of the activities he/she engages with. To focus only on successful language learners will miss the opportunity to investigate the majority of ordinary learners who might make great contribution to the study. Second, the literature has not reached a consensus regarding definition of successful language learners (Gan, et al., 2004). It would be problematic if participants were chosen according to different criteria.

#### **3.6.2.2 Improvement of narrative-based interview guide**

Based on the pilot interviews, I finalized my interview guide (See Appendix III) for the main study with improvements to objectivity and internal reliability. First, I tried to ask more general questions and thus avoid my imposition. For example, for Q3. I chose 'are there any events/things you want to talk about?' rather than 'are there any people who have influenced your conceptions?' as in the previous guide. In fact, this appeared in Gao's (2005) interview guide in probing learners' stories. Second, I was inspired by Malcolm (2004) who asked 'what are the difficulties in your language learning experience?' and incorporated it into my guide. This increased the internal reliability of the guide in that it allowed another perspective



rather than providing an overwhelming account on what constituted successful learning experiences. Moreover, if 'narrative identity' was 'a ground for individual autonomy' (Benson, 2006a: 32), conceptions of the future possibly offer directions of its development in the future. Therefore, question 7 was added to enrich the space for interviewees' accounts. By doing so, from a literal level, the interview guide suggested a holistic and diachronic narration: past, present and future. In addition, this could be referred to in order to check internal reliability through constant comparisons. For example, by Q7, 'what is your ideal English learning situation?' could be used to compare with their previous account of their practical learning situations.

### **3.6.2.3 Development of follow-up interview guide**

The follow-up interview guide (see Appendix IV) consists of two parts. Part one was intended to discover deeper meanings held by interviewees and was informed by Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) theory (Kelly, 1955). PCP takes the position that there is no unique fixed meaning for any thing or event and the potential of different interpretations often exists, and these are named as 'constructs'. These constructs can actually show what is perceived as more important when people contrast things (often unconsciously) (Butt and Burr, 2004: 15). Moreover, Hinkle (1965 cited by Bannister and Fransella, 1986: 51) maintains that people's personal construct system is coherently organized in a hierarchical order and the super ordinate constructs which indicate 'people's philosophy of life' can be examined by inquiring of people 'why is it important'. On a par with this theory is a study done by Marton et al. (1993). In their study, interviewees were often asked by 'what do you mean by learning?' in order to obtain the profound meanings of interviewees. With reference to PCP theory and the relevant research mentioned above, my follow-up guide was completed. The guidance questions were semi structured but clearly composed of two

parts. The first part consisted of questions such as 'Q1: what do you mean by ...' (... stands for whatever topics that emerged as prominent from repetitive reading of the narrative transcription) and 'Q2: is it important to you?' Q3 was aimed at to draw out confirmation from the narrative-based interview or elicit new information on students' conceptions. Q4 was for the purpose of provoking ideas of influences on participants' English language learning.

Part two was composed of fixed questions in order to obtain a bigger picture of the reported learning situations (Q1, Q2, and Q4), which at the same time were expected to provide evidence of possible influences on their conceptions. In addition, Q3, 'What advice would you like to give to someone who wants to learn English well?', was to test the internal validity of narratives.

The overall guides displayed a careful combination of 'performative, structural and literal methods' (Rogan and de Kock, 2005: 629) that employed a chronological order for participants to retrieve their language learning experience, a holistic structure that involved past, present and future, and specific probes into critical episodes that were unpredictable prior to the interviews.

#### **3.6.2.4 Improvement of inquiry skills**

The pilot interviews improved my awareness of using appropriate language and techniques and appropriate styles. On the one hand, in order to avoid any unnecessary interference in the interaction of interviews, I became cautious about the language I used. For example, rather than asking the interviewees, 'Does that influence your English language learning', I used, 'What do you think of that?', instead. At the same time, I took Wengraf's (2001: 127) advice on raising questions 'pointed at narrative' and asked interviewees to explain things they



mentioned. Likewise, probing into 'critical episodes', as suggested by Rogan and de Kock (2005: 634), was also productive. Some techniques were found helpful to provoke more information. For example, rather than a quick response to interviewees' accounts, sometimes to pretend knowing little about the given information increased the opportunity to reveal more descriptions. On the other hand, I was careful not to give my inquiry a fixed style which, according to Rogan and de Kock (2005), would in effect control and direct the narrative. Sometimes, to consider the narrators' own preference of narration was necessary since in that way the influence of the researcher's intention could be reduced (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). Therefore, the interviews gave full opportunity for interviewees to tell their own language learning stories.

### **3.6.2.5 Necessary preparations for narrative-based interviews**

A checklist for the main study (Appendix V) was produced according to my experience in the pilot study. This included a letter for the interviewee (Appendix VI), interviewee personal information form (Appendix VII), a second letter for the interviewee (VIII) and a reminder of practical items such as recorder, battery etc. The letter for the interviewee was to provide a general background to my research and inform interviewees of my expectations of their participation in the interviews and ethical issues were stated (see section 3.11). At the same time, it was a good opportunity to pass the information to the interviewees that genuine accounts would be highly appreciated. The letter of interviewee personal information had three functions: first, it gathered some background information on interviewees; second, it kept the contact details that ensured that I could trace them whenever necessary; third, it left interviewees a short period of time to reflect on their previous English language learning experience

when they filled in the form. The reminder of practical items helped me prepare a back up for contingent problems.

### **3.6.2.6 Necessary preparations for follow-up interviews**

Since Part one of the follow-up interview guide was quite flexible, depending on issues arising from the narrative-based interviews, I had to transcribe and analyze the first interview data. Experiences in pilot interviews provided me with justifiable reasons for my decision to open-code rather than categorize my narrative-based interview data. In the pilot interviews, informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1968), I coded interview transcriptions and synthesized them into broader themes in order to prepare for the follow-up interviews. Nevertheless, uncertainty was always found in my way of categorizing concepts and synthesizing themes. This was either due to limitation of time duration between the two phases of interviews or my own experience of data analysis. For both concerns, I replaced my narrative analysis method by open-coding at this stage.

According to Richards (2003: 273), the initial coding was not to produce categories but to 'generate a set of labels from which categories can be derived', which can be best achieved by 'work on a line-by-line basis'. Due to the time constraints for the follow-up interviews, I chose what Punch (2005: 201) calls 'low-inference descriptive codes' that kept participants' meanings to the maximum within contexts.

In doing so, I could obtain necessary topics for further interview whereas data from both phases were treated as an integrated whole for the formal data analysis. This not only reduced the risks for missing important information but practically saved time for me to carry on the follow-up interview.



### **3.6.3 Main study**

The main study was done among three Chinese universities that are located in Beijing. It involved targeting research sites, finding research participants, and collecting data.

#### **3.6.3.1 Research sites**

I intended to locate my study in three Chinese universities with different rankings for three reasons: first, tertiary English language teaching is of the most relevance since CECR is about the promotion of autonomy at tertiary level and my own teaching experience came from college English language teaching. Second, one of my research assumptions was that institutions could have influences on learners' conceptions. Since Chinese learners had to apply for universities before taking the National Entrance Exam, the rankings of the universities were extremely important information for them to make decisions as admission scores among universities with different ranks can vary greatly. Third, the common Chinese mentality was to equate upper level universities with successful students. Whether this forms part of the students' own identities and affects their autonomy is worth exploration.

Following the published ranking list (Sina, 2005), I decided to choose Tsinghua University (ranked No.1), Beijing Normal University (BNU, ranked No.20) and Beijing University of Chemical Technology (BUCT, ranked No.69) all of which I could manage to have access to.

It was worth noting that the three universities had respective mottos that specify their educational ideology, which seemed to indicate a part of institutional culture. I will therefore introduce these mottos, together with a brief background introduction to the university.

### 3.6.3.2 Tsinghua University

Tsinghua University was founded in 1911 and *zi qiang bu xi* (自强不息) *hou de zai wu* (厚德载物) were written into the university motto in 1914.

The meaning of the eight individual characters is as follows:

*zi*, 'self'; *qiang* 'strengthen'; *bu* 'not'; *xi*, 'cease'; *hou*, 'enrich'; *de*, 'morality'; *zai*, 'accommodate'; *wu*, 'things'. Altogether, the two phrases suggest that a person should develop oneself ceaselessly and cultivate one's morality to its utmost. The university gains its reputation from the fact it ranks as number 2 out of thousands of universities in China and attracts the best students all over the country (In English language teaching, apart from normal English language courses, the university provides an online learning program and radio English broadcast program that runs 128 hours a week. In addition, Tsinghua University has its own English Proficiency Test that is authorized by the Ministry of Education, which means students in Tsinghua University can take this test instead of the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) that is obligatory for students in other universities.

### 3.6.3.3 Beijing Normal University

Beijing Normal University was founded in 1902 and *xue wei ren shi* (学为人师), *xing wei shi fan* (行为世范) were written into university motto by one of the leading academics in China, Qi Gong, in 1997. The meaning of these eight characters is as follows:

*xue*, 'to learn'; *wei*, 'to become'; *ren*, 'people', *shi*, 'teacher'; *xing*, 'to behave'; *wei*, 'to become', *shi*, 'the world'; *fan*, 'model'. In brief, the motto emphasises the best on two themes: the cultivation of learning and morality. The university is known as the best in fostering novice teachers in all subjects for the nation. At the same time, its strength in both Arts and



Science fields entitles it to the position of number 20, according to the ranking. Like Tsinghua University, it also selects very good students from all over China.

#### **3.6.3.4 Beijing University of Chemical Technology**

Beijing University of Chemical Technology was founded in 1958 and *hong de bo xue* (宏德博学), *hua yu tian gong* (化育天工) were written into university motto in 2005. The six individual characters and one two-word phrase can be explained as this:

*hong*, grand; *de*, morality; *bo*, broad, *xue*, learning; *hua*, to change; *yu*, to foster; *tiangong*, natural art. In summary, to develop one's morality and learning in order to change what is given by nature is illustrated in the motto. The university, specialized in chemical technology, is ranked 69.

In general, these three universities, though positioned differently in the same ranking system, all belong to the first class universities. To enter these three universities, students should not only succeed in their national entrance exams but also outperform their counterparts within their local areas to certain degrees. Taking Hubei (name of a province) for example, students are qualified to go to first class universities if they reach 524 or above in their national entrance exams. However, in this province the line was drawn as 646 by Tsinghua University, 615 by BNU, and 574 by BUCT; This means only when the students are outstandingly better than most of their provincial counterparts can they enter these universities.

#### **3.6.3.5 Participants**

The criteria for selecting participants were: first, the group from each university should present a mixed level (upper/middle/lower) according to Beijing College Students English Entrance Exam result and teachers' own judgement; second, they should present a balanced mixture of genders

and majors; third, they were willing to participate in the research; fourth, they were informed of the general research aim but were innocent of my real research questions. With the help from my friends and former colleagues, 36 freshmen (12 each from individual university) were finally recommended and I was given their contact details to make further connection. The number was more than my planned number in case of any unavailability of actual participation. The profile of participants is shown in Appendix IX.

Overall, 27 students, with 11 females and 16 males, from the 3 universities (with nine from each university) were chosen to take the interviews. They were all freshmen and aged around 18. In terms of majors, 12 studied in B.A. courses and the other 15 studied in B.Sc. courses. Their years of English language learning varied from 6 to 15 years and their English levels were shown by the Entrance English Level Test in Beijing Universities. At the same time, information from National Entrance Exams in English, CET-4 and National English Proficiency Test was also taken as supportive evidence. Their English levels were presented from two perspectives: self-evaluation and other-evaluation, some of which matched and some of which did not. The major reasons for the mismatch were that some students downgraded their levels either because they were modest or concerned about their spoken English. In the open-item regarding their attitude towards English language learning, three types of answers were interestingly provided: passive vs. active; very serious vs. not serious, and feeling love vs. dislike for English. Overall, most of them had experiences of informal English language learning in earlier schooling. They were from 18 different provinces or areas of China that cover both Eastern/Western China and Urban/Rural areas. Their admission scores for the universities were presented respectively. Due to the different geographical locations of their secondary



education, their admission scores even for the same university differed greatly.

### **3.6.3.6 Procedure of interview data collection**

Data was collected in a sequence of Tsinghua University, BUCT, and BNU. The process was composed of two main steps: first, to contact participants following the given contact details by friends and former colleagues in order to identify possible dates for the interview; second, to contact the universities to find possible rooms for the interview. The procedure of data collection is documented in Appendix X, with record of date, place, and time duration of the interviews.

The initial contact with interview candidates gave me the opportunity to check their willingness and availability to participate in the interviews. The participants generally showed great interest in the interview. However, dates, specific time slots and places for the interview took me some time to fix. Taking into consideration factors such as participants' availability, university room availability, my own traffic convenience, sufficient spare time for contingent problems, I finally managed to set most of the interviews on weekends and in most cases centralized the interviews (either narrative-based interview or follow-up interviews) in teachers' offices within one day. The time slot for each participant was 40 minutes for the narrative-based interview with an extra 20 minutes for contingencies. It turned out that the time duration for narrative-based interviews ranged from 15'04 minutes to 40'10 minutes and follow-up interviews between 9'09 minutes to 32'17 minutes. After each narrative-based interview, I made an appointment with the interviewee for the next interview. This was confirmed through text message prior to the follow-up interviews in case there were any changes. Teachers' offices

are normally available at weekends. In fact, my friend in Tsinghua University actually lent me his office for the interviews.

In general, most of the interviews were conducted strictly according to the plan except for one interviewee 9 (from Tsinghua University) who forgot the follow-up interview and we rearranged another date. In addition, interviewee 17 (from BNU) was ill and could not speak, she typed her answers for the follow-up interview questions to my laptop instead. After the interview, each interviewee was rewarded by a 2006 diary book.

### **3.7 Qualitative data analysis**

The qualitative data analysis consisted of two major phases: phase I (described in section 3.9.1 below) and Phase II (see section 3.9.6)

#### **3.7.1 Interview data analysis—phase I**

The interview data analysis was broken up into two phases due to the practical need to design and distribute the questionnaire data. This did not mean that I disobeyed the original principle to base the questionnaire design on the interview data analysis (see 3.8.1). It was rather that the process involved in categorization itself required constant reflections on the categories (Richards, 2003). That was why I continued to finalize and rationalize my categories after the questionnaire data collection, which constituted my phase II of the interview data analysis.

#### **3.7.2 Transcribing**

Most researchers in the qualitative domain agree that transcription should not be treated as a unique method that fits all studies (Green et al, 1997; Richards, 2003; Bird, 2005). Although the apparent function of transcription is that it serves as a data collection method (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992), it involves more than simply representing the original oral



language in written form. According to Lapadat and Lindsay (1999), transcribing is a process of interpreting because the extent to which the participants' voices are displayed often involves the researchers' decision-making. Green et al. (1997) argue that transcription is more than an interpretive act in that it reveals the overall rationale lying behind the research. In line with this view, Cameron (2001) and Bird (2005) suggest that transcription should be consistent with the research conventions that researchers adopt. Since my research purpose was to examine participants' conceptions of English language learning, my way of transcribing focused on content rather than following CA (conversation analysis) or DA (discourse analysis) tradition.

The concrete guidelines for transcription were the criteria proposed by Richards (2003: 199): 'fitness for purpose, adequacy, and accuracy'. As a result, features such as speaker tone, normal pause (less than 3 seconds) etc. were ignored in my transcription. However, their general behaviours such as speaking tone, gestures, and the way they talked were observed and noted down in my notebook. As warned by Pavlenko (2007: 173), 'additions' and 'omissions' were avoided. Transcription honestly took down all content words.

Since the follow-up interview was conditioned by issues arising from the narrative-based interview, they were transcribed (see sample transcription both in Chinese and English in Appendix XVI) before the follow-up interview took place. To avoid hasty transcriptions, follow-up interviews were transcribed (see sample transcription both in Chinese and English in Appendix XVII) after the completion of all interview data collection.

Transcriptions were given back to the interviewees to check the accuracy before the follow-up interviews took place. As stated by Kvale (1996)

giving the researcher's interpretation back to the participants can increase the validity.

### **3.7.3 Open-coding**

Kvale (1996) positions interview analysis on making sense of data, which is a process along a spectrum between description and interpretation. This involves the interviewee's description, the interviewer's interpretation, and a dialogue between the two that runs between the description and interpretation ends of the spectrum. I considered open-coding to be the first step that was more focused on description but contributed to a more vibrant data analysis. As suggested by Pavlenko (2007), open-coding was done in the Chinese language as it was consistent with the language used in the interviews to help maintain accuracy.

As stated in section 3.6.2, I followed Punch's (2005) suggestions on the two stages of open-coding. First, I took the position of 'finding codes from data' rather than 'bringing codes to data' (Punch, 2005: 200) and insisted on descriptive codes in the first instance. Then I took the position which is more oriented to the interpretation and attempted to find patterns and themes based on these codes.

Transcriptions had been read repeatedly in order to obtain a general sense of the data before actual coding took place. The actual coding was done by 'work on a line-by-line basis' (Richards, 2003: 273). During this process, attention was paid to the interviewees' meaning segment, repetitive accounts, and explicit expressions relevant to my research questions, which laid a foundation for my follow-up interview.

In stage two, apart from the labelling process discussed above, I was particularly informed by techniques proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2000). In their paper on grounded theory methodology, they (ibid.)



provide two essential strategies to open code data: first, to combine specific parts with the whole piece of data; second, to step back from all data, and make an overall judgement. The first strategy enables the researcher to code intensively as well as to discover conceptual patterns and the second one helps the researcher to decide the central themes of the data. A sample data coding is provided in Appendix XVIII (with sample interviewee 002) and in Appendix XIX (with sample interviewee 003).

### **3.7.4 Theme elicitation**

The procedure of how to elicit themes is well documented. Smith and Osborne (2003) provide 10 steps on how to interpret interview data. Similarly, Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest five stages to form themes. Nevertheless, common ground can still be reached in the following aspects: first, to familiarize oneself with the texts through several instances of repetitive reading; second, themes are to be synthesized systematically.

Data analysis in the present study was informed by the literature presented above: to explore the participants' experience rather than to confine analysis to certain models; to repeatedly read the transcription and recognize events, topical markers and concepts relevant to my research questions; to systematically synthesize themes; to find a co-judge to verify theme elicitation.

First, through a continuous effort of constant comparison and reflective thinking, theme elicitation was done on an individual basis. This process involved several rounds of revision. Themes elicited from sample interviewee 002 are provided in Appendix XX and XXI, with two versions to show a flavour of the revising process. At the same time, an English version is provided in Appendix XXII. This process will be further

described in the second stage of the interview data analysis (see section 3.7.6). Second, co-judging was considered an important step to increase the reliability and validity of my coding and theme elicitation, which will be described in the following section.

### **3.7.5 Co-judging**

Co-judging was done through two channels: two individual co-judgers and public scrutiny within the research community in the Centre for English Language Teacher Education.

I invited two of my colleagues to code my sample data independently: David (sample 2 in English, Appendix XXIII) and Anna (sample 3 in Chinese, translated into English, Appendix XXIV) due to two concerns. First, although my data were collected, transcribed, and analyzed in Chinese, I had to present the discussions in English. The validity of the translation would be enhanced if I could compare the findings in two different languages; second, Anna was given a different piece of data because she participated in our discussion on my sample 2 in the research circle. The comparison of the co-judges was recorded (see Appendix XXV and XXVI respectively) and discussed.

Co-judging with David and Anna yielded the following improvements: first, I was more aware of the issues of translation (esp. with David) because my coding was done in Chinese and it might cause misunderstanding if my translation was not appropriate; Second, I tried to bridge the gap between different codings. This experience enabled me to have confidence in my future codings.

As stated in section 3.7.1, for practical reasons, the questionnaire had to be designed before final categorization was done. Following the experience gathered from open-coding, theme elicitation and co-judging,



an initial questionnaire was designed, piloted and revised, as discussed in section 3.7.

### **3.7.6 Interview data analysis—phase II**

In parallel with the questionnaire design and piloting, I continued to analyse my interview data with Nvivo, which unfortunately had to be replaced with manual work due to technical failure.

#### **3.7.6.1 Experience of using Nvivo**

My experience of using Nvivo was full of excitement and disappointment. Initially I had some positive experiences with it. After co-judging with colleagues, I continued my coding with the rest of the data. During this time, I heard about the powerful functions of Nvivo, a program designed especially for qualitative researchers. I took a training course offered by IT services at the University of Warwick, bought the newest version, Nvivo 7.0, installed it in my laptop and started to manipulate data with it. I tried to familiarize myself with the tool, for example, how to import data, give nodes, export data etc. At the same time, I joined the QSR Nvivo discussion forum, which became a good channel for solving the problems which occurred during my experiences of using Nvivo. For example, I had quite specific questions regarding how to import diagrams into the project, which was answered by Nvivo designers through this online forum.

25 interview transcriptions were imported into Nvivo as one project (due to the limitation of project capacity, I had to ignore 2 interview transcriptions). By 25, I mean 25 document entries with both narrative-based and follow-up interviews treated as one complete entry. Although Nvivo provided hierarchical options at the stage of open coding, I treated my codes as equal levels at this stage and set uncertain codes in the categories of free nodes. At the same time, I took notes for my

consideration and possible solutions, which was helpful in the stage of comparing coding and making the final decisions.

Constant comparison was applied in the coding process. In fact, Nvivo provided all the information on previous codes that had been done. Therefore, when the researcher has to make a decision on whether to treat certain texts as an old code or a new code, he/she can always refer to the previous one with reference (context), which helps make a sound judgement. References for codes were automatically calculated into its coding summary report (see Appendix XXVII). In doing so, reliability and stability of coding was increased.

This process was continued until I finished coding all the data. To avoid the trouble caused by frequent changes of theme elicitation that would involve considerable operation of the software, I decided to do this before I used the software. Theme elicitation was done and I planned to design the questionnaire (see 3.7.4).

It was not until the questionnaire had been distributed (see section 3.8.3) that I used Nvivo to group the previous codes into various categories. However, I lost the data due to a computer crash in Nov. 2006. I had thought that I could trace the data since the coded data had been saved in my memory stick as a backup. For some reason I could not open the copy I had saved and even the QSR online forum was helpless in my case. I had to make a decision as to whether to recode the data using Nvivo, following my coding summaries that had been printed out for the convenience of manual theme elicitation or to give up on Nvivo. I finally chose the latter since I could not afford any more problems with it if I was going to finish my PhD on time. From Jan. 2007 to Mar. 2007, I started to code the data manually, based on my initial open-coding summaries.



The data analysis procedure consists of three parts: the second phase of interview data analysis, the questionnaire data analysis, and the balance of the two data sets. The qualitative data was analysed in three steps: first, to elicit categories by a method informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1968); second, to identify answers to my research questions by using a conceptual framework adapted from the relevant literature; and third, to use case studies with a focus on four specific cases. For the quantitative data, SPSS was applied to generate results. As the first step of the qualitative data analysis was described in section 3.4, the following sections present the rest of the data analysis procedure.

### **3.7.6.2 Manual categorization**

According to Richards (2003) and Punch (2005), categorization is a later stage that comes after open-coding. As stated in section 3.7.3, my phase I interview data analysis had already finished the open-coding of the data. The theme elicitation that was done (see section 3.7.4) also contributed to my decisions on categorization. I used constant comparison techniques as informed by Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) to elicit hierarchical layers of categories. The process was continued until 'theoretical saturation' was reached (*ibid.*). Personally, I felt it was a painful and time-consuming process, which involved repetitive comparison and lasted from Jun. 2006 to Mar. 2007.

During this process, I formed a consistent system of categorization: firstly, I focused on the first individual piece of data and tried to form its own categories (see Appendix XXVIII). This process was a repetitive one involving constant comparison, reflective thinking, and questioning. For example, the second time of categorization (see Appendix XXIX) slightly differed from the first time in that details of subcategories were provided. Then I put it aside and concentrated on forming categories for the second

piece of data. This was followed by a comparison with the first categories (See Appendix XXX). I had to make decisions on whether the categories overlapped, or needed to be adjusted. In fact, the process of revising the categories lasted until the last piece of data., In identifying each level of the umbrella categories, I relied on suggestions given by Richards (2003: 276), that is to constantly decide whether categories are 'analytically useful, conceptually coherent, empirically relevant, and practically applicable' (ibid.).

As a result, the first version of the categories (see Appendix XXXI) was produced and it took me two more revisions to finalize my categories. First, I discussed it with Richards, who is an expert in qualitative research. He examined my categories and gave me very helpful suggestions. I thus revised it and worked out a second version of the categories (see Appendix XXXII). Second, I brought the improved categories to my supervisors for discussion. They accepted my major categories while raising quite a few questions regarding my subcategories, for example, whether 'Chinese learning mottos' should be put into the 'conceptions' category or the 'influences' category. Based on their comments, I re-examined my subcategories and completed my final categorization. The core categories will be illustrated in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

### **3.8 Questionnaire data collection**

As stated in the previous section, a questionnaire survey was considered an important supplement to support my findings from the qualitative interviews and aimed to examine to what extent interviewees' opinions were shared or disagreed with by a larger population. It was carried out between Jun. 2006 and Jul. 2006, with 150 questionnaires collected from the three universities. Overall, the questionnaire data collection process



consisted of questionnaire design, pilot questionnaire study, and the main questionnaire distribution.

### **3.8.1 Questionnaire design**

The purpose of the questionnaire was to examine what opinions were held and to what extent, opinions expressed by interviewees were shared by other Chinese learners. Ideally, the questionnaire was to be designed after the full completion of my interview data analysis. However, in order to make sure that the questionnaire was distributed to a similar population as my interviewees, I had to collect questionnaire data before the new academic year, more specifically before the summer vacation. This meant that my questionnaire design was based on my initial theme elicitations (see section 3.9.4). Due to the concern about commonality as well as possible diversity, the questionnaire allowed spaces for open answers in certain question items. Overall, how questionnaire items corresponded with interview themes is illustrated in Appendix XI.

The questionnaire is provided in Appendix XII. Section one was designed for background information and was composed of two parts in mixed order. Part one was composed of items I used in the interview information form, for example, gender, hometown, major, numbers of years of English language learning, previous education, national entrance score, entrance score in Beijing College Student English Entrance Exam, their self-evaluation and other-evaluation of their English level. Part two reflected the two categories: conceptions and influences that had emerged from the interview data. For beliefs categories, items about the purpose of English language learning, the nature of English language learning, and difficulties in English language learning were designed. For influences, factors affecting their English language learning, geographical location of previous education, decisions on choices of university and

attitude towards university were put into corresponding items. Section two involved 15 five-point-Likert scale items and focused on two categories informed by the interview data: reported behaviours and influences. Participants were asked about five major actions described by interviewees: searching for learning materials, trying out learning strategies, making decisions, evaluation and reflection, and motivating themselves. At the same time they were asked about parents' expectations of their general school learning and English learning, since these appeared to be influential in learners' attitude towards English language in the interviews. Section three aimed to explore the participants' responses to concepts of 'self-dependent' as used by most interviewees. In this section, definitions given by interviewees were put into multiple choices. There was one open choice for participants to provide possible different answers. In addition, participants were asked to select among answers provided by interviewees regarding the necessary conditions for self-directed learning, factors affecting self-direction, learners' roles, teachers' roles, and plans for future English language learning. Since interviewees often used learning mottos to support their beliefs in successful language learning, a space was also given for participants to provide their learning mottos.

In general, the questionnaire was based on the major themes extracted from the interview data analysis (see section 3.9.4). The coding categories were incorporated into the three sections. It aimed to further examine the qualitative data findings, but also expected new information to emerge.

To enhance validity, the questionnaire was translated into English for supervisors' comments. This led to further revision before the pilot study.



### **3.8.2 Pilot questionnaire**

Prior to the questionnaire piloting, I discussed my questionnaire design with my supervisors, who helped offer insights in my improvement of the questionnaire design in the following aspects:

#### **To allow choices for sensitive items**

For question 3 it was suggested that one more choice, 'I don't want to say' be added since participants might not want to tell.

#### **To remove unnecessary information**

I moved question 6 to question 31 and made a corresponding change from a multiple choice to a five-point-Likert scale question. This was because it is difficult for participants to decide their personality among four choices. The interview categories suggest that only one of the personality types correlated strongly with learner actions.

#### **To break down information units to reduce ambiguity**

I broke question 8 into three questions with individual themes.

#### **To add information to increase clarity**

This happened with questions 11, 13, 14, and 17. For Q11, I changed choice b 'me and parents' to 'me but with parents' advice' and choice c 'me and the teacher' to 'me but with teachers' advice'. For Q13 and Q14, I bracketed each choice with a specific range of scores for clarification purposes. For Q17, I put 'including 30 minutes' after choice a thus distinguishing choices a and b.

### **To add information that was missed out**

Themes such as motivation (Q21, Q42), teacher influence (Q20), and review (Q37) were missed out in my questionnaire design, therefore they were added.

### **To frame questions in order to fit into the analysis software**

For Q20, Q23, and Q25, my original requirement was to find the most important three choices and rank them. It was suggested that this would cause trouble in using SPSS to analyse the questionnaires. I also reflected that my real purpose in this question was to identify choices rather than to specify which choice was the most significant. Therefore, the revised requirement ignored ranking.

### **To improve questions and make them user friendly**

Rather than asking the participants to provide answers without any clues, Q44 and Q45, follow most of the other items by providing some findings from the interview data and at the same time leaving space for open answers.

The revised questionnaire is provided in Appendix XIII.

For practical reasons, I piloted the questionnaire among ten Masters level students at the University of Warwick. It was done for two main purposes: to check any ambiguity or confusions, and to ascertain time duration for the completion of the questionnaire. Each participant was asked to give feedback about his or her answering of the questionnaire. The pilot study brought up two changes:



1. In Q4 I asked participants to provide their broad major categorization, i.e. Arts or Science or Engineering, in addition to their major since I might group students' majors in the wrong categories.

2. In Q45 I asked participants to select one term among the choices given by the interview participants to summarize the definition of 'self-dependent' in Q44. The reason for this was to explore whether participants had terminology such as 'autonomy' in their conceptions.

The questionnaire was revised and finally completed based on these concerns (see English version Appendix XIV, Chinese version Appendix XV).

### **3.8.3 Questionnaire Distribution**

The formal questionnaire distribution was carried out with my friends' help in the three universities. I emailed my friends with the questionnaire attachment. In the email, I outlined the criteria for participants, gave the time duration for completion of the questionnaire, and advised them to record any problems in questionnaire distribution. Final preparation for questionnaire distribution was made through several rounds of email exchanges. This included confirmation of receiving the questionnaire and the capability to print it out.

The participants were those freshmen in the three universities who did not attend the interviews, and represented differences in gender, major and English level. The number of participants was decided at 150 from each university since this stood for 10% of the total recruitment number in each case.

The questionnaire survey was done before the summer vacation as planned. A family member helped fetch the questionnaire collected by my

friends and previous colleagues and another friend helped bring them to the UK.

### **3.9 Quantitative data analysis**

As stated in section 3.8, the questionnaire was designed for the purposes of validating interview data findings and at the same time allowing different answers to them. The data (N=450) were processed in SPSS. Questions with open items (Q21, 23, 24, 27, 46, 47, 51, and 52) were word-processed and number-coded during data entry (see Appendix XXXIII for example). It is worth mentioning that apart from significant responses to Q51, answers to other questions were nominal. For example, the majority of the respondents preferred to choose among given items and gave little detail in responses to the open-ended items. This made me reconsider how I could best use the two data sets.

### **3.10 Balance of two data sets**

As stated in previous sections, the present study was primarily based on a qualitative approach. The quantitative approach was to further examine the qualitative data findings and at the same time to aim at gathering more information through open-ended question items. Through careful analysis of both data sets, I found that whereas the qualitative data provided a large amount of rich information, the quantitative data did not provide substantial information on most open-ended items except for Q No..51. After discussion with both supervisors, I decided to put the quantitative data findings in a summary (see Appendix XXXIV) as a reference, and focus primarily on reporting my qualitative data findings. The quantitative data only play a minor role in discussion of data findings, which will be further discussed in section 3.15. Concrete reasons are further explained as follows:



First, all my research questions can be answered with qualitative data. The summary report of the quantitative data was still a valid reference to examine to what extent the interview findings were supported or not by the results.

Second, all relevant quantitative data will be presented in the findings and discussion chapters (chapters 4, 5, and 6) in connection with the qualitative data presentation

Concrete decisions on data presentation are further discussed in section 3.15.

### **3.11 Ethical issues**

Ethical issues are a constituent part of any social research that involves people (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Richards, 2003; Punch, 2005). Miles and Huberman (1994: 290) outline eleven aspects of issues that are worth researchers' close attention: worthiness of the project; competence boundaries; informed consent; benefits, costs, reciprocity; harm and risk; honesty and trust; privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity; intervention and advocacy; research integrity and quality; ownership of data and conclusions, and; use and misuse of results. Richards (2003: 140) highlights five issues: consent; honesty; privacy; ownership, and; harm. Punch (2005: 276) recasts the two main literature sources for consideration of ethical issues: checklists publicized by a body of American social science organizations such as the American Educational Research Association, 1992 (cited by Punch, 2005) and commentaries addressed by various researchers both in and beyond social science research. All of these informed my consideration of ethical issues in my data collection especially in the following three aspects.

## **Consent**

As my friends and former colleague were willing to help with my data collection, any consent issue was mainly about my qualitative data collection involving participants and the university. To obtain permission from the participants, I twice checked the possibility. First, before my friends and former colleague looked for appropriate research participants for me, I emphasised the importance of the participants' willingness to participate and so they passed this research information to their students in class and checked their willingness for me. Second, during my initial contact with the participants, I double-checked their availability for the interviews. In the real interviews, the use of recorders and the taking of notes were also agreed by the interviewees before the actual action. To obtain permission from the university for using the rooms, I contacted the people in charge, introduced myself and my research, and asked for their support in providing the room.

## **Honesty**

As indicated by Richards (2003), honest representation is a necessary condition for informed consent; however, researchers should decide to what extent information can be represented since they cannot do it all. My decision was that I honestly informed all the parties involved, such as my friends, former colleague, and the Universities, as well as the participants in my research and myself. This was displayed not only in my contact with friends, my former colleague, and the Universities, but also in my letters to the interviewees and the questionnaire participants. However, I was also cautious to keep to a limited description of my research to avoid any unfavourable influences on my research. For example, I did not tell my friends, my former colleague, and the interviewees about my specific research questions and my specific research purpose for the data



collection since I was afraid that such information would affect the participants' responses in the interviews or in the questionnaire survey.

### **Privacy and confidentiality**

There are two layers of privacy that were considered in my research: one was to do with the Universities, and the other was about the participants. First, even though I was permitted to use rooms provided by the Universities, I was aware that I should not use other facilities such as telephones, or touch files stored in the office etc. Second, my letter to the participants clearly stated that their information was only to be used for research purposes and that their personal information would be kept strictly confidential. In addition, they were welcome to inquire about my research findings if they wished.

### **3.12 Validity and reliability**

Social scientists are becoming increasingly aware of the impossibility of absolute validity and reliability in any kind of measurement (Punch, 2005). This is because social reality is recognized as 'constructed' and identities of self as 'fluid' (Guba and Lincoln, 2006: 205), which suggests that there is unlikely to be a single method or collection of methods that leads to 'ultimate knowledge' (ibid.). However, validity and reliability are always a researcher's desired goal (Kirk and Miller, 1986) and an essential strategy taken by researchers is to account for them in order to enhance research objectivity (Punch, 2005; Guba and Lincoln, 2006).

Concerns about validity and reliability are factually displayed all through the current research, from the research design to the data analysis. First, for the two main methods employed in the current research, in section 3.2 on research design, I discussed my reasons for the choice of research methods. In section 3.6 and 3.8 on interview and questionnaire data

collection, I documented how pilot studies informed my main studies. Second, for data analysis, Lincoln and Guba (1985: 289) provide three essential criteria to achieve reliability and validity. First, credibility, which suggests evidence of sufficient exposure to the research context and adequate data collection; Second, transferability, which suggests elaborate descriptions and interpretations that enable the research to be relevant to other situations; Third, dependability and conformability, which suggest the provision of detailed documentation of the research design, data analysis procedure etc. Likewise, Richards (2003: 287) proposes three key validity checks: first, member validation, that is to seek the views of members on the accuracy of the data gathered, descriptions, or even interpretations; constant comparison, to keep comparing codings with other codings and classifications, looking for new relationships, properties, etc.; third, negative evidence, to seek out negative evidence/cases and assess their relevance to interpretations. In section 3.7.1 qualitative data analysis—phase I, records of respondents' confirmation of transcription, co-judging, and consultation with supervisors of categories, are examples of efforts to increase the validity and reliability.

Such processes continue to the stage of writing about the data, which is presented across chapters 4, 5, and 6 on the findings and discussions.

### **3.13 My role in the research**

As indicated by Richards (2003), qualitative research recognizes the historical and contextual factors of the research and the researcher. In other words, my experience, my identity and my beliefs 'cannot be divorced from the present research' (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006: 37) and my role in the research is situation specific. This has to be presented objectively in order to offer a clearer picture of the overall research. In my previous sections, I have already described my experiences as a Chinese



English language learner and English language teacher, the research context, and the research design. Here I shall discuss my philosophical concern about truth, unavoidable subjectivity, and my efforts to enhance objectivity in the research.

### **Philosophical concern about truth**

Like most social science researchers, I take the view that there is a general truth that is beyond 'the flawed human apprehension of it' (Guba and Lincoln, 2006: 203). I therefore take the stance of the constructive paradigm which aims to discover multiple realities perceived by people in relation to their contexts. Moreover, as argued by Ellis and Bochner (1996, cited by Guba and Lincoln, 2006: 203), 'truth as partial, identity as fluid, language as an unclear referent system, and method and criteria as potentially coercive', I hold what I revealed and reported from data to be dynamic, which possibly changes in a different context.

However, since my role in the research is not to claim a general truth discovered from data but to add knowledge to our understanding of language learners' perspectives, my research should be valued as a type of reality and truth in a certain historical time and place.

### **Admission of subjectivity**

My research cannot avoid subjectivity in my interaction with interviewees in the qualitative data collection. As pointed out by Bogdan and Biklen (2006: 39), 'researchers can never eliminate all of their own effects on subjects or obtain a perfect correspondence between what they wish to study—the "natural" setting—and what they actually study—a setting with a researcher present'. On the one hand, from the interviewees' point of view, their narration to me possibly differs from that made to someone else because of the uniqueness of my identity (Riessman, 1993). Their

perception of our social categories such as 'age, gender, class and race' is one of the concerns in their responses (Miller and Glassner, 1997: 101). On the other hand, as pointed out by Wengraf (2001), a researcher cannot be absolutely neutral. My own background unavoidably provides me with certain attitudes or beliefs that have possibly influenced my judgement in the process of doing the research.

### **Effort to enhance objectivity**

,Subjectivity in research can, however, be minimized by 'a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2006:10) and by rigour and systematic inquiry (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006). In the present study, subjectivity is compensated for by my effort to adopt multiple methods in data collection, data analysis, and the documentation of my own constant reflection. Since methods of data collection and data analysis were presented in detail in the previous sections, here I would like to emphasise my ways of enhancing research objectivity in the data interpretation.

First, each stage of data interpretation is carefully documented and presented. This consists of my coding, co-judging with colleagues, and consultation with other researchers and supervisors. In my data interpretation, my previous experience of being a Chinese English language learner and an English language teacher potentially influenced my insider's perspective. However, careful documentation of the process ensures readers an objective picture and leaves my interpretation open for challenge. Second, with an engagement in the qualitative research, I recognize that 'to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures' produces valid and qualified research (Berg, 2004: 7). Therefore, I endeavour to take the researcher's role and the

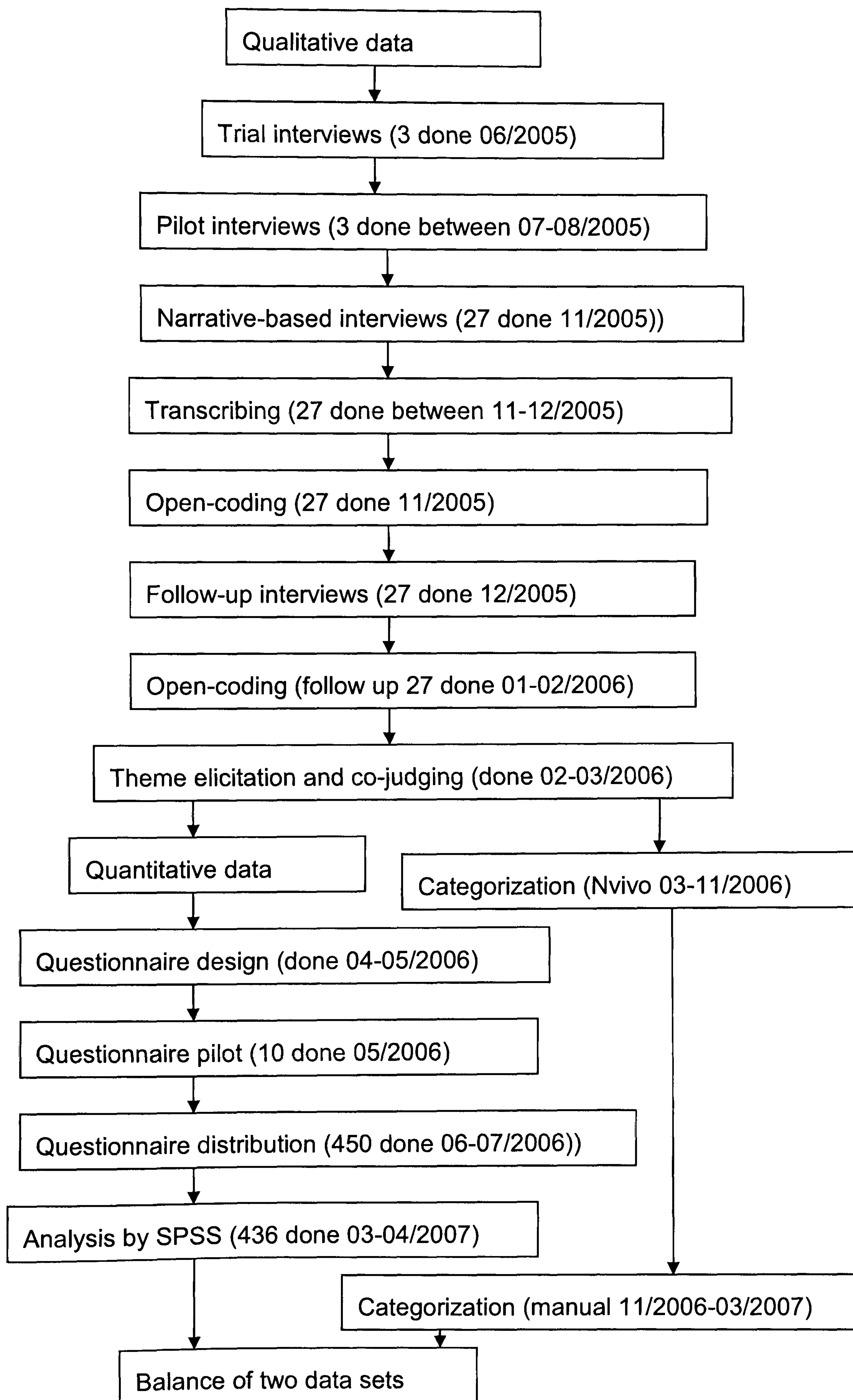


responsibility to be as objective as possible by taking research notes on critical stages of my research.

### **3.14 Summary**

In this chapter, I have introduced my research methodology in the present research. In order to answer my research questions regarding Chinese learners' conceptions about English language learning, possible relevance to concepts of learner autonomy, and possible influences on their conceptions, the overall research adopted qualitative interviews as the main research method, which was supplemented by the quantitative questionnaire survey to validate the findings. In order to carry out the questionnaire survey, qualitative data analysis was interwoven with the questionnaire design. After the completion of the quantitative data analysis Phase II qualitative data analysis was undertaken with continuous efforts on categorization. This was followed by the questionnaire data analysis using SPSS. Afterwards, a decision was made on the balance of presenting two data sets, taking into consideration the advantages and disadvantages. Triangulation was achieved in various stage of the data analysis, with participants, colleagues, supervisors, and the researcher's own perspectives.

Research methodology in the present study is outlined in the following diagram





### **3.15 Decisions on data presentation**

As stated in section 3.7.1, data analysis was informed by grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 2000) and involved open-coding, and the development of themes and categorization (Esterberg, 2002). The eventual three core categories: students' conceptions of English language learning, students' reported behaviours of English language learning and influences on students' conceptions and/or reported behaviours of English language learning, were finally established through constant comparison, questioning and discussions with supervisors. These together with various layers of sub-categories are diagrammed and provided in the following chapters (4, 5, and 6) respectively. However, this by no means suggests that the data analysis was straightforward and completed in one operation. On the contrary, data analysis is an ongoing process that requires the researcher to make constant decisions on how to present his/her interpretations of the data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). In the case of the present study, I had to decide: first, the order of my findings chapters; second, the significance of both qualitative and quantitative data; and third, how I would present them.

With regard to the first question, I chose to present students' reported behaviours first, then students' conceptions and finally influences on students' conceptions and/or reported behaviours for the following concerns: first, students' reported behaviours were the most apparent from the data and they often naturally came out of students' accounts of their English language learning experiences. Second, although students' conceptions sometimes were also overtly uttered, occasionally they needed the researcher to carefully examine and scrutinize. Therefore, this core category came after the students' reported behaviours. It was further justified by the need to put the influences category at the end since the

influences were not exclusively on the students' reported behaviours but also on the students' conceptions.

As for the second question, I chose qualitative data as my major data source and quantitative data as a necessary complement. The decision was made for two reasons. On the one hand, qualitative interviews were my major research method, so interview data naturally became my main data set. On the other hand, quantitative data was not absolutely consistent with my final categories, formed through continuous efforts of categorization. As stated in section 3.8.1, for practical reasons, the questionnaire was designed with themes elicited from the interview data (see Appendix XIII). Therefore, I felt it was appropriate that questionnaire data only came into the discussion whenever they fit the theme of discussion. However, as stated in section 3.10, questionnaire findings are summarized in Appendix XXXIV., Reasons for why certain question items were not used in data discussions are provided in Appendix XXXV.

Regarding the third question, I needed to identify the most salient theme of the data. On repeatedly reading and thinking about my categories, I felt the richest data came from students' accounts of their English language learning at schools, including middle school and high school.

The most salient theme was students' two types of criteria for language learning success: academic achievement and communicative language use, with the former emphasising prescribed knowledge-based exams and the latter emphasising communicative ability. Such a distinction was embedded in each core category of the interview data. Interviewees not only articulated their learning behaviours for different purposes of language learning and different conceptions of language learning success, but also suggested that such differences were brought about by various



sources of influences. This will be revisited in each of the findings and discussion chapters (4, 5, and 6), with reference to the core categories.

With the above concerns, the presentation of the data findings will focus on the students' narration of their English language learning at secondary school, and their accounts with regard to primary and tertiary level will be discussed and compared when necessary. Since the distinction between academic success and communicative competence gave an overarching view on students' reported behaviours, conceptions and various influences, the following chapters (4, 5, and 6) are organized in accordance with such a distinction.

# **CHAPTER 4 STUDENTS' REPORTED BEHAVIOURS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

## **4.1 Introduction**

The present chapter focuses on one core category; students' reported language learning behaviours (see Figure 4-1). The final hierarchical order of the categories was formed after constant comparison, questioning, and discussion with supervisors. The category was composed of two main sub-categories: 'use learning methods' and 'learning organization', with the former describing students' concrete learning behaviours for achieving certain learning tasks and the latter describing how students organized the learning process. Given that students' reported behaviours were much more complex than the identified further sub-categories, sometimes a difficult decision had to be made. For example, although 'revision' also describes learning organization, it was put under 'use learning methods' because students' accounts of revision were mainly about how it was treated as a method to achieve certain aspects of academic success (see section 4.2.4). Therefore, it was put in its current position.

As stated in chapter 3, the three core categories were themed by a major distinction between academic success and communicative language use, which was identified through careful reading and comparing of the data and constantly challenging the thoughts, and will be discussed in detail in each finding and discussion chapter (4, 5, and 6). Taking the current core category (see Figure 4-1), students' reported language learning behaviours for example, students' reported methods use was apparently distinguished by methods for academic success such as memorization (rote), doing exercises, revision (see section 4.2) and methods for



communicative language use such as memorization (meaningful memorization), enhancing language sense<sup>1</sup>, maximizing exposure to authentic communicative data, and intentional language use (see section 4.3). Likewise, even though students' reported learning organization seemed to apply to both learning purposes, there were some differences in students' orientations of behaviours, for example, searching for materials and evaluation, both of which occupied a substantial body of data. Moreover, managing motivation seemed to be closely associated with academic success but not communicative language use.

It is worth mentioning that such a distinction, as to be made in data presentation, did not necessarily suggest that students were rigidly put into different categories. In fact, as shown in Figure 4-1, students' reported behaviours were actually more complex and possibly relevant to both aspects. Therefore, the present chapter is organized using the major distinction between reported behaviours for academic success (see section 4.2) and for communicative language use (see section 4.3), which is followed by the complexity of students' reported behaviours (see section 4.4).

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<sup>1</sup> It is a literal translation from students' accounts. By language sense, students meant the feeling of speaking the language automatically without thinking about grammar rules or answering certain exam questions without thinking too analytically.

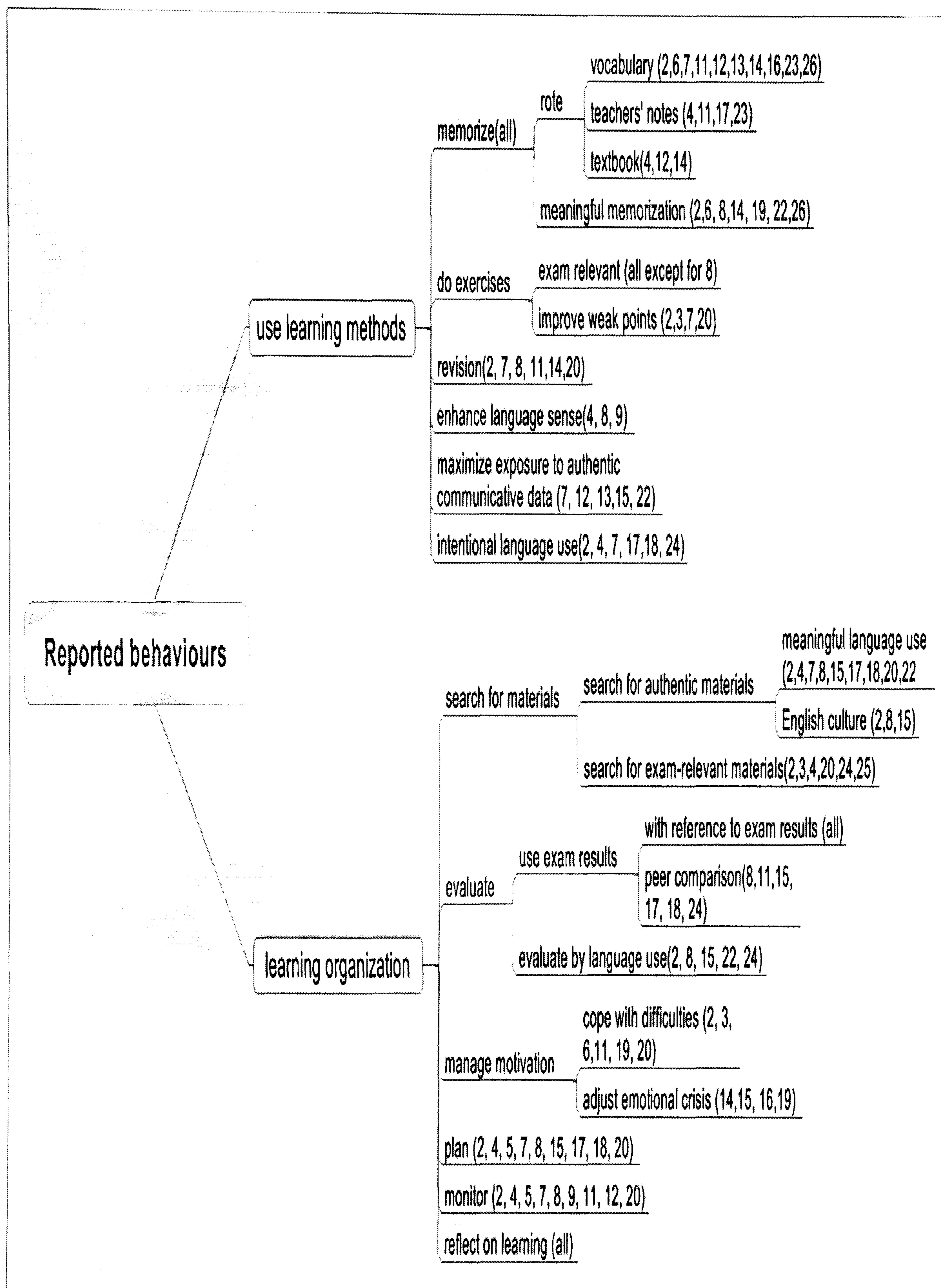


Figure 4-1 students' reported language learning behaviours (Interviewee No. is presented in brackets)



## 4.2 Reported language learning behaviours for academic achievement

As discussed in the above section, students' reported behaviours for academic success were found in both the subcategories 'use learning methods' and 'learning organization' (see Figure 4-1). For example, memorize (rote), do exercises, review, evaluate with reference to exams, and manage motivation (see Table 4-1) were all directly linked with the purpose of academic success. Academic success is mainly assessed by various school exams that are in turn much shaped by the National Entrance Exam, and students' narration of their language learning behaviours was centred on various aspects of how to obtain high exam results. It is noteworthy that since students' reports of searching for exam-relevant materials were closely associated with 'do exercises', data presentation therefore did not consider this as a separate heading.

Reported behaviours of academic success	Interviewees
Evaluation by exams	All
Doing exercises	All except for 8
Rote learning and its development	2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 23, 26
Revision	2, 7, 8, 11, 14, 20
Managing motivation	2, 6, 14, 15, 16, 20

Table 4-1 Students' reported behaviours for academic success

### 4.2.1 Evaluation by exam results

As indicated in the above table, evaluation by exam results received a unanimous report from all the interviewees. Possibly students were quite concerned about their academic success. Accordingly, using exam results to evaluate their learning behaviours appeared to be a recurrent reported behaviour in these interviewees' accounts. Apart from common evaluation

by exam results, they also reported constant peer comparison based on exam results.

Since school exams normally took on the same format as the National Entrance Exam whose maximum score was 150, interviewees often compared their own scores with 150 and judged their language-learning outcomes on this basis. For example,

In the past, I only cared about exam results. When I learned like this (reading *Bookworm*), my exam results improved even without doing exercises. I generally got 130 out of 150 on exam papers (2/92-94; Appendix XXXVI q1<sup>2</sup>)

With reference to 150, a score over 130 out of 150 was commonly thought of as a good one by these interviewees. This was proved by interviewee 14 (77) and 25 (35) who both stated that scores beyond 130 were satisfactory. Such a notion was made evident by a counter example.

My exam score was always between 108 and 110 out of 150, regardless of the exam papers. My teacher once asked me why I could not improve it. But several times, it was still like that. (21/110-112; q2)

Besides directly referring to exam scores, some interviewees also reported using school ranking; either by Class or Grade, to evaluate their learning outcome. This perhaps was due to the common practice of ranking students according to exam scores in Chinese high schools, especially in the final year. In China, it is quite common for schools to rank students for two major concerns: one is that the school wants to know the possible graduation rate to different levels of Universities and so make plans to intervene in students' learning; the other is that it is thought to

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<sup>2</sup> 2/93-94: 2, refers to interviewee 002; 93-94 refers to the line of the transcription; q1, refers to quote No.1 in Appendix XXXVI. Since all quotes were provided in the same Appendix (XXXVI), Appendix No. will not be mentioned afterwards.



produce a motivating atmosphere for students to so that they make more learning effort. Naturally, this appeared to be a way for interviewees to evaluate their own learning in their respective learning community.

However, a close examination of the data revealed an interesting phenomenon. It seemed that peer comparison was only articulated by interviewees who identified themselves with successful learners. For example,

My English belongs to the top among my classmates (5/185; q3)

I was always the best one in our school in any exams (8/71; q4)

I always was the No.1 in the class. Our teacher had another advanced class in our Grade. Even compared with them, I was among the top three (16/167-168; q5)

In middle school, I was the best in my class. If occasionally I became the second, it was always our subject representative who surpassed me (25/7-8; q6)

As can be seen from the citations, interviewees were not only clear about their positions in the class (e.g. 5 and 25) or grade (e.g. 8, 16) but also suggested that whether they were able to keep the position became an important motivation for learning (see section 4.2.5).

#### **4.2.2 Doing exercises**

Doing exercises was found to be another popular learning behaviour with interviewees (see Table 4-1) since it was considered to be a useful means to improve exam performance. In the first place, doing exercises was a common practice especially in the students' final year before leaving school. For example,

In grade three, I don't have to say, people simply learn for exams. Following the teachers, doing exam exercises is necessary. (4/65-66; q7)

By 'I don't have to say'; interviewee 4 implied that doing exercises was universal among students like him. This was evidenced by interviewee 20 who used the metaphor 'exercise sea' to describe the quantity of exercises they were doing:

All of us experienced the 'exercise sea' strategy. The teacher said we need to be immersed in doing exercises. I really did a lot and did it quickly. (20/70-71; q8)

Students' exercises were closely tied up with the National Entrance Exam syllabus. In other words, their choices of exercises were subjected to the weighting of the scores. As summarized by interviewee 20,

In the National Entrance Exam, vocabulary and grammar counts 30%, cloze test 15%, reading comprehension 40% [...] (20/13-14; q9)

Since reading comprehension constituted the most important part of the exam score, it often became the major focus of students' exercises. For example,

Every day is doing exercise [...] feeling English learning is to train exam skills, like reading comprehension skill [...] because of such skills obtained by doing exercises, I got a fairly good score (13/15-17; q10)

Interviewee 13 was not the only person who thought reading comprehension was critical in her exam performance. For interviewee 2,

[...] reading comprehension got quite a high ration of the marks in exams and I was not so strong in this aspect, so I did many exercises in this aspect [...] before the National Entrance Exam, I did more than 100 set [...] my score in reading comprehension increased rapidly, initially 32, then 34, 38 and sometimes full score (127-128;133; 143-144; q11)

Like interviewee 13, interviewee 2 engaged in large quantity of focused exercises on reading comprehension, which led to better exam results.



It seemed that students borrowed the method of learning other subjects and applied it to English language learning. The common practice for learning other subjects such as Maths and Physics was to do a large quantity of exercises in order to be exposed to various types of questions. In view of these interviewees' reports, it seemed that they transferred such a learning method to English language learning, in particular for exam purposes.

### **4.2.3 Rote learning and its development**

Rote learning was also a behaviour quite frequently reported by interviewees in the present study (see Table 4-1). As pointed out by interviewee 14, '[...] rote learning, English is totally a burden' (58-59; q12). Likewise, interviewee 2 reported his difficulty in memorizing vocabulary in this way:

English learning started from alphabet to words. At that time, the scariest thing was to memorize words [...] I could not remember them. For example, one word took many repetitions thus could be remembered (2/9-11; q13)

Whereas many of them seemed not to like this way of learning English, they spent a large proportion of their time engaging in this type of activity. For example, interviewee 6 used repetitive word-copying to memorize vocabulary.

At that time we memorized vocabulary by copying it. It was said copying it once was equal to saying it 10 times by rote. (6/125; q14)

Obviously, he also found that rote learning was difficult and therefore he resorted to copying vocabulary--a method that was thought to be more effective than pure rote. By nature, copying is only another format of rote learning since both emphasise a large quantity of repetition. However, word-copying was thought to be helpful in avoiding the low-efficiency of rote due to its kinetic involvement.

They did not all seem to be satisfied with this way of learning vocabulary and attempted to find new ways of memorizing. For example, interviewee 4 searched book shops for references on improving memorization skills and reported the following:

Incidentally, I found a book about memorizing vocabulary through reciting texts. It was not about memorizing word lists. In fact, our high school teacher asked us to memorize the dictionary. Each time when I forgot I had to come back for it, it was horrible. But this book integrated CET-4 and CET-6 vocabulary, but I did not have time, so I tried to read fluently in order to remember the words (4/57-62; q15)

The particular book he found made compulsory vocabulary such as required by CET-4 into meaningful texts for memorization. He found such a way was useful even by reading if he could not afford the time to recite. This feeling was shared by interviewee 26 who said:

I memorized words and tried to memorize texts. By doing so, vocabulary and grammar would not be a problem. It was difficult to memorize the text but I instead read it aloud at least 30 times (26/122-123; q16)

Compared with rote learning vocabulary in isolation, text reciting seemed to be more favourable since the overall meaning of the text helped sustain the memory of the vocabulary. However, it also involved more time investment. As a compromise, interviewees 4 and 26 chose text reading as an attempt to use understanding to deepen rote learning, which is in accord with Marton's et al. (1996) notion of understanding helping memorization.

In appearance, it was still rote learning that was prevailing among students. However, as pointed by Marton et al. (1996) and Jin and Cortazzi (2006), deep learning can take place under this surface approach.



## 4.2.4 Revision

Revision was reported by 6 interviewees (see Table 4-1) as an activity to consolidate what had been learned from two perspectives. First, it was considered as an effective way to cope with exams. According to interviewee 7,

The final year of high school is completely about revision. All grammar rules were taught in the previous two years [...] through revision of them we prepare exams (7/44-45; q17)

Agreeing that revision was necessary for preparing oneself for exams, interviewee 20 felt it was impractical to review all things learned. Rather, he tended to do selective revision. For example,

Perhaps this was not the best method, but it was the most practical one. I did not care how many mistakes I had made in exams. I took down all of them. In the past, I reviewed them every two days and now every week. I would review them several times until I could remember them. In such a way, I would not make the same mistakes in the exams. Top marks were thus obtained. (20/75-77; q18)

In a way, exams were not predictable and no one knew the exact quantity of exercises that could qualify students as successful examinees. Nevertheless, for interviewee 20, his preparation of a 'mistake notebook' was a good way to avoid similar mistakes in future exams. Revision of 'mistakes' rather than the whole exercise was more to the point and time-saving.

Questionnaire data (Q No..37, Appendix XXXIV) was consonant with these findings, for example, only 24.4% of the total respondents disagreed that they did revision before exams.

Second, interviewees were aware of the human memory patterns and took revision as a necessary step to strengthen memory of learned

vocabulary. Interviewees 7 and 8 described their various ways of reviewing vocabulary as the following:

I would memorize 20 words a day, then at the end of the week, I would review the words I had memorized during this week [...] At the end of the month, I would spend some time reviewing words [...] gradually, I moved on from the first part that had already been stored in my memory [...] (7/95-97; q19)

Interviewee 7 seemed to represent standard revision according to the pattern of the memory curve. She regularly reviewed words that had been memorized in groups, following a gradual sequence on a weekly then a monthly basis.

This was shared by interviewee 8 who not only reviewed vocabulary items on a regular basis but also summarized them at a certain stage of learning.

I always review things I have learned. For example, I summarized all the vocabulary and phrases in middle school following an alphabetical order and book series. (8/68-69; q20)

Although interviewee 8 did not give details of what she often did in her revision, she seemed to be particularly proud of her summarization at the end of a school term, which was systematically organized according to alphabetical order and textbook levels.

Revision seems to be an important element for Chinese learners' perceptions of successful language learning as argued by some researchers (e.g. Rao, 2006; Wang, 2001; Hu, 2002). However, as articulated by interviewee 7, the reasons for these interviewees to use such a method was more to do with knowledge consolidation for exam purposes than what the Confucian doctrine entails as argued by Wang



(2001) and Hu (2002) or the 'traditional' way of deepening the understanding of what has been learned (Rao, 2006: 504).

#### **4.2.5 Managing motivation**

As presented in the above sections, interviewees' reported learning activities involved heavy repetition and did not always lead to successful exam results. Quite a few interviewees (see Table 4-1) were thus bothered by learning bewilderment and had to adjust their negative attitudes towards English language learning and motivate themselves.

It was very difficult learning like that. So many sentences to be analysed and it was an endless task [...] My English level was going done[...] I felt quite depressed. When I saw a sentence that I once knew, I could not remember. It was boring, purely depending on memorization. At that time, the workload in high school was much more than in middle school. There was too much to be memorized. I could not remember after reading it for several times Then I lost confidence. (2/56-61; q21)

Although memorization once brought interviewee 2 a certain level of good exam results, it stopped working when the demands on memorization increased in high School. As a result, his confidence was affected and he had to cope with this emotional crisis.

Likewise, interviewee 6 felt using memorization in English language learning was only acceptable in limited ways: small numbers of vocabulary items or with the teachers' regular monitoring. He said:

There were many difficulties. For example, memorizing vocabulary, in middle school, normally it was mechanical memorization. We followed teachers' instruction, copying words every day. In high school, we had more words but the teacher taught slowly and we had dictations, so I could manage to remember. In college, these things were gone, and I had to depend on myself for everything (6/51-54; q22)

Rote learning vocabulary in itself challenged the students' capacity for memorization, and tedious mechanical repetition could hardly be sustained without external reinforcement.

In such cases, interviewees often resorted to the importance of English exams and thus motivated themselves to continue with such ways of learning. For example,

150 (total score of the English exam) was a high ration of marks in the compulsory test subjects (National Entrance Exam) [...] so I felt I must learn it well. Otherwise, I could not go to a good university (14/130-131; q23)

For interviewee 14, continuing the unfavourable ways of learning English was often because of the absence of other choices. To often remind himself of the potential reward (e.g. going to a good university) thus helped maintain his motivation to learn English in these ways.

Alternatively, interviewee 16 reported his way to cope with his affective resistance by temporarily distracting himself from exams.

What I often did was to chat with our English teacher and try to get back the right state for learning. We did not chat about exams but other things irrelevant to exams, for example, English people's way of living. In doing so, I compensated for my bad mood towards doing English exam papers (16/64-65; q24)

As can be seen from the above quote, interviewee 16 reminded himself of other potential interesting aspects of English language learning (see section 4.3.1) that helped release him from the frustration of doing exam papers.

Overall, the interviewees' reported learning activities mainly focused on memorization, doing exercises, revision, and managing the negative attitude towards these ways of learning English., The questionnaire data



(Q No..24, Appendix XXXIV) was consonant with these findings. The top three learning behaviours as reported by the questionnaire respondents were: 'memorize vocabulary' (319 respondents, 74%), 'do lots of exercises' (195 respondents, 45.2%) and 'reflect on weak points and improve' (183 respondents, 42.5%). Since 'weak points' as used by these students meant areas that received low exam scores and the ways to improve them were the methods discussed for academic achievement (see interviewee 2 in section 4.2.2), essentially, the questionnaire respondents were in agreement with the interviewees in describing their behaviours for academic success. The open-ended answers to Q No..24 (see Table 4-2) did not provide extra information. As can be seen from the following table, respondents' reported 'importance of English' and 'interest' actually meant their attempts to manage their motivation (see 4.2.5) that could lead them to academic success; 'reading' was part of doing exercises as discussed in 4.2.2; and 'communicate with foreigners' and 'language sense' were related to communicative ability yet were thought of as useful for achieving academic success, which will be discussed in section 4.4.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
valid	importance of English	2	.5	5.6	5.6
	interest	23	5.3	63.9	69.4
	reading	6	1.4	16.7	86.1
	communicate with foreigners	4	.9	11.1	97.2
	language sense	1	.2	2.8	100.0
	Total	36	8.3	100.0	
missing	999	400	91.7		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 4-2 (Questionnaire results): students' reported other activities for academic success

These reported behaviours (see Table 4-1) seemed to reflect descriptions in the literature of Chinese learners' common learning behaviours as 'reception, repetition, review, and reproduction' (Hu, 2002: 100). Students were seen to receive textbook knowledge, to memorize it through repetition and revision, and finally reproduce it in exams. However, with a more careful examination, reasons given by for the students for doing these were far more complex than the anecdotal descriptions often found in the literature. For example, Paine (1991, cited by Hu, 2002) claimed that Chinese students tended to accept all knowledge imparted by teachers and textbooks without questioning. However, students in the present study were found to be busy preparing themselves for exams that required correct answers. It seemed there was nothing wrong in their memorizing vocabulary or grammar rules. Moreover, students' use of repetition was not invariably mechanical rote. Instead, they actively tried to find better methods to improve their learning efficiency. Likewise, their adoption of revision was more a responsive behaviour to exams than the clichéd explanations, with reference to Confucian doctrines, given in the literature (e.g. Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Hu, 2002).

It is worth mentioning that during the process of preparing for academic success, they commonly suffered great difficulties in memorizing increasing quantities of vocabulary and grammar rules. In addition, a large quantity of exam exercises often caused affective depression. However, they seemed to be able to manage their motivation, given that the value of exams was well understood. However, as we shall see in the future discussion, interviewees appeared to present quite different profiles in their English language learning. For example, some interviewees were critical and developed their own learning methods or shifted to learning English for communicative use (see section 4.3); for others, the reported



behaviours as discussed above continued to be used even in tertiary level education (see section 4.4.2).

### 4.3 Reported learning behaviours for communicative ability

As can be seen from Figure 4-1 (section 4.1), students in the present study also reported various behaviours that could be related to communicative language use. For example, searching for authentic<sup>3</sup> materials, intentional language use, maximizing exposure to communicative data, evaluation by language use and enhancing language sense (Table 4-3). It should be pointed out that although what students meant by communicative language use appeared to be diverse (see section 5.2.2), they tended to emphasise communicative ability in their actual language learning behaviours. The following section therefore will discuss students' reported behaviours for gaining communicative ability respectively.

Reported behaviours for gaining communicative ability	Interviewees
Searching for authentic English materials	2, 4, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22
Meaningful memorization	2, 6, 8, 14, 19, 22, 26
Intentional language use	2, 4, 7, 17, 18, 24
Maximizing exposure to communicative data	7, 12, 13, 15, 22
Evaluation by language use	2, 8, 15, 22, 24
Enhancing language sense	4, 8, 9

Table 4-3 Students' reported behaviours for gaining communicative ability

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<sup>3</sup> It is a literal translation from students' accounts. By authentic, students meant language that they thought was used in real life in English speaking countries.

### 4.3.1 Searching for authentic materials

As can be seen from the above table, most interviewees reported searching for authentic English materials in addition to using the national textbooks, as indicated by interviewee 16,

I felt in current high school English education in China, the teaching scope was quite limited, content was insufficient. If you wanted to learn better, it was far from being enough. You had to search for more materials, to have contact with more English knowledge. (16/107-109; q25)

Although interviewee 16 did not use the term 'authentic', what he implied was materials that could convey a background knowledge of English such as English culture and language use in real life. His chat with the course teacher (see section 4.2.1) showed that he expected to know more than textbooks could offer.

Interviewee 16's opinion was supported by other interviewees who reported learning *New Concept English*<sup>4</sup> and *21<sup>st</sup> Century Newspaper*<sup>5</sup>. For example,

We were recommended to learn *New Concept English*. However, some students wrongly took it as an exercise book. They did exercises after each text...I treated it as interesting texts [...] I was the only one in the class who finished all four levels (20/56-59; q26)

Unlike his classmates who treated *New Concept English* as a new type of source book for exam exercises, interviewee 20 enjoyed the interesting text for its own sake. Although he did not give details as to what he felt

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<sup>4</sup> *New Concept English* (Alexander, 1967/1993) was the pioneer textbook using authentic English and its influence on Chinese language learners' English language learning is legendary and continual. See L.G. Alexander: A Statue in Beijing. *English Today* 78 20/2: 20-25

<sup>5</sup> *21<sup>st</sup> Century Newspaper*, is a popular newspaper among Chinese students. It is characterised by focusing on students' interest in fashion, English culture etc., and concerns about English language learning.



interesting, the nature of this book series suggested that knowledge of English culture, and authentic language use were their needs.

Likewise, interviewee 18 felt extensive reading of authentic English materials facilitated English language learning. He said:

It was suggested that we should read *21st Century Newspaper*. I felt more reading would expand our knowledge of English (18/28-29; q27)

Since this newspaper offers a wide range of knowledge regarding current fashion and English culture as well as discussion of students' practical English language learning, it became part of some interviewees' learning material. It was not surprising that interviewee 15 regarded reading it as part of her learning routine.

In high school, I insisted on reading *21<sup>st</sup> Century Newspaper*. Each Friday when it came to me, I would finish reading it within two days (15/68-70; q28)

It should be pointed out that both types of materials mentioned above were normally recommended by course teachers, and were optional rather than compulsory. Hence, students were free to decide whether to pursue these materials or not.

Besides the two types of materials mentioned above, interviewees also described their use of other learning materials. For example,

I read *21st Century Newspaper* and now read it occasionally. Also I browsed the websites and searched for things of interest (17/38-39; q29)

I was crazy about English. I read *21<sup>st</sup> Century Newspaper*, and some other story books or magazines [...] I bought each issue of *Crazy English*<sup>6</sup> (22/40-41; q30)

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<sup>6</sup> *Crazy English* is a brand name related to a non-traditional method of learning English in mainland China conceived by Li Yang. It is revolutionary in challenging the common practice of learning

I read English magazines such as *Chicken Soup*, a story series, which is quite deep but uses simple words (18/96-97; q31).

The three interviewees listed above reported that they used different types of English learning materials in addition to teacher-recommended references, namely stories or magazines. Compared with heavy exam materials, they seemed to be light but good complementary materials that allowed students to have contact with authentic English.

Moreover, interviewees 2 and 15 described their serious reading of original English novels in order to understand English culture. For interviewees 2 and 15, presentations of English culture such as pictures in books or novels in the original English were equally effective in helping with the understanding of the English language and its culture. For example,

What I liked best was the beauty of its pictures. They were quite authentic. I felt they shortened the distance between English and real life (2/100; q32)

According to interviewee 2, 'language is only valuable when one can understand it' (223-224; q33), and pictures demonstrated the English people's way of living, which, in turn, was useful for understanding the language. In line with this kind of thinking, he finished the whole series of *Bookworm*<sup>7</sup>

Altogether 68 for the whole series, at the beginning it was about 50, with 18 added later on. I finished reading over 40 within a term [...] (2/69-71; q34)

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English for exams in mainland China by shouting English out. For more information see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crazy\\_English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crazy_English)

<sup>7</sup> *Bookworm* is a series of simplified classic English language novels with both English and Chinese versions



Likewise, for interviewee 15, 'English novels presented English ways of living, behaving...I felt peaceful when I read them' (80-81; q35), and in her opinion, English culture and different ways of thinking and living permeated these novels in the original English. She explored quite a few classic novels, poetry etc in English. She said:

Like *Gone with the Wind*, the one I am reading now [...] I read lots of English books in high school. For example, *Stray Birds* by Tagore, I felt reading English made me peaceful (15/78-81; q36).

Under the tight learning schedule they had experienced in preparing for various exams, searching for additional learning materials such as English stories, magazines, *Crazy English*, and novels was more to do with the concern about knowledge of English or exposure to the target language communities (see section 4.3.1), which was thought of as helpful in contributing to communicative language use.

### **4.3.2 Meaningful memorization**

Table 4-3 showed that vocabulary memorization was reported as an important learning behaviour for gaining communicative ability. However, unlike pure memorizing of vocabulary lists or reciting texts for academic success (see section 4.2.3), interviewees were found to associate vocabulary memorization with other activities related to the English language. For example,

The Flash 2004 installed by the university was in English [...] although it's all in English, with lots of new words. I gradually followed it, looking up in dictionaries [...] in the end I knew all of them. (19/76-79; q37)

Similarly, interviewee 14 felt that the expansion of vocabulary at tertiary level did not seem to put too much of a burden on memorization because they had channels to organize the new vocabulary in meaningful ways. He said;

I suddenly felt we had to learn so many new words in college English class [...] we had regular presentations using learned vocabulary [...] It's helpful to improve English abilities (14/83-85; q38)

Moreover, for some interviewees, vocabulary learning was not confined to an English course. For interviewee 6,

Our major was taught in English, and textbooks and assignments were all in English [...] you read those books relating to your major and your vocabulary naturally enlarged. (6/69; 78-79; q39)

For these interviewees, vocabulary learning was not isolated to the remembering of words, but was integrated into other learning activities. As pointed out by interviewee 26,

English has to be meaningful for you [...] you use it you remember it deeply (26/89-90; q40)

Although interviewees seemed hardly to emphasize the importance of vocabulary memorization in their intentional language use (see section 4.3.3), the above examples shared the same opinion that meaningful memorization was more effective.

### **4.3.3 Intentional language use**

As shown in Table 4-3, a third frequently mentioned behaviour by interviewees in the present study was to use English intentionally. Moreover, the data suggested that such behaviour consisted of engaging themselves in meaningful language use in both spoken and written English.

In the first place, how to become a fluent English speaker was the major concern for a few interviewees and an effective way was to speak English often. As reported by interviewee 7,

I often went to my foreign teacher's flat and practiced oral English with her [...] it often happened that you might spend quite some



time thinking of grammar rules before you could answer teachers' questions in class, which was the symptom of insufficient practice of spoken English. I asked her to tell me whatever mistakes I made in our conversation. (7/38; 84-86; q41)

Interviewee 7 realized that her attention to grammar rules often delayed her responses in spoken English and an effective way to cope with it was to use the language often.

Similar to the above student who tried to find opportunities to use English, interviewees 17 and 18 identified themselves as English study partners and they set up English days during which English was the only language they used for communication.

With the following interviewee, we are English partners. Each Tuesday, we have English class, we eat together, go shopping together. Whatever we do we speak English. (17/81-82; q42)

Differently from interviewee 7, they seemed not to be bothered by the grammar used in their oral English but paid attention to meaningful language use in daily life.

Moreover, attention to language use was not merely confined to spoken English, for interviewee 2; written English was also an important aspect to be considered. He said:

I tried to write English articles, writing one each day for my teacher to comment on. We had a foreign teacher and I asked him to help correct [...] anyway, I write whatever I want to write. Sometimes I created my own sentences [...] As for English use, I felt it was useful for me (2/89-91; q43)

After a continuous effort to read novels in the original English (see 4.3.1 and 4.4), interviewee 2 started to practice his written English, which was a way to prove his capability to use the language. Moreover, in doing so, he had the sense of the ownership of the work since he created his own sentences rather than simple imitation.

It should be pointed out that not all language learners were as purposeful as interviewees 7 and 2 who initiated the opportunity to practise language use with their foreign language teacher. Thinking of the normally large classes in China (e.g. Rao, 2006; Jin and Cortazzi, 2006), it would be impossible for the foreign teacher to cope with each student who requested individual language practice. In a way, these two interviewees were exceptional and stood out from their counterparts in order to best take the advantage of having a native speaker teacher.

Nevertheless, other interviewees were still found to manage to create opportunities to use English. For example, some of them engaged in preparing themselves for future language use. As described by interviewee 4, he took self-practice as a necessary step for real communication since he did not find a channel to use it.

I listened to the tapes and imitated them, correcting my own pronunciation. Since I did not have much opportunity to communicate with others, I shouted English out (sic) at home (4/46-47; q44)

Although his way of practising oral English had no meaningful context, interviewee 4 at least improved his confidence in speaking English language, which would be essential in real communication.

Students in the present study seemed to well recognize that communicative ability is best obtained through communicative use of the target language as suggested by Little (2007a), Hedge (2002), and Nunan (1989).

#### **4.3.4 Maximizing exposure to authentic communicative data**

5 interviewees (see Table 4-3) in the study pointed out that competent language use called for a target language environment, which was often



unlikely to be found in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment. Nevertheless, as discussed below, students reported a variety of ways to get exposure to a target language environment and enhance authentic language input.

First, interviewees 7 and 12 recounted similar experiences of creating an English speaking environment by listening to English tapes each night.

Everyday before going to bed, I would listen to *Happy American English*, just to listen in order to understand their speed and tones [...] (7/22-24; q45).

E: Each night I went to sleep while listening to English tapes.

R: what did you listen to?

E: *Crazy English*, World English. In fact, I could not fully understand it but wanted to create an English environment (12/81-85; q46)

It seemed that both interviewee 7 and interviewee 12 thought that listening to English tapes or to broadcast programmes could immerse them in an English environment. Though they did not interact with that environment, experiencing the way in which English was spoken, such as its speed or tone as suggested by interviewee 7, was quite similar to being in the real English environment.

Second, interviewees 15 and 22 reported their use of English movies to enhance their opportunities to have contact with authentic English language use.

I quite like watching original English movies. Each Tuesday evening there is an Original Movie Cinema, I insisted on watching it even in my final year in high school [...] it lets you have contact with English in a relaxed way and you can know how foreign people think (15/22-26; q47)

Interviewee 22 narrated her similar experience:

Sometimes it was not only for learning but for enjoyment [...] especially, in vacation time, I rented a few VCDs and finished watching them within a few days (22/56-58; q48)

For both interviewee 15 and interviewee 22, watching English movies in itself was enjoyable and relaxing. Yet more importantly, experiencing how language was used by different people reflecting their various ways of thinking, was rich and authentic, and was thus valuable for non-native language learners.

Hedge (2002) states that after-class activities such as listening to cassettes can be a useful means of enhancing students' authentic language input. It seemed that interviewees in the present study were well aware of the benefits of enhancing language input. Though such activities seemed to provide no chance of becoming involved in communication; chunks of language use that interviewees had attended to in theory would appear in their later language use in accordance with the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985).

#### **4.3.5 Evaluation by language use**

For students who engaged in various learning activities so as to obtain communicative ability, it turned out that they often evaluated their learning by themselves. As shown in Table 4-3, 5 interviewees articulated the importance of evaluating language learning through language use. Taking interviewee 8 for example,

I felt my English advanced to a new level. My vocabulary expanded. And I understood better original English movies. I could identify known words in English songs. Occasionally I can think in an English way when chatting with foreign friends (8/165-167; q49)

She provided a comprehensive evaluation of her English language learning outcomes by her ability to understand English, think in English and use English. Although there was no information on how often she evaluated herself, to advance a level certainly had involved considerable



persistence in learning, which would have involved continuous work (see section 5.4).

Unlike interviewee 8, who cared about her comprehension abilities, interviewee 24 seemed to be more concerned about her spoken English. She particularly gave two contrasting examples.

My English teacher saw my exam scores were good and recommended to me that I participate in the English Speech Contest...I found I was awful and couldn't make it (24/27-28; q50)

In my final year, I took part in the English Speech Contest and won the second place (24/72-73; q51)

From being afraid of opening her mouth to becoming a prize winner, interviewee 24 went through improvement in her spoken English.

Another important way to evaluate language use was through classroom performance. For example,

In middle school, some students felt that English was difficult. They did not know how to pronounce words. Since I had had contact with English before, I could speak them confidently and I became one of the better students in my class (15/12-15; q52)

Interviewee 15 attributed her being a 'better' student to her ability to speak English, although her criterion seemed to be limited to pronunciation level.

#### **4.3.6 Enhancing language sense**

Interviewees 4, 8, and 9 (see Table 4-3) felt fluent language use was brought about by a type of sense, one that produces language without involving students' mental effort. Therefore, they thought language learning should be aimed at the enhancement of this. By analogy with first language learning, interviewee 4 suggested that language use relied on the automatic application of language, which was largely determined by a type of sense rather than by isolated grammar rules.

It after all was a language and you cannot use one type of grammar to deduce many other things since many sentences were so flexible [...] when we speak Chinese, we are not thinking of grammar but use a kind of sense (4/39-40; q53).

In line with such thoughts were interviewees' various reported activities to enhance language sense. For example,

From Grade one in middle school, I mainly insisted on reading texts. I did not do reading comprehension exercises, but I would read the passage to foster that kind of sense, either reading aloud or silent reading (9/74-76; q54)

For interviewee 9, reading texts was an effective way to enhance language sense. By familiarizing himself with the language in context, he would naturally have a sense of how to use it. This was true in interviewee 8 who relied on original English movies or songs as a source for obtaining language sense.

I think it is still language sense that works such as language used in a movie or music [...] so many expressions you did not learn before and were strange [...] I got to know them from songs or dialogues in movies (8/55-62; q55)

More than just a source of authentic language input (see section 4.3.4 ), watching original English movies, or listening to English songs helped improve interviewee 8's language sense.

In general, these interviewees commonly felt it was more important for them to be able to use the language rather than to provide reasons for why it should be used in certain ways. Moreover, it was not always possible for them to explain the language use explicitly. Therefore, their reported activities were focused on engaging with the language in context and effort of strengthening such contact.

Overall, students' reported learning behaviours for communicative language use seemed to be largely focused on communicative ability. In relation to the term 'communicative competence' as put forward by Canale



and Swain (1980), students appeared to be more concerned about oral fluency<sup>8</sup> (see table 4-3). It is possible that students had already gained a certain degree of grammar rules in preparing for exams. They intended to create various kinds of opportunities to use the target language. These findings were supported by the questionnaire respondents (see Q No.. 26 Appendix XXXIV).

#### **4.4 Complexity of students' reported learning behaviours**

As stated in section 4.1, students' reported behaviours were much more complex than the category can present (see Figure 4-1). As Figure 4-1 shows, except for the extreme case interviewee 8 whose reported behaviours were exclusively confined to categories relevant to communicative language use and interviewee 23 whose reported behaviours were only found in categories associated with academic success, the majority of the interviewees had both tendencies in their accounts: academic success related behaviours (see section 4.2) and communicative language use related behaviours (see section 4.3). Moreover, students' reported behaviours could be different at different levels of education, for example, secondary education and tertiary education. In addition, there were great differences in terms of learning organization among individuals. The present section will discuss these aspects respectively.

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<sup>8</sup> Although with a literal translation from students' accounts, 'communicative competence' should be used, I consider 'communicative ability' to be the term to be used in the thesis in order to avoid confusion with the technical term 'communicative competence' in the literature,

#### 4.4.1 Academic success oriented behaviours, a dominant role at secondary level education

Overall, the data suggested that exam-oriented behaviours were dominant during students' secondary level education and three types of students' reported behaviours suggested that their behaviours were dominantly related to academic success at the secondary level of education.

First, when some interviewees claimed that they engaged in learning activities for communicative language use, their actual method was strongly associated with different aspects of academic success. For example, interviewee 2 reported reading original English novels to assist his English learning (see section 4.3.1). However, he also mentioned the following:

Each book (*Bookworm*) I at least read 7 to 8 times. I first read for ideas. After reading for the first time, I had a clear understanding of the text. Then I came back and read concrete sentences, vocabulary usage and strange sentences. Back and forth, 7 to 8 times for each book. Now I still remember many stories (2/73-76; q56)

Although he maintained that English learning was to understand the language, as he did with these novels in the original English (see section 4.3.1), he was seen to deploy a repetitive learning strategy (see 4.2.1) to extract language knowledge from the novels. Moreover, he said,

In the past, I was only concerned about exam scores. Following this way of learning (*Bookworm*), my exam results on the contrary improved quickly. In general, I got 130 out of 150 (2/93-94; q57).

He was suggesting that his previous way of learning English, in particular, doing exam exercises by analysing grammar rules, was inappropriate. However, his reference to his improved exam results also indicated the importance of evaluation by exams.



Second, interviewees sometimes were found to be hesitating about using communicative language use oriented behaviours. For example, interviewee 9 once suggested that he preferred to obtain language sense because it increased language fluency in actual use. However, he also reported the following:

I did quite a lot of exercises, and also read a lot of reading passages. But my exam score did not increase. It was still a problem [...] I needed to ask for help from others' (9/87-88; 97; q58)

Along with his confidence in obtaining language sense was his uncertainty with the way he learned English. For example, he doubted whether he could achieve good exam results by studying in his own way. Instead, he started to do exercises because it was the way commonly practiced by his counterparts as described in section 4.2.

Third, some interviewees (e.g. 5, 15, 16) who stated the importance of communicative ability (see section 5.2) were found to use common methods for academic success when they prepared for CET-4 (College English Test, Band 4). Taking interviewee 5 for example,

I Mainly learned CET-4 vocabulary, besides that, I bought college English Course books published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. I finished reading two and a half levels (5/39-41; q59)

Likewise, interviewee 15 reported similar behaviours such as memorization and doing exam exercises.

At that time, what I mainly did was to memorize vocabulary lists [...] then did a large amount of exam exercises (15/62-64; q60).

These examples indicated that learning behaviours such as memorization and doing exercises were tightly bound to exam preparations and were justified by their learning outcomes as evaluated by exam results (see section 4.2.1), which together made behaviours related to academic success appear to be more salient.

#### 4.4.2 Communicative language use oriented behaviours, an increasing role at tertiary level education

According to the interview data, there was a growing tendency to mention communicative language use oriented behaviours. Moreover, such a finding was supported by the according questionnaire responses.

First, as the following table shows, the growing tendency for communicative language use oriented behaviours was judged from decreasing numbers of interviewees reporting academic success oriented behaviours at the tertiary level of education and increasing numbers of the interviewees whose reported communicative language use oriented behaviours took place at tertiary level.

Students' reported behaviours		Secondary education (interviewees )	Tertiary education(interviewees )
Academic success oriented behaviours	Evaluation by exams	All	
	Doing exercise	All except for 8	
	Rote learning and its development	2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 23, 26	11, 23,
	Revision	2, 7, 8, 11, 14, 20	
	Managing motivation	2, 6, 14, 15, 16, 20	
Communicative language use oriented behaviours	Searching for authentic materials	2, 4, 7, 8, 15, 17, 18, 22,	2, 4, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22,
	Meaningful memorization	2, 8, 19, 22	2, 6, 8, 14, 19, 22, 26
	Intentional language use	2, 4, 7, 24	2, 4, 7, 17, 18, 24
	Maximizing exposure to communicative data	7, 15, 22	7, 12, 13, 15, 22
	Evaluation by language use	2, 8, 15, 22, 24	2, 8, 15, 22, 24



	Enhancing language sense	4, 8, 9	4, 8, 9
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Table 4-4 Students' reported behaviours with reference to levels of education

Such a notion was further supported by the questionnaire figures (see the following Table 4-5). Although vocabulary memorization (see section 4.2.3 and 4.3.2) could not be used as a valid indicator since it involved both rote learning and meaningful memorization and there was no sharp increase in students' accounts of communicative language use oriented behaviours, the questionnaire report (Q No..24 and No.26, Appendix XXXIV) did suggest that enhancing language sense and keeping contact with English surpassed most of the academic success related behaviours. Moreover, since questionnaire respondents were likely to give answers to refer to their most recent period of education, the questionnaire report therefore could be considered as presenting students' reported behaviours at tertiary level.

Academic success (n=436)	Communicative ability (n=436)
Memorize vocabulary (319, 74%)	Gain language sense (224, 52%)
Do lots of exercises (195, 45.2%)	Keep contact with English (221, 51.3%)
Reflect on weak points and improve (183, 42.5)%	Find opportunities to use English (163, 37.8%)
Memorize grammar (144, 33.4%)	Search for authentic English materials (67, 15.5%)
Recite textbooks (131, 30.4%)	Know English culture (40, 9.3%)
Know exam syllabus (44, 10.29%)	
Recite teachers' notes (38, 8.8%)	

Table 4-5 (Questionnaire results): students' reported language learning behaviours

It should be pointed out that the figures, both in the interview data and in the questionnaire data, did not provide strong evidence of an increase in communicative language use oriented behaviours, which was possibly because there were still exam pressures at tertiary level (see chapter 6). Moreover, given the complex and even contradictory nature of students' reported behaviours (see section 4.4.1), it was difficult to draw the



conclusion that tertiary education definitely led to a change in students' reported behaviours.

#### **4.4.3 Diversity in individuals' learning organization**

When students reported their language learning behaviours, they simultaneously implied that they were managing their learning, including proper planning, monitoring progress, reflecting on the learning process, and overcoming difficulties, either for academic success or for communicative language use. However, students' reported learning organization behaviours seemed to be quite different from one individual to another. Taking interviewee 2 as one example (see section 4.3.1 and 4.3.3), he searched for extra learning materials, had a clear plan as to what he should achieve each time of reading *Bookworm* and set up new challenges when the objective was reached, he monitored his pace of learning then determined his progress, and he constantly reflected on this way of learning English. As a result, he overcame his difficulty in memorizing grammar rules and formed his own way of learning English. Taking interviewee 11 as another example, she did not report searching for extra learning materials and planning her learning. Although she monitored her learning and reflected on her learning through exam results, she did not seem to organize her learning well but rather followed the teachers' plans. As can be seen from Table 4-1, her reported learning behaviours were only evaluation by exams, doing exercises, rote learning and revision. Such a difference in learning organization behaviours was also revealed by the questionnaire respondents' answers (see Appendix XXXIV), for example, 45.3% (Q 39) of the questionnaire respondents agreed that they searched for learning materials; 31.7% (Q 35) of the questionnaire respondents agreed that they often monitored their learning progress, 50.8% (Q 36) of them agreed that they often reflected on their



learning process, 17.1% (Q38) of them agreed that they had clear learning plans and 51.9% (Q42) of them agreed that they set up new challenges in English language learning.

As the interview data suggested, an important indicator which accounted for students' differences in learning organization seemed to lie in what types of learning difficulties students reported and how they solved them. First, although students generally considered that vocabulary was important for learning English for either academic success or communicative ability, those with better learning management abilities were concerned about how to expand vocabulary size to improve their accuracy in language use (e.g. interviewee2, 8); those with poor learning management abilities were still bothered by memorizing the vocabulary lists provided by textbooks (e.g. interviewee 11, 23, 26). Second, how students dealt with learning difficulties somehow indicated students' learning organization behaviours. For example, interviewee 2 found memorizing grammar rules became difficult, he seized the opportunity of reading novels in the original English and tried a new way of learning English (see section 4.2.5). Nevertheless, quite a few other students still kept complaining about the difficulty of studying grammar rules. Such a difference in learning organization was also found in the questionnaire data (QNo.28). For example, 35.5% of the questionnaire respondents solved the problems by themselves, 54.4% of them relied on themselves first then asked help from either classmates, or teachers, or others (7.2%), and still others directly depended on others or gave up (2.9%).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	solve problems by myself	143	32.8	35.5	35.5
	ask for classmates' help	20	4.6	5.0	40.4
	ask for teachers' help	6	1.4	1.5	41.9
	think over by myself then ask teachers	93	21.3	23.1	65.0
	think over by myself then ask classmates	126	28.9	31.3	96.3
	ignore sometimes	9	2.1	2.2	98.5
	forgot or ask classmates, teachers	3	.7	.7	99.3
	resort internet	3	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	403	92.4	100.0	
Missing	999	33	7.6		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 4-6 (Questionnaire results): ways to cope learning difficulties

Although the relevant literature points out that adult learners more or less engage in self-directed learning, which involves a certain degree of learning management (Benson, 2001), nothing has been said about what determines the degree of learning management. The data in the present study suggested that the nature of the identified learning difficulties and the way to overcome them were critical factors.

In general, students' reported language learning behaviours were quite complex, with differences among individuals and within individuals. On the one hand, in a broad sense, some students reported language learning behaviours that were more focused on academic success (see section 4.2) whereas others were more focused on communicative language use (see section 4.3). Moreover, students' reported learning organization



behaviours seemed to vary among individuals too. On the other hand, students' reported a change of learning behaviours at different levels of education (see section 4.4.2). At the same time, students' accounts of actual learning behaviours were sometimes self-contradictory (see section 4.4.1).

It is worth noting that understanding individual diversity did not necessarily mean that there was no opportunity to find possible common patterns among individuals. As already shown earlier in this chapter, broad patterns of students' reported behaviours have been discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3. At the same time, the complexity has been carefully discussed in the present section. As an important device to deal with narrative-based interviews, this way of dealing with a large amount of interview data was applied to the following findings and discussion chapters (5 and 6).

## **4.5 Summary**

In this chapter, interviewees' reported language learning behaviours have been presented. Following their accounts of various English learning activities for academic success and communicative language use, the chapter ended with discussions about the complexity of students' reported behaviours, including possible associations of students' reported behaviours with levels of education and diversity in students' reported learning organization behaviours.

# CHAPTER 5 STUDENTS' CONCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

## 5.1 Introduction

As stated in chapter 3, the order of the core category presentation was determined as students' reported behaviours for English language learning (chapter 4), students' conceptions of English language learning (chapter 5) and influences on students' English language learning (chapter 6). The present chapter therefore focuses on students' conceptions of English language learning (see Figure 5-1). The final hierarchical order of the various categories was formed after constant comparison, reflective thinking, and questioning and consultation with supervisors, which was shown in Figure 5-1.

As stated in chapter 4, the findings and discussion chapters were organized, after careful reflective thinking and questioning, using a major distinction between academic success and communicative language use. The present chapter follows the same principle based on a careful examination of the core category, students' conceptions of English language learning (see Figure 5-1). With reference to Figure 5-1, the interviewees' conceptions of English language learning presented an apparent distinction between English for academic success and communicative language use. For example subcategories such as: exam results as criteria for successful English language learning; taking reactive responsibility; memorization; doing exercises; hardworking; and taking serious attitude were all relevant to academic success (see section 5.3). Likewise, subcategories such as: communicative ability as a criterion for successful English language learning; taking proactive responsibility; learning in language use; obtaining language sense; reviewing; persistence; willingness; and English language learning environment were



all linked to gaining communicative ability (see section 5.4). However, as emphasised in chapter 4, such a distinction did not necessarily label the students with different categories. The actual situation was much more complicated and was to be dealt with carefully.

This chapter starts with students' perceived nature of English language learning (see section 5.2) as an exam subject, and as a foreign language for communicative language use. Then it discusses students' conceptions of English language learning for academic success (see section 5.3), including criteria for success and the conditions to achieve it. This is followed by a similar structure for reporting students' conceptions of English language learning for gaining communicative ability (see section 5.4). The chapter ends with a general discussion of the complexity of students' conceptions (see section 5.5).

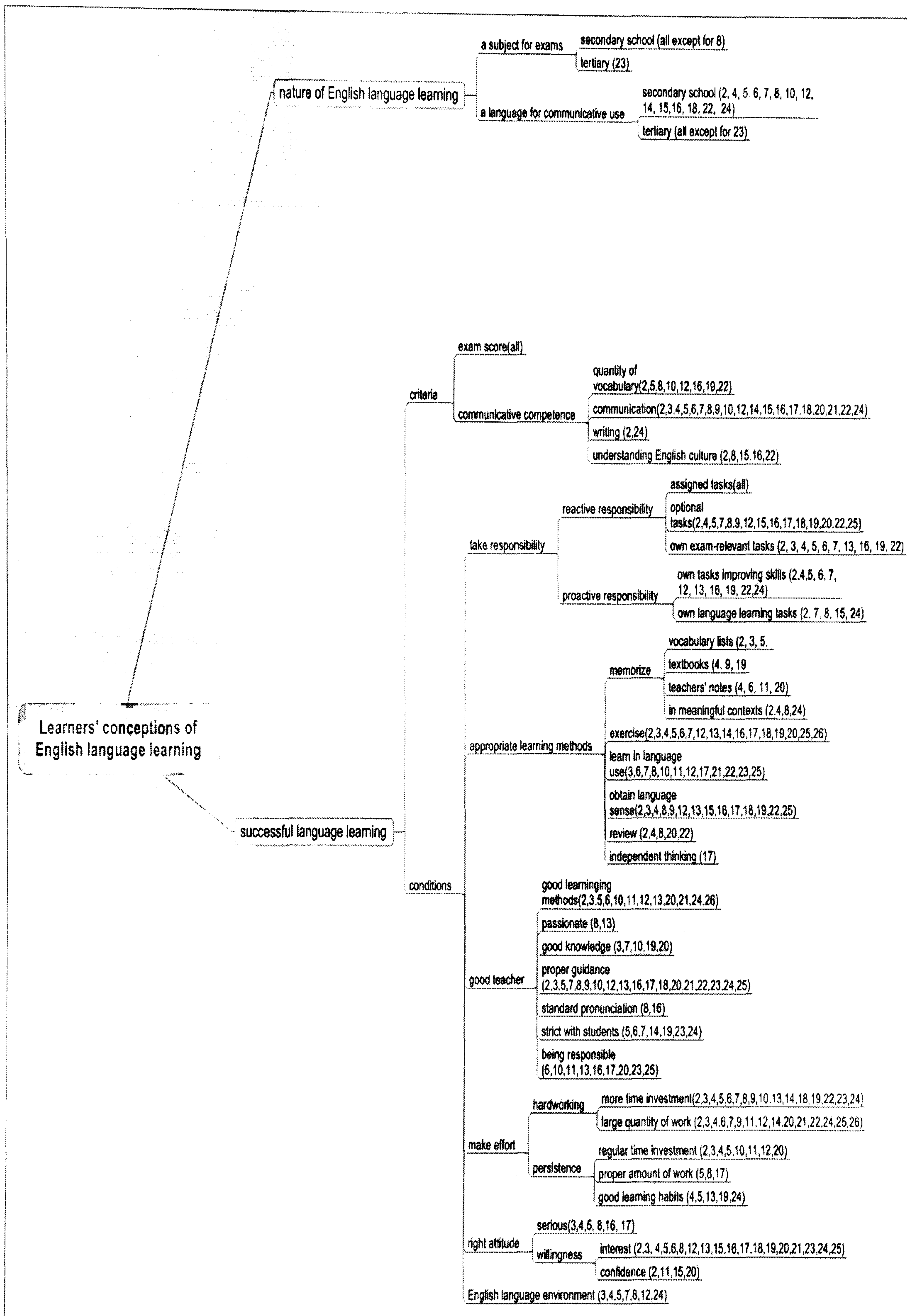


Figure 5-1 Learners' conceptions of English language learning



## 5.2 Nature of English language learning in the eyes of the participants

Students' conceptions of successful English language learning are pre-conditioned by their perception of the nature of English language learning. The interview data reveals that students tended to see English as a compulsory subject as specified by the school curriculum; however, on the other hand, they were also able to treat English as a language and a tool for communication (see Table 5-1).

Nature of English language learning	Interviewees
A subject for exams	All except for 8
A language for communicative use	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 22, 24

Table 5-1 students' conceptions of the nature of English language learning

It should be pointed out that the distinction was most obvious when examining students' accounts of their English language learning which were largely focused on the secondary level of education. Such a distinction seemed to converge when students entered universities and it was difficult to judge which aspect had more weight in the students' current conceptions of their English language learning. Moreover, some of the overlap indicated the complexity of the students' conceptions. These aspects will be revisited in section 5.5.1.

The current discussion is focused on students' distinctive opinions on the nature of English language learning. In accordance with such a distinction, English language learning was deconstructed into various concrete aspects that formed the students' learning objectives. The following sections will discuss them respectively in detail.

### 5.2.1 English as a subject for exams

The data suggest that when English language learning was considered as a compulsory subject for exams, the content of learning was determined by the students' recognition of exam syllabus items such as vocabulary, grammar, cloze tests, and reading comprehension. Moreover, interviewees seemed to attach different levels of importance to these items, depending on their overall judgement of how to best achieve exam success. For example, grammar learning was emphasised by a few interviewees due to its correlation with other items of the exam syllabus, as indicated by interviewee 9,

Multiple choice, cloze test, these were all related to grammar, English learning was analysing grammar structure based on rules (9/25-26; q61)

Likewise, reading comprehension was commonly held to be an important part of exams due to its high ratio of 40% in the total score. For example,

It is mainly about reading comprehension, because it occupies a larger proportion of the total score in exams (24/68-69; q62)

In addition to these general patterns of thinking, the most striking feature appeared to be the interviewees' unanimous agreement on vocabulary learning. It was thought of as the most important basis for exam questions and therefore constituted the paramount part of English language learning. For example, Interviewee 7 held that vocabulary was the base for almost everything. For her, enough vocabulary was the solution to exam questions involving cloze tests, writing and reading comprehension.

Vocabulary is the foundation [...] you need it for cloze tests. Sometimes it affects writing too. It often happened that I was stuck due to limitation of vocabulary. For writing, perhaps you can think of other words to replace it, but it quite affects reading comprehension (7/26-28; q63)

This was shared by interviewee 16 who articulated that:



In a reading passage, if there are many words you do not know, if you do not know about a half, such a situation definitely will influence your reading comprehension (16/55-56; q64)

Moreover, vocabulary was even thought to determine different levels of exams. For interviewee 5 who took both the National Entrance Exam and the College English Band 4 Test, the difference between the two mainly lay in vocabulary size.

If vocabulary in high school was expanded a bit more, graduates would be able to take College English Band 4 Test in high school (5/44-45; q65)

The students' overall account of English language learning seemed to confirm what Benson and Lor (1999: 467) may call 'a quantitative conception' of language learning'. According to Benson and Lor (ibid.), this type of conception considers language as 'a collection of things (grammar concepts, word patterns, etc.) for the learner to 'collect, absorb and assimilate'.

### **5.2.2 English as a language for communicative use**

In addition to the opinions on English as a subject for exams, interviewees also pointed out that English should be a language to be skilfully used. More specifically, English was a language and a tool for communication. Taking interviewee 6 for example,

The English language should be learned for use. Perhaps you had to take exams at school, but it is a tool to be used. You should have the ability to use it rather than merely knowing how to answer exam questions (69-70; q66).

His quote expressed the message that school exams did not assess language use, and thus to aim at school exams prevented one from developing communicative competence. As said before (see section 4.3.6), what students called 'communicative competence' is not the best known definition as is given by Canale and Swain (1980) and I used

communicative ability instead. According to interviewees in the study, this involved three main aspects: listening and speaking abilities, vocabulary storage, and knowledge of English culture.

Listening and speaking abilities were seen as the most important conditions for fluent communication.

English language learning is to obtain a type of ability, the ability to communicate with others, such as English and American people. I thought the most important thing in English language learning was listening and speaking abilities (14/86-87; q67)

Although communication can be done by various means such as writing, interviewees seemed to be primarily concerned about oral communication. Such recognition was underpinned by their notion of vocabulary size and understanding of English culture.

As pointed out by interviewee 7,

If you want to master a foreign language, it is necessary to master a certain amount of vocabulary. Like Chinese, we use lots of vocabulary when we communicate [...] if you are not familiar with the vocabulary, you could not express yourself fluently (7/165-166; 168-169; q68)

For her, vocabulary size and the flexibility of vocabulary use were thought of as crucial in communication. She drew an analogy with Chinese learning and suggested that sufficient vocabulary storage ensured fluent expression of meaning in conversations. This opinion was shared by interviewee 12 who found that a lack of vocabulary delayed simultaneous responses during the conversation.

When talking, I often thought things in Chinese first. I often tried to find the Chinese then searched for the English equivalent [...] it took quite a few minutes sometimes. However, my roommates immediately came up with English when talking. I therefore thought vocabulary size was really important in communication (12/61-63; q69)



Moreover, for interviewee 16, vocabulary did not merely refer to isolated words but to appropriate expressions or 'chunks' by native speakers that could be used immediately in real communication.

English language learning is about using authentic English to express your own ideas. You should know some fixed expressions (16/84-85; q70)

Overall, English language learning meant:

To understand original English, at least *Bookworm* series (2/313; q71)

To know more vocabulary, standard pronunciation, and more fluent communication (5/187-188; q72)

It is about all-round abilities, ability to listen, to speak, and to communicate (8/149-150; q73)

The objective should be abilities regarding listening, speaking, reading, and writing (12/177; q74)

It seemed that the interviewees' reported views of the nature of English language learning comprised Benson and Lor's (1999: 467) notion of 'qualitative conception' that considers language 'as an environment to which the learner must be responsive in order to learn' and a certain degree of knowledge accumulation. In this light, language learning meant to obtain the abilities needed for using it in real situations of communication, in which case, the necessary preparation involving accurate pronunciation and active vocabulary cannot be understated.

In view of the students' conceptions of the nature of English language learning (see Table 5-2), Benson and Lor's (1999: 467) distinction between 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' conceptions seemed to be unable to accommodate all of the findings. For example, some interviewees pointed out that to use English communicatively did not necessarily exclude knowledge accumulation such as enhancing vocabulary, acquisition of standard pronunciation and understanding English through reading

English materials. Although it could be argued that the students' reported vocabulary for exams was that presented in vocabulary lists (see 5.2.1) Although fluent communication needed vocabulary that could be extended to customized expressions or chunks, an emphasis was put on gradual or procedural accumulation rather than a simultaneous construction when English was used. In summary, the students' reported conception of the nature of English language learning fell roughly into two categories. However, they were more complex than Benson and Lor's (1999) distinction between quantitative and qualitative conceptions.

Nature of English language learning	Objectives of language learning	Interviewees	Conceptions of English language learning adapted from Benson and Lor (1999: 467)
English as a subject for exams	Vocabulary, grammar, cloze test, reading comprehension	All except for 8,	Quantitative conception, language as a collection of things for learner to collect, absorb and assimilate
English as a language for communicative use	Language use, listening and speaking abilities, vocabulary, standard pronunciation, understanding English	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 22, 24	Certain quantitative conception
			Qualitative conception, language as an environment to which the learner must be responsive in order to learn

Table 5-2 Students' reported nature of English language learning at secondary education

It is noteworthy; nevertheless, that students' conceptions of communicative ability did not include 'using communication strategies' which is considered an important component in the Canale and Swain (1980) definition.



### **5.3 Students' conceptions of successful English language learning as academic success**

As Figure 5-1 shows, when students considered successful English language learning as equivalent to academic success, exam scores became the learning criterion, and conditions for successful English language learning consisted of reactive responsibility, a good teacher, appropriate learning methods such as memorization and doing exercises, making effort through hard work, and holding a serious attitude. These categories are summarized in Table 5-3, and will be further discussed in the following sections.

Conceptions of successful English language learning as academic success		Interviewees	
Criteria for success	Exam results	all	
Conditions for success	Reactive responsibility	Assigned tasks	all
		Optional tasks	2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 25
	A good teacher	Proper guidance	2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
		Providing good learning methods	2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 20, 21, 24, 26
		Being responsible	6, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 20, 23, 25
		Being strict	5, 6, 7, 14, 19, 23, 24
		Knowledgeable	3, 7, 10, 19, 20
		Being passionate	8, 13
		Appropriate learning methods	memorization
		Doing exercise	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26
	Effort through hardworking	Time investment	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24
		Quantity of work	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26
		Serious attitude	3, 4, 5, 8, 16, 17

Table 5-3 students' conceptions of English language learning as academic success

### 5.3.1 Exam results as the criterion for successful language learning

As Table 5-3, shows, interviewees unanimously agreed that exam results should be the criterion for academic success. However, students gave slightly different reasons for such an opinion. For some students, a good



exam result was the criterion for successful language learning because it was the criterion set by the Chinese educational system, school, and all formal schooling. Taking interviewee 14 for example,

Exam score determines everything. It determines what type of school you go to, higher score, better schools; lower score, poor schools. If your exam score is poor, even if you have better spoken English, it is useless (14/154-155; q75)

As stated in Chapter 1, School exams are of paramount importance for Chinese students. Not only because the National Entrance Exam is extremely competitive and determines the level of university which students can eventually enter, but also because the overall educational system distinguishes students according to their exam results. For example, national key school, provincial key school, city key school and ordinary school have different levels of requirement for admission. English, as a compulsory exam subject, certainly became interviewee 14's crucial referential criterion. This opinion was supported by interviewee 7 who generalized the opinion to all Chinese students.

There was a popular saying among students, 分, 分, 分, 学生的命根 (score, score, score, students' lives). I think it is true to all Chinese students that score measures one's learning. Exam score is really important. At least, we treat it seriously (7/126-127; q76)

Perhaps it sounds exaggerated that the exam score can be compared with students' lives, yet, what is implied in the popular saying provided by interviewee 7 was the critical role exams play in students' lives.

For interviewee 8, exams being a public criterion for learning success at school was reasonable in its own right.

It is a criterion for success. In English language learning at school, if it is not this (exam score), there are few means to prove one's real level (8/134-135; q77)

What she was concerned with was the feasibility of schools providing other criteria for evaluating students' learning outcomes. Despite the possible drawbacks of any exams, they were at least objective in a way as all students were doing the same exam paper and therefore exams could reveal students' levels to a certain extent.

Such an opinion was further supported by interviewee 18 who argued that exams were the most common and valid way to measure learning outcomes and its being a criterion was not exclusive to China. He said:

Exam score is compulsory. Perhaps someone would say the Chinese educational system is different from others, it was quite a common opinion. But I think wherever you go, if it is learning, it is linked with exam scores, which is unavoidable [...] if you want to go abroad, you need an IELTS' score, if you want to graduate, you need a CET-6 score. (18/154-157; 160; q78)

Interestingly, interviewee 18 seemed to be aware of the common association of exams with the Chinese educational system and disagreed with it.

Compared with interviewees 14 and 7 who held a similar opinion and were more concerned about the practical requirement by the Chinese educational system, interviewees 8 and 18 justified their argument by looking into broader educational practices.

### **5.3.2 Conditions for academic success**

As Table 5-3 shows, interviewees identified five major conditions that contributed to academic success: taking reactive responsibility for learning, having a good teacher, using appropriate methods, making effort through hard work, and holding a serious attitude. These aspects will be discussed below.



### 5.3.2.1 Learner responsibility for reactive learning

As stated in Chapter 2, Littlewood (1999: 75) says that Asian language learners engage in two types of learning, reactive and proactive. The main difference is whether the learning direction is established by the teachers (reactive) or the learners themselves (proactive). Interviewees in the present study showed that they all recognized the need to take responsibility for learning, but this responsibility seemed to be pointed to tasks recommended or assigned by teachers.

All interviewees (see Table 5-3) held that learning was the learners' responsibility rather than that of anybody else. Such an opinion was interestingly supported by the Chinese proverb 'Master brings you into the door and it is your responsibility to cultivate yourself' as mentioned by interviewees 4 (171), 8 (126), and 19 (167). For example, interviewee 7 felt that after-class learning constituted the larger part of learning, compared with in-class learning, therefore, it was important for learners to take up their responsibility.

There is only limited time for in class learning, it is critical that you are self-dependent after class (7/137; q79)

Nevertheless, for academic success, learner responsibility meant to finish tasks assigned or recommended by course teachers. As indicated by interviewee 15,

If you do not memorize, do not learn, it (taught knowledge) is useless [...] you depend on yourself to understand the deeper level of a method. If you want to improve yourself to a better level, you should depend on yourself (15/148; 151-152; q80)

Tasks assigned by teachers were to consolidate learned knowledge and aimed at better exam results, yet the concrete action of learning could only be taken by learners themselves. For interviewees such as 15, the assigned tasks, normally memorization of vocabulary and text, grammar

exercises and simulated exam papers, were thought of as basic conditions for a satisfactory exam result. Such an opinion was supported by interviewees' both positive and negative experiences. For example, interviewee 20 showed how he achieved success in exams by completion of all the assigned tasks.

If you sincerely followed the teachers' methods, completed the tasks you would get over 130 at the end, at least over 120 [...] teacher cannot replace you to do the exercises, all these need to be done by yourself (20/23; 186-187; q81)

For interviewee 23, he attributed poor exam result to not doing the teachers' assigned tasks.

In general, we boys always wanted to play, did not want to do homework. In high school, our teacher was not as strict as the one in middle school [...] exam results fell and were very poor (23/10-12; q82)

In both cases, the teachers' assigned tasks were critical to achieving good exam results. Moreover, optional tasks as recommended by teachers were held as helpful in improving their own standards. These tasks appeared to be extra work such as reading *New Concept English* or doing exercises that were more difficult., Although for these interviewees such tasks were not compulsory, they implied a greater challenge that should be taken up in order to achieve a better language learning outcome. For example, interviewee 2 reported how an extra set of reading comprehension exercises enhanced his ability to cope with exams.

In Grade 2 in high school, our teacher recommended we buy *Original Reading*, I learned much from reading that. Just reading and guessing the meaning from the context. And *New Concept English*. (2/110-112; q83)

From the perspective of achieving academic success, learner responsibility seemed to suggest the reactive role of fulfilling tasks given or suggested by teachers. In a way, students thought teachers were in a



better position in knowing how to obtain better exam results, yet, this did not necessarily mean that students absolutely relied on teachers. As indicated by these interviewees, they were solely responsible for their own learning. For them, to accept the teachers' guidance was more likely to be a wise choice of strategy in order to survive competitive exams. This was supported by the questionnaire finding (see section 6.3.2.2) that the teachers' most important role was considered to be that of providing learning direction (277 respondents, 64.6%).

### **5.3.2.2 A good teacher**

As shown in Figure 5-1, a good teacher was considered to be a necessary condition for successful English language learning that was not exclusively focused on academic success. However, with careful examination of the data, students seemed to suggest that a good teacher was more urgently needed for academic success (see Table 5-3). According to the interviewees in the present study, most of the qualities of a good teacher were particularly helpful for students in achieving academic success. As stated in section 5.1, the teachers' role in assisting students' to gain communicative ability will be discussed in section 6.3.2. Moreover, since when students talked about their need of a good teacher, they tended to relate it to their own learning experiences, for example, how a specific teacher helped the students in a particular way, the present section will only focus on the three aspects: proper guidance, providing good learning methods, and being strict (see Table 5-4) that were explicitly articulated by the students, and will leave the other aspects to chapter 6, which discusses the teachers' influences on the students' English language learning.

Qualities	Function	Interviewees	Association with success
Proper guidance	Providing necessary help in the learning process	2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25	A & C
Providing good learning methods	Enlightening new ways of learning English	2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 20, 21, 24, 26	
Being responsible	Role model	6, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 20, 23, 25	A & C
Being strict	Pushing students to work harder	5, 6, 7, 14, 19, 23, 24	A
knowledgeable	Answering students' questions	3, 7, 10, 19, 20	A
Being passionate	Arousing students' interest	8, 13	A & C
Standard pronunciation	Model for imitation	8, 16	C

Table 5-4 Qualities of a good teacher (A, academic success; C, communicative ability)

As shown by the above table, a good teacher was considered a necessary condition for academic success by most of the interviewees because teachers could provide the proper guidance for the students' English language learning, as pointed out by interviewee 18:

Teachers can guide you. Like us college students, we still lack direction in many aspects. Teachers can give you a direction, just like to point out the most dazzling thing to you among the borderless book sea (18/145-146; q84)

This was supported by interviewee 20,

A teachers' guidance can help you skip over the wrong ways and save your time. With a teachers' guidance, you can succeed with half the effort (20/199-200; q85)

Another important reason for students to think of a good teacher as necessary for academic success was that students held that teachers could pass on good learning methods. For example, both interviewee 11 and 20 held that a good teacher was helpful for success in exams. For



interviewee 11, her teacher was assumed to have a good learning method that ensured success.

I had no other ways. I had to follow my teacher even if I did not like his method. You could not succeed if you did not follow his method because there were exams. (11/126-127; q86)

It is worth mentioning that interviewee 11's comments on her English language teacher were contradictory: on the one hand, she disliked her teachers' recommended methods of learning English; on the other hand, she seemed to be willing to follow such methods. One possible explanation was that she believed that her teacher, with experience, knew better than she did about how to achieve exam success. This was further emphasised by interviewee 20 from the point of view of geographical difference:

A small town like ours; it had very poor learning facilities. There was hardly any equipment for listening and speaking. What should we rely on? Only the teacher. (20/21-22; q87)

For interviewee 20, the teachers' methods were particularly important because there was no other means to resort to in a disadvantaged geographical location (see section 6.2.5).

Moreover, in an exam-oriented learning environment, students would easily feel frustration at the repetitive way of learning, or demotivated by unsatisfactory exam scores, in which case a strict teacher was thought to be helpful in keeping the learning momentum. For example,

My teacher at middle school was exactly the opposite of the one in my primary school, very strict. I remembered that she scolded my classmates who did not do their homework [...] strict teachers had their advantage. She was very responsible and taught well. Because she used to teach in high school, her teaching content was a bit deeper. We had many notes and we had to review them at home since she would test us on the following day. Even so, you were happy when you found you mastered more grammar knowledge than others did. It was a type of happiness, a happiness that you had obtained knowledge. (5/23-25; 26-29; q88)

As can be seen from this quote, his English teacher in middle school was quite strict, which according to interviewee 5 was positive since they gained more knowledge than others possibly did.

In a study investigating Chinese students' expectations of a good teacher, Cortazzi and Jin (1996: 187) list 11 characteristics. It seemed that the findings in the present study were consonant with 4 of the characteristics on their list, i.e.: knowledgeable, effective teaching methods, role model, and arousing students' interest. However, students seemed to strongly associate those qualities of a good teacher with academic success, which suggested that it might not be 'traditional learning culture' such as claimed by Cortazzi and Jin (1996: 170) but rather a situational need that yielded such conceptions. Moreover, the strong indication of the learners' own responsibility by these learners implied that their expectations of a good teacher were only a part of their strategic considerations that could help bring them to learning success in a given educational system.

### **5.3.2.3 Appropriate learning methods for academic success**

The use of appropriate learning methods was commonly thought of as an important factor leading to successful language learning (see Table 5-3). As pointed out by interviewee 9, 'all of us experienced learning for exams, why did others learn English more successfully if we were all in the same situation? There must be some good learning methods.' (180-183). Moreover, the good learning methods as pointed out by interviewee 9 were factual memorization and doing exercises, which was also articulated by interviewee 19:

English is a language. It is not like Physics or Maths that require us to understand lots of things. If you do more exercises, memorize more, you can learn it well. There was one case in our class. He had to prepare other National Contests so couldn't come for English



classes. He then memorized English and did exercises at home. His exam results were still good. (19/172-175; q89)

This kind of opinion was shared by other interviewees. For example,

Memorization is really a good method in English language learning. If you memorize the language points that teachers teach, there is no problem for all kinds of exams (4/25-26; q90)

There is no shortcut to learn English, just memorize more, remember more (4/183; 91)

Similarly, for interviewee 24,

If you remembered what teachers taught, you generally got high exam scores. (24/124; q92)

Interestingly, when interviewees expressed the importance of memorization, they seemed to be only concerned about memorization of taught knowledge. For them, the teachers' given notes indicated the essential parts of the knowledge that should be mastered and guaranteed success in exams.

At the same time, doing exercises appeared to be another prevailing method as quite a few interviewees quoted the proverb *Practice makes perfect* to support their argument. In other words, doing exercises, according to these interviewees, was a type of practice that helped consolidate grammar rules and improve exam skills, and which led to success in exam results. For example,

Although doing lots of exercises did not guarantee success, you certainly had no chance to succeed without such work. (13/136; q93)

Similar to interviewee 13, interviewee 3 seemed not to achieve the effect he had expected from doing exercises to improve his weakest point. However, he held that doing exercises was the only way to improve it. He said:

The National Entrance Exam was mainly about reading comprehension. My reading comprehension was very poor. I did lots of reading comprehension passages [...] in fact, my score didn't improve much (3/25-27; q94)

In this regard, interviewee 20 gave a very comprehensive description of how doing exercises improved exam skills.

Each section has its own characteristics, for example, cloze test, you should know whether it is testing synonym analysis or guessing meaning from context; for grammar [...], firstly you should delete unnecessary choices that do not make sense when they were put into the sentences [...] For reading comprehension, you should read questions first, then look for answers with questions [...] For writing, it examines your style. All these need your understanding through **continuous exercises** (38-42; q95)

Apparently, interviewee 20 had developed a whole set of skills to deal with exams. Based on his considerable amount of exercises, interviewee 20 was finally able to judge examiners' intentions and gave quick responses.

Questionnaire data (QNo.23, see following table) seemed to be consonant with the interview findings.

Appropriate methods for academic success	Numbers of respondents (percentage)
Memorize vocabulary	346 (79.5%)
Reflect on weak points and improve it	225 (51.7%)
Memorize grammar	198 (45.5%)
Do lots of exercise	166 (38.2%)
Recite textbook	139 (32%)

Table 5-5 (Questionnaire results): students' conceptions of appropriate methods for academic success (n=436)

As shown in the table, the most widely accepted learning methods were memorizing vocabulary. Although doing exercises did not explicitly come out as a high rated response in the first instance, it actually was because doing lots of exercise included two questionnaire items: do exercises and reflect on weak points and improve it. This was because the students' way



of improving weak points was often doing exercises, for example, as suggested by interviewee 3 (see section 5.3.2.3).

According to Wenden (1999: 518), 'task knowledge' consists of the purpose of the task, nature of the task and information about a task's demand', which can be incorporated into specific learner training for successful language learning. In view of students' accounts of the appropriate methods for academic success, they seemed to have identified the nature of the exams and the appropriate methods to achieve the according success.

#### **5.3.2.4 Making effort by working hard**

As Table 5-3 shows, roughly similar numbers of interviewees who believed in the need for a good teacher for academic success considered that effort was an important factor. First, it was believed to be a requisite for success of any type. As stated by interviewee 4 (169) 'no matter what you learn, if you want to learn better, you need to make effort'. This was echoed by interviewee 12 who attributed language-learning success to more learning effort:

Why were some students better than others in the same class? It was not because of teaching difference, it was because of the difference in effort they made. (12/135-136; q96)

She further suggested that like other subject learning, English also needed effort; unlike other subjects such as chemistry, English needed continuous effort.

You need effort to learn English, like you learn any other subjects. Perhaps you can think out solutions to a chemistry problem within a short limited time, but English depended on your accumulation of all the memorized vocabulary and usages (12/172-173; q97).

With the specific purpose of academic success, effort meant hard work that consisted of a large investment of time, and doing exercises. Apart from

the general expression that the final year of high school learning involved considerable numbers of exercises (see section 5.3.2.3), students pointed out the positive relationship between time investment and academic results. For example,

I normally slept less than my classmates. I only used 1/3 of the nap time for sleeping, the rest of the time was used to do exercises [...] for the National Entrance Exam, I needed to spend more time on it. (7/150-151; q98)

Effort is often argued as a traditional Chinese cultural trait to achieve success (e.g. Rao, 2006; Hu, 2005; Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Lee, 1996). Moreover, quite a few researchers (e.g. Ruan, 2007; Gan et al., 2004; Rao, 2006) seem to find research evidence in their respective studies. Interview data in the present study is consistent with these findings. Nevertheless, since not all interviewees mentioned this element, it was difficult to judge whether it was a traditional Chinese cultural trait and whether it could be applied to each individual or not.

Interestingly, only near half of the questionnaire respondents (48%) agreed that effort was a necessary condition for academic success (see Q No..23 Appendix XXXIV). In relation to the high percentage (see Table 5-5) given to memorizing vocabulary (79.5%) and doing exercises (89.9%), possibly questionnaire respondents interpreted effort as hard work and considered memorizing vocabulary and doing exercises as appropriate learning methods. For them, hard work was necessary but not as important as appropriate learning methods.

### **5.3.2.5 Attitude**

Wenden (1991) has summarized different definitions of attitude into three major components: cognitive, beliefs or thoughts; affective, emotional feelings; and behavioural, predisposition to certain actions. Moreover, quite a few researchers (e.g. Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Wenden, 1987; 1991)



have located learners' attitude at the centre of their language learning process and argue that it conditions their language learning behaviours and affects their subsequent language learning proficiency. In addition to the overall chapter discussion of students' conceptions, the data suggested that the affective and behavioural components of attitude, as argued by Wenden (1991), were evident in students' accounts. However, students seemed to provide a more detailed description.

6 interviewees (see Table 5-3) mentioned that the right attitude towards English language learning was essential. Since English was a compulsory exam subject, learners were likely to feel uncomfortable about it, in which case the right attitude was to take exams positively, as suggested by interviewee 5,

A positive attitude helped to overcome psychological difficulties and one could hardly learn well if he or she always felt repelled by English (5/123-124; q99)

This was echoed by interviewee 16 who said,

Many students treat learning as a burden. What can I say, if you see it as burden, you always feel heavy, but if you often remind yourself of the knowledge you obtain from learning, you are making progress, you will feel different and learn happily. (103-104; q100)

Nevertheless, for other interviewees, the right attitude meant more than positive acceptance; it meant 'being serious in learning', which echoed the behavioural component of attitude in Wenden's (1991) summary. Moreover, it included focused attention and trying one's best in learning. For example,

You should have concentrated attention. Not without learning efficiency. One possibility is to have higher learning efficiency, and the other is to last longer in learning. It is good to do this. Being serious is very important. If your interest in learning is the prerequisite, then being serious is the means to achieve your final learning goal (8/97-99; q101)

Her opinion was supported by interviewee 3 who attributed his exam success to a serious attitude. It seemed that a serious attitude implied a type of spirit that encouraged one not only to do what he or she was expected to do but also to do it with quality.

In the literature, attitude is often considered an important part for successful language learning. For example, it is highlighted as a concern for various learner training proposals by researchers such as Ellis and Sinclair (1989), Wenden (1991). Moreover, it is closely connected with the intrinsic motivation that is needed to sustain language learning (e.g. Ushioda, 1996; 2007). Interviewees in the present study revealed that learning for academic success could hardly be emotionally preferable. However, they suggested the need for a justifiable attitude towards language learning for academic success. This implied that students were unlikely to generate a real willingness to learn English for exams, which however had to be the case in reality.

#### **5.4 Students' conceptions of successful English language learning as communicative language use**

As Figure 5-1 shows, when students held successful English language learning to be equivalent to gaining communicative language use, communicative ability was thought of as the learning criterion, and conditions for successful English language learning consisted of willingness, appropriate learning methods such as obtaining language sense, learning in language use, and reviewing, taking proactive learning responsibility, persistence, and an English environment. It should be pointed out that data presentation did not necessarily describe each small subcategory in an equal amount of detail since students' accounts in these aspects might vary in terms of proportion. Whereas all categories were



provided in Figure 5-1, Table 5-6 summarizes the most salient categories as narrated by the interviewees in the present study.

Conceptions of successful English language learning as communicative language use		Interviewees	
Criteria for success	Communicative ability	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24	
conditions for success	Willingness	Interest	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25
		Confidence	2, 11, 15, 20
	Appropriate learning methods	Obtaining language sense	2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 25
		Learning in language use	3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 17, 21, 22, 23, 25
	Proactive learning responsibility	Improving skills	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 16, 19, 22, 24
		Self-initiated learning tasks	2, 5, 7, 8, 15, 22, 24
	Effort through persistence	Regular time investment	2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 20
		Good learning habits	4, 5, 13, 19, 24
		Proper amount of work	5, 8, 17
	English environment		3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 24

Table 5-6 students' conceptions of successful English language learning as communicative use

The following sections will discuss them respectively.

### **5.4.1 Communicative ability as criterion for successful English language learning**

Apparently some students were more oriented towards considering successful English language learning as communicative language use. Naturally, communicative ability was thought to be the criterion for successful language learning (see Table 5-6). Such an opinion was primarily based on the criticism of exam deficiencies.

In the first place, students held that high exam results did not equate to better abilities in language use. For example,

Many people had very high score in exams. However, if you asked them to speak, they were possibly unable to open their mouths. What did this mean? In fact, they did not really learn English. Real English learning was not about score but mastery (4/152-154; q102)

Interviewee 4 countered the notion of exam results as a criterion for successful English learning by his observation on some students with high score but low abilities with regard to spoken English. Moreover, two reasons were conveyed from his words: first, language learning was for the purpose of language use; second, exams, at least those exams in the Chinese context, failed to evaluate certain aspects of language use.

Agreeing with interviewee 4 that high exam results did not represent better spoken English, interviewee 19 added his concern about possible factors that influenced certain exam results:

Perhaps you have certain reasons that resulted in your failure in one exam, but this did not mean your level is low. Besides that, you might have a high exam score, but your oral English was very poor. (19/227-230; q103)

Although interviewee 19 did not give concrete examples of what factors might impact on exam results, he certainly passed the message that there



were some uncertainties in one's performance in exams. This, together with the major deficiency of exams that failed to assess language use, warranted his objection to exam result as a criterion for successful English language learning.

This was confirmed by interviewee 22's personal experience:

It cannot reflect one's real abilities [...] although my exam scores were generally good in high school, always among the top, and I also won a prize in an English Contest [...] but I could not compete with those hard working people who highly focused on exam papers. I felt English language abilities should not be confined to one's exam score. (22/142-146; q104)

Interviewee 22 felt her own English level was above those who achieved higher exam scores since she had the successful experience of winning the English Contest. Unfortunately, she could not defeat those who only focused on exams in exam performance. In a way, she suggested that one could obtain high scores if he or she paid sole attention to exam papers. However, like interviewee 4 and 19, she felt English language learning should transcend the limitations of exams and be centred on language use.

It is worth noting that although these interviewees apparently rejected exam results as a proper criterion for evaluating learners' language learning outcome, they hardly provide any details as to how to evaluate communicative ability. This was partially because of the difficulty in arriving at a precise description of what fluent spoken English meant. However, in relation to interviewees' descriptions of English as a language for communicative ability (see section 5.2.2), they seemed to suggest that five basic elements: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and understanding should be considered. Moreover, fluent oral English, including both listening and speaking abilities, appeared to be the most important variable according to interviewees. For interviewee 2, it was that

You can communicate with foreigners when you encounter them.  
(2/22; q105).

This was shared by interviewees 3 and 9 who were dissatisfied with their language learning for communicative language use because their communicative ability was not good enough (see section 6.3.1.1).

## **5.4.2 Conditions for gaining communicative ability**

As stated in the above section, some interviewees held that language was a tool for communication and language learning meant obtaining the ability of fluent language use. In accordance with such a notion, various conditions for gaining communicative ability were also articulated (see Table 5-6), for example, willingness, appropriate learning methods, proactive learning responsibility, making effort through persistence, and an English environment, which will be discussed in the following sections respectively.

### **5.4.2.1 Willingness**

Compared with academic success, gaining communicative ability tended to be an optional choice for students since the all-important school exams did not take into account communicative ability. Hence, unlike a 'have to' attitude interviewees bore in order to achieve academic success, most of the interviewees (see Table 5-6) emphasised that gaining communicative ability needed genuine interest or willingness. For example,

It should be autonomous learning not forced learning. Perhaps imposition has a certain effect, but it is not good for fostering interest. Moreover, if such an imposition is gone, one is unlikely to learn (5/87-88; q106)

For interviewee 5, only learning generated from one's own interest helped sustain its functioning. Likewise, interviewee 22 related the following:



Teachers can inspire your curiosity about English and guide you to walk along. But it must be your own willingness to learn. Teachers help set a goal for you but it is your own wish and effort to reach the goal (22/160-162; q107).

That interest is a pre-requisite for communicative ability was also affirmed by a majority of the questionnaire respondents (QNo.25, see the following table).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	304	69.7	70.2	70.2
	no	129	29.6	29.8	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 5-7 (Questionnaire results): having interest for communicative ability (n=436)

According to Littlewood (1996: 428), 'willingness depends on having both the motivation and the confidence to take responsibility for the choices required'. However, in the present study, students seemed to put the emphasis on the sole role of genuine interest in English that led to learning English for its mastery. In fact, interviewees also mentioned the important of confidence, for example, interviewee 15 recalled:

Confidence is very important in English language learning. It enables you to speak bravely and study in a relaxed way. When you have the confidence, you do not need to worry about your ability but focus on how to improve [...] it is very important for language learners and can help remove difficulties. (15/130-132; q108)

While agreeing with interviewee 15 on the significance of confidence, interviewee 2 provided a different reason:

If you have confidence, you remember the vocabulary. If you do not have confidence, you cannot. Just this simple, When you have confidence, you know what to memorize. You can grasp the essence immediately and believe you can remember (2/208-209; q109)

Since interviewee 2 held that gaining communicative language use also involved memorization of vocabulary (see section 5.4.2.2 ), he suggested that confidence helped enhance one's potential, such as the ability to memorize vocabulary.

Moreover, for interviewee 20, confidence was a positive mediator that facilitated good cycles of English language learning. He said:

When you have some sense of achievement you get confidence, which enables you to overcome difficulties. Gradually, you will enjoy learning (20/121-122; q110)

However, as he pointed out, confidence was pre-conditioned by students' previous learning experience, which made it a subordinate condition to others for communicative ability.

As pointed out by Hedge (2002: 11), language learners need to 'test out in their own attempts to produce language and gradually revise as they receive feedback on their attempts'. To obtain communicative ability, students have to use the language and it is essential for them to take the first step with confidence. Nevertheless, the interviewees' reasons for valuing confidence seemed to be more comprehensive than that due to their perspectives on the nature of the mastery of English (e.g. interviewee 2) or its role in facilitating learning (e.g. interviewee 20).

#### **5.4.2.2 Appropriate learning methods for gaining communicative ability**

Similar to the opinion that learning English for academic success required appropriate methods, interviewees also held the need for appropriate methods for gaining communicative ability (see Table 5-6). However, according to these interviewees (see Table 5-6), methods for gaining communicative ability were different. It seemed that to obtain language



sense and to use the language were held as the most appropriate methods for such a goal.

In explaining the importance of obtaining language sense, interviewee 4 used the example of first language learning (see section 4.3.6 q53) and suggested that language use relied on automatic application of language, which was largely determined by a type of sense rather than isolated grammar rules.

If you do not use it but simply memorize all kinds of grammar, you not only tended to face enormous difficulty but also forget about it soon. (4/41-42; q111)

His opinion was a good example of Krashen's (1985) notable theory of language acquisition. According to Krashen (ibid.) language acquisition is a constructive process, in which learners do not attentively study the language but formulate hypotheses about rules in the language and continuously test them out in language use. For interviewee 4, to obtain language sense overcame the difficulties such as studying grammar, large quantity of memorization load, and postponing responses in real time communication. Moreover, he implied that language sense was obtainable in real language use.

However, unlike interviewee 4 who thought development of language sense and language use were interwoven; interviewee 2 held that memorization was an effective way to obtain language sense. He said:

Perhaps in the beginning, you should invest more time, because you need to activate your whole brain, which takes lot of time. When you have certain cognitive ability in English, you do not need much time, half an hour each day is enough [...] Only keeping frequent contact will be fine (2/247-250; q112)

For interviewee 2, language sense was based on a certain accumulation of language knowledge. It was possible that there was little chance of using the language in an EFL environment; therefore, he had to resort to English

materials to enhance the language input. In relation to his searching for authentic English novels (see section 4.3.1) what he meant by memorization greatly differed from the mechanical repetition of vocabulary lists but rather was concerned with meaningful input.

It should be pointed out that a lack of opportunities for using English did not mean that there was no opportunity. For interviewees such as 7, communicative ability was gained through interacting with native speakers.

She said:

Good spoken English needed practice...your classmates were similar to you [...] by talking with her (foreign teacher), you could improve quickly (7/85-86; q113)

Although she used the word 'practice', she was suggesting using the language in a meaningful way, for example, chatting with her foreign teacher in order to improve her spoken English.

Interestingly, questionnaire data (Q No..26 see Appendix XXXIV) showed that slightly more than half of the respondents valued the importance of obtaining language sense in order to gain communicative ability (see Table 5-8). However, less than half of the respondents agreed that communication in English was an effective method (see Table 5-9) In relation to section 4.3.6, where students reported obtaining language sense through repetitive reading texts, it was possible that students did not disagree with communication in English but that they found it was practically unavailable in an EFL environment.



		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	287	65.8	66.3	66.3
	no	146	33.5	33.7	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 5-8 (Questionnaire results): obtaining language sense for communicative ability (n=436)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	198	45.4	45.7	45.7
	no	235	53.9	54.3	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 5-9 (Questionnaire results): finding chances to communicate in English (n=436)

As discussed in section 5.3.2.3, students seemed to have the task knowledge to learn English for communicative use purposes. Nevertheless, such a notion is also possibly subsumed by the recognition of practical constraints.

### 5.4.2.3 Learner responsibility for proactive learning

In contrast to taking a reactive responsibility for academic success (see section 5.3.2.1), learner responsibility for communicative ability entailed that learners themselves had an absolute responsibility for learning, including initiating their own learning tasks (see Table 5-6). For these interviewees, only they themselves knew the best way for them to learn, and therefore, they should cater for their own learning needs and facilitate their own language learning. For example, when interviewee 2 figured out his own need to improve intensive reading skills, he followed his own plan of reading.

E: [...] there were about 100 exercises. They were all done by myself. I did not do teacher assigned tasks.

R: Why?

E: I did not like his requirement. I was unwilling to do his assigned tasks. I even did not do homework. I did not think he knew me. What he assigned was for the whole class. I was confident in my own judgement and decision. I knew what I needed.

R: For example?

E: Because I improved a lot in overall grasp of English, I thought his requirement was a low or middle level. But what I needed was to improve intensive reading skills, understanding of the whole sentences, some deeper meanings. I needed that most. He gave me other things instead. Of course I did not do it. (2/133-143; q114)

At first sight, interviewee 2 engaged himself in doing exercises, which could be misinterpreted as preparation for exams. However, unlike those in section 5.3.2.3 who associated better exam results with large amounts of exercises, his reasons for his self-initiated objectives suggested that he expected to enhance his ability to understand English. In fact, interviewee 2 was not the only person who rejected the teachers' assigned tasks. Interviewee 8 also shared the opinion that she knew herself the best and was able to identify her personal learning objectives.

Most of the time, I relied on myself...what the teacher taught was similar to reference books, I would rather read reference books by myself. It was more efficient. I felt my level was a bit higher, but the teacher's concern was mainly with the majority. (8/38-44; q115)

This notion was affirmed by the majority of questionnaire respondents (Q No. 26) who disagreed that they should refer to the teachers' advice in order to gain communicative ability (see following table).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	28	6.4	6.5	6.5
	no	405	92.9	93.5	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 5-10 (Questionnaire results): referring to teachers' advice on how to gain communicative ability (n=436)



As stated by Coleman (1997), the students' self initiated language learning contributes crucially to their language proficiency. Likewise, Gan et al. (2004) argue that successful language learners involve themselves in extra language learning activities. Students in the present study seemed to support such notions.

#### 5.4.2.4 Persistence

A few interviewees (see Table 5-6) expressed that English is a language and to learn it well needed **frequent contact**, namely, persistence in their words. It should be pointed out that what interviewees meant by persistence was different from hard work, which had been discussed in section 5.3.2.4. For persistence, interviewees emphasised the frequency of learning whereas for hard work, they implied a large quantity of work within a short period of time, for example, in preparation for coming exams. As pointed out by interviewee 20,

You can't stop learning English. You probably could pick up other subjects if you didn't study for a while. But it was not applicable to English. If you gave up for some time, you found that you declined dramatically (20/222-225; q116)

What he implied was the demand for learner persistence since one had to be determined to encounter English in a non-English environment. For some interviewees, persistence even outperformed the learning methods. For example,

There were different methods to learn English, but persistence was the most important (4/169-170; q117)

Gaining communicative ability was a long-term mission. On the one hand, the state of mastery was somehow infinite since no adult can actually achieve native-like proficiency (Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2000). In other words, learners had to be persistent in order to narrow the gap between non-native speakers and native speakers to the maximum extent.

On the other hand, being a language, if English was not used or encountered, it was unlikely to be learned.

This was agreed by interviewee 11 who held that effective learning came out of genuine persistence in learning.

You would definitely see the learning effect if you were persistent in learning English (11/159; q118).

Similarly, interviewee 16 gave a more elaborate account of the need for persistence in English language learning.

English is a language that requires us to memorize and know lots of things. If you only read something in a shallow way, there is no quantity and quality. English should be based on quantity then you can have a big leap. Therefore, persistence is very important at least to increase the quantity, which is the base (16/154-156; q119)

Different from interviewee 16 who thought persistence was to lay a foundation for future progress, interviewee 2 pointed out that persistence had another function, that of maintaining one's level rather than letting it decline (see section 5.4.2.2).

Moreover, realizing that persistence was difficult, some interviewees articulated the importance of forming good learning habits. As stated by interviewee 4,

I found it was difficult to be persistent. But if it became a habit, it would be easier (4/75; q120)

Likewise, interviewee 24 expressed a similar opinion

If you formed the habit to learn English, you could easily do it (24/172-174; q121)



By 'a good habit', interviewees did not mean that there was a standard way of learning, but rather a personalized style to engage oneself in English language learning. For example,

A good learning habit is important...if you form the habit of reading English newspapers and it naturally becomes part of your life. You do not need others to urge you [...] (13/107-108; q122)

What these three interviewees suggested was that good learning habits could make English language learning become a routine task. This concern largely came from the students' anxiety about the learning effort and persistence that was demanded by learning English. For them, it seemed that once a learner was used to regular learning, language learning became subconscious and involved less affective effort thus unloading the burden of struggling for persistence.

A few researchers (e.g. Lee, 1996; Hsu, 2005) hold that persistence is a Chinese characteristic of learning that stems from the *Confucian Analects* and was emphasised by the Chinese people who prepared the Service Exam in ancient times. Although persistence was also mentioned by some interviewees in the present study, there was insufficient evidence to claim that this was a direct influence of the cultural heritage. To date, hardly any research has investigated students' language learning habits except that Rao (2006: 505) gives a glimpse of Chinese learners' habitual learning that emphasises 'linguistic detail, repetition, and review'. The present study shows that language learners' learning habits are about how to arrange English language learning into one's routine, with the intention to persist in learning. However, as discussed above, students' learning habits could be diverse and personalised.

### 5.4.2.5 English language environment

With the recognition that successful language learning is language use, 7 interviewees (see Table 5-6) thought an English language environment a necessary condition. Ideally, interviewees expected to go to English speaking countries and be immersed in an English language environment.

For example,

For real English language learning, you should go abroad. Since people around you all speak Chinese, you cannot practise. But if you go abroad, you have to use it when you do something. For example, you go shopping in the supermarket. Here there is no such environment (3/85-87; q123)

Likewise, interviewee 8 not only thought a native language environment afforded the opportunity of language use but also provided input that was authentic rather than artificial book knowledge.

(Real English language learning) is to go to English speaking countries. Have contact with authentic English, not exam type of English, but one that can be used to communicate. And all levels of English, daily English, academic English etc. (8/80-81; q124)

A secondary choice to going to English speaking countries was to create an English environment within the home country. As suggested by interviewees 5 and 12,

Chinese people who learn English are unlikely to have a good language environment [...] if I am learning English but my classmates around me are talking in Chinese, I do not think I can open my mouth. Even if I try to read a text aloud, I can hardly read it fluently (5/140; 155-156; q125)

I think an English environment is very important. I mean the atmosphere that everyone is speaking English [...] if everyone is speaking English, you naturally come up with English. It is natural, not disconnected with what you have learned. (12/164; 166-167; q126)

For interviewee 5, the lack of an English environment caused learning anxiety and thus hindered language learning; for interviewee 12, a proper



environment not only assisted language retrieval but also provided a platform for language use.

A few studies have reported students' use of different patterns of strategies in an EFL and ESL environment (e.g. Gao, 2003; Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown, 1999). For example, Gao (2003) finds Chinese students no longer feel the heavy load of learning vocabulary such as in their home country. Interviewees in the present study also predicted the advantage of learning English for its mastery in the target language environment.

In summary, interviewees' conceptions of successful English language learning can be illustrated by the following table.

Nature of English language learning		A subject for exams	A language for communicative use	
Criteria for successful language learning		Exam results	Communicative ability	
Conditions for successful language learning	Learner responsibility	assigned task, or plus recommended task	own tasks	
	Appropriate methods	Memorization, practice (doing exercises)	Meaningful memorization, obtain language sense, language use	
	Effort	Hardwork	Persistence (Good learning habits)	
	Attitude	Positive, serious	Willingness	
	A good teacher	Good teaching methods		
		Proper guidance		
		Being responsible		
		Being passionate		
		Knowledgeable	Standard pronunciation	
Being strict				
Others		English language environment		

Table 5-11 Interviewees' conceptions of successful English language learning

As can be seen from the above table, students showed a sufficient understanding of two distinctive types of English language learning:

academic achievement and communicative language use. Accordingly, they also reported conditions for achieving respective success based on their judgement on the task demand. The table, however, did not categorize students in the present studies into two distinctive groups. As is to be discussed in the following sections, some of the conditions were shared by both types of English language learning. Moreover, students' conceptions were more complex than the table can present.

## **5.5 Complexity of students' conceptions of successful English language learning**

As discussed in previous sections, interview data showed that students' conceptions of successful English language learning were understood in two distinctive categories: academic success and communicative language use, which corresponded with a similar distinction in their recognition of the nature of English language learning, the criteria for successful English language learning, and the necessary conditions involved. However, in reality, students were found to juggle with the two sets of objectives in almost every aspect that was involved.

### **5.5.1 Dual purposes of English language learning**

As shown in Table 5-1, some interviewees expressed dual purposes of English language learning: a subject for exams and a language for communicative use, since being students, they had to survive all kinds of school exams; at the same time, being language learners, they expected to be able to use the language fluently. However, these two distinctive purposes did not necessarily contradict each other if students were able to manage them. First, some interviewees chose to follow the school system when English was a compulsory exam subject. Whether communicative



ability became their concern or not depended on their development of recognition, interest, or practical needs.

For example, interviewees 3 and 14 both followed exam-oriented language learning in secondary school. However, they came to understand that language should be learned for communicative language use when they became university students. Therefore, their comments on their previous language learning experiences were negative. For interviewee 3,

R: your exam score was quite high, why did you say your English was poor?

E: I felt they were different types of abilities. I had good ability to take exams and mastered sentence patterns or grammar well. But listening and speaking were poor. On many occasions, I heard a familiar word but just could not think of the meaning (3/96-99; q127)

I felt it was a failure for nine-years of English language learning, I only learned English for the National Entrance Exam (14/78-79; q128)

This by no means suggested that they were unsuccessful learners. In fact, according to their teacher-evaluation and admission score (see Appendix IX), both of them were successful. Their regret about learning for exams implied that they treated English learning as a subject for exams at secondary school yet now they recognized it as a language for communicative use.

Second, some interviewees thought communicative language use was a higher objective and to aim for it would naturally solve the conflict between learning for exams and learning for use. An example is interviewee 2, who thought aiming at communicative language use as the criterion could contribute to his exam performance. He said:

There were people who were better than me, I meant they had better results on exercises. However, in the National Entrance Exam, my result was better than theirs. I felt questions in the National Entrance Exam were quite flexible. They were not rigid questions that were practised by us in our preparation. You could

only work out the answers when you really understood English  
(318-321; q129)

His quote suggested two points: first, better results of exercises were not really 'better' since these 'exercises' (ordinary exams at school) were not real exams (National Entrance Exam). Second, to aim at gaining communicative ability, 'understand English' helped one to perform better in important exams. What he implied was that school exams were only for evaluating low level learning, and to focus on such would result in poor performance in the more challenging exams that involved real English language abilities..

As indicated by the questionnaire data (Q No..22), the majority of the respondents showed that they had dual purposes for English language learning (see Table 5-12) Interestingly, although the interview data suggested that the majority of them had treated learning English as an exam subject, for most of their language learning experience (such as in secondary level), in the questionnaire the respondents showed the opposite.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid exam score	12	2.8	2.8	2.8
gaining communicative ability	197	45.2	45.3	48.0
both exam score and gaining communicative ability	226	51.8	52.0	100.0
Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing 999	1	.2		
Total	436	100.0		

Table 5-12 (Questionnaire results): students' conceptions of the nature of English language learning (n=436)

Possibly, when answering questions, respondents all focused on their most recent conceptions, which was evident from the students' responses



to their future English language learning: 81.1% considered learning English to be for communicative language use and 29.9% were concerned about improving their academic score (see Q 49 Appendix XXXIV).

In college English education, language aspects such as communicative ability are more emphasised than knowledge aspects such as vocabulary lists or grammar rules (see section 6.3.1.1).

### 5.5.2 Layers of learner responsibility

As discussed in sections 5.3.2.1 and 5.4.2.1, interviewees strongly agreed that learning was their own responsibility, which was further supported by 93% of the questionnaire respondents (Q No.. 43. see Appendix XXXIV) who held the same opinion. However, this responsibility seemed to be in different degrees depending on the teachers' role involved. As shown by the following questionnaire data (Q No.s. 48 and 50) which seemed to strongly suggest that learner responsibility did not necessarily exclude the teachers' role in the learning process.

Students' top 3 roles in English language learning	Teachers' top 3 roles in English language learning
Carry out learning plans (273, 63.3%)	Point out learning direction (277, 64.6%)
Initiate learning activities (236, 54.8%)	Introduce learning methods (230, 53.6%)
Participate in activities both in and after class (210, 48.8%)	Pass on knowledge (204, 47.6%)

Table 5-13 (Questionnaire results): students' perceived learners' roles and teachers' roles in English language learning (n=436)

In further probing what they meant by 'self-dependence', interviewees provided four major categories of answers:

#### **Exam-reactive learner responsibility**

you don't need others to push you...prepare yourself for the exams...exams results became your reference for positioning yourself [...] less dependent on your teacher' (20/267-268; q130)

### **Teacher-reactive learner responsibility**

You should finish teachers' assigned tasks first [...] .but you should learn more...it's not imposition but your interest and persistence [...] doing exercises for exams oppresses autonomy (16/108; 120-121; q131)

### **Semi-proactive learner responsibility**

You follow your own way of learning. First, you have a direction, teachers can help guide you the direction, but it's your own decision as to what you should do, follow the plan and check whether you keep to it afterwards (2/281-283; q132)

### **Proactive learner responsibility**

It is a state that you want to learn it (English), you have the freedom and you are learning it, you learn it autonomously and you know how to learn it (10/143-144; q133)

As stated in sections 5.3.2.1 and 5.4.2.3, students' accounts of learner responsibility could be interpreted as two major categories: reactive learning and proactive learning. However, their concrete descriptions implied further distinctions among them. As shown in the four quotes, the major difference seemed to be who was directing the learning process: exam direction, prioritizing teachers' direction, with reference to teachers' direction, and solely own direction.

Overall, these conceptions of learner responsibility seemed to be in a hierarchical order as shown in the following pyramid diagram.



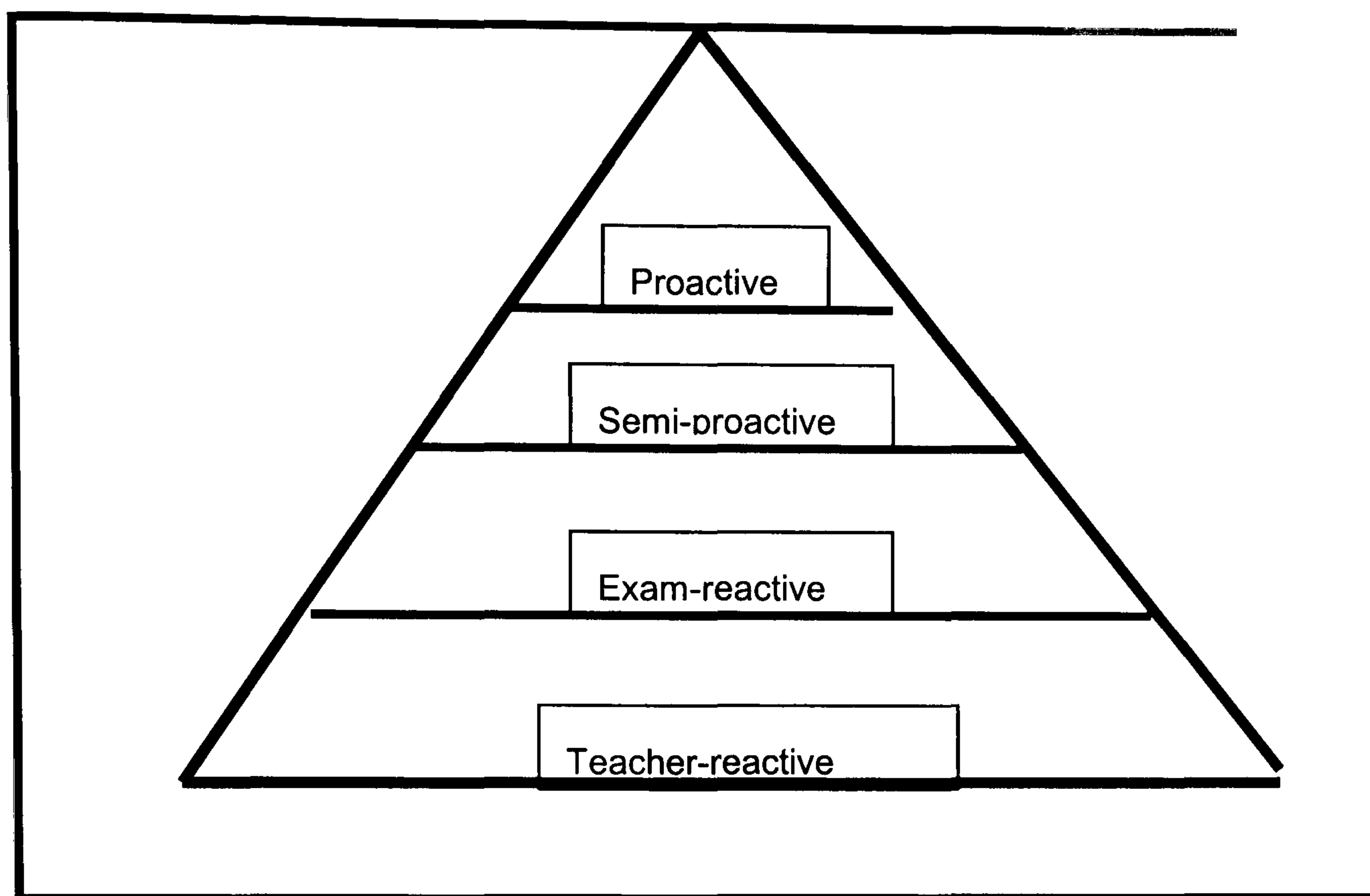


Table 5-14 interviewees' definitions of self-dependence

As can be seen from the diagram, the teachers' role faded out along with the height of the pyramid. At the same time, the interviewees' recognition of the nature of English language learning also changed from English as an exam subject to English as a language for use. However, it was difficult to conclude that all the interviewees' conceptions of 'self-dependence' followed the same trend as the pyramid went up. Their conceptions seemed to be directly influenced by their learning situations (see sections 6.2.3 and 6.3.1.1).

Such complexity was also demonstrated by questionnaire data (Q No..44). Students' answers to the four categories of definitions<sup>1</sup> were complex: 53 supporting exam-directed learning; 168 prioritizing teachers' direction; 93 referring to teachers' direction; and 91 totally preferring own initiation.

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<sup>1</sup> Different terms as a result of interview data analysis were not used in the questionnaire items. Instead, students were given the original definitions provided by the interviewees.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	teacher-reactive	53	12.2	13.0	13.0
	Exam-reactive	168	38.5	41.3	54.3
	semi-proactive	93	21.3	22.9	77.1
	proactive	91	20.9	22.4	99.5
	finish English language learning tasks independently, evaluate learning effect through exams	2	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	407	93.3	100.0	
Missing	999	29	6.7		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 5-15 (Questionnaire results): definitions of 'self-dependence' (n=436)

In the literature, Littlewood (1999: 75) claims that Asian learners' learning can be understood as being of two types: reactive and proactive, the former is the initial step towards the latter. Data findings in the present study suggest that students' learning was much more complex than these superficial categories. For example, when students took reactive roles in learning, they showed that their reactions were not merely toward teachers, such as is maintained by Littlewood (*ibid.*), but also possibly to exams. Moreover, who/what triggered students' reactions implied different levels of learner responsibility. In addition, interviewees were possibly situated in different levels in the pyramid (see Table 5-14), which also disagrees with Littlewood's (*ibid.*) assertion that reactive learning is the initial step that leads to proactive learning.

### 5.5.3 Mixture of learning methods

Although interviewees reported different learning methods for different purposes of English language learning, they were found to use different methods simultaneously. For example, interviewee 2 actually transferred his exam-oriented way of learning to a language-oriented one (see section 4.4.1). Likewise, for interviewee 4, mechanical memorization and



meaningful imitation of tapes were both thought necessary (see sections 5.3.2.3 and 5.4.2.2).

Moreover, some interviewees suggested that using learning methods for communicative language use contributed to exam performance. For example, interviewee 9 thought language sense was helpful in answering exam questions.

If you asked me to analyse grammar, perhaps I could not explain, but I know it should be used like that, it was all about a kind of sense, language sense (9/35-36; q134)

This was confirmed by interviewee 8 who gave similar examples.

E: I think it is still language sense that works such as language used in movies or music [...] so many expression you did not learn before and were strange...in exams I often filled in an answer according to the song. Surprisingly, it was right.

R: for example?

E: there was a phrase "see somebody doing" that I never saw before. What we were taught by the teacher at that time was "see somebody do". Then in the exam, there was a cloze test, I felt I should fill in a participle then I did it. I was right. Things like this were not unusual. I got to know them all from songs or dialogues in movies (8/55-62; q135)

It seemed however there were certain methods that apparently tended to be associated with certain purposes of English language learning. Students in the present study were certainly making sense of the methods they knew and showed that they were trying out various methods in the process of their English language learning.

#### **5.5.4 Mutually applicable conditions**

In addition to the interchangeable learning methods for different language learning purposes, interviewees reported that other conditions for successful language learning were also found applicable to both purposes of English language learning. For example, a good teacher was thought to be both necessary for academic success and for gaining communicative

ability (see section 5.3.2.2). The teacher's possible influences on students' English language learning, either for academic success or for gaining communicative ability, will be further discussed in sections 6.2.5.1 and 6.3.2 respectively. At the same time, interviewees indicated that willingness in English language learning helped remedy a negative attitude towards learning for exams. Interviewee 16, for example, used her interest in English literature to distract her from learning anxiety in exam preparation (see section 4.2.5) Moreover, making effort and being persistent were not mutually exclusive since both involved a certain investment of time and energy.

In general, the interviewees' conceptions of English language learning changed along with the contextual factors, for example, from learning English for exams to mastery of English, which will be further discussed in chapter 6. However, given the individual diversity, some interviewees came to realize the importance of gaining communicative ability much earlier than did others, which in turn displayed a complex picture of the students' perceptions of the learners' roles, learning methods, and other conditions for successful language learning.

## **5.6 Summary**

This chapter started by introducing what the students recognized as the nature of English language learning: its being an exam subject and being a language for communicative use. Then, students' conceptions of successful English language learning, for academic success and for communicative language use, were described, including the different criteria for success and the conditions for success. The chapter ended with discussion of the complexity of the students' conceptions, involving the purposes of English language learning, the different perspectives on



learner responsibility, learning methods, and some overlap of conditions to achieve language learning success.

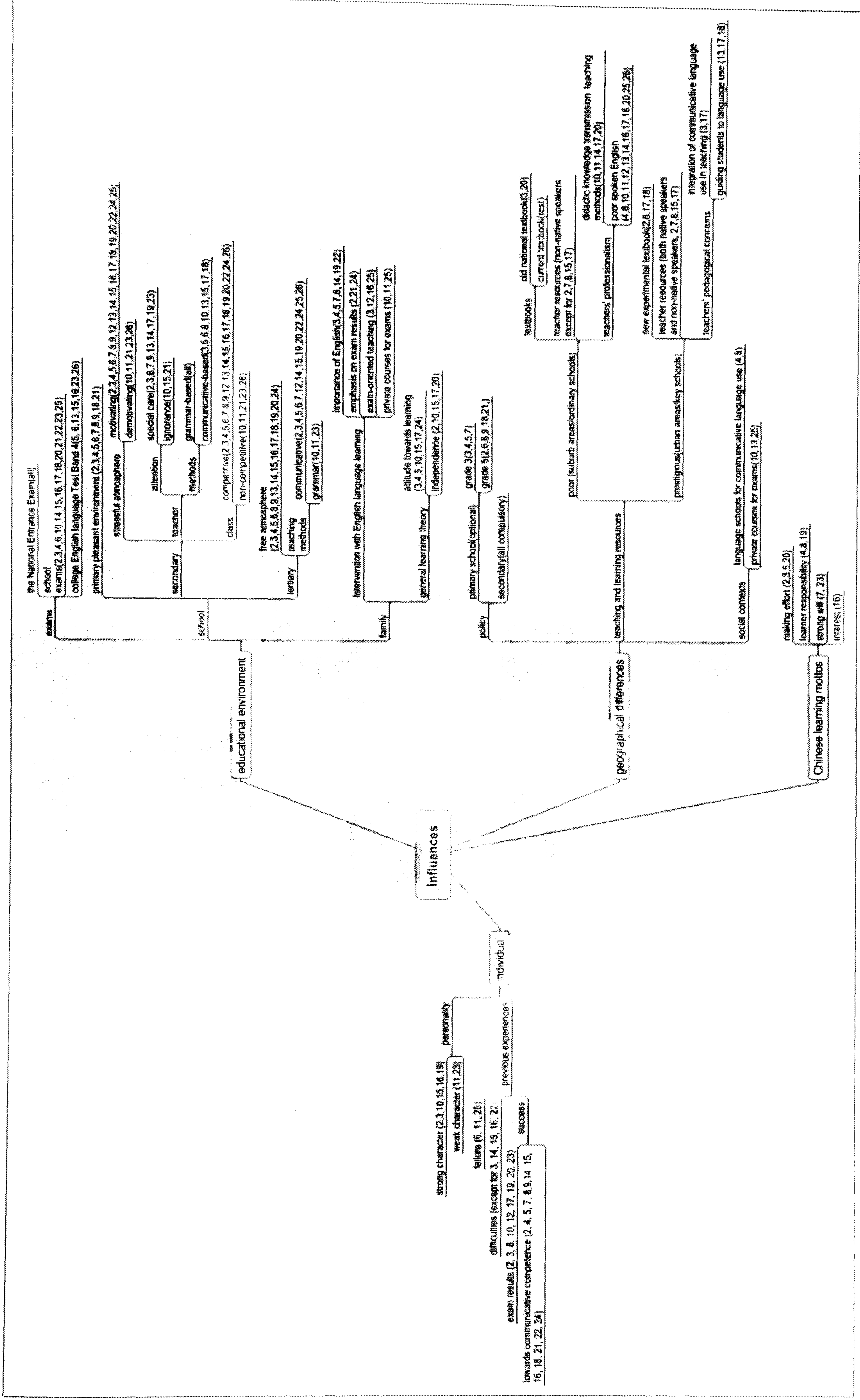
# **CHAPTER 6 INFLUENCES ON STUDENTS' CONCEPTIONS AND/OR REPORTED BEHAVIOURS WITH REGARD TO SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

## **6.1 Introduction**

As stated in chapter 3, influences on students' conceptions and/or reported behaviours emerged as another important category in the present study. This was possibly because when students reported their language learning behaviours and/or described their conceptions of English language learning, they naturally justified their narration, or sometimes had been questioned in the research, to explain their behaviours and/or conceptions. Since students' reported influences were quite complex in terms of what had been influenced, for example, reported behaviours for English language learning or conceptions of English language learning, or both, I decided to put it after chapter 4 (students' reported behaviours of English language learning) and chapter 5 (students' conceptions of English language learning).

As shown by Figure 6-1, four major sources of influences on students' conceptions, reported behaviours or both with regard to successful English language learning were identified from the data, namely, educational environment, geographical differences, Chinese proverbs/learning mottos, and individual factors, with each category being split into further smaller categories. For example, educational environment consisted of exam system, levels of school education, and family education; Geographical differences involved diversity in policies, teaching and learning resources, and societal contexts; Chinese learning mottos included different themes, and; Individual factors, mainly falling into two subcategories: individual personality and students' previous learning experiences.







As stated in chapter 4, the findings and discussion chapters were organized using the major distinction between the students' purposes of English language learning, i.e. academic success and communicative language use. After careful reflective thinking and questioning, and as a result of careful examination of the core category (see Figure 6-1), the present chapter followed this distinction. With reference to Figure 6-1, students' reported influences on conceptions, and/or reported behaviours for successful English language learning could be understood with a distinction between what success meant to students. For example, when success meant the students' pursuit of academic success, the influences on students' conceptions, reported behaviours or both were found to be composed of the following categories: the educational system that emphasises exams, the teachers' instructional methods, the competitive secondary school environment, the authority of family education, the private exams courses, and poor teaching and learning resources (see section 6.2). Likewise, when success meant gaining communicative ability, the influences on students' conceptions, reported behaviours or both contained the following categories: a flexible school environment, democratic family education, prestigious teaching and learning resources, and a language school for the society (see section 6.3). As happened in both chapters 4 and 5, this distinction did not necessarily mean that all identified categories could be put into these two distinctive themes.

The present chapter starts with the students' reported influences on students' conceptions, and/or reported behaviours with regard to their pursuit of English for academic success (see section 6.2). Then it moves on to discuss influences on students' conceptions, and/or reported behaviours with regard to their pursuit of communicative ability (see section 6.3). The chapter ends with the complex relationship between the



identified influences on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours and type of success students pursued (see section 6.4).

## 6.2 Reported influences on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours for English language learning oriented towards academic success

As shown by Table 6-1, five types of influences on students' conceptions, and/or reported behaviours with regard to their pursuit of English for academic success were identified: the exam system, the teachers' grammar-based teaching methods, the competitive secondary school environment, family education, and poor teaching and learning resources. All these aspects will be further discussed in the sections below.

Sources of influences		Interviewees
exam system		all
teachers' grammar-based teaching methods		all
competitive secondary school environment		all except for 21, 23
family education	parents' authority	4, 7, 9, 12, 14, 22, 24, 25
	importance of English	3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 14, 19, 22, 24, 25
	exam-oriented instruction	3, 12, 16, 25
	emphasis on exam results	2, 21, 24
	private course for exams	10, 11, 25
poor teaching and learning resources	teachers' professionalism	4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 25, 26
	non-native speakers	2, 7, 8, 15, 17
	old textbooks	3, 20

Table 6-1 influences on students' conceptions, and/or reported behaviours with regard to their pursuit of English for academic success

## 6.2.1 Emphasis on exam success in the educational system

According to Table 6-1, all interviewees suggested that the educational system, with its emphasis on exams, had influences on their conceptions, and/or reported behaviours for pursuit of academic success. As a matter of fact English is a compulsory exam subject in the National Entrance Exam and subsequent graduation exams in secondary school. Chinese learners have to learn English in order to secure their tertiary education, regardless of their attitudinal preferences (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Hu, 2004). Like it or not, students had to engage themselves with learning for academic survival at least.

As articulated by some of the interviewees, the educational system was something that had been established and should be treated seriously. For example,

It was the result of traditional education, there was no way not to take it seriously. In the current educational system, the National Entrance Exam is the landmark. For example, my classmates, we had little difference in high school. I came to Tsinghua. He went to a local university. He felt my status suddenly increased. It was all about a type of conception. He felt graduation from Tsinghua greatly differed from local university. (2/200-203; q136)

The quote above showed that the educational system, more specifically, the National Entrance Exam, exerted important influences on Chinese learners' learning. By giving an indirect example, interviewee 2 revealed the common mentality among Chinese learners: first, the National Entrance Exam was of great significance; second, different rankings of universities meant different prospects for the future. This obviously doubled the pressure for most Chinese learners. As stated in chapter 1, the selection system for tertiary admission is quite complex and one has to be outstandingly good in order to enter a higher-ranking university.



Interviewee 6 expressed a similar attitude, i.e. that Chinese learners' English language learning was subject to the overall educational system:

In middle school, we learned English for a better high school, in high school for a better university [...] (6/157; q137)

For interviewees 2 and 6, although the educational system was not ideal, it was unlikely that they could change it; therefore, their best choice was to try their best within the system. Moreover, both of them suggested that their opinion was not the only case. For example, interviewee 2 used other's perspectives rather than his own to express how much different ranks of university meant to learners; interviewee 6 used the plural form 'we' to indicate a general situation.

Moreover, even though some interviewees strongly criticized the educational system, they seemed to have no alternative. For example,

I do not know why Chinese students learn English like this. I do not know what the situation is in big cities such as Beijing or Shanghai. Anyway, in places like the mid-west, we only learned through rote. English was absolutely a burden. We had a popular saying: I am Chinese why I should learn English? (14/57-60; q138)

It seemed that interviewee 14's unhappiness with the educational system resulted from the teaching method and the nature of English as a compulsory exam subject. From his awareness of geographical differences in teaching methods (see section 6.2.2), he was suggesting that if the English teaching method had been different, the situation could have been different. However, according to his own experience and his observation of his counterparts, the prevailing teaching method was knowledge transmission that involved a large quantity of mechanical memorization. It seemed that the dissatisfaction with the teaching method extended beyond the method itself to the overall system.

This strong opinion against the status of English at all levels of the selection of elite students was echoed by interviewee 21 who attacked the system with even more severe words:

Hardly any country in the world increased foreign language learning to such a high status. For example, to do a Master in Ancient Chinese, you should take an English language exam [...] I felt the whole nation increased the status of English to an incredible height. It seemed if a vegetable salesperson could not speak English, he or she could not survive in this world. I thought this was a big mistake in conceptions. (21/199-202; q139)

Interviewee 21 strongly disagreed with the high profile that the Ministry of Education set for English language in school learning. Like interviewee 14, he attributed his unhappy English language learning experience to the poor educational system. Moreover, he felt the popularity of English within the nation exacerbated the situation.

High stakes exams in China are often thought of as an important factor that leads to Chinese language learners' engagement with exam-oriented learning behaviours such as memorization, doing exercises and revision (e.g. Huang, 2007; Rao , 2006; Jin and Cortazzi ,2006; and Hu, 2005). According to Rao (2006: 503), 'success in public examinations, particularly the National Matriculation Examination, means that one can expect a secure, high-status and well paid career after graduation from university'. This seemed to be confirmed by the questionnaire respondents who reported their motivation to learn English, which can be summarized as follows (See Q No.. 21 in Appendix XXXIV):

<b>Motivation to learn English</b>	<b>Number (Percentage)</b>
Most important exams need it	328 (75.6%)
Helpful for future career	306 (70.5%)
Can combine with major	186 (42.9%)
Can communicate with foreigners	171 (39.4%)
Understand original movies/novels	92 (21.2%)
Know English culture	28 (6.5%)

Table 6-2 (questionnaire results): students' reported motivation to learn English (n=436)



As can be seen from the above table, that the educational system stresses exams became a strong source of influence on the students' motivation to learn English. Moreover, such an emphasis had a chained effect on the students' perceived future career, which also impacted on the students' motivation to learn English for academic success.

### **6.2.2 Teachers' knowledge-transmission oriented instructions**

As Table 6-1 shows, all interviewees held that the teachers' knowledge-transmission oriented practice had influences on students' conceptions, and/behaviours for the pursuit of academic success. First, teachers' instruction directly influenced students' conceptions of successful English language as equating to academic success that was composed of fixed knowledge items. As stated in chapter 5, students' who reported English learning for academic success considered English to be a set of linguistic items. This seemed to be influenced by their English language teachers' knowledge-transmission oriented instructions. Still taking interviewee 11 for example,

Her teaching was quite rigid, only following her teaching plan. Some language points, she not only taught in this lesson but also repeated in the next. Our notes were huge. We all felt bored [...] we were all busy taking her notes, hardly having time to listen to her instruction. Perhaps she was new. Our classmates talked with her about the size of her notes, but she remained the same. (11/62-63; 65-66; q140)

As can be seen from the above quote, not only was the knowledge-transmission teaching practice highly repeated, but it was also a practice inherited by the newly recruited teachers.

Likewise, interviewee 17 reported that her English learning was mainly about grammar, reading comprehension and the teachers' selected language points:

Only grammar was learned well. For reading, I did not do enough; for listening, we did not have specific equipment, only depending on teachers who taught some language points (17/11-12; q141)

Completely teacher-fronted instruction based on discrete language forms prevailed. Similarly, interviewee 20's teacher prioritized teaching reading skills:

My teacher told me 'our condition was not good, you should focus on reading. Try your best to read more and I could teach you some methods. (20/17; q142)

Second, teachers' instructional practice at the same time influenced students' learning behaviours that were associated with linguistic knowledge in order to succeed in various exams. As already discussed in chapter 4, students were dedicatedly involved in different kinds of exam exercises in order to obtain good exams scores.

It is worth mentioning that although all interviewees mentioned that they had teachers who carried out knowledge-transmission teaching methods, it appeared that such a method was the most popular at secondary education level (see sections 6.2.3 and 6.3.1) and with teachers in less developed areas. Taking interviewee 14, for example,

We students from the mid-west have a common character. That is, to learn English for the National Entrance Exam. What is to be examined will be learned. What is not to be examined will not be learned [...] although we had high exam scores, our overall language abilities are quite low, which can only cope with the National Entrance Exam. (14/34-35; 38-39; q143)

As pointed out by Hu (2003), teachers' professional qualifications and their instructional practices had direct influences on the students' language learning behaviours. Data in the present study confirmed that low teacher



qualification (see section 6.2.5.1) and teaching practices based on knowledge-transmission were particularly pertinent to students' conceptions and reported behaviours for their pursuit of English for academic success only.

### **6.2.3 Competitive secondary school environment**

As stated in chapter 4, secondary school education occupied a large proportion of the interviewees' narration since it constituted the longest time in their English language learning history and had special meaning to them. In particular, the high pressure of surviving school exams that all students underwent was reported by a majority of the interviewees (see Table 6-1) to have greatly influenced both the interviewees' conceptions and their reported English language learning for academic success. One common feature of the stressful secondary school environment was the explicit or implicit competition among students, which could happen to a class as a community or a student as an individual.

Taking interviewee 19's account as one example,

The overall level of English in our class was better than other classes, so we had a stronger atmosphere to learn English. Even if the teacher assigned lots of homework, we had no complaint [...] in whatever exams, our class was always the top one in the Grade and in the school in general. Since our school has four attached sections and our English always got the first one (19/46-47; 52-54; q144)

Although it was unclear who initiated ranking, for example, the school or the learners themselves, an important message conveyed was that a better-ranked classroom community endowed its participants with a collective sense of honour, which sustained a positive attitude towards English language learning in various aspects. First, it supported an acceptable amount of effort made in the subject. It is worth mentioning that the National Entrance Exam involves five compulsory subjects. In other

words, learners have to prepare for another four subjects that are of equal significance to English. Therefore, it would be unfair to require learners to learn English only. However, according to interviewee 19, he and his classmates well accepted the extra tasks assigned by the teacher since they shared a common goal to keep their No.1 position in the Grade and the School. Second, the honour of being the top class in the subject of English in the School would make it less likely that they would challenge the given exam system. Within such a community, it seemed that the honour of the class became the supreme concern and everyone was proud if they could contribute to the overall success in exam results.

Slightly different from interviewee 19, interviewee 18 was inclined to emphasize how he as an individual had to strive for better exam results under the pressure of competition within his class:

At that time my English was the best in middle school and also top in the Grade. However in high school, mine was not good enough, we had very good students. Even our English teacher would be modest before them. There were four who took the TOFEL test and two of them got over 630 [...] in the final year of high school, we often compared among ourselves. If anyone did not get a good enough score, he would feel ashamed (18/9-12; 52-53; q145)

As described by interviewee 18, his high school class was full of competent students. For example, his classmates could take the TOFEL test, and with good results, which was rare among Chinese high school students. For interviewee 18, TOFEL was much more difficult than the National Entrance Exam and to compete with students who had TOFEL experience seemed to be difficult. However, interviewee 18 indicated that he enjoyed such competition and endeavoured to obtain better exam results.

Just as expressed by interviewee 6 (see section 6.2.1), competition had accompanied Chinese learners since the start of their formal education, and secondary education tended to make such competition fiercer. Such a



tendency can be evidenced from the questionnaire respondents' background education, which is summarized in the following table (see Q No.s. 8-10 in Appendix XXXIV).

Level of education	Provincial key school	City key school	Ordinary school
Primary school	19 (4.4%)	74 (17%)	342 (78.6%)
Middle school	85 (19.5%)	127 (29.2%)	223 (51.1%)
High school	255 (58.6%)	133 (30.6%)	47 (10.8%)

Table 6-3 (questionnaire results): Students' educational background (n=436)

Apparently, the number of students who aimed at key schools, either provincial or city goes up along with the level of education, which strongly indicated the rise of competition among students. Since the only criterion for schools to select students is exam results, strong competition as revealed by the interviewees' narration greatly influenced students' conceptions of academic success and their language learning behaviours.

#### **6.2.4 The authority of family education**

As Table 6-1 shows, the authority of family education played an essential role in influencing both students' conceptions and reported behaviours for their pursuit of academic success in English. For example, emphasis on the importance of English and exam results, exam-oriented teaching and sending children on private courses for exams affected students' conceptions and corresponding learning behaviours for academic success. The following sections will discuss them in detail.

##### **6.2.4.1 Emphasis on importance of English**

10 interviewees reported that their parents emphasized the importance of English at home (see Table 6-1). Family education could help children realize the importance of the English language and therefore influenced their motivation in learning. Not all learners are inherently interested in

English and for those who are extrinsically motivated, they must have a facilitator from the significant others who help learners internalize the importance and value of English language learning (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Moreover, Williams and Burden (1997) maintain that the broader context such as family networks or social expectations and norms is an important factor affecting learners' motivation. The data seemed to echo such an opinion. For example,

My uncle also graduated from Tsinghua and now is in the U.S. What they designed for me was to study abroad after graduation. He often told me English was important. Now I also felt I was to take this way in the future. (3/30-33; q146)

Interviewee 3 suggested that his family expectation was taken in by himself and thus became part of his own motivation to learn English. His success in exams had enabled him to study in the same university in which his uncle used to be a student.

Even without a role model in the family, parents were seen to stress the importance of English to children and encourage their motivation to learn English well. For example, interviewee 5 reported his parents' clear explanation of the status of English:

My parents paid much attention to English. From the international situation, Chinese are forced to learn English, why not French? This is the need for international communication. We need to read some documents. We should have such psychological readiness. I felt parents gave me help and enlightenment in these aspects. (5/58-60; q147)

From interviewee 5's description of the importance of English, it was not difficult to find that his parents were very helpful in providing a broad background of English language learning for him, which enabled him to understand its importance and the need for learning. As a result, he formed a very positive attitude towards English language learning (see section 5.3.2.5) even when he faced pressure.



Unlike interviewee 5's parents, interviewee 19 figured out the importance of English from his own observation about his father's behaviour:

For me, it was mainly influence from family. My Dad is a person with foresight. He paid much attention to my English learning. He did not care about my Chinese and Math learning but monitored my English everyday [...] At that time I was too young to know the importance of English, always feeling unwilling to study. Everyone has the side of being lazy. Without his attention, I wouldn't have spent enough energy on English and learned it well [...] Although they did not say much, they potentially passed on to me the message that English learning was important. So I studied quite hard (19/29-32; 189-192; 195-197; q148)

For interviewee 19, his father's monitoring helped him form a good habit of learning English for academic success everyday; including memorization and doing exercises.

With different styles, these families all passed the message that English was important to their children. When secondary school English learning brought enormous concentration on examinations, recognition of the status of English would greatly help learners to overcome psychological difficulties and manage their motivation to learn it well.

#### **6.2.4.2 Exam-oriented language teaching**

Interestingly, family members who had more English language learning experiences could be an important source of influence on students' reported behaviours for academic success. As shown in Table 6-1, 5 interviewees reported that their parents were enthusiastic to give their children direct instruction. Although the learning effect was questionable, interviewees were still found to be influenced by their parents' suggested ways to learn English for academic success. For example,

E: since my Mum is an English teacher. I was taught English since I was born. According to my Mum, she was preparing for English exams when she had me [...] but when I grew older I did not like English.'

R: Why?

E: because my Mum was impatient. She taught me in a boring way and also her tone was always giving orders (12/3-12; q149)

I did not like English because of my Mum and my relationship with her [...] later when I knew more I felt her knowledge was not enough. Since my Mum was a college English teacher, I asked her a grammar question in high school, she felt both were possible. I was angry and wondered why since the answer was only one of them. (12/37-41; q150)

As seen from the above quote, interviewee 12 seemed to be in a conflicting position. On the one hand, she did not like her mother's way of giving instructions, which was quite authoritarian; On the other hand, she still expected her mother to give her some guidance, for example answering her grammar questions. Although neither turned out to be satisfactory, her way of learning English for exams still carried strong characteristics derived from her mother (see Table 4-1). Moreover, she regretted that she could have learned more if she had not felt so obliged to follow her mother due to emotional resistance. She said:

My mother was very hard working. She said the textbook should be read 30 times, reading once and marking once by pencil. You could memorize it...now I felt if I could do more like her, I would be better than now (12/152-153; 155-156; q151)

Similar to interviewee 12, interviewee 25's mother also wanted to get involved in her English learning by recommending various learning methods; yet unlike interviewee 12's experience, interviewee 25's mother did not particularly insist on her own methods:

My mum is a PhD. she always had to prepare for English exams, so she wanted to guide me to learn English. She asked me to memorize *New Concept English*. After 10 lessons, I could not continue. Later on, also tried to memorize a dictionary for high school students, but without finishing it (25/12-14; q152)

From the fact that each recommended method was attempted by interviewee 25, it could be predicted that parents indeed were influential in giving direct language learning experiences.



Moreover, both interviewee 3 and 16 mentioned that their older sister was helpful in sharing their own language learning experience with them.

At that time I was still a novice. For example, we learned “be” and I did not understand why we should use ‘am’, ‘is’ and ‘are’. My sister said these were fixed. The opinion she passed on me was that some English could not be thought by Chinese way. Moreover, we had to memorize it. She clarified my recognition of this language (3/38-40; q153)

An important piece of information interviewee 3 obtained from his sister was that the English language was another language system and he should not use deductive method to learn some customized usage. This seemed to provide the rationale for his using memorization in preparing for exams (see Table 4-1).

For interviewee 16, his sister started English learning earlier than he did. According to him, the fact that his contact with English was earlier than his counterparts aroused his interest in English.

My sister is four years older than me. When she was in middle school I was still a primary school student. She taught me whatever she learned at her English class. So I have contact with English earlier than other peers and had strong interest in English learning (16/4-6; q154)

It was worth noting that the family members as described above all had experiences in learning English in an exam environment. Therefore, their direct involvement in interviewees’ study inevitably carried characteristics of exam-oriented language learning, which subsequently constituted part of the interviewees’ concern when they engaged themselves in English language learning.

#### **6.2.4.3 Emphasis on exam results**

As Table 6-1 shows, parents’ emphasis on exam results had an impact on interviewees’ conceptions of successful English language learning as

academic success. When parents always expected children to obtain high exam scores, the children's attention was directed equally to exam results.

For example, interviewees 2 and 24 both gave stories of how their parents paid much attention to their exam results, for example,

E: In middle school, the importance of exams was the result of family education.

R: How?

E: If an exam score was high, I could be rewarded.

R: for example?

E: If an exam score was high, I would have a material reward.  
(2/232-236; q155)

Interviewee 2's parents seemed to know about a teenager's mentality and used concrete prizes as incentives to motivate him to achieve better exam scores. It did work for interviewee 2. Interviewee 24 underwent a different experience:

To be honest, I did not like my Mum. She paid too much attention to my exam scores. Perhaps she wanted me to be that type of good student with high scores, and being obedient. According to my memory, from young to grown up, I was always forced to learn by my Mum. I was a bit naughty in childhood and liked playing. She always took me back and asked me to do homework (24/149-152; q156)

For interviewee 24, the situation seemed to be the opposite. She had a strict mother who cared greatly about her exam score and evaluated her learning by exam score only.

Both interviewee 2 and 24's family emphasised exam scores yet in different ways. Interviewee 2's parents used reward as a stimulus whereas interviewee 24's mother exercised her authority. Nevertheless, both were effective in affecting children's conceptions of successful English language learning and subsequent learning behaviours. (See section 4.3.1).



#### 6.2.4.4 Private courses for exams

In addition, 3 interviewees (see Table 6-1) mentioned that private courses for exams directly influenced students learning behaviours for academic success. Interviewee 10 gave one such example:

In the final year of high school, all of us went for private course for the National Entrance Exam. It was the popular situation. I also did this. At first, I went to the most famous teacher in our place [...] later in another teacher's place. Quite simply, did homework and reading comprehension. I thought the only benefit was to have big spell of time to study English (10/34-38; q157)

Under the fierce competition of the National Entrance Exam, parents and students tried their best to improve their exam scores. Private English classes were often seen as a major means. What often happened was that parents looked for a local English teacher with good reputation, and made the initial contact. Those teachers won a high reputation because of their record of producing graduates with high exam scores. Interviewee 10's first private English teacher was such a case.

It is worth mentioning that her family education emphasised independence (See section 6.4.2.2), yet when the National Entrance Exam was involved, her parents followed the mainstream and sent her to a private teacher.

Chinese parents' involvement with their children's academic development has been discussed in a few recent studies (e.g. Gao, 2006; Huang and Marjoribanks, 2005; Pang and Watkins, 2000). For example, Gao (2006: 290) reports six main roles of Chinese parents in influencing children's language learning: 'advocates, facilitators, collaborators with teachers, advisors, coercers, and nurturers'. The data in the present study confirmed that parents holding authoritative positions took the role of advocates and coercers in influencing students' conceptions and reported behaviours for

academic success. Moreover, some of them acted as instructors in order to accelerate the process.

## **6.2.5 Poor teaching and learning resources**

Quite a few interviewees (see Table 6-1) articulated that poor teaching and learning resources, including teacher professionalism, and teacher and teaching resources had impacts on both their conceptions and behaviours in English language learning that was aimed at academic success only.

### **6.2.5.1 Teachers' professionalism**

13 interviewees (see Table 6-1) suggested that their English language teachers had little educational background themselves. Moreover, their teachers' pronunciation was inaccurate, and they paid little attention to spoken English. These inevitably influenced the students' own English language learning behaviours that were limited to academic success. For example,

Nothing special, just followed the teacher to learn textbooks. Places like ours never had the opportunity to see foreigners. It is impossible for us to speak English. The teachers' pronunciation has a strong local accent (11/23-24; q158)

According to interviewee 11, her English language teacher's spoken English was not standard. This formed part of the reason for her and her classmates' inability to speak English. Moreover, only focusing on textbook-based learning implied that her English teacher did not have professional knowledge of alternative teaching methods.

Similar accounts were given by interviewees 14 and 20:

Teachers were all very old. Our teachers were only middle school graduates. They learned English by themselves, with inaccurate pronunciation. English teaching was little different from Chinese teaching (14/16-18; q159)



My first two years of middle school were in a mountainous area, the teachers' levels were quite low and they did not pay attention to The International Phonetic Alphabets (20/7-8; q160)

According to Hu (2005: 651; 2004), Chinese teachers in less developed areas generally have low professional qualifications, which results in their lack of 'professional preparation, language competence...' Interviewees in the present study also associated teachers' professionalism with their capability to promote the students' communicative ability, more specifically, listening, and speaking abilities. Due to their limited professional background, these teachers unfortunately could not cater for the students' potential needs in these areas. For these interviewees, the teachers' professional qualifications were important factors in determining student purposes and ways of learning English.

Another important factor that resulted in exam-oriented English language learning seemed to be the limitations of teaching and learning resources in disadvantaged geographical locations.

#### **6.2.5.2 Teacher and learning resources**

Teacher and learning resources were also considered by some interviewees (see Table 6-1) as important influences on students' conceptions and behaviours for pursuing English language learning as academic success. For example, teaching and learning resources were commonly reported as insufficient in rural areas or small towns.

Conditions in our place are pretty poor. We did not have other assisting means. For example, no after school learning materials (2/35-36; q161)

For interviewee 2, his middle school English language learning was only limited to textbooks. When he had difficulties in English (See section 4.4.3), he had no other resources to resort to.

Similarly, interviewee 20 reported a lack of listening facilities in poor area.

It is a small town in Sichuan. Teaching and learning conditions were poor. Listening and speaking abilities were not good (20/12-13; q162)

This was conditioned by the environment. You could not find materials you wanted. There were no tapes, let alone language labs. (20/196-197; q163)

The reported situation appeared to be in contrast with those in the big cities (see section 6.3.3). Differences in the possibility of access to learning resources were further argued by interviewee 18 who made the comparison:

E: My hometown is in Luzhou (small town city) and high school is in Cheng Du (big city). Geographical differences have great influences on English language learning. For example, my classmates from big cities were following a very good mode to learn English since they were young.

R: what mode?

E: for example, they learned *New Concept English* from primary school and finished all four levels upon graduation from middle school. Then they learned *English on the Air*. When they were with us in after class time, they were preparing for studying abroad. Compared with them, we obviously learned less (18/19-24; q164)

Interviewee 18 listed a series of textbooks from which students from big cities learned, which were far more advanced than those from small towns in rural areas. As a result, when students from less developed regions were still preparing for the National Entrance Exams, their big city counterparts started to learn more advanced English such as preparing for studying abroad. In relation to interviewee 14 who generalized the language learning behaviours in the Mid-west part of China (see section 6.2.2), lack of educational 'hardware' such as facilities and old-fashioned textbooks made it difficult for teachers and learners to practice the communicative abilities as opposed to the linguistic-accuracy focused learning for exams (Hu, 2003: 305).



Overall, influences that affect students' conceptions and/or behaviours of language learning that were oriented for academic success both from the interview and questionnaire data are displayed in the following table.

Sources of influences		Interviewees (n=25)	questionnaire respondents (n=436
exam system		all	328 (75.6%, Q No.21)
teachers' grammar-based teaching methods		all	
competitive secondary school environment		all except for 21, 23	
family education	parents' authority	4, 7, 9, 12, 14, 22, 24, 25	142 (32.7%, Q No.40)
	importance of English	3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 14, 19, 22, 24, 25	
	exam-oriented instruction	3, 12, 16, 25	
	emphasis on exam results	2, 21, 24	
	private course for exams	10, 11, 25	
poor teaching and learning resources	teachers' professionalism	4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 25, 26	122 (28.2%, Q No. 7)
	non-native speakers	2, 7, 8, 15, 17	
	old textbooks	3, 20	

Table 6-4 (Questionnaire results): students' reported influences on their conceptions, and/or behaviours for pursuing English as academic success (n=436)

As stated in chapter 3, the questionnaire design was completed based on my initial open-coding and theme elicitation, therefore, categories identified in the later stage of interview data analysis can only be comparable with broad themes in the questionnaire items. However, the results were still illuminating. For example,

328 (75.6%) of the questionnaire respondents held that the exam system influenced their motivation to learn English for academic success. Although

the statistics on the authority of family education and on poor teaching and learning resources were not so strong, it was possible that the questionnaire respondents focused on their present situation, living on campus away from home, and their universities are all located in Beijing, the capital city of China.

### **6.3 Reported influences on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours for English language learning oriented towards gaining communicative ability**

As shown by Table 6-5, students' reported influences on their conceptions, and/or behaviours oriented towards English language learning for gaining communicative ability contained the following categories: flexible school environment, teachers' pedagogical concern on communicative language use, prestigious teaching and learning resources, and language schools oriented towards communicative language use. These are discussed in the following sections.



sources of influences		interviewees
flexible school environment	tertiary free environment	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24
	early optional education environment	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 18, 21
teachers' pedagogical concern on communicative language use	communicative language use in classroom practice	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26
	guiding students to communicative English language use	13, 17, 18
prestigious teaching and learning resources	teaching resources	2, 8, 11, 17, 18
	teacher resources	2, 7, 8, 15, 17
language schools oriented towards communicative use		4, 8

Table 6-5 influences on students' conceptions, and/or reported behaviours oriented towards English language learning for gaining communicative ability

### 6.3.1 Flexible school environment

Compared with a competitive secondary school environment (see section 6.2.3), quite a few interviewees (see Table 6-5) reported that a flexible school environment, like a free tertiary environment and the early optional environment, had impacts on their conceptions, and/or behaviours oriented towards English language learning for communicative ability.

#### 6.3.1.1 Free tertiary environment

As Table 6-5 shows, 18 out of 25 interviewees held that the tertiary environment greatly contributed to their understanding of successful English language learning as being the gaining of communicative ability. This was further explained by interviewees from two main perspectives: the

new learning community that was full of competent language learners, and the need for English language use in learning other subjects.

In the first place, the tertiary environment was seen as a place notable for its freedom in contrast to the stressful atmosphere in secondary school. As described by interviewee 19, 'in university nobody monitors us. You can do whatever you want to...' (19/66-68) and one 'is free to obtain as much as you can...' (14/177-178). Without a teacher's dominant control of the language learning processes, as occurred in secondary school, interviewees' peers became their important references for English language learning. For example,

I am proud of coming to this university, but I am not confident in my English. Here it is full of excellent students. I need to work hard. I will try to communicate with them and teachers (13/146-147; q165)

As stated in chapter 1, competition in the National Entrance Exam was fierce and those who were able to enter university must be top students among their counterparts in secondary schools. Due to various language learning experiences, interviewees had more opportunities to encounter more competent language users, which formed a part of the driving force for the students' desire for communicative ability. For example,

In the past (before university), learning English was only for exams. But now, there were always Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) from international companies who came to Tsinghua and gave speeches in English. I couldn't understand, which was very disappointing...other students were laughing at the humour which I also couldn't understand...I felt I needed to learn English as a language for mastery (9/49-54; q166)

A similar opinion was expressed by interviewee 3 who felt:

Coming to Tsinghua I saw so many students with excellent English. They were quite fluent when talking with foreigners. I felt ashamed [...] I need to improve my oral English and listening abilities. (3/76-79; q167)



Moreover, since the time of 'An army crossing a one-log bridge'<sup>1</sup> (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006: 10) was over, exams at university level are no longer as crucial as the National Entrance Exam. Students were left more space to explore other aspects of language learning that were different from exam-oriented language learning.

As reported by interviewee 18,

From middle school, it was exams that told me how well I studied. However, in the university there were not so many exams. Little chance was given to us to reflect on our own learning [...] (18/128-130; q168)

In relation to his effort of creating an English environment with his classmate (see section 4.3.3) to practise language use, the attention that they paid to communicative ability was self-evident.

In addition, interviewees also reported real language use in other subject learning. For example, in addition to the accounts by interviewee 9 in section 6.3.1.1 he said,

Although there are also exams in the university, I think in good university such as Tsinghua, English is needed for daily life, and it's urgent. Here we had so many English lectures. (9/157-159; q169)

According to interviewee 9, the major difference between the tertiary level and secondary school environments was that English was in real life use in the former. Constant English lectures and other student audience's responses to the lectures changed interviewee 9's conception of English from being an exam subject to a tool for communication. He even anticipated the status of English in his future career. Moreover, with reference to interviewee 6's account in section 6.2.2, English was used as

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<sup>1</sup> It is a typical Chinese folk metaphor, describing the fierce competition of the National Entrance Exam

an instructional language in his major courses. This could hardly happen in secondary schools. Both examples indicated a tendency to emphasise English language use in the tertiary environment, which consequently affected the students' perceptions of English language learning and learning behaviours.

### **6.3.1.2 Early pleasant English language learning**

English did not have an official position in primary schools until the implementation of National English Curriculum Standards (NECS) in 2001, which means that most Chinese students have had six years of formal school English language learning before they entered university. However, as can be seen from the Appendix IX, 19 out of 25 interviewees and 394 out of 431 questionnaire respondents (Q No. 5 in Appendix XXXIV) had early English language learning experiences, either in primary school or at home. This was normally thought of as an advantage that could contribute to students' later English language learning. Moreover, unlike the didactic knowledge transmission method at secondary school, teaching methods for young children were often reported as diverse and activity based which, according to some interviewees (see Table 6-5), contributed to their understanding of the learning of English for communicative uses.

For example, interviewee 21 described his English language learning at primary school:

At that time, English language learning was genuinely based on your interest. We did not learn it for exams [...] teachers were very good. They made you involved in all kinds of activities, singing English songs, acting out short plays. It was a time you learned English as a language for use (21/9-10; 13-15; q170)

As can be seen from interviewee 21's quote, English learning at primary school did not have any pressure from exams, and teachers used different activities that involved language use. These had influences on his



understanding of what English language learning meant, for example, he argued that English language learning should be aimed at communicative use (see Table 5-5).

A similar account was given by interviewee 8 who had been immersed in an English-language-use supporting family environment since she was young.

I like listening to English songs and watching English movies, perhaps because my parents both liked these. There were many videos in my family. My father once was trying to take TOFEL and my grandpa was an English teacher [...] (8/31-33; q171)

The general impression was that English was very important and I had frequent contact with it. In fact, liking it was largely because of habit. They said good night to me since I was a little girl. Gradually English became part of my life (8/114-116; q172)

What interviewee 8 suggested was that she could have access to rich English learning resources at home: English videos, an advanced English learner (her father), and an English teacher (her grandpa). Moreover, the more capable others in her family seemed to create an English environment for her deliberately by speaking English to her. These seemed to work as a positive influence on her attitude towards English: she was not only interested in English but also recognized its importance. According to her, a language use environment such as in her family aroused her genuine interest and consequently a strong motivation to learn English.

My interest in English was fostered in childhood [...] Thus I was motivated to learn. I thought interest was the most important factor' (8/80-81; q173)

As indicated by Ryan and Deci (2000), humans by nature display a quality of curiosity, activity, and exploration. It was not surprising that almost all interviewees (except for 3) who had early childhood English language learning experiences reported their strong interest in English language learning at their first contact with English, commonly involving English

games, songs, rhymes etc. In a way, children were put in an English language environment where language learning was thought to take place by using the language.

It is worth mentioning that English as an optional subject at primary schools often contributed to students' understanding that English language learning should be aimed at language use, which led to some interviewees' attempts to balance English language learning that was oriented towards academic success with communicative ability. However, quite a few interviewees unfortunately were seen to give up the idea of English language learning that was oriented towards communicative use due to the powerful instructional intervention for instrumental requirements.

### **6.3.2 Teachers' pedagogical concerns on communicative language use**

As stated in section 6.2.5.1, the teachers' own professionalism and ways of teaching had great influence on student conceptions of English language learning and actual learning behaviours. Hu (2003: 306) claims that a striking feature of the traditional Chinese conceptualization of education is that it considers learning 'more as a process of knowledge accumulation than as a practical process of knowledge construction and use'. The data suggested that teachers in secondary schools tended to employ a knowledge-transmission approach for various reasons (see section 6.2.2). However, this did not mean that none of the teachers paid attention to communicative language use in classroom teaching. In fact, as Table 6-5 shows, interviewees pointed out that some teachers incorporated language use into their classroom practice or intentionally highlighted the importance of language use in classroom instruction.



### 6.3.2.1 Language use oriented classroom practice

Although the common assumption was that high stakes exams had a strong 'washback' effect on teaching and learning, Alderson and Wall (1993: 126) argue that little research evidence indicates that exams impact on the way that teachers teach English except that the content of language instruction might be shaped by exams. As the data shows (see Table 6-5), there were teachers reported as having emphasised language use in classroom practice. A typical example was given by interviewee 3 who compared two of his English language teachers:

My first English teacher in high school taught little about grammar, mainly about listening and speaking. With brief explanation of language points, she asked us to act out dialogues. I felt quite unhappy since other classes all did reading comprehension exercises and we did nothing. I once asked her and she said different roads merged in the same end. Most importantly, English should be learned in order to use it. (3/51-54; q174)

Then we changed an English teacher. She paid much attention to grammar. Language points were scrutinized in detail. She said once we were familiar with grammar, we could understand long sentences by analysing their structure. (3/55-57; q175)

In the same teaching environment, interviewee 3's two English teachers had different opinions on English language learning: the first one emphasised language use and the second one stressed linguistic forms such as grammar. This example showed that teachers could decide for themselves how to teach: to promote communicative ability or to enhance exam knowledge.

For interviewee 17, preference for communicative ability was possibly more to do with the teacher's own educational background. She described her English class as follows:

Our English teacher was very good. She came back from the U.S. and her English proficiency was quite high [...] In addition to textbooks, we had extra English classes. Each lesson we were asked to listen to tapes, then she would explain sentences.

Afterwards, we had plays, dialogues etc. quite interesting (17/21; 23-25; q176)

Obviously, her teacher paid attention to a pedagogical concern both for linguistic forms and for language use by combining school textbook-based learning with an extra English class that was intended to cover the communicative function of the language. In addition, she mentioned that her teacher had educational experience from an English speaking country, which also contributed to the use of task-based activities that favoured the development of a communicative ability.

It is worth mentioning that teachers' intentions to emphasize language use were not necessarily appreciated by students such as interviewee 3 who were under pressure of exams. However, he admitted the value of such a way of teaching when he recognized the importance of communicative ability when he entered university (see section 6.3.1.1). For interviewee 17, communicative ability was certainly part of her concern in English language learning, which was evident in her effort to create an English language environment and practise English with her classmate (see section 4.3.3).

### **6.3.2.2 Guiding students to English language use**

As reported by 3 interviewees (see Table 6-5), even if teachers focused on prescribed textbook knowledge in English language teaching, their reminder of the communicative ability in language learning could be influential. For example, interviewee 13's report of her teacher's suggestion of immersion in an English environment was quite enlightening:

She (the English teacher) told us to watch English movies, news etc. She said she played English songs to her daughter since the baby was born. Even though the child could not understand it, she could articulate English words when she was able to speak (13/29-32; q177).



It seemed her teacher's demonstration of the importance of making contact with authentic English had had an influence on her (see Table 4-2)

A similar example was given by interviewee 18,

Quite a few students with competent English looked down upon her (the English teacher's) spoken English. However, she knew how to guide us to improve our overall English abilities, which was never limited to coping with exams (18/38-40; q178).

Although interviewee 18 also engaged in exam-oriented language learning (see Table 4-1), he certainly was aware of the importance of communicative ability and of preparing himself to be a competent language user (see section 4.3.3)

Apparently, when teachers applied communicative language teaching methods intentionally in classrooms, or at least gave some guidance in this aspect, students were more apt to aim for the goal of communicative ability in their language learning. Answers to Q No.. 50 'college English teachers' role in English language learning' revealed a similar finding, which is illustrated in the table below.

college English language teachers' role	Percentage
Provide learning direction	277 (64.6%)
Introduce learning methods	230 (53.6%)
Transmit knowledge	204 (47.6%)
Evaluate learning outcome	133 (31%)
Be responsible for teaching	110 (25.6%)
Answer students' questions	105 (24.5%)
Monitor students' progress	96 (22.4%)
Make learning plan	82 (19.1%)

Table 6-6 (Questionnaire results): Students' view on college English language teachers' role (n=436)

Since the majority of students (347 respondents, 81.1%) to Q No.. 49 (see Appendix XXXIV) reported that their future English language learning was for communicative language use, their expectations of the teachers' role were significant for an understanding of what could possibly influence their English language learning for such a purpose. As can be seen from the table, more than half of the students indicated that the teachers' way of teaching and their provision of a learning direction were crucial, which implied that how teachers teach would have a great impact on student conceptions, and/or behaviours for English language learning.

### **6.3.3 Prestigious teaching and learning resources**

Hu (2003) states that English language teaching in coastal and more developed regions in China is marked by its advanced facilities, localized textbooks, better teacher qualifications and identification with language use, all of which informed the diversity of pedagogical practices that are appropriate to a weak version of communicative language teaching. The data (see Table 6-5) not only confirmed such an opinion but also suggested that profiles of schools, regardless of geographical locations, had a similar advantage or disadvantage in the provision of facilities, textbooks, teacher resources, and newer teaching ideologies. As teaching ideologies have been discussed in section 6.3.2, this section focuses on how teaching and teacher resources in prestigious areas influenced student conceptions and behaviours for English language learning that was oriented towards gaining communicative ability.

As Table 6-5 shows, 5 interviewees stated that prestigious areas provided better teaching resources such as textbooks that narrowed the gap between English language learning in classrooms and English language use in the target country, which accordingly influenced their conceptions and/or behaviours for English language learning that was oriented towards



communicative language use. For example, when interviewee 2 entered high school in a bigger city, he had the chance to use an experimental textbook:

In the past, there were few pictures in textbooks. If there were any, they were drawn manually. Our teacher foresaw the situation. He felt the experimental textbook, which is currently used nationwide, was good, then ordered it for us. The textbook was indeed good. (2/96-99; q179)

Traditionally, each round of educational reform would start in small sample areas, with the use of new textbooks or the application of a new pedagogy, which most probably took place in the more developed areas such as on the coasta or in the big cities. Interviewee 2 was fortunate to use the experimental textbook before it was authorized for use in all places by the MOE. This would be very unlikely to happen if he had remained in his middle school located in a smaller town. According to interviewee 2, textbooks were important media that connected classroom English language learning with real life language use. In relation to his account of reading novels of original English, and for example, imagining real life scenery according to the book's description, advanced textbooks seemed to have influenced his way of learning English.

Interviewee 8 gave a similar example by comparing textbooks used in two types of schools: city key school and ordinary school.

### **Middle school (city key school)**

Our school paid much attention to English pronunciation. In some classes we were taught the International Phonetic Alphabet. Moreover, apart from the national textbooks, we had two textbooks used by Hong Kong secondary schools. The vocabulary size was larger and the grammar was more complex. The textbook was closer to real life. Our middle school was the best in the city and our graduation score was the best (8/88-91; q180)

## High school (ordinary school)

What we learned were those textbooks that emphasised grammar and the themes were quite old fashioned. I felt there was nothing new and wished to learn from new textbooks or even to learn from foreign textbooks. (8/15-16; q181)

According to interviewee 8, high profile schools had a better quality of education, at least in terms of providing better textbooks. For example, her middle school used Hong Kong textbooks, which in her words were authentic English, in addition to the ordinary ones. However, in her high school, the textbooks were the ordinary nationwide ones that were authorized by the MOE.

Profiles of universities were also seen to have a role to play in influencing students' conceptions and/or behaviours that were oriented towards English language learning for its communicative use. For example, interviewees from Tsinghua University mentioned the opportunity to attend seminars given in English and major courses given in English (section 6.3.1.1). However, students in other universities did not report such information.

At the same time, a few interviewees (see Table 6-5) mentioned that teacher resources were better in prestigious areas; for example, there were teachers from native speaking countries in economically developed regions or high profile schools. For example, interviewees 2, 7, and 15 reported that they had native speaker teachers in their high schools. Obviously, such good teacher resources had a great influence on students' English language learning behaviours that were oriented towards gaining communicative ability. For example, these interviewees had the opportunity to practise oral English, improve written language, and have contact with new ways of thinking and learning. Compared with such good teacher resources that helped them to be exposed to authentic English



language used by native teachers, students from ordinary schools were left far behind.

Although there were various reasons for interviewees to conceive language learning as concerned with its communicative use, better teaching resources such as advanced textbooks and teacher resources certainly had an important role to play.

#### **6.3.4 Language schools in the society**

Apart from the factors discussed above, various types of language schools were also reported (see Table 6-5) as an undeniable force that helped spread the desire for gaining communicative ability among English language learners.

One of the most popular language schools, namely, *Crazy English*, was mentioned by interviewee 4,

My uncle, he was an English professor in a university. He suggested I try *Crazy English*. Li Yang English inspired me a lot. I obtained lots of information. Even for the sake of exams, I should listen more and speak more, it is very useful (4/42-44; q182)

Li Yang's idea has much influence on me. I enjoy losing face (4/79; q183)

*Crazy English* is very useful. It dares to challenge the tradition, holding spoken English can make the breakthrough of reading comprehension, listening, and exams. Think it over, it is true (4/37-3; q1849)

*Crazy English* or *Li Yang English* (the inventor) has gained widespread popularity among Chinese learners since it largely emphasises oral English. Moreover, the Inventor used his own experience, as a failure in traditional classroom learning terms, but a successful English speaker suggesting the importance of speaking skills. He believed that spoken English helped improve his other skills, including doing exams. It seemed that this language school was able to solve all problems, which attracted

much attention from the society including English professors such as interviewee 4's uncle. By taking the course, interviewee 4 also accepted his teaching ideology.

Another equally famous language school, *New Oriental School*, was mentioned by interviewee 8.

After graduation from middle school, my father sent me to *New Oriental School* and registered me with the spoken English course, American accent [...] afterwards, I felt our English teacher's pronunciation was quite poor. I was uncomfortable listening to her English. (8/9-10; 12-13; q185)

A common feature of these language schools was that they criticized formal school education that had for a long time been knowledge-oriented and ignored abilities to use the language (Ross, 1992), which won high a reputation among students. As discussed in chapter 4, quite a few interviewees in the present study reported their use of *Crazy English Magazine* as supplementary reading to enhance their contact with authentic English. Moreover, differences in teachers' competence in spoken English, as described by interviewee 8 also appeared to be a reason for the popularity of language schools. The awareness of language learning for communicative ability as strengthened by language schools in the society seemed to be positively taken in by interviewees in the present study.

In summary, several factors can affect the extent to which students conceived successful English language learning as academic success or communicative ability and the corresponding approaches to achieving it. Such a fact had already caught Chinese educators' notions and measures had been taken to help bring positive influences on students' conceptions and behaviours for English language learning, for example, with an orientation towards gaining communicative ability. According to Li and



Wang (2001), the possibility of changing the format of the National Entrance Exam, for example, putting emphasis on abilities such as writing and oral exams had been discussed. Moreover, College English Test Band 4 has incorporated listening and speaking into the exam (Jin and Yang, 2006).

#### **6.4 Complexity of influences on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours with regard to successful English language learning**

Influences on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours with regard to successful English language learning were complex. First, as seen from the above discussions, influences on students' conceptions and behaviours sometimes were difficult to separate. When interviewees described their learning behaviours either with an orientation towards academic success or gaining communicative ability, occasionally, their conceptions were embedded. Second, even though there was a general distinction between influences on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours that were oriented towards English language learning for academic success and gaining communicative ability, some source of influences potentially could affect students in either trend. For example, teachers can influence students' conceptions, and/or behaviours for English language learning that were oriented to either direction. Third, there were other aspects or types of influences that were reported to have influenced students' English language learning in general. Given that the first two have been discussed in previous sections, the present section does not further describe the differences between influences on students' conceptions and reported behaviours, or distinguish on which orientation of success the influences had, but focuses on the complexity of influences on students' various attributes that contributed to their desire for successful

English language learning, either for academic success or gaining communicative ability.

#### **6.4.1 A teacher as a whole person**

With regard to Figure 6-1, teachers' influences on students' English language learning extended far further than the methodological aspects such as those discussed in section 6.2.2. and section 6.3.2. For example, teachers could be role models for learners, encouraging them to take on learning responsibilities. As recalled by interviewee 19, he and his classmates were positively influenced by their teachers' attitude towards teaching.

The teacher from high school...I often went to his office and asked him questions. He always explained in detail. I really felt respectful. Since he spent so much effort on us, we should not disappoint him. All of our class studied hard (19/88-90; q186)

One of the roles teachers took was modelling. As can be seen from interviewee 19's quote, his teacher's patience, and sense of responsibility were fully displayed and taken in by the students. It became a powerful factor that sheds light on interviewee 19 and his classmates' learning.

In addition to a teacher's own non-verbal behaviours that could be followed by students, their verbal encouragement, or actual care for the students turned out to be a strong motivation for students to learn better.

My teacher cared a lot about me and made me feel interested in English. I thus wanted to learn it well. Every day I learned it quite seriously (17/8-10; q187)

Her encouragement was quite influential and motivating me to learn. I was a poor student in primary school. When you were in a new environment and people surrounding you often praised you, you would want to learn well (17/51-54; q188)

As pointed out by interviewee 17, without her English language teacher's encouragement, she could not have been able to learn English well, then



other subjects well and finally enable herself to enter a provincial key school with competitive scores.

For interviewee 23, his special treatment was to learn extra English after school.

Our teacher treated us few better. She always had follow-up lessons for us after school, for example, learning *New Concept English*. I learned well and had some interest [...] our teacher paid a lot of attention to me. I felt ashamed if I did not work hard (23/7-8; 24-25; q189)

In general, the most important influence of a teacher's special care was the interviewees' strong feelings of being highly valued. As a natural psychological return, they wanted to show better learning outcomes in order to justify such value in the community where learning took place.

These examples suggested that teacher influences on the students' English language learning were not restricted to a specific orientation towards success, for example, academic success or gaining communicative ability.

In fact, compared with other sources of influence, teacher influences appeared to be the most significant according to the questionnaire data (Q No.. 19 see the following table).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	teacher	211	48.4	51.1	51.1
	parents	10	2.3	2.4	53.5
	classmates	13	3.0	3.1	56.7
	myself	176	40.4	42.6	99.3
	media	3	.7	.7	100.0
	material				
	Total	413	94.7	100.0	
Missing	999	23	5.3		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 6-7 (Questionnaire results): Sources of influences on my English language learning (n=436)

As for the concrete aspects of teachers' influences, questionnaire respondents further provided the following information (see Q No.. 20).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	oral English	56	12.8	15.6	15.6
	knowledge	77	17.7	21.5	37.2
	character	50	11.5	14.0	51.1
	being	32	7.3	8.9	60.1
	responsible				
	teaching	138	31.7	38.5	98.6
	methods				
	fairness	2	.5	.6	99.2
	the ability to				
	arouse my	2	.5	.6	99.7
	interest				
	exercise	1	.2	.3	100.0
	Total	358	82.1	100.0	
Missing	999	78	17.9		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 6-8 (Questionnaire results): Teachers' influences on English language learning (n=436)



As shown in the above table, various aspects of a teacher's quality were reported by students as having had an influence on their English language learning, which were diverse and complex.

## **6.4.2 Family education on general learning**

In addition to the distinctive influences on student conceptions, and/or behaviours for English language learning that was oriented to academic success (see section 6.2) or gaining communicative ability (see section 6.3), family education had some areas of influence on the students that contributed to their language learning success, which were complex and might vary from one family to another. The following section will provide examples of two aspects: the family's attitude towards learning, and the encouragement of students' to become independent as reported by some interviewees (see Figure 6-1), and will suggest that these could influence the students' general pursuit of success in their preferred orientation.

### **6.4.2.1 Attitude towards learning**

7 interviewees (see Figure 6-1) mentioned that their attitude towards English language learning came from family influences. Taking interviewee 3 for example, the message he received from his parents was that effort was the most important factor for successful learning and achievement could only be obtained by hard work.

R: Could you possibly tell me why you studied harder when the teacher said your English was poor?'

E: This perhaps was related to my family education. From very young, my parents told me that I should have ambition. They would not require me to be the best, but they asked me to try my best. So when the teacher said I was not good, surely I would not...feeling that depressed or giving up. Because feeling depressed was no help for improving your score. So I continued to study hard depending on my own efforts (3/153-156; q190)

Under the influence of his family education, interviewee 3 had a strong belief that effort improved learning. When he was told his English was not good enough, he attributed it to insufficient effort. Rather than feeling depressed, which was unhelpful in changing the situation, he chose to make more effort. Undoubtedly, such a learning attitude plays an important role in encouraging learners to improve their learning.

Likewise, interviewee 15 also felt that her parent's own behaviour was the best example for the children. Her mother's attitude towards career and ways to solve problems etc. all became important references in dealing with her learning difficulties. For example,

R: Why you did you say were more likely to be motivated by failure than success?

E: Perhaps it was because of the enlightening education I received, with potential influences. For example, my Mum is a person who works hard and seriously. She is very strong and has quite high social status. Her success in her career made me have certain opinions about society. That is, you should use your own abilities to solve the conflict surrounding you, regardless of how other people comment on you. Perhaps it was due to my respect for my Mum (15/159-162; q191)

Interviewee 15 witnessed her mother's way of working, dealing with rumour and the fact of being successful. What she learned from this was to aim at success, to positively evaluate failure, and to persist with her own goal, which was displayed in her strong determination to face challenges (see section 6.4.4.3).

Unlike them, interviewee 10 reported that her family education made her not want to waste time on learning that did not bring a learning effect.

The teacher asked us to copy words. It was too late and I wanted to sleep [...] my parents helped me do it (10/174; 176; q192)

This family event seemed to have explained why she reported little activity in English language learning (see Table 4-1 and Table 4-2) because



I also tried to force myself to learn English, but there was no effect. I felt this period of time had been wasted, which I otherwise could have used to do lots of other things. (10/104-106; q193)

In her view, time should be spent on things that were useful or effective. Just as copying words was disregarded by her parents, so she rejected English language learning.

### **6.4.2.2 Independence**

According to Figure 6-1, 5 interviewees articulated that they benefited from a family education on independence, and therefore could take responsibility for their own English language learning. For example, both 10 and 17 reported their parents' intention to help them become independent by giving them the right to make their own decisions on learning. Neither family laid pressure on the children as to what level at school they should achieve. For example,

My parents both trust me. We are quite independent. When we got back home, each did his/her own work. I had a lot of space for autonomy. In general, no one interfered with the others' business except for necessary discussions on important family issues [...] for my study, they had no requirements, and it was all dependent on myself (10/170-172; q194)

Interviewee 10 enjoyed much freedom in her family. The family tradition was that everyone took responsibility for his or her own business. She had no pressure from her parents in terms of her school record and had to make decisions about her learning. In this regard, interviewee 17 had a similar experience:

My parents did not have special requirements for me. They only asked me to be aware that learning was my own responsibility. Because I learned music when I was young, perhaps because of this, I did not think exam results were that important (17/19-20; q195)

For interviewee 17's parents, the basic and only requirement was that she took responsibility for her own learning.

As can be seen from the above quotes, neither of the families gave concrete instructions on what goal should be aimed at or how to achieve the learning goals. However, they affected the children in one most important aspect for any successful learning, taking responsibility for their learning.

### 6.4.3 Chinese proverbs/learning mottos

As shown in Figure 6-1, a few interviewees had attributed their conceptions or behaviours for English language learning to certain Chinese proverbs/learning mottos. In other words, students felt these proverbs/mottos influenced their English language learning. However, such influences were complex and diverse, and it was difficult to conclude that they had causal effects on any particular aspect of their English language learning. The typical proverbs were presented as follows:

1. Practice makes perfect (3/103; q196)
2. Pore over one's books by the light of a candle (2/107; q197)
3. Value lies in being persistent (5/194; q198)
4. Fist does not leave your hand; music does not leave your mouth (20/225; 199)
5. Master brings you into the door, cultivation is yours. (4/172; 8/126; 19/167; q200)
6. No pains no gains (7/153; q201)
7. Hair hanged; thigh pierced <sup>2</sup>(23/139; q202)
8. Interest is the best teacher (16/10; q203)

These proverbs can be summarized into four main themes: effort (No.1-4), learner responsibility (No.5) strong will power (No.6-7), and interest (No.8),

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<sup>2</sup> It comes from an ancient story. A man named Su Qin (BC 376 in the War Period) who hung his hair to the ceiling and used the nail to pierce his thigh in order to keep himself awake in reading. He finally became a Minister who united 6 kingdoms against the Qin Kingdom which was the most powerful at that time. This story became a famous one for teach young children to make effort in learning.



which well fit into some of the conditions for language learning success such as was reported by the interviewees in chapter 5.

In the questionnaire data (Q No..51), more proverbs were reported by the participants in addition to the ones found in the interview data. The new proverbs were grouped on the basis of themes, which are illustrated in the following table (see Table 6-9).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	constant review	18	4.1	6.1	6.1
	reflection	13	3.0	4.4	10.5
	be persistent	52	11.9	17.6	28.0
	collaborative learning	4	.9	1.4	29.4
	self-confidence	17	3.9	5.7	35.1
	hardworking	102	23.4	34.5	69.6
	Reverence for education	28	6.4	9.5	79.1
	strong will	48	11.0	16.2	95.3
	do not waste time	14	3.2	4.7	100.0
	Total	296	67.9	100.0	
Missing	999	140	32.1		
Total		436	100.0		

Table 6-9 (Questionnaire results): Students' reported learning mottos for language learning

As can be seen from the above table, the questionnaire findings were similar to the interview data report. For example, effort that included both 'hardworking' (102, 34.5%) and 'be persistent' (52, 17.6%) appeared to be at the top of the list., 'Strong will' (48, 16.2%) appeared to be in the second position. As seen from the themes of the learning mottos, they were relevant to various aspects of learning: methods (e.g. review, reflection, collaborative learning), affective state (e.g. strong will, self-confidence),

belief (e.g. reverence for education, valuing time), which were all considered to be important aspects for learning English successfully.

#### **6.4.4 Individual factors**

As shown in Figure 6-1, individual factors were reported by some interviewees as having affected their English language learning in two main respects: students' previous language learning experiences, and personality. However, given that the present study involved 25 individual students' language learning experiences; it was difficult to exhaust all the individual factors to examine how they influenced students' English language learning. The present section, therefore, focuses on typical examples of individual factors that had influences on students' later English language learning.

##### **6.4.4.1 Language learning contingencies**

Although learners' previous language learning experiences generally contribute to their later language learning process (e.g. Ushioda, 2007), the data (see Figure 6-1) suggest that some particular learning contingencies could have dramatic effects on the interviewees' later English language learning.

For example, both interviewees 2 and 4 encountered learning difficulties in high school (see section 4.4.3). They could no longer use their previous way of learning English grammar and were puzzled. However, such difficulties simultaneously provided them with the opportunities to find solutions, which resulted in an increase in motivation. For interviewee 2, his chance to read his first English novel started to bring back his confidence.



E: [...] Then by accident, I saw my classmate read a book, *Bookworm*, did you hear of it?

R: Yes.

E: [...] that was my first time to contact English. I felt quite good and started to read it. My English improved ever since then (2/58-66; q204)

The first book of *Bookworm*, the English novel series, became his transitional point in English language learning. His motivation in English also started to change from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation (see section 6.2.3). Similarly, interviewee 4 was recommended to try a new English learning material, *Crazy English* (see section 6.3.4 q182), which enlightened him in English learning. That was, grammar was embedded in language sense (see section 4.3.2.2) rather than rigid memorization. His interest in English grew along with his increasing feeling of competence in language use in areas such as listening and speaking.

*Bookworm* and *Crazy English*, which were both popular English learning materials among Chinese learners, seemed to function critically in interviewee 2 and 4's English language learning experience.

However, for interviewee 21, his experience seemed to be more dramatic. After entrance into high school, he accidentally achieved a very high score in his first exam, which became a huge stress for him since his teacher and parents all expected him to keep that position.

I did not get a good graduation score when I entered high school. I therefore had planned to study step by step in order to make gradual progress. Surprisingly, I got a very good exam result in my first exam in High School, No. 3 in the whole grade. I felt this was the worst exam I ever took because afterwards, my mentality changed. In fact, in high school, it was normal for a student to fall over 10 ranks since even 5 points due to a poor result in one subject would result in your falling. At that time, parents, teachers often asked me why I fell so much. It was that type of pressure, too much pressure...I gradually lost my enthusiasm. (21/57-63; q205)

It is worth mentioning that whether an accident was to be developed into changes that were more positive or not seemed to lie in both interviewees'

internal qualities and external relatedness. On the one hand, without interviewee 2 and 4's conscious effort to find solutions to their learning difficulties and their persistence in trying something new, *Bookworm* and *Crazy English* would just remain a different type of learning material on its own. On the other hand, interviewee 21 could have retained his motivation in English and improved his learning if he had been able to adjust his emotional depression caused by one exam loss, which however appeared not to be the case.

In a way, the different ways reported by interviewees 2, 4 and 21 to deal with learning their difficulty that was emergent in the language learning process became important factors that influenced their future language learning.

#### **6.4.4.2 Different learner independence**

Another instance of individual diversity was that learner independence could be developed in different ways and had different impacts on students' English language learning. As shown by Figure 6-1, some interviewees reported that their independence in language learning resulted from their being left unattended from an early age. For example,

The best thing my family gave me was independence. Since Grade 5 in primary school, my family hardly monitored me. My Mum and Dad worked in different places and my younger brother stayed with my Mum, I with my Dad. He was very busy at work. I stayed at home alone. I had to do everything by myself (2/326-328; q206)

My Dad and I lived in a local community, with few playmates. I often played by myself. Set a target and did it. It became a habit. Following the goal, once you reached it, you felt very happy (2/336-337; q207)

Interviewee 2 was in a lonely position, which generated his independence. It seemed he had a strong potential to adapt to such an unfavourable environment for children. His account of playing by himself suggested that



he had the capability to manage himself well. This initial experience of coping with difficulty became a rich experience in terms of dealing with learning difficulties (see section 5.4.1)

Unlike interviewee 2, interviewee 10 reported how her family was supportive in fostering her independence (see section 6.4.2.2). However, such independence seemed not to have resulted in her taking full responsibility for her English language learning. As she reported, she had to go for private courses in order to survive exams (see section 6.2.4.4). It seemed that her independence and the freedom she enjoyed from her family had the opposite effect on her English language learning simply because she did not like English.

### **6.4.4.3 Personality**

Personality was also mentioned by some interviewees (see Figure 6-1) as an important factor influencing their English language learning. For example, being aggressive or non-aggressive yielded different results in English language learning. On the one hand, interviewees 9, and 15 attributed their English language learning to their strong characters.

Interviewee 9 said:

If my academic score was not good, I felt very bad [...] it was self-dignity, part of my character [...] When I was young I had shown my strong character, not easily giving up. For example, many students could not run an 800-meter race, I was the only one who did. (9/131-132; 136-137; q208)

Likewise, interviewee 15 expressed that her strong character brought her strong motivation to learn even better after receiving discouraging feedback. She recounted the following:

My English teacher had a biased opinion of me. Each time she asked others to answer questions except for me. For small quizzes, I could only get C whereas others got A. However, it was such treatment that encouraged me to work harder and become the best. I am that type of person with a strong character. (15/5-9; q209)

On the other hand, interviewee 11 suggested that her following of her teachers' way of learning was partially because of her character. She said:

I was an obedient child since I was young. I would do as teachers told me to. (11/48-49; q210)

In relation to her comments on her English language teachers' teaching (see section 6.2.3.2), it seemed that her personality indeed had great influences on her English language learning, for example, in following of her teachers' methods even though she did not like them.

In summary, the complexity of influences identified in the present study can be summarized in the following table.

Complexity of influences	Aspects of influences	Interviewees
Teacher as a whole person	Motivation to learn English.	Interviewees 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 17, 19, 23,
Family education on general learning	belief in effort; taking learning responsibility	Interviewees 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 15, 17, 20, 24
Chinese learning mottos	learning methods, affective state, beliefs	Interviewees 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 16, 19, 23
Individual factors	confidence, taking learner responsibility, learning methods	All

Table 6-10 complexity of influences on students' English language learning

It is worth noting that apart from these identifiable factors that already show complex influences on students' English language learning, situational factors such as the exact language classroom students were in were also not neglectable. As Figure 6-1 shows, students could enter a motivating or demotivating classroom, which possibly affects their subsequent conceptions, and/or behaviours for language learning in pursuit of success.



## **6.5 Summary**

This chapter has described students' reported influences on their conceptions, and/or behaviours with regard to successful English language learning. First, reported influences on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours for English language learning oriented towards academic success were presented and discussed. Then influences on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours for English language learning oriented towards gaining communicative ability were described and analyzed. This was followed by discussions of the complexity of influences on students' English language learning, with regard to teachers, family, Chinese learning mottos, and individual factors.

# CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION IN RELATION TO CONCEPTS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the data findings and explores Chinese students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy theory in the literature. As stated in chapter 2, although literature in language education generally agrees that learner autonomy is a capacity, it at the same time suggests that concepts of learner autonomy may have cultural characteristics. Moreover, when such an argument is put forward, a distinction is often made between 'Western' and 'Chinese'. However, except for being argued at a theoretical level, the cultural characteristics of learner autonomy are seldom explored. The present study aims to fill the gap by investigating concepts of learner autonomy from the Chinese participants' perspectives. As stated in chapter 3, to avoid any imposition of learner autonomy theory on participants, the present study adopted a methodological strategy of not asking about autonomy directly but instead seeing whether it emerged from learners' accounts of successful English language learning.

Findings of students' accounts of successful English language learning, including reported behaviours, conceptions of successful English language learning, and possible influences on students' conceptions, and/or reported behaviours have been presented and discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively. The current chapter comes back to the main focus of the present study, concepts of learner autonomy. Since the study aims to examine students' conceptions relatable to concepts of learner autonomy, this chapter differs in structure from the previous chapters (4, 5, and 6) in that students' conceptions of successful English language learning come first and this is followed by reported behaviours in their pursuit of language learning success and possible influences on



students' conceptions and/or reported behaviours with regard to successful English language learning.

The chapter first discusses students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy theory, including links with literature descriptions of 'Western' and 'Chinese' emphases on concepts of learner autonomy and the 'universal' core elements of learner autonomy. This is followed by arguments about the inadequacy of the current literature on learner autonomy theory in language education. Then the chapter moves on to discuss the possible relationships between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours, which suggests that both consistency and inconsistency exist. Afterwards, the chapter discusses influences on Chinese students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours, which shows that political, economic, social, cultural, and individual factors all play a role. This again suggests that the current literature on learner autonomy in language education is limited. Based on the complexity of student conceptions, reported behaviours, and identifiable influences, the chapter ends with a holistic view on learner autonomy in English language education.

## **7.2 Students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy**

In this section, students' conceptions of successful language learning will be summarized. Then students' conceptions relatable to 'Western' features of learner autonomy theory and 'Chinese' features of learner autonomy theory will be discussed. It is noteworthy that the 'Western' emphases in the literature seem to be inadequate to explain these particular data findings and that the 'Chinese' emphases in the literature tend to gloss over the complexity of student conceptions. This is followed by a discussion of student conceptions relatable to 'universal' learner autonomy theory and new dimensions of learner autonomy. With research

evidence, the study challenges the 'Westernness' and 'Chineseness' of learner autonomy and states the inadequacy of learner autonomy theory in the literature. These bring about a more sophisticated understanding of concepts of learner autonomy.

### **7.2.1 Summary of students' conceptions of successful language learning**

In chapter 5, I illustrated student conceptions of successful English language learning, relative to three aspects: the nature of English language learning, the criteria for successful English language learning, and conditions for language learning success. To take the nature of language learning first, students had two distinct views: English as an exam subject, and English as a language for communicative use. Based on such a division, language learning success also entailed two types: academic achievement and communicative ability, which fitted with the respective notions of the nature of language learning. In accordance with such criteria, students reported necessary conditions for achieving language learning success. For example, to achieve academic success, they expected learner responsibility in completing the teacher's assigned or recommended tasks, to have a good teacher who can provide proper guidance, to adopt appropriate methods such as memorization and doing exercises, to bear positive attitudes, and to make an effort. Similarly, to obtain communicative ability, they thought there was a need to initiate one's own tasks, to use effective methods such as meaningful memorization, enhancing language sense and using the language, to have an interest in English, to be persistent in language learning, to be confident, to have good learning habits, and to have an English language environment.



Embedded in these conceptions, features that tended to accord with learner autonomy theory in the literature were revealed and examined. At the same time, new findings were explored, which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

## **7.2.2 Links with ‘Western’ emphasis in learner autonomy theory**

As emphasised in 2.1, ‘Western’ was used as shorthand meaning theories that are established in the ‘West’ in a geographical sense limited to Europe and North America. In chapter 2, I reported that aspects such as willingness, freedom, and self-direction (see section 2.5) are emphasized in ‘Western’ learner autonomy theory in language education, all of which were found in the review of students’ reported conceptions for successful language learning.

### **7.2.2.1 Willingness to take responsibility for English language learning**

As argued by Ushioda (2007: 15), ‘self-regulated learning can occur only when the ability to control strategic thinking processes is accompanied by the wish to do so’. In the literature, such willingness is often expressed by the assumption that learners accept the responsibility for learning (e.g. Sinclair, 2000: 7; Little, 1996). This seemed not to be a problem since students clearly stated that they were the learning action takers (see section 5.3.2.1 and 5.4.2.3). Nevertheless, just as Benson (2006a: 29) sounded the alarm, ‘...we should be cautious in assuming that greater responsibility for learning enhances motivation independently of students’ broader willingness to engage in the language learning process’. The comments of students in the present study also suggested that

acceptance of learning responsibility and the willingness to learn were two different issues.

Willingness, as exemplified in learner autonomy theory in language education is often referred to as 'intrinsic motivation' (e.g. Ushioda, 1996; Littlewood, 1996) that exists both 'within individuals' and 'in the nexus between a person and a task' (Ryan and Deci, 2000: 56). In the former sense, learners are profiled as ones who have genuine interest in learning, and learn for its pleasure and the satisfaction of achievement (e.g. Ushioda, 1996); in the latter sense, learners' willingness to learn is preconditioned by the extent to which the learning process and learning contents are personally relevant (e.g. Little, 1991). Both senses were found in students' account in the present study.

On the one hand, some students expressed that they had a genuine interest in English language learning. As discussed in section 5.4.2.1, students suggested that their interest in English language, English culture, or the ability to use the language, were their main driving forces for English language learning. Moreover, even though some of them did not like English at the beginning, their sense of academic achievement helped foster such an interest. On the other hand, some students found that English language learning was personally relevant, for example, they wanted to understand English novels, to use English to communicate with foreigners or to follow major courses that were taught in English (see section 4.3.1 and 4.3.3).

### **7.2.2.2 Freedom to take responsibility for English language learning**

The freedom in learning that learners can exercise has always been a major concern of many autonomy advocates (e.g. Benson, 2001; 2006a).



For example, Benson (2001) emphasised important aspects of such freedom as being the free choice of the learning contents and of the learning process. Some students compared different stages of their English language learning, for example, learning in kindergarten or primary school, middle school or high school and university, and suggested that great differences in the support for learning freedom affected their degree of learner autonomy. As described in section 6.3.1.2, in pre-school and primary school, English was an optional subject and their learning was quite flexible and interest-based; in secondary and high school, English was a compulsory subject for the National Entrance Exam and their learning was prescribed; in university, English was a compulsory subject but students had choices about when to take the National Band 4 Test. They felt that freedom for English learning fluctuated along with these key stages of school education, with more freedom at pre-school or primary and tertiary level and less at secondary level. A strict syllabus-driven and exam-tailored English education aroused some students' resistance to English language learning, which oppressed their autonomy.

It is noteworthy that the data showed that freedom could be a double edged sword. Just as over constraint could oppress learner autonomy, excessive freedom possibly had a negative effect on learner autonomy in language learning. A typical example is interviewee 10 who was a fully independent person under the family education (see section 6.4.2.2). However, she did not like learning English and hardly reported any learning behaviours that could be associated with learner autonomy. As Benson (2001) alerts us, when learners were given the freedom to make all the choices in their learning, they might choose some objectives far away from the curriculum.

### **7.2.2.3 Self-direction as an indicator for learner autonomy**

As stated in chapter 2, self-direction is considered an indicator of learner autonomy in the 'Western' literature. For example, Holec (1981) stresses that if learners can direct all aspects of their learning, such learning is autonomous. Moreover, to consider the social dimension of learner autonomy, self-direction involves learners' exercise of agency including negotiating and collaborating with others (Benson, 2001; 2003). To be more concise, self-direction is often considered to be the state in which firstly, individuals can manage their own learning; and secondly, individuals can negotiate with influential others such as teachers in order to carry out self-directed learning. The data in the present study showed that self-direction was evident among students.

The most notable evidence was that when learner autonomy for academic success was the prime goal for the given educational system, such as at secondary level, quite a few students nonetheless indicated the importance of English language learning for communicative ability. Students' conceptions of how to obtain communicative ability implied the active role of individuals in directing their own English language learning. Moreover, even when learning for academic success, which seemingly was other directed by influences such as exams or teachers, some students showed that their learning was not merely reactive to the system or the teachers' instruction, but rather involved informed choices, taking into consideration the system's requirements and individual personal goals.

In the 'Western' literature on learner autonomy, another characteristic of self-direction is the students' initiative to negotiate with teachers in the language learning process (e.g. Benson, 2001; Dam, 1995). This was also found in the present study. As discussed in section 6.3.2.1, when students



found teachers did not provide the necessary input, which they expected, they tended to articulate their learning request.

In summary, 'Western' emphasis in learner autonomy theory was found in Chinese students' conceptions of successful English language learning, which suggested that such conceptions were possibly not exclusively 'Western'..

### **7.2.3 Links with 'Chinese' emphasis in learner autonomy theory**

As stated in chapter 2, 'Chinese' emphasis in learner autonomy theory pays attention to characteristics such as internalised willingness, manageable freedom, strong will, persistence, and teacher-direction. These elements were found in students' conceptions. However, the data suggested that these themes could be more complicated than could be easily explained by resorting to traditional cultural traits. Since the role of persistence is closely associated with strong will, it is discussed under the heading of strong will. The following sections will focus on internalised willingness, manageable freedom to take the responsibility for learning, the role of strong will and teacher direction..

#### **7.2.3.1 Internalised willingness to take the responsibility for learning**

It is worth mentioning that Ryan and Deci (2000: 6) state that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are a continuum along which various types of regulation exist, depending on how 'internalized' they are. It is reasonable that the importance of English language learning and the values attached to it could be internalized by students. This could be understood from two perspectives. On the one hand, for some students who did not like

learning English for exams, they fully recognized that English, being one of the compulsory subjects for the National Entrance Exam could determine the type of university they could enter, which subsequently led to different job prospects. On the other hand, for some students who did not like learning English, they seemed to know that communicative ability was a prerequisite for a better career with the increase of international communication. In both cases, students showed that they managed their attitude towards English language learning because the seemingly external motivation had been internalized.

The study verified the claims in the literature that willingness is an important component of learner autonomy. However, it also suggested that such willingness consisted of not only a natural affective attachment to language learning process and contents, but also of a choice of attitude based on the judgement of the overall factors that influence language learning. As discussed in section 5.3.2.5, students reported that they needed to have the right attitude towards English language learning, including both a positive attitude and a serious attitude.

### **7.2.3.2 Manageable freedom for taking learner responsibility for learning**

As argued by Little (1991; 1996), freedom is always conditional. Therefore, the freedom to take responsibility for one's own learning can be managed freedom within constraints. In the view of students in the present study, constraints not only came from the educational system that prescribes everything regarding teaching and learning in English but also from the unbalanced accessibility to teaching and learning resources due to economic differences (see section 6.2.5)



In the first place, students were left few choices under the exam-oriented English language teaching practice. However, even though classroom learning was preoccupied with didactic teaching for exam purposes, students showed that individuals had many opportunities in their after-class English language learning. For example, maximizing opportunities to enhance English language input (see section 4.3.4), and practising language use (see section 4.3.5). Moreover, in areas where teaching and learning resources were poor, students suggested that they could take advantage of what they could manage and made the most out of it. This included prioritizing certain language skills such as reading over listening due to the lack of the necessary learning equipment.

In both situations, strong learner autonomy was conveyed by the students' struggle with the given social structure.

### **7.2.3.3 Strong will to maintain learner responsibility for English language learning**

As stated in chapter 2, both Confucius' doctrines of learning and other Chinese ancient learning theories put much emphasis on will power or persistence. They suggested that volitional control over unfavourable situations was a necessary condition leading to learning success. This is often referred to by some searchers (e.g. Rao, 2006; Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Hu, 2002) as characteristic of Chinese traditional learning culture. In relation to learner autonomy, Hsu (2005) argues that the Chinese version of learner autonomy entails will power or sustained motivation or persistence.

An enormous quantity of the data showed that students emphasised the importance of strong will in English language learning. However, for them, such a notion was more to do with a justified willingness to take the

responsibility for learning than with concerns about the traditional culture of learning. Students provided three rationales for expectations of having a strong will in English language learning: the nature of language learning, the practical purpose of learning English, and human nature.

As discussed in section 5.2, students' views on the nature of English language learning could be either English as an exam subject or language for communicative use. For the former, they needed to undertake a large quantity of repetitive memorization and practice that sometimes was frustrating. In such a situation, they felt that it was necessary for them to use strong will to adjust their emotional frustration (see section 4.2.5); for the latter, students thought language learning was a long term commitment, which involved authentic language input and language use. In an environment where English was a foreign language, they had little chance to use the language. This made it even more difficult for them to be persistent in obtaining language input through various media such as English programmes; English novels etc. with no channel to test and consolidate the learned language. In such cases, a strong will could help maintain persistence in English language learning.

Not all students were willing to accept learning English as a compulsory subject. The pressure of dealing with exams often brought psychological hindrance to students. Even though some students liked English, they suggested that they felt depressed with preparations for exams. The situation was worse for those who had no interest in English. Under such circumstances, students reported the need to hold a positive attitude towards English language learning by means of a strong will (see section 4.2.5).

Some students mentioned that laziness was part of human nature and anyone could have a period of feeling unwilling to learn English but



wanting to do other things. All these concerns indicated the students' belief in the role of a strong will in sustaining active involvement in English language learning.

As can be seen from the above discussion, rather than concerns about the traditional culture of learning, students claimed that the role of a strong will was a necessary element in taking responsibility for their English language learning because of the nature of English language learning, and situational and human needs. However, hardly any literature in the 'west' stressed such a point in discussions of learner autonomy in language education. The closest linkage is possibly Benson's (2001) notion of cognitive control, on which the concept of learner autonomy is based. He points out the need for learners to 'set their own priorities and agendas and attempt to control psychological factors that influence their learning' (Benson, 2001: 75). Although will power never explicitly comes to the forefront, it is implied in cognitive management. Students' voices on the subject of will power were a call for a broadening of our vision of learner autonomy.

In fact, in educational psychology, Corno (2001: 196) argues that volition helps learners to prioritize commitments and gear involvement in self-regulated learning. There are good reasons for us to understand that learner autonomy in language education should not be limited to natural willingness or intrinsic motivation.

#### **7.2.3.4 Respect for teacher authority?**

As stated in chapter 2, some researchers (e.g. Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Hu, 2005; 2002) claim that Chinese students are commonly observed as having high respect for teacher authority since it is part of the Chinese culture of learning. Other researchers (e.g. Huang, 2007) are cautious about drawing the conclusion that respect for teacher authority is a cultural

tradition. For example, Littlewood (1999: 75) argues for another type of learner autonomy, 'reactive autonomy' in his words, which means that learning objectives are initiated by teachers and learners engage with learning activities that react to the objectives. Likewise, Xu et al. (2004) overtly maintain that to understand teachers' objectives is the prime component for learner autonomy in China.

The data in the present study seemed to be consonant with the literature in that students expressed their expectations of teacher-direction in particular, in terms of learning methods or appropriate learning materials in order to obtain academic success (see section 5.3.2). However, students did not respect teachers as authoritarian figures, but rather expected their authoritative functions to lie in leading them to effective language learning. This was especially the case in disadvantaged areas where teaching and learning resources were poor (see section 6.2.5). Students reported that relying on the teachers' guidance became their only possible means to achieve academic success. In relation to their strong voices on learner responsibility (see section 5.3.1 and 5.4.4), expectations of teacher-direction rather than pure respect for teacher authority tended to be their strategic choice for surviving an educational system rather than a pure respect for teacher authority. In fact, the willingness to obtain better learning methods from teachers implied a strong sense of taking the responsibility for learning.

Moreover, examples of countering teacher authority were not uncommon in the data. For example, there were students who complained that teachers' ways of instilling learning were ineffective, which confirmed Huang's (2007) finding that Chinese students in his study requested teacher-learner dialogue and cooperation. Moreover, with growing confidence obtained from learning experiences, students showed that a



teachers' direction was only necessary for those whose English was at ordinary level.

To date, hardly anyone challenges Dam's (1995) account of students who are able to initiate their own respective learning objectives and involvement in the various learning activities. However, to reflect on her initial stage of work, students were still put in a position to be directed by her new way of organizing the classroom English language teaching and fostering learner autonomy. Data findings in the present study suggested that teacher-direction was necessary in certain stages or situations of the students' English language learning, which however contained no evidence for the claims that it is because of a respect for teacher authority which is part of the Chinese culture of learning.

#### **7.2.4 Links with 'universal' learner autonomy theory**

As stated in chapter 2, literature on learner autonomy in language education is highly consistent in the claim that learner autonomy entails learners taking responsibility for their own learning. Such responsibility can be summarized into three aspects: the capacity to take responsibility (e.g. Holec, 1981); the willingness to take responsibility (e.g. Little, 1991; Ushioda, 2007); and the right to take responsibility (e.g. Benson, 2001). Among the three dimensions, willingness and freedom to take the responsibility are considered to have respective 'Western' and 'Chinese' emphases in the literature, whereas the capacity to take the responsibility appears to be the most widely accepted in the literature (e.g. Benson, 2006a; Sinclair, 2000). Since the previous sections have discussed the first two aspects of such responsibility in relation to the data findings, the following section focuses on discussions about learner autonomy as the capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning.

### **7.2.4.1 Capacity to take responsibility for English language learning**

In chapter 2, I quoted Holec's (1981) definition of learner autonomy as a capacity that can be elaborated into five aspects of the learning process: learning objectives, learning schedule, learning methods, monitoring with regard to learning rhythm, time and place etc., and evaluation. In other words, being a type of capacity, learner autonomy concerns the ability to identify learning objectives, to establish a certain learning pace with proper learning content, to find appropriate learning methods, to monitor the learning process and to evaluate learning outcomes. These ideas are generally found in students' reported conceptions, which are illustrated as follows:

*First, the ability to identify learning objectives.* This appeared in students' frequent mentioning of their respective learning goals. In chapter 5, I classified two types of broad learning objectives reported by students: academic success and communicative ability. Moreover, as discussed in section 5.5, students' objectives tended to be complex. On the one hand, students' broad objectives are more complicated than would be represented by a neat distinction between academic success and communicative ability. As presented in section 5.5.1, some students chose academic success as a priori and left communicative ability for a later decision whereas others considered communicative ability as an objective that could cater for both objectives. On the other hand, under each broad objective, students revealed various sub-objectives that could be individual specific. Taking the objective of academic success for example, some aimed to be No.1 in the class or even in the Grade, others aimed at a position within the top 10 in the Class, and still others simply aimed for a passing grade (see section 5.3.1). The situation remained the



same when examining data from students whose objective was communicative ability. For example, some students considered native like pronunciation and fluency as the goal and others thought the ability to express oneself and understand interlocutors including other non-native speakers was the objective.

*Second, the ability to establish a certain learning pace.* Students showed unanimous recognition that language learning was not a once for all task and they were able to establish their respective learning paces, following their broad learning objectives. This meant to design practical agendas and stick to them. For example, to achieve academic success, students stated the importance of searching for exam-relevant materials and making effort to work on them. In a sense, their learning pace was subjected to the exam pace. This was particularly evident when the students came to the final year of high school and the National Entrance Exam was near, they showed an increasingly intensive learning pace (see section 4.2.2). Likewise, students felt that obtaining communicative ability was a long term commitment and needed a regular learning pace that involved persistence (see section 4.3.4). As presented in section 4.3.1, students were inclined to look for materials which provided massive language input and which were of personal interests to them in their after class English learning. With different individual learning objectives, students were found to have reported various learning paces.

*Third, the ability to find appropriate methods.* A great many comments in the data showed students' concern about finding appropriate methods in order to achieve learning success. For example, they attached importance to memorization and doing exercises to achieve academic success (see section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2). Similarly, they reported themselves as involving meaningful memorization, enhancing language input, obtaining language sense, and practising language use to improve communicative ability (see



section 4.3). This seems to be in line with a few researchers' (e.g. Wenden, 1991; 2002; Oxford, 2003) proposals for learning strategy training in order to promote learner autonomy. According to Wenden (1991; 2002), learner autonomy is pre-conditioned by necessary learning strategies. Therefore, to have proper learning strategies is seen as compulsory to the capacity for learner autonomy. However, with a further examination of the data, it was revealed that what often happened was not that students did not have the capacity to know or to use certain learning methods but that they tended to become suspicious of the usefulness of their methods if they did not see the expected learning efficiency. This seemed to be closely linked with their capacity to monitor and evaluate their language learning.

*Fourth, the ability to monitor the learning process.* This, according to Holec (1981: 3), means the ability to observe and reflect on learning 'rhythm, time and place etc'. It seems that the nature of such a capacity lies in two psychological constructs: 'attention' and 'reflection' as argued by Benson (2001: 94). The importance of monitoring was found in the data mainly in two aspects: first, when students expressed their feelings of guilt for breaking their regular learning pattern; second, when students provided a rationale for their adjustment of learning contents and learning methods, either for academic success or communicative ability.

*Fifth, the ability to evaluate what has been acquired.* As an important step in learning management, the ability to evaluate learning is often considered as necessary to inform the next round of a learning plan. Although such an opinion was not overtly stated by the students in the data, they showed unanimous agreement on the role of evaluation in their language learning process. This was seen not only in their acceptance of two criteria for language learning success but also in their application of such criteria in their procedural learning. For them, the former is concerned with the final learning outcome with reference to public



judgement such as exam results (see section 4.2.1); the latter on the other hand, dealt with communicative language use, which could be as small as mastery of a few new vocabulary items or as big as 'a leap at language level' as articulated by interviewee 8 or being able to communicate with foreigners (e.g. interviewee 12). Moreover, with reference to exam results it is by no means suggested that students only relied on the external criterion to determine their own learning outcome. Instead, students showed their abilities to make their own judgement, which implied a passing grade could mean something different to different students. In this regard, Holec's (1981) definition seems to be vague as to what acquisition means: linguistic knowledge and skills, language use, or simply completion of a cycle of a learning plan.

### **7.2.5 Learner autonomy for academic success (LAAS) and Learner autonomy for communicative ability (LACA)**

As stated in chapter 2, literature on language learner autonomy remains contradictory. On the one hand, Little (2007a) strongly argues that language learner autonomy equates to communicative ability and should be developed through a dynamic communicative approach in language education. On the other hand, Holec (1996) points out that learners might have different objectives such as linguistic knowledge, communicative ability, special needs or process of learning. Moreover, development of learner autonomy prioritizes learning management (e.g. Wenden, 1991; Holec, 1996). These theoretical debates never come to a conclusion since no relevant research has been done. The present study, with research evidence, suggests that language learner autonomy can mean two broad objectives: learner autonomy for academic success (LAAS) and learner autonomy for communicative ability (LACA).

As discussed in the previous section, the two domains of learner autonomy contain all the elements that define the concept. For example, LAAS entails the students' ability to identify personal objectives within the authoritative yardstick of academic success, to find the appropriate materials to support such learning objectives; to establish certain learning paces that possibly fluctuate with exam frequencies; to find proper methods that work best for them to succeed in exams; to monitor learning progress and evaluate the learning outcome with reference to exam results. The ability to manage learning is equally applicable to LACA. However, due to the difference in objectives, LAAS and LACA differ in each aspect of learning management. For LAAS, exams are important and explicit references for learners to manage their own English language learning. For LACA, communicative language use becomes the most important criterion for learning management adjustment.

Overall, learner autonomy as a capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning is illustrated by the following diagram, with comparison between Holec's (1981) description and students' conceptions.

Holec's description (1981:3)	Students' conceptions	
	LAAS	LACA
The ability to identify learning objectives	Certain exam grade or positions in school ranking order	Native-like pronunciation and fluency; ability to use English
The ability to establish a certain learning pace	Intensive effort, regulated by exams	Regular persistence, regulated by interest/need
the ability to find appropriate methods	Memorization and doing exercises	Obtain language sense, practise language use
The ability to monitor the learning process	Reflection on the language learning process	
The ability to evaluate what has been acquired	Exam results	Communicative ability (e.g. spoken English)

Table 7-1 Learner autonomy as a capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning (LAAS: Learner Autonomy for Academic Success; LACA: Learner Autonomy for Communicative Ability)



The co-existence of LAAS and LACA suggests that language learner autonomy is not restricted to communicative ability as is claimed by Little (2007a). For students in the present study, surviving an educational system was even more important than a communicative ability that had no immediate relevance with them. It should be pointed out that this by no means suggested that LAAS and LACA were mutually exclusive. In fact, some students were seen to have developed personal objectives that were not always in contradiction with the educational system. When students expressed the opinion that aiming at communicative ability brought positive effects on achieving academic success, they were possibly suggesting LACA and LAAS simultaneously. The complexity of the relationship will be further discussed in section 7.5.

### **7.2.6 Conceptions of learner autonomy — a better understanding**

As stated in chapter 2, the concept of learner autonomy has different emphases in the literature, with 'Western' and 'Chinese' features, some of which seemed to be mutually exclusive. However, data findings in the present study strongly indicated that such a sharply drawn distinction was unwarranted. As discussed in the above sections, not only were 'Western' features found in students' accounts but also 'Chinese' features were proved to be situationally dependent rather than cultural characteristics. Moreover, new insights into the concept of learner autonomy were gained through analyzing students' conceptions, which are displayed in the following table.

Literature descriptions	Students' conceptions (LAAS)	Students' conceptions (LACA)
Capacity	Capacity (academic success)	Capacity (communicative ability)
Willingness	Willingness (internalised willingness)	Willingness (genuine interest)
Freedom	Freedom (manageable choices)	Freedom (free choices)
	Strong will (effort to maintain learner autonomy)	Strong will (persistence)
	Teacher-direction (strategic approach for learner autonomy)	Self-direction

Table 7-2 A better understanding of concepts of learner autonomy (LAAS: Learner Autonomy for Academic Success; LACA: Learner Autonomy for Communicative ability)

As discussed in the previous sections and presented in the table, current literature descriptions of concepts of learner autonomy seem to be inadequate to explain data findings in the present research, specifically as follows:

First and most notably, the concept of learner autonomy exists in a high stakes exam environment. In other words, learner autonomy can take the form of learning English for academic success and this is often not recognized in the literature on learner autonomy in language education. The data showed that LAAS had all the components that are defined by Holec (1981). This counters Little's (2007a) argument that considers learner autonomy should only aim at communicative language use. According to him (ibid), only when the learner's objective was for language use purposes, can they be linked with learner autonomy in language learning. This opinion will blind us from other important notions of learner autonomy: constrained freedom and learners' own choices. In my opinion, in a high stakes exam-driven educational context such as in China, students who chose learning objectives under the framework of exams were more than normal. In the short term, no students or even teachers



had the power to challenge the existing system. Students' choices had to be constrained ones. Moreover, not all the students wanted to search for jobs where English proficiency was a necessary condition. In other words, they might never have the opportunity to use English in their future careers. For these students, their prime goal was to obtain a good academic record that could secure them a degree. If learner autonomy essentially is about personal needs, students' preferences for exam-directed learning were also understandable. There was no reason to believe that these students were not autonomous human beings simply because their choices were within the existing system.

Second, data findings indicated that strong will should be incorporated into both LAAS and LACA. Although willingness is commonly recognized as a key component in learner autonomy (e.g. Little, 1991; Sinclair, 2000; Benson, 2001), there seems to be insufficient literature discussing adjusted attitude, for example, as mentioned by students in the present study. As a compulsory subject for public examination, English was a foreign language confronting Chinese students at the beginning. Except for a few interviewees who reported that they had a genuine interest in English at the beginning, most of them had to adjust their attitude towards English language learning. Under such circumstances, a strong will was necessary for them to carry out learning for academic survival. Moreover, even when students had interest in English and aimed at communicative ability, a strong will was also needed to sustain learning. However, caution should be exercised not to attribute these two components to Chinese traditional culture as is often claimed by a few researchers (e.g. Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Hu, 2004; 2002). The data indicated that there were different reasons for students to recognize strong will being a necessary component of LAAS. Although the data showed that Chinese learning mottos on encouraging learning formed parts of students' conceptions of



learner autonomy, there was no research evidence suggesting that such characteristics are absent in other cultures (ethnic culture). In fact, even among Chinese students, not all students reported the same appreciation of Chinese learning mottos.

Last but not least, the literature on learner autonomy often emphasised the teachers' role being secondary to the learners'. For example, teachers are considered as facilitators or counsellors who are only involved in the learning process when learners feel it necessary (e.g. Victori and Lockhart, 1995). However, this often neglects different stages of learning, in which teachers' roles vary. If we accept that learner autonomy is a developing process of supplementing inherent autonomy through systematic learning (Little, 1996), we cannot overlook the teachers' role in the initial stage of bringing students into the new learning system. In fact, the current literature on teacher autonomy for learner autonomy strongly indicates the concern about the teachers' role in fostering learner autonomy (e.g. Little, 1995). Taking the well-known example of Dam's (1995) project, she not only decides the format of teaching and learning in the classroom but also takes the lead in the negotiation because of her knowledge of the curriculum and her professional qualities. Her role will only be subsumed under the students' when they are equipped with the necessary capabilities to make informed decisions.

In a situation where English was a compulsory subject in high stakes exams, aspects such as the objective of academic success, internalized willingness for language learning, effort to maintain learner autonomy, and strategic choice of teacher-direction should not be understated. Moreover, from the perspective of communicative ability, elements such as a strong will to keep persistence in English language learning and therefore encouraging learner autonomy should be considered. In fact, in general education, effort, and persistence are held as crucial components of



learner autonomy (Derrick and Carr, 2003). With the highlighted elements, the present study strongly argues for a better understanding of concepts of learner autonomy in language education.

### **7.3 Relationships between Chinese students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours**

This section first reviews Chinese students' reported behaviours for successful English language learning. Then it explores the relationships between Chinese students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours, with both consistency and inconsistency identified and discussed respectively. Finally, it discusses the intricate nature of concepts of learner autonomy and the complexity of the relationships.

#### **7.3.1 Summary of Chinese students' reported behaviours**

In chapter 4, I provided students' reported behaviours, which were found to relate to two broad categories: language learning for academic success and for communicative ability. In order to achieve academic success, students showed that they engaged in activities such as rote learning and its development, doing exercises, evaluation by exams, and managing motivation (see section 4.2). For communicative ability, students suggested that they were involved in searching for authentic materials; enhancing language sense, maximizing language input, and evaluation by language use (see section 4.3). Moreover, students' reported behaviours that were mixed with both types were also reported (see section 4.4).

To investigate the relationships between Chinese students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours, it is necessary to clarify the two aspects respectively. First, as stated in section 7.2.5, students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy were embedded in

two distinctive domains: LAAS and LACA. Second, to examine students' reported behaviours that could be associated with learner autonomy, it is worthwhile to refer to Holec's (1981: 5) clarification on 'self-directed learning'. For him (ibid), self-directed learning is a term to describe learning that exercises learner autonomy. Therefore, an important criterion for identifying the relationships between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours was whether students engaged in the five aspects of learning management argued by Holec (1981: 3): identifying learning objectives, establishing certain learning paces, finding appropriate methods, monitoring the learning process, and evaluating learning outcomes. However, since students did not necessarily report their learning behaviours concisely in these five aspects, the criterion to identify the possible relationships between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours was therefore adjusted to the extent that students reported that they engaged in self-initiated learning activities, which will be further discussed below.

### **7.3.2 Consistent relationships**

A few researchers (e.g. Cotterall, 1999; Wenden, 1991) report that students' strategy uses are consonant with their beliefs. For some interviewees (see Table 7-3) in the present study, their reported behaviours were also found to be consistent with their conceptions relatable to learner autonomy. For example, when the students' autonomy was related to academic success, their reported behaviours were also associated with SDAS (self-directed learning for academic success); likewise, when the students' autonomy was related to communicative ability, they tended to engage in activities that were SDCA (self-directed learning towards communicative ability).



Typical examples of interviewees	conceptions of successful English language learning relatable to learner autonomy	reported behaviours for successful English language learning associated with self-directed learning
2, 3, 4, 20	LAAS (see section 5.3)	SDAS (see section 4.2.2)
2, 8, 15, 22	LACA (see section 5.4)	SDCA (see section 4.3.1)

Table 7-3 Examples of consistent relationship between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours (LAAS: Learner Autonomy for Academic Success; LACA: Learner Autonomy for Communicative ability; SDAS: Self-Directed learning for Academic Success; SDCA: Self-Directed learning for Communicative Ability)

### 7.3.2.1 Learner autonomy and associated behaviours for academic success

The data suggested that students' reported behaviours could be highly consistent with their autonomy for academic success. These students' learning was outstandingly focused on exams (e.g. 2, 3, 4, 20 in Table 7-3). For example, their learning contents were related to the exam syllabus; their learning methods were prevalently memorization and a huge amount of exercises on exam papers; their learning progress was monitored by them with reference to exams. They did not need others to push themselves in learning since they were informed by the exam results. Moreover, such evaluation often generated another round of learning aimed at improving the weak points that were exposed by the exams.

It is noteworthy that students of this kind were not passive recipients under the high stakes exam system. Their autonomy was demonstrated by their active involvement with learning which was expected to help them to survive the educational system. For example, students were seen to set realistic objectives with regard to their own all-round abilities and the concern about survival of exams. They were actively exploring appropriate methods in order to improve learning efficiency; in which case, some students showed that such an exploration led to their autonomy for

communicative ability (see section 4.2.5 for example). Moreover, although the exam results helped monitor students' learning outcomes, they were critical of the exam papers, which implied that students had the capability to make sound judgement with consideration of both their own capabilities and the quality of exams. This also indicated that students bore an objective attitude towards exam evaluation. In other words, exam results were important indicators but not necessarily a sole determinant of students' learning behaviours.

As argued in section 7.2.6, LAAS has all the characteristics that the concept of learner autonomy entails except that the learning objective is academic success. To some extent, exams no longer appeared to be an external imposition, but rather to be integrated into the students' learning objectives. Moreover, with the accumulation of exam experiences, students were able to judge their own respective learning needs in order to obtain academic success. In the students' own words, they could prioritize their own weak points and make improvements.

### **7.3.2.2 Learner autonomy and associated behaviours for communicative ability**

Similarly, the data suggested that students' reported behaviours could be consonant with their autonomy for communicative ability. Students of this type (e.g. 2, 8, 15, 22 in Table 7-3) often had self-initiated goals, for example to understand more about English culture, to enlarge authentic language input, to improve oral English etc. Moreover, they had developed their own ways of English language learning during the process of pursuing their learning goals. They actively engaged in the learning directions they determined by themselves. For example, those who expected to understand more about English culture chose to read English novels or watch English films; those who aimed to enlarge authentic



language input regularly listened to English programmes in addition to reading novels in the original English or watching English movies; those who targeted oral English actively looked for opportunities for communication with native speakers.

There were some common characteristics shared by this type of student: first, they understood well their objectives and knew how to achieve them. Second, there was no ready-made criterion for them to evaluate their learning since their objectives were different from the school curriculum and they had to find their own measurement and make the judgement. Third, although with different paces, they generally demonstrated an upward trend in the progression of their English learning. Moreover, since their final objective was near-native speaker fluency in language use, something that was difficult to achieve, their engagement in learning was somehow indefinite and thus was sustainable. Last but not least; they were also quite aware of the importance of exams, which however, was put into a secondary position when compared with their own objectives. Their common belief was that once their English proficiency improved, exams were no longer a problem. Such an opinion was often confirmed by their exam results. Hence, they did not see their own learning objectives to be in conflict with exams. Even though some students suggested that occasionally those few who only aimed at preparation for exams would outperform them in exams, they still felt proud of their own all round abilities in English use.

It seemed that confidence in their own capability to make informed choices along with positive learning experiences ensured that these students had an active engagement in English learning. They seemed no longer to need a teachers' guidance for the time being. This confirmed Ruan's (2007) research that students demonstrated greater self-directed learning and

their strong sense of independence from the teacher came from their established self-efficacy, willingness, and confidence in learning.

### 7.3.3 Inconsistent relationships

As Yang (1999) finds in her study, none of the students' strategy use significantly correlates with their beliefs for various reasons. The data also revealed that inconsistent relationships between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours existed in some interviewees' accounts of successful English language learning, which included two main perspectives: between conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and reported self-directed learning; between domains of learner autonomy and reported self-directed learning (see Table 7-4 ).

Typical examples of interviewees	conceptions of successful English language learning relatable to learner autonomy	reported behaviours for successful English language learning associated with self-directed learning
10, 11, 23	LAAS (see section 5.3)	none
2, 9	LACA (see section 5.4)	SDAS (see section 4.4.1)

Table 7-4 Inconsistent relationships between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours

#### 7.3.3.1 Awareness of learner autonomy but without associated behaviours

The data revealed that some students (e.g. 10, 11, 23 see Table 7-4) showed that they had conceptions that were relatable to learner autonomy; however, their reported behaviours seemed unlikely to match with their conceptions. As stated in section 7.3.1, an important indicator for judging whether students' learning behaviours were autonomous or not was to examine the extent to which their learning was self-initiated. In this regard,



inconsistency was found between students' conceptions and reported behaviours.

As seen in section 5.3, interviewees such as 10, 11, and 23 acknowledged that learners should take the responsibility for their own learning. However, there were no according behaviours reported that could be associated with self-directed learning. A common feature among these interviewees was that they did not like English language learning (see Appendix IX). This possibly explained that interviewee 10 had to go to private courses in order to survive exams (see section 6.2.4.5); interviewee 11 followed the teachers' method all the time and was busy engaging in teacher-assigned tasks (see section 5.3.2.2).

### **7.3.3.2 Learner autonomy and associated behaviours in different domains**

As discussed in 7.2.5, students' conceptions could be related to two dimensions of learner autonomy: academic success and communicative ability. Likewise, students' self-directed learning behaviours could also be identified with the two dimensions respectively. The data suggested that inconsistency existed among these dimensions, for example, some students' conceptions implied learner autonomy for communicative ability whereas their reported behaviours focused on self-directed learning for academic success (see Table 7-4).

As shown in Table 7-4, both interviewees 2 and 9 reported that English language learning should aim at gaining communicative ability (see section 5.4), however, their reported behaviours (see section 4.4.1) are much oriented towards academic success.

It should be pointed out that neither discussions of consistent relationship nor inconsistent relationships between students' conceptions relatable to

learner autonomy and associated behaviours meant that the rest of the participants belonged to the same group that was opposite to the typical interviewee examples. In fact, the relationships were much more complex than the broad patterns such as consistency and inconsistency, which will be further discussed in the following section.

### **7.3.4 Intricate nature of learner autonomy and the complexity of the relationships**

The intricate nature of learner autonomy, the dynamic nature of students' conceptions and reported behaviours, and the individual diversity in learning management all determined that relationships between the students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and the associated behaviours were complex. First, as stated in section 2.4.3.4, in the current literature on learner autonomy in language education, the concept is often only associated with communicative ability. However, the data in the present study showed that learner autonomy can be associated with academic success, which could have diverse meanings to individual students (see section 4.2.1). Second, students' conceptions and reported behaviours were not static. In fact, obvious changes were reported in both aspects from the secondary level of education to the tertiary level of education were already reported (see section 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). Third, students' capability of learning management could be different among individuals. Likewise, within individuals themselves, the degree of such a capacity was also developmental. With all these variables, it is beyond the current study to document the complex relationships between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours from each individual's perspective. However, from a broad trend of identified change of students' conceptions, reported behaviours, and a general picture of diversity in learning management among and within



individuals, a flavour of the complexity of the relationships could still be illuminated. The following sections will discuss them in detail.

#### **7.3.4.1 Students' changing conceptions, reported behaviours and different domains of learner autonomy**

As discussed in section 5.5.1, data findings suggested that students' conceptions of successful English language learning underwent an apparent change from secondary education to tertiary education. Likewise, students' reported behaviours implied a similar trend of change (see sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). Both aspects contributed to the change of domains of learner autonomy, for example, from LAAS/SDAS to LACA/SDCA.

On the one hand, students reported that exam-oriented behaviours were dominant in secondary school contexts, where the National Entrance Exam was the immediate and urgent objective. Even for interviewees such as 2 and 9 (see section 4.4.1) who reported engagement in activities for gaining communicative ability, behaviours that were aimed at academic success appeared dominant in their accounts. At the same time, interviewees reported that behaviours that were related to gaining communicative ability started to increase whereas exam-oriented behaviours sharply decreased at tertiary education (see 4.4.2). On the other hand, as signified by the questionnaire data (see section 5.5.1), students' conceptions of successful English language learning increasingly changed towards gaining communicative ability when students came to tertiary education and got away from the pressure of the National Entrance Exam.

Such a trend of change would imply that associations with concepts of learner autonomy undergo an according change, for example, from the LAAS/SDAS domain to the LACA/SDCA domain. However, as discussed in section 4.4.1, students might have dual purposes for English language learning at secondary level, which meant both LAAS and LACA could be associated. Moreover, when students (e.g. 2 and 9 in section 4.4.1) were confronted with high stakes exams, they tended to carry out exam-oriented behaviours. This suggested that when students faced CET-4/6 that is a normal practice at tertiary level, their behaviours also possibly change.

### **7.3.4.2 Developmental abilities of learning management and different degrees of learner autonomy**

In accordance with Holec's (1981:3) definition of learner autonomy, the capacity for learning management is also measured by criteria with regard to the five main aspects: identifying learning objective, establishing certain learning paces, finding appropriate methods, monitoring learning progress, and evaluating learning outcome. For Holec (ibid), only learners who can be responsible for all these aspects are autonomous. This is problematic because it glosses over individual diversity: both among and within individuals. By among individuals, I mean students' levels of capacity for learning management may vary (see section 4.4.3), which is often considered as 'degrees of learner autonomy' by researchers such as Nunan (1997); By within individuals, I mean students possibly have strengths in certain aspects of learning management but weaknesses in others, which however, seems not to be elaborately documented in the literature on learner autonomy in language education. Although the data revealed that some interviewees (e.g. 2, 8, 15, and 20) had stronger learning management than others (e.g. 11 and 23), the substantial data



described how individuals found themselves developed in terms of learning management abilities, possibly because the nature of the study was about students' self-account of their English language learning experiences. Therefore, the following section will discuss more in detail how learning management abilities developed in the eyes of the interviewees.

The data suggested that management of one's own learning was actually often a concern of students in their English language learning experiences. For example, interviewee 19 showed that his abilities to establish a learning pace developed when he became older, and therefore no longer needing parental monitoring in his English language learning (see section 6.2.4.1). Similarly, interviewee 2 found his abilities to evaluate learning outcomes grew with increasing learning experiences. For example, he relied on his own judgement to determine learning tasks rather than following the teacher's (see section 5.4.2.3). Nevertheless, two aspects of ability seemed to be evolving and most frequently mentioned by students in the present study: identifying learning objectives and finding appropriate methods.

On the one hand, students showed that their abilities to identify appropriate learning objectives fluctuated. For example, at the initial stage of English language learning, students' learning objectives all appeared to be influenced by teachers. As shown in section 5.3.2.1, interviewees unanimously agreed that they should fulfil the teachers' assigned tasks. However, with more experience, some students showed that they were able to establish objectives that were different from the teachers' (e.g. 2, 4, 15 in section 5.4.2.3). On the other hand, students' language learning methods also appeared to be in a developmental process. Since foreign language learning was a new task for students, they tended to imitate teachers' methods, to start with. However, some students (e.g. 2, 4, 7, and

9) reported that they did not stay at adopting recommended methods but actively searched for appropriate methods or making improvement of suggested methods for themselves. Moreover, such a process of exploration would only become stable when students found the learning outcome was satisfactory (e.g. 2, 4, and 7).

It is noteworthy that students' capabilities for learning management were developmental. However, this did not necessarily imply that all students followed the same trend of development, for example, from low ability to high ability. In fact, the process was much more complex. For example, students might have sufficient abilities to manage their own learning for academic success. Nevertheless, they possibly felt uncertain about the appropriateness of their methods for communicative ability and therefore expected teachers' temporary guidance. Interviewee 18 was such a case. He was confident in learning English to achieve academic success, but when he realized the importance of gaining communicative ability, he chose to follow the teachers' advice (see section 5.3.2.2). Given that the students' purposes for English language learning, their expectations of the teachers' roles, and that their own capabilities to manage learning varied along with their different learning experiences and changing educational settings, relationships between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and reported behaviours should be dynamic.

In summary, the dynamic and complex relationships between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours are presented in the following Table 7-5. As shown by the table, students' conceptions and associated behaviours were changeable and such changes were also related to different domains of learner autonomy.



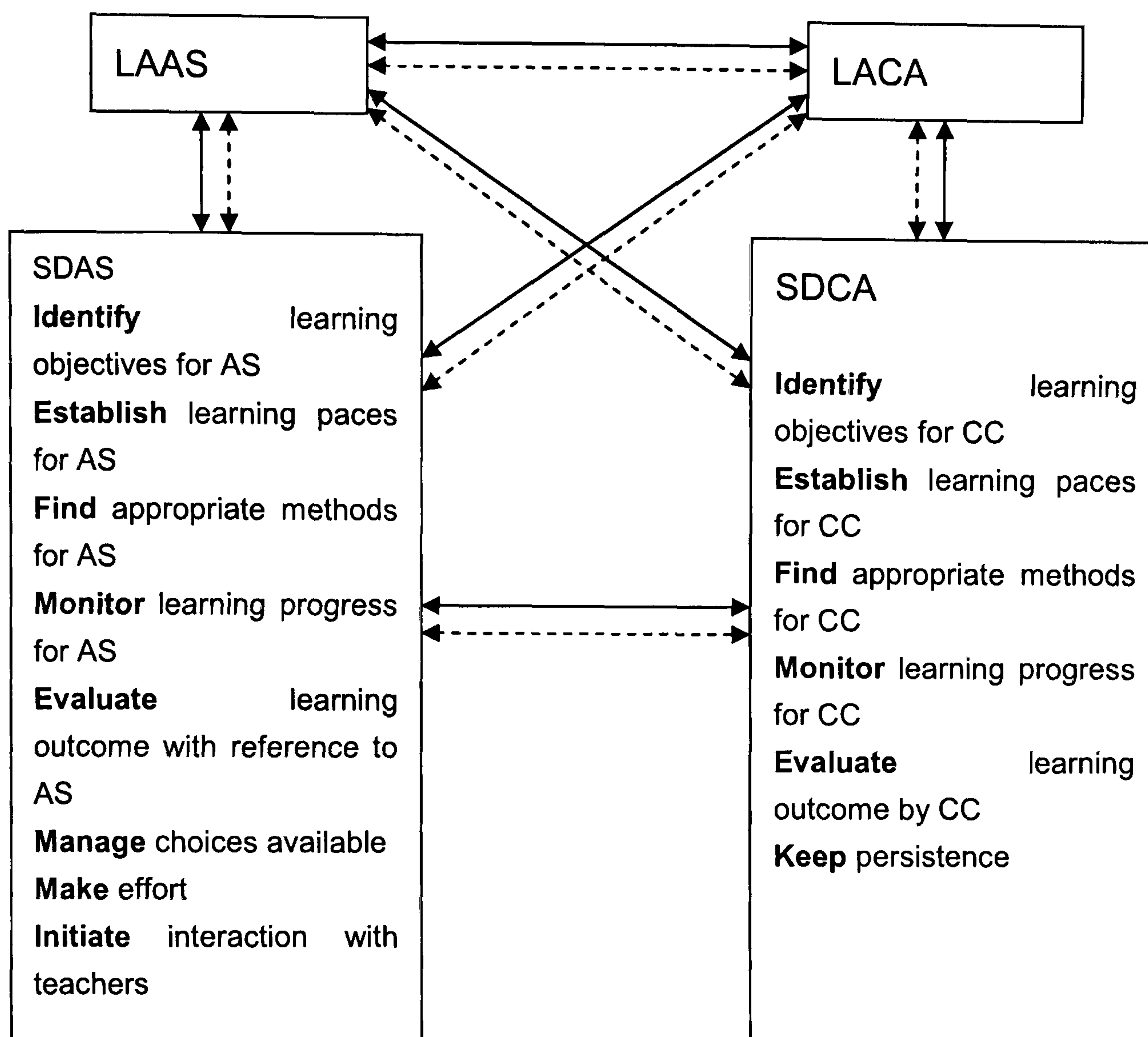


Table 7-5 Dynamic relationships between conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours (LAAS: Learner Autonomy for Academic Success; LACA: Learner Autonomy for Communicative ability; SDAS: Self-directed learning for Academic Success; SDCA: Self-directed learning for Communicative Ability)

#### 7.4 Influences on Chinese students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours

As discussed in the above sections, both consistency and inconsistency existed between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours. Moreover, students' conceptions and/or reported behaviours might undergo changes along with their language learning experiences. Therefore, it was difficult to differentiate which particular factor influenced an individual student's conceptions at a certain stage whereas the other affected his/her reported behaviour in another specific

time. A more feasible approach seemed to identify influences on LAAS and its association with SDAS (LAAS/SDAS) and LACA and its association with SDCA (LACA/SDCA) in a broad sense. This section first summarizes influences on Chinese students' conceptions of successful language learning and/or reported behaviours. Then it discusses influences on LAAS/ SDAS and LACA/ SDCA from five perspectives: political, economic, social, cultural, and the individual dimension.

#### **7.4.1 Summary of influences on Chinese students' conceptions of successful language learning and/or reported behaviours**

In chapter 6, I illustrated two broad patterns of influences on students' conceptions and/or reported behaviours with regard to successful English language learning, namely, students' pursuit of academic success and communicative ability respectively. For example, an exam-emphasised educational system, a competitive secondary school environment, teachers with exam-oriented teaching, the authority of family education, and poor teaching and learning resources were identified as sources of influence on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours for English language learning that was oriented towards academic success (see section 6.2.5). At the same time, a flexible school environment such as an early optional English language learning environment, and a free tertiary environment, teachers with communicative ability oriented teaching practice; prestigious teaching and learning resources, and language schools in the society all had influences on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours that were oriented towards gaining communicative ability. However, I also pointed out that the influences appeared to be complex. For example, a teachers' other qualities rather than instructional practices, a family's overall educational ideology could influence students' overall



conceptions and/or behaviours for English language learning with either orientation. Likewise, some Chinese proverbs/learning mottos as reported by students could also influence students' conceptions and/or behaviours for English language learning with either orientation. Moreover, individuals' previous experiences and personalities could have quite opposite effects on students' conceptions, and/or behaviours for English language learning.

To examine the influences on students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours in LAAS/SDAS and LACA/SDCA, five dimensions were found to be pertinent, namely, a political dimension, an economic dimension, a social dimension, a cultural dimension, and an individual dimension. The following sections will discuss them respectively.

#### **7.4.2 Political dimension**

Benson (2001: 49; 1996) argues that learner autonomy essentially involves a political dimension that concerns 'control over the learning process, resources, and language through collective decision-making'. Although his opinion is more focused on gaining access to conditions more favourable for learner autonomy through negotiation, the present study showed that learner autonomy could be developed in the most constrained situation such as a high stakes exam environment (see section 7.2.6). Therefore, the political dimension in the present study emphasised the importance of language policy, which might lead to different domains of learner autonomy, for example, LAAS and LACA respectively.

As discussed in section 7.2.5, when English language is a compulsory exam subject, especially for the National Entrance Exam at secondary

education, students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours displayed strong exam characteristics, for example, conceiving language learning as exam content and involvement with exam-oriented learning (see section 4.2 and 5.3). Similarly, when English language is an optional subject in primary education (see section 6.3.1.2) or a compulsory subject in tertiary education, but with a policy that supports gaining communicative ability (see section 6.3.1.1), students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours turned into an outlook that favoured gaining communicative ability (see section 4.3 and 5.4).

It should be pointed out that this did not mean that learner autonomy could be predicted by any particular language policy. In fact, students possibly developed learner autonomy within a high stakes exam environment upon self-exploration or with the teachers' proper guidance. For example, some interviewees such as interviewee 2 had developed a strong LACA/SDCA through his self-exploration at secondary school (see section 5.4.2.3). Moreover, language policy itself can be contradictory. For example, communicative language teaching has been written into English language teaching reform in China since the late 1980s (Adamson, 2004). However, the policy for the National Entrance Exam has long been the same format of testing primarily book knowledge while ignoring creative language use (Ross, 1992). Even though there are voices (e.g. Li and Wang, 2000) in favour of reforming the National Entrance Exam by incorporating elements for testing abilities of language use, they seem still to stay at the stage of debates rather than actions. In a way, the nature of the National Entrance Exam largely influenced English language teaching at secondary level (Hu, 2002) and students' subsequent autonomy and associated behaviours. The impact was so great that even some students were observed to manage their English language learning at tertiary level in much the same



way as they did in secondary school (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006), which implied that students' conceptions relating to learner autonomy and associated behaviours would possibly stay in the same domain such as LAAS that was dominant in secondary education.

As stated in chapter 1, the recent college English language teaching reform announces that learner autonomy is the prime goal and communicative ability should be emphasised. Moreover, College English Test Band 4 also undertakes reforms and includes testing oral English (Jin and Yang, 2006). These measures show the strong orientation of English language teaching for fostering learner autonomy for communicative ability. Nevertheless, some interviewees such as interviewees 10 and 23 still reported behaviours relating to SDAS at tertiary level (see section 4.4.2). Moreover, questionnaire data did not show an apparent increase of gaining communicative ability in students' conceptions (see section 4.4.2) at tertiary level. It seems that students' conceptions relating to LAAS/SDAS did not disappear completely due to the influence of their language learning experiences under a high stakes exam environment at secondary level.

### **7.4.3 Economic dimension**

Due to the unequal pace of economic development, English language teaching in China presents notable regional differences (Hu, 2003). According to Hu (2003), economically developed and developing areas have major differences in infrastructural resources including teaching facilities and instructional equipment, language learning ideologies and curricular and pedagogical practices, which contributed to the different students' language learning behaviours in classrooms. The data in the present study first suggests that economic differences not only exist among different regions but also exist among different types of schools,

and second, it finds that economic differences had influences on LAAS/SDAS and LACA/SDCA respectively.

The data showed that the economic dimension had influences on students' learner autonomy in both types. On the one hand, economically developed areas such as the coastal areas or big cities and high profile schools were seen to provide better teaching and learning resources, advanced teaching and learning theories such as communicative language teaching, which had an impact on students' conceptions and reported behaviours relatable to LACA/SDCA (see section 6.3.3). For example, interviewee 8 reported that how a school with advanced textbooks and better teaching resources influenced students' English language learning with an orientation towards gaining communicative ability (see section 6.3.3). On the other hand, students in developing areas reported apparent conceptions and behaviours that were closely linked with LAAS/SDAS in order to enter into those high profile schools (see section 6.2.5). Just as interviewees articulated, all their English language learning concerned with success in entering a more competitive school (see section 6.2.1). This was evident in the dramatic growing number of students who chose to enter high profile schools along with their educational progress (see section 6.2.3).

It is worth mentioning that although economically advantaged/disadvantaged areas or schools seemed to have broad patterns of influences on students' conceptions and/or behaviours that were relatable to different domains of learner autonomy and associated behaviours such as LAAS/SDAS and LACA/SDCA, the economic dimension did not necessarily mean that students' learner autonomy and associated behaviours could be predictable. In fact, some students received their education in different economically developed areas, for example, from less developed areas to more developed places such as



Beijing (see Appendix IX), or from ordinary school to key schools (see section 6.2.3) and it would be an oversimplification to link students' learner autonomy with certain types of economic situation or profiles of schools. A case in point is that interviewee 8 (see section 6.3.3), she had studied at two different types of schools, key middle school and ordinary high school, however, her conceptions (see Table 5-5) and reported behaviours (see Table 4-2) for English language learning were unanimously consistent with an orientation towards gaining communicative ability, which suggested that her LACA/SDCA did not change because the type of school changed.

#### **7.4.4 Social dimension**

As stated in chapter 2, Vygotsky's (1978: 6) definition of ZPD is considered a powerful theoretical base underpinning the social dimension of learner autonomy. The data showed that parents, teachers, classmates and the more competent others in the society could all affect students' learner autonomy and associated behaviours through interaction (see section 6.2.2; 6.2.3; 6.2.4 and 6.3.2).

As discussed in section 6.2.2 and 6.3.2, exam-oriented teaching, the authority of family education could impact on students' conceptions and behaviours relatable to LAAS/SDAS. At the same time, teachers' other qualities and the family's general attitude towards learning could affect students' conceptions and behaviours relatable to either LAAS/SDAS or LACA/SDCA (see section 6.4.1 and 6.4.2). Moreover, students' classmates were seen to be equally influential. In a competitive class, students tended to be affected by classmates' conceptions of English language learning and according behaviours. For example, interviewee 18 reported how he saw the gap between himself and his classmates when he just entered the provincial high school and determined to catch up with

them (see section 6.2.3). In addition, private English courses for improving academic results (see section 6.2.4.5) or language schools in the society (see section 6.3.4) also played a role in influencing students' conceptions and behaviours that related to different domains of learner autonomy and associated behaviours.

It is noteworthy that the social dimension of influences on students' autonomy and associated behaviours were also unstable. First, such influence involved interactions between the students and the more capable others, which implied that the effect of such interaction was unpredictable, depending on both parties. For example, interviewee 12 reported that her mother's didactic English language instruction led to her quitting English language learning at home (see section 6.2.4.3). Second, the more capable others did not always hold similar learning theories and therefore could influence students' autonomy and associated behaviours quite differently. A case in point was interviewee 10, her parents did not think repetitive copying of textbooks was helpful for learning and discouraged her from doing it, which however was an assigned task from the teacher. Such a teacher-parent conflict in educational ideology somehow influenced interviewee 10's learner autonomy (see section 6.4.2.1). As can be seen from Appendix IX, she did not like English; she did not report any proactive activity for English language learning apart from some preparation for exams (see Table 4-1 and Table 4-2).

#### **7.4.5 Cultural dimension**

As stated in section 2.4.3.4, concepts of learner autonomy are thought to have cultural characteristics (e.g. Sinclair, 2000; Holliday, 2003; 2005; Benson, 2007). Moreover, culture may not only mean national ethnic culture (e.g. Palfreyman, 2003a). The present study suggests that students' learner autonomy and associated behaviours could be



influenced by factors related to small cultures such as school culture, however, it is uncertain whether there are some Chinese national cultural traits that can influence students' autonomy and associated behaviours.

School culture, as shown in the present study, includes different types of schools, for example, ordinary school vs. key school, school in small towns vs. school in big cities, and different levels, for example, optional education in primary school, competitive secondary school and free tertiary environment. As discussed in section 6.2.5 and section 6.3.3, different types of schools, with different teaching and learning resources could have influence on students' learner autonomy and associated behaviours. At the same time, the general environment for English language learning at different levels of education also affected students' autonomy and associated behaviours (see section 6.3.1.1 and 6.3.1.2).

As discussed in section 6.4.3, students in the present study reported that some Chinese learning mottos formed part of their conceptions of successful learning in general and influenced their conceptions and/or associated behaviours for English language learning in pursuit of success. For example, themes such as strong will, effort, and learner responsibility, which are exemplified by these proverbs/learning mottos are all necessary elements in concepts of learner autonomy (see section 7.2.6). For some researchers (Cortazzi and Jin, 2007; Wang, 2001), Chinese proverbs/learning mottos display Chinese cultures of learning (Cortazzi and Jin, 2007) and have strong impacts on students' learning that is aimed at success (Wang, 2001). It could be argued that these proverbs/learning mottos had a role to play in influencing students' learner autonomy and associated behaviours. However, the present study hesitates to claim that those proverbs/learning mottos as found in the data were Chinese specific. As demonstrated by the questionnaire data, themes of proverbs were quite diverse and quite a few respondents even did not report any

proverbs/learning mottos. It seemed inappropriate to overgeneralize that the possible influence extracting from certain Chinese proverbs/learning mottos was national.

#### **7.4.6 Individual dimension**

As indicated in the previous discussion, although political, economical, and social dimensions could all possibly influence students' learner autonomy and associated behaviours, there were always exceptions. This suggested that individual factors could not be underestimated.

Among others, students' personal character was often mentioned as an important aspect. For example, interviewees 9 and 15 (see section 6.4.4.3) reported that they had a strong motivation to learn English well because of their character of being unwilling to fail. In a way, they attributed their LAAS/SDAS or LACA/SDCA to the influence of their strong personality. Likewise, students (e.g. interviewee 11 see section 6.4.4.3) who identified themselves with having weak characters suggested that lack of learner autonomy and associated behaviours was because they were obedient and subject to significant others, more specifically, the teachers' influences.

At the same time, individual previous experience or language learning experiences also contributed to students' present autonomy and/or associated behaviours. As discussed in section 6.4.4.1, students' positive learning experiences facilitated learner autonomy. When interviewee 2 saw the positive effect of his own method of learning English, he continued to engage in such activities, which helped sustain learner autonomy. However, students' negative learning experiences could hinder students' confidence in carrying out self-directed learning. For example, interviewee 21 was severely affected by exam results and people's



expectations, and his autonomy in English language learning was negatively influenced.

Although individual factors consist of many components, personality and previous experience appeared to be the most salient aspects as revealed by the present study that affected students' learner autonomy and associated behaviours.

## **7.5 A holistic and dynamic view of concepts of learner autonomy**

In view of the data findings and discussions so far, the present study strongly argues for a reconsideration of concepts of learner autonomy as described in the relevant literature in language education in the following aspects:

First, learner autonomy in language education is not necessarily confined to gaining communicative ability only. Although there are good reasons for Little (2007a) to claim that language learner autonomy and communicative ability are two sides of one coin, the actual English language learning context such as a high stakes exam environment that Chinese learners are situated in makes gaining communicative ability a difficult even unfeasible goal to achieve, in particular in secondary education. However, as the data shows, students can develop learner autonomy within such an environment since their conceptions of successful English language learning and reported behaviours can be related to all aspects of Holec's (1981) definition of learner autonomy.

Second, the conceptualization of learner autonomy in language education should incorporate elements such as strong will. As the data shows, strong will is a necessary condition to keep language learning sustained. Unlike the description from the literature that intrinsic motivation naturally

sustains learner autonomy (e.g. Ushioda, 1996), students in the present study suggested that even when one had a genuine interest in English language learning, persistence was needed in order to learn English successfully. Moreover, such persistence sometimes was dependent on a strong will (see section 5.4.2.4).

Third, teacher direction should have a place in concepts of learner autonomy in language education. In the literature, the teacher is often considered a facilitator in developing learner autonomy (e.g. Victori and Lockhart, 1995; Benson, 2001) and teacher direction by definition is seen as contradicting learner autonomy. Even though Littlewood (1999) attempts to argue for reactive autonomy in Asian learners, which attempts to give a legitimate place for teacher direction in the beginning stage of student learning, his argument does not portray the full picture of a teacher's role as it deserves in helping develop learner autonomy. The present study, with students' voices, shows that teacher guidance is necessary at both the beginning stage and all the time along with the students' learning process, which is particularly critical when the student's new objective is identified. During most of the time of a student's English language learning process, teachers are commonly in a better position to know about the educational system and to have professional knowledge. As argued by the students from the study, the teachers' guidance can save students from wandering in distraction and focus them instead on learning objectives with concentration, which helps adjust students' autonomy in the right domain.

Fourth, learner autonomy in language education should consider the economic dimension. In the literature, Oxford (2003) summarizes various theories of learner autonomy into a four dimension model: technical, socio-cultural I, II, and political, and suggests these aspects can all influence learner autonomy. While these dimensions are found in



students' accounts of successful English language learning in the present study, data findings show that attention should also be paid to possible influence from the economic dimension and the individual's dimension. As discussed in section 7.4.3, economic differences can influence students' autonomy and associated behaviours, just as other factors can.

Fifth, learner autonomy in language education should consider individual factors such as personality. Although there is sufficient literature describing the individual dimension of learner autonomy, such as individual's capacity (e.g. Holec, 1981), psychological status (e.g. Little, 1991), motivation (e.g. Ushioda, 1996; 2007), affective state (e.g. Shi, 2002) and beliefs (e.g. Benson and Lor, 1999), there is no literature discussing learners' personality as a factor in promoting learner autonomy. It is possible that personality is often treated as a generic factor (e.g. Benson, 2004). Nevertheless, as the data shows a learner's personality can greatly influence student autonomy and associated behaviours, which suggests that it should be considered in promoting learner autonomy.

Sixth, although some researchers try to avoid a culturally essentialist view of learner autonomy by arguing for cultural alternatives (e.g. Pennycook, 1997) for learner autonomy or proposing that learner autonomy may bear cultural imprints (e.g. Holliday, 2003; 2005; Palfreyman and Smith, 2003; Benson, 2007), caution should be taken to avoid another type of essentialist view, that is to overgeneralize so called 'cultural particularity'. For example, strong will or persistence are often associated with Chinese culture by researchers such as Hu (2002), Jin and Cortazzi (1996). Similarly, Chinese learning mottos are considered as Chinese specific (e.g. Cortazzi and Jin, 2007; Wang, 2001) before an appropriate comparative study is undertaken. As discussed in section 7.2.3 and 7.4.5, the present study provides no evidence for such a claim. Instead, the present study supports a contextualized understanding of concepts of learner autonomy



that is suggested by researchers such as Aoki (2001) and Palfreyman (2003a), but with a strong proposal for avoiding overgeneralization.

Last but not least, concepts of learner autonomy should be understood in a holistic and dynamic perspective, with consideration of conceptions, behaviours, and possible influences. Although the literature recognizes that learner autonomy is a multifaceted concept (e.g. Benson, 2007), researchers tend to associate it with different dimensions such as are exemplified in Oxford's (2003) model. In a way, learner autonomy is considered a static concept with different appearances: for example, sometimes associated with culture, other times linked with strategies depending on the researcher's chosen emphases. An obvious drawback of such a consideration is that other elements of learner autonomy are often sacrificed for a researchers' priority. Moreover, to merely discuss learner autonomy without mentioning associated behaviours often puts the researchers in a paradoxical position. Even though Holec (1981) claims that one can have autonomy but may not necessarily exercise it, it is not convincing to prove learner autonomy without seeing the ability demonstrated. Although the present study is limited, in that judgement on students' self-directed learning is based on students' reported behaviours, it provides rich insights for our understanding of the relationship between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours. In addition, the literature acknowledges that learner autonomy can be influenced by both 'big' and 'small' cultures (Holliday, 1999; Palfreyman, 2003a; Palfreyman and Smith, 2003), and policies (e.g. Benson, 2001). Nevertheless, the literature does not describe how different sources of influences can, and possibly jointly, affect a learner's autonomy. The present study, by no means exhaustive, shows that five major sources can interplay and exert influences on student autonomy in English language learning.



With the above concerns, the present study strongly argues for a holistic and dynamic view of learner autonomy, incorporating conceptions, behaviours, and possible influences (see Table 7-6). Taking the present study for example, as already discussed in previous sections, students' conceptions and reported behaviours changed along with their English language learning experiences. Moreover various sources of influences could have complex impacts on students' conceptions and/or reported behaviours, which made students' autonomy and associated behaviours unpredictable.

A holistic and dynamic view of concepts of learner autonomy therefore, argues that conceptions of learner autonomy are not static and vary among individuals. As shown by the diagram, the bold arrows suggest that interactions between different variables can take place and therefore bring about changes of conceptions. At the same time, the dotted arrows imply that due to individual diversity, the changes are dynamic rather than static.

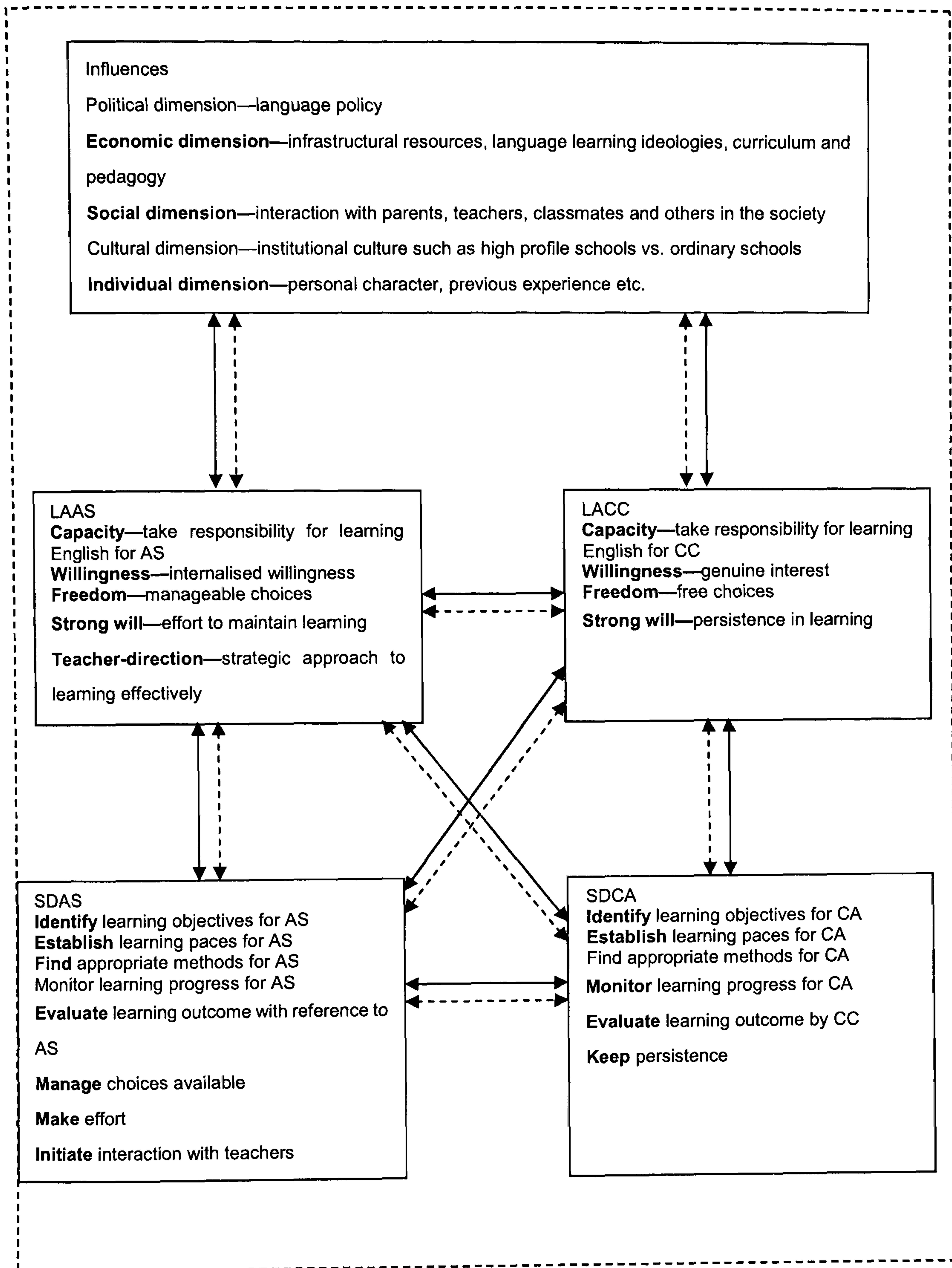


Table 7-6 A holistic and dynamic view on concepts of learner autonomy



## 7.6 Questions still remaining

Findings and new insights have been gained from the present study, which have been discussed in the previous sections. However, there are also some questions that remain unanswered.

First, as stated in section 2.7.1, the present study aims to find out the cultural roots of concepts of learner autonomy. However, although students' accounts of successful English language learning contained some elements such as strong will, effort and diligence that are commonly claimed to be Chinese culture specific (e.g. Tsu, 2005), the study shows that students have various reasons to support the role of strong will, effort and diligence in successful English language learning. Likewise, even though some researchers (e.g. Cortazzi and Jin, 2007; Wang, 2001) claim that Chinese learning mottos are Chinese-exclusive in encouraging successful learning, the present study did not report a unanimous picture that all Chinese students hold the same view. As a result, the study, although it set out to examine whether there are any cultural particularities existing among Chinese learners, does not provide a definite answer.

Second, the study attempts to find out whether learner autonomy can be treated as an educational goal regardless of educational contexts (see section 2.7.2), in particular, with the implementation of the recently publicized CECR (2004) which sets promotion of learner autonomy as one of its prime objectives. The study did not find an answer to this question since none of the students mentioned such a reform in their accounts of successful English language learning.

Third, as stated in section 2.8 the present study aims to examine how 'big' as well as 'small' culture, as a whole can possibly influence students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy. As mentioned above, 'big'

culture is hardly identifiable from the present study. Though the study reveals some institutional influences from the perspectives of high profile schools and ordinary schools, the study did not find strong evidence with regard to the possible differences as a result of university ranking.

## **7.7 Summary**

This chapter started with discussions of students' conceptions that are relatable to learner autonomy, which revealed features that accorded with 'Western', 'Chinese' and 'universal' emphases in the literature. Moreover, the study found two distinctive domains of learner autonomy: LAAS and LACA, which were seldom discussed in the literature. The study also strongly argued for the position of strong will and teacher direction as core components of learner autonomy theory. Then the chapter looked at students' reported behaviours and examined the relationships between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours. With both consistent and inconsistent relationships, the chapter revealed complex and dynamic relationships between them. The chapter then explored the influences on students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours. With a focus on LAAS/SDAS and LACA/SDCA, the study reported five dimensions of influences, namely, political, economic, social, cultural, and individual. The chapter thus proposed a holistic and dynamic view of concepts of learner autonomy based on findings from the data in the present study and discussions of the literature. The chapter ended with a summary of questions still remaining from the present study



# **CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION**

## **8.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, answers to my research questions based on research findings through both qualitative and quantitative data analysis are summarized. Then the major contributions of the study are presented and the limitations and implications for further research are suggested. The chapter ends with final concluding remarks.

## **8.2 Answers to research questions**

In chapter 3, I explained that my broad research questions had to be broken down and reframed into three main questions due to methodological considerations. In this section, answers to these questions will be provided.

RQ1: What, if any, are Chinese university students' conceptions of English language learning relatable to learner autonomy?

The data revealed that concepts of learner autonomy were embedded in Chinese university students' conceptions of successful English language learning. Findings suggested that the dichotomy between 'Western' and 'Chinese' emphases in the literature might not be necessary since they both contributed to the understanding of learner autonomy in this context. On the one hand, students held that genuine interest in English and freedom of choice in English language learning were crucial factors in successful English language learning, which could be linked with 'Western' emphases on willingness and freedom being necessary conditions for learner autonomy. At the same time, they also expressed the idea that individuals taking active roles in English language learning was essential, which could be associated with a 'Western' stress on self-direction being

an indicator of learner autonomy. On the other hand, students suggested that they should adjust their own attitude towards English language learning, manage freedom within the given educational system, hold a strong will to sustain learning and make use of teachers' proper direction for effective English language learning. These conceptions could be linked with a 'Chinese' emphasis in learner autonomy theory. Thus, it would not be appropriate to use an exclusive 'Chinese' or 'Western' label for conceptions of learner autonomy in this context. Indeed, students expressed that to learn English successfully, they should take the responsibility to identify learning objectives, establish a certain learning pace, find appropriate methods, monitor learning process, and evaluate what has been acquired, which were consistent with the core 'universal' elements of learner autonomy that is widely acknowledged by researchers in language education.

In addition, students' identified two broad objectives: English learning for academic success and learning for communicative ability, which suggested that learner autonomy in language education should not be confined to the communicative ability domain. According to these students, to learn English for academic success involved all the elements for learner autonomy and to survive the local educational system should be considered as a basic need for learner autonomy.

RQ2: How might students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy correspond with actual learning behaviours?

The data suggested that the relationship between students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and their reported behaviours were complex, with both consistency and inconsistency. For example, there were students who held conceptions that were relatable to LAAS or LACA and reported corresponding behaviours as SDAS or SDCA. However, there were



students who held conceptions that were relatable to LAAS or LACA yet their reported behaviours were either not self-directed or inconsistent with the particular domain of learner autonomy. This was because of the changing nature of students' conceptions and the development of learning management. On the one hand, students' conceptions related to five aspects of learner autonomy such as a capacity, willingness, and freedom to take responsibility for learning, and the role of strong will and teacher-direction were changing. At the same time, their conceptions underwent an apparent change from learning English for academic success to communicative ability, which led to an according change from LAAS to LACA. On the other hand, students' reported abilities to manage their own learning were developing, involving different aspects of learning management such as outlined by Holec (1981). In addition, students were different from each other and therefore it was difficult to draw a universal conclusion apart from the broad patterns of relationships stated above.

RQ3: What influences students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and corresponding behaviours?

Focusing on students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and corresponding behaviours, five aspects of influences were found in the data, including political dimension, economic dimension, social dimension, cultural dimension, and individual dimension. In the political dimension, language policy might directly have an impact on LAAS and LACA respectively. For example, when English is a compulsory subject in high stakes exams, LAAS appeared to be dominant; when English is proposed as a language for communicative use, LACA was preferred by students. In the economic dimension, uneven regional differences seemed to exert influences on students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy and associated behaviours: students tended to report LACA/SDCA in economically developed areas whereas LAAS/SDAS in developing areas.

In the social dimension, students' conceptions of learner autonomy and associated behaviours were found to be influenced through students' interaction with others such as family members, teachers, or classmates, which possibly resulted in LAAS/SDAS or LACA/SDCA. In the cultural dimension, high profile schools seemed to act as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they impacted on students' learner autonomy and associated behaviours in the LACA/SDCA domain by providing advanced facilities and teaching and learning ideologies; on the other hand, they encouraged students' LAAS/SDAS in order to enter into those high profile schools. In the individual dimension, individuals' personal characteristics such as personality and previous experiences were reported to contribute to students' conceptions relating to learner autonomy and associated behaviours. Since these different sources of influences were interwoven and had joint influences on the students, it would be difficult to associate one particular influence with individuals' conceptions and associated behaviours.

### **8.3 Major contributions**

The present study has made a number of contributions to the understanding of concepts of learner autonomy, which can be summarized into two main aspects: enriching learner autonomy theory in language education and providing an innovative research approach to access students' conceptions relating to learner autonomy.

#### **8.3.1 Enriching learner autonomy theory in language education**

The present study has enriched learner autonomy theory in language education in various ways. First, it is the first study that reviews relevant literature in both the 'West' and China and provides a comprehensive



description of the origin of the concept of autonomy and its development in general education and language education. Second, research findings corresponded to both 'Western' and 'Chinese' emphases on learner autonomy in the literature and confirmed that the most widely acknowledged core elements of learner autonomy as stated in Holec's (1981) definition were recognized by the students in the present study. However, the data revealed that students' consideration of taking learner responsibility was of four kinds: teacher-reactive, exam-reactive, semi-proactive and proactive, depending on which factor was dominant in a given situation, for example, teachers, exams, individual selves. Third, the study argues for domains of learner autonomy, which is different from other researchers' proposal, such as Littlewood's (1996) autonomy as language learner, learner, and a person. Instead, the present study revealed that students' conceptions relatable to learner autonomy were subject to their broad language learning objectives: academic success or communicative ability. This contradicts Little's (2007a) claim that learner autonomy and communicative competence are two sides of one coin. The data suggest that learner autonomy in language learning should not necessarily mean that the purpose of language learning should only be gaining communicative ability and to develop learner autonomy in language learning should only be realized through communicative language use. In a high stakes exam environment, learner autonomy in language learning could well involve achieving academic success and surviving the educational system. Fourth, the present study proposes a holistic and dynamic view of understanding concepts of learner autonomy, involving conceptions, reported behaviours, and possible influences. By using a holistic and dynamic view, a more sophisticated opinion can be gained since culturally essentialist views can be avoided and the dynamic nature of concepts of learner autonomy will be fully respected.

### **8.3.2 An innovative research approach**

The present study also contributes to research on learner autonomy in language education at a methodological level by using mixed research approaches and technically avoiding the imposition of learner autonomy theories on participants.

In the first place, the present study described an experience of using both qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate concepts of learner autonomy from the learners' perspectives. As stated in chapter 2, most learner autonomy research in the past adopted quantitative methods to examine learner autonomy. In the limited qualitative research into conceptions of learner autonomy from learners' perspectives, the scale of the research is rather small, often focusing on one or two cases. The present study, unlike previous research, collected a large amount of qualitative data (27 interviews and 27 follow-up interviews) and a certain scale of quantitative data (450 respondents) in order to examine diversity as well as possible commonality among individual learners' perspectives. Based on analysis of 27 individuals' accounts of English language learning experiences, various categories, and themes were identified. Through constant comparison, reflective thinking and questioning, and discussions with supervisors, they were finalized into different core categories, which contained individual diversity whilst representing common patterns at different levels found in the data. Then a questionnaire was designed based on themes elicited from interview data analysis in order to examine to what extent interview findings are supported, which is due to one of the research concerns about identifying possible commonality among the 450 students. At the same time, the questionnaire left spaces for open-ended answers in order to allow diverse views from the students.



As argued by Larsen-Freeman (2007), though understanding individual diversity helps teacher educators to understand how language learning is a complex, dynamic system, it is useful to find common patterns among groups of learners to inform teaching practice. Examining individual students' various paths of English language learning through narrative-based interviews, the present study has obtained rich information on learners' conceptions of learner autonomy that is not abstract but concrete and contextualized. At the same time, trying to explore common patterns among learners' conceptions through categorizing the interview data and further examination by questionnaire data, the study reveals that in a broad sense, students' conceptions of learner autonomy are found to exist in two domains: LAAS and LACA. Moreover, while recognizing that there are various sources of influences on students' conceptions of learner autonomy, different levels of education such as primary, secondary and tertiary education are found to be the most salient factors.

Secondly, the present study shows that narrative-based interviews are appropriate methods for investigating learners' conceptions that are relatable to learner autonomy, which has the advantage of obtaining rich information whilst avoiding the imposition of learner autonomy theory on participants. By asking participants to describe their English language learning stories, rich information that is context-bound can be provided. At the same time, not asking participants directly about learner autonomy gives the researcher the opportunity to investigate whether concepts of learner autonomy are embedded in participants' conceptions. To date, some researchers (e.g. Chik, 2007; Murray and Kojima, 2007) have started to use learners' auto-biographies to investigate the development of learner autonomy and show that narratives are effective methods to gain in-depth and contextualized information. However, hardly any research points out the importance of not imposing learner autonomy theories on participants.

## 8.4 Limitations

Due to some practical reasons, there are some limitations in the present research, which need to be recognized.

First, although learners' perspectives have brought about rich insights in understanding concepts of learner autonomy, it would be desirable to find out teachers' and parents' opinions on successful English language learning or general learning, and their observations on the learners' language learning process since these two parties are critical sources of influence on student conceptions as reported by the participants. Also their observations on the learners' language learning process could further validate students' reported behaviours for successful English language learning. However, students' accounts of language learning experiences are largely focused on secondary education done in different places all over China, and it was not feasible for the researcher to collect the relevant data.

Second, CECR was published in 2004, with a notion of promoting learner autonomy in college English language teaching. Ideally, data would have been collected among second year students who have both experience of college English language learning and possibly more understanding of the reform. However, for practical reasons, for example, the researcher's personal contact work with first year university students, the data had to be collected among first year students.

Third, ideally, a questionnaire should have been designed based on the final categories identified from the interview data analysis, which could better function as a supporting research method to further examine the interview findings. However, as mentioned in chapter 3, due to the practical need to engage with students who were in the same population as the



interview participants, the questionnaire design was not fully based on final categories but the main themes according to the interview data analysis. Consequently, questionnaire data did not significantly contribute to the research findings and discussions.

Fourth, diversity and commonality itself is a pair in conflict, which suggests that in particular in data presentation, these two aspects have to be carefully dealt with, sometimes even sacrificing one at the expense of the other. For example, the findings chapters are organized by the two main distinctive themes: academic success and communicative ability. Such a distinction, although it helps us understand the general patterns among the students, sometimes requires lumping together different learners to common themes. Likewise, in discussing individual diversity in each findings chapter, although the complex situation that varies from one individual to another can be revealed, it fails to give a broad picture of students' voices. The same difficulty exists in general discussions in relation to concepts of learner autonomy. Although students' accounts can be related to broad domains of learner autonomy such as LAAS/SDAS and LACA/SDCA and general sources of influences on students' autonomy such as political, economic, social, cultural, and individual factors are identified, there were always the individual exceptions that counter the broad patterns.

## **8.5 Implications**

The research findings have implications for policy makers, teachers, parents, and students respectively.

First, as the data show, the majority of the students in particular at secondary level, were preoccupied with learning English as a subject for exams. Even though some students acknowledged the importance of

learning English as a language for communicative use, such a notion was often submerged into the main task to survive the educational system by, for example, obtaining high scores in the National Entrance Exam. Consequently, learner autonomy remains in LAAS/SDAS. As stated in chapter 1, the recent CECR largely stresses learner autonomy and communicative language use, in other words, advocates LACA/SDCA, which suggests that first, which suggests that, first, changes in the curriculum should be made accordingly, for example, recommended approaches should be suggested for developing learner autonomy in English language teaching; second, a corresponding reform should be made in the assessment system such as CET-4/6 that is used to examine reading and writing skills. Although some measures have been taken, such as adding an oral exam into CET-4/6 (Jin and Yang, 2007), it seems insufficient to fully support LACA/SDCA.

Second, teachers have an important role to play in facilitating learner autonomy. As we can see from the data, some learners developed LACA/SDCA in a high stakes exam environment, which is largely because of teachers' appropriate guidance. At the same time, for college English language teachers, developing learner autonomy should be conditioned by a better understanding of the students who might come from various geographical locations of the country with different language learning experiences. For example, some students already recognized LACA/SDCA whereas others remained with LAAS/SDAS. Rather than to apply the idea of LACA/SDCA to students, teachers should think carefully how to help change students' conceptions from LAAS/SDAS to LACA/SDCA in some cases. It is necessary that college English language teachers become better informed of the CECR and that guidance regarding the development of learner autonomy in language education should become incorporated in relevant teacher training programmes.



Third, as the data suggests, family education was considered as an important component of developing learner autonomy in language learning. Parents perhaps should properly guide the students to recognize the educational system, the nature of English language learning, and general principles of how to succeed in learning. As articulated by some interviewees, to know the importance of English language learning helps them adjust their attitude towards learning English for educational survival. Moreover, some attributes for learning success such as the role of effort from parents' education can influence students' learner autonomy in general.

Fourth, as revealed from the data, although all the interviewees were successful educational survivors, some of them suffered from English language learning because their academic score was not ideal. This often attacked students' confidence in themselves and motivation to continue with English language learning, and thus hindered learner autonomy. Possibly, they should also try to think of this from a different perspective, for example, finding new ways to learn and assess their English language learning through consultations with teachers, peers or significant others. After regaining confidence, learner autonomy will be developed and learning success even for educational survival is not problematic.

## **8.6 Further research**

In view of the present research, there are a few aspects that are worth further research.

First, the present research argues for two domains of learner autonomy in language education: LAAS/SDAS and LACA/SDCA. Since the former is closely linked with a high stakes exam environment, it is desirable that

research be done in another similar context to further examine the validity of such a claim.

Second, the present research reports some characteristics of learner autonomy that reflect literature descriptions of 'Chinese' emphasis, for example, strong will, persistence, teacher direction, yet, they cannot be claimed as Chinese specific since not all participants hold the same opinion. Instead, they were thought as necessary elements that should be incorporated in wider concepts of learner autonomy. It would therefore be helpful if further, similar research is done in a 'Western' context to investigate 'Western' learners' conceptions of learner autonomy, informing our understanding in this regard.

## **8.7 Final concluding remarks**

Towards the end, I realized that I have personally benefited in various ways from undertaking this research.

First, as a researcher, I had thought that I could find Chinese characteristics of learner autonomy through my research because I had such a strong impression that Chinese learners were different in their learning from those I observed in the UK. However, my professional stance always reminded me when I was interpreting my data: whether these findings were generalizable or not, whether the existing literature was accurate or not. With such a critical attitude, although I did not provide a definite answer to the question of whether there are Chinese cultural characteristics of learner autonomy, I have developed my professional awareness of being perceptive and not jumping to conclusions.

Second, as a learner, I have developed great learner autonomy in an educational context that is different from the one in my home country. In my former educational context in China, my limited experience told me that



learner autonomy meant to prioritize teachers' direction over my own. Even though when I was left to make decisions in tertiary education, I still could resort to teachers, parents or others to provide advice when I had difficulties. However, in the educational context here in UK, I realized that I was expected to decide almost every aspect of my research. Although I had a certain learner autonomy in terms of learning management, benefiting from my previous education, I had little confidence in taking control of the research and making critical decisions. After quite a few tutorial experiences and emotional crises, I started to understand that supervision was an opportunity not to seek the supervisors' direction but their alternative perspectives. Such recognition led to my sudden change of conception and helped develop my learner autonomy. For example, I always drafted a tutorial plan by reporting work that had been done, any existing problems and my possible solutions before the tutorial took place. In such a way, I engaged myself in constant reflection on my own research process and developed greater confidence in making decisions about my research. Reflecting on my research journey for over three years, I found my supervisors were actually helpful in that they facilitated my learning with their professional experience and insights, which however, would not take over or sometimes even interfere with my own exploration.

Third, as a future teacher, I came to understand not to impose my own theory of learner autonomy on my future students. In the past, I took for granted that language learners in my class should only aim at communicative language use. However, the present research informed me that students possibly had their own learning objectives, for example, simply passing exams. Therefore, I should be more careful in my future teaching and take into consideration different learners' needs.

I believe there are many other potential benefits that will take time for me to fully understand in the future. For the time being, I would like to conclude

the thesis by reminding myself that:, though there is a full stop for the present research, there is only an ellipsis for the development of learner autonomy.



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## Appendix I Interview Guide (pilot)

### 1. Background Information (背景介绍)

--i.e. length of English learning, attitude towards it, (学习时间, 态度等)

### 2. What is 'successful learning'? (你认为成功的学习是什么样?)

--why you believe this? (你为什么如此认为)

--is there any special teacher or other influences your opinion? (有没有什么老师影响你的观点?)

### 3. What is 'successful language learning'? (你认为成功的语言学习是什么样?)

--is there any difference between successful language learning and learning in general? (成功的语言学习和成功的学习之间有什么区别吗?)

--how you recognized the differences? (if yes) (如果有, 你觉得他们的区别在哪里?)

--any examples you can think of 'good language learners' in your class? (你能举几个例子班上同学英语好的例子吗?)

--what are the characteristics they have? (他们都有什么特点?)

### 4. What do you think of your own learning? (你自己的学习是什么样?)

--strong points (why) (强项在哪里, 为什么?)

--weak points (why) (弱项在哪里, 为什么?)



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## Appendix II Interview Guide (pilot revised)

1. Can you possibly tell me about your English learning experience up to now to me?

你能对我谈谈你直到今天的英语学习经历吗？

2. What is your most successful experience in English learning?

你最成功的英语学习经历是什么？

3. According to your own English learning experience, are there any people influenced your opinions?

在你的英语学习过程中，有没有影响过你的观点？

4. To think back your English learning, what do you think you have obtained from it?

回顾你的英语学习经历，你认为你从中获得了什么？

5. How do others (e.g. teachers, classmates) think of your English language learning?

别人（比如老师同学）是如何评价你的英语学习的？

6. How do you see your English language learning in the future will be like? How do you feel about it?

你认为你将来的英语学习会是什么样子？你对此有何感受

7. Can you summarize your English language learning experience?

你能把你的英语学习经历总结一下吗？

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## Appendix III Narrative-based Interview Guide (main study)

1. Can you possibly tell me about your English learning experience up to now to me?  
你能对我谈谈你直到今天的英语学习经历吗?
2. According to your own English learning experience, are there any people you want to talk about?  
在你的英语学习过程中, 有没有什么人你想谈谈?
3. Are there any events/things you want to talk about?  
在你的英语学习过程中, 有没有什么事你想谈谈?
4. Have you ever met any difficulties in English learning? If yes, **what did you do with them?**  
你在英语学习中遇到过什么困难吗? 如果有, 你是怎么处理的?
5. What is your most successful experience in English learning?  
你最成功的英语学习经历是什么?
6. Did you ever feel dissatisfied with your English learning? If yes, what did you do then?  
你有过对自己英语学习不满意的时候吗? 如果有, 你怎么办?
7. What is your ideal English learning situation?  
你理想的英语学习是什么样?
8. How do you see your English language learning in the future will be like? How do you feel about it?  
你认为你将来的英语学习会是什么样子? 你对此有何感受?
9. Can you summarize your English language learning experience?  
你能把你的英语学习经历总结一下吗?



## **Appendix IV Follow-up Interview Guide (main study)**

### Part A

1. What do you mean by ‘’?  
你提到的 ‘ ’ 指什么?
2. Is it important for you/to learn English well? Why is it important?  
你认为 ‘ ’ 对你重要吗? 为什么?
3. Can you give some examples?  
你能举例说明吗?
4. Where do you have these ideas/Where these ideas come from?  
你这些想法是从哪里来的?

### Part B

1. What do you think of your English learning among your peers? What are your criteria for this judgement?  
你认为你的英语学习在同学中是一个什么情况? 你的判断标准是什么?
2. What do you think of others' comments on your English learning? Do you care about these comments? If yes, in which way? If no, why?  
你认为别人是怎么看待你的英语学习的? 你是否在意别人对你的英语学习的看法? 是, 哪方面? 否, 为什么?
3. What advice would you like to give to a friend who wants to learn English well?  
如果让你给你的朋友提供建议, 你会告诉他们怎样才能学好英语?
4. What do you think of studying in current university?  
你对在目前的大学学习有什么样的感受吗?

# **Appendix V Checklist for main study**

## **Checklist for main study:**

1. Information letter for interviewees
2. Interviewee personal information form
3. recorder and enough battery
4. laptop
5. notebook and pen
6. small present
7. watch
8. confirm place and time



## Appendix VI Information for the Interviewee

致被采访人

### Information for the interviewee

十分感谢您允许我倾听您的英语语言学习经历。我将两次占用您的宝贵时间：第一次以您的故事自述为主，第二次以我的深入采访为主。这将是我的博士论文研究计划的一部分。我的研究主要是调查中国大学生在经历了多年的英语学习后对英语语言学习的看法。我非常希望您真实的，毫无拘束的回忆您在英语学习过程中想谈的人和事及任何想说的话。我也希望您通过自述和回忆能对您目前英语学习的现状有所感悟和收获。这两次的调查都将进行录音，我会对录音进行整理，并让您提出意见和建议。两个月后您将收到一个简单的调查报告。所有您提供的信息会进行保密处理，如果存在您觉得不方便回答的问题，您可以回避。

在调查结束后，我将送给您一个小礼物来表达我的真诚谢意，希望您能喜欢。

江晓丽（华威大学，英语教师教育中心，自主英语语言学习研究博士学生）

Thank you very much for your agreement to share with me your experience of English language learning. I will twice take your precious time, with your narrative stories for the first and my in-depth interview afterwards. As part of my PhD dissertation, my research is to investigate Chinese university students' conceptions of English language learning. I would much appreciate it if you could honestly recall people, things or any events took place during your English language learning. I also wish your narration can help you understand your current learning situation. Both story telling and interview will be recorded and transcribed. I would be much grateful if you could provide any advice on my transcription. In two months, you might receive a brief introduction of my research result. All the information you provide will be treated strictly confidential. Please feel free to avoid answering any uncomfortable questions that might emerge.

I have also prepared a small gift to express my sincere thanks for your kind cooperation.

Xiaoli Jiang PhD student in English Language Teaching

Center for English Language Teachers' Education University of Warwick

## Appendix VII Interviewee Personal Information

被采访人个人信息

### Interviewee Personal Information

编号 No. :

姓名 Name :

性别 Sex :

年龄 Age :

年级 Year of University :

专业 Major :

学习英语时间 Years of English Study :

参加过的英语水平测试 Any English Proficiency Test :

测试时间 Time for the Test :

测试成绩 Test Result :

北京市大学生入学英语水平测试成绩

Beijing College Students Entrance English Test Result :

对英语语言学习的态度 Attitude towards English Language Learning :

自我的英语水平评价 Self-assessment of English Level :

所学过的英语课程 English courses Taken :

地址 Mail Address :

电话 Tel :

电子邮件 Email Address :

进行采访的时间 Time for This Story Telling :

预约下次采访时间 Appointment for Next Interview :

采访地点 Place for Interview :

感谢您提供以上信息! 请注意您所有的信息都将严格保密。

Thank you for providing above information! Please remember all of it will be treated strictly confidential!

被采访人签名 Interviewee Signature:



## Appendix VIII A Second Letter to the Interviewee

再致被采访人

### A Second Letter to the Interviewee

很感谢你又一次来参加访谈！首先我想请您阅读我整理的故事自述的录音。希望您对其真实性，准确性提出宝贵意见和建议。这次我将针对上次您的英语学习经历自述提出一些问题，希望您能如实详谈。

Thank you again for joining this interview! In the first place, I would like you to read my transcription of your English learning story. I wish you could provide precious opinions or advice on its authenticity and accuracy. On the basis of your narration last time, I will raise some issues and would like to listen to your further opinions.

若有修改意见请提出：

Suggestions for the transcription:

若有对访谈的意见请提出：

Any comments on the interview:

若同意这个录音整理请签字：

Agree with the transcription:

No.	G.	Major	YEL	Class	Entrance	EL-self	EL-teacher	Attitude	Hometown	E/W	U/R	LoAS	UniAS
1	M	B.S	7	A	upper	poor	middle	like it very much	Liaoning	E	R	503	637
2	M	B.S	6	A	upper	upper	upper	not so active	Hubei	E	R	524	646
3	M	B.S	6	A	upper	poor	upper	serious	Hunan	E	U	544	659
4	M	B.S	6	A	upper	upper	upper	serious	Neimeng	W	U	555	672
5	M	B.S	10	O	upper	upper	upper	serious	Shandong	E	U	597	688
6	M	B.S	11	O	middle	poor	low	not serious	Beijing	E	U	470	615
7	F	B.A	7	O	middle	middle	middle	like it very much	Shandong	E	U	572	512
8	F	B.A	12	O	upper	upper	upper	like it very much	Jiangsu	E	U	560	500
9	M	B.A	7	O	middle	poor	middle	active	Shandong	E	U	572	512
10	F	B.A	7	O	middle	poor	low	don't like it passive	Qinghai	W	U	442	558
11	F	B.A	10	O	middle	low	low	don't like it, serious	Anhui	W	R	543	586
12	F	B.A	15	O	upper	middle	middle	eager to learn it	Heilongjiang	E	U	582	609
13	F	B.A	8	O	middle	poor	low	sometimes active	Fujian	E	R	555	612
14	M	B.S	7	A	upper	poor	middle	very active	Henan	W	R	568	594
15	F	B.A	9	A	upper	upper	upper	like it very much	Shanxi	W	U	534	581
16	M	B.S	7	A	upper	middle	middle	serious	Sichuan	W	R	598	627
17	F	B.S	7	A	upper	middle	upper	like it very much	Chongqing	W	R	548	643
18	M	B.S	6	A	upper	middle	upper	like it	Sichuan	W	U	598	627
19	M	B.S	7	A	upper	upper	upper	like it	Gansu	W	R	558	580
20	M	B.S	9	A	upper	upper	middle	active	Sichuan	W	R	598	605
21	M	B.S	10	O	middle	middle	middle	sometimes active	Chongqing	W	U	548	560
22	F	B.S	6	A	upper	upper	upper	serious	Sichuan	W	U	598	605
23	M	B.S	10	O	low	low	low	don't like it not serious	Hebei	E	U	551	565
24	F	B.S	7	A	upper	upper	upper	serious	Hunan	E	U	544	571
25	F	B.A	6	A	upper	middle	middle	love	Jiangsu	E	U	560	573
26	M	B.A	8	O	low	low	low	active	Heilongjiang	E	R	582	599
27	M	B.A	7	O	low	low	low	serious	Jilin	E	R	562	575



## Appendix X Interview Procedure

Interviewee No.	Date for 1 <sup>st</sup> .interview	Time duration	Date for 2 <sup>nd</sup> interview	Time duration	University	Room
1	Nov.21 <sup>st</sup>	31'54	Nov.28 <sup>th</sup> .	27'27	Tsinghua	Office(408)
2	Nov.22 <sup>nd</sup> .	40'10	Nov.28 <sup>th</sup> .	24'54	Tsinghua	Same
3	Nov.22 <sup>nd</sup> .	20'38	Nov.28 <sup>th</sup> .	13'37	Tsinghua	Same
4	Nov.22 <sup>nd</sup> .	43'19	Nov.28 <sup>th</sup> .	32'17	Tsinghua	Same
5	Nov.22 <sup>nd</sup> .	26'22	Nov.28 <sup>th</sup> .	17'10	Tsinghua	Same
6	Nov.22 <sup>nd</sup> .	26'19	Nov.28 <sup>th</sup> .	23'	Tsinghua	Same
7	Nov.25 <sup>th</sup> .	28'41	Dec.4 <sup>th</sup> .	29'44	Tsinghua	Same
8	Nov.25 <sup>th</sup> .	15'51	Dec.4 <sup>th</sup> .	22'31	Tsinghua	Same
9	Nov.25 <sup>th</sup> .	24'12	Dec.9 <sup>th</sup> .	21'04	Tsinghua	Same
10	Dec.10 <sup>th</sup> .	27'55	Dec.17 <sup>th</sup> .	22'09	BUCT	Office(110)
11	Dec.10 <sup>th</sup> .	35'44	Dec.17 <sup>th</sup> .	26'39	BUCT	Same
12	Dec.10 <sup>th</sup> .	35'17	Dec.17 <sup>th</sup> .	18'32	BUCT	Same
13	Dec.10 <sup>th</sup> .	24'27	Dec.17 <sup>th</sup> .	17'49	BUCT	Same
14	Dec.10 <sup>th</sup> .	15'04	Dec.17 <sup>th</sup> .	9'09	BUCT	Same
15	Dec.10 <sup>th</sup> .	22'05	Dec.17 <sup>th</sup> .	21'04	BUCT	Same
16	Dec.10 <sup>th</sup> .	19'23	Dec.17 <sup>th</sup> .	15'53	BUCT	Same
17	Dec.10 <sup>th</sup> .	25'01	Dec.17 <sup>th</sup> .	15'54	BUCT	Same
18	Dec.10 <sup>th</sup> .	15'26	Dec.17 <sup>th</sup> .	10'43	BUCT	Same
19	Dec.16 <sup>th</sup> .	20'53	Dec.24 <sup>th</sup> .	21'	BNU	Office(102)
20	Dec.16 <sup>th</sup> .	17'15	Dec.24 <sup>th</sup> .	14'18	BNU	Same
21	Dec.16 <sup>th</sup> .	15'37	Dec.24 <sup>th</sup> .	18'38	BNU	Same
22	Dec.16 <sup>th</sup> .	17'46	Dec.24 <sup>th</sup> .	20'01	BNU	Same
23	Dec.16 <sup>th</sup> .	26'28	Dec.24 <sup>th</sup> .	22'27	BNU	Same
24	Dec.16 <sup>th</sup> .	21'47	Dec.24 <sup>th</sup> .	20'04	BNU	Same
25	Dec.16 <sup>th</sup> .	17'06	Dec.24 <sup>th</sup> .	15'39	BNU	Same
26	Dec.16 <sup>th</sup> .	18'34	Dec.24 <sup>th</sup> .	2'	BNU	Same
27	Dec.16 <sup>th</sup> .	25'19	Dec.24 <sup>th</sup> .	36'01	BNU	Same

## Appendix XI Corresponding Questionnaire Items with Interview Themes

Themes	Sub-themes	Question No.
Reported behaviours	Evaluation	16
	Time investment	17
	Using methods to achieve learning success	24; 26
	Form learning habits	32
	Managing learning	28; 35-39; 42
Conceptions	Learner responsibility	11; 18; 28; 43-45; 48; 50
	How to achieve learning success	23; 25
	Future English language learning	33-34; 49
	Nature of English language learning	22
	Difficulty in English language learning	27
Influences	Geographical differences	2-7; 11
	Profiles of schools	8-10; 12
	Sources of influences	19
	Teacher influences	20
	Family influences	40- 41
	Personal factors	30-31
	Chinese proverb	51
	Future plan	52
	Motivation	My motivation
Background information		1-2; 13-15



# Appendix XII Questionnaire (pilot)

Dear Student,

Thank you for your participation in this questionnaire investigation. I assume you have been studying English for at least six years and expect to know how you feel about English language learning in your experience. I hope present questionnaire can bring some insights for English language teaching at tertiary level in China. I am grateful if you could honestly answer all the questions. All your answers are strictly kept confidential except for research purpose.

Xiaoli Jiang

Centre for English Language Teachers' Education

## I. Please circle the item you think appropriate and fill in the blank.

1. Sex a) Male b) Female
2. I was brought up in \_\_\_ province \_\_\_\_\_ city/ county \_\_\_\_\_ town
3. My family income belongs to \_\_\_\_\_ Yuan/per month:  
a) income  $\leq$  500 b)  $500 < \text{income} \leq 1500$   
c)  $1500 < \text{income} \leq 3000$  d)  $3000 < \text{income} \leq 5000$   
e)  $5000 < \text{income}$
4. My Major is \_\_\_\_\_
5. My total number of years of English language learning is \_\_\_\_\_
6. I think English language learning is \_\_\_\_\_ relevant to my major at University.  
a) extremely b) quite  
c) not very d) not
7. My school education was mainly done in:  
a) urban situation b) rural situation  
c) both urban and rural situation but longer in urban situation  
d) both urban and rural situation but longer in rural situation
8. I graduated from \_\_\_\_\_  
Provincial Key Primary school  
City Key Middle school  
Ordinary High school
11. My current university is the choice of:  
a) myself alone b) myself but with parents' support  
c) myself but with teacher's support  
d) myself but with both parents and teachers' support others  
e) parents' choice f) others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
12. I am \_\_\_\_\_ satisfied with studying at current university  
a) extremely b) quite  
c) not very d) not
13. My English score in National Entrance Exam belongs to \_\_\_\_\_ level  
a) upper b) middle c) low
14. My score of Beijing College Student Entrance Exam belongs to:  
a) upper b) middle c) low
15. My English level belongs to \_\_\_\_\_ level in my current class  
a) upper b) middle  
c) low d) not known
16. My criteria for the judgement (question 15) is:  
a) score b) classroom performance  
c) both a and b d) others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
17. I spend \_\_\_\_\_ in average in English learning out of class every day:  
a) less than 30 min. b) between 30min and 1 hour  
c) between 1 hour and 2 hours d) more than 2 hours
18. I learn English because (please choose the top three):  
a) I like to watch English original movies or read novels  
b) I like English culture  
c) It's compulsory in important exams (i.e. National Entrance Exam)  
d) It's a useful tool to assist my major study  
e) I will be more competent in future career







30. I think I have good learning habits:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
31. I think I can achieve a high academic score in the future:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
32. I think I can master the English language in the future:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
33. I often check the appropriateness of my English learning methods:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
34. I like to reflect on my English learning after a period of time:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
35. I have a clear learning plan for English language learning:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
36. I look for extra materials to learn English:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
37. My parents are strict about my English learning:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
38. My parents are strict about my academic learning:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
39. I think college English learning mainly depends on myself:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD

**III Please answer the following questions and fill in the blanks when necessary**

40. Here are some students' understanding of 'depending on myself', please see whether you agree with any of them, if yes, please give a tick, if no, please **write your own**:

- 1) actively and independently fulfilling tasks assigned by the teacher and evaluate learning effect on the basis of exams
- 2) actively fulfil tasks assigned by the teacher then initiate my own plan of learning, reflect on my learning effect, monitor learning process and evaluate it
- 3) referring to tasks assigned by the teacher, make my own plan of learning, strictly carry out the plan, reflect on my learning effect, monitor learning process, evaluate it
- 4) without any constraints, make plan to learn what I want to learn, use my own methods, fulfil tasks assigned by myself, reflect on learning effect, monitor learning process and evaluate it
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

41. I think \_\_\_ of followings are necessary conditions to become self-dependent in learning (please choose the top three):

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a) teacher's guidance                                      | b) classmates' influence           |
| c) self-management   | d) ranking students by exam scores |
| e) sense of achievement                                    |                                    |
| f) communicate with others to exchange learning experience |                                    |
| g) parents' monitor and help foster a good learning habit  |                                    |
| h) others please specify _____                             |                                    |

42. I think \_\_\_ of followings can help me to learn independently (please choose the top three)

- |                                  |                                    |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a) exams                         | b) interest                        |
| c) learning habit                | d) parents' expectation            |
| e) teacher's encouragement       | f) classmates' competition         |
| g) my own progress               | h) my personality                  |
| i) previous learning experience  | j) competitive learning atmosphere |
| k) others (please specify) _____ |                                    |

43. I think student's role in college English learning is to (please choose the top three):

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| a) make learning plan                        | b) implement the plan           |
| c) monitor learning process                  | d) evaluate learning effect     |
| e) participant in and out of class           | f) initiate learning activities |
| g) attempt to use different learning methods |                                 |
| h) others (please specify) _____             |                                 |

44. My future English language learning is \_\_\_\_\_

45. My ideal college English language teacher is \_\_\_\_\_

46. Chinese motto/proverb I often refer to in my learning is \_\_\_\_\_

47. My future plan after graduation is \_\_\_\_\_



# Appendix XIII Questionnaire (pilot revised)

Dear Student,

Thank you for your participation into this questionnaire investigation. I assume you have been studying English for at least six years and expect to know how you feel about English language learning in your experience. I hope present questionnaire can bring some insights for English language teaching at tertiary level in China. I am grateful if you could honestly answer all the questions. All your answers are strictly kept confidential except for research purpose.

Xiaoli Jiang

Centre for English Language Teachers' Education

## I. Please circle the item you think appropriate and fill in the blank.

1. Sex a) Male b) Female
2. I was brought up in \_\_\_ province \_\_\_ city/ county \_\_\_ town
3. My family income belongs to \_\_\_ yuan/per:  
a) income  $\leq$  500 b)  $500 < \text{income} \leq 1500$   
c)  $1500 < \text{income} \leq 3000$  d)  $3000 < \text{income} \leq 5000$   
e)  $5000 < \text{income}$  f) I don't want to say
4. My Major is \_\_\_\_\_ belongs to \_\_\_\_\_ (Art, Science or Engineering)
5. My years of English language learning is \_\_\_\_\_
6. I think English language learning is \_\_\_\_\_ relevant to my major at University.  
a) extremely b) quite  
c) not very d) not
7. My school education was mainly done in:  
a) urban b) rural  
c) both urban and rural but longer in urban  
d) both urban and rural but longer in rural
8. My primary education was done in \_\_\_ school  
a) provincial key b) city key c) ordinary
9. My middle school education was done in \_\_\_ school  
a) provincial key b) city key c) ordinary
10. My primary education was done in \_\_\_ school  
a) provincial key b) city key c) ordinary  
\_\_\_\_\_ Primary School \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School \_\_\_\_\_ High School
11. My current university is the choice of:  
a) myself alone b) myself but with parents' support  
c) myself but with teacher's support  
d) myself but with both parents and teachers' support others  
e) parents' choice f) others (please specify)\_\_\_
12. I am satisfied with studying at current university  
a) extremely b) quite  
c) not very d) not
13. My English score in National Entrance Exam belongs to \_\_\_ level  
a) upper (130-150) b) middle (100-129) c) low (less than 100)
14. My score of Beijing College Student Entrance Exam belongs to:  
a) upper (above 85) b) middle (70-84) c) low (less than 69)
15. My English level belongs to \_\_\_ level in my current class  
a) upper b) middle  
c) low d) not known
16. My criteria for the judgement (question 15) is:  
a) score b) classroom performance  
c) both d) others (please specify)\_\_\_
17. I spend \_\_\_ in average in English learning out of class every day:  
a) time  $\leq$  30 min. b)  $30\text{min} < \text{time} \leq 1 \text{ hour}$   
c)  $1 \text{ hour} < \text{time} \leq 2 \text{ hours}$  d)  $2 \text{ hours} < \text{time}$
18. I learn English because (please choose the top three):  
a) I like to watch English original movies or read novels  
b) I like English culture  
c) It's compulsory in important exams (i.e. National Entrance Exam)











g) attempt to use different learning methods

h) others please specify \_\_\_\_\_

48. My future English language learning will be to (multiple choices possible):

a) make more effort

b) master the language

c) improve my academic score

d) give it up when there is no exam

e) others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

49. I think teacher's role in college English language learning is to (please choose the top three):

a) evaluate learning effect

b) answer questions

c) make learning plans

d) monitor learning process

e) guide learning direction

f) give instructions of knowledge

g) introduce learning methods

h) be responsible for teaching

i) others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

50. Chinese motto/proverb I often refer to in my learning is \_\_\_\_\_

51. My future plan after graduation is \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix XIV Questionnaire (main study English version)

Dear Student,

Thank you for your participation into this questionnaire investigation. I assume you have been studying English for at least six years and expect to know how you feel about English language learning in your experience. I hope present questionnaire can bring some insights for English language teaching at tertiary level in China. I am grateful if you could honestly answer all the questions. All your answers are strictly kept confidential except for research purpose.

Xiaoli Jiang

Centre for English Language Teachers' Education

I. Please circle the item you think appropriate and fill in the blank.

1. Sex a) Male b) Female
2. I was brought up in \_\_\_ province \_\_\_\_\_ city/ county \_\_\_\_\_ town
3. My family income belongs to \_\_\_ yuan/per:  
a) income  $\leq$  500 b)  $500 < \text{income} \leq 1500$   
c)  $1500 < \text{income} \leq 3000$  d)  $3000 < \text{income} \leq 5000$   
e)  $5000 < \text{income}$  f) I don't want to say
4. My Major is \_\_\_\_\_ belongs to \_\_\_\_\_ (Art, Science or Engineering)
5. My years of English language learning is \_\_\_\_\_
6. I think English language learning is \_\_\_\_\_ relevant to my major at University.  
a) extremely b) quite  
c) not very d) not
7. My school education was mainly done in:  
a) urban b) rural  
c) both urban and rural but longer in urban  
d) both urban and rural but longer in rural
8. My primary education was done in \_\_\_ school  
a) provincial key b) city key c) ordinary
9. My middle school education was done in \_\_\_ school  
a) provincial key b) city key c) ordinary
10. My primary education was done in \_\_\_ school  
a) provincial key b) city key c) ordinary  
\_\_\_\_\_ Primary School \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School \_\_\_\_\_ High School
11. My current university is the choice of:  
a) myself alone b) myself but with parents' support  
c) myself but with teacher's support  
d) myself but with both parents and teachers' support others  
e) parents' choice f) others (please specify)\_\_\_
12. I am satisfied with studying at current university  
a) extremely b) quite  
c) not very d) not
13. My English score in National Entrance Exam belongs to \_\_\_ level  
a) upper (130-150) b) middle (100-129) c) low (less than 100)
14. My score of Beijing College Student Entrance Exam belongs to:  
a) upper (above 85) b) middle (70-84) c) low (less than 69)
15. My English level belongs to \_\_\_ level in my current class  
a) upper b) middle  
c) low d) not known
16. My criteria for the judgement (question 15) is:  
a) score b) classroom performance  
c) both d) others (please specify)\_\_\_
17. I spend \_\_\_\_\_ in average in English learning out of class every day:  
a) time  $\leq$  30 min. b)  $30\text{min} < \text{time} \leq 1 \text{ hour}$   
c)  $1 \text{ hour} < \text{time} \leq 2 \text{ hours}$  d)  $2 \text{ hours} < \text{time}$
18. I learn English because (please choose the top three):  
a) I like to watch English original movies or read novels  
b) I like English culture







30. I think I have language aptitude to learn a second language:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
31. My personality is aggressive:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
32. I think I have a good learning habit:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
33. I think I can achieve high academic score:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
34. I think I can gain communicative competence:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
35. I often check the appropriateness of my English learning methods:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
36. I like to reflect on my English learning after a period of time:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
37. I often review what I learned in English learning:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
38. I have a clear learning plan  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
39. I look for extra materials to learn English:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
40. My parents are strict with my English learning:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
41. My parents are strict with my academic learning:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
42. I always set up challenges to motivate myself to learn English:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD
43. I think college English learning mainly depends on myself:  
 a) SA                      b)A                      c)N                      d) D                      e)SD

**III Please answer the following questions and fill in the blanks when necessary**

44. My understanding of 'self-dependence' is:  
 1) actively and independently fulfil tasks assigned by the teacher and evaluate learning effect on the basis of exams  
 2) actively fulfil tasks assigned by the teacher then initiate my own plan of learning, reflect on my learning effect, monitor learning process and evaluate it  
 3) referring to tasks assigned by the teacher, make my own plan of learning, strictly carry out the plan, reflect on my learning effect, monitor learning process, evaluate it  
 4) without any constraints, make plan to learn what I want to learn, use my own methods, fulfil tasks assigned by myself, reflect on learning effect, monitor learning process and evaluate it  
 5) others (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_
45. The above description (Q44) can be summarized by the following term \_\_ :  
 a) learner autonomy                      b) self-directed learning  
 c) self-regulated learning                      d) active learning  
 e) independent learning                      f) others (please specify)
46. I think \_\_\_ of followings are necessary conditions for self-directed learning (please choose the top three):  
 a) teacher's guidance                      b) classmates' influence  
 c) self-management                      d) ranking students by exam scores  
 e) sense of achievement  
 f) communicate with others to exchange learning experience  
 g) parents' monitor and help foster a good learning habit  
 h) others please specify\_\_\_\_\_
47. I think \_\_\_ of followings can enable me to engage in self-directed learning (please choose the top three)  
 a) exams                      b) interest  
 c) learning habit                      d) parents' expectation  
 e) teacher's encouragement                      f) classmates' competition  
 g) my own progress                      h) my personality



i) previous learning experience

j) competitive learning atmosphere

k) others (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

48. I think student's role in college English learning is to (please choose the top three):

a) make learning plan

b) implement the plan

c) monitor learning process

d) evaluate learning effect

e) participant in and out of class

f) initiate learning activities

g) attempt to use different learning methods

h) others please specify \_\_\_\_\_

49. My ideal of my English language learning is \_\_\_\_\_

50. My ideal college English language teacher is \_\_\_\_\_

51. Chinese motto/proverb I often refer to in my learning is \_\_\_\_\_

52. My future plan after graduation is \_\_\_\_\_





17. 我平均每天课后用于学习英语的时间为：  
 a) 30 分以内（含 30 分）      b) 30 分到一个小时之间（含一小时）  
 c) 1 小时到两小时（含 2 小时）  
 d) 两小时以上
18. 我平时课后的英语学习是：  
 a) 自己一个人学                      b) 跟同学一起学  
 c) 自己为主，偶尔和同学一起  
 d) 和同学一起，偶尔自己学
19. 在我过去的英语学习中，以下\_对我帮助最大：  
 a) 老师                                  b) 家长  
 c) 同学                                  d) 我自己  
 e) 其他（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
20. 英语老师的\_\_\_\_\_对我的英语学习影响最大：  
 a) 口语水平                              b) 知识面宽度  
 c) 性格                                    d) 敬业程度  
 e) 教学方法                              f) 公平性  
 g) 其它（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
21. 我学英语是因为（请选出最重要的三项）：  
 a) 喜欢英国文化                      b) 喜欢看原文电影或小说  
 c) 能与专业结合                      d) 重大考试都需要它（如高考）  
 e) 有利于将来就业                    f) 能和外国人交流  
 h) 其它（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
22. 我认为英语学习最重要的是：  
 a) 成绩                                    b) 掌握英语                              c) 二者都有
23. 我认为取得好成绩最基本的是（可多选）：  
 a) 背诵课文                              b) 背诵单词                              c) 了解语法  
 d) 了解考试大纲                      e) 做很多练习                          f) 努力  
 g) 设定分数目标                      h) 背诵老师的课堂笔记  
 i) 用老师推荐的方法                  j) 反思自己的弱项并提高  
 k) 听从老师的建议                    l) 其它（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
24. 我认为我能通过以下（请选出最重要的三项）取得好成绩：  
 a) 背诵课文                              b) 背诵单词                              c) 了解语法  
 d) 了解考试大纲                      e) 做很多练习                          f) 努力  
 g) 设定分数目标                      h) 背诵老师的课堂笔记  
 i) 用老师推荐的方法                  j) 反思自己的弱项并提高  
 k) 听从老师的建议                    l) 其它（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
25. 我认为掌握英语最基本的是（可多选）：  
 a) 有语感                                  b) 有兴趣                                  c) 有自己的方法  
 d) 有机会用英语交流                  e) 坚持不懈                              f) 经常保持同英语接触  
 g) 参考老师的建议                    h) 有地道的英语学习材料  
 i) 了解英国文化                        j) 其它（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
26. 我认为以下（请选出最重要的三项）\_\_能帮我掌握英语：  
 a) 有语感                                  b) 有兴趣                                  c) 有自己的方法  
 d) 有机会用英语交流                  e) 坚持不懈                              f) 经常保持同英语接触  
 g) 参考老师的建议                    h) 有地道的英语学习材料  
 i) 了解英国文化                        j) 其它（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
27. 我学习英语最大的困难是：  
 a) 记不住单词                            b) 不敢开口说英语  
 c) 我的分数不理想                    d) 语法规则不清楚  
 e) 没有好的学习方法                  e) 其他（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
28. 当我在英语学习中遇到困难是，我：  
 a) 总是自己想办法解决              b) 直接问同学                            c) 直接问老师



- d) 首先自己想办法然后问老师  
f) 其他 (请说明) \_\_\_\_\_

e) 首先自己想办法然后问同学

**II. 请在下列合适的选项上画圈**

29. 我认为英语很重要:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
30. 我认为自己有学习外语的天赋:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
31. 我的性格比较好强:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
32. 我认为我有良好的学习习惯:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
33. 我认为将来我英语能取得好成绩:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
34. 我认为我将来能掌握英语:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
35. 我经常检验自己的英语学习方法是否合适:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
36. 我在经历了一段时间的英语学习之后会对学习进行反思:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
37. 我在考试前才复习英语:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
38. 我的英语学习总是有一个清晰的计划:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
39. 我主动寻找额外的英语学习资料:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
40. 我父母对我的英语学习要求很严格:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
41. 我父母对我的学习要求很严格:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
42. 我会经常自己找学习压力:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意
43. 我认为大学英语学习主要靠自己:  
a) 完全同意                      b) 同意                      c) 既不同意也不反对  
d) 不同意                      e) 完全不同意

**III. 请回答下列问题，并在合适的地方填空**

44. 这里是一些同学对学习‘靠自己’的理解，请选出你认同的选项，如果不认同，请写出你自己的理解：  
a) 主动独立地完成考试范围内的英语学习任务并通过考试检测学习效果



- b) 首先完成老师的任务，再根据自己的计划主动学习，自己反思学习效果，检测学习过程，考试检测学习效果；
- c) 参照老师的任务，自己制定自己的计划，严格执行计划，自己反思学习效果，自己监测学习计划地执行，自己同时参照考试检测学习效果；
- d) 没有任何限制，想学什么就按自己的计划，方法，主动完成学习任务自己反思学习效果，自己监测学习计划地执行，自己检测学习效果；
- e) 其它（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
45. 上面的定义(44)可以用下列\_\_\_\_\_概括：
- a) 学习者自主                      b) 自主学习                      c) 自我调节学习
- d) 主动学习                        e) 独立学习                      f) 其它（请列出）
- \_\_\_\_\_
46. 我认为下列（请选出最重要的三项）\_\_\_\_\_是主动学习的必要条件：
- a) 老师的引导                      b) 同学的影响                      c) 自我管理的能力
- d) 学生分数排名                      e) 成就感
- f) 和别人交流学习经验              g) 父母监督，帮助形成一个良好的学习习惯
- h) 其他（请说明）\_\_\_\_\_
47. 我认为以下（请选出最重要的三项）\_\_\_\_\_能让我主动学习英语：
- a) 英语考试                        b) 兴趣                              c) 学习习惯
- d) 家里的期望                        e) 老师的鼓励                      f) 同学的竞争
- g) 自己的进步                        h) 个人性格                        i) 以前的学习经验
- e) 其他（请说明）\_\_\_\_\_
48. 我认为学生在大学英语学习中的角色是（请选出最重要的三项）：
- a) 制订学习计划                      b) 执行学习计划                      c) 监测学习进度
- d) 评价学习效果                      e) 积极参与课堂内外的活动
- f) 主动开展学习活动                  g) 尝试使用不同的学习方法
- h) 其他（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
49. 我将来的英语学习会是（可以多选）：
- a) 更加努力                        b) 掌握语言                        c) 提高分数
- d) 放弃如果没有考试的话
- e) 其他（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
50. 我认为大学英语老师的角色是（请选出最重要的三项）：
- a) 制订学习计划                      b) 回答学生问题                      c) 监测学习进度
- d) 评价学习效果                      e) 指明学习方向                      f) 传授知识
- g) 介绍学习方法                      h) 对教学负责
- i) 其他（请列出）\_\_\_\_\_
51. 我经常提醒自己的中国学习名言，谚语是\_\_\_\_\_
52. 我毕业以后的打算是\_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix XVI Interview Transcription (sample 002)

江：你好。感谢你抽出时间来参加我的访谈。你能谈谈你从最初接触英语到现在的英语学习经历吗？

葛：我最初接触英语是在小学六年级。我们那边刚好进行英语教学改革。现在英语当成小学课程。但当时也没什么就觉得英语好玩。也没怎么学，记单词就是背。那时候就记得单词蛮好听，英语说出来对我而言就象唱歌一样。那个时候下课作业顶多就是抄写一下单词。好像搞了半年，下学期就不搞了。到了初中以后，因为有的小学开了这课，有的小学没开这课，所以都是从零开始。初中上学期的时候英语不错，那个时候非常简单，只要听下讲，背下单词就可以了。英语最初都是从字母开始，然后就是单词。那时候最怕就是背单词。不知道怎么搞的，那个时候单词背完了觉得记不住。比如说一个单词要重复很多遍才能记住。现在这个问题基本解决了。因为我知道单词有一些结构。一猜就知道了，按音节划分，哪些一加就清楚了。有些单词我甚至只要一听就知道大致是一个什么样的组合。现在记起来好多了，当时不知道这个事情。然后就是到初二的时候，那是英语学习也挺投入的。不过那个时候很注重语法。因为应试呀。这是一个典型的驱动（？）。要我看到一个句子，分析它的结构，什么主谓宾哪，什么定状补啊，什么典型的句型呀。让我把它记下来，当时分析这些事情。在我看来，学习英语的方法跟数学是一样的。数学是记了一个定理就赶快去套，英语是记一段英语语法规则然后去套。觉得好像没什么区别。反正那个时候数学学得挺起劲的，英语学的分数蛮高。不过没有学到多少实际的东西。

江：你这个实际的东西指的是什么？

葛：就是比如碰到老外你就能跟他对话。

江：你讲到初一时，记不住单词，那时是怎么办的？

葛：那时老师讲了一些方法。不过那时也不知道这些事情，她讲了一些音节。音节必须有一个积累的过程。必须知道哪些单词组合发什么音。当时我没有积累。所以那个时候不明显，不知道。到初二时英语分数很高，120分的题目能靠110多分。就那样。上课听讲的话，我从来只记语法规则，她讲语法规则我就把它记下来。然后就去干其它的事情。实际上她讲课可能就讲一条语法，那我整堂课就听这一条语法。比如有些动词该怎么搭配呀。我说得语法指单词和语句之间是怎么组织的。也就是指的英语的一个结构。但是那些单词的意思我记得比较少。我就是找句子的结构怎么把它组全。填空题怎么做，然后选择题怎么做。翻译的话很差。然后到初三的时候，我们的英语老师水平不高。我觉得他的水平不高至少不如我初二的老师水平高。上课讲课的时候我发现时间用得很少。上课的时候读遍课文就完了。他认为我们都不会读课文似的。初三基本上是我得不到东西我就不听。不听我们那边条件比较差，有没有其他的辅助手段。比如说课外书什么的，没有。所以英语下降。英语有这样的一个规律，我到现在都很不解，一段时间不搞，它下降很快。真得很快。

江：具体表现在哪些方面？

葛：单词我想不起来了。但我看到单词知道大致意思。就是不能把它写出来。比如说看到单词的中文意思我写不出英文，我在文章中看到英文能想出它的中文意思。就是所谓的写词汇比阅读词汇少一些。然后就是原来很熟悉的东西现在很模糊。原来记住了的单词现在也忘了，一天比一天忘得多。初三那年英语就下滑。我现在讲下滑是以我英语成绩为主线讲的，这样行吗？我想知道你想知道的有价值的东西。

江：你随便讲呀，只要是你的英语学习经历，任何事情对我来说都是有价值的。这次主要是以你的叙述为主，我不想对你有任何干扰和影响。你能谈得越详细越好。



葛：因为整个英语教育的氛围可能对分数比较看重吧。我之后英语就比较烂了。中考的时候，120分满分我只得了一百零几分。反正在我看来很差。因为对我而言，英语和数学是比较强的东西。应该考高点呀。结果那年高考的时候考重点中学比分数线高两分进去的。然后高一，高一因为受中学偏重语法的影响，我高一的英语学习全都受语法左右。句子结构，它怎样用。也就是我把句子肢解开来，分析句子，去把握这个句子。而不是把这个句子整个记下来，去感知这个句子。当时那样，现在觉得这个方法很失败。白花了时间结果没什么效果，而且还误入了歧途。因为那么学非常困难，那么多句子需要搞的话，那分析得完呀。然后什么都记不住哇。英语还是下降。高一下学期的时候到低谷了。150分的卷子100分左右呗。当时比较沮丧。就看了这个句子，明明知道，不知道怎么写。记不住，靠背诵的话太枯燥了。那时高中和初中比，内容增加了不少。太多了我就记不住，看了几遍都记不住。然后就没信心了，因为你记不住嘛。后来就不打算搞了。然后在高二时无意中看到别人在看一本书，书虫。书虫听说过吗？

江：听说过。

葛：是外研社和牛津大学出版社联合推出的。那等于说我是第一次用英语接触到的小说，看了以后感觉很好。然后就开始看了。从那以后我的英语开始有起色了。现在我非常感谢它。要不是它的话我也不会到清华来。那小说吧其实它文字写得非常优美。然后词汇量刚好合适。3000左右，整本书读下来我的生词不会超过20个，厚一点的比较多薄一点的不会超过10个。基本上没有什么生词，即使有一点我也能猜出来。总共是68本，已开始是50本，后来增加了18本。我一口气，那个学期读了40多本。阅读速度越来越快。快的话半个小时就搞定了。厚一点的个把小时。

江：你能记起来你是怎么看的吗？

葛：先看。每本书我起码都读了7.8遍。我首先看内容。我整个看完对他整体要表达的意思有了一个清晰地把握之后，我再回过头把具体的句子，单词的用法及觉得陌生的句子看看。反反复复，一本书搞个7.8遍。现在我有许多情节都记得，什么呼啸山庄呀。好像是勃朗特的作品。就是牛津大学出版社，把它改编了，缩小。

江：你指简易读本？

葛：对。从中我发现英语比汉语描写更为精确。比如说我拿个句子打比方，‘用棍子打在马腿上’我们就直接说用棍子打马腿。英语先有个打的动作，然后‘on the leg of the horse’后面有一个介词短语来具体说明动作的位置。反正这是体会。因为它是英汉对照，一个英文，一个中文。从对照开始，我对中英文之间的差异就有些兴趣了。看多了后慢慢喜欢英语了。因为英语精确，表达的意思很清晰。中文有时候挺含糊的。你没有经历那些事情的话可能就看不懂或不能完全读懂。我觉得英语很实在。优点比较好，正好符合我的要求，我觉得语言就是精确呗。达到易懂，不要玩弄什么其它的什么技巧。有时我觉得那什么无聊的文字游戏。那时候就开始慢慢喜欢英语，喜欢英语不是出于分数，完全是出于一种可以说是对美感的追求吧。或者说对语言的一种我自己的要求。然后就尝试一下学英语的新办法。我就试着用英语写一些文章。每天写一篇然后给老师改，我们那时有外教。我就给外教。反正想些什么就写什么。然后生搬硬套的还造了些句子。老外看了以后。。。效果还是有的。这个英语的运用呀。我觉得他对我有用，它开始又成为我思维的一部分。这是最实在的，它对我有用。原来只注重分数。我就这样慢慢的学下去，这个英语的成绩呀。不搞了反而好了。英语一般150分左右，我130。英语成绩上来后呢，我觉得这个方法很有效。后来我又受我们一套教材的启发。我们有一套教材，现在改革后的英语教材是图片比较多。以前的教材是图片少，而且是手画的。我们念书的时候用的是老教材，不过我们那个老师有先见。觉得那套



教材比较好，就在我们那里搞了一套。就是现在全国通用的教材，当时可能还只是在一些地方试行。这本书非常好。我觉得最好的就是图画非常美。就是照片非常真实。我觉得他拉进了英语和实际生活的距离。受它启发，我觉得真正的理解英语就是能够把它的实际情况想象出来。我又反过来去看书虫。因为里面有很多东西描写得很优美，肯定有很多有用的东西。这个时候就把一段话当成一个整个情景来理解，去想象它表现了一个什么样的情景。我就边看边想像。我觉得看书就像看电影一样。整个图像就揣摩出来了。主人公怎么做的。其中我又一个印象最深刻。就是小妇人三姐妹参加舞会回来。她们坐在马车里的谈话。我不仅想象着他们对华还想得出他们的面部表情，和肢体语言。反正那个时候特上瘾，有时候还秉烛夜读。那时候上可听英语听得比较少。我完全不管语法。因为你记得整个句子的话你还要语法干吗呢？我就知道那个单词时那样的。我就知道是那样写的。我还记得老师跟我说高中英语最重要的就是培养阅读能力。我们高二时我们老师让我们买原文阅读。从阅读中获得了不少东西。就是看原文，上下文猜单词。而且他告诉你怎么猜。单词和句子的关联。一共三册，那个时候看了一下。还有新概念。新概念英语的话，教学的模式很好。有个听写，我当时听力还比较差，很多东西听不懂。或者听了反应不过来。我老师跟我说了一下，他给了我一个建议。让我听磁带听写。听一句或几个单词就写，不管写不写得出来。一开始是听写新概念。我听写之后，发现我对语言的敏锐捕捉有很大提高。比如说很多轻音，还有连读我基本都能听出来。这样学习了一段时间我记得有一次在家里面，我已签订了希望英语(outlook)，我以前听不懂的东西一下子都听懂了。中央4台每天中午，晚上都有这个栏目。主持人都用英语。我一下子觉得很神奇。所以这种方法锻炼了我耳朵对英语的感知能力。我看它和汉语也有很多共同之处。汉语说多了越说越快。快到很多音都省略了。我一下子能听懂了省略，因为那个句子是作为一个整体留在你的脑海里。给我一些局部暗示的时候，那个整体就能凸现出来。尽管我有些音没听到，没关系。我其他音听到了，我对照就能知道省略的是什么。通过这种方式，我到现在英语还可以。我大学入学这个水平测试因为听力好才拿到85分，我们班最高87分。我们一个寝室的，他由于听力太差，只靠了70多分。我有好多基本都是猜的。然后到最后我们老师说占最大比重的是阅读，占40分，所以大量搞阅读。因为有我之前大量泛读作基础。我觉得那段时间真是读书读疯了。一天读3,4本，什么做也不做，一个学期下来几十本。有大量的阅读作基础，你的语感自然而然就上来了。猜单词和猜句子的能力也增强了。我觉得到这个阶段我所学的只是开始综合了。原来对单词词性的了解对我推测句子提供了基础。上下文一看，我就能进一步弄清楚它是个什么东西。这样高考前3个月，我做了100多套题。都是自己做的。老师布置得我反而不做。

江：为什么？

葛：因为我对他的要求比较反感。老师要求我做我偏偏不做。我连作业都不做。我觉得老师对我不是很了解。他布置的是针对全体同学的。我当时对我自己的判断和决定很有信心。我知道自己需要学什么。

江：为什么？

葛：因为我对整个英语的把握能力有很大提高。我觉得他是一个低水平或中等水平的要求。而我觉得那时我最迫切需要提高的就是精读能力，对句子的整个把握。一些深层的意思。我当时最需要的就是这个。他反而给我一些其他任务，我当然不做了。然后阅读成绩提高很快。开始是32分，后来34,38还得过几次满分。然后就知道怎么去做那题了。然后高考我觉得不会做得太烂。高考150分满分我得了132。然后从高考过后我就没摸过英语。除了偶尔看下书虫。再也没看过。高考过后我把每晚的全玩了一遍。



江：那有什么人你想谈一下

葛：就是几个老师。高中几个老师。初中那个老师当时也不错。我高一那个老师是全校水平最高的，因为学校有些外事活动都让他来翻译。可是她讲的东西听不懂。有时候又东西她讲不出来，有时候冒出一大堆英语出来听不懂。我听了一个学期，他讲课的模式也不知道。不清晰。因为这对我们预习很有帮助。高二的时候，那个老师也特别注重语法。句子解剖到不能解剖为止。句子得语法全部划出来，用法，句型，结构都弄出来。我从这里没学到东西，另外我记不住。当天就忘。他对我最大的帮助就是叫我听写的方法。对我英语听力帮助很大。而且当时高中一个男同学给我看了书虫，对我影响挺大。引起了我的主意，我就开始搞阅读。一个指明了方法，一个指明了思路。然后就是在高三的时候，那个老师也非常好，好像是我们主任，一个女老师，讲课很有特点。他不会讲具体语法的東西，只会讲句子。比如看见词组，他不会讲语法，他怎么搭配。而是罗列句子。一系列句子给我们表达了什么意思。他让我想到书虫里是不是也有这样的现象。所以我也下去找类似的用法。去记整个句子的意思。所以当我看到一个用法时，我不是孤立的看一个用法，我自然联想到其他的类似用法。她等于说教给了我一种学英语的思路。而且这样学可以把很多东西囊括在内。日积月累。越来越多。再一个，他给我了一套教材。那套教材有启发成分。她给我的180篇阅读我全做完了。

江：给你？

葛：对。因为我当时英语成绩不错，其他科目也不错。他们认为我能上清华北大。平时又不做什么东西。所以分配些任务。这段经历让我对文章的深层理解有了很大提高。

江：你还有什么其它事情需要补充吗？

葛：应该没有吧

江：根据你所讲的，我能不能说你英语学习中遇到的困难就是初中过分学语法，到高中开始阶段成绩下滑感到很沮丧？

葛：对。然后又通过阅读克服了这个困难。

江：你认为你学英语的最大成功经历是什么？

葛：就是读书虫。

江：你有没有对你英语学习不满意的时候？

葛：除了个别时候对英语分数不满意。我基本没有。因为我只要找明了方向，我都能想办法实现目标。

江：你理想的英语学习是什么？

葛：就是现在这样，把语法抛掉。看书，电影。我肯定会把书虫重新建起来。我相信他会重新给我带来感觉。

江：你能不能把你的英语学习经历简单总结一下？

葛：很简单。就两句话。一个是向语法探索，一个是向英语的本质探索。外在的表达和内在的意思。这样一说，我自己的脑袋也清醒了不少。

江：好谢谢你。



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## Appendix XVI Interview Transcription (sample 002 English version)

R: Hi, Nice to meet you! Thank you very much for joining this interview. Could you please tell me your English language learning experience? I mean from the first time you contact English to now.

E: My initial contact with English was in Grade six when I was in primary school. It was a time we (in our province) undertook an English language teaching reform. Now English is incorporated into primary school curriculum. But at that time I knew nothing, just thought English was interesting. I didn't learn much. To learn vocabulary by reciting. I remembered I thought English words sounded nice. For me, to speak English was like to sing a song. At that time, the most homework after class was to copy vocabulary. This situation lasted for only a term and there was no more English class in the second term. When I came to Middle school, everything started from the very beginning as some students had English class in primary school, others not. At that time, things (English learning) were very simple. Only to listen to teacher's instruction in class and recite vocabulary after class will do. English learning at the beginning, all started from alphabets, then vocabulary. At that time, the most frightening thing was to memorize vocabulary. I didn't know why, I felt I couldn't remember after memorization. For example, I could only remember a word after lots of times of repetition. Now this problem has basically been solved. Because I know English word has some structures. You know when you make a guess. Separate them by syllables, to add them up then you are clear. For some words, I even know them simply after I hear the pronunciation. Now it is much easier for me to memorize words, but at that time I didn't know this. Then, it is about second year in my Middle school. I was quite devoted to English language learning. But at that time, grammar was much emphasised. Because we had to deal with examinations, which was a typical motivation. If I saw a sentence, I would analyse its structure, such as subject, verb, object, attributive, adverb and predicative or memorize typical sentence models. For me, the way I learn English was like I learn Maths. Learning Maths was to learn a theorem then you quickly apply it to the things. Learning English was to memorize some grammar rules then apply them. I felt little difference between the two. Anyway, at that time, I was quite motivated in learning Maths and my English score was quite high. But I did not learn much practical things.

R: What do you mean by practical things?

E: For example, you could chat with a foreigner if you met any.

R: You mentioned you couldn't remember English words when you were in grade one, what did you do at that time?

E: My teacher introduced some methods at that time. But I didn't understand. She talked about some syllables. I think to know syllables is a process of accumulation. You must know what kind of combination result in what kind of pronunciation. I didn't have accumulation at that time, therefore this (memorize words according to syllables) was not obvious and unknown. In the second year of Middle school, my English score was quite high, I could get over 110 out of 120. Just like this, in terms of listening to the instruction in class, I would only listen to grammar rules and remember them. Then I would do other things. In fact, sometimes she would only teach one grammar principle, and all I learned in the class would only be that, i.e. how to collocate certain verbs. The grammar I meant here refers to how words and sentences are organized. In other words, I meant the structure of English sentences. But since that time, I didn't memorize much vocabulary, my way of doing English exercise was to search the way how to make up the overall sentences according to its structure. I was poor in translation. When it came to the final year of my Middle school, our English teacher's (changed to another one) level was not high, at least not as high as the one in my second year. In class, she spent little time in explaining. It seemed the class was over after we read aloud the text. And It seemed she didn't think we knew how to



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read text. Therefore, in most of the time, I didn't listen to her instruction when I found I got nothing from her class. But since conditions in our place (local hometown) were poor, and we didn't have other means i.e. after-class books assisting in English language learning. So my English went declined. I realized English had such a regular pattern: it declined quickly, very quickly if you didn't devote to it for some time.

R: Could you please tell me more as in what aspects it declined?

E: I couldn't remember the vocabulary I once knew. Perhaps I knew the rough meaning of the words, but I didn't know how to spell it. Moreover, to see the Chinese translation of the English words, I didn't know the English version. I could figure out the Chinese meaning when I read English text. It was kind of my written vocabulary was less than my reading vocabulary. Besides that, those things once I was familiar became obscure. I forgot the words I once remembered. Forgot more and more as time went by. In particular in my last year of middle school, my English went down. What I meant went down was based on my English examination score. Is that OK I talk like this? I want to know what you want to know from me?

R: Please don't worry about that. Only that it is your English language learning experience, I am interested in whatever you want to talk about and I don't want to influence your narration. I would be grateful if you could tell as much as you can.

E: Maybe because the overall English education atmosphere emphasised score. Afterwards, my English became very poor. In the Entrance exam for High School, my English was around 100 out of 120. At least for me, it's poor. Because for me, English and Maths were my specialities. I should have got a higher score. At last, I entered a key high school only by two points beyond the admission score. Still influenced by ideas formed in middle school which emphasised grammar, my English study in the first year of high school was dominated by grammar study. Sentence structure, how to use it. In other words, I deconstructed the sentence and analysed the sentence in order to master it. Rather than to sense the sentence by remembering the whole sentence. It was the situation at that time. Now I thought it was a failure. I wasted lots of time and got no much effect. Even I was misled to a wrong way. Because it was really difficult learning English in that way. There were so many English sentences and I could never remember them all in that way. My English still went down till to the bottom in the second semester of my first year in high school. Roughly I got 100 out of 150 (score). And I felt very depressing. Compared with middle school, the content of English learning had been increased much. And I couldn't remember so much. Since I couldn't remember them after even several times reading, I lost my confidence. I almost decided to give up as I couldn't remember. Then in my second year of my high school, I coincidentally found my classmate was reading a book. Bookworm! Did you hear about that?

R: Yes. Do you mean bookworm series?

E: Yes. It's published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and Oxford University Press. It was my first time to contact English story. I felt quite good after I read it. Then I began to read it. My English also seemed to be picked up. Now I indeed felt grateful of it, otherwise I had no chance to study at Tsinghua university. The sentences in the short story were really beautiful and the vocabulary was also appropriate for me to read. Around 3000. For a whole book, new words for me were less than 20. If the book was thinner, then new words were less than 10 for me. Basically there were no new words for me. I could guess the meaning from the context if there were any. Altogether there were 68 in the series, with 50 at the beginning and 18 added later on. I finished reading 40 during one semester. My reading speed became highly improved. I could finish reading one thin book by 30 minutes and a thick one by an hour at last.



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R: So how you read it?

E: Firstly, just read. Each book I've read more than seven times. At first, I would read the content. After I grasp the main idea of the story, I would come back for concrete sentences, word usage and some strange sentences. Repeated reading. I can now even remember lots of plot of the stories. i.e. *Wuthering Heights*. They were all changed into simple words and easier to understand.

R: You mean simplified version of the classics?

E: Yes. I found English was more precise in terms of description when compared with Chinese. For example, if we describe '棍子打马腿', English first had a verb 'hit' then 'on the leg of the horse', a prepositional phrase to describe the actual position. Anyway, it's my own feeling. Because the book provides both English and Chinese version. At the beginning of comparison, I became interested in the difference between the two languages. Gradually, I liked English language. Because English was accurate, and its expression was clear. For Chinese, sometimes, it was vague and you couldn't understand without relevant experiences. I felt English was practical which suited my requirement. I thought language should be accurate and easy to understand. I don't like playing with words. Therefore from then I began to like English. This time I liked it was not because of score but due to pursuit of beauty or my own requirement for language. Afterwards, I attempted to learn English in a new way. I try to write some short articles in English everyday and submitted to my teacher. We had a foreign teacher at that time and I often asked her to correct. Anyway, I wrote whatever I wanted to write and sometimes created my own sentences. It turned out to be effective. It was about application of English. And I thought it was important in terms of language use. Moreover, it became part of my thinking, which was most practical. In the past, I cared only about score. But since I learned English like this, without any special analysis and memorization of grammar rules, my score on the contrary went up. It was about 130 out of 150. The score went up suggested that this way of English learning was effective. Later on, I was enlightened by a set of course book. In the past, our course book had few pictures which were mainly manual scripts. But our teacher foresaw the importance of course book and managed a set of newly revised course book which was now commonly used all over the country. At that time, only some privileged places could try this. But because of our teacher, we had opportunity to know this course book, with lots of pictures. The pictures were very nice. In particular, they helped you understand a real world, which narrowed the distance between English and my real life. Enlightened by this, I thought to truly know English was to imagine the real situation it suggested. Again, I resorted to *Bookworm*. Since there were so many things well written, there must be useful things I could learn from. This time I read and began to imagine the scene. For example, I vividly remember I could imagine the sisters' facial expression, gesture etc. after the ball in 'little women'. Anyway, I was addicted to these stories at that time and sometimes I would stay up late reading. I didn't listen much in class and didn't care about grammar at all. Since I could remember the whole sentence, why shall I analyse grammar? I knew the words were used and written in that way. I remembered my teacher once told me the most important thing in high school English learning was to foster reading skills. In the second year of high school, our teacher suggested us to buy a sets of books called 'original English reading', from which I benefited a lot. It told us how to guess words from context, the relationship between words and sentences. Besides that, I also learned 'New Concept English'. I thought it provided a good teaching and learning mode. There was a dictation section in each lesson. My listening ability was rather poor at that time. I couldn't understand things spoken or I had no immediate response to listening materials. My teacher gave me rather good a suggestion that I could practise dictation by listening to the tape. She asked me to write down as much as I could wither it's a sentence or several words. Thus I began practising dictation by listening to *New Concept English*. I found I improved much in becoming sensitive



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to English and could capture it. For example, I could get the unstressed syllables. After a period of practising like this, once I found I could understand Outlook (an English program in CCTV 4) which I didn't understand before. I found it was amazing. So this method trained my ears and improved my sensitivity to spoken English. I found there were some similarities between English and Chinese. If you speak more Chinese, you would speak faster and faster and many syllables would be omitted. English was the same in this regard. I could understand what was omitted since the overall English sentence remained in my head. Given partial hints, the overall sentence would emerge. Even though I could not catch each syllable, it didn't matter, I could figure out the meaning from others. By this way, my English now is good. My score (Beijing College Entrance English Language Test) is 85. The top of our class is 87. In the later stage of my high school, our teacher advised us to prepare for reading comprehension which was heavily valued in our National College Entrance Exam. Since I had the reading experience of English stories (Bookworm), I began to read more such books. Based on these reading, language sense naturally came up and the ability to guess words or sentences was improved as well. I felt in this stage, my ability of English learning became integrated. Original understanding of grammar provided bases for me to predict sentences. Language context on the other hand helped me to understand the text. Thus three months before National Exam, I had done more than a hundred reading comprehension passages. They were all done by myself. On the contrary, I didn't do any assigned by the teacher.

R: Why?

E: Because I felt repulsive to her requirement. I deliberately chose not to do her assignment, let alone the homework. I felt she didn't know me. What she assigned was towards overall class. At that time, I knew myself quite well. I had confidence in my own judgement and decision. I knew what I need.

R: Why?

E: Because I improved greatly in mastering English from overall perspectives. I felt my teacher's requirement belonged to a low or middle level. But what I urgently need was to improve my ability in intensive reading, to explore the deep meaning of the sentences. But she gave me other exercises to do, of course I wouldn't do it. Later on, My score of reading improved substantially, with 32 then 34, 38 even occasionally 40 (full score). My English in National College Entrance Exam is 132 (150 total). Afterwards, I didn't touch English at all except for reading Bookworm occasionally. I spent all the time playing, enjoying all those I couldn't when I had to prepare for Entrance Exam.

R: Are there any people you want to talk about?

E: Yah. Those teachers in my high school although teachers in middle school were not bad too. The teacher in my first year of high school belonged to the highest level in the school, because she would be the interpreter whenever we had foreign guests. But I couldn't understand her English. Sometimes she couldn't speak out what she wanted to express; sometimes she slipped out lots of English which I couldn't understand. After the whole semester, I didn't know her teaching mode and was not clear at all. This actually was very important for us to preview the lessons. In the second year, my English teacher much stressed grammar. He would deconstruct the sentence till it can never be deconstructed. Usage, sentence pattern, structure and everything would be listed. I didn't learn anything from him. Even I learned some I wouldn't remember as I would forget exactly the same day. But what he helped me most was the suggestion on dictations on tapes. My classmate who I happened to borrow Bookworm from had great impact on my English learning. It should be acknowledged that my teacher in the second year proved me a method of improving listening and my classmate incidentally offered me a new way of thinking. In the final year of high school, my English teacher was generally good and was our class-master. She was outstanding in teaching. For example, she wouldn't teach concrete grammar, but would display the overall



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sentences. She wouldn't suggest us to memorize isolate phrases but illustrated several examples of how the collocation worked. This made me relate to my Bookworm: whether I could find out similar phenomena in the stories. So I searched for similar usage of words or sentences in the stories. Therefore, I would naturally relate one usage to others rather than memorize a single one only. To learn English like this can include lots of things. Moreover, she gave me an exercise book which was inspiring. I finished doing 180 reading passages on that.

R: She just gave it to you?

E: Yes. Because my English score was pretty good at that moment. And my other subjects were good as well. I was thought to enter either Peking University or Tsinghua university. This experience was helpful in terms of my deep understanding of passages.

R: According to your account, can I say your difficulty in English language learning was the time around final year of middle school and first year of high school?

E: Yes. Then I overcame the difficulty by reading.

R: what do you think your most successful English language learning experience?

E: reading Bookworm.

R: Is there any time you are not satisfied with your English learning?

E: Basically no except for occasionally I was not satisfied with my English score. Because I once found the direction, I would try my best to realize my goal.

R: What's your ideal English language learning?

E: Like now. Get rid of grammar. Read books, watch original movies. I would pick up Bookworm again and I believe they would once again bring to me the sense.

R: Can you briefly summarize your English language learning experience?

E: very simple. Two sentences: one is to explore into grammar; another is to explore into the nature of English language. The external expression and internal meaning. To tell you like this, I also became clearer in my own learning experience.

R: Thank you.



## Appendix XVII Follow-up Interview Transcription (sample 002 Chinese version)

江：针对刚才你看了，谈话，我想有几个问题，你一直认为分数很重要，因为大环境是这样的，我很想知道你个人是怎么看的？

葛：分数外处于很重要，那是无奈，没办法，虽然我知道英语最重要的是对英语的理解和应用，中国现实的环境下，当然是对书面语言的理解，现在大部分最新的科技资料，还有很多国外图书馆资料要去查，要去看的话，肯定是用英语，还有在高中的时候，百分之八十报纸都是用英语写的，还有很多电脑上面，很多网页都是用英语写的，我们用C语言编程的时候，他的提示都是英文的，没有中文，而且输入的时候也是用英文。

江：你认为现在很重要，你认为这个现在具体指的是什么时候？

葛：从开始追求分数到英语实际能力应用转折点的时候。

江：那个时候是在什么？

葛：高考之后。

江：那你为什么把高考看的很重要？

葛：传统教育的结果，没办法不把他看的不重要，现在中国这个教育制度，高考是个分水岭。我们那个同学，本来高中条件没什么差别，不是很大，我进了清华，他进了地方大学，他觉我的地位一下提高了，整个一个观念，他觉的读清华出去和他读地方大学出去截然不同。

江：这就是为什么把高考看的那么重要，因为高考决定了你将来的

葛：不说是决定，整个路就不一样。好多了。

江：另外你谈过因为受分数影响，在中学时候很好吧，自信心很强，高中有一个阶段很沮丧，成绩也不是很满意。你怎么看待信心和英语学习的关系？

葛：我觉的有信心就记得住，没信心就记不住。就这么简单。你有信心了，你就知道记什么，一下子能抓住关键，相信自己记得住。我当初没信心了，就觉的很枯燥，记不住。有信心了，就能一直继续下去，持续下去，没信心了，就很难继续下去。

江：当你意识到这一点，你有没有有意识去培养自己的信心的事情。

葛：书丛有分两级的，有初中的书丛，有高中的书丛，初中的书丛很薄，很简单，我就从初中的书丛开始，整个一本书读下去一点障碍也没有。

江：另外你能不能详细谈一下在语言学习中坚持指的是什么？你很多次提到过坚持。

葛：坚持，首先找一个目标，然后一直朝这个目标前进。

江：你拿什么来促使向这个目标前进？

葛：兴趣。我读书丛就是一个很好的例子，当时觉的越读越过瘾。

江：你觉的选目标有什么要去做，如何去选这个目标？

葛：看自己最想做的事情，例如读书丛我今天的目标就是弄懂那些句子，表达什么意思，一个句子表达什么样的情节。对书丛里的句子有一个清晰的理解。这是我当时看书丛的目标，我觉的这是第一步，理解了真正的语言，语言才会对我们有价值。

江：除了这个兴趣，你觉的有意思去坚持，你有没有以其他的方式来达到你的坚持的？

葛：其他时候，在高一的时候，初中时候，那就是分数，我觉的他能帮我拿到分数，我就去做。

江：那么你觉的分数对你的重要性源自于当时的梦想，大的目标影响，高考。

葛：不是，初中的时候，还没上高二。

江：那初中的时候为什么？

葛：初中的时候，分数的重要性是家里教育的结果，



江：家里怎么教育的？

葛：分数高的话，就可以有享受多么高的待遇。

江：比如说？

葛：比如说分数高的话，就会有什么奖励之类的。

江：除了物质上的奖励，家里还和你说过什么没有？

葛：没有，一是从物质上奖励，然后分数高怎么好，怎么好了。

江：你能举些例子吗？

葛：举例子，这个可能记不清了。

江：另外你能不能谈一下投入时间是怎么样的？

葛：投入时间？

江：你曾经谈到过英语学习要投入时间，前次对话里面。

葛：什么是投入时间，

江：比如说你上大学以后，就没什么时间投入到学英语中，我就是想知道英语学习和时间投入是一个什么样的关系？

葛：初学的时候，要投入很多时间，因为学英语你要让整个脑袋发动起来，那么要发动起来就要很多的时间，等到自己对英语有一定的感知能力的时候，然后就不需要用很多的时间，每天半个小时就差不多了，不必要做大量的练习，只要保持每天接触就行了。

江：另外你还谈到背诵，最初的时候，背的很快，到高中以后，分析语法，东西越来越多，觉的很枯燥，但到最后，你对书很感兴趣，熟读能背，你是怎么看待背诵的发展趋势的？

葛：有两个阶段，一个是机械式的，纯粹的记忆那些符号，什么意思都不知道，像记密码似的，另外一个是有真正意思，知道他意思去背。当时读书从我整个意思都清楚了。我不一定能照着全文背下来，但整个意思我全都知道。记的很清楚。就像看那个很过瘾的电影一样。

江：你机械式的背诵指的是什么？

葛：句子。

江：就是孤立的一些句子，就像老师举的例子，那你觉的两个阶段的背诵是递进式的，还是平行式的？

葛：应该是一个递进式的，首先从机械式的开始，没办法一开始不能理解或难以理解。到一定程度就能进入下一阶段真正记忆式的。

江：另外，你开始讲觉的英语很有意思，就像唱歌一样，到后来，高中的一个阶段，对英语很反感。后来到读书从又有浓厚的兴趣你是怎么看待兴趣在学英语过程中的作用的？

葛：兴趣是最好的老师。兴趣最起码能引导我去做自己想做的事情，兴趣能告诉我自己最想干的是什么事情。那我自己觉的充满动力。越干越过瘾。

江：你是在有意识地去找这个兴趣，还是在无意当中，有这么一个环境再去发现，你感觉是怎么样一个情况？

葛：我感觉是无意的。

江：无意的。

葛：当时不知道怎么去找。

江：在无意当中觉的很好玩、很有意思，然后再想去加强的那种兴奋点吧。

葛：对

江：你谈到老师水平，曾经讲到初二初三的老师英语有个比较，你怎么看待老师英语水平和你的英语学习。



葛：我觉的老师的教学水平对个人学习影响不大，换句话说，就是给你指明方向，我向来喜欢自学。可能是对我而言。

江：你指的自学是什么？

葛：有时候我不管老师，自己按照自己的想法去学，首先知道一个方向，他给我一个计划，现在该把什么学会，下一个我又该把什么东西学会，具体怎么学可以不听老师的。

江：你说自己喜欢自学，你喜欢自学是什么时候开始的？怎么样有了这种能力？

葛：初三的时候就有了，首先从数学移植过来的。觉的弄起来挺有意思的。英语初三的时候，听不习惯老师的讲课，根本一点门路都没有，不知道怎么学，听与不听没什么两样，那就根本不听，从那时就开始不听，但英语还得去学，不学的话，成绩就不行，然后就自己学，学一个阶段就会问同学，学到那儿了，给自己确定一个进度。

江：老师的讲解是给你确定一个进度，但具体怎么去实施完全由自己来。

葛：对。

江：你能详细谈一谈具体实施有什么环节吗？

葛：我记得最清楚是高中阶段。首先第一个是，靠以往的经验做参照，高一的时候专攻语法，搞语法能够让我把题目做对，实际上根本记不住，这是一个经验，我也没有其他办法，高二的时候，老师教给我们方法，而不是教给我们内容，提高捕捉英语细节的能力，能够捕捉英语细节，那个时候书丛读的比较多了，高三的时候，老师教给我英语定义怎么去理解，什么叫做把英语真正理解了，通汇的句子或者一段话上体表达的具体的图像，我尽量把那个书丛，像看电影一样，一页页翻过去，整个电影画面一直持续下去。

江：你的目标就是看完多少本书？然后你有没有什么检测手段？就是弄懂了以后，还是平行的，你还依然像你讲的一样把老师的讲课计划当成参照，比如说老师讲到一个什么样的阶段，你自己达到一个什么程度，

葛：到高二的时候就没有了，因为书丛就是一个完整的体系，从低到高，课后有练习，有些练习设计很巧妙，第一是语音练习，第二是填空练习，还有填词练习，第三个是写作练习，有些练习是让你回忆那一段话讲的什么东西，判断正确、错误，整个书丛分阶段练习，我就不需要老师，他本来就给我划分好了阶段。

江：另外，你的英语学习从语法到语感的一个过渡，你如何看待这个过渡的，为什么？

葛：第一是英语理解的提高，从一开始的机械式记忆，我们一开始接触到的是符号，从符号到内核，就是他真正表达的意思，这之间需要大量的记忆，是不可避免的，有某些阶段的成功误导了我，误导我走了错误的方向，算是一个曲折，后来又扭过头朝正确的方向走。

江：好的，你认为你英语学习在你同学中是一个什么样的情况？你的判断标准是什么？

葛：我自己的判断标准是起码能够把书丛看懂。

江：你英语学习在你同学中是一个什么样的情况？

葛：在班上还是比较好的，也不是最好的。

江：不是单指现在，是整体的一个情况？

葛：在高中，也是这个样子。也有比我更好的。在平时做题比我好，在高考的时候，我的英语成绩比他好。我觉的高考的时候出题很活，不会出平时那些考试的死题目。你真正理解语言的时候才会做出来的题目，也会出这样的题目。

江：你认为别人是怎么看待你的英语学习的？

葛：难以移植，因为我自己的思维比较独立，有一套自己的探索办法，从物理、数学，理科移植过来的东西，



江：你谈到从小家里对你的分数作物质奖励，在独立性上有没有做些什么？

葛：家里给我最好的就是独立性。在我小学五年级的时候，家里基本上没管过我，我妈和我爸工作分开，我还有一个弟，我弟和我妈住一起，我爸工作比较忙，我一个人住在家里，什么都是我自己搞。

江：那你怎么有这种物质奖励促使自己学，有没有其他的，或言行上的。

葛：当时我觉的分数高，这个人就很优秀，就是有一种积级向上的起作用。

江：你觉的这种积极向上的来自于那儿？

葛：来自于同学，或是来自于自己内心对某些优秀同学的一种追求吧。这比较深刻。

江：老师布置什么，家长布置什么，以这样一种方式达到优秀。而你反映出来一种很自主的，我很想知道你为什么能这样？是不是没人管你才会这样。

葛：我跟我爸住在水电大院，没有什么小伙伴，自己跟自己玩，给自己设定一个目标，自己去做。成了习惯。按照自己设定的目标去做，达到目标就觉的很爽。

江：你刚才提到你的同学认为你英语学习很好，但没法迁移，你是否在意同学对你英语学习的评价吗？

葛：不怎么在意。根据内心设定的目标去做，做给自己看。

江：如果让你给你的朋友提些建议，你会告诉他们怎样去做？

葛：我只能给他们指方向。第一，我不了解他个人的想法，第二像我这样，你要有非常强的探索能力，不断去探索，这样实施起来比较困难，我只能给他们指明方向。朝着英语本质的东西去前进。第一，你见到的是英语的外壳，你要努力去朝着获取他本身表达的图像。

江：另外，你还有一句话很精典，只要能给我指明方向，我就一定能实现我的目标。你说这句话的信心来自于那里？

葛：因为我自己有目标的话，我就一定要想方设法去实现。

江：源于自己的经验，一直到目前为止，

葛：除非那个目标不可能实现，如果不可能实现，我就不会有那个目标了。

江：你认为来清华读书有什么感受？

葛：更自由了，不全是靠书本，还有杂志、报刊，像全球经济人了，看那些经营巨头们怎么搞的，一些传记什么的，微软的比尔盖茨，看他们怎么弄的，自己学着弄。

江：你觉的在清华读书和其他地方有什么不一样，除了你感觉更自由了，还有一些世界上很有名成功人士的经历，我还是关注你的英语学习，你觉的清华这个名字或清华的这个氛围对你的英语学习有什么样的影响？

葛：我觉的影响不大。

江：影响不大，你觉的是在拓展其他方面。

葛：对，只是给我提供了一个更好的客观条件。我自己的学习方式不会因为周围的氛围不同而改变。我自己学自己的。

江：你如何看待到这儿后英语水平下降。

葛：我觉的时间匆忙的话，是必然的现象只要给我两个月的时间不去摸的话，肯定会下降。

江：你还是希望保持一个接触。

葛：对

江：好的，谢谢！



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## Appendix XVII Follow-up Interview Transcription (sample 002 English version)

R: You've just reviewed the transcription and provided your opinions on that. Can I ask you some questions based on our last talk?

E: Sure.

R: Firstly, it seems you always think score is very important, how do you feel about it?

E: Score is very important. That is because I have no choice. Even though I now know the most important thing is to understand English and use English, within the practical big environment in China, of course reading ability is more emphasised. Nowadays many latest resources on Science and technology are written in English, and many references are in English. I still remember there was one article I came across when I was in High School. over 80% of the newspaper is published in English. Moreover, many websites are written in English. When we learn to edit C Language (computer), all the reminder is written in English.

R: when do you mean 'now'?

E: At my turning point from chasing scores to practical English language use. It was after National Entrance Exam.

R: Do you think National Entrance Exam important?

E: Of course. It's the result of traditional education. There is no way to ignore it. The present educational system in China, National Entrance Exam is the landmark. My high school classmate, there was no much difference between him and me in high school. But now I am in Tsinghua University and he is just in a local university. He felt that my status was promoted. It's an overall opinion. People felt that there was sharp difference between graduates from Tsinghua University and local University.

R: Does this suggest National Entrance Exam determines your future?

E: Not really decisive, but the overall path in the future is different. To study in Tsinghua is much better.

R: You mentioned due to the influence of scores, you were quite confident at Middle School. But you were quite depressed and dissatisfied with your score at High School, what do you think of this change of confidence?

E: I felt I could remember when I had confidence and can't remember when I had no confidence. It is just this simple. When you have confidence, you can grasp the key point immediately, and believe yourself that you can remember. At the time when I had no confidence, I felt very boring and couldn't remember. When you had confidence, you can always persist and persist. Without confidence, it would be very hard to continue. There are two levels of Book Worm: one for Middle School and another for High School. The level for Middle School is very thin and simple. So I started from lower level. There was no obstacle for me to read through the whole book.

R: Can you tell me why you did much work on grammar when you think grammar is important, and why you read substantially when you find it helpful in reading bookworm?

E: I believe persistence leads to success. At first, find a goal, then march towards the goal.

R: What makes you march towards the goal?

E: Interest. It serves as a good example that I read bookworm. At that moment, you find you are addicted to reading. The more you read, the happier you are.

R: What do you think of your goal?

E: It depends on what I want to do most. For example, today, my goal of reading bookworm is to understand those sentences, what meaning they express, what scene they describe. Have a clear understanding in certain sentences in the book. That was my goal of reading bookworm. I felt that's the first step. Only by



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understanding the real language, language becomes valuable to us.

R: besides 'interest', is there any other way make you persistent?

E: on other occasions, it's score. If I felt it could help me improve my score, I would definitely do it.

R: What made you think score is very important?

E: It's about my middle school. I think the importance of score comes from family education.

R: Why?

E: For example, when I got high score, I could enjoy much prestigious treatment.

R: For example?

E: if my score is high, I would have material award.

R: Do you think those award important?

E: Of course, at that time I was young and surely I would have some temptation for certain material things.  
Then when you had good score you naturally wanted to keep the record.

R: In your last talk, you mentioned to learn English need to invest lots of time, can you tell me why?

E: At the beginning stage, you should invest lots of time. Because to learn English means you should activate your whole brain and this took a long time. When I myself had certain ability to sense English, I wouldn't need too much time. It's likely half an hour every day. I don't need to do many exercises. Only that I can keep in touch with English everyday is enough.

R: You mentioned recitation. At the beginning, you can quickly memorize but when you came to High School, there were more and more grammar analysis and you felt too much to memorize, you felt recite was boring. Again, when you came across Bookworm, you read them so many times and you could easily recite lots of the chapters. I wonder how you think of recitation?

E: There are two stages of recitation. The first stage is mechanical, purely to memorize those symbols and you don't know the meaning. Like you remember password. The second stage is to memorize the real meaning. You know the meaning and to memorize. When the time I read Bookworm, I knew clearly the meaning. Perhaps I can't recite the whole story, but I know the overall meaning. It's very clearly remembered. Just like you have watched a movie.

R: What do you mean by mechanical memorization?

E: sentences. Like the example sentences given by the teacher. I should say the two stages are connected in sequence of proceeding. You should start with mechanical memorization. There is no other way if it is difficult to understand. When you come to certain degree, you will enter into a real memorization.

R: You mentioned you felt English was very interesting, sounded like singing. In High School, however, you disliked it. Later when you read Bookworm, you became very interested. Could you please tell me what do you think of 'interest'?

E: Interest is the best teacher. Interest at least can guide me to do things I want to do. It can tell me what I want to do most and I would feel full of energy and motivation

R: Where do you think interest comes from?

E: It's unconscious. Just in a situation you suddenly find you like it or feel good doing things.

R: You mentioned teacher's qualification and compared your teacher in Grade two and Grade three in middle school and other teachers in High School as well. I wonder how you think of teacher's role?

E: I don't think teachers would influence that much on students. In other words, teacher is supposed to give you a direction. I prefer to do self-study. Perhaps this is my personal style.

R: What do you mean by 'self-study'?

E: Sometimes I don't care about the teacher. I would follow my own ideas to learn. At first, you know a direction. The teacher can set a goal which I may refer to. I mean what we shall learn now and what we



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shall learn next. But how to learn that I wouldn't listen to teachers.

R: You mentioned you prefer self study, when did that take place?

E: About Grade three in middle school. It's firstly transplanted from my math study. I felt quite interesting to learn English in that way. In Grade three, I was not used to the teacher's lesson. There was no way. I had no idea as how to learn. There was no difference between listening to the teacher and not to. So I chose not to listen. But I would still learn English. The score would not be good if I didn't learn. So I learned by myself. After a period of time, I would ask my classmates where they have learned thus I could set up my own progress.

R: Can you tell me more about it?

E: What I remember most clearly was in High School. At first, I would refer to my past learning experience, in Grade one I specially focused on grammar. To learn grammar can help me do exercises correctly. Actually I couldn't remember. But this was my previous experience. I had no other choices. In Grade two, the teacher taught us methods rather than content. I improved my ability of capturing details of English, I can capture the details of English. At that time, I already read much Bookworm. In Grade three, teacher told us the definition of understanding English. What meant to really understand English. I will imagine the scene words or paragraphs aim to describe. I would try my best to turn over page by page as I was watching movie, the picture was shown one after another.

R: So at that time was your goal still set with reference to teacher's goal?

E: it's not in Grade Two. Since Bookworm is a complete system. From low to high, there is exercise after the text. The exercise is designed delicately. For the first part, it's pronunciation; the second part is blank filling; the third part is writing exercise. Besides that, there are some exercises asking you to recall the main idea of certain paragraph, to judge right or wrong. Since the whole book was designed with different stages, there was no need to refer to the teacher.

R: You mentioned your English learning experienced a transition from grammar to language sense, how you think about this transition?

E: firstly, it's improvement of understanding English. From mechanical memorization, what we contact was symbols. From symbols to the core was the real meaning. During the process large amount of memorization is unavoidable. In some stages my success misled me and I took the wrong direction. It was a frustration. Then I turned back and walked towards a correct direction.

R: How you judge your direction?

E: based on whether I can understand original English, for example, Bookworm.

R: How would you comment yourself in your class in terms of English language learning?

E: belonging to the upper level, but not the best. Even in High School, there are some students who are better than me in normal English exercises. But my score was better in National Entrance Exam. I thought questions in National Entrance Exam were very flexible. Unlike our normal exam at school which were dead exercises. In national Entrance exam, you can only work out solutions after you really understand the language.

R: What do you think of other's opinion on your English language learning?

E: They thought I was good. Hard to transfer. Because I am quite independent in thinking. I have my own way of exploration. Something I transplanted from Physics, Math and Science.

R: You mentioned your family education earlier on, I wonder what else you want to comment on?

E: The best thing my family gave me was independence. From Grade five in primary school, my family basically didn't care about me. My dad and mum works in different places. My younger brother lives with my mum and I stay with my dad. Since my dad was very busy, almost everything was done by



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myself within home.

R: Why you think material award can make you study?

E: At that time, I also think if the person got high score, he or she is the example of being excellent. I mean it urges me to work hard and move forward. It is my pursuit for excellence from the bottom of my heart.

R: Can you talk a bit more about your childhood when you mentioned nobody cared about you in the family?

E: At that time, my dad and I lived in a flat within his company. There were no friends who I could play with. Simply I played with myself. Set a goal for myself and then did it. It became a habit. Following the goal I set and reached it I would feel very good.

R: From previous talk, it seemed you knew yourself very well in terms of English language learning, I wonder how you do that?

E: It's natural I think. If you want to reach a goal, you must know the requirement this goal entails. Accordingly, you can try your best to evaluate your learning effect. Whether you can reach the goal or not.

R: Just now you mentioned your classmates thought your English was very good but can't be transplanted. I wonder whether you care about their comments?

E: Not really mind. Follow my own goal set by myself, I do it for myself.

R: If you were asked to give advice to your friends who want to learn English, what kind of advice you would like to give?

E: I can only give them a direction. Firstly, I don't know what's her or his own opinion. Secondly, like me, you should have very strong ability of exploration, continuous exploration. It is difficult to implement. I can only give them a direction. To march towards the essence of English. You first see the shell of English, but you shall try your best to know it's real image the language expresses.

R: You have a typical sentence: given a direction, I can reach my goal. How come you have the confidence?

E: My confidence comes from my experience. Up to now, except that the goal can't be reached. Well, if can't be reached then I won't have that goal. Because if I have my goal, I will try my best to realize it.

R: What do you think of studying here?

E: more freedom. Not only depending on textbooks. There are so many books, magazines. Like world economist. To see how those great people became successful for example, Bill Gates and learn from them.

R: Anything else?

E: I don't think the atmosphere have much influence on me. From objective environment, here indeed provides much better learning conditions. But my way of learning wouldn't change because of atmosphere. I learn what I want to learn.

R: How do you think of your English declining?

E: I felt if there was no time, it's natural if I didn't touch English for two months. But I will keep in touch with it.

R: Anything else to comment?

E: No.

R: Thank you. I will contact you if I have further questions.

E: No problem.



## Appendix XVIII Data Coding (sample 002)

江: 你好。感谢你抽出时间来参加我的访谈。你能谈谈你从最初接触英语到现在的英语学习经历吗?

葛: 我最初接触英语是在小学六年级。我们那边刚好进行英语教学改革。现在英语当成小学课程。但当时也没什么就觉得英语好玩。也没怎么学, 记单词就是背。那时候就记得单词蛮好听, 英语说出来对我而言就象唱歌一样。那个时候下作业顶多就是抄写一下单词。好像搞了半年, 下学期就不搞了。到了初中以后, 因为有的小学开了这课, 有的小学没开这课, 所以都是从零开始。初中上学期的时候英语不错, 那个时候非常简单, 只要听下讲, 背下单词就可以了。英语最初都是从字母开始, 然后就是单词。那时候最怕就是背单词。不知道怎么搞的, 那个时候单词背完了觉得记不住。比如说一个单词要重复很多遍才能记住。现在这个问题基本解决了。因为我知道单词有一些结构。一猜就知道了, 按音节划分, 哪些一加就清楚了。有些单词我甚至只要一听就知道大致是一个什么样的组合。现在记起来好多了。当时不知道这个事情。然后就是到初二的时候, 那是英语学习也挺投入的。不过那个时候很注重语法。因为应试呀。这是一个典型的驱动。要我看到一个句子, 分析它的结构, 什么主谓宾哪, 什么定状补啊, 什么典型的句型呀。让我把它记下来, 当时分析这些事情。在我看来, 学习英语的方法跟数学是一样的。数学是记了一个定理就赶快去套, 英语是记一段英语语法规则然后去套。觉得好像没什么区别。反正那个时候数学学得挺起劲的, 英语学的分数蛮高。不过没有学到多少实际的东西。

江: 你这个实际的东西指的是什么?

葛: 就是比如碰到老外你就能跟他对话。

江: 你讲到初一时, 记不住单词, 那时是怎么办的?

葛: 那时老师讲了一些方法。不过那时也不知道这些事情, 她讲了一些音节。音节必须有一个积累的过程。必须知道哪些单词组合发什么音。当时我没有积累。所以那个时候不明显, 不知道。到初二时英语分数很高, 120分的题目能靠110多分。就那样。上课听讲的话, 我从来只记语法规则, 她讲语法规则我就把它记下来。然后就去干其它的事情。实际上她讲课可能就讲一条语法, 那我整堂课就听这一条语法。比如有些动词该怎么搭配呀。我说得语法指单词和语句之间是怎么组织的。也就是指的英语的一个结构。但是那些单词的意思我记得比较少。我就是找句子的结构怎么把它组全。填空题怎么做, 然后选择题怎么做。翻译的话很差。然后到初三的时候, 我们的英语老师水平不高。我觉得他的水平不高至少不如我初二的老师水平高。上课讲课的时候我发现时间用得很少。上课的时候读遍课文就完了。他认为我们都不会读课文似的。初三基本上是我得不到东西我就不听。不听我们那边条件比较差, 有没有其他的辅助手段。比如说课外书什么的, 没有。所以英语下降。英语有这样的一个规律, 我到现在都很不解, 一段时间不搞, 它下降很快。真得很快。

江: 具体表现在哪些方面?

葛: 单词我想不起来了。但我看到单词知道大致意思。就是不能把它写出来。比如说看到单词的中文意思我写不出英文, 我在文章中看到英文能想出它的中文意思。就是所谓的写词汇比阅读词汇少一些。然后就是原来很熟悉的东西现在很模糊。原来记住了的单词现在也忘了, 一天比一天忘得多。初三那年英语就下滑。我现在讲下滑是以我英语成绩为主线讲的, 这样行吗? 我想知道你想知道的有价值的东西。

江: 你随便讲呀, 只要是你的英语学习经历, 任何事情对我来说都是有价值的。这次主要是以你的叙述为主, 我不想对你有任何干扰和影响。你能谈得越详细越好。

葛: 因为整个英语教育的氛围可能对分数比较看重吧。我之后英语就比较烂了。中考的时候, 120分满分我只得了一百零几分。反正在我看来很差。因为对我而言, 英语和数学是比较强的东西。应该考高点呀。结果那年高考的时候考重点中学比分数线高两分进去的。然后高一, 高一因为受中学偏重语法的影响, 我高一的英语学习全都受语法左右。句子结构, 它怎样用。也就是我把句子肢解开来, 分析句子, 去把握这个句子。而不是把这个句子整个记下来, 去感知这个句子。当时那样, 现在觉得这个方法很失败。白花了时间结果没什么效果, 而且还误入了歧途。因为那么学非常困难, 那么多句子需要搞的话, 那分析得完呀。然后什么都记不住哇。英语还是下降。高一下学期的时候到低谷了。150分的卷子100分左右呗。当时比较沮丧。就看了这个句子, 明明知道, 不知道怎么写。记不住, 靠背诵的话太枯燥了。那时高中和初中比, 内容增加了不少。太多了我就记不住, 看了几遍都记不住。然后就没信心了, 因为你记不住嘛。后来就不打算搞了。然后在高

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二时无意中看到别人在看一本书，书虫。书虫听说过吗？

江：听说过。

葛：是外研社和牛津大学出版社联合推出的。那等于说我是第一次用英语接触到的小说，看了以后感觉很好。然后就开始看了。从那以后我的英语开始有起色了。现在我非常感谢它。要不是它的话我也不会到清华来。那小说吧其实它文字写得非常优美。然后词汇量刚好合适。3000左右，整本书读下来我的生词不会超过20个，厚一点的比较多薄一点的不会超过10个。基本上没有什么生词，即使有一点我也能猜出来。总共是68本，一开始是50本，后来增加了18本。我一口气，那个学期读了40多本。阅读速度越来越快。快的话半个小时就搞定了。厚一点的个把小时。

江：你能记起来你是怎么看的吗？

葛：先看。每本书我起码都读了7.8遍。我首先看内容。我整个看完对他整体要表达的意思有了一个清晰地把握之后，我再回过头把具体的句子，单词的用法及觉得陌生的句子看看。反反复复，一本书搞个7.8遍。现在我有好多情节都记得。什么呼啸山庄呀。好像是勃朗特的作品。就是牛津大学出版社，把它改编了，缩小。

江：你指简易读本？

葛：对。从中我发现英语比汉语描写更为精确。比如说我拿个句子打比方，‘用棍子打在马腿上’我们就直接用棍子打马腿。英语先有个打的动作，然后‘on the leg of the horse’后面有一个介词短语来具体说明动作的位置。反正这是体会。因为它是英汉对照，一个英文，一个中文。从对照开始，我对中英文之间的差异就有些兴趣了。看多了后慢慢喜欢英语了。因为英语精确，表达的意思很清晰。中文有时候挺含糊的。你没有经历那些事情的话可能就看不懂或不能完全读懂。我觉得英语很实在。优点比较好，正好符合我的要求，我觉得语言就是精确呗。达到易懂，不要玩弄什么其它的什么技巧。有时我觉得那些什么无聊的文字游戏。那时候就开始慢慢喜欢英语，喜欢英语不是出于分数，完全是出于一种可以说是对美感的追求吧。或者说对语言的一种我自己的要求。然后就尝试一下学英语的新办法。我就试着用英语写一些文章。每天写一篇然后给老师改，我们那时有外教。我就给外教。反正想些什么就写什么。然后生搬硬套的还造了些句子。老外看了以后...效果还是有的。这个英语的运用呀。我觉得他对我有用，它开始又成为我思维的一部分。这是最实在的，它对我有用。原来只注重分数。我就这样慢慢的学下去，这个英语的成绩呀。不搞了反而好了。英语一般150分左右，我130。英语成绩上来后呢，我觉得这个方法很有效。后来我又受我们一套教材的启发。我们有一套教材，现在改革后的英语教材是图片比较多。以前的教材是图片少，而且是手画的。我们念书的时候用的是老教材，不过我们那个老师有先见。觉得那套教材比较好，就在我们那里搞了一套。就是现在全国通用的教材，当时可能还只是在一些地方试行。这本书非常好。我觉得最好的就是图画非常美。就是照片非常真实。我觉得他拉进了英语和实际生活的距离。受它启发，我觉得真正的理解英语就是能够把它的实际情况想象出来。我又反过来去看书虫。因为里面有很多东西描写得很优美，肯定有很多有用的东西。这个时候就把一段话当成一个整个情景来理解，去想象它表现了一个什么样的情景。我就边看边想像。我觉得看书就像看电影一样。整个图像就揣摩出来了。主人公怎么做的。其中我又一个印象最深刻。就是小妇人三姐妹参加舞会回来。她们坐在马车里的谈话。我不仅想象着他们对华还想得出他们的面部表情，和肢体语言。反正那个时候特上瘾，有时候还秉烛夜读。那时候上可听英语听得比较少。我完全不管语法。因为你记得整个句子的话你还要语法干吗呢？我就知道那个单词时那样的。我就知道是那样写的。我还记得老师跟我说高中英语最重要的就是培养阅读能力。我们高二时我们老师让我们买原文阅读。从阅读中获得了不少东西。就是看原文，上下文猜单词。而且他告诉你怎么猜。单词和句子的关联。一共三册，那个时候看了一下。还有新概念。新概念英语的话，教学的模式很好。有个听写，我当时听力还比较差，很多东西听不懂。或者听了反应不过来。我老师跟我说了一下，他给了我一个建议。让我听磁带听写。听一句或几个单词就写，不管写不写得出来。一开始是听写新概念。我听写之后，发现我对语言的敏锐捕捉有很大提高。比如说很多轻音，还有连读我基本都能听出来。这样学习了一段时间我记得有一次在家里面，我已签订了希望英语(outlook)，我以前听不懂的东西一下子都听懂了。中央4台每天中午，晚上都有这个栏目。主持人都用英语。我一下子觉得很神奇。所以这种方法锻炼了我耳朵对英语的感知能力。我看它和汉语也有很多共同之处。汉语说多了越说越快。快到很多音都省略了。我一下子能听懂了省略，因为那个句子是作为一个整体留在你的脑海里。给我一些局部

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暗示的时候，那个整体就能凸现出来。尽管我有些音没听到，没关系。我其他音听到了，我对照就能知道省略的是什么。通过这种方式，我到现在英语还可以。我大学入学这个水平测试因为听力好才拿到 85 分，我们班最高 87 分。我们一个寝室的，他由于听力太差，只靠了 70 多分。我有好多基本都是猜的。然后到最后我们老师说占最大比重的是阅读，占 40 分，所以大量搞阅读。因为有我之前大量泛读作基础。我觉得那段时间真是读书读疯了。一天读 3, 4 本，什么做也不做，一个学期下来几十本。有大量的阅读作基础，你的语感自然而然就上来了。猜单词和猜句子的能力也增强了。我得到这个阶段我所学的只是开始综合了。原来对单词词性的了解对我推测句子提供了基础。上下文一看，我就能进一步弄清楚它是个什么东西。这样高考前 3 个月，我做了 100 多套题。都是自己做的。老师布置得我反而不做。

江：为什么？

葛：因为我对他的要求比较反感。老师要求我做我偏偏不做。我连作业都不做。我觉得老师对我不是很了解。他布置的是针对全体同学的。我当时对我自己的判断和决定很有信心。我知道自己需要学什么。

江：为什么？

葛：因为我对整个英语的把握能力有很大提高。我觉得他是一个低水平或中等水平的要求。而我觉得那时我最迫切需要提高的就是精读能力，对句子的整个把握。一些深层的意思。我当时最需要的就是这个。他反而给我一些其他任务，我当然不做了。然后阅读成绩提高很快。开始是 32 分，后来 34, 38 还得过几次满分。然后就知道怎么去做那题了。然后高考我觉得不会做得太烂。高考 150 分满分我得了 132。然后从高考过后我就没摸过英语。除了偶尔看下书虫。再也没看过。高考过后我把每晚的全玩了一个遍。

江：那有什么人你想谈一下

葛：就是几个老师。高中几个老师。初中那个老师当时也不错。我高一那个老师是全校水平最高的，因为学校有些外事活动都让他来翻译。可是她讲的东西听不懂。有时候又东西她讲不出来，有时候冒出一大堆英语出来听不懂。我听了一个学期，他讲课的模式也不知道。不清晰。因为这对我们预习很有帮助。高二的时候，那个老师也特别注重语法。句子解剖到不能解剖为止。句子得语法全部划出来，用法，句型，结构都弄出来。我从这里没学到东西，另外我记不住。当天就忘。他对我最大的帮助就是叫我听写的方法。对我英语听力帮助很大。而且当时高中一个男同学给我看了书虫，对我影响挺大。引起了我的主意，我就开始搞阅读。一个指明了方法，一个指明了思路。然后就是在高三的时候，那个老师也非常好，好像是我们主任，一个女老师，讲课很有特点。他不会讲具体语法的東西，只会讲句子。比如看见词组，他不会讲语法，他怎么搭配。而是罗列句子。一系列句子给我们表达了什么意思。他让我想到书虫里是不是也有这样的现象。所以我也下去找类似的用法。去记整个句子的意思。所以当我看到一个用法时，我不是孤立的看一个用法，我自然联想到其他的类似用法。她等于说教给了我一种学英语的思路。而且这样学可以把很多东西囊括在内。日积月累。越来越多。再一个，他给我了一套教材。那套教材有启发成分。她给我的 180 篇阅读我全做完了。

江：给你？

葛：对。因为我当时英语成绩不错，其他科目也不错。他们认为我能上清华北大。平时又不做什么东西。所以分配些任务。这段经历让我对文章的深层理解有了很大提高。

江：你还有什么其它事情需要补充吗？

葛：应该没有吧

江：根据你所讲的，我能不能说你英语学习中遇到的困难就是初中过分学语法，到高中开始阶段成绩下滑感到很沮丧？

葛：对。然后又通过阅读克服了这个困难。

江：你认为你学英语的最大成功经历是什么？

葛：就是读书虫。

江：你有没有对你英语学习不满意的时候？

葛：除了个别时候对英语分数不满意。我基本没有。因为我只要找明了方向，我都能想办法实现目标。

江：你理想的英语学习是什么？

葛：就是现在这样，把语法抛掉。看书，电影。我肯定会把书虫重新建起来。我相信他会重新给我带来感觉。



江: 你能不能把你的英语学习经历简单总结一下?

葛: 很简单。就两句话。一个是向语法探索, 一个是向英语的本质探索。外在的表达和内在的意思。这样一说, 我自己的脑袋也清醒了不少。

江: 好谢谢你。

葛灿辉 002

江: 针对刚才你看了, 谈话, 我想有几个问题, 你一直认为分数很重要, 因为大环境是这样的, 我很想知道你个人是怎么看的?

葛: 分数外处于很重要, 那是无奈, 没办法。虽然我知道英语最重要的是对英语的理解和应用, 中国现实的环境下, 当然是对书面语言的理解, 现在大部分最新的科技资料, 还有很多国外图书馆资料要去查, 要去看的话, 肯定是用英语, 还有在高中的时候, 百分之八十报纸都是用英语写的, 还有很多电脑上面, 很多网页都是用英语写的, 我们用 C 语言编程的时候, 他的提示都是英文的, 没有中文, 而且输入的时候也是用英文。

江: 你认为现在很重要, 你认为这个现在具体指的是什么时候?

葛: 从开始追求分数到英语实际能力应用转折点的时候。

江: 那个时候是在什么?

葛: 高考之后。

江: 那你为什么把高考看的很重要?

葛: 传统教育的结果, 没办法不把他看的不重要, 现在中国这个教育制度, 高考是个分水岭。我们那个同学, 本来高中条件没什么差别, 不是很大, 我进了清华, 他进了地方大学, 他觉我的地位一下提高了, 整个一个观念, 他觉的读清华出去和他读地方大学出去截然不同。

江: 这就是为什么把高考看的那么重要, 因为高考决定了你将来的

葛: 不说是决定, 整个路就不一样。好多了。

江: 另外你谈过因为受分数影响, 在中学时候很好吧, 自信心很强, 高中有一个阶段很沮丧, 成绩也不是很满意。你怎么看待信心和英语学习的关系?

葛: 我觉的有信心就记得住, 没信心就记不住。就这么简单。你有信心了, 你就知道记什么, 一下子能抓住关键, 相信自己记得住。我当初没信心了, 就觉的很枯燥, 记不住。有信心了, 就能一直继续下去, 持续下去, 没信心了, 就很难继续下去。

江: 当你意识到这一点, 你有没有有意识去培养自己的信心的事情。

葛: 书从有分两级的, 有初中的书从, 有高中的书从, 初中的书从很薄, 很简单, 我就从初中的书从开始, 整个一本书读下去一点障碍也没有。

江: 另外你能不能详细谈一下为什么当认为语法很重要时作了很多这方面的工作, 党认为鼠虫对你很有帮助时有大量阅读?

葛: 我相信坚持就能成功, 首先找一个目标, 然后一直朝这个目标前进。

江: 你拿什么来促使向这个目标前进?

葛: 兴趣。我读书从就是一个很好的例子, 当时觉的越读越过瘾。

江: 你觉的选目标有什么要去做, 如何去选这个目标?

葛: 看自己最想做的事情, 例如读书从我今天的目标就是看懂那些句子, 表达什么意思, 一个句子表达什么样的情节。对书从里的句子有一个清晰的理解。这是我当时看书从的目标, 我觉的这是第一步, 理解了真正的语言, 语言才会对我们有价值。

江: 除了这个兴趣, 你觉的有意思去坚持, 你有没有以其他的方式来达到你的坚持的?

葛: 其他时候, 在高一的时候, 初中时候, 那就是分数, 我觉的他能帮我拿到分数, 我就去做。

江: 那么你觉的分数对你的重要性源自于当时的梦想, 大的目标影响, 高考。

葛: 不是, 初中的时候, 还没上高二。

江: 那初中的时候为什么?

葛: 初中的时候, 分数的重要性是家里教育的结果,

English language learning in the future

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江：家里怎么教育的？

葛：分数高的话，就可以有享受多么高的待遇。

江：比如说？

葛：比如说分数高的话，就会有什么奖励之类的。

江：除了物质上的奖励，家里还和你说过什么没有？

葛：没有，一是从物质上奖励，然后分数高怎么好，怎么好了。

江：你能举些例子吗？

葛：举例子，这个可能记不清了。

江：另外你能不能谈一下投入时间是怎么样的？

葛：投入时间？

江：你曾经谈到过英语学习要投入时间，前次对话里面。

葛：什么是投入时间，

江：比如说你上大学以后，就没什么时间投入到学英语中，我就是想知道英语学习和时间投入是一个什么样的关系？

葛：初学的时候，要投入很多时间，因为学英语你要让整个脑袋发动起来，那么要发动起来就要很多的时间，等到自己对英语有一定的感知能力的时候，然后就不需要用很多的时间，每天半个小时就差不多了，不必要做大量的练习，只要保持每天接触就行了。

江：另外你还谈到背诵，最初的时候，背的很快，到高中以后，分析语法，东西越来越多，觉的很枯燥，但到最后，你对书很感兴趣，熟读能背，你是怎么看待背诵的发展趋势的？

葛：有两个阶段，一个是机械式的，纯粹的记忆那些符号，什么意思都不知道，像记密码似的，另外一个是有真正有意思，知道他意思去背。当时读书从我整个意思都清楚了。我不一定能照着全文背下来，但整个意思我全都知道。记的很清楚。就像看那个很过瘾的电影一样。

江：你机械式的背诵指的是什么？

葛：句子。

江：就是孤立的一些句子，就像老师举的例子，那你觉的两个阶段的背诵是递进式的，还是平行式的？

葛：应该是一个递进式的，首先从机械式的开始，没办法一开始不能理解或难以理解。到一定程度就能进入下一阶段真正记忆式的。

江：另外，你开始讲觉的英语很有意思，就像唱歌一样，到后来，高中的一个阶段，对英语很反感。后来到读书从又有浓厚的兴趣你是怎么看待兴趣在学英语过程中的作用的？

葛：兴趣是最好的老师。兴趣最起码能引导我支去做自己想做的事情，兴趣能告诉我自己最想干的是什么事情。那我自己觉的充满动力。越干越过瘾。

江：你是在有意识地去找这个兴趣，还是在无意当中，有这么一个环境再去发现，你感觉是怎么样一个情况？

葛：我感觉是无意的。

江：无意的。

葛：当时不知道怎么去找。

江：在无意当中觉的很好玩、很有意思，然后再想去加强的那种兴奋点吧。

葛：对

江：你谈到老师水平，曾经讲到初二初三的老师英语有个比较，你怎么看待老师英语水平和你的英语学习。

葛：我觉的老师的教学水平对个人学习影响不大，换句话说，就是给你指明方向，我向来喜欢自学。可能是对我而言。

江：你指的自学是什么？

葛：有时候我不管老师，自己按照自己的想法去学，首先知道一个方向，他给我一个计划，现在该把什么学会，下一个我又该把什么东西学会，具体怎么学可以不听老师的。

江：你说自己喜欢自学，你喜欢自学是什么时候开始的？怎么样有了这种能力？

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**Comment:** Family influence (attitude towards higher exam score)  
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**Comment:** Conceptual change on time investment (more time to average contact)  
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**Comment:** Memorization (mechanical to deep understanding)  
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**Comment:** Interest (best teacher)  
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**Comment:** Teacher's English level (little influence on own learning)  
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**Comment:** Teacher's decision on learning plan, own decision on learning process  
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葛：初三的时候就有了，首先从数学移植过来的。觉的弄起来挺有意思的。英语初三的时候，听不习惯老师的讲课，根本一点门路都没有，不知道怎么学，听与不听没什么两样，那就根本不听，从那时就开始不听，但英语还得去学，不学的话，成绩就不行，然后就自己学，学一个阶段就会问同学，学到那儿了，给自己确定一个进度。

江：老师的讲解是给你确定一个进度，但具体怎么去实施完全由自己来。

葛：对。

江：你能详细谈一谈具体实施有什么环节吗？

葛：我记得最清楚是高中阶段。首先第一个是，靠以往的经验做参照，高一的时候专攻语法，搞语法能够让我把题目做对，实际上根本记不住，这是一个经验，我也没有其他办法，高二的时候，老师教给我们方法，而不是教给我们内容，提高捕捉英语细节的能力，能够捕捉英语细节，那个时候书从读的比较多，高三的时候，老师教给我英语定义怎么去理解，什么叫做把英语真正理解了，通汇的句子或者一段话上体表达的具体的图像，我尽量把那个书从，像看电影一样，一页页翻过去，整个电影画面一直持续下去。

江：你的目标就是看完多少本书？然后你有没有什么检测手段？就是弄懂了以后，还是平行的，你还依然像你讲的一样把老师的讲课计划当成参照，比如说老师讲到一个什么样的阶段，你自己达到一个什么程度，

葛：到高二的时候就没有了，因为书从就是一个完整的体系，从低到高，课后有练习，有些练习设计很巧妙，第一是语音练习，第二是填空练习，还有填词练习，第三个是写作练习，有些练习是让你回忆那一段话讲的什么东西，判断正确、错误，整个书从分阶段练习，我就不需要老师，他本来就给我划分好了阶段。

江：另外，你的英语学习从语法到语感的一个过渡，你如何看待这个过渡的，为什么？

葛：第一是英语理解的提高，从一开始的机械式记忆，我们一开始接触到的是符号，从符号到内核，就是他真正表达的意思，这之间需要大量的记忆，是不可避免的，有某些阶段的成功误导了我，误导我走了错误的方向，算是一个曲折，后来又扭过头朝正确的方向走。

江：好的，你认为你英语学习在你同学中是一个什么样的情况？你的判断标准是什么？

葛：我自己的判断标准是起码能够把书从看懂。

江：你英语学习在你同学中是一个什么样的情况？

葛：在班上还是比较好的，也不是最好的。

江：不是单指现在，是整体的一个情况？

葛：在高中，也是这个样子。也有比我更好的。在平时做题比我好，在高考的时候，我的英语成绩比他好。我觉的高考的时候出题很活，不会出平时那些考试的死题目。你真正理解语言的时候才会做出来的题目，也会出这样的题目。

江：你认为别人是怎么看待你的英语学习的？

葛：难以移植，因为我自己的思维比较独立，有一套自己的探索办法，从物理、数学，理科移植过来的东西，

江：你谈到从小家里对你的分数作物质奖励，在独立性上有没有做些什么？

葛：家里给我最好的就是独立性。在我小学五年级的时候，家里基本上没管过我，我妈和我爸工作分开，我还有一个弟，我弟和我妈住一起，我爸工作比较忙，我一个人住在家里，什么都是我自己搞。

江：那你怎么有这种物质奖励促使自己学，有没有其他的，或言行上的。

葛：当时我觉的分数高，这个人就很优秀，就是有一种积极向上的起作用。

江：你觉的这种积极向上的来自于那儿？

葛：来自于同学，或是来自于自己内心对某些优秀同学的一种追求吧。这比较深刻。

江：老师布置什么，家长布置什么，以这样一种方式达到优秀。而你反映出来一种很自主的，我很想知道你为什么能这样？是不是没人管你才会这样。

葛：我跟我爸住在水电大院，没有什么小伙伴，自己跟自己玩，给自己设定一个目标，自己去做。成了习惯。按照自己设定的目标去做，达到目标就觉的很爽。

江：你刚才提到你的同学认为你英语学习很好，但没法迁移，你是否在意同学对你英语学习的评价吗？

葛：不怎么在意。根据内心设定的目标去做，做给自己看。

江：如果让你给你的朋友提些建议，你会告诉他们怎样去做？

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Comment: Reasons for own decisions on English learning

Comment: Teacher's plan as reference to monitor own learning

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Comment: Different teaching approach (grammar to achieve high score; learning method to understand English)

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Comment: Learning material is more useful than teacher

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Comment: Self-reflection on English learning process (overcome difficulty)

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Comment: Self-reflection on National entrance exam (understand English not memorizing grammar)

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Comment: Family influence on independence

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Comment: Life goal

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Comment: Being alone develops independence (habit)

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葛：我只能给他们指方向。第一，我不了解他个人的想法，第二像我这样，你要有很强的自控能力，不断去探索，这样实施起来比较困难，我只能给他们指明方向。朝着英语本质的东西去前进。第三，你见到的是英语的外壳，你要努力去朝着获取他本身表达的图像。

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江：另外，你还有一句话很精典，只要能给我指明方向，我就一定能实现我的目标。你说这句话的信心来自于那里？

**Comment:** Self-image (ability of exploration)

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葛：因为我自己有目标的话，我就一定要想方设法去实现。

江：源于自己的经验，一直到目前为止。

**Comment:** determination

葛：除非那个目标不可能实现，如果不可能实现，我就不会有那个目标了。

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江：你认为来清华读书有什么感受？

葛：更自由了，不全是靠书本，还有杂志、报刊，像全球经济人了，看那些经营巨头们怎么搞的，一些传记什么的，微软的比尔盖茨，看他们怎么弄的，自己学着弄。

**Comment:** freedom in university, new life goal (successful economist)

江：你觉的在清华读书和其他地方有什么不一样，除了你感觉更自由了，还有一些世界上很有名成功人士的经历，我还是关注你的英语学习，你觉的清华这个名字或清华的这个氛围对你的英语学习有什么样的影响？

葛：我觉的影响不大。

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江：影响不大，你觉的是在拓展其他方面。

葛：对，只是给我提供了一个更好的客观条件。我自己的学习方式不会因为周围的氛围不同而改变。我自己学自己的。

**Comment:** relationship between environment and self (self is more important in managing own study)

江：你如何看待到这儿后英语水平下降。

葛：我觉的时间匆忙的话，是必然的现象只要给我两个月的时间不去摸的话，肯定会下降。

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江：你还是希望保持一个接触。

葛：对

江：好的，谢谢！

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## Appendix XIX Data Coding (sample 003)

1. English learning environment (not compulsory)
2. no interest
3. own decision to give up
4. self-reflection (regrets not knowing the importance of English at earlier age)
5. other's help with English learning (Mum and sister)
6. self-evaluation (English competence contest, geographical difference on English level)
7. teacher's special care
8. self-evaluation (exam score)
9. family influence (uncle's way of success becomes own life goal)
10. motivation (uncle as an example)
11. sister's English learning method
12. teacher's special treatment (motivating)
13. teacher's decision (learning material)
14. teaching method (communicative approach)
15. own preference of English learning (exam-oriented)
16. teaching method (grammar-based)
17. attitude towards teaching methods (positive)
18. own way of learning (listen to English song, watch English movie)
19. self-evaluation (own way of learning, little effect)
20. no control (self-forced learning)
21. teacher's advice on improving pronunciation
22. self-image (try best to go forward)
23. Mum's influence (words)
24. self-evaluation (English language ability)
25. own control (improve oral English)
26. belief in English language environment
27. make effort
28. self-evaluation (exam-oriented learning and real language use)
29. self-reflection on English language learning process (ups and downs, time investment is decisive)
30. Chinese learning motto (practice makes perfect)
31. exam score (public evaluation criteria)
32. learning goal (to prove one's own value)
33. family education (optimistic, make effort to overcome difficulty)
34. family influence (mum's behaviour)
35. motivation (English is important)
36. conflict (mother's control, own choice to reject)
37. Chinese learning motto (interest is the best teacher)
38. own control over learning (mum little control)
39. teacher's advice
40. time investment (only by making effort can succeed)
41. effort leads to high exam score (own experience)
42. self-image (best student at school)
43. teacher's special care
44. learning attitude (always want to improve)
45. teacher's role (give direction and provide some methods)
46. own role (make effort to improve English level)
47. conceptual change (exam-oriented learning, grammar, instrumental purpose to oral English, language use)
48. self-reflection (should learn more at earlier age, good for language sense)
49. self-evaluation (high score but poor abilities in language use)
50. interest (is vital in English language learning)
51. effort leads to success
52. competitive environment (pressure results in motivation)
53. time investment (determines score)



## Appendix XX Theme Elicitation (sample 002 1<sup>st</sup> time)

1. 单词的学习方法
2. 地域差异
3. 动力
4. 高考很重要
5. 个人学习理论
6. 归因（英语学习阶段性结果）
7. 家庭教育
8. 家庭影响
9. 坚持很重要
10. 交叉学科的影响
11. 教育环境
12. 老师的个别关注
13. 老师的教学方法
14. 老师推荐的学习方法
15. 个人目标
16. 批判老师分配的任务
17. 时间投入
18. 同学的英语学习方法
19. 英语很重要
20. 兴趣
21. 英语学习的关键
22. 英语学习的材料
23. 学习格言/俗语
24. 个人和环境的关系
25. 学习量
26. 学校环境
27. 英语教学政策
28. 英语学习的实质
29. 语法学习很重要
30. 中英文对比
31. 自我反思
32. 自我奖励
33. 自我决定
34. 自我评价
35. 自我形象
36. 自信

## Appendix XXI Theme Elicitation (Sample 002 2<sup>nd</sup> time)

1. 英语学习方法（单词的学习方法；老师推荐的学习方法；同学的英语学习方法；语法学习很重要）
2. 地域差异（学习资源缺乏）
3. 动力（英语很重要；高考很重要；兴趣）
4. 个人学习理论（英语学习的核心）
5. 家庭影响（家庭教育）
6. 坚持很重要
7. 交叉学科的影响（中英文对比）
8. 教育环境（英语教学政策；学校环境）
9. 老师（老师的个别关注；老师的教学方法）
10. 个人目标
11. 时间投入
12. 英语学习的材料
13. 学习格言/俗语
14. 个人和环境的关系
15. 学习量
16. 自我反思（英语学习的实质；归因：英语学习阶段性结果）
17. 自我决定（自我调节学习过程，优化学习效果；自我奖励）
18. 自我评价（评估学习任务的完成情况，分数，技巧，水平）
19. 自我形象（自己的性格）
20. 自信（批判老师分配的任务）



## Appendix XXII Theme Elicitation (sample 002 English version)

1. English language teaching reform
2. interest (English sound)
3. vocabulary learning (recite by reading or copying)
4. vocabulary learning (memorization)
5. vocabulary learning (structure analysis)
6. motivation (exam)
7. grammar learning
8. cross-curriculum learning (English and Math)
9. evaluation (English language learning)
10. teacher's method
11. own decision on selectively listening to teacher's lectures (only take grammar)
12. exam-oriented learning
13. teaching method (reading aloud the text, boring)
14. own decision on rejecting teacher's lecture (only take grammar)
15. evaluation (English level, attribute to time investment)
16. evaluation (exam score)
17. English language education environment (attach importance on score)
18. grammar-based learning
19. self-evaluation (learning method)
20. self-evaluation (score, memorization)
21. lose confidence
22. observing other's learning method (reading original novel)
23. transitional point (original novel)
24. interest (English literature)
25. self-evaluation (English level)
26. own decision on new way of learning (reading original novel)
27. self-evaluation (reading speed)
28. own ways of reading (original novel)
29. language comparison (English and Chinese)
30. interest (difference between two languages)
31. interest (beauty of English language)
32. own decision to learn in a new way (try writing)
33. self-evaluation (exam score)
34. comparison (English textbooks)
35. ~~own decision on how to learn in class (give up grammar)~~ (influence from textbook)
36. own decision to learn through reading original English novels
37. Chinese learning motto (pore over one's books by the light of a candle)
38. own decision on how to learn in class (give up grammar)
39. teacher's advice on learning material (original English reading/ New concept English)
40. teacher's advice on improving listening (dictation according to tapes)
41. self-evaluation (learning method of listening)
42. language comparison (English and Chinese in speaking)
43. teacher's advice on reading (exam purpose)
44. self-evaluation (own ability of English language learning)
45. own decision to learn (doing more exercise /exam oriented)
46. own control (what to learn) confidence in own decision
47. self-evaluation (exam score)
48. self-reward for diligence
49. teaching approach (communicative/grammar based)
50. peer's influence (reading original novel)
51. teaching approach (English in context)
52. teacher's special care
53. confidence in finding learning objective and determination to achieve it
54. self-evaluation (English language learning process)
55. no control on exam-oriented learning
56. ~~conflict of English language learning~~ (understanding & language use/written English)
57. ~~Conceptual change on purpose of English language learning~~ (higher score to language use)
58. importance of national entrance exam

**Comment:** Environmental influence

**Comment:** interest

**Comment:** learning method

**Comment:** motivation

**Comment:** evaluation

**Comment:** teacher

**Comment:** own decision

**Comment:** confidence

**Comment:** transitional point

**Comment:** language comparison

**Comment:** nature of language learning

**Comment:** Chinese learning motto

**Comment:** Conflict of language learning



59. ordinary people's different expectations on different universities
60. own control of learning plan (easy to difficult)
61. Chinese learning motto (when there is a will there is a way)
62. motivation (genuine interest)
63. motivation (higher exam score)
64. family influence (importance of exam score)
65. conceptual change on time investment (more time to average contact)
66. conceptual development of memorization (mechanical recite to deep understanding)
67. Chinese learning motto (interest is the best teacher)
68. self-image (like self-study)
69. teacher's role (determine learning plan), own role (determine learning process)
70. difficulty in learning leads to own decisions to learn
71. teacher's plan as reference to monitor own learning process
72. different teaching approach (grammar to achieve high score; method to understand English)
73. own control of learning material (replace teacher's role)
74. self-reflection on English language learning process (memorization is necessary, grammar based learning is wrong, understanding English is correct)
75. self-reflection on National entrance exam (understanding English helps achieve higher score)
76. family influence on independence
77. life goal (being excellent by achieving higher exam score)
78. habit of being independent (being alone at home)
79. self-image (strong ability to explore)
80. self-image (strong determination)
81. freedom in university; new life goal (successful economists)
82. relationship between learning environment and self (self is more important in managing own learning)

Comment: Self-image

Comment: Self-reflection



## Appendix XXIII Co-judger's Coding (sample 002)

R: Hi, Nice to meet you! Thank you very much for joining this interview. Could you please tell me your English language learning experience? I mean from the first time you contact English to now.

E: My initial contact with English was in Grade six when I was in primary school. It was a time we (in our province) undertook an English language teaching reform. Now English is incorporated into primary school curriculum. But at that time I knew nothing, just thought English was interesting. I didn't learn much. To learn vocabulary by reciting. I remembered I thought English words sounded nice. For me, to speak English was like to sing a song. At that time, the most homework after class was to copy vocabulary. This situation lasted for only a term and there was no more English class in the second term. When I came to Middle school, everything started from the very beginning as some students had English class in primary school, others not. At that time, things (English learning) were very simple. Only to listen to teacher's instruction in class and recite vocabulary after class will do. English learning at the beginning, all started from alphabets, then vocabulary. At that time, the most frightening thing was to memorize vocabulary. I didn't know why, I felt I couldn't remember after memorization. For example, I could only remember a word after lots of times of repetition. Now this problem has basically been solved. Because I know English word has some structures. You know when you make a guess. Separate them by syllables, to add them up then you are clear. For some words, I even know them simply after I hear the pronunciation. Now it is much easier for me to memorize words, but at that time I didn't know this. Then, it is about second year in my Middle school. I was quite devoted to English language learning. But at that time, grammar was much emphasised. Because we had to deal with examinations, which was a typical motivation. If I saw a sentence, I would analyse its structure, such as subject, verb, object, attributive, adverb and predicative or memorize typical sentence models. For me, the way I learn English was like I learn Maths. Learning Maths was to learn a theorem then you quickly apply it to the things. Learning English was to memorize some grammar rules then apply them. I felt little difference between the two. Anyway, at that time, I was quite motivated in learning Maths and my English score was quite high. But I did not learn much practical things.

**Comment:** Early start

**Comment:** Different motivation (not think of jobs)

**Comment:** Stressful way of learning; pressure; no skills/no strategy

**Comment:** Motivation (exam)

**Comment:** Learning style

**Comment:** Learning math/rules into different situation; compare different subjects

**Comment:** Reflection (metacognition)

**Comment:** Teacher's methods

**Comment:** Making his decisions of what is learning; confidence

**Comment:** Judgment on teacher's level

**Comment:** Sophisticated; criticize teacher

**Comment:** Motivation (look for opportunity)

**Comment:** Evaluation (attribute to time investment)

R: What do you mean by practical things?

E: For example, you could chat with a foreigner if you met any.

R: You mentioned you couldn't remember English words when you were in grade one, what did you do at that time?

E: My teacher introduced some methods at that time. But I didn't understand. She talked about some syllables. I think to know syllables is a process of accumulation. You must know what kind of combination result in what kind of pronunciation. I didn't have accumulation at that time, therefore this (memorize words according to syllables) was not obvious and unknown. In the second year of Middle school, my English score was quite high, I could get over 110 out of 120. Just like this, in terms of listening to the instruction in class, I would only listen to grammar rules and remember them. Then I would do other things. In fact, sometimes she would only teach one grammar principle, and all I learned in the class would only be that, i.e. how to collocate certain verbs. The grammar I meant here refers to how words and sentences are organized. In other words, I meant the structure of English sentences. But since that time, I didn't memorize much vocabulary, my way of doing English exercise was to search the way how to make up the overall sentences according to its structure. I was poor in translation. When it came to the final year of my Middle school, our English teacher's (changed to another one) level was not high, at least not as high as the one in my second year. In class, she spent little time in explaining. It seemed the class was over after we read aloud the text. And It seemed she didn't think we knew how to read text. Therefore, in most of the time, I didn't listen to her instruction when I found I got nothing from her class. But since conditions in our place (local hometown) were poor, and we didn't have other means i.e. after-class books assisting in English language learning. So my English went declined. I realized English had such a regular pattern: it declined quickly, very quickly if you didn't devote to it for some time.

R: Could you please tell me more as in what aspects it declined?

E: I couldn't remember the vocabulary I once knew. Perhaps I knew the rough meaning of the words, but I didn't know



how to spell it. Moreover, to see the Chinese translation of the English words, I didn't know the English version. I could figure out the Chinese meaning when I read English text. It was kind of my written vocabulary was less than my reading vocabulary. Besides that, those things once I was familiar became obscure. I forgot the words I once remembered. Forgot more and more as time went by. In particular in my last year of middle school, my English went down. What I meant went down was based on my English examination score. Is that OK I talk like this? I want to know what you want to know from me?

**Comment:** Awareness (specific awareness what is declining)

**Comment:** Productive vs passive vocabulary

R: Please don't worry about that. Only that it is your English language learning experience, I am interested in whatever you want to talk about and I don't want to influence your narration. I would be grateful if you could tell as much as you can.

**Comment:** Educational environment

E: Maybe because the overall English education atmosphere emphasised score. Afterwards, my English became very poor. In the Entrance exam for High School, my English was around 100 out of 120. At least for me, it's poor. Because for me, English and Maths were my specialities. I should have got a higher score. At last, I entered a key high school only by two points beyond the admission score. Still influenced by ideas formed in middle school which emphasised grammar, my English study in the first year of high school was dominated by grammar study. Sentence structure, how to use it. In other words, I deconstructed the sentence and analysed the sentence in order to master it. Rather than to sense the sentence by remembering the whole sentence. It was the situation at that time. Now I thought it was a failure. I wasted lots of time and got no much effect. Even I was misled to a wrong way. Because it was really difficult learning English in that way. There were so many English sentences and I could never remember them all in that way. My English still went down till to the bottom in the second semester of my first year in high school. Roughly I got 100 out of 150 (score). And I felt very depressing. Compared with middle school, the content of English learning had been increased much. And I couldn't remember so much. Since I couldn't remember them after even several times reading, I lost my confidence. I almost decided to give up as I couldn't remember. Then in my second year of my high school, I coincidentally found my classmate was reading a book. Bookworm! Did you hear about that?

**Comment:** Self-evaluation (exam score)

**Comment:** Grammar-based learning

**Comment:** Self-evaluation; taking responsibility

**Comment:** Self-reflection (my way of dealing with English didn't work; expecting a new learning method)

**Comment:** Awareness of confidence

R: Yes. Do you mean bookworm series?

**Comment:** Awareness of own level

E: Yes. It's published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and Oxford University Press. It was my first time to contact English story. I felt quite good after I read it. Then I began to read it. My English also seemed to be picked up. Now I indeed felt grateful of it, otherwise I had no chance to study at Tsinghua university. The sentences in the short story were really beautiful and the vocabulary was also appropriate for me to read. Around 3000. For a whole book, new words for me were less than 20. If the book was thinner, then new words were less than 10 for me. Basically there were no new words for me. I could guess the meaning from the context if there were any. Altogether there were 68 in the series, with 50 at the beginning and 18 added later on. I finished reading 40 during one semester. My reading speed became highly improved. I could finish reading one thin book by 30 minutes and a thick one by an hour at last.

**Comment:** Important new way of learning English (sth. He didn't realize as possible before)

**Comment:** Learning strategy

**Comment:** Monitoring

**Comment:** Suggestions of motivation; his choice; now he likes learning

R: So how you read it?

E: Firstly, just read. Each book I've read more than seven times. At first, I would read the content. After I grasp the main idea of the story, I would come back for concrete sentences, word usage and some strange sentences. Repeated reading. I can now even remember lots of plot of the stories. i.e. Wuthering Hights. They were all changed into simple words and easier to understand.

**Comment:** Quantity of work; methods

R: You mean simplified version of the classics?

E: Yes. I found English was more precise in terms of description when compared with Chinese. For example, if we describe '棍子打马腿', English first had a verb 'hit' then 'on the leg of the horse', a prepositional phrase to describe the actual position. Anyway, it's my own feeling. Because the book provides both English and Chinese version. At the beginning of comparison, I became interested in the difference between the two languages. Gradually, I liked English language. Because English was accurate, and its expression was clear. For Chinese, sometimes, it was vague and you couldn't understand without relevant experiences. I felt English was practical which suited my requirement. I thought

**Comment:** Own method: general ideas to specific language use; strategy use (not read in the same way)

**Comment:** Language comparison

**Comment:** analytical



language should be accurate and easy to understand. I don't like playing with words. Therefore from then I began to like English. This time I liked it was not because of score but due to pursuit of beauty or my own requirement for language. Afterwards, I attempted to learn English in a new way. I try to write some short articles in English everyday and submitted to my teacher. We had a foreign teacher at that time and I often asked her to correct. Anyway, I wrote whatever I wanted to write and sometimes created my own sentences. It turned out to be effective. It was about application of English. And I thought it was important in terms of language use. Moreover, it became part of my thinking, which was most practical. In the past, I cared only about score. But since I learned English like this, without any special analysis and memorization of grammar rules, my score on the contrary went up. It was about 130 out of 150. The score went up suggested that this way of English learning was effective. Later on, I was enlightened by a set of course book. In the past, our course book had few pictures which were mainly manual scripts. But our teacher foresaw the importance of course book and managed a set of newly revised course book which was now commonly used all over the country. At that time, only some privileged places could try this. But because of our teacher, we had opportunity to know this course book, with lots of pictures. The pictures were very nice. In particular, they helped you understand a real world, which narrowed the distance between English and my real life. Enlightened by this, I thought to truly know English was to imagine the real situation it suggested. Again, I resorted to Bookworm. Since there were so many things well written, there must be useful things I could learn from. This time I read and began to imagine the scene. For example, I vividly remember I could imagine the sisters' facial expression, gesture etc. after the ball in 'little women'. Anyway, I was addicted to these stories at that time and sometimes I would stay up late reading. I didn't listen much in class and didn't care about grammar at all. Since I could remember the whole sentence, why shall I analyse grammar? I knew the words were used and written in that way. I remembered my teacher once told me the most important thing in high school English learning was to foster reading skills. In the second year of high school, our teacher suggested us to buy a sets of books called 'original English reading', from which I benefited a lot. It told us how to guess words from context, the relationship between words and sentences. Besides that, I also learned 'New Concept English'. I thought it provided a good teaching and learning mode. There was a dictation section in each lesson. My listening ability was rather poor at that time. I couldn't understand things spoken or I had no immediate response to listening materials. My teacher gave me rather good a suggestion that I could practise dictation by listening to the tape. She asked me to write down as much as I could wither it's a sentence or several words. Thus I began practising dictation by listening to New Concept English. I found I improved much in becoming sensitive to English and could capture it. For example, I could get the unstressed syllables. After a period of practising like this, once I found I could understand Outlook (an English program in CCTV 4) which I didn't understand before. I found it was amazing. So this method trained my ears and improved my sensitivity to spoken English. I found there were some similarities between English and Chinese. If you speak more Chinese, you would speak faster and faster and many syllables would be omitted. English was the same in this regard. I could understand what was omitted since the overall English sentence remained in my head. Given partial hints, the overall sentence would emerge. Even though I could not catch each syllable, it didn't matter, I could figure out the meaning from others. By this way, my English now is good. My score (Beijing College Entrance English Language Test) is 85. The top of our class is 87. In the later stage of my high school, our teacher advised us to prepare for reading comprehension which was heavily valued in our National College Entrance Exam. Since I had the reading experience of English stories (Bookworm), I began to read more such books. Based on these reading, language sense naturally came up and the ability to guess words or sentences was improved as well. I felt in this stage, my ability of English learning became integrated. Original understanding of grammar provided bases for me to predict sentences. Language context on the other hand helped me to understand the text. Thus three months before National Exam, I had done more than a hundred reading comprehension passages. They were all done by myself. On the contrary, I didn't do any assigned by the teacher.

**Comment:** interest; aware of what he wants; attitude; motivated by sth. reading in English; his decision of way to learn

**Comment:** ownership of work

**Comment:** evaluation

**Comment:** authentic meaning

**Comment:** nature of English language learning is understanding (not just academic subject)

**Comment:** teacher suggested learning

**Comment:** evaluation

**Comment:** comparison between Chinese and English

**Comment:** reflection (critical thinking)

**Comment:** self-evaluation: both grammar and language

**Comment:** quantity of work; ownership of work

**Comment:** confidence of own decision

R: Why?



E: Because I felt repulsive to her requirement. I deliberately chose not to do her assignment, let alone the homework. I felt she didn't know me. What she assigned was towards overall class. At that time, I knew myself quite well. I had confidence in my own judgement and decision. I knew what I need.

**Comment:** autonomy

R: Why?

E: Because I improved greatly in mastering English from overall perspectives. I felt my teacher's requirement belonged to a low or middle level. But what I urgently need was to improve my ability in intensive reading, to explore the deep meaning of the sentences. But she gave me other exercises to do, of course I wouldn't do it. Later on, My score of reading improved substantially, with 32 then 34, 38 even occasionally 40 (full score). My English in National College Entrance Exam is 132 (150 total). Afterwards, I didn't touch English at all except for reading Bookworm occasionally. I spent all the time playing, enjoying all those I couldn't when I had to prepare for Entrance Exam.

**Comment:** evaluation (exam score)

R: Are there any people you want to talk about?

E: Yah. Those teachers in my high school although teachers in middle school were not bad too. The teacher in my first year of high school belonged to the highest level in the school, because she would be the interpreter whenever we had foreign guests. But I couldn't understand her English. Sometimes she couldn't speak out what she wanted to express; sometimes she slipped out lots of English which I couldn't understand. After the whole semester, I didn't know her teaching mode and was not clear at all. This actually was very important for us to preview the lessons. In the second year, my English teacher much stressed grammar. He would deconstruct the sentence till it can never be deconstructed. Usage, sentence pattern, structure and everything would be listed. I didn't learn anything from him. Even I learned some I wouldn't remember as I would forget exactly the same day. But what he helped me most was the suggestion on dictations on tapes. My classmate who I happened to borrow Bookworm from had great impact on my English learning. It should be acknowledged that my teacher in the second year proved me a method of improving listening and my classmate incidentally offered me a new way of thinking. In the final year of high school, my English teacher was generally good and was our class-master. She was outstanding in teaching. For example, she wouldn't teach concrete grammar, but would display the overall sentences. She wouldn't suggest us to memorize isolate phrases but illustrated several examples of how the collocation worked. This made me relate to my Bookworm: whether I could find out similar phenomena in the stories. So I searched for similar usage of words or sentences in the stories. Therefore, I would naturally relate one usage to others rather than memorize a single one only. To learn English like this can include lots of things. Moreover, she gave me an exercise book which was inspiring. I finished doing 180 reading passages on that.

**Comment:** evaluation of teacher

**Comment:** able to make his own judgement

**Comment:** peer observation

**Comment:** aware of teaching methods

**Comment:** learning strategy (related usages rather than symbol memory)

**Comment:** quantity is important

R: She just gave it to you?

E: Yes. Because my English score was pretty good at that moment. And my other subjects were good as well. I was thought to enter either Peking University or Tsinghua university. This experience was helpful in terms of my deep understanding of passages.

**Comment:** self evaluation

R: According to your account, can I say your difficulty in English language learning was the time around final year of middle school and first year of high school?

E: Yes. Then I overcame the difficulty by reading.

R: what do you think your most successful English language learning experience?

E: reading Bookworm.

R: Is there any time you are not satisfied with your English learning?

E: Basically no except for occasionally I was not satisfied with my English score. Because I once found the direction, I would try my best to realize my goal.

**Comment:** confidence

R: What's your ideal English language learning?

E: Like now. Get rid of grammar. Read books, watch original movies. I would pick up Bookworm again and I believe they would once again bring to me the sense.

**Comment:** personal theory of learning



R: Can you briefly summarize your English language learning experience?

E: very simple. Two sentences: one is to explore into grammar; another is to explore into the nature of English language.

The external expression and internal meaning. To tell you like this, I also became clearer in my own learning experience.

R: Thank you.

**Comment:** self-experience/  
methods suits him

## Appendix XXIV Co-judger's Coding (sample 003)

1. early start (initial interest)
2. no assessment, no pressure no motivation
3. family support
4. great achievement (full exam score)
5. exam pressure
6. teacher's care
7. family member's influence
8. goals (going abroad)
9. significant others (sister and mother)
10. being pushed (by teacher)
11. learning strategy (look up dictionary, read newspaper suggested by teacher)
12. different teaching methods
13. other contact with English (English song, movie)
14. no interest, self control
15. learning strategy (improve pronunciation)
16. personality (like to go forward)
17. peer pressure (university)
18. language environment (such as abroad)
19. exam-oriented (TOFEL)
20. abilities (to pass exam)
21. ups and downs (language learning process)
22. attribution (achievement=efforts)
23. need for achievement (own perception of self-value)
24. family influence
25. personality (try to make most effort)
26. parental influence
27. English (importance, usefulness and instrumental)
28. societal expectation
29. job-oriented, instrumental
30. family support
31. self-regulation
32. learning strategy (reference book)
33. autonomy
34. purposeful study
35. learning belief (doing leads to reward)
36. attribution (effort=improvement)
37. personal experience (exam)
38. teacher's influence
39. be connected (teacher's care)
40. teacher's guidance, influence
41. teacher's learning strategy
42. exam-oriented learning
43. skills and abilities
44. evaluation criteria (score and communication)
45. how to learn English well (intrinsic motivation, attitudes and efforts)
46. pressure (is good)



## Appendix XXV Co-judging (sample 002)

David	Xiaoli	
1. motivation	motivation	
2.	geographical difference	
3. learning method	English learning method	
4. learning style		Xiaoli puts 4 under 23
5. cross-curriculum learning skills	influence from other subjects study	
6. teacher's methods	teacher (personal attention; teaching methods)	Xiaoli (teacher's methods in 3)
7. teacher's role		
8. making own decisions	self-decision	
9. judgement on teacher's level		Xiaoli puts 9 under 13
10. evaluation	self-evaluation	
11. educational environment	educational environment	
12. self-reflection	self-reflection	
13. confidence	confidence	
14. monitoring		Xiaoli puts 14 under 10
15. quantity of work	quantity of study	
16. autonomy		
17. peer observation		Xiaoli puts 17 under 3
18. personal theory of learning	personal theory of learning	
19. management of own learning		Xiaoli puts 19 under 12
20. learner belief		
21. family education	family influence	
22. persistence	persistence is important	
23.	personal goal	
24.	time investment	
25.	English learning material	
26.	learning motto/proverbs	
27.	relationship between self and environment	
28. personal character	self-image	

## Appendix XXVI Co-judging (sample 003)

Na Li	Xiaoli	Comparison
1. early start (initial interest)	English learning environment (optional)	
2. no assessment, no pressure no motivation	no interest	
	Own decision to give up	removal
	Self-reflection (regret not knowing the importance of English at earlier age)	
3. family support	Other's help (Mum and sister)	
4. great achievement (full exam score)	Self-evaluation (English competence contest, geographical difference on English level)	
5. exam pressure	Self-evaluation (exam score)	
6. teacher's care	Teacher's special care	
7. family member's influence	Family influence (uncle's way of success becomes own life goal)	
8. goals (going abroad)	Motivation (uncle as an example)	
9. significant others (sister and mother)	Sister's English learning methods	
10. being pushed (by teacher)	Teacher's special treatment (motivating)	Xiaoli's
11. learning strategy (look up dictionary, read newspaper suggested by teacher)	Teacher's suggestion (learning material)	
12. different teaching methods	Teaching method (communicative)	
	Own preference of learning (exam-oriented)	
	Teaching method (grammar-based)	
	Attitudes towards teaching methods (positive)	
13. other contact with English (English song, movie)	Own way of learning (listen to English song, watch English movie)	
14. no interest, self control	No other control (self-forced learning)	
15. learning strategy (improve pronunciation)	Teacher's advice on improving pronunciation	
16. personality (like to go forward)	Self-image (try best to go forward)	Li Na's
17. peer pressure (university)		
	Mum's influence (words)	
	Self-evaluation (English language ability)	
	Own control (improve oral English)	
18. language environment (such as abroad)	Belief in English language environment	
	Make effort	
19. exam-oriented (TOFEL)		
20. abilities (to pass exam)	Self-evaluation (exam-oriented learning and real language use)	
21. ups and downs (language learning process)	Self-reflection on English language learning process (ups and downs,)	
22. attribution (achievement=efforts)	time investment is decisive	
	Chinese learning motto (practice makes perfect)	Xiaoli's
	Exam score (public evaluation criteria)	
23. need for achievement (own	Learning goal (to prove own value)	



perception of self-value)		
24. family influence	Family education (optimistic, make effort to overcome difficulty)	
25. personality (try to make most effort)		
26. parental influence	Family influence (mum's behaviour)	
27. English (importance, usefulness and instrumental)	Motivation (English is important)	
28. societal expectation		
	Conflict (mother's control, own choice to reject)	
29. job-oriented, instrumental		
30. family support		
	Chinese learning motto (Interest is the best teacher)	
31. self-regulation	Own control over learning (mum little control)	
32. learning strategy (reference book)	Teacher's advice	
33. autonomy		
34. purposeful study		
35. learning belief (doing leads to reward)		
36. attribution (effort=improvement)	Time investment (only by making effort can succeed)	
37. personal experience (exam)	Effort leads to high exam score (own experience)	
	Self-image (best student at school)	
38. teacher's influence		
39. be connected (teacher's care)	Teacher's special care	
	Learning attitude (always want to improve)	
40. teacher's guidance, influence	Teacher's role (give directions and provide some methods)	
	Own role (make effort to improve English level)	
41. teacher's learning strategy		
42. exam-oriented learning		
	Conceptual change (exam-oriented learning, grammar, instrumental purpose to oral English, language use)	
	Self-reflection (should learn more at earlier age, good for language sense)	
43. skills and abilities	Self-evaluation (high score but poor abilities in language use)	
44. evaluation criteria (score and communication)		
45. how to learn English well (intrinsic motivation, attitudes and efforts)	Interest is vital in English language learning	
	Effort leads to success	
46. pressure (is good)	Competitive environment (pressure results in motivation)	
	Time investment (determines score)	

# Appendix XXVII Node Summary Report

Initial open-coding

ed: 2006-7-27 12:59

阶段 (机械式到理解式)	Free Node
	<b>Words Coded</b> 105
2006-7-23 17:15	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b> 1
2006-7-23 17:15	<b>Coding References</b> 1
	<b>Sources Coded</b> 1
	<b>Cases Coded</b> 0
模仿汉语发音来记忆)	Free Node
	<b>Words Coded</b> 25
2006-7-25 7:32	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b> 1
2006-7-25 7:32	<b>Coding References</b> 1
	<b>Sources Coded</b> 1
	<b>Cases Coded</b> 0
法 (背诵)	Free Node
	<b>Words Coded</b> 261
2006-7-23 14:49	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b> 4
2006-7-25 18:16	<b>Coding References</b> 5
	<b>Sources Coded</b> 4
	<b>Cases Coded</b> 0
法 (抄写)	Free Node
	<b>Words Coded</b> 125
2006-7-23 14:55	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b> 3
2006-7-25 17:37	<b>Coding References</b> 3
	<b>Sources Coded</b> 2
	<b>Cases Coded</b> 0
法 (结构分析)	Free Node
	<b>Words Coded</b> 8,876
2006-7-23 14:56	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b> 142
2006-7-23 16:34	<b>Coding References</b> 1
	<b>Sources Coded</b> 1
	<b>Cases Coded</b> 0



方法 (看报纸, 查字典) **Free Node**

ne		<b>Words Coded</b>	58
	2006-7-24 8:12	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b>	2
d	2006-7-24 8:12	<b>Coding References</b>	1
		<b>Sources Coded</b>	1
		<b>Cases Coded</b>	0

方法 (流利朗读文章) **Free Node**

ne		<b>Words Coded</b>	77
	2006-7-24 18:49	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b>	1
d	2006-7-24 18:49	<b>Coding References</b>	1
		<b>Sources Coded</b>	1
		<b>Cases Coded</b>	0

方法 (通过阅读文章反复增加但此印象) **Free Node**

ne		<b>Words Coded</b>	98
	2006-7-25 17:27	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b>	1
d	2006-7-25 17:27	<b>Coding References</b>	1
		<b>Sources Coded</b>	1
		<b>Cases Coded</b>	0

方法 (重复记忆); 觉得很难 **Free Node**

me		<b>Words Coded</b>	112
	2006-7-23 14:54	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b>	2
d	2006-7-23 15:33	<b>Coding References</b>	3
		<b>Sources Coded</b>	1
		<b>Cases Coded</b>	0

方法 (学习资源缺乏; 对学习造成阻力) **Free Node**

me		<b>Words Coded</b>	48
	2006-7-23 15:37	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b>	2
d	2006-7-26 18:58	<b>Coding References</b>	2
		<b>Sources Coded</b>	2
		<b>Cases Coded</b>	0

方法 (英语水平受限制) **Free Node**

me		<b>Words Coded</b>	33
	2006-7-24 7:56	<b>Paragraphs Coded</b>	1
d	2006-7-24 7:56	<b>Coding References</b>	1
		<b>Sources Coded</b>	1
		<b>Cases Coded</b>	0

## **Appendix XXVIII Categorization (sample 002 1<sup>st</sup> time)**

1. motivation
2. geographical difference
3. influence from other subjects study
4. teacher (personal attention; teaching methods)
5. self-decision
6. self-evaluation
7. educational environment
8. self-reflection
9. confidence
10. quantity of study
11. personal theory of English learning
12. family influence
13. persistence is important
14. personal goal
15. time investment
16. English learning material
17. learning motto/proverbs
18. own role in language learning process
19. self-image

### **learner belief**

- personal goal
- quantity of study
- time investment
- persistence
- learning motto/proverb
- own role in learning process

### **learning management**

- motivation
- English learning materials
- self-decision
- self-evaluation
- self-reflection

### **influences**

- educational environment
- geographical difference
- family influence
- teacher
- other subjects study



## Appendix XXIX Categorization (sample 002 2<sup>nd</sup> time)

### learner belief

- personal goal
  - being an excellent person
  - become a successful economist
- quantity of study
  - large amount of exam exercise
  - lots of novel reading
  - repetitive reading the stories with different purpose
- time investment
  - more time at the beginning
  - keep in constant contact
- persistence
  - is very important
- learning motto/proverb
  - diligence is important
- own role in learning process
  - learning is own responsibility

### learning management

- motivation
  - exams
  - English is important
  - interest
- English learning materials
  - extra learning materials
- English learning methods
  - teacher recommended methods: vocabulary learning
  - peers' methods
  - grammar based learning
  - give up grammar and read original novel
  - own methods: vocabulary learning
- self-decision
  - selectively listening to teachers' instruction
  - adjust learning process: arrange own learning tasks
  - make learning effective
  - self-reward
- self-evaluation
  - score is satisfactory
  - strong ability to explore
  - listening ability is improved
  - like self-study
- self-reflection
  - self-image: confident (in own decision)
  - independent
  - strong volition
  - nature of language learning: exam
    - is understanding
    - is mastery of language
  - own learning process:

from grammar to understanding,  
become part of logic thinking  
personal learning theory: critical points of English

learning  
**influences**

- educational environment
    - school environment
      - attach importance to score
      - national exam is very important
    - English language policy
  - geographical difference
    - lack in learning resources
  - family influence
    - pay attention to importance of exam score
    - being alone helps become independent
  - teacher
    - teacher's teaching method
    - teacher's special care
    - criticize teacher's teaching
  - other subjects study
    - mathematics learning skills
    - comparison of English and Chinese: help understand
- listening skills



## Appendix XXX Categorization (sample 003)

### learner belief

- Appropriate learning methods
  - Vocabulary learning
  - Auditing English lectures
- quantity of study
  - large amount of exam exercise
- time investment
  - more time at the beginning
  - keep in constant contact
- persistence
  - is very important
- learning motto/proverb
  - interest is the best teacher
- own role in learning process
  - learning is own responsibility

### learning management

- motivation
  - exams
- English learning materials
  - extra learning materials for exams
- English learning methods
  - teacher recommended methods: vocabulary learning
  - sister recommended methods: grammar learning
- self-evaluation
  - exam score
  - communicative competence
- self-reflection
  - nature of language learning: exam
    - communicative use
  - own learning process: exam-oriented learning

### influences

- educational environment
  - school environment
    - attach importance to score
    - national exam is very important
  - English language policy
- geographical difference
  - different levels in English education
- family influence
  - pay attention to importance of English
  - uncle is an example to follow
- teacher
  - teacher's teaching methods
  - teacher's special care

## Appendix XXXI Provisional Categories

### learner belief

- quantity of study
  - large amount of exam exercise
  - lots of novel reading
  - repetitive reading the stories with different purpose
- time investment
  - more time at the beginning
  - keep in constant contact
- persistence
  - is very important
- learning motto/proverb
  - diligence is important
- own role in learning process
  - learning is own responsibility
- nature of language learning: exam
  - is understanding
  - is mastery of language
- personal learning theory: critical points of English learning

### motivation

personal goal  
being an excellent person  
become a successful economist

exams  
English is important  
interest

### learning management

- English learning materials
  - extra learning materials
- English learning methods
  - vocabulary learning
  - grammar based learning
  - give up grammar and read original novel
  - own methods: vocabulary learning
- self-decision
  - selectively listening to teachers' instruction
  - adjust learning process: arrange own learning tasks
  - make learning effective
  - self-reward
- self-evaluation
  - score is satisfactory
  - strong ability to explore
  - listening ability is improved
  - like self-study
- self-reflection
  - self-image: confident (in own decision)
    - independent
    - strong volition



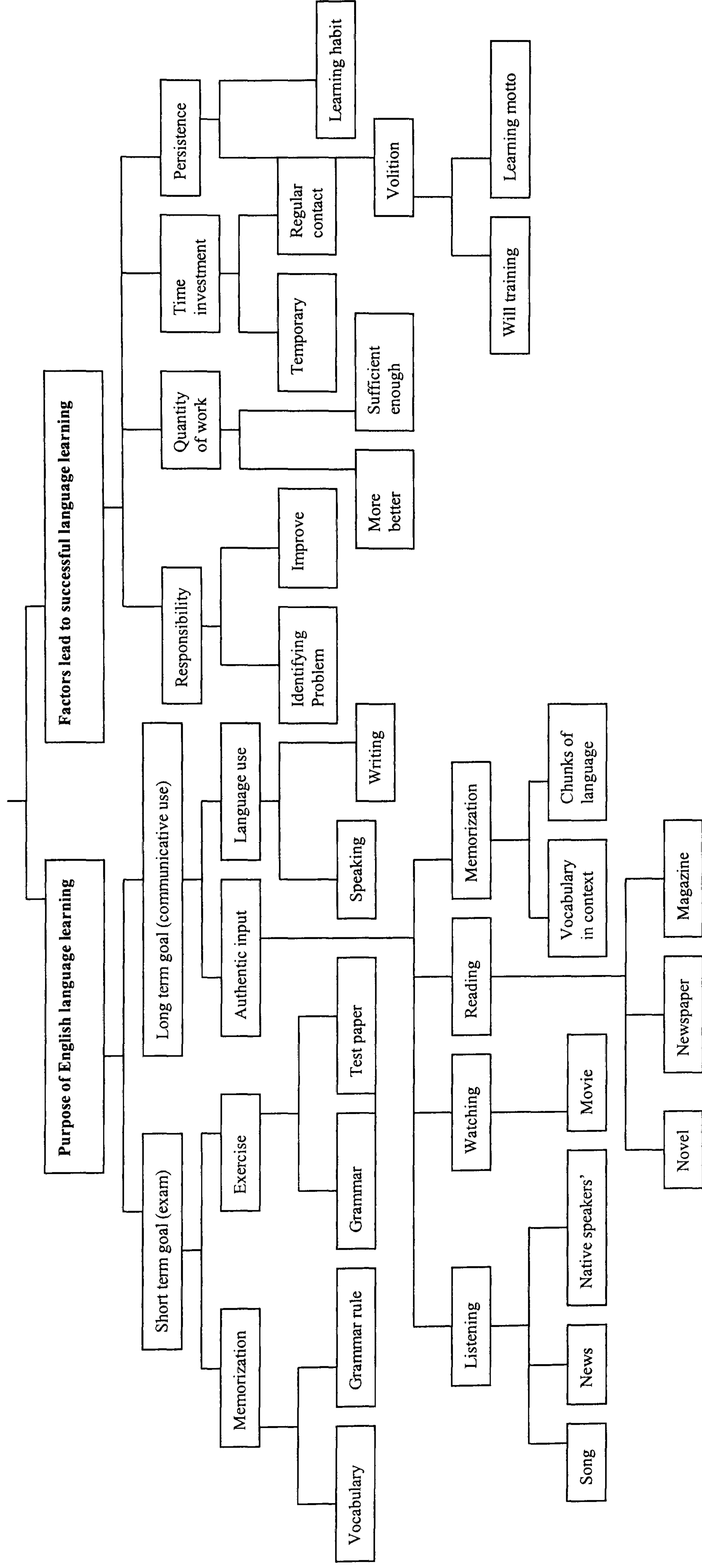
own learning process:

from grammar to understanding,  
become part of logic thinking

### **influences**

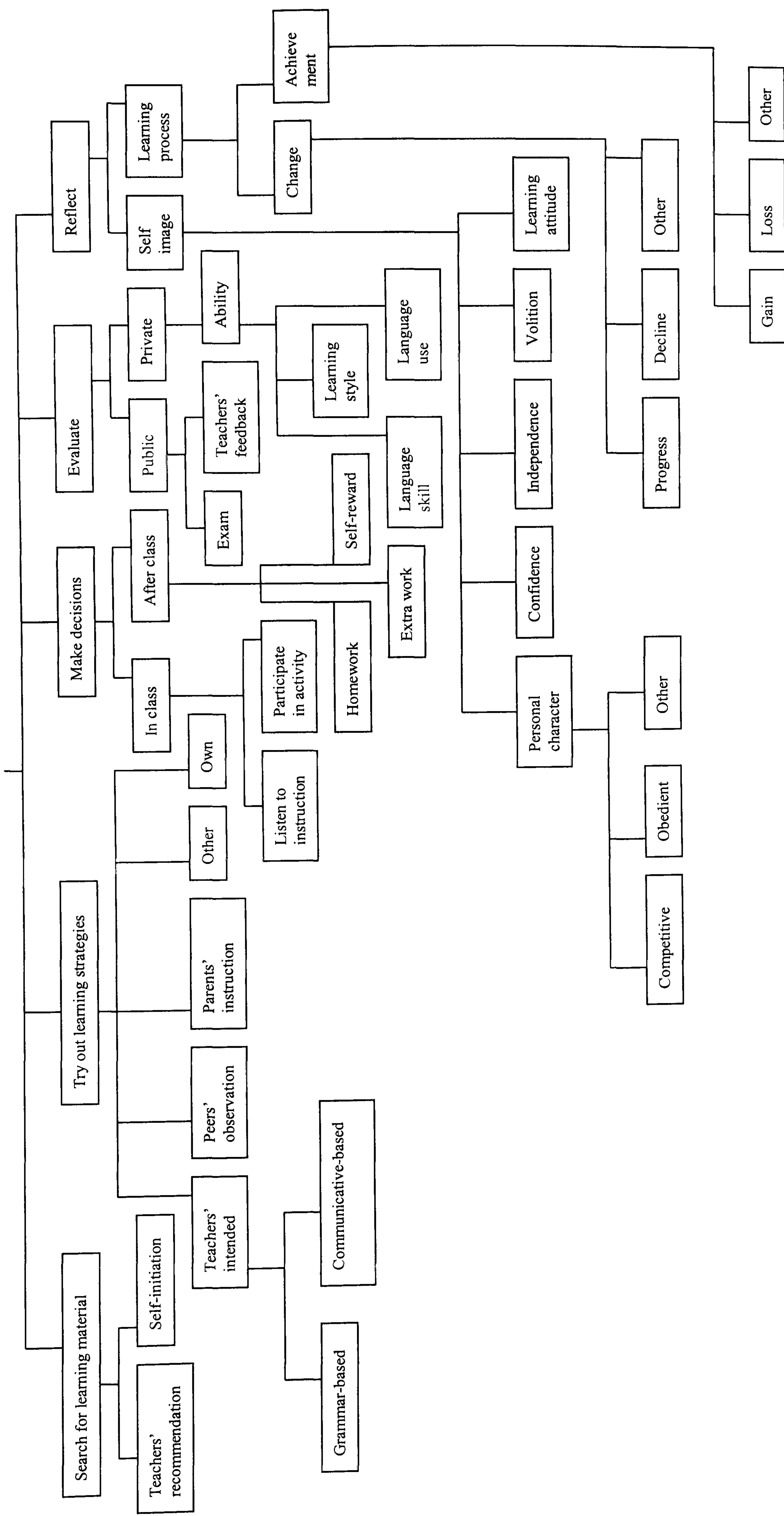
- educational environment
  - school environment
    - attach importance to score
    - national exam is very important
  - English language policy
- geographical difference
  - lack in learning resources
- family influence
  - pay attention to importance of exam score
  - being alone helps become independent
- teacher
  - teacher recommended methods
  - teacher's teaching method
  - teacher's special care
  - criticize teacher's teaching
- other subjects study
  - mathematics learning skills
  - comparison of English and Chinese: help understand listening skills
- peers' methods
- ? personal character

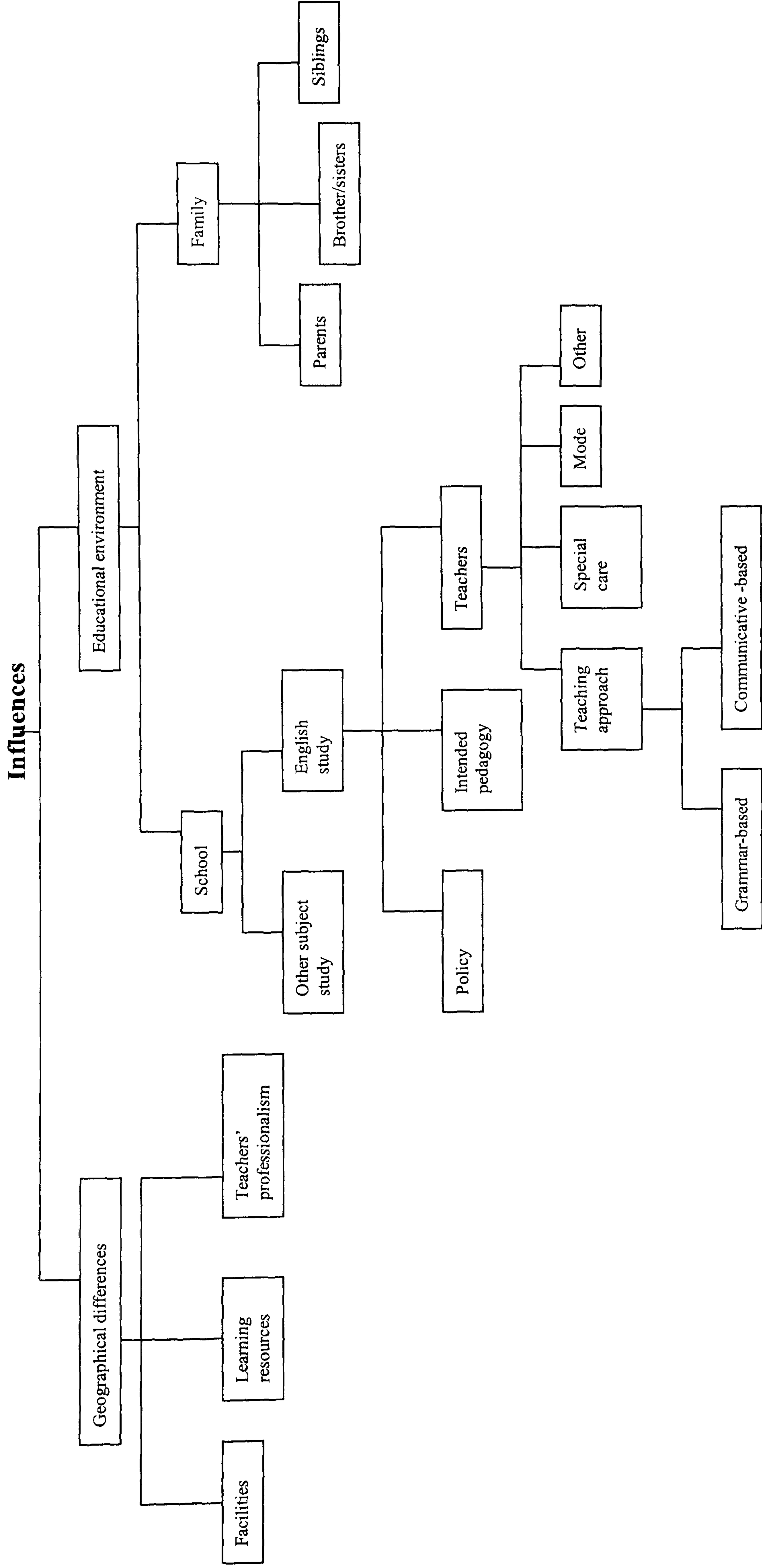
# Learner belief





# Learner action







## Appendix XXXIII Open-ended Questionnaire Item Coding (Q51)

Themes	Questionnaire respondents No.
1.Constant review	1, 13, 50, 65, 74, 101, 138, 140, 168, 169, 190, 243, 301, 302, 355, 363, 364, 426
2. Reflection	80, 82, 110, 152, 154, 260, 284, 331, 333, 337, 365, 405, 406
3. Be persistent	7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 27, 29, 43, 48, 54, 85, 114, 119, 121, 125, 161, 162, 166, 188, 201, 204, 219, 220, 222, 225, 239, 271, 282, 285, 296, 303, 309, 318, 324, 328, 341, 356, 362, 367, 368, 374, 376, 379, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 412,
4. Collaborative learning	205, 283, 332, 436
5. Self-confidence	11, 22, 70, 89, 103, 127, 187, 193, 308, 319, 325, 351, 404, 418, 420, 325, 435
6. Hardworking	2, 6, 8, 25, 30, 32, 33, 38, 44, 46, 47, 52, 56, 63, 64, 66, 67, 83, 87, 92, 93, 105, 107, 112, 122, 124, 129, 133, 142, 155, 157, 158, 160, 172, 174, 179, 180, 181, 185, 186, 189, 191, 192, 194, 196, 207, 210, 223, 228, 235, 245, 249, 256, 257, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 269, 275, 277, 279, 291, 298, 300, 304, 305, 306, 310, 313, 314, 315, 319, 321, 323, 326, 329, 330, 335, 343, 344, 348, 349, 350, 328, 373, 375, 378, 383, 384, 391, 396, 402, 407, 410, 421, 424, 425, 429
7.Reverence for education	3, 4, 17, 26, 79, 90, 132, 144, 147, 151, 159, 167, 170, 184, 272, 273, 374, 276, 286, 294, 297, 336, 366, 371, 393, 403, 427, 432
8. Strong will	49, 77, 111, 113, 134, 136, 145, 148, 149, 156, 165, 201, 211, 214, 215, 221, 231, 233, 238, 240, 248, 268, 281, 287, 290, 293, 295, 311, 317, 339, 342, 347, 357, 360, 372, 377, 382, 394, 398, 400, 401, 408, 409, 413, 414, 415, 416, 430
9. Value time	20, 99, 175, 178, 202, 203, 213, 253, 270, 280, 299, 345, 369, 419

## Appendix XXXIV Questionnaire Summary

### QNo.1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	238	54.6	54.8	54.8
	female	196	45.0	45.2	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

### QNo.2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	east	275	63.1	63.2	63.2
	west	160	36.7	36.8	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

### city

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	coastal	195	44.7	44.8	44.8
	inland	240	55.0	55.2	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

### QNo.3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than 500(inc)	33	7.6	7.6	7.6
	500 through 1500(inc)	116	26.6	26.7	34.3
	1500 through 3000(inc)	128	29.4	29.5	63.8
	3000 through 5000(inc)	55	12.6	12.7	76.5
	more than 5000	28	6.4	6.5	82.9
	don't want to tell	74	17.0	17.1	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
	Missing	999	2	.5	
Total		436	100.0		



**QNo,4**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	art	70	16.1	16.2	16.2
	science	183	42.0	42.5	58.7
	engeering	178	40.8	41.3	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.5 numbers of years of English language learning**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	.2	.2	.2
	2	3	.7	.7	.9
	4	1	.2	.2	1.2
	5	1	.2	.2	1.4
	6	31	7.1	7.2	8.6
	7	214	49.1	49.7	58.2
	8	79	18.1	18.3	76.6
	9	25	5.7	5.8	82.4
	10	40	9.2	9.3	91.6
	11	15	3.4	3.5	95.1
	12	7	1.6	1.6	96.8
	13	8	1.8	1.9	98.6
	14	4	.9	.9	99.5
	15	2	.5	.5	100.0
	Total		431	98.9	100.0
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.6 relevance between English learning and Major study**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	extreme	166	38.1	38.2	38.2
	some	187	42.9	43.1	81.3
	little	71	16.3	16.4	97.7
	no	10	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.7 school education background in terms of geography**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	urban	246	56.4	56.7	56.7
	rural	28	6.4	6.5	63.1
	both but mainly urban	66	15.1	15.2	78.3
	both but mainly rural	94	21.6	21.7	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.8 primary school education**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	key province	19	4.4	4.4	4.4
	key city	74	17.0	17.0	21.4
	ordinary	342	78.4	78.6	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.9 middle school education**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	key province	85	19.5	19.5	19.5
	key city	127	29.1	29.2	48.7
	ordinary	223	51.1	51.3	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.10 high school education**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	key province	255	58.5	58.8	58.8
	key city	133	30.5	30.6	89.4
	ordinary	46	10.6	10.6	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		



**QNo.11 choice of current university**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	myself	156	35.8	36.4	36.4
	myself but with parents' opinion	129	29.6	30.1	66.4
	parents'	22	5.0	5.1	71.6
	myself but with teachers' opinion	31	7.1	7.2	78.8
	myself but with both parents and teachers' opinion	72	16.5	16.8	95.6
	our choice together	19	4.4	4.4	100.0
	Total	429	98.4	100.0	
Missing	999	7	1.6		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.12 satisfaction with current university**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	very	66	15.1	15.2	15.2
	basically	279	64.0	64.4	79.7
	little	76	17.4	17.6	97.2
	not at all	12	2.8	2.8	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.13 National entrance examination**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	upper(120-150)	201	46.1	47.4	47.4
	middle(100-129)	194	44.5	45.8	93.2
	low(less than 100)	29	6.7	6.8	100.0
	Total	424	97.2	100.0	
Missing	999	12	2.8		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.14 Beijing College Students English Entrance Exam**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	upper(more than 85)	107	24.5	26.4	26.4
	middle(70-84)	177	40.6	43.6	70.0
	low(less than 69)	122	28.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	406	93.1	100.0	
Missing	999	30	6.9		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.15 English level with my class**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	upper	55	12.6	12.7	12.7
	middle	163	37.4	37.6	50.2
	lower	140	32.1	32.3	82.5
	not clear	76	17.4	17.5	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.16 Criteria for judging my English level**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	exam score	106	24.3	24.8	24.8
	classroom performance	15	3.4	3.5	28.3
	exam score and classroom performance	281	64.4	65.7	93.9
	language use in daily life	24	5.5	5.6	99.5
	exam score and the ability to read levels of English materia	2	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	428	98.2	100.0	
Missing	999	8	1.8		
Total		436	100.0		



**QNo.17 Time spent on English language learning out of class**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than 30 (including 30)	304	69.7	70.0	70.0
	between 30min and 1 hour (including 1 hour)	94	21.6	21.7	91.7
	between 1 hour and 2 hours (including)	31	7.1	7.1	98.8
	more than 2 hours	5	1.1	1.2	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
	System	1	.2		
	Total	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.18 after class learning style**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	independent learning	307	70.4	70.9	70.9
	learn with classmates	1	.2	.2	71.1
	mainly independent learning sometimes with classmates	117	26.8	27.0	98.2
	mainly with classmates sometimes independent learning	8	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.19 Who helped me most in my past English learning experience**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	teacher	211	48.4	51.1	51.1
	parents	10	2.3	2.4	53.5
	classmates	13	3.0	3.1	56.7
	myself	176	40.4	42.6	99.3
	media material	3	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	413	94.7	100.0	
Missing	999	23	5.3		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.20 teacher influences**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	oral English	56	12.8	15.6	15.6
	knowledge	77	17.7	21.5	37.2
	character	50	11.5	14.0	51.1
	being responsible	32	7.3	8.9	60.1
	teaching methods	138	31.7	38.5	98.6
	fairness	2	.5	.6	99.2
	the ability to arouse my interest	2	.5	.6	99.7
	exercise	1	.2	.3	100.0
	Total	358	82.1	100.0	
Missing	999	78	17.9		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.21 like English culture**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	28	6.4	6.5	6.5
	no	406	93.1	93.5	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**like original movie or novel**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	92	21.1	21.2	21.2
	no	342	78.4	78.8	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**can combine with major**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	186	42.7	42.9	42.9
	no	248	56.9	57.1	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		



**most important exams need it**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	328	75.2	75.6	75.6
	no	106	24.3	24.4	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**helpful for future career**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	306	70.2	70.5	70.5
	no	128	29.4	29.5	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**can communicate with foreigners**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	171	39.2	39.4	39.4
	no	263	60.3	60.6	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	going abroad	5	1.1	20.8	20.8
	interest	8	1.8	33.3	54.2
	read original literature	3	.7	12.5	66.7
	need in the future	6	1.4	25.0	91.7
	Educational requirement	1	.2	4.2	95.8
	like the teacher	1	.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	5.5	100.0	
Missing	999	412	94.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.22 nature of English learning**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	exam score	12	2.8	2.8	2.8
	gaining communicative competence	197	45.2	45.3	48.0
	both exam score and gaining communicative competence	226	51.8	52.0	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.23 recite textbook**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	139	31.9	32.0	32.0
	no	296	67.9	68.0	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**memorize vocabulary**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	346	79.4	79.5	79.5
	no	89	20.4	20.5	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**know grammar**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	198	45.4	45.5	45.5
	no	237	54.4	54.5	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		



**know exam syllabus**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	57	13.1	13.1	13.1
	no	378	86.7	86.9	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**do lots of exercise**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	166	38.1	38.2	38.2
	no	269	61.7	61.8	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**make effort**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	209	47.9	48.0	48.0
	no	226	51.8	52.0	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**set target score**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	15	3.4	3.4	3.4
	no	420	96.3	96.6	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**recite teachers' notes**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	53	12.2	12.2	12.2
	no	382	87.6	87.8	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**use teachers' methods**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	67	15.4	15.4	15.4
	no	368	84.4	84.6	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**reflect on my own weak points and improve**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	225	51.6	51.7	51.7
	no	210	48.2	48.3	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**listen to teachers' advice**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	94	21.6	21.6	21.6
	no	341	78.2	78.4	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	more exercise	4	.9	8.2	8.2
	language sense	33	7.6	67.3	75.5
	more reading	3	.7	6.1	81.6
	knowing foreign culture	2	.5	4.1	85.7
	communicate with foreigners	5	1.1	10.2	95.9
	interest	1	.2	2.0	98.0
	own learning habit	1	.2	2.0	100.0
	Total	49	11.2	100.0	
Missing	999	387	88.8		
Total		436	100.0		



**QNo.24 recite textbook**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	131	30.0	30.4	30.4
	no	300	68.8	69.6	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**memorize vocabulary**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	319	73.2	74.0	74.0
	no	112	25.7	26.0	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**memorize grammar**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	144	33.0	33.4	33.4
	no	287	65.8	66.6	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**work on exam syllabus**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	44	10.1	10.2	10.2
	no	387	88.8	89.8	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**do lots of exercise**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	195	44.7	45.2	45.2
	no	236	54.1	54.8	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**make effort**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	173	39.7	40.1	40.1
	no	258	59.2	59.9	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**set target score**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	8	1.8	1.9	1.9
	no	423	97.0	98.1	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**recite teachers' notes**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	38	8.7	8.8	8.8
	no	393	90.1	91.2	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**use teachers' methods**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	46	10.6	10.7	10.7
	no	385	88.3	89.3	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**reflect on my own weak points and improve**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	183	42.0	42.5	42.5
	no	248	56.9	57.5	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		



**listen to teachers' advice**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	40	9.2	9.3	9.3
	no	391	89.7	90.7	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	importance of English	2	.5	5.6	5.6
	interest	23	5.3	63.9	69.4
	reading	6	1.4	16.7	86.1
	communicate with foreigners	4	.9	11.1	97.2
	language sense	1	.2	2.8	100.0
	Total	36	8.3	100.0	
Missing	999	400	91.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.25 have language sense**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	287	65.8	66.3	66.3
	no	146	33.5	33.7	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**have interest**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	304	69.7	70.2	70.2
	no	129	29.6	29.8	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**have my own methods**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	150	34.4	34.6	34.6
	no	283	64.9	65.4	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**have chance to communicate in English**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	198	45.4	45.7	45.7
	no	235	53.9	54.3	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**be persistent**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	249	57.1	57.5	57.5
	no	184	42.2	42.5	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**keep constant contact with English**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	279	64.0	64.4	64.4
	no	154	35.3	35.6	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**refer to teachers' advice**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	28	6.4	6.5	6.5
	no	405	92.9	93.5	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		



**have authentic learning material**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	92	21.1	21.2	21.2
	no	341	78.2	78.8	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**know English culture**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	67	15.4	15.5	15.5
	no	365	83.7	84.5	100.0
	Total	432	99.1	100.0	
Missing	999	4	.9		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Basic methods to learn English	1	.2	3.3	3.3
	Factors help use English	29	6.7	96.7	100.0
	Total	30	6.9	100.0	
Missing	999	406	93.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.26 have language sense**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	224	51.4	52.0	52.0
	no	207	47.5	48.0	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**have interest**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	270	61.9	62.6	62.6
	no	161	36.9	37.4	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**have my own methods**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	111	25.5	25.8	25.8
	no	320	73.4	74.2	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**have chance to communicate in English**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	163	37.4	37.8	37.8
	no	268	61.5	62.2	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**be persistent**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	214	49.1	49.7	49.7
	no	217	49.8	50.3	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**keep constant contact with English**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	221	50.7	51.3	51.3
	no	210	48.2	48.7	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		



**refer to teachers' advice**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	21	4.8	4.9	4.9
	no	410	94.0	95.1	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**have authentic learning material**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	67	15.4	15.5	15.5
	no	364	83.5	84.5	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**know English culture**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	40	9.2	9.3	9.3
	no	391	89.7	90.7	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	watch original movies	1	.2	100.0	100.0
Missing	999	435	99.8		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.27 my difficulty in English learning**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	can't remember vocabulary	130	29.8	43.0	43.0
	dear not speak English	86	19.7	28.5	71.5
	my exam score is not satisfactory	18	4.1	6.0	77.5
	do not know enough grammar	13	3.0	4.3	81.8
	no good learning method	33	7.6	10.9	92.7
	no interest	3	.7	1.0	93.7
	do not have the English environment	3	.7	1.0	94.7
	do not have time	8	1.8	2.6	97.4
	laziness	8	1.8	2.6	100.0
	Total	302	69.3	100.0	
Missing	999	134	30.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.28 the way I overcome difficulty**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	solve problems by myself	143	32.8	35.5	35.5
	ask for classmates' help	20	4.6	5.0	40.4
	ask for teachers' help	6	1.4	1.5	41.9
	think over by myself then ask teachers	93	21.3	23.1	65.0
	think over by myself then ask classmates	126	28.9	31.3	96.3
	ignore	9	2.1	2.2	98.5
	sometimes forgot or ask classmates, teachers	3	.7	.7	99.3
	resort internet	3	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	403	92.4	100.0	
Missing	999	33	7.6		
Total		436	100.0		



**QNo.29 I think English is very important**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	245	56.2	56.3	56.3
	agree	158	36.2	36.3	92.6
	neither agree nor disagree	24	5.5	5.5	98.2
	disagree	7	1.6	1.6	99.8
	strongly disagree	1	.2	.2	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.30 I have foreign language learning aptitude**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	41	9.4	9.4	9.4
	agree	106	24.3	24.4	33.9
	neither agree nor disagree	166	38.1	38.2	72.1
	disagree	82	18.8	18.9	91.0
	strongly disagree	39	8.9	9.0	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.31 my character is quite competitive**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	99	22.7	22.8	22.8
	agree	203	46.6	46.8	69.6
	neither agree nor disagree	93	21.3	21.4	91.0
	disagree	36	8.3	8.3	99.3
	strongly disagree	3	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.32 I have good a learning habit**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	19	4.4	4.4	4.4
	agree	109	25.0	25.1	29.5
	neither agree nor disagree	159	36.5	36.6	66.1
	disagree	119	27.3	27.4	93.5
	strongly disagree	28	6.4	6.5	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.33 I will aim at achieving high score in the future**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	80	18.3	18.5	18.5
	agree	200	45.9	46.3	64.8
	neither agree nor disagree	134	30.7	31.0	95.8
	disagree	12	2.8	2.8	98.6
	strongly disagree	6	1.4	1.4	100.0
	Total	432	99.1	100.0	
Missing	999	4	.9		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.34 I will aim at gaining communicative competence in the future**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	103	23.6	23.7	23.7
	agree	227	52.1	52.2	75.9
	neither agree nor disagree	87	20.0	20.0	95.9
	disagree	13	3.0	3.0	98.9
	strongly disagree	5	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		



**QNo.35 I often evaluate my English learning methods**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	17	3.9	3.9	3.9
	agree	121	27.8	27.8	31.7
	neither agree nor disagree	136	31.2	31.3	63.0
	disagree	135	31.0	31.0	94.0
	strongly disagree	26	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.36 I often reflect on my English learning**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	36	8.3	8.3	8.3
	agree	185	42.4	42.5	50.8
	neither agree nor disagree	112	25.7	25.7	76.6
	disagree	84	19.3	19.3	95.9
	strongly disagree	18	4.1	4.1	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.37 I often review what I learned**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	70	16.1	16.1	16.1
	agree	163	37.4	37.5	53.6
	neither agree nor disagree	96	22.0	22.1	75.6
	disagree	83	19.0	19.1	94.7
	strongly disagree	23	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.38 I always have a clear learning plan**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	12	2.8	2.8	2.8
	agree	62	14.2	14.3	17.1
	neither agree nor disagree	165	37.8	38.0	55.1
	disagree	160	36.7	36.9	91.9
	strongly disagree	35	8.0	8.1	100.0
	Total	434	99.5	100.0	
Missing	999	2	.5		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.39 I always look for extra learning material**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	46	10.6	10.6	10.6
	agree	151	34.6	34.7	45.3
	neither agree nor disagree	122	28.0	28.0	73.3
	disagree	94	21.6	21.6	94.9
	strongly disagree	22	5.0	5.1	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.40 My parents are strict with my English learning**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	33	7.6	7.6	7.6
	agree	109	25.0	25.1	32.6
	neither agree nor disagree	141	32.3	32.4	65.1
	disagree	97	22.2	22.3	87.4
	strongly disagree	55	12.6	12.6	100.0
	Total	435	99.8	100.0	
Missing	999	1	.2		
Total		436	100.0		



**QNo.41 My parents are strict with my learning**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	47	10.8	10.9	10.9
	agree	173	39.7	40.0	50.9
	neither agree nor disagree	108	24.8	25.0	75.9
	disagree	65	14.9	15.0	91.0
	strongly disagree	39	8.9	9.0	100.0
	Total	432	99.1	100.0	
Missing	999	4	.9		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.42 find pressure for myself**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	50	11.5	11.5	11.5
	agree	175	40.1	40.4	52.0
	neither agree nor disagree	120	27.5	27.7	79.7
	disagree	65	14.9	15.0	94.7
	strongly disagree	23	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.43 College English learning is mainly self-dependent**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	208	47.7	48.1	48.1
	agree	194	44.5	44.9	93.1
	neither agree nor disagree	21	4.8	4.9	97.9
	disagree	9	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	432	99.1	100.0	
Missing	999	4	.9		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.44 definition of 'self-dependence'**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	teacher-reactive	53	12.2	13.0	13.0
	Exam-reactive	168	38.5	41.3	54.3
	semi-proactive	93	21.3	22.9	77.1
	proactive	91	20.9	22.4	99.5
	finish English language learning tasks independently, evaluate learning effect through exams	2	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	407	93.3	100.0	
Missing	999	29	6.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.45 terminology used**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	learner autonomy	32	7.3	8.0	8.0
	autonomous learning	151	34.6	37.8	45.8
	self-regulated learning	115	26.4	28.8	74.5
	active learning	66	15.1	16.5	91.0
	independent learning	35	8.0	8.8	99.8
	determined and can work hard	1	.2	.3	100.0
	Total	400	91.7	100.0	
Missing	999	36	8.3		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.46 teachers' guidance**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	175	40.1	40.5	40.5
	no	257	58.9	59.5	100.0
	Total	432	99.1	100.0	
Missing	999	4	.9		
Total		436	100.0		



**classmates' influence**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	163	37.4	37.6	37.6
	no	270	61.9	62.4	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**ability of self-management**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	382	87.6	88.2	88.2
	no	51	11.7	11.8	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**ranking of students' score**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	74	17.0	17.1	17.1
	no	359	82.3	82.9	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**sense of achievement**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	258	59.2	59.6	59.6
	no	175	40.1	40.4	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**exchange learning experience with others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	122	28.0	28.2	28.2
	no	311	71.3	71.8	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**parents' monitor helping form good learning habit**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	20	4.6	4.6	4.6
	no	413	94.7	95.4	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	understand the importance of English interest	5	1.1	10.2	10.2
	look for pressure	36	8.3	73.5	83.7
	my aggressive character	1	.2	2.0	85.7
	clear objective	2	.5	4.1	89.8
	English environment	2	.5	4.1	93.9
	Total	3	.7	6.1	100.0
Missing	999	49	11.2	100.0	
Total		387	88.8		
		436	100.0		

**QNo.47 English exam**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	180	41.3	41.6	41.6
	no	253	58.0	58.4	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**interest**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	308	70.6	71.1	71.1
	no	125	28.7	28.9	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		



**learning habit**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	115	26.4	26.6	26.6
	no	318	72.9	73.4	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**family's expectation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	71	16.3	16.4	16.4
	no	362	83.0	83.6	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**teachers' encouragement**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	88	20.2	20.3	20.3
	no	345	79.1	79.7	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**classmates' competition**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	143	32.8	33.0	33.0
	no	290	66.5	67.0	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**my own progress**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	230	52.8	53.1	53.1
	no	203	46.6	46.9	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**my character**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	109	25.0	25.2	25.2
	no	324	74.3	74.8	100.0
	Total	433	99.3	100.0	
Missing	999	3	.7		
Total		436	100.0		

**my past learning experience**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	29	6.7	6.7	6.7
	no	403	92.4	93.3	100.0
	Total	432	99.1	100.0	
Missing	999	4	.9		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	need for English	15	3.4	38.5	38.5
	influences from authentic English material	20	4.6	51.3	89.7
	persistence	1	.2	2.6	92.3
	future plan	1	.2	2.6	94.9
	an environment that you cannot survive without English	1	.2	2.6	97.4
	teachers' being strict with me	1	.2	2.6	100.0
	Total	39	8.9	100.0	
Missing	999	397	91.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.48 make learning plan**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	190	43.6	44.1	44.1
	no	241	55.3	55.9	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		



**carry out learning plan**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	273	62.6	63.3	63.3
	no	158	36.2	36.7	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**monitor learning progress**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	82	18.8	19.0	19.0
	no	349	80.0	81.0	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**evaluate learning effect**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	93	21.3	21.6	21.6
	no	338	77.5	78.4	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**participate in activities both in and out of class**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	210	48.2	48.8	48.8
	no	220	50.5	51.2	100.0
	Total	430	98.6	100.0	
Missing	999	6	1.4		
Total		436	100.0		

**initiate learning activities**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	236	54.1	54.8	54.8
	no	195	44.7	45.2	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**try different learning methods**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	144	33.0	33.4	33.4
	no	287	65.8	66.6	100.0
	Total	431	98.9	100.0	
Missing	999	5	1.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	tool user and the tool	16	3.7	100.0	100.0
Missing	999	420	96.3		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.49 initiate learning activities**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	220	50.5	51.4	51.4
	no	208	47.7	48.6	100.0
	Total	428	98.2	100.0	
Missing	999	8	1.8		
Total		436	100.0		

**gaining communicative competence**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	347	79.6	81.1	81.1
	no	81	18.6	18.9	100.0
	Total	428	98.2	100.0	
Missing	999	8	1.8		
Total		436	100.0		

**improve exam score**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	128	29.4	29.9	29.9
	no	300	68.8	70.1	100.0
	Total	428	98.2	100.0	
Missing	999	8	1.8		
Total		436	100.0		



**give up if there is no exam**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	37	8.5	8.6	8.6
	no	391	89.7	91.4	100.0
	Total	428	98.2	100.0	
Missing	999	8	1.8		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	exam first then gaining communicative competence	3	.7	50.0	50.0
	persistence	2	.5	33.3	83.3
	improve language sense	1	.2	16.7	100.0
	Total	6	1.4	100.0	
Missing	999	430	98.6		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.50 make learning plan**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	82	18.8	19.1	19.1
	no	347	79.6	80.9	100.0
	Total	429	98.4	100.0	
Missing	999	7	1.6		
Total		436	100.0		

**answer students' questions**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	105	24.1	24.5	24.5
	no	324	74.3	75.5	100.0
	Total	429	98.4	100.0	
Missing	999	7	1.6		
Total		436	100.0		

**monitor learning progress**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	96	22.0	22.4	22.4
	no	333	76.4	77.6	100.0
	Total	429	98.4	100.0	
Missing	999	7	1.6		
Total		436	100.0		

**evaluate learning effect**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	133	30.5	31.0	31.0
	no	296	67.9	69.0	100.0
	Total	429	98.4	100.0	
Missing	999	7	1.6		
Total		436	100.0		

**point out learning direction for students**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	277	63.5	64.6	64.6
	no	152	34.9	35.4	100.0
	Total	429	98.4	100.0	
Missing	999	7	1.6		
Total		436	100.0		

**pass on knowledge**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	204	46.8	47.6	47.6
	no	225	51.6	52.4	100.0
	Total	429	98.4	100.0	
Missing	999	7	1.6		
Total		436	100.0		

**introduce learning methods**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	230	52.8	53.6	53.6
	no	199	45.6	46.4	100.0
	Total	429	98.4	100.0	
Missing	999	7	1.6		
Total		436	100.0		



**be responsible for teaching**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	110	25.2	25.7	25.7
	no	318	72.9	74.3	100.0
	Total	428	98.2	100.0	
Missing	999	8	1.8		
Total		436	100.0		

**others**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	provision of good learning materials	3	.7	10.3	10.3
	create learning atmosphere	22	5.0	75.9	86.2
	foster learner interest	4	.9	13.8	100.0
	Total	29	6.7	100.0	
Missing	999	407	93.3		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.51 my Chinese learning motto**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	constant review	18	4.1	6.1	6.1
	reflection	13	3.0	4.4	10.5
	persistent	52	11.9	17.6	28.0
	collaborative learning	4	.9	1.4	29.4
	self-confidence	17	3.9	5.7	35.1
	hardworking	102	23.4	34.5	69.6
	education is important	28	6.4	9.5	79.1
	strong will	48	11.0	16.2	95.3
	do not waste time	14	3.2	4.7	100.0
	Total	296	67.9	100.0	
Missing	999	140	32.1		
Total		436	100.0		

**QNo.52 my future plan after graduation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	further study	166	38.1	56.7	56.7
	work	113	25.9	38.6	95.2
	open my own business	8	1.8	2.7	98.0
	be a successful person	1	.2	.3	98.3
	become rich	3	.7	1.0	99.3
	improve oral English	2	.5	.7	100.0
	Total	293	67.2	100.0	
Missing	999	143	32.8		
Total		436	100.0		



## Appendix XXXV Reasons for unused questionnaire items in discussions

Unused questionnaire items	Reasons for not using it
Q 1	Background information on gender, not fitting into the discussion
Q2	Birth place does not represent places in which students receive education, and thus cannot be used for discussion of geographical differences
Q3	Although in the interview, students from humble families seemed to have stronger motivation to learn, it cannot be used as an indicator to make such an assumption
Q4	Background information, not fitting into the discussion
Q6	In the interview, it seemed that if students' major was relevant to English, they were motivated to learn English for communicative use. However, this cannot be used as an indicator to predict the situation among questionnaire respondents.
Q11	In the interview, some interviewees mentioned that choosing current universities were their own choices, which seemed to indicate learner independence. However, this did not form a significant category, and thus was not brought into discussion
Q12	In the interview, it seemed that if students were satisfied with the tertiary environment, they were inclined to enjoy the freedom to learn English. However, this was inappropriate to predict questionnaire respondents because there was no detail information on their learning provided.
Q13-15	Background information on questionnaire respondents' general levels, not fitting into the discussion
Q16	Although some of the interviewees tried to use classroom performance to mean language use that represented another type of criterion, it was difficult to make the same assumption to other students.
Q17	In the interview, there was a distinction between average time investment and a large proportion of time investment. This item failed to provide useful information to judge students' effort made in English language learning
Q18	In the interview, interviewees reported different learning situations, for example, independent learning, learning with classmates. However, this did not finally come up as a significant category and therefore was ignored.
Q27	In the interview, it seemed students who reported great difficulty in memorizing book vocabulary had lower management ability. However, since students reported that learning English for communicative use also involved vocabulary memorization, this item became useless to judge students' learning management abilities
Q29	It repeated the theme that had been disused in Q 21
Q30-31	In the interview, personal factors such as language aptitude, personality had been mentioned by some interviewees in explaining their English language behaviours. However, they presented different pictures that did not fit into the discussion.
Q32	In the interview, students reported that to have a good learning habit was necessary to keep persistence in language learning. This item asked students to

## Appendix XXXV Reasons for unused questionnaire items in discussions

	report whether they had good learning habit or not, which was irrelevant to the discussion
Q33-34	These two items would serve the same purpose for examining students' conceptions of English language learning. However, they were not as effective as Q 49
Q41	Important information can be gained from Q40
Q45	In designing the questionnaire, I tended to elicit terms relevant to autonomy from students since some of the interviewees mentioned it. However, I no longer found the knowledge of terms contributed significantly to discussing students' conceptions.
Q46-47	These two items were irrelevant to the discussion
Q52	Interview data showed that students' future plan influenced their present English language learning, however, this item cannot be used as a valid prediction



## Appendix XXXVI Quotes in English and Chinese

1. In the past, I only cared about exam results. When I learned like this (reading *Bookworm*), my exam results improved even without doing exercises. I generally got 130 out of 150 on exam papers (2/92-94)  
原来只注重分数，等我这样学了以后，我考试成绩不搞反而好了。英语一般 150 分左右，我能拿 130 分。
2. My exam score was always between 108 and 110 out of 150, regardless of the exam papers. My teacher once asked me why I could not improve it. But several times, it was still like that. (21/110-112)  
我考试成绩从来都是 108 到 110 之间，150 满分，不管什么卷子。我老师又一次问我成绩怎么尚不去，但后来说多了，还是那样
3. My English belongs to the top among my classmates (5/185)  
我英语在班上上游吧
4. I was always the best one in our school in any exams (8/71)  
我在任何考试中都是学校最好的
5. I always was the No.1 in the class. Our teacher had another advanced class in our Grade. Even compared with them, I was among the top three (16/167-168)  
我总是班里的第一名。我们老是还叫我们年级的快班，即使那样，我也从来都是前三名
6. In middle school, I was the best in my class. If occasionally I became the second, it was always our Subject representative who surpassed me (25/7-8)  
在中学，我是班上最好的。如果偶尔第二名，一定是我们班的课代表超过我了
7. In grade three, I don't have to say, people simply learn for exams. Following the teachers, doing exam exercises is necessary. (4/65-66)  
高三不用说了，就是考试，跟着老师，做考试题是有必要的
8. All of us experienced the 'exercise sea' strategy. The teacher said we need to be immersed in doing exercises. I really did a lot and did it quickly. (20/70-71)  
我们所有的人都经历题海战术。老师说我们应该做题上瘾。我真的作了很多而且很快
9. In the National Entrance Exam, vocabulary and grammar counts 30%, cloze test 15%, reading comprehension 40% [...] (20/13-14)  
高考，词汇语法 30 分，完形填空 15 分，阅读理解 40 分
10. 'Every day is doing exercise [...]feeling English learning is to train exam skills, like reading comprehension skill [...] because of such skills obtained by doing exercises, I got a fairly good score' (13/15-17)  
每天都是做练习。。。感觉英语学习就是在训练一种应试技巧，像阅读技巧。。。由于平时训练出来的技巧，我考的还不错。
11. [...]reading comprehension got quite a high ration of the marks in exams and I was not so strong in this aspect, so I did many exercises in this aspect [...]before the National Entrance Exam, I did more than 100 set [...] my score in reading comprehension increased rapidly, initially 32, then 34, 38 and sometimes full score' (127-128;133; 143-144)  
阅读理解在考试占很大比重，所以我做了很多这方面的练习。。。高考前，我做了 100 多套题。。。  
阅读成绩提高很快，开始 32，后来 34，还得过几次满分。
12. [...] rote learning, English is totally a burden (58-59)  
死记硬背，英语完全是一种负担
13. English learning started from alphabet to words. At that time, the scariest thing was to memorize words [...] I could not remember them. For example, one word took many times of repetition thus could be remembered' (2/9-11)  
英语最初都是从字母开始，然后就是单词，那时候最怕就是背单词。。。记不住，比如说一个单词要重复很多遍才能记住。
14. At that time we memorized vocabulary by copying it. It was said copying it once was equal to saying it 10 times by rote. (6/125)  
那时候用手抄写单词来记单词。说是超一遍等于背十遍。
15. Incidentally, I found a book about memorizing vocabulary through reciting texts. It was not about memorizing word lists. In fact, our high school teacher asked us to memorize the dictionary. Each time when I forgot I had to come back for it, it was horrible. But this book integrated CET-4 and CET-6 vocabulary, but I did not have time, so I tried to read fluently in order to remember the words (4/57-62)  
偶然在书店碰到一本通过阅读记单词。不是专门背词汇。其实高中老师建议我们背字典。每次忘了又从 a 开始。太难受了。但这本书是把 4.6 级词汇融入到这些文章当中。但要背下来时间肯定是不够。所以我就争取流利的念下来。
16. I memorized words and tried to memorize texts. By doing so, vocabulary and grammar would not be a problem. It was difficult to memorize the text but I instead read it aloud at least 30 times (26/122-123)



我记单词注重教材，把教材上的课文尽量背下来，这样单词语法都没问题了。我背不太可能，但每篇课文读 30 遍没问题。

17. The final year of high school is completely about revision. All grammar rules were taught in the previous two years [...] through revision of them we prepare exams (7/44-45)  
基本高三完全是复习。所有前两年学的语法。。。通过来备考。
18. Perhaps this was not the best method, but it was the most practical one. I did not care how many mistakes I had made in exams. I took down all of them. In the past, I reviewed them every two days and now every week. I would review them several times until I could remember them. In such way, I would not make the same mistakes in the exams. Full score was thus obtained. (20/75-77)  
我在英语方面采用错题本，不管考试中错了多少，都记下来□过去我每两天看一次，现在每周看一次。我复习很多遍直到我记住为止。这样我不会犯同样的错误，满分就是这么来的。
19. I would memorize 20 words a day, then at the end of the week, I would review words I had memorized during this week [...] At the end of the month, I would spend some time reviewing words [...] gradually, I moved on from the first part that had already been stored in my memory [...] (7/95-97)  
比如一天记 20 个单词，然后周末把这周记的所有单词复习一下。。。到月末，再把所有单词复习一下，循环记忆式。然后接着往下记。我觉得这种效果好一些，重复记忆是记忆之母吧。
20. I always review things I have learned. For example, I summarized all the vocabulary and phrases in middle school following an alphabetical order and book series. (8/68-69)  
我喜欢把学过的东西整理出来，比如我把整个初中的单词，词组都整理过，按字母顺序和书本的顺序。
21. It was very difficult learning like that. So many sentences to be analysed and it was an endless task [...] English was declining [...] I felt quite depressed. When I saw a sentence that once was known, I could not remember. It was boring purely depending on memorization. At that time, the learning contents in High school were much more than in middle school. There were too much to be memorized. I could not remember after several times of reading. Then I lost confidence. (2/56-61)  
因为那么学非常困难，那么多句子需要搞的话，那分析得完呀。然后什么都记不住哇。。。英语还是下降。高一下学期的时候到低谷了。。。当时比较沮丧。就看了这个句子，明明知道，不知道怎么写。记不住，靠背诵的话太枯燥了。那时高中和初中比，内容增加了不少。太多了我就记不住，看了几遍都记不住。然后就没信心了。
22. There were many difficulties. For example, memorizing vocabulary, in middle school, normally it was mechanical memorization. We followed teachers' way, copying words every day. In high school, we had more words but the teacher taught slowly and we had dictations, so I could manage to remember. In college, these things were gone, and I had to depend on myself for everything (6/51-54)  
困难还是挺多的。比如说记单词。初中的时候还是按照老师说得比较机械的记，每天抄写单词，到了高中以后，虽说词也很多，但讲的慢了，而且有听写，也还能促进去学。到了大学这些东西全都没了，全靠自己我觉得就不行了。背不过来了
23. 150 (total score of the English exam) was a high ration of marks in the compulsory Test subjects (National Entrance Exam) [...] So I felt I must learn it well. Otherwise, I could not go to a good university' (14/130-131)  
150 分在高考中还是占很大比例的。。。我觉得一定要学好，否则我就上不了好大学。
24. What I often did was to chat with our English teacher and tried to get back the right state for learning. We did not chat about exams but other things irrelevant to exams, for example, English people's way of living. In so doing to compensate for my bad mood towards doing English exam papers' (16/64-65)  
我经常采用的方式是和我们英语老师聊天。找回状态。我们不是聊怎么考试而是一些看似无关的话题，比如英国人的生活方式那些。弥补一下队做题的反感。然后调整一下，找回感觉
25. I felt in current high school English education in China, the teaching scope was quite limited, content was insufficient. If you wanted to learn better, it was far from being enough. You had to search for more materials, to have contact with more English knowledge. (16/107-109)  
因为我觉得中国现阶段高中的英语教学范围很窄，内容很少，你要想在这上面有所建树的话，这是远远不够的，你一定要自己去找更多的材料，去涉猎更多的英语知识。



26. We were recommended to learn *New Concept English*. However, some students wrongly took it as exercise book. They did exercises after each text...I treated it as interesting texts [...] I was the only one in the class who finished all four levels' (20/56-59)  
然后后来他让我看新概念英语。大家都看，不过那时很多人走入了一个误区。喜欢不仅看文章。。。我就把那些当作有意思的文章看。到后来班里老师问看了新概念看四的有几个，就我一个。
27. It was suggested that we should read *21<sup>st</sup> Century newspaper*. I felt more reading would expand our knowledge of English (18/28-29)  
当时老师建议我们看 21 世纪报。我觉得阅读拓宽了英语知识。
28. In high school, I insisted on reading *21<sup>st</sup> Century newspaper*. Each Friday when it came to me, I would finish reading it within two days (15/68-70)  
在高中，我坚持看 21 世纪报，每个周五报纸一来，我就会在两天内读完。
29. I read *21<sup>st</sup> Century newspaper* and now read it occasionally. Also I browsed the websites and searched for things of interest (17/38-39)  
我看 21 世纪报，现在有时候还会看。我也会根据兴趣浏览一些网站
30. I was crazy about English. I read *21<sup>st</sup> Century newspaper*, and some other story books or magazines [...] I bought each issue of *Crazy English* (22/40-41)  
我对英语很疯狂。我看 21 世纪报，还有其他的故事书，杂志。。。疯狂英语我每期必买。
31. I read English magazines such as *Chicken Soup*, a story series, which is quite deep but uses simple words (18/96-97).  
我看英语杂志比如说心灵鸡汤，一个小说系列，是那种很深刻道理却用简单语言描写的小说。
32. What I liked best was the beauty of its pictures. They were quite authentic. I felt they shortened the distance between English and real life (2/100)  
我最喜欢的是图片的美。他们很真实。我觉得那些图片缩短了英语和真实生活的距离。
33. language is only valuable when one can understand it (2/223-224)  
语言只有真正懂了才对我们有价值
34. Altogether 68 for the whole series, at the beginning it was about 50, with 18 added later on. I finished reading over 40 within a term [...]  
总共一系列有 68 本，开始是 50 本，后来加了 18 本。我一个学期看完了 40 本。
35. English novels present English ways of living, behaving...I felt peaceful when I read them (15/80-81)  
英语小说反映英国人的生活，行为方式。。。我看它们的时候感到很平静。
36. Like *Gone with the Wind*, the one I am reading now [...] I read lots of English books in high school. For example, *Stray Birds* by Tagore, I felt reading English made me peaceful (15/78-81).  
像飘，我现在正读的。。。我高中的时候看了很多英语读物。比如泰戈尔的飞鸟集。我觉得看英语能让我平静。
37. The Flash 2004 installed by the university was in English [...] although it's all in English, with lots of new words. I gradually followed it, looking up in dictionaries [...] in the end knew all of them. (19/76-79)  
我们学校安装的又 flash2004 是英文版的。。。虽说它是英文版，我还是很喜欢看。一打开全是英语，好多都不认识，但我慢慢通过和书对比，同时查字典，就明白了。这样一是英语有了提高
38. I suddenly felt we had to learn so many new words in College English class [...] we had regular presentations using learned vocabulary [...] It's helpful to improve English abilities (14/83-85)  
大学英语感觉挺新鲜的，感觉要背好多单词。。。不过对我能力的提高还是很有帮助的。我们经常作一些小组的 presentation.最起码我敢说了
39. our major was taught in English and textbooks, assignments were all in English [...] you read those books relating to your major and your vocabulary naturally enlarged. (6/69; 78-79)  
我们专业使用英语上课，课本也是英文的，作业也是。。。你看这些书和你专业相关，你词汇量自然就扩大了
40. English has to be meaningful for you [...] you use it you remember it deeply (26/89-90)  
英语必须对你有用。。。你用才能记住。



41. I often went to my foreign teacher's flat and practiced oral English with her[...] it often happened that you might spend quite some time thinking of grammar rules before you could answer teachers' questions in class, which was the symptom of insufficient practice of spoken English. I asked her to tell me whatever mistakes I made in our conversation. (7/38; 84-86)  
我经常到我们外教家和她练习口语。。。一个问题你要想好不要出现语法错误什么的，一个问题要想5, 6分钟然后才敢举手回答老师的问题。可能是一种缺乏口语锻炼的表现。如果我出现什么错误，我让她指出来。
42. With the following interviewee, we are English partners. Each Tuesday, we have English class, we eat together, go shopping together. Whatever we do we speak English. (17/81-82).  
比如说接下来的同学，我们是英语的 partner。星期二那天有英语课，我们吃饭，逛街那一天干什么都说英语。我们凡是在一起都说英语。
43. I tried to write English articles, writing one each day for my teacher to comment. We had a foreign teacher and I asked him to help correct [...] anyway, write whatever I want to write, sometimes created my own sentences [...] English use, I felt it was useful for me' (2/89-91).  
然后就尝试一下学英语的新办法。我就试着用英语写一些文章。每天写一篇然后给老师改，我们那时有外教。我就给外教。反正想些什么就写什么。然后生搬硬套的还造了些句子。老外看了以后。。。效果还是有的。这个英语的运用呀。我觉得他对我有用。
44. I listened to the tapes and imitated them, correcting my own pronunciation. Since I did not have much opportunity to communicate with others, I shouted English out at home (4/46-47)  
我听磁带，然后模仿。纠正一下自己的发音。和别人说的机会比较少。自己在家呆着没事是狂喊
45. Everyday before going to bed, I would listen to Happy American English, just to listen in order to understand their speed and tones [...] (7/22-24).  
每天睡觉前，我会听欢乐美语，就是想熟悉语速和语调
46. E: Each night I went to sleep while listening to English tapes.  
R: what did you listen to?  
E: Crazy English, World English. In fact, I could not fully understand it but wanted to create an English environment (12/81-85)  
陈：每天晚上我都是听着英语磁带睡觉的。  
江：你都听些什么？  
陈：疯狂英语，世界英语。实际上，我不能完全听懂。但是想营造一个英语环境。
47. 'I quite like watching original English movies. Each Tuesday evening there is an Original Movie Cinema, I insisted on watching it even in my final year in high school[...] it lets you have contact with English in a relaxed way and you can know how foreign people think' (15/22-26)  
我特别喜欢英文电影，每周二晚上十点都会有一个原声影院，即使到了高三我也坚持看。。。那里教给我一种外国人的思维方式
48. Sometimes it was not only for learning but for enjoyment [...] especially, in vacation time, I rented a few VCD and finished watching them within a few days (22/56-58)  
有时候不仅仅是学习也是一种放松。。。尤其是假期的时候，我会租些碟几天就看完。
49. I felt my English advanced to a new level. My vocabulary expanded. And I understood better original English movies. I could identify known words in English songs. Occasionally I can think in an English way when chatting with foreign friends (8/165-167)  
我觉得自己上了一个新台阶，一个是单词量有了很大的扩充，还有就是听原版电影能听得更清楚。歌里得词只要是我认识的都可以听出来。有些思维可以直接用英语思考。
50. My English teacher saw my exam scores were good and recommended me that I should participate in English Speech Contest...I found I was awful and couldn't make it (24/27-28)  
我英语老师看我考试分数不错就推荐我去参加英语演讲比赛。。。我觉得很糟糕，我不行。
51. In my final year, I took part in the English Speech Contest and won the second place (24/72-73)  
在我高三那年，我参加了英语演讲比赛并拿了第二名。
52. In middle school, some students felt that English was difficult. They did not know how to pronounce words. Since I had had contact with English before, I could speak them out confidently and became one of the better students in my class (15/12-15)



我觉得到了初中以后，有些同学是刚刚接触他们觉得非常难。他们看着音标，看着单词都不知道该怎么做。而我因为原来接触过，所以会非常自信的把它念出来，背出来和写出来。我就成了班里一个英语学习比较好的人。

53. It after all was a language and you cannot use one type of grammar to deduce many other things since many sentences were so flexible [...] when we speak Chinese, we are not thinking of grammar but use a kind of sense (4/39-40).  
其实想想是这样。毕竟是语言。你不可能拿着一个语法公式去推导很多东西。很多句子都是非常灵活的。。。平常说中国话你也不会去想语法怎么说，都是拿一种习惯去说。
54. From Grade one in middle school, I mainly insisted on reading texts. I did not do reading comprehension exercises, but I would read the passage to foster that kind of sense, either reading aloud or silent reading (9/74-76)  
从初一开始，主要还是坚持读课文。到后来阅读理解我不会去做，但我会去读它的文章。培养那种感觉。或者读或者看。自己去找些东西。
55. I think it is still language sense that works such as language used in movie or music [...] so many expressions you did not learn before and were strange [...] I got to know them from songs or dialogues in movies' (8/55-62)  
我觉得还是靠语感，比如电影或音乐中用到的语言。。。这么多的表达你可能没见过觉得奇怪。。。都是通过听歌或电影里的对白知道的。
56. Each book (*Bookworm*) I at least read 7 to 8 times. I first read for ideas. After reading for the first time, I had a clear understanding of the text. Then I came back and read concrete sentences, vocabulary usage and strange sentences. Back and forth, 7 to 8 times for each book. Now I still remember many stories (2/73-76)  
每本书我起码都读了7.8遍。我首先看内容。我整个看完对他整体要表达的意思有了一个清晰地把握之后，我再回过头把具体的句子，单词的用法及觉得陌生的句子看看。反反复复，一本书搞个7.8遍。现在我有许多情节都记得。
57. In the past, I was only concerned about exam scores. Following this way of learning (*Bookworm*), my exam results on the contrary improved quickly. In general, I got 130 out of 150 (2/93-94).  
原来只注重分数。我就这样慢慢的学下去，这个英语的成绩呀。不搞了反而好了。英语一般150分左右，我130
58. I did quite a lot of exercises, and also read a lot of reading passages. But my exam score did not increase. It was still a problem [...] I needed to ask for help from others' (9/87-88; 97)  
做得题多了，看的文章也多了，可是成绩却没有提高，现在依然是个问题。。。我应该问问别人。
59. I Mainly learned CET-4 vocabulary, besides that, I bought College English Course books published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. I finished reading two and a half levels (5/39-41).  
在这段时间里，我学了英语，主要是看了四级单词。学得也不是很多。我还买了上海外教社出版的大学英语。提前看了两本半参加了四级考试。
60. At that time, what I mainly did was to memorize vocabulary lists [...] then did large amount of exam exercises' (15/62-64).  
在那时，主要是记单词。。。然后做大量练习。
61. Multiple choice, cloze test, these were all related to grammar, English learning was analysing grammar structure based on rules (9/25-26)  
多项选择，完形填空，这些都和语法有关。英语学习就是根据语法规则分析语法结构
62. 'It is mainly about reading comprehension, because it occupies larger proportion of the total score in exams' (24/68-69)  
主要是阅读理解，因为它占考试的比份最重。
63. Vocabulary is the foundation [...] you need it for cloze tests. Sometimes it affects writing too. It often happened that I was stuck due to limitation of vocabulary. For writing, perhaps you can think of other words to replace it, but it quite affects reading comprehension (7/26-28)  
单词是基础。。。这个非常影响我做阅读理解，完形填空，写作的时候也很受影响。经常知道单词学过但是卡壳了。写作还可以替换别的词，但阅读很受影响



64. In a reading passage, if there are many words you do not know, if you do not know about a half, such a situation definitely will influence your reading comprehension (16/55-56)  
比如说一篇文章你好多单词，有一半都不认识，那你想着这样肯定影响阅读理解，就觉得有必要
65. If vocabulary in high school was expanded a bit more, graduates would be able to take College English Band 4 Test in high school (5/44-45)  
我感觉主要是单词，如果高中的词汇拓展到四级，他们高中毕业考四级应该没有问题
66. English language should be learned for use. Perhaps you had to take exams at school, but it is a tool to be used. You should have the ability to use it rather than merely knowing how to answer exam questions (69-70).  
英语应该以实用为主。也许你在学校必须考试，可是它是一门工具。你应该有能力使用它，而不是回答考试的问题
67. English language learning is to obtain a type of ability, the ability to communicate with others, such as English and American people. I thought the most important thing in English language learning was listening and speaking abilities (14/86-87)  
学英语是为了培养一种能力。培养一种与人交流的能力，英国人，美国人交流的能力。我觉得英语最重要的是听说
68. If you want to master a foreign language, it is necessary to master a certain amount of vocabulary. Like Chinese, we use lots of vocabulary when we communicate [...] if you are not familiar with the vocabulary, you could not express yourself fluently (7/165-166; 168-169)  
因为要想学好一门外语，对它词汇的掌握还是很有必要的。就像汉语，我们交流可能要用到很多词汇。。。如果你不熟悉单词，你就不可能自如的表达
69. When talking, I often thought things in Chinese first. I often tried to find the Chinese then searched for the English equivalent [...] it took quite a few minutes sometimes. However, my roommates immediately came up with English when talking. I therefore thought vocabulary size was really important in communication (12/61-63)  
像假如说我现在想用个什么的时候，我会想汉语词。。有时候得好几分钟才能想出来。而他们就反映英语，我就觉得单词量在交流中很重要
70. English language learning is about using authentic English to express your own ideas. You should know some fixed expressions' (16/84-85)  
英语学习是拿地道的英语来表达你的想法，你应该知道一些固定的表达方法。
71. To understand original English, at least Book Worm series (2/313)  
就是懂得英语原文，至少书虫系列
72. To know more vocabulary, standard pronunciation, and more fluent communication (5/187-188)  
知道更多单词，标准发音，及更流利的表达能力
73. It is about all-round abilities, ability to listen, to speak, and to communicate (8/149-150)  
应该是一种全方位的能力，听说交流的能力
74. Objective should be abilities regarding listening, speaking, reading, and writing (12/177)  
目标应该是听说读写能力
75. Exam score determines everything. It determines what type of school you go to, higher score, better schools; lower score, poor schools. If your exam score is poor, even you have better spoken English, it is useless (14/154-155)  
以分数取人，分数好就能进好学校。分数不好，口语再好也白搭
76. there was a popular saying among students, 分，分，分，学生的命根 (score, score, score, students' lives). I think it is true to all Chinese students that score measures one's learning. Exam score is really important. At least, we treat it seriously (7/126-127)  
分分分，学生的命根，我觉得对全中国的学生来说都是挺对的。分数真得很重要。至少我们心里很看重
77. It is a criterion for success. In English language learning at school, if it is not this (exam score), there are few means to prove one's real level (8/134-135)  
因为这是自己成功的一种标志。平时除了靠考试成绩很少有途径来证明自己英语的实力



78. Exam score is compulsory. Perhaps someone would say the Chinese educational system is different from others, quite much of such opinion. But I think wherever you go, if it is learning, it is linked with exam scores, which is unavoidable [...] if you want to go abroad, you need IELTS' score, you want to graduate, you need CET-6 score. (18/154-157; 160)  
英语成绩是必不可少的。如果说中国和别的国家教育体制不同，说得都很烂。但我觉得不论你在哪个地方，只要是学习，你肯定会和分数挂上关系。那些东西是不可避免的。。。你要出国没有雅思英语不行，你要毕业没有六级也不行。
79. There is only limited time in class learning, it is critical that you are self-dependent after class (7/137)  
课堂学习时间有限，可后自己学习很关键。
80. If you do not memorize, do not learn, it (taught knowledge) is useless [...] you depend on yourself to understand the deeper level of a method. If you want to improve yourself to a better level, you should depend on yourself (15/148; 151-152)  
如果你不去背还是没用。。。还是靠自己去领悟一个更高的层次，要想到一个更高的层次还是靠自己。
81. if you sincerely followed teachers' methods, completed the tasks you would get over 130 at the end, at least over 120 [...] teacher cannot replace you to do the exercises, all these need to be done by yourself (20/23; 186-187)  
你忠实地按照老师的意图走，走到后面都是 130 几分，一般也是 120。。。老是不能代替你做题，这些都必须靠自己去做
82. In general, we boys always wanted to play, did not want to do homework. In high school, our teacher was not as strict as the one in middle school [...] exam results fell and were very poor' (23/10-12)  
通常我们男孩子喜欢玩，不喜欢做作业，高中我们老是不像以前对我们要求严。。。考试成绩很不好
83. In Grade 2 in high school, our teacher recommended us to buy *Original Reading*, I learned much from reading that. Just reading and guessing meaning from the context. And *New concept English*. (2/110-112)  
高二时老师让我们买原文阅读，从阅读中获得不少东西，就是看原文，上下猜单词，还有新概念。
84. Teachers can guide you. Like us college students, we still lack direction in many aspects. Teachers can give you a direction, just like to point out the most dazzling thing to you among the borderless book sea (18/145-146)  
老师会引导你。像我们现在虽然是大学生，但我们在很多方面还是缺乏一个方向性，老师可以指导你，相当于在茫茫书海把一些闪闪的东西指引给你
85. Teachers' guidance can help you skip over the wrong ways and save your time. With teachers' guidance, you can succeed with half effort'(20/199-200)  
老师的指导可以帮你跳过误区，节约你的时间。有老师的指引，你可以事半功倍
86. I had no other ways. I had to follow my teacher even if I did not like his method. You could not succeed if you did not follow his method because there were exams. (11/126-127)  
我也没有什么办法，不跟着老师的方法不可能成功的。因为有考试在那里
87. A small town like ours; it had very poor learning facilities. There was hardly any equipment for listening and speaking. What should we rely on? Only the teacher. (20/21-22)  
像我们小城里面。听说英语的条件都不好。靠什么，靠得是老师。老师给你指引道路。你忠实地按照老师的意图走，走到后面都是 130 几分。一般也是 120 几
88. My teacher at middle school was exactly the opposite of the one in my primary school, very strict. I remembered that she scolded my classmates who did not do their homework [...] strict teachers had their advantage. She was very responsible and taught well. Because she used to teach in high school, her teaching content was a bit deeper. We had many notes and we had to review them at home since she would test us on the following day. Even so, you were happy when you found you mastered more grammar knowledge than others did. It was a type of happiness, a happiness that you obtained knowledge. (5/23-25; 26-29)  
我初中的老师和我小学的老师恰恰是相反的，非常严格。我记得有些同学如果那些作业没写。他会非常严格的批评。。。严格的老师也有严格的好处。老师却是非常负责任，讲得也很好。因为她是从小高中下来的。她讲的东西很深，我们上课做很多笔记。回家就得看第二天他会在黑板上出



题我们做。尽管这样，当你发现你比别的同学多掌握一些语法的时候，你也有一种快乐，是一种获得知识的快乐。

89. English is a language. It is not like Physics or Math that requires us to understand lots of things. If you do more exercises, memorize more, you can learn it well. There was one case in our class. He had to prepare other Contests so couldn't come for English classes. He then memorized English and did exercises at home. His exam results were still good. (19/172-175)  
因为英语是门语言，他不像物理数学那样要理解很多东西。只要你多练，多背，多写你肯定可以把它学好。我们班就曾经有这样的例子。好象英语课很少来上，由于他有竞赛，但他自己在家就成天背或者说读，他的英语成绩依然很好。
90. Memorization is really a good method in English language learning. If you memorize the language points that teachers teach, there is no problem for all kinds of exams (4/25-26)  
现在想想背诵确实是英语学习的一个比较好的办法。讲的语言点记得比较认真，应付各种考试没问题
91. There is no shortcut to learn English, just memorize more, remember more (4/183)  
学英语没有什么捷径，就是多背，多记。
92. If you remembered what teachers taught, you generally got high exam scores. (24/124).  
如果你记住老师讲的，你通常都能得高分
93. Although doing lots of exercises did not guarantee success, you certainly had no chance to succeed without such work. (13/136)  
尽管大量做题未必能成功，你不做题肯定不能成功
94. The National Entrance Exam was mainly about reading comprehension. My reading comprehension was very poor. I did lots of reading comprehension passages [...] in fact, my score didn't improve much (3/25-27)  
高考主要是阅读，我阅读不行。做了很多这方面的练习。。。事实上到后来也没怎么提高
95. Each section has its own characteristics, for example, cloze test, you should know whether it is testing synonym analysis or guessing meaning from context; for grammar [...], firstly you should delete unnecessary choices that do not make sense when they were put into the sentences [...] For reading comprehension, you should read questions first, then look for answers with questions [...] For writing, it examines your style. All these need your understanding through **continuous exercises**' (38-42)  
每项都有自己的特点，比如 closet test 考什么方面，是在同义词辨析，还是上下文词汇方面。Grammar。。。删掉一些不必要的与句子语义相悖的选项。reading 出题的方法先看题，带着答案找问题。。。writing 里面基本上都是写得很有文采的。所有这些都靠大量练习来积累
96. Why were some students better than others in the same class? It was not because of teaching difference, it was because of the difference in effort they made. ( 12/135-136)  
为什么一个班有些人比人学得好？不是老师不一样，而是有些人努力，其他人没有
97. You need effort to learn English, like you learn any other subjects. Perhaps you can think out solutions to a chemistry problem within a short limited time, but English depended on your accumulation of all those memorized vocabulary and usages (12/172-173).  
英语就是要努力。和大多数学科一样没有捷径。像化学有时你想到了就能做出这道题。而英语就是靠你死记硬背的功底。是非常需要下苦功夫的学科
98. I normally slept less than my classmates. I only used 1/3 of the nap time for sleeping, the rest of the time was used to do exercises [...] for the National Entrance Exam, I needed to spend more time on it. (7/150-151)  
我通常比我们班同学睡得少。我只用他们午睡 1/3 的时间，剩下的时间我会做练习。。。为了高考，我得花些时间
99. A positive attitude helped to overcome psychological difficulties and one could hardly learn well if he or she always felt repelled by English (5/123-124)  
一种积极的态度可以帮助克服困难，如果厌恶英语很难把它学好
100. Many students treat learning as a burden. What can I say, if you see it as burden, you always feel heavy, but if you often remind yourself of the knowledge you obtain from learning, you are making progress, you will feel different and learn happily. (103-104)



很多学生把英语学习当成一种负担。我能说什么呢？如果当成一种负担，你总会觉得沉重，如果你提醒自己你能从里面学到知识，你进步了，你就会感觉到不一样，会学的开心。

101. You should have concentrated attention. Not without learning efficiency. One possibility is to have higher learning efficiency, and the other is to last longer in learning. It is good to do this. Being serious is very important. If your interest in learning is the prerequisite, then being serious is the means to achieve your final learning goal (8/97-99)  
主要是做的时候就要注意力集中，不要没有效率这样。一个是效率高，一个是时间长一些。这样可以掌握的好一些。认真很重要。如果说喜欢是前提，认真是实现的手段
102. Many people had very high score in exams. However, if you asked them to speak, they were possibly unable to open their mouths. What did this mean? In fact, they did not really learn English. Real English learning was not about score but mastery (4/152-154)  
一般很多人，为了应试，通过大量的练习，读的很快，做的很好，但是让他说的话，不一定能说好，这说明一个什么问题呢，实际上可能他学英语没有真正掌握。
103. Perhaps you have certain reasons that resulted in your failure in one exam, but this did not mean your level is low. Besides that, you might have a high exam score, but your oral English was very poor. (19/227-230)  
不排除某些时候由于考题的原因你没有达到比较好的水平，这部代表你水平低。或者说你的笔试成绩非常高，但是你的口语比较贫乏，这不能说你的水平比较高
104. It cannot reflect one's real abilities [...] although my exam scores were generally good in high school, always among the top, and I also won a prize in an English Contest [...] But I could not compete with those hard working people who highly focused on exam papers. I felt English language abilities should not be confined to one's exam score. (22/142-146)  
它应该不是很能够反映一个人的英语能力。。。基本是高中的时候，尽管成绩也不错，基本都在前面，虽然比赛也拿奖了。。。但是你到高三始终靠不过那些兢兢业业，刻刻苦苦学习的人。然后我就觉得英语能力不应该反映在一个人的英语成绩上
105. You can communicate with foreigners when you encounter them. (2/22).  
你在街上遇到外国人能和他们交流
106. It should be autonomous learning not forced learning. Perhaps imposition has certain effect, but it is not good for fostering interest. Moreover, if such imposition is gone, one is unlikely to learn (5/87-88)  
要自主的学而不是被迫的学。也许逼迫也有一定效果，但对培养兴趣不是很好。而且一旦没压力他很可能丢掉了
107. Teachers can inspire your curiosity about English and guide you to walk along. But it must be your own willingness to learn. Teachers help set a goal for you but it is your own wish and effort to reach the goal (22/160-162).  
老师可以激励你对学英语的好奇，引导你往前走。如果你内在想学，对学走路的动作好奇的话，你肯定愿意学，而且学得很快。老师帮你设定一个目标，加上你自己的努力，肯定会加快这个目标的实现
108. Confidence is very important in English language learning. It enables you to speak bravely and study in a relaxed way. When you have the confidence, you do not need to worry about your ability but focus on how to improve [...] it is very important for language learners and can help remove difficulties. (15/130-132)  
它可以让人变得很无畏。就是你去学东西的时候，如果有自信的话让你不去有顾虑和担心而只是说你能把它掌握好。这对一个语言学习者来说是非常重要的。能帮助扫清障碍
109. If you have confidence, you remember the vocabulary. If you do not have confidence, you cannot. Just this simple, When you have confidence, you know what to memorize. You can grasp the essence immediately and believe you can remember (2/208-209)  
我觉的有信心就记得住，没信心就记不住。就这么简单。你有信心了，你就知道记什么，一下子能抓住关键，相信自己记得住
110. When you have some sense of achievement you get confidence, which enables you to overcome difficulties. Gradually, you will enjoy learning (20/121-122)  
当你有些成就你就有信心，这样即使后面比较艰难也能克服，到后来就学着觉得愉悦



111. If you do not use it but simply memorize all kinds of grammar, you not only tended to face enormous difficulty but also forget about it soon. (4/39-41)  
你要不说不用，每天抠，太困难了。所以我觉得这是英语成为很多人求职求学一个坎的很重要的原因。不去听，不去说。光看这些很容易忘。
112. Perhaps in the beginning, you should invest more time, because you need to activate your whole brain, which takes lot of time. When you have certain cognitive ability in English, you do not need much time, half an hour each day is enough [...] Only keeping frequent contact will be fine (2/247-250)  
初学的时候，要投入很多时间，因为学英语你要让整个脑袋发动起来，那么要发动起来就要很多的时间，等到自己对英语有一定的感知能力的时候，然后就不需要用很多的时间，每天半个小时就差不多了，不必要做大量的练习，只要保持每天接触就行了
113. Good spoken English needed practice...your classmates were similar to you [...] by talking with her (foreign teacher), you could improve quickly (7/85-86)  
好的口语是需要练习的。。。你的同学和你差不多。。。和她练习，你能进步快些。
114. E: [...] there were about 100 exercises. They were all done by myself. I did not do teacher assigned tasks.  
R: Why?  
E: I did not like his requirement. I was unwilling to do his assigned tasks. I even did not do homework. I did not think he knew me. What he assigned was for the whole class. I was confident in my own judgement and decision. I knew what I needed.  
R: For example?  
E: Because I improved a lot in overall grasp of English, I thought his requirement was a low or middle level. But what I needed was to improve intensive reading skills, understanding of the whole sentences, some deeper meanings. I needed that most. He gave me other things instead. Of course I did not do it. (2/133-143)  
葛：。。。我做了100多套题。都是自己做的。老师布置得我反而不做。  
江：为什么？  
葛：因为我对他的要求比较反感。老师要求我做我偏偏不做。我连作业都不做。我觉得老师对我不是很了解。他布置的是针对全体同学的。我当时对我自己的判断和决定很有信心。我知道自己需要学什么。  
江：比如说？  
葛：因为我对整个英语的把握能力有很大提高。我觉得他是一个低水平或中等水平的要求。而我觉得那时我最迫切需要提高的就是精读能力，对句子的整个把握。一些深层的意思。我当时最需要的就是这个。他反而给我一些其他任务，我当然不做了
115. Most of the time, I relied on myself...what the teacher taught was similar to reference books, I would rather read reference books by myself. It was more efficient. I felt my level was a bit higher, but the teacher's concern was mainly the majority. (8/38-44)  
反正我自己也会看的。我觉得老师讲课大多数时候还是靠自己吧。。。下课后看一些参考书，我觉得老师跟上面讲的差不多。我觉得还不如老师把讲义发给我们，让我们自己回家看。这样效率还高些。因为我觉得每人水平不同。我觉得自己水平可能会高一些。但老师会为了大多数同学
116. You can't stop learning English. You probably could pick up other subjects if you didn't study for a while. But it was not applicable to English. If you gave up for some time, you found that you declined dramatically (20/222-225)  
英语这东西是丢不得的。其他课你丢一年再花几天可能还能捡起来，英语你丢几个月就废了
117. There were different methods to learn English, but persistence was the most important (4/169-170)  
有很多方法可以学英语，但是坚持是最重要的
118. You would definitely see the learning effect if you were persistent in learning English (11/159).
119. English is a language that requires us to memorize and know lots of things. If you only read something in a shallow way, there is no quantity and quality. English should be based on quantity then you can have a big leap. Therefore, persistence is very important at least to increase the quantity, which is the base (16/154-156)



英语是一门语言学科，需要记和了解的东西很多，如果只是肤浅的去看一些东西，量肯定不够，质也不够。英语学习必须在量的基础上才能优质的飞跃。必须坚持下去，把量搞上去。这是基础

120. I found it was difficult to be persistent. But if it became a habit, it would be easier (4/75)  
我觉得要做到坚持很难，但如果成了一种习惯，就会容易一些
121. If you formed the habit to learn English, you could easily do it (24/172-174)  
如果你形成了学习英语的习惯，你就会觉得容易些
122. A good learning habit is important...if you form the habit to read English newspapers and it naturally becomes part of your life. You do not need others to urge you [...] (13/107-108)  
培养一个学习英语的习惯很重要。。。比如你习惯性的每天看英语的报纸，这样让后来不需要老师引导依然可以保持习惯
123. For real English language learning, you should go abroad. Since people around you all speak Chinese, you cannot practise. But if you go abroad, you have to use it when you do something. For example, you go shopping in the supermarket. Here there is no such an environment (3/85-87)  
我觉得要置身国外。因为周围人都在讲中文，你不能练。比如你在国外你必须去做一些事情的时候你必须去用它。比如去超市买东西。这里没有一个环境逼着我用它。人都有惰性嘛。
124. (Real English language learning) is to go to English speaking countries. Have contact with authentic English, not exam type of English, but one that can be used to communicate. And all levels of English, daily English, academic English etc.' (8/80-81)  
就是到真正的英语国家去。接触纯正的英语，不是应付考试那种，而是真正可以交流的。各种层次的英语，日常交流的英语呀，学术上的英语呀
125. Chinese who learn English are unlikely to have a good language environment [...] if I am learning English but my classmates around me are talking in Chinese, I do not think I can open my mouth. Even if I try to read a text aloud, I hardly can read it fluently (5/140; 155-156)  
中国人学英语一般没有一个好的语言环境。。。因为如果我再学英语而周围人都在讲汉语尤其宿舍，我觉得我的嘴巴有些张不开。我要是在这里读下课文，感觉不是很流畅
126. I think an English environment is very important. I mean the atmosphere that everyone is speaking English [...] if everyone is speaking English, you naturally come up with English. It is natural, not disconnected with what you have learned. (12/164; 166-167)  
我认为英语环境很重要，我只那种人人都说英语的氛围。。。如果每人都说英语，你自然反映出来的是英语，很自然，不是那种和你所学的脱节。
127. R: your exam score was quite high, why did you say your English was poor?  
E: I felt they were different types of abilities. I had good ability to take exams and mastered sentence patterns or grammar well. But listening and speaking were poor. On many occasions, I heard a familiar word but just could not think of the meaning (3/96-99)  
江：你英语成绩不错，怎么还说差呢？  
谷：我觉得这是不同能力的体现。在这方面我应考的能力很强。对句型，语法掌握得很熟悉。但听，表达还不行。很多时候听到一个单词觉得很熟悉但想了半天也不知道是什么意思。
128. I felt it was a failure for nine-years of English language learning, only for the National Entrance Exam (14/78-79)  
感觉学了9年英语挺失败的，就是为了高考
129. There were people who were better than me, I meant they had better results on exercises. However, in the National Entrance Exam, my result was better than theirs. I felt questions in the National Entrance Exam were quite flexible. They were not rigid questions that were practised by us in our preparation. You could only work the answers when you really understood English (2/318-321)  
也有比我更好的。在平时做题比我好，在高考的时候，我的英语成绩比他好。我觉的高考的时候出题很活，不会出平时那些考试的死题目。你真正理解语言的时候才会做出来的题目，也会出这样的题目
130. you don't need others to push you...prepare yourself for the exams...exams results became your reference for positioning yourself [...] less dependent on your teacher' (20/267-268)



不用人逼迫你。。。自己准备考试。。。考试成绩是你的参照。。。减少对老师的依赖。

131. You should finish teachers' assigned tasks first [...] .but you should learn more...it's not imposition but your interest and persistence [...] doing exercises for exams oppresses autonomy (16/108; 120-121)  
你首先应该完成老师的任务。。。但你应该多学一些。。。不是强迫二是你的兴趣和坚持。。。  
做练习压抑自主
132. You follow your own way of learning. First, you have a direction, teachers can help guide you the direction, but it's your own decision as to what you should do, follow the plan and check whether you keep it afterwards (2/281-283)  
自己按照自己的想法去学，首先知道一个方向，他给我一个计划，现在该把什么学会，下一个我又该把什么东西学会，具体怎么学可以不听老师的
133. It is a state that you want to learn it (English), you have the freedom and you are learning it, you learn it autonomously and you know how to learn it (10/143-144)  
是那种你想学的状态，你有自由并去做的状态，你自己主动去做，也知道自己在做什么
134. if you asked me to analyse grammar, perhaps I could not explain, but I know it should be used like that, it was all about a kind of sense, language sense (9/35-36)  
但是让我分析语法的原因，我可能讲不出来。是一种对语言的感觉
135. E: I think it is still language sense that works such as language used in movie or music [...] so many expression you did not learn before and were strange...in exams I often filled in an answer according to the song. Surprisingly, it was right.  
R: for example?  
E: there was a phrase "see somebody. doing" that I never saw before. What we were taught by the teacher at that time was "see somebody. do". Then in the exam, there was a cloze test, I felt I should fill in a participle then I did it. I was right. Things like this were not unusual. I got to know them all from songs or dialogues in movies (8/55-62)  
王：我觉得还是语感，比如那些电影和音乐利用的。。。然后很多语法以前也没有学过，但就觉得有些歌词很奇怪，怎么这样呢。。。考试时碰到了我就毫不犹豫的按歌词那样填，居然就对了。  
江：能举个例子吗？  
王：不是有个短语 see sb. doing.我以前也没见过，然后我们老师也是说 see sb. do 然后考试时有个完形填空我感觉应该填分词，然后就填了，居然就对了。然后这样的事情不止一次。都是在歌里面见到的
136. It was the result of traditional education, there was no way not to take it seriously. In the current educational system, the National Entrance Exam is the landmark. For example, my classmates, we had little difference in high school. I came to Tsinghua. He went to a local university. He felt my status suddenly increased. It was all about a type of conception. He felt graduation from Tsinghua greatly differed from local university. (2/200-203)  
传统教育的结果，没办法不把他看的不重要，现在中国这个教育制度，高考是个分水岭。我们那个同学，本来高中条件没什么差别，不是很大，我进了清华，他进了地方大学，他觉我的地位一下提高了，整个一个观念，他觉的读清华出去和他读地方大学出去截然不同
137. In middle school, we learned English for a better high school, in high school for a better university [...] (6/157)  
中学学英语为了上一个好高中，高中为了上一个好大学
138. I do not know why Chinese students learn English like this. I do not know what the situation is in big cities such as Beijing or Shanghai. Anyway, in places like mid-west, we only learned through rote. English was absolutely a burden. We had a popular saying: I am Chinese why I should learn English? (14/57-60)  
我不明白中国学生学英语为什么是这样，我不知道北京，上海这样的大城市是什么情况，反正像我们中西部，都是这样。怎么说呢？就是死记硬背。英语完全是一种负担。校园里还流行：老子中国人，干吗学外语？
139. Hardly any country in the world increased foreign language learning to such a high status. For example, to do a Master in Ancient Chinese, you should take an English language exam [...] I felt the whole nation increased the status of English to an incredible height. It seemed if a vegetable salesperson could not speak English, he or she could not survive in this world. I thought this was a big mistake in conceptions. (21/199-202)



我觉得中国很奇怪，因为世界上很少有国家把语言提高到这种高度，好像你要靠中国古文的研究生你也要考英语，我就不知道春秋战国时后的人用英语吗？我觉得整个国家把英语提高到了一个不可思议的高度，好像以后卖菜的不会英语都不行。我觉得没有这个必要，我觉得这是认识的一个误区

140. Her teaching was quite rigid, only following her teaching plan. Some language points, she not only taught in this lesson but also repeated in the next. Our notes were huge. We all felt bored [...] we were all busy taking her notes, hardly having time to listen to her instruction. Perhaps she was new. Our classmates talked with her about the size of her notes, but she remained the same. (11/62-63; 65-66)  
他讲课很死板，就照着他的教案。有些知识点，她这节课要讲，下节课还要讲，会讲很多遍。然后我们的笔记特别多，同学都练得特别烦。。。同学都忙着抄笔记，根本没时间听他讲课。可能她是新老师，我们也有同学跟他讲过他的笔记太多，可是他还是那样
141. Only grammar was learned well. For reading, I did not do enough; for listening, we did not have specific equipment, only depending on teachers who taught some language points (17/11-12)  
就语法学的好些。阅读我做得不够多，听力，我们没有专门的设备，就是靠老师专门讲一下语言点什么的
142. My teacher told me 'our condition was not good, you should focus on reading. Try your best to read more and I could teach you some methods'. (20/17)  
我们老师告诉我我们这里条件不好，你就好好搞阅读。尽量多读我会教你一些方法
143. We students from the mid-west have a common character. That is, to learn English for the National Entrance Exam. What is to be examined will be learned. What is not to be examined will not be learned [...] although we had high exam scores, our overall language abilities are quite low, which can only cope with the National Entrance Exam. (14/34-35; 38-39)  
我觉得我们从中西部来的学生一个共同特点都是学英语就是为了高考。考得就学，不考得就不学。所以尽管我的高考分数很高，我的整体水平很差。就只能应付高考。我的发音很差
144. The overall level of English in our class was better than other classes, so we had a stronger atmosphere to learn English. Even if the teacher assigned lots of homework, we had no complaint [...] in whatever exams, our class was always the top one in the Grade and in the school in general. Since our school has four attached sections and our English always got the first one (19/46-47; 52-54)  
而且我们班英语整体水平比较高，所以英语学习气氛比较高。虽然老师留的作业比较多，但英语方面同学没有任何怨言。。。无论什么统考我们班都是全年级第一。因为我们班英语本来就在全年级是最好的。但我们总校有四个分校。我们班在学校总校也是第一
145. At that time my English was the best in middle school and also top in the Grade. However in high school, mine was not good enough, we had very good students. Even our English teacher would be modest before them. There were four who took the TOFEL test and two of them got over 630 [...] in the final year of high school, we often compared among ourselves. If anyone did not get a good enough score, he would feel ashamed (18/9-12; 52-53)  
当时初中在班上英语还是最好的。在学校也还行，但后来就觉得这段时间不行。后来到高中，班主任就是英语老师，我们班上有很多英语很强的同学。老师见到他们都要谦让三分。有四个参加托福考试，有两个考了630多分。。。大家高三了，好朋友之间都会互相比较那种。做不好会很没面子
146. My uncle also graduated from Tsinghua and now is in the U.S. What they designed for me was to study abroad after graduation. He often told me English was important. Now I also felt I was to take this way in the future. (3/30-33)  
因为我舅舅也是清华毕业。现在美国。他们给我设计的道路就是读完书出国。他跟我经常说的是英文很重要。我现在进了清华后也觉得这是我将要走的路
147. My parents paid much attention to English. From the international situation, Chinese are forced to learn English, why not French? This is the need for international communication. We need to read some documents. We should have such psychological readiness. I felt parents gave me help and enlightenment in this aspects. (5/58-60)  
初中比较严的语法老师应该说我的家长也听重视英语的。首先从现在看来是这种国际形势来逼迫我们中国人来学英语的，为什么不学法语。是国际交流的需要。要看一些资料。应该来讲必须得有这个心理准备。我觉得家长给了我这方面给了我帮助和启发



148. For me, it was mainly influence from family. My Dad is a person with foresight. He paid much attention to my English learning. He did not care about my Chinese and Math learning but monitored my English everyday [...] At that time I was too young to know the importance of English, always feeling unwilling to study. Everyone has the side of being lazy. Without his attention, I wouldn't have spent enough energy on English and learned it well [...] Although they did not say much, they potentially passed on me the message that English learning was important. So I studied quite hard (19/29-32; 189-192; 195-197)
- 我主要是家里对我的影响。我父亲是一个非常有远见的人。他非常重视我的英语学习，语文数学他不管。但是每天他都会监督我英语读了没有，背了没有。早晨起来他如果听见我读了就算了，每听见就会提醒我。。。在当时来说塑造我整个英语学习的过程来说是非常重要的，那时候因为是小的时候对英语的或者说学习的重要性认识还不够，总觉得催促心里面有些不愿意。每个人都有惰性嘛，但现在想着如果当初没有父亲的督促，我现在不可能对英语有那样的重视或者说学得没有那么好，也不可能渐渐学得那么好的。所以很重要。。。所以家庭还是影响还是比较大的，父亲虽然没管啥，他总是在潜移默化中告诉我学习很重要□
149. E: since my Mum is an English teacher. I was taught English since I was born. According to my Mum, she was preparing for English exams when she had me [...] but when I grew older I did not like English.  
R: Why?  
E: because my Mum was impatient. She taught me in a boring way and also her tone was always giving orders (12/3-12)
- 陈：因为我妈妈是英语老师所以从生下来我就被灌输英语。据我妈妈说，她在怀我的时候她在进行英语考试，所以她每天都在听英语听力。。。但是后来我懂事以后我就不喜欢英语了。
- 江：为什么呢？
- 陈：因为妈妈教孩子都不太有耐心。然后觉得对英语越来越反感
150. I did not like English because of my Mum and my relationship with her [...] later when I knew more I felt her knowledge was not enough. Since my Mum was a college English teacher, I asked her a grammar question in high school, she felt both were possible. I was angry and wondered why since the answer was only one of them. (12/37-41)
- 我小的时候真的是很不喜欢英语就因为我妈。也因为英语跟我妈妈的关系不是很好。就是产生了相互抵触的情绪。但是到后来，我渐渐的学得比较多的时候怎么觉得她的知识显得少了呢。因为我妈妈是教大学的，我高中的时候问她语法，她看看觉得这也行，那个也行。然后我就特别生气，说怎么可能呢。
151. My mother was very hard working. She said the textbook should be read 30 times, reading once and marking once by pencil. You could memorize it...now I felt if I could do more like her, I would be better than now (12/152-153; 155-156)
- 我妈是特刻苦性的。她读课文说是读上30遍，读一遍就拿铅笔划一道，读30遍就能记下来了，这样她的英语在班上学的特别好。。。现在我认为如果我像她那样我的英语可能会更好些。
152. My mum is a PhD. she always had to prepare for English exams, so she wanted to guide me to learn English. She asked me to memorize *New Concept English*. After 10 lessons, I could not continue. Later on, also tried to memorize a dictionary for high school students, but without finishing it (25/12-14)
- 因为我妈是博士，她老是要考英语，她老是要引导我去学英语。她就让我背新概念，我就背了十篇就再也背不下了。后来还看了本字典，但没看完。
153. At that time I was still a novice. For example, we learned "be" and I did not understand why we should use 'am', 'is' and 'are'. My sister said these were fixed. The opinion she passed on me was that some English could not be thought by Chinese way. Moreover, we had to memorize it. She clarified my recognition of this language (3/38-40)
- 我觉得那时候我没入门。比如我们学be，比如我不明白英语中为什么要am is are。我觉得是就是是呗。然后我姐就跟我说是固定的。我姐给我灌输的观点就是英语有些东西不能用中文的方式去思考。二是要去记住它。等于她澄清了我对英语的模糊认识促进了我对这门语言的认识
154. My sister is four years older than me. When she was in middle school I was still a primary school student. She taught me whatever she learned at her English class. So I have contact with English earlier than other peers and had strong interest in English learning (16/4-6)
- 因为我姐姐比我大四岁，高三个级。最初她上初中的时候我还在上小学，刚好她学到什么就给我讲，在小学的时候我就比同龄人更早的接触到了英语。让我开始就对英语产生了浓厚的兴趣



155. E: In middle school, the importance of exams was the result of family education.  
 R: How?  
 E: If an exam score was high, I could be rewarded.  
 R: for example?  
 E: If an exam score was high, I would have material reward. (2/232-236)  
 葛: 初中的时候, 分数的重要性是家里教育的结果,  
 江: 家里怎么教育的?  
 葛: 分数高的话, 就可以有享受多么高的待遇。  
 江: 比如说?  
 葛: 比如说分数高的话, 就会有什么奖励之类的
156. To be honest, I did not like my Mum. She paid too much attention to my exam scores. Perhaps she wanted me to be that type of good student with high scores, and being obedient. According to my memory, from young to grown up, I was always forced to learn by my Mum. I was a bit naughty in childhood and liked playing. She always took me back and asked me to do homework (24/149-152)  
 但是开始确实很反感, 她太看重我的分数。可能她希望我是那种分数高的好学生, 听话。我记得从小到大我总是被妈妈逼着学。我有些淘气在外面玩, 每次都会被她揪回去让我写家庭作业
157. In the final year of high school, all of us went for private course for the National Entrance Exam. It was the popular situation. I also did this. At first, I went to the most famous teacher in our place [...] later in another teacher's place. Quite simply, did homework and reading comprehension. I thought the only benefit was to have big spell of time to study English (10/34-38)  
 高中最后一年, 为了高考所有人都去补课, 这是一种趋势。一开始找的时候我找的是青海最有名的老师。。。然后去了另外一个老师那里, 很单纯, 做作业, 做阅读理解。唯一的好处就是给我腾出了很大一块时间让我学英语。
158. Nothing special, just followed the teacher to learn textbooks. Places like ours never had the opportunity to see foreigners. It is impossible for us to speak English. Teachers' pronunciation has strong local accent (11/23-24)  
 没有什么。就是跟着老师学教材。小地方。安徽那边根本不可能有接触外国人的经历, 根本不可能去说英语。课堂上老师那发音都是有方言的。
159. 'Teachers were all very old. Our teachers were only middle school graduates. They learned English by themselves, with inaccurate pronunciation. English teaching was little different from Chinese teaching' (14/16-18)  
 老师都比较老。我们的英语老师是初中毕业过来的, 英语是自学成才。发音也不准。讲课基本上和语文课没什么区别
160. 'My first two years of middle school were in a mountainous area, teachers' level was quite low and they did not pay attention to The International Phonetic Alphabets' (20/7-8)  
 我初一初二在一个山区的中学, 那里的老师不是很好, 特别音标不是很重视, 所以导致英语只能是比较好不是特别好
161. Conditions in our place are pretty poor. We did not have other assisting means. For example, no after school learning materials (2/35-36)  
 我们那边条件比较差, 也没有其他辅助手段, 比如课外书什么的
162. 'It is a small town in Sichuan. Teaching and learning conditions were poor. Listening and speaking abilities were not good' (20/12-13)  
 四川的一个小镇, 教学条件很差, 听说能力都不好
163. 'This was conditioned by the environment. You could not find materials you wanted. There were no tapes, let alone language labs.' (20/196-197)  
 这是环境决定的。你找不到想要得学习资料, 没磁带, 更别提语音室
164. E: My hometown is in Luzhou (small town city) and high school is in Cheng Du (big city). Geographical differences have great influences on English language learning. For example, my classmates from big cities were following a very good mode to learn English since they were young.  
 R: what mode?  
 E: for example, they learned *New Concept English* from primary school and finished all four levels upon graduation from middle school. Then they learned *English on the Air*. When they



were with us in after class time, they were preparing for studying abroad. Compared with them, we obviously learned less' (18/19-24)

钟：因为当时我家在泸州。高中是在成都。地方差异对英语学习影响很大。像我那些英语很好的同学从小就是按一个很好的模式学习英语。

江：是一个什么样的模式？

钟：比如说吧。他们小学就开始学新概念英语。初中毕业四本就学完了。然后学其他的空中英语什么的，他们也有自学。他们平时跟我们一起学的时候，休息的时候就会参加新东方大学准备出国的东西。和他们比我显的学得少了

165. I am proud of coming to this university, but I am not confident in my English. Here is full of excellent students. I need to work hard. I will try to communicate with them and teachers (13/146-147)

反正来北师大我还是挺骄傲的。但在英语方面觉得很自卑。因为高手云集。下一步还是要努力，尽量跟英语学得好的交流，还要积极主动和老师交流。多花点时间。

166. In the past (before university), learning English was only for exams. But now, there were always Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) from international companies who came to Tsinghua and gave speeches in English. I couldn't understand, which was very disappointing... other students were laughing at the humour which I also couldn't understand... I felt I need to learn English as a language for mastery (9/49-54)

因为以前学英语主要是为了考试。可是现在，现在在清华经常有些跨国公司的老总来讲课，都用英语讲，可是听不懂。听着都能睡着了。还不如不去听呢。刺激非常大。确实应把英语掌握好，作为一门语言，而不是应付考试。

167. Coming to Tsinghua I saw so many students with excellent English. They were quite fluent when talking with foreigners. I felt ashamed [...] I need to improve my oral English and listening abilities. (3/76-79)

现在到清华后看到有些同学英语很好，跟外国人交流时表达得很流利就觉得自己的英语很烂。。。所以现在都对自己的口语和听力都不满意。然后我就很想去练。

168. From middle school, it was exams that told me how well I studied. However, in the university there were not so many exams. Little chance was given to us to reflect on our own learning [...] (18/128-130)

从小就是考试来告诉我学得怎么样。分数给你鼓励，考得好就是学的好。觉得这段时间学得不错，但大学里没有那么多考试，一学期就以两次。给与自己肯定或者说给与自己反省的机会就很少

169. Although there are also exams in the university, but I think in good university such as Tsinghua, English is needed for daily life, and it's urgent. Here we had so many English lectures. (9/157-159)

到了大学尽管有考试，但是我认为好的大学，像清华，英语平常就需要用的，而且非常迫切。在这里我听了很多英语讲座

170. At that time, English language learning was genuinely based on your interest. We did not learn it for exams [...] teachers were very good. They made you involve in all kinds of activities, singing English songs, acting out short plays. It was a time you learned English as a language for use (21/9-10; 13-15)

171. I like listening to English songs and watching English movies, perhaps because my parents both liked these. There were many videos in my family. My father once was trying to take TOEFL and my grandpa was an English teacher [...] (8/31-33)

我就喜欢听歌看电影。可能我小时候我爸我妈也挺喜欢看这些。我家好多这种碟。原来我爸爸也准备考托福。结果他也没有去考。然后我爷爷是英语老师

172. The general impression was that English was very important and I had frequent contact with it. In fact, liking it was largely because of habit. They said good night to me since I was a little girl. Gradually English became part of my life (8/114-116)

整体给我的感觉是英语是一门很重要的学科。然后就是因为频繁接触。其实喜欢很大程度上是习惯。我很小时他们就跟我说英语晚安。慢慢英语也是我生活的一部分

173. My interest in English was fostered in childhood [...] Thus I was motivated to learn. I thought interest was the most important factor' (8/80-81)

可能是幼儿时期被激发了兴趣，初中的时候遇到了一个很好的老师，然后从此就更加激励的学习英语，我觉得爱好是最主要的因素



174. My first English teacher in high school taught little about grammar, mainly about listening and speaking. With brief explanation of language points, she asked us to act out dialogues. I felt quite unhappy since other classes all did reading comprehension exercises and we did nothing. I once asked her and she said different roads merged in the same end. Most importantly, English should be learned in order to use it. (3/51-54)  
高中换了一次老师，开始的老师强调说，跟初中老师一样。但那时我觉得挺不爽。因为其它班上的老师都是大篇大篇的发阅读。我什么都没讲是不是有些落后。那时我问了我们老师。他说都是殊途同归。因为英语最重要的是学会如何去表达它
175. Then we changed an English teacher. She paid much attention to grammar. Language points were scrutinized in detail. She said once we were familiar with grammar, we could understand long sentences by analysing their structure. (3/55-57)  
然后我们就换了一个英语老师。他上课就是特别注重语法。上课语言点讲得特别细。他说如果我们与法很清楚的话就能把很长的句子清楚地划分出它的结构然后去理解这个句子
176. Our English teacher was very good. She came back from the U.S. and her English proficiency was quite high [...] In addition to textbooks, we had extra English classes. Each lesson we were asked to listen to tapes, then she would explain sentences. Afterwards, we had plays, dialogues etc. quite interesting (17/21; 23-25)  
我们的英语老师特别好。他是美国留学回来的，各方面都比较好。。。那时候除了教材，每周还花两小节课学新概念三，连续连堂上。他上课每次先听录音，然后再一句一句的讲。然后进行表演呀，对话呀，挺有意思的
177. She (English teacher) told us to watch English movies, news etc. She said she played English songs to her daughter since the baby was born. Even though the child could not understand it, she could articulate English words when she was able to speak (13/29-32).  
她上课时经常讲英语电影，新闻，她讲给她的女儿放英文儿歌，即使还不明白，但当她会说话的时候就能说出英语来
178. Quite a few students with competent English looked down upon her (English teacher's) spoken English. However, she knew how to guide us to improve our overall English abilities, which was never limited to coping with exams (18/38-40).  
我们班有很多英语很好的都瞧不上他的口语，但他知道我们应该怎样提高英语的能力。绝对不是要求你只是做题应付考试
179. In the past, there were few pictures in textbooks. If there were any, they were drawn manually. Our teacher foresaw the situation. He felt the experimental textbook, which is currently used nationwide, was good, then ordered for us. The textbook was indeed good. The best thing was its pictures, authentic and beautiful, shortened the distance between textbooks and real life (2/96-100)  
以前的教材是图片少，而且是手画的。我们念书的时候用的是老教材，不过我们那个老师有先见。觉得那套教材比较好，就在我们那里搞了一套。就是现在全国通用的教材，当时可能还只是在一些地方试行。这本书非常好。
180. Our school paid much attention to English pronunciation. In some classes we were taught the International Phonetic Alphabet. Moreover, apart from the national textbooks, we had two textbooks used by Hong Kong secondary schools. The vocabulary size was larger and grammar was more complex. The textbook was closer to real life. Our middle school was the best in the city and our graduation score was the best (8/88-91)  
比如说我们学校很重视英语的发音。有一些可成交我们音标的发音，除了学习统一教材，还教了我们香港出的中学生教材，新综合，有两册。那个教材单词量大，语法也深，也更加贴近真实的生活。英语考试中考成绩是全市最好的。因为我们中学是全市最好的中学
181. What we learned were those textbooks that emphasised grammar and themes were quite old fashioned. I felt there was nothing new and wished to learn from new textbooks or even to learn from foreign textbooks. (8/15-16)  
然后上科教的那些教材侧重于语法的東西，题材比较老套，感觉没有什么新意，希望学些比较新的教材或干脆拿外国的教材给我们学
182. My uncle, he was an English professor in a university. He suggested me to try *Crazy English*. Li Yang English inspired me a lot. I obtained lots of information. Even for the sake of exams, I should listen more and speak more, it is very useful (4/42-44)



但我有个舅舅。他在郑州。他是英语教授。。。有一次电话他就提了疯狂英语李阳这个英语对我来说启发还是比较大的。我获取到了很多信息。即使是为了应试，也应该多听多说。非常有用

183. Li Yang's idea has much influence on me. I enjoy losing face (4/79)

李阳的理念对我有很大影响，我不怕丢脸

184. *Crazy English* is very useful. It dares to challenge the tradition, holding spoken English can make the breakthrough of reading comprehension, listening, and exams. Think it over, it is true (4/37-39)

他敢于反传统。认为通过口语可以突破阅读，突破听力，突破考试。可能说得有点夸张。其实想想是这样

185. After graduation from middle school, my father sent me to *New Oriental School* and registered me with the spoken English course, American accent [...] afterwards, I felt our English teacher's pronunciation was quite poor. I was uncomfortable to listen to her English. (8/9-10; 12-13)

然后报了一个新东方的英语班，美式口语班，在高一暑假的时候，然后学回来就觉得我们老师的口语很差

186. The teacher from high school...I often went to his office and asked him questions. He always explained in detail. I really felt respectful. Since he spent so much effort on us, we should not disappoint him. All of our class studied hard'(19/88-90)

那时我们班老师。。。我经常去他办公室问问题。他每次都讲得很详细。我确实很佩服。我觉得既然他对我们付出了这么多，自然我们不想让他失望。我们班都学得很努力

187. My teacher cared a lot about me and made me feel interested in English. I thus wanted to learn it well. Every day I learned it quite seriously (17/8-10)

我们老师对我特别照顾让我对英语感兴趣，我也就想把它学好。我每天都学得很认真

188. Her encouragement was quite influential and motivating me to learn. I was a poor student in primary school. When you were in a new environment and people surrounding you often praised you, you would want to learn well (17/51-54)

就是她对我的鼓励。因为我小学是一个差生。成绩很差，很调皮那种。因为比较小。什么都不懂。到了初中，一个全新的环境，人家对你很赞赏的时候，你就有那种很想在学好的心情

189. Our teacher treated us few better. She always had follow-up lessons for us after school, for example, learning *New Concept English*. I learned well and had some interest [...] our teacher paid a lot of attention to me. I felt ashamed if I did not work hard (23/7-8; 24-25)

老师对我们也比较好，总是拉我们几个比较好的学生补课，学新概念什么的。然后觉得自己也学得不错，还是比较有兴趣。。。老师对我挺重视的，不努力觉得不好意思

190. R: Could you possibly tell me why you studied harder when the teacher said your English was poor?'

E: This perhaps was related to my family education. From very young, my parents told me that I should have ambition. They would not require me to be the best, but they asked me to try my best. So when the teacher said I was not good, surely I would not...feeling that depressed or giving up. Because feeling depressed was no help for improving your score. So I continued to study hard depending on my own efforts (3/153-156)

江：你能讲讲为什么老是说你英语不好，你反而更努力呢？

谷：这可能跟我的家庭教育有关，因为从小开始，我爸爸妈妈就告诉我说一定要上进，要升读，不要求做和最好，但要尽自己最大的努力去做，这样当教师说我不好的时候，我当然不会去.....就是很沮丧的那种，因为这个你沮丧，对你的成绩是没有帮助的，所以就全靠自己的努力继续去学

191. R: Why you did you say were more likely to be motivated by failure than success?

E: Perhaps it was because of enlightening education I received, with potential influences. For example, my Mum is a person who works hard and seriously. She is very strong and has quite high social status. Her success in her career made me have certain opinions about the society. That is, you should use your own abilities to solve the conflict surrounding you, regardless of how other people comment on you. Perhaps it was due to my respect for my Mum (15/159-162)

江：为什么说失败比成功对你的促进作用更大？

刘：可能启蒙教育，有潜移默化的影响吧，比如说我妈妈是一个工作很认真，比较强，也是地位比较高的女性。她的事业的成功让我对人生有一定的看法，就是不管别人怎么说，怎么看你都要



用自己的实力做给人家看来化解身边的这些不好的东西。可能是对妈妈的仰望和对她生活的例证吧

192. The teacher asked us to copy words. It was too late and I wanted to sleep [...] my parents helped me do it (10/174; 176)  
老师让我们抄单词。太晚了我想睡觉。。。我父母就帮我抄让我睡觉。
193. I also tried to force myself to learn English, but there was no effect. I felt this period of time had been wasted, which I otherwise could do lots of other things. (10/104-106)  
我试着让我自己学英语，可是没效果。我觉得那段时间浪费掉了，还不如拿来干别的事情。
194. My parents both trust me. We are quite independent. When we got back home, each did his/her own work. I had a lot of space for autonomy. In general, no one interfered with others' business except for necessary discussions on important family issues [...] for my study, they had no requirements, and it was all depending on myself (10/170-172)  
我父母都很相信我。我们家各自都很独立的，各忙各的。所以我自主的空间很大。一般不会去干涉别人的空间，除非有事情需要讨论了，我们采访到桌面上讨论。对于我的学习他们也对我没要求，都是靠自己
195. My parents did not have special requirements for me. They only asked me to be aware that learning was my own responsibility. Because I learned music when I was young, perhaps because of this, I did not think exam results were that important (17/19-20)  
因为我父母也没要求我怎么样。只要你自觉学就行了，因为我小时候学音乐，所以也可能因为这个原因，就觉得成绩什么的没什么了不起的
196. Practice makes perfect (3/103)  
熟能生巧
197. Pore over one's books by the light of a candle (2/107)  
秉烛夜游
198. Value lies in being persistent (5/194)  
贵在坚持
199. Fist does not leave your hand; music does not leave your mouth (20/225)  
拳不离手，曲不离口
200. Master brings you into the door, cultivation is yours. (4/172; 8/126; 19/167)  
师傅领进门，修行在个人
201. No pains no gains (7/153)  
不劳无获
202. Hair hanged; thigh pierced (23/139)  
头悬梁，锥刺股
203. Interest is the best teacher (16/10)  
兴趣是最好的老师
204. [...] Then by accident, I saw my classmate read a book, Bookworm, did you hear of it?  
R: Yes.  
E: [...] that was my first time to contact English. I felt quite good and started to read it. My English improved ever since then (2/58-66)  
葛：然后在高二时无意中看到别人在看一本书，书虫。书虫听说过吗？  
江：听说过。  
葛：是外研社和牛津大学出版社联合推出的。那等于说我是第一次用英语接触到的小说，看了以后感觉很好。然后就开始看了。从那以后我的英语开始有起色了
205. I did not get good graduation score when I entered into High school. I therefore had planned to study step by step in order to make gradual progress. Surprisingly, I got very good exam result in my first exam in High school, No. 3 in the whole grade. I felt this was the worst exam I ever took because afterwards, my mentality changed. In fact, in High school, it was normal for a student to fall over 10 ranks since even 5 points due to a poor result in one subject would result

in your falling. At that time, parents, teachers often asked me why I fell so much. It was that type of pressure, too much pressure...I gradually lost my enthusiasm. (21/57-63)

上了高中以后心态不是很好。想着自己也不是很好的考进来的就慢慢学吧。在慢慢爬上去，但是没想到第一次考试因为没有心理负担吧，也没怎么准备反倒考的很好。全年级第三名。我觉得这是我高中考的最失败的一次，因为从那以后心态又有微妙的变化。在高中其实你名次跌个十几名是很正常的。因为如果你有一门没考好，哪怕五分。也能让你的名次降好几名。那时候家长也问我怎么退步了，老师也会说怎么考差了。这样反正那种压力，也不是压力，反正心里不好受。。。我逐渐丧失了对英语的兴趣。

206. The best thing my family gave me was independence. Since Grade 5 in primary school, my family hardly monitored me. My Mum and Dad worked in different places and my younger brother stayed with my Mum, I with my Dad. He was very busy at work. I stayed at home alone. I had to do everything by myself (2/326-328)

家里给我最好的就是独立性。在我小学五年级的时候，家里基本上没管过我，我妈和我爸工作分开，我还有一个弟，我弟和我妈住一起，我爸工作比较忙，我一个人住在家里，什么都是我自己搞

207. My Dad and I lived in a local community, with few playmates. I often played by myself. Set a target and did it. It became a habit. Following the goal, once you reached it, you felt very happy (2/336-337)

我跟我爸住在水电大院，没有什么小伙伴，自己跟自己玩，给自己设定一个目标，自己去做。成了习惯。按照自己设定的目标去做，达到目标就觉的很爽

208. If my academic score was not good, I felt very bad [...] it was self-dignity, part of my character [...] When I was young I had shown my strong character, not easily giving up. For example, many students could not run 800-meter race, I was the only one who did. (9/131-132; 136-137)

如果我分数不好，我就感觉不好。。。是一种自尊心，可能部分由于我的性格。。。当我小的时候，我性格很好强，轻易不放弃。比如很多学生不能跑800米，我是唯一一个能跑下来的。

209. My English teacher had a biased opinion on me. Each time she asked others to answer questions except for me. For small quizzes, I could only get C whereas others got A. However, it was such treatment that encouraged me to work harder and become the best. I am that type of person with a strong character. (15/5-9)

我的英语老师对我有偏见，每次她点人回答问题从来不叫我，对于小测验，从来都是别人拿A我只能拿C。但是他这样只是让我更加努力和想成为最好的。我就是那种性格很强的人。

210. I was an obedient child since I was young. I would do as what teachers told to. (11/48-49)

我小的时候很听话。老师让干什么就干什么。