

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND THE USE
OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES:
A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE LEARNERS**

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UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

2006

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**Learning Environments and the Use of Vocabulary
Learning Strategies: A Case Study of Chinese Learners**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Education
At the University of Leicester**

By

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**School of Education
University of Leicester**

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**Learning Environments and the Use
of Vocabulary Learning Strategies: A Case Study of Chinese Learners**

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Abstract

This thesis reports a study of how Chinese students use strategies when learning second language vocabulary. The focus of the study is on the effect of learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) and learner's achievement level on the use of vocabulary learning strategies. The subjects are Chinese secondary school students learning English in China (EFL context) and in Singapore (ESL context).

For the investigation purpose, I developed in this study a two-phase research design, which consisted of a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase. Phase one was a survey using a modified version of the questionnaire developed by Gu and Johnson (1996). 450 secondary school students, aged from 16 to 19, from two secondary schools in Harbin, China and one boarding school in Singapore participated in the survey. The profile of the students' learning beliefs, sources and strategies was examined in relation to their learning environments and achievement level. The t test results showed that learning environment and achievement level were significant factors in affecting vocabulary learning beliefs, sources and strategy use.

Phase Two was to make use of the qualitative data collected from selected participants through diaries and interviews to triangulate and illuminate the findings of the questionnaire survey in Phase One. The findings were generally consistent with the findings of Phase One, though with minor discrepancies. The findings suggest that the combined effects of the teaching emphasis and the amount of exposure to the target language in and out of the classroom should be considered closely in order to understand the strategy choice of Chinese EFL learners, and that integrative strategy training should aim at fostering positive cognition about language learning, facilitating self-directed learning, and identifying pedagogical approaches in an attempt to nurture intrinsic motivation in students' learning process. (288 words)

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work reported here is the research I have conducted during the period of my study registered as an Ed. D. candidate at University of Leicester and that I have not registered for any other academic award or qualification at any other institution concurrent with my present registered study.

This thesis is my own work, where any citations I have made are given due credit. I have not submitted the material reported in this thesis wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than the University for which it is now submitted.

Wang Dakun

Signed: 

Date: 25/1/07

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Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief description of the background to the study. Then it states the purpose and the rationale of the study, followed by the research questions to be addressed. The chapter further presents the significance of the study. Finally, the plan of the thesis is presented.

1.1 The Background to the Study

With a shift of focus from teachers to learners, as can be seen in the development of a learner-centered, self-directed communicative approach (Cohen, 1998; Gu, 1996), second language research efforts have been increasingly devoted to exploring learning strategies used by second language learners (O'Malley et al., 1985; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). The original attempt was made in the last half of the 1970s in order to establish what good language learning strategies might be and to share them with unsuccessful learners. Subsequent to these initial investigations, various other researchers explored the relationships between reported strategy use and language learning outcomes in the hope of identifying the range and nature of learning strategies employed by good, successful, or effective language learners, with good, successful, or effective generally understood to mean those learners who perform well on tests or examinations, or who are rated as such by their teachers (see Chamot, 2005 and McDonough, 1999 for summaries of the research). The general findings from these studies are that successful learners demonstrate a greater range and frequency of learning strategies or more appropriate application of strategies to the learning task, whereas less successful or unsuccessful students use a limited or inappropriately applied repertoire of language learning strategies.

Besides proficiency, the choice and use of learning strategies are found to be determined by individual learner differences, situational and social factors, such as personal beliefs about language learning, the form of instruction they are exposed to, and environmental opportunities (Chamot, 2005; Gu, 2003b; McDonough, 1999; Oxford & Anderson, 1995; Ellis, 1994).

In terms of strategy use relating to specific language tasks, a wide range of strategies is identified in vocabulary tasks (O'Malley et al., 1985). Taking these findings in language learning strategy research into account, it should be noted that some of the interesting dimensions to be pursued might be how learners' personal beliefs about language learning and their learning context are related to their L2 vocabulary learning strategies.

As far as second language vocabulary research is concerned, it is now anything but a neglected area, and the mushrooming amount of experimental studies being published is enough to swamp even lexical specialists trying to keep abreast of current trends (Meara, 1995). The upsurging interest in vocabulary learning is largely due to the initial cry of Meara (1980) that vocabulary acquisition research had been "a neglected aspect". Vocabulary was neglected before 1980 most likely due to the fact that vocabulary is an open-ended system defying structural description and generalization which often makes it difficult for linguists to narrow down their focus of enquiry (Carter, 1987, 1998; Gass, 1988; Singleton, 1997). However, vocabulary is acknowledged as the "greatest single source of problems" from the second language learners' perspective (Meara, 1980, p. 221). This remark may possibly reflect the fact that the open-endedness of a vocabulary system is also perceived to be a cause of difficulty by learners (Levenston, 1979). Unlike syntax and phonology which follow rules that learners may acquire in their second language acquisition, it is not always clear in L2 language vocabulary learning which vocabulary items are to be learned first and which words ought to be deferred. Some researchers hold that new words and their meanings do not need to be taught explicitly since most vocabulary is likely to be learnt implicitly when learners are engaged in grammatical or communicative tasks or while reading (Krashen, 1989; Maiguashca, 1993). In fact, this belief has been persistent in the practice of lexical instruction, which, according to Maiguashca (1993), has a detrimental effect on L2 vocabulary teaching as well. It is pointed out that one of the drawbacks is the absence of a lexical organization principle in course books so that L2 learners are exposed to new words in a random, haphazard manner (Maiguashca, 1993).

There is a long-standing tradition of research into vocabulary control and selection primarily on the basis of frequency counts (Kucera & Francis, 1967; West, 1953). The underlying assumption behind making lists of frequently-used words is the notion that such an attempt will help L2 learners and teachers decide which words are to be learned and taught. However, one criticism is that this type of research is concerned with controlling learning by restricting the order of words without consideration being given to how a target language vocabulary is actually learned by L2 students (Meara, 1980). This seems to suggest that it is very important to take learner factors into account when we attempt to investigate ways in which L2 students are involved in target language vocabulary learning. In this connection, it has also been proposed that the following four categories can be regarded as a set of factors affecting the growth and expansion of L2 vocabulary:

- a. features of the second language — phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics;
- b. features of the first language — and other languages known to the learner;
- c. features of the learner — personality, motivation, previous knowledge;
- d. features of the learning situation — especially input, controlled or uncontrolled, general or specific.

(Levenston, 1979, p. 151)

Particularly relevant to the present study are the third and fourth categories. Although features of the learner such as personality, motivation, and previous knowledge described in (c) are not measured and, thus, beyond the scope of this study, it is possible that learners' attitudes towards, or motivation for L2 vocabulary learning are related to other learner variables, such as achievement level. Regarding features of the learning situation in (d) above, the context in which opportunities for second language learning are provided is considered in this study. It is suggested that this may be divided roughly into formal and informal situations. Formal situations are where second language learning is provided by various kinds of educational institutions in a society, while informal situations are where second language learning takes place in

various ways and amounts, depending on the social contexts that “determine the potential opportunities for a learner to interact with speakers and writers of the target language” (Spolsky, 1988, p. 385-86). This remark seems to be worthy of note in that one of the primary purposes of the current study is to examine the effects of social context on the learning of second language vocabulary (see the third chapter on comparing learning contexts). In other words, the effects of the non-target language environment versus the target language environment on the use of second language vocabulary learning strategies will be investigated by making a comparison between two groups of L2 learners: Chinese intermediate level students in China and those in Singapore. To recapitulate, in addition to achievement level, the present study concerns itself with the language learning environment, including classroom environment and culture of learning as another potential variable affecting the use of vocabulary learning strategies.

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

The study of vocabulary learning strategies has emerged from the recent developments in language learning strategies research and second language vocabulary research, in other words, from where these two areas of study overlap with each other. Investigations into the use of vocabulary learning strategies carried out so far have been mainly concerned with the similarities and differences between students at higher and lower proficiency levels, either at one educational institution (Gu & Johnson, 1996), or across different levels of institutions (Ahmed, 1989; Schmitt, 1997).

The purpose of the present study is a contrastive study to examine ways in which learner factors and language learning environment are related to the use of vocabulary learning strategies by Chinese intermediate level students in the EFL context of mainland China and the ESL setting of Singapore. More specifically, learners' achievement level is posited as a learner variable, and the EFL and ESL environments are postulated as language learning environment variables.

The participants in China were from secondary schools in a provincial capital, studying English as a foreign language as prescribed in the national curriculum. They were taught mainly in traditional grammar-translation methods. The participants in Singapore were also from China and had been in Singapore for secondary education for minimally over one year. However, in the ESL context of Singapore, English is used as the medium of instruction in all lessons except Chinese and English is widely used in daily communication. In English classes, the ESL participants are taught mainly through a communicative approach (see 4.3.1.1).

1.3 Rationale of the Study

While language learning strategy research has so far produced an impressive amount of insight into language learning strategies in general, it is time for researchers to focus on the more specific aspects, such as vocabulary learning strategies. Vocabulary learning strategies must play a crucial role in second language acquisition since many second language acquisition researchers concur that for ESL learners, vocabulary is the greatest obstacle (Alderson, 1984; Cohen, 1991; Huckin & Bloch, 1993; Huckin & Coady, 1999), but it's the bedrock of second language acquisition as well (Ellis, 1994). In this sense, the studies on vocabulary learning strategies are likely to yield insightful implications for effective learning and instruction.

Effective learning and instructions of English are very important for Chinese students because English is stipulated as a requirement by the Chinese Ministry of Education as a foreign language in the school curricula. In China, English is taught commencing from the junior middle school level, continuing at the senior middle school level until the students go to the higher education, where English is also a requirement for graduation. In China, English is primarily interpreted as a tool to gain access to Western advances in science and technology, and secondarily as a means of fostering broader relations with other nations (Xu, 1990). There are over 86 million students and around 4 million teachers in approximately 77, 268 middle schools. English is a compulsory foreign language requirement at this level¹. Middle schools are divided into junior middle and senior middle stages, each lasting three years. At

¹ More information is available at: <http://www.cernet.edu.cn> (统计数字)

the senior middle school level, general and vocational are the two types of schools. Students in general senior middle schools are prepared for the college/university matriculation examinations. The other students who choose vocational senior middle schools find employment upon graduation. Foreign language is not required in the vocational middle schools except in schools that prepare students for the hospitality industry, such as hotel services, tourism, trade, and so on.

Five hours per week is devoted to the teaching of English both at the junior middle school and senior middle school level, with flexibility in some schools where English is emphasized through expenditure of more classroom hours in the school curricula for English, usually six hours a week. In many primary schools in urban areas, English is taught at the upper primary levels.

In the first two years of the tertiary education, “College English” is a requirement for all university students except English majors in the English department and those learning other foreign languages. The standard national curricula for foreign language are four hours of classroom instruction per week, lasting four consecutive semesters, totaling 280 hours. The English curricula are further divided into intensive reading, extensive reading, fast reading, listening, and in some institutions, one or two hours of speaking per week. The students are required to pass College English Test Band-II after their 1st year’s study and Band-IV to qualify for graduation. Band-VI is optional for Bachelors’ programs, but a requirement for Masters’ programs. The policy has been effective since 1986 when the College English Syllabus for Sciences and Arts was first published and put into use.

Since proficiency in English is a prerequisite for academic success and secure future for students in China, empirical research likely to shed light on effective English learning and instruction is much needed. This kind of research is all the more needed considering the following three reasons. Firstly, there is some evidence showing that the English language proficiency of learners to some extent correlates with their use of vocabulary learning strategies (Ahmed, 1989; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Sanaoui, 1995). Meara (1996) states that “vocabulary skills make a significant contribution to almost all aspects of L2 proficiency” (p.37). Second, it has been widely acknowledged that sociocultural factors and the environment influence the way

in which people use strategies (Ellis, 1994; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Parry, 1993a; Williams & Burden, 1997). For those parents who finance their children's education in Singapore, the study helps them to investigate whether it is worth sending their children from China to Singapore to take advantage of the ESL environment before they start university studies. Third, vocabulary is "thought to be one of the most difficult components" for the EFL students in China (Zhao, 2001, p. 1).

Unlike English being learned as a foreign language in China, English is the de facto dominant working language for all practical purposes in Singapore and is studied as the first language² in the schools (see 3.2). For the PRC students moving to Singapore, it is not known if they will change their beliefs about language learning and how they will make use of the opportunities that are present in Singapore but not in China to learn English in general and vocabulary in particular. To date little has been published on the area in question. What this study intends to do is to fill in this gap in the empirical research in particular and try to contribute to second language acquisition in general.

1.4 The Overall Research Questions

The overall research questions are posited below.

1. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their beliefs about vocabulary learning?
2. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their sources of vocabulary learning?
3. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies?
4. Do learners' achievement levels influence their choice of vocabulary learning strategies?
5. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their beliefs about vocabulary learning? If yes, how do

² In the Singaporean context, the students involved in this study are considered to have English as their first language as English is the language of instruction. However, as English is not their native language, spoken at home or with most their peers, they will be referred to as English as a second language learners in this study.

Singapore-based learners change their beliefs about language learning and the extent of personal responsibility for language learning as a result of exposure to a communicative curriculum, English medium schooling and an ESL environment outside school?

6. How do the changed beliefs and opportunities result in different patterns of strategy use? How do they take advantage of opportunities that are present in Singapore but not in China? As it gets closer to exams, do they increasingly favour memorisation, or limit their strategies to examination-oriented ones?
7. Do Singapore-based successful and unsuccessful learners differ in their beliefs about vocabulary learning and their choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies? If yes, how do they differ? At what level, metacognitive, cognitive, social or affective? If no, how can it be explained? Can qualitative data provide any clues?

1.5 The Significance of the Study

Research on vocabulary acquisition has been in the limelight over the last two decades and many empirical studies have been carried out with regard to vocabulary learning. However, little research has been done on the role of context and learner's individual differences in lexical acquisition. This study is designed to focus on the effect of learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) on learner's use of vocabulary learning strategies.

This is the first attempt ever to do so as far as Chinese subjects are concerned. It should be noted that what is found to be practised significantly more frequently by the Chinese students in Singapore (CSS) may not necessarily work well for the Chinese students in China (CSC), and versus versa. Nor does it always follow that strategies more frequently used by CSS in a target language environment are good ways of facilitating L2 vocabulary learning for CSC. Some differences in patterns of strategy use for CSS may not be wise changes and they may result in enhancement of learning in just different ways of doing learning.

Nevertheless, the findings of the present study are likely to prompt both Chinese learners of English and their teachers to reflect on the vocabulary learning

and teaching strategies they are employing and even explore strategies other than their conventional ones. Besides, the findings based on learner variables, such as achievement level and different language learning environments, it is hoped, will pave the way for further investigation into ways in which L2 vocabulary is to be taught in accordance with the differences in vocabulary learning strategy use identified by each factor delineated above. With the findings garnered from the study, L2 teachers will be able to familiarize themselves with the strategies used by L2 students and allow their teaching style or techniques to be adjusted to such an extent that the learning strategies employed by L2 learners will work as effectively as possible.

1.6 Definitions of Terms Used in the Study

The following operational terms will be used throughout the study:

- (1) Learning strategies: techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information (Chamot, 1987; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).
- (2) Language learning strategies: steps, techniques or actions taken or consciously selected by learners to improve their learning by enhancing their ability to process, internalize, and store and retrieve a second language (Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 1990).
- (3) Vocabulary learning strategies: learning strategies learners employ with the specific purpose of facilitating the learning process of second language vocabulary items.
- (4) 'Foreign language' vs. 'second language': A foreign language is one which is taught in schools as a subject but which is not used for communication within a country; a second language is one which is not a native language in a country but which is widely used as a medium of communication along with another language or languages. Briefly, a 'second language' has social functions as a lingua franca within the community where it is learnt while a 'foreign

language' is learnt primarily for contact outside one's own community (Littlewood, 1984).

- (5) 'L2 learners', 'ESL learner', 'EFL learner', 'foreign language learners', and 'foreign language students' are also used interchangeably in the sense that all of these terms indicate those who are learning English as a non-native, additional language.
- (6) 'Target language' will be used to refer to both 'foreign language' and 'second language' in the sense that all of these terms indicate that the English language is the language that non-native learners are learning.
- (7) 'L2 vocabulary items' and 'L2 words' are used interchangeably. Although Nation (1990) defined 'word' as a word family which includes inflectional as well as derivative forms of each word, both the above terms are used to include fixed and idiomatic phrases as well.

1.7 Plan of the Thesis

Chapter One has been an introduction to the thesis, covering the background to the study, the purpose and the importance of the study and the overall research questions. The focus of this chapter is to put this study into perspective by providing a general but relevant background underlying the present study.

Chapter Two is a review of relevant literature. Language learning strategy research in general will be considered first, to be followed by a literature review on the strategy use of L2 vocabulary learning. I will identify and summarize the definition of general language learning strategy in the first place. The terminology used in the literature to refer to learning strategies will be clarified and some categorization systems of general language learning strategies will be examined. I will then review the empirical research on the impact of context on learner's language development and learning strategy use, and the relationship between proficiency, beliefs and learning strategies. I also review the empirical research on vocabulary learning strategies carried out so far and delineate the research scope of this study by spelling out the hypotheses for this study.

Chapter Three reviews the general settings in which the participants in this study learn English. It clears the scene for understanding the basic backgrounds of the current educational systems and English teaching in China and Singapore. The main job of this chapter is to present enough background to establish that China and Singapore offer sufficiently distinctive learning contexts.

Chapter Four covers the methodology of the study, the main job of which is to show how the research design will address the questions. A detailed account of the methodology is provided which includes background information of the subjects as well as a discussion of the data collection and data analysis procedures. Relevant methodological issues are also addressed whenever appropriate.

Chapter Five is the quantitative analysis of vocabulary learning strategies data collected through a questionnaire survey. The overall frequency of strategy use in each category will be considered in each section first, to be followed by a more detailed discussion about the specific strategies in order to show the significant differences in terms of 'EFL versus ESL' factor and 'achievement level'. A summary of vocabulary learning strategies found to be used by the EFL and ESL groups of subjects in each learning environment will also be provided at the end based upon the results.

Chapter Six draws on the findings of the qualitative data by closely examining two small groups of learners (twelve students in EFL and ESL contexts respectively) in order to look at how the learners contextualise their vocabulary learning, and explain how and why the opportunity/choice to use a particular strategy occurs; how Singapore-based learners come to realise that they can take advantage of opportunities that are present in Singapore but weren't in China; how they change their beliefs about language learning and the extent of personal responsibility for language learning as a result of exposure to a communicative curriculum, English medium schooling and an ESL environment outside school, and how changed beliefs and opportunities result in different patterns of strategy use; and to elaborate and document beliefs and employment of strategies that may be critical to understanding the attainment of students' English learning outcomes.

Chapter Seven is the summary and conclusion. It consists of the summary of the result of research questions, limitations of the study, the implications for pedagogy

and future research. A brief summary of 'achievement level' and EFL versus ESL differences in overall vocabulary learning strategy use will also be provided.

Chapter Two

Review of Relevant Literature

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, language learning strategy research in general will be considered first, to be followed by a literature review of the effects of contextual factors on language learning strategies. I will identify and summarize the definition of general language learning strategy in the first place. The terminology used in the literature to refer to learning strategies will be clarified and some categorization systems of general language learning strategies will be examined. I will then review the empirical research on the impact of context on learner's language development and learning strategy use, and the relationship between proficiency, beliefs and learning strategies. I also review the empirical research on vocabulary learning strategies carried out so far and delineate the research scope of this study by spelling out the hypotheses for this study.

2.2 Language Learning Strategy Research

Since the early 1970s, a historic focus-shifting in EFL/ESL studies has been from how teachers teach to how students learn (Wenden, 1987a), as researchers have tried to search for a deeper understanding of the nature of the second language learning process. There is an increasing awareness that a conception of language learning is an essential component of a language teaching theory, and that efficient language teaching must work with rather than against the natural and/or learned processes of language learning (Cohen, 1998; Howatt, 1984; Stern, 1983; Wenden, 1987b).

Increased interest in language learning strategies has been part of the movement towards learner-centered language learning. The studies on language learning strategies began with attempts to identify the characteristics of good language learners (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). There has since been a proliferation of publications on learning strategies. Besides numerous articles in various academic journals, the following are some of the recently published books

devoted to language learning strategies: Bialystok (1990), Cohen (1998), Graham (1997), McDonough (1995), O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), Wenden and Rubin (1987).

However, the strategy studies of L2 learning and use are characterized by a lack of a common framework. There are in circulation a number of terms for describing second language learning and using strategies but the conflicting views as to the meaning of some rather basic terms often render readers uncertain what the terms actually refer to and how to make use of them in understanding second or foreign language instruction (Cohen, 1998; Gu, 1996).

In the following subsections, I will try to clarify some notions in relation to learning strategies through reviewing the relevant literature.

2.2.1 What is a language learning strategy?

In language learning strategy research, authors have not reached a consensus on the definition of learning strategy and probably will not do so (McDonough, 1995). From the outset with regard to what learning strategies are, Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) differed from each other. To Rubin, learning strategies are the specific techniques or devices that learners use to acquire knowledge, whereas to Stern learning strategies are some more general higher order approaches to learning which govern the choice of more specific techniques. "This difference has continued to exist, though Rubin's more specific perspective has emerged as the dominant stance taken by researchers within the field of second language acquisition" (Gu, 1996, p. 2). Table 2.1 shows chronologically how the term "learning strategies" has evolved in this field through the years.

2.2.2 Definitions of learning strategies and their related issues

It is clear from the definitions quoted in Table 2.1 that there are some aspects on which authors agree and others on which they differ. First, there has not been a consensus of opinions about whether strategies are specific or general. To some authors (e.g., Davies, 1995; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975, 1987), strategies are specific actions while they are more general approaches to some others (e.g., Naiman et al.,

Table 2.1: Selected definitions of “learning strategies”

Author	Definitions refer to	Function and characteristics
Rubin (1975, p. 43)	Techniques or devices	To acquire knowledge
Bialystok (1978, p. 76)	Methods/conscious enterprises	For exploiting available information to increase the proficiency of L2
Naiman et al. (1978, p. 2)	General, more or less deliberate approaches to learning	Observable forms of language behavior
Cohen (1984, p. 110)	Mental operations	To accomplish learning tasks
Weinstein and Mayer (1986, p. 315)	Behaviors and thoughts of a learner	To influence the learner’s encoding process
Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986, p. 24-25)	(Purposeful and goal-oriented) processes underling performance or thinking tasks	The basis of performance and thinking tasks
Rubin (1987, p. 19)	Set of operations, steps, plans, routines	To facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information; to regulate learning of an L2
Wenden (1987b, p. 6-7)	– learning behaviors – strategic knowledge – knowledge about learning	To learn and regulate the learning of an L2
Chamot (1987, p. 71)	Techniques, approaches or deliberate actions	To facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information
Schmeck (1988, p.5)	A sequence of procedures	For accomplishing learning
Kirby (1988, p. 230-231)	A combination of tactics, or a choice among tactics, that forms a coherent plan	To solve a problem
O’Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 1)	Special thoughts or behaviors	To help comprehend, learn, or retain new information
Oxford (1990, p. 8)	Specific actions	To make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations
Oxford (1993, p. 175)	Specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques,	Often consciously to improve progress in internalizing, storing, retrieving, and using the L2
McIntyre (1994, p. 185)	Techniques deliberately chosen	To facilitate language learning
Davies (1995, p. 8)	Physical or mental actions employed consciously or unconsciously employed	For facilitating learning
Cohen (1998, p. 5)	Conscious thoughts and actions	To improve the learning of an L2, the use of it, or both.
Cohen (1998, p. 68)	Conscious thoughts and behaviors	To improve the knowledge and understanding of the target language.
Chamot (2005, p. 112)	Conscious and goal-driven procedures	To facilitate a learning task; tackle an unfamiliar language task

1978; Nisbet & Shucksmith, 1986; Schmeck, 1988; Stern, 1975) and they can even mean both to still others (e.g., Chamot, 1987; Cohen, 1998). Secondly, it should be noted that opinions vary as to the distinction between learner strategies and learning strategies. Wenden and Rubin (1987) use 'learner strategies' in the title of their book, although Rubin (1987) provides her own definition of 'learning strategies' in her article. On the other hand, O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990) and Cohen (1990) refer to 'learning strategies' in their books. Cohen (1998) tries to clarify the terms by saying:

Second language learner strategies encompass both second language learning and second language use strategies. Taken together they constitute the steps or actions consciously selected by learners to improve the learning of a second language, the use of it, or both (1998, p.5).

Nevertheless, since researchers in this field have not agreed on a definition of learning strategies, the distinction will not be widely observed and thus 'learner' and 'learning' strategies will still be used in the literature without making a clear distinction between them (McDonough, 1995, 1999).

Third, it has been questioned whether learning strategies are conscious or unconscious. Chamot (1987, p. 71) states in her definition of learning strategies that they are 'techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions', which appear to suggest that they are employed consciously by learners. Cohen (1990, p. 5), by including the word 'consciously' in his definition of the term, makes it clear that consciousness is the essential component underlying the concept of learning strategies. Furthermore, he states clearly that "the element of consciousness is what distinguishes strategies from those processes that are not strategic (Cohen, 1998, p. 4). Oxford (1990), though she does not articulate the involvement of consciousness in her definition as Cohen does, using the word 'taken' (Oxford, 1990, p. 8) seems to imply to some extent that strategies are used consciously. However, O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 52), though they admit the involvement of consciousness in the early stages of learning, assert that strategies may later be performed 'without the person's awareness', which clearly indicates that strategies will ultimately be used unconsciously. Thus, there seems to be little agreement about what makes a strategy conscious or unconscious, and this is

indeed a controversial issue (Cohen, 1998). In other words, it is as yet unclear to what extent such factors as the learning task and the learning environment are interrelated to affect the learner in the conscious or unconscious use of a specific language learning strategy (Oxford & Cohen, 1992).

Based on the above discussions, it is necessary and practical to formulate the operational definition of learning strategies employed in this study as follows:

Learning strategies are steps, techniques or actions taken or consciously selected by learners to improve their learning by enhancing their ability to process, internalize, and store and retrieve a second language.

In the light of this definition, **vocabulary learning strategies** can be defined as learning strategies learners employ with the specific purpose of facilitating the learning process of vocabulary items.

Having clarified the concept of the term of learning strategy and formulated the working definition of it, let us turn to the relationship between learning strategies and other factors.

2.2.3 Relationship between learning strategies and other factors

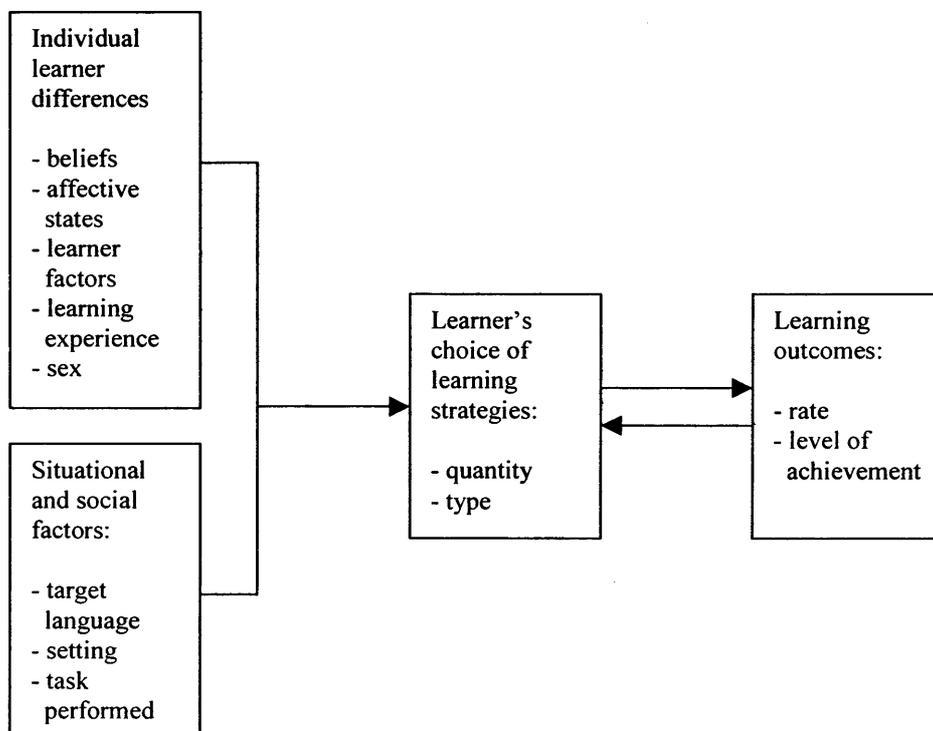
In accordance with the definition of learning strategies employed in this study, learning strategies are what the learner utilizes when confronted with a learning task. The strategies employed are alterable and variable, depending on individual differences, such as experience, language proficiency and gender (Cohen, 1998; Ellis, 1994; Oxford, 1995), learning tasks (Ellis, 1994), learning situations per se where learning occurs (Gu, 1997). The common ground the above authors stress is that internal individual differences and external contextual and situational variations play a crucial role in the formation and use of learning strategies, and thus in learning strategy research.

Besides, it is believed that there is a strong relationship between strategy use and learning result. Biggs (1984) stresses that strategy plays a key role in illuminating the relationship between person, situation and performance because it explains what happens between individual and situational variables and performance. Reflecting on

the variety of factors associated with the employment of learning strategies, Ellis (1994, p. 529) holds that strategies play a mediating role in the process of language learning. He claims that there is a strong interface between individual differences, situational and social factors, strategies used by language learners and language learning achievement (Figure 2.1). While individual differences and social factors can affect the choice of learning strategies and thus language achievement, this interaction can occur in a reverse direction in such a way that language achievement can affect the employment of learning strategies and thus further individual differences.

In brief, Ellis (1994) sums up the general relationships between pre-existing factors, strategy use and learning results. First, the choice and use of learning strategies are determined by individual learner differences and situational and social factors. Second, the quantity and type of strategies chosen and used, and the rate and level of learning achievement mutually affect each other.

Figure 2.1: Relationship between individual learner differences, situational factors, learning strategies, and learning outcomes. (Ellis, 1994, p. 530)



In the following section, taxonomies of strategies will be reviewed in detail for a frame of reference for discussion of the results of the vocabulary learning strategy data in the wider context of language learning strategies.

2.2.4 Classification of language learning strategies

Early studies on learning strategies show that strategies can be described and categorized in different ways. Researchers of language learning strategies differ in definitional content of the term *strategy* and have followed different principles of classifications from the very outset. Rubin (1975), Stern (1975) and Naiman et al. (1978) contributed immensely to the identification and classification of language learning strategies though they have some limitations of their own. Following the early work in this field, other researchers have proposed different taxonomies of strategies (Bialystok, 1978; Chamot, 1987; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985; Rubin, 1981, 1987).

When it comes to the taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies, researchers also developed different versions based on the classifications of general language learning strategies. The taxonomy of Schmitt (1997) consisted of two general categories of discovery strategies and consolidation strategies, each of which subsumed a number of subcategories. Gu and Johnson (1996) categorized vocabulary learning strategies into metacognitive regulations, guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, note-taking strategies, memory strategies (rehearsal), memory strategies (encoding) and activation strategies. The subcategories and the items under them varied from dimension to dimension.

So far, there is no consensus of opinion about the classification of learning strategies in general and vocabulary learning strategies in particular. The taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies used in this study (Appendices A and B) is a modified version of Gu and Johnson (1996), with inspirations drawn from Schmitt (1997) and Oxford (1990).

2.3 Language Learning Strategy and Contextual Factors

As reviewed in Section 2.2.3, both individual differences and contextual variations play a crucial role in the formation and use of learning strategies. Therefore, the choice and use of learning strategies are determined, among other factors, by the effects of learner context, learners' levels of proficiency and their learning beliefs, the empirical research of which this section focuses on in view of the research scope of this study.

2.3.1 Effects of learner context on language learning

Learning strategies are directed toward particular learning tasks that can vary in one way or another, and can differ depending on whether the learning context is an EFL or ESL setting (Chamot, 2005; Cohen, 2003; Oxford et al., 2004), and whether the context is in or outside the classroom (Oxford & Anderson, 1995). From an ethnographic perspective, values and beliefs of a learning context influence every aspect of the aims of the learners, the methods, and consequently the strategies used to achieve learners' learning tasks and ultimately their second language proficiency (LoCastro, 1994). Takeuchi (2003) examined 67 books by Japanese good language learners of various languages and analyzed each author for evidence of language learning strategy use included in their descriptions of their foreign language learning histories. The results suggested that there were strategies especially favoured in the Japanese EFL context. The post-structuralist revolution in the language sciences has given even more importance to the notion of context and variability in language acquisition (Kramsch, 1991, p. 177). This subsection summarizes the relevant empirical research on the impact of learner context on language learning.

2.3.1.1 Classroom instruction vs target language community

In a study of American study abroad learners in France, Freed (1995) investigated the folklinguistic belief that learners who study abroad become fluent in the L2. In an attempt to pinpoint the vagueness which surrounds the concept 'fluency',

Freed detailed the specific changes which occurred during study abroad that the learners sounded more fluent. For example, she noted that the study abroad learners were perceived to speak significantly more than purely instructed learners, to have an increased speech rate, as well as longer streams of continuous speech. Overall, the study abroad learners were more at ease when speaking in the L2 and were better capable of coping with varied communicative situations than purely instructed learners.

Regan (1995) interviewed six Irish university students who participated in a program (ERASMUS), funded by the European Union, which helped university students to spend an academic year in another European country. Five of the six were in universities in France, and one was in Brussels. During the year abroad the students attended the regular courses at the university and got credit for these. They generally lived in university residences. There was also a system in place in which the students were assigned a host family which invited the international students on occasions to spend time in their homes. But the amount of contact with native speakers in interactive situations varied with the individuals.

Regan interviewed the students twice, one before the students left Ireland and the other just after they returned. The findings indicated that the increased contact with the native speakers facilitated during study abroad was an important causal factor in the development of the learner's sociolinguistic competence (R. Ellis, 1994, p. 165), whereby the study abroad learner tried to approximate native speech norms on use of different sociolinguistic markers.

Milton and Meara (1995) addressed the effects of study abroad on the learner's lexical competence. Fifty-three European exchange students on six-month LINGUA and ERASMUS programs in a British university took part in their study. They found that the group as a whole showed a sizable improvement between the entry test and the final test after six months. By calculating the average number of words acquired in a year based on the subjects' vocabulary score at the start of their stay in the UK, Milton and Meara discovered that the study abroad learners not only attained a more expansive lexical repertoire than purely instructed learners, but they also demonstrated a more native-like organization of their lexicon.

Howard (2005) compared the language development of classroom instructed learners in Ireland and study abroad learners. Based on a cross-sectional comparison of 18 Irish university learners of French, who were divided into three groups (Group 1 and Group 2, instructed learners, and Group 3 study abroad learners) according to their levels of classroom instruction and whether they had resided in the target language community, Howard focused on the role of context in the development of learner language. Given the differences in the type of intercultural encounters which each learning context permitted, Howard attempted to capture how such encounters might transform the learners' language use on a particular aspect of their linguistic repertoire in French (namely the expression of past time reference). While the results detailed the highly beneficial effect of the study abroad context on the learners' language development, they none the less pointed to a number of similarities in the past time systems of both the study abroad learners and the instructed learners.

So far the studies of the effects of learner context on language learning tended to be based on the investigation of the learner's general linguistic skills in the second language, without necessarily illuminating how learners made use of opportunities and learning strategies to help their language learning in general and vocabulary learning in particular. Examples of the empirical studies reviewed above captured the learner's linguistic development in terms of a general test score, based on general language tests. While such studies generally reported the more beneficial effects of target language context on the learner's oral and aural language skills than on reading and writing skills, they did not in any way aim to offer an insight into the specificity of what learning strategies the learners actually used in their language learning. Given such limitations, this study established the effects of learner context on vocabulary learning strategies as its aim.

2.3.1.2 Change in learning environment

Goh and Liu (1999) compared the metacognitive knowledge about language learning between two groups of tertiary-level students from the People's Republic of China with similar language backgrounds. One group of 84 participants was then

studying in a university in China while the second group of 93 participants was at the end of a six-month intensive language program in a university in Singapore. In July the previous year, both groups successfully passed the same national entrance examination for higher learning in China. In September, all the participants began their undergraduate courses in Chinese universities. Meanwhile, the participants of the second group were offered scholarships to study in Singapore universities. They arrived in December for a six-month intensive English program to prepare them for university academic courses conducted entirely in English. At the time of Goh and Liu's (1999) study, most of the subjects in China had been receiving four hours of formal classroom English instruction each week for about eight months while the subjects in Singapore, on the other hand, were in the last week of a 700-hour English language program.

To collect data, Goh and Liu (1999) used a 50-item questionnaire, which was based on a three-dimensional framework of metacognitive knowledge: person, strategy and task. A comparison of responses showed that, despite being in two different learning environments, both groups held many similar views about language learning. In general, both groups shared many similar views in person knowledge (i.e. knowledge about themselves and other people as language learners). They also shared some aspects of knowledge about learning strategies. Both groups agreed that an effective way to learn another language was through using it in everyday communication. Nevertheless, the two groups showed a notable difference in their views about the effectiveness of three learning strategies commonly associated with Chinese language learners. While the China group supported memorization, translation and pattern drills, the Singapore group had generally rejected these strategies most probably as a result of their new learning environment.

However, it may not be surprising that the two groups of Goh and Liu's (1999) subjects did not show significant differences in their metacognitive knowledge about language learning. Language environments may influence individual's metacognitive knowledge and learning strategies, but it may take a long time for long held views to be changed. It might have yielded different findings if the same groups had been followed up with more surveys and interviews after regular intervals of time. In fact,

more studies remain to be done with learners moving from an EFL environment into an ESL or target language community on a longer interval basis.

Through narrative inquiry, Li (2004) examined the transitional experiences of four female high school students from mainland China as they moved from a Chinese high school to a Canadian high school and later to a Canadian university. She reported the uncertainty, anxiety, frustration and depression of the four students during their transitional period. She reported that the immigrant ESL students had language problems and lacked academic language skills in their studies. To cope with the problem, the students tried to avoid difficult language courses, not participate in discussions, do preview and review of lessons, tape-record the lectures, ask teachers and friends for help. What Li examined was the general transitional experiences of new international students and she did not touch on whether or how the four international students changed their vocabulary learning beliefs and vocabulary learning strategies, which is what this research will turn to.

2.3.2 Learner proficiency

Philips (1991) found strong relationships between ESL/EFL SILL frequencies and English proficiency levels (measured by the TOEFL) among 141 adult ESL learners in seven western states in the U.S. She found no consistent differences between high-proficiency students and low-proficiency students on entire strategy categories, so she looked at strategies singly. She found that middle scorers on the TOEFL, who were thus considered moderately proficient in English, showed significantly higher overall strategies than did the high-proficiency or the low-proficiency group, when strategy use was defined as the mean number of strategies used frequently and the mean number of strategy categories that had at least one frequently used strategy. The profile of medium-proficiency students using more strategies more often than high-proficiency or low-proficiency students produced a curvilinear pattern. Additionally, Philips discovered that high TOEFL scorers used certain learning strategies significantly more often than low TOEFL scorers: paraphrasing, defining clear goals for learning English, and avoiding verbatim

translation. The low TOEFL scorers reported significantly greater use of certain strategies, many of which would logically be found among beginning students: using flashcards, finding out how to be a better speaker, looking for conversation partners, noticing tension or nervousness, and writing down feelings in a journal.

Takeuchi (1993) used multiple regression analyses and found that eight SILL items predicted 58% of the variance in scores on the *Comprehensive English Language Test*. The CELT was used in that study to measure English achievement among 78 Japanese first-year students of English at a women's college in Kyoto. The figure of 58% was unusually high when compared with other studies (e.g. Gu & Johnson, 1996; Wen & Johnson, 1997). Four strategies positively predicted language achievement: writing notes, messages, letters, or reports in English; trying not to translate word-for-word; dividing words into parts to find meaning; and paying attention when someone is speaking English. Another four strategies negatively predicted language achievement: asking questions in English; using flashcards; writing down feelings in a language learning diary; and trying to find as many ways as possible to use English. Takeuchi explained some of these findings based on cultural influences.

Vandergrift (1997) studied the relationship between listening comprehension strategies and levels of proficiency of high school French learners and found that metacognitive strategy use increased with proficiency levels, i.e. that intermediate listeners used twice as many metacognitive strategies as novice listeners. He found novice listeners tended to use lower level cognitive strategies, such as translation, transfer and repetition. The metacognitive strategies reportedly used more frequently by the intermediate listeners appeared to be important in distinguishing successful from less successful listeners.

Goh (1998) identified the cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies of 16 overseas Chinese ESL learners on a university preparation English course in Singapore and compared the way high- and low-proficiency students applied them. The findings showed that the high-proficiency students used more strategies than the low-proficiency ones. They were also able to vary their application of each strategy.

Both groups used more cognitive strategies than metacognitive ones, but the low-proficiency students were particularly poor at it.

Using a 36-item Likert-scale Metacognitive Awareness Questionnaire (MAQ), Zhang (2002) investigated the reader awareness and reading performance of 160 mainland Chinese EFL learners of tertiary level. Interview protocols were collected from 20 of the subjects to illuminate MAQ findings. The results indicated that the Chinese EFL learners' metacognitive awareness was linked to their EFL reading performance. The percentage of the subjects' responses to the four categories of the MAQ further indicated that they generally regarded "Confidence", "Effectiveness", "Repair" and "Difficulty" as pertinent to EFL reading. However, multiple regression analyses revealed that, of the four categories, "Difficulty" and "Effectiveness" were significant predictors.

Gan et al. (2004) looked closely at two small groups of EFL tertiary-level learners in China to find how they carried out their out-of-class (self-directed) English learning and to examine individual difference factors that may lead to the variability in their English learning outcomes. The data were gathered through interviews, diaries, and follow-up email correspondence with nine successful and nine unsuccessful second-year EFL students at two Chinese mainland universities. Using grounded theory methodology, they constructed six categories of qualitative data: conceptualizing English language learning; perceptions of the College English Course; learning and practising strategies; self-management; internal drive; and English proficiency tests. The findings suggest that different levels of success can be explained by a complex and dynamic interplay of internal cognition and emotion, external incentives, and social context.

However, a more recent study by Nisbet, Tindall and Arroyo (2005) investigated the relationship between language learning strategy preferences and English proficiency among Chinese university students. Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and an institutional version (ITP) of the *Test of English as a Foreign Language* (TOEFL) were administered to 168 third-year English majors in Henan University, China. Results of a multivariate analysis of

variance (MANOVA) indicated no significant differences on eight measures of learning strategy preferences and proficiency.

Though the findings of the above studies and many others reviewed by Chamot (2005), McDonough (1999), and Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) are not always consistent, the general pattern of the findings from these studies shows that high-proficiency learners demonstrate a greater range and higher frequency of learning strategies or more appropriate application of strategies to the learning task, whereas low-proficiency learners use a limited or inappropriately applied repertoire of language learning strategies. Nevertheless, the following points are patently notable from the currently available empirical studies on language learning strategies: first, most of the studies were conducted in North American settings; second, the participants were overwhelmingly adult learners, university students or immigrant ESL students; third, the participants were often homogeneous in the sense that they were from the same cohort or level of education. These points raise questions as to the generalizability of the findings across different social, educational and cultural settings. Thus, this study will turn to the cross-sectional population of secondary students in mainstream schools in Asian contexts.

2.3.3 Learners' beliefs

2.3.3.1 Definition

In the past decades, several terms have been employed to refer to people's opinions, views or perceptions about language learning. Abraham and Vann (1987) used *philosophy* to indicate learners' own theories about how language operates and what could lead to successful learning of L2. Wenden (1987c, 1991) regarded them as a part of learners' *metacognitive knowledge*. Hosenfeld (1978) used the term *mini-theory*. Grotjahn (1991) called them the learner's subjective theory. Horwitz (1987, 1988) saw them as *beliefs*. Because the term *belief* is straightforward and needs no further explanation, this study employed it to refer to learners' views, opinions and perceptions about what could lead to success in L2 learning.

2.3.3.2 Empirical research

Hosenfeld (1978) was one of the first researchers who called for research about students' beliefs and how their beliefs developed and operated in L2 learning. Rubin (1987, p. 19) more explicitly stated the importance of studying students' beliefs in her review of the research on learning strategies, "to better understand how learner strategies come to be used, it is essential that we account for a learner's knowledge about language and his beliefs about the language learning process (that is what he knows) because this knowledge can form the basis for selecting and activating one strategy over another".

Wenden (1986a, 1986b) reported a study of 25 adults enrolled in a part-time advanced level class of the American Language Program in an American university. In the first stage of her analysis, Wenden (1986a) found the students had beliefs about five aspects of second language learning: 1) the nature of English (the language the students were learning); 2) the learners' proficiency in the language; 3) the outcome of their language learning efforts; 4) their role in the language learning process; and 5) how best to approach the task of language learning. In the second stage, Wenden (1987d) identified L2 explicit statements from 14 of the 25 students that represented three views on language learning: some students emphasized the importance of using the language, especially speaking and listening; some held the view that grammar and vocabulary were priorities; others thought that personal factors such as emotions, self-image and aptitude played a role in SLA. Furthermore, Wenden (1987d) suggested that learners' beliefs about language learning did have an impact on their selection of language learning strategies. And their strategy use was consistent with their prescriptive beliefs. The communicative strategies were taken up by those who thought that it was important to use the language and that cognitive strategies were adopted by those who emphasized the importance of learning about the language and paid attention to language forms. The results of Wenden's study (1987d) showed that language learners did reflect upon their learning experiences and that they were able to describe some of their beliefs that prompted their strategy use.

Horwitz's study (1987) on language learning beliefs perhaps is still the most comprehensive one so far. She developed *The Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI) based on popular beliefs about language learning. The questionnaire included 34 statements related to language learning covering the five areas: 1) the foreign language aptitude; 2) the difficulty of language learning; 3) the nature of language learning; 4) learning and communication strategies, and 5) motivation. Thirty-two subjects with different ethnic backgrounds who were taking an intensive university English program in the U.S. participated in the survey. Most learners (81%) felt that people were born with the special aptitude for learning foreign languages and were confident that they possessed such an aptitude themselves! They believed that some languages were more difficult to learn than others, English being perceived as of average difficulty. Many students felt that the best way to learn English was to spend most of their time memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules. With regards to culture, 94% percent of the learners believed that it was necessary to know something about English speaking cultures in order to speak English well. With regard to learning and communication strategies, the learners favoured the use of audio materials and overwhelmingly endorsed the need to repeat and practice. Finally, most of the learners indicated that their main reason for learning English was to speak the language fluently and they were keen on developing friendships with Americans.

However, Horwitz's (1987) study did not try to investigate the relationship between language learning beliefs and success in language learning. Abraham and Vann (1987) found some evidence that beliefs might affect learning outcomes in a case study of two learners. The two learners (Gerardo and Pedro) in their study believed that it was important to create situations for using English outside the classroom, to participate actively in class, to practice as much as possible, and to have errors corrected. Differences lay in their efforts to achieve correctness and flexibility in strategy use. Both learners were interested in communication. However, Pedro was not concerned with rules and correctness while Gerardo stressed form. Gerardo's ability to choose strategies in accordance to task demands reflected his knowledge of task demands whereas Pedro's lack of flexibility in his organization of strategies indicated that he was unconscious of task knowledge. Abraham and Vann (1987)

suggested this might have contributed to Gerardo's better TOEFL score (523 vs. 473). Pedro, however, did better on a test of spoken English, which might suggest that different beliefs about language learning resulted in different kinds of success. Quite a few recent empirical studies have showed that learners' beliefs had links with their language proficiency (Goh, 1997, 1998; Vandergrift, 1997; Zhang, 2002).

He (1996) approached Chinese students' attitudes and learning styles by examining factors such as cultural background, EFL in China, Confucian educational doctrines, traditional ideas and current educational systems, illustrating that beliefs and attitudes were not the result of one single factor but a whole web of factors of multidimensional nature. He held that though learners had similar views about language learning, different cultures, value systems and physical environments would result in differences in their ideologies and approaches to language learning. He argued convincingly that beliefs should be examined in relation to social background.

In view of the close relationship among learners' learning beliefs, learning strategies and even their learning achievement, this study will try to map out the differences in vocabulary learning beliefs among the students from different learning backgrounds and will also try to identify whether the students change their vocabulary learning strategies along with their learning beliefs as they move from one learning environment into the other.

2.4 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Quite a few studies have been carried out to investigate what learners do in their vocabulary learning (Ahmed, 1989; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999; Sanaoui, 1995). The study of vocabulary learning strategies probably began with Ahmed's study (1989). Ahmed investigated vocabulary learning strategies of three hundred Sudanese learners of English while they were studying a set of 14 English words. He tried to distinguish good and poor language learners according to the strategies they employed. Ahmed identified 52 types of vocabulary learning strategies by means of think-aloud, direct observation and interview. He excluded some of these strategies from further statistical analysis on the basis that

they were not frequently used. The strategy repertoire of each student was filed using a binary scale, i.e. either used or not used.

A cluster analysis of the subjects' choice of strategies indicated that good language learners used a wider range of strategies with a relatively higher frequency. They were more aware of contextual learning, paid more attention to collocation, spelling, guessing and dictionary use. Nevertheless, the poor learners were not interested in inferring word meanings from the context and dictionary use, less conscious of what they could learn about the target words. They tended to take words as discrete items and learn words in isolation, used a limited number of mostly passive strategies with relatively lower frequencies.

Sanaoui (1995) examined approaches to vocabulary learning involving 50 ESL students registered in a 6-week vocabulary course, at the end of which he impressionistically identified two major approaches to vocabulary learning: structured approach and unstructured approach. Some learners seemed to systematically organize their learning while the others lacked routines and organization in their vocabulary studies. Sanaoui (1995, p. 26) found that "learners who had a structural learning approach were more successful in retaining vocabulary taught in their classes than learners who had an unstructured learning approach", and "a structured approach was found to be more effective than an unstructured approach for both beginning and advanced learners". An analysis shows that the students with the structured approach tended to employ strategies of recording the words, immediate repetition, spaced repetition, contextual association, linguistic association, etc. However, in a study replicating Sanaoui's research, Lessard-Clouston (1996) failed to find any relationship between students' approaches to vocabulary learning surveyed through a questionnaire and their scores on TOEFL which were taken as an indication of their overall English proficiency.

Gu and Johnson (1996) presented a large-scale questionnaire study of 865 second year students at Beijing Normal University, and looked at the relationships between particular cognitive strategies, measure of proficiency and vocabulary size. They administered a vocabulary learning questionnaire including 91 vocabulary learning strategies identified from the literature. The strategies are grouped as

strategies for metacognitive regulation, guessing, dictionary use, note taking, memory (rehearsal), memory (encoding), and activation. Vocabulary size was measured by two vocabulary level tests. English proficiency was measured by a composite of College English Test, quiz score, and teachers' overall scoring.

Data analysis revealed that the students mostly believed that vocabulary should be carefully studied and used. A correlational analysis found that self-initiation and selective attention strongly correlated with general proficiency. Contextual guessing, using dictionary look-up for learning, note taking and other active strategies correlated with both vocabulary size and general proficiency. A feature of their analysis is that they used a cluster analysis to divide their 486 valid respondents into five clusters. The first cluster, labeled readers, was distinguished from other learners by their frequent use of reading for vocabulary learning, guessing strategies, contextual encoding and studying word forms. The second cluster, active strategy users, was characterized by their wide range of strategies and they were the second best in terms of vocabulary size and language proficiency. This is in line with Sanaoui (1995) and Ahmed (1989) in that good language learners used more strategies. The third cluster, passive strategy users, was the opposite of the second cluster. They used fewer strategies and their vocabulary size and English proficiency were below the average. The fourth cluster, encoders, and the fifth cluster, non-encoders, were similar. They clustered close to mean language proficiency and vocabulary size. In terms of vocabulary size and language proficiency, the most successful learners were readers followed by active strategy users, non-encoders, encoders, and passive strategy users. Gu and Johnson (1996) came to the conclusion that

“pure retention of decontextualized words without a threshold level of L2 skills offers limited value no matter what ‘deep’ processing strategies learners use to achieve this purpose. Learners should use memory strategies that aim for retaining word-meaning pairs with caution, if at all, and should complement them with other fully contextualized strategies.” (p. 669).

Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999) carried out another survey study in which a questionnaire was administered to 47 ESL and 43 EFL students. The five variables

investigated were the amount of time the subjects spent on vocabulary learning, the extent to which they engaged in independent language study, the type of vocabulary learning activities they did on a regular basis, the frequency and elaborateness of their note-taking and reviewing efforts, and the frequency and elaborateness with which they used dictionaries. As in Gu and Johnson (1996), cluster analysis was employed for identifying relatively homogeneous subgroups in the whole subject population. A total of eight different profiles of approaches to lexical learning were identified with Cluster 8 having only one member.

The subjects' achievement level was determined through their performance on a Yes/No test assessing vocabulary knowledge and a cloze test assessing overall English proficiency. Of the eight clusters, two (Clusters 1 and 6) comprised high achievement students, two (Clusters 4 and 5) lower achievement students, while the remaining clusters fell between. The analysis of the relationship between strategy use and performance on the two tests suggested a strong relationship between the amount of strategy use and levels of success in language learning, a finding consistent with that of Ahmed (1989) and Sanaoui (1995). However, the examination of the use of particular strategies showed that time and learner independence were the two crucial strategies most closely related to success in vocabulary learning and overall English proficiency (Clusters 1 and 6). Clusters of the students (Clusters 4, 5 and 8) that made use of neither of these two strategies exhibited the lowest proficiency level, whereas the students in Clusters 2, 3 and 7 that used either time and learner independence attained average scores on the two measures of vocabulary knowledge and overall English proficiency. In this respect, the findings of this study were in agreement with those of Sanaoui (1995) and Gu and Johnson (1996) in that self-initiation and efforts on the learners' part played a crucial role in the language achievement.

Two other findings of the study with regard to strategies of review and dictionary use in ESL and EFL environments deserve special attention. With both Cluster 1 and Cluster 6 comprise high achievers, but the 23 students in Cluster 6 reported using all five strategies types extensively but Cluster 1 students did not report making use of review. This difference was accounted for by the fact that Cluster 1 mainly contained ESL students while Cluster 6 comprised a slightly larger number of

EFL (N=13, 56.5%) than ESL students. It was speculated that the strategy of review was not as crucial for the ESL learners who were exposed to the target language on a daily basis as it was for the EFL learners who were not. The environment might provide ESL students with opportunities to contact, and thus they reviewed newly encountered words in an indirect way. However, the EFL learners were deprived of such indirect, context-embedded lexical learning, and they were seemingly better off only if they set out to compensate for that with direct and deliberate review activities. However, reviewing activities alone were not sufficient to ensure lexical learning, as seen from the strategic profile of Cluster 5. The students in Cluster 5 had low scores on all four variables except review, and their achievement level, in terms of both lexical and overall proficiency, was the lowest in the whole subject population.

Both high achievement Clusters 1 and 6 reported extensive use of dictionary while the two lower achievement Clusters 4 and 5 exhibited low scores on dictionary use. This led Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999, p. 190) to conclude that “whatever the learning environment, frequent and elaborate dictionary use seems to provide a solid base for lexical learning.” The study of Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999) complements the finding of Gu and Johnson (1996), Ahmed (1989) and Sanaoui (1995) that students can be grouped according to the strategies they use.

The majority of the above studies have revealed that good and poor learners differ in their vocabulary learning strategies, which substantiates the claim of Williams and Burden (1997) that the fundamental difference between successful and unsuccessful learners is not merely due to their IQ but also to their employment and deployment of learning strategies. What’s more, quite a few studies have come up with evidence that the English language proficiency of learners in a great measure correlates with their vocabulary learning strategies (e.g. Ahmed, 1989; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999; Sanaoui, 1995). In this vein, research on vocabulary learning is likely to yield insightful implications for effective second language learning and instruction.

However, a problem is that none of the empirical studies have as yet focused on the effect of learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) on the use of vocabulary learning strategies. What this study intends to do is to fill in this gap by comparing

how Chinese learners at an intermediate level in China (EFL setting) and in Singapore (ESL environment) learn vocabulary.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the theoretical concept of learning strategies and the empirical research on the impact of contextual factors on learner's language development and strategy use in general and vocabulary learning strategies in particular.

In the section concerning learning strategy, various definitions of strategy by different authors are reviewed, the term of strategy clarified and the working definition of strategy adopted in this thesis set up. The theoretical concept of learning strategy will provide a criterion for vocabulary learning strategy identification and coding in the main study.

In the section concerning contextual factors on learner's language development and learning strategy use, the review of the relevant empirical research showed that the studies carried out so far tend to focus on the effects of context on the learner's general linguistic competence development without necessarily illuminating how the learners made use of opportunities and learning strategies to help their language learning in general and vocabulary learning in particular. While the studies generally reported the more beneficial effects of target language context on the learner's oral and aural language skills, they did not in any way aim to offer an insight into the specificity of what learning strategies the learners actually used in their vocabulary learning.

Few empirical studies can be located to investigate how learners learnt L2, L2 vocabulary in particular, as they moved from EFL setting to ESL or target language context. Of the two studies available, one addressed learner's metacognitive knowledge and the other concentrated on the general problems encountered during the transitional period for the immigrant ESL learners. When it comes to the relationship between learning strategies and learner's proficiency, the general pattern of the empirical findings reaped so far is that high-proficiency learners demonstrate a greater range and higher frequency of learning strategies or more appropriate application of

strategies to the learning task, whereas low-proficiency learners use a limited or inappropriately applied repertoire of language learning strategies. Nevertheless, most of the studies have been conducted in North American setting and the participants were overwhelmingly homogeneous, which casts doubt on the generalizability of the findings.

I then reviewed the definition of learners' beliefs, and the impact of learners' beliefs on their selection of language learning strategies. Based on the available empirical research, learners' strategy use was consistent with their learning beliefs. Though several empirical studies were carried out on vocabulary learning strategies, none of them focused on the effect of learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) on the use of vocabulary learning strategies, and this is the area to which this study intended to turn.

2.6 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the relevant literature reviewed above, let us posit a list of research questions and hypotheses for our study as follows:

A: Research questions

1. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their beliefs about vocabulary learning?
2. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their sources of vocabulary learning?
3. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies?
4. Do learners' achievement levels influence their choice of vocabulary learning strategies?
5. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their beliefs about vocabulary learning? If yes, how do Singapore-based learners change their beliefs about language learning and the extent of personal responsibility for language learning as a result of exposure to a communicative curriculum, English medium schooling and an ESL

environment outside school?

6. How do the changed beliefs and opportunities result in different patterns of strategy use? How do they take advantage of opportunities that are present in Singapore but not in China? As it gets closer to exams, do they increasingly favour memorisation, or limit their strategies to examination-oriented ones?
7. Do Singapore-based successful and unsuccessful learners differ in their beliefs about vocabulary learning and their choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies? If yes, how do they differ? At what level, metacognitive, cognitive, social or affective? If no, how can it be explained? Can qualitative data provide any clues?

B: Hypotheses

1. PRC-based students tend to believe that vocabulary should be memorized while Singapore-based students tend to believe that words should be learned through use;
2. Singapore-based students make more use of the socio-cultural environment (what happens outside the classroom and the school) as a vocabulary learning source to learn vocabulary, and increasingly so over time than their counterparts in China;
3. PRC-based students make use of more strategies of memorization/rehearsal types, and Singapore-based students make use of more social interaction and daily communication strategies;
4. High achievers are better language learners in that they make use of a wider range of strategies, and use them more frequently.

Chapter Three

English in China and Singapore

This chapter reviews the generally contrastive settings of EFL in China and ESL in Singapore in which the participants in this study learn English. It clears the scene for understanding the basic backgrounds of the current educational systems and English teaching in China and Singapore. The main job of this chapter is to present enough background to establish that China and Singapore offer sufficiently distinctive learning contexts.

3.1 English Learning in China

With an exponential increase of international trade and the 2008 Olympic Games to be held in Beijing, there is a thirst for English in China. According to Jin and Cortazzi (2003), there are hundreds of millions of English learners in China, who outnumber their counterparts in any other country. English is considered by many Chinese to be the bridge to the future and “speaking English confers prestige on individuals and opens doors to academic, professional and business success” (Jin & Cortazzi, 2003, p. 131). This section will briefly outline the overall system under which these Chinese learners of English are studying with a specific focus on the EFL situation in China.

3.1.1 Brief history of EFL

English learning in China dates back to the nineteenth century when English served as a language for access to modern schooling in the mission schools in China (Jin & Cortazzi, 2003). From the 19th century to the early years of the 20th century, English was studied to learn science and technology from western countries. In the late 1950s, Russian, the main foreign language then, was replaced by English, which reappeared in the secondary school¹ curriculum. During the Cultural Revolution (1966

¹ Secondary schools are often referred to as middle schools in China and thus the lower and upper secondary schools are called Junior Middle Schools and Senior Middle Schools. Their counterparts in Singapore are Secondary Schools and Junior Colleges respectively.

– 1976), ELT was disrupted as educational institutions were closed and English teachers and learners were persecuted. By the late 1970s, English regained its popularity and was seen as important in the reform and modernization in the country's opening up to the outside world, though there were occasional fears in the 1980s that it might bring cultural contamination. English has enjoyed increasing acclaim in China in the past few years and it never won such popularity as it does in the 21st century.

3.1.2 English instruction at primary level

English instruction was introduced into primary schools at age 6-7 only in the 1990s by individual schools in large cities and developed areas with the capacity to teach English. As the demand for English proficiency (Wu, 2001) was becoming increasingly pressing, English was first introduced into the school curriculum for Primary Five students in Shanghai in 1998. But the fast development of ELT in primary schools made this requirement outdated in just two years' time. By the autumn semester of 2001, all the primary schools in Shanghai started teaching English. The popularization of ELT throughout primary schooling is a major measure taken to ensure that by the time the students graduate from senior middle school, they will have gained strong competence in English. Encouraged by Shanghai's success, the Ministry of Education of China issued in 2000 guidelines which recommends that primary schools run at municipal and countryside levels should start to offer English classes at Primary Three from the autumn of 2001. According to Jin and Cortazzi (2003), currently tens of millions of children are learning English in classes organized by their schools or private schools chosen by their parents, though it is not compulsory nationwide to teach English at lower primary school level.

National text books such as Cornelius (2001) and *New EEC English* (2005) are published often incorporating the advice of both domestic and foreign linguists. The textbooks encourage pair work and oral activities, but teacher-centered and book-based activities are still quite dominant, especially in classes with 50, 60 or more students (Jin & Cortazzi, 2003; L. Zhang, 2003).

3.1.3 English instruction at the lower secondary level

For students at lower secondary at the age of 12 or 13 and beyond, a foreign language is compulsory and the overriding majority of the students learn English.

The junior middle school national syllabus in use now was mandated in 2001. As this syllabus adopted the principles of communicative approach in teaching, it placed more emphasis on the students' ability to communicate and express ideas in English. The goals are specified as (a) to help students develop basic language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing; (b) to cultivate students' interests in learning English and develop correct learning habits and strategies; and (c) to promote students' understanding of local and foreign cultures (MOE, China, 2001).

National textbooks (Liu et al., 2001) jointly published with Longman are used. The textbooks, though developed following communicative language teaching principles, are more often than not used to execute a form-based, structure-oriented syllabus. With average class size of over 50, communicative methods are obviously constrained and it is not surprising that the lessons tend to be book-based or teacher-centered, though pair work is often employed for practicing textbook dialogues, oral tasks and developing reading. As Jin and Cortazzi (2003) observe, though change has been very rapid,

“still, analyses of Chinese English classrooms show characteristic interaction patterns, including clear teacher explanations and presentations of models; high-paced, varied and vigorous questioning; organized learners participation with high attention and strict discipline as teachers mediate the textbook.” (p. 139)

Consequently, the actual classroom practice and the instructional focus still rely heavily on accuracy-oriented and test-driven activities (L. Zhang, 2003) to promote rote learning by students.

While the fairly large class size and the shortage of well-trained teachers render communicative approaches less effective, the poor input environment inclines the students to make intensive use of materials in the absence of easy alternatives to practice (Wen & Johnson, 1997). Research also suggests that there may be specific Chinese cultures of learning in terms of beliefs, expectations and practices, which may

result in the inconsistency between the national syllabus and the actual English language teaching and learning in China (Biggs, 1996; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Wen & Johnson, 1997; Young, 1994).

3.1.4 English instruction at upper secondary level

The latest English language syllabus for upper secondary schools from the age of 15 or 16 to the age of 18 or 19 was revamped and launched in 2001 to begin a new chapter in upper secondary school English education in China. Compared with its predecessor, the 2001 syllabus put more emphasis on developing students' interests in learning English and helping them develop learning strategies and attitudes to lay the foundation for independent learning. The senior middle school syllabus also adopts the communicative approach as the central guiding principle and emphasizes learner-centeredness, communicative functions of English language and learner strategies in language learning.

Table 3.1: Classroom hours for foreign language instruction

	Hours/week	Hours/year	Hours/total
Primary school	No specification		
Junior Middle	5	200	600
Senior Middle	5	200	600
University (non-Eng, majors)	4	140	280
Total			1480

(Adapted from Ministry of Education, China, 2001, 2003, 2004)

The national textbooks (Liu, 2004) used are jointly published with Longman as well. In alignment with the syllabus, the textbooks put emphasis on oral skills and cultural content, but in practice, grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary and translation are emphasized through multiple-choice examination-preparation exercises (L. Zhang, 2003). Besides passage reading, pair work and group work, typical

classroom activities include the explanation of new words and phrases, the analysis of sentence structures, comprehension exercises, translation, and sentence making, etc. Teachers spend much of the class time talking, while students sit there quietly listening and taking notes. For exercise sessions, students are also asked to practice the language points being learned (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Besides class work, students may spend long hours completing English homework, reviewing vocabulary and grammar notes, going over mock examinations exercises and memorizing texts. Some teachers require their students to recite textbook passages in class or in the teachers' offices (Jin & Cortazzi, 2003). To enter university in China, the upper secondary school students must do well in National Matriculation English Test (NMET), which now carries more weight than the examinations of other subjects.

English is currently taught at virtually every school at and beyond the lower secondary school level. For most of these Chinese youngsters, the word "English" has become synonymous with better job prospects, more promotion opportunities, and chances to further their studies abroad (Jin & Cortazzi, 2003). Table 3.1 provides the number of hours English is being taught as a school subject at various levels.

3.1.5 Textbooks

Preschool and primary school English textbooks are available in many editions (e.g. Hou et al., 1995; Lin, 1992; New Starting Point, 2001). These textbooks for beginners include games, rhymes, pictures, dialogues and songs to teach English. Some textbooks also have corresponding well-produced audio-video tapes and CD-ROMs to support them. Since there is no national requirement to teach English in kindergartens and lower primary schools, the teachers have much freedom in their choice of textbooks. For the upper primary levels (Primary 3 and above), national textbooks, which are published jointly with the renowned international publisher Longman, are available. The textbooks encourage pair work and oral activities. Notably, the textbooks use phonetics to teach pronunciation. The standard Chinese system (pinyin) uses roman letters to transcribe Chinese words. It is used in early education to teach the pronunciation of Mandarin for pre-schoolers and primary school students. Since the pinyin system is used systematically to teach the initial

reading of Chinese characters, an active knowledge of pinyin can help with the learning of English considerably (Jin & Cortazzi, 2003).

The national English syllabuses for secondary schools used to determine the corresponding level textbook writing and production in China. Since the mid-1990s, the ever-increasing zeal to learn in China has created a huge demand for textbooks and related materials. To meet the demand of the textbook market, the Ministry of Education has given relative autonomy in syllabus design and material development, though there are national English Language Syllabuses and textbooks for adoption. Several series of syllabuses and textbooks were designed in the 1990s by universities and provincial agencies for use in different regions. Nevertheless, the national textbooks for both the lower and upper secondary schools, which are jointly published with Longman, still hold the lion's share of the textbook market. "Currently, the two series are used in about 70% of secondary schools nationwide" (Hu, 2002a, p.39). The secondary school textbooks adopted an eclectic approach, trying to synthesize some CLT principles with existing audio-lingual practices. Lessons are organized not on the basis of linguistic structures but around topics which cover culture-specific activities, cross-cultural information, scientific knowledge and, and ethical behavior. To support teachers to use the textbooks, a wide range of resources are provided, including written exercise work books, reading practice books, cassette tapes, CD-ROMs, teacher's books, wall pictures, etc. The teacher's books contain detailed teaching objectives, pedagogy, time allocation, support resources, teaching steps, instructional techniques, and methods for training listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Each lesson has a detailed teaching plan, with tips for handling each component. Thus, the teacher's books are in a sense methodology training textbooks for teachers.

Besides the national and regional textbooks, some big cities and provinces such as Shanghai, Guangzhou and Jiangsu have either directly adopted imported English textbooks or adapted them to suit their local students' learning needs. For example, *Oxford English* (McArthur & Etherton, 1996) is adopted for use in some selected primary and secondary schools in Shanghai while *New Concept English* (Alexander, 1967) is widely used in secondary schools in the southern part of Jiangsu Province. Shanghai Primary and Middle School Curriculum and Materials Reform

Commission in collaboration with Oxford University Press has come up with a local edition of *Oxford English* (McArthur et al., 1999) by incorporating some new features. To help the students acquire communicative competence, the textbooks adopt a learner-centered approach that tries to engage them in purposeful communication in meaningful contexts. Students are encouraged to react to, reflect on, and make creative use of the information in the textbook and the teacher to engage in stimulating tasks and activities. Another innovation is the adoption of a theme-based principle of organization. Each textbook consists of several modules, each of which is further divided into several units. A theme of general interest to the students runs through a module, with its constituent units covering different aspects of the theme. The themes are wide ranging and contain a strong cultural element. A third innovation is task-based learning. Each lesson is structured into pre-task, during-task, and post-task sections to provide students with the language to perform the task, and to follow up the task with further activities that aim to stimulate the communicative use of the learned knowledge both in and outside the classroom. Other features of the textbooks include progressive recycling of language knowledge and skills, large amount of language input, attention to learner autonomy, and considerable flexibility for teachers to select teaching contents in accordance with students' abilities and needs. While the textbooks have clear advantages over the more traditional ones, the main challenge faced is to train the current secondary school teachers in general to use them effectively. Without adequate training, the teachers will still 'take the old path in new shoes' (L. Zhang, 2003, p. 149). Furthermore, it is not an easy job for the teachers to switch from traditional grammar-translation to Communicative Language Teaching in China which has great potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports due to its very long-held rote-learning tradition (Hu, 2002b, 2005).

3.2 English in Singapore

3.2.1 English as the lingua franca in Singapore

Singapore is a multiracial island republic which gained her independence in 1965, after nearly one and a half centuries of British rule. As a multilingual polyglossic society (Gopinathan et al., 1994), there are four official languages, Malay,

Chinese, Tamil and English. Malay is the national language and English the language of administration.

Of the four official languages in multi-lingual Singapore, English is by far the most prestigious, mainly because of its utilitarian value, it is the de facto dominant working language for all practical purposes. Administratively, it is the language of government bureaucracy; legally, it is the language for the judgment of courts; commercially, it is the language of international trade and socially its use carries the most prestige (Gopinathan et al., 1994; Xu & Tan, 1996).

The prevailing multi-racial mix and the social cohesion lead to a high level of bilingual competence amongst Singaporeans. 56% of Singaporeans aged 15 years and over are literate in two or more languages (Singapore Census 2000, Advanced Data Release No. 3, p. 1). There has been an increase of 11% of biliteracy in the last decade largely as a result of the bilingual education policy which emphasizes English and the Mother Tongue (Singapore Census 2000). In fact, English has become a quite popular home language for all ethnic groups of resident population. The proportion speaking English most frequently at home is 24 percent among the Chinese, 7.9 percent among the Malays and 36 percent among the Indians (Singapore Census 2000, Advanced Data Release No. 3, p. 4). “English has emerged as the lingua franca of the Singapore resident population” (Singapore Census 2000, Advanced Data Release No. 3, p. 2). Among the literate residents population aged 15 years and over, literacy in English is 71 percent. “The increased literacy in English is partly due to the adoption of English as the main medium of instruction in schools and partly due to the use of English as the working language for administration and business” (Singapore Census 2000, Advanced Data Release No. 3, p. 2).

3.2.2 Bilingual educational policy

Bilingual educational policy is “the cornerstone” of Singapore education system (Tan, 1991). Bilingualism in Singapore does not mean learning of any two languages, but of English as the first language and the pupil’s mother tongue as second language. English is taught right from the first year in primary school. The distinction drawn between English as the first language and mother tongue as the

second language highlights proficiency in English as a prerequisite for academic success. Besides being an indicator of the pupils' medium of instruction in schools, the term 'first language' and 'second language' also signify the level of proficiency expected of a pupil.

The importance of English as the common language in the bilingual policy is constantly emphasized as "English will remain the main working language in Singapore as students must be proficient in it order to get good jobs in a modern economy" (Mr Goh Chok Tong, the then first Deputy Prime Minister, in the *Straits Times*, Saturday, October, 20, 1990, p.1). Apart from the economic aspects, the central role of the English language is to enable the bilingual to be the social broker (Chiew, 1983) in the multilingual society of Singapore.

3.2.3 English at primary level

Primary education in Singapore begins at the age of six. The subjects emphasized during the first four years are basic arithmetic, moral education and the learning of English and mother tongue. The first streaming process is at the end of Primary 4, when pupils are streamed into English and Mother Tongue 1(EM1) and English and Mother 2 (EM2) and English and Mother Tongue 3 (EM3), according to their performance up to this time. Pupils streamed into EM1 are assessed as good at both English and mother tongue and those streamed into EM2 are considered as a bit slower in learning the English and mother tongue, while the pupils streamed into the last group are judged to be unable to cope with the learning of the two languages and to have low academic ability in general. This last group studies only one language, either English or mother tongue, depending on their parents' choice. All primary pupils take the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) after six years for qualification for entry to secondary level education.

The current English language curriculum for primary and secondary schools revamped in 2001 is an eclectic curriculum, incorporating both communicative and structural (grammatical) components. The curriculum adopts CLT, with oral presentation and communication emphasized. Group work is emphasized and students encouraged to work together to achieve common goals. More creative types of

activities are encouraged and the syllabus encourages the use of drama, role-play, story telling, poetry, songs and games as a means of inspiring students to express themselves while enabling them to acquire language skills indirectly. However, grammar is also given a place in explicit teaching to the students, as compared to the thematic approach in the previous syllabus (1991). The cyclical change from communicative approach to structural (grammatical) approach shows the concern of Singapore government over what has been perceived as “declining standards in written English” and its impact on Singapore’s global competitive ratings (Chew, 2005).

Textbooks for primary schools, produced under the 2001 syllabus by commercial publishers, are also communicatively-oriented with task-like activities based on the promotion of communicative fluency. They emphasize the integration of skills, contextual teaching, and learner’s participation such as group work. Cooperation and group work continue to be emphasized. All the language textbooks for primary schools include tasks and mini-projects, which require students to work together while learning the four language skills. The textbooks make use of “themes” (e.g. “hobbies”, “adventure”, “sea creatures”) as the framework by which to organize their linguistic content, despite the fact that the syllabus has pointed the movement away from themes to areas of language use as an organizational framework. The themes used often involve the individual (e.g. my hobbies, my friends, my pets, my family); fantasy (e.g. fairy tales, monsters, witches); and general knowledge (e.g. of animals, weather, sports).

3.2.4 English at lower secondary level

The PSLE channels pupils into three courses, according to their performance in the examinations: the Special Assistance Program, Express Course and Normal Course. The Special Assistance Program is for the best pupils or the top 10 per cent of the PSLE passes, who will go on to study in selected schools under a special program that aims to preserve the best of both Chinese and western traditions. The Express Course is for the next best pupils. For these two groups of pupils, they spend four years on secondary level study before they take the GCE ‘O’ Level examinations. The

Normal Course for pupils who are judged to need extra time, to prepare for the GCE 'O' Level examinations. At the end of their fourth year, pupils in this course sit for the GCE 'N' Level examinations, and only those who do well will proceed to the fifth year and sit for the GCE 'O' Level examinations at the end of it. Those who do not qualify for entry into the fifth year end their schooling at this point and proceed to take up vocational training.

However, the streaming system of Special Assistance Program, Express Course and Normal Course allows for students to move laterally from one course to another, depending on the progress they have shown. Normal Course students can move to the Express course if they are judged by their teachers to have shown marked improvement. Likewise, Express Course students can be moved to the Normal Course if they are judged to be underachieving and in need of the extra time allowed to prepare for the 'O' Level examinations.

The current English language curriculum for secondary schools and for the primary schools actually is a combined one. In other words, the English teaching in both primary and secondary schools share the aims, philosophy, teaching and learning principles, but the learning outcomes expected, difficulty levels of text types used, knowledge of grammar to be mastered, and the contents and way of assessments are different. Thus, as expected of the primary school phase, the secondary school stage also features communication and function. While fluency is emphasized through group work, tasks and mini-projects, accuracy is not sacrificed. The political concern over declining standards in students' written English has led the way in giving the explicit teaching of grammar a place in the 2001 syllabus. This is reflected in Lee's demand (2001) that Singaporeans should be able to "speak and write and make presentations in internationally acceptable English that is grammatical, fluent and appropriate for the purpose, audience and context".

Most of the secondary textbooks published in 2001 and afterwards have reintroduced form and pedagogical grammar. However, where grammar methodology is concerned, it is not to be taught through the conventional structural or grammar translation approach but in context (through text types). To facilitate this, under each "Area of Language Use", the 2001 syllabus lists text types and their relevant

grammatical features. A variety of recommended text types, comprising print, visual and electronic media, which provides students with many models of language use, suitable for various purposes, audiences and contexts are listed in the syllabus.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that what is advocated in the syllabus is widely practiced. There is often a gap between the theoretical and the applied (Chew, 2005). In Singapore, it is the examination that determines how a subject is really taught despite what the curriculum may prescribe. Tan (2001) found that experienced teachers strongly endorsed learning activities that enhance memorization rather than that of creativity and cooperation, as embodied in the 2001 syllabus. Student-directed small group discussions that empower learners with responsibilities and encourage independent learning rarely take place since teachers prefer recitation and seatwork to sharing time and student-directed small group activities.

3.2.5 English at upper secondary level

The third stage of streaming in secondary level education is based on students' performance in the GCE 'O' Level examinations. Pupils who have performed well and are proficient in English are streamed into a two-year course in the Junior Colleges, while those who have done well generally but are weak in English are streamed into a three-year course in the pre-university centers where the emphasis is on upgrading their standard of English. Both groups take the GCE 'A' Level examinations at the end of their respective courses before going into a tertiary institution or job market.

The Ministry of Education does not issue a formal English language syllabus for Junior College students like the one for the primary and secondary students. The syllabus consists of only three sheets, divided into introduction, assessment objectives and skills, and assessment mode. The focus of Junior College English syllabus is "to underscore maturity of thought, independent thinking and the proficient use of language" (General Paper GCE 'AO' Level, 2005, p. 1). The aims of the pre-university phase English teaching is

“to enable the students to better understand the world by fostering a critical awareness of continuity and change in the human experience, demonstrate understanding of the nature of knowledge by appreciating the inter-

relationship of ideas from across disciplines, broaden their global outlook while enabling them to remain mindful of shared historical and social experiences, develop maturity of thought and skills of clear, accurate and effective communication, skills of evaluation of arguments and opinions, apply critical reading and creative thinking skills, promote extensive and independent reading and research” (General Paper GCE ‘AO’ Level, 2005, p. 1).

The GCE ‘A’ Level English examination paper consists of two parts, essay writing and comprehension. In the essay paper, the students are given twelve questions, from which they are required to choose one and write a 500-800 word long essay. In the comprehension paper, the students are required to demonstrate their ability to comprehend, explain, infer, evaluate and summarize.

There are six 40-minute periods of English lessons in Junior Colleges. The typical activities in lessons are the teachers going through passages and compositions with the students, group discussions, the students giving presentations of general interest. In addition, the teachers also give the students among other things comprehension passages, vocabulary lists related to certain topics and sample compositions, which are usually polished and compiled after each test.

3.3 Vocabulary Teaching and Learning in China and Singapore

Apparently, there are drastic differences in terms of vocabulary teaching in the classrooms between China and Singapore.

Vocabulary is often regarded in China as the most important aspect of EFL learning and teaching (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). The difficulty in vocabulary learning may be due to the poor input target language environment and the striking difference between Chinese and English. In view of the lexical importance and the daunting task to learn the vast English vocabulary, vocabulary teaching is one of key tasks every teacher must do in class. Whenever a new word arises in the text, the teacher elaborates on its part of speech and collocations followed by examples. More often than not, the students are required to make sentences with the new word in class. The

newly learnt word is reinforced in the homework after class and is dictated and tested in the following classes.

There are books teaching students how to remember vocabulary in every foreign language book shop. These books usually make use of orthographical or phonological forms, associations, etymological information and word-formation rules to help students to memorize new words. In such a populous country as China with a thirst for English, quite a few vocabulary learning books enjoy a very large readership. *Yingyu cihui de aomi* (Secrets of English Vocabulary) by Jiang Zheng (1986) is just one of the examples. The book lists vocabulary according to roots and affixes and explained in Chinese how to memorize them by working out the meanings of the roots and affixes. The book was first published in 1986 and has been reprinted many times.

Except for Gu and Johnson (1996), the empirical research on Chinese learner's English learning is still rare in terms of the huge numbers of learners both in China and overseas. This is especially true of the secondary learners, who outnumber tertiary students and are at the forefront of educational reforms. The empirical research on Chinese learners usually reports on tertiary students while secondary learners are neglected. This may be due to the fact that secondary school teachers are very busy, leaving them little time for research, and the fact that few secondary school teachers have enough English proficiency and research methodology training to carry out a well-designed study and then report their findings. For the convenience of data collection, the better trained and resourced university teachers prefer their own students as subjects. Nevertheless, vocabulary learning is viewed as such a challenge in English learning that nearly every learner and teacher talks about it in China. Nobody, to my knowledge, has done any empirical research on the vocabulary learning strategies that Chinese learners in secondary schools really use. Thus, mapping out the vocabulary learning strategies of secondary school learners in China is one of the objectives of this study.

Unlike the situation in China, English is the main language of instruction in the schools of Singapore and the Ministry of Education does not prescribe any word list for students of whatever level. With the exception of *Celebrate English!* by Sullivan et al. (2001), the other course books do not provide any glossary or word list at the back

for the convenience of the students to check or study the vocabulary. But in each unit of the secondary students' course books, there is a vocabulary focus, which is embodied in various tasks, for example, using words to describe sounds, examine connotation, use similes and metaphors, examine meanings of words in context, set words onto a cline, categorize words, understand and use idioms, study word associations, use words to create a certain atmosphere or colors etc. What should be noted is that many secondary schools in Singapore currently do not adhere to one set of English course books. The prevailing practice is that the teacher gives students some worksheets, either self-prepared or commercially published, to do. According to Heng et al. (2003), when the passage is gone through, the students are trained in the skills of responding to contextual clues so that they can cope with texts containing unfamiliar words. Some post-reading exercises or tasks are designed to require the students to analyze and apply words to ideas and situations in the text. Dictionary consultation skills are also trained, and word puzzles and creative spelling games are given to encourage students to learn new words. Nevertheless, since the syllabus drawn up by the Ministry of Education does not spell out the details about vocabulary teaching nor provide a compulsory word list which the students must master, the choice of words to be taught or learnt is left entirely to the initiative of individual teachers or learners. The English teachers give students files and files of worksheets, many of which are vocabulary learning exercises, to do. This practice is so common in Singapore that some researchers refer to this as worksheet or workbook "syndrome" (Cheah, 2003, p. 360).

What is notable is that most of the ESL course books also are equipped with student's work book and teacher's books. In the student's work books, a variety of exercises are provided, ranging from grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension to speaking and writing. The teacher's books contain a wealth of resources, teaching objectives, pedagogy, teaching steps, time allocation, instructional and presentation techniques, and methods and procedures for training listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, extension activities, supplementary resources like reading passages, audio-visuals etc. Each unit has an overview, suggested sequences of programs, steps for handling each component, questions to ask during each step, and objectives to

achieve during each activity. Much like the teacher's books in China, the teacher's books are of great help to the teachers. But its value is not much utilized because it seems that the entire community of teachers in Singapore has been infected with worksheet "syndrome" and the course books are more often than not put aside in the classroom (Cheah, 2003, p. 360).

The most popular books Singaporean parents buy for their school children are assessments. A vocabulary exercise book seems to be a must among what the parents purchase every year. *'O' Level English language with distinction – Vocabulary: the power of words* by Yap (1999) is one of the most popular vocabulary exercise books secondary school students buy. The book comprises seventeen thematic units of vocabulary exercises. Some units deal with people, figures of speech, emotive words, five senses, feelings and moods while other units cover phrasal verbs, size, professions, nature, loan words, jargons and technical terms etc. Another commercially published vocabulary exercise book is the series *Secondary Vocabulary* by Teoh, which was first published in 1990 and has been reprinted eighteen times. Each book in the series consists of three parts, i.e. vocabulary practices, word tests, and vocabulary building. The first two parts provide a variety of vocabulary exercises while the third part contains classified long lists of idioms, proverbs, similes, groups of confusing words, and figures of speech.

Generally, the EFL and the ESL students differ in their curriculums, textbooks, materials, media and methods of classroom instruction as well as extracurricular linguistic environments, nevertheless, both the groups attach much importance to vocabulary learning. It is unclear if and how the EFL and the ESL students differ in their beliefs about vocabulary learning, vocabulary learning sources and their vocabulary learning strategies due to the above differences in their learning contexts, and if and how the students vary in their vocabulary learning as they become more proficient in English and progress in level of education.

However, no empirical research on this contrastive and developmental study has been carried out. Indeed, how students learn vocabulary in Singapore has been neglected and no literature has been found in either journals or the local major libraries. Except for Wang's study (2001), which investigated how Singapore

secondary three students handled vocabulary in reading, there is much yet to be explored regarding learners' vocabulary acquisition in Singapore. However, due to the limitation of resources, this research project is confined to the effect of the social, educational and cultural environment on the vocabulary learning strategies of PRC students studying in Singapore.

3.4 Summary

This chapter reviews the general settings of EFL in China and ESL in Singapore by comparing the education systems, the English language syllabuses, the prevailing teaching pedagogies, the expectations of the teachers and parents, the teaching materials, the role of English in China and Singapore respectively. The importance of English is highly valued both in China and Singapore. While China is currently experiencing the greatest thirst for English as a foreign language, English in Singapore is the medium of instruction in schools for all subjects except the mother tongue, and enjoys a higher official status in education as 'the first language' than the mother tongues of the local peoples, which is accorded the status of the second language. The censuses in the past decades (Singapore Census, 1990, 2000) showed that the number of children in Singapore picking up English as their de facto first language and using English as their dominant language of daily communication kept increasing. Thus, besides being the language for public administration, education, commerce and judicial system in Singapore, English is also the language used in casual conversations in shops, streets, playgrounds. Compared to the poor English input EFL context in China, the students in the ESL context of Singapore enjoy a very rich input environment.

Socio-cultural learning contexts condition the ways learners approach learning tasks. How learners do learning is influenced by classroom culture, curricula, examinations and the wider socio-cultural environment as well as their beliefs and motivation. Without understanding the impact of the learning context, the process of EFL/ESL learning and its achievement in general can not be fully understood. Nevertheless, the effect of learning contexts on EFL/ESL acquisition has been neglected. Little empirical research has been devoted to how contexts shape the way

the learning is approached, what learning strategies learners with similar educational experiences will employ in different contexts, and when and where the learning takes place. What this study is going to do is to try to address this gap by focusing on the effect of learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) on the use of vocabulary learning strategies.

Having cleared the scene for understanding the backgrounds of the research questions, the next chapter is devoted to the research methodology of the study.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall describe the methodology followed in the two phases of the current study. To do this, I shall firstly present the research questions and summarize how I intend to undertake the process of addressing these questions. Secondly, I shall briefly describe the nature of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms to justify the synthesis of research methods followed in the present study. Besides, I shall further discuss different research methods for investigating learning strategies and provide a rationale for why I decided to use interviews and diaries.

Thirdly, I shall describe the process of designing a questionnaire, which was employed to map out what vocabulary learning strategies PRC students employ in China and Singapore. I shall then present results of initial trials of the think-aloud procedure with eight pilot subjects and discuss how understandings from these pilot trials resulted in adjustments to the main study. Finally, the methodology followed in the main study for collecting and analyzing the verbal report data will be described in detail.

4.2 Research Questions and Summary of the Methodology

This study investigates the effect of learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) on the use of vocabulary learning strategies. The subjects are Chinese learners at an intermediate level learning English in China (EFL context) and in Singapore (ESL context). It also seeks to investigate the relationship between the student's use of strategies and their individual differences, such as learning beliefs, English language proficiency and level of education.

To undertake the investigation, two stages are adopted in the study. Phase One is a stage of quantitative study, the scope of which is to globally map out the differences in vocabulary learning beliefs and vocabulary learning strategies of the PRC students in China and Singapore. For this purpose, a vocabulary learning

questionnaire based on the existing literature and the findings from some interviews with Chinese students was administered to address the following questions:

1. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their beliefs about vocabulary learning?
2. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their sources of vocabulary learning?
3. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies?
4. Do learners' achievement levels influence their choice of vocabulary learning strategies?

Based on the relevant literature reviewed, a list of hypotheses is posited as follows:

1. PRC-based students tend to believe that vocabulary should be memorized while Singapore-based students tend to believe that words should be learned through use;
2. Singapore-based students make more use of the socio-cultural environment (what happens outside the classroom and the school) as a vocabulary learning source to learn vocabulary, and increasingly so over time than their counterparts in China;
3. PRC-based students make use of more strategies of memorization/rehearsal types, and Singapore-based students make use of more social interaction and daily communication strategies;
4. High achievers are better language learners in that they make use of a wider range of strategies, and use them more frequently.

Phase Two is a stage of qualitative study to triangulate the data collected in Phase One. Interviews and diaries were adopted in Phase Two. Twenty-four secondary three students were selected as subjects. Twelve of the subjects were EFL secondary students in China while the other twelve students were ESL students in Singapore. Of

each student group of twelve, two good learners and two underachievers (one boy and one girl in each category) came from each level of education in the two different contexts. The English language proficiency of the students was assessed according to their marks in the examination and teacher's evaluation. Phase two tried to answer basically the same broad questions by means of the qualitative aspects of the diaries and interviews. The following are the specific research questions explored in Phase Two:

1. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their beliefs about vocabulary learning? If yes, how do Singapore-based learners change their beliefs about language learning and the extent of personal responsibility for language learning as a result of exposure to a communicative curriculum, English medium schooling and an ESL environment outside school?
2. How do the changed beliefs and opportunities result in different patterns of strategy use? How do they take advantage of opportunities that are present in Singapore but not in China? As it gets closer to exams, do they increasingly favour memorisation, or limit their strategies to examination-oriented ones?
3. Do Singapore-based successful and unsuccessful learners differ in their beliefs about vocabulary learning and their choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies? If yes, how do they differ? At what level, metacognitive, cognitive, social or affective? If no, how can it be explained? Can qualitative data provide any clues?

4.3 Research Design

4.3.1 Phase One: Questionnaire Survey

The purpose of this phase was to discover in broader terms the patterns of vocabulary learning strategies PRC students at an intermediate level learning English in China (EFL context) and in Singapore (ESL context) employ and to explore the effect of learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) on the use of vocabulary learning

strategies. Further examined were the relationships among learners, strategies and learning outcomes. A vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire based on the existing literature was developed and piloted twice for this purpose. The third version was used in the main study.

4.3.1.1 Participants

Two groups of participants in the study were drawn from two secondary schools in Harbin, China and one boarding school¹ in Singapore. The participants were high school students (Year 1 to Year 3) in China and secondary four to Junior College (JC) 2 students in Singapore. They were peers of the same age, ranging from 16 to 19 years old.

Those in China were studying English as a foreign language as prescribed in the national curriculum. The students had six 45-minute English lessons from Monday to Friday every week in the academic semesters. The teachers taught in traditional grammar-translation methods, explaining in detail word meaning and usage, sentence formation, and English grammar. Thus the students were taught to focus on each word in a text and to examine the text carefully for any unknown grammatical phenomenon. English was one of the compulsory subjects the students had to take in their college entrance examinations at the end of High School Year 3. Meanwhile, the ever-increasing explosive growth of cultural, economic and political exchange between China and other countries created a craze for English in China, which may affect the students' English learning in one way or another.

The participants in Singapore were studying English as a second language² and will be taking GCE 'O' Level examination at the end of Secondary School Year 4 and

¹In Singapore, boarding schools are usually affiliated to schools but often function independently and do not provide daytime classroom instructions. Thus, boarding schools in Singapore are somehow different from those in other countries, such as Australia, China, UK and USA where the boarding schools are full normal schools and conduct daytime teaching. In Hwa Chong Institution Boarding School (HCIBS) where the data collection was conducted in Singapore, there are about 900 secondary school students from fifteen countries and the majority of the boarders (over 500) are from China.

²In the Singaporean context, students are considered to have English as their first language as English is the language of instruction in schools and universities and is the basic working language of the country.

GCE 'A' Level examination at the end of Junior College Year 2. Like their counterparts in China, the students also have six 45-minute English lessons from Monday to Friday every week in the academic semesters. These participants in Singapore are also from China and have been in Singapore for secondary education for over one year. However, in the ESL context of Singapore, English is used as the medium of instruction in all lessons except Chinese and is widely used in daily communication. In English classes, the participants are taught through a communicative approach in which the teacher's role in the learning process is recognized as less dominant. Though some attention is paid to grammar in English classes for the upper secondary and Junior College students, more emphasis is placed on discourse level, especially on analytical skills in comprehension. Grammar items are not taught out of context. The students are encouraged to read more for the purpose to enlarge their vocabulary and improve their comprehension. The students are expected to answer questions in their own words instead of lifting sentences from passages. Classroom activities encourage interaction among the students and the teacher. The teacher is recognized both as the conventional classroom teacher and a facilitator. After the class, the use of language in daily life gives the students plenty of chances to use the target language. Compared to the poor input learning context in China, the participants enjoy rich exposure to the target language in the ESL context of Singapore.

Students at these levels in Singapore were chosen for the study because they have experienced at least one full year of secondary school life. During the one year of the local study, the students have generally learnt enough English for daily communication and classroom discussion. Through mingling with local peers and participating in various activities both inside and outside school, they have learned to appreciate the local cultures and the great majority of them can pass the year-end examinations along with the local peers. Some of the bright Singapore-based PRC students can even represent their schools to participate in intermural or international competitions in English. Hence, having been formally assessed through presentations,

However, as English is not their native language spoken after school with most of their peers, the participants involved are referred to as ESL learners in this study. Please refer to Section 3.2.

project work, various tests and examinations, the participants are aware of the demands and expectations of secondary school education in Singapore, making them adept in the transition from EFL learning experience in China to ESL learning context in Singapore. In this sense, I assume the learning strategies the participants employ are more typical of intermediate level students in general EFL and ESL contexts respectively than those employed by students of other grades.

Table 4.1:

Participant distribution in China by achievement level and gender

Year/Level	Achievement Level			Female	Male	Total
	Upper	Moderate	Lower			
High School Year 1	22	26	27	37	38	75
High School Year 2	25	25	25	37	38	75
High School Year 3	24	26	25	37	38	75
					Total	225

Table 4.2:

Participant distribution in Singapore by achievement level and gender

Year/Level	Achievement Level			Female	Male	Total
	Upper	Moderate	Lower			
Secondary 4	23	27	25	38	37	75
JC 1	24	26	25	37	38	75
JC 2	24	27	24	39	36	75
					Total	225

To answer the proposed research questions, a total of 450 students was involved in the first phase of the questionnaire survey, 225 in China and 225 in Singapore, and the distribution of them is reflected in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. In the first phase of the survey, the students' English language proficiency was collected through self-reports in the questionnaires. As for the second phase, the achievement level of

the students was assessed according to both the results of their English exams and their teachers' evaluation of the students' English proficiency observed through their homework and classroom performance (see 4.3.2.1).

4.3.1.2 Instrument

The instrument used in this phase for eliciting vocabulary learning beliefs, vocabulary development sources and vocabulary learning strategies was a vocabulary learning questionnaire (VLQ) that was a modified version of Gu and Johnson (1996). Gu and Johnson's questionnaire had to be modified with some items removed and new items added in because the current study was quite different from Gu and Johnson's (1996) study in terms of the purposes and scopes. During the VLQ modification process, a number of vocabulary learning articles, reference books and textbooks were examined and compared with Gu and Johnson's VLQ version. After that, several English teachers in Hwa Chong Institution were asked to review the revised vocabulary learning questionnaire and add strategies they were aware of from their teaching experience. Then, 34 secondary three PRC students in Hwa Chong Institution were asked to write a report on how they studied English vocabulary words. The vocabulary learning questionnaire was further amended.

Before the final administration, piloting is a must, which has two purposes: to check the clarity of the language used in the questionnaire and to check content validity. For the purpose of checking the clarity of the language used in the questionnaire, six secondary three PRC students in Hwa Chong Institution were invited for individual meetings in April 2005 to complete the questionnaire and the time required for completing it was observed. Each student was then asked to comment on the language and the layout of the questionnaire. Though the administration copy was in Chinese, the feedback from these students resulted in rephrasing some statements so as to make the meaning of the statements clearer. To check content validity, the students were also requested to comment on the content of the statements in each strategic category as a way to establish the statements were

Table 4.3: The internal consistency reliabilities of VLQ

Beliefs, sources and strategies	No. of items	Variable labels	Reliabilities
Importance perception	3	IMPORTANCE	$\alpha = .56$
Difficulty perception	3	DIFFICULTY	$\alpha = .72$
Knowing a word	3	KNOWING	$\alpha = .46$
Memorization	6	MEMORIZATION	$\alpha = .53$
Learning words from use	3	USE	$\alpha = .46$
Learning words from reading	3	READING	$\alpha = .55$
Classroom learning	4	CLASSLEARN	$\alpha = .47$
Independent learning	6	INDEPENDENT	$\alpha = .68$
Daily communication	3	DAILYUSE	$\alpha = .82$
Selective attention	6	SELECT	$\alpha = .62$
Self-initiation	6	INITIATION	$\alpha = .82$
Wider context	5	DISCOURSAL	$\alpha = .51$
Immediate context	5	LOCAL	$\alpha = .70$
Dictionary use strategies for comprehension	4	COMDICTUSE	$\alpha = .60$
Extended dictionary strategies	6	EXTENDEDICTUSE	$\alpha = .77$
Dictionary look-up strategies	5	DICTIONLOOKUP	$\alpha = .71$
Social interaction	3	SOCIAL	$\alpha = .62$
Meaning-oriented note taking	4	MEANINGNOTE	$\alpha = .65$
Usage-oriented note taking	4	USAGENOTE	$\alpha = .75$
Use of word lists	4	USING LIST	$\alpha = .69$
Oral repetition	3	ORALREP	$\alpha = .66$
Visual repetition	3	VISUALREP	$\alpha = .67$
Association/elaboration	5	ASSOCIATION	$\alpha = .79$
Visual encoding	4	VISUALCOD	$\alpha = .53$
Auditory encoding	3	AUDITORYCOD	$\alpha = .72$
Use of word-structure	3	WORD-STRUCTURE	$\alpha = .68$
Semantic encoding	3	SEMANTICCOD	$\alpha = .70$
Contextual encoding	3	CONTEXTCOD	$\alpha = .62$
Activation	5	ACTIVATION	$\alpha = .72$

measuring what they claimed to measure. The piloting showed that the questionnaire took an average of 40 minutes to complete and this was considered to be appropriate (Gu & Johnson, 1996). A seven-point Likert scale was adopted for the questionnaire. The Likert scale reflected a continuum of agreement, which ranged from *absolutely agree/extremely true*, *agree/true*, *moderately agree/generally true*, *neutral*, *moderately*

disagree/generally untrue to *disagree/untrue* and *absolutely disagree/ extremely untrue*. The responses elicited were correspondingly coded in numbers from 7, 6, 5, 4, 3 to 2 and 1.

To check the reliability of the questionnaire (Appendix B) before the administration, the questionnaire was pilot tested in early May 2005 with some of the PRC students in Hwa Chong Institution Boarding School. Fifty-five copies of the questionnaire were distributed and a total of 53 questionnaires were returned. The return rate was 97%. The reliability of the questionnaire was analyzed by employing the Cronbach's alpha test on SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). A listwise deletion of missing data left 47 valid cases for the procedure.

Item analysis was done based on the contribution of each item to the overall reliability of the strategy category (Gu & Johnson, 1996; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990) to which it belonged (item-total statistics and inter-item correlation). In this regard, items in the questionnaire that contributed less to their respective categories and those that did not correlate with other items in the same category were removed. Besides, following the principle of parsimony, categories that correlated highly with other categories were combined (high inter-category correlation). After deleting weak items and combining highly correlated categories, the remaining, 29 categories were left, with altogether 121 items included. The internal consistency of the final form of the categories ranged from moderate to satisfactory, as shown by the alpha figures in Table 4.3. Therefore, it was assumed that the instrument had a sufficient internal consistency to be used in the main study.

4.3.1.3 General procedure

The vocabulary learning questionnaire was administered in late May and early June 05 in Singapore and China respectively to collect data.

Before the administration, a briefing was held one day before for all the teachers whose students were to be involved in the study. The administration time and venues were slightly different in Singapore and China. On the following evening in Singapore, the pre-packaged questionnaires were administered by my colleagues and myself in the dining hall where the PRC students were asked to gather during their

study time. As for the data collection in China, the pre-packaged questionnaires were taken to class and administered by the teachers using around 40 minutes of class time. The completed questionnaires were collected from the teachers immediately after the class and coded for analysis.

To thank them for the help rendered, each teacher and student was given a pen as a token of appreciation.

4.3.1.4 Analysis

Descriptive statistics were obtained in order to delineate the overall patterns of vocabulary learning strategies employed by the PRC secondary students in EFL and ESL contexts. T tests and ANOVA analyses when appropriate were then performed to reveal if the inter-group and intra-group differences in vocabulary learning strategies employed by the EFL and ESL students were significant. Based on the analysis, the strategy profiles of different types of learners were delineated.

4.3.2 Phase Two: Qualitative Study

The purpose of this phase is to make use of the qualitative data collected through diaries and interviews to triangulate and illuminate the findings of the questionnaire survey in Phase One. Diaries and interviews can potentially reveal how Singapore-based students change their beliefs about language learning and the extent of personal responsibility for language learning as a result of exposure to a communicative curriculum and English medium schooling. They can show how the changed beliefs and opportunities result in different patterns of strategy use; how learners come to realise that they can take advantage of opportunities that are present in Singapore but not in China. They can also elaborate and document beliefs and employment of strategies that may be critical to understanding the attainment of the students' English learning outcomes.

4.3.2.1 Participants

Table 4.4: Participants' personal data

Student	Gender	Age	Level of Education	Achievement Level	Context
1	Female	16	Senior Middle School 1, China	Good	EFL
2	Female	16	Senior Middle School 1, China	Poor	EFL
3	Male	16	Senior Middle School 1, China	Good	EFL
4	Male	16	Senior Middle School 1, China	Poor	EFL
5	Female	16	Secondary 4, Singapore	Good	ESL
6	Female	16	Secondary 4, Singapore	Poor	ESL
7	Male	16	Secondary 4, Singapore	Good	ESL
8	Male	16	Secondary 4, Singapore	Poor	ESL
9	Female	17	Senior Middle School 2, China	Good	EFL
10	Female	17	Senior Middle School 2, China	Poor	EFL
11	Male	17	Senior Middle School 2, China	Good	EFL
12	Male	17	Senior Middle School 2, China	Poor	EFL
13	Female	17	Junior College 1, Singapore	Good	ESL
14	Female	17	Junior College 1, Singapore	Poor	ESL
15	Male	17	Junior College 1, Singapore	Good	ESL
16	Male	17	Junior College 1, Singapore	Poor	ESL
17	Female	18	Senior Middle School 3, China	Good	EFL
18	Female	18	Senior Middle School 3, China	Poor	EFL
19	Male	18	Senior Middle School 3, China	Good	EFL
20	Male	18	Senior Middle School 3, China	Poor	EFL
21	Female	18	Junior College 2, Singapore	Good	ESL
22	Female	18	Junior College 2, Singapore	Poor	ESL
23	Male	18	Junior College 2, Singapore	Good	ESL
24	Male	18	Junior College 2, Singapore	Poor	ESL

To answer the research questions in Phase Two, out of the 450 participants involved in Phase One, 24 of them (12 in China and Singapore respectively) were singled out from different levels of education and achievement for the qualitative study in Phase Two. The students were selected through discussions with the teachers and approached individually for their willingness to participate in the phase two study. The students were chosen because of the following considerations:

a). Scores on the mid-term and final English language paper. The pupils whose examination scores were over 75% for the ESL students and 85%³ for the EFL ones were considered as 'good' while the students whose marks were below 50% and 60% for the ESL and the EFL students were viewed as 'poor'. Thus, a substantial difference in language learning ability between the two groups was assured.

b). Marks from their Continuous Assessment (CA). The scores of the aforementioned examinations can distinguish effective learners and ineffective learners. However, they are not foolproof. To achieve more validity, CA marks were also taken into account. The CA marks of the 'good' students were established as over 70 and 85 for the ESL and EFL students respectively out of a maximum mark of 100 while the CA marks of the 'poor' ESL and EFL students were set below 45 and 60 respectively.

c). English teacher's observation of the pupils' attitude. The teacher's observation not only helped to categorize the students in terms of 'good' or 'poor', but also helped to select students with proper attitude to school work, because the pupils' good general attitude to school work would prevent premature dropouts from the study.

As for the language used to conduct the interviews, it was Chinese, though the participants were allowed to use English if they preferred.

4.3.2.2 Diary keeping

Each of the participants was asked to keep a 2-month diary (from May to July 2005) either in Chinese or English, describing or reflecting on his or her vocabulary

³ Due to the different curricula and exam paper formats in the EFL and the ESL contexts, the mean score of the EFL students tends to be higher than their ESL counterparts'. Thus, the cut-off points here differed.

learning sources, strategies, feelings, experiences, in or outside of classroom. The participants were given guidelines (see Appendix E) on how to keep a vocabulary learning diary and a list of vocabulary learning questions to guide their diary writing. These guidelines and questions provided a context for sustained reflection on various aspects of the participants' English vocabulary learning. Their teachers helped to collect the participants' diaries at the end of each month in China while I collected those at weekly intervals in Singapore. I contacted the participants regularly, either personally, by phone or by email to ask them about their feelings or difficulties in keeping the diaries. Immediately after the diaries were collected on a weekly basis, I read through all diary entries to see if there were any confusing or particularly notable points that would need to be clarified further by phone or email. All the diaries, if written in Chinese, were translated into English in such a manner as to reproduce as far as possible the lexical distinctions and discursive structure of the original writing.

4.3.2.3 Interview arrangements

I made interview appointments with the participants in China in June 2005 and with those in Singapore in late June and July 2005 when the diary writing was at the half-way stage. The first part of the interview focused on the participants' beliefs about English vocabulary learning, their preferred vocabulary learning strategies, and the main sources of their vocabulary learning, the motivation that initiated and sustained their English learning efforts. In the second part, each participant was asked to report how he or she had carried out vocabulary learning. I also asked the participants during the interview if they had a theory about English vocabulary learning and what they would tell a junior who asks for advice about English learning in general, vocabulary learning in particular. After the questions steered the interview in a general direction, every attempt was made to let the interviewee take the lead while I probed for clarification and expansion of what was said. Meanwhile I tried to clarify the unclear points I came across in reading their diaries and tried to find out more details about their vocabulary learning strategies (see Appendix C for general interview questions). Besides, I checked whether the participants had notebooks for vocabulary learning and when and how they took notes and learned new words. Each

of the interviews lasted about 45 minutes and was tape-recorded on thirty 60-minute cassette tapes, transcribed verbatim, and later translated into English in their entirety.

To show appreciation for the help of the teachers and the students, each of them was given a gift and the students were offered English tutorials if they needed them.

4.3.2.4 Coding the strategies

When the diaries were collected and the interviews transcribed (see Appendix D for samples), the next job was to analyze and code the data.

In the process of data coding, all the diaries and printed transcripts were treated in the following steps: (1) They were read carefully several times to obtain an intuitive picture of possible strategies in the students' strategic repertoire. At this stage I did not label these as strategies. (2) These initial impressionistic strategies were noted instead of being labeled immediately. (3) Similarities and differences in such strategies were identified, and (4) I reflected on similarities and differences between the strategies and noted how the participants contextualised their vocabulary learning, how and why the opportunity/choice to use a particular strategy occurred; how Singapore-based learners came to realise that they could take advantage of opportunities that were present in Singapore but weren't in China. (5) I examined further how the students changed their beliefs about language learning and the extent of personal responsibility for language learning as a result of exposure to a communicative curriculum and English medium schooling, and how their changed beliefs and opportunities resulted in different patterns of strategy use etc.

Table 4.5: Transcription legend

Subject talk	S:
Researcher talk	R:
Subject emphasis	<i>Bold italics</i>
Recording unclear	[?]
Omission	...
Pause
Researcher insertion	()
Irrelevant	“ ”

The following extracts, for instance, were taken from the data of an EFL student (No. 12):

- a). "I learn English vocabulary mainly from classrooms and textbooks." (Code: 12EFL/M/SM2/I090605. Translation mine)
- b). "I do not have a plan to expand my vocabulary. I am quite lazy. Without teachers' assigned homework, I do not know what to learn, what to review after school." (Code: 12EFL/M/SM2/I090605. Translation mine)
- c). "When I learn English words, I always learn them according to Chinese meanings. In this way, when I hear the word, I can quickly translate it into Chinese in my mind. When I want to speak English, I can first of all think of the Chinese meanings of the word before I translate it into English so as to improve the accuracy." (Code: 12EFL/M/SM2/I090605. Translation mine)
- d). "To learn English words, you have to memorize. But I also think it is not so effective only to memorize. Another way to memorize a new word is to remember its pronunciation. If the correct pronunciation is not remembered, the word will not be remembered accurately. In a period of time, you will forget how the word is spelled." (Code: 12EFL/M/SM2/I090605. Translation mine)
- e). "My English is 'dumb' English (unable to speak English, note mine). I learn English purely for exams. After class, there is no opportunity to use English." (Code: 12EFL/M/SM2/I090605. Translation mine)

When I read the above extracts, I noticed that the student used *Chinese meanings* (Strategy 1) and *pronunciations* (Strategy 2) to memorize English words, because she believed in *memorization* (Belief). Owing to the input-poor EFL environment, she learned vocabulary predominantly from *classrooms* (Source 1) and *textbooks* (Source 2), and she did not have opportunities (or she did not make efforts to find or create some) to practice her English. As a result, she could not speak English or did not have the confidence to speak it, and therefore to prepare for examinations was the only purpose of her English learning.

Let's look at another set of extracts taken from the data of an ESL student (No. 23):

f). I learn most of my vocabulary from reading newspapers and magazines, and reading English novels. Ah, personally I feel that reading newspapers and magazines is a very good source for vocabulary learning ... and know how they are used in daily communication. (Code: 23ESL/M/JC2/I270605. Not my translation)

g). ... my teacher also teaches some new vocabulary in class. But that is not my primary source of vocabulary (learning). (Code: 23ESL/M/JC2/I270605. Not my translation)

h). Maybe sometimes, I pick up some words through activities because others use them every day. (Code: 23ESL/M/JC2/I270605. Not my translation)

i). But for most of us, when we first encounter the language, the way we learn the vocabulary is through memorizing, and personally I feel that is a very bad way because after a while we may forget what we have memorized. We must apply these vocabulary, so when we first pick up these vocabulary, we must try to use them in essays, in our conversation, so as to reinforce all these vocabulary. So it may be difficult if we just memorize the vocabulary again and again without using them. I think the application is much more important. It does not matter how many words we know. I think the important thing is how many words we can use.... (Code: 23ESL/M/JC2/I270605. Not my translation)

j). If I encounter a particular word frequently, I will look it up and try to learn the word. This is the long-term plan. But as for the short-term plan, when I was preparing for some language tests, like SAT, ah, what I did was to kind of dismantle a dictionary and divide it into several sections, I just circle out the words, then carry the small ... [?] it is just like a booklet. Very small then I can carry (it) with me. I can refer to them whenever I'm free. I think that is the plan about vocabulary learning. But in the long term, I think we should read more to learn new vocabulary. (Code: 23ESL/M/JC2/I270605. Not my translation)

k). ... it's (vocabulary learning is) challenging and at the same time it is rewarding, because, take SAT as example. During that time, I really spent a lot of time every day memorizing the vocabulary. Ok, that is for the exam. After that, I do feel that my vocabulary has increased quite a lot. After the exam, I can still recall most of the vocabulary. I can recognize them in my reading, so, after doing that, whenever I see new words, I will be more confident of learning the new words because you know, I have, I have learnt much difficult words before, so now this one should not be too difficult for me. I gain confidence and motivation through the learning. Now when I read passages, I won't have many problems understanding passages because I have learnt much vocabulary through all these. It is rewarding in the way that I can read something more fluently. I can read more difficult articles, no need to interrupt my thought to check up vocabulary. (Code: 23ESL/M/JC2/I270605. Not my translation)

After reading the above extracts several times, I found that the ESL students learned his vocabulary from the following sources: *reading*, *classrooms* and *communication*, of which *reading* was the most important to him. Meanwhile, *reading* was also the one of the main strategies for him to expand and reinforce his vocabulary. Besides, he tried to activate and consolidate his vocabulary through *using* them in writing and daily communication, which was a privilege to the ESL students over their EFL counterparts.

Though he usually did not believe in *memorization* (Belief), which, according to him, could lead to vocabulary learning being difficult and hard to retain, he did resort to *memorization* when he was preparing for examinations featuring vocabulary. What could be inferred was that his beliefs were not always consistent with his learning strategies, which varied with learning tasks.

The extracts showed that the student was a motivated student, knowing how to manage his time efficiently and plan his strategies flexibly and accordingly. He readily assumed the responsibility of vocabulary learning either through reading, using or memorization. He was challenged by difficult vocabulary learning tasks and felt

rewarded and more confident after he found his vocabulary increased after the difficult tasks of vocabulary memorization for examinations.

After all the data was studied and coded, the vocabulary learning strategies reported by each participant were collated on a master sheet. The master sheet contained the questions asked with all the vocabulary learning strategies and the conditions in which they were used noted down. The master sheet now contained all the data needed for analysis. However, diaries and transcribed interviews were referred to if more information was needed.

To help with the writing up, the data was grouped into themes and categories in a logical and consistent process. On most occasions the themes and categories were similar to the questions in the checklist. However, organizing the data in this way allowed me to handle efficiently information that might not necessarily follow an expected pattern.

4.3.2.5 Reliability checks for the coding procedure

The reliability of the coding procedures was checked in September 2005 by employing inter-rater and intra-rater reliability procedures. Inter-rater reliability represents the average agreement between outside coders and the researcher while intra-rater reliability refers to the level of agreement between analyses of the same data by the researcher himself at two different times (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). The target reliability was set at 90% match for the intra-rater reliability and 85% for the inter-rater reliability in view of the difference in the understanding between the raters.

4.3.2.6 Sampling for reliability checks

For the purpose of the reliability checks, the diaries and transcripts of four students were randomly chosen from the 24 students which represented approximately 17% of the corpus data. One of the transcripts was used for training and practice purposes, the other three were used for the reliability analysis.

4.3.2.7 Independent coders

Two independent coders, both of whom had taught English over five years in universities in China, were invited to do the inter-rater reliability check. The first independent coder was a PhD student in Nanyang Technical University (NTU) of Singapore, specializing in English as a foreign language teaching and learning to Chinese students. He was familiar with the literature on language learning strategies. The second independent coder was a graduating MA student in NTU, and preparing his research project on EFL/ESL learning. He was also familiar with the learning strategies.

4.3.2.8 Procedures of reliability checks

The intra-rater reliability check was done one week before the inter-rater reliability checks in order not to bias my second analysis of the data from training the external coders for the inter-rater reliability checks. The time gap between the first analysis and the analysis for the intra-rater reliability was one month. For the intra-rater reliability, I read the definitions of the strategy types identified in the study and then recoded the transcripts of the four students randomly picked out.

The inter-rater reliability checks were done on two consecutive days. To maintain the confidentiality of the data provided by the participants of the study, the personal referents in the data used in the reliability checks were replaced with letters. Furthermore, the independent coders were reminded of the confidentiality of the data they were going to analyze.

The independent coders were given training on the coding scheme used in the study. The scheme was further complemented with an example use of each strategy from the unselected transcripts. The independent coders initially read the scheme carefully, and then studied it again with me, followed by a practice analysis.

Both independent coders first read the transcripts and then started coding. During the initial parts of the coding, I helped the external coders with the analyses, gradually minimizing the amount of help as they became more confident with the

procedure. Uncertainties during the coding process were solved by further discussion. After they expressed confidence with the scheme, the session proceeded to the actual analysis. This initial training session took around three minutes. During the actual coding session, the independent coders were not provided with any help. The coding took three sessions, between which the coders had short breaks. The coding session lasted about four hours.

4.3.2.9 Reliability analysis

The intra-rater reliability was calculated by the following formula where “I” represents myself:

$$\frac{\text{No of strategies coded the same by I in the 1st and 2nd codings}}{\text{No of strategies coded by I in the 1st coding}}$$

In the first coding, I had coded 156 strategy incidences whereas in the second coding I identified 149, 145 of which were identical to my first coding. Applying the above formula, the intra-rater reliability was found to be approximately 93%, which was above the set target.

For the inter-rater reliability, the following formula, where "I" refers to myself while A is the first independent coder and B is the second independent coder, was used:

$$\frac{(\text{No of strategies coded the same by I and A} + \text{No of strategies coded the same by I and B})/2}{\text{No of strategies coded by I}}$$

The first independent coder coded a total of 98 strategy incidences, 93 of which were identical to mine, resulting in 92.1% match with my initial coding while the second independent coder identified a total of 89 strategies, 86 of which matched my codings, suggesting a 85.2% match. The overall consistency of codings between the three coders was 88.6%, which was above the set target. Thus, it was viewed that the inter-rater reliability was high enough for the further data analysis.

4.3.2.10 Data analysis

The data was analyzed in the sequence of research questions proposed to make up for what the quantitative survey fell short of in Phase One by making use of the qualitative data. The analyses of the data were carried out to examine the EFL and ESL students' beliefs on vocabulary learning, how Singapore-based learners changed their beliefs about language learning; how ESL students' changed beliefs and opportunities resulted in different patterns of strategy use; how they took advantage of opportunities that were present in Singapore but not in China; whether the ESL students resorted to examination-oriented strategies when examinations got closer; if and how Singapore-based successful and unsuccessful learners differed in their beliefs about vocabulary learning and their choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies. In doing so, comparisons and contrasts among the EFL and ESL participants were done at metacognitive, cognitive and affective levels. Besides exploring the effect of the environment on the use of vocabulary learning strategies, the differences in the highachieving and lowachieving learners in terms of their vocabulary learning beliefs, development sources and strategies were also examined.

4.4 Summary

The chapter has presented the methodology pursued in the present study. The general process of how to address the research questions was first summarized and the research methods for investigating learning strategies involved in this study were discussed. This chapter further described the two-phase research design in detail, with subjects, instruments, data collection procedures and data analyses described sequentially.

The chapter has also presented the process of transcribing, coding of the diaries and interview transcripts, and procedures of reliability checks in Phase Two. The intra-rater and inter-rater reliability procedures indicated that the consistency was satisfactory enough for further data analysis.

The next chapter presents the results and discussion of the questionnaire survey of Phase One.

Chapter Five: Survey Phase

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the t test results of vocabulary learning strategies data will be reported following the proposed research questions and hypotheses. The overall frequencies of strategy use in each dimension will be considered in each section first, followed by a more detailed discussion about the specific strategies in order to show the significant differences among various explanatory variables.

5.2 Research Questions

1. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their beliefs about vocabulary learning?
2. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their sources of vocabulary learning?
3. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies?
4. Do learners' achievement levels influence their choice of vocabulary learning strategies?

Based on the relevant literature reviewed, a list of hypotheses is posited as follows:

1. PRC-based students tend to believe that vocabulary should be memorized while Singapore-based students tend to believe that words should be learned through use;
2. Singapore-based students make more use of the socio-cultural environment (what happens outside the classroom and the school) as a vocabulary learning source to learn vocabulary, and increasingly so over time than their counterparts in China;
3. PRC-based students make use of more strategies of memorization/rehearsal types, and Singapore-based students make use of more social interaction and

daily communication strategies;

4. High achievers are better language learners in that they make use of a wider range of strategies, and use them more frequently.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Beliefs about vocabulary learning

The independent samples t-test results revealed that the ESL and the EFL students differed significantly ($p < .05$) in 4 of 6 belief categories as shown in Table 5.1. Vocabulary seemed to carry more importance in the mind of the ESL students in their English learning compared with their EFL counterparts (ESL $M = 5.87$, EFL $M = 5.52$, $t = 4.17$, $p = .000$), and the ESL students also reported a firmer belief that words can be picked up by using them (ESL $M = 5.59$, EFL $M = 5.27$, $t = 3.95$, $p = .000$). In addition, the ESL students believed more that learning new words means knowing more than its pronunciation and spelling, involving learning words and set phrases usually going with them (ESL $M = 6.06$, EFL $M = 5.81$, $t = 3.09$, $p = .002$), suggesting the ESL students demonstrating a more native-like organization of their lexicon as Milton and Meara (1995) found with their study abroad learners. Nevertheless, the complex task of vocabulary learning seems less difficult to the ESL students, though the difference in the beliefs between the two groups of the students was not significant. Relative to the EFL students, the ESL ones believed less in memorization of words (ESL $M = 3.62$, EFL $M = 3.84$, $t = -2.08$, $p = .038$) but more in learning them from use and reading (see Table 5.4). The results of the independent samples t-test confirm the hypothesis that PRC-based students tend to believe that vocabulary should be memorized while Singapore-based students tend to believe that words should be learned through use.

The difference that the EFL students believed more in memorization while their ESL counterparts believed more in use and reading can be explained by two reasons: First, the EFL students studied in an input-poor environment while the ESL ones studied in an input-rich environment. Second, the EFL students were under a stronger influence of the Confucian heritage culture, the quantitative tradition in educational thinking of which conceives learning as the aggregation of content. Thus, to the EFL students, to be a good learner is to know more so that the ability to

reproduce previously learned content quickly and accurately becomes the criterion for good learning (Cole, 1990).

Table 5.1: Beliefs about vocabulary learning of EFL and ESL students

Beliefs	Learning Context	Mean	SD	N	T	p
Importance perception	ESL	5.87	.857	222	4.172	.000
	EFL	5.52	.920	219		
Difficulty perception	ESL	4.83	1.219	220	-.389	.697
	EFL	4.87	1.099	221		
Knowing a word	ESL	6.06	.942	223	3.088	.002
	EFL	5.81	.748	222		
Memorization	ESL	3.62	1.107	211	-2.082	.038
	EFL	3.84	1.011	205		
Learning words by use	ESL	5.59	.717	218	3.948	.000
	EFL	5.27	.956	218		
Learning words from reading	ESL	5.25	.672	217	1.757	.080
	EFL	5.12	.913	217		

Based on the above results, it can be said that the EFL and the ESL students differed far more than they resembled each other in their vocabulary learning beliefs. For the EFL students, vocabulary seems to assume slightly less importance in their English learning, which is accounted for by the fact that grammar is another outstanding component in their curriculum while grammar is hardly touched upon in the ESL learning context. Though the ESL students reported a significantly firmer belief that it is a complicated job to learn new words, they don't consider it as difficult as the EFL students. This may be due to the fact that the ESL students learn English as a second language, with English input so abundant in both school and daily life that they pick up words incidentally without much conscious effort. This is supported by their low scores on the intentional cognitive learning strategy of rote memorization but high scores on less intentional learning from reading and actually using them, which

proves the hypothesis that EFL students believe more in rote memorization than their ESL counterparts, who tend to believe that words should be learned through use.

5.3.2 Sources of vocabulary learning

Table 5.2: Vocabulary learning sources of EFL and ESL students

Sources	Learning Context	Mean	SD	N	t	P
Classroom learning	ESL	3.85	.945	219	-25.506	.000
	EFL	5.95	.769	220		
Independent learning	ESL	4.68	1.015	219	12.146	.000
	EFL	3.51	.986	216		
Daily communication	ESL	4.76	1.003	219	16.142	.000
	EFL	3.04	1.210	216		

As expected of the three dimensions about vocabulary learning sources, the independent samples t-test results in Table 5.2 showed that the ESL and the EFL students differed significantly in all the three vocabulary learning sources. The EFL students reported learning from classrooms much more than their ESL counterparts (ESL $M=3.85$, EFL $M=5.95$, $t=25.51$, $p=.000$) while the ESL students ascribed their vocabulary learning far more to independent learning (ESL $M=4.68$, EFL $M=3.51$, $t=12.15$, $p=.000$) and daily communication (ESL $M=4.76$, EFL $M=3.04$, $t=16.14$, $p=.000$) than their EFL counterparts. Presumably, in the input-poor EFL learning environment, the classroom is the predominant venue for the students to learn vocabulary from the texts, role-play mini-dramas, dialogues, their teachers and their classmates. By comparison, the ESL students enjoy a much more input bountiful environment besides their classroom in which the teachers focus on comprehension analysis and writing skills instead of spoon-feeding them the linguistic knowledge as their former EFL English teachers did in China. Thus, in terms of vocabulary learning, they felt they benefited more from independent learning, for example, from reading among other things and daily communication. The results substantiate the first half of the second hypothesis that the Singapore-based students make more use of the socio-

cultural environment as a vocabulary learning source to learn vocabulary than their counterparts in China.

5.3.3 General vocabulary learning strategies

Table 5.3 displays the independent samples t-test results of the EFL and the ESL students. To make it more decipherable, I analyzed the results in terms of metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies.

5.3.3.1 Metacognitive strategies

Two metacognitive strategies, selective attention and self-initiation, are surveyed and the results reveal that the EFL students ($M=4.86$, $SD=0.91$, $N=224$) rated selective attention higher than their ESL counterparts ($M=4.63$, $SD=0.98$, $N=215$) while the latter ($M=4.30$, $SD=0.95$, $N=220$) ranked self-initiation slightly higher than the EFL learners ($M=4.28$, $SD=0.71$, $N=223$). Nevertheless, the independent samples t-test showed that the inter-group differences were significant only over selective attention but not over self-initiation.

The difference in selective attention was probably due to the fact that the EFL students have a clearly spelt out English learning syllabus in which all the words and their collocations required to be learnt are neatly listed, and thus the students must have a better sense of which words need to be learnt. As for the self-initiation difference, it was due to the difference in the parental supervision. The EFL students are closely supervised by their parents after school at home but the ESL students are overseas students. They stay in a boarding school and though the teacher mentors act as loco parentis, each teacher mentor has around 20 students to take care of, thus it is understandable that they can not pay as much attention to the boarders under their care as the EFL students' parents can to their own children at home.

Table 5.3: Vocabulary learning strategies of EFL and ESL students

Strategies	Learning Context	Mean	SD	N	t	P
Selective attention	ESL	4.64	.980	215	-2.465	.014
	EFL	4.86	.909	224		
Self-initiation	ESL	4.30	.947	220	.172	.863
	EFL	4.28	.713	223		
Use of wider context	ESL	4.99	.800	215	3.210	.001
	EFL	4.70	1.048	214		
Use of immediate context	ESL	4.61	.978	217	-4.229	.000
	EFL	4.96	.739	219		
Use of English-English dictionary	ESL	5.18	1.652	218	8.852	.000
	EFL	3.74	1.246	219		
Use of English-Chinese dictionary	ESL	4.10	1.764	216	-5.089	.000
	EFL	4.97	1.809	220		
Use of Chinese-English dictionary	ESL	4.29	1.836	221	2.592	.010
	EFL	3.87	1.643	224		
Dictionary use strategies for comprehension	ESL	5.18	.800	216	7.277	.000
	EFL	4.47	1.174	218		
Extended dictionary strategies	ESL	5.11	.804	217	7.250	.000
	EFL	4.45	1.053	210		
Dictionary look-up strategies	ESL	4.45	1.120	216	-3.086	.002
	EFL	4.75	.902	220		
Social interaction	ESL	4.88	1.009	217	8.985	.000
	EFL	3.97	1.103	218		
Meaning-oriented note taking	ESL	4.46	.982	210	2.009	.045
	EFL	4.27	.943	219		
Usage-oriented note taking	ESL	4.33	1.174	213	-3.74	.708

	EFL	4.37	1.107	219		
Use of word lists	ESL	3.73	.870	217	-2.837	.005
	EFL	3.99	1.064	216		
Oral repetition	ESL	4.14	1.089	215	-5.049	.000
	EFL	4.68	1.123	219		
Visual repetition	ESL	3.70	1.089	216	-6.761	.000
	EFL	4.42	1.105	207		
Association/elaboration	ESL	4.03	1.075	215	-1.994	.047
	EFL	4.23	1.034	216		
Visual encoding	ESL	3.88	1.232	215	-.665	.507
	EFL	3.96	1.142	217		
Auditory encoding	ESL	4.13	1.250	219	-.577	.564
	EFL	4.20	1.179	219		
Use of word-structure	ESL	4.49	1.110	216	5.667	.000
	EFL	3.85	1.257	216		
Semantic encoding	ESL	4.40	1.225	217	4.158	.000
	EFL	3.92	1.185	219		
Contextual encoding	ESL	4.88	.984	215	6.399	.000
	EFL	4.22	1.144	213		
Activation	ESL	4.73	.842	214	6.031	.000
	EFL	4.13	1.186	213		

**Table 5.4: Vocabulary learning beliefs,
sources and strategies of Chinese EFL and ESL students**

Beliefs, Sources and Strategies	EFL Students			ESL Students		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Importance perception	219	5.52	.920	222	5.87	.857
Difficulty perception	221	4.87	1.100	220	4.83	1.219
Knowing a word	222	5.81	.748	223	6.06	.942
Memorization	205	3.84	1.011	211	3.62	1.107
Learning words from use	218	5.27	.956	218	5.59	.717
Learning words from reading	217	5.12	.913	217	5.25	.672
Classroom learning	220	5.95	.769	219	3.85	.945
Independent learning	216	3.51	.986	219	4.68	1.015
Daily communication	216	3.04	1.210	219	4.76	1.003
Selective attention	224	4.86	.909	215	4.64	.980
Self-initiation	223	4.28	.713	220	4.30	.947
Use of wider context	214	4.70	1.048	215	4.99	.800
Use of immediate context	219	4.96	.738	217	4.61	.978
Use of English-English dictionary	219	3.74	1.245	218	5.18	1.652
Use of English-Chinese dictionary	220	4.97	1.809	216	4.10	1.764
Use of Chinese-English dictionary	224	3.87	1.643	221	4.29	1.836
Dictionary use strategies for comprehension	218	4.47	1.174	216	5.18	.800
Extended dictionary strategies	210	4.45	1.053	217	5.11	.804
Dictionary look-up strategies	220	4.75	.902	216	4.45	1.120
Social interaction	218	3.97	1.103	217	4.88	1.009
Meaning-oriented note taking	219	4.27	.943	210	4.46	.982
Usage-oriented note taking	219	4.37	1.107	213	4.33	1.174
Use of word lists	216	3.99	1.064	217	3.73	.870
Oral repetition	219	4.68	1.123	215	4.14	1.089
Visual repetition	207	4.42	1.105	216	3.70	1.089
Association/elaboration	216	4.23	1.034	215	4.03	1.075
Visual encoding	217	3.96	1.142	215	3.88	1.232
Auditory encoding	219	4.20	1.179	219	4.13	1.250
Use of word-structure	216	3.85	1.257	216	4.49	1.110
Semantic encoding	219	3.92	1.185	217	4.40	1.225
Contextual encoding	213	4.22	1.144	215	4.88	.984
Activation	213	4.13	1.186	214	4.73	.842

5.3.3.2 Cognitive strategies

A total of 21 strategies fall under this category, which is composed of encountering strategies and consolidating strategies. Encountering strategies, in turn, consist of contextual guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, socialization strategies and note-taking strategies while consolidating strategies are made up of rehearsal strategies and encoding strategies. In the following sections, I will look at the strategy use of the different categories in detail.

5.3.3.2.1 Encountering strategies

If learners do not know a word, they must try to decode its meaning by guessing from the context, guessing from their structural knowledge of the language, using reference books, and asking someone else. These encountering strategies facilitate gaining knowledge of a new word initially and will be discussed in the categories of contextual guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, social interaction and note-taking strategies in this section.

5.3.3.2.1.1 Contextual guessing strategies

The independent samples t-test results in Table 5.3 revealed that the ESL and EFL students differed significantly in guessing using both immediate context (ESL $M=4.61$, EFL $M=4.96$, $t=4.23$, $p=.000$) and wider context (ESL $M=4.99$, EFL $M=4.70$, $t=3.21$, $p=.001$), with the EFL students using the immediate context more and their ESL counterparts using the wider context more. This might be explained by the fact that except for the Chinese lessons, all the reading materials of the ESL students are in English and thus they must read much more than their EFL counterparts and they possibly know the importance of guessing using wider context more than the EFL students, though they also make much use of the immediate context ($M=4.61$, $SD=0.98$, $N=217$) as well.

5.3.3.2.1.2 Dictionary strategies

The six dictionary use strategies under study looked at the types of the dictionaries the students used and the manners they used the dictionaries.

The independent samples t-test results showed that the ESL and the EFL students were significantly different in the use of all the six dimensions of dictionary use investigated. The ESL students reported more use of English–English dictionaries (ESL $M=5.18$, EFL $M=3.74$, $t=8.85$, $p=.000$) than the EFL students while the latter reported more use of English–Chinese dictionaries (ESL $M=4.10$, EFL $M=4.97$, $t=-5.09$, $p=.000$). That the EFL and the ESL groups diverged on the types of dictionaries used is due to the fact that English is widely used in the ESL context and Chinese equivalents or translations of new words are seldom needed. Perhaps, due to the need to express ideas in English expressions which are beyond the PRC students, the ESL students have to use more Chinese–English dictionaries to find the proper words and that may account for why the ESL students reported significantly more use of Chinese–English dictionaries than their EFL counterparts (ESL $M=4.29$, EFL $M=3.87$, $t=-2.59$, $p=.01$). But unlike the ESL students, the EFL students more often than not need to understand the Chinese equivalents of new words encountered because Chinese is the medium of instruction most of the time, even in English lessons. This is in line with the finding of Goh and Liu (1999) that their EFL Chinese learners favoured translation. Thus, in view of the EFL and the ESL language learning environments, it is not surprising that the ESL students reported more use of English–English dictionaries and Chinese–English dictionaries while the EFL students reported more use of English–Chinese dictionaries.

In terms of dictionary use for comprehension, the ESL students reported significantly greater use (ESL $M=5.18$, EFL $M=4.47$, $t=7.28$, $p=.000$), probably because of the aforementioned reason that they read more and the materials they read contain more new vocabulary since their syllabus, unlike the one for their EFL counterparts, does not prescribe vocabulary. As for extended dictionary strategies, the ESL students reported significantly greater use (ESL $M=5.11$, EFL $M=4.45$, $t=-7.25$, $p=.000$) as well. This is accounted for possibly by the fact that the ESL students use English, both written and oral, more and they have to look up new words to find their

accurate collocations and usages so that they can use them properly. But the EFL students reported significantly higher ratings (ESL $M=4.45$, EFL $M=4.75$, $t=3.09$, $p=.002$) on the dimension of looking-up strategies, such as removing the inflections or affixes to recover the basic forms to look up new words, or using part of speech, pronunciation, style, collocation, meaning, etc. to integrate dictionary definitions into the context of the unknown words. This difference is accounted for by the fact that relative to the ESL students, the EFL students possess a smaller vocabulary size and have to resort to some 'techniques' to facilitate their dictionary consultation process. Alternatively, the EFL students have a better sense of grammar, which helps them to use more often some specific strategies such as part of speech and inflections.

5.3.3.2.1.3 Social interaction

The results of the independent samples t-test, as anticipated, show that the EFL and the ESL students differed significantly in the dimension of learning vocabulary from social interaction (ESL $M=4.88$, EFL $M=3.97$, $t=-8.99$, $p=.000$), with the ESL students reporting much higher usage than their EFL counterparts. While Freed (1995) noted that the study abroad learners spoke significantly more and better than purely instructed learners, Regan (1995) indicated that the increased contact with the native speakers in the target language context was an important causal factor in the development of the learner's sociolinguistic competence. However, this study has confirmed the second part of the third hypothesis that the Singapore-based students make use of more social interaction and daily communication strategies in their vocabulary learning.

5.3.3.2.1.4 Note-taking strategies

There are two dimensions of note-taking, meaning-oriented note taking and usage-oriented note taking, studied under this category. A closer look at the mean frequency ratings of the EFL and the ESL groups reveals that the ESL students reported higher than the EFL students on meaning-oriented note taking while the latter reported slightly higher on usage-oriented note taking. The independent samples t-test results in Table 5.3 show that the ESL and the EFL students differed significantly in

meaning-oriented note taking (ESL M=4.46, EFL M=4.27, $t=-2.01$, $p=.045$) but no significant difference in usage-oriented note taking. The significant difference on meaning-oriented note taking was most likely due to the ESL students' encountering and looking up more new words in their studies than their EFL counterparts.

5.3.3.2 Consolidation strategies

After the initial learning of a word, learners can use various strategies such as repetition or practice to consolidate and anchor newly learnt words in their mind. Discussed in this section is the use of rehearsal strategies, encoding strategies and activation strategies by the students involved in this study.

5.3.3.2.1 Rehearsal strategies

Rehearsal strategies subsume three strategies, namely oral repetition, visual repetition and list learning. The independent samples t-test results in Table 5.3 show that the ESL students were significantly different from the EFL ones over the use of all the three rehearsal strategies. The EFL students reported more use of wordlists (ESL M=3.73, EFL M=3.99, $t=2.84$, $p=.005$), oral repetition (ESL M=4.14, EFL M=4.68, $t=5.05$, $p=.000$) and visual repetition (ESL M=3.70, EFL M=4.42, $t=6.76$, $p=.000$) than the ESL students. This finding clearly points to the conclusion that the EFL students make more use of rote learning strategies than their ESL counterparts.

5.3.3.2.2 Encoding strategies

Encoding strategies include six items and the independent samples t-test results indicate that the ESL and the EFL students were significantly different over four of them. The two groups differed significantly over the use of word-structure knowledge (ESL M=4.49, EFL M=3.85, $t=5.67$, $p=.000$), semantic encoding (ESL M=4.40, EFL M=3.92, $t=4.16$, $p=.000$) and contextual encoding (ESL M=4.88, EFL M=4.22, $t=6.40$, $p=.000$). The difference in the use of association (ESL M=4.03, EFL M=4.23, $t=1.99$, $p=.047$) is at the borderline of the significance level. However, the

differences in visual encoding and auditory encoding did not approach statistical significance level set at .05.

By comparison, the ESL students reported more use of word-structure knowledge, semantic encoding and contextual encoding while their EFL counterparts reported more use of association, visual encoding and auditory encoding. The ESL students used more word-structure knowledge and semantic encoding because relative to their EFL peers, they have bigger vocabulary stock and better knowledge of word structures. Some of the vocabulary exercises they do are designed based on word structure knowledge and semantic classification, which might have raised their sense of the above aspects. With regard to the significant difference in the use of contextual encoding, it is due to the ESL students' using English more both in and outside classroom and thus they feel they learn words better by putting them in specific contexts of use.

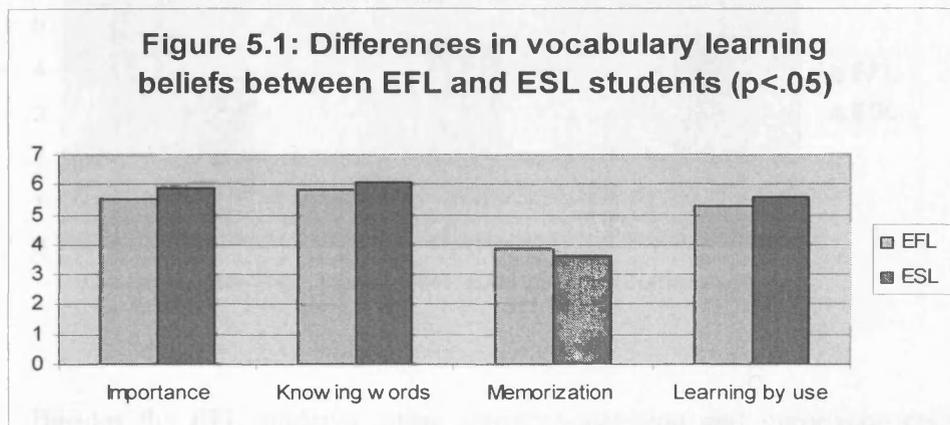
The plausible interpretation for the EFL students' more use of association, visual encoding and auditory encoding is the way new words are presented in the Chinese students' English textbooks, i.e. new English words listed after the texts and glossaries with Chinese equivalents attached at the back of the textbooks as appendices. Besides, there are exercises in the textbooks which require the students to use newly learnt words to translate Chinese sentences into English or vice versa; there are also exercises requiring the students to distinguish groups of new words that share similar parts in spelling; besides, the differences in strategy use partially result from the ubiquitous commercial books teaching the EFL students how to memorize new vocabulary by associating English words to Chinese words, objects, ditties etc. In addition, while Singapore is more westernized due to its colonial history and its particularly close links with western countries, the stronger traditional Chinese culture in China that stresses hard work, effort and perseverance also plays a part in shaping the EFL students' learning strategies. All these dispose the EFL students to adopt the strategies of association, visual encoding and auditory encoding in their vocabulary learning.

5.3.3.2.2.3 Activation strategies

The results in Table 5.3 indicate that the ESL and the EFL students were significantly different over the use of activation (ESL $M=4.73$, EFL $M=4.13$, $t=6.03$, $p=.000$), with the ESL students reporting more than the EFL ones. The divergence in the strategy employment was due to the fact that the ESL students had much more opportunities than their EFL peers to apply what they picked up either intentionally in the classroom or incidentally outside the classroom. For the ESL students, English is the language of instruction in classroom and they have more interaction among themselves than do their EFL counterparts. After the class, the use of English in daily life gives also the ESL students plenty of chances to activate the target language.

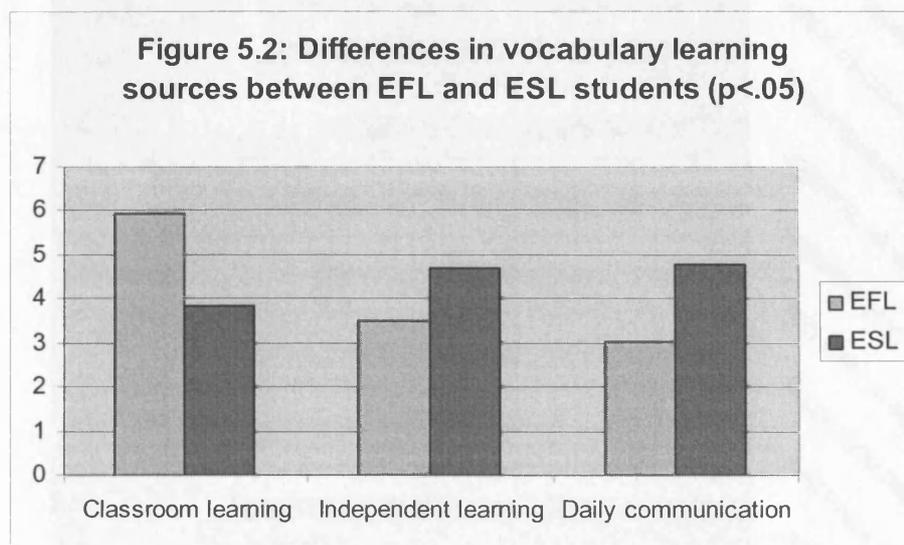
5.3.4 Summary

So far, this chapter has tried to identify and map out the differences in vocabulary learning between the EFL and the ESL students as a whole.



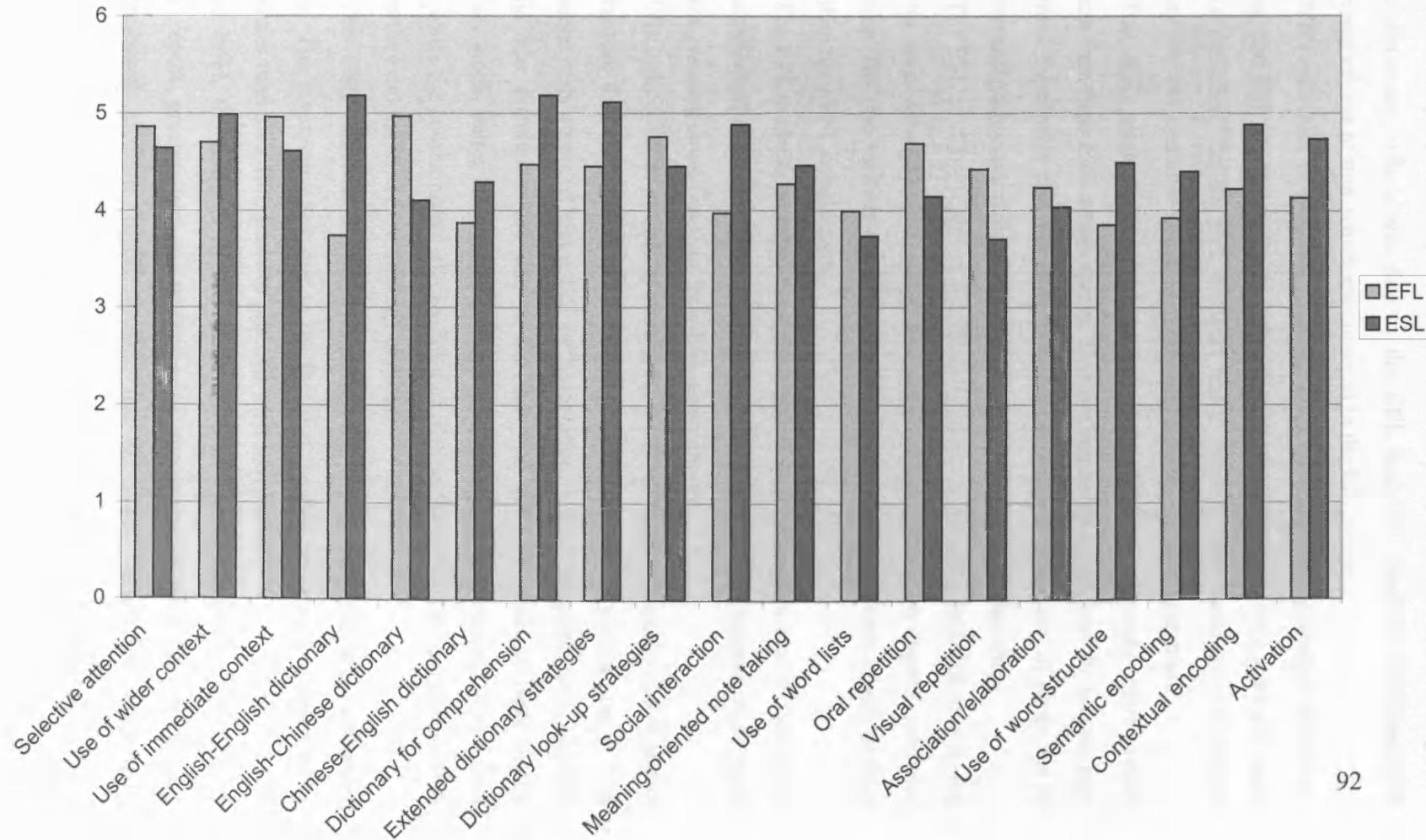
As shown in Figure 5.1, the independent samples t-test results revealed that the ESL and the EFL students differed from each other in their vocabulary learning beliefs. The ESL students attached greater importance than their EFL counterparts to vocabulary in their English learning and the ESL group also reported a firmer belief in learning words through use, and a firmer belief that learning new words means more than just knowing their Chinese equivalents. In contrast, the EFL students believed more in learning words through memorization. As a general statement, the results of the independent samples t-test confirm the hypothesis that PRC-based students tend to believe that vocabulary should be memorized while Singapore-based students tend to believe that words should be learned through use.

Of the three dimensions of sources of vocabulary learning, classroom learning was ranked the highest (Figure 5.2), with independent learning and daily communication following behind. The independent samples t-test results showed that the ESL and the EFL students differed significantly ($p < .001$) in all the three vocabulary learning sources. The EFL students reported learning from classrooms much more than their ESL counterparts while the ESL students ascribed their vocabulary learning far more to independent learning and daily communication.



Besides the EFL students rating selective attention and immediate context significantly higher than their ESL counterparts (Figure 5.3), the ESL and the EFL students were significantly different over the use of all the six dimensions of dictionary use investigated. The ESL students reported more use of English–English dictionaries than the EFL students while the latter reported more use of English–Chinese dictionaries. This is due to the fact that English is widely used in the ESL context and Chinese equivalents or translations of new words are seldom needed. Perhaps, due to the need to express ideas in English expressions, which are beyond the students, the ESL students reported using more Chinese–English dictionaries than

Figure 5.3: Differences in vocabulary learning strategies between EFL and ESL students ($p < .05$)



their EFL counterparts. In contrast, the EFL students reported more use of English–Chinese dictionary, which was due to the EFL students’ need to understand the Chinese equivalents of new words encountered in the EFL context.

With reference to dictionary use for comprehension and extended dictionary strategies, the ESL students reported significantly more because they read and used English more often. But the EFL students had to activate more looking-up strategies since they possess a smaller vocabulary size and a better sense of grammar.

The ESL students reported being engaged in significantly more social interaction than their EFL counterparts. This finding helps to confirm the second part of the third hypothesis that the Singapore-based students make use of more social interaction and daily communication strategies in their vocabulary learning.

The ESL students reported significantly more on meaning-oriented note taking but not on usage-oriented note taking. The significant difference on meaning-oriented note taking was due to their encountering and looking up more new words in their studies than their EFL counterparts.

The EFL students reported more than their ESL counterparts over the use of all the three rehearsal strategies. This finding suggests that the EFL students made more use of rote learning strategies than their ESL counterparts.

When it comes to encoding strategies, the ESL students reported more use of word-structure knowledge, semantic encoding and contextual encoding while their EFL counterparts reported more use of association, visual encoding and auditory encoding. The differences are due to the fact that the ESL students have bigger vocabulary stock, better knowledge of word structures and more opportunities to use English while the course books, the medium of instruction in the EFL context and the exercises they did inclined their strategy choices.

The ESL students reported significantly more in employing activation strategies. The divergence was due to the fact that the ESL students had much more opportunities than their EFL peers to practise what they learnt.

In brief, the findings in this study have so far confirmed that PRC-based students report greater use of strategies of memorization/rehearsal types, and Singapore-based students report greater use of social interaction and daily

communication strategies; the hypothesis that Chinese students at different levels of education differ in patterns of vocabulary learning strategy use in each environment is also proved. As the students become older and more experienced language learners, they possess a bigger repertoire of learning strategies which they may adopt for learning tasks, but that does not necessarily mean that they will always adopt a wider range of strategies than their juniors.

5.3.5 Achievement, proficiency and strategy use

It is essential to take learner factors into account when we attempt to investigate ways in which language learners are involved in language learning tasks (Levenston, 1979) and empirical research has showed that learning strategies are associated with both learners' mother tongue, the target language (Cohen, 1991; Ellis, 1997) and their achievement (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Politzer, 1983; Wen & Johnson, 1997). Due to the scope of the study, I will focus on learners' achievement in the following sections.

5.3.5.1 Strategy use of the good EFL and ESL students

In the quantitative study phase, there were 71 good EFL students and another 71 good ESL ones involved. Their English language proficiency was based on their reports in the questionnaires. The selected results of the independent samples t-test illustrated in Table 5.5 show the significant differences in vocabulary learning dimensions of the two groups of learners.

In terms of vocabulary learning difficulty, the good ESL students had lower mean rating than their EFL counterparts ($t=4.16$, $p=.000$), which was associated with the fact that the ESL students reported significantly more vocabulary learning from daily communication ($t=7.69$, $p=.000$), independent learning ($t=9.31$, $p=.000$), and self-initiation ($t=4.33$, $p=.000$). Relative to the input-poor EFL environment, the use of English in daily communication and the abundance of English reading materials at hand must play some part in facilitating the vocabulary learning task for the ESL learners, and this explains why the ESL students reported a firmer belief than the EFL

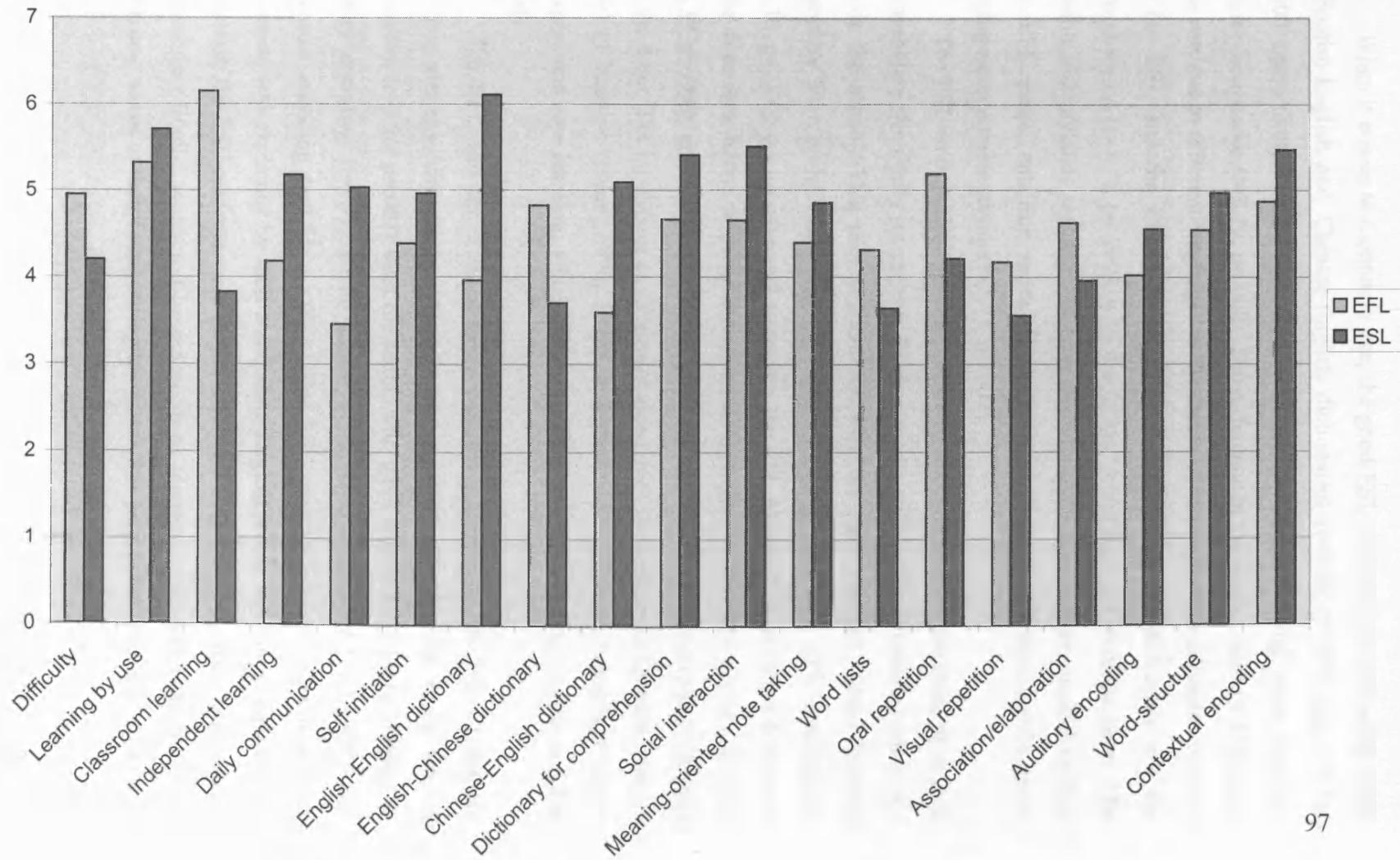
ones did that vocabulary should be learned from use ($t=3.43$, $p=.001$). In contrast, the classroom is the predominant venue, if not the only one, for the EFL students to learn their vocabulary and thus they reported much more learning from the classrooms ($t=15.44$, $p=.000$) than the ESL students.

Table 5.5: Vocabulary learning of the good EFL and ESL students

Beliefs, Sources and Strategies	Groups	Mean	SD	N	t	P
Difficulty perception	ESL	4.20	1.036	70	-4.160	.000
	EFL	4.95	1.137	71		
Learning words by use	ESL	5.71	.502	70	3.428	.001
	EFL	5.32	.806	68		
Classroom learning	ESL	3.83	1.043	70	-15.444	.000
	EFL	6.15	.676	68		
Independent learning	ESL	5.18	.487	70	9.312	.000
	EFL	4.18	.755	68		
Daily communication	ESL	5.03	.963	70	7.686	.000
	EFL	3.46	1.391	66		
Self-initiation	ESL	4.96	.826	69	4.328	.000
	EFL	4.38	.762	71		
Use of English-English dictionary	ESL	6.11	1.136	70	9.065	.000
	EFL	3.96	1.625	68		
Use of English-Chinese dictionary	ESL	3.70	1.834	69	-3.786	.000
	EFL	4.82	1.623	67		
Use of Chinese-English dictionary	ESL	5.09	1.755	69	4.831	.000
	EFL	3.59	1.902	71		
Dictionary use strategies for comprehension	ESL	5.41	.724	70	4.784	.000
	EFL	4.66	1.093	68		
Social interaction	ESL	5.51	.739	70	6.145	.000

	EFL	4.65	.895	68		
Meaning-oriented note taking	ESL	4.85	.998	69	2.731	.007
	EFL	4.39	.981	70		
Use of word lists	ESL	3.64	.846	70	-4.374	.000
	EFL	4.31	.948	67		
Oral repetition	ESL	4.21	.905	70	-6.152	.000
	EFL	5.19	.961	68		
Visual repetition	ESL	3.56	1.077	70	-3.168	.002
	EFL	4.17	1.187	63		
Association/elaboration	ESL	3.96	1.151	70	-3.559	.001
	EFL	4.62	1.003	68		
Auditory encoding	ESL	4.55	1.030	68	2.720	.007
	EFL	4.02	1.246	70		
Use of word-structure	ESL	4.97	1.115	70	2.187	.030
	EFL	4.54	1.207	68		
Contextual encoding	ESL	5.47	.931	69	3.642	.000
	EFL	4.87	.999	68		

Figure 5.4: Differences in vocabulary learning between good EFL and ESL students ($p < .05$)



When it comes to dictionary use, the good ESL students reported using more of English-English and Chinese-English dictionaries ($t=9.06$, $p=.000$ and $t=4.83$, $p=.000$ respectively) while their EFL counterparts reported using more English-Chinese dictionaries ($t=3.79$, $p=.000$). The difference in the employment of dictionary types was due to different languages as the media of instructions in different contexts. But the ESL and the EFL students differed significantly in dictionary use for comprehension ($t=4.78$, $p=.000$), with the former reporting more than the latter. The plausible interpretation was that the ESL students came across more vocabulary than their EFL peers, entailing more dictionary consultation and significantly more meaning-oriented note taking ($t=2.73$, $p=.007$).

The ESL environment provides plenty of opportunities for the students to pick up vocabulary from daily interaction, English media and various activities both in and outside the school. This may account for why the ESL students scored learning vocabulary from social interaction significantly higher than their EFL counterparts ($t=6.15$, $p=.000$). As for rehearsal strategies, the EFL and the ESL students differed in all the three dimensions, with the former reporting significantly more use of word lists ($t=4.37$, $p=.000$), oral repetition ($t=6.15$, $p=.000$), and visual repetition ($t=3.17$, $p=.002$) than the latter. The input-poor environment along with the traditional Chinese mimetic model of learning (Paine, 1990, 1992) inclines the EFL learners towards rehearsal strategies and rote learning, which is in alignment with the finding of Goh and Liu (1999).

The EFL and the ESL students differed significantly in four of the six encoding strategy dimensions. The former reported significantly more use of association ($t=3.56$, $p=.001$) than the latter, who gave significantly higher ratings to auditory encoding ($t=2.72$, $p=.007$), use of word-structure ($t=2.19$, $p=.030$) and contextual encoding ($t=3.64$, $p=.000$). The EFL students' greater employment of association was explained by their associating English words to Chinese equivalents. In contrast, the ESL students were immersed in the English environment and instead of associating English words to Chinese words or sentences, they had a better chance to link new words to their familiar English words that sounded similar, and used them

in similar situations where the new words were encountered. Since the ESL students possessed larger vocabulary sizes and had much more opportunities to encounter unfamiliar words, they would probably either consciously or subconsciously build up a better sense of their word formation rules than their EFL counterparts, thus causing their reporting more use of word-structure knowledge analyses in vocabulary learning.

5.3.5.2 Strategy use of the poor EFL and ESL students

Seventy-seven poor EFL students and 74 poor ESL ones were involved in this phase (see 4.3.1.1). The results of the independent samples t-test with statistical significance are selected in Table 5.6, illustrating vocabulary learning differences between the poor EFL and ESL learners.

In the dimensions of vocabulary learning beliefs, the EFL and the ESL students differed in four aspects. The poor ESL students attached significantly more importance to vocabulary than their EFL counterparts ($t=4.50$, $p=.000$), and this was due to the extensive use of English in the ESL context and the students had to use proper words to express their ideas. While the poor ESL students reported a firmer belief that learning words does not only mean knowing their Chinese equivalents ($t=2.70$, $p=.008$) and vocabulary should be learnt through use ($t=2.46$, $p=.015$), the EFL students believed more in memorization ($t=2.83$, $p=.005$).

In terms of vocabulary learning sources, what was found of the poor subgroups is quite similar to the finding with the good EFL and ESL learners. The ESL students reported more independent learning ($t=6.95$, $p=.000$) and more learning from daily communication ($t=10.72$, $p=.000$), but the EFL students reported more vocabulary learning from the classrooms ($t=13.84$, $p=.000$). When it comes to metacognitive strategies, the poor ESL students came up with significantly lower ratings on both selective attention ($t=2.38$, $p=.019$) and self-initiation ($t=3.18$, $p=.002$) than their EFL counterparts. The differences were most likely due to their different curriculums, different levels of parental supervision and different functions of the target language in their daily life (see 5.3.3.1).

With reference to contextual guessing strategies, the poor ESL students reported more use of wider context ($t=3.18$, $p=.002$) while the EFL students gave a

significantly higher rating to immediate context use ($t=4.63$, $p=.000$). This difference was due to the ESL students' reading more and thus they gradually developed more and better guessing strategies based on wider context.

Regarding dictionary use, the poor ESL students reported more use of English-English dictionaries ($t=4.80$, $p=.000$) and dictionary use for comprehension ($t=2.91$, $p=.004$). The poor ESL students also reported more use of extended dictionary strategies ($t=4.37$, $p=.000$), but the EFL students gave a significantly higher mean frequency rating to the use of dictionary look-up strategies ($t=2.73$, $p=.007$). The dictionary use differences were accounted for in terms of the different languages used as the media of instruction in the EFL and ESL contexts. Besides, the ESL students encountered more unfamiliar words in their reading than their EFL counterparts, thus resulting in greater dictionary use.

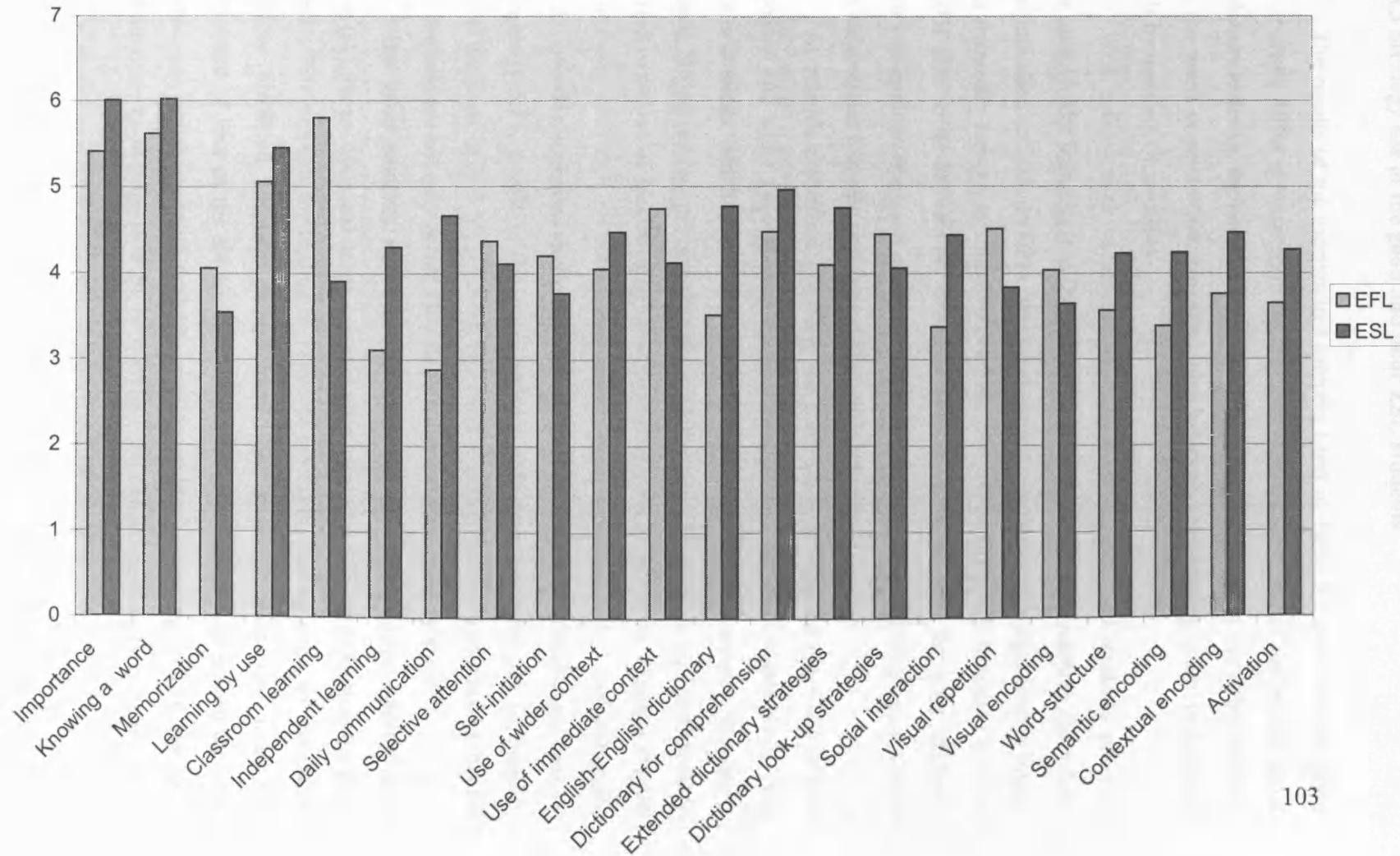
Furthermore, the poor ESL students reported more use of social interaction strategies ($t=6.92$, $p=.000$), word-structure ($t=3.89$, $p=.000$), semantic encoding ($t=5.03$, $p=.000$), contextual encoding ($t=4.24$, $p=.000$), and activation ($t=4.36$, $p=.000$) in vocabulary learning, but the poor EFL students rated the mean frequency ratings of visual repetition ($t=4.15$, $p=.000$) and visual encoding ($t=2.04$, $p=.043$) significantly higher than their ESL counterparts. The patterns of the poor ESL and EFL students' strategy use in vocabulary learning are largely parallel to the differences identified between the good ESL and EFL students investigated in the above section.

Table 5.6: Vocabulary learning of the poor EFL and ESL students

Beliefs, Sources and Strategies	Groups	Mean	SD	N	t	P
Importance perception	ESL	6.01	.726	73	4.499	.000
	EFL	5.41	.886	75		
Knowing a word	ESL	6.02	.987	73	2.700	.008
	EFL	5.62	.817	76		
Memorization	ESL	3.55	1.008	68	-2.829	.005
	EFL	4.06	1.062	68		
Learning words by use	ESL	5.45	.911	74	2.458	.015
	EFL	5.06	1.029	72		
Classroom learning	ESL	3.91	.822	74	-13.838	.000
	EFL	5.80	.828	72		
Independent learning	ESL	4.30	1.117	74	6.953	.000
	EFL	3.11	.933	72		
Daily communication	ESL	4.66	.921	74	10.720	.000
	EFL	2.88	1.084	72		
Selective attention	ESL	4.11	.651	71	-2.381	.019
	EFL	4.37	.686	77		
Self-initiation	ESL	3.77	.865	73	-3.184	.002
	EFL	4.20	.766	76		
Wider context	ESL	4.47	.569	72	3.175	.002
	EFL	4.05	.965	68		
Immediate context	ESL	4.12	.913	71	-4.628	.000
	EFL	4.74	.681	75		
Use of English-English dictionary	ESL	4.77	1.328	73	4.797	.000
	EFL	3.52	1.764	71		
Dictionary use strategies for comprehension	ESL	4.96	.862	73	2.906	.004
	EFL	4.48	1.121	71		

Extended dictionary strategies	ESL	4.75	.674	74	4.374	.000
	EFL	4.10	1.068	69		
Dictionary look-up strategies	ESL	4.06	1.105	71	-2.728	.007
	EFL	4.45	.590	75		
Social interaction	ESL	4.44	.896	73	6.916	.000
	EFL	3.38	.941	70		
Visual repetition	ESL	3.84	1.025	73	-4.15	.000
	EFL	4.51	.910	69		
Visual encoding	ESL	3.65	1.227	70	-2.042	.043
	EFL	4.04	1.066	74		
Use of word-structure	ESL	4.23	.919	73	3.890	.000
	EFL	3.57	1.123	70		
Semantic encoding	ESL	4.24	1.027	73	5.029	.000
	EFL	3.39	1.014	73		
Contextual encoding	ESL	4.47	.842	72	4.241	.000
	EFL	3.76	1.116	69		
Activation	ESL	4.27	.733	72	4.364	.000
	EFL	3.65	.964	71		

Figure 5.5: Differences in vocabulary learning between poor EFL and ESL students ($p < .05$)



5.3.5.3 Strategy use of the good and poor ESL students

The results of the independent samples t-test in Table 5.7 show that the good ESL students differ extensively from the poor learners. In terms of the beliefs about vocabulary learning, the poor students thought vocabulary learning was more difficult than the good ones ($t=7.64$, $p=.000$), who believed significantly more in learning words by use ($t=2.14$, $p=.034$).

With reference to vocabulary learning sources, the good students reported more independent learning ($t=6.09$, $p=.000$) and more vocabulary learning from daily communication ($t=2.34$, $p=.021$). The good students came up with significantly higher mean frequency ratings on selective attention ($t=8.44$, $p=.000$), self-initiation ($t=8.36$, $p=.000$) and social interaction strategies ($t=7.78$, $p=.000$) than the poor students, which substantiates the good students' aforementioned reports that they learned more from independent learning and from daily communication.

As regards contextual guessing, the good students reported more use of both immediate and wider context ($t=7.96$, $p=.000$ and $t=7.71$, $p=.000$ respectively) than the poor students, which implies that the good students were more actively engaged in guessing during reading process than the poor learners. In addition, the good students reported more use of English-English dictionaries ($t=6.51$, $p=.000$), Chinese-English dictionaries ($t=3.72$, $p=.000$), dictionary use strategies for comprehension ($t=3.37$, $p=.001$), extended dictionary strategies ($t=5.52$, $p=.000$), dictionary look-up strategies ($t=5.81$, $p=.000$). The poor students only reported more use of English-Chinese dictionaries ($t=3.68$, $p=.000$). The t-test results point to the conclusion that the good students are not only active guessers but also active dictionary users.

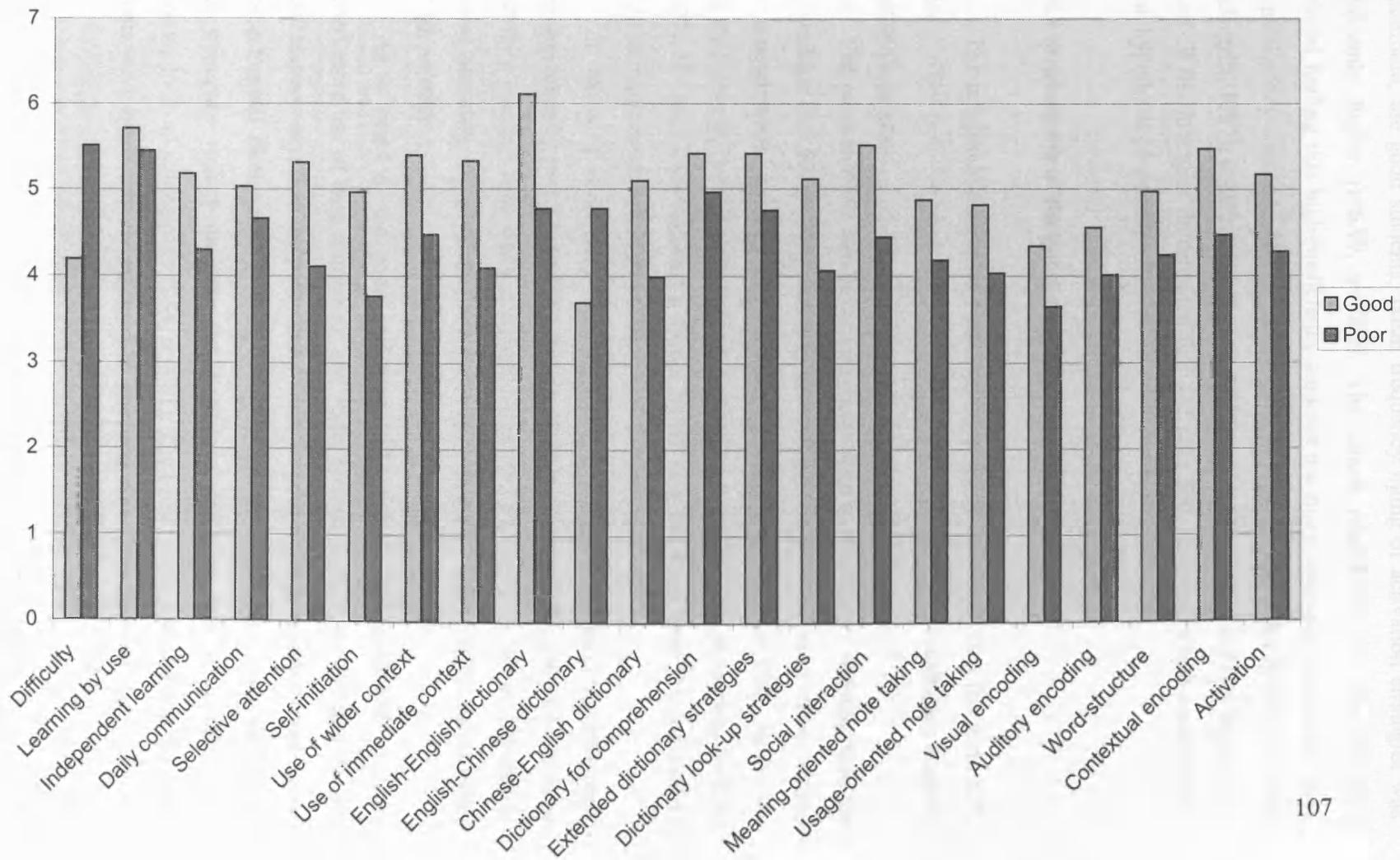
The good students also reported more use of both meaning-oriented note taking ($t=3.99$, $p=.000$) and usage-oriented note taking ($t=3.89$, $p=.000$) than the poor students. This supports the finding of Takeuchi (1993) that taking notes and messages positively predicted language achievement. The good students also rated the employment of four of the six encoding strategies significantly higher than the poor students, i.e. visual encoding ($t=3.12$, $p=.002$), auditory encoding ($t=2.76$, $p=.007$), word-structure knowledge ($t=4.29$, $p=.000$) and contextual encoding ($t=6.70$, $p=.000$).

Table 5.7: Vocabulary learning of the good and poor ESL students

Beliefs, Sources and Strategies	Groups	Mean	SD	N	T	P
Difficulty perception	Good	4.19	1.036	70	-7.638	.000
	Poor	5.51	1.021	72		
Learning words by use	Good	5.71	.502	70	2.136	.034
	Poor	5.45	.911	74		
Independent learning	Good	5.18	.487	70	6.094	.000
	Poor	4.30	1.117	74		
Daily communication	Good	5.03	.963	70	2.335	.021
	Poor	4.66	.921	74		
Selective attention	Good	5.31	1.001	68	8.436	.000
	Poor	4.11	.651	71		
Self-initiation	Good	4.96	.826	69	8.356	.000
	Poor	3.77	.865	73		
Use of wider context	Good	5.39	.829	68	7.711	.000
	Poor	4.47	.569	72		
Use of immediate context	Good	5.32	.948	70	7.960	.000
	Poor	4.09	.877	70		
Use of English-English dictionary	Good	6.11	1.136	70	6.505	.000
	Poor	4.77	1.328	73		
Use of English-Chinese dictionary	Good	3.70	1.834	69	-3.681	.000
	Poor	4.77	1.632	71		
Use of Chinese-English dictionary	Good	5.09	1.755	69	3.722	.000
	Poor	3.99	1.756	72		
Dictionary use strategies for comprehension	Good	5.41	.724	70	3.368	.001
	Poor	4.96	.868	72		
Extended dictionary strategies	Good	5.41	.737	70	5.523	.000
	Poor	4.75	.678	73		

Dictionary look-up strategies	Good	5.11	1.016	67	5.808	.000
	Poor	4.06	1.105	71		
Social interaction	Good	5.51	.739	70	7.782	.000
	Poor	4.44	.896	73		
Meaning-oriented note taking	Good	4.87	.986	68	3.994	.000
	Poor	4.18	1.012	66		
Usage-oriented note taking	Good	4.81	1.282	68	3.885	.000
	Poor	4.03	1.083	69		
Visual encoding	Good	4.34	1.368	66	3.122	.002
	Poor	3.65	1.227	70		
Auditory encoding	Good	4.55	1.030	68	2.757	.007
	Poor	4.01	1.273	73		
Use of word-structure	Good	4.97	1.116	70	4.286	.000
	Poor	4.24	.923	72		
Contextual encoding	Good	5.47	.931	69	6.700	.000
	Poor	4.47	.842	72		
Activation	Good	5.17	.774	70	6.994	.000
	Poor	4.28	.736	71		

Figure 5.6: Differences in vocabulary learning between good and poor ESL students ($p < .05$)



Furthermore, the good students' mean frequency rating of activation strategies was significantly higher ($t=6.99$, $p=.000$). The above results confirm the previous empirical finding that high-proficiency students use more strategies more often than low-proficiency ones (e.g. Ahmed , 1989; Goh, 1998; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999; Vandergrift, 1997), showing that the good ESL students are more actively engaged in almost all the strategies investigated than the poor ESL learners, which confirms the fourth hypothesis proposed.

5.3.5.4 Strategy use of the good and poor EFL students

The independent samples t-test results in Table 5.8 reveal that the good EFL students differ from the poor learners in the great majority of the vocabulary learning dimensions surveyed.

The good students attached more importance to vocabulary learning than the poor students ($t=3.60$, $p=.000$), and they also believed more in learning words beyond their pronunciation, spelling and Chinese equivalents ($t=4.08$, $p=.000$). While the good students put more weight behind vocabulary learning through reading ($t=2.34$, $p=.021$), the poor ones reported a firmer belief than the good ones that vocabulary should be memorized ($t=3.24$, $p=.002$).

In terms of vocabulary learning sources, the good students reported more classroom learning ($t=2.77$, $p=.006$), independent learning ($t=7.52$, $p=.000$) and more vocabulary learning from daily communication ($t=2.87$, $p=.005$). When it comes to selective attention, the good students came up with significantly higher mean rating ($t=7.10$, $p=.000$).

As is found of the good and poor ESL students, the good EFL students reported more use of both immediate and wider context ($t=4.22$, $p=.000$ and $t=9.95$, $p=.000$ respectively) than the poor ones. While the poor students reported more use of Chinese-English dictionaries ($t=3.24$, $p=.001$), the good students produced higher mean frequency ratings on extended dictionary strategies ($t=6.70$, $p=.000$), and dictionary look-up strategies ($t=3.44$, $p=.001$). The t-test results indicate that the good students were more actively engaged in guessing and dictionary use than the poor

students and more importantly the good students seemed to use dictionaries with more sophisticated skills.

What is noteworthy is that even in the input-poor EFL context, the good students reported learning significantly more from social interaction than the poor students ($t=8.16$, $p=.000$). It might be inferred that the good students tried to grab more opportunities than the poor learners to learn from the social interaction despite the non-conducive learning environment.

As true of the EFL cohort, the good ESL students reported more use of usage-oriented note taking ($t=3.22$, $p=.000$) than the poor students. As regards the rehearsal strategies, the good students reported more use of word lists ($t=2.79$, $p=.006$) and oral repetition ($t=5.19$, $p=.000$).

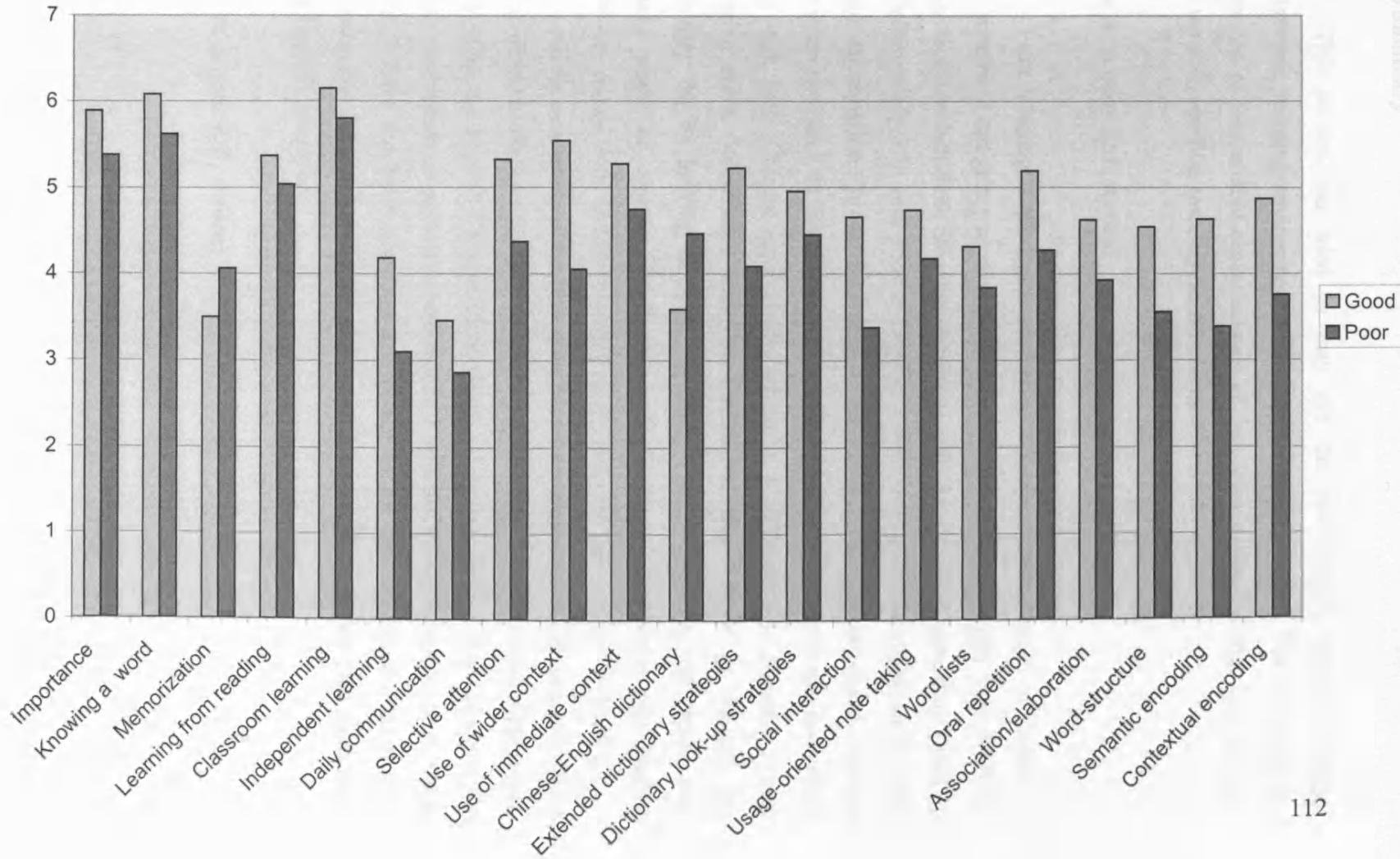
The good students also rated the employment of four of the six encoding strategies significantly higher than the poor students. They reported more use of association ($t=4.35$, $p=.000$), word-structure analysis ($t=4.93$, $p=.000$), semantic encoding ($t=7.24$, $p=.000$) and contextual encoding ($t=6.10$, $p=.000$). As is the case with the good ESL students, the good EFL students' mean frequency rating of activation strategies was also significantly higher ($t=7.57$, $p=.000$).

Table 5.8: Vocabulary learning of the good and poor EFL students

Beliefs, Sources and Strategies	Groups	Mean	SD	N	t	P
Importance perception	Good	5.89	.793	71	3.595	.000
	Poor	5.38	.885	73		
Knowing a word	Good	6.08	.483	70	4.080	.000
	Poor	5.62	.817	76		
Memorization	Good	3.50	.908	64	-3.241	.002
	Poor	4.06	1.062	68		
Learning words from reading	Good	5.37	.811	68	2.336	.021
	Poor	5.04	.845	70		
Classroom learning	Good	6.15	.676	68	2.774	.006
	Poor	5.80	.828	72		
Independent learning	Good	4.18	.755	68	7.523	.000
	Poor	3.10	.928	71		
Daily communication	Good	3.46	1.391	66	2.866	.005
	Poor	2.86	1.070	71		
Selective attention	Good	5.32	.933	71	7.101	.000
	Poor	4.37	.686	77		
Use of wider context	Good	5.54	.769	68	9.948	.000
	Poor	4.05	.965	68		
Use of immediate context	Good	5.27	.835	70	4.219	.000
	Poor	4.74	.681	75		
Use of Chinese-English dictionary	Good	3.59	1.902	71	-3.244	.001
	Poor	4.46	1.311	76		
Extended dictionary strategies	Good	5.22	.886	62	6.698	.000
	Poor	4.08	1.050	68		
Dictionary look-up strategies	Good	4.95	1.079	70	3.438	.001
	Poor	4.45	.590	75		

Social interaction	Good	4.65	.895	68	8.157	.000
	Poor	3.38	.941	70		
Usage-oriented note taking	Good	4.73	1.16931	70	3.216	.002
	Poor	4.17	.91456	75		
Use of word lists	Good	4.31	.94757	67	2.792	.006
	Poor	3.84	1.04535	71		
Oral repetition	Good	5.19	.96078	68	5.193	.000
	Poor	4.27	1.11936	72		
Association/elaboration	Good	4.62	1.00253	68	4.354	.000
	Poor	3.93	.85797	71		
Use of word-structure	Good	4.54	1.20671	68	4.927	.000
	Poor	3.56	1.12295	70		
Semantic encoding	Good	4.63	1.01813	68	7.238	.000
	Poor	3.39	1.01381	73		
Contextual encoding	Good	4.87	.99940	68	6.099	.000
	Poor	3.76	1.11599	69		
Activation	Good	5.01	1.12693	65	7.573	.000
	Poor	3.65	.96360	71		

Figure 5.7: Differences in vocabulary learning between good and poor EFL students ($p < .05$)



5.3.6 Summary

This section has tried to map out the relationships between strategy employment, learning environment, achievement and proficiency. The following are summaries of the relative characteristics of four imaginative paradigmatic students from the EFL and ESL learning environments.

Type A: A poor EFL student

I am Weifeng, a third year student in a Senior Middle School in Harbin. In three months, I am going to take the National Matriculation English Test (NMET), which, together with three other examinations, will decide which university I will go to. Unfortunately, I'm very poor in English. I think vocabulary is important because, without knowing the Chinese meanings of the words, I can not understand what the texts mean nor can I do the exercises. Therefore, I often try to memorize new words along with their Chinese equivalents, which is a difficult task, because I keep forgetting them. Vocabulary must be memorized and I often go through the vocabulary list by looking at them, repeating them, associating the words with Chinese words or objects. Textbooks and classrooms are where my English vocabulary comes from, and increasingly so as I enter the last year before NMET.

All the new words in the textbooks have been annotated in Chinese, so I do not have to often use dictionaries to look them up. When I do need to consult dictionaries, I very often use English-Chinese dictionaries. Of course, when I want to know the English equivalents of some Chinese words, I will use Chinese-English ones. Good for me, I have the basic grammar knowledge as for how to locate a word in a dictionary. But frankly, beyond the classroom, I very seldom use English apart from doing English homework.

Type B: A poor ESL student

I'm Zhihao, a Junior College Year Two student, having studied in Singapore for nearly four years after leaving China. I am not good at English. I believed vocabulary was important in English learning when I was studying in China and believe so even more after I came here. Because I did not have the necessary vocabulary initially, I could hardly understand what people said when I first came. But just knowing the Chinese equivalent of a word is not enough. Words must be learnt through use. I learnt vocabulary mainly from daily communication and social interaction. I did not learn much from the classroom. In fact, I did not really work hard because I lacked the self-initiation for independent learning outside classrooms. In Singapore the curriculum does not prescribe a vocabulary list for us to study, like the one we used in China, so I do not really know which words are important for me to learn. I come across many new words in my studies. I use both English-English and English-Chinese dictionaries in comprehension. Besides picking up new words through daily communication, i.e. listening and speaking, I also try to activate newly learnt words in proper contexts, and use semantic features and word-structure knowledge to memorize words, especially when exams featuring vocabulary come or when there are many new words to learn.

Type C: A good EFL student

I am Weiqiang, one of Weifeng's classmates and when it comes to English, I'm always among the top in our class of around sixty. Like Weifeng, I also think vocabulary is important and it is not easy to learn, since it involves memorizing all the Chinese equivalents before knowing how to use them. The classroom and the textbooks are my predominant vocabulary learning sources, though I read some simple readers after class. The dictionaries I use most frequently are English-Chinese ones. I know how English words inflect in different tenses and it is no problem for me to locate them in dictionaries. Though I do not often use dictionaries, I do use them more often than Weifeng and take more notes.

Compared to Weifeng, I spend more time and effort on English. Actually, my self-initiation is much better than Weifeng and I do more independent learning than he

does. Besides trying, or rather, using more often, all the learning strategies employed by Weifeng, such as so-called oral repetition, visual repetition, list learning, association and visual encoding, I also use semantic features and word-structure knowledge to remember words, which I pick up from books I read after class. In addition, I try using English whenever possible, though there are not so many opportunities. But I do try to activate my English words by using them in proper contexts because I'm aware that mere memorization is not enough to anchor them. Since the NMET is coming, I'm under a lot of stress and my focus is in the classroom, and thus I do not pick up as much as I used to do beyond the classroom.

Type D: A good ESL student

I'm Zhanhui. I came to Singapore from China in the same batch as Zhihao and have also been in the same class all the while. My English is more or less the best among my PRC friends and actually among the best out of our cohort including the local students, according to my English teacher. To me, vocabulary is very, very important because it is the foundation of everything in English studies. Knowing a word means far more than just its Chinese equivalents. I have to know the proper usages of the word, such as its collocations, connotations and the genres in which it can be used. Hence, words should not be memorized but learnt through application. I manage my time better than Zhihao and have higher self-initiation. Besides classroom learning, I also learn much vocabulary from daily communication, social interaction and independent studies. I often use dictionaries in comprehension and take notes when I feel it necessary for the extended use of the new words. I use English-English and Chinese-English dictionaries more often than Zhihao and I'm very confident of my dictionary consultation strategies. However, when I can use contextual clues to guess at new words, I will actively do so by making use of both immediate and wider context. I do not believe in the efficacy of rote memorization but I make use of word-structure knowledge, and the pronunciation and spelling features of words to memorize them when I find it necessary, for example, when I was in Junior College 1, faced with the forthcoming SAT. Besides, I also try to remember the new word

together with the context where the new word occurs and try using newly learnt words whenever possible.

5.4 Chapter Summary

Following the proposed research questions and hypotheses, this chapter reports the t test results of quantitative data of the EFL and ESL students' vocabulary learning beliefs, learning sources and learning strategies.

The EFL and the ESL students differed in their beliefs about vocabulary learning. The ESL students believed more in vocabulary learning importance than their EFL counterparts. The ESL students also reported a firmer belief that words can be picked up by using them and that learning new words is a complicated task. Nevertheless, they rated vocabulary learning difficulty lower than the EFL students, who believed more in memorization of words. The results confirm the hypothesis that PRC-based students tend to believe that vocabulary should be memorized while Singapore-based students tend to believe that words should be learned through use.

The EFL and the ESL students were very different in their vocabulary learning sources. The EFL students reported learning more from classrooms while the ESL students attributed their vocabulary learning far more to independent learning and daily communication. Besides, the ESL students rated learning vocabulary from social interaction higher than the EFL students. All these substantiate the hypothesis that the Singapore-based students make more use of the socio-cultural environment as a vocabulary learning source to learn vocabulary than their counterparts in China.

The ESL and the EFL students were also very different in their dictionary use. The ESL students reported more use of English–English and Chinese–English dictionaries than the EFL students while the latter reported more use of English–Chinese dictionaries. The finding that the EFL and the ESL groups diverged on the types of dictionaries used relates to the fact that different languages were used as media of instruction in the different learning contexts.

The EFL students reported using looking-up strategies more frequently but the ESL students reported significantly more dictionary use for comprehension and extended dictionary strategies, which led to the more meaning-oriented note taking by

the ESL students. These differences were accounted for by the students' different curriculums and learning tasks.

While the ESL students reported more vocabulary learning from social interaction, the EFL students rated higher their employment of list learning, oral repetition and visual repetition. The findings lead to the conclusion that the EFL students make more use of memorization and rehearsal strategies while the ESL students use social interaction and daily communication strategies more frequently.

The comparison of the strategy employment of the good and the poor students showed that the good students employed a much wider range of strategies and used them more frequently. Both the good EFL and ESL students reported employing more metacognitive strategies, using contextual clues in guessing at unfamiliar words more often than the poor ones. With reference to dictionary use, both the good EFL and ESL students came up with higher mean frequency ratings of dictionary consultation strategies. The good ESL students reported using more English-English and Chinese-English dictionaries. Besides, both the good EFL and ESL students reported more vocabulary learning from social interaction, taking more notes, using encoding strategies more frequently and taking more opportunities to activate their newly learnt words. Moreover, the good EFL students made more use of rehearsal strategies than their underachieving fellows. As for the underachieving students, the ESL ones merely reported using English-Chinese dictionaries more frequently while the poor EFL students only rated the mean frequency of using Chinese-English dictionaries higher. The results support the hypothesis that good students make use of a wider range of strategies, and use them more frequently.

The results and findings of the quantitative data have been discussed in this chapter but the differences identified so far have only surfaced in the general patterns. The following chapter will try to use the qualitative data to provide a clearer picture of the differences in the vocabulary learning of the ESL and the EFL Chinese students by focusing on the research questions.

Chapter Six: Qualitative Phase

6.1 Introduction

The findings in the last chapter of a quantitative survey have suggested that the students from the ESL and the EFL learning environments used different vocabulary learning strategies but the differences identified so far were only found in the general patterns without substantial details to substantiate the findings. What this chapter tries to do is to make up for what the quantitative survey fell short of by making use of the qualitative data collected through the interviews and the diaries of the 24 students to provide a clearer picture of the differences in the vocabulary learning of the ESL and the EFL Chinese students at the secondary level in China and Singapore by sequentially focusing on the three research questions proposed in this qualitative research phase. Since no empirical research has been done on how students learn English vocabulary when they migrated from an EFL environment into an ESL context, the chapter tries to explore the themes that emerged from the contrastive analysis of the data between the ESL highachieving and lowachieving groups of the participants.

All the EFL students were interviewed in Chinese while some ESL students chose to speak English during interviews. As for diaries, some students wrote in Chinese while the others wrote in English. In this chapter, the quotations are my translations unless annotated otherwise.

6.2 Research Questions

1. Do Chinese students in an EFL environment differ from their counterparts in an ESL environment in their beliefs about vocabulary learning? If yes, how do Singapore-based learners change their beliefs about language learning and the extent of personal responsibility for language learning as a result of exposure to a communicative curriculum, English medium schooling and an ESL environment outside school?
2. How do the changed beliefs and opportunities result in different patterns of strategy use? How do they take advantage of opportunities that are present in

- Singapore but not in China? As it gets closer to exams, do they increasingly favour memorisation, or limit their strategies to examination-oriented ones?
3. Do Singapore-based successful and unsuccessful learners differ in their beliefs about vocabulary learning and their choice and use of vocabulary learning strategies? If yes, how do they differ? At what level, metacognitive, cognitive, social or affective? If no, how can it be explained? Can qualitative data provide any clues?

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Perceptions about vocabulary learning

6.3.1.1 What does it mean to know a word?

The ESL and the EFL students somehow divided in their beliefs of what it means to know a word. All the ESL students believed that knowing an English word does not only mean knowing its Chinese equivalent, but also its usages and collocations. Some ESL students even said it also means learning its usages in formal and informal contexts, in different genres and its connotations. By contrast, nine of the twelve EFL students said that knowing an English word means to know its Chinese equivalent and the other three remarked that to learn an English word means not only knowing the Chinese equivalent but its collocations as well.

The ESL students were quite unanimous in this aspect of vocabulary learning. One ESL student remarked, “vocabulary learning does not mean learning the individual words themselves. To me I must learn how the words are used with other words, and how they are used in different sentence structures” (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605). Another ESL student said,

“...I should be able to recognize the word, and recall the meaning. After the passive learning, I also hope I can try to use that word in my conversation, in my essay. So when I say I have learnt a word, at least I should reach that level I can recognize it and recall it, and later I’m able to, at least make an attempt to apply that word in conversation or essay” (07ESL/M/Sec.4/I220605).

“To know a word, you must know its different usages in different contexts, like how to use it in formal writing, how to use it in informal writing. Some words may have different connotations in different contexts. You must know this” (13ESL/F/JC1/I240605), one ESL female student said.

However, the majority of the EFL students held a more simplistic notion of vocabulary learning. ‘Knowing an English word means knowing its Chinese meaning’ was a standard answer used by more than half of the twelve students. Some ESL students’ answers had the same denotation but used different wordings, such as “Knowing what it means in Chinese, like *father* is *baba* and *mother* is *mama*” (03EFL/M/SM1/I050605), “To know its Chinese translation” (12EFL/M/SM2/I090605). One EFL student remarked, “To know its Chinese meanings. But some words may have more than one meaning” (19EFL/M/SM3/I130605).

The general division in the ESL and the EFL students’ beliefs of vocabulary learning are due to several factors. First, different vocabulary requirements exist in the English syllabuses for the ESL and the EFL students. According to the Teaching Syllabus for Secondary Schools issued by the Ministry of Education of China (2001, 2003), a lower secondary student in China needs to recognize 1600 words and 300 phrases while an upper secondary student needs to recognize 3300 words, and needs to be able to use around 500 set phrases actively and skillfully. In contrast, the ESL context of Singapore, there is no official prescription and specific requirement for vocabulary learning. Secondary students in Singapore learn English in order

“to communicate fluently, appropriately and effectively in internationally acceptable English. They need to understand how the language system works and how language conventions can vary according to purpose, audience, context and culture, and apply this knowledge in speech and writing in both formal and informal situations.” (MOE, Singapore, 2000, p. 4).

While the syllabus emphasizes teaching pupils to read and write and communicate effectively in English, it also includes a focus on literacy skills instead of just language learning. Since literacy development is “the heart of an English language instructional programme” (MOE, Singapore, 2000, p. 7) in Singapore secondary

schools, it is hard, if not impossible, for the authorities to prescribe a compulsory list of words for the students to learn. To achieve literacy and meet the needs of effective communication in various situations, it is unrealistic to include certain words for students to learn while some others are excluded. Besides, since the schooling is of English-medium, the MOE authorities of Singapore assume that there is extensive vocabulary development right across the school curriculums. It is most likely due to these reasons that there is no compulsory word lists for both primary school and secondary school students. Second, there is a quite big portion of examination questions designed in the multiple choice format in China while English teaching emphasizes effective communication in Singapore. In China, the vocabulary and their meanings to be tested are all listed in the syllabus, and therefore the vocabulary used in the textbooks also centers around the prescribed vocabulary in the syllabus, as one ESL student said in an interview:

“I had to memorize the English words and their Chinese equivalents in China. The exam questions were based on the words and their Chinese meanings. The teacher also dictated the words and these Chinese meanings. But in Singapore I memorize words for composition writing. If I don’t memorize words, the writing looks so simple. When I use the memorized words and phrases in writing, it will look sophisticated. So when learning words, you have to know use them properly, not just their Chinese meanings.”
(21ESL/F/JC2/- I260605).

Hence, the syllabus together with the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) is the powerful wand, which holds sway over the entire landscape of English learning and teaching of China. Nevertheless, the examination questions for the ESL students under study in Singapore are open ended and their syllabus does not give as many details to be tested in the national examination. Finally, the difference in the proficiency of the ESL and the EFL students may also contribute to their divergent beliefs in vocabulary learning, which has been suggested in some studies (e.g. Ahmed, 1989; Gu & Johnson, 1996).

6.3.1.2 Perception of vocabulary learning importance

A quite similar vocabulary learning conception emerged among the EFL and the ESL Chinese secondary students. Most notably, all the students referred to English vocabulary learning as a very important part of their language learning and understood the value of having a rich vocabulary. “Words are the foundation of English learning, without which you can’t express what you want to say, let alone express yourself well and clearly” (05ESL/F/Sec. 4/I210605), one ESL student said. Another ESL student said in the interview,

“ ...How big your vocabulary is actually indicates your level of understanding, because there are many words in English with similar meanings, you have to know when, where, and how to describe a particular notion. As I feel my vocabulary becoming bigger, the easier I find reading. As for adults, vocabulary means even more. Vocabulary can make you more confident and influential. If you are a businessman and doing business with others, your first impression on others is very important and that first impression much depends on what you say, and that depends on what vocabulary you use...”
(15ESL/M/JC1/I220605, not my translation)

Besides frequently referring to English learning as a process of mastering linguistic knowledge, all the ESL students in this study repeatedly emphasized the paramount importance of gaining a practical command of English for use in daily life. To the ESL students, the role of language is for communication and nine out of the 12 ESL students reported their belief in the effective learning of a language through using it as a tool for daily communication. This belief was consistent with the diverse techniques the ESL students reported for developing practical language skills, for example, “I try to speak English with Singaporean students whenever possible” (15ESL/M/JC1/I220605, not my translation). “I devote much time to reading *Straits Times* (an English newspaper in Singapore) and the *Economist* after class” (07ESL/M/Sec.4/I220605); “I often listen to English radio programs on my way to school and back to the boarding school” (22ESL/F/JC2/I270605). Two ESL students mentioned English as a means of social interaction:

“English is used as a medium of communication in Singapore, I have to learn English well and use English effectively both in its spoken and written form.

Only with effective use of English, I can establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships with others in our social interaction” (13ESL/F/JC1/-I200605).

Some ESL students touched upon the issue of culture, suggesting that learning a language means learning its culture and the aesthetic value expressed by the language as well, as reported by one of the ESL students:

“I stay in an English speaking country, I have to learn English. That is the practical reason. I have to know English to communicate effectively. Another reason, I feel, true language learning you get to learn a new culture, the western culture. That is (an) enriching experience for me... I also learn English because I want to know different culture(s). It is an art of communication. Let me just take poems (for example). In Chinese, we learn poems, although we don't use poems every day, but there is aesthetic value attached to the forms. That is another reason why I learn” (23ESL/M/JC2/I270605, not my translation)

Several ESL students also highlighted the role of English learning as a means of information and literacy development. To them, English learning is not just an activity of

“developing linguistic proficiency but a route to literacy development. Except for the mother tongue, all the subjects are conducted in English, and we have to make use of English to access, retrieve and evaluate information, use English to express ourselves, to relate to other people” (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605).

Like the ESL students, the EFL students shared the consensus that English vocabulary learning is a very important component of their language learning. “Words are the bricks for a building. Without bricks, what will the building be built of?” (19EFL/M/SM3/I130605). Nevertheless, the EFL students seemed to put greater emphasis on the learning of linguistic knowledge than the ESL students. They tended to recognize that English learning in a sense means a mastery of basic linguistic

knowledge, which confirmed the finding of some previous studies (Gan et al., 2004; Gu, 1994). The EFL students commonly reported that vocabulary and grammar took up the central position in their English learning. They were particularly explicit about the problems confronted in vocabulary learning. They appeared to have a strong belief that a basic vocabulary and grammar must be mastered before any other learning activity could take place. “To learn English well, I set a task for myself: I must memorize five new words every day. Besides, I must do some vocabulary and grammar exercises” (12EFL/M/SM2/I090605), an EFL student said in his diary. The EFL students’ view of language as knowledge was clearly reflected in a response like “the main problem with my English is that I’m very weak in the basics of English, the basic grammatical knowledge and the basic vocabulary. I need to work hard at both” (04EFL/M/SM1/I070605). Here, the student evaluated his English negatively because he felt his foundation in English was not good, and that he needed to absorb more grammatical and vocabulary knowledge.

Only a minority (four out of 12) of the EFL students in this study believed that the practical use of English is important for them. The following extracts from interviews shed some light on the mentality among the EFL participants: “I have no interest in English. I study it only for the sake of exams,” said one (10EFL/F/SM2/I110605).

“English is very important for our future. But now it’s time for us to lay a good foundation. We must learn grammar and vocabulary well, which are tested in the examinations. I’m aware of the importance of oral English, but it is not tested and we do not have many opportunities to practice speaking. Listening is tested in the examination. We can listen to cassette tapes and CD-roms in school and at home. However, we must learn enough vocabulary before being able to understand the listening,” said another. (19EFL/M/SM3/I130605)

Owing to the fact that English is neither the medium of instruction nor the medium of communication for the EFL students, the impetus for the EFL Chinese secondary students involved in his study was to pass their examinations with high

marks. Thus, what they cared about most was what would be tested in the examinations, in the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) in particular. Although they were aware of the importance of a practical command of English, especially in terms of speaking, they did not see much urgency to develop their ability in this area mainly because it was not part of the examination, either local or national. Therefore, speaking ability was a low priority for them at the particular phase of education. In this sense, how the English examination is conducted and what is examined largely decide how the students learn English and what they learn in China.

6.3.1.3 Perception of vocabulary learning difficulty

The numbers of the EFL and the ESL students considering vocabulary learning difficult were similar but their perceptions of the difficulty lay in different aspects. Seven out of the 12 ESL students said that vocabulary learning was difficult while eight of the 12 EFL students reported so. The ESL students at the lower levels tended to rate the difficulty higher, but their EFL counterparts at the upper levels did so.

The four ESL Sec. 4 students reporting vocabulary learning difficulty based their perception on their finding that English vocabulary was enormous and they often came across new words in their reading.

“There are so many words in English. When reading a magazine or a newspaper, I will definitely meet some new words. If not use a dictionary, I have to guess (at the new words). But in Chinese, even if you don’t know what is talked about, for example, a new invention, you will not have new words in the article” (06ESL/F/Sec. 4/I230605), remarked one Sec. 4 student.

There were three ESL JC1 students reporting vocabulary learning difficult and all of them were preparing for SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test). “The verbal SAT is very hard to score” (15ESL/M/JC1/I220605, not my translation), one JC1 student said. “The vocabulary in the verbal sections (in SAT) is very difficult for PRC students” (14ESL/F/JC1/I210605), said another JC1 student. It turned out that all the SAT-bound students did SAT vocabulary exercises and went through the SAT word lists to build up their vocabulary. One JC1 student also used commercially published

vocabulary cards, which had words on one side and definitions on the other. When the student was asked to evaluate the helpfulness of the vocabulary learning cards in their SAT preparation, his answer was positive.

The vocabulary learning difficulty the EFL students reported was reflected in the following responses: “Repeated memorization is not effective” (10EFL/F/SM2/-I110605), “I can’t remember so many words. They are always confusing.” (01EFL/F/SM1/I070605); “Learning vocabulary is a headache” (12EFL/M/SM2/-I090605); “Vocabulary is English learning foundation, but to remember them is difficult and boring” (03EFL/M/SM1/I070605). The responses showed that the students were aware of the ineffectiveness of their dominant traditional strategies of memorizing vocabulary through repetition and rote learning. But in the input-poor environment, the majority of them seemed unable to find a better way out and adhered to their ‘time-honored’ strategies of mechanical memorization.

It was noted that the ESL students found vocabulary learning difficult largely due to its sheer size but their EFL counterparts reported the difficulty owing to the boredom of vocabulary memorization as well as the vocabulary size. The ESL students reported that their vocabulary was very small when they first came to Singapore. Initially, they could not understand what the teachers said nor read the newspapers. Gradually, their vocabulary stock increased and they were up to all the learning tasks. Thus, in terms of vocabulary size, the ESL students had a far larger active and passive vocabulary than their EFL counterparts. The gap in the two groups’ affective responses to the difficulty of vocabulary learning was accounted for by the fact that the ESL students picked up more vocabulary incidentally while the EFL students learnt vocabulary predominantly intentionally. One ESL student said, “I think I learn more vocabulary from communication in English with friends than even from classroom. I have quite a few Malay friends and we hang out together most of the time” (15ESL/M/JC1/-I220605, not my translation). “If you come across a new word again and again in reading or communication, you will definitely know what it means”, another ESL student (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605) said. What the EFL students described was quite different: “It is very boring to memorize English words every day. What’s

more, (I) often feel disappointed to find memorized words forgotten in few days” (12EFL/M/SM2/-I110605);

“English words are not easy to remember. I don’t mean the very simple ones, like good morning, teacher, book etc. of course, these are very easy. What I mean is that there are so many words in English and we seldom use them. For example, I have tried to memorize *dongmian* (hibernate) many times, I still can not spell it correctly” (20EFL/M/SM3/I130605).

Another EFL student said bluntly, “I keep forgetting English words, and often confuse them. I do feel frustrated” (24ESL/M/JC2/I270605). All the ESL reported that they believed they picked up vocabulary from daily communication, listening, reading and TV watching, though they also admitted to intentional learning from time to time as well. The incidental learning of vocabulary spared the ESL students the boredom and somehow their sense of frustration. By contrast, the EFL students lacked a conducive incidental language learning environment. They had to commit the compulsory word lists in the textbooks to memory in whatever strategies they could think of and resort to, though they did not believe in the effectiveness of the strategies they actually employed. Thus, though both the EFL and the ESL groups of students felt the difficulty English vocabulary size posed, the two groups generally differed in their affective perception of vocabulary learning difficulty and the effectiveness of their vocabulary learning approaches, which will be discussed subsequently.

6.3.1.4 Perception of the optimal approach to vocabulary learning

All the ESL students held a consensus that words are best learnt through application, i.e. oral communication, reading and writing, but the EFL students seemed to diverge more in their reports than their ESL counterparts. After analyzing the data, eight of the 12 EFL students focused on learning word lists in the textbooks, with four of them using auditory, visual and manual actions simultaneously while the other four only resorted to visual means. In other words, four thought that vocabulary was optimally learnt by looking at them, spelling them either aloud or mentally and writing them repeatedly at the same time while the other four believed vocabulary could be effectively learnt by visual rote memorization. The remaining four each had

their own view: reciting the entire text with the new words in it; remembering the accurate pronunciation; by doing exercises; and by reading.

The ESL students were largely of the same opinion. All of the twelve believed extensive reading is the most effective way to anchor and expand vocabulary. They held that through multiple encounters of unfamiliar words, they will not only know their spellings and meanings, but also their various usages and connotations in different contexts. The majority (10 out of 12) of them agreed that daily communication and interaction is the other most effective way to learn English words. “I learn many words from our daily communication. We talk in English about our home, school functions, CCA activities, and projects. In this process, I think I learn many words” (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605).

Unlike the similar patterns of learning strategies reported by the ESL students, the EFL students reported a wide range of techniques. One of the four students claiming learning vocabulary using auditory and visual repetition said,

“When I learn the words, I look at the word and read it out aloud if possible, otherwise I just read them in the heart, meanwhile I write it again and again on a piece of paper. I find it’s very effective” (03EFL/M/SM1/I070605).

One student using only visual action said,

“When I try to memorize the words, I go through the word list first. Then I use a sheet of paper to cover the English word list column and only look at the Chinese meanings. I try to recall the English words from the top to the bottom one by one. At the same time, I slide the paper sheet downwards and reveal the English words one by one. In this way, you will know if the recalled words are correct” (17EFL/F/SM3/I120605).

Another student preferring visual repetition said, “I just looked at the words a few times and try to remember them. If forget them, I will take them and look again” (04EFL/M/SM1/I070605). One student said that he believed he remembered the words best after he recited the texts. “I seldom memorize words individually. I just recite all the texts. Reciting the texts helps word memorization, and also helps with speaking. It’s *yi ju liang de* (one stone kills two birds.)” (19EFL/M/SM3/I130605). While one student said that he thought he could learn words best by doing various

exercises, the other one maintained that she could remember best by studying the regularities in the pronunciations and syllables of new words (auditory encoding), which would help her with memorization by sounding them out when she would meet them again in the future. The one saying that he thought he could learn English words best through reading, admitted that he did not read enough.

“I think I learn English words best through reading. Though I did not read very much, the interesting articles I read help me remember the words. ... I tried to read *The 21st Century*¹, some simple articles from *English World*², and some simple readers” (11EFL/M/SM2/-I110605)

From the analysis, the conclusion is that the ESL students held a prevailing belief that words can be best learnt through reading and communication while the majority of the EFL students believe that rote remembering through repetition is an effective way and is widely practised among the EFL secondary students to learn vocabulary. The ESL students abandoned their previous strategies found in their EFL counterparts because of their input-rich environment, their experiential language learning experiences and curriculum requirements. For the EFL students, they hardly had any opportunities to use English for daily communication but they are required to memorize and spell the words out in discrete-point examinations. In addition, the prevailing Confucian heritage culture in China that stresses hard work, effort and perseverance and that conceives learning as the aggregation of content predisposed the EFL students to adopt rote learning strategies (Cole, 1990; Salili, 1996).

6.3.1.5 Perception of personal responsibility for language learning

The ESL students did not differ from the EFL ones in their perception of personal responsibility for language learning. All the 24 students believed that they had personal responsibility for their own language learning. Most of the ESL students said without any hesitation that they had to be definitely responsible for their own

¹ A weekly newspaper for secondary students in China.

² A bilingual English-Chinese magazine.

English learning. One EFL student remarked, “Whatever you learn, you must be finally responsible for your own learning result” (19EFL/M/SM3/I130605)

However, when I followed on by asking them how they thought of their English teacher’s role in their English learning results, the two groups differed quite widely. The ESL students only attributed some role to their teachers while the EFL students attributed either an “important” or “very important” role to their English teachers, revealing the importance attached to teachers in the Chinese culture (Salili, 1996). One ESL student remarked, “We can not entirely rely on the teacher for learning. To learn English well, we have to practice a lot. We have to read extensively, speak more often in English and actively put newly learnt words into essay writing” (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605). Another ESL student reported,

“We must be responsible for our own learning. In my case, for example, I try to seize every opportunity to practice English and actually learn many words from daily communication and interaction in English. Wherever I go, like shopping, MRT station, I always try to use English. In class, especially after I entered JC (Junior College), I always use English to ask the teachers questions and interact with my classmates. Actually, I am the only (one) PRC student in my class because few PRC students choose the combination of three sciences, so after class, I always hang out with the locals, and many of them are Indians and Malays. We always speak English to each other. I don’t know if I appear weird to my PRC fellows, because they often go together after class but I seldom hang out with them” (15ESL/M/JC1/D200505, not my translation).

Much unlike the ESL students shouldering almost all the responsibility for their own language learning, the EFL students attributed quite an important role to their teachers. One of them remarked, “The teacher plays a very important role. If he can not teach well, whom can we learn from?” (02EFL/F/SM1/I070605). Another one said,

“The teacher has to be good at English. He has to know how to teach us how to pronounce a new word, how to use the word, why a sentence is

correct or wrong. Otherwise, what is the point to have a teacher” (17EFL/F/SM3/I120605).

Still another remarked,

“The teacher is very important. He must have much experience in teaching how to answer the examination questions. A good teacher should know how the examination papers of the past years were set and then teach us how to prepare for it. So the teacher’s experience is very, very important” (19EFL/M/SM3/I130605).

The difference in the perceptions regarding the teacher’s responsibility for language learning, according to my personal experience in both EFL and ESL contexts, is due to three factors, i.e. language input in the learning environment, examinations and classroom cultures. In the ESL environment, the teacher as a role model consists of only part of the language exposure the students receive. Besides learning from the teacher, the students can also learn English from many other sources, like peers, books, mass media, and activities. “There is always new information and knowledge for us to absorb and learn” (13ESL/F/JC1/I240605), one ESL student said. In contrast, in the EFL environment, the English input is very poor. Besides the textbooks, the students largely depend on their teachers in terms of the model they provide for the students, the supplementary materials given, the examples they use to explain language points and so on. As one EFL student reported, “there is not much I can read except the textbook and what the teacher gives us” (19EFL/M/SM3/I130605). As for the examinations, the questions used in Singapore for secondary students are all open-ended, either in reading comprehension or writing. It’s very hard to predict what topic is going to be tested in the coming examination. But in China, “some teachers are very accurate in predicting what are probably to be tested in the exams” (17EFL/F/SM3/I120605), since the questions are largely based on the usages of the words, sentence structures and grammar points prescribed in the standard syllabus. Many examination questions, after some modification, appear time and again in national examination papers (NMET), so the teachers with much teaching experience will know which structures and language points are very likely to be tested in the examinations and thus help the students focus on reviewing them by doing various exercises and mock

examination papers. In this sense, the teachers do have ‘responsibility’ for how well they can coach their students to prepare for the very important national examination (NMET), which will decide which university the students will go to, thus, their future. Last but not least, the differences in the classroom cultures may contribute to the variations in the beliefs of the EFL and the ESL students. In China, the students are more often than not taught in traditional grammar-translation methods that require teachers to explain in detail word meanings and usages, sentence formations, and English grammar. As one EFL student reported,

“Our teacher usually asks us to read through the text first, then explains the text sentence by sentence, explains all the new words, sentence structures, tenses and other language points. He sometimes speaks English and sometimes Chinese. Almost half and half.” (03EFL/M/-SM1/I050605)

The other students also reported that they were taught to focus on each word in a text and to examine the text carefully for any unknown grammatical phenomenon. Obviously, the focus of the teachers in China is to prepare the students for examinations rather than for the actual use of the language for communication. In contrast, the ESL students in Singapore are taught with a communicative approach in which the teacher’s role in the learning process is recognized as less dominant, as described by one ESL student,

“The teacher does not really teach. In class, we often have discussions, games, debates, presentations, project work, doing HRP (humanities Research Paper) and other activities” (24ESL/M/JC2/I270605).

“When going through a passage, our teacher rarely explains new words. She usually talks about the factual meaning, inferred meanings, how to answer the questions in our own words, how to identify the key points to write the summary, how the arguments are organized etc” (13ESL/F/JC1/I240605),

said another ESL student. Though some attention is given to grammar in English classes for the upper secondary and Junior College students, more emphasis is placed on discourse, especially on analytical skills in comprehension. Grammar items are not taught out of context per se. The students are encouraged to read more to enlarge their

vocabulary and improve their comprehension. The students are trained and expected to answer questions in their own words instead of lifting sentences from passages. Classroom activities encourage interaction among the students and the teacher, and feedback is promoted through initiating questions or group work. The teacher is recognized both as the conventional classroom teacher and a facilitator. Besides, the use of English in daily life gives the students plenty of chances to use the target language. Compared to the poor input learning context in China, the participants enjoy rich exposure to the target language in the ESL context of Singapore. In comparison, the EFL classrooms are more teacher-centered while the ESL classrooms are more student-centered. The different classroom cultures also help to result in the divergence in their sense of responsibility in learning.

6.3.2 Patterns of strategy use

This section will make use of the qualitative data to examine how the ESL and the EFL students take advantage of opportunities that are present in their respective sociocultural and educational contexts, and how their beliefs and opportunities result in different patterns of strategy use. The patterns of strategy use will be discussed in the following two subsections of encountering strategies and consolidating strategies.

6.3.2.1 Encountering strategies

As the ESL and the EFL students differed in their sources of vocabulary learning, so did they in vocabulary encountering strategies. The ESL students reported that they learned most of their vocabulary through reading, lessons of other subjects, daily communication, social interaction and activities of various kinds. They picked up vocabulary from both formal and informal learning settings like classrooms, school assemblies, discussions, projects, CCA activities, shopping and even taking public transport. In contrast, ten out of the 12 EFL students indicated that they learned vocabulary through prescribed textbooks in China. In other words, the overwhelming majority of the EFL students did not read beyond their prescribed text books and thus their vocabulary learning sources were almost all from their textbooks and exercises.

The vocabulary encountering strategies the students employed varied with their learning contexts and the circumstances under which they came across unfamiliar

words. The 12 ESL students all reported that they tried to guess at unfamiliar words first in reading if this did not hinder their comprehension of the passage. But two of them reported they highlighted and took down almost all unfamiliar words while the others only selectively highlighted, jotted down or just tried to memorize by re-looking at some of the unfamiliar words. For example, one ESL student said that he occasionally read some newspapers, magazines and story books and, since he was weak in English he would highlight all the new words he came across, take them down in a notebook and then look them up in a dictionary. Another four ESL students said that they tried to guess new words most of the time but they rarely took down notes because they strongly believed that words were best learnt through contexts by multiple encounters. Multiple encounters of new words in context would enrich their understanding of the word usages, collocations, shades of meaning in different contexts and thus would gradually reinforce their learning of the words. For example, one ESL student said in the interview,

“Reading can help fix words more easily and firmly in mind than rote memorization, because the context of the words in reading is richer and the impression the words leave in my mind is deeper. I know not only the usage of the words but also whether the word should be used in formal settings or informal settings, whether a word has positive connotations or negative connotations.” (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605)

Seven of the ESL students mentioned that if the words were non-technical and important to understand the paragraph or even the whole passage, they would definitely look them up. Due to the constraint of time, they said they used dictionaries far less in classrooms than in their own rooms in the boarding school. Of the seven ESL students, two (one Sec. 3 and one JC) said that they would write the words and their collocations they believed important and useful in their notebooks while the rest said they tended to scribble the meanings of the words they looked up along the margins of the articles. Sometimes, they just highlighted the words if they did not have the time or the mood to look them up in the dictionaries. As one ESL student said,

“the act of highlighting shows I’m aware that I don’t know the word, or at least unsure of the meaning of the words. Maybe when I’m free and feel like studying English, I will look them up. Even if I did not look up them, highlighting gives me a deeper impression of the words. In fact, If you did not ask me this question (why to highlight unfamiliar words in reading?), I think it is just a habit for many of us.” (15ESL/M/JC1/I220605, not my translation)

Besides the frequently used vocabulary encountering strategies of guessing, highlighting, dictionary use and note taking, the ESL students mentioned that they made use of the knowledge of English word structures to guess at unfamiliar words. Nine out of the 12 ESL students said that they had some English word structure knowledge, though five of the nine did not make active use of this knowledge to memorize words. But all the nine ESL students remarked that English word structure knowledge did help them to analyze and guess unfamiliar words though the derived meaning might not be so accurate, as written by one ESL student in his diary,

“There are some general rules in vocabulary learning and we can make use of these rules in guessing and memorizing new vocabulary, such as prefix and suffixes. If you know *inter-* is a prefix in English, for example, it’s very easy for you to know the meanings of words, say, *interpersonal*, *international*, *interaction*, *interchange* etc. There are quite a number of prefixes, suffixes and roots that I subconsciously pick up in English lessons and lessons of other subjects. I think such rules somehow make me learn English words much more easily” (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605).

In comparison, over half (seven out of 12) of the EFL students reported that they were aware of the existence of word form rules in English but only two of them ever used the knowledge of English word structures for vocabulary learning.

The ESL students reported reading much more than their EFL counterparts and the former group often employed guessing, dictionary consultation, note-taking and word structure analysis as initial handling strategies to attack the new words encountered. As for the two EFL students who reported reading beyond their textbooks, they said that during school holidays they often read simplified English

story books, magazines and newspapers meant for secondary students. During school terms, they said they had too much school work to afford time for extra-curricular reading in English. When reading, they tried to guess unfamiliar words if the words did not affect their understanding of the paragraph, but they rarely needed to resort to guessing because the vocabulary in these readers and newspapers is relatively simple and the words and structures deemed difficult for secondary students are annotated in most cases. Besides the detailed notes, the Chinese and the English versions in the readers for secondary students are often printed side by side. If the students have difficulty understanding the particular sentence or paragraph, they can just switch their eyes to the Chinese version for comprehension, so in-depth guessing involving looking for cues in both the preceding and following contexts is rarely needed. What's more, the great majority of the so-called English learning magazines for students of various levels in China are actually edited in Chinese. Besides some annotated English passages and some exercises, the English learning magazines usually cover grammar points, sentence structures and word usages, which are all explained in Chinese. As one EFL student said,

“In holidays when I do not have much homework, I would read simplified readers, for example, *Little Women*, *Gone with the wind*. When I meet with some new words, I look at either the page bottom for explanations or the glossary at the back of the book, so guessing is often not necessary” (11EFL/F/SM2/I110605).

Instead, the EFL students reported that they used dictionaries more often when they found unfamiliar words in comprehension passages and exercises from which they picked up some vocabulary besides from their textbooks.

When it comes to vocabulary encountering strategies in listening, it seems that the ESL and the EFL students were quite similar. All the twelve ESL students mentioned that they could guess the occasional unfamiliar words from the topic or the context the teacher or the speaker was talking about. If they could not guess a new word and it really affected their understanding, they said that they would turn to their friend sitting or standing next to him for clarification. The EFL students reported that they had very few chances to listen to English speakers besides their English teachers

in the classrooms, but three mentioned that they could ask their teacher either in class or after the lesson about the word they did not know. As for the ESL students, the great majority of them (10 out of 12) said that they could ask their friends to clarify what the speaker talked about, or ask the speaker to repeat or explain if possible, for example, in one-to-one talks or in small group discussions. Only one ESL student reported some attempts to remember new words by heart according to the pronunciations and check the words out later when dictionaries were accessible. He believed that encountering new words in communication and then consulting friends or looking them up in dictionaries could etch the words in his mind, according to his experience.

The ESL students reported much more speaking experience than their EFL counterparts obviously because the ESL students could use English as the medium of daily communication. They could speak English in formal settings like in classrooms, at school functions like assemblies, receiving visitors, and informal settings like school offices, canteens, food courts, cafes, shops, streets, public transports, cinemas etc. But the EFL students only could speak English in their English lessons. The topics the ESL students talked about ranged from academic studies to daily life and to entertainment while the EFL students were confined to sentence making or text based simple discussion. The language the ESL students used could be either formally used in classroom, presentations, or debate, or informally used as in canteen, sports field, teasing each other, joking, even vulgar words etc. The ESL students' language was lively, practical, dynamic and vibrant while the EFL students' English was always formal and meant to be as grammatical as possible, and thus dull and bookish. When it comes to new words in speaking, the strategies reported by the all the ESL and the EFL students were quite similar. If they found they could not express themselves in speaking, they all said that they would try to avoid the word by paraphrasing or using synonyms. But the ESL students seemed to be more skillful in handling unfamiliar words or expressions in speaking. None of them reported they had to resort to Chinese while nine of the twelve EFL students said that they had the experience of using Chinese to replace the English words which they could not use to express themselves in speaking. Presumably it was due to the fact that they were speaking to their peers or

teachers whose mother tongue was Chinese. Thus, they would assume that the listeners could understand them. I doubt that they would use the same strategy if they spoke English to foreigners who did not understand a single Chinese word. This example shows that strategy use is associated with the language proficiency of the learners and the context of using the strategy (Gu, 2003b).

In terms of vocabulary strategy use in writing, the picture was similar to that of speaking. The ESL students had much more experience of writing in English than the EFL students because the ESL students used English in their assignments for every subject except their mother tongue, while the EFL students used English only in classroom and to finish their English homework. Nevertheless, the strategies reported by all the ESL and the EFL students were similar to some extent. The students from both the groups said that they would try to avoid the words or structures they did not know how to use by paraphrasing or using synonyms. However, the ESL students seemed to have a bigger repertoire of strategies in store. Three of the ESL students said that they would use Chinese-English dictionaries to help them to find a proper English word. One said in the interview that he even went a further step by looking up a Thesaurus and other dictionaries as quoted:

“...usually I use Thesaurus because, since I want to use that word I must know the meaning, and once I know the meaning I can paraphrase it using other words and ... all the synonyms will be listed there. Maybe after that, I can check them out from the dictionary and look for (their) correct usage.” (23ESL/M/JC2/I270605, not my translation)

Overall, the ESL students seemed rather different from the EFL students in terms of the patterns of their vocabulary encountering strategy employment. Though they reported the same encountering strategies, they differed widely in the frequencies, employment occasions, complexity and elaboration of the strategy use. Both the ESL and the EFL students took notes but a greater number of the EFL students had note books and had the habit of taking notes formally in classrooms while the majority of the ESL students gave up writing in their note books in the second half of the first year after they came to Singapore. The majority of the EFL students also mentioned that they highlighted new words and expressions in their textbooks, tried to analyze their

part of speech to decide their functions in the sentences in which they appear, and tried to work out their pronunciations. Since textbooks were not much used in Singapore classrooms, all the ESL students had an English file to keep the articles and worksheets given by the teachers. The ESL students tended to scribble down their notes on the worksheets or along the margins of the articles, magazines and newspapers.

The ESL students made much use of guessing, which is often related to highlighting, note taking and word structure knowledge in reading while the EFL students as a whole seldom went beyond their text books and the exercises given by their teachers, and thus there was little need or chance for them to use and practice guessing, though they reported using it in the survey phase. While the ESL students read widely and encountered many unfamiliar words in the process, they came across occasions from time to time requiring them to use dictionaries instead of their guessing. In contrast, the EFL students rarely ventured beyond their textbooks and even when they did, they were most likely to read simplified or annotated readers, in which they did not encounter many new words. Their dictionary consultations occurred more often when they did exercises.

In terms of the numbers and types of dictionaries possessed, all the ESL students possessed at least one of the following monolingual dictionaries, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Oxford), *Longman Advanced American Dictionary* (Pearson Education Ltd), *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Longman) or electronic versions of the above dictionaries. Some of the ESL students also had dictionaries like *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Foreign Language Teaching & Research Press, China), *Little Oxford--The Thesaurus* (Oxford), *The Little Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus* (Oxford), *Oxford Mini-dictionary--Thesaurus & Wordpower Guide* (Oxford). It was quite common for the ESL students to have two or three dictionaries and when they consulted unfamiliar words, they usually checked the English meanings of the new words. If unsure, they would look up the Chinese meanings, and even took one more step further to look up the synonyms and their collocations.

The dictionaries the EFL students used usually were *Dictionaries for Secondary Students* (Hei Longjiang Education Press, China), *A Mini English-Chinese Dictionary* (Dalian Ligong Daxue Press, China), *An English-Chinese Dictionary* (Foreign Language Teaching & Research Press, China), and various electronic dictionaries like *Wen Qu Xing*, *Hao Yi Tong*, *Besta* etc. Almost all the EFL students had only one of the above relatively simple bilingual dictionaries, which more often than not had only a few Chinese equivalents and sample usages. As a matter of fact, the majority of the EFL students reported that they used dictionaries merely to look up the Chinese meanings of English words. Thus, though both groups of the students used dictionaries, they had striking differences in dictionary types, numbers of dictionaries, dictionary consultation frequencies, skills and elaboration, the time and occasions of consulting dictionaries. Comparing the dictionary consultation strategies of the ESL and the EFL students, I would say that the strategies employed by the EFL students seemed much less elaborated than those employed by the ESL students, though the strategies reported by the two groups sounded alike. Focusing on the details, I would expect much more differences, which deserve further research.

6.3.2.2 Consolidating strategies

The ESL and the EFL students reported using contrasting consolidating strategies after the initial handling of new words. While the ESL students preferred reinforcing newly learnt words by contextual and experiential application, the EFL students resorted to mechanical and non-contextual strategies largely focusing on the discrete-point knowledge of vocabulary.

All the twelve ESL students, without exception, reported that they tried to bolster newly learnt words by using them in speaking such as daily communication, classroom discussion and writing, though some of them reported much more practice than the others. One ESL said in an interview,

“After I came to Singapore, I found the little English we learnt in China was far from enough. We even could not read a single article in the newspaper! So in the first half year, I wrote down almost every single new word I met with in reading and reviewed them whenever possible. Gradually I read

faster and read more, and do not take down as many notes. But when I come across an interesting word or phrase, I will look at the sentence with the word again and try to remember it and use it in writing. For example, recently I often saw the word, *spate* in *a spate of accidents, a spate of burglaries*, so I used the word in the essay I wrote just now” (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605).

Another ESL student said,

“when I first saw a word, I think I did not know how to use it. I noted it down, and I try to imagine a situation to use it. Let’s say, ‘I was frustrated when I first started learning English’. I will try to make up sentences, and next time, let’s say, during an interview like this, if you ask me this question, ‘how was it when you first learning English’, then I can just apply this sentence, because this sentence has been in my mind already.” (23ESL/M/JC2/I270605, not my translation)

The ESL students all believed that reading was an effective means for anchoring words in their mind and seven out of the 12 said that they would like to have read more if they had not been so busy. “List learning is tiring and ineffective. You remember twenty words today. If you do not use them, after one or two weeks, you will forget most of them” (22ESL/F/JC2/I270605), one ESL student. The other said,

“Only if you meet a word repeatedly in different contexts, you will know the different meanings and usages. For example, my CCA is choir and I’m one of the six tenors. If you do not read, you do not understand ‘what is the tenor of the passage?’” (15ESL/M/JC1/I220605, not my translation).

Five of the ESL students, especially the lower secondary ones, mentioned that they from time to time did some vocabulary exercises. The exercises included multiple choice questions, passage closing, grouping words according to themes, identifying synonyms or antonyms, word puzzles, sentence filling, grouping words etc. Only two of the ESL students said that they occasionally reviewed their notes and English files. But when the examinations come, all said that they would like to go through their notes and the worksheets in their English files again. Most of them (nine in twelve)

said they would read more articles and write more essays in the weeks preceding their English examinations. None of the ESL students mentioned they did list learning for their school exams, which tested only writing and open-ended comprehension questions. Nevertheless, three of the four Junior College students preparing for SAT said that they did list learning, with one even using commercially published vocabulary cards brought for convenient memorization.

Unlike the ESL students, all the twelve EFL students said that they used list learning, written repetition, studying the spelling and sound of new words, doing vocabulary exercises and notes to memorize new words, which is in alignment with the findings of the quantitative survey. In contrast with the ESL students whose teachers issued many worksheets instead of using textbooks, the EFL students heavily depended on their textbooks, in which there were a list of new words and various exercises after every text passage, so it was quite convenient for the students to go through the list whenever they needed to or felt like it. All the EFL students reported that they had experiences of memorizing words by rote (just looking at the Chinese meaning and repeating the spelling of the word orally or repeatedly copying the spelling). One EFL student said in an interview,

“Since the new words listed after the text in each lesson are what we have to learn by heart, I always try to memorize the words and their Chinese meanings well. So almost every morning I will use around ten to fifteen minutes before the first lesson to read newly learnt words, at the same time memorize the spellings and write them again and again on a jot notebook” (09EFL/F/SM2/I090605).

All the EFL students reported the same learning strategy, with some employing the strategy almost every day while others used it either often or occasionally. Besides, three out of the 12 EFL students mentioned that they bought vocabulary handbooks specially prepared for secondary students and tried to memorize words. By contrast, only one of the ESL lower secondary students and the JC students preparing for the SAT reported using the rote learning strategy. If not for SAT, the great majority of the ESL students would have given up rote memorization about half a year after they began studying in the ESL context of Singapore.

Note-taking was among the most commonly and frequently used strategies employed by the EFL students while the strategy seemed to receive a decreasing attention among the ESL students as they progressed in the ESL environment. The majority of the EFL students (eight out of 12) said they had a note book exclusively for jotting down the unfamiliar words they came across in or after class in their studies. Even for the other four claiming they did not have a separate vocabulary notebook, they also had note books to take down new words, expressions, sentence structures and unfamiliar grammar points for them. The common employment of note-taking among the EFL students may be partly due to the encouragement of their teachers, who told me during our conversations that they believed that note taking would help reinforce the students' English learning and facilitate their review whenever needed. Actually, some teachers required that every one of their students have a note book for their English studies. However, the expectations of the ESL English teachers were slightly different. None of the ESL classroom teachers required their students to keep note books though the students were encouraged to take notes. Many of the ESL students just took notes on the worksheets themselves, such as along the margins. Presumably, the frequent use of note taking among the EFL students may be, on the one hand, associated with their habitual employment of rote learning which note taking will facilitate, and on the other hand, due to the classroom culture in the EFL context.

Three of the twelve EFL students mentioned that they tried to use newly learnt words in sentences while one tried to use newly picked up vocabulary in the journals he occasionally wrote at weekends. These students believed that they remembered words best when they used the words in writing.

When the examination was approaching, the EFL students said they would do intensive vocabulary list learning, various exercises and mock exam papers. What they did in the weeks before the actual examinations was entirely exam-oriented learning. Likewise, the ESL students were also exam-oriented before their examinations, though they were not as much as their EFL counterparts and they prepared with different strategies. Since the ESL students' papers were open-ended, it's more difficult for them to pinpoint what was going to be tested, and they would do

preparation by going through their notes, their English files and writing more essays. This seems to confirm the often quoted Chinese learning tradition that learning by heart is always viewed as the good thing to do, which may be traced all the way back to the time of Confucianist examinations (Biggs, 1996; Scollon, 1999).

The EFL students were more encouraged than the ESL students to take notes by their teachers, which may help to reinforce the EFL students' rote learning.

“While I listen to the teacher in class, I jot down the important words, its part of speech and the example sentences the teacher writes on the blackboard. In this way, I can refer to the notes to do my English exercises and review them in free time or before the exam.” (09EFL/F/SM2/I090605)

Generally, the ESL and the EFL groups differed in their strategy use. They differed more in the frequencies, occasions, complexity and elaboration of strategy use than in the types of strategies they employed to pick up and consolidate their vocabulary learning, which was largely consistent with the findings from the quantitative phase. The ESL students made extensive use of reading, writing as well as speaking through context-embedded application while the EFL students tended to anchor newly learnt words through less context-embedded, discrete strategies like list learning, note reviewing and doing exercises. The ESL students put more emphasis on practical and experiential use of English while their EFL counterparts were more devoted to mechanical repetition, rote learning and doing exercises.

6.3.3 Highachieving and lowachieving students

Five themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (a) conceptualizing vocabulary learning; (b) perception of English learning at secondary level; (c) reactions and adaptability to ESL pedagogy; (d) learning and practicing strategies (e) self-management and internal drive. Comparisons between the 12 ESL highachieving students (HAS) and lowachieving students (LAS) are reported based on each theme for the sake of clarity, although there is some overlap among responses between categories.

6.3.3.1 Conceptualizing vocabulary learning

The highachieving and the lowachieving students shared some English vocabulary learning beliefs but they differed in some others. Most notably, both the highachieving and the lowachieving ESL students referred to English vocabulary learning as a very important part of their language learning. “Words are the building blocks. Without them, where will the building will be?” (15ESL/M/JC1/I220605, not my translation , HAS). To the students, the accumulation of lexical items was essential. One lowachieving student said in the interview: “The problem I have in reading is I come across too many new words; now the main task for me, I think, is to expand my vocabulary” (08ESL/M/Sec.4/I220605). Besides, the ESL students repeatedly emphasized the importance of vocabulary for communication in daily life, as a highachiever said, “we must use right words at right times and right places to convey proper messages for effective communication.” (13ESL/F/JC1/I240605)

To the highachieving students, they seemed to have no doubt that one could acquire the essential vocabulary if one immersed oneself in the language through extensive reading, listening, speaking and TV watching. They reported their belief in learning new words through using English as a tool to communicate with others, for example, “The more often a word is used, the better it can be mastered. I seize every opportunity to speak English. I always try to speak English first wherever I go” (15ESL/M/JC1/I220605, not my translation).

On the other hand, besides their agreement with the highachieving students that vocabulary was fundamental, the lowachieving students commonly expressed their concerns about grammar. In their view, grammar and vocabulary formed the foundation of good language learning. Their view was clearly reflected in a response like

“I am not good at English because my English foundation is not good. English is not my mother tongue. I started to learn English quite late. It is not easy to catch up in a short while. Have to take it easy” (14ESL/F/JC1/I240605, LAS).

Another one said,

“the main problem with my English is that I’m very weak in the basics of English, the basic grammatical knowledge and the basic vocabulary. I need to work hard at both” (06ESL/F/Sec.4/I230605, LAS).

Here, the lowachieving students talked about the equal importance of grammar and vocabulary. They evaluated their English negatively because they felt their foundation in English was not good, and that they needed to absorb more grammatical and vocabulary knowledge.

6.3.3.2 Perceptions of English learning at secondary level

The highachieving students ascribed their English learning achievement more to their own efforts in their independent learning than to their English lessons. Nevertheless, the ESL highachieving students felt that their English lessons were quite lively and communication-oriented, as one said, “We have much more opportunities to develop communicative competence in the class than we did in China” (15ESL/M/JC1/I220605, not my translation, HAS). Another student remarked in the interview: “our teacher often organize(s) discussions on tops of general interests. The discussion helps us to develop communication skills” (13ESL/F/JC1/I200605, HAS). Besides, they commented they needed to be kept on the right track by their teachers in their independent study.

The lowachieving students agreed with the highachieving students that English should be learnt through independent learning. On the other hand, they reported in the interview that they found that ESL learning was very different from English learning in China, about which one of the students clearly felt nostalgic:

“My English teacher in China explained every detail tirelessly, corrected every mistake I made in exercises, and took measures to ensure that we did our English homework properly. He was very responsible. But the teacher in Singapore does not really teach. He just asks us to read some passages, write some essays, then talks in general terms. He never focuses on specific language points. I can hardly learn anything from him” (08ESL/M/Sec.4/I230605, LAS).

Another lowachieving student remarked that “the teacher does not teach much in class, and we do not know what really will be tested, so it is a bit hard to prepare for the exams” (06ESL/F/Sec. 4/I230605). Besides, all the lowachieving students mentioned that they were demoralized as a result of a sense of helplessness and loss of confidence, as one stated, “I sometimes feel quite frustrated. I took down some words from reading and tried to memorize them, but a few weeks later, I forgot all of them” (22ESL/F/JC2/I270605). Another one, reported, “I think I have improved in my English, but the results are still so bad, so the confidence is affected” (24ESL/M/JC2/I270605, LAS).

6.3.3.3 Reactions and adaptability to ESL pedagogy

There were notable differences between the HAS and the LAS groups in their reactions to the pedagogical practices in the ESL learning context, and these differences seemed to stem partially from their varying perceptions of the nature and process of teaching and learning. In general, the lowachieving students reported more ‘methodology shock’. They all had expected their English lessons to have more formal teacher-fronted instruction. In their view, the teachers should draw students’ attention to difficult language points such as usages of new words, sentence structures, grammar; they should also constantly correct the students’ language errors; they should parse some paragraphs or passages in detail instead of always talking in general terms and asking the students to read by themselves; they should know better and tell the students how the national examination papers are set, marked and what is most likely to be covered in the examinations and how to prepare for the examinations. Instructional practices like these are typical of the time-honoured grammar-translation method popular in their previous EFL learning context. Some lowachieving students (two of the six) were quite sceptical of their teachers’ pedagogy and even of their professional competence and qualifications. The lowachieving students tended to perceive learning as a knowledge-accumulating process and associate classroom lessons with teacher-fronted formal instruction, seeing themselves largely as knowledge receivers rather than negotiators, discoverers and contributors of knowledge. They hoped to see more explicit explanations of English grammar and

vocabulary in English lessons. Thus, they were apparently disappointed to find very few such explanations. This explained why, when the lowachieving students were asked to evaluate their English lessons, the answers given by the lowachieving students tended to be negative. To them, true learning was synonymous with acquisition of new grammar rules, structural patterns, metalanguage, vocabulary items, and collocations – discrete-point knowledge which could be taken down in notebooks and which they could rehearse, review and memorise to the point of accurate reproduction upon request.

By contrast, a majority of the highachieving students did not seem to experience any disorientation in the ESL learning context. They understood that the ultimate goal of language learning was communicative competence and that to attain this goal they would need to engage in genuine language use for authentic communicative purposes. Consequently, although they were, like most students of the lowachieving group, interested in learning new grammar and vocabulary knowledge, they were also keen on converting such declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge (Nation, 2001, p. 36) which could be rapidly accessed both in and out of the classrooms. Most of the highachieving students (five in six) reported their willingness to be involved in discussions and presentations in English and various other classroom activities. They tried to mix with English-speaking classmates and to grab as many opportunities as possible to speak English. They were quick to appreciate and exploit the unpredictability and initiatives inherent in the communicative and meaning-focused approach. They showed a greater willingness to respond, communicate, and learn collaboratively in classrooms. When asked the same question of how they evaluated their English lessons, they generally responded positively and could point to specific areas of improvement. In contrast to the relatively smooth transition experienced by most students from the highachieving group, the lowachieving students displayed lower adaptability and considerable resistance to the ESL pedagogical practices. On the one hand, they were cut off from the traditional approach to language teaching and learning that they were accustomed to; on the other hand, they were rather distrustful of the meaning-focused approach as an effective way for them to master the target language. Unlike many of their

counterparts in the highachieving group who were able to learn independently by seeking opportunities to use the target language, the lowachieving students lacked learner autonomy and were more dependent on their teachers for directions. Generally speaking, far more students in the lowachieving students group than students in the highachieving group tried to persist in a traditional approach to language learning.

In summary, most students in the highachieving group did not experience any serious disorientation in the ESL learning context, displayed good adaptability, and were quick to settle down to, and benefit from the ESL pedagogical practices. By contrast, a majority of the students in the lowachieving students group experienced considerable confusion and frustration, tried to stick to their old ways of learning for a prolonged period of time, and were slower in their transition and adaptation to the meaning-focused pedagogical approach after coming to the Singapore ESL context. The observed qualitative differences between the high-achieving and lowachieving students reflected their differing perceptions of the nature of language learning on the one hand and their different language learning and practicing strategies on the other.

6.3.3.4 Learning and practicing strategies

As a whole, the highachieving and the lowachieving students reported apparently similar types of learning and practicing strategies but the latter group employed them with lower frequencies and less elaboration than their highachieving counterparts. The lowachieving students' vocabulary learning strategies largely consisted of encountering new words in minimal reading, highlighting new words, guessing, taking down the words and looking up their Chinese equivalents, keying them into electronic dictionaries, and trying to memorize the words by rote. Sometimes, they tried to learn vocabulary through doing vocabulary exercises. All the lowachieving students admitted that their vocabulary was small and often encountered many new words in their reading. Besides, it seemed they could not take opportunities to practice their English. As one mentioned, "I tried to speak English with my Singaporean friends. But when I spoke English, they replied in Chinese. Perhaps, they found my English is not good, and they know I am from China, so they reply in Chinese" (08ESL/M/Sec. 4/I230605). Thus, with regard to vocabulary study, the

lowachieving students tended to be trapped in an unhealthy cycle of minimal reading, little oral communication practice, little progress, and feeling frustrated.

By contrast, the highachieving students tried to learn vocabulary by reading extensively, taking as many opportunities for practice, though they also reported the strategies employed by the lowachieving students. Most of them reported picking up vocabulary and their collocations through extensive reading. Four of them reported trying to put their newly picked-up words into use for reinforcement. For example, one highachieving student said, "I learn many new words and lively expressions from them (English journals). When I write essays, I try to recall these words and expressions and put them into my essays." (13ESL/F/JC1/I240605, HAS). What seemed to most effectively distinguish the highachieving from the lowachieving students in this study was the amount of reading and practice they did and whether and how they maintained and strengthened the vocabulary in their memory. The reports from the students showed that the most effective way to learn vocabulary in the ESL context was through extensive reading, much speaking and writing practice aided with vocabulary exercises, the process from which the highachieving students much benefited from. The lowachieving students also reported employing the same types of strategies involved in the process, but their frequencies and elaboration of using such strategies were very limited. Their reading was minimal, oral communicating opportunities often missed, their follow-up reinforcing reading not enough, which delayed their thorough understanding newly learnt words and thus using them properly in communication and writing. The lowachieving students' sense of slow progress only directed their focus towards doing 'O' Level or 'A' Level examination papers of the past years and mock test papers, which appeared to dominate some of the lowachieving students' English learning agenda.

The data pointed to the conclusion that the vocabulary learning strategies employed by the lowachieving students were impressionistically similar to those of the highachieving students but the strategies of the former group did not help to form in the mind wide associations with other words nor add depth to the memory (Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Craik & Tulving, 1975). Words temporarily stored in their mental lexicon by highlighting and note taking were tied there only by isolated Chinese

equivalents, forms and sounds, but not by contextualization through their actual application. In contrast, the typical general vocabulary learning strategies employed by the highachieving students as a whole formed the following sequence of steps: (a) encountering the new words in extensive reading or communication; (b) highlighting, guessing the words, and/or taking down the words and looking them up (c) reviewing the words, and/or doing some exercises, and (d) reinforcing them by extensive reading and using them in communication or essay writing.

6.3.3.5 Self-management and internal drive

The highachieving students seemed to have a better overview of their vocabulary learning in general, knowing how to maximize their exposure to English by controlling and evaluating their learning process. They were able to set particular objectives to expand their vocabulary. They appeared to have a clear idea of what possible phases they were going through, like intensive memorization, evaluation and adjusting learning strategies etc , how the learning activities should be carried out and what books should be used. One student described in his diary his decision to expand his vocabulary experiences soon after he came to Singapore:

“The vocabulary we learnt in China was too limited. I had dozens of new words in every passage the teacher gave us. Sometimes I had sixty or seventy new words in one passage. So I knew my first obstacle to overcome was to expand my vocabulary in the shortest time possible. I highlighted and took down all the important words, looked them up in the dictionary and tried to memorize them, then reviewed them regularly. It was quite time consuming and the words learnt were often forgotten. I found the method was not so effective so I took few notes and read more. Meanwhile, a local friend took me to visit a Christian church near our school. I found the Bible sharing quite interesting. Besides helping me understand Christianity better, it helped me improve my English, so I have been going to the church every Sunday with my friend” (15ESL/M/JC1/D180605, not my translation, HAS).

In addition to evaluating whether the learning activities in relation to vocabulary learning proceeded as planned, the highachieving students generally reported the experiences of evaluating the effectiveness of a learning strategy. Implicit in the highachieving students' evaluation is that they tended to locate responsibility inside themselves, as in: "Vocabulary learning is limited in the class; you have to rely on yourself to read more in order to learn more" (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605, HAS). Also worthy of note is their use of self-encouragement to help themselves to persevere when they were confronted with challenges or adverse learning circumstances. For example, one highachieving student wrote in her diary,

"Vocabulary learning is a process of gradual accumulation. You can't expect to learn the words after you meet them once. You have to come across them again and again before you know how they are used. Thus, you have to read extensively to expand your vocabulary. Any little progress of vocabulary learning is due to constant effort."(13ESL/F/JC1/D290405)

In contrast, the lowachieving students did make reference to intentionally expanding their vocabulary, but they generally appeared to lack the flexibility to switch strategies if the strategies did not work, to lack the perseverance to persist and the initiative to reinforce the newly learnt words. As one lowachieving student said, "I kept forgetting words I memorized; I felt extremely bored and very frustrated, so I just stopped memorizing them" (24ESL/M/JC2/I270605, LAS). Consequently, they tended to adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude towards vocabulary learning problems.

Some of the lowachieving students tended to locate the problem outside themselves. "If the teacher taught more, I would learn better" (14ESL/F/JC1/I210605), one lowachieving student said. Another said, "I'm having private English tuition, but it is not as effective as I expected" (24ESL/M/JC2/I270605, LAS). In addition, the data showed that the lowachieving students were more inclined than the highachieving students to feel frustrated at the failure to see any tangible progress. Last but not least, three out of the six ESL lowachieving students said that they indulged in other activities including computer games, comics, chatting on the internet, reading Chinese gongfu stories etc., and could not regulate themselves, leaving little time for English

study and meanwhile gradually losing interest not only in English but also in other subjects.

6.4 Discussion

6.4.1 Beliefs and vocabulary learning

Since both the ESL and the EFL students believed that vocabulary is to them as building materials are to the architects, they all felt the necessity to develop their vocabulary stock, either consciously or subconsciously, incidentally or intentionally as an indispensable component of their English command. With this awareness of the importance of the vocabulary learning, those students with stronger sense of self-responsibility will be more internally motivated and autonomous in vocabulary learning than those otherwise. Presumably, the former will build up a bigger lexical arsenal than the latter at their command.

The reports of the ESL and the EFL students indicated that the ESL students are more independent in their vocabulary learning through communication and reading while the EFL students tend to be more reliant on their teachers and acquire vocabulary through intentional means, such as rote memorization and doing exercises. The ESL students expressed an explicit need to learn the language for application, i.e. communication. Their understanding of knowing a word is much more comprehensive than their EFL counterparts', who are more exam-oriented in English learning. Given a more flexible English syllabus and more open-ended exam-questions, the EFL students might, like their ESL counterparts, be less exam-oriented and more inclined towards learning for practical use.

Differently from the ESL students, the majority of the EFL students thought that knowing an English word means to know its Chinese equivalent, which rings an alarm bell for EFL teachers. Theoretically, the larger the learner's vocabulary size, the more competent he/she feels with the language. Yet, this is largely dependent on the sound knowledge of the vocabulary items s/he has and the correct use s/he can make of them (Nation, 2001; J. Zhang, 2003). The misconception in question might have a delaying effect on the EFL students' language learning process in general and vocabulary learning in particular because proper approaches towards vocabulary

acquisition are essential in helping the students expand their vocabulary knowledge and size.

Aware of the vocabulary requirement prescribed in the teaching syllabuses (see 6.3.1.1), the students put accumulation of English vocabulary above everything in the learning process. Holding such a notion, they adopt whatever rote memorization methods they believe to be effective to expand their vocabulary size. Though for a short period they might achieve a rapid growth, the words are “easy come easy go”. Consequently, they can neither be long retained nor correctly used. The methods they use to learn words are just straight translation or rote memorization. The numerous vocabulary books found in the bookstores across China all claim to be the most effective and helpful. Yet, they only reinforce this questionable notion of vocabulary learning. One reason to disprove this way of learning words, i.e. straight translation and rote learning, is that it does not help to form in the mind wide associations with other words nor add depth to the memory. Words are stored and remembered in a network of associations (Stevick, 1976, p. 18). Words in the mental lexicon are tied to each other not only by meaning, form and sound, but also by sight and by other parts of contexts in which learners have learned or experienced them (Nattinger, 1988, p. 64). Cortazzi and Jin expressed similar worries about this (1996, p. 70), “Indeed, memorizing English words seems to be the major activity among students of English.” Wang (1998) and Yang and Liu (2004) provide learner accounts of extensive memorization from dictionaries, vocabulary review cards and bilingual word lists in notebooks. This is reinforced by the common practice in English textbooks compiled and published in China in which all the new words and expressions of a text are listed with Chinese translation.

Many students often reported that they spend enormous amounts of time and energy in learning vocabulary items, but the reward is little. It was most likely due to the above-mentioned ineffectiveness of rote memorization and the students’ reliance on their mother tongue. They more often than not put English words into Chinese and the other way round. They do it even with very simple lexical items (J. Zhang, 2003). This habit of learning not only affects adversely the quantity of their vocabulary learning but the quality as well. A large vocabulary size is undeniably necessary, but

the important thing is that proper methods should be adopted. In other words, they need to know more lexical items, what is more important is they should be able to retain and use them correctly.

Many teachers of English in China, however, do not seem to encourage students in a right direction by merely asking the students to memorize as many words as they can (Yang & Liu, 2004; J. Zhang, 2003). There are those who even make some rash promise that if the students have a vocabulary of certain size, they can definitely pass tests of various kinds and levels. This is often deceptive. The harder the students try, the more frustrated they become because eventually they do not feel that they have actually achieved a good growth of vocabulary. Therefore, they are less likely to pass tests. Even if they do, they are still not sure of the use of these words they claim to have acquired.

To achieve a steady growth of vocabulary and a long-term retention, the teacher and the student should work together as partners. While the teachers provide good guidance, the students adopt proper strategies and notions, which will affect their choices of strategies and learning outcomes (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Wenden, 1987d). Nation (1993, pp, 126-127) sums up four roles that the teacher can play in vocabulary growth. The most important role of the teacher is to ensure that the learner's efforts are directed towards the vocabulary and the type of learning that provides the best return. Strategically, an effective way of producing rapid vocabulary growth will be through extensive reading because reading leads to multiple-encounters with words in a variety of meaningful contexts (Nagy & Herman, 1987, p. 31). Through extensive reading, the students will gradually understand the various derivatives of a word, its collocations, connotations, and even synonyms and antonyms. In this light, the students should be encouraged to read extensively. It is far from adequate to just cover the textbook intensively. They should be guided to read newspapers, periodicals and simplified versions of English novels. Though the growth obtained in this manner is slow, what they gain will not be easily lost. Vocabulary is easier to learn in contexts than in isolated word lists in that such meaningful contexts permit this more complex and deeper cognitive processing, which enhances storage in

memory (Stevick, 1976, p. 30). Moreover it is only after experiencing a word in its many contexts that one gets a complete understanding of its meaning.

6.4.2 Strategies to learn vocabulary

Both the ESL and the EFL students reported a wide spectrum of very similar types of vocabulary encountering and consolidating strategies but the two groups of the students more often than not differed in the frequencies, occasions, the manners and the elaboration of the strategy applications.

The vocabulary encountering strategies the ESL students used mainly comprised of guessing, structure knowledge, highlighting, monolingual dictionary use and note taking. In contrast, the EFL students tended to use highlighting, note taking, bilingual dictionary use, part of speech and working on word pronunciations. As for the consolidating strategies, the ESL students made more use of strategies of contextual and experiential application but the EFL students used more context-independent strategies.

The ESL students reported their vocabulary learning came from extensive reading, daily communication, school functions, various mass media etc. They had ideas as to when they should pay more attention to some words than to others, though some of the ESL students seemed much more skillful in this metacognitive aspect than some others. Lacking extensive reading and the privilege of using English as the medium of daily communication, the EFL students got their lion's share of vocabulary from their textbooks and exercises. Thus, unlike their ESL counterparts whose consolidating strategies were more focused on extensive reading and experiential application, the EFL students' predominant anchoring strategies comprised list learning, repetition, orthographical or phonological patterns' identification, note reviewing and doing exercises.

All the ESL students said that reading could reinforce their vocabulary learning, making it less tedious, but one of them also remarked that "reading definitely enrich the passive knowledge of words, but their spellings can easily slip from the memory" (21ESL/F/JC2/I260605) and thus in her opinion, important and useful words needed extra attentive focus on their spellings. Several other ESL students (five),

though not stressing, it also mentioned the necessity of using regularities of spelling, sense relationships and affixes to enhance their vocabulary learning. By comparison, the EFL students generally relied on oral and written repetition, visual patterns, pronunciation, syllables and groupings to strengthen the word forms in their mind, which somehow suggests that rote memorization is a strategy necessary for EFL Chinese learners in the poor-input learning context.

Vocabulary learning plays an important part in reading and writing. If not learning well, the students will encounter problems in literally every aspect of language use. The literature review shows that even though there are some suggestions as to how to teach vocabulary for teachers in both China and Singapore, there is little guidance to the students as to how to learn vocabulary (Gu, 1994; Gu & Leung, 2002; J. Zhang, 2003). There seems to be an agreement that vocabulary buildup is an indisputable duty of the students and should be left to the individuals. That's why both the ESL and the EFL students sometimes ask questions like "How do I learn vocabulary better?"

Students from both the ESL and the EFL groups mentioned that they sometimes organized words into groups under some themes, like, animals, tools, vehicles, food, plants, etc. They usually associate a new word with related knowledge concepts they have already learnt and consolidate its form and meaning by putting the word in context. It can be assumed that although learners with their individual differences find their own strategies, they take advantage of their experience and knowledge. The process of consolidating word forms and meaning is also the process of accumulation of mental lexicon.

Making clear use of word meaning is crucial in vocabulary learning and the following aspect deserves attention in getting the meaning(s) of a word: the specification of the word meaning may vary with learners. In other words, people have different mental representations of the same word. Many studies have found that different tasks or situations and different levels of learners necessitate different degrees of semantic differences (Aitchison, 1996a, 1996b; Gu & Leung, 2002; Laufer, 1988, 1991, 1994; Nagy, et al., 1989). In this sense, context plays an important role in understanding word meaning. Nevertheless, studies (Laufer, 1997b; Nation, 1990,

2001; Parry, 1993b) have shown that context does help in getting word meaning, but it is rough. It is either prototypical or peripheral in a semantic field. They share family resemblance, but not the accurate meaning. They are not exactly equal in internal structure of meaning. Fortunately, both the ESL and the EFL students reported dictionary use in this study, but some students seemed to need training in effective dictionary consultation skills. Only with the accurate prototypes of word meanings and usages looked up in dictionaries can the students be amply equipped to understand and express meaning in communication, whether in reading or writing, which is the final aim of vocabulary learning and perhaps also is the most difficult challenge in vocabulary learning. It does not mean that learners cannot come to the final step of using the word until they have mastered its form and meaning. In fact, using the word facilitates and accelerates the process of mastering the word since actual application of a word will help with getting clearer schema of the word. The frequency, experience and context of encountering a word along with the certain word knowledge looked up in a dictionary should play an important role in achieving the accurate use and acquisition of a word.

So far as the employment of the learning strategies is concerned, the situations when the new word is met with should be considered. If a student is not immersed in English environment, i.e. does not read, listen to and speak English extensively, logically s/he will not encounter much unfamiliar vocabulary, and thus will not have many opportunities to use guessing strategies. Likewise, English is not used as the medium of communication in the EFL context, the EFL students can not be expected to reinforce their newly learnt words much in daily communication and social interaction. Both the EFL and the ESL students, especially the highachieving learners, learnt from their experience that they had to pay close attention to the forms of the unfamiliar words, to need multiple and diverse situations to shape better understandings of the words, and to use appropriate strategies to anchor them in mind. The majority of the students from the two groups claimed that they could remember words best when they had encountered or repeated them several times. And all the ESL and most of the EFL students expressed explicitly that they remembered words best when they could use the words experientially, either in speaking or writing.

Therefore, one important implication seems that the activation of newly learnt words, and the number of times a word is encountered or repeated in different contexts are two very essential factors to be taken into account in vocabulary learning.

The difference in making use of word structure knowledge between the ESL and the EFL students shows EFL teachers the area they need to work on to help their students. Word formation and derivation are important parts of vocabulary teaching and learning. For example, the words, *abstain*, *attain*, *contain*, *detain*, *retain*, *maintain*, *sustain* etc. appear to the students totally irrelevant to one another, but brief analysis of their formation will show that they are in fact descended from the same Latin root word. With good illustration, the students can realize that the words *abstract* and *abstain* have connections with each other. If the teacher goes on to explain the prefix *con* in the word *contain*, then gives them more examples like *convene*, *conceive*, and *conclude*, the students will know how words are formed, which can facilitate them to understand and memorize the words they encounter through orthographical or phonological patterns' identifications which the EFL students often make use of. In the long run they will find it more effective to memorize words in association with other words (Lu, 1983, p. 253).

Collocation is also a difficult part in vocabulary acquisition the EFL students need help with. While some words serve either the signifier or the signified and they are reversible in meaning and usage in both languages, others are not. As highlighted by one of the ESL students, *wenhua* is the Chinese equivalent of the word *culture* and the Chinese equivalent is very rich in its denotations and connotations. The sentence "He has no culture (*wenhua*) because he did not go to school" sounds quite odd to a westerner. If it is rewritten as "He is illiterate because he has never been to school", it will make perfect sense. The trouble lies in literal translation from the Chinese equivalent back into English, a common error among EFL students due to improper method of approaching English vocabulary. Memorizing lexical items along with their collocations, synonyms and antonyms has also proved to be effective (Nation, 2001). As Nattinger (1988, p. 65) put it, "to know the meaning of a word becomes the task of knowing its associations with other words". Therefore, to teach vocabulary most effectively, words must be presented it in network of associations. At the same time,

the students need to develop the notion that the true objective of obtaining a big vocabulary is to make a good and correct use (Nation, 2001, p. 383). In other words, quantity is important, but quality is even more important.

Besides collocation, the ESL students reported a much better sense of connotations of words than their EFL counterparts. Connotations of words are not explicitly expressed in the contexts and not in many dictionaries, especially the pocket ones. Unlike some of the ESL students, none of the EFL students mentioned that they needed to be aware of the hidden meanings or traps of words in specific and cultural contexts. The word *propaganda* has become a classic example in this sense (Gao, 1965, preface). In China, it denotes any organized group, effort or movement to spread a particular doctrine or system of doctrines or principles. Nothing negative about the word is suggested in the Chinese. But in the West, its connotation is almost synonymous with deception and distortion. The connotations are particularly difficult to handle when the words in textbooks are given Chinese equivalents. For this reason, the teachers, especially the EFL teachers, must then perform an important task by reminding the students of the pitfalls and guide them with the right usage.

As a whole, the EFL and the ESL students have been found employing rather similar types of strategies at the macro level owing to their ingrained cultural and educational beliefs. But the different sociocultural and educational contexts in which the two groups of the students live and study affect their actual employment of vocabulary learning strategies. In the ESL context, English is the medium of daily communication and of the instructions in classrooms. New words to the ESL students are spangles on the macroscopic linguistic landscape and they view the new words in the entire context. Many opportunities are available for them to activate and use newly learnt words. But the EFL students pick up their vocabulary mainly from their textbooks and they are so acclimatized to list learning based on the textbooks and do so many exercises that they tend to neglect the function of the contexts, their collocations and connotations. Besides, the EFL and the ESL students differ in terms of their teachers' expectations, curriculums, pedagogical approaches, examination coverage and formats. The different sociocultural and educational factors come to form an inextricably intertwined totality of interconnection and interaction underlying

why the EFL and the ESL students are so divergent in the micro level of vocabulary learning strategy employment.

6.4.3 Highachieving and lowachieving ESL students

The findings in this section have showed both similarities and differences between the highachieving and the lowachieving students in terms of how they conceptualized the process of language learning in general, vocabulary learning in particular. Though for both the highachieving and the lowachieving students, language learning meant accumulation of language knowledge and developing practical language skills, they differed in quite a few aspects in vocabulary learning. The highachieving students appeared to hold that English learning was a process of both incremental accumulation of linguistic knowledge and integrative development of practical command of language skills. This conception favorably disposes them towards using a mixture of approaches. The lowachieving students' perceptions of their language learning were found to be suggestive of a mainly incremental approach. They seemed to feel that something basic in their English was missing, which seemed to correspond with their relatively limited view of English learning.

The data have suggested apparent differences in attitudes towards English vocabulary learning between the highachieving and the lowachieving students. Implicit in this finding is that the intertwined totality of the pedagogical adaptability, learning strategies, affective state and internal drive may stimulate progressive development among the highachieving students but disappointment among the lowachieving students. The lowachieving students displayed an overall negative attitude: They felt disappointed by the teaching styles in Singapore; they thought the teacher was pedagogically unwise because they thought the teacher did not know how to teach students of different proficiency levels. Though most of the highachieving students found they learnt more from outside their English lessons, they believed they could learn something — linguistic knowledge or skills — from the classroom. Some highachieving students felt that their teacher's guidance was very valuable in keeping them on the right track of their English learning.

It is interesting that the highachieving and the lowachieving students in the study reported some similar learning strategies such as highlighting new words, note taking, looking words up and reviewing. These similarities were understandable given that these students were basically a homogeneous group in terms of the instructional input they received both in China and Singapore and the Asian cultural contexts they were in. However, the highachieving students reported some learning or practicing activities (e.g., going to church) that were not mentioned by the lowachieving students. In addition, the employment frequencies and the elaboration of some learning strategies varied between the highachieving and the lowachieving students. The greater variety of learning strategies and the more sophisticated use of strategies by the highachieving students, as compared to the lowachieving students, relate to the former group's better self-management.

The analysis revealed striking differences in terms of self-management in language learning between the highachieving and the lowachieving students under study. The responses showed that the highachieving students attributed their success to controllable factors such as effort and strategy use, that they generally felt optimistic and challenged about their performance in English, and that the majority of them appeared to be able to determine their own learning goals, to locate a learning problem and its causes, and then to take corresponding measures to overcome the problem. They actively made use of the learning and practicing resources around them. They seemed to be able to sustain their efforts towards a learning goal at their own pace. The lowachieving students, in contrast, tended to find it difficult to adjust to the new language learning environment, and experienced a noticeable sense of disillusion and helplessness; some explicitly expressed their intention to leave Singapore for a more conducive language learning environment. Though all the lowachieving students in the present study considered persistence, strong will, and hard work crucial for success in language learning, they were aware they lacked these internal factors and they appeared to be more prone to emotional responses that interfered with learning than the highachieving students. These lowachieving students also tended to locate the sources of learning problems outside themselves, seeing inadequacies in the

environment and in their teachers and thus failing to see the more significant role of learners themselves in learning (Williams & Burden, 1997).

The majority of the highachieving students in this study seemed to be motivated both externally and internally. Although sources of internal drive such as interest, learning progress, enhanced self-confidence, and self-efficacy seemed to play an important role in influencing their tendency to approach and persist in vocabulary learning tasks on a continuing and self-directed basis, learning and practicing English for examinations was also an important part of the highachieving students' English learning experiences. By contrast, the lowachieving students' language learning apparently was an extrinsically motivated affair, in other words, chiefly driven by compulsory examinations. Paradoxically, the compulsory examinations also emerged as a factor undermining the lowachieving students' interest and persistence in learning. These lowachieving students tended to marginalize English learning except when the examinations were approaching.

In light of the results of this study, a holistic perspective should be taken towards not only learner differences in language learning outcomes but also learner strategy training that attempts to teach less successful language learners to use the strategies characterizing their more successful peers. Such an integrative view is in line with the current reform movements in education that are calling for teachers to attend to the need of the whole student in achieving high academic standards as well as to provide more integrative and personally relevant curriculums and learning assessment (McCombs, 1998). The strategy training in the area of second language acquisition should be expanded to include fostering positive cognition about language learning, exploring the role of teacher-learner interaction in facilitating self-directed learning, and identifying pedagogical approaches in an attempt to nurture intrinsic motivation in students' learning process. I believe that an integrative perspective will help us better understand the process underlying both successful and unsuccessful language learning and help teachers and researchers make informed choices about potential instructional interventions.

6.5 Chapter Summary

Based on the qualitative data collected through interviews and diaries, this chapter has tried to provide a clearer picture of the differences in the beliefs about vocabulary learning held by the ESL and the EFL Chinese secondary students, the differences in their vocabulary learning strategies, and the perceptible and strategic differences between Singapore-based highachieving and lowachieving students.

Both the ESL and the EFL Chinese students believed that vocabulary is the foundation of their English learning. They all felt the necessity to build up their vocabulary stock as an essential component of their English command. But the ESL and the EFL students were somehow divided in their beliefs of what it means to know a word. While all the ESL students believed that knowing an English word does not only mean knowing its Chinese equivalent, but also its usages and collocations, the majority of the EFL students said that knowing an English word means to know its Chinese equivalent.

Both the EFL and the ESL students found that English vocabulary learning was challenging due to its enormous size but they differed in their affective perceptions of vocabulary learning. While the ESL students reported the vocabulary learning was difficult, the EFL students, besides recounting the same difficulty as their ESL counterparts, went on to report the boredom and confusion involved in the vocabulary learning process. The affective gap in learning vocabulary between the EFL and the ESL students was due to their different vocabulary learning approaches. While the ESL students picked up vocabulary more incidentally, the EFL students learnt vocabulary predominantly intentionally. The incidental vocabulary learning spared the ESL students boredom of learning vocabulary through rote learning.

The ESL and the EFL students also differed in their beliefs of optimal approaches to vocabulary learning. The ESL students thought that words are best learnt through reading and application but the EFL students seemed to resort more to list learning by rote memorization and doing exercises. As for their perceptions of personal responsibility for language learning, all the ESL and the EFL students

believed that they had personal responsibility for their own language learning. Nevertheless, in terms of their English teacher's role in their English learning achievement, the two groups differed quite dramatically: while the ESL students only attributed a relatively minor role to their teachers, the EFL students rated their teacher's help as relatively more important in both success and failure situations.

The ESL and the EFL students reported a wide array of similar vocabulary encountering and consolidating strategies but differed in the employment frequencies and elaborations of the strategies. In terms of vocabulary encountering strategies, the ESL students made more use of guessing, highlighting, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and note taking, and word structure knowledge analyses. By comparison, the EFL tended to use highlighting, note taking, bilingual dictionaries, part of speech and word pronunciations. As for the consolidating strategies, the ESL students made more use of strategies of contextual and practical application but the EFL students used more context-independent strategies. Their strategic differences related to the different sociocultural learning contexts the students were in.

This chapter has revealed both similarities and differences between the highachieving and the lowachieving Singapore-based students in terms of their adaptability to the meaning-focused pedagogy, how they conceptualized the process of language learning in general, vocabulary learning in particular, their learning strategies and their internal drive. The highachieving students showed better adaptability and stronger internal drive than the lowachieving ones. Importantly, the highachieving reported better ability to monitor and evaluate their progress. While the highachieving students appeared to hold that English learning is a process of both incremental accumulation of linguistic knowledge and integrative development of practical command of language skills, the lowachieving students, especially the lower-level ones, tended to believe that English learning is a process of incremental accumulation, which is aligned with the finding of Gan et al (2004). Besides, there was an attitudinal difference, with the highachieving students feeling stimulated and guided in their classroom interaction while the lowachieving students feeling disappointed and disillusioned. The highachieving students ascribed their English learning achievement more to their own efforts by their independent learning than to

their English lessons. Nevertheless, the ESL lowachieving students, like their EFL counterparts in China, felt that their English teachers should spoon feed them more and they tended to locate their learning problems outside themselves. Strategically, the lowachieving students' vocabulary learning strategies largely consisted of encountering new words in minimal reading, highlighting new words, guessing, taking down the words and looking up their Chinese meanings, and trying to memorize them. Generally, they could not take as many opportunities to practice their English as their more successful peers. Thus, their more impressionistic way of learning words did not help to form in the mind wide associations with other words nor added depths to the memory. In contrast, the typical vocabulary learning process experienced by the highachieving students as a whole consisted of a consistent sequence of steps, with the next one bolstering the previous one. Metacognitively, the highachieving students seemed to have a better overview of their language learning in general, knowing how to maximize their exposure to English. They were able to set plans to expand their vocabulary, with a clear idea of what possible phases they were undergoing and how the learning activities should be carried out. But the lowachieving students generally appeared to lack the flexibility to switch strategies if they did not work, the perseverance to persist and the initiative to reinforce the newly learnt words.

This study has thus suggested that learning beliefs, strategy use, and motivation tend to be situation- and person-specific and that they are perhaps a consequence of goal orientation, personal choice, engagement with different kinds of learning activities, tasks and social interaction. Taken collectively, the results that emerged from this study indicate that the ESL students' different levels of success are shaped by a complex and dynamic interplay of learning beliefs, internal cognition and emotion, external incentives, and social context, which is in line with the finding of Gan et al. (2004) and Gu (1994) with their EFL participants. The qualitative inquiry therefore reiterates the importance of a sociocultural and interactionist perspective in understanding learner difference factors and their impact on learning outcomes.

The next chapter will reiterate the major findings of this study and come up with some implications for vocabulary learning and instruction. It will also discuss the limitations of this study and some suggestions for future research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall first summarize the results of the research questions and hypotheses in this study and discuss the implications of these findings for second language learning research, theory and instruction. I shall then spell out the limitations of this study and finally offer suggestions as to the directions future research might take.

7.2 Summary of the Results of Research Questions and Hypotheses

This section will be summarizing the major findings according to the proposed research questions and hypotheses, i.e. the differences between the EFL and ESL students in their vocabulary learning beliefs, sources and general learning strategies. The section winds up by recapitulating the interrelations between the achievement levels and strategy use of the participants.

7.2.1 Beliefs about vocabulary learning in EFL and ESL environments

The EFL and the ESL students tended to differ in their vocabulary learning beliefs. The survey showed that the ESL students believed more the importance of vocabulary learning than their EFL counterparts, though the qualitative data did not reveal that. Actually, both the ESL and the EFL students believed that vocabulary is the foundation of their English learning. They all felt the necessity to build up their vocabulary stock as an essential component of their English command. But the ESL and the EFL students were somehow divided in their beliefs of what it means to know a word. While all the ESL students believed that knowing an English word does not only mean knowing its Chinese equivalent, but also its usages and collocations, quite a few EFL students said that knowing an English word means to know its Chinese equivalent.

The ESL students also reported a firmer belief that words could be picked up by using them and they rated vocabulary learning difficulty lower than the EFL

students, who believed more in memorization of words. The results confirm the hypothesis that PRC-based students tend to believe that vocabulary should be memorized while Singapore-based students think that words should be learned through use.

The EFL and the ESL students differed in their affective perceptions of vocabulary learning. The EFL students reported the boredom and confusion of vocabulary learning, which the ESL students little mentioned. The affective gap in learning vocabulary between the EFL and the ESL students was due to their different vocabulary learning approaches. While the ESL students picked up vocabulary more incidentally, the EFL students learnt vocabulary predominantly intentionally. The incidental vocabulary learning spared the ESL students the boredom of learning vocabulary through rote memorization. However, the EFL students did not have a conducive learning environment for incidental learning. They had no choice but to resort to list learning and repetition, which are often characteristic of Chinese learners.

The ESL and the EFL students also differed in their perceptions about optimal approaches to vocabulary learning. The ESL students thought that words are best learnt through reading and application but the EFL students seemed to resort more to list learning by rote memorization and doing exercises. As for their perceptions of personal responsibility for language learning, all the ESL and the EFL students believed that they had personal responsibility for their own language learning. Nevertheless, in terms of their English teacher's role in their English learning achievement, the two groups differed quite dramatically: while the ESL students only attributed a minor role to their teachers, the EFL students attributed an important part to theirs.

7.2.2 Vocabulary learning sources in EFL and ESL environments

The EFL students reported learning more from classrooms while the ESL students attributed their vocabulary learning far more to independent learning and daily communication. Besides, the ESL students reported learning more vocabulary from social interaction than their EFL counterparts.

The qualitative data indicated that the ESL students learned vocabulary through application, i.e. oral communication, reading and writing. They believed that extensive reading is the most effective way to anchor and expand vocabulary. They held that through multiple encounters of unfamiliar words, they will not only know their spellings and meanings, but also their various usages and connotations in different contexts. They also believed that daily communication and interaction is the other most effective way to learn English words. As found in the survey, the EFL students reported that they learnt vocabulary predominantly from textbooks and classrooms by list learning, auditory, visual and manual repetitions, reciting texts, doing exercises and reading.

Generally, both the EFL and the ESL students of the last year faced with national examinations tended to report more learning from classrooms and the ESL students reported increasingly more independent learning from lower secondary to upper secondary. While the EFL students reported more learning from classrooms, their ESL counterparts reported more independent learning and more learning from daily communication. The findings support the hypothesis that the Singapore-based students make more use of the socio-cultural environment as a vocabulary learning source to learn vocabulary than their counterparts in China.

7.2.3 Vocabulary learning strategies in EFL and ESL environments

The EFL and the ESL students reported extensive differences in their vocabulary learning strategies. In terms of metacognitive strategies, the EFL students rated selective attention significantly higher than their ESL counterparts. As regards contextual guessing, the EFL students reported using the immediate context significantly more while their ESL counterparts reported using the wider context more often. Nevertheless, while the EFL students reported an increasing tendency in the use of immediate context from SM1 to SM3, the ESL students reported almost the opposite across the three levels of education.

The ESL and the EFL students also diverged in their dictionary use. The ESL students reported using English–English and Chinese–English dictionaries more than the EFL students while the latter reported more use of English–Chinese dictionaries.

The divergence on dictionary use between the EFL and the ESL groups was due to the different languages used as media of instruction in the different learning contexts.

The EFL students reported using looking-up strategies more frequently but the ESL students reported significantly more dictionary use for comprehension and extended dictionary strategies, which relate to the more meaning-oriented note taking by the ESL students. The differences resulted from the students' different curriculums and learning tasks.

While the ESL students reported more vocabulary learning from social interaction, the EFL students rated higher their employment of list learning, oral repetition and visual repetition. The employment of these strategies related to the EFL students' firmer belief in memorization. By contrast, the ESL students made more use of social interaction, daily communication and activation strategies. The cross-environmental differences were accounted for by an intertwined totality of quantity of input, learners' learning and using language experiences, curriculum requirements, examination formats among others.

The qualitative data further indicated that the ESL students believed words were best learnt through communication, reading and writing. The ESL students unanimously believed that extensive reading is the most effective way to anchor and expand vocabulary. They held that through multiple encounters of unfamiliar words, they will not only know their spellings and meanings, but also their various usages and connotations in different contexts. They agreed that daily communication and interaction is the other most effective way to learn English words. However, the EFL students diverged in their reports, with some believing in list learning, some in auditory, visual and manual repetitions, reciting texts, remembering the pronunciations, doing exercises and reading.

As a whole, the ESL and the EFL students reported a wide array of similar vocabulary encountering and consolidating strategies but differed in the employment frequencies and elaborations of the strategies. In terms of vocabulary encountering strategies, the ESL students made more use of guessing, highlighting, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and note taking, and word structure knowledge analyses. By comparison, the EFL students tended to use highlighting, note taking, bilingual

dictionaries, part of speech and word pronunciations. As for the consolidating strategies, the ESL students made more use of strategies of contextual and practical application but the EFL students used more context-independent strategies. Their strategic differences related to the different sociocultural learning contexts the students were in.

7.2.4 Learners' achievement levels and vocabulary learning strategies

The comparison of the strategy employment of the good and the poor students showed that the good students employed a much wider range of strategies and used them more frequently. Both the EFL and the ESL good students reported employing more metacognitive strategies, using more contextual clues in guessing at unfamiliar words than the poor students. With reference to dictionary use, both the EFL and the ESL good students came up with higher mean frequency ratings of dictionary consultation strategies. The ESL good students reported using more English-English and Chinese-English dictionaries. Besides, both the EFL and the ESL good students reported more vocabulary learning from social interaction, taking more notes, using encoding strategies more frequently and taking more opportunities to activate their newly learnt words. Moreover, the EFL good students made more use of rehearsal strategies than their underachieving fellows. As for the underachieving students, the ESL ones merely reported using English-Chinese dictionaries more frequently while the EFL poor students rated only the mean frequency of Chinese-English dictionaries higher. The results support the hypothesis that good students make use of a wider range of strategies, and use them more frequently.

The comparison of the highachieving and lowachieving ESL students based on the qualitative data showed that while both the groups held that language learning meant accumulation of language knowledge and developing practical language skills, they differed in quite a few aspects in English learning in general and in vocabulary learning in particular.

The highachieving students ascribed their English learning achievement more to their own efforts in their independent learning than to their English lessons. The

highachieving students were more adept in the transition from the teacher-centered EFL classroom instruction to the more communication-oriented ESL learning setting. While the highachieving students found they learnt more from outside their English lessons, they believed the classroom instruction was very valuable in guiding them. But the lowachieving students were unsatisfied with the classroom instruction.

While the highachieving and lowachieving students reported some similar learning strategies such as highlighting new words, note taking, looking words up and reviewing, the former group reported a wider variety of strategies, more often and more elaborated employment of some learning strategies. The greater variety of learning strategies and the more sophisticated use of strategies by the highachieving students, as compared to the lowachieving students, related to the former group's better self-management.

The highachieving students attributed their success to controllable factors such as effort and strategy use. They generally felt optimistic and challenged about their performance in English, and were able to determine their own learning goals, to locate a learning problem and its causes, and then to take corresponding measures to overcome the problem. They actively made use of the learning and practicing resources around them. They seemed to be able to sustain their efforts towards a learning goal at their own pace. The lowachieving students, in contrast, tended to find it difficult to adjust to the new language learning environment, and experienced a noticeable sense of disillusion and helplessness. Though all the lowachieving students believed persistence, strong will, and hard work crucial for success in language learning, they were aware they lacked these internal factors and they appeared to be more prone to emotional responses that interfered with learning than the highachieving students. These lowachieving students also tended to locate the sources of learning problems outside themselves, seeing inadequacies in the environment and in their teachers.

The highachieving students were motivated both externally and internally. Although sources of internal drive such as interest and learning progress seemed to play an important role in influencing their tendency to approach and persist in vocabulary learning tasks on a continuing and self-directed basis, learning and

practicing English for examinations was also an important part of the highachieving students' English learning experiences. By contrast, the lowachieving students' language learning apparently was an extrinsically motivated affair, in other words, chiefly driven by compulsory examinations. Paradoxically, the compulsory examinations also emerged as a factor undermining the lowachieving students' interest and persistence in learning. These lowachieving students tended to marginalize English learning except when the examinations were approaching.

While the highachieving students held that English learning was a process of both incremental accumulation of linguistic knowledge and integrative development of practical command of language skills, the lowachieving students' perceptions of their language learning were found to be suggestive of a mainly incremental approach.

The findings suggest that the synergy of the pedagogical and strategic adaptabilities, affective state and internal drive stimulates progressive development among the highachieving students but disappointment among the lowachieving students.

7.3 Pedagogical Implications

I have touched upon the implications of each finding in this study as I went along. This section will be reiterating some of the most important implications that I believe are particularly relevant to ESL learning and research in general, but to Chinese secondary students' English learning in particular. Though attempts are made to draw implications for pedagogy from the findings about the differences in vocabulary learning between EFL and ESL learners, it does not preclude efforts to explore educational implications on the basis of substantial differences revealed in relation to factors such as achievement level. These variables are actually discovered in this study to be interrelated to affect the amount and variety of strategy use. Nevertheless, since the main purpose of this study is to explore the effect of the EFL versus ESL learning environment on the use of vocabulary learning strategies by Chinese learners of English and this is the first attempt ever to make so far as Chinese students are concerned, the decision here is to concentrate on implications to be

derived from some of findings in relation to EFL and ESL learners. It should be noted first of all that what is found to be practiced significantly more frequently by ESL students may not work well for EFL students, and vice versa. Strategies more often used by ESL learners may not be good ways for facilitating EFL vocabulary learning. The effectiveness of strategies in different contexts of cultural diversity depends on them being recast in different terms to suit other conditions of relevance (Ho & Wong, 2003, p. xxxvi).

1. Training EFL learners to guess from context. One of the findings in this study is that the ESL students use context more frequently than the EFL students as clues to guess at the meaning of unfamiliar words. This is, on one hand, probably because the ESL students have more language knowledge and develop better language schemata which are available to them than the EFL students. On the other hand, it relates to the finding from the interviews that reading comprehension strategies including skimming and/or guessing from context are neither taught nor explained in the EFL students' classrooms. It is often the case that they are told by teachers to remember a certain number of new words on a specific word list to be tested daily or the following week. This appears to foster some vocabulary learning techniques in the EFL students which work effectively for word list learning, but not for other types of learning such as guessing from affixes or from the context (McCarthy, 1990; Nation, 1990). Hence, the EFL students need to be given instruction on how to deal with unknown words they are likely to encounter elsewhere such as in reading other than in a word list. It is also suggested in this connection that if words in the lists include contexts larger than single sentences, this might help learners to increase their ability to guess meanings from context (Hatch & Brown, 1995). However, taking into account the current situation in China, where such contextualized word lists are unavailable, the teachers can train students to be aware of the effective use of context as a means of getting an approximate meaning of an unfamiliar word, once they cross the threshold of vocabulary size of 3000 high frequency words (Laufer, 1997b; Nation, 1990; Nation & Waring, 1997).

2. Cracking the myth about overall vocabulary size. Language teachers and researchers in ESL and EFL acquisition have long known that there exists a strong

correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. The instrumentalist view sees vocabulary knowledge as a major prerequisite and causative factor in comprehension (Nation, 1993, p. 115). According to Laufer (1997a), learners whose vocabulary size gives them 95% coverage of the words in the text are able to reach an adequate level of comprehension. She also finds that if vocabulary size is smaller than 3,000 words, academic ability does not compensate for it to help comprehension. For good comprehension, therefore, it is necessary to have a large vocabulary. But the use here is largely receptive. Our efforts to acquire vocabulary knowledge should never culminate in this. Both teachers and students should be clear as to what extent we can say that we have actually acquired certain amount of vocabulary knowledge. There is consensus on this question among linguists and language teachers. Richards (1976, pp. 77-89) makes seven criteria for knowing a word. Wallace (1982, p. 27) gives a more concise summary on this matter. He says the task of teaching vocabulary is to know a word so that it may be recognized, recalled at will, related to an object or a concept, correctly used, pronounced and spelt, appropriately collocated, used at the right level of formality and with awareness of its connotations and associations. Summers' standard (1988, p. 115) is that the word is only really acquired if the learners can use it actively and correctly, or has efficient recall of it in a variety of contexts. The notions of these linguists are especially instructive to the EFL students as they can reveal to the learners that the overall vocabulary size does not mean the size of equivalents they have obtained, a notion commonly held by EFL PRC students at the secondary level.

In view of the vocabulary requirement prescribed in the Teaching Syllabus for Secondary Schools (see 6.3.1.1), the students put accumulation of English vocabulary above everything in the learning process. Holding such a notion, they adopt whatever methods they believe to be effective to expand their vocabulary size. Though for a short period they might achieve a rapid growth, the words are "easy come easy go". Consequently, they can neither be long retained nor correctly used. The methods they use to learn words are just literal translation or rote memorization. The numerous vocabulary books found in the bookstores in China all claim to be the most effective and helpful. Yet, they only fortify this questionable notion of vocabulary learning.

One reason to disprove this way of learning words, i.e. literal translation and rote learning, is that it does not help to form in the mind wide associations with other words nor add depths to the memory. Words in our mental lexicon are tied to each other not only by meaning, form and sound, but also by sight and by other parts of contexts in which we have learned or experienced them (Aitchison, 1996a; Nattinger, 1988; Stevick, 1976).

Many students often complain about little growth in their vocabulary after enormous amounts of time and energy devoted to vocabulary learning. Besides the factor mentioned above, a second factor is that they rely on their mother tongue in learning English. They almost always put English words into Chinese and the other way round. They do it even with very simple lexical items. This habit of learning not only affects adversely the quantity of their vocabulary learning but the quality as well. A large vocabulary size is undeniable necessary, but what is more important is that the words should be retained and used correctly.

Teachers of English in China, however, do not seem to encourage students in the right direction. The majority of the teachers merely ask their students to memorize as many words as they can. There are those who even make some rash promise that if the students have a vocabulary of x size, they can definitely pass tests of various kinds and levels. This is often deceptive. The harder the students try, the more frustrated they become because eventually they do not feel that they have actually achieved a good growth of vocabulary. Therefore, they are less likely to pass tests. Even if they do, they are still not sure of the use of these words they claim to have acquired.

3. Some ESL students who are well aware of the benefits of being exposed to the ESL environment make the most of being in the environment for L2 learning, but there are others who appear to adhere to familiar ways of learning L2 vocabulary which they believe work best and so continue to use consistently even after they move to an ESL environment. It is likely that the ESL students of the latter type are not aware of the wide range of potential strategies at their disposal, and thus they use only a very limited number of strategies without ever considering whether they are suitable or useful for them. This being the case, then, it is of vital importance to encourage them to use different learning strategies experimentally, to determine for themselves

how they work (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; Gu, 2003c). The same is also true of the EFL students who are assumed to be less aware of what different strategies the ESL students use in their English vocabulary learning. One of the possible ways to simulate the language learning circumstance where strategies used by the ESL students are expected to emerge among the EFL students is that native teachers of English should be allowed to choose textbooks for use in their classes. For example, as far as L2 vocabulary learning is concerned, there is a range of books available which gives a fresh insight into how L2 vocabulary could be learned (e.g. McCarthy & O'Dell, 1994; Nation, 1994). These books often provide detailed information about second language vocabulary learning which is generally unavailable in English textbooks currently used by the secondary students in China. Taking into account the difficulty to change the Chinese context of English language teaching by Chinese teachers of English alone, it is of vital importance for the increasing number of native teachers of English to use such vocabulary books as those referred to above and make their students aware of a wide range of vocabulary learning strategies at secondary school level.

It must be admitted here that it is difficult to predict, given the current state of language learning strategies research, what will be good or bad strategies to use or to recommend (Gu, 2003c; McDonough, 1999). It is reasonable, however, that teachers should introduce the variety of strategies hitherto unknown to their students and let them experiment with different types of strategies so that they can judge for themselves whether a particular strategy or a combination of strategies will be effective for their second language vocabulary learning.

The human ability to assimilate ideas that are radically different from present experience seems to be severely limited (Bialystok, 1985, p. 259). Research shows, for example, that Asian students who are so accustomed to word list learning of second language vocabulary are reported to be reluctant to abandon the habit of rote-memorization strategies (O'Malley, 1987). Language teachers need to be aware that some strategies which are deeply ingrained in second language learners' belief in language learning are not to be discounted but to be supplemented by other strategies that may help learners to facilitate their own second language vocabulary learning.

The findings of the present study based on achievement level and different language learning environments (EFL vs. ESL), it is hoped, will pave the way for further investigation into the ways in which second language vocabulary is to be taught in accordance with the differences in vocabulary learning strategy use identified by each factor delineated above. Further research efforts could include an attempt to bridge the gap between teachers and learners, so that teachers, who have been regarded as being rather ignorant of how their students learn the target language (O'Malley et al., 1985a; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994), will be able to familiarize themselves with the strategies used by second language students and allow their teaching style or techniques to be adjusted to such an extent that the learning strategies employed by second language learners will work as effectively as possible.

4. Students should be taught proper vocabulary learning strategies. To achieve a steady growth of vocabulary and a long-term retention, the teacher and the student should work together as partners. The teachers provide good guidance while the students adopt proper learning strategies. Nation (1993, pp, 126-127) sums up four roles that the teacher can play in vocabulary growth. The most important role of the teacher is to ensure that the teacher and the learner's efforts are directed towards the vocabulary and the type of learning that provides the best return. Strategically, an effective way of producing rapid vocabulary growth will be through extensive reading because reading leads to multiple-encounters with words in a variety of meaningful contexts (Nagy & Herman, 1987, p. 31). In this light, the students should be encouraged to read extensively. It is far from adequate to just cover the textbook intensively. Second language learners, especially the EFL one, should be guided to read newspapers, periodicals, simplified English novels and then original novels. Though the growth obtained in this manner is slow, what they gain will not be easily lost. Vocabulary is easier to learn in contexts than in isolated word lists in that such meaningful contexts permit this more complex and deeper cognitive processing, which enhances storage in memory (Stevick, 1976, p. 30). Moreover, it is only after experiencing a word in its many contexts that one gets a complete understanding of its meaning.

Word formation, derivation, collocation, synonyms and antonyms are important parts of vocabulary teaching and learning. Derivatives of a common root may appear to the students totally irrelevant to one another, but a brief analysis of their formation will show that they are in fact all are closely related and the students will know how words are formed, which can facilitate them to understand and memorize the words they encounter. In the long run they will find it more effective to memorize words in association with other words (Lu, 1983, p. 253). Memorizing lexical items in association with other words has proved to be effective. As Nattinger (1988, p. 65) put it, “to know the meaning of a word becomes the task of knowing its associations with other words”. Therefore, to teach it most effectively, we must present it in its network of associations. At the same time, the teacher also needs to impart to the students the notion that the true objective of obtaining a big vocabulary is to make a good and correct use. In other words, quantity is important, but quality is even more important.

Connotations of some words are difficult to handle because they are implied in the contexts and are not always explicitly expressed in the dictionaries, especially in bilingual dictionaries which are preferred by the EFL students in general. Given that the words in the EFL textbooks are annotated in Chinese equivalents, which often do not have the same connotations, it is particularly difficult for the EFL students to understand and use connotation-tinged words accurately. As Gao (1965) stated, Chinese students are usually unaware of the hidden meanings or traps of words in specific and cultural contexts, thus the teacher must perform an important task by reminding their students of the pitfalls and guide them with the right usage.

Collocation is also an important aspect in second language vocabulary acquisition. Some words serve either the signifier or the signified. They are reversible in meaning and usage in both languages. But others are not. Hence direct translation from the Chinese equivalent back into English often leads to blunders by the EFL students in their English learning. A big difference exists between Chinese and English in phonology, morphology and semantics. A sound knowledge of connotation and collocation will prevent students from doing word for word translations from one language into another. Knowledge of connotation and collocation can not only help to

avoid blunders in use but also consolidate and enhance the students' vocabulary growth.

5. The National Matriculation English Test (NMET) in China should be reformed. The challenges the English teachers in China face are connected with the unique centralized examination-driven educational system. What is tested in the examination are predominantly discrete language points and grammatical structures instead of real-life communication competence and skills. The examination backwash influences both what the teachers teach and how the students learn (Chen, 2002). The high-stakes nature of the NMET drives teachers' perceptions of teaching in the direction of teaching for what is required in the exam. Hence, the NMET has had little intended positive backwash because linguistic knowledge and teaching only skills tested on the NMET are still emphasized in the classroom (Cheng, Watanabe & Curtis, 2004).

Positive backwash is more likely to occur when a curriculum and test are highly matched. Since the communicative curriculums have been developed, the NMET should be designed to measure how students have learnt based upon the curriculums. Aural and oral tests should be included in the NMET in order to encourage teachers to integrate communication-based assessment into their classroom evaluation. The positive backwash will promote a shift from grammar-based teaching toward more communication-oriented teaching. Otherwise, even if sufficient opportunities for reading, listening and speaking can be made available in China, the students might not take up the opportunities.

In brief, for Chinese learners, lexical items are like building materials. In their efforts to expand their vocabulary size, they need to adopt proper ways and methods. Extensive reading, listening to radio and other learning strategies all provide chances to recall their knowledge of encountered words and chances to come across new ones. Knowledge of word formation, connotation and collocation is vital to their vocabulary growth. The teacher, however, should not only guide the students in the right direction, but also do what he can to encourage vocabulary acquisition. With regard to overall vocabulary size, quantity is important but more important is the quality. The learner should make his knowledge of vocabulary not only receptive but productive as well.

Last but not least, the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) in China should be reformed for a positive backwash.

7.4 Contribution of the Study

Empirically, this is the first study that focuses on the effect of learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) on the use of vocabulary learning strategies. Previous empirical studies have mainly centered around the similarities and differences between students at higher and lower proficiency levels, either at one educational institution (Gu & Johnson, 1996), or across different levels of institutions (Ahmed, 1989; Schmitt, 1997). There is hardly any literature documenting how EFL and ESL learners develop vocabulary.

Pedagogically, this study verifies that learners' strategy use varies with learning contexts, achievement level and learning tasks. The strategies used by the EFL and the ESL groups had been developed to attain learning goals and deal with learning tasks found in their respective contexts and had been further reinforced by the success with which these goals and tasks had been accomplished. Thus, learning strategies need to be recast to suit the specific conditions so as to be effective in different contexts of cultural diversity (Ho & Wong, 2003). Besides confirming that high and low proficiency students employed strategies in different manners and with different frequencies, this study provides an understanding of the type and the extent of strategy use by good EFL and ESL learners, and an understanding that learners' strategy use can develop in different contexts. Furthermore, even if the EFL and ESL students employed the strategies of the same types, the combinations of such strategies varied from group to group. This suggests that learners and teachers should be mindful of not only the strategy types learners employ, but also the quality of their strategy use.

7.5 Limitation of the Study

The generalisability of the findings in this study is somewhat confined to the particular cohort of the Chinese secondary students because of several potential limitations, which need to be mentioned.

First, the Likert-scale questionnaire survey may result in ambiguities such as ambiguities of reference like inexplicitness of the wording ‘moderately true of me’. The questionnaire as data collection instrument may give rise to different interpretations of the questionnaire items, which is related to the reliability of the reports that each respondent provides. It is possible that the respondents overestimate or understate the frequency of the use of certain strategies, which might underlie some inconsistencies in the findings of the survey and the qualitative phase.

Second, the Likert-scale makes the assumption that the psychometric distance between categories is equal. This aspect of scale construction is always considered as equally-spaced, comprising marks on a horizontal line. The clear implication is that these categorical names exhibit the same internal scaling as the printed scale and numbers suggest. However, this is not the case.

Third, the students’ English language proficiency collected in the questionnaires was self-reported and might be inaccurate. More rigorous methods for assessing English language proficiency could have classified the students differently. Moreover, the achievement level of the students involved in the qualitative phase was assessed by teachers based on the criteria adopted at each school, which suggests the likelihood that students at the upper level in one school might be considered to be at the moderate level in another, and vice versa. Additionally, the self-reported strategy use data was not corroborated by observation of actual strategy use. The fact that the data is all self-reported makes it impossible to confirm or reject hypotheses about actual strategy use.

Next, more details were needed. With more details about the English learning history of the students and individual classroom cultures, including the precise teaching methods and the expectations of the English teachers might have facilitated the understanding of the effect of the context on the use of certain strategies. In

addition, due to time constraints during the process of data collection especially in China, it was not possible to work with a larger sample size. Therefore, the findings in this study have to be generalized with caution. If more generalisable results are to be sought, larger scale studies are needed.

Besides, the sampling of the students in the qualitative phase was limited and not random. They were all selected only in schools, which were within my reach. All the ESL students involved in the study knew me (I personally knew over half of them) and it was possible that these students were more motivated than other students. Therefore, the results of the study and any conclusions are subject to possible motivation bias. Further as all the participants were PRC students, possible nationality related differences might have also biased the data.

However, given the exploratory nature of the present study, these limitations do not detract significantly from the value of investigating the nature of some of the processes language learners go through in their vocabulary development. As Basit (2005, p.1) said, “Quality research is about the search for truth, the commitment to conduct it in an ethical manner, the ability to generate valid and reliable data, to present our findings in a way that practitioners, policy makers and other researchers, present and future, can learn from them. ... I do not believe that all research has to be generalisable, but only needs (to) be transferable/replicable.”

7.6 Suggestions for Future Research

This study aimed at exploring and finding patterns of vocabulary learning strategies employed by intermediate level Chinese students in EFL and ESL contexts, mapping out the relationship between strategies, learning environments and achievement level. Considering that this study involved only Chinese students, the findings need to be confirmed. Further research can replicate the study in different contexts with students from different nationalities. Besides, the difference between the effects of EFL and ESL instructions on the use of vocabulary learning strategies needs to be researched. And the effectiveness of some significant vocabulary learning strategies identified in this study needs to be empirically confirmed in different

contexts with a longitudinal research design involving authentic learning tasks used as indicators of strategy effectiveness. Accumulation of findings can add to our understanding of the effect of instructional methods in EFL and ESL contexts respectively and can even help the teachers to avoid recommending the use of inappropriate strategies (Chamot & Rubin, 1994; Gu, 1996; Rees-Miller, 1993).

Besides, future research needs to aim at helping learners in different contexts rather than finding patterns and testing hypotheses. In so doing, the field will yield more experimentation on strategy training and intervention in order to determine cause and effect relationships and to see if specific strategies, or more importantly, strategy combinations, make a difference, what strategies make a difference, how much difference they make, and to whom. After sufficient knowledge of vocabulary learning strategies is obtained from such studies, I would like to see more research on strategy engineering to bridge the gap between teachers and learners so that teachers will be able to adjust their teaching style or techniques to such an extent that the L2 learners' learning strategies will work as effectively as possible with the ultimate goal of learners' reaching their fullest potential.

Finally, due to the scope and the methodological constraints of this study, I excluded some other potentially important learner difference variables, such as gender and language aptitude. Research and theorizing on these two areas has increased in recent years. Knowledge of gender differences in the employment of vocabulary learning strategies can serve in the preparation of language classroom activities that cater for the variation shown by gender. As for language aptitude, researchers in both second language acquisition and cognitive psychology now seem to believe that language aptitude is a kind of developing expertise rather than a fixed innate talent (Gan et al., 2004). The construct of foreign language aptitude remains to be researched in depth, and what's more important, what role language aptitude plays in learning achievement at different learning stages, in different sociocultural contexts, or both, should be a very promising avenue to be explored.

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Appendix A: Summary of Items in Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire (VLQ)

Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire contains five sections. Section 1, Personal Data, asks about the demographic information of each respondent. Section 2, Beliefs about Vocabulary Learning, includes 21 statements representing six variables. Section 3, Sources of Vocabulary Development, consists of 13 items, which are classified into three variables. Section 4, Metacognitive Strategies, is composed of 12 items, representing two variables. Section 5, Cognitive Strategies, contains 19 variables, which are made up of 74 statements. Items 39, 60 and 81 look at the types of the dictionaries respondents use and the three items are not correlated.

Respondents will be asked to rate each statement on a seven-point scale from Absolutely Disagree or Extremely Untrue of Me (1) to Absolutely Agree or Extremely True of Me (7). To increase the reliability of the survey, reversed value is adopted for Items 57, 78, and 99.

**Summary of Dimensions, Categories, Variables
And Item Numbers In Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire**

Dimension	Category		Variable	Item Number
Beliefs about vocabulary learning			Importance perception	1, 8, 15
			Difficulty perception	2, 9, 17
			Knowing a word	3, 11, 18
			Words should be memorized.	4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19
			Words should be learned through use.	5, 12, 20
			Learning words from reading	6, 14, 21
Source of vocabulary development			Classroom learning	22, 26, 30, 33
			Independent learning	23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 34
			Daily communication	24, 28, 32
Metacognitive strategies			Selective attention	35, 56, 77, 98, 111, 119
			Self-initiation	36, 57, 78, 99, 112, 120
Cognitive strategies	Encountering strategies	Contextual guessing	Wider context	37, 58, 79, 100, 113
			Immediate context	38, 59, 80, 101, 114
	Dictionary strategies		Dictionary type	39, 60, 81
			Dictionary strategies for comprehension	40, 61, 82, 102
			Extended dictionary Strategies	41, 62, 83, 103, 115, 121
			Looking-up strategies	42, 63, 84, 104, 116
	Socialization	Social interaction	43, 64, 85	

		Note-taking strategies	Meaning-oriented notetaking	44, 65, 86, 105
			Usage-oriented note-taking	45, 66, 87, 106
	Consolidation	Rehearsal strategies	Use of word lists	46, 67, 88, 107
			Oral repetition	47, 68, 89
			Visual repetition	48, 69, 90
	Encoding strategies		Association/elaboration	49, 70, 91, 108, 117
			Visual encoding	50, 71, 92, 109
			Auditory encoding	51, 72, 93
			Use of word-structure	52, 73, 94
			Semantic encoding	53, 74, 95
	Activation		Contextual encoding	54, 75, 96
			Activation strategies	55, 76, 97, 110, 118

Appendix B: English Version of Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire (VLQ)

Dear boys and girls:

You are participating in a research project on vocabulary learning. The statements below are designed to help us understand your beliefs and strategies in vocabulary learning. The questionnaire is anonymous. The questionnaire is NOT a test and there is no right or wrong answer. Your answers will not affect your English scores. Please answer the questions as HONESTLY as possible. However, your first impression is good enough. You do not have to ponder over a statement for too long. Please report according to what you normally do, but not what you think you should do or what you think your teacher would like you to do. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Please start now.

Section 1: Personal Information

1. Name of school: _____ Grade: _____
2. Sex: Male/female Age: _____
3. My last year-end English score: _____
4. Rank of English proficiency in class: Please circle the choice.
 A. very poor B. poor C. average D. good E. very good

Section 2: Beliefs about Vocabulary Learning

In the statements below, you will find some commonly held beliefs about vocabulary learning. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you agree or disagree with the statement. Mark your answer in the corresponding space provided using the following seven-point scale.

1=Absolutely Disagree	2=Disagree	3=Moderately Disagree
4=Neutral	5=Moderately Agree	6=Agree
7=Absolutely Agree		

For example:
 Learning English vocabulary is very difficult.

If you *absolutely agree* with the statement listed above, mark the response (7) with a “√” in the corresponding space.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learning English vocabulary is very difficult.							√

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
01. Vocabulary is very important to the learning of English.							
02. Learning English vocabulary is difficult.							
03. Knowing a new word means knowing more than its pronunciation and spelling.							

04. Once the English equivalents of all Chinese words have been remembered, English is learned.							
05. When you come across a word several times in different contexts, you will know what it means.							
06. The meanings of a considerable number of words can be picked up through reading.							
07. The best way to remember words is to memorize word lists or dictionaries.							
08. Knowing words is the key to understanding and being understood.							
09. I have much difficulty learning vocabulary.							
10. Remembering the meanings of a word is an end in itself.							
11. Knowing a new word involves knowing what words and set phrases usually go with it.							
12. Words should be put to use before they are finally learned.							
13. A good memory is the best way to remember words.							
14. One can expand his/her vocabulary simply through reading a lot.							
15. Vocabulary is the most important component for learners.							
16. Repetition is the best way to remember words.							
17. It involves much effort to learn vocabulary.							
18. The least a learner should know about a word is its form, its meaning, and its basic usage.							
19. You can only acquire a large vocabulary by memory of individual words.							
20. Using English (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) is more important than memorizing words.							
21. Guessing words in context is one of the best ways to learn vocabulary.							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 3: Sources of Vocabulary Learning

In the statements below, you will find various sources for English vocabulary learning. Please read each statement carefully and mark your response (1 to 7) that tells how true of you the statement is.

1= Extremely Untrue of Me	4= Neutral	7= Extremely True of Me
2= Untrue of Me	5= Generally True of Me	
3= Generally Untrue of Me	6= True of Me	

For example:

I pick up most of my new English words from my English classes.

If you really pick up most of your new English words from your English classes, mark the response (7) with a “√” in the corresponding space provided.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I pick up most of my new English words from my English classes.							√
22. I pick up most of my new English words from my English classes.							
23. I pick up most of my vocabulary from reading books.							
24. I pick up most of my vocabulary from daily use, such as listening and speaking in English.							
25. I pick up most of my vocabulary from reading magazines.							
26. My teacher often sets aside time to teach us vocabulary.							
27. I learn vocabulary mostly from reading newspapers.							
28. I learn words and phrases from the people I talk with.							
29. I try my best to memorize new words I come across in after-class reading.							
30. My teacher deals with vocabulary as part of comprehension lessons.							
31. I get most of my opportunities to practice English vocabulary in activities outside my English classes.							
32. I pick up most vocabulary from English-language media, such as English TV programs, news broadcasts, songs, newspapers etc.							
33. I get most of my opportunities to learn vocabulary in my English classes.							
34. I often try to imitate the words and expressions that good writers (including my classmates) use.							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 4: Vocabulary Learning Strategies

In the statements below, you will find various English vocabulary learning strategies. Please read each statement carefully and mark your response (1 to 7) that tells how true of you the statement is. NB: “true of you” indicates that you actually use these strategies in your learning of vocabulary; it does not mean that the strategies would be suitable to you if you used them.

1= Extremely Untrue of Me	4= Neutral	7= Extremely True of Me
2= Untrue of Me	5= Generally True of Me	
3= Generally Untrue of Me	6= True of Me	

For example:
I memorize new words everyday.

If you really memorize new words everyday, mark the response (7) with a “√” in the corresponding space provided.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I memorize new words everyday.							√
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. I know when a new word or phrase is essential for adequate comprehension of a passage.							
36. Besides textbooks, I look for other readings that I am interested in.							
37. I make use of the logical development in the context (e.g., cause and effect) when guessing the meaning of a word.							
38. When I meet a new word in a sentence, I use the familiar words in the sentence to infer the meaning of the new word.							
39. I look up new words in an English-English dictionary.							
40. When I see an unfamiliar word again and again, I look it up.							
41. I pay attention to the examples of use when I look up a word in a dictionary.							
42. If the new word is inflected, I remove the inflections to recover the form to look up (e.g., for created, look for create).							
43. I try to pick up the new words I come across in daily communication.							
44. I make a note of the meaning of a new word when I think the word I'm looking up is commonly used.							
45. I make a note when I see a useful expression or phrase.							
46. I make vocabulary lists of new words that I meet.							
47. When I try to remember a word, I repeat it aloud to myself.							
48. When I try to remember a word, I write it repeatedly.							
49. I remember a group of new words that share a similar part in spelling.							
50. I act out a word in order to remember it better.							
51. I remember the words that sound similar.							
52. I analyze words in terms of prefixes, stems, and suffixes.							
53. I try to create semantic networks in my mind and remember words in meaningful groups.							
54. I remember the new word together with the context where the new word occurs.							
55. I try to read as much as possible so that I can make use of the words I tried to remember.							
56. I know which words are important for me to learn.							
57. I wouldn't learn what my English teacher doesn't tell us to learn.							
58. I make use of my common sense and knowledge of the world when guessing the meaning of a word.							
59. I make use of the grammatical structure of a sentence when							

guessing the meaning of a new word.									
60. I look up new words in an English-Chinese dictionary.									
61. When I want to confirm my guess about a word, I look it up.									
62. I consult a dictionary to find out about the subtle differences in the meanings of English words.									
63. If the new word I try to look up seems to have a prefix or suffix, I will try the entry for the stem.									
64. I try to pick up the new words encountered in activities both in and out of school.									
65. I make a note when I think the word I'm looking up is relevant to my personal interest.									
66. I take down the collocations of the word I look up.									
67. I go through my vocabulary list several times until I am sure that I do not have any words on that list that I still don't understand.									
68. Repeating the sound of a new word to myself would be enough for me to remember the word.									
69. I memorize the spelling of a word letter by letter.									
70. I associate a group of new words that share a similar part in spelling with a known word that looks or sounds similar to the shared part.									
71. I create a mental image of the new word to help me remember it.									
72. I remember the words that are spelled similarly.									
73. I deliberately study word-formation rules in order to remember more words.									
74. When I meet a new word, I search in my memory and see if I have any synonyms and antonyms in my vocabulary stock.									
75. When I try to remember a word, I remember the sentence in which the word is used.									
76. I make up my own sentences using the words I just learned.									
77. I have a sense of which word I can guess and which word I can't.									
78. I only focus on things that are directly related to examinations.									
79. I check my guessed meaning against the wider context to see if it fits in.									
80. I make use of the part of speech of a new word when guessing its meaning.									
81. I look up new words in a Chinese-English dictionary.									
82. When not knowing a word prevents me from understanding a whole sentence or even a whole paragraph, I look it up.									
83. When I want to know more about a word that I already have some knowledge of, I look it up.									
84. If the unknown word appears to be an irregularly inflected form or a spelling variant, I will scan nearby entries.									
85. I take notice of new vocabulary encountered in English TV programs, news broadcasts, songs and newspapers and learn									

them.									
86. I write down the English synonym(s) or explanations of the word I look up.									
87. I take down grammatical information about a word when I look it up.									
88. I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go.									
89. When I try to remember a word, I repeat its pronunciation in my mind.									
90. I write both the new words and their Chinese equivalents repeatedly in order to remember them.									
91. I create a sentence in Chinese when I link a new word to a known word.									
92. I visualize the new word to help me remember it.									
93. I associate a new word with a known English word that sounds similar.									
94. I memorize the commonly used stems and prefixes.									
95. I group words into categories (e.g., animals, utensils, vegetables, etc.).									
96. I learn words better when I put them in contexts (e.g., phrases, sentences, etc.).									
97. I try to use the newly learned words as much as possible in speech and writing.									
98. When I meet a new word or phrase, I have a clear sense of whether I need to remember it.									
99. I wouldn't care much about vocabulary items that my teacher Does not explain in class.									
100. I make use of my knowledge of the topic when guessing the meaning of a word.									
101. I check my guessed meaning against the immediate context to See if it fits in.									
102. I look up words that are crucial to the understanding of the sentence or paragraph in which it appears.									
103. I consult a dictionary to find out about the subtle differences in The meanings of English words.									
104. If there are multiple senses or homographic entries, I use various information (e.g., part of speech, pronunciation, style, collocation, meaning, etc.) to reduce them by elimination.									
105. I write down both the Chinese equivalent and the English synonyms of the word I look up.									
106. I note down examples showing the usages of the word I look up.									
107. I make regular and structured reviews of new words I have memorized.									
108. I attach physical sensations to certain words (e.g., stinking) when I try to remember them.									
109. I associate a new word to a known English word that looks									

similar.							
110. I try to use newly learned words in real situations.							
111. I know what clues I should use in guessing the meaning of a particular word.							
112. I use various means to make clear vocabulary items that I am not quite clear of.							
113. I look for any definitions or paraphrases in the passage that support my guess about the meaning of a word.							
114. I analyze the word structure (prefix, root, and suffix) when guessing the meaning of a word.							
115. When looking up a word in the dictionary, I read sample sentences illustrating various meanings of the word.							
116. I try to integrate dictionary definitions into the context where the unknown word was met and arrive at a contextual meaning by adjusting for collocation, part of speech, and breadth or meaning.							
117. I help myself remember a word by associating it to a word in my mother tongue.							
118. I try to use newly learned words in imaginary situations in my mind.							
119. I know which words can be skipped and passed in reading.							
120. I try to use English-language media (songs, movies, and newscasts, newspapers etc.) as much as possible.							
121. When I look up a word in a dictionary, I also read the information on related words, such as synonyms and idiomatic expressions.							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C: General Interview Questions

1. What are your major sources of vocabulary learning? (e.g. classroom, textbooks, flysheets, exercises, reading English books, newspapers and magazines, watching TV, listening to English radio programs, friends)
2. How do you expand your passive vocabulary? (e.g. from reading, listening, or other activities)
3. What do you mean by learning? What do you mean by learning English?
4. Do you feel it easy or difficult to learn English? Why do you think so? How do you learn English?
5. Do you feel it difficult to learn English vocabulary? Why do you think so?
6. Do you think English important? Why?
7. What are your reasons to learn English? Do you want to go to university or just want to look for a job? What is the highest educational level you set for yourself?
8. How important is vocabulary learning in learning a foreign language? Why?
9. What does it mean to you when you say you've learned a word?
10. Do you think English vocabulary can be learnt according to some rules? Can you give some examples to illustrate?
11. Do you have any plan about vocabulary learning?
12. Do you often deliberately employ some strategies to learn vocabulary? How often do you do that?
13. How do you keep track of your progress in vocabulary learning?
14. How do you know that a particular word or expression is worth remembering?
15. Do you think there are some vocabulary learning strategies that work for you? If yes, please think of as many strategies as possible that you yourselves use to learn English vocabulary.
16. Do you translate English words into your mother tongue or vice versa? Does your mother tongue help your English vocabulary learning through transferring?
17. How much time on average do you spend on English study after class every day?
18. Do you model your teacher or your classmates about vocabulary learning? If you do, do you find your modeling effective?

19. Do you write down unfamiliar English words that you come across in class or after class in your own studies? If you do, why do you usually do so? In order to review them later or just help you remember the word more easily at that moment?
20. How often do you use a dictionary? What dictionary do you prefer?
21. What do you do when you have new words while listening? (Ignore it; make a mental note of the word in order to check it in a dictionary later; try to relate it to a similar word in my mother tongue; try to guess at its meaning from the context; ask the speaker for clarification)
22. What do you do when you have new words while reading? (Ignore it; write it on a piece of paper in order to check it in a dictionary later; look it up in a dictionary on the spot; try to relate it to a similar word in my mother tongue; try to guess at its meaning from the context)
23. What do you do when you do not know an exact English word to express yourself when speaking? (Avoid it; use gestures to convey its meaning; 'borrow' a word from my mother tongue; make up an English-sounding word for it; paraphrase or describe it; ask someone for the correct word)
24. What do you do when you do not know an exact English word to express yourself when writing? (Avoid it; 'borrow' a word from my mother tongue; make up an English-sounding word for it; paraphrase or describe it; consult a dictionary; ask someone for the correct word)
25. Do you purposely try to change your passive vocabulary into active vocabulary? How do you do that?
26. How do you feel about vocabulary learning, boring, tiring, or challenging? Why?
27. Have you ever felt frustrated with vocabulary learning? If yes, how do you cope with this problem?
28. How did find the English language Singaporeans speak when you first came here? Have you accepted it now?
29. How do you think of your English lessons?

Appendix D: Excerpt of Interview Transcripts

R: What are your major sources of vocabulary learning? e.g. classroom, textbooks, flysheets, exercises, reading English books, newspapers and magazines, watching TV, listening to English radio programs, friends, and some other sources?

S: I learn most of my vocabulary from reading newspapers and magazines, and reading English novels. Ah, personally I feel that reading newspapers and magazines is a very good source for vocabulary learning because through reading all these, we not only learn new vocabulary, we have a broader knowledge of what is going on in world every day, and also reading English books, novels is not a really burden for us, it's enjoyment, because it's like watching a movie, at the same time, we learn vocabulary, and know how they are used in daily communication.

R: Good. Next one, how do you expand your passive vocabulary?

S: I think I expand my passive vocabulary mainly through reading, not so much through listening and other activities. Sometimes, if I can't recall a vocabulary, I check it out to reinforce the concept. Maybe sometimes, I pick up some words through activities because others use them every day.

R: What activities do you mean in your mind?

S: CCA activities or just a normal dialogue or conversation with other people, because they use these words every day and I get very familiar with all these words although I do really not know the meaning, so once I look it up in the dictionary, it is very easy for us to remember these words.

R: Very good. Next one, what do you mean by learning? Or can you give me a definition of learning? What do you mean by learning English?

S: In my opinion, there are two levels of learning. The first level is to use the language to communicate because the English language is primarily a tool for communication. By that I mean if I can talk to other people to communicate ideas, that is the first level. The second level is to treat the language as a(n) art form rather than a tool, so the second level may involve like English literature, movies and plays. I think I'm still at the first level. For learning English is (to) pick up English linguistic skills, communicate effectively with other people, to present my ideas, to listen to other people, and maybe discuss with other people.

R: That means you're talking about the practical use of English or linguistic skills of English.

S: That's right.

R: Next question, do you feel it easy or difficult to learn English? Why do you think so?

S: I have been learning English for almost six or seven years and now I feel it is Ok, not that difficult. But at the very beginning, I did feel it was very difficult. I think it applied to every language. When you first encounter the language, it's always hard. But after exposure, after practice, I think it becomes easier.

R: Ok. Now can you say something in general about how you learn English. Here I mean not only vocabulary learning but also other aspects.

S: I think we must overcome the psychological barrier of speaking up. At the beginning I felt embarrassed and uncomfortable to speak English because English is not my mother tongue. It was not very natural especially with others who can speak Mandarin fluently. But since we want to learn English, we have to eventually overcome these problems by being more proactive, being more willing to speak English, to practice, because practice makes perfect, so we have to learn through practice. So I would like to suggest from the every beginning we should be brave enough to speak up. To overcome psychological barriers is very important, yah, for the oral practice. For the written English, I think it is a good idea to imitate others' essays, sample essays. But not the carbon copies of the articles. Maybe a few sentences that are very well written, maybe I can use them in some other places. I think it is the same as learning Chinese language. I remember what I did in the primary school, I just memorized some paragraphs, but if I use them often, some sentences and vocabulary will become my own, so I can use them effectively.....

(Code: 23ESL/M/JC2/I270605)

Appendix E: Diary Writing Guidelines

Diary Writing Guidelines

- a. You can write in either Chinese or English as you prefer.
- b. Do not worry about grammar if you write in English.
- c. Write about your personal experience and reflections about English vocabulary learning. Please support them with examples whenever possible.
- d. Write anything and everything you feel about vocabulary learning. For example, you can write about the following aspects:
 - how you learn English vocabulary in or after class, and your purposes and feelings about these learning activities.
 - teaching or learning activities in the classroom and your feelings about these activities.
 - opinions about how English vocabulary should be learned.
 - reflections on your problems and progress in your English vocabulary learning.

Appendix F: Samples of Diaries

Sample 1

2025年七月10日

16) 学习英文单词时, 我都是对照着汉语意义进行记忆的, 这样在听到这个单词之后可以尽快的在脑中翻译成汉文, 在说的时候也可以直接在脑中先将它汉语在脑中想上, 然后再翻译成英语也可以提高我记忆。

但如果只记单词的单一汉语意义, 在翻译时就会受到局限, 在记忆单词的汉语意义时, 一定要尽量将单词的全部意义记清, 这样在翻译时才能更好的体现这一单词在句中的意义。

17. 2025年五月11日

在回家作, 我学习英语的时间长短并不固定, 时长时短, 学习英语的时间也不固定, 有时在睡前, 有时在早晨起床之后, 学习英语的时间也比较散。

情绪较躁时我如果在放学后没有老师的叮嘱, 回家后就不知道要学习什么, 要复习什么。

18. 2025年五月12日

以前学习英语, 记忆单词我总是按照自己的方法, 感觉特别没有效果, 单词怎么也记不住。最近学习了一种新的记忆单词的方法, 就是通过读音记忆拼音。以前我都是通过拼音直接记忆单词, 因为音标不好, 单词基本都不准, 最后导致的结果就是哑吧英语, 然后再过一段时间, 就连单词拼音也不记得了, 但通过读音记

Sample 2

10. 你如何学习英语单词有规律可循吗? 若是, 请给一些例子
来说明。

Yes, we need to remember many words now. Maybe
we haven't much time, so we must look for the ~~principle~~
principle of studying words.

For example, we know "agree" means 同意 and "disagree"
means 不同意. So do you know what's the meaning of
"dis"? Yes, its meaning is opposite. Sometimes
"in", "im", "un" have the same meaning from "dis".
And the meaning of "mid" is between.

There are any other ~~principles~~^{principles} of studying
words. They can help us to study words.

Appendix G: A sample of the survey data spreadsheet

	wrdimpt1	difpcpt1	knowwrđ1	wrdmem1	thruse1	read1	wrdmem2	wrdimpt2
1	6.00	4.00	7.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	6.00	7.00
2	7.00	6.00	7.00	7.00	1.00	4.00	1.00	7.00
3	7.00	7.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	1.00
4	5.00	7.00	5.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	6.00	6.00
5	6.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	7.00	3.00
6	6.00	5.00	7.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	5.00	7.00
7	5.00	7.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	7.00	1.00	7.00
8	7.00	7.00	6.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	7.00	7.00
9	5.00	6.00	7.00	1.00	1.00	7.00	7.00	4.00
10	5.00	2.00	6.00	1.00	5.00	2.00	1.00	7.00
11	7.00	7.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	5.00
12	7.00	7.00	6.00	4.00	2.00	7.00	1.00	4.00
13	7.00	7.00	6.00	1.00	3.00	4.00	2.00	4.00
14	6.00	5.00	6.00	4.00	6.00	7.00	5.00	6.00
15	6.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	6.00	6.00	4.00	6.00
16	7.00	5.00	6.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	6.00
17	6.00	6.00	7.00	2.00	3.00	5.00	6.00	7.00
18	7.00	4.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	4.00	6.00
19	6.00	5.00	7.00	2.00	4.00	7.00	1.00	7.00
20	7.00	5.00	6.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	6.00
21	6.00	6.00	7.00	2.00	3.00	5.00	6.00	7.00
22	7.00	4.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	4.00	6.00
23	7.00	5.00	7.00	2.00	4.00	7.00	1.00	7.00
24	6.00	6.00	7.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	5.00
25	5.00	7.00	4.00	2.00	6.00	5.00	3.00	7.00
26	7.00	4.00	6.00	6.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	2.00
27	6.00	2.00	7.00	1.00	4.00	1.00	6.00	6.00
28	6.00	2.00	6.00	1.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	6.00
29	6.00	6.00	7.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	2.00	6.00
30	7.00	7.00	2.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00
31	6.00	3.00	6.00	2.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	6.00
32	7.00	5.00	6.00	3.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	4.00
33	7.00	6.00	6.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	7.00	5.00
34	6.00	7.00	4.00	1.00	6.00	7.00	4.00	5.00
35	7.00	7.00	7.00	2.00	3.00	6.00	6.00	7.00
36	7.00	4.00	6.00	1.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	4.00
37	5.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	6.00	3.00	2.00	1.00
38	6.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	1.00	4.00	2.00	6.00
39	7.00	4.00	7.00	2.00	1.00	5.00	7.00	7.00
40	5.00	1.00	7.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	6.00
41	7.00	3.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
42	6.00	4.00	7.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	4.00
43	7.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	6.00	5.00	2.00

Appendix H: Sample pages from *Vocabulary: the power of words* by Yap (1999)

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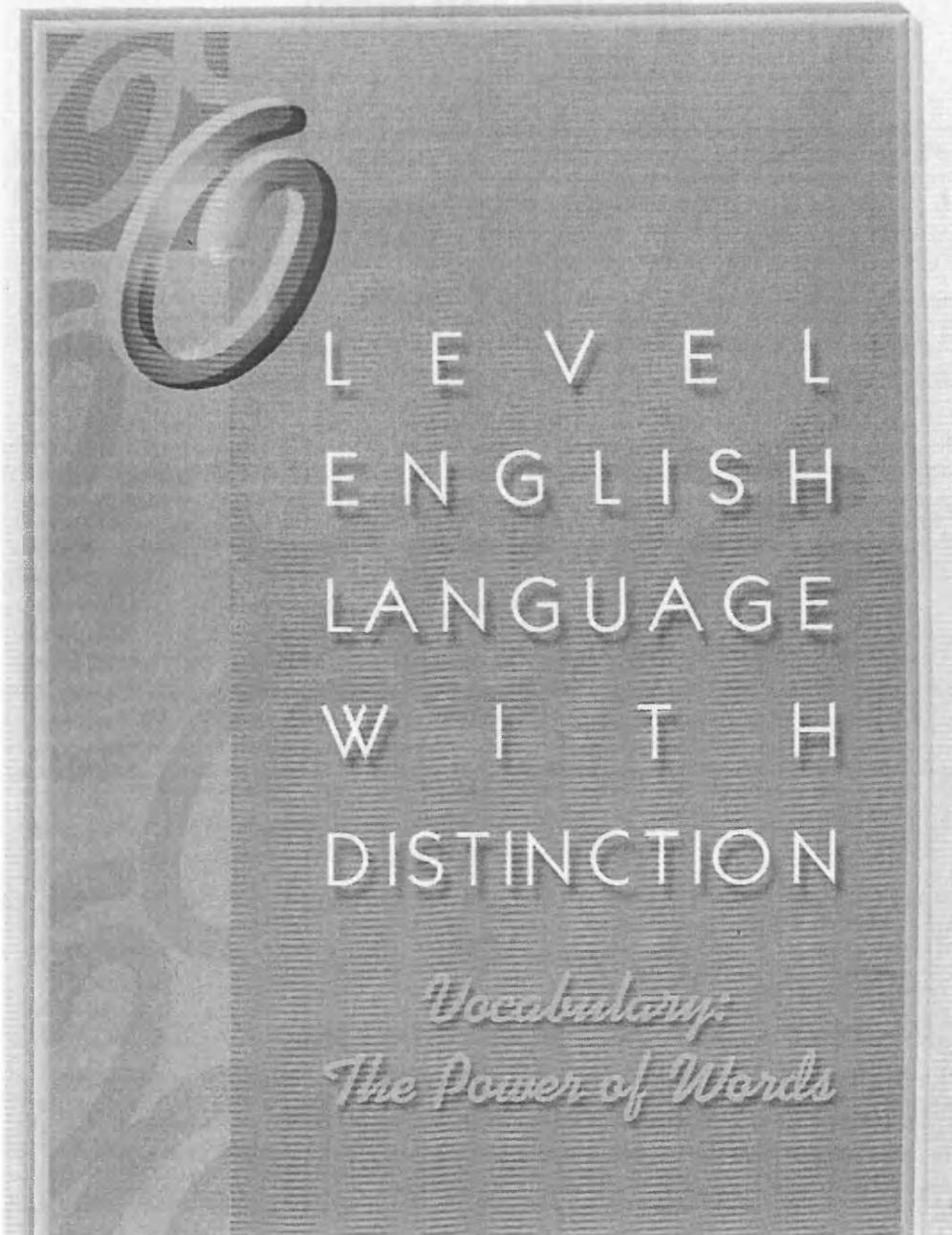
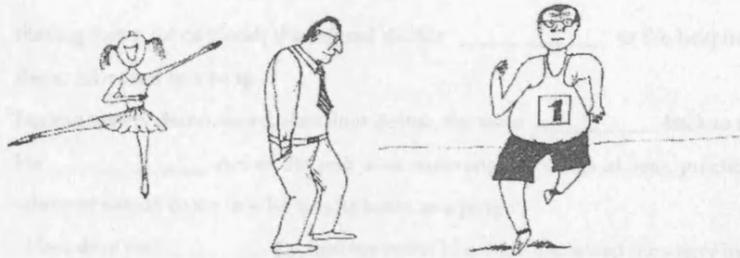


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• Move •



Exercise 6: The words in the box are all vivid verbs for the word “move”. Fill in each blank with the correct form of one of these verbs.

barge	stalk	hobble	sneak
lumber	stagger	caper	prance
plod	sashay	stride	shamble
totter	dart	toddle	caper
slink	mince	flit	swagger

- 1 She _____ across the street in a bid to avoid being caught in the crossfire.
- 2 The willowy Mrs Jones _____ from room to room to see to the preparations for the party.
- 3 Attracted by the twinkling lights, two-year-old Tommy _____ over to the Christmas tree.
- 4 The aspiring model _____ across the stage, hoping to capture the judges’ attention.
- 5 “Hey, you big gorilla!” the boys taunted Timmy, “_____ over here, will you?”
- 6 Feeling so full of himself, he _____ his way up the stage, only to be embarrassed when he tripped on the carpet and landed flat on his face.
- 7 Rufus the dog _____ about the garden when his master finally returned from a long vacation.
- 8 Cecilia _____ around the room upon hearing that her father would buy her the doll she had been yearning to own.
- 9 Feeling slighted by their insensitive remarks, she _____ off in a huff.
- 10 When the principal was interrogating the class about the graffiti on the wall, Michael, who was still holding onto the spray can, tried to _____ away.
- 11 Having just sprained his ankle, Paul _____ to the grass verge to nurse his injured leg.
- 12 Not wanting to leave Juliet, Romeo _____ home with a heavy heart.

- 13 Having lost a lot of blood, the injured doctor _____ to the hospital entrance, and there, collapsed in a heap.
- 14 Feeling utterly demoralised after their defeat, the team _____ back to the locker room.
- 15 He _____ out of the pub after downing ten mugs of beer, proclaiming loudly to whoever would listen that he was as sober as a judge.
- 16 "How dare you _____ into my room like that!" bellowed the angry judge, "Have you no manners?"
- 17 The next competitor _____ onto the stage, confident of his victory.
- 18 The children _____ back to their seats when they heard the headmistress' footsteps echoing in the hallway.
- 19 The enterprising policeman _____ up from behind the robber, taking him by surprise.
- 20 "Hi, beautiful!" the boys shouted at Ronald, as he _____ his way across the basketball court.

• **Fall** •



Exercise 7: The words given in the box below are vivid verbs for the word "fall". Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the words in the box.

cascade	drop	swoop	plummet	slither	dive	plunge
slide	dip	nose-dive	tumble	slip	duck	

- 1 The road _____ between the two cliffs.
- 2 His grades _____ by thirty percent in three months.
- 3 The plane's altitude _____ from 45 000 feet to 30 000 feet when it encountered an air pocket, causing severe injuries in some of the passengers.
- 4 The boxer _____ to avoid a blow from his opponent.

- 5 The lifeguard _____ into the pool to rescue a swimmer who was floundering in the water.
- 6 The hawk _____ down from the sky, towards its prey.
- 7 His favourite basketball team _____ down the ranks to the tenth place this month.
- 8 He _____ into an abyss of depression when he lost his job during the economic recession.
- 9 Share prices tend to _____ when times are bad.
- 10 The mountain climbers were shaken when they saw one of their team members _____ into the gorge.
- 11 The children cheerfully _____ down the muddy slopes.
- 12 The water _____ over the rocks and into the gorge below us.
- 13 Without warning, the plane _____ and crashed on the mountainside.

• **Throw** *

Exercise 8: There are many ways to throw things. Take the following test to discover how many you know! Choose your answers from the words in the table below.

pelt	stone	pitch	shower	hurl
bowl	chuck	heave	launch	fling
lob	cast	toss	catapult	

- 1 _____ a rocket
- 2 _____ a stone
- 3 _____ that heavy table at me and I'll . . .
- 4 _____ the ball (in baseball / rounders)
- 5 _____ a coin
- 6 _____ his cigarette out the window
- 7 _____ insults at someone
- 8 _____ open the door
- 9 _____ him to fame
- 10 _____ someone with rotten eggs
- 11 _____ the adulterers to death
- 12 _____ someone with praise
- 13 _____ a ball (in a tennis game)
- 14 _____ a ball (in cricket)

Appendix I: Sample pages from *New Concept English* (New Edition) by Alexander & He (1997)



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Lesson 38 Water and the traveller 水和旅行者

First listen and then answer the following question.

听录音，然后回答以下问题。

What does this text describe?

Contamination of water supplies is usually due to poor sanitation close to water sources, sewage disposal into the sources themselves, leakage of sewage into distribution systems or contamination with industrial or farm waste. Even if a piped water supply is safe at its source, it is not always safe by the time it reaches the tap. Intermittent tap-water supplies should be regarded as particularly suspect.

3 Travellers on short trips to areas with water supplies of uncertain quality should avoid drinking tap-water, or untreated water from any other source. It is best to keep to hot drinks, bottled or canned drinks of well-known brand names—international standards of water treatment are usually followed at bottling plants. Carbonated drinks are acidic, and slightly safer. Make sure that all bottles are opened in your presence, and that their rims are clean and dry.

4 Boiling is always a good way of treating water. Some hotels supply boiled water on request and this can be used for drinking, or for brushing teeth. Portable boiling elements that can boil small quantities of water are useful when the right voltage of electricity is available. Refuse politely any cold drink from an unknown source.

5 Ice is only as safe as the water from which it is made, and should not be put in drinks unless it is known to be safe. Drinks can be cooled by placing them on ice rather than adding ice to them.

Alcohol may be a medical disinfectant, but should not be relied upon to sterilize water. Ethanol is more effective at a concentration of 50-70 per cent; below 20 per cent, its bactericidal action is negligible. Spirits labelled 95 proof contain only about 47 per cent alcohol. Beware of methylated alcohol, which is very poisonous, and should never be added to drinking water.

6 If no other safe water supply can be obtained, tap water that is too hot to touch can be left to cool and is generally safe to drink. Those planning a trip to remote areas, or intending to live in countries where drinking water is not readily available, should know about the various possible methods for making water safe.

RICHARD DAWOOD *Travellers' Health*

New words and expressions 生词和短语

contamination (1.1) /kən,tæmɪ'neɪʃən/ *n.* 污染

sanitation (1.1) /sæni'teɪʃən/ *n.* 卫生, 卫生设备

sewage (1.1) /'sju:ɪdʒ/ *n.* 污水

leakage (1.2) /'li:kɪdʒ/ *n.* 泄漏

intermittent (1.4) /,ɪntə'mɪtənt/ *adj.* 间歇的, 断断续续的

carbonated (1.8) /kɑ:bəneɪtɪd/ *adj.* 碳化的, 碳酸的

acidic (1.8) /ə'sɪdɪk/ *adj.* 酸的, 酸性的

alcohol (1.16) /'ælkəhɒl/ *n.* 酒精

disinfectant (1.16) /,dɪsɪn'fektənt/ *n.* 消毒剂

sterilize (1.16) /'sterɪlaɪz/ *v.* 消毒

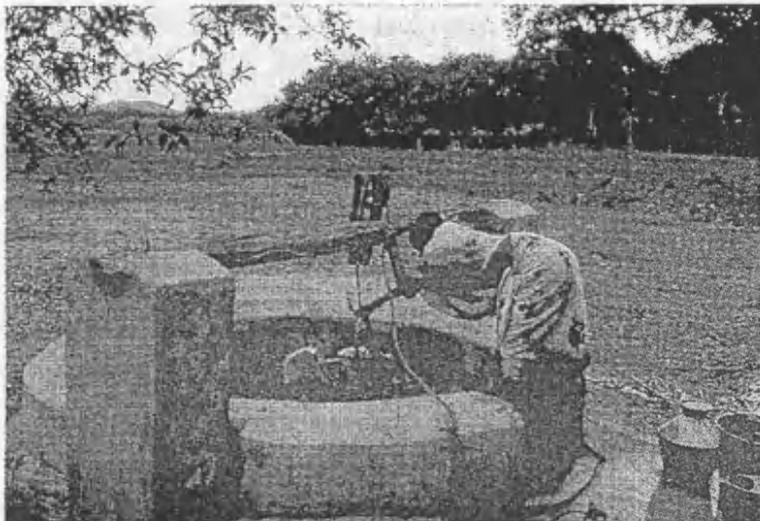
ethanol (1.16) /'eθənɒl/ *n.* 乙醇

bactericidal (1.17) /bæk,tɪərɪ'saɪdəl/ *adj.* 杀菌的

negligible (1.17) /'neglɪdʒɪbəl/ *adj.* 可以忽略的, 微不足道的

methylated (1.18) /'meθɪleɪtɪd/ *adj.* 加入甲醇的

Unit 5 Lesson 38



A woman is drawing water from a well.

Notes on the text 课文注释

- 1 keep to, 局限于。
- 2 Ice is only as safe as the water from which it is made. 冰块只是当制造冰块的水安全时才是安全的。
- 3 know about, 知道……的情况, 了解。

参考译文

水源的污染通常是由于接近水源的地方卫生条件太差而造成的: 污水排入水源, 污水渗入给水系统或工农业污水造成污染。即使管道供水系统在水源处是安全的, 等水到达龙头时就不一定总是安全的了。断断续续的水管应该被视为是非常可疑的。

短途旅行到水质不保险的地区时, 应避免饮用水龙头的水或未经处理任何其他来源的水。最好仅饮用开水, 名牌瓶装或罐装水——装瓶厂通常遵循国际水处理的标准。碳酸饮料是酸性的, 就更安全一些。确保瓶子是当着你的面开启的, 瓶口清洁干燥。

烧开一直是水处理的一种好办法。有的酒店根据要求可提供开水, 这些开水可用于饮用和刷牙。如果有匹配的电压, 可以煮少量水的便携式热水装置是有用的。应谢绝任何不明来源的冷饮。

冰块只有当制造冰块的水安全时才是保险的, 只有知道冰块安全时才能加入饮料。可以把饮料置于冰块之上冷却, 而不是把冰块加进饮料之中。

酒精可能是医学上的消毒剂, 但决不可用来消毒饮用水。乙醇的浓度为 50% 至 70% 时比较有效, 浓度低于 20% 时, 杀菌能力基本上就不存在了。强度标为 95 的酒中含 47% 的酒精。要提防甲基化酒精, 那是剧毒的, 永远不能掺入饮用水。

如果没有其他安全的饮用水, 水管中流出的烫手的水可以留下来冷却。这种水一般是安全的。那些计划去偏远地区旅行、或在饮用水不现成的国家居住的人, 应该知道如何使水适于饮用的各种办法。

Unit 5 Lesson 38

Comprehension 理解

Answer these questions:

- 1 What kind of piped water could be dangerous to the health?
- 2 Why does the author recommend that travellers on short trips should drink canned drinks of well-known brand names?
- 3 Why could ice in drinks be dangerous to the health?
- 4 Why wouldn't you be safe if you added 95 proof alcohol to contaminated water?
- 5 What kind of tap water is generally safe to drink in the absence of other sources?

Vocabulary 词汇

Refer to the text to see how the following words have been used, then write sentences of your own using these words: poor (1.1); contamination (1.2); regarded (1.4); areas (1.5); plants (1.7); in your presence (1.8); supply (1.10); on request (1.10); refuse (1.12); remote (1.21); various (1.22).

Summary 摘要

Refer to lines 1-5 ('Contamination ... adding ice to them,'). In not more than 80 words write seven sentences giving advice to travellers about drinking water. Begin each sentence with the word 'always'. The first sentence has been done for you:

Always avoid intermittent tap-water supplies.

Composition 作文

- A A foreigner is going to travel to some of the remote regions of your country. Write some notes giving him/her good advice under each of these headings: the people, accommodation, food, water.
- B Refer to your notes and write four paragraphs of advice to a traveller in about 400 words.

Key structures 关键句型

- A Compare these active and passive uses of *should* for giving direct and indirect advice:

You should regard intermittent tap-water supplies as particularly suspect.

Intermittent tap-water supplies should be regarded as particularly suspect. (1.4)

Turn these sentences into the passive in order to give indirect advice:

- 1 You should avoid drinking tap-water.
- 2 You should prefer well-known brand names of bottled drinks.
- 3 They should open all bottles in your presence.
- 4 You should request boiled water in hotels.
- 5 You should boil water before drinking it.

Unit 5 Lesson 38

B Compare these active and passive uses of *shouldn't* for giving direct and indirect advice:

You shouldn't regard intermittent tap-water supplies as safe.

Intermittent tap-water supplies shouldn't be regarded as safe.

Turn these sentences into the passive in order to give indirect advice.

- 1 You shouldn't drink tap-water.
- 2 You shouldn't accept bottles of water that haven't been opened in your presence.
- 3 You shouldn't put ice in drinks.
- 4 You shouldn't rely on alcohol to sterilize water.
- 5 You shouldn't add methylated alcohol to drinking water.

Special difficulties 难点

A Compare the *-ing* form in these four sentences:

Boiling is always a good way of treating water. (I.10) (boiling-*noun*)

Portable boiling elements that can boil small quantities of water ... (I.11) (boiling-*compound noun*: i.e. elements used for boiling)

I was scalded with boiling water. (boiling-*adjective*: i.e. water which was boiling)

The water is boiling. (boiling-*participle*: part of the verb form)

Identify the *-ing* forms as nouns, adjectives or participles in these sentences:

- 1 Travellers should avoid drinking tap water. (II.5-6)
- 2 International standards of water treatment are usually followed at bottling plants. (I.7)
- 3 Methylated alcohol should never be added to drinking water. (II.18-19)
- 4 Those planning a trip to remote areas should know about various methods ... (II.21-22)
- 5 Making water safe to drink is a matter of life or death.
- 6 We are planning a trip to the remote areas of the country.

B Compare the *-ed* form in these two sentences:

Piped water supply is safe at its source. (I.3) (piped-*adjectival past participle*)

The water has been piped across thousands of miles. (piped-*past participle*: part of the verb form)

Identify the *-ed* forms as adjectives or past participles in these sentences:

- 1 Some water supplies should be regarded as particularly suspect.
- 2 Bottled or canned drinks are usually safe. (II.6-7)
- 3 Carbonated drinks are acidic. (I.8)
- 4 Make sure that all bottles are opened in your presence. (II.8-9)
- 5 Drinks can be cooled by placing them on ice. (I.15)
- 6 Spirits labelled 95 proof contain only about 47 per cent alcohol. (II.17-18)

Multiple choice questions 多项选择题

Choose the correct answers to the following questions.

Comprehension 理解

- 1 Piped water could be contaminated, especially if _____ .
 (a) it is supplied from the sewage system
 (b) it isn't safe by the time it reaches the tap

Unit 5 Lesson 38

- (c) doesn't flow continuously through the pipes
(d) it comes from farmland
- 2 Make sure that bottled drinks are opened in your presence, presumably _____ .
(a) to be assured that it was filled at a bottling plant
(b) to make sure that it isn't too acidic to drink
(c) to check that the rim of the bottle is clean and dry
(d) because water supplies are uncertain
- 3 You should avoid ice in drinks because _____ .
(a) you don't know if it has been made with contaminated water
(b) you can be sure it hasn't been boiled first
(c) because it always comes from an unknown source
(d) it hasn't been treated in your presence
- 4 You can't use alcoholic drinks to sterilize water because _____ .
(a) only ethanol is capable of doing this
(b) the alcoholic content is rarely sufficiently concentrated to do the job
(c) methylated alcohol is very poisonous
(d) it's not a very good disinfectant

Structure 句型

- 5 Piped water _____ safe at its source, _____ it isn't always safe. (1.3)
(a) must be ... and (b) may be ... but (c) should be ... though (d) will be ... even if
- 6 It _____ to drink tap water of uncertain quality. (1.5)
(a) isn't advisable (b) is advisable (c) isn't required (d) is required
- 7 Drinks can be cooled _____ them on ice. (1.15)
(a) so as to place (b) in placing (c) if you place (d) to place
- 8 _____ rely on alcohol to sterilize water. (1.16)
(a) Not (b) Don't (c) Must not (d) Not to

Vocabulary 词汇

- 9 Make sure that all bottles are opened _____ . (1.8)
(a) at once (b) now (c) at present (d) in front of you
- 10 _____ any cold drink from an unknown source. (1.12)
(a) Discard (b) Prevent (c) Deny (d) Don't accept
- 11 You should not _____ on alcohol to sterilize water. (1.16)
(a) depend (b) insist (c) lean (d) support
- 12 Those planning a trip to _____ places ... (1.21)
(a) away (b) far away (c) contaminated (d) overseas

Appendix J: National Matriculation English Test (NMET) of China, 2006

2006 年普通高等学校招生全国统一考试(辽宁卷)

英 语

第一卷(三部分, 共 115 分)

第一部分 听力(共两节, 满分 30 分)

做题时, 先将答案标在试卷上。录音内容结束后, 你将有两分钟的时间将试卷上的答案转涂到答题卡上。

第一节 (共 5 小题; 每小题 1.5 分, 满分 7.5 分)

听下面 5 段对话。每段对话后有一个小题, 从题中所给的 A、B、C 三个选项中选出最佳选项, 并标在试卷的相应位置。听完每段对话后, 你都有 10 秒钟的时间来回答有关小题和阅读下一小题。每段对话仅读一遍。

例: How much is the shirt?

- A. £ 19.15.
- B. £ 9.15.
- C. £ 9.18.

答案是 B。

1. How much will the man pay for the tickets?

- A. £ 7.5.
- B. £ 15.
- C. £ 50.

2. Which is the right gate for the man's flight?

- A. Gate 16.
- B. Gate 22.
- C. Gate 25.

3. How does the man feel about going to school by bike?

- A. Happy.
- B. Tired.
- C. Worried.

4. When can the woman get the computers?
A. On Tuesday. B. On Wednesday. C. On Thursday.
5. What does the woman think of the shirt for the party?
A. The size is not large enough.
B. The material is not good.
C. The color is not suitable.

第二节 (共 15 小题;每小题 1.5 分,满分 22.5 分)

听下面 5 段对话。每段对话后有几个小题,从题中所给的 A、B、C 三个选项中选出最佳选项,并标在试卷的相应位置。听每段对话前,你将有时间阅读各个小题,每小题 5 秒钟;听完后,各小题将给出 5 秒钟的作答时间。每段对话读两遍。

听第 6 段材料,回答第 6、7 题。

6. What can we learn about Mr. Brown?
A. He is in his office.
B. He is at a meeting.
C. He is out for a meal.
7. What will the man probably do next?
A. Call back.
B. Come again.
C. Leave a message.

听第 7 段材料,回答第 8、9 题。

8. What kind of room does the man want to take?
A. A single room.
B. A double room.
C. A room for three.
9. What does the man need to put in the form?
A. Telephone and student card numbers.
B. Student card number and address.
C. Address and telephone number.

听第8段材料,回答第10至12题。

10. What is the relationship between the speakers?
- A. Fellow clerks.
 - B. Boss and secretary.
 - C. Customer and salesperson.
11. What does the man like about his job?
- A. Living close to the office.
 - B. Chances to go abroad.
 - C. Nice people to work with.
12. What do we know about the woman?
- A. She likes traveling.
 - B. She is new to the company.
 - C. She works in public relations.

听第9段材料,回答第13至16题。

13. When will the visitors come?
- A. In March.
 - B. In April.
 - C. In May.
14. How many visitors are coming?
- A. 8.
 - B. 10.
 - C. 12.
15. What will the visitors do on the second day?
- A. Go to a party.
 - B. Visit schools.
 - C. Attend a lecture.
16. Where will the visitors go on the final day?
- A. To London.
 - B. To Scotland.
 - C. To the coast.

听第10段材料,回答第17至20题。

17. What is the first word the baby tried to say?
- A. Truck.
 - B. OK.
 - C. Duck.
18. How old was the baby when he learned to say that word correctly?
- A. About 18 months.
 - B. About 21 months.
 - C. About 24 months.

19. What did the father do when the baby screamed that word at the airport?

- A. He corrected the baby.
- B. He tried to stop the baby.
- C. He hid himself somewhere.

20. Why did the mother pretend not to know the baby?

- A. She got angry with the father.
- B. She was frightened by the noise.
- C. She felt uneasy about the noisy baby.

第二部分 英语知识运用(共两节,满分45分)

第一节 单项填空(共15小题;每小题1分,满分15分)

从A、B、C、D四个选项中,选出可以填入空白处的最佳选项,并在答题卡上将该项涂黑。

例: It is generally considered unwise to give children _____ they want.

- A. however B. whatever C. whichever D. whenever

答案是B。

21. Of all _____ reasons for my decision to become a university professor, my father's advice was _____ most important one.
A. the; a B. 不填; a C. 不填; the D. the; the
22. The computer system _____ suddenly while he was searching for information on the Internet.
A. broke down B. broke out C. broke up D. broke in
23. I hear _____ boys in your school like playing football in their spare time, though others prefer basketball.
A. quite a lot B. quite a few
C. quite a bit D. quite a little
24. He was about halfway through his meal _____ a familiar voice came to his ears.
A. why B. where C. when D. while
25. I was told that there were about 50 foreign students _____ Chinese in the school, most _____ were from Germany.
A. study; of whom B. study; of them
C. studying; of them D. studying; of whom
26. — These books are too heavy for me to carry.
— _____
A. You may ask for help B. I'll give you a hand
C. I'll do you a favor D. I'd come to help
27. The father as well as his three children _____ skating on the frozen river every Sunday afternoon in winter.
A. is going B. go C. goes D. are going
28. People have always been curious _____ how living things on the earth exactly began.
A. in B. at C. of D. about
29. I think it is necessary for my 19-year-old son to have his own mobile phone, for I sometimes want to make sure if he _____ home for dinner.
A. come B. comes C. has come D. will come
30. _____ makes this shop different is that it offers more personal services.
A. What B. Who C. Whatever D. Whoever
31. It is said that the early European playing-cards _____ for entertainment and education.
A. were being designed B. have designed
C. have been designed D. were designed
32. School children must be taught how to deal with dangerous _____.
A. states B. conditions C. situations D. positions
33. — I'm sorry I'm late. I got held up in the traffic on my way here.
— _____
A. Don't be late next time B. You should be blamed
C. It doesn't matter. I'm also late D. Never mind. Come and sit down
34. I grew up in Africa, _____ at least I should say that I spent much of the first ten years of my life there.
A. and B. or C. so D. but

35. It was after he got what he had desired _____ he realized it was not so important.

- A. that B. when C. since D. as

第二节 完形填空(共 20 小题;每小题 1.5 分,满分 30 分)

阅读下面短文,掌握其大意,然后从 36~55 各题所给的四个选项(A、B、C 和 D)中,选出最佳选项,并在答题卡上将该项涂黑。

It was a bright spring afternoon when Freda told me she wouldn't need me any more. I had just finished my four-hour work — 36 up and down the stairs of her three-storey home, cleaning the floor and washing the dishes. She was 37 jeans and a sweater, sitting at the table I had just 38, a pile of papers spread around her. Her husband's 39 was going to be reduced by thirty percent, and they were trying to live as if it had 40 happened. I felt sorry for her, but I also felt a sense of 41.

I had been cleaning Freda's house for five years and had 42 an unexpected relationship with the family. It was not just 43 I had become an expert at scraping (刮掉) dirt stuck to their wooden floor, 44 that I had learned exactly how to place toys on the girls' beds. It was 45 than that, for I felt I had become a part of their 46.

Freda stayed at home with the kids, 47 I would often see her in the morning 48 them to school. And I'd be there when they 49 home at lunch for sandwiches and piano practice. I had 50 them grow up. Now I was fired, but the 51 thing was that I still wanted to keep scraping away the dirt and dust for the family.

I left Freda's house that day, wondering about the 52 of my relationship with my clients(主顾). Who am I 53 them? As a matter of fact, I'm 54 an employee — the lowest kind of employee. But I'm also a trusted 55 of the family. I can't help worrying about what happens around me.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| 36. A. stepping | B. coming | C. jumping | D. moving |
| 37. A. hanging | B. making | C. wearing | D. changing |
| 38. A. cleaned | B. washed | C. swept | D. brushed |
| 39. A. duty | B. money | C. work | D. pay |
| 40. A. already | B. seldom | C. never | D. yet |
| 41. A. regret | B. surprise | C. fear | D. loss |
| 42. A. started | B. developed | C. improved | D. broken |
| 43. A. why | B. what | C. that | D. which |
| 44. A. but | B. and | C. or | D. for |
| 45. A. less | B. least | C. more | D. most |
| 46. A. life | B. story | C. activity | D. experience |
| 47. A. as | B. so | C. since | D. however |
| 48. A. taking | B. bringing | C. meeting | D. calling |
| 49. A. left | B. returned | C. went | D. marched |
| 50. A. found | B. noticed | C. watched | D. realized |
| 51. A. possible | B. great | C. proper | D. strange |
| 52. A. meaning | B. nature | C. result | D. importance |
| 53. A. for | B. to | C. with | D. at |
| 54. A. hardly | B. certainly | C. probably | D. merely |
| 55. A. member | B. person | C. relative | D. companion |

第三部分 阅读理解(共 20 小题;每小题 2 分,满分 40 分)

阅读下列短文,从每题所给的四个选项(A、B、C 和 D)中,选出最佳选项,并在答题卡上将该项涂黑。

A

Have you ever dreamed of having a fashionable watch of great value?

A small watchmaker in Switzerland in 1922 designed the first automatic(自动的)watch to show the day, month, and date. Only seven of these splendid watches were ever made and these watches were almost lost to history. Today, it is so hard to get an original(首批的)watch that some watch historians are even willing to offer \$200,000 for one.

These watches attracted a lot of people for their splendid color, fashionable style, and new uses in the 1920s. The owners of the watches were admired and set apart from the crowd. Because the number of the original watches is very limited, owning such a watch will make you feel very special.

Today, you are offered the same kind of watch with improvement. It has a 24-jewel mechanical(机械的) movement, the kind desired by watch collectors. The watchmaker has made the movement of the watch much more modern with an automatic rotor(上弦装置) so that the watch never needs to be wound by hand. The watch comes in a very beautiful case with a crocodile design on it. To get a watch in such a perfect design means to get a chance to know a piece of watch-making history and to wear such a watch will show your personal taste and social position.

You can get the watch either in person or by mail at an affordable price. You will also receive good service from the watch seller. If you are not satisfied with the watch after you get it, you may simply return it within 30 days. Don't miss the chance to realize your dream.

56. The original automatic watches are valuable because _____.
- A. the watches were made many years ago
 - B. the watches were made by a Swiss watchmaker
 - C. only rich people can afford the watches
 - D. only a few watches of the kind were made
57. Watch collectors want to get the improved watch, especially for its _____.
- A. mechanical movement
 - B. splendid color
 - C. fashionable style
 - D. new uses
58. The purpose of the passage is to encourage the readers to _____.
- A. buy the watch
 - B. return the watch
 - C. wear the watch
 - D. receive the service
59. The passage is probably taken from a _____.
- A. report
 - B. magazine
 - C. text book
 - D. science book

B

Unlike modern animal scientists, dinosaur scientists cannot sit on a hillside and use telescopes to watch dinosaurs in order to know how they lived and whether they were good parents. Instead, they have to search hard for information from dinosaurs' fossils(恐龙化石) because dinosaurs died out millions of years ago.

It's very difficult for the scientists to reach an agreement because different results can be got from the same fossils. Many fossils of the same kind of dinosaurs have been dug out from one place. They might have formed when an entire group of dinosaurs got stuck(陷入) all at once, or they might have been the result of dinosaurs getting stuck one after another over a course of a few centuries. Thus we can say that dinosaurs might have in the first case lived in big groups and in the second lived alone.

Though there are two different results, dinosaur scientists now generally agree that at least some

kinds of dinosaurs lived in big groups. "That's pretty much settled at this point," says Paul Sereno. A kind of dinosaurs called Sauropods left behind tracks in the western United States that appear to run north and south, suggesting that they even moved long distances together.

As to whether dinosaurs cared for their young, dinosaur scientists have turned to the closest living relatives of dinosaurs — birds and crocodiles — for possible models. Birds give a lot of care to their young, while crocodiles just help their young to the water. The discovered fossils of dinosaurs sitting on their eggs and staying with their young suggest the parents were taking care of their babies, but we still cannot say that all dinosaurs did the same.

There is still a long way to go before the above questions could be answered. Dinosaur scientists will have to find more proof to reach an agreement.

60. Dinosaur scientists can get information directly by _____.
- studying dinosaur fossils
 - examining modern animals
 - watching dinosaurs
 - using telescopes
61. What is pretty much settled according to Paul Sereno?
- Half of the dinosaurs lived alone.
 - Most dinosaurs moved long distances.
 - Many dinosaurs settled in the north.
 - Some dinosaurs lived in big groups.
62. Dinosaur scientists can probably know whether dinosaurs were good parents by _____.
- watching many kinds of animals
 - studying dinosaurs' living relatives
 - following the tracks left behind
 - working on dug-out dinosaur eggs
63. Which of the following is true according to the 4th paragraph?
- Birds hardly pay attention to their young.
 - Baby crocodiles can look after themselves well.
 - Some dinosaurs took care of their young.
 - Birds and crocodiles take good care of their young.

C

Department stores sell *ready-to-wear* clothing, which is also called *ready-made* clothing. Such clothing is made in fixed sizes. Those people who find that ready-made clothing fits them well can save money by buying it. Most often, people do not fit exactly into a producer's size. Their clothing must be altered (改变) to make it fit better. However, most alterations are not very expensive. The small cost of most alterations means that ready-made clothing can meet the needs of most customers.

Those who can afford it often get someone to design and make their clothing. Such clothing is called *custom-made* (定做的). The person who makes it measures the customer, and then sews it so that it fits perfectly. Alterations are not needed. Custom-made clothing is largely sewn by hand, has better quality, better material, and is of the style you have chosen. Of course, it costs much more than ready-to-wear clothing. You need to pay the difference for the special fitting and better skill that you are receiving. This often means that you spend double or more than you would for a ready-made garment (衣服).

Custom-made clothing is not always that much better than ready-made clothing. It costs more partly because only one garment has been made, just for you. Companies that produce ready-made products make thousands of garments at a time. This means they can buy large quantities of material. Workers cut each size by the hundreds. Companies work out ways to make the garments quickly by machine and pay workers according to their skill. Thus they can sell the finished products at a low price while still making money. Most of the clothing sold in the United States is made in this way. Customers gain from the lower

prices which are made possible by mass production (批量生产). It may or may not give them high quality.

64. According to the passage, people who buy ready-made clothing _____.
- A. wish to make alterations
 - B. can fit into the sizes
 - C. want to make it better
 - D. will spend less money
65. We can learn from the passage that custom-made clothing is _____.
- A. specially made
 - B. fashionably designed
 - C. chosen by few people
 - D. made with difficulties
66. Which of the following is true about ready-made clothing?
- A. It is of poor quality.
 - B. It suits all people.
 - C. It takes more time to make it.
 - D. It is labor-saving to make it.
67. The purpose of the writer is _____.
- A. to explain why custom-made clothing costs more
 - B. to show the advantages of mass production
 - C. to provide information about different kinds of clothing
 - D. to tell readers how to make money from ready-made clothing

D

Collecting information about pre-employment and filling out an application form (申请表) are closely connected. However, filling out an application form is much easier because you have total control and have enough time to think and plan.

That you are given a form to fill out does not necessarily mean that you have to answer all the questions in it. If the form contains unclear questions or terms and conditions, you can make some changes before signing (签约) it, or refuse to answer some of the questions. What you must realize is that those terms and conditions have been written by highly paid lawyers. Each word is important, or it would not be there; and you can be sure that there is not anything there that is written with your interests in mind.

I know what I speak of because, as a lawyer for Litton Industries, I wrote the terms and conditions that were printed on the back of order forms. I wrote the most tiring terms and conditions anyone has ever seen. Still, 90 percent of the buyers would just sign on them without questioning anything. If anyone questioned them, we would reach an agreement on something that was acceptable to both sides.

So when you see a preprinted application that contains questions or terms and conditions, read it all and read it slowly. If you don't like something, you can simply change the parts you don't like. Remember that everything can be settled by discussion. To what degree it can be settled depends on your position (立场), of course, and that is something only you can determine.

68. Filling out application forms is much easier because _____.
- A. everything connected with application forms is easier
 - B. it is easier to collect information about pre-employment
 - C. you can plan and have control of the needed time
 - D. you can control the form filling with enough time
69. We can learn from the underlined part "Each word is important" that _____.
- A. everything in a form must be read carefully
 - B. questions in a form must be answered
 - C. the conditions that interest you are changeable

- D. something of your interests is most important
70. The writer points out with an example that the side who will sign a form _____.
- may know it is tiring for both sides to ask questions
 - has to hire a highly paid lawyer to fill out the form
 - should refuse to answer the questions in the form
 - can reach an agreement with the other side by discussion
71. It can be inferred from the 4th paragraph that _____.
- it depends on your position to settle everything in a form
 - questions in a form are more important than your position
 - you have little right to determine the conditions you like most
 - you must change a preprinted application before it is discussed

E

Important changes took place in the lives of women in the 19th century. When men went out from their farms to cities to seek jobs in industry, peasant women had to take over the sowing, growing, and harvesting of the fields as well as caring for cattle and raising their children. When women also moved to the cities in search of work, they found that it was increasingly separated by sex and that employment opportunities for women were limited to the lower-paid jobs. Later in the century, women in industry gathered mainly in cloth-making factories, though some worked in mining or took similarly difficult and tiring jobs.

In the 1800s, service work also absorbed (吸纳) a great number of women who arrived in the cities from the country. Young women especially took jobs as servants in middle-class and upper-class homes; and as more and more men were drawn into industry, domestic service (家庭服务) became increasingly a female job. In the second half of the century, however, chances of other service work also opened up to women, from sales jobs in shops to teaching and nursing. These jobs came to be done mainly by women and low paid.

For thousands of years, when almost all work was done on the family farm or in the family firm (家庭作坊), home and workplace had been the same. In these cases, women could do farm work or hand work, and perform home duties such as child care and preparation of meals at the same time. Along with the development of industry, the central workplace, however, such as the factory and the department store, separated home from work. Faced with the necessity for women to choose between home and workplace, Western society began to give particular attention to the role of women as homemakers with more energy than ever before.

72. We learn from the first paragraph that _____ had been done chiefly by men before they went to cities to seek jobs.
- mining, teaching, and nursing
 - sewing clothes and mining
 - sowing, growing, and harvesting
 - caring for cattle and growing crops
73. Domestic service became a female job mainly because _____.
- women took care of children
 - women took jobs as servants
 - men were employed in industry
 - men seldom worked in shops
74. We know from the passage that in the 1800s _____.
- more and more women began to work in domestic service
 - women mainly worked as servants, nurses, and miners
 - service and industrial jobs absorbed more women than men
 - women enjoyed working as sellers, teachers, and miners

75. This passage is about _____ in the 19th century.
 A. service and industry B. female and male jobs
 C. women and their work D. female jobs and the pay

第二卷(共 35 分)

第四部分 写作(共两节,满分 35 分)

第一节 短文改错(共 10 小题;每小题 1 分,满分 10 分)

此题要求改正所给短文中的错误。对标有题号的每一行作出判断:如无错误,在该行右边横线上画一个勾(√);如有错误(每行只有一个错误),则按下列情况改正:

此行多一个词:把多余的词用斜线(\)划掉,在该行右边横线上写出该词,并也用斜线划掉。

此行缺一个词:在缺词处加一个漏字符号(∧),在该行右边横线上写出该加的词。

此行错一个词:在错的词下划一横线,在该行右边横线上写出改正后的词。

注意:原行没有错的不要改。

(试题内容见答题卡)

第二节 书面表达(满分 25 分)

下面四幅图片描述的是李明和爷爷从养鸟到放鸟的一段经历。请根据图片所提供的信息以第三人称用英语写一篇短文。

注意:① 短文必须包括所有图片的主要内容,短文的内容要连贯、完整;

② 短文单词数:100 左右(开头已给出的单词不计入单词总数)。



2006年普通高等学校招生全国统一考试(辽宁卷)

科目:英语

答案及评分参考

第一卷

第一部分(听力)

- | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 2. C | 3. A | 4. A | 5. C | 6. C | 7. A |
| 8. A | 9. C | 10. A | 11. B | 12. B | 13. A | 14. B |
| 15. B | 16. C | 17. A | 18. B | 19. B | 20. C | |

- | | | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 第二部分 | 21. D | 22. A | 23. B | 24. C | 25. D | 26. B |
| | 27. C | 28. D | 29. D | 30. A | 31. D | 32. C |
| | 33. D | 34. B | 35. A | | | |
| | 36. D | 37. C | 38. A | 39. D | 40. A | 41. D |
| | 42. B | 43. C | 44. C | 45. C | 46. A | 47. B |
| | 48. A | 49. B | 50. C | 51. D | 52. B | 53. B |
| | 54. D | 55. A | | | | |

- | | | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 第三部分 | 56. D | 57. A | 58. A | 59. B | 60. A | 61. D |
| | 62. B | 63. C | 64. D | 65. A | 66. D | 67. C |
| | 68. D | 69. A | 70. D | 71. A | 72. C | 73. C |
| | 74. A | 75. C | | | | |

第二卷

第四部分

第一节

Many students feel it that a popular teacher must be kind and easy-going. He and she should make the class very active for joking with the students. However, the popular teacher is at a same time the one who should be strict with students. Last year, my English teacher proved to be the more popular in our school. She was usual patient with her students and never made them disappointed. She always stays in full control of the situations. She always made sure that our homework was finished on time, but she marked strictly on student's actual performance.

76. it
 77. or
 78. by
 79. the
 80. most
 81. usually/unusually
 82. stayed
 83. √
 84. and
 85. students'/our

Appendix K: General Paper of Singapore, 2005

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SINGAPORE
in collaboration with
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LOCAL EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE
General Certificate of Education Alternative Ordinary Level

GENERAL PAPER **8005/01**
Paper 1 October/November 2005

1 hour 30 minutes

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.
Write your Centre number, index number and name on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **one** question.
All questions carry equal marks.
At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.
(Note that 20 marks out of 50 will be awarded for your use of language.)

This document consists of 2 printed pages.

 Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board

 UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

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PAPER 1

Answer **one** question from this Paper.

Answers should be between 500 and 800 words in length.

- 1 Is effective farming possible without science?
- 2 'There is no such thing as luck. People determine their own lives.' Do you agree?
- 3 To what extent should the State involve itself in the world of business?
- 4 Do the arts, such as music and literature, really play a significant part in Singaporean society?
- 5 'Medical science has been so successful that people now expect too much of it.' Discuss.
- 6 'Hosting major sporting events creates more problems than benefits'. Do you agree?
- 7 Examine the claim that the world is too dependent on oil.
- 8 'The tourist does not see the country the inhabitants know.' How far is this true of Singapore?
- 9 'Instead of speeding up the pace of life, we should be slowing it down.' What do you think?
- 10 Consider the view that the study of mathematics is intellectually satisfying, but of little practical use.
- 11 'Too much attention is given to criminals; not enough to their victims.' Is this true?
- 12 How far do magazines or television programmes aimed at young people in Singapore have a positive effect?

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8005/01/O/N/05

Centre Number	Index Number	Name
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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SINGAPORE
 in collaboration with
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LOCAL EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE
 General Certificate of Education Alternative Ordinary Level

GENERAL PAPER

8005/02

Paper 2

October/November 2005

Candidates answer on the Question Paper.
 No Additional Materials are required.

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your Centre number, index number and name on all the work you hand in.
 Write in dark blue or black pen in the spaces provided on the Question Paper.
 Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer all questions.
 At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.
 The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.
 The insert contains the passage for comprehension.
 (Note that 15 marks out of 50 will be awarded for your use of language.)

For Examiner's Use	
Content	/35
Language	/15
Total	/50

This document consists of 5 printed pages, 1 lined page, 2 blank pages and an insert.



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
 International Examinations

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Aggression

Arthur Woolgar writes.....

- 1 Fundamental to all living things is the choice between fight and flight, between attack and evasion. Since nourishment is necessary to support life, and since the resources available to supply nourishment are finite, there is perpetual competition to acquire it. In order to survive, plants in any given area crowd each other out, or adapt to less attractive locations which lack good soil and adequate light, while organisms capable of movement feed either upon plants or upon each other. Every living thing is equipped either with means of attack, such as teeth, claws or poisonous excretions, or of evasion, such as shells, long legs, thorns or camouflage. The plants and animals which survive by these means contribute, in infinitesimal stages, to the development and improvement of their species.
- 2 Human beings – comparatively late entrants to the competition of life – are similarly equipped with the means to survive. Like every other living creature they are born with the impulse to seize what they need and avoid what will harm. Significantly, the first product of their unique brains and hands was the flint arrow-head. Human beings armed with flint arrow-heads were the masters of animals and unarmed humans; eventually they attained the dominance which was necessary to establish order and direction among groups of competing individuals. Once established, this ordered community could only be sustained by individuals who relied on force to subdue the inevitable attempts to usurp their authority. Under such a rule, the community flourished and grew. This growth required expansion, either into territory where only animals had to be fought, or – increasingly – into land already occupied by other groups of humans who had to be subdued to ensure the survival of the aggressors. Thus, from the earliest times, war and conflict were inescapable.
- 3 There are many possible motives for war: sheer greed, population pressure, zeal for a political or religious ideology, or dynastic ambition. Whatever the motive, those who are attacked must defend themselves with equally aggressive intent and efficiency if they are to survive: one country's Ministry of War is another's Ministry of Defence. As civilisation progressed, people increasingly considered the circumstances under which war might be thought to be acceptable: it was argued that war should only be waged in response to aggression and that it was justifiable only if undertaken by a legitimate authority and only as a last resort.
- 4 Some would argue that all wars, whether or not they are regarded as "acceptable", produce beneficial effects. The actor, Orson Welles, memorably put the case for one such benefit. 'In Italy for thirty years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed – they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock.' The three competitive characteristics of aggressive self-assertion, the determination to win and the thirst for power can clearly produce tyrants and criminals. However, the same characteristics can also motivate the builders of cities and captains of industry, whose efforts bring prosperity to their workers and to the wider community. Moreover, it is undeniably true that many of the great technological and medical advances of the twentieth century were made in response to the urgent and vital needs of nations at war. The jet engine and developments in disease control come to mind, as does, of course, the threatening mushroom cloud of nuclear weapons. And without conflict, how would the heroic virtues be exercised? Is there no merit in the bravery which meets death without flinching for a good cause or on behalf of others? Or in the compassion for a fellow human being which finds expression on the battlefield and in bombed cities? Some people, indeed, will even argue that warfare is a natural solution to the problems of population excess and imbalance. The people who hold this view take

	their cue from the means nature employs to achieve an equilibrium among species of plants and animals.	50
5	It would seem, then, as we look out on the natural world and back on the history of the human race, that conflict and aggression and war are inevitable. And yet, for all the drawbacks associated with such aggression, substantial benefits are also often derived.	
6	However, given the phenomenal and ever-increasing rate of technological change we are witnessing, it could be that the human race has reached a turning point in its history where aggression is not the only means through which world population can be controlled. Science has already given us the ability to control the number of people on the planet, as well as the ability to increase the agricultural productivity on which these people depend. Moreover, these twin areas of knowledge can instantly, and indeed universally, be disseminated via the internet. At the moment, all that is lacking is willingness of governments to give priority to the spreading of this information. And is it not conceivable that the prosperity and comfortable life-style which technology has already given to millions upon millions in the developed world will be extended in the fullness of time to what are now called the under-developed nations? Again, it is the political will to devote the necessary resources which is lacking, rather than the resources themselves. This is what prevents these changes from coming about. But under-developed nations are pressing hard for this comfortable life-style. When these pressures reach bursting point, the political will to give these countries what they want may eventually be found.	55 60 65
7	The twentieth century saw two catastrophic world wars and innumerable other conflicts which resulted in the decimation of whole populations. And yet, in spite of this, the phenomenon of world-wide competition in sport has come about, as seen in the Olympic Games, the various sporting world cups, and the touring 'circuses' of racing drivers, tennis players and golfers who feed their publics' appetite for competition. This world-wide competition in sport has been encouraged by unprecedented resources of media and transport. It has grown in some places almost into a religion. Is it possible that this religion is destined to become a substitute for the fatal conflicts of the past, whose very language – attackers and defenders, defeat and victory – it borrows?	70 75
8	It is possibly true that aggression and competitiveness are primarily masculine characteristics. Consequently, perhaps the most encouraging development of recent times is the gradual but unstoppable growth of the power and influence of women. This influence cannot be anything but beneficial. The particular virtues of women are widely claimed to be co-operation, care and concern for others. Therefore, women may enable the human race to tame and render harmless the aggressive instinct which has brought us so successfully – but so painfully – to our present condition.	80 85
9	Considerations such as these give the optimist grounds to challenge the pessimist's parrot-cry: 'You can't change human nature.' The quite unprecedented capability for destruction which the human race now possesses must make us hope that the pessimists are wrong.	

Read the passage in the insert and then answer **all** the questions which follow below. Note that up to fifteen marks will be given for the quality and accuracy of your use of English throughout this Paper.

NOTE: When a question asks for an answer **IN YOUR OWN WORDS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE** and you select the appropriate material from the passage for your answer, you must still use your own words to express it. Little credit can be given to answers which only copy words or phrases from the passage.

- 1 Explain **in your own words as far as possible** why there is 'perpetual competition' (line 3) between all living things.

.....
.....
..... [2]

- 2 Why does the author include the word 'significantly' in line 13?

..... [1]

- 3 Why does the author believe that the 'attempts to usurp' authority were 'inevitable' (line 18)?

..... [1]

- 4 Explain how a) 'population pressure' and b) 'dynastic ambition' might be 'possible motives for war' (lines 24-25).

(a)

(b) [2]

- 5 **Using your own words as far as possible**, explain the circumstances under which, according to the writer, 'war might be thought to be acceptable' (lines 28-29).

.....
.....
.....
..... [3]

Exe

6 What are the two sources of conflict which the author claims, in paragraph 6, can be resolved by science? Why, according to the author, are they not being resolved? **Use your own words as far as possible.**

.....
.....
..... [3]

7 From paragraph 8, identify three statements which might seem controversial, and in each case, show how the author's language seeks to give an impression of open-mindedness.

(i)
.....
(ii)
.....
(iii)
..... [3]

8 Give the meaning of the following words as they are used in the passage. You may write your answer in one word or a short phrase.

fundamental (line 1)
.....
exercised (line 45)
.....
equilibrium (line 50)
.....
disseminated (line 61)
.....
parrot-cry (line 87) [5]

For
Examiner's
Use

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..... [5]

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- 10 Having reviewed the apparent inevitability and compensating benefits of aggression in the past, Arthur Woolgar suggests some reasons why aggression may play a much reduced role in the future.
How convincing do you find these reasons, and do you consider the gains would outweigh the losses if aggression ceased to be a central feature of human behaviour?

[Dotted lines for writing]