The Learning Strategies of Adult Immigrant Learners of English: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives

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Abstract

This study examines the use of language learning strategies by a group of adult immigrant learners of English attending government-funded classes in Australia. It attempts to identify the language learning strategies reported by the learners and the particular factors which are influential on their use.

The study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data on language learning strategy use. The quantitative data comprised the responses of 154 learners to the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990), while protocols such as classroom observation, stimulated recall and think-aloud protocols, and individual and group interviews with the investigator were employed to gather qualitative data on strategy use from nineteen of the original 154 learners.

The subjects’ response scores to two of the six SILL subscales, Compensation and Affective, were discarded after analyses of reliability revealed that those quantitative data were not reliable. The remaining four subscales were then analysed using SPSS. Coding and analyses of the qualitative data were conducted using the computer software Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theory-building (NUD*IST).

Results of the analysis of subjects’ responses to the SILL indicated a ‘high-medium’ use of the majority of SILL items and an overall preference for the use of Social strategies. Little effect was found for independent variables on reported strategy use. Analysis of the qualitative data, using NUD*IST, confirmed some of the SILL responses and also revealed additional strategies and factors, particularly of motivation, which were important and influential to the language learning of the immigrant adult subjects.

The conclusion is reached that, in the case of the immigrant ESL learners involved in the study, the use of strategies is an individual choice and is consequent on the motivation which the learner brings to the learning situation. This motivation had been shaped by interacting internal and external factors, by the learner’s past experience and current life context.

The thesis discusses the significance and limitations of the study, together with the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications which arise from the findings and suggests areas for further research.
Declaration

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work,

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed: [Signature]
Preface

This thesis is the sole and original work of the candidate. All sources from which information has been derived have been acknowledged in the text and cited in the Bibliography. No part of the thesis comprises work submitted for other qualifications or work carried out prior to PhD candidature enrolment.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Dr Brian Paltridge and Dr Brian Lynch for their guidance and constructive advice during this research process. I am most grateful also to Professor Peter Skehan of Thames Valley University for his generous assistance and for the support of an Overseas Research Experience Scholarship which made that time in the UK possible. My sincere thanks go to the teachers in the AMES centre for offering me access to their classes and to the students who, by so willingly sharing their language learning experiences, made the task of data collection enjoyable and rewarding. To colleagues go my thanks for their interest and helpful discussions, particularly at the time of data coding. I would also like to acknowledge the continuous support and understanding of close friends. Finally, my special thanks to my family for their patience and constant encouragement.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMES</td>
<td>Adult Migrant Education Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASLPR</td>
<td>Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CES</td>
<td>Commonwealth Employment Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Australia Department of Employment, Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Australia Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLL</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>First language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>Third or later language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>Non English speaking background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILL</td>
<td>Strategy Inventory for Language Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>Target language</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>Test of English as a Foreign Language</td>
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</table>
Chapter One

Introduction and Overview of the Thesis

1.1. Background to the study

This thesis examines the language learning strategies of English language learners, in particular adult, immigrant learners attending government-funded classes in Melbourne, Australia.

A significant proportion of the Australian population is comprised of immigrants, many from a non English-speaking background. By mid-1998, it was estimated that 23% of the total population of approximately 19 million had been born overseas and of those approximately 60% had been born in non-English speaking countries. In 1996, the Census of Population and Housing revealed that 2.5 million people (16% of the population five years and over) spoke a language other than English in the home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000).

For those immigrants wishing to participate more fully in the English-speaking community the learning of English is crucial. Many, therefore, choose to attend formal classes for English as a Second Language (ESL), such as those conducted by Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES), the setting for the current study.

In any consideration of such language learners the processes of language learning assume importance. Included in those processes are ‘language learning strategies’, the concept of which, since early studies in the 1970s, has proved somewhat elusive (Wenden, 1987a). Now, with a greater degree of unanimity on its meaning, the term ‘language learning strategies’ in the context of the current study, refers to the:

- actions, behaviors, steps or techniques ... used by learners to enhance learning. Specifically, these strategies facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information (Oxford, Lavine & Crookall, 1989: 29).

- special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information. (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990: 1).

- operations or processes which learners deploy to learn the TL (White, 1995:210).
1.2. Research questions

During the last thirty years, many studies of learner strategy use have been conducted, in a range of settings: secondary schools, tertiary institutions, within a target language (TL) community, or within a ‘foreign’ language community. Few studies, though, have involved adult, immigrant learners, least of all in Australia; the learning strategy use of those who have migrated to an English-speaking country, such as Australia, has been largely unexplored. The aim of this thesis is therefore, to establish answers to the following questions:

2. What particular factors are influential on the use of those language learning strategies?

1.3. Design of the study

1.3.1. Data

Three types of data were gathered during the four stages of the study:

Stage 1 biographical data which included age, sex, first language (L1), prior learning of English and length of time in Australia;

Stage 2 quantitative data from responses to an English format of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990) i.e. responses were made to a format of the SILL which was not in the subject’s first language (L2);

Stage 3 quantitative data from responses to a format of the SILL in the subject’s L1;

Stage 4 qualitative data from classroom observation, stimulated recall and think-aloud protocols, individual and group interviews.
1.3.2. Instrumentation

A self-report questionnaire was used to elicit biographical data in Stage 1 of the study. Following the collection of the biographical data, data were collected on the subjects’ use of language learning strategies. Firstly, in Stage 2 and Stage 3, English and L1 formats of the SILL (Oxford, 1990), respectively, were used to gather quantitative data on the learners’ use of language learning strategies. Then, protocols such as classroom observation, stimulated recall and think-aloud protocols, individual and group interviews with the investigator were employed in Stage 4 of the study to gather qualitative data on strategy use.

1.3.3. Analysis of the data

In order to explore the answer to the two research questions analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data were conducted.

Analyses of the biographical and quantitative data were carried out in SPSS using traditional statistical procedures, such as estimating reliability of scores, correlation, t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), chi-square and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Examination was made of the overall reported strategy use of the subjects, together with reported strategy use in terms of variables, such as age, sex, level of proficiency, first language (L1) background, length of time living in Australia and amount of prior English learning. Following these analyses, the response patterns of Asian and European subjects were examined.

The coding and analysis of qualitative data was carried out using the computer software package, Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theory-building (QSR NUD*IST).

The research design described above is summarised in Table 1.1 below.
Table 1.1
Summary of the research design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of the study</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>Self-report questionnaire</td>
<td>Biographical data</td>
<td>coding and analysis using SPSS and NUD*IST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>SILL (Oxford, 1990) (English format)</td>
<td>Response (in English) scores on use of language learning strategies</td>
<td>analysis of reliability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>correlation</td>
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<td>MANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>SILL (L1 format)</td>
<td>Response (in L1) scores on use of language learning strategies</td>
<td>analysis of reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Classroom observation and oral interaction with subjects</td>
<td>Qualitative data</td>
<td>coding and analysis using NUD*IST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4. Scope of the thesis

The thesis includes the fields of language learning strategies and language learning motivation. The first part of the thesis, underpinned by learner strategy literature, investigates of use of strategies as revealed by subjects’ responses to the SILL and the subsequent qualitative methodology. The latter part of the thesis calls on the field of language learning motivation in an attempt to account for the pattern of use of language learning strategies as revealed by the qualitative data.

1.5. Thesis outline

Chapter One: Introduction and Overview of the Thesis

This chapter has provided an overview of the thesis, providing a brief background to the study, a statement of the research questions and an outline of the design of the study: the types of data gathered, the instrumentation used and the analyses carried out.
Chapter Two: Language Learning Strategies: an overview

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature of language learning strategies, describing the identification and classification of language learning strategies and the factors influential on their use. The chapter proceeds to outline the development of the SILL, describing prior research involving that instrument and, finally, places the current Australian study in the context of that research.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter concerns the methodology of the study. Firstly, it attempts to show the postpositive paradigm from which the current study derived by presenting a broad description of relevant research paradigms and methodologies. Then, the chapter describes, in detail, the setting, subjects and data collection procedures of the study.

Chapter Four: Analyses of Reliability

Chapter Four describes and discusses the analyses of reliability of the scores obtained on administrations of the SILL in English, and in the L1. These analyses of reliability were carried out as it is believed that further statistical analysis (as described in Chapter Five) should include only those scores for which reliability has been established. Firstly, the chapter reports on the analyses of reliability of the scores of the fifty item SILL (version 7.0) following its administration to 154 participants, in English. The unreliability of the Compensation and Affective subscales scores, and their discarding from further analysis is discussed. The second part of the chapter reports the reliability of the SILL (L1 format) scores and draws a comparison with the responses of subjects to the English format.

Chapter Five: Description and Analyses of Quantitative Data

Chapter Five describes and analyses the quantitative data gathered from the English format of the SILL, at the level of sub-scales, Memory, Cognitive, Metacognitive and Social. It reports on (a) the overall reported strategy use of subjects: correlations between individual SILL items, strategy sub-scales and independent variables; mean scores of strategy sub-scales and individual items, and (b) reported strategy use in terms of variables: sex, age, first
language background, general English language proficiency (class level), length of time living in Australia, length of time spent learning English prior to arrival in Australia. The chapter also examines the response patterns of Asian and European subjects to the SILL, suggesting that response patterns might be attributable to cultural practices and expectations.

Chapter Six: Description of the Qualitative Study

This chapter, together with Chapters Seven and Eight, are concerned with the second part of this study: the description and analysis of the qualitative data gathered in Stage 4. The first part of Chapter Six describes the sources of qualitative data, while the latter part describes the methods employed in the coding and analyses of those data, using NUD*IST.

Chapter Seven: Analysis of Qualitative Data - SILL strategies

Chapter Seven describes the use of particular SILL strategies reported orally by participants: SILL strategies, of which use was reported by the majority of subjects; SILL strategies of which non-use was commonly reported and lastly, SILL strategies the use of which was determined to be related to an independent variable e.g. age, L1 background.

Chapter Eight: nonSILL Strategies

Emerging from the qualitative data was the reported use of a number of strategies not included on the SILL, and so categorised as ‘non-SILL’. Chapter Eight discusses seven of those ‘non-SILL’ strategies: ‘keep in mind’; ‘draw a picture’; ‘use a dictionary’; ‘repetitive listening’; ‘remaining silent’; ‘working alone or with others/avoiding anxiety’, and ‘help from children’.

Chapter Nine: Motivation and Language Learning Strategies

Following the gathering and analysis of the qualitative data, the effect of motivation on the subjects’ use of language learning strategies became evident. Thus, after reviewing the literature in the field of language learning motivation, Chapter Nine discusses the effect of motivation on the strategies of the English language learners in this study. Particular attention is paid to the model of Williams and Burden (1997). That model is extended here to account for the motivation and consequent language learning strategy use of the participants in the current study; detailed accounts from individual
learners are presented as evidence of the factors influencing motivation and language learning strategy use.

Chapter Ten: Summary and Conclusion

The final chapter draws together the findings of the study reported in Chapters Five, Seven and Eight, relating them to the two research questions posed at the outset of the thesis.

In response to the first research question: *What language learning strategies do immigrant adult learners of English, in an Australian English-speaking setting, report using?* and in terms of the **quantitative** data, ‘high-medium’ use was found of the majority of SILL strategies, and ‘Social’ was the subscale most highly reported. The **qualitative** data served (a) to confirm the level of responses to the SILL, (b) to identify the context of individual uses which participants made of the SILL strategies and (c) to reveal the reported use of strategies additional to those of the SILL, particularly that of receiving ‘help from children’.

In answer to research question two: *What particular factors are influential on the use of those language learning strategies?* the **quantitative** data, obtained from the responses to the SILL, showed that the responses of participants were remarkably homogeneous; only for one item was an effect found for level of general English proficiency, with no effect found for other independent variables. The **qualitative** data, on the other hand, revealed some effect on language learning strategy use for several variables and for the influence of motivation.

The chapter then presents implications which arise from the findings, (a) on the SILL, (b) on the methodology of studies of learner strategies, and (c) on classroom teachers and language learners. Next, follow suggestions of areas of further research and a discussion of the limitations of the study. Finally, the significance of the findings of the study are presented. The value of qualitative data in the understanding of second language learners and their processes of learning is emphasised. The conclusion is drawn that the use of language learning strategies is individual and is consequent on the learner’s motivation which is shaped by interacting internal and external factors, by past experience and by current life context.
Chapter Two

Language Learning Strategies

This chapter presents an overview of language learning strategies. Firstly, it describes the research which identified and classified language learning strategies. Then, it outlines studies of the use of language learning strategies and variables, such as age, sex, proficiency, L1 and motivation, which have been found to affect that use. Next, information on the development of the SILL is presented. The final section of the chapter describes the prior research using the SILL and also indicates the way in which the current Australian study relates to that research.

2.1. Earlier research

Since the 1970s research in the area of learner strategies has been carried out, chronologically, in a number of stages:

- the gathering of data which enabled profiles of good language learners to be drawn e.g. Rubin (1975); Naiman et al. (1978);

- research which concentrated on collection of self-report data indicating learners’ use of particular strategies e.g. Politzer (1983); Politzer and McGroarty (1985); O’Malley et al. (1985a);

- the consequent classification of learner strategies e.g. O’Malley et al. (1985b); Oxford (1990);

- the development of programs of strategy training, in the late 1980s, based on the assumption that the successful strategies could be taught and used to good effect by less effective learners e.g. Ellis and Sinclair (1989); Oxford (1990); Oxford et al. (1990); Wenden (1986, 1988, 1991; 1995);

- in the 1990s, research into other cognitive and affective influences on second language learner strategy use, such as motivation (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1990, 1994; Gardner et al., 1997), aptitude and style (Sternberg, 1995) and personality type (Ehrman, 1990; Oxford and Ehrman, 1993).
Research significant to the current study is confined mostly to three of the above five stages, i.e.:

(i) the identification of language learner strategies,
(ii) the classification of language learner strategies,
(iii) the use of particular strategies by second language learners, and the factors affecting that use

Other research significant to the current study pertains to the research instrument itself and concerns

(iv) the development of the SILL and
(v) prior research using the SILL.

Each of these areas of research will be discussed in the sections which follow.

2.1.1. Identification of language learner strategies

Much of the previous research into language learner strategies has been carried out in the USA. Often that research has concentrated on subjects located in tertiary or secondary school classroom settings, learning a language ‘foreign’ to the English-speaking community. Less research has involved subjects, such as immigrants, who were not in an academic setting and were learning English, the target language (TL) of the community. Similarly, in the English-speaking community of Australia very little research has been conducted into the language learning strategies of immigrant learners of English i.e. those for whom English is a Second Language (ESL).

Much of the early research into language learning strategies tried to identify those used by ‘good learners’ and was conducted by observation of second language learners in the classroom and also in more naturalistic settings, as described below.

Rubin (1975), as a result of observation of language learners in California and Hawaii, isolated some of the strategies used by good language learners. Although not indicating the type or level of learner which she observed, Rubin suggested that the good language learner:
(i) is a willing and accurate guesser;
(ii) has a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from a communication;
(iii) is often not inhibited; is willing to appear foolish, to make mistakes, to live with a certain degree of ambiguity;
(iv) focuses on form;
(v) practises and seeks out opportunities to use the language;
(vi) monitors his/her own speech and the speech of others;
(vii) attends to meaning.

Stern (1975), took account of the characteristics proposed by Rubin (1975), at that time still unpublished, and in a paper prepared as part of a project of the Modern Language Centre of The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) on Effective Language Teaching and Learning, indicated:

We are approaching the study of the good language learner with an open mind. But an open mind does not mean an empty mind. We have a certain conception of what we think are the strategies of good language learning … (Stern, 1975: 304-5).

Those speculations were ten features that marked good language learning:

(i) a personal learning style or positive learning strategy;
(ii) an active approach to the task;
(iii) a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers;
(iv) technical know-how about how to tackle a language;
(v) strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system and of revising this system progressively;
(vi) constantly searching for meaning;
(vii) willingness to practise;
(viii) willingness to use the language in real communication;
(ix) self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use;
(x) developing the target language more and more as a separate reference system and learning to think in it (Stern, 1975: 316).
The results of the OISE project, *The Good Language Learner* were published three years later. Using Stern’s list of strategies as an initial frame of reference, Naiman et al. (1978) conducted intensive retrospective interviews in Canada with thirty-four highly proficient adult language learners who were personal acquaintances of the interviewers or recommended to them as being highly proficient, and subsequently identified five major strategies as important to learner success:

(i) an active task approach  
(ii) a realization of language as a system  
(iii) a realization that language is for communication  
(iv) the ability to manage affective demands  
(v) the monitoring of one’s performance in a second language (L2) (Naiman et al., 1978: 13-15).

Such taxonomies of strategies though, tended to reflect the situations of the learners which the researchers had observed. For younger learners, different ‘good’ strategies were identified. Wong-Fillmore (1979), in California, observed five Mexican Spanish-speaking five to seven year old children in play situations over a period of nine months and suggested that cognitive and social strategies, necessary to immediate context-dependent language use, were important to their increasing communicative competence in English. Wong-Fillmore found that it was important for young learners to interact confidently, even without meaning, by using a few well chosen formulas. In doing so, those learners maintained participation in a conversation and in time became aware of the language detail they needed. Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1985) observed fourteen Mexican-American 5-6 year olds in bilingual classrooms over a period of one year and demonstrated that the learners’ strategies changed over time, with more proficient learners using a wider range of strategies.

Reiss (1985) confirmed the view of Rubin (1975) that the successful language learner does have a higher than average tolerance of ambiguity, and that those strategies most important to good language learners were monitoring, attending to form and meaning, guessing, practising, motivation to communicate and mnemonics. Contrary to Rubin, though, Reiss found that the successful language learner is not necessarily uninhibited.
Thus, from studies such as these were identified the strategies of good learners. Overall, five major aspects of successful language learning are suggested (Ellis 1994):

- a concern for language form;
- a concern for communication (functional practice);
- an active task approach;
- an awareness of the learning process;
- a capacity to use strategies flexibly in accordance with task requirements (Ellis 1994:546).
2.1.2. Classification of strategies

Different classifications of learner strategies were made over a period of approximately ten years. Bialystok (1979) classified strategies on two parameters which characterised the occasions of language use: (a) purpose (whether formal or functional) and (b) modality (oral or written). Rubin (1981) classified strategies according to the contribution which they made to language learning i.e. direct or indirect, while the classification of Politzer (1983) pertained to the context of use of the strategy i.e. whether in the classroom, in individual study or in interaction with others. Wenden (1991) on the other hand, classified strategies according to their function: cognitive strategies included the functions of selecting, comprehending, storing and retrieving input, while self-management strategies included the functions of planning, monitoring and evaluating language learning.

However, the two classifications of strategy types which have contributed most to the field have been those of O'Malley et al. (1985a) and Oxford (1990).

The classification of O'Malley et al. (1985a)

The O'Malley et al. classification was developed following a two phase study (O'Malley et al. 1985a, 1985b) in which seventy secondary school ESL students in the USA, and their twenty-two teachers, were observed and interviewed. The study attempted to

(a) identify the range and variety of learning strategies used by good language learners,

(b) classify the learning strategies so identified, and

(c) discover which strategies were associated with particular language learning activities and whether beginning and intermediate level students made differential use of strategies.

O'Malley et al. found that classroom observation was inadequate for the identification of mental strategies and, moreover, that teachers were not aware of the strategies which learners were using. Students though, were well able to relate their strategy use and in so doing often reported a combination of strategies for a particular task. Those strategies “appeared to be similar to those reported in the cognitive literature, suggesting that strategic processing is a generic activity applied to all areas of learning”
(O'Malley and Chamot, 1990:122) so were classified, as outlined below, as metacognitive, cognitive or social-affective. As theirs was one of the first to focus on the importance of metacognitive strategies to the learner the study of O'Malley et al. (1985a, 1985b) was particularly significant. Interestingly though, the learners in this study laid little emphasis on some of the strategies considered by Naiman et al. (1978) as important i.e. 'realization of language as a system' or 'management of affective demands'.

As well as classifying the strategies identified, O'Malley et al. (1985a) raised the possibility of relationships between strategy use and language learning task, and strategy use and second language proficiency. They had found, firstly, differences in the reported strategy use of beginner and intermediate students, with the latter making greater use of metacognitive strategies and, secondly, a relationship between certain language learning tasks and the strategies used; students reported most strategy use for the tasks of learning vocabulary and pronunciation.

Following their study, O'Malley et al. (1985a) maintained that a strategy classification scheme based on cognitive theory (Brown and Palincsar, 1982) would be useful with second language acquisition. Thus, they distinguished three major types of strategies: metacognitive, cognitive and social mediation as shown below on Table 2.1. Metacognitive strategies include processes such as ‘planning’, ‘self-monitoring’, ‘self-evaluation’ and are those which make use of the learner’s knowledge of their own cognitive processes. Cognitive strategies include ‘note-taking’, ‘repetition’, ‘deduction’ and ‘resourcing’, and are those directly related to the performance of learning tasks. Social mediation are concerned with the ways in which learners interact with other speakers of the target language and include strategies of co-operation and asking for clarification.


Table 2.1
Classification and definition of learning strategies - O'Malley et al. (1985a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning strategy</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Metacognitive Strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance organizers</td>
<td>Previewing the main ideas and concepts of the material to be learned, often by skimming the text for the organizing principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directed attention</td>
<td>Deciding in advance to attend in general to a learning task and to ignore irrelevant distractors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional planning</td>
<td>Planning for and rehearsing linguistic components necessary to carry out an upcoming language task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective attention</td>
<td>Deciding in advance to attend to specific aspects of input, often by scanning for key words, concepts, and/or linguistic markers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>Understanding the conditions that help one learn and arranging for the presence of those conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>Checking one's comprehension during listening or reading or checking the accuracy and/or appropriateness of one's oral or written production while it is taking place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>Checking the outcomes of one's own language learning against a standard after it has been completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Cognitive Strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resourcing</td>
<td>Using target language reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, or textbooks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>Imitating a language model, including overt practice and silent rehearsal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td>Classifying words, terminology, or concepts according to their attributes or meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deduction</td>
<td>Applying rules to understand or produce the second language or making up rules based on language analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td>Using visual images (either mental or actual) to understand or remember new information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory representation</td>
<td>Planning back in one's mind the sound of a word, phrase, or longer language sequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword method</td>
<td>Remembering a new word in the second language by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) identifying a familiar word in the first language that sounds like or otherwise resembles the new word, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) generating easily recalled images of some relationship with the first language homonym and the new word in the second language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>Relating new information to prior knowledge, relating different parts of new information to each other, or making meaningful personal associations with the new information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>Using previous linguistic knowledge or prior skills to assist comprehension or production.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inferencing Using available information to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes, or fill in missing information.

Note taking Writing down key words or concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form while listening or reading.

Summarising Making a mental, oral, or written summary of new information gained through listening or reading.

Recombination Construction a meaningful sentence or larger language sequence by combining known elements in a new way.

Translation Using the first language as a base for understanding and/or producing the second language.

C. Social Mediation

Question for clarification Eliciting from a teacher or peer additional explanations, rephrasing, examples, or verification.

Cooperation Working together with one or more peers, to solve a problem, pool information, check a learning task, model a language activity, or get feedback on oral or written performance.

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O'Malley and Chamot (1990:119-20)

The classification of Oxford (1990)

Oxford’s classification (Oxford, 1990) differs from that of O'Malley et al. (1985a) in that it proposed six categories of learner strategies (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1
Classification of language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990)

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Oxford (1990:16)

From strategies mentioned in the literature, these categories were identified by factor analysis, a process which examined the strategies employed by the learners under research and tried to find underlying groupings of strategies. Oxford thus identified three direct strategies:

Memory - for entering new information into memory storage and for retrieving it when needed
Cognitive - for linking new information with existing schemata and for analyzing and classifying it

Compensation - (such as guessing or using gestures) to overcome deficiencies and gaps in one's current language knowledge

and three indirect strategies:

Metacognitive - for organizing, focusing, and evaluating one's own learning

Affective - for handling emotions or attitudes

Social - for co-operation with others in the learning process (Oxford, 1989b).

Oxford conceded that the six categories of strategies were by no means discrete and that the strategy groups overlapped each other to a great extent:

For instance, the metacognitive category helps students to regulate their own cognition by assessing how they are learning and by planning for future language tasks, but metacognitive self-assessment and planning often require reasoning, which is itself a cognitive strategy! (Oxford 1990:16)

However, O'Malley and Chamot, having confirmed the usefulness of a classification scheme of three strategy groups which was based largely on cognitive theory, were critical of her approach. In their view,

[w]hat Oxford apparently tried to do was to subsume within her classification virtually every strategy that had previously been cited in the literature on learning strategies. The problem with this approach, so far as a taxonomy of strategies is concerned, is that this extended listing is far removed from any underlying cognitive theory; fails to prioritize which strategies are most important to learning, and generates subcategories that appear to overlap (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990:103).

Nevertheless, despite the greater number of categories in the Oxford (1990) classification, there is a considerable degree of common ground between the two classifications; the cognitive category of O'Malley et al. encompasses Oxford's cognitive and memory categories, while the social and affective categories of Oxford can be accounted for in the social mediation category of O'Malley et al. The main difference between the two classifications lies in the inclusion of the 'direct' compensation category in the Oxford classification, a category which contains strategies for guessing intelligently and overcoming
limitations in speaking and writing. Yet, it was precisely that category which Ellis (1994) claimed weakened Oxford’s classification:

The scheme is marred by a failure to make a clear distinction between strategies directed at learning the L2 and those directed at using it. Thus, somewhat confusingly, ‘compensation strategies’ are classified as a direct type of ‘learning strategy’. In this Oxford departs from other researchers, who treat compensation strategies as distinct from learning strategies (for example, Rubin 1987). However, the organization of specific strategies into a hierarchy of levels and the breadth of the taxonomy is impressive (Ellis 1994:539).

The six strategy groups, or subscales, are subdivided into a total of nineteen strategy sets shown below on Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2**
**Classification of strategies showing subdivision of subscales (Oxford, 1990)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECT STRATEGIES</th>
<th>INDIRECT STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I Memory strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>A Centering your learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Creating mental images</td>
<td>B Arranging and planning your learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Applying images and sounds</td>
<td>C Evaluating your learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Reviewing well</td>
<td><strong>II Metacognitive strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Employing action</td>
<td><strong>A Lowering your anxiety</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II Cognitive strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>B Encouraging yourself</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Practising</td>
<td><strong>C Taking your emotional temperature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Receiving and sending messages</td>
<td><strong>II Affective strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Analysing and reasoning</td>
<td><strong>A Asking questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Creating structure for input and output</td>
<td><strong>B Co-operating with others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III Compensation strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>C Empathising with others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Guessing intelligently</td>
<td><strong>III Social strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| B Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing | }

Oxford (1990:17)
Despite providing a basis of study for strategies and their effect on language learning, Ellis (1994) claimed that problems remain with the frameworks such as those developed by O’Malley et al. (1985a), Oxford (1990) (and Wenden, 1991), asserting that:

[the categories that have been established are ‘high-inference’ in nature, their identification often requiring considerable interpretation on the part of the researcher. The strategies listed as belonging to a single type frequently vary on a number of dimensions such as specificity ... and the extent to which they are observable .... It is not yet clear whether the range of strategies available to the learner is finite or infinite in number. These problems are serious blocks to reliable research... (Ellis 1994: 540).]
2.1.3. The use of language learner strategies and the factors affecting that use

Following the identification of strategies believed to be fundamental to language learner success, much research in the 1980s concentrated on collection of self-report data from learners to identify the use made of particular strategies. As well as providing data on the frequency of use, studies emphasised the importance of factors, such as learner beliefs, age, sex, level of proficiency, cultural background, learning style, multiple language skills, career choice and motivation to strategy use.

**Beliefs**

The beliefs which learners have about language learning influence the extent and type of use which they make of strategies in that learning. Abraham and Vann (1987) suggested that learners have a philosophy of how language is learned. That philosophy guides the learner’s approach to language learning situations, the consequent strategy use, as well as the degree of success in language learning. Abraham and Vann’s case studies (1987) of two second language learners (one good the other poor) revealed that the good language learner made greater and more flexible use of strategies, but Abraham and Vann conceded that other factors such as age, educational background, intelligence and possibly personality traits were also likely to be influential in strategy use.

Wenden (1987b) interviewed twenty-five learners in the USA about their language learning activities in the classroom and outside, and found that learners who believed in the importance of *using* the language reported greater use of communication strategies and attended mainly to meaning and social purpose, and not form, in social interaction. In contrast, those who laid emphasis on learning *about* the language used more cognitive strategies and were more conscious of form in social settings.

**Age**

Few studies have been found which sought specifically and systematically to identify the differential use of strategies by participants of different ages. Longitudinal studies are rare in the area of learner strategies, as they are “virtually non-existent” in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)
research in general (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991: 166). Explanations for such a situation may be that much research is constrained by time limits or is confined to homogeneous groups of subjects: young children, secondary school, university students or adults. Thus, in any one study there is little direct evidence of the effect of age on strategy choice; conclusions on that effect can be drawn only from an overview of the results of such studies.

One study of young children in a play situation (Wong-Fillmore, 1979) demonstrated, as mentioned above, that cognitive and social strategies were important. The children used a social strategy of joining a group, stayed in the group by acting as though they understood what was going on, learning chunks of language and relying on their friends for help, even when they were in situations of non-comprehension. In a bilingual classroom situation, Chesterfield and Chesterfield (1985) found a natural order in the development of the children's learning strategies: firstly, receptive strategies, such as repetition and memorisation were apparent; next came strategies which permitted children to initiate and maintain interactions, such as attention getting, appeal for assistance or clarification; last, if at all, came strategies which demonstrated an awareness and monitoring of grammatical errors.

Purdie and Oliver (1999) examined the language learning strategies of fifty-eight primary school-aged children in Australia, from non-English speaking backgrounds, who were learning English. Using thirty-eight items based on the SILL, they found that the most frequently used strategies were metacognitive, with social strategies next in importance. Other categories of strategies: memory, cognitive and compensation were less frequently used.

From self-reports of learners of secondary school age, O’Malley et al. (1985a, 1985b) concluded that cognitive strategies were in general use and that the use of metacognitive strategies was reported by some more advanced students. Kaylani (1996), using the SILL and interviews with 255 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) high school students in Jordan, found that the use of metacognitive strategies was significantly higher for the more proficient students, as were memory and cognitive strategies.
Ramirez (1986) attempted to identify the successful strategies used by 105 learners of French at three levels of language study: grade 8, grade 9-10 and grade 10-11 in two high schools in New York State. The use of strategies in the classroom, in individual study and in social interaction was investigated, using the questionnaire developed by Politzer (1983), and was related to speaking, reading and grammatical competence as well as to years of study of the learners. However, unlike the studies of O’Malley et al. (1985a, 1985b) and Kaylani (1996), the findings of Ramirez (1986) indicated that successful learning behaviours varied depending on the task (e.g. classroom and individual behaviours needed for success in a communicative task differed from those required to complete a cloze passage), and years of study influenced the use made of different strategies; some strategies were used more productively than others at different levels of study.

Chamot (1993) surveyed the strategies used, after strategy training, by seventy-nine beginner level students of Spanish, Japanese and Russian. Thirteen were studying at university, the rest at high schools in the USA. This study gathered qualitative data from the learners when, in responding to the Learning Strategies Review Questionnaire, they were asked to indicate whether or not they used a particular strategy in class and at home, and to give their reasons for so doing. Results of the study revealed that learners used a particular strategy because, for example, it was fun, made learning easier, seemed natural, matched the learner’s own way of learning, helped plan the task, focussed attention, aided comprehension, enabled faster learning, was good for practising, helped recall or organised information in the memory. Conversely, the study revealed that learners did not use particular strategies because they preferred a different approach, forgot to use it, were unaware of it, the strategy was not effective, had a negative effect on the learner, was confusing, was boring, did not match the learner’s way of learning, or took too much time or effort. This study is important because, in gathering qualitative data from the learners, it enabled insights into the underlying reasons for strategy use of learners in the adolescent age groups, insights which have not been gained from other studies which have made use of summative rating scales (Ramirez, 1986; Kaylani, 1996).

One study which did identify the use of a certain strategy by specific age groups of learners was that of White (1993) who, investigating the strategy use of university language learners of French and Japanese in New Zealand,
found that learners over thirty years of age made greater use of a metacognitive self-management strategy than did those who were younger.

**Sex**

Several studies of strategy use found that females reported a greater use of strategies than males. Politzer (1983), for example, in researching the language learning behaviours of ninety undergraduate foreign language learners by means of a self-report questionnaire, found a “relatively minor” (Politzer 1983:62) difference between male and female learners on the variable of social interaction with females making a greater use of those strategies. Similarly, Ehrman and Oxford (1988) in their study of seventy-eight subjects: professional language trainers, native speaker (NS) language teachers, and students, found females made significantly greater use than males of strategies on four SILL factors: general strategies, authentic language use, searching for and communicating meaning, and self-management strategies.

However, when a twenty person subset of the larger, seventy-eight person, group in the Ehrman and Oxford (1988) study, above, was examined by Ehrman and Oxford (1990) in a study of psychological type and language learning it was concluded that psychological-type preferences, rather than sex differences, were influential in strategy use and suggested that psychological type may account for some of the variability in strategy use which had previously been attributed to sex differences.

Nonetheless, in a study of 1200 undergraduate university learners of French, Spanish, German, Russian and Italian which gathered data using a 121-item version of the SILL, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found that females reported more frequent strategy use than males of formal rule-related practice strategies (e.g. finding similarities between languages, generating and revising rules, and analysing words), general study strategies (e.g. studying hard, ignoring distractions, being prepared, organising, and using time well) and conversational input elicitation strategies (e.g. requesting slower speech, asking for pronunciation correction, and guessing what the speaker will say).

In the ‘hybrid’ ESL/EFL context of Puerto Rico, Green (1991) found a greater use by female university English students of metacognitive and social strategies. Likewise, Green and Oxford (1995), in a study of 374 students at three different course levels at the University of Puerto Rico, revealed a greater use by females in fourteen of the fifty SILL items: three of each of
memory, cognitive and social subscales, two of metacognitive and affective, and one compensation strategy.

Conversely, two studies have revealed a greater use of particular strategies by males. One was that of Tran (1988), which examined the level of acculturation of immigrant Vietnamese, aged from forty to ninety-two, in the United States. Responses to interview questions revealed that males made greater use of strategies to learn and to improve their English language skills: enrolling in English classes, practising English with American friends and watching television or listening to the radio in English. MacIntyre (1994), suggested that in Tran’s study “the employment situation of the individual seems to be the key variable influencing strategy use rather than his/her gender...” (MacIntyre, 1994:187). However, Tran’s own explanation went somewhat further. Rather than explain the findings as a simple difference between males and females, Tran explained them by the inherited cultural difference in traditional Vietnamese society; older females depended on males and were not encouraged to interact with foreigners. Thus, they did not have the chance to interact with Americans and to improve their level of English language proficiency and so were not then able to use the strategy of watching television or listening to the radio in English.

A second study in which males were shown to make greater use of a specific strategy was that of Nyikos (1990). When attempting to investigate a possible test type bias in tests for recall, by studying the vocabulary recall of university level beginner learners of German using different combinations of colour and picture stimuli, Nyikos (1990), found that males were superior when a visual-spatial stimulus of colour plus picture was used. However, another specific set of subskills seemed to favour women; the recall of females was greater when colour was the mediator. Nyikos suggested that such strategies were consequent on the socialisation of males and females and that such differences should be taken into account when the use of strategies was encouraged in language learning.
**Level of proficiency**

Generally, findings of studies which have attempted to relate learners’ language proficiency and strategy use report a greater, and wider variety of use by learners of higher proficiency. However, no firm conclusion can be drawn on the causality between greater strategy use and higher proficiency; in some students greater strategy use might cause higher levels of performance, in others the opposite might be the case (Skehan 1989). MacIntyre too, contends that

> [w]hen considering the association between strategy use and proficiency, it is difficult to tease apart the potential contribution of strategies to proficiency from the effect of proficiency on the choice of strategies. In other words, one may ask, “Does the use of certain strategies lead to (cause) improved ability level or does an elevated level of ability lead to the use of different strategies?” (MacIntyre, 1994:188)

As well, it is possible that learners of higher proficiency are more able to reflect and report on their use of strategies than others.

Reiss (1981) surveyed, by questionnaire, a group of eighty-four students of Spanish and German at a university in the USA, requesting them to respond to three hypothetical learning situations. She found that successful learners, identified by the grade received in the previous semester, were specific in their learning task, constantly looked for meaning, and seemed to understand their way of learning and how to internalise information. Unsuccessful language learners, in contrast, did not seem to be aware of their learning style and used ‘vague’ terms when describing their learning. The latter, according to Reiss “may well produce ‘vague’ learning” (Reiss 1981:125).

For O’Malley et al. (1985a) however, in the study described earlier, it was the learners of lower proficiency, the beginning level school ESL students, who reported more strategies on the average than did intermediate level students. In a very similar study, but with school learners of Spanish and Russian, O’Malley and Chamot (1990) found that beginner learners reported using fewer strategies than those of higher proficiency, the intermediate level students.

Huang and van Naerssen (1987) used data obtained from a questionnaire and interview of high and low proficiency English learners in China, and concluded that high proficiency students were making significantly more use
of functional practice strategies, those such as ‘speaking with other students and native speakers, listening and reading for comprehension, attending lectures, watching films and TV programs, and thinking or talking to oneself in English’ (p.289). However, as was pointed out (Skehan, 1989), these learners were all graduates of a Foreign Languages Institute, so “the linguistic accomplishments of the low group might well be the envy of most people” (Skehan 1989:92).

On the other hand, two studies revealed that ‘poor’ learners did make use of ‘good learner’ strategies. Following interviews in English language schools in London with fifteen under-achieving learners, Porte (1988) found them using strategies for dealing with new vocabulary which were very similar to those of ‘the good language learner’. Vann and Abraham (1990) studied the strategies of two unsuccessful learners of English, enrolled in an academically-oriented intensive English program in the USA and found that while they lacked certain metacognitive strategies or self-regulatory skills essential to the assessment and completion of a task the unsuccessful learners were, contrary to expectations, actively using strategies similar to those of good learners.

Of particular interest though, was Chamot and Küpper (1989), a three phase study of the strategy use of first, third and fifth-sixth year high school learners of Spanish in the USA. Unlike earlier studies which had concentrated on investigating ‘good’ learners (Rubin, 1975; Naiman et al., 1978; O’Malley et al., 1985a), Chamot and Küpper examined the strategies of learners across all levels of proficiency. Following the first phase, the Descriptive Study, in which sixty-seven learners classified as effective, average and ineffective by their teachers were interviewed in small groups, Chamot and Küpper found that students at the higher levels of ability were using more strategies than were beginners. Cognitive strategies were used more than metacognitive strategies by all learners, and the metacognitive strategies were mainly planning, rather than monitoring or evaluation strategies. Learners at the beginner level used mainly the cognitive strategies of repetition, translation and transfer, although the cognitive strategy of inferencing was used to a greater extent by more advanced learners. Little use was made of social or affective strategies. Chamot and Küpper concluded that learners of all ability levels do use learning strategies and moreover, were able to report their use.
The second phase of Chamot and Küpper (1989) was a Longitudinal Study, over four semesters, of twenty-seven effective and thirteen ineffective learners who had been involved in the Descriptive Study. This phase of the study revealed major differences between the two groups of learners; more successful students used learning strategies more frequently, more appropriately and with greater variety than did the ineffective learners. As well,

effective students were more purposeful in their approach to a task than ineffective students; they monitored their comprehension and production for overall meaningfulness rather than for individual components and effectively used their prior general knowledge as well as their linguistic knowledge while working on a task (Chamot and Küpper, 1989:17).

The study of Oxford and Nyikos (1989), mentioned above and involving 1200 undergraduate foreign language learners, sought a self-rating of proficiency level, and found that greater strategy use accompanied perceptions of higher proficiency. Further, in terms of years of study, those who had been studying the particular language for four or five years used strategies more often than did those who were less experienced in language learning. Specifically, those with at least four years of study used strategies, e.g. requesting slower speech, asking for pronunciation correction, and guessing what the speaker will say, with greater frequency, while those with at least five years of study more frequently used functional practice strategies, such as strategies requiring language practice in natural settings outside of the classroom: attending foreign language films, conversing with native speakers and reading authentic material in the L2.

Using data gathered from the administration of the fifty item SILL to university students in Puerto Rico, at three levels of proficiency, Green and Oxford (1995) found differences in use overall, and in the subscales of compensation, metacognitive and social strategies, between the students of lowest proficiency and other two levels. As well, for cognitive strategies significant differences were found between all three levels of proficiency with students of highest proficiency making greatest use, and students of lowest proficiency least use, of those strategies. Interestingly, and by way of contrast, Green and Oxford found that at the level of individual SILL strategies, certain strategies (using gestures, making up new words, paying attention when someone is speaking and trying to relax when afraid) were used less by students of highest proficiency, suggesting a curvilinear
relationship between proficiency and the use of those strategies. In other words, it seemed that the need for use of those strategies decreased with an increase in proficiency. Similar findings were made by Phillips (1991) in a study of 141 ESL learners in the USA.

However, the findings of Park (1997) found a linear, not curvilinear, relationship between language learning strategies and English language proficiency as measured by the TOEFL scores (in listening, writing and reading). Using a Korean version of the SILL, Park attempted to measure the variety and frequency of strategies of 332 intermediate to advanced level students of English at two universities in Korea, who had been studying English for at least six years, where the focus had been on learning vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills. When strategy use was related to TOEFL scores, it was found that proficiency levels increased together with an increase in the frequency of strategy use. Park also found that all six categories of strategies, as well as total strategies were significantly correlated with TOEFL scores, and that cognitive and social were more predictive of TOEFL scores, than the other four categories. Wharton (2000), using the SILL to examine the strategy use of L3 learners in Singapore also found a linear relationship between the use of many strategies and self-rated proficiency level.

Verbal reports obtained from thirty-six school students of French in Canada (Anderson and Vandergrift, 1996), revealed that cognitive strategies were the most widely used strategies across all levels of proficiency, although the relative dominance of such strategies declined as the level of proficiency increased. The use of metacognitive strategies, on the other hand, increased proportionately with increasing levels of proficiency, findings similar to those of O’Malley et al. (1985a, 1985b).

Language background /ethnicity

Politser and McGroarty (1985) was an early study which identified a relationship between L1 background/ethnicity and the strategies of the language learner. They administered, to thirty-seven learners preparing for graduate study in the United States, a three section questionnaire relating to presumed good learning behaviours: a 14 item scale on classroom study, a 15 item scale on individual study and a 22 item scale of social interaction outside the classroom, together with pre and post tests of English proficiency.
According to their “native language and national origin” (p.104) eighteen of the learners in the study were Asian, mainly Japanese, while nineteen were described by Politzer and McGroarty as Hispanic, “mainly Latin American Spanish speakers, with one from Spain” (p.104). Following analysis of the subjects’ responses to questionnaire items Politzer and McGroarty found that, of the two groups, Asian learners scored lower than the Hispanic students on all three scales of presumed good learning behaviours. Such behaviours, they concluded

represent certain types of social interactions which Asians are less likely to engage in than are Hispanics (and probably any other representatives of Western culture). Classroom behaviors such as correcting fellow students, asking the teacher all kinds of questions, any kind of volunteering, several social interaction behaviors such as asking for help, asking others to repeat, and asking for confirmation are apparently more a part of the Western rather than the Asian learning behavior repertoire (Politzer and McGroarty, 1985:113-14).

Notwithstanding, Asian learners showed greater gains in competence, leading Politzer and McGroarty to suggest that

many of the good language learning behaviors currently discussed in the literature may be based on highly ethnocentric assumptions about language learning and teaching. For that reason, even if these behaviors should turn out to be valid, they may represent gratuitous advice for members of certain ethnic or cultural groups (Politzer and McGroarty, 1985:114).

Unlike many other studies of strategy use, Politzer and McGroarty (1985) included data on the internal reliability coefficients of the three scales. However, all were low (.45, .24, .23), indicating that the scores of the scales on which they based their study were not reliable. In an attempt to render the three scales more homogeneous and thus more reliable, Politzer and McGroarty discarded some items which were found to correlate negatively with the total scale of which they were a part. However, as Skehan contended,

we are left with the problem that we have no basis, other than blind statistics, for accepting or rejecting items. Some good items, ... may have been eliminated (Skehan, 1989:85).

Therefore, although he considered the Politzer and McGroarty (1985) study interesting as an exploratory study, Skehan judged the study unsuccessful, as:

[...]he empirical data, either in terms of internal consistency of the scales, or of their validity, is not impressive (Skehan, 1989:86).
O’Malley (1987) also found differences in strategy use between groups of Asian and Hispanic learners, in his study of the strategy training of 75 high school ESL students in the USA. Despite training in the use of particular metacognitive and cognitive strategies in the learning of vocabulary, Asian students were noted to persist in using rote repetitive strategies, whereas Hispanics in the treatment group more readily adopted the strategies presented in training (O’Malley, 1987:141).

However, it could be argued that the previous learning behaviour of the subjects was the variable which influenced strategy use, rather than ethnicity alone. Indeed, O’Malley suggested that the highly efficient Asian rote learners of vocabulary lists may have been “negatively affected by the introduction of grouping and imagery” strategies (p.142), strategies which were unfamiliar to them. MacIntyre (1994) also, suggested that the influence of ethnicity as a determinant of strategy use may be more clearly understood by examining the differences generally associated with the variable rather than with that variable itself.

**Multiple language skills**

Using multilingual, bilingual and monolingual subjects, Nation and McLaughlin (1986) sought to determine whether expert language learners use different strategies and techniques in learning. Having induced subjects to use one of two language learning strategies, they found that multilingual subjects did perform better on an ‘implicit-learning task’, one when they were not instructed what they should learn, but only that they should attend to particular stimuli. In contrast, on the ‘explicit-learning task’, where subjects were informed that the stimuli followed certain rules and were instructed to try and discover them, there was no difference between the three groups of learners.

Following the Nation and McLaughlin (1986) study, Nayak, Hansen, Krueger, and McLaughlin (1990) investigated the hypothesis that learners with multiple language skills employ different language-acquisition strategies from those with single language skills, and found that although multilinguals were more flexible and able to adjust their learning strategies to the requirements of the task they were not superior in language learning abilities overall.
Career choice

Career choice or field of specialisation has been associated with strategy choice. The study of Politzer and McGroarty (1985) of language learning behaviours, mentioned above, revealed that learners from an engineering/physical science had lower scores on all scales than did those from a social science/humanities background. However, no firm conclusion was drawn from this observation as the distinction between the two groups was very similar, and largely overlapped, the Asian/Hispanic contrast made within the study.

Using three groups of learners: professional language trainers, NS language teachers, and students, Ehrman and Oxford (1988) found that a wider variety of strategies was reported by professional language trainers than other groups in the sample, with students reporting less use of all types of strategies.

Motivation

The underlying motivation of language learners has been considered influential on strategy use in a number of studies. Politzer and McGroarty (1985) raised the possibility that particular strategies may be task specific, and that the goal of the English language study should be considered in any discussion of language learning strategies. Oxford (1989a) suggested that students might be learning target languages for different purposes and this could influence their choice of strategies. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) claimed that motivation had a “pervasive influence on the reported use of specific kinds of strategies…” (1989:295), while Nyikos and Oxford (1993), reporting on the same study of 1200 university language learners in the US, the majority of whom were taking a language to fulfil a requirement, reported that the students aiming at obtaining good grades concentrated on formal, rule-related processing strategies and academic study strategies, rather than on strategies which developed skills for authentic and communicative language use.

The influence of motivation on strategy use by second language learners will be discussed more fully in Chapter Nine.

Many of the variables outlined above as important to the use of learner strategies in language learning are considered relevant to the examination of
learner strategy use in this study. Here, the collection of biodata from the learners gathered data on: sex, age, cultural or first language background, level of proficiency, prior language learning experience and motivation. The relevance of these variables firstly, to the quantitative data, will be discussed in Chapter Five - *Description and Analysis of Quantitative Data* and later in Chapter Seven - *Description and Analysis of Qualitative Data: SILL strategies*, and Chapter Eight - *Description and Analysis of Qualitative Data: nonSILL strategies*. 
2.1.4. Development of the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL)

Several techniques have been used to investigate the behaviours of language learners, all with their particular advantages and disadvantages. This section presents those techniques as a background to the development of the SILL, discussing their strengths and weaknesses.

*Observation* can be of benefit when the behaviours of the learner are clearly observable. However, learning strategies are generally “internal or mentalistic processes” (Cohen and Scott, 1996: 90), so many instances of the learner’s strategy use are unobservable. Thus, other report techniques may serve to overcome such limitations.

*Student language learning diaries* offer a source of information which is of significance to the individual learner. Kept over a period of time, diaries can provide a developmental account of the learner’s progress and attitudinal changes (Bailey, 1983), and so

> can give the teachers and researchers insights on the incredible diversity of students to be found even within a homogeneous language classroom (Bailey, 1983:98).

Language learning diaries do, however, depend on the willingness of the learners to maintain them and, if kept in the L2, on their level of second language writing proficiency.

*Verbal report* techniques (Cohen and Scott, 1996) are those, “measures intended to provide mentalistic data regarding cognitive processing” (Cohen and Scott, 1996:96) and include:

- **self-report** (learners’ generalised statements which describe what they do when using or learning a language), such as the interviews and questionnaires used by Naiman et al., (1978); O’Malley et al. (1985a, 1985b), Ramirez (1986), and Chamot and Küpper (1989);

- **self-observation** (inspection of specific, not generalised, language behaviour introspectively or retrospectively), e.g. Hosenfeld (1976), and Mangubhai (1991);
• self-revelation (think-aloud, stream-of-consciousness disclosure of thought processes while the information is being attended to), e.g. Abraham and Vann (1987), and Chamot and Küpper (1989).

The gathering of data from individuals or groups of learners through such verbal reports can provide a great deal of information which is not observable. However, it can have the disadvantage of taking a great deal of time, which is often not available to the teacher, or the learner. In the case of retrospective interviews,

students may not report their strategy use accurately - they may forget to mention some strategies (especially those that have become so automatic that they may be operating on a subconscious level), and they may claim to use strategies that they do not in fact use with any frequency (Chamot and Küpper, 1989:19).

‘Think-aloud’ protocols also are limited in that

they do not permit a sampling of all the strategies a student might use in understanding, studying, and recalling new information (Chamot and Küpper, 1989:19).

and as well, need to be used with an individual who has been trained over a considerable period of time to respond in such a way.

Moreover, if learners complete a task in the L2 and report on it in the L1 information might be lost in the recoding or translation of thoughts (Cohen and Scott, 1996) or the operation in the L2 might be affected (McDonough, 1995). Conversely, if the techniques above require the report to be made in the L2, learners could well be constrained by the limits of their second language proficiency. Or, responses may be those thought by learners to be socially desirable (Cohen and Scott, 1996). In any case, verbal reports demand from learners a level of self-awareness and depend on the ability and willingness of the learners to articulate their learning strategies. Otherwise, the learner’s report

might very well be the result of examining his own second language production and surmising how he might have reached the production, rather than a description of what went on at the time of producing the second language utterance (Seliger, 1983:188).
Summative rating scales

Compared with the techniques outlined above, Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) believe that *summative rating scales* are among the most efficient and comprehensive ways to assess frequency of language learning strategy use. Several such rating scales have been used to investigate the behaviours of language learners (Bialystok, 1979; Politzer, 1983; Politzer and McGroarty, 1985; McGroarty, 1987; Chamot et al., 1987; Padron and Waxman, 1988). However, the most widely used (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995) has been the SILL (Oxford, 1990).

It is claimed that summative rating scales are easy to administer to learners in the classroom, particularly when, as with the SILL, students can self-score and so receive immediate feedback from their self-report information provided. The scales can be statistically manipulated in ANOVA, MANOVA, correlation or regression analysis to compare several mean scores simultaneously and to predict performance on a dependent variable via an independent variable. Thus, a generalised view of strategy use for a particular learner, or a view across items and categories can be gained. Further, comparisons can be drawn between learners, from different cultural and language backgrounds (Oxford, 1995).

Conversely, it is acknowledged that summative rating scales have limitations; in providing a generalised view of the strategy use of a particular learner such a scale is not able to inform on the strategy use dependent on any specific task. Furthermore, learners are confined to report on the strategies which comprise the instrument itself and are not able to report on additional strategies which may be particularly valuable to them, or to certain contexts of learning (Oxford, 1995).

Reasons for the development of the SILL

The ‘key reason’ behind the development of the SILL was the lack of published reliability or validity data of many of the earlier ratings scales.

> If the psychometric properties of reliability and validity have not been explored, it is impossible to know whether we can put faith in the results of the research (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995: 4).

Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) claim that “in general, the ESL/EFL SILL reliabilities have been high” (1995:6). A range of Cronbach alpha reliability
coefficients from .91 to .94 has been claimed for the 50-item version of the SILL when it was administered in the L1 in various studies, such as Yang (1992), Watanabe (1990), Oh (1992) and Bremner (1999), and a range from .85 to .91 when administered in English, rather than the L1 of the respondents (Phillips, V., 1990, 1991; Oxford, Nyikos, Nyikos, Lezhnev, Eyring, & Rossi-Le, 1989; Anderson, 1993; Talbott, 1993). Wharton (2000) achieved a reliability coefficient of .94 following the administration of the 80 item SILL in English to L3 learners in Singapore. Oxford and Burry-Stock claim that “these reliabilities are very respectable, and the SILL can be administered in the respondent’s native language or a foreign or second language with confidence that measurement error is minimal” (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995:7).

Yet, such claims can be considered overstated because the reliability coefficients quoted pertain to the whole SILL instrument which comprises, at least, fifty items. Indeed, it could be argued that it would be surprising to find other than high reliability coefficients with such large numbers of items; more revealing of the reliability of the instrument would be the reliability coefficients for each of the six strategy subscales. However, only two studies have been found which have indicated such values, Park (1997) and Gardner et al. (1997).

Park (1997), sought to relate proficiency as measured by TOEFL scores with strategy use as measured by the fifty item SILL, and achieved a “very respectable” (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995:7) overall reliability coefficient of α=.93. However, when coefficients for the individual subscales are examined (memory (.65), cognitive (.82), compensation (.61), metacognitive (.85) affective (.68) and social (.70)), it can be seen that compared with the reliability criterion of α=.65 set for the current study (described in Chapter Four), the coefficient of α=.61 for the compensation subscale was somewhat low, raising the suspicion that scores on that the compensation subscale were not internally consistent.

Gardner et al. (1997) (discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine), attempted to show by causal modelling how variables of individual difference, including language learning strategies as measured by the eighty item SILL, related to one another and to L2 achievement. While the overall reliability coefficient of the SILL was not revealed, coefficients achieved by Gardner et al. for scores of the subscales were: memory (.76), cognitive (.84), compensation (.43), metacognitive (.87), affective (.70) and social (.74). That the coefficient for the
compensation subscale (.43) was lower again than that of Park (1997) immediately calls into question the reliability of the scores of that SILL subscale. Yet, neither Park (1997) nor Gardner et al. (1997) commented on the compensation subscale reliability coefficient values, nor did they reveal Item-total correlation values for the strategy categories, making it impossible to know the underlying reliability of subscales at the item level.

A second reason for developing the SILL was the belief that other rating scales do not always systematically represent all the kinds of strategies viewed as important to language learning. A more comprehensive scale was needed for measuring strategy use among ESL and EFL students (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995: 4).

Thus, Oxford attempted to build on some of the earlier classifications of strategies and after factor analysis subdivided the (fifty-item) SILL into six subscales of strategies: memory (nine items), cognitive (fourteen items), compensation (six items), metacognitive (nine items), affective (six items) and social (six items). For Oxford, the fact that the largest group of strategies in the SILL is cognitive strategies stands to reason, because research on learning strategies suggests that cognitive strategies possess the greatest variety, covering strategies related to practice and to the all-important “deep processing” in which learners analyze, synthesize, and transform new information (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995:5).

In creating a category for Compensation and Affective strategies Oxford attempted to overcome earlier shortcomings in language learning research, which has suffered from overemphasis on metacognitive and cognitive strategies, which are admittedly very important, at the expense of other strategy types that are also very useful... (Oxford, 1989b: 3)

Furthermore, she and Burry-Stock assert "the content validity of the SILL is very high" (1995:7) and that ESL/EFL SILL strategy frequency is related ... to language performance in a number of studies, thus providing validity evidence for the SILL as a strategy instrument (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995: 10).

Because of the claims outlined above, the SILL (Oxford 1990) was used as the instrument to collect quantitative data in this study.
2.1.5. Prior research using the SILL

Forty to fifty major studies using the SILL, involving 8000-8500 language learners, have been carried out in countries around the world (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995). Some of these studies have been discussed above, others are outlined below. The results of some of the studies have not been published but have been cited by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) and Bedell and Oxford (1996).

Several studies in the USA e.g. Ehrman and Oxford, 1988; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989; Nyikos and Oxford, 1993; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995; Gardner et al., 1997, involved subjects the majority of whom were, or had been, learners of languages other than English, such as French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Thai, and Turkish. Other American studies involved ESL learners of English, e.g. Chang (1991) and Markley (1997), as did the study in South Africa of Dreyer and Oxford (1996).

Most of the participants in SILL studies carried out in non-English speaking countries have been learners of English as a Foreign Language: Mainland China (Bedell, 1993; Wen and Johnson, 1997); Egypt (Boraie et al., 1994; Touba, 1992); Indonesia (Davis and Abas, 1991); Korea (Oh, 1992; Park, 1997); Japan (Watanabe, 1990; Noguchi, 1991); Taiwan (Klassen, 1994; Yang, 1996) and Thailand (Mullins, 1992). The learners in the Puerto Rican studies (Green, 1991; Green and Oxford, 1995) were described as EFL/ESL because of the ‘hybrid’ nature (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995) of the language community in that country.

Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) assert that the “frequency of use of language learner strategies appears to be directly related to whether students are in an ESL of EFL setting (or in a hybrid of ESL and EFL environments, as in Puerto Rico)” (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995:12) and claim that learners in ESL environments have been shown to make more frequent use of strategies than EFL learners in non-English speaking communities. Green and Oxford (1995) attribute the medium to low use of strategies by subjects living in non-English speaking communities to the fact that the subjects did not need English for immediate survival purposes. Those in English-speaking communities, on the other hand, were constantly exposed to a “strong communicative demand from the environment” (Green and Oxford, 1995:266).
Studies, such as those discussed above, have shown that significant differences related to various variables, such as language proficiency, career interests, cultural background and gender have been found in the frequency of strategy use. Oxford and Burry-Stock call for studies ... to be replicated so that more consistent information becomes available within and across populations. Particularly important is more information on how students from different cultural backgrounds and different countries use language learning strategies. ... students from different countries utilize different strategies and prioritize common strategies differently (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995:19).

As far as can be ascertained, the results of only one study in Australia, using the SILL, have been published (Grainger, 1997). Grainger conducted research into the strategies of 133 first, second and third year learners of Japanese at an Australian university and found that the learners, from three broad cultural backgrounds (English speaking, European and Asian), exhibited differences in their responses to the 80-item version of the SILL; English-speaking and European background learners showed a greater preference for ‘learning about the culture’ than did Asian learners who, for their part, preferred a greater use of compensation strategies such as ‘finding different ways to express an idea’ and ‘guessing meaning’. Asian learners of Japanese also indicated that they read Japanese more than did English-speaking and European background learners.

Willing (1988) examined, by means of a survey, the language learning styles of 517 adult ESL learners in Adult Migrant Education settings in Australia. Incidental to that study and included only as a means of stimulating some discussion, were fifteen questionnaire statements pertaining to the strategies used by the learners. However, no other studies appear to have been published of the strategy use of immigrant, adult ESL learners in Australia nor, it seems, has any such study been made using the SILL.

By using the SILL and conducting the current Australian study with subjects from a wide variety of cultural and language backgrounds, it was hoped that insights would be gained of the use of language learning strategies and of the effects of variables on the strategies of immigrant, adult ESL learners of English in the Australian context.
The following chapter concerns the methodology of the study describing, firstly, the research paradigm in which the study was carried out and then the setting, subjects and data collection.
Chapter Three
Methodology

This chapter concerns the methodology of the study. Firstly, it attempts to show the perspective from which the methodology of the current study derived by presenting a broad description of relevant research paradigms and methodologies. The chapter then describes the setting, subjects and data collection of the study in greater detail.

3.1. Historical perspective

Historically, there has been much debate over methods for conducting research. Lynch (1996) describes the debate as between “advocates of positivistic, quantitative research methodology and advocates of naturalistic, qualitative research methodology” (pp 12-13). Here, positivistic refers to a variety of modified positivistic positions, including postpositivism (Phillips, D., 1990) which was a response to the criticisms of positivism, and contrasts with naturalistic positions, primarily drawing upon the constructivist (Lincoln, 1990) paradigm. These terms will be described in greater detail below.

Basic to the debate between researchers is the nature of the positivistic and the constructivist paradigms, that is, the philosophical underpinning, or the nature of the “basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990:17). Paradigms define “for inquirers what it is they are about and what falls within and outside the limits of legitimate inquiry” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:108). Such definitions are consequent on the answering of three fundamental questions, interconnected in such a way that the response to any one constrains how the others may be answered:

1. the ontological question (what is the nature of reality, what is there that can be known about it?)
2. the epistemological question (what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known?)
3. the *methodological* question (how can the inquirer go about finding whatever is believed can be known, what are the ways of finding out knowledge?) (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:83)

*Positivism* is the ‘received view’ that has dominated research in the physical and social sciences for several hundred years. It asserts that objective accounts of the world can be given. Thus, research can converge on the ‘truth’ by the investigator and the investigated remaining independent entities. The influence of one on the other are avoided; such influences are regarded as threats to validity. An experimental methodology is followed where questions and hypotheses are stated as propositions and subjected to empirical test for verification (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

*Postpositivism* represents efforts of the last few decades to overcome some of the perceived problems of *positivism*. It holds that only “partially objective accounts of the world can be produced, because all methods are flawed” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:15). Theory precedes the data and, while quantitative methods are typical, inquiry is conducted in more natural settings with viewpoints gathered from the observed
to assist in determining the meanings and purposes that people ascribe to their actions ... All these aims are accomplished largely through the increased utilization of qualitative techniques (Guba and Lincoln 1994:110).

In contrast to the postpositivistic stance, the *constructivist* position holds that as reality is not objective, there cannot be a separation of facts and values. Consequently, the emphasis in a *constructivist* paradigm is on “observing, describing, interpreting, and understanding how events take place in the real world rather than in a controlled, laboratorylike setting” (Lynch, 1996:14), typically using qualitative rather than quantitative methods. There is an interactivity between the researcher and the researched; the inquirer is a participant and facilitator in this process yet is still open to new interpretations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Thus, in a *constructivist* paradigm, meaning emerges from the research setting or, in other words, theory arises from the data.

Reichardt and Cook (1979) disputed the fixed characterisations of paradigms. They questioned the assumptions, common at that time, which inherently linked paradigm and method-type, and suggested that
The choice of research method should also depend at least partly on the demands of the research situation at hand.... In some situations the most efficacious research procedure will be quantitative whereas in others the same research purpose will be best served by a qualitative method (Reichardt and Cook, 1979:16).

Others (Smith and Heshusius, 1986) disagreed, claiming that the philosophical differences underlying a paradigm precluded linking the two at the level of methodology, but Howe (1988), argued that the epistemological level of a research paradigm need not dictate the methodology. In other words, the methodological level of a study within a constructivist paradigm, for example, could include methods traditionally associated with another, such as a postpositivist paradigm.

Lynch (1996) while encouraging the combining of paradigms, pointed out that from each of the positivistic and constructivist perspectives the basis for verifying research findings using methods of the other becomes “problematic” (Lynch, 1996:21). Nevertheless, in the field of applied linguistics, he argued for

a serious and ongoing consideration of this dialog, not with an eye toward replacing one research paradigm with another, but in order to encourage applied linguists to be open to different approaches to research and to be clear about the philosophical basis for their inquiry (Lynch, 1996:177).

3.2. Applied linguistics research

Much research in the broad field of applied linguistics has, in the past, been conducted from within the postpositive paradigm. Similarly, research in the area of second language learner strategies has been conducted from the same perspective; for example, research which has used the SILL has focussed almost exclusively on the use of quantitative methods (Green and Oxford, 1995; Dreyer and Oxford, 1996; Okada et al., 1996; Gardner et al., 1997; Grainger, 1997; Markley, 1997; Park, 1997; Wharton, 2000). On the other hand, strategy research using qualitative data gathered from interviews with learners (Hosenfeld, 1976; Naiman et al., 1978; Wenden, 1981; O'Malley et al., 1985a, 1985b; Pearson, 1988; O'Malley et al., 1989; Chamot and Küpper, 1989) has operated from a constructivist position.
However, very few studies of learner strategies (Yang, 1996) have been found which, while operating from within a *postpositive* paradigm, have used both quantitative and qualitative methodology. The current study, in using such methodology is, therefore, an attempt to redress that shortcoming.

### 3.3. The current study

This study was carried out from within a *postpositive* paradigm. That is, it firstly gathered quantitative data, the subjects’ responses to the SILL, and analysed that data using traditional, statistical procedures, such as estimating reliability of scores, correlation, t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), chi-square and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The SILL was chosen because it is an instrument for which reliability is claimed and which has been used in several other second language learning settings in different parts of the world (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995). Thus, it was believed that the administration of the SILL could gather quantitative data on the language learning strategies of the participants and, at the same time, provide some basis of comparison for the language learning setting in Australia.

Secondly, however, qualitative data was gathered from the learners because it was also believed that the quantitative data of itself, in this case the responses to the SILL, could not reveal any of the “meanings and purposes that people ascribe to their actions” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:110). In short

> the careful measurement, generalizable samples, experimental control, and statistical tools of good quantitative studies are precious assets. When they are combined with the up-close, deep, credible understanding of complex real-world contexts that characterize good qualitative studies, we have a very powerful mix (Miles and Huberman, 1994:42).

The qualitative data from classroom observation, think-aloud protocols, retrospective accounts and interviews could generate that “powerful mix” by enabling clarification and finer interpretation of the quantitative findings which, in turn, could strengthen the formation of theory and increase understanding of the use of strategies by English language learners.

The collection of the quantitative and qualitative data will be described in detail, later in this chapter, and also in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight.
3.4. Background to the study

3.4.1. Setting

This study was carried out at an Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES) Centre in Melbourne, the capital city (population approximately 4 million) of the State of Victoria, in Australia.

Adult Migrant Education Services

Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES) is a major provider of English language and literacy programs for non-English speaking background (NESB) adults in the state of Victoria, Australia. AMES conducts English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for newly arrived migrants and private students, labour market training courses for registered job-seekers, and on-the-job training for industry. At the time of the data collection, AMES was within the portfolio of the Victorian government Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Training (AMES, 1995).

The primary aim of AMES is to provide ESL and literacy training to adult immigrants and people of non-English speaking background (NESB) enabling them to gain sufficient English for employment or further study and so to participate productively in Australian society (AMES, 1994).

Teaching staff of AMES Victoria are qualified, experienced teachers who possess post-graduate Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) qualifications in addition to their three or four year general teacher education qualifications (AMES, 1992).

Prior to 1992, AMES received all of its funding recurrently from the Commonwealth of Australia Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. From 1993 AMES diversified its activities and now receives much of its income through competitive tendering (AMES 1995).
**Programs**

AMES delivers a wide range of language and literacy programs to learners of non English speaking background (NESB) who are in the following categories:

(i) newly arrived permanent residents who require the development of English language skills for successful settlement into the Australian community;

(ii) job-seekers for whom English language and literacy skills are vital for successful entry into the workforce and progress within it;

(iii) those preparing for further study and who require assistance with developing language skills needed in tertiary courses or labour market training programs;

(iv) those in the workforce who need to improve their English language skills to meet the competency standards required for Australian industry award structures;

(v) temporary residents and visitors whose stay in Australia will be greatly enhanced by the development of language communication skills (AMES, 1992).

Subjects who participated in this study were drawn from the first two, Category (i) and Category (ii), of the above five categories.

**Category (i)**

The courses offered by AMES for clients in Category (i), newly arrived permanent residents, are delivered by AMES for the Commonwealth of Australia Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA) as part of that department’s Settlement Program.

For inclusion in such a course funded by the DIEA clients must:

- have reached 18 years of age;
- have recently arrived in Australia and been granted permanent residence;
• have less than functional level of English (considered to be Level 2 *minimum social proficiency* on the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR), outlined below);

• not have already received more than 510 hours of tuition¹ under the DIEA settlement program.

*Category (ii)*

Courses for clients in Category (ii) above provide English Language and Literacy courses for the long term unemployed and job seekers and, at the time that this study was carried out, were delivered by AMES on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) under the Special Intervention Program (SIP) and the Office of Labour Market Adjustment (OLMA) (AMES, 1994).

To participate in a course conducted on behalf of the DEET clients must be:

• long-term unemployed or

• registered with the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) as a job seeker, and

• needing improved English language skills for participation in work or training.

*Assessment of English proficiency*

On applying for inclusion in an AMES course, clients are individually assessed by trained language assessors, given an Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR) (Ingram and Wylie, 1982) (see below) and assisted in identifying their goals. They are then referred to an appropriate course (AMES, 1992).

---

¹ Immigrants arriving in Australia, who have been granted permanent residence, are normally entitled to attend up to 510 hours of English tuition funded by the DIEA.
**Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR)**

The ASLPR are ratings of English proficiency in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Ingram and Wylie, 1982). The ASLPR was developed to describe an overall framework of proficiency development within which new English Second Language programmes for migrants and refugees to Australia could be designed. It is a nine-point scale which, at each point from zero to native-like, provides a performance-based definition of second language proficiency (Ingram, 1980:1).

The nine proficiency levels are:

0  zero proficiency  
0+ initial proficiency  
1- elementary proficiency  
1  minimum survival proficiency  
1+ survival proficiency  
2  minimum social proficiency  
3  minimum vocational proficiency  
4  vocational proficiency  
5  native-like proficiency

The approximate ASLPR levels of the classes from which participants in this study were drawn are shown in Table 3.1 (Column 3).

**ASLPR levels of participants**

At the AMES Centre in which the study was carried out, courses were provided only for students whose proficiency levels were at or below ASLPR 2, *minimum social proficiency*. Thus the English proficiency of all the participants in this study was assessed at most, as *minimum social proficiency*. However, as Table 3.1 shows, the proficiency level of the majority of subjects was lower than ASLPR 2; most were at the 1- *elementary proficiency*, 1 *minimum survival proficiency* or 1+ *survival proficiency* level, while the proficiency levels of some individual participants had been assessed at ASLPR 0+ level.
Table 3.1  
Characteristics of classes and numbers of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Hours of instruction per week</th>
<th>Approximate ASLPR level</th>
<th>Number of males</th>
<th>Number of females</th>
<th>Total number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1+ to 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1 to 1+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1- to 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1+ to 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 7 (Evening)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1- to 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1+ to 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1 to 1+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0+ to 1-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** | **63** | **91** | **154** |

Types of classes provided by the AMES Centre in the study

Altogether, a total of sixteen classes were provided by the AMES Centre in which this study was carried out. Eleven of these were funded by the DIEA, and of the eleven, eight classes were conducted during the day while three were evening classes. The other five classes in the Centre were provided during the day, for job-seekers, and were funded by the DEET.

The number of hours English tuition offered each week at the AMES Centre varied according to class type and level of proficiency. Table 3.1 shows (Column 2) that all DEET classes and the DIEA daytime classes of highest level (ASLPR 1+ to 2) received twenty hours of tuition per week. DIEA classes of lower proficiency and evening classes received fewer hours of instruction.
3.4.2. Stages of data collection

The collection of quantitative and qualitative data from the 154 subjects was carried out in four stages, as outlined below:

**Stage 1**  the collection of biographical information, in response to a questionnaire;

**Stage 2**  the collection of responses to the SILL, in English (L2);

**Stage 3**  the collection of responses to the SILL, in the first language (L1);

**Stage 4**  the gathering of data, from observation, individual and group interviews, think-aloud and stimulated recall.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 were completed simultaneously over a period of three weeks. Stage 3 was carried out approximately six weeks later. Stage 4 commenced after the first two stages and continued over a period of approximately three months.

**Stage 1  -  collection of biographical data**

All subjects were requested to provide biographical information pertaining to their English language learning: age, sex, country of origin, first language, knowledge of other languages, length of time in Australia, length of time studying English, occupation in country of origin, present occupation and reasons for learning English (Appendix 1: Background Questionnaire). The data gathered is summarised in the section Characteristics of subjects below.

**Stage 2  -  collection of responses to the SILL in English**

All subjects were requested to indicate their frequency of use of particular language learning strategies by responding, using a five-point scale, to a 50 statement questionnaire in English (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), (Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL), for Speakers of Other Languages Learning English) (Oxford, 1990) (see Appendix 2). It was emphasised to subjects that as there was no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer they should give an honest response to each questionnaire statement.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 were carried out simultaneously within each class. The time needed for collection of this data varied from forty-five to ninety-five
minutes, depending on the proficiency level of the subjects in each class. The average time taken by subjects to provide the data was seventy minutes (Table 3.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Time taken (minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 4</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 5</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 6 evening</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 7 evening</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 1</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 3</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 4</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 5</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage 3 - collection of responses to the SILL in the L1

Approximately six weeks after their first responses to the English (L2) format, seventy-two of the original 154 subjects were selected to respond to the SILL in their first language (L1). Those seventy-two were from the six language groups in which a translation of the SILL was available: Arabic, Chinese, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. Translations of the SILL were obtained, following an e-mail request to Professor Rebecca Oxford. However, of the possible seventy-two subjects of these six language groups who had responded to the SILL in English, responses to a translation of the SILL in the L1 were obtained from only fifty subjects (see Table 3.3); twenty-two subjects were absent from the AMES Centre at the times of administrations of the questionnaires in the L1. All subjects completed their responses to the SILL in their first language within a period of thirty to forty minutes.

Translations of the questionnaire were not available in other relevant languages and so subjects from other language groups, particularly the numerically significant groups of Khmer, Farsi, Serbian and Vietnamese could not be included in this stage of the project.
Table 3.3
Number of subjects responding to SILL in both English and first language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language group</th>
<th>Number responding to SILL in English</th>
<th>Number responding to SILL in L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage 4 - the gathering of qualitative data

Nineteen subjects were selected for further research. For practical reasons, most of these subjects were from an intact group, the DEET 1 class. Over a period of three months, these subjects were requested to provide further data on their language learning practices by being observed in the language learning classroom and by participating in audio-taped individual and group interviews with the investigator. Stimulated recall and think aloud protocols were also used to collect data during this stage of the study. During the initial interview, the Interview Schedule (Appendix 3) was followed, with each subject receiving the same questions in the same order. Later interviews, however, followed a semi-structured format (Burns, 1994); a broad interview guide was developed but participants were encouraged to offer their own “perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984:77). This stage of the data collection will be described in greater detail in Chapter Six.

3.4.3. Subjects

As mentioned above, the participants in the study were drawn from two of the AMES client categories, and so were:

(i) newly arrived permanent residents who require the development of English language skills for successful settlement into the Australian community, or

(ii) job-seekers for whom English language and literacy skills are vital for successful entry into the workforce and progress within it.
Many of those job-seekers from category (ii) had been made redundant following changes in federal government policy on tariffs and trade which had affected industries, such as clothing and textiles. As part of a retraining scheme for workers so affected, DEET offered an option of attending English classes. Thus, many of the participants in that retraining scheme were studying English at the AMES centre when the study was carried out.

**Selection of subjects**

In consultation with teachers, it was decided to include in this study only those students whose level of English proficiency would enable them to have some possibility of understanding, in English, the requirements of the project. While it was believed that data gained from very low English proficiency students would have been pertinent and of value to this study, such information could have been gained only with the assistance of interpreters. No assistance from interpreters was available to this project and so, on purely practical grounds, very low proficiency students were not included in the project.

Thus, four of the sixteen classes at this AMES Centre were excluded from the project and participation was confined to students in seven DIEA (five day and two evening classes) and five DEET classes (see Table 3.1), a total of twelve classes.

**Characteristics of the subjects**

Stage 1 of the data collection yielded the following biographical details of the subjects.

**Sex**

Of the 154 respondents in the study, 63 (41%) were male and 91 (59%) female.
Age

The 154 subjects ranged in age from 19 years to 63 (see Figure 3.1), with a mean age of 37.0 years. For the 63 males in the study, the mean age was 37.2 years, slightly higher than the mean age of 36.8 years of the 91 females. For both groups the median age was 35 years.

**Figure 3.1**
**Age of subjects (males and females)**

Language background

The subjects provided information on their language background, naming their own first language (L1). A total of twenty-nine language backgrounds were thus identified. Of the total 154 subjects, 116 identified with the seven largest language groups: Chinese (n=47) consisting of Cantonese, Hokkien, Mandarin and Teochew; Khmer (n= 12); Spanish (n= 12); Farsi (n= 10); Serbian (n= 10); Vietnamese (n= 10); Arabic (n= 8) and Polish (n= 7) (see Figure 3.2). The remaining 38 subjects were represented by the other eighteen language groups, as shown on Table 3.4.
Figure 3.2
First language background of subjects (N=154)

- Chinese: 31%
- Other: 25%
- Polish: 5%
- Arabic: 5%
- Vietnamese: 6%
- Serbian: 6%
- Farsi: 6%
- Spanish: 8%
- Khmer: 8%
Table 3.4  
Language background of subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1 group</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including Cantonese</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teochew</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farsi/Persian</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panjabi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pashto</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>154</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Previous language learning experience

Subjects were requested to indicate what other languages they knew, apart from their first language and English. Of the total 154 subjects, eighty-four indicated a knowledge of a third language, thirty a knowledge of four languages, while nine claimed a knowledge of at least five languages (Table 3.5). Subjects were not asked however, to describe their level of proficiency in the particular language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of languages</th>
<th>Knowledge of two languages (L1 and English)</th>
<th>Knowledge of three languages</th>
<th>Knowledge of four languages</th>
<th>Knowledge of at least five languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Length of time living in Australia

The length of time in which subjects had been living in Australia ranged from as little as one month to 432 months (36 years). On average, subjects had been living in Australia for 4 years and 1 month. However, a total of ninety (58%) of the subjects, had been in the country for two years or less and of these, fifty-five (36%) had been in the country for one year or less, as Figure 3.3 indicates.

On average, subjects from the DEET classes, had lived in Australia for 7 years and 3 months, while subjects from DIEA classes had been in Australia, for approximately 18 months.

Length of time learning English prior to arrival in Australia

Figure 3.4 shows the length of time over which subjects had learnt English before arrival in Australia; a range from zero to 192 months (16 years). The average length of time spent in learning English prior to arrival in Australia was 39.8 months.

Differences in prior English learning were noted between the subjects in DIEA and DEET classes. Eighty-four (75%) of DIEA subjects had spent an average of 52.7 months learning English before arriving in Australia, compared with 70 subjects (44%) of the subjects from DEET classes, who had spent, on average, 24.4 months (see Figures 3.4 and 3.5).
Figure 3.3
Length of time living in Australia (N=154)

Figure 3.4
Time spent learning English before arrival in Australia (N=154)
Length of time attending English classes in Australia

Since arriving in Australia subjects had attended English classes for periods of time ranging from one month to three and a half years (Figure 3.6). For all subjects, the average time was 10.2 months, with DEET subjects having spent an average of 14.4 months and DIEA subjects an average of 6.9 months in classes in Australia.
Figure 3.6
Time spent in English classes in Australia (N=154)

![Graph showing time spent in English classes in Australia](image)

**Occupation**

The majority of subjects attending AMES ‘day’ classes listed their current occupation as ‘student’. Two indicated their occupation as ‘housewife’, and one as ‘cleaner’. The occupations of the subjects attending the two ‘evening’ classes which were included in the study are shown in Table 3.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 6 (n = 9)</td>
<td>computer operator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>elec process worker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>service &amp; application</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>engineer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>room attendant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>carpenter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>physiotherapy aide</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 7 (n = 8)</td>
<td>factory worker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bundler</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mechanic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The occupations in the country of origin of the nineteen subjects included in Stage 4 of the study are shown in Appendix 6.
Reasons for learning English

Subjects were asked to indicate their reasons for attending classes to learn English as one or more of:

- interested in the language
- interested in the Australian way of life
- have friends who speak English
- need English for further study
- need English for a job
- need English to talk to the family

As subjects were not requested to rank their responses in order of importance to themselves, Figure 3.7 indicates only the number of subjects who responded to each category. Of the 154 subjects, 136 indicated that they were learning English because they needed it for a job, while an interest in the Australian way of life and an interest in the language were given as reasons by 114 and 108 subjects respectively. Ninety-four subjects indicated that they were learning English because they had friends who spoke English, or because they needed English for further study, while forty-four needed English to talk to their family. Other reasons given for wanting to learn English included “travel”, “to know the council and the rules of Australia” and “to communicate with others in Australia”.

Figure 3.7
Reasons for learning English in Australia
3.4.4. Data collection

Over a period of three weeks, students in the twelve classes were approached by the researcher who, after outlining the purpose of the study, invited them to participate. Students were provided with a written description of the project, which indicated what their involvement would be should they volunteer to participate (see Appendix 4: Language Learning Project - Information To Students and Appendix 5: Consent Form). It was emphasised to the students that participation was voluntary and, moreover, that they were free to withdraw from the project at any time during its duration and to withdraw any information which they had provided. The strict confidentiality of their responses was guaranteed. Not all students in each class were present at the time of the researcher's visit but of those present only one declined to participate.

Problems encountered during the data collection

Discarding of responses of six participants

One hundred and sixty (160) students volunteered to participate in the study, 84 from DIEA classes and 76 from DEET classes. However, the responses of six volunteers from the lowest level DEET class were later discarded, leaving 154 subjects as participants in the study.

Observation of these six subjects during the administration of the SILL (Stage 2) indicated that they were not able to respond unaided to the task; several seemed to experience considerable difficulty understanding the statements and took approximately ninety minutes to complete their responses while others were observed to be not engaged in the task at all. Nevertheless, all returned a completed questionnaire, but had responded to most of the items with a ‘2’ indicating little, if any, discrimination in the completion of the questionnaire. Interviews with two of the subjects after the SILL administration revealed a very low level of English proficiency and little understanding of the questionnaire. The investigator believed therefore that the task had been beyond these six subjects, and that the responses they had made did not really inform on their strategy use.

As the purpose of the questionnaire had been to gather data on the subjects' strategy use it was felt that to retain the responses from these six volunteers,
knowing that their responses were not genuine, would serve only to confound the data set. Thus, their responses were discarded, leaving 154 subjects as participants in the study.

**Non-understanding or misunderstanding of SILL items**

Problems of understanding were evident at the time of the administration of the SILL (Stage 2). Several subjects in classes at all levels of proficiency asked for clarification of certain words, such as those shown on Table 3.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>SILL statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>rhymes</td>
<td>I use <em>rhymes</em> to remember new English words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>flashcards</td>
<td>I use <em>flashcards</em> to remember new English words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>physically</td>
<td>I <em>physically</em> act out new English words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>patterns</td>
<td>I try to find <em>patterns</em> in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>gestures</td>
<td>When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use <em>gestures</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>META</td>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>schedule</td>
<td>I plan my <em>schedule</em> so I will have enough time to study English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>META</td>
<td>Q37</td>
<td>goals</td>
<td>I have clear <em>goals</em> for improving my English skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, some subjects in the middle and lower level proficiency classes also sought clarification of other words, shown on Table 3.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>SILL statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>mental</td>
<td>I remember a new English word by making a <em>mental</em> picture of a situation in which the word might be used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>native</td>
<td>I try to talk like <em>native</em> English speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>practise</td>
<td>I <em>practise</em> the sounds of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>pleasure</td>
<td>I read for <em>pleasure</em> in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>translate</td>
<td>I try not to <em>translate</em> word-for-word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>guesses</td>
<td>To understand unfamiliar English words, I make <em>guesses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>make up</td>
<td>I <em>make up</em> new words if I do not know the right ones in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>phrase</td>
<td>If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or <em>phrase</em> that means the same thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>META</td>
<td>Q32</td>
<td>pay attention</td>
<td>I <em>pay attention</em> when someone is speaking English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFF</td>
<td>Q41</td>
<td>reward or treat</td>
<td>I give myself a <em>reward or treat</em> when I do well in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>Q50</td>
<td>culture</td>
<td>I try to learn about the <em>culture</em> of English speakers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63
Subjects in the lowest proficiency class (DEET5) though, did not ask for any clarification of SILL statements perhaps because they were unable to do so. As mentioned earlier, many in this class had been observed to be not engaged in the task of responding to the SILL. It seems likely that their non-engagement could have been due to their inability to understand the meaning of some, at least, of the SILL statements.

Later, when some of the subjects from classes of the **highest proficiency** levels were interviewed (Stage 4), it was obvious that they too, had not understood the meaning of certain of the SILL statements. Several, for example, sought clarification of Q7 *I physically act out new English words*. Kit, a doctor from one of the highest proficiency classes, did not know the meaning of the word *physically*:

**Int:** What about no 7? Do you ever do that one?
**Kit:** No, I don't know. Never, I think so. What does it mean really?

Similarly, Hui from DEET1, the highest proficiency class:

**Int:** ...Can you give me some examples of when you do that? *I physically act out new words*. Can you tell me what that one means? What does it mean *I physically act out new English words*?
**Hui:** Physically means um ...very hard to act out the new words, is it? Is a...

and, likewise, Mena did not understand the meaning of the statement:

**Mena:** What it mean physically act?

The word *rhymes* also caused some problems, again with Hui:

**Int:** How about No 5, that's the next one. *I use rhymes to remember a new English word*. Can you tell me what that one means?
**Hui:** This one rhymes? I don't know what this one means.

Peter though had no such problem, and clearly indicated knowledge of the meaning of the word:

**Peter:** Sometimes I use rhymes to remember the word. When some word is similar... Nearly same one word and second word, the first and second word.
**Int:** Oh right, yeah. For example, can you give me an example?
**Peter:** Stay, may.
However, the meaning of 'dividing' in Q21 I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand posed a problem for him:

Int: Right. Do you ever do this one though, by dividing it into parts?
Peter: Dividing. Not sure of this word.

One subject, from the class of the lowest proficiency level indicated during interview a non-understanding of the word 'summary' from Q23 (I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English):

LL: I understand little, this summary, don't know.

Comments from other subjects during interview revealed that they had probably misunderstood the meaning of a statement. Rather than understanding Q33, for instance, as a metacognitive statement,

I try to find out how to be a better learner of English

subjects, such as Sandra and Betty, had clearly interpreted the statement to mean:

I try to be a better learner of English.

For example,

Int: Number 33. Can you give me some examples? What do you do for that?
Sandra: I try to, like when I talk, I try to use the verbs and the words, try to remember the situation when I read too I try too because grammar is a little difficult. Try to see the grammar in the, when I read.

and again

Int: How about 33? I try to find out how to be a better learner of English. What do you do about that one?
Betty: Mm. I try because maybe before when I started learning English I couldn’t, I only heard something in TV, but I didn’t understand. Now I can understand so I can take more these programs, more radio, more books, because I understand more so now I can do something more. I can start and learn myself a little bit.

3.5. Summary

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the research paradigms and methodologies which are pertinent to the current study, and described the paradigm from which the study was carried out. It then described the AMES setting for the study as well as the subjects, in terms of a number of
biographical details: ASLPR ratings of proficiency; sex; age; language background; previous language learning experience; length of time in Australia; length of time learning English prior to arrival in Australia; length of time attending English classes in Australia and reasons for learning English. The chapter concluded by outlining the stages in the collection of data and some of the problems encountered in that collection.

The next chapter will discuss the analysis of reliability of the scores of SILL responses.
Chapter Four

Analyses of Reliability

This chapter describes and discusses the analyses of reliability of the subjects’ response scores, using a strongly continuous five-point scale, on administrations of the SILL in English, and in the L1. Using SPSS (1996), these analyses were carried out as it is believed essential to establish the reliability of scores on which data description and analysis are based, thus preventing “the accumulation of results based on relatively invalid or unreliable measures” (Wilkinson et al., 1999:6).

It is recognised that, in discussing reliability, it is the measurements or scores on a particular subscale which may be proved unreliable, not the subscale itself. Thus, implicit in any discussion of the reliability of a subscale, are the particular set of scores of that subscale, scores which were obtained in the particular context in which the SILL was administered in this study.

The chapter is organised in two parts. Part One reports on the analyses of reliability of the scores of the fifty item SILL (version 7.0) following its administration to 154 participants, in English. It firstly reports on the analysis of the overall reliability of the English format of the SILL, then on the analyses of reliability of each of the six subscales. Part Two compares the results of the analyses of reliability of the scores of the SILL in English with those in the L1 of fifty of the original 154 participants.

4.1. Part One: Reliability of SILL - overall and subscales: English format (N=154)

4.1.1. Overall reliability

Following the administration of the English format of SILL (version 7.0) (Oxford (1990) to the 154 subjects, an analysis was made of the overall reliability of the instrument (Cronbach alpha for internal consistency). The overall reliability was found to be .86. This was somewhat lower than the coefficients in the range of .93 to .98 obtained in administrations by other
researchers (Green and Oxford, 1995) but, nevertheless, was considered quite acceptable.

The report of analyses of reliability of scores of the six SILL subscales now follows, below.

4.1.2. Reliability of subscales

After the analysis of overall reliability of the SILL analyses was made of the SILL subscales. As outlined in Chapter Two, the version of the SILL used in this study consisted of fifty items which are divided into six subscales, as shown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was these six subscales on which analyses of reliability were carried out. The approach to analysis was in three parts:

(i) the examination of the overall reliability index, in which a range of zero to one is possible, of each of the six SILL subscales. In two similar studies (Park, 1997; Gardner et al., 1997), reliability co-efficients for the six SILL subscales ranged, with one exception (.43) from .61 to .87. Thus, it was decided that the level of reliability for the purposes of this research, was deemed adequate at a level of .65.

(ii) the examination of the internal consistency of the subscale at the item level to determine the overall satisfactoriness of the subscale. Considering general discussion in the field of applied linguistics (Hughes, 1989) which suggests an item-total correlation of .30 to determine internal consistency, a somewhat more conservative level of .25 was set in this study as the criterion necessary for an item to be considered as relating satisfactorily to the subscale as a whole;

(iii) a discussion of those scales, the scores of which were considered to be unreliable.
4.1.3. Results of analysis of reliability of subscales (English format of SILL)

It can be seen in Table 4.1 that the reliability index for the six subscales ranged from a minimum of .48 for the Affective subscale to .77 for the Social subscale. Two subscales, Compensation (.55) and Affective (.48) did not reach the satisfactory criterion level of .65.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Reliability Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory (MEM)</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive (COG)</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation (COMP)</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive (META)</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective (AFF)</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social (SOC)</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1
Reliability Index of SILL subscales

Each subscale was then examined at the item-level to decide on the overall satisfactoriness of the subscale.
**The Memory subscale**

The overall reliability index of the Memory subscale (.65), seen on Table 4.1, was considered satisfactory according to the criterion outlined in (i) above. Further, when examined at the item level all items (Q1 to Q9) achieved a corrected item-total correlation of at least .25 (see Table 4.2), as outlined in (ii) above. Thus Memory (MEM) fulfilled the criteria, so could be considered a satisfactory subscale.

### Table 4.2

**Reliability Analysis: Memory subscale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>VARIANCE</td>
<td>ITEM-IF ITEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>24.7078</td>
<td>21.5938</td>
<td>.2655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>24.7208</td>
<td>21.5098</td>
<td>.2902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>24.6753</td>
<td>20.4560</td>
<td>.2848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>24.8831</td>
<td>19.2412</td>
<td>.4596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>25.4935</td>
<td>19.7156</td>
<td>.3159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>25.6299</td>
<td>19.3196</td>
<td>.3255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>25.4286</td>
<td>18.9655</td>
<td>.4016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>24.5455</td>
<td>19.9358</td>
<td>.3747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>24.6429</td>
<td>20.8193</td>
<td>.2765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

----

**RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N OF CASES</th>
<th>N OF ITEMS</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>154.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.6548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Cognitive subscale

Initially, the Cognitive (COG) subscale met the criterion of .65 for overall reliability. However, when examined at the item-level it could be seen that the overall reliability had masked the internal inconsistency of the subscale; ten of the fourteen items met the criterion of .25 item-total correlation value but four were below that level with a minimum value of .03 (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3
Reliability Analysis: Cognitive subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>Item-Total Correlation</td>
<td>Item Deleted Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>43.6169</td>
<td>34.5124</td>
<td>.3163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>43.9740</td>
<td>33.8817</td>
<td>.3281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>43.5390</td>
<td>34.2632</td>
<td>.3460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>43.9610</td>
<td>36.2338</td>
<td>.2435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>43.7208</td>
<td>35.4836</td>
<td>.2636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>43.3571</td>
<td>34.5579</td>
<td>.2925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>43.8442</td>
<td>33.8971</td>
<td>.3738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>44.4675</td>
<td>34.5512</td>
<td>.3304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>43.8377</td>
<td>32.8558</td>
<td>.4308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>43.9870</td>
<td>33.2678</td>
<td>.2851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>44.0325</td>
<td>36.4891</td>
<td>.1506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>43.9026</td>
<td>35.1342</td>
<td>.2625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>44.1753</td>
<td>37.6619</td>
<td>.0293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>44.2987</td>
<td>36.1716</td>
<td>.1802</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Coefficients

N of cases = 154.0
N of items = 14

Alpha = .6468

The ten items on the COG subscale which did relate well to the subscale were:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Questionnaire statement</th>
<th>Corrected Item-total correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>I say or write new English words several times</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>I try to talk like native English speakers</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>I practise the sounds of English</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>I start conversations in English</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>I read for pleasure in English</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>I first skim an English passage (read the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four items which did not correlate highly with the subscale as a whole were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Questionnaire statement</th>
<th>Corrected Item-total correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>I use the English words I know in different ways</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>I try to find patterns in English</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>I try not to translate word-for-word</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The underlying construct of the satisfactory items could be described as direct cognitive strategies: e.g. I practise, I look for, I find, I write… In contrast, it could be suggested that the underlying construct of Q13, Q20 and Q23 is ‘transformational organisation’; in other words, those were strategies which required subjects to act on the English language which they had acquired, and to organise it further in an attempt to extend their proficiency. It may be that, in the process of second language acquisition, the use of such strategies occurs later and so, for the subjects in this study, many of whom were in the early stages of English language acquisition, responses to such questionnaire items were not consistent. Q22 I try not to translate word-for-word seems not to fit either of the two constructs mentioned; perhaps its negativity was the cause of its inconsistency with the COG subscale.
The four items which did not relate well to the COG subscale were then removed from it and a reliability index generated on the remaining ten items (see Table 4.4). However, an increase in reliability was negligible; the index increased to only .66, and two items (Q14 and Q21) which had previously met the item-total correlation criterion of .25 now, with item-total correlations of .24 and .23 respectively, failed to meet that same criterion.

Table 4.4
Reliability Analysis: revised Cognitive subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>VARIANCE</th>
<th>CORRECTED ITEM-SCALE TOTAL</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>30.9416</td>
<td>23.8855</td>
<td>.3525</td>
<td>.6307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>31.2987</td>
<td>23.9625</td>
<td>.3003</td>
<td>.6411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>30.8636</td>
<td>23.6610</td>
<td>.3856</td>
<td>.6244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>31.0455</td>
<td>25.2724</td>
<td>.2404</td>
<td>.6513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>30.6818</td>
<td>23.9177</td>
<td>.3263</td>
<td>.6357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>31.1688</td>
<td>23.7883</td>
<td>.3667</td>
<td>.6280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>31.7922</td>
<td>24.1788</td>
<td>.3406</td>
<td>.6332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>31.1623</td>
<td>22.6597</td>
<td>.4503</td>
<td>.6097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>31.3117</td>
<td>23.4316</td>
<td>.2568</td>
<td>.6550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>31.2273</td>
<td>25.0264</td>
<td>.2339</td>
<td>.6533</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 154.0
N OF ITEMS = 10
ALPHA = .6605

Nevertheless, with a reliability index of .65 and ten of the fourteen items meeting the criterion of item-level correlation of .25, the Cognitive subscale was judged, cautiously, as satisfactory.
**The Compensation subscale**

In generating an overall reliability of only .55, the Compensation (COMP) subscale did not meet the criterion of a reliability of .65. Further, as can be seen on Table 4.5 below, two of its six items (Q27, Q28) with values of .10 and .20, did not meet the criterion of an item-total correlation of at least .25.

**Table 4.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compensation subscale</th>
<th>RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (COMP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS</td>
<td>SCALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>16.8701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>16.4610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>17.1623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27</td>
<td>17.1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28</td>
<td>17.0455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>16.4156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four items which met the criterion of item-total correlation of more than .25 were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Questionnaire statement</th>
<th>Corrected Item-total correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those items which did not generate an item-total correlation of .25, thus indicating that they did not relate well with the subscale as a whole were:
The underlying construct of the items Q24, Q25, Q26 and Q29, and hence that of the COMP subscale, seemed to be guessing and circumlocution to overcome a non-understanding, or an inability to express, meaning.

The other two items, Q27 and Q28 do not, as shown above, correlate well with the Compensation subscale, nor do they seem to be related to each other. Q28, on the one hand, is concerned with guessing but not with guessing of meaning. Rather, the underlying construct seems to be the guessing of direction of a conversation. Q27, with an emphasis on without looking up every new word may be more closely related to items concerning translation on other subscales e.g. Q22 (I try not to translate word-for-word) on the COG subscale. Alternatively, Q27 might simply have been too vague and open to many different interpretations.

In an attempt to increase the overall reliability of the COMP subscale the poorly correlating items, Q27 and Q28, were removed from the subscale and reliability analysis was carried out again on the remaining four items. However, the reliability index increased to only .58, still not meeting the criterion of .65 set for this study, as is shown in Table 4.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Questionnaire statement</th>
<th>Corrected Item-total correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q27</td>
<td>I read English without looking up every new word</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28</td>
<td>I try to guess what the other person will say next in English</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.6
Reliability Analysis: revised Compensation subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM–TOTAL STATISTICS</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>VARIANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>10.8800</td>
<td>4.6384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>10.4000</td>
<td>4.7347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>11.4800</td>
<td>4.9078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>10.5000</td>
<td>6.1327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reliability Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N OF CASES</th>
<th>N OF ITEMS</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.5819</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The option of increasing the number of items on the Compensation subscale to increase the reliability index was next considered. The Spearman Brown prophesy formula was therefore applied to ascertain the minimum number of subscale items necessary for reliability to increase and so meet the criterion level of .65. Following application of the formula

\[ n = \frac{r_{ttd} (1 - r_t)}{r_{tt} (1 - r_{ttd})} \]

where \( n \) is the number of times that the test must be increased with similar items, \( r_{ttd} \) is the desired level of reliability and \( r_{tt} \) is the present level of reliability (Hatch and Lazaraton 1991: 536-7), it was found that lengthening the Compensation subscale by 1.5 times its length i.e. to nine similar items instead of six, could increase the reliability index of the scale to a minimum acceptable level of .65.

Thus the COMP scale was not valid in its present form of six items. To increase its reliability the length of the subscale would need to be increased to a minimum of nine similar items.
The Metacognitive subscale

The overall reliability index of .76 of the Metacognitive (META) subscale met the criterion of .65 outlined above, as can be seen on Table 4.7, below. Further, when examined at the item level all items (Q30 to Q38) met the criterion of corrected item-total correlation of at least .25. Thus the META subscale fulfilled the criteria and so could be considered satisfactory.

Table 4.7
Reliability Analysis: Metacognitive subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SCALE MEAN IF ITEM DELETED</th>
<th>SCALE VARIANCE IF ITEM DELETED</th>
<th>CORRECTED ITEM- TOTAL CORRELATION IF ITEM DELETED</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>29.8636</td>
<td>21.3081</td>
<td>0.4233</td>
<td>0.7421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>29.9221</td>
<td>20.2292</td>
<td>0.5530</td>
<td>0.7222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32</td>
<td>29.7013</td>
<td>20.9559</td>
<td>0.4435</td>
<td>0.7390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q33</td>
<td>29.7338</td>
<td>20.7064</td>
<td>0.4743</td>
<td>0.7342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>30.4481</td>
<td>21.5038</td>
<td>0.3442</td>
<td>0.7550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35</td>
<td>30.5065</td>
<td>21.5588</td>
<td>0.3461</td>
<td>0.7544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36</td>
<td>30.2727</td>
<td>20.6833</td>
<td>0.4549</td>
<td>0.7372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q37</td>
<td>30.2532</td>
<td>20.1381</td>
<td>0.5090</td>
<td>0.7282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38</td>
<td>30.0000</td>
<td>21.5425</td>
<td>0.4305</td>
<td>0.7412</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-----------------------------

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 154.0
N OF ITEMS = 9
ALPHA = .7615
The Affective subscale

Table 4.8, below, shows that the overall reliability index of the Affective (AFF) subscale did not meet the minimum criterion of a level of .65. Moreover, only three of its six items met the criterion of .25 item-total correlation (Q41 I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English; Q43 I write down my feelings in a language learning diary; Q44 I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English). Three items, with a minimum value of .15 did not meet that criterion (Q39 I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English; Q40 I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake; Q42 I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English).

Table 4.8
Reliability Analysis: Affective subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>VARIANCE</td>
<td>ITEM-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>DELETED</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DELETED</td>
<td>CORRELATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39</td>
<td>14.9416</td>
<td>9.5325</td>
<td>.2300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q40</td>
<td>14.5649</td>
<td>10.4435</td>
<td>.1550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q41</td>
<td>15.1818</td>
<td>8.6072</td>
<td>.2883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q42</td>
<td>15.2143</td>
<td>9.8950</td>
<td>.1474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q43</td>
<td>15.9026</td>
<td>8.4937</td>
<td>.3138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q44</td>
<td>14.8442</td>
<td>8.7076</td>
<td>.3264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

------

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 154.0
N OF ITEMS = 6
ALPHA = .4843

To remove the three poorly correlating items in an attempt to increase the reliability index would reduce the subscale to three items, thus making it impractical. Further, the overall reliability index was considered too low for the practical application of the Spearman Brown prophesy formula. Thus it was concluded that the AFF subscale was not internally consistent.
The Social subscale

The Social (SOC) subscale, with an overall reliability level of .77 met the criterion for overall reliability level, as is shown on Table 4.9, below. As well, the criterion of .25 for item-total correlation was met by all six items on the subscale. Thus, the SOC subscale was regarded as reliable.

Table 4.9
Reliability Analysis: Social subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>VARIANCE</th>
<th>ITEM-总 CORRECTION</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q45</td>
<td>18.7468</td>
<td>10.7263</td>
<td>.4970</td>
<td>.7383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q46</td>
<td>19.3506</td>
<td>9.0658</td>
<td>.6176</td>
<td>.7043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q47</td>
<td>18.9221</td>
<td>10.8174</td>
<td>.4743</td>
<td>.7437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q48</td>
<td>19.2338</td>
<td>9.8404</td>
<td>.5695</td>
<td>.7187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q49</td>
<td>19.0519</td>
<td>11.0038</td>
<td>.4873</td>
<td>.7412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q50</td>
<td>19.2727</td>
<td>10.7748</td>
<td>.4341</td>
<td>.7541</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 154.0  N OF ITEMS = 6

ALPHA = .7685

4.1.4. Summary

As has been demonstrated here, and is summarised on Table 4.10, the scores on only four of the six subscales of the English format of the SILL, when administered to the 154 subjects in this study, can be considered reliable. Three of those four, MEM, META and SOC, can be regarded straightforwardly as internally consistent as they met the criteria set for those conditions. The COG subscale however, while broadly satisfactory, should be treated cautiously as it just met the criterion level of .65 for overall reliability and four of its fourteen items did not meet the minimum level criterion of item-total correlation of .25.
On the other hand, the two remaining subscales, COMP and AFF must be considered non-viable. Half of the six items on the COMP subscale failed to reach a satisfactory level of reliability and coherence. The COMP subscale could do so only by increasing the length of the subscale to nine similar items.

Likewise, the AFF subscale, with its small number of items, low reliability and lack of coherence must be considered not valid. Thus, the intent of developing six subscales such that each subscale would have an adequate number of items to facilitate more in-depth research and understanding of the learning strategies for ESL/EFL. (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995:5)

was not realised in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Reliability index</th>
<th>Number of items internally consistent with the scale</th>
<th>Subscale is reliable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>10/14</td>
<td>yes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMP</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>META</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFF</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.1.5. Discarding of unreliable results

The unreliable results obtained from the COMP and AFF subscales, following the administration of the SILL in English were thus discarded and were not considered in further analyses and discussion of the quantitative data.
4.2. **Part Two: Reliability of SILL subscales: L1 and English formats (n=50)**

As the scores on the English format of the SILL when administered to 154 subjects had been found unreliable on two of the six subscales, the reliability of the SILL in the L1 was called into question. Thus, the reliability of the SILL in the L1 was examined to see if that instrument was, in fact, more reliable than the format administered in English.

Translations of the SILL were obtained in several languages other than English. Six of those languages: Arabic, Chinese, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish, were applicable to the subjects in this study and, approximately six weeks after administering the English format to the subjects, formats of the SILL in those L1s were administered. The possible number of subjects to whom the SILL could have been administered in their first language was seventy-two: Arabic (n=8); Chinese (n=47); German (n=2); Japanese (n=2); Spanish (n=12); and Russian (n=1). However, twenty-two of those seventy-two were absent, due to illness or other reasons, from the AMES centre at the times of the administration of the SILL in their first language. Thus, as Table 4.11 indicates, only fifty of the total 154 subjects who responded to the SILL in English were present at the centre and responded to the SILL in their L1.
Table 4.11
Subjects who responded to SILL in English and in L1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of subjects responding to SILL in English</th>
<th>Number of subjects responding to SILL in L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog/Filipino/Pilipino</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian Languages</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Chinese Languages</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghani/Pashto/Pushto</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farsi/Persian</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Indian Languages</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>154</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So that any comparison made between English and L1 formats was valid, only the fifty subjects who had responded to the SILL in both English and the L1 were included in the reliability analyses which were conducted, as before, for the six subscales. The same procedures of analysis were followed as had been followed for the English format (N=154), viz:

(i) the examination of the overall reliability index of each of the six SILL subscales, the level of which for the purposes of this research, was deemed adequate at a level of .65;
(ii) the examination of the internal consistency of the subscale at the item level to determine the overall satisfactoriness of the subscale. An item-total correlation of at least .25 was set as the criterion necessary for an item to be considered as relating satisfactorily to the subscale as a whole;

(iii) a discussion of those scales, the scores of which were considered to be unreliable.

It was anticipated here that, because of a ‘confounding language effect’ (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995), lower reliabilities would be found for the SILL administered in the English than in the L1 format, for it had been claimed that

[s]lightly lower but still very acceptable reliabilities are found for the ESL/EFL SILL when it is not administered in the native language of the respondents but is given in English instead (Oxford and Burry-Stock 1995:6).

However, to anticipate that all subjects will respond more reliably to the SILL when it is presented to them in their L1 may be naive, for to do so assumes a certain level of literacy in the L1. Such was not the case for at least one Chinese subject in this study, who explained her slowness when completing the questionnaire:

QT: I don’t know all these [characters]. I only learnt Chinese for two years. Sometimes my reading is better in English.
4.2.1. Results of analysis of reliability of subscales (L1 format of SILL)

The Memory subscale

In the English format of the SILL administered to fifty subjects the MEM subscale generated a reliability index of .65, a level which met the criterion outlined in (i) above. However, three items,

Q2 I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them,
Q5 I use rhymes to remember new English words and
Q9 I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign

did not attain an item-total correlation of .25 (see Table 4.12), indicating that the subscale was not internally consistent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.12</th>
<th>Reliability Analysis: Memory subscale (English) (n=50)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS</td>
<td>SCALE MEAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>24.7600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>24.7400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>24.7200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>25.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>25.5600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>25.7200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>25.5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>25.4400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>24.6800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As anticipated by Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995), the L1 format of the MEM subscale did appear more reliable than the English format, as can be seen on Table 4.13; the overall reliability index increased to .66, slightly above the
criterion figure of .65 which was considered acceptable and all items achieved an item-total correlation of at least .25, indicating that the subscale was internally consistent in the L1 format. (Note that item numbers in the L1 format are distinguished by the addition of ‘x’.)

Table 4.13
Reliability Analysis: Memory subscale (L1) (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCALE MEAN</th>
<th>SCALE VARIANCE</th>
<th>ITEM-CORRECTED MEAN</th>
<th>CORRECTED VARIANCE</th>
<th>ITEM-ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QX1</td>
<td>25.6600</td>
<td>21.7800</td>
<td>.4089</td>
<td>.6197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX2</td>
<td>25.9600</td>
<td>22.5698</td>
<td>.2999</td>
<td>.6406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX3</td>
<td>26.2600</td>
<td>20.6453</td>
<td>.4182</td>
<td>.6135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX4</td>
<td>26.1800</td>
<td>21.1302</td>
<td>.4457</td>
<td>.6103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX5</td>
<td>26.3600</td>
<td>21.2963</td>
<td>.2836</td>
<td>.6478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX6</td>
<td>26.9800</td>
<td>22.2241</td>
<td>.2976</td>
<td>.6411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX7</td>
<td>26.4800</td>
<td>19.7241</td>
<td>.3674</td>
<td>.6278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX8</td>
<td>25.8200</td>
<td>23.0486</td>
<td>.2952</td>
<td>.6419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX9</td>
<td>25.9800</td>
<td>22.5098</td>
<td>.2499</td>
<td>.6517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 50.0
N OF ITEMS = 9
ALPHA = .6600

The Memory subscale then, while not reliable in the English format, could be considered so in the L1 format.
**The Cognitive subscale**

The COG subscale in the English format (n=50) generated a reliability index of only .55 which was below the criterion level of .65 (see Table 4.14). Moreover, six of the fourteen items on the scale (Q13, Q14, Q17, Q20, Q22 and Q23) generated an item-total correlation figure of less than the .25 considered as a necessary indicator of the internal consistency of the subscale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS</th>
<th>SCALE MEAN</th>
<th>SCALE DELETED</th>
<th>CORRECTED ITEM- TOTAL</th>
<th>CORRECTED ITEM- DELETED</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>42.6000</td>
<td>29.6735</td>
<td>.2891</td>
<td>.5104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>42.9800</td>
<td>29.9792</td>
<td>.2505</td>
<td>.5181</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>42.4200</td>
<td>30.0445</td>
<td>.2527</td>
<td>.5179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>42.8200</td>
<td>31.6608</td>
<td>.2067</td>
<td>.5295</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>42.7200</td>
<td>30.7363</td>
<td>.2136</td>
<td>.5262</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>42.3800</td>
<td>30.5261</td>
<td>.2473</td>
<td>.5202</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>42.8000</td>
<td>28.1633</td>
<td>.4209</td>
<td>.4813</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>43.5000</td>
<td>31.1939</td>
<td>.1860</td>
<td>.5316</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>42.7600</td>
<td>26.4718</td>
<td>.4907</td>
<td>.4564</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>42.9800</td>
<td>26.7139</td>
<td>.3786</td>
<td>.4805</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>43.1600</td>
<td>33.8922</td>
<td>-.0839</td>
<td>.5882</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>42.9800</td>
<td>28.4282</td>
<td>.3631</td>
<td>.4920</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>43.1800</td>
<td>36.9261</td>
<td>-.2910</td>
<td>.6355</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>43.3200</td>
<td>31.3649</td>
<td>.1071</td>
<td>.5493</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.14**

Reliability analysis: Cognitive subscale (English) (n=50)

In the L1 format (Table 4.15), the reliability index reached a level of .71, indicating that in this format the COG subscale was acceptably reliable. However, as with the earlier analyses of the English formats of the COG subscale in Part One and above, in Part Two, the coefficient of the overall reliability masked the internal inconsistency of the subscale; here four items (Qx12, Qx13, Qx22 and Qx23) did not relate well to the subscale, generating a corrected item-total correlation of less than .25.
Table 4.15  
Reliability analysis: Cognitive subscale (L1) (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>VARIANCE</td>
<td>ITEM- TOTAL</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>CORRELATION</td>
<td>DELETED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX10</td>
<td>44.9600</td>
<td>49.5902</td>
<td>.3774</td>
<td>.6883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX11</td>
<td>45.2400</td>
<td>48.2269</td>
<td>.3929</td>
<td>.6844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX12</td>
<td>45.0400</td>
<td>52.0800</td>
<td>.1908</td>
<td>.7054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX13</td>
<td>45.0800</td>
<td>50.9322</td>
<td>.2207</td>
<td>.7033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX14</td>
<td>45.0800</td>
<td>50.0343</td>
<td>.3488</td>
<td>.6912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX15</td>
<td>44.8200</td>
<td>49.5384</td>
<td>.2867</td>
<td>.6964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX16</td>
<td>45.2600</td>
<td>47.6657</td>
<td>.2818</td>
<td>.6992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX17</td>
<td>45.8400</td>
<td>47.7290</td>
<td>.5552</td>
<td>.6719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX18</td>
<td>45.6000</td>
<td>43.9592</td>
<td>.5607</td>
<td>.6585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX19</td>
<td>44.9200</td>
<td>45.4629</td>
<td>.5437</td>
<td>.6644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX20</td>
<td>45.2200</td>
<td>43.5220</td>
<td>.5343</td>
<td>.6606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX21</td>
<td>45.4200</td>
<td>47.1873</td>
<td>.2917</td>
<td>.6983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX22</td>
<td>45.4800</td>
<td>52.3363</td>
<td>.0475</td>
<td>.7305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX23</td>
<td>45.6600</td>
<td>51.7392</td>
<td>.0754</td>
<td>.7274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 50.0  N OF ITEMS = 14
ALPHA = .7080

Those items which related well to the COG subscale in the L1 format were:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Item total correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qx10</td>
<td>I say or write new English words several times</td>
<td>.3774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx11</td>
<td>I try to talk like native English speakers</td>
<td>.3929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx14</td>
<td>I start conversations in English</td>
<td>.3488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx15</td>
<td>I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English</td>
<td>.2867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx16</td>
<td>I read for pleasure in English</td>
<td>.2818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx17</td>
<td>I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English</td>
<td>.5552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx18</td>
<td>I first skim an English passage (read the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully</td>
<td>.5607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx19</td>
<td>I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English</td>
<td>.5437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx20</td>
<td>I try to find patterns in English</td>
<td>.5343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx21</td>
<td>I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand</td>
<td>.2917</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As discussed in Part One, the underlying constructs of these ten satisfactory items, and hence the COG subscale, seem to be those of surface level, or direct, use e.g. I start conversations..., I watch English language TV shows..., I write notes, messages... in English. As well, here, is the underlying construct of elaboration e.g. I try to find patterns in English, I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts... , where subjects integrate new language information with prior knowledge.

The four items which did not relate well to the COG (L1) subscale were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Item total correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qx12</td>
<td>I practise the sounds of English</td>
<td>.1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx13</td>
<td>I use the English words I know in different ways</td>
<td>.2207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx22</td>
<td>I try not to translate word-for-word</td>
<td>.0475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qx23</td>
<td>I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English</td>
<td>.0754</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three of those items, Qx13, Qx22 and Qx23 were the same items which had not related to the subscale on both previous analyses of reliability, as is shown on Table 4.16, suggesting that these items were clearly not consistent with the underlying construct of the COG subscale. As discussed earlier, and assuming that it was expressed similarly in the translations to the L1 formats, Qx22 again might have been inconsistent because of its negativity. Again, the inconsistency of items Qx13 and Qx23 might have been due to their underlying construct of 'transformational organisation, a process which, at the time of the SILL administration, might have been beyond the English
proficiency level of subjects in this study. Alternatively, subjects may have found these two strategy statements open to interpretation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.16</th>
<th>Items not relating to the COG subscale on analyses of reliability following administrations of the SILL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English (N=154) format</td>
<td>English (n=50) format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>Q13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>Q14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>Q17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>Q20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>Q22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>Q23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One item however, Q20 *I try to find patterns in English* was inconsistent only in the English formats of the SILL, suggesting perhaps that it might have been the language of the statement itself in those formats which caused the inconsistency. Indeed, as reported earlier, several subjects had asked for clarification of the word ‘patterns’ during the administration of the SILL.

Table 4.16 also shows that Qx12 *I practise the sounds of English* was inconsistent with the COG subscale only in the L1 format of the SILL. Indeed, on the English (N=154) format Q12 generated an item-total correlation of .35. Further, the item did not seem to relate to the three other items which were inconsistent with the COG subscale in the L1 (n=50) format, not with the ‘negativity’ of Qx22 *I try not to translate word-for word* nor to the ‘transformational organisation’ of Qx13 and Qx23. Rather, Q12 seemed unique, and was the only item on the subscale which related to oral practice of the language.

Perhaps the ‘uniqueness’ of Qx12 can be explained by the fact that the cohort in the L1 (n=50) format consisted of six language groups, but was dominated by those of Chinese L1 background (n=29). Thus, it seems possible to speculate that the inconsistency of Qx12 on the L1 format of the SILL could have been influenced, in some way, by the responses of the Chinese L1 subjects. Unfortunately, the analysis of quantitative data, such as that carried out here, enables no more than speculation.
In summary, the COG subscale in the L1 format, with a reliability index of .71 and ten of the fourteen items meeting the criterion item-level correlation of .25, can be judged, guardedly, as satisfactory.
The Compensation subscale

In generating an overall reliability of only .52, the COMP subscale of the SILL in English (n=50) did not meet the criterion of a reliability of .65. Further, as can be seen on Table 4.17, two of its six items (Q27 and Q28), with values of .02 and .13, did not meet the criterion of an item-total correlation of at least .25.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>VARIANCE</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>DELETED</td>
<td>DELETED</td>
<td>ITEM- TOTAL</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CORRELATION</td>
<td>DELETED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q24  16.8400  8.4229  .4136  .3899
Q25  16.3600  8.4392  .5326  .3448
Q26  17.4400  8.5780  .3162  .4423
Q27  17.5200  10.6629  .0185  .6031
Q28  17.2800  10.4098  .1346  .5297
Q29  16.4600  9.8045  .2886  .4623

---

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES =  50.0  N OF ITEMS =  6
ALPHA =  .5155

In the L1 format the COMP subscale was less reliable, contrary to the views of Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995), generating a reliability index of only .50 (see Table 4.18). Three items (Qx24, Qx26 and Qx29), with an item-total correlation of less than the criterion .25, did not relate well with the subscale.
Table 4.18
Reliability analysis: Compensation subscale (L1) (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM—TOTAL STATISTICS</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>VARIANCE</td>
<td>ITEM—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DELETED</td>
<td>DELETED</td>
<td>CORRELATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX24</td>
<td>18.7200</td>
<td>9.5935</td>
<td>.1760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX25</td>
<td>18.3800</td>
<td>7.9139</td>
<td>.3965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX26</td>
<td>19.2600</td>
<td>9.4616</td>
<td>.2118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX27</td>
<td>19.0600</td>
<td>9.0780</td>
<td>.3183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX28</td>
<td>19.5800</td>
<td>9.8812</td>
<td>.3016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX29</td>
<td>18.4000</td>
<td>10.2857</td>
<td>.1473</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 50.0
N OF ITEMS = 6
ALPHA = .4991

As the COMP subscale had only six items, the Spearman Brown prophesy formula was applied to ascertain the minimum number of subscale items necessary for reliability to increase to meet the criterion level of .65. Following application of the formula

\[ n = \frac{r_{td} (1 - r_{tt})}{r_{tt} (1 - r_{td})} \]

as outlined earlier, it was found that lengthening the COMP subscale, in the L1 format, by 1.8 times its length i.e. to eleven similar items instead of six, the reliability index of the scale could increase to a minimum acceptable level of .65.

Thus the COMP scale in the L1 format was not valid in its present form of six items. To increase its reliability the length of the subscale would need to be increased to a minimum of at least eleven similar items.
The Metacognitive subscale

The overall reliability index of .69 of the META subscale in the English format, exceeded the criterion of .65 outlined above. Further, as can be seen on Table 4.19, when examined at the item level, all items except Q34 I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English met the criterion of corrected item-total correlation of at least .25. Thus the META subscale can be considered reasonably satisfactory in the English format.

| Table 4.19 |
| Reliability analysis: Metacognitive subscale (English) (n=50) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale Mean</th>
<th>Scale Variance</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>30.2800</td>
<td>18.1649</td>
<td>.3671</td>
<td>.6581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>30.3200</td>
<td>16.5078</td>
<td>.5228</td>
<td>.6229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32</td>
<td>29.8400</td>
<td>19.1984</td>
<td>.3357</td>
<td>.6657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q33</td>
<td>30.0800</td>
<td>17.5037</td>
<td>.3893</td>
<td>.6531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>30.5800</td>
<td>19.2690</td>
<td>.1954</td>
<td>.6926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35</td>
<td>30.9400</td>
<td>18.1392</td>
<td>.3177</td>
<td>.6685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36</td>
<td>30.5400</td>
<td>17.5188</td>
<td>.4061</td>
<td>.6496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q37</td>
<td>30.6200</td>
<td>16.8118</td>
<td>.4177</td>
<td>.6466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38</td>
<td>30.2400</td>
<td>19.0841</td>
<td>.2922</td>
<td>.6721</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N of Cases = 50.0
N of Items = 9
Alpha = .6856

In the L1 format the subscale was highly reliable at a level of .85 (see Table 4.20). Item-total correlations ranged from .58 to .65, and so were well in excess of the minimum criterion of .25. Thus, in the L1 format, the META subscale is internally consistent.
Table 4.20  
Reliability analysis: Metacognitive subscale (L1) (n=50)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>VARIANCE</td>
<td>ITEM-IF ITEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX30</td>
<td>30.9800</td>
<td>26.4282</td>
<td>.4845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX31</td>
<td>30.5600</td>
<td>27.5984</td>
<td>.4748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX32</td>
<td>30.3000</td>
<td>27.5204</td>
<td>.4597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX33</td>
<td>30.6200</td>
<td>26.1996</td>
<td>.5917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX34</td>
<td>31.4400</td>
<td>23.6392</td>
<td>.6513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX35</td>
<td>31.2400</td>
<td>24.9208</td>
<td>.5758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX36</td>
<td>31.1200</td>
<td>25.6588</td>
<td>.5828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX37</td>
<td>31.0600</td>
<td>24.4657</td>
<td>.6254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX38</td>
<td>30.7600</td>
<td>25.0841</td>
<td>.6098</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 50.0  N OF ITEMS = 9
ALPHA = .8458
The Affective subscale

As can be seen on Table 4.21, the AFF subscale in the English (n=50) format of the SILL generated very low reliability, a level of only .29. Further, none of the six items on this subscale reached the minimum acceptable level for item-total correlation; values ranged from a maximum of .22 to a minimum of .04.

In the English (n=50) format, therefore, the AFF scale is not viable.

Table 4.21
Reliability analysis: Affective subscale (English) (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM-TOTAL STATISTICS</th>
<th>SCALE MEAN</th>
<th>SCALE VARIANCE</th>
<th>CORRECTED ITEM- TOTAL</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q39</td>
<td>14.800</td>
<td>7.9592</td>
<td>.2179</td>
<td>.1805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q40</td>
<td>14.380</td>
<td>9.4241</td>
<td>.0755</td>
<td>.2866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q41</td>
<td>15.180</td>
<td>7.8649</td>
<td>.2005</td>
<td>.1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q42</td>
<td>15.160</td>
<td>9.1984</td>
<td>.0485</td>
<td>.3099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q43</td>
<td>15.860</td>
<td>8.1637</td>
<td>.1851</td>
<td>.2074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q44</td>
<td>14.620</td>
<td>9.0567</td>
<td>.0399</td>
<td>.3208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before the L1 Chinese format was administered, the translation was checked by a tertiary-educated, native speaker of Mandarin with high proficiency in English. It was noted that Qx43 was not a direct translation of Q43 I write down my feelings in a language learning diary on the English format. To take account of this, analysis of reliability of the AFF scale in the L1 format was carried out, firstly including the Chinese subjects and secondly, on only the scores of the other twenty-one subjects.

When scores of all fifty subjects were included, the AFF subscale, like the COMP subscale, generated even lower values than in the English (n=50) format. As is shown on Table 4.22, the overall reliability was -.10, and again
none of the six items on this subscale reached an item-total correlation value of .25; values ranged from a maximum of .21 to a minimum of -.15.

Table 4.22
Reliability analysis: Affective subscale (L1) (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>VARIANCE</td>
<td>ITEM-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX39</td>
<td>19.6200</td>
<td>14.8118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX40</td>
<td>19.2800</td>
<td>16.6955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX41</td>
<td>19.9200</td>
<td>17.0139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX42</td>
<td>19.6400</td>
<td>16.9698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX43</td>
<td>17.1200</td>
<td>7.0465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX44</td>
<td>19.9200</td>
<td>18.1159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 50.0
N OF ITEMS = 6
ALPHA = -.0954

However, similar results were obtained when the scores of the twenty-nine Chinese subjects were omitted from the analysis of the AFF subscale in the L1 (see Table 4.23). Again, the overall reliability and item-total correlation failed to reach the criteria set. Thus, the AFF subscale was unreliable when administered in its L1 format.
Table 4.23  
Reliability analysis: Affective subscale (L1) (n=21)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>CORRECTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>VARIANCE</td>
<td>ITEM-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>IF ITEM</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELETED</td>
<td>DELETED</td>
<td>CORRELATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX39</td>
<td>15.9048</td>
<td>5.8905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX40</td>
<td>15.4762</td>
<td>8.4619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX41</td>
<td>16.0952</td>
<td>10.0905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX42</td>
<td>15.6667</td>
<td>8.8333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX43</td>
<td>17.5714</td>
<td>9.7571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX44</td>
<td>16.1905</td>
<td>12.3619</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS

N OF CASES = 21.0  
N OF ITEMS = 6  
ALPHA = .2435
The Social subscale

The SOC subscale in the English (n=50) format, with an overall reliability level of .83 met the criterion for overall reliability level, as shown on Table 4.24. As well, the criterion of .25 for item-total correlation was met by all six items on the subscale with values ranging from .50 to .75. Thus, the SOC subscale can be regarded as quite reliable.

Table 4.24
Reliability analysis: Social subscale (English) (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>SCALE MEAN</th>
<th>SCALE VARIANCE</th>
<th>CORRECTED ITEM- TOTAL CORRELATION</th>
<th>ALPHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q45</td>
<td>18.4800</td>
<td>13.6424</td>
<td>.5628</td>
<td>.8076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q46</td>
<td>19.0200</td>
<td>11.3261</td>
<td>.7462</td>
<td>.7659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q47</td>
<td>18.6400</td>
<td>14.1943</td>
<td>.5315</td>
<td>.8134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q48</td>
<td>18.7800</td>
<td>12.5424</td>
<td>.7016</td>
<td>.7775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q49</td>
<td>18.8400</td>
<td>14.4229</td>
<td>.5546</td>
<td>.8097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q50</td>
<td>18.9400</td>
<td>14.3024</td>
<td>.5001</td>
<td>.8194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N OF CASES = 50.0 N OF ITEMS = 6

The L1 format of the SOC subscale also met the criteria for overall reliability and item-total correlation. Interestingly, the reliability index of .71 was lower than that for the English format but was still well above the necessary minimum value of .65, and item-total correlations were in the range of .31 to .58, well above the minimum criterion value (see Table 4.25).

The SOC subscale in the L1 format then can be considered internally consistent.
Table 4.25
Reliability analysis: Social subscale (L1) (n=50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Corrected Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QX45</td>
<td>18.7000</td>
<td>11.9286</td>
<td>.4087</td>
<td>.6749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX46</td>
<td>19.2200</td>
<td>11.8486</td>
<td>.3117</td>
<td>.7107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX47</td>
<td>18.5600</td>
<td>11.6800</td>
<td>.5779</td>
<td>.6334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX48</td>
<td>18.9000</td>
<td>11.5204</td>
<td>.4110</td>
<td>.6749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX49</td>
<td>18.9400</td>
<td>11.5678</td>
<td>.5385</td>
<td>.6397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QX50</td>
<td>18.9800</td>
<td>10.7139</td>
<td>.4494</td>
<td>.6644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Reliability coefficients

N of cases = 50.0
N of items = 6
Alpha = .7058

4.2.2. Summary

Of the six subscales, the scores of three can be regarded straightforwardly as satisfactory in the L1 format; MEM, META and SOC, met the criteria established at a satisfactory level and thus, were all reliable.

While not completely internally consistent (four of its fourteen items did not meet the item-level correlation criterion), the COG subscale also can nevertheless be regarded, cautiously, as satisfactory overall in the L1 format.

The two remaining subscales, COMP and AFF, must be considered invalid. COMP, in its present form of six items, is not viable and would need to increase its length to a minimum of at least eleven similar items for the reliability to increase to an adequate level. The AFF subscale with a small number of items, low overall reliability and very low item-total correlation values was likewise invalid. The reliability results of both these subscales, together with those of SOC, were in fact lower in the L1 format of the SILL.
than in the English format for the same fifty subjects, thus contradicting the
views of Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) that

[s]lightly lower but still very acceptable reliabilities are found for the
ESL/EFL SILL when it is not administered in the native language of
the respondents but is given in English instead (Oxford and Burry-

The overall results of the three analyses of reliability English (N=154), English
(n=50) and L1 (n=50) are summarised in Table 4.26 below. For the English
(n=50) format only two subscales META and SOC could be considered
reliable. The English (N=154) and L1 (n=50) formats obtained similar results;
of the six subscales, four (MEM, COG, META and SOC) could be considered
satisfactory, albeit one (COG) with caution. Further, only on three of the six
subscales: MEM, COG and META was the SILL found to be more reliable in
the L1 format than in the English format.

4.3. Conclusion

The differences in results of the analyses of reliability obtained from
administrations of the SILL, in this study and others (Park, 1997; Gardner et
al., 1997), serve to emphasise the fact that each context of administration of
such an instrument is unique; it cannot be assumed that the reliability of
scores obtained in one situation will necessarily be found in another. Thus,
such differences highlight the need to establish the reliability of the scores
following each administration of an instrument, like the SILL, in order that
results based on unreliable measures are not accumulated.

In subsequent chapters, no further discussion will be made of the results
obtained from the L1 administration of the SILL. All further discussion of the
quantitative results of the SILL in Chapter Five pertain to the administration
of the instrument in English. Further, that discussion of the English format of
the SILL will refer only to the four subscales of MEM, COG, META and SOC;
the COMP and AFF subscales were discarded because of the unreliability of
their scores, as demonstrated in this chapter.

Chapter Five will describe the quantitative data obtained from the responses
to the SILL and their analysis.
| Subscale | English version (N=154) | | English version (n=50) | | L1 version (n=50) | |
|----------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|          | Reliability index | Number of items internally consistent with the scale | Sub-scale is reliable | Reliability index | Number of items internally consistent with the scale | Sub-scale is reliable | Reliability index | Number of items internally consistent with the scale | Sub-scale is reliable |
| MEM      | .65 | 6/6 | Yes | .65 | 3/9 | No | .66 | 9/9 | Yes |
| COG      | .65 | 10/14 | Yes? | .55 | 8/14 | No | .71 | 10/14 | Yes? |
| COMP     | .55 | 4/6 | No | .52 | 2/6 | No | .50 | 3/6 | No |
| META     | .76 | 9/9 | Yes | .69 | 8/9 | Yes | .85 | 9/9 | Yes |
| AFF      | .48 | 3/6 | No | .29 | 0/6 | No | -.10 | 0/6 | No |
| SOC      | .77 | 6/6 | Yes | .83 | 6/6 | Yes | .71 | 6/6 | Yes |
Chapter Five

Description and Analysis of the Quantitative Data

Chapter Five describes and analyses the quantitative data gathered from the administration of the English format of the SILL. It describes the overall reported strategy use of subjects and that use in terms of variables. The chapter then examines the response patterns of Asian and European L1 background subjects.

As described in Chapter Three, subjects responded using a five point scale to the fifty item English language format of the SILL. Chapter Four described the discarding of the unreliable Compensation and Affective subscales. The remaining four subscales and thirty-eight items will be described in this chapter at the level of subscales, MEM, COG, META and SOC, in the following way:

Overall reported strategy use of subjects:

- Correlations between individual SILL items, strategy subscales and independent variables, such as those shown below in 2;
- Mean scores of strategy subscales and individual items.

Reported strategy use in terms of variables:

- Sex;
- Age;
- General English language proficiency, where class level was considered to be a reflection of such proficiency;
- Length of time living in Australia;
- Amount of English learning prior to arrival in Australia;
- First language (L1) background.

Response patterns of Asian and European subjects.
5.1. Overall reported strategy use

5.1.1. Correlations

Correlation between subscales and variables (N=154)

Using SPSS (1996), correlations were examined between the four strategy scales (MEM, COG, META and SOC) which remained after analyses of reliability were carried out, the variables of Age, time learning English before arrival in Australia (preENG), time spent learning English in Australia (Eoz), and time living in Australia (Toz).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEM</th>
<th>COG</th>
<th>META</th>
<th>SOC</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>preENG</th>
<th>Eoz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td></td>
<td>.3614**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>META</td>
<td>.3148**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.6040**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>.2875**</td>
<td>.3305**</td>
<td>.4332**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>.0500</td>
<td>-.1490</td>
<td>-.0028</td>
<td>-.1048</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preENG</td>
<td>-.0251</td>
<td>.0711</td>
<td>.0500</td>
<td>-.0907</td>
<td>-.0650</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eoz</td>
<td>-.0568</td>
<td>-.0740</td>
<td>-.0718</td>
<td>-.0790</td>
<td>.2271*</td>
<td>-.3417**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toz</td>
<td>-.0040</td>
<td>-.1513</td>
<td>-.0548</td>
<td>-.1295</td>
<td>.3158**</td>
<td>-.1782</td>
<td>.3307*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is shown on Table 5.1, positive correlations greater than .35 and significant at .001 level were found between the MEM and COG, the COG and META, and between the META and SOC subscales. That such a strong correlation was obtained between COG and META (.6040) suggests that the two subscales were measuring a similar construct, or constructs. No other significant, positive and meaningful correlations were found.

Correlation between items

It is to be expected that strong correlations be obtained between items on the same subscale. As Table 5.2 shows, such was the case for the subscales of MEM, META and SOC. However, the correlation coefficients for items on the COG subscale ranged from a low of .21 to .56. It will be recalled (Chapter Four, Analyses of Reliability) that four of the fourteen items (Q13, Q20, Q22 and Q23) did not relate well to the underlying construct of the COG subscale.
Table 5.2
Range of correlations between items and subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Range of correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COG</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>META</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, some strong significant correlations at the level of .35 or more were found between items of different subscales, as shown on Table 5.3. Columns 1 and 4 show the items between which such correlation was noted. Columns 2 and 5 indicate the strategy subscale to which particular items belong, while Columns 3 and 6 show the SILL questionnaire statements of those items. Column 7 shows the level of correlation between the items listed.

Table 5.3
Correlation between items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Questionnaire statement</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Questionnaire statement</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I review English lessons often</td>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I say or write new English words several times</td>
<td>.3766**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I practise the sounds of English</td>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English</td>
<td>.3456**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I first skim an English passage then go back and read carefully</td>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better</td>
<td>.3575**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English</td>
<td>Q46</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk</td>
<td>.3486**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N of cases: 154  1-tailed Signif: * .01 ** .001

5.1.2. Mean scores

Subscales

Table 5.4 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of reported use of strategies of the 154 subjects at the subscale level. Overall, on the five point scale, subjects rated SOC strategies as highest (mean = 3.82), ahead of META (3.76), COG (3.38) and MEM (3.12) strategies.
Table 5.4
Overall reported strategy use by subjects (N=154)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy subscale</th>
<th>Mean Item score</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social (SOC)</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive (META)</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive (COG)</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory (MEM)</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rating of SOC strategies as highest corroborates the findings of Wharton (2000) in Singapore, and Phillips, V. (1990) in the US where, it has been suggested, the learners rated SOC strategies highly because they "needed to use these strategies to survive" (Bedell and Oxford, 1996:59). That could indeed be so, but also likely is the fact that, for learners in an English-speaking community there is greater opportunity to use such strategies than there is for learners in an EFL situation.

The rating of MEM strategies as lowest in this study, which comprised a majority of Asian learners, supports the similar findings of other studies (Davis and Abas, 1991; Oh, 1992; Yang, 1992; Bedell and Oxford, 1996; Bremner, 1999 and Wharton, 2000) but perhaps seems at odds with other claims (Politzer and McGroarty, 1985; Scarcella, 1990) that memorisation is a popular strategy with Asian students. However, the two points of view may be compatible when a further interpretation is considered. Perhaps the particular MEM strategies which are included on the SILL are not those which learners, and Asian in particular, find of most use. Thus, in their responses to the SILL the subjects rated MEM strategies lowest. A higher relative rating of the MEM subscale might result if other, more pertinent MEM strategies were to be included.

Although no rationale is given, Oxford (1990: 291) defines mean scores of 3.5-5.0, on the five point scale, as ‘high’ strategy use, that is, those ‘always or almost always used’ and ‘generally used’. Scores in the range 2.5-3.4 are designated ‘medium’ strategy use i.e. those ‘sometimes used’, while those of 1.0-2.4 are regarded as ‘low’ strategy use i.e. strategies ‘generally not used’ and ‘never or almost never used’. Using those broad categories of ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’, the mean scores obtained here for SOC and META can be described as 'high', while those for the COG and MEM subscales can be considered 'medium' reported strategy use.
Individual strategy statements

The overall mean scores of the thirty-eight strategy statements which remained after discarding the COMP and AFF subscales are shown on Table 5.5. Using Oxford’s (1990) broad categories of description it can be seen that eighteen of the items, almost half, could be considered ‘high’ use as they generated a mean greater than 3.50 on the rating scale of 1 to 5. Of the remainder, all but one with a mean of 2.5 to 3.4 could be classed as reported ‘medium’ use. Only Q6 I use flashcards to remember new English words (mean = 2.46) could be classed as ‘low’ use. Thus, the ESL, immigrant learners in this study who reported strategy use by means of the SILL were ‘high/medium’ strategy users, as defined by Oxford (1990).

5.1.3. Factor analysis

Perhaps because of the relatively small number of items (38) and subjects (154) factor analysis was not achieved. After 24 iterations, the Varimax Rotation failed to converge.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I pay attention when someone is speaking English</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I try to find out how to be a better learner of English</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>I practise English with other students</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>I ask questions in English</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I think about my progress in learning English</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I practise the sounds of English</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>I ask for help from English speakers</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I say or write new English words several times</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>I try to learn about the culture of English speakers</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I have clear goals for improving my English skills</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I start conversations in English</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I review English lessons often</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I first skim an English passage read the passage quickly then go back and read carefully</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I read for pleasure in English</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>I look for people I can talk to in English</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I use the English words I know in different ways</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I try to talk like native English speakers</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I try to find patterns in English</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I try not to translate word-for-word</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I physically act out new English words</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I use rhymes to remember new English words</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td>I use flashcards to remember new English words</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2. Reported strategy use in terms of variables

5.2.1. Sex

T-tests revealed no significant differences in the overall reported use of strategies at the subscale level between males (n=63) and females (n= 91).

5.2.2. Age

No significant correlations were found between Age and any of the four subscales. However, certain trends in reported strategy use were evident after subjects were sub-divided, on the basis of age, into seven categories, as shown on Table 5.6, where the mean score of each subscale for the seven age groups is shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.6</th>
<th>Means of reported strategy use by subscales and age groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = highest mean score for subscale
† = subscale of reported highest use for particular age group

Overall, MEM strategies were reportedly used least; the greatest use of those strategies was reported by subjects in the 46-50 age group (a mean of 3.32 on the five point scale). COG strategies, second lowest in overall reported use, were most favoured by those in the age groups, 18-25 and 31-35 (mean = 3.49). META strategies, the second highest in terms of overall reported strategy use, were reportedly most preferred by the subjects in the 31-35 and 46-50 groups (mean = 3.88). SOC strategies, the highest overall, were reportedly used most by the youngest subjects, those in the 18-25 age group (mean = 4.00).

The information in Table 5.6 is represented again in Figure 5.1.
Figure 5.1 serves to illustrate, perhaps more clearly than Table 5.6 alone, that reported strategy use across the age groups was remarkably uniform: from a low of 2.8 (MEM, 36-40 age group) to 4.0 (SOC, 18-25 age group). The highest rated subscale for subjects up to the age of 40 years, with the exception only of the 31-35 age group, was SOC. After the age of 40, subjects consistently reported a preference for the use of META strategies.

The preference of the 31-35 group for META strategies, seemingly misfitting the general pattern, can perhaps be explained by examining the composition of that group more closely. The thirty-two subjects in the 31-35 age group were from sixteen different L1 groups, yet 19% were from one single L1 group, Chinese-Hong Kong; four of the nineteen females and two of the thirteen males in the 31-35 age group were of that origin. None of the other fifteen L1 groups in this age group was so large. As will be discussed below, the Chinese-Hong Kong subjects as a whole, unlike most other L1 groups, showed a preference for META strategies. That such a large proportion of the 31-35 age group consisted of Chinese-Hong Kong could have affected the expressed strategy preference of the 31-35 age group in this case.
Alternatively, it could be argued the trend towards a preference for META strategies commenced above the age of 30, in which case the 36-40 age group, with its preference for SOC strategies would have been considered as misfitting. However, that group did not stand out on any one variable, nor was its composition dominated to the extent of the Chinese-Hong Kong on the 31-35 group; the 36-40 group consisted of only eight L1 groups, which ranged in size from one to three i.e. 16 per cent. It seems likely then that the responses from the 36-40 age group were more typical of the overall strategy preference pattern than were those of the 31-35 group.

**Summary**

No significant correlations were found between the variable of Age and any SILL subscale. However, the strategies of the META and SOC subscales were rated higher than those of MEM and COG at all age levels and, apart from a slight preference for META strategies by the 31-35 age group, SOC strategies were rated highest until 40 years of age. From that point onwards META strategies were rated highest. Nevertheless, the differences between the age groups and their reported strategy use were not great, suggesting that overall the participants were remarkably homogeneous in their reported use of strategies.

**5.2.3. Level of general English language proficiency**

The relationship between the level of proficiency of the subjects and their reported strategy use was examined. No individual ratings of proficiency were available to this study but, as each learner had been placed in a class within the AMES centre according to his/her level of proficiency as determined by the ASLPR, it was decided to examine the relationship between class level and reported strategy use.

As indicated earlier (Chapter Three), there were two types of classes in the AMES centre, those for recent immigrants funded by the DIEA and those for job-seekers funded by the DEET. Learners were accepted into a course funded by the DIEA on a number of criteria, the most pertinent here being that their proficiency level should be no higher than Level 2 minimum social proficiency on the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR). Learners were included in the DEET classes at similar maximum proficiency levels.
The procedure outlined by Green and Oxford (1995) was followed, i.e. an examination of the relationship between three levels of proficiency and strategy use. Three levels of proficiency were formed on the basis of ASLPR ratings for the particular class, as shown on Table 5.7:

- ‘High’ were those classes with an overall ASLPR rating of 1+ to 2 (n=43);
- ‘Mid’, those in the 1 to 1+ range (n=54) and
- ‘Low’ those classes rated as 0+ to 1 (n=57).

It should be emphasised here that the labels of ‘High’ ‘Mid’ and ‘Low’ were not descriptive of the actual proficiency level of the group but were chosen only to distinguish between the three groups; none of the subjects exceeded the level of ASLPR 2 minimum social proficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.7</th>
<th>Characteristics of classes and numbers of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class</strong></td>
<td><strong>Approximate ASLPR level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High proficiency</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 1</td>
<td>1+ to 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 6</td>
<td>1+ to 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Evening)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 1</td>
<td>1+ to 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid proficiency</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 2</td>
<td>1 to 1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 3</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 2</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 3</td>
<td>1 to 1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low proficiency</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 4</td>
<td>1- to 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIEA 7</td>
<td>1- to 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Evening)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET 5</td>
<td>0+ to 1-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other procedures of Green and Oxford (1995) were replicated:

- to determine significance the standard of $p < .05$ was used, to indicate a chance occurrence of statistical significance fewer than 5 times in 100;
• significant variation in mean strategy use across the four subscales of MEM, COG, META and SOC together was determined using one-way ANOVA;

• significant variation in mean strategy use of each of the four subscales of MEM, COG, META and SOC was determined using multivariate tests (MANOVA);

• chi-square tests were used to determine significant variation in the SILL items by proficiency level. Three levels of strategy use were determined (Green and Oxford, 1995); responses of 1 and 2 (‘never or almost never true of me’ and ‘usually not true of me’) were combined to form a single category of ‘low’ strategy use, while responses of 4 and 5 (‘usually true of me’ and ‘always true of me’) together formed a single ‘high’ strategy use. In this case, the thirty-eight items from the MEM, COG, META and SOC subscales were included. A level of 5 was set as the minimum permissible expected value for any cell in the matrix.

Significant variation across levels of proficiency was considered positive when variation occurred in a step-by-step pattern with an increasing use at higher levels of proficiency, negative when a step-by-step pattern showed a decreasing use of the strategy by higher levels of proficiency, or mixed when neither of these patterns was obvious.

As in the Green and Oxford study, when variation of reported strategy use across the three proficiency levels was not significant, three levels of variation, based on the percentage of subjects who gave a ‘high’ response: either ‘4’ or ‘5’ (‘usually true of me’ or ‘always true of me’) were determined to enable some comparison of use:

• frequent use: 50% or more of all students in the study responding 4 or 5;
• moderate use: 20-49% of subjects responding 4 or 5;
• infrequent use: fewer than 20% of students responding 4 or 5.
Results

Variation in overall strategy use

One way ANOVA revealed no significant variation in overall strategy use between the three levels of proficiency.

Variation in use of the four categories of strategies

Results of multivariate tests showed no significant differences in the reported use made of the independent variables (MEM, COG, META and SOC) by the three proficiency groups.

Variation in use of individual strategies by proficiency (class level)

Five of the thirty-eight SILL items met the criteria for significant variation by class level (observed chi-square values higher than the critical value 9.49 at the level of $p < .05$; a minimum of 5 as the expected value in any cell in the matrix). Of these five items, one displayed a positive variation, that is a clear step-by-step pattern with an increasing use at higher levels of proficiency, while four showed a mixed pattern of variation. Of the remaining thirty-three items, nineteen items, as shown on Figure 5.2, revealed a 'frequent use' across all levels, and fourteen items a 'moderate use'. For no items was the reported use 'infrequent'.

Figure 5.2

Relationships of individual SILL items to proficiency (class level)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE: 1 item</th>
<th>MIXED: 4 items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent use: 19 items</td>
<td>Moderate use: 14 items</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: black and shaded areas represent statistically significant variation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>Low profic (n=57)</th>
<th>Mid profic (n=54)</th>
<th>High profic (n=43)</th>
<th>Observed $\chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q3   MEM Connect word sound with image or picture</td>
<td>6 27 24</td>
<td>12 19 23</td>
<td>10 6 27</td>
<td>13.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5   MEM Use rhymes to remember new words</td>
<td>19 27 11</td>
<td>26 18 10</td>
<td>26 19 9</td>
<td>9.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17  COG Write notes, etc. in English</td>
<td>26 23 8</td>
<td>16 27 11</td>
<td>10 18 15</td>
<td>9.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18  COG Skim then read carefully</td>
<td>19 16 22</td>
<td>5 14 35</td>
<td>10 10 23</td>
<td>11.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22  COG Try not to translate word-for-word</td>
<td>9 26 22</td>
<td>18 21 15</td>
<td>16 9 18</td>
<td>10.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Critical Value of $\chi^2 = 9.49 \ (df = 4) \ p < .05$
Frequencies of responses in the three levels of proficiency for the five SILL items which varied significantly by class level are shown on Table 5.8. All five items were from either the MEM or COG subscales. They will now be described.

**Positive variation**

Figure 5.3, shows the pattern of responses for one item, Q17. Here, a *positive* regular stairstep pattern was revealed; increasing ‘high’ responses (grey areas) across the three proficiency levels were matched by the decreasing ‘low’ responses (black areas) of subjects. The white areas indicate the percentage of subjects at each proficiency level reporting ‘medium’ strategy use.

*Figure 5.3*

**Relationship between proficiency (class level) and Q17 I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English**

This pattern suggests that learners with Low proficiency in English were unable to make use of the strategy of ‘writing notes, messages, letters or reports in English’ but with gains in their English writing proficiency they reported making an increasing use of the strategy.

**Mixed variation**

The variation of four items (Q3, Q5, Q18 and Q22) was classed as *mixed*; none revealed the clear stair-step pattern outlined by Green and Oxford (1995). The pattern revealed by Q18 *I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully* was somewhat different from the other three so will be described first. For this item, no stairstep sequence across the three levels of proficiency was obvious. However, as Figure 5.4 indicates,
increases in the reported ‘high’ use of the strategy at all levels were matched by a corresponding decrease in ‘low’ responses.

Figure 5.4  
Relationship between proficiency (class level) and Q18 I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully

That 33% of the subjects at the Low level of proficiency reported ‘never’ or ‘generally not’ using the strategy, Q18 I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully, suggests that learners at that level did not have the reading skills in English to be able to skim. In contrast, at the Mid level of proficiency, reports of ‘never’ or ‘generally not’ had dropped to only nine per cent, while reports of ‘generally’ or ‘always’ were made by 65% of the learners. In other words, by the Mid level of proficiency learners had gained the skill of being able to skim and were conscious enough of its use to be able to report it. Beyond that, at the High level of proficiency a ‘generally’ or ‘always’ response to this item had dropped back to 54% of the subjects suggesting that, for some, the strategy of ‘skimming’ had become automatic, less conscious and so not as frequently reported.

Three other items (Q3, Q5 and Q22) were also classed as mixed variation. Q3 (I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word) showed very little difference between the percentage of ‘never’ or ‘generally not’ responses of High and Mid proficiency subjects (see Figure 5.5). As well, there was only a very slight difference between the ‘generally’ or ‘always’ responses of Mid and Low proficiency subjects. Overall, though, the learners of High proficiency reported more use of the strategy than did others.
Figure 5.5
Relationship between proficiency (class level) and Q3 I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word

Figure 5.6 shows the pattern of responses for Q5 (I use rhymes to remember new words) and indicates that the learners in this study reported using the strategy less as proficiency increased. However, reports of ‘generally’ and ‘always’ remained constant at close to 20%. As indicated earlier (Chapter Three), many of the subjects had asked for clarification of the word ‘rhymes’ during the administration of the SILL in English. Thus, an explanation of the pattern for Q5, shown on Figure 5.6, could be that as learners gained in proficiency they better understood the meaning of ‘rhymes’ and so were more straightforward in making a response of ‘never’ or ‘generally not’.

Figure 5.6
Relationship between proficiency (class level) and Q5 I use rhymes to remember new words

Indeed, the responses to the same statement on the L1 format of the SILL tentatively confirmed this explanation. Although only fifty subjects had
responded to the L1 format the percentages of responses of High and Mid subjects were again similar to each other, as shown in Figure 5.7. What was more remarkable though, was that more than sixty percent of Low proficiency subjects indicated ‘generally’ or ‘always’ using the strategy Qx5 (I use rhymes to remember new words). Such a response suggests quite strongly that the results obtained from Low proficiency learners on the English (L2) format were indeed confounded by their lack of understanding of the statement. Overall, the responses to Qx5 suggest that for vocabulary learning at least, the use of certain mnemonic strategies are most useful to those who are below a certain level of proficiency in the L2 but that with an increase in proficiency comes an increasing ability to draw on other resources.

![Figure 5.7: Relationship between proficiency (class level) and Qx5 I use rhymes to remember new words (L1 format) (n=50)](image)

The pattern of responses (Figure 5.8) to Q22 I try not to translate word-for-word cannot be easily explained. It could be expected that with increasing proficiency learners would translate less and not more. Yet, the increase in the ‘never’ or ‘generally not’ responses over the three levels of proficiency shows otherwise. It could be that subjects were confused by the only negative statement on the fifty item SILL believing that in making a similar response as they had to other statements, they were indicating their non-use of the strategy. Or, subjects might have responded to the negative statement as they would in their L1 thinking that they were indicating their disagreement with it. To throw some light on this idea
the responses of subjects to this item in the L1 format were examined. A different pattern of responses was evident, as shown in Figure 5.9. Here, as expected, the responses of High proficiency learners did indicate that they reported making less use of the strategy than Mid proficiency learners. Interestingly though, the least use of the strategy was reported by Low proficiency learners which suggests that the lack of English skills of these learners might have precluded them from making use of such a translation strategy.

Figure 5.9
Relationship between proficiency (class level) and Qx22 I try not to translate word-for-word (L1 format) (n=50)
Strategies not varying significantly by proficiency level

The thirty-three SILL items which did not vary significantly in reported use by proficiency level are shown in Table 5.9. Of the thirty-three, nineteen were strategy items for which more than 50% of the subjects reported ‘4’ or ‘5’ (‘generally’ or ‘always’), while fourteen items were reportedly used moderately i.e. 20-49% of subjects gave a ‘4’ or ‘5’ response. None of the items was used infrequently (fewer than 20% reporting ‘generally’ or ‘always’).

Summary

Compared with the findings of Green and Oxford (1995), little difference was found in the reported use of strategies by subjects of different levels of proficiency. No significant differences were found in the use of strategies as a whole nor in the use of strategies of each subscale. Further, the number of individual items in this study which varied significantly in pattern of use by proficiency level was extremely low, only five compared with Green and Oxford’s twenty-two. However, the number of subjects in this study (N=154) was less than half that in the Green and Oxford study (N=374) and, as pointed out above, the range of proficiency levels was narrow, from ‘zero’ proficiency to less than a functional level of English. Had the number of subjects been greater and the range of proficiency levels wider the scores of more SILL items might have varied significantly across proficiency levels, possibly in a positive direction. In addition, the use of the L1, rather than English, for the administration of the SILL might have produced different results; as it was the use of English seems to have had a confounding effect on the results obtained for some items, rendering them less accurate. Notwithstanding such limitations, results obtained did indicate that subjects overall were reporting ‘frequent’ and ‘moderate’ use of a large number of strategies lending support to the claim that learners in ESL environments make more frequent use of strategies than EFL learners in non-English speaking communities (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995).
Table 5.9
Items showing no significant variation by proficiency level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>% High use (4 or 5)</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Strategies used frequently at all course levels (50% or more of students reporting high use)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>MEM Review English lessons often</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9.984‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>MEM Connect words and location (eg. on page)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>COG Say or write new English words several times</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>COG Practise sounds of English</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>COG Start conversations in English</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>COG Watch TV or movies in English</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>9.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>META Seek many ways to use English</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>META Notice my mistakes/try to do better</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>4.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32</td>
<td>META Pay attention when someone is speaking</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13.044‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q33</td>
<td>META Try to find out about language learning</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>16.176‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36</td>
<td>META Seek opportunities to read in English</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q37</td>
<td>META Have clear goals for improving skills</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>8.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38</td>
<td>META Think about progress in learning English</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>7.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q45</td>
<td>SOC Ask other person to slow down or repeat</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q46</td>
<td>SOC Ask to be corrected when talking</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>16.901‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q47</td>
<td>SOC Practise English with other students</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q48</td>
<td>SOC Ask for help from English speakers</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>9.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q49</td>
<td>SOC Ask questions in English</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q50</td>
<td>SOC Try to develop cultural understanding</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Strategies used moderately at all course levels (20%–49% of students reporting high use)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>% High use (4 or 5)</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>MEM Associate new material w/already known</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16.899‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>MEM Use new English words in sentence</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9.498‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>MEM Connect word to mental picture of situation</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>MEM Use flashcards to remember new words</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>MEM Physically act out new words</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>COG Try to talk like native English speakers</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>COG Use known words in different ways</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>COG Read for pleasure in English</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>COG Seek L1 words similar to L2 words</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>COG Try to find patterns</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>COG Find meanings dividing words into parts</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>COG Make summaries of information</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>META Plan schedule to have enough time</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35</td>
<td>META Look for people to talk to in English</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Critical Value of $\chi^2 = 9.49$ (df = 4) $p < .05$
‡ - not considered significant: some cells had an expected count of less than 5
5.2.4. Length of time living in Australia

No positive correlations of significance could be found between length of time living in Australia and any of the four subscales. However, in an attempt to identify patterns of strategy use subjects were sub-divided into seven broad groups, based on length of time they had been living in Australia. Those seven groups can be identified in Column 1 of Table 5.10 below, which shows the mean of strategy subscales at one year intervals up to five years, then by five year intervals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of time in Australia (years)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than 1</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1 to 2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;2 to 3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3 to 4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;4 to 5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5 to 10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>154</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information contained on Table 5.10 is also represented in Figure 5.10. An overall slight decline is evident in the reported strategy use of those living in Australia for 'less than one year' and 'more than ten years'. In fact, the reported use on all subscales decreased steadily until four years of living in Australia. Further, until that four year point the rank order of strategy subscales remained as it had been at the outset: SOC as highest, META, COG and lastly MEM. After four years of living in Australia the mean for all subscales increased and the reported use of META strategies overtook that of SOC to become the subscale of greatest reported use. This pre-eminence of META strategies was maintained until the point of 'more than ten years' when SOC strategies were again preferred, albeit marginally, over META.
5.2.5. **Amount of English learning prior to arrival in Australia**

Of the 154 subjects in this study, sixty had had no previous formal learning of English before arrival in Australia (see Table 5.11). Broadly speaking, a total of forty-eight had had more than five years of learning English, while forty-six had had between one month and five years.

No significant correlations were found between length of prior English learning and any of the four strategy subscales.
Table 5.11

Numbers of subjects by prior English learning categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior learning of English (years)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zero</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;2 to 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3 to 4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;4 to 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5 to 6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, for those with five years and less of prior English learning, highest mean scores were found for the SOC strategies subscale, shown on Figure 5.11. The only exception to this pattern appeared to be in the category of >1 to 2 years of prior English learning where the highest mean score (4.04) was found on the META strategies subscale. For those who had had more than five years of English learning prior to their arrival in Australia, the reported overall use of strategies was lower than other subjects, with a greater mean use of META strategies reported.

Figure 5.11

Reported strategy use and length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia
5.2.6. First language (L1) background

The variable of first language (L1) background was examined in relation to the subjects’ reported strategy use. As was explained earlier (Chapter Three), the size of language groups varied greatly; eight groups comprised only one subject while the largest L1 group, Chinese, numbered 47.

To enable more meaningful comparison between the reported strategy use of L1 groups

(a) Chinese (n=47), was subdivided on the basis of country of origin i.e. Cambodia (n=3), Hong Kong (n=20), Malaysia (n=2), Mainland China (n=11), Taiwan (n=5) and Vietnam (n=6);

(b) subjects from the Former Yugoslavia who had identified themselves as belonging to Bosnian, Croatian, or Serbian language group were considered as belonging to one L1 group: ‘Former Yugoslavia’;

(c) any L1 group which, following (a) and (b) numbered four or less subjects was omitted from any further discussion of strategy use and L1 background, in this chapter.

Mean scores of reported strategy use of L1 groups

 Twelve L1 groups thus remained for examination and are shown on Table 5.12, together with the mean score of reported strategy use (column 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Total mean response score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Yugoslavia</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Hong Kong</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Mainland</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-all</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Taiwan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Vietnam</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It can be seen that overall six of the L1 groups obtained a ‘high’ mean score of reported strategy use (3.5 or greater) (Oxford, 1990), while six could be categorised as reporting ‘medium’ strategy use. Interestingly, the ‘high’ category included all European L1 groups, but only one Asian L1 group (Vietnamese).

Six other L1 groups, with a mean score of 2.5 to 3.4, could be considered to be in the category of ‘medium’ users: Farsi, Khmer and all Chinese subjects. Of the Chinese, those from Hong Kong (mean = 3.42) reported making greatest overall use of strategies, followed by those from Mainland China (3.37), Taiwan (3.29) and Vietnam (3.0).

**Mean reported strategy use on four subscales**

The mean scores of each L1 group were examined across each of the four subscales: MEM, COG, META and SOC. One-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference between any two L1 groups on any of the four subscales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language groups</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>MEM</th>
<th>COG</th>
<th>META</th>
<th>SOC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Yugoslavia</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Hong Kong</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-M/ China</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Taiwan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Vietnam</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rank order of strategy subscales within L1 groups**

Table 5.13 reveals that for all but four of the L1 groups the greatest reported use was of SOC strategies; only Arabic (n=8), Italian (n=5), Spanish (n=12) and Chinese-Hong Kong (n=20) reported greatest use of META strategies.
These groups, therefore, were examined more closely in an attempt to make some account for their predominant use of META strategies.

**Italian**

Three of the five Italian subjects reported highest use on the META subscale and three on the SOC subscale. None of the Italian subjects reported highest use of the MEM or COG subscales, as is shown on Table 5.14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>MEM</th>
<th>COG</th>
<th>META</th>
<th>SOC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of subjects reporting highest use</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As class level was a reflection of proficiency level, the placement of Italian subjects in classes was examined (Figure 5.12).

**Figure 5.12**

*Classes - Italian subjects (n=5)*

All five Italian subjects were in the DEET classes (employment assistance program) sponsored by the Department of Employment Education and Training, rather than DIEA classes provided for more recent immigrants. The range of classes in which they had been placed, DEET2 to DEET5, is indicative of a wide range in their proficiency levels; DEET2 subjects were roughly at a level of 1+ (survival proficiency) while DEET5 roughly at 0+ (initial proficiency) on ASLPR ratings.
Of the five Italian subjects, four had had no learning of English and one had had 5 years of learning English prior to arrival in Australia, compared with the average of 3 years and 3 months for the 154 subjects. In the time that they had been in Australia, three Italian subjects had been in language classes for one month only, one for 10 months (also the mean length of time for all subjects) and one for 16 months. No significant positive correlation existed between the variables of prior learning of English or learning of English in Australia, and the use of META strategies for these subjects.

Two variables, however, did set Italian subjects apart from others:

(i) age, and
(ii) the length of time they had been in Australia.

The ages of the five Italian subjects ranged from 24 to 58 (all but one were aged 49 or over), with an average age of 47 years, as against the average of 37 years for the 154 subjects as a whole. Unlike any other L1 group in the study, no Italian subject had been in Australia for less than nine years; the average length of time Italian subjects had been in Australia ranged from 9 to 36 years, with an overall average of 26 years, compared with the average of 4 years for the 154 subjects as a whole. Correlations, albeit not significant, were found for Italian subjects between length of time in Australia and the use of META strategies (.79) and between Age and META strategies (.90) for the Italian subjects.

Perhaps the greater use of META strategies by Italian subjects can be explained as follows. As mentioned above, the Italian subjects were in English classes funded by DEET as a retraining option. Having already lived and survived in Australia for a long period, one wonders why, at this time, they chose the option of a class which would, presumably, improve their English language skills. One explanation is that such a decision was influenced by their age. Because of the possible difficulty in finding further employment in a new field, the Italian subjects saw little benefit in pursuing other types of retraining programs offered to them and so decided to join an English language class. The fact that they did make such a choice serves, nevertheless, to emphasise the resolve of these particular subjects. On joining a formal English class, it is quite possible that the Italian subjects expected that they would be called on to make use of META strategies, and so, in
responding to the SILL were conscious of their use and able to report on them. Indeed, even in making the choice to attend English classes, the subjects had practised metacognitive strategies of planning, organising time, setting goals, thinking about progress.

**Spanish**

Like the Italian group, the Spanish subjects reported a predominant use of META strategies. For seven of the twelve subjects, the META subscale was the one of highest reported use; MEM and COG were each highest for one subject, while three reported highest use of SOC strategies (see Table 5.15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.15</th>
<th>Mean scores of Spanish subjects on subscales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of subjects reporting highest use</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A strong correlation of .74, significant at the level of 0.01 was found for Spanish subjects, as a whole, between the META and SOC subscales, indicating that for those subjects the use of META and SOC strategies were complementary.

The ages of Spanish subjects ranged from 19 to 57, the average age being 39.2 years, slightly higher than the mean age of 37 of subjects overall. Before arrival in Australia, they had learnt English for 31 months, slightly less than the average of 39.8 months of all subjects (N=154). Five had not studied English before arrival in Australia; others had had from 1 to 6 years of prior English learning. In Australia, subjects had been in English classes from four months to three years, with an average fifteen months.

On average, the Spanish subjects had been resident in Australia for 6 years and 3 months, somewhat longer than the average of 4 years for all subjects in this study. To gain a more detailed picture, the length of time that they had been living in Australia was divided into three broad groups:
(i) up to 30 months,
(ii) 31 months to 7 years, and
(iii) more than 7 years.

No significant correlation was found, for Spanish subjects as a whole, between the length of time living in Australia with any of the four subscales. Categories (i) and (iii), outlined above, were examined more closely, again to discern trends in strategy use. No attention was paid to category (ii) *31 months to 7 years*, as it comprised only one subject.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Spanish subjects and reported strategy use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of time in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 30 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = subscale rated highest by particular cohort

Table 5.16 shows that META strategies were reported as the subscale of highest use irrespective of the length of time Spanish subjects had been resident in Australia. The table also shows that with increasing time in Australia came a change in the rank order of strategy subscales; for recent arrivals COG were second in importance after META, while to those who had been in the country for more than seven years, SOC was second in importance.

Also with an increase in time, came an increase in the mean of reported strategy use of each subscale; all scores were higher for category (iii) *more than 7 years*, than they had been for category (i) *up to 30 months*, and, for the META and SOC subscales, the differences were significant at the levels of 0.02 and 0.04, respectively. Such a trend on the part of the Spanish subjects contrasts with the trend of subjects as a whole, noted above on Table 5.10: *Length of time living in Australia*. There, it was pointed out that for subjects as a whole, the reported use of strategies declined with greater length of time in Australia.

Further explanation can be offered when prior English learning by the subjects in categories (i) and (iii) is examined. Those Spanish subjects who had been in Australia for up to 30 months had had, on average, 4 years of
prior English learning. In contrast, the mean for those who had resided in Australia for more than seven years was 16.8 months. Although these differences in prior English learning were not statistically significant, their effect may have been shown by the differences in response to the SILL. Perhaps because they had had less prior English learning, the subjects in the >7 years category were more conscious of their language learning and so responded more highly to the questionnaire items overall.

Like the Italian subjects, the choice of the Spanish subjects to join an English class might well have been a manifestation of their metacognitive strategies. Figure 5.13 below shows the class levels at which the Spanish subjects were placed. Of the twelve subjects, four were in DIEA classes, one of which was an evening class, while eight were in classes funded by the Department of Employment Education and Training. That is to say, eight were taking English classes as part of DEET’s retraining program for workers made redundant with changes in government policies. Several of the Spanish subjects had been placed in classes of lower level proficiency, but six were in either DIEA1 or DEET1, the two classes of highest proficiency in the AMES Centre, broadly rated as ASLPR 1+ survival proficiency to 2 minimum social proficiency.

![Figure 5.13](image)

Thus, many of the Spanish subjects were like the Italian subjects, in that they had made a conscious decision to join an English class. Like the Italian subjects, it may have been those who were more conscious of using META strategies who took up the option of language classes.
Chinese-Hong Kong

Chinese-Hong Kong subjects were the only Asian language group to report highest use of META strategies; for all others, strategies from the META subscale were ranked second after a reported highest use of SOC strategies (see Table 5.17).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asian languages</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>MEM</th>
<th>COG</th>
<th>META</th>
<th>SOC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Hong Kong</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.78*</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-M/China</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.70*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Taiwan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.77*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Vietnam</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.67*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.85*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = subscale rated highest by particular cohort

The Chinese-Hong Kong group contrasts with the other Chinese groups on a number of variables, as can be seen on Table 5.18. On average, Hong Kong subjects were older than other Chinese subjects, had received the greatest amount of prior English and had been in Australia for a shorter time than other Chinese, apart from Chinese-Vietnam. The differences appeared most marked however, between Chinese-Hong Kong and Chinese-Mainland China.
Table 5.18
Characteristics of Chinese subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1 group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean Age (months) Mean</th>
<th>Time in Australia (months) Mean</th>
<th>Prior English learning (months) Mean</th>
<th>Strategy subscale of highest use</th>
<th>Number in DIA class</th>
<th>Number in DEET class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All subjects</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Chinese</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-HK</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-M/China</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Taiwan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Vietnam</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prior English Learning - Chinese-Hong Kong and Chinese-Mainland**

Chinese subjects from Hong Kong had experienced significantly longer in learning English before coming to Australia than had the Chinese-Mainland subjects. Those from Hong Kong had spent an average of 7 years 9 months learning English, compared with four years for those from the Mainland.

No significant correlations were found for either Chinese-Mainland or Chinese-Hong Kong subjects between the length of time spent in prior learning of English and any of the strategy subscales.

Interestingly, it was found that irrespective of the amount of their prior English learning the Hong Kong subjects preferred the use of META strategies while the Mainland subjects preferred the use of SOC strategies. Table 5.19 shows the preferred strategy use for each of the two Chinese groups according to the length of time spent in their prior learning of English.
Table 5.19
Length of prior learning of English and preferred strategy use: Mainland and Hong Kong subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior English learning (years)</th>
<th>Subscale of highest mean score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mainland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zero</td>
<td>SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up to 5 years</td>
<td>SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
<td>SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Hong Kong subjects had lived in a society where the use of English was common. Of the 20 subjects, 14 had learnt English for more than five years and of these, nine had learnt English for ten years or more. In contrast, no subject from the Mainland had learnt English for more than nine years. That the Hong Kong participants had learnt English for such a length of time indicates an extensive period of general education for the Hong Kong subjects. Data were not collected on the subjects’ general level of education reached, but it is probable that most of the Chinese-Hong Kong subjects had completed secondary education, perhaps tertiary as well. That being so, the Hong Kong subjects were probably metacognitively aware, were used to planning and setting long term goals, to making opportunities to learn, to thinking about progress in learning. For these immigrants, on arrival in Australia, the preference for metacognitive strategies might well have been a continuation of prior learning practices (Levine et al., 1996). Indeed, an administration of the SILL to university students in Hong Kong found greater reported use of META than SOC strategies (Bremner, 1999). Thus, it seems that the type of prior learning, rather than the amount, might well be a factor which relates to the type of language learning strategies preferred.

Four of the twenty Chinese-Hong Kong subjects were in DEET classes, those provided as part of the job assistance schemes. These four were those who had been in Australia for a longer period of time e.g. 6 to 10 years. The others were the subjects who had arrived in the country more recently and were taking advantage of the opportunity to attend classes funded by the DIEA as one of the provisions of the subjects’ immigration package.

As explained in Chapter Three, on arrival in Australia immigrants who have been granted permanent residence are normally entitled to attend up to 510 hours of English tuition funded by the DIEA. Most of the subjects in the DIEA classes in this study had arrived in Australia within the previous twelve
month period, and so had quickly taken up the option of attending English language classes.

Compared with the Hong Kong subjects those from Mainland China present a very different picture in this regard. On average, the Mainland subjects had been in Australia for more than five years. Thus, it could be expected that they would have already attended DIEA classes, received 510 hours of tuition under that provision, and if attending this AMES centre at all, would have been doing so as a DEET student. However, of the eleven Mainland subjects, nine were still attending DIEA classes. In other words, most of the Chinese-Mainland were attending classes which immigrants normally attend within their first two years in the country.

Why then had the Chinese-Mainland not taken advantage earlier of the provision of English language classes? It is possible that there were reasons which had precluded them from attending English language classes earlier such as an initial, urgent need to find immediate employment or a lack of permanent residency status.

There is though, also the possibility that the Chinese-Mainland had not taken up the option of attending English classes immediately on their arrival in Australia because, as a group, they had not planned and considered long term goals, taken opportunities to learn, and had not thought about their progress in learning. In other words, the Chinese-Mainland group might have been less metacognitively aware, generally, than the Chinese-Hong Kong group. Without the level of metacognitive awareness, and with a lower level of English proficiency anyway, the Chinese-Mainland group might have relied on their social strategies to learn and survive in the Australian society. Perhaps that was why they had reported the preferred use of SOC strategies, in their consequent formal learning of English.
Arabic

No strong reasons could be found for the greater reported use of META strategies by the eight Arabic subjects. With an average age of 35, the group was a little younger than the average age of 37 years of the 154 subjects as a whole. They had lived in Australia for an average of twenty-one months, less than half the average time of the 154 subjects as a whole (49.2 months). However, their prior English learning, an average of 59 months, exceeded the average 40 months for all subjects.

That they had learnt English for almost 5 years, on average, suggests quite an extensive period of general education, leading to the speculation that they too, like the Hong Kong Chinese had, in their prior education, developed a metacognitive awareness. Thus, it could be suggested, the length of prior education had some bearing on the strong preference for META strategies from the Arabic subjects.

As the numbers of subjects included in this discussion of the use of META strategies were small the explanations of patterns of use can remain only speculative. They do, however, suggest avenues for further research.
5.3. **Response patterns of European and Asian language groups**

An examination was made of the response patterns of European (n=53) and Asian (n=80) language groups to the items on the SILL. The language groups of Afghani, Arabic, Farsi and Turkish were not included in this comparison.

Table 5.20 below, shows the results of t-tests which revealed that the European languages subjects responded more highly than the Asian subjects on all subscales. However, it is recognised that there is a risk of obtaining spuriously significant differences when repeated t-tests are used within the same experiment (Brown 1990) and that a strict interpretation cannot be made of the results obtained. Thus, after correcting for error, only on the COG subscale was the difference between European and Asian language groups considered significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>MEM Sub-scale mean</th>
<th>COG Sub-scale mean</th>
<th>META Sub-scale mean</th>
<th>SOC Sub-scale mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>131.4</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>129.1</td>
<td>3.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| p              |    | 0.43               | 0.004              | 0.05               | 0.13               |    |            |           |

When the response patterns were examined more closely, it was seen that the two groups had made different use of the five point scale (Figure 5.14). The differences were not extreme but a greater percentage of European than Asian L1 subjects had used the upper end of the five-point scale.
Figure 5.14
Overall percentage use of 5-point scale by Asian and European L1 subjects
(N=154)

Further, when the pattern of responses on each subscale was examined, it was found that the European L1 responses were concentrated at the fourth of the five points on all subscales (see Figures 5.14 to 5.17). Responses of Asian L1 subjects, in contrast, were concentrated at the fourth point only on the subscales of META and SOC. Otherwise, on the MEM and COG subscales, their responses clustered at the third, or mid-point of the scale.

Figures 5.15 to 5.18
Percentage use of 5-point scale on subscales by Asian and European L1 subjects
The conclusion could be drawn that because a greater proportion of them responded at a higher level to the questionnaire statements, subjects from European L1 backgrounds were making greater use, than were the Asian L1 subjects, of the strategies posed in the questionnaire. However, to draw such a conclusion could be naive.
Other explanations can be given for such a pattern of responses. The subjects from Asian L1 backgrounds might have been less familiar with questionnaire-type instruments and, in consequence, responded more cautiously than did the subjects from European L1 backgrounds. Or perhaps, the 'language distance' of European languages from English is not as great as the 'distance' between English and Asian languages. Hence, subjects from European language groups might have felt a greater affinity with the language of the questionnaire statements and so might have responded in a more positive direction than did the Asian L1 subjects.

However, the explanation of cultural difference needs to be considered. Hui and Triandis (1989), for example, found that Hispanic subjects exhibited a stronger tendency for extreme checking (about half the time, on the average) than did non-Hispanic when responding on a five point scale. Here, the different response patterns of the Asian and European groups of subjects could well have been superficial, and only a consequence of the different cultural norms of responding of the two groups of subjects. Different cultures have different construals of the self, of others, and of the interdependence of those.

for many cultures of the world, the Western notion of the self as an entity containing significant dispositional attributes, and as detached from context, is simply not an adequate description of selfhood. Rather, in many construals, the self is viewed as interdependent with the surrounding context, and it is the "other" of the "self-in-relation-to-other" that is focal in individual experience. (Markus and Kitayama, 1991:225)

The interdependent view, exemplified by many Asian cultures, sees one's behaviour as determined by the relationship one has with others in the group (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). In Japan, for example, the ability to feel a oneness with persons other than self is a valued sign of maturity (Weisz et al., 1984).

On the other hand, the independent view, is exemplified by many of Western European cultures, for whom
achieving the cultural goal of independence requires construing oneself as an individual whose behavior is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings and action, rather than by reference to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others. (Markus and Kitayama, 1991: 234)

Such differing views of self and of one's interdependence with others could result in very differing response patterns to a questionnaire such as that used in this study; there is always the possibility that interdependent subjects may never have previously considered, and so may not be aware of, their own abilities or practices (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Thus, such subjects in this study might have been less able to report on their language learning strategies.

Or, unlike subjects with an independent view of self, respondents with interdependent selves might focus on the motivation of the person administering the questionnaire and on the nature of their relationship with that person. Consequently, in the process of responding, they might be overly concerned with the potential ramifications of answering in one way or another (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Further, in their desire to fulfil the cultural expectation to fit in with others, those from interdependent cultures may respond in a more modest and self-effacing way to a self-report questionnaire than would those from independent cultures (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). For subjects from Asian cultures, for example, it can be important to be modest and to respond cautiously. For them, "to use the extremes of the scale would be in 'poor taste' and boisterous" (Hui and Triandis 1989:298).

For those of other cultures, however

an extreme response is used because people consider such a response sincere. To use the middle of the scale would be considered trying to hide one's feeling, which is normatively disapproved. (Hui and Triandis 1989: 298)

Another limitation of research involving cross-cultural groups of subjects is that of "translation and equating stimuli and questionnaires" (Markus and Kitayama 1991:248). How is it possible for a researcher to know whether a particular word, for example, used on a questionnaire has the same meaning for a Chinese subject as it has for a Spanish-speaking subject? To what extent can constructs be unequivocally defined across different cultures which have
very different views of self (Markus and Kitayama, 1991)? In consequence, how meaningful can be the conclusions drawn from the data gathered?

Such reservations do not, however, seem to underlie the questionnaire used in this study. Underpinning the SILL is a Western view of self. That is to say, the statements of the SILL infer that all learners should be aiming to be independent, self-monitoring, self-evaluating individuals. Moreover, through the greater use of more of the SILL strategies it is implied that learners can achieve the ultimate goal, autonomy.

However, for those subjects with an interdependent view of self and whose cultural expectation is that they will focus on the 'self-in-relation-to-other' such a view is clearly at odds with their cultural norms. Thus, in this study, responses of some Asian L1 subjects to the questionnaire statements might not have been an account of a lower level of use of particular language learning strategies. Rather, their responses might have been a reflection of their interdependent cultural norms.
5.4. Summary

5.4.1. Overall reported strategy use

Correlations
To summarise, positive correlations, greater than .35 and significant at .001 level, were found between the MEM and COG and between the META and SOC subscales. A strong correlation (.6040) was found between COG and META suggesting that the two subscales were measuring a similar construct, or constructs. No other significant, positive and meaningful correlations were found.

Mean scores
Overall, on the five point scale, subjects rated the subscale of SOC strategies as highest (mean = 3.82), ahead of the META (3.76), COG (3.38) and MEM (3.12) strategy subscales.

At the item level, eighteen of the thirty-eight were classed as ‘high’ use, having generated a mean greater than 3.50 on the five-point rating scale of the SILL. All but one of the remaining items were classed ‘medium’ use. The ESL immigrant learners in this study who had so reported that strategy use were therefore considered to be ‘high/medium’ strategy users, as defined by Oxford (1990).

5.4.2. Reported strategy use in terms of variables

Sex
No significant differences in overall reported strategy use were found between males and females.

Age
No significant correlations were found between Age and any of the four subscales. However, certain trends in reported strategy use were evident: SOC were reported highest by youngest subjects, aged 18-25. META strategies were preferred by those aged 31-35 and 46-50. The use of COG
strategies were reported more by learners aged 18-25 and 31-35, and MEM by those in the 46-50 age group.

**Level of general language proficiency**

One way ANOVA revealed no significant variation in overall strategy use between three levels of proficiency, where class level was considered to be a reflection of such proficiency, nor did the results of multivariate tests show any significant differences in the reported use made of the strategy subscales (MEM, COG, META and SOC) by the three proficiency groups. Five of the thirty-eight SILL items met the criteria for significant variation by class level, and of these, one displayed a positive variation, with an increasing use at higher levels of proficiency, while four showed a mixed pattern of variation.

**Length of time living in Australia**

No positive correlations of significance could be found between length of time living in Australia and any of the four subscales. However, it was observed that, while SOC strategies were reported most highly by those who had been in the country for up to four years, META strategies were generally highest reported by those in the country longer than that time.

**Amount of English learning prior to arrival in Australia**

No significant correlations were found between length of prior English learning and any of the four strategy subscales. Broad trends were noted however, with those having five years or less of English learning prior to arrival in Australia favouring SOC strategies, those with more than five years preferring the use META strategies.

**First language (L1) background**

One-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference between any two L1 groups on any of the four subscales: MEM, COG, META and SOC. Some non-significant differences were noted in the reported use of META strategies by Italian, Spanish and Arabic subjects, and of META and SOC strategies by Chinese subjects from Hong Kong and the Mainland.
5.4.3. Response patterns of European and Asian language groups

While it was noted that, in general, the Asian subjects gave lower responses than did those from a European L1 background, it was suggested that the differences in responses might well have been superficial and attributable to the expectations of the individual’s cultural background.

In short, although some trends were observed in the findings, no significant correlations were found between subscales and variables overall, nor any significant differences in use of strategies between subjects of proficiency levels or L1 background. Such findings underline the homogeneous nature of the subjects in this study; no sub-set of subjects stood out on any measure. The findings also however, reflect the relatively small sample size (N=154). Had that been larger, results of greater significance could perhaps have been obtained.

This chapter concludes the description and analysis of the quantitative data, the first part of this study. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight are concerned with the second part of the study: the description and analysis of qualitative data.
Chapter Six

**Description of Stage 4: Qualitative study**

This chapter, together with Chapters Seven and Eight, is concerned with the second part of this study: the description and analysis of the qualitative data gathered in **Stage 4**. The first part of the chapter describes the sources of qualitative data while the latter part describes the methods used in the coding and analyses of those data.

### 6.1. Selection of subjects for qualitative research

It will be recalled that **Stage 1** and **Stage 2** of this study involved 154 subjects. Of those 154 subjects, nineteen participated in **Stage 4**. However, the study concentrated on fifteen of the nineteen subjects who were members of the same class, DEET1. That class was selected as the teacher was a former colleague of the researcher and was interested and willing to participate in the project.

It was intended to gather qualitative data from the subjects during the limited twelve week period they were attending the AMES Centre. After **Stage 4** of the project had commenced, though, the teacher of DEET1 was moved to other duties for five weeks. Thus, the period in which that class could be visited for data collection became even more restricted. As outlined earlier, DEET1 was the highest proficiency level class in the Centre; most of the subjects in this class were at a proficiency level of ASLPR 1+ *survival proficiency* to ASLPR 2, *minimum social proficiency*. It seemed that they were able to express their strategy use, in English, without the need of an interpreter so enabling the limited time and resources of the study to be used as efficiently as possible.

One consequence of selecting the majority of subjects from the same class was that all were roughly within the same English proficiency levels. This circumstance might have been a limitation of this study for if, as is sometimes suggested (Green and Oxford, 1995), patterns of strategy use change with the development of proficiency in the second language a broader view of strategy use might have been obtained if students with lower levels of English proficiency had, as well, been included in this part of the study.
Nevertheless, limitations such as these were balanced against the practical aspects of conducting the study in classrooms and within strict time limits. Thus, with very few exceptions the qualitative data which were obtained reflected the situations of the participants at higher levels of proficiency in the AMES Centre and did not reflect those of lower proficiency levels.

6.2. Collection of qualitative data

This study was carried out in normal classrooms of a functioning language centre with the limitations that such a situation can impose on research: time and access to subjects were limited, subjects were sometimes absent from the class because of illness or other reason at the times that data collection had been planned. Thus, decisions on data collection had to be made on a daily basis taking into account the least undue interruption to the learners, the emerging data and the most efficient and fruitful means of their collection in the time available. It was found that

data from some informants are “better”. The informant may be articulate and reflective and may enjoy talking about events and processes. Or the informant may be knowledgeable, close to the event, action, process, or setting with which you’re concerned (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 268).

Consequently, collection was more focussed on those subjects who attended regularly and whose level of English language proficiency enabled them to best report on their language learning.

6.3. Sources of qualitative data

Initially, it was planned to collect qualitative data from classroom observation, think-aloud protocols, retrospective accounts, as well as interviews. However, it soon became apparent that the data which could be gathered from classroom observation of strategy use, for example, was negligible. Unless the strategies used were overt, such as using a dictionary or asking a friend or the teacher for assistance, classroom observation was not a fruitful source of data (Chamot, 1987). Mental processes which learners may have been using were not observable (Cohen and Scott, 1996). Therefore, the initial plan for the collection of
| Name   | Class | Gen | Q resp | Read | Writ | Vocab | Cloze think-aloud | Dict retro | Writ retro | Strats | TV | Chn | Gp | LL | Mot |
|--------|-------|-----|--------|------|------|-------|-------------------|------------|------------|--------|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Anna   | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Betty  | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Hui    | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Janetta| DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Leo    | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Maria  | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Mena   | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Nan    | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Peter  | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Rita   | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Sam    | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Sandra | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Serge  | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Thi    | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Wei    | DEET1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Bai    | DIEA3 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| Kit    | DIEA1 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| CS     | DEET5 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |
| LL     | DEET5 |     | •      |      |      |   •    |                  |           |            |        |    |    |    |    |    |     |

**Key**
- **Gen**: General questions on language learning
- **Q resp**: SILL Questionnaire responses
- **Read**: Audio-taped Reading exercise in class
- **Writ**: Audio-taped Writing exercise in class
- **Vocab Gram**: Audio-taped Vocabulary/Grammar exercise in class
- **Cloze think-aloud**: Audio-taped think-aloud of cloze exercise
- **Dict retro**: Retrospection on dictation exercise
- **Writ retro**: Retrospection on writing exercise
- **Strats**: Interview - use of strategies
- **TV**: Interview - TV watching habits
- **Chn**: Interview - influence of children on English learning
- **Gp pref**: Interview - preference for working in group or alone
- **LL**: Recommendations to other immigrants on language learning
- **Mot**: Interview - factors of motivation
Data was modified considerably during the course of the study to take account of the data emerging from the subjects.

Table 6.1 shows the sources of the qualitative data eventually collected from the subjects whose pseudonyms are listed in Column 1: Anna to Wei were members of the same DEET1 class while Bai, Kit, CS and LL were drawn from other classes as will be explained below.

### 6.3.1. General Interview

The first interview with subjects was a general one, titled 'Gen' on Table 6.1, and conducted individually with all of the subjects from the DEET1 class who were present on the day. The purpose of this interview was to familiarise subjects and the researcher with each other and to gain some overall idea of the subjects' language learning backgrounds, preferences and difficulties. For this and subsequent interviews subjects were asked to move to an adjoining room screened by glass from the main classroom and there to respond to questions such as those listed in Table 6.2 and Appendix 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General interview questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did you learn English before you came to Australia?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is learning English in Australia different from learning English in your country?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What things do you like/not like doing in this class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When you're speaking in English, do you feel nervous?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How do you learn new words in English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you see then as the biggest problem for you, at the moment, in learning English?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.3.2. Qresponse interview

Following the initial general interview several subjects, shown in the column headed 'Qresp' (Questionnaire responses) on the table above, were interviewed individually. The purpose of this interview was
(i) to encourage subjects to reflect on their strategy use and so to report on it;
(ii) to confirm, or otherwise, the responses which those subjects had made to the SILL;
(iii) to identify a hierarchy of strategy use.

The *Response* interview will be described in greater detail later in this chapter.

### 6.3.3. Other sources of data

Further qualitative data were gathered from several subjects while they were undertaking tasks in class (see Table 6.1). Subjects were audio-taped while completing Reading (*Read*), Writing (*Writ*) and Vocabulary/Grammar (*Vocab/Gram*) exercises. Four subjects were asked to undertake a 'think-aloud' cloze exercise (*Cloze think-aloud*) but this protocol did not prove a fruitful source of data; it quickly became apparent that subjects were more concerned with finding a 'right' answer than with verbalising their mental processes. A 'think-aloud' protocol might have been more successful if time had been available, which it was not, to train subjects to 'think aloud', something strongly recommended by researchers using this technique (Ericsson and Simon, 1987). Even so, it might not have been reasonable to expect subjects at such a level of proficiency to verbalise, in a language which was not their first, what could have been a complicated mental procedure (Cohen and Scott, 1996). In such a situation, the subjects' efforts to verbalise could well have interrupted their concentration on the task itself. Thus, after using the think-aloud protocol with four subjects it was not used further in the study.

Two groups of subjects were asked to retrospect on the strategies they had used to complete a particular task. Wei, Mena and Anna, followed by Peter and Sam, retrospected on a class dictation exercise (*Dictretro*), as did Hui on a writing task she had carried out in class with Sandra (*Writretro*). From these particular interviews data emerged which led to further individual interviews on strategy use (*Strats*) with Wei, Anna, Hui and Peter.

By this stage of the collection, data were emerging which indicated important influences on the language learning of the subjects and on their choice of strategies in that learning. Hence, subjects were further interviewed on the
influence of television (TV), the family, particularly the children (Chn), on their preferred situation of learning in the classroom (Gp pref), their advice to others in learning English (LL) and their own motivation (Mot). These influences, with the exception of ‘advice to others in learning English’ (LL), will be discussed in the following chapters.

6.3.4. Audiotaping and transcription

All the data gathered from classroom activities and interviews were recorded on audiotape and were subsequently transcribed by the researcher in preparation for further analysis.

6.4. The Qresponse interview

The findings from the protocols will be described and discussed in later sections. However, because of its different nature the Qresponse interview and its findings are outlined here.

As outlined earlier, the purpose of the Qresponse interview was threefold:

(i) to encourage subjects to reflect on their strategy use and so to report on it;
(ii) to confirm, or otherwise, the responses which those subjects made to the SILL;
(iii) to identify a hierarchy of strategy use.

6.4.1. Selection of strategy statements for discussion

Because it was not possible in the limited time available to interview all nineteen subjects on their responses to the SILL, ten participants were selected for the Qresponse interview. To have interviewed all of those ten on their responses to all fifty SILL strategies would have taken far longer than the time available and, as well, could have proved tedious for the participants. So before interviewing each subject a selection was made of strategies for discussion.

Firstly, the responses which the subjects had made to the fifty SILL items were examined and from them items were selected which they had rated as ‘5’ (always or almost always true of me), ‘4’ (usually true of me), or by way of contrast, as ‘2’ (usually not true of me) or ‘1’ (never or almost never true of me).
Because of the pressure of time and the possibility of stress on the subjects strategies which had been ranked as 3 (*sometimes true of me*) were generally not selected.

It was hoped that when presented with the selected strategy statements the subjects would reflect closely on their use of particular strategies and identify and report on those which they considered to be of particular importance to their learning of English at the time. By using such a process it was believed that a more detailed picture of the hierarchy of their strategy use could be drawn. Such data remain hidden if only quantitative data are gathered. For example, Anna had given a ‘5’ response to twenty of the fifty SILL items, making it impossible for the researcher to know which individual strategies she saw as most important. By requesting her, and other subjects, to focus on those strategies to which they had given a ‘5’ response on the SILL it was thought that some hierarchy of use might emerge. Thus, the collection of qualitative data could enhance and enrich the findings of the quantitative data.

### 6.4.2. Selection of subjects for *Q*response interview

Of the ten subjects interviewed, six (Anna, Betty, Hui, Mena, Peter and Sandra) were from DEET1, the class on which Stage 4 of this study concentrated and which was, as mentioned above, the highest proficiency class in the centre (ASLPR level of 1+ to 2). Two further subjects were: Bai from DIEA3 (ASLPR 1+) and Kit from DIEA1 (ASLPR 1+ to 2). Both of these subjects had been in Australia for less than one year, had been attending English classes for up to six months only and had learnt English previously for at least six years. In those aspects they were similar to many other subjects involved in the study. However, Bai and Kit had been selected for this interview because their responses to certain SILL items had been atypical; they had responded highly to items which were, in general, low rated:
Q6 I use flashcards to remember new English words,
Q7 I physically act out new English words,
Q23 I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English,
Q24 To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses,
Q41 I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English,
Q42 I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.

Thus, eight of the ten participants in the *Qresponse* interview were from classes of highest proficiency in the AMES centre (approximately 1+ to 2 on the ASLPR scale). In contrast, the last two subjects selected for the *Qresponse* interview, CS and LL, were from the DEET5 class. As described in Chapter Three, this class was at a level of 0+ to 1- on the ASLPR scale and so was the lowest proficiency level class included in the study. CS and LL were included in an attempt to gather some data from lower proficiency subjects and also to gain some insight into the extent to which such subjects had been able to cope with the administration of the SILL.

### 6.4.3. Ranking activity

At the start of the *Qresponse* interview each participant was presented with ten to twelve slips of paper on which were printed SILL item statements which they had rated as ‘high’ or ‘low’. They were asked to rank these, after consideration, in order of importance to their learning of English. After they had completed the ranking task, the subjects were asked to give examples of how and when they used the strategy and, if possible, to recall a particular situation as illustration.

### 6.4.4. Results

The interview with CS and LL confirmed their low level of proficiency in English. While they might have understood the items when the SILL was administered they were not able, within the constraints of the time available for the interview, to rank the strategies as other subjects did. Thus, only very limited data were gathered from these two subjects.

The other eight subjects, though, were able to report in English on their strategy use. Discussion during the interviews was concentrated on strategies which subjects had rated as ‘high’ or ‘low’ in their responses to the SILL.
Where a low ranking strategy had been selected for discussion in interview participants sometimes commented quite simply that they rarely, if ever, used that strategy and so little qualitative data could be obtained. Therefore, most of the data collected pertained to those strategies which the subject had rated highly on the SILL.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anna</th>
<th>Bai</th>
<th>Betty</th>
<th>Hui</th>
<th>Kit</th>
<th>Mena</th>
<th>Peter</th>
<th>Sandra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important now</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Always - at home</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>Very Often</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12 COG 5</td>
<td>Q6 MEM 3</td>
<td>Q15 COG 5</td>
<td>Q30 META 5</td>
<td>Q41 AFF 5</td>
<td>Q2 MEM 5</td>
<td>Q10 COG 5</td>
<td>Q33 META 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15 COG 5</td>
<td>Q16 COG 3</td>
<td>Q16 COG 5</td>
<td>Q15 COG 5</td>
<td>Q6 MEM 3</td>
<td>Q19 COG 3</td>
<td>Q19 COG 3</td>
<td>Q49 SOC 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19 COG 5</td>
<td>Q41 AFF 5</td>
<td>Q33 META 5</td>
<td>Q12 COG 5</td>
<td>Q16 COG 4</td>
<td>Q12 COG 5</td>
<td>Q32 META 5</td>
<td>Q39 AFF 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29 COMP 5</td>
<td>Q24 COMP 4</td>
<td>Q36 META 5</td>
<td>Q40 AFF 5</td>
<td>Q17 COG 4</td>
<td>Q31 META 5</td>
<td>Q47 SOC 5</td>
<td>Q45 SOC 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36 META 5</td>
<td>Q42 AFF 5</td>
<td>Q31 META 5</td>
<td>Q31 META 5</td>
<td>Q15 COG 5</td>
<td>Q21 COG 5</td>
<td>Q12 COG 5</td>
<td>Q34 META 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16 COG 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38 META 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31 META 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q47 SOC 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32 META 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q30 SOC 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22 COG 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35 META 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q47 SOC 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Always - outside
not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used to be</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q40 AFF 5</td>
<td>Q23 COG 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q45 SOC 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q48 SOC 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39 AFF 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q49 SOC 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than always | Less important |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q33 META 5</td>
<td>Q24 AFF 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 COG 5</td>
<td>Q23 COG 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36 META 5</td>
<td>Q7 MEM 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38 META 4</td>
<td>Q16 COG 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q34 META 5 | Q5 META 5 | Q6 MEM 1 | Q7 MEM 2 | Q43 AFF 1 | Q41 AFF 2 | Q24 COMP 3 |

Never important | Never | Never | Never | Never | Never |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q3 MEM 5</td>
<td>Q7 MEM 3</td>
<td>Q44 META 5</td>
<td>Q5 MEM 5</td>
<td>Q6 MEM 1</td>
<td>Q7 MEM 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9 MEM 5</td>
<td>Q6 MEM 1</td>
<td>Q7 MEM 2</td>
<td>Q5 MEM 1</td>
<td>Q43 AFF 1</td>
<td>Q41 AFF 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Confirmation of responses to the SILL

Table 6.3 shows the order in which the subjects ranked certain SILL statements during the Qresp interview. The table also shows the score which the subject had given each strategy when responding to the SILL. Generally, SILL ratings were confirmed. Mena, for example, ranked Q6, Q7 and Q41 as ‘never’ during the Qresponse interview after having rated them as ‘1’, ‘1’ and ‘2’ respectively on the SILL. Nevertheless, some exceptions did occur. Hui revealed in the Qresponse interview that she hadn’t understood the meaning of Q5 when responding to the SILL, despite having given it a ‘5’ rating. Once she did understand the meaning of Q5 she placed it without hesitation in the ‘never’ used sub-set:

Hui: This one rhymes? I don't know what this one means.
Int: Uh huh. That means like songs but without the music,
Hui: Mm.
Int: Like little poems. Do you understand poems?
Hui: Yes, yes.
Int: Well that's what we're saying. I use rhymes or I use poems to Remember new English words.
Hui: No, never this one.

Other rankings however, such as Anna’s classification of ‘never important’ to Q3 and Q9, strategies to which she had responded with a ‘5’ on the SILL, cannot be easily explained. Nor can Peter’s inclusion of Q49 in his ‘very important’ class, even though he had rated that strategy as ‘3’ on the SILL. Had time permitted closer investigation more light might have been thrown on these discrepancies.

Hierarchy of strategy use

All subjects were asked to rank their selected strategy statements from ‘most important’ to ‘least important’. As shown on Table 6.3, they did so in different ways. Only Sandra ranked her set of statements from highest to lowest importance without any further subdivision of the set; all other subjects subdivided the strategies into groups. For example, Kit and Peter divided their sets into two:

Kit: most important
    less important;
Peter: \textit{very important} \\
\textit{less important}.

Bai, Betty and Hui divided their sets of strategies into three:

Bai: \textit{most important} \\
\textit{little} \\
\textit{never};

Hui: \textit{always} \\
\textit{less than always} \\
\textit{never};

Betty: \textit{always - at home} \\
\textit{always - outside the home or class} \\
\textit{never};

while Mena made four sub-sets:

Mena: \textit{very often} \\
\textit{often} \\
\textit{sometimes} \\
\textit{never}.

Anna, however, created sub-sets of strategies which clearly indicated that she had reflected on the time spent and progress made in learning English:

Anna: \textit{important now} \\
\textit{not so important now} \\
\textit{used to be important} \\
\textit{never important}.

Table 6.4 lists those strategies which subjects nominated in this way as their ‘highest ranked’. A total of twenty-one such strategies is shown on the table. Two COG strategies:

Q15 \textit{I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English and}

Q16 \textit{I read for pleasure in English}

were placed in the ‘highest ranked’ set by four of the eight subjects.
Table 6.4
Subjects’ highest ranked strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>No. of subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td><em>I watch English language</em> TV shows spoken in English or go to movies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>spoken in English</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td><em>I read for pleasure in English</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td><em>I practise the sounds of English</em></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>META</td>
<td>*I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>better</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q47</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td><em>I practise English with other students</em></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td><em>I use flashcards to remember new English words</em></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td><em>I say or write new English words several times</em></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36</td>
<td>META</td>
<td><em>I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English</em></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q41</td>
<td>AFF</td>
<td><em>I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English</em></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>MEM</td>
<td><em>I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td><em>I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>COG</td>
<td>*I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>English</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>COMP</td>
<td><em>to understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>COMP</td>
<td><em>if I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>the same thing</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>META</td>
<td><em>I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32</td>
<td>META</td>
<td><em>I pay attention when someone is speaking English</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q33</td>
<td>META</td>
<td><em>I try to find out how to be a better learner of English</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38</td>
<td>META</td>
<td><em>I think about my progress in learning English</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q40</td>
<td>AFF</td>
<td>*I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>mistake</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q42</td>
<td>AFF</td>
<td><em>I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q50</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td><em>I try to learn about the culture of English speakers</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4 shows that of the nine strategies ‘highest ranked’ by two or more subjects four were from the COG subscale and two from the META subscale compared with only one from each of MEM, AFF and SOC subscales.
The exercise of ranking strategies did achieve its three purposes:

(i) subjects reflected on their strategy use and reported on it;
(ii) responses which subjects had made to the SILL were generally confirmed;
(iii) a broad hierarchy of strategy use was identified.

However, the exercise was limited in that

- a small number of subjects were involved. Thus, the findings made here cannot be generalised to the wider field of English language learners;

- it focussed only on those subjects whose proficiency in English enabled them to talk about their strategy use; and

- discussion of strategy use focussed mainly the highest ranked strategies.

Nevertheless, the findings from the Qresponse interviews serve to illustrate the value of obtaining qualitative data in addition to quantitative data. In this instance, the additional information gained by questioning the subjects particularly on the strategies they had rated highly on the five point scale of the SILL ‘fleshed out’ the quantitative data providing insights into hierarchies of strategy use which, otherwise, would have remained obscure.
6.5. Analysis of Qualitative data

As outlined earlier, on Table 6.1, qualitative data were gathered from several sources, such as retrospective accounts and general and specific interviews. The way in which those data were coded and analysed will now be described.

6.5.1. Use of QSR NUD*IST software

Analysis of the qualitative data was carried out using a computer software package, titled Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theory-building (QSR NUD*IST). This is

a computer package designed to aid users in handling Non-numerical and Unstructured Data in qualitative analysis, by supporting processes of coding data in an Index System, Searching text or searching patterns of coding and Theorizing about the data (QSR NUD*IST 4 User Guide, 1997, p2).

This package creates a document database which stores all the records of textual and non-textual data of the project under study. QSR NUD*IST then enables documents and ideas to be linked in ways that allow the researcher to:

• search for patterns in coding and build new codes;
• clarify ideas, discover themes and store memos about the data;
• construct and test theories about the data;
• generate reports including the text, coding patterns and/or statistical summaries;
• display matrices and build models by linking with graphical display software


A 'document database' is, in fact, the text of the qualitative data collected in the process of a research project. In this study, the database consisted of the text of forty-eight documents obtained from interviews, observations, classroom interactions and retrospection which had been recorded on audiotape and transcribed. Then, using the tools of NUD*IST, the text documents were coded and analysed.
The index, or coding, system of NUD*IST is hierarchical, or tree-structured and inverted, with the root at the top. Branches or subsections sprout from the root according to how the subject area is divided. Initially in this study, two main branches were created in the coding of the qualitative data: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA and STRATEGIES. As data emerged other main branches were identified and so added to the ‘tree’. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA was given the code number ‘1’ and STRATEGIES the code number ‘2’, as shown in Figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1**  
Diagram showing tree structure of coding of qualitative data

The further coding of Biographical Data and Strategies is described below.

**6.5.2. Coding of BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA included information which had been collected at the time of the SILL administration in Stage 1 (see Appendix 1 - Background Questionnaire) and which pertained to the subjects themselves: sex, first language (*L1*), age, prior English learning (*preEng*), length of time in Australia (*Toz*) and length of time spent attending English classes in Australia (*Eoz*). The categories of spouse (*Sps*) and number of children (*Chn*) were also added to the BIOGRAPHICAL DATA. As will be discussed later (Chapter Eight), it became evident, as data emerged, that family members played an important role in the language learning of several subjects. Each of the categories in BIOGRAPHICAL DATA was given a code number, at the second level as shown in Figure 6.2, before being further divided into subcategories at the third branch level of the ‘tree’. 

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Thus, for example all text for male subjects was coded as 1 1 1, where

1 = biographical data
1 = sex, and
1 = male,

while all text for female subjects was coded as 1 1 2, where

1 = biographical data
1 = sex, and
2 = female.

When using NUD*IST, any piece of text in any document can be given multiple codes, thus enabling relationships and themes in the data to be subsequently explored. For example, as well as being coded as 1 1 1, as illustrated above, text pertaining to Peter, a male Croatian subject who was 43 years of age, was also coded as 1 3 41 and 1 2 4, where

1 = biographical data
3 = age
41 = age group 41-45, and
1 = biographical data
2 = L1, and
4 = Croatian.

In fact, all text, or utterances of a particular subject, was coded with all the biographical data pertaining to that particular subject. Thus, every utterance of Peter, the male Croatian subject mentioned above, was coded by:

- sex,
- L1, and
- age

as shown above and, as well, by

- spouse,
- number of children,
- ages of children,
- length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia,
- time spent living in Australia and
- length of time spent attending English classes in Australia.

This process of coding all utterances of subjects with their biographical data was an essential step in the process of the analysis of the qualitative data. When it was completed relationships and themes in the data could be explored, as will be explained in Chapters Seven and Eight. This coding also enabled the generation of a summary table of BIOGRAPHICAL DATA of the nineteen subjects (Table 6.5).

The table of BIOGRAPHICAL DATA shows that seven male and twelve female subjects were involved in Stage 4 of this study (column 3). Column 4 shows that the subjects comprised eleven different L1 groups while Column 5 indicates their age groups: 21-24 to 51-54. Thirteen of the nineteen subjects indicated during interview that they had up to three children (Column 7) the ages of whom are indicated in Columns 8, 9 and 10. Column 11 (preEng) reveals the length of time subjects had spent in learning English before arriving in Australia, while the lengths of time they had been living in Australia and attending English classes are shown in Column 12 (Toz) and Column 13 (Eoz), respectively.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Spouse</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Child 1 age</th>
<th>Child 2 age</th>
<th>Child 3 age</th>
<th>preEng*</th>
<th>Toz† (years)</th>
<th>Eoz‡ (months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>&gt;2-3</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>&gt;10-15</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>&gt;2-3yr</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>7-12 mth</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>&gt;6yr</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td>&lt;6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>&gt;6yr</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td>&lt;6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>&gt;10-15</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>7-12 mth</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>&gt;15</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>&gt;5-6yr</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td>6-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>&gt;6yr</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>pregnant</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>&gt;6yr</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>DLEA3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>&gt;6yr</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kit</td>
<td>DEET1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>&gt;5-6yr</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>6-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>DEET5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>7-12 mth</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td>6-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>DEET5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td>6-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* preEng - length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia
† Toz - time spent living in Australia
‡ Eoz - length of time spent attending English class in Australia
6.5.3. Coding of STRATEGIES

The hierarchical structure of NUD*IST proved to be particularly suitable for the coding of STRATEGIES which were given, as mentioned above, the second branch from the ROOT of the ‘tree’. The six strategy subscales of the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford 1990): Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social were placed on the second level of the hierarchy and were coded 1 to 6, respectively. Individual strategies were then coded from 1 to 50, to correspond with item numbers on the SILL, on the third level of the hierarchy, as shown in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3
Hierarchy of coded STRATEGIES

For example, the statement from Anna:

Anna: Sometimes I don’t have the words, because always maybe I use the same English so I need some, some synonyms

was considered to be evidence of item Q29 *If I can’t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing* of the SILL and so was coded as 2 3 29, where

\[
\begin{align*}
2 & = \text{strategy} \\
3 & = \text{Compensation strategy (i.e. the third subscale in Oxford’s SILL classification) and} \\
29 & = \text{circumlocution/synonym.}
\end{align*}
\]
6.5.4. Coding of non use of SILL strategies

The method of coding described above takes account only of the reported instances of use of a strategy. However, on occasions subjects reported that they did not make use of a particular SILL strategy so, on the third level of each subscale, a category ‘99’ was attached to the existing item codings. Node ‘99’ was titled ‘non use’ and was further coded at the fourth level of the hierarchy to correspond with the SILL item to which it referred (see Figure 6.4).

By way of example, the statement:

Betty: And I never use the rhymes to remember new English words

was coded as 2 1 99 5, where

2 = strategy  
1 = Memory  
99 = non-use  
5 = use rhymes

6.5.5. Coding of nonSILL strategies

By coding SILL strategies in the way outlined above, strategies which subjects reported using but which were additional to the fifty SILL items soon became evident. Such additional strategies were named 'nonSILL' and were given a code number of '7' following the six initial subscales of the SILL, on the second level of the hierarchy, as illustrated in Figure 6.5.
The '7 nonSILL' category was further sub-divided, creating a third level of the hierarchy; statements were identified as belonging to one of the six strategy subscales, Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, and so on, and numbered to correspond with one of the original SILL six subscales, as shown in Figure 6.5. Instances of the particular nonSILL strategies were then coded at the fourth level of the hierarchy.

For example, the statement:

CS: If not remember, if the new word I don’t understand I take my pen and the paper, write and check the dictionary.

was considered to be evidence of the strategy of using a dictionary, a Cognitive strategy *not* included on the fifty item version of the SILL. Hence this statement was coded, at first, as 2 7 2, where

\[
2 = \text{strategy}, \\
7 = \text{nonSILL strategy} \\
2 = \text{Cognitive strategy}
\]

Then, with the fourth level of coding added the specific strategy of *using the dictionary* was coded as 2 7 2 1, where

\[
2 = \text{strategy}, \\
7 = \text{nonSILL strategy}, \\
2 = \text{Cognitive strategy and} \\
1 = \text{use dictionary.}
\]

Likewise, the strategy of remaining silent when not knowing how to express something in English was not included on the fifty item SILL. Nevertheless, use of this strategy was reported and needed to be coded:
Hui: Sometime I can't think the word so I must just keep quiet and think and then say, say inside you know.

As it was judged a compensation strategy, it was coded as 27321, where

2 = strategy
7 = nonSILL
3 = Compensation strategy
2 = speaking macroskill
1 = remain silent.

6.5.6. Searching the data

Having coded the biographical data and strategies it became possible to search the data for instances of reported strategy use and relationships between such instances. Several ways of searching the data are available, using NUD*IST, but those most used in this project were

(a) node searches, and
(b) searches using the matrix operator.

(a) A node search simply retrieves all the text which has been coded at a particular node. For example, a search of the node 211 where

2 = strategies
1 = Memory
1 = Q1 I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English

retrieves all text coded by the researcher as reported use of that strategy.

(b) The results of a search using the matrix or vector operator can be “valuable for scanning, searching for or validating patterns and displaying results” (QSR NUD*IST 4 User Guide, 1997: 183). In this study, the use of matrix or vector was particularly useful in the process of searching for relationships in the data.

Matrix is a search operator which retrieves text occurring at the intersection of the children (i.e. the next level of the hierarchy) of one node and the children of another node. So, for example a search of 11 and 21 where
1 = Biographical data
1 = Pseudonyms of subjects

and

2 = Strategies
1 = Memory

generates a matrix showing the intersection of the nineteen pseudonyms of the subjects with the nine Memory strategies. Part of that matrix is reproduced as Figure 6.6; for reasons of space only five of strategies and thirteen of the subjects are shown. Coding is represented as (1) while (0) indicates that no coding exists.

A vector is similar to a matrix except that the intersection is between one node only (and not its children) and the children of the other node. For example, a vector search of the nodes 2 1 1 (Strategies/MEM/relate to what already know) and 1 1 (Biographical Data/pseudonyms) generated a two line table, one line being the subjects’ pseudonyms and the other showing where coding existed for the particular strategy (2 1 1). Figure 6.7 shows the coding for five of the nineteen subjects. Again, coding is represented as (1) while (0) indicates that no coding exists.
A matrix or vector can be exported as a table of numerical data to a spreadsheet or statistical package such as SPSS. In this study, as will be described in Chapters Seven and Eight, the export of the results of a matrix
and vector searches to Excel enabled fruitful searches for relationships in the data to be made.

6.5.7. Reliability of coding of qualitative data

To confirm the reliability of the researcher’s coding of the qualitative data, the script of one interview which was believed to include evidence of use of approximately half of the fifty SILL strategies was recoded by a colleague who is an experienced second language teacher undertaking doctoral research in the area of second language teaching and learning.

Agreement between the coders was categorised on three levels:

- ‘Total’ agreement where a text unit was coded by both coders as e.g. A, B, C;
- ‘Partial’ agreement where a text unit was coded as e.g. A, B, C and A, B, D;
- ‘No’ agreement where a text unit was coded as e.g. A, B, C and D, E, F.

Following the coding of the interview script it was found that ‘Total’ agreement had been reached on the coding of 77% of the text units. ‘Partial agreement’ had been reached on the remaining 23% of the text units. There were no instances of ‘No’ agreement. Thus, the coding of the qualitative data in this study by the researcher was concluded to be reliable.

6.6. Summary

This chapter initiates the description and analysis of the qualitative data gathered in Stage 4. The first part of this chapter described the sources of qualitative data: the subjects and the data gathering protocols. The second part of the chapter described (a) the way in which the computer program NUD*IST was used to code and analyse those data and (b) the inter-rater reliability of the data coding.

Chapter Seven will describe the findings which emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data and which pertained to SILL items.
Chapter Seven
Description and Analysis of Qualitative Data: SILL strategies

The findings of the qualitative data will be discussed in two parts. Firstly, in this chapter, the findings pertaining to the SILL items themselves (Appendix 2) will be presented. Next, in Chapter Eight, the findings from the data pertaining to those strategies not included on the SILL, and so referred to as nonSILL strategies, will be presented.

7.1. Reported use of SILL strategies

In the gathering of qualitative data reports were made by the subjects of forty-six of the fifty SILL strategies. No evidence of use, or non-use, was obtained of four strategies, two Cognitive and two Compensation:

**COGNITIVE**

Q14 I start conversations in English  
Q18 I first skim an English passage (read the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully  

**COMPENSATION**

Q 26 I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English  
Q 28 I try to guess what the other person will say next in English  

That no data were collected on these four strategies is not to say, however, that the particular strategies were not used by subjects; if discussion during interviews had been deliberately focussed on those strategies, which it was not, some evidence of use might have been found.

7.2. The use of the matrix function of NUD*IST

As was outlined in Chapter Six, it is possible to generate a matrix, using NUD*IST, to show the existence of coded text at the intersection of the children of one node and the children of another node.
Six such matrices were generated, one for each subscale, which showed each subject’s reported strategy use as coded in the qualitative data. These matrices were then exported into Excel where they were combined to create a larger matrix showing the reported use of all fifty SILL strategies by the nineteen subjects.

That larger matrix was then attached to the table of Biographical Data (Chapter Six), to make the more detailed Table 7.1 Subjects’ Biographical Data and reported use of SILL Strategies (for reasons of space some details of biographical data have been omitted here).

Table 7.1 shows firstly, in Column 1, the pseudonyms of the subjects followed by Sex, L1, Age, in Columns 2, 3 and 4 and details of preEng, Toz and Eoz in Columns 5, 6, and 7.

The remaining columns of the table show the coded instances of reported use of SILL strategies Q1 to Q50 by the subjects. Original coding (1, 0) of the NUD*IST generated matrices has been altered to make the table easier to read. Instances of reported strategy use and ‘non-use’ are now represented by the symbols ‘•’ and ‘X’, while the presence of both symbols ‘•/X indicates a subject’s report of both use and non-use. A blank on the table indicates that no evidence of use of that particular strategy was collected from a subject, during this stage of the study. It should be emphasised that a blank in the table does not indicate that the strategy was not used by subjects but, rather, that in the time available for data collection no evidence of use, or non-use, was gathered. Had more time been available for interviews with subjects in this part of the study there would have been a greater possibility of discussing strategy use more widely and, accordingly, the possibility that more evidence of use, or non-use, would have been reported.
| Name  | Sex | L1   | Age | 5 preEng* | Toxt (years) | Eoxt (months) | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5 | Q6 | Q7 | Q8 | Q9 | Q10 | Q11 | Q12 | Q13 | Q14 | Q15 | Q16 | Q17 | Q18 | Q19 | Q20 | Q21 | Q22 | Q23 | Q24 |
|-------|-----|------|-----|-----------|--------------|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Anna  | F   | Spanish | 31-35 | zero  | >5-10 | >12-18 | * | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bai   | M   | Mandarin | 21-25 | >6yr  | <1 | <6 | * | * | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Betty | F   | Polish  | 26-30 | zero  | >2-3 | >18-24 | * | * | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CS    | M   | Khmer   | 31-35 | 7-12mth| >1-2 | 6-12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hui   | F   | Hokkien | 46-50 | zero  | >10-15 | >12-18 | * | * | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jenette | F | Hungarian | 41-45 | zero  | >5-10 | >12-18 | * | * | /x | * | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kit   | F   | Hungarian | 41-45 | >5-6yr | <1 | 6-12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Leo   | M   | Mandarin | 51-55 | >2-3yr | >1-2 | >12-18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| LL    | M   | Mandarin | 46-50 | zero  | >1-2 | 6-12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maria | F   | Spanish | 36-40 | 7-12mth| >1-2 | >18-24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Menia | F   | Serbian | 21-25 | zero  | >1-2 | >18-24 | | | x | x | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nan   | F   | Bengali | 31-35 | >6yr  | >5-10 | <6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Peter | M   | Croatian | 41-45 | zero  | >1-2 | >18-24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rita  | F   | Spanish | 46-50 | zero  | >10-15 | >18-24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sam   | M   | Cantonese | 31-35 | 7-12mth| >1-2 | >12-18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sandra| F   | Spanish | 41-45 | zero  | >15 | >12-18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Serge | M   | Serbian | 26-30 | >5-6yr | >1-2 | 6-12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Thi   | F   | Vietnamese | 31-35 | >6yr  | >5-10 | >12-18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wei   | F   | Cantonese | 26-30 | >6yr  | >5-10 | >18-24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

* preEng - length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia
† Toxt - time spent living in Australia
\( \dagger \) Eoxt - length of time spent attending English class in Australia

\* - reported use of strategy
\( \dagger \) - reported not use of strategy

x - reported not use of strategy
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<th>Name</th>
<th>COMP</th>
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Nevertheless, from this table it was possible to see certain broad patterns of strategy use emerging. Some subjects reported greater strategy use than did others. For example, in only three interviews Rita reported a total of ten strategies while Betty provided evidence of the use of twenty-two and the *non*-use of four, thus lending support to Skehan’s contention

that some people are capable of more precise, detailed and organized thought perhaps because of decontextualization ability, analytic capacities with verbal material, or memory, or other factors. This is what enables them to reflect on their own language learning experiences effectively, and report them so well (Skehan 1989:80).

As well, it can be seen that the subscales of COG and META generated the greatest number of instances of use from subjects, while the MEM and AFF subscales generated more instances of *non*-use of strategies than did the other four subscales. Further, it is clear that use of particular strategies, such as

Q10  *I say or write new English words several times,*
Q15  *I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English*
Q30  *I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English*
Q38  *I think about my progress in learning English*

was reported by the majority of subjects. On the other hand, strategies, such as

Q20  *I try to find patterns in English*
Q37  *I have clear goals for improving my English skills*

generated very few reports.

Subjects reported *non*-use of twelve strategies, including:

Q5  *I use rhymes to remember new English words,*
Q6  *I use flashcards to remember new English words,*
Q7  *I physically act out new English words,*
Q22  *I try not to translate word-for-word and*
Q41  *I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English*
7.3. Categories of SILL strategies to be reported

The use of SILL strategies will now be reported, as follows:

- **SILL strategies: use reported by the majority of subjects:**
  
  Q10 I say or write new English words several times
  Q15 I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English
  Q30 I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English
  Q38 I think about my progress in learning English

- **SILL strategies: non-use was common:**
  
  Q5 I use rhymes to remember new English words
  Q6 I use flashcards to remember new English words
  Q7 I physically act out new English words

and

- **strategy use related to an independent variable**

- **Age**
  
  the subscales of MEM and AFF strategies

- **L1 background**
  
  Q12 I practise the sounds of English
  Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English
  Q41 I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English

- **Length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia (PreEng)**
  
  Q32 I pay attention when someone is speaking English
• Length of time spent attending English class in Australia (Eoz) 
  the subscale of META strategies

• Time spent living in Australia (Toz)

  Q50 I try to learn about the culture of English speakers

7.3.1. SILL strategies: use reported by the majority of subjects

Q10 I say or write new English words several times

As Table 7.1 indicated, fifteen of the nineteen subjects reported using Q10 I say or write new English words several times. The data which emerged on the use of this strategy revealed many subtle variations of use and so reflected the individuality of the learners. For example, subjects recounted differences in the number of times they said or wrote new words, the volume of their speech when saying them, their method of recording new words or their frequency of recalling them. In some cases, learners referred to earlier learning situations as an influence on their current use of the strategy.

The use of Q10 I say or write new English words several times will now be described under four broad headings:

  • source of new words
  • writing new words
  • types of record-keeping
  • saying new words.

Source of new words

Coding of the subjects’ responses, as represented on Table 7.2, revealed that other than the new English words learnt in the classroom, the sources of new words were books, newspapers and TV.
In a group interview, Anna (Spanish), Wei (Cantonese) and Mena (Serbian) reported the sources of new words which they considered necessary to write:

Int: Do you keep a list Mena?
Mena: Yes.
Int: What sort of list is it?
Mena: Just new vocabulary, so when I have a time I just read.
Int: Right. Is it in any sort of order or just...
Mena: No, no. Just if I learn new word here in the class I just put, when I come home I just put it down. It's not in order. It's just new words.
Int: What about you Anna, do you write a list?
Anna: We have a book. In that way you, you knew some new words, have to put it
Int: What about words, do you add words that you learn outside the class?
Anna: Outside the class, yes.
Int: Or do you just add words that you put...
Wei: No, outside the class too. When you read newspapers, books.
Int: Can you give me some examples of words you've learnt recently outside the class? Can you think of any that you've learnt recently outside the class?
Mena: Yeah. Like word 'probably'. I heard that several times on TV but I didn't know what it means. And I tried to write it down but it wasn't correct. So I phoned my friend - she speaks very good English and I asked her what it means 'probably' and she told me.

Later, in individual interviews Mena again, and also Betty, stated the importance of TV as a source of new English words. Although it was not easy for them to do so, both wrote lists of the new words they had heard:

Mena: Yeah, so sometimes when I watching TV and they say some words and I know what it means but it's hard for me to remember, I just write it down.
Int: Oh right, in the sentence or just..
Mena: No, no just the word. So sometimes I have a list of 10 or 15 words ...

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>books</th>
<th>newspapers</th>
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Int: So these words that you learn, are they always words that you learn in class, or do you do this sometimes with words that you learn outside?
Betty: Most of them from the TV.
Int: Oh right, yeah.
Betty: I think most of them from the TV. I sit with the dictionary and see the title, translate the title and I try to catch some words from the text which they speak. So I try to find. You know it's very difficult because I don't know how to spell. But sometimes it's OK. Most of them from TV and once times I used to had a radio, so the radio was very helpful.

Writing new words

As the matrix (Table 7.3) constructed from participants’ coded responses illustrates, subjects reported that the writing of new words supported their English learning by aiding memory, pronunciation, meaning, spelling and self-correction.

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<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>memory</th>
<th>pronunciation</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>spelling</th>
<th>self-correction</th>
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Aid to memory

Several subjects indicated that they wrote new words down to aid later memory recall. However, Sandra (Spanish) revealed that she was not concerned with later recall; for her the “exercise” of writing itself was essential for memorisation:
Int: So why do you write it down?
Sandra: Like an exercise.
Int: Oh right, does that help you remember?
Sandra: Yes because to remember I have to write.

A similar explanation was given by Rita (Spanish):

Rita: When I have time I write several times the word because it's more easy for me write. When I write it's more easy and I can remember every time.

Thi (Vietnamese) also indicated that it was the act of writing which helped her to remember:

Int: ... Do you write it on a piece of paper that you keep or do you just write it down and throw the paper away?
Thi: Oh, I write down and throw it away.
Int: Right.
Thi: Because I remember. I didn't need any more.
Int: OK. So once you've written them down, you can remember.
Thi: Yeah.

Peter (Croatian), on the other hand, indicated that writing new words down was not a useful strategy for him as he preferred to “look at” the new word:

Peter: I try to remember the words how it write, every letter.
Int: Do you write it again? Do you write it out several times, or do you just look at it and remember?
Peter: More look at it than write.

Aid to pronunciation and meaning

Thi and Betty offered other reasons for writing new English words: as an aid to pronunciation and meaning:

Int: Why do you write them down?
Thi: Because the difficult words sometimes they very long and I can't remember that's all the words, so I write down if it's long words, the difficult words.
Int: What does writing it down help you do?
Thi: It remind me to remember how the pronunciation goes and what the meaning is.

Betty: I use only the books for write the words, meanings and how to pronunciation in here...
Bai revealed that after his writing of a new word he noted the pronunciation and tried to use the word in a sentence:

Bai: I usually write the new word in the piece of the paper and write the pronunciation mark and how to use it, write one sentence.
Int: What sort of pronunciation marks do you make?
Bai: International mark.
Int: Oh right.
Bai: And then I read several times and put it in my pocket and while you take the train and another have a free times maybe I look for the piece of paper and read it and remember it.

**Spelling and self-correction**

Mena reported that the repetitive writing of a new word helped her learn the correct spelling and also provided her with a means of noting and correcting her mistakes:

Mena: And I always make a mistake. And one time I sit and all one page I write down government, government, government but now I don't have problem with that. ... Sometimes you can see your mistakes when you know you writing something and after that you read, you can see your mistakes.

**Types of record-keeping**

Three types of record keeping of new words were reported by the participants: alphabetical, non-alphabetical and grouping.

**Alphabetical**

Leo, from Taiwan, kept new words in alphabetical order

Int: ... Do you keep new words in a book? Where do you.... or do just have them on pieces of paper, words that you write down?
Leo: Before I write down the ... on the book. ABCD.

as did Betty when she had time:

Int: And when you keep this book, do you keep them in any sort of order? Or do you just put them all in? Today goes at the end, and next day at the end.
...
Betty: No, sometimes I take for one day, the new words here, another day, another day... but if I have a lot of time I write them all in alphabetic order. Alphabet.
**Non-alphabetical**

Others, like Mena and Wei, did not bother keeping an ordered list:

Int: Right. Is it in any sort of order or just...?
Mena: No, no. Just if I learn new word here in the class I just put, when I come home I just put it down. It's not in order. It's just new words.

Int: Do you keep them in any sort of order, or it's just a list?
Wei: Just a list.
Int: So how do you find a word that you want to find?
Wei: Oh, I'm not try to find a word. I just look at the list and maybe twice a week try to keep it in my mind.

**Grouping**

Betty described the process by which she wrote and kept records of new words. As well as trying to keep them in alphabetical order, as stated above, she organised them into word groups to aid her memory:

Betty: Sometimes sort of maybe all medicine words on one paper, some another technical, or about school, or about animals, something like that.
Int: Yeah, I was just going to ask you that.
Betty: In groups.
Int: Do you find that helpful, putting them in groups?
Betty: Yeah. Because I know because one time I put in words from animals about how they growing and all that stuff, so after a few times when I read and learn these words now I can, I don't understand 100% but I can, words for example animals or something like that so I learn some words and now I can understand these words.
Retaining or discarding

A matrix search of the data revealed, interestingly, that subjects differed in their retention of their written records of new words, as Table 7.4 shows.

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<th>Names</th>
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</table>

Most reported that they kept these records. Anna and Kit, for example, kept new words in a special book:

Anna: We have a book. In that way you, you knew some new words, have to put it down.

Kit: Like you a special papers for me, not sheets, a special little book, school book and er er inside er er you can see that a lot of words with pencil, not pen, with pencil and later one green highlighter and one red and again then I repeat at home the words. It's very, very useful.

Leo also wrote down new words on paper but revealed that he sometimes lost them:

Leo: So just piece of paper and put down. Then sometimes it lose.

Sandra and Thi, it will be recalled, had reported that the act of writing itself was their means of committing the word to memory. Their subsequent comments supported that view, for they stated that they discarded the paper on which the words were written:
Int: Where do you write them, and why do you write them?
Sandra: On a paper.
Int: Yes, just any paper, piece of paper?
Sandra: Yes.
Int: And do you keep the paper or just...
Sandra: No,
Int: Throw it away?
Sandra: Yes.

Int: Yeah, but where? Do you write it on a piece of paper that you keep or do you just write it down and throw the paper away.
Thi: Oh, I write down and throw it away.
Int: Right.
Thi: Because I remember. I didn’t need any more.

**Number of times of writing new words**

Variations emerged in the number of times which subjects found it necessary to write out new words. Some wrote new English words many times, others only once. Mena and Anna, interviewed together, differed on the number of times they wrote new words:

Mena: I write down many times.
Int: How many?
Mena: Three or four, three or four. And if I have some new words there I try to understand them.
Int: What about you Anna?
Anna: I copy them.
Int: How many times?
Anna: Once. ...

Betty though, preferred greater repetition in the writing and subsequent review of the words:

Int: And if you’re trying to remember how to spell, or trying to remember new words, if you have a lot of new words in class, how do you learn them, what do you do?
Betty: Oh specially if I write them on the paper, few times.
Int: So how many times?
Betty: Oh, sometimes I write one page maybe up to ten times, one word. And I repeat a few times in the week.

For Thi, the level of difficulty of the new word determined the number of times she wrote it:

Int: Right. So how many times would you write these words down?
Thi: Some of them just two or three times. Some of them four, five.
Int: Right, depends.
Thi: Depends, yeah, what the word I learn, long or short word.
Wei also made a similar comment. There was no particular number of times that she wrote the word; ten times was possible.

Int: How many times, how many times would you normally write it down?
Wei: Oh, depends on the word.
Int: Yes.
Wei: A short one maybe a few times. If it's a long one maybe ten, or, ten times, something like that.

**Saying new words**

Two reasons were given for saying new words aloud: to assist the memory of the new word, and to practise its pronunciation.

**Aid to memory**

The Cambodian subject CS, from the DEET5 class, whose level of English proficiency was low reported that repetition aloud aided his memory of a new word:

CS: I think, I think if I forget about the word, I remind and I sing, I sing in my idea.
Int: Ah.
CS: Yeah, I sing in my idea.
Int: When do you do that? When, when do you sing?
CS: If, if not remember about the new words, I sing.
Int: When, at school, at home? When?
CS: At home. Yeah, if I am back home I, if any my teacher give many new words, I sit here I understand, I know, but if I am back home so I am forgot one word, two words, so I sing in my idea.

Nan from Bangladesh, indicated that while she needed to write words uttering them aloud helped her remember:

Nan: A few pages, you have to write down and you have to remember everything you said. I used to read like this a few times, like five times, or six times, so I remember what next, what next, what next.
Int: So how does that help you remember?
Nan: I don't know how, because when I say loudly, I hear it and it helps me to remember, I don't know how.

Interestingly, Nan’s accounts revealed how her early learning experiences in Bangladesh had transferred to her learning of English in Australia. Nan described how, when doing her homework as a child in Bangladesh, she had
had to repeat her lessons loudly so that her mother who was in the next room could hear that she was not idle:

Nan: Because when I was young if I don’t read a little bit loudly my parents think I’m not studying. So my mother was cooking or something and she might say ‘Read,’ so I have to read a little bit louder something and hear I’m doing something. Not cheating.

On another occasion, Nan revealed that it was not solely because of her mother’s urging that she had learned in this way; memorisation had been vital to educational success in Bangladesh:

Nan: But you have to sit for exam. You have to memorise all the things and they will give you the sheet and the paper and the time is three hours, so you have to finish that exam....

...Different here is nobody like memorise like our country. In our country everything is memorise. If you are really brilliant you don’t have to memorise that much, but if you’re not, you have to work hard.

Practising pronunciation

Mena indicated that she practised pronunciation by saying new words aloud, but did so only when sure that her pronunciation was correct.

Int: Do you try and speak it?
Mena: Yes.
Int: Who would you speak it to?
Mena: To myself. I just repeat and repeat, because of pronunciation.
Int: Do you do that often, practising the pronunciation?
Mena: Yes, but just if I’m sure that that pronunciation is good, but if I’m not sure, I don’t do that.

In another interview, Mena reiterated that opinion and explained her reservation:

Int: What about saying new English words several times, do you do that?
Mena: But just if I’m sure of the pronunciation I do that, but not if I’m not because there was one word and I didn’t know how to pronounce that and I find it in a, I found it in my dictionary and I tried to pronounce the way, I think it’s OK, I thought actually it’s OK, but it wasn’t correct. So it was very hard for me to correct that.
Int: Right.
Mena: Because every time I used it I just say incorrect, so people didn’t know what I said (laughs). So I never learn new words from dictionary any more.
Int: Oh right. So how do you become sure of the pronunciation? How do you know that you are sure?
Mena: I know because if when I talk with my neighbour if she understood me me um, you know, it makes me sure...
**Not saying aloud**

It will be recalled that Peter was the one learner who indicated that he did not always write new English words to remember them. He preferred to look at the word. Similarly, he reported that he did not repeat words aloud but rather, repeated them to himself:

Peter: When I look new English words I read it and I, I say it in myself.

Int: Just let me ask a question. When you see a new word, like when you’re walking down the street or something, and you say it, do you say it to yourself, or do you say it aloud?

Peter: To myself.

Int: Do you ever say new words aloud?

Peter: Not often.

Int: Ever? Do you ever do it?

Peter: Not ever.

**Summary**

Several of the subjects reported in considerable detail the processes they followed in learning new words; subjects varied in the number of times they said or wrote words, in the volume of their repetition aloud, in their method of retention of records or in their frequency of recall of new words. These reports revealed the differences in their use of the strategy *I say or write new English words several times*, and served to emphasise the individuality of the learners and the past experience which they brought to the learning situation.
Q15  I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English

As reported in Chapter Five, the responses of subjects to the SILL item Q15 I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English ranked it sixth overall (mean = 3.93, SD =1.08) and highest of the fourteen Cognitive strategies. The qualitative data collected on this strategy and reported here indicated that Q15 was highly significant to the particular subjects involved in this part of the study. As is seen on Table 7.1 sixteen of the nineteen subjects indicated use of this strategy, a greater number than for any other strategy.

Searching for patterns of use

In an attempt to gain further insight into the use of Q15 I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English additional coding was added to the data and again, a matrix table generated. Table 7.5 reflects the three broad aspects of subjects’ use of this strategy:

- the amount of TV watched
- the types of programs watched
- the reasons for watching.

To search for patterns of use which related to the independent variables Table 7.5 initially was sorted on the variables of Sex, Age, L1 and preEng (actual values were inserted to enable precise sorting). However, no patterns in the use of the strategy could be found after these sortings, so for reasons of space these biographical details were deleted from Table 7.5.

When sorted on the variables of Time spent living in Australia (Toz) though, some patterns of use were apparent in two of the types of programs watched: news (Column 9) and movies (Column 11). In both cases, subjects who watched such programs had been in Australia for more than eighteen months and had been attending English classes for at least twelve months. As well, some relationship was evident between Time spent living in Australia (Toz ) and those who watched TV to learn of the Australian way of life (Column 22); those subjects had been in the country for more than eighteen months.
Then, when Table 7.5 was sorted on *Length of time spent attending English classes in Australia* (Eoz), it was found that the strongest pattern of use in those who watched TV to improve listening comprehension and proficiency (Column 20) was in those who had been attending English classes for at least twenty months.

Although the watching of TV may well be of some benefit in the early stages of English language learning, the results of these matrix searches of the data suggest that it might be only after some time of exposure to English, through living in the TL community and/or attending English classes that learners are able to derive benefit from watching TV programs in English. Specifically, the findings here suggest that approximately eighteen months may be the critical length of time needed. However, as the number of subjects is very small, further research is needed.

The use of Q15 I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English will now be described under the three broad headings:

- the amount of TV watched
- the types of programs watched
- the reasons for watching TV.
Table 7.5  
Subjects' reported use of Q15 (watch TV, movies in English) - sorted on time living in Australia (Toz)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>preEng (months)</th>
<th>Toz (months)</th>
<th>Toz+ (months)</th>
<th>Q15 Watch TV/movies in English</th>
<th>daily</th>
<th>little</th>
<th>quiz</th>
<th>news</th>
<th>sport</th>
<th>movies</th>
<th>soap</th>
<th>cartoons</th>
<th>comedy</th>
<th>children’s</th>
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<th>listening</th>
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* preEng - length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia

* Toz - time spent living in Australia

* Toz+ - length of time spent attending English class in Australia

* report of use

* general

* vocab

* grammar

* listening

* comprehension
**Amount of TV watched**

In answer to the question “How often do you watch TV?” two subjects responded that they watched very little:

- Rita: A little, short time. Yeah because maybe only half an hour a day.
- Sandra: Not much. I don't watch much television.

Most, though, watched it every day and sometimes for several hours:

- Hui: Yes, all the time I watch English language TV shows. Yeah, all the time I watch that English.
  ... Most of the time is watching the TV.
- Janetta: I watch every day. I like because I think I learn too very much on TV.
- Leo: I always I every day I maybe watching two hours.
- Peter: Not often, maybe one to two hours a day.
- Nan: Every day. Every day.
- Mena: I don't know, three four, five hours per day.

From the data gathered it was clear that most subjects were spending several hours each day practising the strategy Q15 *I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.*

**Type of programs watched**

Responses to questions on the type of programs they liked to watch included quiz programs, news, sport, movies, soap operas, cartoons and comedy. As well, subjects reported watching children's programs because the language used was clearly comprehensible, and advertisements which, being repetitive, eventually enabled comprehension.
Leo: TV. I watching every day. Go, from school go home back I like the Total Recall, of the children and Family Feud and Wheel of Fortune. …
Int: What other programs do you watch on TV?
Leo: Oh I watch first the news then about the sport, sometimes movies and Channel 2 have all the words here.
Int: Oh it has (subtitles).
Leo: Yes, I can try understand the news. Some children’s programs are good.
Int: Yes.
Leo: Sometimes very clear about the language.
Int: Yes.
Leo: The Simpsons.

Mena: Movies, children’s programs, because I understand best children’s programs. Some soap…

Janetta: I usually watching the night, at night the TV. The news, but I have favourite show ‘The Young and the Restless’ and ‘Days of Our Lives’, so … So that’s two my favourite shows and I watching them now since I am here.

Nan: I usually watch midday movie.
Int: Ah yeah.
Nan: Midday movie when I go home and sometimes I watch cartoon too. I like cartoon. And I like 8.30 movie also I watch.

Peter: Movies and comics.
Int: Oh yeah.
Peter: Like Mr Bean …

Int: The advertisements? Do you watch them?
Betty: Yes. Yes one day I open my “My God what are they talking about?” After a few times, I know one word, another word. Then I discover, OK, I understand this.

For some subjects, watching news broadcasts were important even if, as in the case of Anna, they did not always understand:

Anna: Really the news was very quick I don’t understand much but there’s the picture there so you can take some deduction what they talking about.

Sandra: The news. I watch the news.
Int: Can you understand the news?
Sandra: Yes.
Two subjects watched a succession of news broadcasts each evening, on different channels, Betty indicating that the repetition of items eventually enabled her to understand:

Leo: I always I every day I maybe watching two hours. I like begin the news Channel 5, Channel 2. I like SBS 1.

Betty: I watch all the news every day. I start about 5 o’clock and finish at 7 o’clock.
Int: So you go from channel to channel.
Betty: Yeah. So every one the same, so at the end, I understand.

However, two subjects preferred not to watch the news. Nan, did not watch because she was irritated by her husband’s viewing of successive news broadcasts, stretching over several hours:

Int: Do you watch the news?
Nan: Not really. Because, sometimes, because my husband always watch the news, like if he is at home he start watch from 10, Channel 10 news, afterward SBS. It’s a long news. Like Channel 10 finish he watch Channel 9, then he watch SBS, then he go to ABC. And that’s I, so I get very angry and don’t watch news.

Mena, an immigrant to Australia from the Former Yugoslavia, preferred not to watch the news, because she found it personally distressing:

Int: What sort of programs on TV do you find difficult to watch?
Mena: News.
Int: Right.
Mena: Because I don’t understand many words and sometimes because my husband start to work at six o’clock so he has to leave home at five thirty.
Int: In the morning?
Mena: Very early in the morning and when I watch the news and I see something happened, something big happened I’m scared to stay at home. So that’s why I don’t really watch the news. ... If I watch at night it’s all the time in my mind.

---

1 One of the Australian TV channels, SBS, provides programs in English as well as in many other languages.
Reasons for watching TV

Subjects reported benefits from watching TV; English language learning was enhanced, as well as knowledge of the Australian community into which they were settling.

*Learning English*

Most subjects saw watching TV as a strategy which helped them learn English,

Janetta: I watch every day. I like because I, I think I learn too very much on TV

and specifically mentioned the value to their listening comprehension, pronunciation and vocabulary.

*Vocabulary*

Betty used her time watching TV as an opportunity to extend her English vocabulary:

Betty: ... I sit with the dictionary and see the title, translate the title and I try to catch some words from the text which they speak. So I try to find. You know it's very difficult because I don't know how to spell. But sometimes it's OK. Most of them from TV ....

*Pronunciation*

Other subjects indicated that they used their TV watching to help them improve their English pronunciation and were helped by watching the mouth of the speaker, or listening:

Anna: I don't know maybe because I was looking to you if I can't understand I look at your mouth how you pronounce.
Int: Uh huh. Do you do that with TV too, do you think?
Anna: TV? Ah yes. ....

CS: ...TV understand little bit. The people speak in the TV I must to listen the pronunciation. Yeah. The pronunciation …
Kit: And sometimes, sometimes when I watch the TV program ... and I listen to the pronunciation, only the pronunciation and oh, is this the way to say, oh and hear the connections and expressions and whole text.

**Listening and comprehension**

Clearly though, the greatest benefit gained from watching TV was to the subjects’ listening proficiency. Several subjects reported how they had watched TV with a view to increasing that skill:

Int: So how do you practise your listening?
Wei: Watch the televisions ...

Maria: ... I like watching TV because I want to listen more English...
...Yes, yes because I need I understand English.

Another, Mena, related how she used TV to deliberately test and increase her listening proficiency:

Mena: I’m trying when people talk to me not to watch their mouths. I’m trying just to listen now. And when I watch TV just turn it a bit louder and went to my kitchen, that was yesterday.
Int: Right.
Mena: And I was cooking some meal, I was listening to TV. But I didn’t understand all, but I did understand a lot.
Int: Right.
Mena: But before I couldn’t understand anything. If I not in the same room as TV.
Int: Right.
Mena: And I had to turn it very hard so I would understand something. But now it's OK. And people I don't have to watch their mouths. I can understand them while I, just if I listen.

**Reasons, other than language learning, for watching TV**

In addition to the benefits to their English language learning subjects also indicated other benefits from watching TV; for one subject it was a means of relaxation, while for others TV programs informed on aspects of the Australian way of life.
Relaxation

Maria’s TV watching was a time of relaxation and a break from her family responsibilities, but also one which she combined with an opportunity to listen to more English:

Maria:  Sometimes when I finish the, my home, ten o’clock maybe, they going to bed and I say ‘Ah, be happy’ and I take something the refrigerator for eat. I watching TV, half an hour alone, myself.

Int:  Just relaxing.

Maria:  Relaxing, yes. I like watching TV because I want to listen more English.

Learning about Australian way of life

Because he knew little about the game, Leo believed it important to watch TV to learn about cricket, a popular sport in Australia.

Int:  Um, now apart from the news what else on TV do you like to watch?
Leo:  ... I always like sport.
Int:  Oh right.
Leo:  I like cricket, cricket and
Int:  Do they play cricket in Taiwan?
Leo:  No, just watch because I think my friend told me they cricket plays is very much in Australia should be understand that.

Advertisements too, served to provide subjects with important information pertinent to their settlement within the Australian community. Betty indicated that she had watched, and been informed by, the content of a TV advertisement for the ambulance service:\footnote{The costs of ambulance services are not covered by Medicare, the Australian health program. To insure against the high cost in the event of use of an ambulance, an annual subscription can be paid to the ambulance service.}

Betty:  Yeah. $45 per person, and for couple I think $70 for one year, anywhere I don’t know where, Australia. You can apply in the Post Office to take the form.

For Wei, who was soon to give birth, the information gained from others who had seen the same advertisements for the ambulance service on TV was of immediate relevance. Unobserved by the researcher, Wei had been recorded on audiotape, with Janetta and Nan, while carrying out a reading

\footnote{The costs of ambulance services are not covered by Medicare, the Australian health program. To insure against the high cost in the event of use of an ambulance, an annual subscription can be paid to the ambulance service.}
comprehension exercise from a newspaper article about an industrial dispute in the local ambulance service. In the process of completing the exercise the conversation of the three turned to the benefits to Wei of joining the ambulance scheme:

Nan: So now if you want the ambulance you have to pay
Wei: For once, eight hundred dollars?

... 
Janetta: But if you’re a member sixty dollars for one year, maybe a hundred for a family.
Nan: Family, yeah.
Janetta: If you haven’t, not a member, eight hundred dollars.
Wei: Really?
Janetta: Yeah. If you have a health care card you don’t pay have to pay anything.
Nan: Yeah if you have health care you don’t have to pay eight hundred dollars.
Wei: Eight hundred dollars.
Nan: You don’t need for years but, ...
Janetta: Have you got membership?
Wei: No.
Janetta: You haven’t a health care card?
Wei: No.
Janetta: Maybe you should. If you want to go in ambulance, you know...
Wei: But my friend told me she called ambulance once last year only a hundred and something.

... 
Janetta: I don’t know. I just ... on the news. She paid for it eight hundred dollars.
Nan: Yeah yeah.
Janetta: But I know the membership is hundred dollars per year
Nan: For the whole family.
Janetta: For the whole family.

... 
Wei: Maybe I had better join a year. Yeah if you got a baby you better join.
Janetta: Maybe if your husband can take you, if you got just a small pain you know, sick. He can take you, but if needed urgently is need member, because it is expensive. Because inside the ambulance has everything
Wei: Mm...
Nan: Yeah they can do anything inside.
Janetta: You can find in the post office application, maybe a form.
Family relationships - interaction with children

Television viewing was often a catalyst of parent-child interaction; parents frequently asked children for clarification when they were not able to understand something heard on TV. Peter indicated on more than one occasion that asking his children was helpful to his learning of English and caused no friction or distress:

Peter: Yes. I ask them. Everything what I hear on television or what I found new words in a newspaper I ask them.

Peter: Yes. All the time when I watch television when I hear some words I don’t know meanings I’ll ask them.

For other families, though, the interruption of the children's viewing by questions from their parents was clearly a cause of great irritation:

Int: What about if you are watching TV and you see something that you don't understand or you hear something you don't understand. What do you do?

Maria: I ask they. Sometimes they ‘Oh Mum shut up. I can't listen. I explain you, oh, oh, ah.” My husband very unhappy because always my children watch TV. My husband no like they watch TV all the time. But they say “Dad, if I watch TV I learn more English. I can learn” they say. He always watch TV. Sometimes we all together watch TV, my husband say, the people say something. I no know what she say. He say “What she say?” My children say “Oh, what, what?” My children very angry because they have to continue listen for the words you know.

Programs ‘spoken in English’

Q15 stipulates the watching of TV/movies ‘spoken in English’. However, the responses of some subjects revealed that programs ‘spoken’ in other languages could also be of benefit to English language learning. Bai liked watching foreign movies shown on SBS as the sub-titles provided enabled him to read in English:

Bai: And I like see the SBS program because when you have foreign movies have English writing under the line.

Betty, watching programs in Polish and subtitled in English, realised the shortcomings of her own Polish-English translations and used that knowledge to increase her understanding of English.
Betty: ... sometimes when I watch the movies in SBS, sometimes Polish movies, and they different. Sometimes I think “I’m going to translate like that” but the interpreter will translate something else. So I can hear the difference and sometimes the titles, you know, because we saw so many movies in my country with Polish titles and here they’re different, so sometimes when I translate in my language, you know, straight away, like the words are meaning nothing.

Summary

Clearly, the findings of this study indicate that Q15 I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English was important to learners. Responses to the SILL revealed that the strategy was the highest rated COG strategy. Here, the results of the qualitative data revealed that use of the strategy was hugely important to the immigrant English language learning subjects. TV programs are a cheap and accessible English language resource and many learners spent hours every day in watching them. Thus, the time many learners spent in practising the strategy of Q15 was greater than that spent practising any other single SILL strategy.

However, the numbers involved in this study were small and so relationships such as those outlined above remain speculative. Only with further research can firmer conclusions be drawn. Nevertheless, the findings do suggest that watching movies or TV programs in English may not be equally beneficial for all learners at all times. Rather, certain programs may be pertinent and of greater interest to immigrant learners at certain stages of their settlement and English language learning. Without the collection of qualitative data and without its analysis using programs such as NUD*IST though, such speculations could not have been raised.
Q30  *I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.*

In an English-speaking community such as Australia it is inevitable that learners have many opportunities to use English. Obviously, all subjects used English in their daily classes but twelve reported at least eight other situations in which they used English to communicate: shopping, bank, government department, doctor, lawyer, neighbours, library, telephone and their child’s school. These instances are shown on Table 7.6, where it can be seen that most of the reports of Q30 *I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English* were made by females; the males, Bai, Leo and Peter, each made only one such report. The females, on the other hand, indicated using English in up to five different situations.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>shopping</th>
<th>bank</th>
<th>govt dept</th>
<th>doctor</th>
<th>lawyer</th>
<th>neighbours</th>
<th>library</th>
<th>telephone</th>
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Q 38 I think about my progress in learning English

During interviews, most of the subjects were asked to reflect on their current English language skills and to compare them with those they had had before coming to Australia, or before attending an English class. The vivid accounts of thirteen of the subjects revealed that they were ‘thinking about [their] progress in learning English’ and moreover, were able to report on their general progress as well as on specific gains in listening, speaking, reading and writing (see Table 7.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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Table 7.7

In most cases, before attending English classes, subjects had had little, if any, proficiency in any English language skills:

Int: ... So think back to the beginning when you first started. What difference is there that you can think of?

Thi: If I didn’t come to class I don’t understand at all what Australians say, but I just guess.
Int: Yeah. How was it when you first came? Did you have any English at all?
Betty: No.
Int: You've improved haven't you? Done really well. When you first came were you afraid to talk?
Betty: Oh yes. ... The first one 510 hours\(^3\) was terrible I didn't, I couldn't speak. ...

Subjects therefore viewed the subsequent progress they had made in English as considerable. For example, until two years previously Rita had depended totally on her husband to interact on her behalf with the Australian community. After attending English classes and making progress in learning English Rita reported that she was able to act independently and confidently in the community:

Rita: It was very hard for me, very hard time, because I depend 100% on my husband, everything. I go to the doctor, bank, he made everything, but now he, he work all day. I can go to the bank, I can go to the doctor, I can go to CES \(^4\) for ...
Int: Yeah, that's a big improvement isn't it? ...

Specific instances of evaluating progress in the four English language skills will now be described below.

**Listening**

Several subjects evaluated the progress they had made in listening. Mena was aware of her ability now to make a conscious effort to listen without watching a speaker's mouth:

Mena: Yeah, I think so. And what else I try? I'm trying when people talk to me not to watch their mouths.

Both she and Anna were able to listen to the radio or TV while doing something else, such as cooking and described the how they had removed themselves from the visual clues of the television:

\[^3\] At the time that this study was carried out, newly arrived immigrants in Australia were offered English courses funded by DfEA for a total of 510 hours.

\[^4\] CES - Commonwealth Employment Service, the government agency which provided assistance in finding employment.

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Anna: Ah, I think if I don't have a problem to hear that's why I listen radio now, because you know I want to improve my I don’t have to stay and sit down in front of the TV, maybe I can cook or just listen and I going to understand what's happened.

Mena: ... I'm trying just to listen now. And when I watch TV just turn it a bit louder and went to my kitchen, that was yesterday
Int: Right.
Mena: And I was cooking some meal, I was listening to TV. But I didn't understand all, but I did understand a lot.
Int: Right.
Mena: But before I couldn't understand anything. If I not in the same room as TV.
Int: Right.
Mena: And I had to turn it very hard so I would understand something. But now it's OK. And people I don't have to watch their mouths. I can understand them while I, just if I listen.

In the same interview, Mena evaluated her progress in listening to the radio recounting how she was trying to listen to the words of songs:

Mena: Like I told you, I'm trying now not to watch TV, just listening and now I'm listening radio programs because I didn't understand and I listening to music now because I can, I don’t understand all.
Int: Songs, do you mean?
Mena: Songs, yeah, but now ... but now I can understand maybe half but before I understand just two or three words.

Betty reported her progress in listening to TV and radio and the use she had made of repetitive advertisements:

Betty: ... I used to had a radio, so the radio was very helpful. They repeat every day, the same things, the news and the advertising and all that stuff, so after a few months I think “Oh, my God, I can understand”. So I was very happy with the radio. TV is very good too.
Int: The advertisements? Do you watch them?
Betty: Yes. Yes one day I open my “My God what are they talking about?” After a few times, I know one word, another word. Then I discover, OK, I understand this.

Anna and Sandra, below, evaluated their progress in learning English after attending classes for some time. These accounts serve to underline the value to immigrants of their attending English language classes soon after they arrive in the country. Anna and Sandra had not done this and had been living in Australia for about six and sixteen years, respectively, before attending classes. In those years they had not gained many English language skills and so had been precluded from understanding TV and radio and from
learning about the Australian community in which they were trying to settle. Here, after attending English classes for twelve to eighteen months, they evaluated their progress in listening to the radio:

Anna: So every morning I put the radio. So I start you know understand a little bit more.
Int: Right.
Anna: And sometimes but sometimes I don’t know what they’re talking about, because they are saying things, so I have to ask my kids “What they talking about?” and they say “Oh, da, da, da”.
Int: Yeah.
Anna: And then you know I can catch more.
Int: Yeah, yeah. Is it getting better?
Anna: Yes, yeah, yeah. I think I get a little bit more better. They put FOX radio in the morning and they talking and they make jokes in the morning so I try to catch, you know, the joke ... And um, yeah but I think I get better. Slowly, but.
Int: Yeah. Think back to the beginning of the year.
Anna: Yeah.
Int: How do you think you’ve got better?
Anna: Ah I didn’t listen like that before because I couldn’t catch anything ...

Int: How about listening? Is it any different now do you think, having been to class?
Sandra: Yeah.
Int: How is it different?
Sandra: Listening more understand, understand the word, understand what they say. I can see a movie and I understand all the movies.
Int: What about the radio?
Sandra: Yeah, sometimes I listen 3MP, I can understand the news. Before I didn’t know what they talking about. But now when he say...
Int: When you say before you couldn’t understand the radio.
Sandra: When I first come to Australia. When I want to hear the weather I put the radio, I understand the weather.
Int: Did you understand that before you started coming to class?
Sandra: Yeah a little bit. This is too fast. But now, yeah is all right.
Int: Is it too fast now on the radio?
Sandra: No, it’s all right.
Int: Oh good, so you think there’s been a lot of improvement.
Sandra: Yeah.
Int: So it’s been worth coming to class?
Sandra: Yeah.
In stark contrast, Betty began attending English classes within days of arrival in Australia. However, her anxiety when she first attended an English class and the subsequent time it took for her to feel comfortable suggest that an initial period of time to allow for adjustment to a new environment before attending English classes, might be beneficial.

Betty:  And after that I moved to the D’s class. I think we have to have a time, you know, to listen someone, because the first time I didn’t recognise any words. I didn’t heard the words, like one line, and that’s it. And writing was awful. O my God. I don’t like remember this time.

Int:  No.

Betty:  But it takes a while.

Int:  So how long did it take, do you think, until you started feeling better?

Betty:  Maybe was the third course with P.

Int:  Right, so how long would that have been?

Betty:  Six, eight months.

**Speaking**

Nan evaluated her progress in speaking as not having improved:

Nan:  I think my speaking is the same. No improvement, I think. I don’t know why.

but other subjects made positive evaluations of their speaking skills. Now, they were able to interact with the English-speaking Australian community:

Janetta:  Oh, now is not too difficult but was in years before.

Int:  Yeah.

Janetta:  When I came to this school it was very hard. I think not now, still hard, but not that hard, because I can go to the Social Security, I can talk. I can talk my lawyers and things. I can talk with the doctors. Before I had to ask for an interpreter.

Int:  Um, what about speaking? Do you think speaking has changed a bit?

Sandra:  Yes, more. Before I was scared to speak with the new family like my neighbour, and speaking I always avoid to speak with her, but now I’m all right. I can go and say ‘Hello, how are you’ start to talk something. Before I used to be scared.
Peter: For me it was difficult first six or seven months. When I started learning every day I know more and more. Now is not very difficult but sometimes I cannot explain everything that I want. But people here in Australia are I think very friendly and they want to understand. And now I haven't big problems.

Some subjects reflected on more specific aspects of their speaking skill, such as pronunciation, grammar, translating back into the L1 and speaking on the telephone. Hui evaluated her progress in pronunciation:

Int: Um what about speaking? Has speaking got better this year?
Hui: Yes, more better. My pronunciation is not very good.
Int: Now or before?
Hui: Before, now is better.
Int: So what has made your speaking a bit better?
Hui: I think I can listen the teacher tell me the pronunciation.
Int: Mm.
Hui: And I sometimes practise myself.

Anna and Sandra revealed that they were thinking about their progress in grammar:

Anna: Because when I come here to Australia, it is just, my English is just talking.
Int: Right.
Anna: With no idea about grammar. And now with my talking, I have to be careful with the grammar.

Sandra: That was my big problem, always when I speak I always speak present.
Int: Right.
Sandra: I didn’t know the past.
Int: Has that changed since you’ve come to class?
Sandra: Yeah.
Int: How has it changed?
Sandra: I not the same. I learn the verbs …
Sandra also evaluated her progress in ‘thinking in English’:

Sandra: This one I understand before I used to think in, and translate in Spanish the word, and then I know the meaning. Now I understand what the mean without translate.

while Betty assessed her developing ability to speak on the telephone:

Int: So how long was that, after you came that you started making telephone calls?
Betty: Maybe, before, maybe ten, eleven months.

Reading

Subjects evaluated the progress they had made in their reading in English, particularly since attending a class:

Int: Now if you think back to the beginning of this year, ... So you think these have got better?
Hui: Yes.
Int: In what way? Tell me about it.
Hui: You see like reading. So I can read the, sometimes the story, a story.
Int: Could you not do that before? Is that what you're saying, at the beginning of the year?
Hui: Yeah, yeah before I didn't read, reading the story or anything.

Int: ... what about reading, from when you started coming to class to now?
Sandra: Yeah, more reading. I can read a book. I read the newspaper.
Int: Did you read before? What did you read before?
Sandra: I read a little bit. I can read before a big and I understand a little, but now I find I can read and understand all.
Writing

Nan’s evaluation of her skills in writing included ten years English learning in Bangladesh. After attending an English class in Australia for some months she reported some limited improvement in her writing skills:

Nan: Difference is that maybe nearly ten years I didn’t write anything in English. Maybe some words maybe I have piece, but not like the perfect tense, like no dictation, no writing reports, no writing like argument something like that. But now I know little bit and I know how to write, I know how to start. I think writing little bit improving …

Anna too, was similarly measured in the assessment of her progress in writing:

Int: ... Tell me more about your writing, how it’s got better....
Anna: ... I feel a little bit more confident. So, I can write something.
Int: So what sort of things do you write?
Anna: Ah, for my teachers, for my kid’ teachers something for my kid, or because he went yesterday he go with runners or why she was late, or things like that, ... for my kid’ teachers I have to write in English of course.
Int: Anything else you write in English?
Anna: Oh the things, here the school. I try to write to a letter for my sister because she was living in Canada.
Int: Oh right.
Anna: And she come back to Chile so I tell her I will send a letter in English ... and she’s waiting for that still the letter (laughs).

Sandra on the other hand, evaluated her progress as substantial:

Int: Did you do any writing before you came to class?
Sandra: No, no.
Int: Nothing at all.
Sandra: No. Even the school notes, my husband used to write those.
Int: So what do you write now?
Sandra: Now I can write a letter in English. I can write a report. I can write a lot of things.
While somewhat modest, Rita’s comments revealed a considerable improvement in her writing skills:

Rita: But my husband say you, my husband say you improve because now you, you write papers...
Int: Yes.
Rita: Or when come CES, or for my daughter. I write a little note for teacher but I think I said I don’t improve.
Int: Oh, but before did you write anything before?
Rita: No, never. I depend on my husband.

Summary

The comments of most of the subjects indicated that they were making use of the strategy ‘I think about my progress in learning English’. Of all the reports made only one, that of Nan in regard to her speaking, revealed a belief of negative progress. Indeed, the subjects’ positive accounts clearly indicate the value of attending formal English classes to gains in language proficiency. Without such gains subjects would have remained dependent on others for their interaction with the community and so would not have participated to the extent that successful settlement entails. Thus, analysis of the data here reveals that access to effective English classes, after an initial period of adjustment, can be a powerful aid to the successful settlement of immigrants in the Australian English-speaking society.
7.3.2. SILL strategies: non-use was common

As described in Chapter Five, subjects had rated the MEM subscale lowest when responding to the SILL in Stage 2 of the study. It was suggested then that certain items on the MEM subscale might have contributed to the relatively low rating given. Indeed, as was shown on Table 5.5 (Rank order of mean responses to SILL) particular MEM strategies i.e. Q5 I use rhymes to remember new English words, Q6 I use flashcards to remember new English words and Q7 I physically act out new English words with means of 2.6, 2.46 and 2.66 respectively, were the lowest ranked of all thirty-eight strategies from the four reliable subscales (MEM, COG, META and SOC). From the quantitative data gathered then, it seemed that these three strategies were not widely favoured by the learners in this study.

Table 7.1 shows that responses of subjects in Stage 4 of the study generally confirmed the findings of the quantitative data. Q5 was referred to in five records of interviews two of which reported use and three non-use of the strategy. Four subjects reported on Q6, but only two of its use. Q7 was reported in four interviews, with all subjects indicating a non-use of the strategy.

**Q5 I use rhymes to remember new English words**

For Q5 I use rhymes to remember new English words interview data were obtained from four of the subjects and of these two, Betty and Hui indicated that they did not use the strategy. Peter revealed that he did use the strategy while a fourth subject, Kit, indicated both use and non-use according to the circumstances.

As reported earlier (Chapter Three), some subjects did not understand the meaning of the word 'rhymes' and asked for clarification at the time of the SILL administration or when interviewed subsequently. Initially in interview, Hui did not understand the meaning of the word 'rhymes' but, once she did understand stated that she never used such a strategy:
Hui: This one rhymes? I don't know what this one means.
Int: Uh huh. That means like songs but without the music,
Hui: Mm.
Int: Like little poems. Do you understand poems?
Hui: Yes, yes.
Int: Well that's what we're saying. I use rhymes or I use poems to remember new English words.
Hui: No, never this one.

Unlike Hui, Betty did understand the meaning of ‘rhymes’ but she too, indicated no use of the strategy.

Betty: And I never use the rhymes to remember new English words.

However, Peter and Kit indicated that they did place some importance on the use of the strategy although they seemed to differ slightly in their interpretation of ‘rhymes’. Kit from Hungary, seemed to interpret ‘rhymes’ as a stanza and indicated that she might indeed use such strategy in certain circumstances. However, she stated that she could make use of this strategy only through her first language, Hungarian. Her lack of knowledge of rhymes in English precluded her from using such a strategy in English:

Kit: Rhymes to remember like a song, like a rhyme.
Int: Mm like a poem.
Kit: Yes, if some word, one certain word is similar or same Hungarian word or a Hungarian theme I use a rhyme, but not, unfortunately it's not too often because I don't know really good rhymes and poems and sing songs in English. It's very good but hard for me.

Peter, on the other hand, indicated that his understanding of ‘rhymes’ was at the word level and that he used the strategy to remember pairs of words which rhymed:

Peter: Sometimes I use rhymes to remember the word. When some word is similar.
Int: Right. Can you tell me the meaning of that word? What does rhyme mean?
Peter: Yes. Nearly same one word and second word, the first and second word.
Int: Oh right, yeah. For example, can you give me an example?
Peter: Stay, may.
Summary

When subjects indicate, as they did for Q5, that they made little or no use of a strategy little qualitative data can be gathered. Two subjects indicated limited use of the strategy while two others indicated no use at all. Thus, for the subjects interviewed the strategy could be described as a low use strategy at best. Kit expressed the limitation of the strategy for many second language learners; use of the strategy was constrained by her lack of English knowledge.
Q6 I use flashcards to remember new English words

Of the four subjects who provided data on this item only two revealed some use of Q6 I use flashcards to remember new English words. Bai and Kit indicated that Q6 was important for them and, of the strategies they were asked to rank placed it in a high position.

Bai showed in the excerpt below, that he had been specifically taught the strategy at school in China and since had since found the strategy “very easy to use”. After writing the word with notes on its use and pronunciation he was able to keep the cards, or pieces of paper, in his pocket for revision when he had the opportunity.

Bai: This one is a very good way to remember the new, a new English word.
Int: That's no 6. Uh huh.
Bai: Yes.
Int: Do you do this? What do you do? Tell me about it.
Bai: I usually write the new word in the piece of the paper and write the pronunciation mark and how to use it, write one sentence.
Int: What sort of pronunciation marks do you make?
Bai: International mark.
Int: Oh right.
Bai: And then I read several times and put it in my pocket and while you take the train and another have a free times maybe I look for the piece of paper and read it and remember it. It's a very good way. I use it for a very long time, from the senior school,
Int: Oh right.
Bai: From the senior middle school in China.
Int: Is that what you were taught to do in China? ...
Bai: Yes. The teacher give me many good ways, but I just can keep it.
Int: That one. Yeah.
Bai: Very easy to use.

Kit reflected on the processes she was using to learn English and revealed the way in which she had been using the strategy Q6 by writing new words on a small piece of paper and revising them before going to bed:

Int: ... OK so just let's have a look at no. 6. You use highlighters but do you ever use flashcards, do you ever look at the word and then put it away and have another card...?
Kit: When I began to read this book, Neville Shute, the first um first days I use to read that I wrote every new words and to er, er, a little paper and when I finished reading before going to bed I read again, again and back and it was very very tiring and exhausting and later my husband suggested that way... changed...
In contrast, Mena and Betty had both rated the strategy as '1' *Never or almost never true of me* during the administration of the SILL and later confirmed those responses during interview:

Mena: Oh yeah. I never do that.
Int: OK so you never use No 6.
Mena: Flashcards to remember English words.

Betty: I don't use flashcards. I use only the books for write the words, meanings and how to pronunciation in here but not on flashcards.

**Summary**

Again, little qualitative data were gathered on the use made of this strategy. Of the four interviewed, only two subjects indicated some use, one revealing that he had been taught the use of the strategy during his prior education. Perhaps the otherwise general lack of response to Q6 *I use flashcards to remember new English words* can be attributed to a lack of specific teaching of the strategy in the classroom. Further classroom research could inform on this speculation.
Q7  I physically act out new English words

During the administration of the SILL several subjects of different levels of proficiency indicated that they did not understand the meaning of the word 'physical'. In interviews also, three of the four subjects initially asked for clarification. All, however, subsequently stated that they did not use the strategy 'I physically act out new English words'.

Perhaps because of shortcoming in the demonstration given to her, Hui's response to the first explanation of meaning indicated that she understood the meaning of the statement to be 'I use gestures'. After further explanation was given, though, she gave an emphatic, negative response:

Hui: Physically means um ...very hard to act out the new words, is it? Is a...
Int: Physically means you act with your body.
Hui: Act your body, act my body.
Int: Yeah, you know (gives demonstration).
Hui: Yeah.
Int: Like this. Do you do that?
Hui: Yeah, I all the time.
Int: So what sort of words would you act out?
Hui: Sometimes the things, because I afraid people not understand, so I act the things or...
Int: Oh right, I see. When you're speaking. OK. I think this means with new words to learn a new word, to remember the word, you act it out, to help yourself remember. Do you do that?
Hui: Never.
Int: Never.
Hui: Never do that.

Similarly, Mena indicated no use of the strategy:

Mena: What it mean physically act?
Int: Physically act means with your body. You get your body to do the thing.
Mena: Oh yeah. I never do that.

Kit indicated that she did not understand the meaning of the word 'physical', but her response to further explanation still showed that she did not understand the way in which the word was used in the Q7 statement:
Int: ...What about no 7 do you ever do that one?
Kit: No, I don't know. Never, I think so. What does it mean really?
[No 7]
Int: It means with your body, you know you will act...
Kit: Yess, we swim, we swim twice a week.

Bai indicated quite clearly that he never employed such a strategy in his learning:

Int: OK. So do you ever do number 7, physically act out new words. Do you understand this word?
Bai: Yes, I understand. No never do that.

**Summary**

The data collected on Q7 seemed to have confirmed the low overall response to the item on the SILL. A lack of understanding seemed general and, of the subjects interviewed on this strategy, none indicated use of ‘I physically act out new English words’.
7.3.3. SILL strategies: use related to an independent variable

Following text and matrix searches of the data, certain relationships became evident between SILL items and categories and independent variables: Age; L1 background; Length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia (PreEng); Length of time spent attending English class in Australia (Eoz); and Time spent living in Australia (Toz).

Age

The reported use of MEM and AFF strategies appeared to be related to the variable of Age.

Table 7.8 shows that most reports referring to MEM strategy use were made by subjects under thirty-one and over forty years of age with most reports of non-use, represented by the symbol ‘X’, coming from the younger subjects. It will be recalled (Chapter Five) that, following analysis of the quantitative data, greatest use of MEM strategies was reported by subjects in the 46-50 age group. Here, a similar pattern of use emerged from the qualitative data confirming that, for older learners, the use of MEM strategies was somewhat important.

As will be discussed in more detail later (Chapter Eight nonSILL strategies), several older learners expressed difficulty in remembering when learning English and accounted for that difficulty by their age. Thus, it seems possible that the greater use of MEM strategies revealed here could have been an attempt to overcome those difficulties.
In the case of AFF strategies, Table 7.9 reveals that most reports of non-use were made by subjects thirty years and under, while subjects over the age of forty were those who reported making use of the AFF strategies. The use of AFF strategies will be further discussed in Chapter Eight, where their use by learners to avoid anxiety in the learning situation is strongly linked with age and a consequent deterioration in memory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Q39</th>
<th>Q40</th>
<th>Q41</th>
<th>Q42</th>
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<td>Thi</td>
<td>31-35</td>
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<tr>
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<td>✗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = use of the strategy

X = non-use of the strategy
**L1 background**

Following matrix searches of the qualitative data relationships emerged between the independent variable, L1 background, and two of the individual strategies:

Q12 I *practise the sounds of English* and
Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English

The searches also revealed an association between L1 background and

Q41 I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English

However, as will be explained below, although the latter association at first seemed to be with L1, closer examination of the data revealed that the reported use or non-use of Q41 was related with cultural factors rather than with the subjects’ L1 background.

**Q12 I practise the sounds of English**

Some differences in the pattern of responses to Q12 could be observed between the Asian and European L1 background subjects, as shown on Table 7.10. Firstly, fewer Asian L1 subjects were coded as having used Q12 *I practise the sounds of English* than the subjects from European L1 backgrounds: two Asian L1 subjects Hui (Hokkien) and Thi (Vietnamese) as against four European L1 backgrounds: Peter (Croatian), Mena (Serbian), as well as Anna and Sandra (both Spanish). Secondly, but perhaps more interesting, were the types of responses which were given by the subjects; responses of Asian L1 pertained only to their poor pronunciation of English as a barrier to effective communication, while the responses of European L1 backgrounds pertained to production of particular sounds or words, and affective factors such as stress and family embarrassment.
Table 7.10
Reported use and non-use of Q12 I practise the sounds of English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>L1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hokkien</td>
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<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Peter | M   | Croatian | /x  
| Janetta | F | Hungarian |     
| Kit   | F   | Hungarian |     
| Betty | F   | Polish   |     
| Mena  | F   | Serbian  |   
| Serge | M   | Serbian  |     
| Anna  | F   | Spanish  |   
| Maria | F   | Spanish  |     
| Rita  | F   | Spanish  |     
| Sandra| F   | Spanish  |   

* = reported use of strategy

X = reported non use of strategy

Poor pronunciation

Two subjects, both from Asian L1 backgrounds recognised that their pronunciation was a barrier to effective communication with others in the Australian community.

Thi, who had learnt English for approximately ten years in Vietnam, indicated that she was very aware of the differences in the American pronunciation she had learnt in Vietnam and the pronunciation of English in Australia:
Thi: Sometimes I have mistake about pronunciation. Before I learn in my country and English at my class, but when I come here the pronunciation is different because my pronounce from American in my country learn about it, and when I come here it's different. So sometimes I make mistake my pronunciation. It's not right.

Later, in the same interview, she gave a specific example of a word which was particularly difficult for her:

Thi: But sometimes I have problem when I talk to people in a shop. Like I want to buy something vitamin.
Int: Victorian?
Thi: Vegggeta..../ vitamin? Vegetarian.
Int: Oh vegetarian.
Thi: Vegetarian! My mistake. I can't, 'vegetarian' and when you say they don't understand what you say. I say 'vegetarian', and they say 'Victorian', and I say 'Ooh...' (laughs). Yeah. So that's when I have problem when we talking.

Thi did not indicate specifically during interview that she practised the sounds of English, yet her behaviour in the extract above demonstrated that she did practise, thus confirming to a certain extent at least, her score of ‘5’ for Q12 on the SILL.

Like Thi, Hui (Hokkien) realised that her pronunciation of English caused problems in her being understood by speakers of English in Australia:

Hui: Sometimes very hard for Asian people got the slang [accent?] 
Int: Which slang, Australian slang or?
Hui: No Asian slang.
Int: How do you mean that?
Hui: Can't say... not like Australian people (pause) sometimes it is very hard to pronunciation the things, so my tongue isn't, it's harder.
Int: Do you mean, do you mean because you are Chinese speaking it's harder to pronounce things?
Hui: Yes, because sometimes Australian people can't understand what I say, the meaning.

Because she believed that her pronunciation was poor, Hui took time to ‘practise the sounds of English’ indicating more than once that she did so on a regular basis:

Hui: Because my pronunciation is not good, so always practise my sounds.

and again:
And these, every day or nearly every day?

This one?

No 12, yeah

This one, when I free, sometimes...or nothing to do, so I practise my sounds.

OK.

Not every day, sometimes I think.

Although Hui had indicated, above, that she practised 'sounds', the extract below reveals that she practised at the level of 'the word'. She indicated that she preferred to “speak out” when she had time available at home, sometimes seeking correction from her sixteen year old daughter:

Mm. OK. What about No 12? I practise the sounds of English? When do you do that?

When I free. I practise my sounds. Yeah.

What sort of things do you practise? How do you practise them?

Practise the word.

Mm. Do you do it with a tape recorder?

No.

Or in front of a mirror?

No, never. Never. Just practise like that, ah, ah. When I free I say 'Ah', and my pronunciation, when I speak out.

Right.

Sometimes my daughter beside me and then I ask my daughter is right or not.

How old’s your daughter?

16.

Oh right, so she can be very helpful can’t she?

Yeah.

The four other subjects who indicated using the strategy Q12 I practise the sounds of English were from European language backgrounds: Peter (Croatian), Mena (Serbian), and Anna and Sandra (Spanish). None of these subjects practised, as had Asian L1 learners, because their pronunciation was a barrier to communication with English speakers in the Australian community. They practised for other reasons; to master a particular sound, for example.

Mena (Serbian), practised the sound, /θ/, which proved difficult for her:

Are there any sounds in English that are difficult?

Yeah.

Which ones?

Ah, everyone where you can find T-H together, like /θ/, like thirty or thirteen or...

So what do you do, do you really practise those?
Mena: Yeah, and in my language we never put our tongues... so it is very difficult for me to say /θ/. One month later, Mena again referred to the difficulty in pronunciation of the same sound, and described the way in which she practised at home. Although her teacher had encouraged her to practise with the aid of a mirror, she indicated her embarrassment when trying to do this. Mena’s comments clearly indicated that she was at a stage of conscious production of the sound, but not yet able to produce it automatically:

Mena: ...But sometimes it is very hard for me to say some words because just English is very soft language, but my language is you know very hard.
Int: Is it?
Mena: Yeah, and this is the best I can say.
Int: Yeah, oh good. How about No 12? What do you do...can you give me an example of what you do there?
Mena: Sounds. It means pronunciation. It means that I pronounce it many times. But just, our teacher T., you know her, she said we can pronounce in front of mirror but I couldn’t because it so funny. I couldn’t do it in front of mirror.
Int: Yeah, it’s embarrassing isn’t it?
Mena: Yeah.
[tape turned off here - M. demonstrates positioning of tongue to produce the /θ/ sound.]
Int: Is it still a problem putting your tongue out for /θ/? Or are you getting over that?
Mena: Yeah, when I want to say just /θ/ but when I should put it in a word it’s a bit harder because I have to think, oh I have to put my tongue out. A bit difficult.

Limited practice

Two learners, Peter and Sandra, indicated that although they did practise the sounds of English, they did not practise to any great extent, for differing reasons. Peter, never practised at home but restricted his practice to repetition of words uttered by the teacher and other students, in class:

Int: Can you give me some examples of No. 12?
Peter: I try, I repeat some words when you hear from my teacher, other students. I think these words is right, is OK.
Int: Do you practise at home, the sounds?
Peter: Never.
Int: OK, most of the practising the sounds is in class.
Peter: Yeah.
A possible explanation for his lack of practice at home were his comments, in the same interview, that he found the hours spent in class to be enough for him:

Peter: I cannot learn for a long time, example four to five hours in class is enough for me.

Again, four weeks later, Peter indicated the same sentiments:

Peter: ...Maybe I need relax of English. I think this time is difficult. I think now I think I must relax.
Int: Mm.
Peter: After the school.
Int: Yeah, I can understand that, yeah. ... You have English in class, you just want to go home and relax.
Peter: No, I have enough English in class every day, four hours. That's enough.

Perhaps underlying his need to relax after class was Peter’s age. On two occasions he indicated that he believed learning English at his age, 43, to be somewhat difficult:

Peter: ...Because my age is not very good for learning.
Int: Why? Why do you think that?
Peter: I think after forty... I no remember something.

and again, four weeks later:

Peter: In my age is not easy.

For Peter then, the reason basic to his lack of practice of the sounds of English seemed to be his need for relaxation, because of his age. His comments demonstrated his awareness of the need to take account of affective factors in learning.

Sandra also, indicated that she did not practise the sounds of English to any great extent. She was one of the most proficient in English and indicated that the strategy of practising the sounds of English was of less importance to her now than it had been earlier, when her level of proficiency in English was lower. In making her comments, Sandra revealed that she was metacognitively aware, as she had reflected on her progress and realised that she now needed to practise only some long words which caused her difficulty:

Int: ... do you still do this one, no 12, I practise the sounds of English?
Sandra: Yeah, some words, long words.
Int: When would you do that?
Sandra: Some words if they’re long ones and I can’t say, make the sounds.
Int: Would that have been more important, was that more important before than it is now?
Sandra: Yeah.
Int: Yeah, but it’s still important, but not as often.
Sandra: No, not often.

Thus, for Sandra there had been a progression away from the practising of sounds of English. At her present level of proficiency, she no longer found it necessary to use the strategy Q12 I practise the sounds of English to the extent which she had earlier.

However, a higher level of proficiency did not necessarily entail a lessening of practice for all subjects. Like Sandra, Anna, was one of the most proficient subjects in this study but, in contrast, Anna indicated that the use of Q12 I practise the sounds of English was of current, not past, importance. It will be recalled that during the Qresponse interview, Anna had reflected on her use of several strategies, by dividing them into categories:

- important now,
- not so important now,
- used to be important, and
- never really important.

She ranked Q12 I practise the sounds of English as the most important strategy to her at the present time and revealed an underlying family reason why it was so important for her:

Anna: Yes, I think because now just I want doing with my sounds. Really trying to give...
Int: That’s important for you at the moment?
Anna: Yes.
Int: Has that always been important, right from the beginning?
Anna: Yes.
Int: Is it more important now than it was before?
Anna: Umm. My kids are more bigger now...
Int: Yes.
Anna: And sometimes when I talk with their friends they can’t understand because of my accent, so I try to fix my accent because my kids sometimes they are feel embarrassed,
Int: Ah right.
Anna: because I no speak properly English, so I try to correct these things because they at school they are teenagers, yeah, they just say “Oh Mum you have to say this one that way” or whatever, so I trying to correct.
Thus, the embarrassment her pronunciation was causing her children was the reason that Anna placed so much importance on her use of the strategy Q12 I practise the sounds of English. To alleviate that embarrassment Anna believed that she should improve her pronunciation, by practising the sounds of English.

Summary

The individuality of the learners and the personal situations which they brought to their learning process clearly had a bearing on the extent to which they used Q12 I practise the sounds of English. Learners from Asian L1 backgrounds perceived their pronunciation to be a barrier to effective communication with the Australian English-speaking community and so practised the sounds of English in a bid to overcome that problem. In contrast, learners of European L1 background did not perceive their pronunciation as a serious impediment to communication. For them, the factors of age, level of proficiency and family influences were clearly the driving forces in their use of this strategy. However, because the numbers of subjects in this study were small, further research is necessary to establish the generalisability of the findings.
Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English

Initially, utterances related to the strategy Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English were coded, using NUD*IST, as 2 2 19, where

\[
\begin{align*}
2 & = \text{strategies} \\
2 & = \text{Cognitive, and} \\
19 & = \text{Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.}
\end{align*}
\]

However, it soon became evident that that coding did not capture the characteristics of the data emerging from this particular SILL statement. A finer, more detailed coding was necessary. Hence, a fourth level of coding was introduced for Q19, as shown in Figure 7.1, where

\[
\begin{align*}
1 & = \text{‘faux amis’ (false friends),} \\
2 & = \text{other L,} \\
3 & = \text{transcribe sound}
\end{align*}
\]

![Figure 7.1](#)

**Figure 7.1**

**Coding of strategy Q19**

The coding ‘faux amis’ was applied to utterances where the subject recognised a similarity of English to the L1 but realised also that it was sometimes unwise, because of differences in meaning, to rely on the strategy of ‘look[ing] for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English’. The coding ‘other L’ was used for a number of subjects for whom English was not the second language, but was the third, fourth or even fifth language learned.
These subjects indicated, in interviews, that they had used their knowledge of languages, other than their first, to help them in their learning of English. Thus, the coding ‘other L’ was applied to utterances where subjects recognised similarities, between that language, and English. ‘Transcribe sound’ coded those instances where subjects indicated that they had, as an aid to memory, used the script of their L1 to convey the sounds of English words (Crystal, 1997).

Creation of table summarising use of the Q19

Using the NUD*IST procedures of vector and matrix to search the data, a table was created (Table 7.11) which shows the subjects who were coded at the node 2 2 19 (similar to L1), as well as at 2 2 19 1 (‘faux amis’), 2 2 19 2 (other L), and 2 2 19 3 (transcribe sound). Subjects are arranged in two groups: firstly, those from an Asian L1 background and then, those from European L1 backgrounds.

On Table 7.11 it can be seen (column 3) that while six of the ten subjects of European language background were coded at 2 2 19 (Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English), the utterance of only one subject in the Asian language group was considered to be evidence of use of the strategy. Columns 4, 5 and 6 show the subjects who were coded at the three sub-strategies of Q19: 2 2 19 1 (‘faux amis’), 2 2 19 2 (other L) and 2 2 19 3 (transcribe sound). In Column 4, one subject (Anna - Spanish) was coded as recognising ‘faux amis’, while reported use of ‘Other L’, in Column 5, was somewhat mixed: two European L1 subjects, Kit (Hungarian), and Mena (Serbian) as well as two Asian language subjects, Hui (Hokkien) and LL (Mandarin) were coded here. Column 6 (transcribe sound) shows that three Asian language subjects (Wei, Hui and LL) and four European language subjects (Peter, Betty, Mena and Sandra) were coded as transcribing the sound of an English word in another language, usually the L1.
As indicated above (Table 7.11), six from a European L1 background, but only one subject from an Asian language background, were coded as reporting using the strategy, Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.

Subjects from a European L1 background indicated that they had looked for, and found, similarities between words in their L1 and in English, a process which had helped them to understand meaning and to remember.
Peter indicated that there were a number of words in Croatian which were “stranger words”, or borrowings, from English:

Int: Are there any words in English that are similar to Croatian words?
Peter: Yes, because in my language we have some words, stranger words but we use in our language.
Int: Such as, an example...
Peter: An example, medical words and technical words.

After completing a dictation exercise in class, Peter was able to give an example of a word which he had written correctly in the dictation because he had recognised it as similar to the word in his L1:

Int: Did you have this word ‘cement’ the first time?
Peter: Yes, because in my country is same writing but pronunciation is different.
Int: What’s the pronunciation in your country?
Peter: In English is ceMENT, in my country is CEment.

Mena too, related that she had looked for, and found, some similarities of words in Serbian and English, although she gave no example:

Int: ... There are a lot of things that are very similar between Spanish and English. But in your language [Serbian]? A lot of things like that?
Mena: Not a lot, but there are some.

Sandra indicated that she used the strategy of looking for words similar in Spanish and English, particularly when she divided an English word into parts. When she did this, she sometimes found a word within that she knew in Spanish, a finding which helped her remember the word in English:

Int: ...This one - ‘I find the meaning of and English word by dividing it into parts that I understand’. ... Can you tell me...
Sandra: I separate by syllable. That’s easy to me to, if it’s a long word.
Int: Do you find doing that helps you when the word is similar to Spanish?
Sandra: Yes, because I remember sometimes in the middle is a word I know and I remember that...

The comments of the subjects above, all from European language background, clearly indicate that they did put into practice the strategy of Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English and that they did, at times, find similarities.
In contrast, Wei, a Cantonese speaker, indicated that she had not found much that was similar between Cantonese and English:

Int: ...how often do you try and find anything that’s similar between Chinese and English?
Wei: Mm, similar. Not much, no. It’s very different.
Int: Is there anything you find sometimes that is similar between Chinese and English?
Wei: (long pause) No. Only some foreign words we use in Chinese, like bus.
Int: Oh right.
Wei: We call it bus. Yeah. Not much.
Int: What about the way the words are made, like the meaning behind the words. Is that ever very similar, do you ever see anything that’s similar there?
Wei: Mm, some idiom.
Int: Yeah? So can you give me an example?
Wei: Oh, I can’t think of any now. I know some idioms.

When she responded to the SILL questionnaire, in English, Wei had given Q19 *I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English* a score of ‘1’ indicating ‘Never or almost never true of me’. Perhaps it was that Wei did, in fact, rarely *look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English* because she believed that, in the Chinese context, there was little point in doing so (Bremner, 1999). It may be that Chinese learners of English, in finding nothing that is visually or aurally similar, or borrowed from English, are not aware that other similarities could be possible and so do not look for them.

For example, another Chinese speaker, Hui (Hokkien) had not recognised the similarity between the word ‘leukaemia’ and the Chinese word for the disease. In the extract below where, with Sandra, she had just completed a reading exercise on the effects on the human body of radiation, Hui did not recognise the word, ‘leukaemia’, until the meaning was explained to her. Sandra, on the other hand, had recognised it, from its similarity to Spanish. In answer to questions which sought, firstly, to find if the word had been borrowed and then, to find if the morphology of the word in Chinese was similar to the word used in English, Hui was able to explain the word as ‘white blood’. Yet, she did not seem aware of the similar morphology of the word in English (*leukos* white, *haima* blood) and Chinese.
Int: OK. Anything else you don’t understand there?
Hui: How about this one. Leukaemia is it?
Sandra: Disease in the blood.
Int: ... Is it similar to Spanish?
Sandra: Yes.
Int: So you know it from Spanish word?
Sandra: Yes.
Int: What ‘s the word in Chinese I wonder? Do you know the word?
Hui: Yeah - white blood in Chinese it’s called ‘baixué’.
Int: It’s quite different. Is that a word in Chinese that is saying
something about ‘white’?
Hui: Yes - ‘bai’ is white.

The evidence provided by the two Chinese learners of English suggests that there is, perhaps, a case for teachers to place more emphasis in their teaching on the morphology of the English word. Such a strategy could benefit all learners but particularly those from L1 backgrounds such as Chinese who find very few visual/aural similarities of their language to English. Students could be encouraged to search for comparison beyond the visual/aural similarity of the word and to make comparisons between the underlying morphology of the word in their L1 and in English. Armed with such a strategy students could look for, and perhaps find, a greater number of similarities between words in their L1 and English and in so doing find a more effective means of learning new words in English.

Nevertheless, the greater number of reports of Q19 from European L1 learners does suggest that the item is biased toward those language groups and not as pertinent to Asian L1 learners.
**Looking for similarities beyond the ‘word’ level**

Implicit in the SILL statement Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English is the making of comparisons between the L1 and English at the level of the word. Thus, the quantitative data gathered from the administration of the SILL is confined, presumably, to comparisons made between the L1 and English at the word level only. But, as evidenced below, the qualitative data which emerged in this study demonstrates that learners went beyond the word level in making comparisons between their own language and English; they had compared their L1 with English in other areas such as grammar or spelling.

**Grammar**

Mena (Serbian) indicated that, as well as vocabulary, she had made comparisons between her L1 and English in grammar, specifically with adjectives and tense:

Mena: ... I found in my language some words are similar, or like grammar, or like past tense we have, or like good, better, the best, we have all things like that.

Similarly, Peter showed that he had carefully thought about Croatian, his L1, making a comparison with English and using that as a basis for remembering the structure of English:

Int: ... For example, grammar. How are you going to remember that?

Peter: I think about what’s in my language and compare in English.

Int: Yeah. Do you have similar tense in your language? What’s your language?

Peter: Croatian. Yes.

In their responses below, Janetta and Kit, both Hungarian, described the use of affixes in verb formation in Hungarian, indicating that in the process of their learning of English they too, had made comparisons between the two languages, finding not similarities, but differences:
Int: What are some things that are different between Hungarian and English that you have noticed?

Janetta: Hungarian and English yes. Because is some, some words is totally different if 'we go' the past or 'we go' the future then in our language, our language is not different. The same words just we put double 'b' or 'tág' or something, before.

Kit: ...our language is very old and we can express ourselves one word. Inside one word there are suffixes, prefixes and without anything, I'm reading, I am reading, one word (gives example) and the English language has a lot of expressions, not only expressions, a lot of words for one thing, similar thing ...

Spelling

However, it was not only at the levels of vocabulary and grammar that subjects showed that they had made comparison between their L1 and English. On two separate occasions during interview, Betty described her difficulty with the sound-word system of English, so different from that of Polish, and how that caused problems in spelling for her. One instance is related here:

Betty: Sometimes I been hearing a lot of things and it comes to writing, it's very different. So I think is that things is hard for English that the pronunciation is different like the spelling so we haven't got that problem in our, my language.

From the data gathered here, it seems that SILL statement Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English in confining itself to the 'word' level, does not truly reflect the range of ways in which learners look for similarities between their L1 and English. Thus, it seems at this stage of the discussion, that a better SILL statement may be: I look for similarities between my own language and English.

Fourth level of coding

As was explained above, the additional qualitative data emerging on Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English called for a finer, more precise coding to capture the characteristics of the use of the strategy. A fourth level of the strategy coding ‘tree’ was introduced. That level of coding will now be described.
'Faux amis'

The coding ‘faux amis’ (false friends) was applied to utterances where the subject recognised a similarity of English to the L1 but realised that it was sometimes unwise to rely on the strategy of ‘look[ing] for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English’.

Five subjects from a European language background, indicated that they had looked for, and found, some similarities of words in Spanish and English. However, Anna was the only one to have expressed a realisation that meanings in the two languages were not always equivalent and consequently, that she had reservations about using the strategy:

Int: … When you’re learning English do you look for words that are similar to Spanish?
Anna: Ah yes, there are some are similar, so I know.
Int: Are there a lot that are similar?
Anna: Um yes, sometimes I know the meaning because it’s similar to my language, but some I think are the same but they are not.
Int: Yeah, they are a bit tricky aren’t they?
Anna: Yes, that’s right. So, I have to be careful.

Other language

The coding ‘other L’ was applied to utterances where subjects recognised similarities between a language, other than their first, and English. For several of the subjects in this study, English was the third, fourth or even fifth language that they had learnt. Many of those subjects demonstrated that they did not confine themselves to the strategy Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English. Instead, they went beyond their L1, particularly if similarities between it and English were not obvious and compared their ‘other’ languages with English.

Hui, a Hokkien speaker from Malaysia who also had a knowledge of Mandarin, Malay and Cantonese, had not indicated finding any similarities between her L1 and English. Yet, her prior knowledge of Malay, with its Roman alphabet and a sound system more similar to English, had helped her with the pronunciation of words in English, as she reported:
Hui: ... before I learn Malay, you know in Malaysia, Malay? Sounds of word is more similar.
Int: To what?
Hui: The pronounce.
Int: To what, English?
Hui: To English, yes.
Int: So how does that help you?
Hui: See I can see the “family” and I can see the Malay’s ‘t’ is /fa/, so I can say ‘family’.
Int: So it’s using your knowledge of Malay to help you with English. That’s interesting isn’t it?
Hui: Yes.

Similarly, Kit a Hungarian speaker, had not reported noting any similarities between her own L1 and English but she did reveal that her knowledge of Latin, German and Russian had helped her in her learning of English, particularly in her understanding of meaning:

Kit: ...‘repercussion’ this week is my new word, but I know percussion, that is the Latin and you know I’m a doctor and I, percussion chest [x x x knocks on chest] percussio is Latin, percussion, repercussion and oh good, and no more times, because it is easy the meaning, etymology, from etymology.

...and when I learn the English words usually I’m thinking about meaning, about etymology, about how come, and sometimes I understand the meaning and I understand the origin and relating other languages Latin and German. I speak German and Russian and it’s very important, not only important but interesting and I understand again...

Mena, on the other hand, believed that a knowledge of Russian had not been helpful in her learning of English:

Int: Did you find Russian was any help when you were learning English?
Mena: No, no.
Int: Nothing at all? No words that are similar and you think, oh that’s similar, or the grammar is similar?
Mena: No.
Transcribe sound

Some learners reported that they used their L1 when trying to learn, or remember, the sounds of words in English, or when compensating for a lack of knowledge of a word in a dictation exercise, for example. In doing this, they were making a comparison of the sound system of English and that of their L1, using letters of their L1 to convey the sounds of English words (Crystal, 1997).

As shown in Table 7.11 above, the use of the strategy ‘transcribe sound’ was evenly spread across the European and Asian language groups; three Asian L1 and four European L1 subjects reported using it.

(a) European L1 background learners

The four subjects from European L1 backgrounds indicated that they used the strategy of ‘transcribe sound’ by writing “in my language”. One subject, Peter (Croatian) chose the strategy of transcribing the sound of an unknown word in a dictation exercise in class:

Int: ... What do you do, Peter, when you hear in a dictation, when you hear a word that you don't know? What do you do? You know you have to keep writing..
Peter: Yes, I write this word how I heard and after I try remember about this word. ... I heard and write this in my language. What I say, I write.
Int: So you write the sound as it would be in your language, or some sounds from your language to help you, and write it down?
Peter: Yes.

Sandra used the same strategy at home, to remember the pronunciation when trying to practise the sounds of English:

Int: ... "I practise the sounds of English" right. ... Can you give me some examples of how you do that?
Sandra: Yes, I put in my language, the word sound in my language.
Int: Mm.
Sandra: Then I remember.
Int: Do you write the sound in your language?
Sandra: Yes.

Above, Betty (Polish) related her difficulty with sound-word correspondence in English. Here, she cited the way in which she used the strategy of, firstly, transcribing the sound of the English word, in Polish, to learn the
pronunciation. Then, with that prop in place, she tried to learn the English spelling:

Betty: Most of them we [Polish] have rules, not like English. It’s very hard because now I have to learn how to spell all the words. And I can’t spell words, because I have to think which letter is you know this way or something like that.

Int: So how do you remember spelling? How do you remember? What do you do?

Betty: Pronunciation, specially pronunciation in my language.

Int: Yeah.

Betty: So I have to learn twice, in English and in my language.

Int: Right.

Betty: It’s stupid idea, it’s not correct. But I can’t. I don’t know. Some people have you know, they look for words they remember but I have to learn different.

Int: Right. So you sort of remember it in your language first, the sounds in your language or whatever.

Betty: Yes. This pronunciation in my language.

Of all the subjects coded as having used the strategy of ‘transcribing sound’ Mena was the one who reiterated her use in several interviews. Like other subjects, she used the strategy of transcribing in the L1 when practising the sounds of English at home:

Int: Do you do that often, practising the pronunciation?

Mena: Yes, but just if I’m sure that that pronunciation is good, but if I’m not sure, I don’t do that.

Int: How do you know whether you are sure?

Mena: Because the teacher teach me English, if I heard good, I just translate the sound.

Int: Oh right. How do you do that? How do you translate the sound? Do you make little notes or ...

Mena: Yeah, yeah I put little notes in my language. So, when I’m at home, just practise that.

Int: And you just write the sound as a sound in your language.

Mena: Yeah, just like translate the sounds.

She used the strategy during a dictation exercise in class, when she did not know a word:

Int: What about you Mena what do you do?

Mena: I’m trying to hear properly sound but if I’m not sure about some word I just translate sound on my language and put it on the line there.

and gave a specific example of what she had done that day during a dictation exercise when she had not known, or understood, the word ‘disturbance’:
Mena: ... And this one, 'disturbance', something like that. I didn’t know. I just put sound, the sound in my language.

Seven weeks later, Mena again indicated her use of the strategy of transcribing the sound of an English word, saying that it was particularly helpful to her when trying to learn new vocabulary:

Int: What about saying things aloud, is that helpful? Somebody the other day was saying they didn’t write so much, but they said it.
Mena: Yeah, mm.
Int: Is that helpful for you?
Mena: Yes, it’s very helpful. And I always translate, pronunciation, always translate in my language. So it’s easier.

For learners of European L1 backgrounds it seemed that the strategy of ‘transcribe sound’ was useful in more than one language learning situation. In all cases, they indicated that they wrote the sound “in my language” and used this as a bridge in their learning of English.

(b) Asian L1 background learners

Three learners, of Chinese L1 background, indicated use of the strategy of transcribing the sound of an English word. However, not all reported doing so in their ‘own language’. Some data emerged which indicated that these Chinese learners used a language other than their character-based L1 to transcribe.

Of the three Chinese subjects, Hui was the only one who said that she used Chinese to ‘transcribe sound’ and demonstrated by drawing a character on her hand:

Hui: Yeah, sometimes the hard word, the English one, so you write down the Chinese one [writes character on palm of hand] to help you remember a bit.
Int: Right.
Hui: Simple like the same sound, but a little bit different.

It seems possible, though, that Hui could also have used Malay to ‘transcribe sound’ for, as recounted earlier, she used that language to help her with pronunciation. However, no data were gathered from her to clarify this point.
Wei (Cantonese) reported employing the strategy when confronted with an unknown word in a dictation exercise, but did not actually specify that she transcribed a sound in Chinese:

Int: What do you do if you’re not sure what the word is? …
Int: Do you ever leave a space? …
Int: What about you Wei?
Wei: Yeah, I write down the sound, similar sound and then I leave a space beside.

The third subject from an Asian L1 background to report using the strategy was LL who, unlike Sandra, Betty, Peter, Mena, Wei and Hui (all from DEET1), was from DEET5, the class of lowest proficiency in this study. That both high and low proficiency learners reported employing it illustrates the universality of this particular strategy. LL’s first language was Mandarin but as well, he had a knowledge of three other languages: Teochew, Khmer and Cantonese. Interestingly, LL reported that he transcribed an English sound into Khmer, an alphabet-based language, and only sometimes into Mandarin, his first language:

LL: English very difficult for me.
Int: Yeah, yeah. So what do you do if you have to learn some new words. All right? If your teacher gives you some new words, how do you learn them? What do you do, what do you do to remember?
LL: I to learn English sounds and listen very difficult for me, but I write the sound Cambodia, sometimes I write the Mandarin sound. I in the home use dictionary English-Chinese or English-Cambodia. Help to learn English.

Learners from an Asian language do use the strategy of ‘transcribe sound’ However, it seems quite possible that those with a character-based L1 background do not always transcribe the sound into that L1. Although there is no strong evidence either way, it seems possible that such learners find it easier to use an alphabetised language for the purpose of transcribing. Further investigation is necessary to elucidate these findings.
Summary

The responses of learners in this study, in interview, to Q19 *I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English*, suggest that the SILL statement as it exists is limited. Firstly, in the case of Asian, and particularly Chinese learners, few reports were generated of ‘similarities’ with English. Secondly, Q19 confines learners to looking for similarities at the *word* level. However, learners indicated here, in interview, that while they did look for such similarities between the L1 and English they also looked for similarities and differences in other aspects of their English learning, specifically grammar, spelling and sound-word system. Thirdly, the SILL statement limits learners to making comparisons between their L1 and English whereas some learners reported that they went beyond their L1 and compared other languages with English. Thus, the SILL statement, *I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English*, may not elicit the range of comparisons possible.

As there is no means of knowing otherwise, it must be presumed that the ratings of the learners who responded to the SILL in *Stage 2* of this study did so to the SILL statements, as posed. Yet, from the qualitative data presented here it seems that the statement as it exists, *I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English*, is restrictive and does not tap the situations of use of the strategy. A statement, such as *I look for similarities between language(s) I know and English* or *I compare language(s) I know with English* could serve to better encompass the range of possibilities which the subjects reported employing.
Q41 I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English

The responses of subjects to Q41 I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English are included here in the L1 section as, initially, a relationship between that variable and responses became obvious when the item was analysed, using NUD*IST. However, on closer examination of the data, it became clear that the relationship between the use, or otherwise, of Q41 was culturally, rather than L1 based.

Five subjects commented on their use of this strategy, as is shown on Table 7.12. Of those, four indicated that they did not use the strategy while one, Bai, expressed both use and non-use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Q41</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>•/x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = use of the strategy  
X = non use of the strategy

Two of the subjects, Betty and Mena, were from a European L1 background. Each indicated straightforwardly that she never used the strategy of rewarding herself when she did well in English.

The other subjects who commented on this strategy were all of Chinese L1 background. Bai reported that he had sometimes used this strategy but suggested that self-reward was perhaps inappropriate in a Chinese culture; it was for others to reward him:

Bai: Yes. I know this word, the meaning but in China just not you give yourself a reward.
Int: Ah, well this is what I’m trying to find out.
Bai: The parents give or your school,
Int: Uh huh, but not to yourself.
Bai: Not to myself. Yeah, sometimes I give myself this word. ...
In any case, Bai stated that as he was not able to meet his own goals for learning English, he didn’t feel that his achievements in English warranted a reward:

Int: ... Do you do that sometimes?
Bai: Sometimes yes, because ah, I never feel that I worked enough hard because I plan all quicker than I improve, so I don’t think, I didn't think I do well in English, ...

Wei also expressed similar sentiments, saying that she and Chinese people never felt enough satisfaction with their efforts to deserve a reward:

Int: What about when you’ve been working hard at English, do you ever say to yourself ’Oh I think I’ve done a good job there. I deserve something good, I deserve
Wei: No.
Int: to go out to the cinema, or something”?
Wei: I always feel not enough (laughs).
Int: Not enough. How much would you have to do before you thought you’d deserved it, something good?
Wei: Mm. I’ve never thought of that (laughs). No.
Int: Do Chinese people think of that? Giving themselves something good or is that just you?
Wei: After your hard work?
Int: Yes.
Wei: Mm. No, no.
Int: Never?
Wei: Seldom.
Int: Why is that do you think?
Wei: I think they always want more, never feel you know satisfaction (laughs).

Hui reported that, while some Chinese might do so, she did not express self-congratulatory feelings but rather kept them to herself.

Int: Do you tell yourself sometimes when you’ve done a good job, or when you’ve worked hard? ...
Hui: Not really. (laughs)
Int: Do you say to yourself ’I've done a good job there, I've done some hard work’.
Hui: Never.
Int: Never that? No? Do you think that...is that a Chinese thing? Do Chinese people not tell themselves that they’ve done a good job, or
Hui: Yes, some people do.
Int: But you don’t.
Hui: Yeah. But sometimes I feel very happy, yeah, inside is very happy but not say out, it’s a good job.
From the comments made by the three Chinese subjects above, it seems that the of Q41 I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English may not be appropriate to learners of Chinese cultural background. For those learners the responsibility for reward lay not with the individual but with others, if indeed at all.

These findings therefore, suggest that the selection of items for an instrument, such as the SILL, should be made with sensitive consideration of culturally appropriate practices and call for further qualitative research with larger numbers of Chinese learners, as well as learners from other cultural groups, to inform on such items.
Length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia (PreEng)

When examined following NUD*IST coding and matrix search, the independent variable *Length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia (PreEng)* seemed to have shown some effect on the use of Q32 *I pay attention when someone is speaking English*.

Q32 I pay attention when someone is speaking English

All reports of Q32 *I pay attention when someone is speaking English* were made by subjects who had not learnt English prior to their arrival in Australia (see Table 7.13). Other subjects had previously learnt English for periods of up to ten years yet, interestingly, none of those subjects commented on Q32.

### Table 7.13
Reported use of Q32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>preEng*</th>
<th>Q32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>7-12 mth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>7-12 mth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>7-12 mth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>&gt;2-3 yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kit</td>
<td>&gt;5-6 yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge</td>
<td>&gt;5-6 yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>&gt;6 yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>&gt;6 yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi</td>
<td>&gt;6 yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>&gt;6 yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* preEng - length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia

• reported use of strategy

Perhaps such responses reflected the stage of the learners’ listening skills; careful listening might have become a less conscious strategy for those with
some prior learning whereas for those, such as Peter and Mena, whose total exposure to English was less than two years, conscious use of the strategy of ‘paying attention when someone is speaking English’ was necessary:

Peter: I should listen carefully at every, every person.  
Int: Uh huh. When someone is speaking do you watch and listen carefully, or do you just...?  
Peter: Yes, very important. 

Mena: ... every day I try to listen what people say

For those learning English as a Foreign Language i.e. in a non-English speaking society, the need to ‘pay attention when someone is speaking English’ may not be as crucial as it is for ESL learners living in the TL community. For EFL learners the need to ‘pay attention’ would only be necessary within the classroom where, in Betty’s words, the teachers “speak very nice, slowly”. However, for ESL learners such as those in this study, the need to ‘pay attention’ went beyond the ‘easy listening’ of the classroom to native speakers who did not necessarily take subjects’ lack of proficiency into account:

Betty: Because sometimes when someone is speaking, like a good speaker, like here in the school, a teacher. All teachers they speak very nice, slowly. Everything is clear, I catch everything. But outside sometimes I can't because people they don't, when someone see me they don't think 'Oh, you're a migrant, so I can, I have to speak different'. They speak how they do all the time. So I have to be very careful, sometimes ask to repeat again.

Moreover, the need to ‘pay attention when someone is speaking English’ was constant and vital; without effective listening, they were not able to function successfully in the wider community:

Mena: Yes. I pay attention when someone is speaking English. Yeah, I listening whatever, in my shopping, bars, every day.
Summary

From the little evidence gathered, it seems possible that Q32 is a strategy particularly relevant to those in the first two years of exposure to English. Beyond that time, and with an increasing level of proficiency, it is possible that ‘paying attention when someone is speaking English’ becomes a less conscious, and so less reported, strategy. More research with a greater number of learners in both ESL and EFL situations could inform on the generalisability of these findings.
Length of time spent attending English class in Australia (Eoz)

Matrix searches of the data revealed a pattern of greater use of META strategies by those who had been attending English classes in Australia for a period longer than twelve months. Those subjects indicated using a greater number and variety of META strategies as Table 7.14 shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Eoz‡ (months)</th>
<th>Q30</th>
<th>Q31</th>
<th>Q32</th>
<th>Q33</th>
<th>Q34</th>
<th>Q35</th>
<th>Q36</th>
<th>Q37</th>
<th>Q38</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>&lt;6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kit</td>
<td>6-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>6-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serge</td>
<td>6-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>&gt;12-18</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>&gt;18-24</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‡ Eoz - length of time spent attending English class in Australia

Such a pattern of use suggests that use of META strategies and attendance at an English class for an extended period of time are positively correlated.

It is quite likely that the students in the AMES centre where this study was conducted were encouraged by classroom teachers to use META strategies and thus to “coordinate their own learning process” (Oxford, 1990:136). Yet, from the evidence gathered here and analysed using NUD*IST, it seems that a period of approximately twelve months was necessary for learners to engage
the use of META strategies or, to be sufficiently aware of that use to report on it.

Again, further research in other English learning students could inform on the generalisability of these speculative findings.

**Time spent living in Australia (Toz)**

From the coding and analysis of data using NUD*IST, it seemed that the independent variable *Time spent living in Australia (Toz)* had an effect on Q50 *I try to learn about the culture of English speakers*.

**Q50 I try to learn about the culture of English speakers**

It seems likely that the inclusion of Q50 *I try to learn about the culture of English speakers* as a SILL item is an attempt to gauge the level of “integrativeness and attitude toward the learning situation” (Gardner 1985:158). However, the findings made in Stage 4 of this study indicate that, in an immigrant situation at least, responses to the SILL cannot be regarded straightforwardly as indicators of ‘integrativeness’ and might need to be considered in conjunction with other variables, such as the length of time spent living in the TL community.

Seven subjects made comments which were coded as Q50 *I try to learn about the culture of English speakers*. Of these, four had lived in Australia for more than five years (see Table 7.15), which suggests that the strategy of trying to learn about the culture of the English speakers may be more pertinent to immigrant learners when they have been settled longer in the TL community.
Table 7.15
Responses coded as use of Q50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Toz† (years)</th>
<th>Q50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>&gt;1-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>&gt;2-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>&gt;5-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>&gt;10-15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>&gt;10-15</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>&gt;15</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Toz - time spent living in Australia
• reported use of strategy

Maria, for example, wanted to understand everything about the Australian society:

Maria: Society. Yes. Because I want to understand all, all thing about Australia.

Other subjects however, were more specific. Kit felt that an understanding of English literature, particularly Shakespeare, was important:

Kit: ... and I would like to read a lot of books like Shakespeare.

while Rita and Thi wanted to learn about Australian history:

Rita: Books about Australian history, Australia.
I want to learn more about grammar, or some vocabulary or the story about Australia, it's important we don't know before.

Why is that important?

Um, the Australian history we didn't know before.

Yeah. Why is it important? Why does that matter?

Because we live here, we have to knew about them. We have to learn about the history.

Leo viewed an understanding of sport, namely cricket, as being essential to an understanding of the Australian community:

I like cricket, cricket and

Do they play cricket in Taiwan?

No, just watch because I think my friend told me they cricket plays is very much in Australia should be understand that.

It could be speculated that recent immigrants to the English-speaking society did not comment on the use of this strategy because factors, other than the culture of the TL community, were more immediately pressing. As will be suggested later (see Chapter Nine), factors such as housing, employment and children’s education can take much of the available time and energy of new immigrants. Only when those initial needs have been satisfied can learners begin to concentrate wholeheartedly on using the strategy I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

Summary

More qualitative research is called for on item Q50 I try to learn about the culture of English speakers. The findings of this study suggest that, for immigrant ESL learners at least, the strategy may be of most relevance to those who have been settled in the TL society for some time; encouraging those newly-arrived to use the strategy may be wasted.
7.4. **Summary of Chapter**

This chapter has discussed the qualitative findings of those strategies referred to as SILL strategies. It outlined the use made of NUD*IST in the analysis of the findings. Then, it discussed the use of particular strategies for which a majority of subjects reported use, those for which non-use was mainly reported and lastly, those for which reported use seemed related to an independent variable, such as age, L1 background, length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia, attending English classes or living in Australia.

The analysis of the qualitative data, using NUD*IST, enabled detailed findings to be reported here of subjects’ strategy use. Such detail contrasts strongly with the lack of conclusive findings from the quantitative data, reported in Chapter Five, and emphasises the individuality of the learners in their use of SILL strategies and the value of gathering and analysing qualitative data.

The next chapter will describe the reported use of non-SILL strategies which emerged from the qualitative data.
Chapter Eight:

Description and Analysis of Qualitative Data: nonSILL Strategies

Chapter Eight examines the use made of strategies emerging from the qualitative data but additional to those of the SILL. From the large number of such ‘non-SILL’ strategies reported used, seven are selected for discussion here: those reported by a number of subjects, as well as those which inform on strategy use or raise important issues for further research.

As described in Chapter Three, the questionnaire which was administered to the subjects in Stage 2 of this study was the fifty item SILL (Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL), for Speakers of Other Languages Learning English) (Oxford, 1990) (see Appendix 2). However, during interviews in Stage 4, subjects revealed the use of many language learning strategies additional to the fifty of the SILL. These additional strategies were categorised as ‘nonSILL’ and were coded, using NUD*IST, as shown in Chapter Six. Firstly, each strategy was placed on the ‘nonSILL’ branch of the hierarchical ‘tree’ structure. Then, within that branch, the strategies were identified as belonging to one of the six subscales (MEM, COG, COMP, META, AFF or SOC). For example, the MEM strategy of ‘keep in mind’ was coded as 2 7 1 1 where

\[
\begin{align*}
2 & = \text{STRATEGIES} \\
7 & = \text{nonSILL strategy} \\
1 & = \text{MEM strategy} \\
1 & = \text{keep in mind.}
\end{align*}
\]

Approximately thirty nonSILL strategies were identified and coded in this way and are shown as the nonSILL branch of the hierarchy, in Figure 8.1. (Bracketed numbers indicate the number of subjects who reported use of the strategy e.g. (2) indicates reported use by two subjects.)

Using the matrix function of NUD*IST, a table was then created to show the nonSILL strategies which were disclosed by particular subjects (Table 8.1).
Approximately seven of the thirty strategy items categorised here as nonSILL are included on the longer, eighty item Version 5.1 of the SILL, for English Speakers Learning a New Language (Oxford, 1990). Those items are shown on Table 8.2 together with the number of subjects (column 3) who reported using the particular strategy in this study.
### Table 8.1
**nonSILL strategies reported by subjects**

| Names  | Sex | AGE | LI | preEng* | Toz† | Eoz‡ | Interviews | 1 keep in mind | 2 repetition— | 3 draw picture | 1 use dictionary— | 2 new vocab | 1 underline | 2 repetition | 3 repetitive | 4 practice | 5 pronunciability | 1 listening | 2 watch model |
|--------|-----|-----|----|---------|------|------|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| Anna   | F   | 35  | Spanish | 0 | 95 | 12 | 6 | *            | *             |              |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Bai    | M   | 25  | Mandarin | 96 | 08 | 4 | 1 | *            | *             |             |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Betty  | F   | 26  | Polish  | 0 | 26 | 24 | 3 | *            | *             |             |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| CS     | M   | 35  | Khmer   | 9 | 15 | 10 | 1 | *            |              |              |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Hui    | F   | 48  | Hokkien | 0 | 127 | 16 | 5 | *            | *             |             |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Janetta| F   | 45  | Hungarian | 0 | 83 | 16 | 4 |              |               |              |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Kit    | F   | 44  | Hungarian | 72 | 06 | 6 | 1 | *            | *             | *           |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Leo    | M   | 54  | Mandarin | 36 | 19 | 17 | 3 |              |               | *           |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| LL     | M   | 48  | Mandarin | 0 | 15 | 10 | 1 |              | *             | *           |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Maria  | F   | 36  | Spanish  | 12 | 23 | 24 | 2 |              |               |              | *           |             |             |              |              |            |
| Mena   | F   | 24  | Serbian  | 0 | 23 | 20 | 4 |              | *             | *           | *             |             | *           |              |              |            |
| Nan    | F   | 31  | Bengali  | 96 | 71 | 1 | 4 |              | *             |              |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Peter  | M   | 43  | Croatian | 0 | 22 | 20 | 5 |              | *             |              |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Rita   | F   | 48  | Spanish  | 0 | 10 | 18 | 3 |              | *             |              |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Sam    | M   | 35  | Cantonese | 12 | 18 | 17 | 1 |              | *             | *           |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Sandra | F   | 41  | Spanish  | 0 | 225 | 16 | 4 |              | *             |              |               |             |             |              |              |            |
| Serge  | M   | 26  | Serbian  | 72 | 14 | 8 | 1 |              |               |              |               |             |             |              |              | *           |
| Thi    | F   | 34  | Vietnamese | 120 | 79 | 12 | 2 |              |               |              |               | *           |             |              |              |            |
| Wei    | F   | 29  | Cantonese | 108 | 69 | 24 | 5 |              |               |              |               | *           | *           |              |              | *           |

* preEng* - length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia
† Toz† - time spent living in Australia
‡ Eoz‡ - length of time spent attending English classes in Australia

* - reported use
X - reported non-use
Table 8.1 (cont.)
nonSILL strategies reported by subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>COMPENSATION (cont)</th>
<th>METACOGNITIVE</th>
<th>AFFECTIVE</th>
<th>SOCIAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 SPEAKING</td>
<td>3 READING</td>
<td>4 WRITING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>keep quiet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>word provid.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>repeat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>refine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>think</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

258
Table 8.2  
nonSILL items which correspond with items on Version 5.1 of the SILL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nonSILL coding</th>
<th>strategy</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Item on Version 5.1 of SILL</th>
<th>Version 5.1 statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 7 1 3</td>
<td>draw picture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>I remember the word by making a clear mental image of it or by drawing a picture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 7 2 1</td>
<td>use dictionary</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Item 31</td>
<td>I use reference materials such as glossaries or dictionaries to help me use the new language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 7 3 1 1</td>
<td>pronunciation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Item 41</td>
<td>When I do not understand all the words I read or hear, I guess the general meaning by using any clue I can find, for example, clues from the context or situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/watch mouth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 7 3 2 2</td>
<td>word provided by</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Item 45</td>
<td>I ask the other person to tell me the right word if I cannot think of it in a conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>another</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 7 3 2 5</td>
<td>use L1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Item 44</td>
<td>If I am speaking and cannot think of the right expression, I use gestures or switch back to my own language momentarily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 7 3 3 1</td>
<td>read headline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Item 41</td>
<td>When I do not understand all the words I read or hear, I guess the general meaning by using any clue I can find, for example, clues from the context or situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>look at picture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In many cases, only one or two subjects reported using the strategies categorised as nonSILL (see Figure 8.1). That such a number of strategies was reported by only a small number of subjects serves to emphasise the individuality of learners and as such, deserves closer examination. However, because of the limits of space, the nonSILL strategies selected here for closer scrutiny are:

- those strategies which were reported by a number of subjects,
- those strategies which serve to inform on strategy use or raise important issues for further research.

The nonSILL strategies to be examined closely in this chapter, therefore, are

- MEMORY: keep in mind; draw a picture
- COGNITIVE: use a dictionary; repetitive listening
- COMPENSATION: remain silent
- METACOGNITIVE / AFFECTIVE: work alone or with others / avoid anxiety
- SOCIAL: help from children
8.1. MEMORY

8.1.1. Keep in mind

The responses of two subjects were coded as 2711 keep in mind. The use of this strategy by one of those subjects is considered of particular interest and will be reported here.

Wei (aged 28, Cantonese) described committing something to memory without aids such as creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well or employing action (Oxford 1990). Thus, among the subjects in this study, Wei was unique in the way in which she used the nonSILL strategy labelled ‘Keep in mind’.

After practising writing new vocabulary she made no concerted effort to commit that to memory by continual review, but merely looked at it occasionally and tried to keep it in her mind:

Wei: Every time I read and write I got new words I write it down on a piece of paper.
Int: Right.
Wei: So I got all the records I can looking back later.
Int: Do you keep them in any sort of order, or it’s just a list?
Wei: Just a list.
Int: So how do you find a word that you want to find?
Wei: Oh, I’m not try to find a word. I just look at the list and maybe twice a week try to keep it in my mind.

In a later interview, Wei again described her process of keeping new language in mind:

Wei: Then I put it away. After a few days I look at my list again and try to,
Int: Why do you do that? Why do you put it away?
Wei: Oh, for you know let it sit for a while see you can still remember it or not, and then I look it up again and you know recall my memory.

On another occasion, Wei explained that she used a similar process with the passages given to class members to prepare for dictation; instead of consciously trying to commit the passage to memory, using the memory strategies of the SILL, she read it once then put it away only to look at it again after she had completed the dictation, in class, a week later:
Wei: We normally have time to practise on the computer. I sometimes just you know after she gave me the dictation I just look at it, just once and then I just put it away and next week I have the dictation first. Then I look back at the paragraph she gave me and found out which one I didn't know.

Int: Hang on, I'm not quite sure about that. I didn't understand what you mean.

Wei: I didn't practise when she gave me the paragraph. I just put it away. I understand. I read it once and I understand the meaning, then I put it away. Then next week she gave us the dictation. I just do the dictation and then look back the paragraph and find out which one I didn't know.

Int: Oh right. So you don't really sit down and try and learn it.

Wei: No.

It could be argued that Wei did not report the use of aids to memory (Oxford 1990) because she was unable to reflect on, or express, her strategy use. However, other data gathered from Wei, a former teacher in China, suggested that not to be the case; she was most able to reflect on her learning and was quite fluent and articulate in expressing her thoughts in English. Here, it can be seen that in three separate interviews she maintained a consistent description of her memory strategy. Moreover, during observations of her in class it was noted that she was able to quickly recall earlier learning when others were not. Her teacher confirmed these observations and Wei’s accounts:

T: [Wei] seems to be very retentive. When we do perhaps a new word and I mention something in passing that we’ve read or looked at, she will often be able to recall it and say what it means at a later time. … so she’s accruing extra words and getting more structures and things like that. It just all seems to go in her head and stay there somehow, with Wei. She must have a fixative thing in her brain that makes it stick there. Whereas some of the others I could ask them what we’d done five minutes ago and they’d have forgotten. … Somehow she pulls it in and pokes it into an appropriate place in her head where she can pull it out and use it again.

In Stage 2, Wei’s mean response score of 3.2 on the five-point MEM subscale of the SILL had ranked her only eighth of the nineteen subjects in her class, DEET1, and suggests that her use of MEM strategies was ‘medium’ (Oxford, 1990). Had only that quantitative data been gathered, it would likely have been concluded that Wei’s use of memory strategies was not overly effective.

The evidence presented above however, clearly demonstrates otherwise and so raises the possibility that she did not readily identify with the particular MEM strategy statements included on the SILL (see Items 1 to 9 in Appendix 2): the use of aids such as creating mental linkages; applying images and sounds; reviewing well or employing action (Oxford 1990). Or, the items
themselves might have focussed on too narrow a range of aspects pertinent to Wei’s stage of language learning; seven of the nine MEM statements related to memorising lexical items.

Support for this argument is found in the findings of other studies; Bedell and Oxford (1996) cite several which reported that ‘medium’ use was made of MEM strategies or, that they were the lowest ranked of all SILL subscales. It will be recalled that in Chapter Five, MEM strategies were described as the lowest rated subscale after the administration of the SILL in Stage 2 of this study. As well, Chapter Seven described subjects’ reports of ‘non-use’ of three of the MEM strategies (Q5, Q6 and Q7). Thus, it seems possible that lower rankings given to MEM strategies might be explained by the irrelevance of particular items to the language learning of the subjects and perhaps Chinese, in particular (Bremner, 1999).

The analysis of the data gathered from Wei serves to sound a note of caution. The SILL may be an indicator of learners’ strategy use, but only as far as it goes; broad descriptive or prescriptive generalisations on the strategy use of learners cannot be drawn from its administration. Therefore, more research is called for, including the gathering of qualitative data to inform on the diversity and individuality of the memory strategies of language learners, “to establish whether the SILL was an appropriate instrument for investigating their strategy use in this area” (Bremner, 1999: 502).
8.1.2. Drawing a picture

The strategy of drawing a picture which one subject, Kit, used was somewhat similar to Item 6 on the eighty item version of the SILL (Version 5.1): *I remember the word by making a clear mental image of it or by drawing a picture.*

However, Kit’s drawing was not necessarily of ‘the word’ itself but was a drawing, or doodle, which she created, sometimes from the letters of a word. Thus, it seemed that Kit was generating relevant ‘cues’ in the input (VanPatten, 1996) to enhance her attention to form-meaning links. When viewed later, the drawing became a visual mnemonic which served to trigger Kit’s recall of the whole learning situation in which she had been placed at the time. Choice of this strategy was not recent for Kit, now 41 years of age; she had used it successfully many years earlier when studying medicine at university in Hungary. That she now brought the use of the strategy to her current learning situation serves to illustrate the strong, lasting influence which earlier practices may have on a learner.

Kit: And I can draw with a pencil and sometimes I listening to somebody very carefully I I draw during the listening because for me much, much better. At university I remember that I all my in my books nearly every pages there are, there were a drawing a flower and so on but for me it’s much easier to listen.

Int: So when you’re listening are you drawing the flower? You’re not drawing what you’re listening about?

Kit: Yes. Sometimes I write again, again the new word but when I during my listening sometimes from the word like repercussion, r is a flower and n is a…. and I write again and from the word I I I create that drawing. I can show my book, it’s a terrible notebook, but it’s very useful for me…. And when I repeat the words at home I thought, I see the drawing and I laugh and I remember better the whole story and because don’t worry a drawing, for me a special listening.

Had the gathering of data in this study relied solely on quantitative data from the responses to the SILL, personal insights such as those of Kit would never have been gained. It is therefore incumbent on researchers to gather qualitative data so that the body of knowledge of language learners and the processes of their learning can be enriched and extended.
8.2. COGNITIVE

8.2.1. Using a dictionary

Although the strategy of ‘using a dictionary’ is included in the eighty item (Version 5.1) of the SILL, it is not included in the fifty item version (Version 7.0) used in this study. Therefore, any report here of that strategy was classed as a nonSILL strategy. Of all the non-SILL strategies thus identified, ‘using a dictionary’ was the most widely reported; fourteen of the nineteen participants in Stage 4 of this project mentioned using a dictionary (see Table 8.1). The other five did not mention using a dictionary, nor were they questioned on their use of one.

The use of the strategy will be described under two broad headings:

- Overview of dictionary use, and
- Reasons for using a dictionary.

Overview of dictionary use

Limited use

Although ‘using a dictionary’ was widely reported, three of the fourteen subjects limited their use trying instead to derive meaning from context:

Betty: But I don't, specially I don't use a dictionary. I try to read without dictionary. So when I read a sentence, a few sentence, if I can understand so I don't use a dictionary to find some words.

Bai: ...I just read the professional articles. I needn't understand every word, so I rarely look it up in the dictionary.

But another material you just read it. It's unfamiliar English word and I know English word you didn't look for the meaning, check for the dictionary, just skip it. From the whole sentence the meaning and the whole article the meaning.

or listening to explanations from the teacher or others:
Int: How often do you use your dictionary Thi?
Thi: When a difficult word I use them, but usually I learn from other people when I go out, listen to them, and I remember in my mind. Sometimes I watching TV and I listen the pronunciation and I couldn’t, couldn’t see the words but image about the words what they pronounce and check my dictionary I got them.

Int: Yeah, what about in class?
Thi: In class, sometimes difficult word I use the dictionary but sometimes I listen to the teacher explain to me and I understood so I didn’t have to use my dictionary but not any time, I think just sometime.

Int: What about asking other people?
Thi: I ask some friend or
Int: Would you ask them before you use your dictionary?
Thi: Yes, I ask before I use my dictionary but if they can’t answer, I use my dictionary.

**Level of proficiency**

Subjects from all levels of proficiency reported using a dictionary. Mena, one of the most proficient students in DEET1 class reported referring to a dictionary at home:

Mena: But at home if you’re reading, if you don’t know some word, you can use a dictionary.

as did CS (Khmer), from DEET5 class and so one of the subjects of lowest proficiency:

CS: Sometimes remember, sometimes not remember. If not remember, if the new word I don’t understand I take my pen and the paper, write and check the dictionary.

Betty though, realised that as her level of proficiency increased she needed to use a dictionary less frequently:

Betty: I can more, myself I can more do, I get more English and do better. This is easier now…

**Types of dictionary used**

As outlined in Chapter Three, most of the subjects in Stage 4 of this project were members of DEET1 class. During the times that the class was observed, the teacher frequently encouraged her students to “use your dictionary”
which the subjects frequently did, either an English learner’s dictionary, an English-L1 dictionary, or both.

**English-L1**

Rita used an English-Spanish dictionary when completing a vocabulary exercise in which she had to name the sporting activities shown on small pictures:

Int: Are there any you didn’t know?
Rita: One like this one.
Int: So how did you find out that one?
Rita: looked in my dictionary in my language.

Hui (Hokkien) used an English-Chinese dictionary when she did not understand the meaning of an English word but also had an English dictionary at her disposal:

Int: Now the dictionary that you use in class, is that an English dictionary or is that an English-Chinese dictionary?
Hui: Yes, sometimes an English dictionary, sometimes in Chinese. If I can’t understand the word, the meaning, I found out the Chinese one.
Int: So you’ve got two dictionaries in class?
Hui: Yes.

Thi used an English-Vietnamese dictionary to clarify something said by the teacher. Not recognising the English word itself but understanding the meaning, she looked up the Vietnamese word in her L1 dictionary and so found the translation of the word in English:

Thi: I understood because the way she saying and the first word she pronunciation and um, I check at least the meaning in my language and I know what this story about, so the meaning is fit the story, yeah.
Int: Right. So you go back into Vietnamese sometimes.
Thi: Yeah, this fit the story.

**English**

Anna though, realised that using an English-L1 dictionary had its shortcomings and found it quicker to use an English dictionary:
Anna: ... and if I can't find I just learn the Spanish first what it means, and then I ...
Int: So is that what you did today? You did the Spanish meaning and then looked?
Anna: Normally I find in English because is easier, more quick and another one just in the English because I know the meaning.

*Electronic English-L1*

Sam (Cantonese) was the only subject in the group to have an electronic dictionary which enabled him to check the meanings of English words and also to store new English words he had learnt:

Sam: I use my language dictionary to store the new English words, to my dictionary, in my language together. ... I store that.
Int: Store?
Sam: Store, yes,
Int: Where do you store it?
Sam: To the dictionary because my dictionary is a computer.

*Non-use of English-L1 dictionary*

Unlike all the other subjects observed, Nan (Bengali), did not own an English-L1 dictionary. Although that caused her some difficulty, she could, nevertheless, see some advantage in the situation:

Nan: No. I don't have dictionary in Bengali. ... I have English.
Int: But you haven't got an English-Bengali. Does that make it difficult? What's the problem if you don't have an English-Bengali dictionary? Or are there some good things if you don't have an English-Bengali dictionary?
Nan: Mm, one way is good. You have to learn the English. You have to learn English. And one sometimes when you stuck you don't have to ask anybody, you can check if you have dictionary.

*Reasons for using a dictionary*

Using NUD*IST*, a table was constructed to show those subjects who had reported ‘using a dictionary’. The results are shown in column 3 of Table 8.3. There, it can be seen that the five subjects who made no mention during interviews of making use of a dictionary were all from European L1 backgrounds. Further, and more strikingly, all nine of the Asian L1 background subjects reported ‘using a dictionary’.

Although the numbers in this study were small, an attempt was made to find reasons for such a pattern of use. The qualitative data were closely re-examined; subjects’ reasons for using a dictionary were considered and
further coding was added to the data, creating an additional level on the NUD*IST hierarchy. Four reasons for using a dictionary were coded:

(i) checking pronunciation;
(ii) learning new English vocabulary;
(iii) finding the meaning of a word;
(iv) checking spelling.

Table 8.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>L1 group</th>
<th>USE DICTIONARY</th>
<th>REASON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td>European</td>
<td></td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kit</td>
<td>European</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge</td>
<td>European</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>Asian*</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>Asian*</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>Asian*</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>Asian*</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Asian*</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>Asian*</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Chinese L1 background  ● = instance of use
Then, to gain a visual impression of the distribution of the four types of use across the subjects, a matrix was constructed, using NUD*IST. Those uses are shown in columns 4, 5, 6 and 7 of Table 8.3. It can be seen that using a dictionary for Checking pronunciation (column 4) was indicated by two subjects, one European, (Mena) and one Asian L1 (Thi). Using a dictionary to Learn new vocabulary was reported by three subjects, one European and two Asian L1 background (column 5). Of the ten subjects (column 6) using a dictionary to Find the meaning of a word six were of Asian L1 background, as were six of the eight subjects who reported using a dictionary to Check spelling, (column 7). In short, subjects from an Asian, and particularly Chinese, L1 background made more reports of using a dictionary than did those from a European L1 background. Reasons for such patterns of use will be suggested later in this chapter.

The four reported reasons for using a dictionary, indicated above, will now be discussed.

To check pronunciation

Two subjects reported using their dictionary to check pronunciation and both expressed reservations in doing so. Thi (Vietnamese) stated that although she was able to find the pronunciation in her dictionary, she believed that it could not always be relied upon to be correct:

Int: How do you find that, how do you find out what the pronunciation is?
Thi: Because in my dictionary they got national pronunciation.
Int: Is that helpful?
Thi: Yes, but sometimes they make mistake.
Int: Yeah.
Thi: Sometimes, because I don't know, the dictionary.
Int: Can you think of any time when there has been a mistake? Can you remember anything?
Thi: Just one or two times in English. The meaning is right, just the pronunciation.

Mena (Serbian) also indicated that, as a result of consulting a dictionary to help with pronunciation, she had not been understood and also found difficulty in correcting her pronunciation:
Mena: But just if I'm sure of the pronunciation I do that, but not if I'm not because there was one word and I didn't know how to pronounce that and I find it in a, I found it in my dictionary and I tried to pronounce the way, I think it's OK, I thought actually it's OK, but it wasn't correct. So it was very hard for me to correct that.

Int: Right.

Mena: Because every time I used it I just say incorrect, so people didn't know what I said (laugh). So I never learn new words from dictionary any more.

That only two subjects reported and expressed reservation in using a dictionary to check pronunciation is probably not surprising. It is unlikely, at their level of proficiency (not more than ASLPR 2 minimum social proficiency), that the learners in this study would have possessed the knowledge and understanding of phonetic transcription necessary for effective use of the strategy. Perhaps only with more advanced proficiency and specific teaching of the skills would learners be able to make effective use of a dictionary in this way.

**To learn new vocabulary**

Three subjects reported using a dictionary to learn new vocabulary.

Betty (Polish) was the only European L1 subject to have reported using a dictionary for this purpose. She used a dictionary when learning new vocabulary heard on TV:

Int: When you're watching the TV and you hear the words you want to learn, do you write them down first or do you just look them up in the dictionary?

Betty: In the dictionary..... I sit with the dictionary and see the title, translate the title and I try to catch some words from the text which they speak. So I try to find. You know it's very difficult because I don't know how to spell. But sometimes it's OK.

Hui (Hokkien) used a dictionary as a memory aid to recall new vocabulary previously processed, but now forgotten:

Int: But what if you can't remember the word?
Hui: Oh can't remember. ...The only thing is find the dictionary.

while Sam (Cantonese) used an electronic dictionary to store new English words he had learnt:
Sam: I use my language dictionary to store the new English words, to my dictionary, in my language together.
Int: So you put English and Chinese do you, together? What do you do with that?
Sam: Because this easy to remember dictionary.
Int: When you've got the meaning? So do you write it many times or do you just look at it many times, or do you say it many times? What do you do?
Sam: I store that.
Int: Store?
Sam: Store, yes,
Int: Where do you store it?
Sam: To the dictionary because my dictionary is a computer.

To check meaning

Subjects differed in the way in which they used a dictionary to check meaning; some used it as their first resort, others as their last. Peter (Croatian) used the dictionary first to find the meaning of words:

Peter: Oh, I find the meaning of some words in my dictionary or I ask my children...My dictionary is the first thing. I try to find meaning in my dictionary.

When reading, Hui would first try and guess but if she felt the need for confirmation of meaning she turned to the resources of a dictionary. Only when that was not available did she refer to her daughter or husband for help:

Hui: Sometimes I read the book. I guess too. Yeah. So if, if I feel is not right so I find a dictionary.

Int: ...if you have a word that you don't know, what do you do?
Hui: I find the dictionary.
Int: What happens if you don't have the dictionary?
Hui: I ask my daughter or husband.

Int: So how often would you use your dictionary?
Hui: Mm. Yeah at home, I all the times use the dictionary. So if I go out anywhere with my husband or daughter I then I ask them.
To check spelling

As was pointed out above, several subjects reported using a dictionary to confirm, or find the correct spelling of an English word.

Sam: I know the spelling, but I make sure I looked up the dictionary.

Thi: Between, between is only one 'e'. I checked my dictionary, I think maybe not right so I checked my dictionary and that's all.

Int: So what do you do then if you can't spell the word? What do you do?
Hui: I all the time find the dictionary.
Int: Does that help you?
Hui: Yes.

Certain classroom tasks entailed the subjects making greater use of a dictionary to confirm, or correct spelling. During a dictation exercise for example, several subjects were observed using a dictionary and later detailed their use:

Anna: Was 'tow'. I put 'throw' but I knew was wrong so I had to check that one.
Int: How did you check it?
Anna: In the dictionary.

Wei described her process of checking the spelling of the words 'bedroom' and 'completely' which had occurred in the dictation:

Int: Wei, what did you change?
Wei: I changed 'bedroom'. I was separate two words and then I found out it should be together.
Int: How did you find out?
Wei: I was wondering when I write down the first time, so I was trying to look up the dictionary.
Int: So you checked the dictionary. OK. What other changes did you make?
Wei: 'Completely'. I write it without a 'e' so I added that.
Int: How did you know to add the 'e'?
Wei: From the dictionary.
Int: Right.
Wei: Because I know 'complete' has the 'e' so I'm not sure it's without 'e' or not.
Int: OK, so you checked, used the dictionary again.
Wei again, and also Peter described the somewhat similar process they had each followed during the dictation task to check the correct spelling of the word ‘towed’. In doing so, they revealed their understanding of some of the conventions of spelling in English:

Wei: And “tow” was wrong.
Int: So how did you get the right spelling?
Wei: From the dictionary.
Int: But did you look up English spelling or did you look up Chinese spelling and then go to English?
Wei: English spelling.
Int: OK. So you had some idea. What did you look it up under? How did you know where to look?
Wei: The pronunciation.
Int: So what did you look up?
Wei: From the ‘T’.
Int: But you didn’t start at ‘TA’ did you?
Wei: No, tow. You can have ‘o-u’ ‘o-w’ or ‘o-l-l’.
Int: OK, right. So you looked in a few places for ‘to’. ...

Int: What did you have the first time, for towed?
Peter: Told (laughs).
Int: Oh I see, ‘told’. Yeah.
Peter: But towed, T-O-W-E-D.
Int: So how did you find that word? How did you know that it was that word? ‘Cos you’ve got it right there.
Peter: Found it dictionary. I think about pronunciation and what word can be good here.
Int: So you looked it up? How did you know how to spell it? How did you know where to look in the dictionary?
Peter: Spell?
Int: Mm. So you looked up T-O-
Peter: Yes, T-O- and after ‘towed’ maybe, I’m not, I didn’t sure, not ‘L’ here, ‘told’ and I looked ‘U’ and ‘W’ and found this word.

Discussion

Why did more subjects of Asian, and in particular Chinese, L1 background report using a dictionary than did those of European L1 background?

One explanation could be that of chance alone. The number of subjects here is small and the patterns of use of the dictionary might have been purely coincidental. Nevertheless, other explanations are possible. Firstly, it could be argued that Asian languages have a greater ‘language distance’ from English than do some European languages and so there is less opportunity for
learners to ‘look for similarities’ before resorting to the use of a dictionary. As was discussed in Chapter Seven, the use of the strategy Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English showed differential use between Asian and European L1 subjects; learners of a European language background reported looking for, and finding, similarities between their own L1 and English while Asian learners found few if any similarities. Thus, Asian learners, of necessity, might have relied to a greater extent on the use of a dictionary.

Perhaps, another explanation is the educational background and achievement levels of the Asian, and in particular Chinese, learners in this section of the study. As already stated, subject numbers were small, but it is interesting to note that none of the Chinese learners here were of Chinese-Hong Kong origin. Thus, the composition of the group of Chinese learners in this section of the study was not typical of whole group of Chinese learners (n=47), with its large proportion from Hong Kong (n=20). Earlier (Chapter Five), it was shown that the Chinese-Hong Kong learners in this study reported making greater use of META strategies than did other Chinese learners. Thus, if some of the Chinese-Hong Kong learners had been included in this section of the study, different accounts of dictionary use might have been obtained. Chinese learners are not, it has been claimed, interested in taking risks in their learning, tending to believe that one answer only is possible (Chen 1990; Wen and Johnson, 1997). Perhaps that was the case with the particular Chinese subjects included in this section of the study; because of their non-Hong Kong educational background they might have been less metacognitively aware, less confident in drawing on their own language resources, and so were more reliant on the explanation gained by the use of a dictionary. Wen and Johnson (1997) found differences in the use of a dictionary by high and low achievers. Before consulting a dictionary, high achievers assessed its effectiveness (Wen and Johnson, 1997), whereas low achievers tended to use it inflexibly. Of the Chinese learners in this section of the study, only Wei could be considered to be a high achiever; perhaps explaining why the others relied to a greater extent on their dictionary.

Yet another interpretation of the greater dictionary use by Asian, particularly Chinese learners, could be the different orthographies of the L1 and the L2. Wade-Woolley (1999) explained the difference thus:
Because orthographies differ with respect to the basic representational unit, the information and strategies most useful in processing the L1 orthography may be less so in the L2 orthography (1999:448).

One consequence of less effective processing strategies in the L2 may be an increased dependence on a dictionary. Indeed, Grainger (1997), using the eighty-item Version 5.1 of the SILL, to study English L1 learners of Japanese at an Australian university, found that their strategy of greatest use was that of ‘I use reference materials such as dictionaries’. In other words, when learning a language with a different orthography from their L1, the use of the dictionary became a conspicuous learning strategy.

Other studies, such as those by Brown and Haynes (1985) and Koda (1988, 1990) showed that L2 readers from a non-alphabetic orthography, Japanese and Chinese, processed words in English less efficiently than did those from an L1 with an alphabetic orthography, Persian and Spanish. However, after studying the English reading skills of Japanese and Russian learners of English, Wade-Woolley (1999) found “no differences in accuracy necessarily appear as a result of different strategy use, even when the L1 and L2 orthographies vary widely” (1999:466), and so called for further research in this area.

**Summary**

The findings made after the collection of qualitative data and its analysis using the matrix function of NUD*IST, while not generalisable, point to areas for further research which might, in due course, be of particular benefit to Asian and particularly Chinese, learners of English.

The findings suggest that ‘using a dictionary’ is an important strategy in language learning, particularly perhaps for learners of English whose proficiency is not high, or whose L1 uses a different orthography. It is a strategy which could be usefully included in the fifty item Version 7.0 of the SILL (Version for Speakers of Other Language Learning English).
8.2.3. Repetitive listening

Four subjects indicated that the strategy of repetitive listening to audiotapes, TV or radio helped them improve their English listening comprehension.

Audiotapes

Wei explained that she was not able to understand everything when listening to TV, having no-one at home who could help her but, with the script and tape of a story borrowed from the local library, she was able to improve her listening comprehension:

Wei: I just watch TV, but when you can't understand, you don't have anyone else to ask, so you have to read and then sometimes borrow some tape. When you're reading, you're also listening.
Int: Yeah, right. Do you do that, listening to tapes and things? What sort of tapes do you listen to?
Wei: I borrow it from the library.
Int: Oh, of what? Tapes of...
Wei: Stories.
Int: And do you have the story there to follow?
Wei: Yes. I listening first. Then I look at the book and listen again.
Int: Oh that's a good idea.
Wei: That's for listening, disability people. ...

News broadcasts

Leo and Betty watched and listened repetitively to several versions of TV news broadcasts each evening, switching from channel to channel:

Leo: I always I every day I maybe watching two hours. I like begin the news Channel 5, Channel 2. I like SBS.

Betty: ... I watch all the news every day. I start about 5 o'clock and finish at 7 o'clock.
Int: So you go from channel to channel?
Betty: Yeah. So every one the same, so at the end, I understand.
Nan, on the other hand, chose not to use the strategy of repetitive listening to the news on TV, because of her anger towards her husband when he did so:

Int: ... Do you watch the news?
Nan: Not really. Because, sometimes, because my husband always watch the news, like if he is at home he start watch from 10, Channel 10 news, afterward SBS. It's a long news. Like Channel 10 finish he watch Channel 9, then he watch SBS, then he go to ABC. And that's I, so I get very angry and don't watch news.

Advertisements

Betty used the advertisements on radio and TV as a repetitive listening strategy and described her process of gradual comprehension:

Betty: ... They repeat every day, the same things, the news and the advertising and all that stuff, so after a few months I think 'Oh, my God, I can understand'. So I was very happy with the radio. TV is very good too.
Int: The advertisements? Do you watch them?
Betty: Yes. Yes one day I open my 'My God what are they talking about?' After a few times, I know one word, another word. Then I discover, OK, I understand this.

Songs

Mena described the way in which she extended her level of comprehension. Unlike Betty, whose comprehension was gradual and seemingly unconscious, Mena deliberately created for herself an i+1 (Krashen, 1985) listening situation just beyond her comprehension limits, removing the visual support of TV and listening to frequently repeated songs on the radio:

Mena: Like I told you, I'm trying now not to watch TV, just listening and now I'm listening radio programs because I didn't understand and I listening to music now because I can, I don't understand all.
Int: Songs, do you mean?
Mena: Songs, yeah, but now... I can understand maybe half but before I understand just two or three words.

Although the four subjects used repetitive listening as a strategy, the different ways in which they did so serve to emphasise the individuality of these learners: Wei chose to borrow tapes, because she needed immediate feedback on her listening and had no-one at home who could provide this; Nan chose not to listen repeatedly to the news, because of her domestic situation and her
relationship with her husband; Leo, Betty and Mena, having no children needing their attention, were able to spend greater amount of time watching TV and listening to the radio. Thus, the subjects’ choice of strategy use was consequent on their particular situation which was, in turn, specific to the individual.
8.3. COMPENSATION

8.3.1. Remaining silent

Several nonSILL compensation strategies in the skills areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing were reported by learners (see Figure 8.1). Most were reported by only one or two learners.

Six compensation strategies in speaking were named by learners and of these, five were ‘achievement strategies’ (Bygate, 1987) in that they involved the active use of language: using a word provided by another, repeating, rephrasing, using the L1 and explaining the lack of English. However, four learners indicated that at times, when unable to make productive use of English they used an avoidance strategy (Faerch and Kasper, 1983) of remaining silent. The use of that strategy will be detailed here.

By ‘remaining silent’ Anna, Betty and Maria avoided embarrassment when performing in front of others of their own L1 group, or fellow students:

Anna: And tried to do my best but at that time was, you know, I was scared to talk in front of somebody speak my language and know English more than me, so it really just made me don't speak when somebody was over there.

Betty: No-one thinks it's very scary, and I don't know why, but if someone is from my country except my husband, so I don't speak.

Int: You'd like a group?
Maria: Yes.
Int: Why?
Maria: Because I don't have to talk all time. Sometimes I talk, sometimes I don't.

Hui chose to remain silent, to “abandon the message” (Bygate, 1987:47) rather than risk embarrassment when she was unable to maintain an active engagement in a ‘real time’ conversation because of a lack of vocabulary:

Hui: Sometime I can’t think the word so I must just keep quiet and think and then say, say inside you know. ...
However, when she had time to plan, Hui reported managing without any great problem:

Hui: Oh, before I went, before I go to the bank, I prepare everything first, what to say and then go.

Int: Do you practise it?

Hui: Yeah at home. Sometimes go to the council, bank, must think first how to say the word, what to say before you go.

For Hui then, planning time was crucial to her effective production of English in the wider English-speaking community; by planning she could avoid using the strategy of ‘remaining silent’. Betty, on the other hand, did not plan what she wanted to say before going to the post office because, although embarrassed, she felt that English-speaking Australians were accepting of her unplanned efforts.

Betty: And difficult is when you go to bank or office and 'Oh, I forgot something. I forgot this word. Oh my God.' Terrible. In Australia it’s OK because people don't care, or they understand,

Int: Do they?

Betty: migrant people, ...

She did though, plan before using the telephone which she had previously avoided for almost a year. Thus, for Betty also, planning time gave her a ‘way out’ of avoidance:

Int: Did you find when you did go into the bank or something, before you went you practised what you had to say in the bank?

Betty: No. I practise only before I take the telephone.

Int: Oh right.

Betty: Practise and write on the paper, in the first time when I take the telephone. Because when we lived with another family together they were better than us in English. They learn in Poland. So I never touched the telephone. I was very scared. But when we moved to our house we have to do something. So my husband tells me what to do and now I have to do. ... And I think the telephone is very good and start to touch the telephone.

Int: So how long was that, after you came that you started making telephone calls?

Betty: Maybe, before, maybe ten, eleven months.

An effect for planning time on accuracy has been found in research carried out on classroom tasks (Ellis, 1987; Crookes, 1989; Foster and Skehan, 1996). Speakers without planning time were found to have more pauses and periods of total silence (Foster and Skehan, 1996). In this Australian study, it seemed that in situations when no planning time was possible some learners chose to remain silent rather than engage in an interaction where they risked the possibility of communication breakdown and subsequent embarrassment.
However, when the situation allowed for planning time the learners’ willingness to undertake otherwise difficult tasks was increased, probably because they believed that their production of English would be more accurate and that they would suffer less resultant embarrassment.

The examples given here serve to demonstrate that the use of strategies by second language learners cannot be viewed as simple and straightforward; rather, they are inter-related and interdependent. Here, the affective need to avoid embarrassment was fundamental to the learners’ use of strategies and was achieved initially by using a compensation strategy of ‘remaining silent’. Subsequently, with increasing levels of proficiency the same affective need was realised by the use of a metacognitive strategy of planning.
8.4. METACOGNITIVE / AFFECTIVE

8.4.1. Working alone or with others / avoiding anxiety

The preference of learners to work alone, or with others, is sometimes considered a characteristic of a particular learning style (Willing, 1988). However, the data gathered from the subjects in this study suggests that for them, working in a group or alone in the classroom was a conscious strategy. In the DEET1 class of which they were members learners were sometimes encouraged by the teacher to work with someone else, or alone, depending on the task. Nevertheless, they were always free to work as they wished and the reasons for their choice seemed to be related to factors other than an underlying learning style.

Eleven of the nineteen learners in Stage 4 of the study were asked, during interview, if they preferred working alone or with others when they were in their English class. Using NUD*IST, their responses were coded, very broadly at first, as ‘ALONE’ or ‘GROUP’ and from this coding a matrix was constructed (Table 8.4) to show the preference which they had expressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Alone</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
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<td>Anna</td>
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<td>Janetta</td>
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<td>Peter</td>
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<td>Hui</td>
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<td>Rita</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.4
Preferences of subjects: work alone or in a group
Table 8.4 indicates that of the eleven,

- four (Mena, Nan, Thi and Wei) indicated that they varied in their preference; sometimes they liked to work with others in a group, at other times alone,
- six (Maria, Anna, Janetta, Peter, Hui and Leo) preferred working in a group only, and
- one (Rita) preferred working alone only.

In an attempt to find why the subjects had expressed these preferences, the data were re-examined more closely. They will now be discussed under the following headings:

- Subjects who worked **either** in a group or alone
- Subjects who worked **only** alone
- Subjects who worked **only** in a group.

The preferences of the four subjects, Mena, Nan, Thi and Wei whose preferences varied, sometimes working alone and at other times in a group, will now be examined.

**Subjects who worked either in a group or alone**

**Reasons for working in a group**

The four subjects, Mena, Nan, Thi and Wei offered three reasons for working in a group:

- to improve English,
- to gain information and
- to compare ideas.
To improve English

Mena preferred to work with others for oral activities because that situation gave her the opportunity to improve her English:

Int: What sort of things would you like to be with other people?
Mena: Oh, talking things.
Int: Yeah.
Mena: Like, in the morning when we have something to warm up ...

To gain information

Similarly, when information could be gained Wei preferred working with others to share ideas:

Wei: ...I think if you need more information, resources, you like to talk with the other person. Depends what the topic is.
Int: All right, yeah. Can you give me an example?
Wei: Mm. For example if you write something about the goldmine [class excursion to old gold mine], then you would like to talk to somebody else because you only read a limit of information on that topic, so you want to know more about it.

To compare ideas

Nan liked to work in a group so that she could compare her ideas with those of others:

Nan: Oh, like sometimes we do something we have to put in order, like in the morning activity, like warm up .... I like to do it in a group.
Int: Yeah. Why? Why is it better in a group?
Nan: Mm, maybe other students has different idea. Maybe I'm wrong, so we can compare which are wrong, which are right. You can, yeah.

Thi also saw benefits in comparing her ideas with those of others, even though she first preferred to work independently:

Int: When you're in class do you prefer working by yourself or in a group?
Thi: By myself.
Int: Do you?
Thi: Yeah, but sometimes I think because everybody have a different idea you know. So maybe they not agree my idea or I not agree their idea.
Int: Right.
Thi: So I have to do by myself and after that we correct together.
Reasons for working alone

On the other hand, when the task demanded concentration or was one in which they wanted to express their own views or feelings without being distracted by those of others these four subjects preferred to work alone. They offered three reasons:

- to concentrate,
- to maintain own ideas, and
- to express opinion.

To concentrate

As mentioned above, Mena’s first preference was to work with others but when the task in hand called for concentration, she preferred to work alone:

Mena: Oh it depends on work you’re doing and it depends on people you around here
Int: Yeah,
Mena: around you, actually. I prefer to work as a team because then you can talk, no you can better improve your English, but sometimes if I need to concentrate really hard on something that I do, I can’t talk. So, it depends actually on work.

To maintain own ideas

Wei indicated that, when writing, she did not want her ideas influenced by others so preferred to work alone:

Wei: Um, if do the writing I prefer to do it myself. If talking I like to do it with somebody else.
Int: What about, well, when you’re writing why do you prefer to do it by yourself?
Wei: Because you give your own ideas and then you, after you can express your own feelings, yeah.
Int: Mm, mm. So how would working in a group prevent that? How would it stop that?
Wei: Mm, if you’re working with a group maybe you will, somebody else will persuade you to accept their ideas so you maybe will lose your own ideas.
To express opinion

Similarly, Nan clearly stated that she wanted to be able to express her opinion without the distraction of anyone else:

Int: ... what sort of things do you like doing by yourself?
Nan: Like we write about Melbourne Gaol report. I like to write my way. And, yes something like that.
Int: Why is that? Why do you like, prefer for that to be by yourself?
Nan: Yeah, because maybe another student has different idea, but I like to put my idea. I don't know my idea is right or wrong, but I like to put it.

Although these subjects might really have preferred to work with others, they were prepared to forego that preference and to work alone when they felt it was necessary. They chose to work alone when they wanted to avoid the influence or distraction of others, particularly on tasks in which the expression of their own ideas and opinions was crucial. At other times, on tasks which demanded interaction with others they were happy to work cooperatively. Thus, basic to all choices of their work situation was the type of task in hand.

Subjects who worked only alone

Reasons for working alone

To avoid embarrassment

As seen on Table 8.4, Rita was the only subject, the ‘outlier’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994), who expressed the preference to always work alone. Unlike the subjects mentioned above, Rita’s reason for wanting to work alone was not because of the demands of the task but, rather, her embarrassment with what she perceived to be her lower level of English proficiency, or her lack of knowledge.

Rita: Yes, I like go with myself because for me it’s very embarrassing ... Maybe when everybody is together maybe I can’t say I can’t say for I don’t know.

In other words, Rita chose the option of working alone, because she felt less anxiety in that situation (Bailey et al., 1999). In expressing this preference, Rita revealed that she had based her preference of learning situation on an
affective, or emotional, need and not, as the other four learners had, on the demands of the task type.

A matrix (Table 8.5) was constructed, using NUD*IST, to summarise the reasons underlying the preferred choices which the learners had expressed so far, and to give a visual impression of where they occurred.

Table 8.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Alone</th>
<th>concentrate</th>
<th>express own ideas</th>
<th>embarrassment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
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</table>

- [task based]
- [affective-need based]
Subjects who worked only in a group

Five subjects stated that they preferred working only in a group, in addition to the four mentioned above, who had indicated a willingness to work in a group at certain times. However, some of the five placed limits on the size of the group.

Size of group

Hui, Janetta and Peter, clearly stated that although they preferred working in a group, that group should be ‘a few’, ‘one [other]’ or not more than three or four. With a large group there were too many ideas:

Int: Why do you like working in a small group?
Hui: I think a small group is good, because too many people is the ideas, complicated you know. Only a few is all right.

Janetta: Oh it's, for me it's easier if just one [other] people.
Int: Mm, mm. Why?
Janetta: Because if there are too many ideas,
Int: Oh right.
Janetta: And if speak two or three people together I cant think clearly.

Or, there were too many voices, leading to confusion:

Int: Right, yeah. What about, how big a group? How many in the group would you like?
Peter: Three or four, not big.
Int: More than four?
Peter: No.
Int: Why not more?
Peter: I cannot explain. A big group is not good ... I cannot explain...
Int: Yeah, just go on, just try it's all right. If the group is too big, what happens?
Peter: Every everybody blah, blah and nothing.

Thus, it seemed that all subjects did not want to be distracted by others. Unlike Mena, Wei and Nan though, who were prepared to work alone to avoid such distraction, Hui, Janetta and Peter limited the size of their group to achieve that end, preferring the support of another at all times. Only Rita preferred working alone, because of her lack of confidence in her ability to contribute to a group.
Reasons for working only in a group

The text of the subjects’ responses in the interview data was closely re-examined in an attempt to find the reasons underlying their preference for working only in a group.

The reasons expressed by the five whose preference was working *only* in a group were:

- share ideas
- avoid talking;
- easier;
- receive help.

*To share ideas*

Both Hui and Maria liked to share with others, Maria finding that to do so was more exciting:

Int: What about when you're in the class, do you prefer to work by yourself or in a group?

Hui: In a group ... So I can share.

Maria: Because it's more exciting and .... somebody, everybody can choice many things, and put together.

*To avoid talking*

Maria though, gave another reason for preferring to work in a group; in that situation she was not obliged to talk and could opt out if she wanted to:

Int: You'd like a group?
Maria: Yes.
Int: Why?
Maria: Because I don't have to talk all time. Sometimes I talk, sometimes I don't.

Maria was similar to Rita in that both were trying to avoid the anxiety caused when having to perform in a group with others. Both were trying to achieve a situation of greater comfort. Both therefore, were taking account of their affective needs when choosing a work situation in class. Yet, interestingly, the way in which each chose to achieve her end was different: Rita chose to work alone, Maria chose to work in a group.
**Easier**

Peter’s reason for working in a group was because it was easier. Although he didn’t explicitly say so, he too might have felt less pressure on him to express an individual opinion. In any case, he indicated that he felt more comfortable working in a group:

Peter: I think I prefer work in a group because there's there is, there are many opinions and for me it is easier.

**To receive help**

Leo as well, found it more comfortable to work in a group, where he could rely to some extent on the help which others could give him.

Leo: ... when I growing older I think it is I can maybe some other work worker is better because, yeah I can think some something I can't understand or mistaking maybe the other workers can help me, help me.

Although they expressed their choice of work situation in somewhat different ways the choices of Hui, Maria, Peter and Leo were similar in that all were trying to achieve a comfortable learning situation. In other words, all were basing their strategy choice on realising an underlying affective need.

These additional reasons which the five subjects gave for ‘working in a group’ were added to the coding of the interview data, and another matrix was constructed to provide a visual impression of all occurrences of the preference (Table 8.6). (Because the underlying explanation for ‘share ideas’ was not clear, that reason was not categorised as either ‘task based’ or ‘affective-need based’.)
Table 8.6
Reasons for preferring to work in a group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>improve English</th>
<th>gain info</th>
<th>compare ideas</th>
<th>share ideas</th>
<th>avoid talking</th>
<th>easier</th>
<th>receive help</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
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<td>Janetta</td>
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<td>Hui</td>
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Examination of patterns in the data

The construction of the two matrices (Tables 8.5 and 8.6) raised the question: were there any obvious patterns in the data? Thus, the two matrices were combined (Table 8.7) and examined for any relationships between preferences for classroom work situation and variables such as L1, time spent learning English in Australia, proficiency or age.

L1

The eleven subjects included in this section of the study, were drawn from nine different L1 backgrounds. It was therefore impossible to find any relationship between L1 and choice of strategy of working alone or in a group.
Time spent learning English in Australia

Examination of the matrices showed no apparent relationship between this variable and the choice to work alone or in a group.

Proficiency

No specific data were available on the proficiency of each learner. However, as all of the eleven had been placed in the same class on the basis of proficiency, it could be assumed that all of the subjects were within a broadly similar proficiency level. However, two who had indicated a preference to sometimes work alone, Mena and Wei, had been observed during class sessions to be among the most proficient of the eleven subjects. Perhaps then, there was a relationship between proficiency and preference even though it could not be clearly identified.

Age

Leo’s comment, “When I growing older...maybe other workers can help me,...”, was an indication of a belief that his age [54] was influential on his learning.

To find if any other subjects had made similar statements, a ‘pattern’ search was made, using NUD*IST, of all interview data for any ‘age’ related words e.g. age, old, older, young, younger, which subjects might have used in reference to their learning. It was found that Leo had made another reference to his age and its negative effect on his ability to remember.

Leo: Some not easy to remember because age (laughs) is too old. (aged 54)

As well, Peter (43) and Hui (48) were found to have mentioned their age as a barrier to their learning, particularly on their ability to remember:

Int: Is there anything that is very difficult for you?
Peter: Not very difficult, but a little bit yes. Because my age is not very good for learning. ... I think after forty. ... I no remember something. (aged 43)
Hui: Very hard to help me remember. I think I getting old. The brain's not working. Yeah, I think so. (aged 48)

Interestingly, these comments by older learners regarding the importance of memory to their learning reflect the findings of the quantitative data. In Chapter Five, it was seen that of all four subscales MEM strategies were reportedly used least, but that older learners, i.e. those in the 46-50 age group reported greatest use of those strategies (mean = 3.32 on the five point scale). In another study, White (1993) found an effect for age on strategy use; university foreign language learners over thirty years of age made greater use of a metacognitive self-management strategy than did those who were younger.

It seemed a logical step then, to investigate further whether the age of the learner was an influence on the choice to work alone or in a group. On closer examination of Table 8.7, it seemed that the variable of Age did have an effect and that the age of 35 was pivotal in the types of responses given by subjects. For the four youngest (Mena, Wei, Nan and Thi) the reasons for their preferences for working in a group or alone were, broadly:

- concentration;
- expressing or comparing their own ideas;
- gaining information;
- improving English.

In other words, the reasons were based on the task in hand; they were, as discussed earlier, task oriented reasons. None of the reasons was concerned with affective needs.

For the learners over the age of 35 the reasons given for their preferences were:

- embarrassment;
- avoiding talking;
- easier;
- receiving help.
Table 8.7
Age of subjects and combined matrices: reasons expressed for preferring to work alone or in a group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Alone</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>ALONE</th>
<th>GROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Wei</td>
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<td>Nan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>•</td>
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<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
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<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Concentrate
- Embarrassed
- Improve English
- Information
- Compare ideas
- Share ideas
- Avoid talking
- Easier
- Receiving help

- Task based
- Affective needs based
That is, the preferences of the older learners were held with a view to bringing about a more comfortable learning situation, one in which they could ‘avoid anxiety’. In all but one case, this meant choosing to work with others.

These differences between younger and older learners suggest that there may have been some maturational factor at work here; perhaps, for example,

- younger learners had a stronger desire to express their own opinions than did older learners;
- younger learners felt a stronger need to assert their individuality in completing a task;
- younger learners did not feel the stress which older learners did and so did not need to take ‘comfort’ in learning into account.

However, the comments of Leo, Peter and Hui, mentioned above, lead to the speculation that ‘comfort’ was a consequence of a factor crucial to learning, but here found to be inadequate: memory. By organising themselves to work with others, learners found that they could achieve a ‘collective’ memory and so could overcome ‘individual’ memory shortcomings.

Whatever their preference, though, it seems that in expressing it the learners were demonstrating some part at least of their metacognitive knowledge, classified by Wenden (1998) “according to whether it focuses on the learner [person knowledge], the learning task [task knowledge] or the process of learning [strategic knowledge]” (Wenden, 1998: 518) (parentheses not in the original).

Clearly, both the younger learners and older learners possessed one of the facets of task knowledge, that is

> information about a task’s demands, i.e. how to learn in general, how to go about doing a particular task and the knowledge and skills needed to do so (Wenden 1998:518).

Yet, the “knowledge and skills” necessary for each age group to complete a task were different. Younger learners did not have to overcome a failing memory so, for them, task knowledge was paramount when a particular task needed to be undertaken; person knowledge was a lesser issue. In contrast, the task knowledge of the older learners first demanded a consideration of person
knowledge. That is, the “knowledge and skills” needed to carry out a task required the older learners to consider the “human factors that facilitate or inhibit learning” (Wenden, 1998: 518), in this case, an inadequate memory. Thus, they chose to work with others but in doing so, they demonstrated that their task knowledge and person knowledge were shaping their knowledge of process of their learning, their strategic knowledge.

The analysis of the data suggests that task fulfilment was the ultimate goal for all learners whatever their choice of work situation; younger learners did not necessarily consider affective needs, whereas only when such needs were realised could older learners achieve task fulfilment. Regardless of the different choices made, both groups of learners were planning and organising their learning situations for their individual best effect. Thus, the choices of all were underpinned by their metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1998). The reasons for those choices were not straight-forward and simple, but multi-faceted and inter-related.

Further, the choice ‘to work with others’ exemplifies the close inter-relationship of some language learning strategies and the consequent difficulty faced by researchers when trying to consign such strategies to membership of one particular subscale or another, “their identification often requiring considerable interpretation on the part of the researcher” (Ellis, 1994: 540). For example, the manifestation of the learners’ metacognitive knowledge here was, for those who chose to take account of their affective needs, to choose a social strategy i.e. ‘to work with others’.

The numbers of subjects in this study were very small. Nevertheless, the analysis of the data, which was able to be done quickly and easily, using NUD*IST, raises the possibility of a relationship between age, memory and the strategy of choice of learning situation, a possibility which could be explored by further research.
8.5. SOCIAL

8.5.1. Help from children

Many of the studies of strategy use of second language learners have involved learners in a tertiary education setting (e.g. Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Nyikos, 1990; Green, 1991; Oh, 1992; White, 1993; Green and Oxford, 1995; Dreyer and Oxford, 1996; Grainger, 1997), or in secondary schools (O’Malley et al. 1985a, 1985b; Ramirez, 1986; O’Malley, 1987; Chamot & Küpper, 1989; Kaylani, 1996). Fewer studies have been carried out using immigrant learners as subjects (Tran, 1988; Rossi-Le, 1989; Levine et al., 1996) and of those, none seem to have considered the use, by immigrant parent-learners, of the strategy of receiving help with language learning from their children. On the SILL, no mention is made of using the strategy of receiving help from children. Yet, in Stage 4 of this study, data pertaining to the help given by children emerged quickly and seemed highly significant to the language learning of the parent. Thus, because of its potential to add another dimension to the body of knowledge regarding the strategy use of language learners discussion of the findings of Help from children is included here as a nonSILL strategy.

In this study ‘help’ is regarded as any filling of a gap in English language knowledge, or correction of the subject’s oral or written expression of English, by another. As seen on Table 7.5, many subjects had indicated use of the SILL statement Q48 I ask for help from English speakers. They asked for, and received help from a variety of people, such as spouse, friends and fellow students, some of them L1 speakers of the language.

As mentioned, data regarding the child as ‘helper’ emerged quickly in the first interviews with many of the parent-subjects. Thus, time was spent during consequent interviews asking subjects to elaborate on the ways in which they drew on their children’s help as a strategy in their learning of English.
Parents who received help from children

Table 8.8 shows that, of the nineteen participants involved in Stage 4 of this study, fifteen were parents. Of those fifteen, ten parents reported receiving some form of help with their English learning, shown by an asterisk, from at least one of their children. Those ten parents comprised six L1 groups: Spanish (n=3); Chinese [Hokkien and Mandarin] (n=2); Hungarian (n=2); Croatian (n=1); Vietnamese (n=1) and Bengali (n=1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Age of Child 1</th>
<th>Age of Child 2</th>
<th>Age of Child 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>14*</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>21-25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>16*</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>16*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>&gt;21</td>
<td>&gt;21*</td>
<td>&gt;21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>16*</td>
<td>15*</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>26-30</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = help with learning English given to parent
Parents who received limited or no help from children

Of the fifteen parent-subjects no reports of ‘help from children’ were made by five: CS, LL, Sam, Serge and Rita. Another two, Leo and Nan reported only limited help from their children. That lack of data can be explained by one of the following.

Lack of oral proficiency in English

The oral proficiency of the subject, CS, was so low as to make it impossible to gather data from him on this aspect of his language learning strategies.

Age

The children of three of the subjects, Sam, Serge and LL, at three months, one, and two years, were too young to offer any help with English to their parents.

Inability

Of Rita’s two children, the younger was autistic

Rita: He no speak, he no make sentence, only words, but he understands when you say something in Spanish or English.

and did not like her speaking English:

Rita: Because when I speak with him in English, he say ‘No’.
Int: Does he?
Rita: Yes, I don’t know what my accent or something, he say ‘No, no’. Everything is ‘No, no’.
Int: He doesn’t like you speaking in English?
Rita: No, he likes when I speak only in Spanish.
Int: Mm.
Rita: His hand, his hand on my mouth when I speak in English.

In addition, her fifteen year old daughter was intellectually disabled and although showing some interest in Rita’s English learning offered no help:
... So when you're at home with your daughter do you always speak Spanish with her?
Rita: Yes.
Int: She always speaks Spanish to you?
Rita: Yes.
Int: Does she sometimes have a look at the work you do in school?
Does she look at your books?
Rita: Oh yes. And she say 'Mum, this is easy'.
Int: Does she?
Rita: She say, but never help me. ...

L1 in the home

Nan, the mother of two children, aged 6 and 4 years, reported only limited help from her children possibly because of their young age but, also because she used her L1 in the home:

Int: What about your children Nan, do they correct your English?
... 
Nan: They don't easily because I speak our language.
Int: Right.
Nan: And they speak English. Sometimes when I speak, when they hear they say not this way.
Int: So do both of them correct you or just one?
Nan: One.
Int: Yeah, which one?
Nan: My daughter.
Int: That's the older one.
Nan: Older.

Time constraints

The children of Leo (Taiwan-Chinese, aged 54), were, as shown on Table 8.8, all in their early 20s and were studying at university. Thus, their time available to help their father was limited. Nevertheless, they sometimes helped him with pronunciation

Int: Do they sometimes help you with pronunciation?
Leo: Sometimes but they [inaudible] not much a little bit because is work, homework, much.
Int: For them?
Leo: For them is very hard.

or they helped him with vocabulary when asked:

Leo: ... Some, I bought some newspaper about 'Age' something and the headline I can't understand. ... So I ask about this. What does this mean?
Loss of face

Interestingly, Leo revealed another reason for the limited help given by his children, that of 'loss of face':

Int: Yes. Sometimes people say that their children will correct them .... Do your children do that?
Leo: Sometimes too silent because maybe they me really about no good feeling.
Int: Good feeling for who?
Leo: For me. Because I say wrong, you say you're wrong, maybe I lose face (covers his face). So if they keep silent.
Int: The children keep silent?
Leo: Yes.

The reticence of Leo's children to correct him may be explained by their age; being more mature they were probably quite sensitive to his potential embarrassment but it seems possible that factors other than the age of his children could have been operating within Leo's family. Here, it seemed that the father's potential 'loss of face' was a factor which precluded 'help from children'. Other parent-subjects, from a variety of language and cultural backgrounds, revealed the sensitivity of their children when providing correction as will be discussed below, but none so clearly, or strongly as Leo.

Categories of help given

The help which parents received from children was coded, using NUD*IST, as one of two categories: solicited, or unsolicited. That help, together with the age of the children who provided it, is shown on Table 8.9, constructed using the matrix function of NUD*IST.
Table 8.9  
**Age of children and categories of help given**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of help given</th>
<th>Age of children solicited</th>
<th>Age of children unsolicited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>• •</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;21</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* = report of help given

Table 8.9 shows that unsolicited help was given to the parents by children from a wide range of ages: four to seventeen. Interestingly, subjects reported soliciting help only from children aged thirteen to over twenty-one which suggests that parents might not have regarded the help of younger children as particularly fruitful. Perhaps younger children were, indeed, unable to help or were not greatly concerned with the parent’s performance, as Anna revealed:

Int: And do they all give you, do they all correct you?
Anna: Ah no, not all the time.
Int: No not all the time, but which children?
Anna: My daughter, the older one [14], and my thirteen years old sometimes.
Int: Yeah. The younger one [9]?  
Anna: No.
Int: Right.
Anna: He just lives his life, he don’t care what happens.
Categories of help and L1

Table 8.10, again generated using the matrix function of NUD*IST, shows the names of subjects, their L1 and the category of help given, that is, solicited or unsolicited.

Eight of the ten learners reported receiving unsolicited help from their children, which perhaps implies that both parents and children were comfortable with such a situation; children were happy to give help and parents were happy to receive it. What is particularly notable on the table though, is that the two subjects, Hui and Leo, who reported only solicited help were both of Chinese background. Leo, it will be recalled, had referred to a ‘loss of face’ on receipt of help from his children. Data from only two Chinese cases does not warrant drawing a conclusion but the finding does raise the possibility of an effect here for cultural background, such as that found in Hong Kong, for instance, where Chinese society

in accordance with Confucian tenets is hierarchically ordered, with due respect shown for age, seniority, and rank ... superiors must always be accorded ‘face’ and not caused to lose it through overt and public criticism (Flowerdew, 1998:325).

The relationship between cultural background and categories of help given deserves the attention of further research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>solicited</th>
<th>unsolicited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kit</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thi</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>Hokkien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
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<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• = report of help given
**Language skill areas in which help was given**

Areas of help were identified and coded as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary. Then, using the matrix function, Table 8.11 was generated to show how those categories of help were given to parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>solicited</th>
<th>unsolicited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>listening</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
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<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
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<tr>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocab</td>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>⬤</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = report of help given

As can be seen, **listening** was the only area in which all the help from children to parents was solicited. This finding is perhaps not surprising given the receptive nature of the skill; unless the parent first indicated, the child could not know how or where the parent’s listening had broken down. Anna reported how she had sought help from her children, aged 13 and 14, when listening to TV:

Anna: Yes. Now I still could attention because sometimes my kids are looking for me, but if I miss something and ask them ‘What, what happened?’ and say ‘What happened there?’ You are looking, watching, but not really listening. So sometimes I feel very upset or angry because just I miss the important thing and you miss all. So, it’s my stickynose, like a stickynose you know.

as did Leo, from his children aged over 21:

Leo: ...And in the watch TV some news about that and then I guess what is my mean is right or wrong and ask what is the mean? And explain to me I think nearly know, but maybe same thing.

Maria too sought help from her children [12, 10 and 9] in similar circumstances but it seemed that her requests served to generate anger, rather than a willingness to help:

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Maria: I ask they. Sometimes they 'Oh Mum shut up. I can't listen. I explain you, oh, oh, ah.' … Sometimes we all together watch TV, My husband say, the people say something, 'I no know what she say'. He say 'What she say?' My children say 'Oh, what, what?' My children very angry because they have to continue listen for the words you know.

**Language skill area and age of children**

Table 8.12 was constructed to show the relationship between the age of 'helping' children and the language skill area in which help was given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help given with:</th>
<th>Age of children</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>&gt;21</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>listening</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

= report of help given

The table shows that, apart from speaking, most of the reports of help were of children who were at least fourteen. Some help in listening and reading was given by children aged thirteen and seven respectively, but otherwise all help with writing, vocabulary and grammar came only from older children.
**Examples of help given**

**Speaking**

Help with speaking was mainly the correction of pronunciation and was, as Table 8.12 showed, given by children from a wide range of ages, from Thi’s child of four years:

- Thi: She says ‘Mummy, daddy, look my mouth pronunciation not good.
- Int: What sort of things will she try and correct you on?
- Thi: Like she said ‘Pocahontas’.
- Int: Oh right.
- Thi: She said ‘Daddy, mummy look, Po, Po. I don’t believe it, she very smart. Sometimes my husband joke to her and he say ‘Pacahontas’ “no, Po, Po ca, hantas’. She say like that. I know she’s clever sometimes.

To those aged more than twenty-one, the adult children of Leo:

- Int: Do they sometimes help you with pronunciation?
- Leo: Sometimes but they (inaudible) not much a little bit because is work, homework, much.
- Int: For them?
- Leo: For them is very hard.

It is probably not surprising that help with speaking came from a wide age range of children. Being an oral productive skill, the errors of speaking are overt, obvious to a proficient listener and their correction made quickly and without effort. Thus, children of all ages were able to give help, albeit simple or limited, to their parent.

**Reading / Writing**

Few instances of help were reported received in the areas of reading and writing. Table 8.12 shows that only two reports were made of help with reading, one by Leo of his children [>21]:

- Leo: Can’t understand what they say. Some, I bought some newspaper about ‘Age’ something and the headline I can’t understand.
- Int: You can?
- Leo: I can’t. So I ask about this. What does this mean?

And the other by Sandra, of her seven year old daughter:
Sandra: Yeah. You know the little one when I read the book, the second one, some words I don't know the spelling.
Int: Right, yeah,
Sandra: and I try to guess and she correct me.
Int: Yeah. Do they do it... Um, do you sometimes ask them to correct you?
Sandra: Yeah I ask them. Sometimes I don't know. I not sure the meaning and I ask her how you read this and she told me.

Of the three reports of help with writing two referred to correction of written homework, one by Sandra’s daughter [17]:

Int: Right. And would she correct you then?
Sandra: No.
Int: So it's only since you've been coming to classes. Oh that's interesting.
Sandra: Since she's seen me doing homework and write and I ask her sometimes and she ...

and the other by Anna’s daughter [14]:

Anna: Ah, sometimes when I um, used to do my homework, she correct me, after me.
Int: Right.
Anna: And she sometimes explain me, you know, because I put all the time I put so many articles,
Int: Oh right.
Anna: The wrong way. 'the' and 'the' don't have to be there and she say, just try to explain just Spanish and some in English but I can't help with that.

**Vocabulary**

Four subjects reported receiving help from children with vocabulary, as seen on Table 8.12, Hui, Janetta, Leo and Peter. Hui drew on the knowledge of her 16 year old daughter, when wanting to know the use of a particular English word:

Hui: Yeah, if in my English sometimes mistakes so what should I make the, find out the dictionary, and then find out if is right or not, the word. Sometimes ask my daughter which way is better way.

whereas Peter sought the help of his children [15 and 16] when trying to learn new vocabulary:

Int: ... What do you do Peter when you have to learn new words? How do you remember them?
Peter: Sometimes I write words many times, or I have dictionary. Sometimes I ask my children.
or when unsure of the meaning:

Int: Yeah. What sort of things will they correct?
Peter: When I’m not sure what it means some words, they will correct.

**Grammar**

Three of the subjects indicated that their children helped them with grammar. For example, Hui’s daughter [16]:

Hui: Yes, I very confused the grammar, the perfect, the continue, present tense or anything. All confused.
Int: So what do you do to help you remember?
Hui: Very hard to help me remember. I think I getting old. The brain’s not working. Yeah, I think so. Sometimes you remember a thing in the class and then you go back and you forget everything.
Int: Yeah. you go back where?
Hui: Home.
Int: Uh huh. So what do you do if you get home and you have forgotten?
Hui: I ask my daughter what means, and what to do this one.

and Janetta’s son [17],

Int: ... What about grammar?
Janetta: Oh, yes, sometimes yes.
Int: Like what sort of things would he correct? Can you think of anything?
Janetta: Oh the because when I some day I said 'You are, we are', he said, ‘you were’.

as well as Anna’s daughter [14]:

Anna: And she sometimes explain me, you know, because I put all the time I put so many articles.
Reasons for help from older children

As was pointed out above, apart from the area of speaking, most of the reports of help were of children who were at least fourteen. Some of these children might have helped their parents solely from a desire to be helpful; others might have viewed such support as their filial obligation. Yet, there are other factors which seem fundamental to the help that was given. These are discussed below.

Age of the child and inherent embarrassment

It is likely that the children aged fourteen and over who gave the most help were typical of adolescents in the Australian community and so experienced feelings of embarrassment, particularly in situations involving their parents. Thus, it could be speculated that the willingness of the children to assist the parent’s production of English might, in some part, have been driven by the adolescent child’s own feelings of embarrassment. Sandra’s daughters showed their embarrassment with their mother’s efforts to speak English in front of their friends:

Sandra: ...My daughters now growing and they got friends come home and a little embarrassed to talk to their mother,

as did Anna’s children [13 and 14] by refusing to speak to her when their friends were present:

Int: And does your son correct your pronunciation?
Anna: Yes, yes, because they feel embarrassed.
Int: Do they?
Anna: Yes. When I talk with friends, they feel embarrassed and no talk in front of me. So it’s hard.
Int: So if their friends are there, do they correct you when the friends are there? Or after?
Anna: Um, I really can’t say now. But normally they try don’t talk to me when their friends are over there.
Int: So they avoid speaking to you?
Anna: Yeah.

It could be speculated that helping the parent improve their English was seen by the child as being in his or her own interest; with their parent producing better English the child’s feelings of embarrassment could be alleviated.
Thus, underlying the provision of help was a motive of self-interest on the part of the child.

The effect on the parent of the child’s embarrassment will be discussed in a later section (Chapter Nine).

**Child’s education in Australia and level of English proficiency**

It seems probable that age, and its concomitant feelings of embarrassment, was not, of itself, the crucial factor in the child giving help to parents. Rather, age in conjunction with the child’s own level of English proficiency were the important factors. Table 8.13 shows that the children over fourteen, in the main, had received most of their education in Australia and consequently had probably achieved near native-like proficiency in English. In any case their levels of proficiency were very much superior to those of their parents and enabled them to provide help.

For example, Anna and Sandra’s daughters provided help to their mothers with written homework. Both girls had been at school in Australia since the age of five or six and had therefore received most, if not all, of their education in English (see Table 8.13). It was therefore highly likely that each daughter possessed English writing skills superior to those of her mother and so was able to help her.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child aged 14+</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Amount of education in English in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna - daughter</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8 years (since age 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui - daughter</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10 years (since age 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta - son</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7 years (since age 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kit - daughter</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo - daughters</td>
<td>&gt;21</td>
<td>6 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter - children</td>
<td>15 and 16</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra - daughter</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12 years (since age 5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, the three children who helped with grammar had received most of their education in Australia (Table 8.13): Hui’s and Anna’s daughters since the age of six, and Janetta’s son for seven years since the age of ten. Although the number of cases here is small they suggest that help in the area of
grammar could be offered only by those with considerable years of education in English.

Peter’s report that he did not receive help from his children with grammar, tends to confirm this point. His two children [15 and 16], unlike those of Anna, Hui and Janetta, had been learning English at school in Australia for a comparatively short time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int:</th>
<th>So how much English have they done? How long have they been learning English?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter:</td>
<td>Two years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and were prevented from helping him with grammar by their lack of knowledge:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int:</th>
<th>What about grammar? Do they correct grammar?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter:</td>
<td>No. I think not often grammar because they I think they don’t learn grammar in their school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same children however, were able to provide help to their father in other areas, in listening, in speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int:</th>
<th>What do they say?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter:</td>
<td>When I say a not good pronunciation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int:</td>
<td>Yeah, yeah, yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter:</td>
<td>They say me, say me 'Father, that's not good'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int:</td>
<td>Yeah. And then do they tell you how to say it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter:</td>
<td>And correct me, tell me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and in vocabulary:

| Peter: | When I’m not sure what it means some words, they will correct. |
Feelings of parents regarding help from children

Only one subject, Maria, indicated that help from the children was sometimes unwelcome. Comments from all other parent-learners were positive:

Hui: Yeah, she very helpful my daughter. …

Int: … how do you feel when they correct you? Are you happy about that?
Anna: Oh yes, yes, yes.

Sandra: Because she know I speak another language and I know they try to help me and I ask her [17].

Janetta: I'm happy because he help me.

Peter: In my opinion I like when my children say me what's correct.

Maria had mixed feelings about her son correcting her believing that it was wrong for him to interrupt her conversation, although she understood his wanting her to be able to speak good English:

Int: Yeah. Do you like, do you like it when he corrects you?
Maria: No, because I think it's, I no speak English well. I explained him. I no speak English well. I have to speak right or wrong. I have to practise my English because I ... see he want I speak very well English. I say 'I can't'.

Int: Yeah.
Maria: Maybe they can speak in English well, but I, it very difficult for me because I no only study English and I have many things to do at home.

Int: Yes, yes. Does it worry you if your son corrects you?
Maria: Yes, I no very happy because he say "Mum, you can't say..." ... he want I speak very good English and speak another... mother... oh.

Int: Yes, yes, yes. But are you happy if he does that?
Maria: Mm, yes, ... yes, when... No, not exactly because when I speak, he say 'Stop Mum' or stop my conversation. This is wrong. No must be wrong. No should do to be like this. Because if I speak wrong it doesn't matter. The people know I no speak English well. I just learning English.
In general then, parents were happy to receive help from their children when learning English. However, as stated earlier, little research has been carried out on the role of children in the immigrant parent-learners’ second language learning and on the attitude of the parent to that role. The findings of this study therefore raise interesting questions for further research on this aspect.

**Sensitivity of the children**

**Correction at home**

To avoid possible embarrassment most children gave help to their parents only at home; if the parents did make mistakes in their English when they were out, the children waited until they returned home to correct them, as indicated by Sandra:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int:</th>
<th>Do they [correct you] when you're out?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandra:</td>
<td>No, not when we're out, no. They know that they embarrass me (laughs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int:</td>
<td>Yeah, that’s what I’m wondering. I’m trying to find out how parents,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra:</td>
<td>They told me, my daughter [17 years] told me oh, you say this mum, you should say that and..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int:</td>
<td>So she’ll tell you, when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra:</td>
<td>Yeah, she’ll tell me when we're at home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and Janetta:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int:</th>
<th>… sometimes when you are out, when you're not at home and you're speaking English. Would he correct you then?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janetta:</td>
<td>No, no. He [17 years] just said after. What I have to say it, what the word was wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int:</td>
<td>Right. Why do you think he says it after?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta:</td>
<td>Because he didn’t want to interrupt me, so he told me after, but he didn’t tell every.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Peter’s children might have been sensitive to their father’s embarrassment their lack of correction outside the home was, in his opinion, because of their shyness:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int:</th>
<th>Yeah, right. Do they [correct you] just at home, or do they do it sometimes if you’re out?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter:</td>
<td>Just at home because they [16 and 15 years] are very shy out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correction in public

Only Maria (Spanish) reported correction given overtly outside the home. Her son, aged 12, corrected her or tried to prevent her from speaking at all during meetings with English-speakers, such as at a parent-teacher meeting. Maria described his acute embarrassment with her efforts to speak:

Maria: No because, when I have meeting with the teacher, my son's teacher sometimes I pronounce some wrong words, like sometimes I say 'she' for 'he' and he feel very bad and say "Mum, you, you, you, can't, you can't speak not you speak..." because he's bit nervous and upset, yes.

Int: So he's there when you're talking to the teacher?

Maria: Yes, yes. Or sometimes when I speak with another person, Australian person, or when I go in the office, many place sometimes I speak some wrong words, my older son all the time say she be [unintelligible] when I speak it. She correct me many time.

As well as trying to prevent his mother from speaking when they were outside the home Maria’s son also did so on certain occasions, at home:

Int: ... If someone asks you a question, does he sometimes give the answer?

Maria: Yes.

Int: Can you give me an example when that might happen?

Maria: My son give the answer?

Int: Yes.

Maria: When some people come my home for example, he want to ask me if I like to buy something or want to paint the roof or something like this,

Int: Yes, yes.

Maria: Or ... he say 'Mummy I going'. Or maybe when I going to the shopping and I ask something and the, the people give me the answer. 'My son say, 'You shut up Mum, I say'.

Effects of help

Error correction

For several reasons, error correction was an effective form of help given to the parent.

(a) Solicited correction would have been given in response to the parent’s questioning, indicating that the parent was focussed on a particular language form and so receptive to learn.
(b) Unsolicited correction, given at home would of its nature have been instant, and of an error of which the parent was probably unaware. Thus, immediately, the parent would have focussed attention on the language form. Without such help the error could persist, as Anna illustrated:

Int: Yeah. Can you think of any examples of something for pronunciation that she might have corrected recently?
Anna: Um, she correct me when I say 'supposed to do something' and I said before, I said, I said 'apposed to, apposed to'
Int: Oh right.
Anna: And she say it's no, 'apposed to,' and she say it's 'supposed to'.
Int: Right.
Anna: So last time when I said that, because when you don't really, nobody correct you, you think you are talking well.

Additionally, in consequence of receiving help from their children the parent-learners could become more conscious of other potential errors, could make greater efforts to monitor production and to self-correct when in the presence of the child and also when in the wider TL community.

**Motivation of the child**

Observing the parent making an effort to learn English motivated the child to help. Sandra recounted the way in which her daughter had helped her since she had been attending English classes. Prior to that, her daughter had given no help at all:

Int: ... before when she was younger, would she just correct you anyway?
Sandra: Not before, not before I come to classes. Because before like I was working and I wasn't worrying learn English. Now I learn, I want to learn properly. Before I just speaking whatever I learn working in the factory.
Int: Right. And would she correct you then?
Sandra: No.
Int: So it's only since you've been coming to classes. Oh that's interesting.
Sandra: Since she's seen me doing homework and write and I ask her sometimes ...

**Motivation of the parent**

Realising that the child was willing to help raised the level of motivation of the parent, as Sandra again related. Wanting to improve her English and, knowing that were she to make a mistake she would be corrected by her daughter [17], Sandra created the setting and spoke in English rather than Spanish:
Sandra: When I speak with my daughter sometimes, I speak English.
Int: Uh huh. All the children, do you speak English, or only the older ones, or the younger ones or what?
Sandra: Most the older one because she correct me, especially the pronunciation.

The family unit

As well as raising the level of motivation of the parent it could be speculated that help from the child has wider implications for the family unit. If the help were regarded as mutually beneficial the parent-child bonds might be strengthened, thus improving the immigration settlement experience of the family. However, such help needs to be sensitively used; too much reliance on the child places a responsibility which could outweigh the child’s age and maturity, as Anna’s comments implied:

Anna: ... and my daughter took the English straight away, so later on I asked her for translate whenever.
Int: Right, so she helped you.
Anna: And she was only six years old, ...

Summary

The findings of this stage of the study demonstrate that the use of the strategy ‘help from children’ was invaluable to immigrant parent-learners of English in the Australian community. In the area of speaking, help was easily given by children from pre-school to young adult age. Help with vocabulary was offered by children who had been learning English for only two years. To give help with writing and grammar however, children needed to have a knowledge of English usually acquired over several years, at an English-speaking school.

Other findings which emerged as important were:

- The children who had received most of their schooling in English in Australia often had a level of proficiency in English superior to that of the parents. Thus, the children became useful models of English for the parents particularly in oral skills where children gave the parents frequent correction of their pronunciation.

- The sensitivity of the children usually meant that they took account of the affective needs of the parents, avoided the embarrassment of a public situation, and offered help only when in the privacy of the home.
The help given by children was often unsolicited and so focussed on errors of which the parent, otherwise, may have been unaware and so unable to correct.

In observing the parent making an effort to learn English the child was motivated to help. Conversely, the parent’s level of motivation to learn was raised by the willingness of the child to help.

Without the gathering of qualitative data and its analysis, using a program such as NUD*IST, such findings would not have been made.

As little is known of the importance of the strategy ‘help from children’ to parent-learners of a second language further research into immigrant families from various language and cultural backgrounds is called for to increase the body of knowledge in the field.

8.6. Summary

This chapter examined the use made of selected ‘non-SILL’ strategies. From the thirty or so such ‘non-SILL’ strategies reported used, seven were selected for discussion here (a) those which informed on strategy use or raised important issues for further research such as ‘keep in mind’, ‘draw a picture’, ‘repetitive listening’, ‘remaining silent’, and (b) those reported by a number of subjects e.g. ‘use a dictionary’, ‘working alone or with others/avoiding anxiety’, and ‘help from children’.

Chapter Nine will examine the role of motivation in the use of language learning strategies.
Chapter Nine

Motivation and Language Learning Strategies

In this chapter, the role of motivation in the use of language learning strategies is considered. Following the collection of quantitative and particularly, qualitative data certain questions emerged. Why, for instance, did the learners use particular strategies? Why did they not use others? Why did individual learners use strategies which were different from other learners?

The analysis of the data gathered in this study suggests that learners are active in their choice of strategies and that the specific strategy choices they make are consequent on the motivation which they bring to the learning situation. That motivation is itself entwined with the previous life circumstances of the learner and also with the current context in which the learner is situated.

The discussion of motivation is as follows. Firstly, earlier studies of language learning motivation are described, with particular attention paid to Williams and Burden’s (1997) social constructivist view of motivation. The model they developed is extended to account for the motivation and consequent language learning strategy use of the participants in the current study; detailed accounts from individual learners serve to illustrate the factors influencing that motivation and language learning strategy use.

9.1. Earlier research into language learning motivation

The concept of motivation in psychology has changed with changing theories of psychology. Early concepts were explained in terms of behaviourism; human motivation was accounted for in terms of biological needs being met and reinforced. More recently, the concept has focussed on cognitive aspects (Ames and Ames, 1984, 1985, 1989), such as causality (de Charms, 1984), control (Seligman, 1975), attribution (Weiner, 1985, 1991); self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Schunk, 1989) and intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Deci, 1975; Harter, 1981; Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 1989). The study of motivation in foreign and second language learning, though, has not mirrored that in the broader field of psychology and focussed on cognitive aspects,
such as those outlined above. Until very recently, the concept which exerted the greatest influence on foreign and second language learning was the instrumental/integrative model of Gardner (1985), described below.

Following his earlier research, Gardner developed the Socio-educational Model of language learning which made the widely adopted distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation. In proposing the model, Gardner (1985) pointed out that

\[
\text{languages are unlike any other subject taught in a classroom in that they involve the acquisition of skills or behaviour patterns which are characteristic of another cultural community (1985:146)}
\]

and argued that success in learning another language was heavily influenced by the individual’s attitude to the L2 community and, in turn, its beliefs on language learning.

Thus, Gardner’s Socio-educational Model causally linked

- the learner’s cultural beliefs,
- attitudes to the learning situation,
- integrativeness,
- language aptitude and motivation

to elements of the linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes. Motivation, according to Gardner (1985), comprised effort, the desire to achieve the goal of learning the language, together with favourable attitudes toward that learning.

Effort could consist of

\[
\text{compulsiveness, desire to please a teacher or a parent, a high need to achieve, …social pressures, such as a demanding teacher, impending examinations… (1985:10)}
\]

but did not equate with motivation.

Further, Gardner claimed that favourable attitudes did not reflect motivation in and of themselves but were “an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object” (Gardner, 1985:9) which an individual inferred on the basis of beliefs or opinions.
Following collection of data on seventeen indicator variables from a sample of 200 grade 7 (12-year-old) children studying French as a second language, Gardner tested the basic elements of his causal model using Linear Structural Relations (LISREL) a program which, using a correlation matrix, describes the degree of linear relationship between all possible measured variables under investigation. He concluded that the model suggested

... that integrativeness and attitude toward the learning situation cause motivation and that aptitude and motivation cause French achievement (Gardner 1985:158).

Au (1988), drawing on research literature to evaluate Gardner’s socio-educational model, argued that the five hypotheses which underpinned Gardner’s theory could not be supported. Further, he disputed Gardner’s contention that motivation was causal in second language achievement claiming instead, the reverse. Gardner (1988) countered, claiming that while Au’s criticisms were valuable in highlighting issues in the motivation research area they were based on simplistic interpretation and invalid assumptions, “assumptions he has made rather than assumptions underlying either the model or the research itself” (Gardner 1988:103).

Skehan (1989) however, suggested that motivation both causes and is caused by success, but nevertheless, claimed that the underlying theories of Gardner’s causal model (1985) had been supported and that, in terms of the data, its predictions were consistent. In addition, he acknowledged that:

[w]ithout doubt, Gardner’s work on the place of motivation in language learning is unique, and certainly its positive qualities far outweigh the negative. The level of theorizing is always high and his work has the virtues of making good connections with mainstream psychology as well as providing a relevant account of language learning (Skehan, 1989:61).

Nonetheless, other research had raised questions on the generalisability of Gardner’s integrative-instrumental distinction to broader contexts of learning. Unlike the findings of Gardner’s research in Canada, Gardner and Santos (1970) had found an instrumental motivation more effective in the Philippines, as did Lukmani (1972) in India, findings suggesting that motivation is linked to the context of the learning situation.

Clément (1980) developed a model which took account of motivation in the individual as it related to the social setting and the interplay between integrativeness and fear of assimilation, raising the possibility that the type of
motivational orientation may be closely related to the type of setting, or context, of the learner. Clément and Kruidenier (1985) tested this model with school students in Québec, using causal modelling and found that the hypothetical constructs and the causal sequence of the Clément model (1980) were supported. Further, they claimed that because the results were obtained from cross-grade subjects, some generality of the model was supported.

With increasing opinion that the original distinction between integrative and instrumental motivations lacked universal relevance (Skehan, 1991) came calls for research to establish the possibility of a broader range of orientations of motivation by widening the social situation in which the role of motivation for language learning was studied, to include minority indigenous and immigrant groups. It was claimed (Skehan, 1989), without such research, the generalisability of models of motivation could not be known.

Those arguments for the broadening of the concept of motivation went hand-in-hand with those for changes to the methods of research into motivation, which hitherto had been much dependent on questionnaires and correlational studies. Skehan suggested the use of more “open-ended and ethnographic techniques” (1991:285) while Crookes and Schmidt (1991) called for a research program

that uses survey instruments along with observational measures, ethnographic work together with action research and introspective measures, as well as true experimental studies (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991:502).

At the same time, proposals were made to extend the existing concept of motivation in second language learning to include a cognitive view. Such a view contrasted with earlier views, those of behaviourists for instance, in that an individual’s actions were a consequence of personal choice and not a response to external forces. Thus, motivation, from a cognitive perspective is concerned with

such issues as why people decide to act in certain ways and what factors influence the choices they make. It also involves decisions as to the amount of effort people are prepared to expend in attempting to achieve their goals (Williams and Burden, 1997:119).
Oxford and Shearin (1994, 1996) proposed including principles drawn from general, industrial, educational and cognitive developmental psychology, while Crookes and Schmidt suggested a cognitive concept of motivation in language learning, in terms of choice, engagement, and persistence, as determined by interest, relevance, expectancy, and outcomes (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991:502).

Several studies were conducted in the 1990s which did indeed serve to expand the boundaries of motivation in second and foreign language learning to include cognitive variables. Dörnyei (1990) investigated the instrumental-integrative concept of motivation in young adult learners in a foreign-language learning (FLL) situation in Hungary with the aim of defining the relevance and characteristics of integrativeness and instrumentality in that learning situation, as well as to locate other motivational components. He found that an Instrumental Motivational Subsystem significantly contributed to motivation in the FLL context as did an Integrative Motivational Subsystem (a multifaceted cluster with four dimensions: a general interest in foreign languages; a desire to broaden one’s view, to be cosmopolitan and up-to-date; a desire for new stimuli and challenges; a desire to be integrated into another community) and two other components, the Need for Achievement, and Attributions about Past Failures. Dörnyei’s results also indicated that in such a foreign language learning context a hierarchy of motives was operative; the Instrumental Motivational Subsystem and Need for Achievement especially, played a significant role in mastering an intermediate target language proficiency, whereas the desire to go beyond this level was associated with integrative motives.

Dörnyei (1994) proposed a framework of motivation relevant to L2 classrooms and consisting of three levels: the Language Level, the Learner Level and the Learning Situation Level, which drew together three basic constituents of the L2 learning process: the L2, the learner and the learning environment, with three different dimensions of language: the social, the personal and the educational subject matter.
Tremblay and Gardner (1995) significantly expanded the earlier Socio-educational Model (Gardner 1985) by investigating the relation of a number of measures of motivation from a cognitive perspective. Measures such as persistence, attention, goal specificity, and causal attributions were related to each other, to existing measures of attitudes and motivation, and to indices of achievement in French courses undertaken by secondary school students in Canada. They concluded that the new motivational measures added to the understanding of motivation in language learning.

Investigating the components of motivation for adult EFL learners in Egypt, Schmidt et al. (1996) found that affect, goal orientation and expectancy were basic dimensions of motivation for those learners.

Ushioda (1996) used a qualitative ethnographic approach to research university learners of French in Ireland and found that learners most frequently cited language-related enjoyment, personal goals, and prior learning experiences as motivation in their learning; less successful learners tended to emphasize the particular goals and incentives which directed their motivation while successful language learners tended to emphasize a positive learning history. These findings suggested that success itself engendered motivation, and so contrasted with those of Gardner (1985).

In attempting to extend the earlier socio-educational model (Gardner 1985) and show, by causal modelling, how variables of individual difference: language attitudes, language aptitude, field independence, motivation, language learning strategies and self-confidence related to one another and to L2 achievement, Gardner et al. (1997) investigated university students of French. Interestingly, they concluded that language attitudes, a construct formed from the two constructs of the Gardner (1985) model: integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation, caused motivation and that motivation promoted the use of learning strategies. Further, and contrary to earlier claims (Oxford et al., 1987), Gardner et al. (1997) found that the use of strategies, as reported by subjects in response to the 80 item SILL (Oxford, 1990) caused lower levels of L2 achievement.

Spolsky, though, believed that the study of motivation went beyond such aspects and
remains an area where the social and psychological aspects of language learning and use are a source of fruitful exploration and deserve regular revisiting (Spolsky, 2000: 166).

thus lending support to Williams and Burden’s (1997) earlier contention that a purely cognitive view of motivation was limited, for it failed to take account of “the influence of affective factors, the emotions, or of social and contextual influences” (Williams and Burden, 1997:119).

9.2. Williams and Burden (1997) view of motivation

Williams and Burden (1997) proposed a social constructivist view of motivation. Looking first at the constructive element of this view, Williams and Burden suggested that it

- centres around the premise that each individual is motivated differently. ...Therefore, what motivates one person to learn a foreign language and keeps that person going until he or she has achieved a level of proficiency with which he or she is satisfied will differ from individual to individual (Williams and Burden, 1997:120).

while the social perspective takes account of the social and contextual influences to which the individual is subject. These influences

- include the whole culture and context and the social situation, as well as significant other people and the individual’s interactions with these people (Williams and Burden, 1997:120).

Williams and Burden (1997:120) therefore proposed a definition of motivation, cognitive in essence, but which fits within a social constructivist framework. Motivation may be construed as

- a state of cognitive and emotional arousal,
- which leads to a conscious decision to act and
- which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort
- in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals).

Initial arousal may be triggered by different causes, those which are internal such as interest or curiosity or those which are external, such as another person or an event. Then, being aroused, the person makes a conscious choice to act in a particular way and persists to achieve a goal. The reason for persisting may be extrinsic, that is, to gain something outside the activity itself, such as finding a job. Or, the reason may be intrinsic, that is, because of
the interest and enjoyment which the activity itself engenders (Williams and Burden, 1997).

Thus, from the social constructivist perspective, motivation involves **choice** about actions or behaviours. Choice is central to the model, as shown below in Figure 9.1, and is consequent on the individual’s own construction of the world as well as on internal and external influences. Internal factors could include:

- **intrinsic interest of the activity** e.g. arousal of curiosity, optimal degree of challenge
- **perceived value of the activity** e.g. personal relevance, anticipated valued of outcomes, intrinsic value attributed to the activity
- **sense of agency** e.g. locus of causality, locus of control
- **mastery** e.g. feelings of competence, awareness of developing skill and mastery
- **self-concept** e.g. awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, self-worth concern
- **attitudes** e.g. to language learning in general, to the target language, to the target language community and culture
- **other affective states** e.g. confidence, anxiety
- **developmental age and stage**
- **gender**

(Williams and Burden, 1997:138),

and external factors,

- **significant others** e.g. teachers, parents, peers
- **the nature of interaction with significant others** e.g. the nature and amount of feedback, rewards, punishments and sanctions
- **learning environment** e.g. comfort, resources, time of day, size of class, class and school ethos
- **the broader context** e.g. wider family networks, conflicting interests, cultural norms, societal expectations and attitudes

(Williams and Burden, 1997:139-40).
Further, the influences within the social constructivist model are interactive. That is to say, there is an interplay between internal and external influences; they can act dynamically and reciprocally on each other, as shown below in Figure 9.1, depending on the situation and the experiences which the learner brings to that situation.

Figure 9.1
An interactive model of motivation

For the learners in this study, the social constructivist model of motivation seems particularly apt, as will be argued below.

9.3. Extension of the Williams and Burden (1997) model to the current study

Figure 9.1 shows, by a two-dimensional model, the interplay between internal and external influences and the way in which they act dynamically and reciprocally on each other, at the moment of the Decision to Act. Figure 9.2 attempts to extend the Williams and Burden (1997) two-dimensional, circular model and to convey the impression of the internal and external influences interacting over a period of time; the three-dimensional cone represents the
progress of the immigrant learners through various stages, or levels, of English language learning.

Stages additional to the Williams and Burden (1997) model are included in Figure 9.2, as they are specific to the subjects in this study. Immigration, is the first stage and Nurture the Family ¹ the ultimate stage, at the bottom of the diagram. The latter entails the ability to maintain the family unit by providing for its physical needs, such as food and shelter, as well as its emotional, and developmental needs, such as education. Nurture the Family is considered to be the ultimate goal which immigrant learners seek to achieve, and is the ideal which many believed immigration to Australia could effect. To achieve this goal completely, however, it is suggested that immigrants need to pass through the penultimate stage, labelled Integration. In this stage it is not suggested that the immigrant ‘assimilates’ into the Australian community by a loss of cultural identify. Rather, it is suggested that the immigrant maintains cultural identity and enriches it by achieving the three basic, interactive goals implied at this stage: find a job/further study, interact with the Australian community, and satisfy affective needs.

The specific examples listed in the boxes of the Internal and External factors are those which emerged from the data in this study. (For reasons of space, those factors are listed to the left and right of the diagram.)

At the level of the Decision to Act arrows indicate the interplay between the Internal and External factors and the Decision to Act itself. To maintain clarity, the detail of that interaction is not repeated at other levels of language learning, but nevertheless, in interpreting the diagram, it should be remembered that such interplay continues between the internal and external factors over time and is influential on the stages of learning as the learner makes progress towards Nurture the Family. Indeed, it is considered that any factor can influence any stage. In short, when interpreting the diagram, it should be remembered that the factors continue to operate on each other

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¹ As all participants, except one, in Stage 4 of the study were members of a family unit, the term Nurture the Family will, for simplicity, be used throughout this discussion. Implied in the term though is Nurture the Family, or Self.
Figure 9.2
An interactive model of motivation and the stages of English language learning

IMMIGRATION

trigger

INTERNAL FACTORS

1. Intrinsic interest
   - want to learn more

2. Perceived value
   - find a job

3. Sense of agency
   - personal control

4. Mastery
   - of language skills

5. Self-concept
   - awareness of strengths and weaknesses

6. Attitudes
   - to English language
   - to Australians community

7. Affective states
   - avoid shame
   - anxiety
   - confidence

EXTERNAL FACTORS

1. Significant others
   - spouse
   - children
   - teachers

2. Nature of interaction with significant others
   - children
   - Australian community

3. Learning environment
   - accessible learning centre
   - supportive classroom

4. Broader context
   - government assistance

DECISION TO ACT

language learning strategies

DECISION TO PERSIST

language learning strategies

GOAL

learn English

INTEGRATION

NURTURE THE FAMILY
(represented above as concentric circles), as well as on, and at, each stage of learning, inside the cone.

In the case of the learners in this study the Decision to Act was, in fact, their ‘decision to attend formal English classes to learn English’, while the first Goal was ‘to learn English’. However, as pointed out above, the activity to learn English was undertaken not as an end in itself but was a means to other ends (Williams and Burden, 1997), such as those presented as the next stage of Integration: find a job, further study, integrate into Australian community or satisfy affective needs, and the final stage, labelled Nurture the Family.

The use of a multiplicity of language learning strategies is represented by the labels ‘language learning strategies’ between Decision to Act and Decision to Persist, and also between the Decision to Persist and GOAL. It has been suggested that motivation caused the use of language learning strategies (Gardner et al., 1997). Here, the findings made following the analysis of the qualitative data suggest, importantly, that the use of language learning strategies was influenced by motivation, specifically by its varied internal and external factors which the learner brought to the learning situation. Those factors in turn, as has been explained above, were a consequence of the situation and context of the learner and so were personal and individual (Williams and Burden, 1997).

The progress of learners in this study through the stages of language learning, outlined above, and the influence of internal and external factors on that progress will now be illustrated with data gathered from the subjects.
9.3.1. Immigration

Several subjects related experiences of living in Australia without a knowledge of English, after immigration. Unable to participate in the Australian society, these immigrants could not provide for their own everyday needs:

Sandra: And if you don’t help yourself, you still live there for years and years.
Anna: Some people come many years ago and they can speak just Spanish and they going to the club on Sunday and apart of that they don’t got any other kind of friends.
Sandra: I got one friend, South American, come the same year with my husband and any problem he got calling my husband ‘Can you take me to the bank? Can you take me to the doctor? Can you make me a little?’ I say so many years they not try to learn or speak by himself.
Int: Yeah. How many years would that be?
Sandra: Twenty years.
Int: Really. Yeah.
Sandra: He still got problems. … That’s why some people don’t like Australia. They been here twenty, thirty years here and not happy. They not happy because they can’t speak English. That’s the big problem.
…
Anna: Especially when you’re not in your country, you have to try to understand what you are doing. If not, you always going to depend on somebody.

Mena, Anna and Sandra emphasised the isolation they had experienced:

Mena: … it’s very hard when you came here without English and you don’t understand TV and you can’t read a newspaper, radio, nothing. It’s very hard. It’s like isolated.
… It happened to me more now than before, because I didn’t go nowhere just stayed at home because I couldn’t go by myself, so I stayed with my sister-in-law and we only speak our language,

Anna: And another thing is sometimes happen is something and you don’t know not why or what is going on. You read about no English, just live a very small environment around you and you don’t know any view for outside of what is going or what’s happening in your community or whatever, or what are big news or something. So you really are isolate.

Sandra: … You know without English you locked inside your house and that’s it.
By the time this study was carried out most of the participants of Stage 4 had acquired a level of English proficiency sufficient to participate in the community and, moreover, were able to reflect on and express just how unsatisfactory their previous situations had been. The anxiety and unhappiness which they had experienced would have been a strong incentive to learn English, yet several had not made the decision to attend formal English classes ‘to learn English’ for many years: Sandra had lived in Australia for about fifteen years before going to class, Hui about nine years, Rita and Thi eight years, while Anna, Janetta, Wei and Nan had all lived in Australia for approximately six years before attending formal English classes. On the other hand, all eleven other subjects had started attending within approximately one year of arrival. Thus, it can be seen that the time taken to make the Decision to Act, here the Decision to learn English, varied greatly according to the individual.

9.3.2. Trigger factors

Why then did Mena, Anna and Sandra and other participants in Stage 4 of this study choose to start learning English formally? What was it that aroused them to make the decision to attend formal classes? Williams and Burden suggest:

[the initial arousal may be triggered by different causes, perhaps internal ones such as interest or curiosity, or often by external influences such as another person or event (Williams and Burden, 1997:120).

For most of the subjects here, the trigger to attend English classes had been external, an ‘event’. In the early 1990s, the Australian federal government made changes of policy on tariffs and trade which particularly affected the clothing and textile industries. Consequently, many workers in those industries were made redundant. However, to improve their chances of finding future employment the federal government offered them retraining programs of up to two years. Learning English in classes funded by DEET was one such retraining option which could enhance the subjects’ possibility of finding employment, more in line with the previous non-factory occupation in their country of origin (see Appendix 6). Thus, job redundancy was an external ‘trigger’ factor to subjects such as Thi who took up the offer of attending English classes as she believed that her level of English proficiency was not good:
Thi: Oh yes. Because my factory is redundant so I wanted to improve my English is better. I come in class I think I have good English more than before. Because before I don’t understand English when I need to learn like this.

Another external factor was associated with the changes in government policies; the subsequent rising levels of unemployment in Australia during the early 1990s paved the way for employers to exercise greater selectivity when employing workers\(^2\). Sandra took up the option of English classes as she realised that her search for another job, after being made redundant, would not be as easy as it had been when she arrived in Australia many years earlier. Now, some English skills would be necessary:

Sandra: Because now we need English more than before.
Int: Yeah, why is that?
Sandra: Because before there is more job, plenty job.
Int: Right.
Sandra: You go in the door and ask for a job and if they need people you go in straight away. And they show you what to do, you do it and they’re happy. But now in the factory they need English first, ... 

However, no one factor alone was the trigger. Often, a combination of events or personal needs was causal in the decision to learn English. For Anna, the external factor of job loss was inter-related with another external factor, her divorce, as well as with a consequent internal factor, her need to maintain personal control over her life:

Anna: I was working and then I get my divorce and separation, the things. So my English was very bad. And I start to think of myself and I say I have to really do something for myself and just to stop thinking about that other work and um, I come to the school.

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\(^2\) At the time of the data collection (late 1995), the average rate of unemployment in the Melbourne metropolitan area was approximately 8.3%. However, the rate of unemployment of those who were born outside Australia, particularly in non-English speaking countries, was generally considerably higher. In May 1996, “as a group, persons born outside Australia had a higher unemployment rate (10.6%) than the Victorian [State] average (8.4%)... The highest unemployment rate was recorded for persons from the major country group, Middle East and North Africa (17.7%), while the country with the highest statistically reliable unemployment rate was Viet Nam (18.4%)”. (Source: Victorian Year Book, 1997. pp. 89-90).
9.3.3. Factors influencing the Decision to Act and the Decision to Persist

As a consequence of ‘triggers’, such as those outlined above, subjects had made a Decision to Act, a decision to attend formal English classes. That decision to Leo, Sandra and Peter had been coupled with their acceptance of immigration to Australia for ‘life’ and implied the learning of English:

Leo: Yes, so I should be first learning English language because I did Australia should be for my life.

Sandra: Because for me I decide my life live is here and I need the English to communicate.

Peter: I have to live my life here I must know English. ... For living and having a job, for everything. ... For everything. And I with no English I can't go to the doctor...

The Decision to Act (Decision to learn English) and the later stage, Decision to Persist, were influenced by a combination of factors, as shown earlier (Figure 9.2). Williams and Burden (1997) suggest certain groups of internal factors which can be operative at any stage of the language learning process, can interact with each other, and are also influenced by certain groups of external factors.

The categories of factors which seemed most influential on the learners in this study were identified in the qualitative data. While the categories themselves were broadly similar to those of Williams and Burden (1997), some of the specific factors were different, because of the particular situation of these adult, immigrant learners living in an English-speaking community. Such differences serve to confirm the belief that motivation results from a combination of influences which are personal to the learner and are consequent on the situation and context (Williams and Burden, 1997). Further, it was apparent that some factors were influential only at one stage of the subjects’ language learning, while others maintained an on-going influence.
Outline of influential internal factors

The internal factors which seemed most influential on the learners’ Decision to Act and the Decision to Persist are listed below, with examples from the learners themselves:

- intrinsic interest, degree of challenge;
- perceived value of the activity, particularly in relation to the finding of a job;
- sense of agency i.e. the need to maintain personal control, the desire for greater life enjoyment;
- mastery i.e. feelings of competence;
- self-concept i.e. realistic awareness of strengths and weaknesses;
- attitudes to the target language, English and to the English-speaking Australian community;
- other affective states, such as potential shame, greater enjoyment of life, confidence.

Outline of influential external factors

External factors, with specific examples from this study, which appeared to be influential on the internal factors and consequently on the Decision to Act and the Decision to Persist were:

- significant others, particularly spouse, children and teachers;
- the nature of interaction with significant others, such as those in the English-speaking community, children;
- learning environment, e.g. accessible location of the learning centre, teacher, comprehensible input, other students;
- the broader context, e.g. on-going government financial assistance, avoidance of conflicting interests, wider family.

Examples of the way in which these factors influenced the learners’ Decision to Act and the Decision to Persist will be discussed below.
**Internal factors**

**Intrinsic interest**

The learners were not interviewed at the stage of their **Decision to Act** (Decision to learn English). Thus, no data could be gathered at that time as evidence of intrinsic interest (Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 1989), that is, an interest in learning for its own sake. However, some evidence was found of intrinsic interest influencing the **Decision to Persist**. Thi, for example, after having been engaged for some time in learning English developed an interest which influenced her decision to persist:

Thi: This year? I improve because I want to learn more English. I think last year is not enough. I want to learn more about grammar, or some vocabulary or the story about Australia, it's important we doesn't know before.

Anna, realised that her writing proficiency was not as she wished it to be and so used the continuation of English classes as an opportunity to approach the ‘zone of next potential’ (Vygotsky 1978), the level of skill just beyond that in which she could cope. In other words, her continued learning of English was a challenge to her which if taken up, would generate an added intrinsic dimension (Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 1989) and so provide her with continuing interest and satisfaction:

Int: ... OK so are there any other reasons why you want to keep on learning English? Next year, are you thinking of coming back again, here?
Anna: Yeah. ... Yeah I'm happy, you know, I have the course here ... I can't go into the TAFE because really I don't know what I want to do so what's the point going to study something you really don't like it?
Int: Mm.
Anna: And I prefer you know, learning my English.
Int: Yeah.
Anna: I know I can talk and my writing not 100% like I wish or dream to do.

From the reports of these two learners it seemed that intrinsic interest in the activity of learning English developed as the activity progressed. The students’ initial reasons for learning were extrinsic (Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 1989); they wanted to learn English to realise goals which were

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3 TAFE - Technical and Further Education college
outside the activity. However, as a result of spending productive time on learning, intrinsic factors became operative.

**Perceived value of the activity**

Perceived value is the personal relevance which the learning of English has for the subjects, and the anticipated value of outcome of learning (Williams and Burden, 1997). Although data were not gathered when learners were making the **Decision to Act**, it is likely that their perceived value of learning English at that time was extremely high. Had it not been, they would probably not have made the decision to learn English. Experience had shown them that without English they could not hope to interact successfully with the Australian community.

Later, at the stage of **Decision to Persist** the perceived value of the activity of learning English remained high:

- Betty: I live here and I have to know the language. It's everywhere on the street, everywhere. I have to know.
- Maria: ...Because I want to understand all, all thing about Australia.
- Thi: ... Because I improve my English because sometimes I want to understand what the people say.
- Int: Which people?
- Thi: In the factory or on TV, or somewhere, everywhere, or shopping or what they say, I want to understand.

Much of the value in persisting in learning English was the anticipated outcome of finding a job.

- Mena: Mm. I mean the biggest reason is because of the job.
- Peter: For living and having a job, for everything.

Only one subject, of the eleven who commented on this aspect, stated that finding a job was not important:

- Betty: I don't think about get job, because it's too far away for me.
For all others, the need to find a job was paramount. Thus, for them, the need to learn English was crucial. The following comments of Leo, Nan and Janetta reflected the influence of the external factor, the high unemployment rate in Australia. Leo believed that learning English could enable him to find a job more easily:

Leo: I hope, I hope learn more English because I can't speak very well and I not good listening and I can't understand what some many at professional words so I should be learn study more English. Then maybe get improve me about English then I think get job maybe easier.

Improving her oral proficiency offered Nan the possibility of finding a job more quickly:

Int: OK, yeah. What's the main reason?
Nan: Maybe if I speak very well I might get a job quickly and also I can communicate well with other people.

and Janetta, a good job:

Janetta: Oh first I have to find a good job. We have to speak if we can find a job. If you want to find a good job you have to speak and learn and try to manage.

Anna though, realised that:

Anna: ... my English is obstacle all the time ...

when expressing her wish for a job which would bring greater satisfaction:

Anna: ... I want to do something where I feel good.
Int: Right. And how do you think that will help? How do you mean you want to do something where you feel good?
Anna: Because I been working in factories,
Int: Right.
Anna: And really I'm sick and tired of factories because it's too much stress job and I want to do something I like to do but I don't know what.
Int: Yeah. What sort of work did you do in your country?
Anna: I was kindergarten teacher.

Rita expressed the desire of a very specific job setting; because she needed to be readily available for her autistic son she wanted to work in her own home, as a child care worker employed by the local Council. But, without good proficiency in English her chance of obtaining such a job was low. Thus, for Rita the value of persisting with learning English was very high:
Int: OK so the reasons for you continuing to learn more English would be your family, for a job?

Rita: Yeah for a job, because I want find a job for child care. I like child care. …
Because I want in my home, because I need to stay in my home every time because sometimes the teacher call me ‘Your boy is sick’. I need go.

Int: So you need some work at home.

Rita: At home, yes.

For Thi and Serge greater proficiency in English was essential to the type of job, or further study, which they wanted:

Thi: I like cooking but some special words for cooking, maybe I didn’t know, so I have to learn that’s why because I interesting about it.

Int: So you are learning this, sort of, hoping that you’ll get a job?

Thi: Yes, that’s right. After maybe I can get a job it’s better.

Serge: I want to learn because I want to continue my study. I want to take some skills example, for the computers, I need to know something.

Not surprisingly, the accounts given here by the learners indicate that they perceived the value of learning English to be high, for reasons of interacting with the Australian English-speaking community and for reasons of finding a suitable job. Had they considered the value to be otherwise they would, no doubt, have discontinued their attendance at formal English classes before achieving such levels of proficiency.

**Sense of agency**

A sense of agency is:

...the sense people have of whether they cause and are in control of their actions, or whether they perceive that what happens to them is controlled by other people ... (Williams and Burden, 1997:127).

Several subjects recounted the ways in which, in the past, they had been without a sense of agency and independence. Because of their lack of skills in English they had had to rely on others to interact with the Australian society. They contrasted that with their current situation, pinpointing the gaining of proficiency in English as crucial to the process of their developing sense of agency and independence.
Sandra: ... You know without English you locked inside your house and that’s it. ... I had never been in the cinema and now I take my daughters in the cinema. ... I had never been before the doctor myself, always my husband with me. Now I can go myself or take my daughter to the doctor. Do things myself.

Rita: For me very important everybody learn English, learning English.
Int: Why is that so important?
Rita: Because is more, the person is more independent, is more easy for help the children. ...
It was very hard for me, very hard time, because I depend 100% on my husband, everything. I go to the doctor, bank, he made everything, but now he, he work all day. I can go to the bank, I can go to the doctor, I can go to CES for ...

Int: ... So why is it important for you to learn English? What are the reasons for you?
Janetta: Oh it’s very important, not because of I want to find some good job, but if I go somewhere I don’t have to ask interpreter. If I have to write some letters I don’t have to ask somebody to help me, so that’s really good. That’s why, .... Because before, before I start here I need, I always needed interpreter ....

Anna expressed most vividly her current wish to gain some control of her actions, in this case her choice of job but without English, she realised that she had little, if any, such control. She had previously worked in a factory, a job for which she felt quite unsuited and in strong contrast to the type of work she had done, and enjoyed, before coming to Australia:

Int: Yeah. What sort of work did you do in your country?
Anna: I was kindergarten teacher.
Int: Oh right. I think you told me that before.
Anna: Yeah. And last two years before coming to Australia I was working in a like a superannuation company.
Int: Oh right.
Anna: I was a saleswoman. And I had to visit people and, you know, try to convince them come my company and, you know, and talk with them all the time and you have to choose the people who earn more money because was better commission. So all the time I go straight to the head over there and talk with them. It was very nice job because really all the time I think I have scared to the people, so that was hard in one way, but it was good, because my personality become stronger and I really liked that job. I liked to talk with the people.
Int: Yeah.
Anna: You know it was nice. ... Yeah, talk, so at that time I feel very happy because I think I could do that kind of job. But when I come here it was complete different. I had to go in to the factory and I couldn’t speak and I couldn’t explain myself and I can’t say how I feel or nothing. ...
Int: What sort of work, do you have any ideas what sort of work you’d like to do?
Anna: I like um, social studies work.
Int: Right.
Anna: And I like creative jobs. Really I don’t know just I been thinking all this time because, you know, all the time they ask, what you been thinking, what you’re going to do later on and really I don’t know. Really I don’t know.
Int: It’s very difficult isn’t it?
Anna: Yeah, because whatever you choose is not able for you, available for you, because you, I think I’m not ready, I’m not prepared enough for whatever. Community service can’t be because my English, I still have problem with my English, so I don’t feel, you know, confident for that.
Int: Mm.
Anna: And really for teacher again, no that’s ....

These comments clearly convey Anna’s strong belief that proficiency in English was critical to her ability to find satisfying work. Because she knew her abilities, having been successful in enjoyable work before, she was readily able to identify a lack of English as the essence of her difficulty. Thus, in making the decision to learn English she was asserting her control over her actions and trying to ensure control over the direction of her life.

Although categorised here as examples of a Sense of Agency, Anna’s comments were inextricably intertwined and inter-related with other internal factors, such as Mastery and Self-concept. Each interacts with and supports the other. Only with a growing sense of mastery of language skills and a greater concept of self could the learners believe that they, and not others, were in control of their situation.

Mastery

Implicit in a sense of mastery are the learner’s feelings of competence, an awareness of developing skill and mastery in the area, and self-efficacy i.e. the learner’s “beliefs about their capabilities to apply effectively the knowledge and skills they already possess and thereby learn new cognitive skills” (Schunk 1989:14).

After many months attending classes, subjects had the benefit of hindsight and so were able to reflect on and report their developing skills in English. Sandra commented on her increasing proficiency in writing and on the ways in which she could now apply the skills she had acquired:
Int: Did you do any writing before you came to class?
Sandra: No, no.
Int: Nothing at all.
Sandra: No. Even the school notes, my husband used to write those.
Int: So what do you write now?
Sandra: Now I can write a letter in English. I can write a report. I can write a lot of things.

Interestingly, Sandra’s comments confirm the quantitative findings for Q17 *I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English*. It will be recalled that when the proficiency levels of the learners was considered, it was found that learners reported making greater use of the strategy as their level of proficiency increased (Chapter Five).

Rita, until two years earlier, had relied totally on her husband for help but now found that her ability to communicate in English enabled her to act independently:

Rita: But I depend, now he work 7 to 7. I, nobody help me. I need I go to the doctor with my children, I explain when he sick or something.
Int: Would you have done that before?
Rita: Nev...
Int: Two years ago?
Rita: No, no.
Int: So there’s a big improvement
Rita: Yes, now I go the bank,
Int: That’s a big improvement then. How do you feel? How does that make you feel?
Rita: I feel more security sometimes, but sometimes I don’t know.
Int: Mm, yes. So how did it feel before, when you couldn’t go to the doctor by yourself?
Rita: It was very hard for me, very hard time, because I depend 100% on my husband, everything. I go to the doctor, bank, he made everything, but now he, he work all day. I can go to the bank, I can go to the doctor, I can go to CES...

As with other factors mentioned above, the factor of *Mastery* was clearly evident in several subjects at the stage of *Decision to Persist* for skills were developed only after time had been spent in learning. As also indicated above, this factor was strongly linked with those of a *Sense of agency* and *Self-concept*. 

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Self-concept

Self-concept is a realistic awareness of strengths and weaknesses (Williams and Burden, 1997). For most subjects, this factor was operative at the stage of Decision to Persist, although some revealed how it had been operative in the Decision to Act. Nan, for instance, had been aware of her lack of comprehension in the work situation before she had started learning English:

Nan: Because I work three, more than three years, but I just work. And when we stop for tea or coffee, they chat and they joke and I didn’t understand anything.

In reflecting on their past weaknesses, others were able to provide a realistic picture of their current strengths and weaknesses. Sandra’s account of her previous weakness in using the past tense is in contrast with her developing knowledge of its use:

Sandra: That was my big problem, always when I speak I always speak present.
Int: Right.
Sandra: I didn’t know the past.
Int: Has that changed since you’ve come to class?
Sandra: Yeah.
Int: How has it changed?
Sandra: I not the same. I learn the verbs and
Int: Yeah. Before you came to class even if you spoke always in the present, did you know that there was a past and that you should have been using the past?
Sandra: Yeah.
Int: Or did you not think about that?
Sandra: Yeah, I knew, but I didn’t know the verbs in the past.
Int: Right.
Sandra: Then I used only the present.

Similarly, Wei realistically assessed the comparative strengths of her listening, speaking and writing:

Wei: Yeah. The listening and speaking was very poor when I was learn in China. We can’t, if we met a foreigner we can’t speak at all. We can’t understand what they’re talking about. But after I came here I improved my speaking and listening. Now my speaking and listening’s even better than writing.

Nan and Anna also were clearly aware of their current levels of proficiency in speaking, writing and listening:

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Nan: I think my speaking is the same. No improvement, I think. I don’t know why. But I think writing is a little bit different.

Int: What’s different about that?

Nan: Difference is that maybe nearly ten years I didn’t write anything in English. Maybe some words maybe I have piece, but not like the perfect tense, like no dictation, no writing reports, no writing like argument something like that. But now I know little bit and I know how to write, I know how to start. I think writing little bit improving ....

Anna: Yeah, sometime I can’t understand very clear what they said. So I think listening I have a little problem.

These comments reveal that subjects were aware of, and able to report on, their previous weaknesses in English and were also able to make realistic judgements about their proficiency in English. Their conservative assessments indicated an awareness of a need to improve which had probably been of some influence on their Decision to Persist.

Attitudes

Attitudes to learning, to the target language (TL) and to the TL community are considered to be important influential factors on the Decision to Act and the Decision to Persist (Williams and Burden, 1997). The positive attitudes expressed by the learners to learning, to the English language and to the Australian community and its culture were probably significant influences on their decision to learn English and to persist.

That no participant in Stage 4 of the study expressed a negative view of English or the Australian English-speaking community is probably not unexpected. Firstly, participants might not have wished to express a negative view of the language or the community to the Australian interviewer, despite every attempt being made to put them at their ease. Secondly, subjects in this study were likely to have been positive in their attitude; those immigrants who had felt negative towards the language or the Australian community would, most likely, have avoided attending classes at all or at least not persisted as long as had these learners. Examples of the positive attitude of the learners are given below.
to learning

Thi, indicated her positive attitude to learning of English:

Int: Yeah. But why do you want to [learn English]?
Thi: Because I enjoy it, I like.

to the target language

Mena specifically revealed a liking for the language itself:

Mena: ... And third reason is because I always liked English.
Int: Mm.
Mena: Even when I was a child I wanted to learn English because it's very soft, you know when you hear it, it sounds nice.
Int: Yeah?
Mena: Yeah and I always wanted to learn, but in my country it was very expensive, like 45 minutes was like 20 Australian dollars, so my parents said no. So I had to learn Russian.

to the target language community

Four of the subjects expressed attitudes, largely positive, to the Australian TL community. Betty commented on the multicultural nature of the Australian community and on the general level of tolerance within it:

Betty: Oh, I think, Australia is not a bad country, is OK. First thing, that Australia has all people from all world and they live here with, I never heard about some conflicts. Maybe a little but it can't be because is whole world one country and they live OK. ... so Australia I think, is good. They mix as a country here, and they still are very happy. And one thing the Australian people are very good.

as did Peter:

Peter: For me it was difficult first six or seven months. When I started learning every day I know more and more. Now is not very difficult but sometimes I cannot explain everything that I want. But people here in Australia are I think very friendly and they want to understand.

Leo indicated that older Australians, in particular were “kindly”:

Leo: They all almost Australian very kindly.
Int: Are they? Mm, mm.
Leo: Yes. Specially maybe age.

although Anna recalled that she had been upset by the lack of understanding of younger people:
Anna: I wish so many times say, I wish you just speak Spanish you know because at the time when I come young people don’t help you.

Int: Yeah.

Anna: Some don’t try to understand a thing. The old people they try and understand you … with more understanding, but the young ones with the shopping or whatever, they just don’t care. So sometimes I think you know maybe I upset.

The statement Maria made was probably the most realistic summing up of the reactions of English speakers in the Australian community to those from another language background:

Maria: … Depends on the person. Somebody is very nice, somebody is very hurry.

In presenting *Attitude to learning, to the target language and to the TL community* as influential on the motivation of language learners, Williams and Burden (1997) seem to be reiterating Schumann’s (1976) proposition, that positive attitudes towards the TL and the TL community are necessary in the successful outcome of TL learning. For Schumann, such positive attitudes need to be reciprocal whereas for Williams and Burden (1997) the responsibility for positive attitudes rests with the learner. Schumann (1976), presenting his Acculturation Model, argued that a series of factors, promoting either social distance or proximity between two groups, would affect the degree to which a second language learning (L2) group acquired the language of a particular target language (TL) group. The greater the social distance between two communities the fewer opportunities there were for contact and consequent language acquisition. He argued that social solidarity and hence a good language learning situation would exist where the L2 group was non-dominant in relation to the TL group, where both groups desired some form of assimilation for the L2 group, where the two cultures were similar, where the L2 group was small and non-cohesive, where both groups had positive attitudes toward each other, and where the L2 group intended to remain in the target language area for a long time. Stauble (1980) however, believed that psychological factors, particularly motivation “are more influential than social factors in varying one’s degree of acculturation” (Stauble, 1980:48), while McLaughlin considered that “it is not objective conditions but what the learner perceives that forms the learner’s reality” (McLaughlin, 1987:126).
The learners in this study seemed to match most of the criteria of Schumann’s model; being immigrants they intended to remain in the Australian community for a long period of time, if not permanently. Their languages were non-dominant in the English-speaking Australian community which, in general, was positive towards immigrant groups and desired their integration, if not their assimilation.

The factor of attitudes is one which could have been influential in the initial stage of Decision to Act as well as at the later stage of Decision to Persist. Had subjects not been positive in their attitude to learning, to the language and to the English-speaking Australian community, it is unlikely that they would have made the effort to attend classes to learn the language. The fact that they persisted in their efforts to learn English was an indication of their positive attitudes.

Other affective states

Many affective factors were influential throughout the language learning of the participants in this study. Following the coding and analysis of the qualitative data twenty-eight different affective states, which subjects had mentioned during the course of the study, were identified. To maintain the feelings expressed by the subjects those states were not generalised into broad categories but were coded, where at all possible, according to the word which subjects had used themselves. Strikingly, twenty-two of the total number mentioned were negative affective states, or conditions: embarrassed, stress, tension, anger, afraid, nervous, tired, shame, unhappy, ignorant, ridiculous, idiotic, isolated, helpless, loss of face, offended, scared, low, bad, upset, bored and frustrated. Only six of the affective states reported by the learners could be described as positive: self-esteem, achievement, confident, happy, good and secure. That such an imbalance of affective states was evident serves to emphasise the adverse nature of the learners’ immigration experiences. Despite that, however, the perceived value of learning English underpinned their resolve in making the Decision to Persist. Some examples of the affective states have already been mentioned earlier in relation to other influential factors. Others will be discussed below.
Embarrassment

Despite embarrassment, learners had persisted in their efforts to learn English. Nan and Bai described their feelings of embarrassment, common to many L2 learners, when speaking to a native speaker:

Nan: Yeah because when Australian people speak I feel shy to go to front of them who speak English because I know if they ask me something I can't answer. I feel little bit shy.

Bai: ... when you are talking to another people they speak very quickly. You feel ashamed to always speak 'Pardon?'. You feel terrible.

In contrast, Betty from Poland together with Anna and Sandra from Chile reported as much embarrassment when speaking English in front of another immigrant from their country:

Betty: ...No-one thinks it's very scary, and I don't know why, but if someone is from my country except my husband, so I don't speak.
Int: Is that so?
Betty: Yes, some people are not better, but sometimes the people, you know, it seems like they are better and good and I think maybe they want to laugh for me because I couldn't speak, so my conversation was very bad.
Int: Has that happened? People from your country that laughed?
Betty: Not really, no. Maybe I am so embarrassing like that or scared or quiet, something.

Anna: ... when we come here, we were afraid especially in front of another people from your country.
Int: Why?
Anna: Because you don't talk properly.
Sandra: You're embarrassed to make mistake.
Int: Yeah, in front of your own country more than other people?
Anna: Yeah, I think so. For me it was that way.
Sandra: Yeah.
Int: Yeah. Were you the same, more embarrassed with...
Sandra: Maybe, depend on another person knows more than me and I'm going to talk and say something wrong.
Int: Yeah. I'm interested in that, you know with people from your own country.
Anna: Because at the time when I come, many Chileans were here before, so when I say something was wrong, they just laugh, and I feel very ridiculous.
Sandra: Yeah.
Anna: And tried to do my best but at that time was, you know, I was scared to talk in front of somebody speak my language and know English more than me, so it really just made me don't speak when somebody was over there.
Members of the L1 community are often those which provide firm support for immigrants who do not have English language skills, as Sandra attested, above, of her husband’s help to an immigrant friend. As already related immigrants experience a range of difficulties, many which they anticipate, when interacting with the English-speaking Australian community. They would, though, hardly anticipate a lack of support from their own L1 community. Yet, Anna and Sandra poignantly revealed that even among members of that group support was not always forthcoming; instead of support they received ridicule. Understandably, Anna chose to be silent.

Shame

For Serge, the need to avoid shame when returning at some time in the future to visit his friends was a strong influence on his decision to learn English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int:</th>
<th>So what for you is the main reason for learning English. For you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serge:</td>
<td>Main reason for me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int:</td>
<td>Mm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge:</td>
<td>Because I’m young I want to learn. One day if I go to holiday I, they will be shame of me because I didn’t learn English language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int:</td>
<td>When you went back?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge:</td>
<td>For the holiday, yes. And I see my friends, old friends and I been here for the couple of years and I don’t know how to speak English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int:</td>
<td>Right. OK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge:</td>
<td>I will shamed. (laughs) Yes, really.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Need to enjoy life

Nan’s wish to enjoy life, and particularly the workplace was an influential factor in her decision to learn English:

Nan:  Because I work three, more than three years, but I just work. And when we stop for tea or coffee, they chat and they joke and I didn’t understand anything. ... Just I talk a few and then I start work again. So if I knew more English I will enjoy more.


**Anxiety**

As recounted above, several subjects had experienced anxiety when trying to live in the Australian community, without English. Yet, even after making the **Decision to Act** that anxiety was not always alleviated. Betty vividly recalled her painful experience in a classroom soon after making a decision to learn English:

Betty: So we started the course and the course was so hard for me. ... I went to T.’s class and T. said ‘Can you write a few sentences about your, about yourself?’ and I was crying because my friends translate me this sentence to me, what I have to do and I didn’t know how to write and I didn’t understand her, so I was crying. “Oh how can I be here in this class? I don’t understand and I can’t write”, so it was awful. ... And writing was awful. Oh my God. I don’t like remember this time.

Int: No.

Betty: But it takes a while.

Int: So how long did it take, do you think, until you started feeling better?

Betty: Maybe was the third course with P.

Int: Right, so how long would that have been?

Betty: Six, eight months.

Betty’s **Decision to Persist** clearly illustrates the way in which several factors were interacting. Though her pain and embarrassment were strong, they were dominated by even stronger operative factors which enabled her to make a decision to continue learning beyond the first eight months or so. Gillette (1994) alluded to such a situation when recording the unsatisfactory learning experience of a student of French:

> a learner’s basic orientation, namely to value or not value foreign language study, does not necessarily change because of a positive or negative learning experience (Gillette, 1994:199)

and suggested that

> a learner’s goal to acquire a specific language is shown to outweigh one disappointing learning experience (Gillette, 1994:200).

Perhaps it was Betty’s emerging sense of confidence, concomitant with her progress, which strengthened the belief that the goal of knowing English was attainable and which, consequently, strengthened her capacity to persist:
Betty: Yeah. I read the first books when I was I think here maybe nine months or ten and I was so happy. It was O my God, I can read English books.
Int: Yeah.
Betty: It was very easy but anyway I was happy so I can do that. So I think “Oh maybe I finish, so I can do another one”.

**Confidence**

As data were gathered after the learners had made a **Decision to Act**, evidence of the influence of the factor **Confidence** was reported later, at the stage of the **Decision to Persist**. By that time, learners had the benefit of hindsight and were able to assess their progress in learning English and to feel confidence in their increasing proficiency:

Int: Mm, so how does it feel now?
Sandra: I feel more confident now.
Int: That's good, isn't it?
Sandra: Yeah.
Int: ... what about reading, from when you started coming to class to now?
Sandra: Yeah, more reading. I can read a book. I read the newspaper.
Int: Did you read before? What did you read before?
Sandra: I read a little bit. I can read before a big and I understand a little, but now I find I can read and understand all.

Janetta indicated how her increasing level of English proficiency had given her more confidence and, accordingly, more independence:

Janetta: Oh it's very important, not because of I want to find some good job, but if I go somewhere I don't have to ask interpreter. If I have to write some letters I don't have to ask somebody to help me, so that's really good. That's why.

Increasing levels of confidence in turn served to influence motivation. Leo's level of confidence had motivated him to “study hard”:

Int: How does this make you feel? How do you feel about this?
Leo: Feel is very confident about future because I can, I study hard I think I will make good, great improve.
Int: Yes.
Leo: Maybe I will be, I can speaking fluently. Then I think I get job easier. Then my life in my family is very good, is very happy.
Thus, it can be seen from the few examples cited above that many affective states were influential on the English learning of the subjects. The majority of those expressed were negative, yet, despite all, these learners perceived the value of English as high and so persisted in their learning.
External factors

The four external factors of Williams and Burden (1997) which were outlined earlier in the chapter are reiterated below, with examples specific to the participants reports and which seemed to have been the greatest influence on their ‘decision to learn English’:

- significant others, spouse, children and teachers;
- the nature of interaction with significant others, such as those in the English-speaking community, children;
- learning environment, e.g. accessible location of the learning centre, teacher, comprehensible input, other students;
- the broader context e.g. on-going government financial assistance, avoidance of conflicting interests, wider family. (after Williams and Burden, 1997:139-40)

These four factors will now be discussed.

Significant others

Because the learners in this study were immigrant and living in an English-speaking community the nature of their interaction in English was not dependent on exchanges in the classroom alone, as it would be for learners in a foreign language learning situation. Additionally, these learners were adult and so the ‘significant others’ were not the ‘parents, teachers and peers’ of Williams and Burden (1997) model, but were those with whom they interacted in English outside the classroom: spouse, children and also the members of the Australian English-speaking community. It was with those people that interaction, and the implicit feedback, became meaningful and influential firstly, on the Decision to Act, and later, on the Decision to Persist.

Spouse

Interestingly, no male subjects commented on the influence of the spouse in their learning of English. The comments made by female participants, though, generally implied the positive influence of their husbands on the Decision to Act and the Decision to Persist.
One factor which had influenced Maria’s **Decision to Persist** with her learning had been her husband’s inability to communicate in English; she was the one on whom the family depended when interaction with the English-speaking community was needed:

Maria: Yes, yes because I need I understand English.
Int: Yes.
Maria: Because my husband,
Int: Why?
Maria: I think I have to ... how explain. In my home I am the principal speaking English, person. When I have a problem I have to explain, or when I have to call something else.

For others, the husband, in most cases, was supportive and encouraging of the subject’s efforts to learn and use English, to seemingly positive effect:

Rita: But my husband say you, my husband say you improve because now you, you write papers...

Betty: And I started I think understand more and my husband say 'You understand more than me,' ...

Betty: So my husband tells me what to do and now I have to do. And all the time when we’re going to the shop 'OK, ask her', something like that.

Those who already had a knowledge of English sometimes gave help:

Hui: Yes, sometimes. Sometimes I ask my daughter, and my husband.

Kit: But my husband’s suggestion was without vocabulary ...

Kit: ... and it was very very tiring and exhausting and later my husband suggested that way...

or correction, when needed:

Kit: My husband correct me very often ... I'm grateful for it,...
Other husbands were themselves trying to learn English, so support was mutual:

Betty:    In the first class I was with my husband.

Mena:    I put it in my bedroom next, on the wall and I read it and my husband too because he tries to learn English too. It's OK.

Betty:    Especially always what I heard in school I take home and speak to my, talk to my husband and friends and they know from me.

Only one subject, Nan, indicated on two occasions that she received no help from her husband with her classwork at home:

Nan:    But my husband doesn't help me at all. He can speak very good English. Very well. But he doesn't help me at all. He says if you want to learn something you can learn it for yourself. If you don't have intelligence I can't help you. If you want to learn you have to learn yourself. Not even once.

Nan:    ... but my husband didn't help me. I think if he helped me I could speak in very good English. He doesn't. Sometimes I take homework, if I don't understand he doesn't check dictionary. If you mistake your teacher will help you, something else.

Despite the lack of assistance at home from her husband, Nan was persisting in learning English. However, that Decision to Persist, it seemed, had been strongly influenced by her husband’s opinion:

Nan:    Yes, I think I have to improve my speaking because my husband said when you go for a job interview or something they won't see your writing, they will see how you speak, how you understand and how you look, talk, if your grammar is correct or not. They will check that all.

These examples serve to illustrate the various ways in which the subjects’ learning of English was influenced by their husbands. They highlight the individuality of each learner’s circumstances and the support which they received.

**Children**

For most subjects, the factor which seemed to have exerted the greatest influence on the learning process was a particular group of ‘significant others’, the children. As was described earlier (Chapter Eight), a strong
influence on Sandra and Anna in their Decision to Act and the Decision to Persist in learning English was their low level of oral proficiency and their children’s consequent embarrassment:

Sandra: Because for me I decide my life live is here and I need the English to communicate. My daughters now growing and they got friends come home and a little embarrassed to talk to their mother, communicate with the people, even the parent of the girls come to pick the girls up you can talk, you need speak.

Anna: Yes, yes, because they feel embarrassed.
Int: Do they?
Anna: Yes. When I talk with friends, they feel embarrassed and no talk in front of me. So it’s hard. …
Int: But how do you feel about them being embarrassed?
Anna: Now, helpless. Yeah, that’s when I decided to come to study because um really I don’t have opportunity to study before.

As well, for Anna, the decision to learn English, the Decision to Act, was influenced by her inability to help her children as she would have done in Chile. In Australia, without English, she could not:

Anna: …But anyway sometimes they have very big homework and they don’t got the time to do it.
Int: The children?
Anna: Yes, so, and I want to help them but my English don’t was enough for that, so I feel very helpless.
Int: Yeah.
Anna: So I said I going to keep studying so feeling better in come shorthand typing or whatever, I have to do it because they really sometimes got so many things to do and they need help. Normally in my country we help to the kids with their maths or and everything and I do the same thing here, but my English is obstacle all the time …

Thus, a combination of factors was operative in the decision to learn English and to persist; for Anna, the desire to help her children and her response to their embarrassment prompted her to act.

The desire to be able to help the children with school work was strong with Thi also. She had wanted to be able to “teach” her children:

Thi: Um, we just have to, have to know to teach our children or some information for your family is better.
Thi: We like learn more English because sometimes we have to teach the children what they learn about in the future. Maybe not much, little bit is helpful.

However, the extent of the desire to ‘help’ the child with formal learning was consequent on the age of the child. Serge, the father of a child only three months old, was not concerned in that way for his son:

Serge: My son is born here and sometimes, he will learn easily English, I know that.

Yet, it was not just the desire to help the children with their learning which was influential in the decision of some subjects to learn English. Rita had been impelled to make a Decision to Act by the needs of her two disabled children:

Rita: Because I think I need learning English speak because my boy is autistic and I talk in my house only Spanish but he talks in school only English. For him it's very hard two language. I need speak English to help my children.

For Leo, aged 54, other reasons pertaining to his children had influenced him to make the Decision to Act and the Decision to Persist. With his wife he had migrated to Australia from Taiwan about eighteen months earlier in an effort to keep the family unit together. His two daughters, aged in their early twenties, had been studying in Australia for about ten years and were by that time at university. His son had also come to Australia after qualifying as an engineer in the USA.

Int: ... Oh right. What about your son, did he come here to study?
Leo: No, in America. Finished school and come to Australia, family together.

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Leo’s Decision to Act, to learn English, was influenced by his belief that his migration to Australia was for life,

Leo: Yes, so I should be first learning English language because I did Australia should be for my life.

by his strong wish to integrate into the Australian community and to understand some of its cultural activities:

Leo: No, just watch because I think my friend told me they cricket plays is very much in Australia should be understand that.
Despite his difficulties in learning
Leo: Some not easy to remember because age (laughs) is too old

he persisted, believing that in doing so he would be able to achieve his ultimate goal, that of *Nurturing the Family*:

Leo: Maybe I will be, I can speaking fluently. Then I think I get job easier. Then my life in my family is very good, is very happy.

However, Leo’s plans to keep the family together seem to have been frustrated by the situation of high unemployment in Australia. At the time of the data collection his son had been unable to find a job and had returned to Taiwan:

Leo: But in Australia is not easy to get job because my son is finished university, school, still can’t get job. Engineer, so now is return to Taiwan.
Int: Oh he’s gone back?
Leo: Yes, waiting three years, but not get a really job.

As well, one of his daughters was contemplating returning, albeit unwillingly, as she too found it difficult to find a job in Australia:

Leo: Yes, she like Australia, I don’t know, the life because she like Australia. She can go home Taiwan, can get job. She say I like this life, it’s very easy. So she doesn’t like go Taiwan.

Thus, for learners such as those exemplified above, the influence of children had been an extremely strong motivating factor on their decisions firstly, to migrate to Australia then to learn English and to persist.

**The nature of interaction with significant others**

*English-speaking Australian community*

Subjects related very graphically the ways in which they had initially been unable to interact in English with the Australian community. Before making the Decision to Act subjects had found it impossible to participate successfully in the society. As a consequence, confidence and a sense of self-worth were low.
**Neighbours**

Sandra had been living in Australia for about seventeen years but only during the last two years had she attended formal classes to learn English. She related how she had lived before, without sufficient English language skills, and the effect on her self-esteem and emotional well-being:

Sandra: ... Before I was scared to speak with the new family like my neighbour, and speaking I always avoid to speak with her, but now I'm all right. I can go and say 'Hello, how are you' start to talk something. Before I used to be scared.

Int: Yeah.

Sandra: I preferred not see nobody, ... I feel low, because always my husband speak with the neighbour, or my husband speak and I always inside avoid to speak with them and I feel like ignorant, when you can't speak...

**Shopping**

Sandra also recounted her experience of trying to go shopping when she first arrived in Australia and the loss of all confidence when her efforts to speak English were not understood:

Sandra: Like me, the first time I came, I went to the butcher to buy meat and the girl not understand me and I not talk any more. I come back home. I cried. I couldn't buy the meat. I know I say, a friend of mine teach me, 'Go and say that'. I went there, say that and the girl like talk another language. ... That time I was scared to go again.

Anna too, outlined how she had been overwhelmed by having to cope with the everyday tasks necessary to support and organise her family, without the resources of English:

Anna: When I have to go to the supermarket to get my shopping and I didn't know even how the milk comes.

Int: Yeah, yeah,

Anna: She have to show me everything and how to pronounce you know the things.

Int: Uh huh. So who was that?

Anna: Was a lady from the St Vincent de Paul. ...

Int: It's difficult isn't it?

Anna: Yeah, yeah, normally I cry every day at this time.

Int: So how long, how long were you sort of crying every day?

Anna: Ohhh.

Int: How many weeks, how many months?

Anna: I think the first year, I always cry.

Int: Really.

Anna: Yeah. Because my husband start to work and I have to put my school, to put my kids at the school without interpreter. And even we didn't have a telephone at that time so I have to try to
explain them with my kids at school, open my bank account and ah, somebody told me I have to put my kids at Language Centre ... So my kids went for six months there, and my daughter took the English straight away, so later on I asked her for translate whenever.

Int: Right, so she helped you.
Anna: And she was only six years old, ...

**Work**

Two other participants, Thi and Nan, told of their feelings at work when they had been unable to interact socially with others:

Nan: Because I work three, more than three years, but I just work. And when we stop for tea or coffee, they chat and they joke and I didn't understand anything.
Thi: Yes, coffee time and lunch time.
Nan: Just I talk a few and then I start work again. So if I knew more English I will enjoy more....
Int: Mm. How does it feel when you can’t understand?
Thi: Oh feel horrible. Feel boring when you can't talk. I don't understand what the people say, you feel boring.

Several days later, Thi again referred to her earlier work situation, and her frustration when she was not able to communicate in English with others:

Thi: So after that I go to work, I feel very bad, you know, because you can't understand what the people say and you can't talk with them and what do you want or you want to tell them something, you can't, you can't do it.

Anna also recalled her first experience of work in Australia, before she was able to communicate in English, contrasting it with the very satisfying job she had had before she left Chile:

Anna: ... But when I come here it was complete different. I had to go in to the factory and I couldn't speak and I couldn't explain myself and I can't say how I feel or nothing.

Although perhaps not the strongest influence, the unsatisfactory and often painful nature of their interaction with the Australian community was of some influence on the subjects’ **Decision to Act**. After having learnt some English and with the benefit of hindsight, though, increased ability and confidence strengthened the influence of the English-speaking Australian community as a factor on their **Decision to Persist**.
Learning environment

The accessibility of the AMES learning centre, located as it was close to train and several bus routes, was a strong influence on the learner at the stage of Decision to Act. From the class attendance rolls, it was noted that most of the subjects lived within five miles of the centre. As well, the centre itself presented a pleasant learning environment. Classrooms were well-resourced, and teachers well-qualified and experienced.

Although no data were gathered to confirm these impressions, it seems likely that the external factor, convenient location, had been an influencing factor in the subjects’ Decision to Act and also, later, in the Decision to Persist.

At stages beyond the initial Decision to Act other factors pertaining to the learning environment were influential. Teachers, for example, exerted a strong influence. As shown earlier in this chapter (Anxiety - Betty), the effect of the teacher on levels of anxiety could be significant. Important in that process was the practice of the teachers of using comprehensible input, as five of the subjects reported:

Betty:  ... All teachers they speak very nice, slowly. Everything is clear, I catch everything.

Rita:  The teacher speak very good English, very complete the course [sentence]

Bai:  Teacher speak very quickly …, but very clearly.

Peter:  I understand when my teacher everything at school…

Mena:  ...but you know, our teacher she knows what we can understand and what we can’t and she explains that to us.

Twelve of the nineteen subjects had been attending the same centre for more than one year, some had been attending for more than eighteen months. Had they not found the learning environment to be congenial and supportive, it is unlikely that these learners would have continued for so long. Thus, a significant influence in the learning of the subjects in this study appears to have been the accessible and supportive environment of the centre in which they enrolled.

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Broader context

Factors in the broader context were influential in the learners’ Decision to Act and Decision to Persist.

*Free classes and living allowance*

Although no subjects commented on it, the fact that the classes for these immigrant learners were free was surely a strong influence in the Decision to Act and Decision to Persist. However, free classes would have been of no use if the learner had no other financial means of support. Thus, the fact that the learners were able to access financial support from the federal government in the form of a living allowance enabled the Decision to Act and the Decision to Persist to become realistic options.
9.4. The relationship of context to specific learning strategies

The factors outlined above serve to throw some light on the learning process of the subjects, on why they made a Decision to Act and, later, a Decision to Persist. Although the learners were similar in that most were members of the same AMES class the process which each followed in learning was different and individual. Each learning process was fashioned by the particular context of the learner, a context which was the sum of the past and present life circumstances, such as family, age, language background, attitude, proficiency, education, occupation, and so on. Because each learner’s circumstances were different and individual, the strategies which the learners employed, or did not employ, were specific to themselves and their situation. Thus, it could be said of the learners in this study that they

... are far from passive in their learning; rather, they are actively involved in making sense of the tasks or problems with which they are faced in order to learn. When confronted with a learning task, learners have various resources at their disposal and make use of them in different ways (Williams and Burden, 1997: 144).

Some examples of the different and individual circumstances of the learners and the effect of those on the choice of language learning strategies will now be outlined.

Thi had to decide on the amount of time which she could reasonably allot to her learning of English while meeting the cultural expectations of her Vietnamese family to care for her mother-in-law:

Thi: and now I got my family problem is that my mother-in-law live with me and she sick. She can't do anything by herself, she needs help. So maybe I work half day for English, half day for my family is good in my culture.

Mena, who had left the Former Yugoslavia because of war, responded to her unique circumstances by consciously choosing not to use the strategy of watching the TV news, as described earlier (Chapter Seven):
Int: What sort of programs on TV do you find difficult to watch?
Mena: News.
Int: Right.
Mena: Because I don’t understand many words and sometimes because my husband start to work at six o’clock so he has to leave home at five thirty.
Int: In the morning?
Mena: Very early in the morning and when I watch the news and I see something happened, something big happened I’m scared to stay at home. So that’s why I don’t really watch the news. ... If I watch at night it's all the time in my mind.

Even though watching the TV news might have been valuable to her English language learning, Mena demonstrated her metacognitive awareness by acknowledging the need to take account of emotions and feelings which could affect her learning.

Betty’s background was different from Mena’s. Thus, she did watch the news using her viewing as an effective learning strategy, for a period of two hours each day:

Betty: I watch all the news every day. I start about 5 o’clock and finish at 7 o’clock.
Int: So you go from channel to channel.
Betty: Yeah. So every one the same, so at the end, I understand.

Moreover, the fact that Betty was able to spend so long each day watching the news was due to another element of her individual situation; she had no children, so had plenty of time when at home. In this she was different from most of the others learners who had to spend much time meeting the needs of their families. Betty’s time was not limited and, consequently, she was under no pressure to use the metacognitive strategy of planning her learning time:

Betty: ... I don’t plan. I haven’t got so much to do. I don’t work. I haven’t got children. I have time when I come from school. I have time except the dinner, and that’s it.

In contrast, using TV watching as an English learning situation was not possible for Rita,

Int: What about at home? How often do you watch TV?
Rita: A little, short time. Yeah because maybe only half and hour a day.

as her time was occupied by caring for her two children with special needs:
Rita: Always very hard because my time is very busy because I have two children with problems. My little boy is autistic.

Nor was it possible for Maria, the mother of three children:

Maria: ... it very difficult for me because I no only study English and I have many things to do at home.

Only after her family were in bed was Maria able to use TV watching as a strategy to improve her English listening comprehension. Because she believed the use of the strategy was important she created the time and the situation when she could put it into use:

Maria: Sometimes when I finish the, my home, ten o'clock maybe, they going to bed and I say 'Ah, be happy' and I take something the refrigerator for eat. I watching TV, half an hour alone, myself.

Int: Just relaxing.

Maria: Relaxing, yes. I like watching TV because I want to listen more English.

Int: So it's important for you, the TV?

Maria: Yes, yes because I need I understand English.

Wei’s situation was different again; she did not have any school-aged children who could provide her with some practice in English. Neither did she have much chance to use English at home with her Chinese-speaking husband. So, in response to her individual context she actively created situations in which she could use particular listening and reading strategies:

Int: So what really is that problem then?

Wei: Not much chance to use English.

Int: So how do you get around that problem? Do you make chances to use your English, or...?

Wei: I just watch TV, but when you can't understand, you don't have anyone else to ask, so you have to read and then sometimes borrow some tape. When you're reading, you're also listening.

Int: Yeah, right. Do you do that, listening to tapes and things? What sort of tapes do you listen to?

Wei: I borrow it from the library.

Int: Oh, of what? Tapes of...

Wei: Stories.

Int: And do you have the story there to follow?

Wei: Yes. I listening first. Then I look at the book and listen again.

Int: Oh that's a good idea.

Wei: That's for listening, disability people. The tape...
Thus, it can be seen that the learners were actively involving themselves in the learning process. From their individual circumstances, they were choosing strategies specific to and consequent on the interaction of their individual internal and external influencing factors, to make use of available resources in differing ways. In doing that, they displayed a knowledge of factors relating to the self, and the way in which these affect the use of cognitive processes ... an awareness of one’s personality, feelings, motivation, attitudes and learning style at any particular moment ... (Williams and Burden, 1997:155)
9.5. Conclusion

When viewed from the social constructivist perspective (Williams and Burden, 1997), the individuality of the learners in this study was emphasised. Each immigrant learner was individually motivated to learn English and so chose to act or behave in ways which shaped the learning process, with a view to achieving particular goals. After immigration, on settling in Australia, the learners made a Decision to Act, to learn English and consequently, a Decision to Persist. Such decisions were the outcome of the interaction between ‘trigger’ and internal and external factors which also interacted on the on-going strategy choice of learners. The specific strategies chosen took account of affective needs, and were those most suitable to the circumstances and goals of the learner’s construction of the world.

It was only through the gathering of qualitative data, and its analysis using NUD*IST, that the strategies and the life circumstances of the learners became apparent. The proposition of Gillette (1994)

\[
\text{that future language learning strategy research take students' goals and histories into account (Gillette, 1994:212)}
\]

is well reiterated here for without the examination of qualitative data, rich in accounts of the students’ goals and experience, the illuminating details of their motivation and learning processes and the relationship of those on their learning strategies would not have been revealed.

The final chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, its limitations and the conclusions reached.
Chapter Ten

Summary and Conclusions

10.1. Overview of the chapter

This chapter firstly summarises the findings made in the current study. Then, it presents implications, theoretical, methodological and pedagogical which arise from those findings. Next, suggestions for further research are followed by a description of the limitations of the study. The final section discusses the significance of the findings of the study and the conclusions which are drawn.

10.2. Summary of findings

This study has attempted to examine the language learning strategies of adult immigrants learning English in an AMES setting, in Australia. By analysing quantitative and qualitative data, using the computer software programs of SPSS and NUD*IST respectively, the study has attempted to answer two questions:

2. What particular factors are influential on the use of those language learning strategies?

The summarised findings to those two questions are reported below. For each question, the findings made from analysis of the quantitative data are reported first, then follow those made after the analysis of the qualitative data.
10.2.1. **Research Question 1:** What language learning strategies do immigrant adult learners of English, in an Australian English-speaking setting, report using?

**Strategy use revealed by analysis of quantitative data: SILL strategies**

Statistical analysis using SPSS, of the subjects’ responses to the SILL, i.e. the quantitative data, revealed that

- the learners in the study were ‘high/medium’ strategy users of all but one of the fifty SILL items; only for Q6 I use flashcards to remember new English words did the responses reveal a ‘low’ use.

- SOC strategies were the subscale most highly scored, followed by META, COG and lastly, MEM.

**Strategy use revealed by analysis of qualitative data: SILL strategies**

Although the size of the sample providing the qualitative data was small (n=19), analysis of the qualitative data, using NUD*IST, confirmed certain findings of the quantitative data. Firstly, the high use of particular strategies as found in the quantitative data, was confirmed by the oral reports of a majority of subjects:

- Q10 I say or write new English words several times
- Q15 I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English
- Q30 I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English
- Q38 I think about my progress in learning English

In addition to confirming the responses to the SILL, the analysis of the qualitative data of these four strategies served to emphasise the individual ways in which learners made use of the strategies. Influences of prior learning were obvious as were the value which the learners had placed on attending formal English classes. Of these four strategies, subjects’ reports revealed that Q15 I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to
movies spoken in English in particular was of huge importance as a language learning strategy in the English-speaking Australian community; learners spent a greater time practising this SILL strategy than any other.

Secondly, the low use of certain MEM strategies, as shown in the quantitative data, was confirmed by subjects’ reports of non-use of the strategies:

Q5 I use rhymes to remember new English words
Q6 I use flashcards to remember new English words
Q7 I physically act out new English words.

Other strategy use revealed by analysis of qualitative data: nonSILL strategies

The analysis of the qualitative data also revealed the use of many other strategies, not included in the SILL, but which were of importance in the language learning of the subjects. Some of those were:

Memory - keeping in mind
- drawing a picture
Cognitive - using a dictionary
- repetitive listening
Compensation - remaining silent
Metacognitive / Affective - working alone or with others
/avoiding anxiety
Social - receiving help from children

Of all the non-SILL strategies on which data were gathered, the last listed here, that of receiving ‘help from children’ was the single, most important in the subjects’ learning of English.
10.2.2. Research Question 2. What particular factors are influential on the use of those language learning strategies?

**Factors revealed by the analysis of quantitative data: SILL strategies**

From the analysis of the quantitative data, findings on the influence of factors on the use of language learning strategies were limited. Nonetheless, it was revealed that

- the responses of subjects were remarkably homogeneous. That is to say, no statistically significant relationships were found between strategy use and the variables of age, time spent living in Australia, time spent in prior English learning or L1 background.

This finding raises the possibility that the homogeneity of responses might be explained by the restricted range of English proficiency of learners within the AMES centre (as indicated in Chapter Three, only learners within the ASLPR range of 0 zero proficiency to 2 minimum social proficiency were entitled to attend classes in the centre). However, such an explanation can be only tentative as level of proficiency does not necessarily imply homogeneity. Perhaps, more realistically, the finding suggests that AMES classes were attracting a certain type, or types, of learner.

Further research examining the latter explanation could prove fruitful, as could research which, conversely, examined the needs of those immigrants who had never attended, or who had dropped out from AMES classes.

- a positive relationship existed between only one SILL item, Q17 I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English and the variable of general English language proficiency, as instanced by class level. In other words, a correspondingly greater use of the strategy was reported by learners of greater proficiency levels.

- there was some difference in the response patterns of Asian and European L1 background subjects, with European L1 background subjects generally responding more highly to the SILL items.
One implication of this observation is that conclusions on the response patterns of different cultural groups to items on an instrument, such as the SILL, should be drawn cautiously; differences might be an effect of cultural background and expectations and so merely superficial.

Factors revealed by the analysis of qualitative data: SILL strategies

For strategies which were included on the SILL, analysis of the qualitative data, using NUD*IST, revealed the influence of particular factors. Those factors, described in Chapter Seven, were:

- **Age**, on
  the subscales of MEM and AFF strategies, with older subjects reporting greater use, and learners under 30 years of age making most reports of non-use of those two subscales;

- **L1 background** (or, in the case of Q41, cultural background), on
  
  Q12 *I practise the sounds of English*, with learners of Asian L1 background using the strategy in a bid to overcome the perceived problem of poor pronunciation;

  Q19 *I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English*, with European and Asian L1 learners reporting differences in the ways in which they looked for similarities between their L1 and English;

  Q41 *I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English*, with learners of Chinese background indicating the strategy as personally inappropriate.

- **Length of time spent learning English before arrival in Australia (PreEng)**, on
  
  Q32 *I pay attention when someone is speaking English*, with subjects of less than two years exposure to English making more reports of using the strategy;

- **Length of time spent attending English class in Australia (Eoz)**, on
  the subscale of META strategies, with learners who had attended classes for more than twelve months reporting greater use, and

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• **Time spent living in Australia** *(Toz)*, on 

Q50  *I try to learn about the culture of English speakers,* with most reports of use from subjects who had been living in Australia for more than five years.

**Other factors revealed by the analysis of qualitative data**

The analysis of qualitative data also revealed other factors which influenced the subjects’ use of language learning strategies. These factors were described as ‘internal’ and ‘external’ and, as was seen in Chapter Nine, interacted on each other and on the choice of strategies.

To summarise, the ‘internal’ factors which influenced the use of language learning strategies were:

• *intrinsic interest* i.e. the desire to learn more;
• *the perceived value of learning English,* particularly relevant to subjects in this study who had become unemployed;
• *a sense of agency* i.e. the sense of whether the learners were in control of their lives;
• *mastery* i.e. the belief in the self to learn new language skills;
• *self-concept* i.e. the awareness of strengths and weaknesses;
• *attitudes to the English language and to the Australian community*;
• *affective states* e.g. embarrassment, shame, loss of face, confidence.

Those ‘external’ factors which influenced the use of strategies were:

• *significant others* e.g. spouse, children, teachers;
• *nature of interaction with significant others* e.g. children, Australian community;
• *learning environment* e.g. accessible learning centre, supportive classroom;
• *broader context* e.g. government financial assistance.

The study revealed that the choice of language learning strategies is individual to the learner and is dependent on the learner’s past experience and current life context; no two learners were the same. These influences, together with internal and external factors shaped the motivation of the
learner which in turn, influenced the strategy choice of learners. Strategies were chosen because they were those which enabled the learner to take account of affective needs and which the individual learner believed to be the most suitable to the circumstances and goals of his/her construction of the world.

10.3. Implications of the research for the study of learner strategies

Implications of the research for the future study of learner strategies are noted here. Firstly, are those which pertain to the instrument used in this study to gather quantitative data i.e. the SILL. Next, are outlined implications for the methodology of studies of learner strategies and, lastly, those for classroom teachers and language learners.

10.3.1. Implications pertaining to the use of the SILL

The analysis of the data gathered in this study revealed that

- the SILL is limited in the strategies it can measure. It must be remembered that those strategies which it does not include might well be those used frequently and efficiently by learners. For instance, as shown in Chapter Eight, Wei’s responses to the MEM subscale on the SILL indicated a ‘moderate’ use of those strategies whereas later comments, during interviews, revealed her refined use of memory strategies. One implication of this finding is that conclusions on strategy use should not be hastily drawn from subjects’ response scores on the SILL. Rather, the gathering of further, qualitative data should be used to extend the findings of the SILL and to consolidate opinion.

- responses to the SILL may be constrained by the wording of a particular SILL item. For example, subjects’ oral reports of Q19 I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English revealed that the subjects looked not only at the level of the ‘word’ in their L1 for similarities, but also to grammar, spelling, the sound-word system and to other familiar languages.
• the SILL is underpinned by a Western view of self; it infers that learners should be aiming to be independent, self-monitoring, self-evaluating individuals. Such aims might well be at odds with the cultural norms of many learners from non-Western cultural backgrounds.

• certain SILL items might by culturally inappropriate for particular learners of groups of learners; here, several learners of Chinese background reported Q41 _I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English_ as being inappropriate.

• particular SILL items might not be pertinent to learners, at all stages of learning. Further research is called for into the relationship between strategy use and level of language proficiency.

• the gathering of quantitative data from an instrument such as the SILL is limited in the light which it can throw on the strategy use of language learners. Such data therefore needs to be considered cautiously, and in conjunction with the results of analysis of qualitative data.

10.3.2. Implications pertaining to the methodology used in studies of learner strategies

• It is essential that, in future strategy research using the SILL, or similar scales, the results of analyses of reliability of the scores of the instrument and its subscales be published. Here, analyses of reliability found that the scores of responses to the COMP and AFF subscales were not reliable in English and L1 formats, and only the scores on META and SOC were consistently reliable across all formats used in this study. Publication of results of analyses of reliability could help ensure that only reliable results accumulate as the basis for further research.

• To ensure that reasonable account is taken of the factors shown here to be important to the learners and their process of learning, future studies of the strategy use of second language learners should include the gathering and analysis of qualitative data.

Here, the analysis of quantitative data revealed little of statistical significance on the use of language learning strategies. On the other hand, the analysis of qualitative data, using NUD*IST, provided a rich
supplement to the quantitative data and so served to add to the understanding of strategy use by second language learners. The analysis of the qualitative data revealed relationships between strategy use and variables such as age, L1 background and length of time spent attending English class in Australia. Moreover, it enabled account to be taken of the life situation of the learners, their previous experience and current life situation together with the influences of spouse, children, family, work, and affective needs significant to their language learning. Without the inclusion of such qualitative data, many of the insights gained in this study would have remained obscure.

10.3.3. **Implications pertaining to classroom teachers and language learners**

Although it was not the primary intent of this study to focus on classroom practice, the findings of the study have implications, some of which are outlined below, for the teacher and learner in the language classroom.

- Teachers need to be aware of the past experience and current life situation which the learner brings to the classroom; this study has shown that such factors are critical to the motivation and progress of the language learner.

- Language learners should be encouraged to extend their repertoire of strategies, but teachers should be cautious in prescribing the use of particular strategies to language learners; the findings from the qualitative data in this study showed that certain strategies were not universally useful and that the use of others was dependent on the amount of exposure to the TL and its community.

- Teachers should develop programs of strategy training which, together with increasing learner autonomy help learners toward a greater self-awareness, such that they are able to take individual characteristics and needs into account when selecting strategies for use.

- When organising the classroom and planning its activities, teachers need to take account of the age of the learner and the possible implications of that on memory and the need to avoid anxiety in the learning situation. Learners should be encouraged to extend their range of classroom roles, but nevertheless, should be credited with a degree of self-awareness to
select the type of classroom working arrangement in which they feel confident and secure.

- In an English-speaking community, such as that in which this study was carried out, teachers should raise awareness of the many language learning resources, other than the classroom, available to learners, particularly those of their own children, and encourage learners to draw sensitively on them.

10.4. Further research

The findings of this study suggest directions for further research in the area of language learning strategies. Some were mentioned at various points in earlier chapters and are included below.

1. To encourage findings which take account of the individuality of the learner, more research into strategies, which includes the analysis of qualitative data, should be carried out.

2. Research should be conducted in other adult, immigrant populations to explore the effects found in this Australian study for life situation and motivation on the use of strategies. Additionally, similar studies should be made of other types of language learners e.g. secondary and tertiary ESL students as well as learners in EFL locations, in an attempt to find whether similar effects are found on language learning.

3. Studies need to be made of the language learning strategies of immigrants who have never attended, or who have dropped out, from formal English classes to explore further the factors inherent in making a Decision to Act or a Decision to Persist.

4. Longitudinal study of learners, as they pass through various levels of TL proficiency, is needed to investigate changing patterns of strategy use.

5. Research should be conducted with learners from particular cultural backgrounds to examine ways in which cultural norms influence the use, and reporting, of strategies.
6. The role of the L1 and the orthographic background on the use of particular strategies by learners needs to be examined in greater detail.

7. Further study of the age of the learner and the relationship between that variable and the use of strategies, particularly memory and affective, is called for.

8. The attitudes of parents and children to the parents’ language learning should be further examined to inform on, for example, the incidence of ‘loss of face’ and the strategy of ‘help from children’.

9. Further investigation into the role of motivation of the language learner and the effect of that motivation on the use of language learning strategies is warranted.

10.5. Limitations of the study

Summarised here are the limitations of the study, previously mentioned at several points throughout the thesis. The findings of the study should be considered in the light of these limitations.

- A major limitation of the study was the short period of time in which this study was carried out. Ideally, in a study such as this, the time during which the data is collected should allow for the thorough analysis of quantitative data before the collection of qualitative data. As this study was conducted in a functioning language centre where the maximum course length of subjects was twelve weeks, such thorough, initial analysis of quantitative data was not possible. Certain trends e.g. the use of META strategies by Italian, Spanish and Hong Kong Chinese subjects were found in the quantitative data, but too late to be followed up with interviews of the particular learners during the collection of the qualitative data. Thus, underlying reasons for trends such as those remained speculative.

- The numbers of subjects who responded to the SILL in English were small (N=154). Had a larger sample been available, more findings of statistical significance might have been made.

- The number of subjects who responded to both English and L1 formats of the SILL was limited (n=50) as translations of the SILL were not available
in all twenty-nine relevant languages, particularly those which were numerically significant: Khmer, Farsi, Serbian and Vietnamese.

• The responses of learners, during the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, might well have been subject to the effect of social desirability.

• Ideally, a study of the use of learning strategies would include as wide a range of proficiency levels as possible but, as was pointed out in Chapter Three, only learners to a maximum of ASLPR 2 (minimum social proficiency) were eligible to attend the AMES centre in which the study was conducted. Further, no interpreters were available to assist learners in the range of ASLPR 0 zero proficiency to 1- elementary proficiency and so a valuable source of data from learners with a very low proficiency level in English was not able to be tapped. Thus, the quantitative data was obtained from learners within a narrow range of English language proficiency levels (ASLPR 1- elementary proficiency to 2 minimum social proficiency). Nevertheless, the study does give a picture of the language learning strategy use of those learners who, within practical constraints, were able to be included in the study.

• For practical reasons, the gathering of qualitative data in this study concentrated on learners mainly from the same class, which happened to be one of the highest level of proficiency within the centre. Further, within that class the study tended to concentrate on those subjects who were able to reflect on and report their strategy use in English, as not all learners possessed the same ability to report on their strategy use, particularly when asked to do so in a language other than the L1. Had it been possible to have the services of interpreters during the data collection, and as well to extend the data collection period, a more representative sample of learners within the centre might have been studied.
10.6 Significance of the findings and conclusion

The findings of the study are significant for they lead to the conclusion that, in the case of the immigrant ESL learners here, the choice of language learning strategy, conscious or otherwise, was individual to the learner. That choice was consequent on the motivation which the subject brought to the learning situation, a motivation which was distinct and personal, and which had been shaped by the learner’s past experience, current life situation as well as interacting internal and external factors.

Consequently, individual learners chose strategies which, from their perspective, were suitable to the achievement of their goals and took account of their affective needs and life context. Specific strategies assumed a particular level of importance for the individual learner. For example, the strategy of ‘help from children’ was of great importance for many of the ‘parent-learners’, as was ‘watching TV in English’ for the majority.

The findings of this study have contributed to the knowledge of strategy use of adult, immigrant learners of English in Australia. In drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data they have enhanced the understanding of language learning strategies. Of particular significance are the findings regarding ‘help from children’ because no similar findings have been found so far in the research literature. The strong influence of children on the English learning of the immigrant parent, first as a factor in the decision of the parent to attend English classes, and later as a support in the on-going learning process, brings to light an area in which further research could be particularly fruitful.

Finally, it is believed that this study has made a valuable methodological contribution to the field of applied linguistics. The study has emphasised the necessity of basing quantitative research only on results which can be demonstrated to be reliable. Then, it has shown that the gathering and analysis of qualitative data, using a computer program such as NUD*IST, can enrich and illuminate the findings of quantitative data and, in consequence, greatly enhance the understanding of second language learners and the underlying broader processes of second language acquisition.
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APPENDIX 1

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Here are some questions about you and about your English learning. Please answer them in the spaces provided.

1. What country do you come from? ____________________________
2. When did you arrive in Australia? ____________________________
3. What is your first language? ____________________________
4. What other languages do you know? ____________________________
5. Did you study English in your country? YES _____ NO _____
6. If yes, for how long? _____ years _____ months
7. How long have you been learning English in Australia? _____ years _____ months
8. What was your job before you came to Australia? ____________________________
9. What is your job now? ____________________________
10. Why do you want to learn English? (tick your answers)

   interested in the language _____
   interested in the way of life _____
   have friends who speak English _____
   need to take an English course for further study _____
   need English for a job _____
   need English to talk to my family _____
   other (please explain) ____________________________

11. Age ________
12. Sex ________

THANK YOU!
APPENDIX 2

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)
Version for speakers of Other Languages Learning English

Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL)

Directions

This form of the STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL) is for students of English as a second or foreign language. You will find statements about learning English. Please read each statement. On the separate Worksheet, write the response (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) that tells HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS.

NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE OF ME means that the statement is very rarely true of you.
USUALLY NOT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true less than half the time.
SOMewhat TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you about half the time.
USUALLY TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true more than half the time.
ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you almost always.

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Put your answers on the separate Worksheet. Please make no marks on the items. Work as quickly as you can without being careless. This usually takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. If you have any question, let the teacher know immediately.

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.
7. I physically act out new English words.
8. I review English lessons often.
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.
10. I say or write new English words several times.
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.
12. I practice the sounds of English.
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.
I read for pleasure in English.

I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.

I first skim an English passage (read the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.

I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.

I try to find patterns in English.

I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.

I try not to translate word-for-word.

I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.

To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.

When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.

I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.

I read English without looking up every new word.

I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.

If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.

I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.

I pay attention when someone is speaking English.

I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.

I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.

I look for people I can talk to in English.

I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.

I have clear goals for improving my English skills.

I think about my progress in learning English.

I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.

I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.

I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.

I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.

I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.

I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.

If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.

I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.

I practise English with other students.

I ask for help from English speakers.

I ask questions in English.

I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!
APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

General

- How do you remember things that you learn in English?
- How do you remember new words?
- Do you try and learn things by heart? What things do you try and learn in this way?
- Do you read back over the work you have done in class when you are at home? How often? What do you do?
- Do you try to speak like an Australian person? How do you do that?
- Do you ever start the conversation with someone? Or do you always wait for someone else to speak to you? Who with?
- What do you like watching on TV? How do you help yourself understand?
- Which films have you seen in English?
- Which newspaper do you read? How often do you read it?
- What other things do you read in English? How often do you do that?
- Which books have you read in English? Do you go to the local library?
- Do you read notices from your child’s school?
- Do you write letters/notes to your child’s teacher?
- What other things do you write in English?
- How do you read something in English? Slowly or quickly the first time?
- Are there many words in English which are similar to words in your own language? What are some of them?
- What do you do if you find a word you don’t understand? How do you work out what it means?
- When do you use a dictionary?
- What do you do if people don’t understand you when you are speaking?
- What do you do if you don’t know how to say something in English?
- How do you feel when you are speaking English? What do you do if nervous?
- How do you feel if you make mistakes when you use English?
- How do you think you can improve your English?
- How long will you continue coming to English classes?
- Do you like coming to English classes? Why/why not?
- When do you practise speaking to yourself?
- When do you practise talking with other students in class? Out of class?
- Do you ever listen to other people talking together on a train or bus? What do you do to help you understand?
- Do you like other people to tell you when you say something incorrectly?
- Does anyone ever tell you that you have said something incorrectly? Who? What do you do when that happens?
- Do you ask other people to help you with your English? Who? How do they help you?
- Has your way of learning English changed at all since you first started learning? What do you do that is the same/different?
- How did you learn English in your country before you came to Australia? What is the same/different?
- Do you want to learn about Australia, and Australians? Why/why not?
APPENDIX 4

LANGUAGE LEARNING PROJECT
INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

I am very interested in finding out how different people learn a new language. Everyone learns in a different way and I am interested in the special things people do to help them learn better.

In the next few weeks I am going to try and collect some information about how different people learn English.

I’d be very pleased if you could help me, but first here is some information about the project.

You are free to choose whether to take part or not; you do not have to take part if you don’t want to. However, if you decide to help me you will be asked to do the following things:

**Firstly, in your class**

1. read and sign a form which says that you understand what the project is about and that you are willing to take part;
2. complete an information sheet giving some details about yourself and your English learning;
3. complete a questionnaire about how you learn English. For this, you will need to read 50 statements about learning English, and indicate how true these statements are for you.

**Then,**

4. some of you, not everybody, will be asked to talk to me by yourself, or in a small group, about your English language learning. These interviews will be recorded on audiotape, so that I can refer to them again later.

* You will be asked to give your name on the information sheet only so that I can find those people I need to interview.
* Any information you give will remain with me; it will not be passed on to any other person.
* Your name will not be used in any report of this project.
* You will be free to withdraw from the project at any time and as well, to withdraw any information which you have already given me.
* You can ask me questions about the project at any time.

Thank you very much.

Helen Lunt
Department of Applied Linguistics and Language Studies
University of Melbourne
APPENDIX 5

CONSENT FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE STUDIES

Consent form for persons participating in research projects

Name of participant (BLOCK LETTERS): ____________________________

Project title: The adult ESL learner: an examination and validation study

Name of investigator(s): Dr. B. Paltridge and Ms. Helen Lunt

1. I agree to take part in the above project. The details of the project have been explained to me and are attached to this page.

2. I allow the investigators to give me the information sheet and questionnaire to complete, and to interview me in this project.

3. I understand:

   (a) what the project is about and what I will be asked to do;

   (b) that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any information which I have already given;

   (c) that the information I give will remain confidential;

   (d) that my name will not be used in any report of this project.

Signature ___________________________ Date _______________

(Participant)
## APPENDIX 6

### Subjects’ occupations in country of origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Previous occupation(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>kindergarten teacher / superannuation salesperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>nurse / bookkeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janetta</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>caretaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>government officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>office worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
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<td>student</td>
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<td>Nan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>teacher - physical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>data enterer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>optical salesperson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>41</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>high school teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bai</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>programmer and automobile designer</td>
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<td>Kit</td>
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<td>Hungarian</td>
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<td>teacher - Khmer language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>teacher - Chinese language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Author/s: Lunt, Helen

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