

A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF EFL LEARNERS'
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY WITH THEIR BELIEFS AND
LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to identify learners' beliefs and language learning strategies as well as their proficiency of English language, focusing on postgraduate students from China studying English in the Malaysian context. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized. The questionnaire of BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) established by Horwitz (1988) and SILL (Strategy Inventory of Language Learning) by Oxford (1990) were delivered to 82 participants, among whom 10% were interviewed. Finding released the fact that participants have strongest beliefs of the nature of language learning and the lowest beliefs of the difficulty of language learning, and they used the compensatory strategies most and the affective strategies least. The insights and pedagogical implications of the study were put forward.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti kepercayaan pelajar dan strategi pembelajaran bahasa serta penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris mereka dengan memberi tumpuan kepada pelajar pasca siswazah dari China yang belajar Bahasa Inggeris dalam konteks Malaysia. Kedua-dua kaedah penyelidikan kuantitatif dan kualitatif telah digunakan. Soal selidik daripada BALLI (Kepercayaan Mengenai Inventori Pembelajaran Bahasa) yang diperkenalkan oleh Horwize (1980) dan SILL (Strategi Inventori Pembelajaran Bahasa) oleh Oxford (1990) telah diedarkan kepada 82 pelajar, di mana 10% daripad pelajar tersebut telah ditemuramah. Keputusan mendapati bahawa pelajar mempunyai kepercayaan yang paling kuat dalam sifat pembelajaran bahasa dan kepercayaan yang paling rendah dalam kesukaran pembelajaran bahasa, dan mereka paling sering menggunakan strategi pengimbangan dan paling kurang menggunakan strategi afektif. Pengertian dan implikasi pedagogi kajian telah dikemukakan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) is one of the most important areas of research in the educational field and because of that issues that are related to SLA seem to be attracting worldwide attention from as early as the 1960s, particularly in the area of learning English as a second language, there are constant debated issue over how the language is learnt as a second language. Of late, the concept of SLA has also been taken into consideration by researchers in the area of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. As a universally known and popular language, English is used in many modes of communication such as major world news reported on television, movies, international conferences, social media like Facebook, email correspondences, SMS (short text messages via mobile phones), twitter, and chats and so on. In this regard, it can be seen that mastering this language would be an important accomplishment for many people all over the world. The English language has become such an indispensable language in the context of development, global economy, reformation of society and research that learning and mastering the language can only bring benefits to all who have become competent in it.

The mastery of the English language could also benefit teaching and learning institutions in terms of creating international communication and trade among themselves in research and publications whilst benefitting the individuals who could use their competence in the language as a platform for getting better paying jobs in local as well as foreign companies.

Given the fact that the English language is so important in this globalized world, the current study is trying to identify three very important variables in learning the English language. They are, learner beliefs, language learning strategies as well as the English language proficiency.

Of these so called variables, learner beliefs and language learning strategies are considered as being the most crucial determinants of the success of second language acquisition or foreign language acquisition (Yang, 1995) and many scholars have claimed that the learners' preconceptions to learning the language could be highly related to the means by which they learn the language, or say, their language learning strategies as well as their language learning outcome (e.g., Wenden, 1987; Abraham & Vann, 1987; Horwitz, 1987). In this thesis, the context involves students from mainland China studying courses which are conducted in the English language. Many students from China did not believe that they need to learn English very well in the past but today, the education system in China is different. English is an important language to learn and acquire, because it can propel their career to greater heights and therefore, improve their social status (Gu, 2002). Thus, there is a need to find out what postgraduate students from China perceive their beliefs in learning English are. It is also important to know what their main language learning strategies are. It should be noted that language proficiency has impact on any other variables of language learning (Gu, 2002), there is also a need to understand the relationship between their beliefs and their proficiency level as well as the relationship between their language learning strategies and their proficiency level as to see if proficiency level has any impact on language learning beliefs and language learning strategies.

This chapter will focus on the background of the study by introducing the current situation of Chinese students learning English, Higher Education in Malaysia, statement of the

problem, the research objectives, research questions, and significance of study, limitations and definition of terms used.

1.2 Background of the Study

All research needs to be contextualised and in the present study, it gives focus to the learning of English as a foreign language by learners from mainland China. These learners are currently graduate students pursuing their postgraduate programme in one of the public universities in Malaysia. This section thus begins by looking at the context of the English language in Malaysia.

1.2.1 Chinese students learning English as a foreign language

China is developing fast and as a result of globalization, the importance of the English language is also an issue in education (Gu, 2002). The language has been taught in secondary and university levels for more than three decades (Yin, 2008). But yet Chinese students are still not fluent in using the language, this could be due to the teaching methodology of ‘duck feeding’ (giving knowledge without understanding and application) where substantial emphasis is placed on vocabulary memorization and grammar acquisition only) (Yin, 2008). Thus, students seldom get the chance to reflect on what variables could be involved appropriately in the English language learning process because they rarely get to practice using the language (Gu, 2002).

Because of the above, it is important for the learners to know what variables contribute a lot for them to learn a foreign language, and whether or not their strong beliefs in learning the language have an impact on the way they learn. Previous studies done in different language contexts such as Yin’s (2008) study in China, Yang’s (1999) study in Taiwan and Zhong’s

(2012) study in New Zealand have focused on undergraduates only, there is thus a need to focus on postgraduates.

1.2.2 Higher Education in Malaysia

The researcher is going to study the Chinese students in a Malaysian university, so it is necessary to introduce the higher education in Malaysia.

Malaysia aims to serve as an education hub of excellence under its many visions and so higher education is made accessible to both local and foreign learners. With the introduction of much availability for higher education qualification, cheaper tuition fees, multiple programs and courses and a system that is based on the British advocate, the demand for higher education in Malaysia has become more and more popular. In the strive to serve global learners under its vision to become globalized, the country is also seeing in the last few years more and more students arriving on its shore from developing countries like India, Thailand, China and Middle Eastern countries like Iran and Iraq. It has been the nation's vision to expand its education system worldwide and in order to keep up with the demands of the global market economy, the Malaysian government began implementing the policy of educational globalization. For this vision to materialize, it requires a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce to transform itself from a production-oriented economy into a knowledge-oriented one. Since the population of the international students studying in the various universities could be one of the most important criteria used to raise the ranking of local public universities, increasing more foreign student intake becomes a focus. Moreover, Malaysia provides one of the more affordable educational centers and markets for foreign students as compared to western countries like the UK and US hence, the demand for postgraduate programs in this country is also high. The call to turn itself

into a 'regional hub' in education has made a huge impact on the perspectives of the Malaysian educational policy makers. (Blessinger & Sengupta, 2012.). This invariably makes Malaysia a desirable place to pursue further education.

Of the 20 public universities accessible in Malaysia, the University of Malaya (UM) is one of the most sought after in Malaysia as it is not only the longest established but is also the top research university, with a world ranking of 151 in 2014, which is the top in Malaysia. The university has developed itself to become the leader in research and innovation both of which has a considerable impact on the educational insights in the regional and international context. In that regard, the university is not only well known among its foreign counterparts but it is also one that most foreigners seem to have an affinity for. This is because the university has a good reputation.

In the University of Malaya, English is one of the two major languages used as a medium of instruction, besides Malay. Most courses are conducted in English, most forms are in English and undeniably, reference books and journals are also mainly in English. This makes English a language that is in demand. Comparatively, as an education hub which offers educational programs in English, tuition fees in Malaysian universities are relatively cheaper in contrast to universities in Britain, America or even Singapore. These are the reasons why the university attracts students from countries such as those mentioned above. Chinese students from mainland China are among the top 3 number of students in the university. (Institute of Graduate Studies of University of Malaya, 2015) Many come for the need to improve their English and the university serves as a platform for many aspiring candidates to receive a qualification that is not only internationally recognized but is also highly reputable. The researcher is one of the Chinese postgraduate students based in the University of Malaya. Due to the observation noted among the diverse proficiency level of

mainland Chinese students in using English, this thesis was thus developed for the purpose of understanding the variables that affect how Chinese postgraduate students learn the English language. In this regard, this study aims to identify what are their beliefs and strategies in language learning, particularly, the use of English.

1.3 Statement of Problems

In this study, the focus is on Chinese postgraduate students from mainland China, (the People's Republic of China) pursuing their postgraduate programs in the University of Malaya (UM). The Malaysian curriculum is based on the British educational system which pays a lot of emphasis on oral presentation and written work. As the researcher is one of the Chinese postgraduate students who got a lot of interaction with the other students from China, the researcher learned that many of the Chinese students are unable to use the language well, whether in speaking with lecturers and presentation or in their written assignments. It was necessary to understand if they had any negative attitude towards learning the language. A negative attitude would be reflected in their beliefs about learning the language and perhaps also revealed in their learning strategies. Prior studies have proven that beliefs of learners in learning English and the strategies for learning English are among the most crucial variables in determining the outcome of language learning (Bedell, 1996; Gu, 2002; Gu & Johnson 1996; Huang, 1987). These studies also mention that it is vital that these students know where they stand in terms of their learning competence since many are still unable to speak and write as well as is expected. Among the many studies previously conducted to understand learners are those done by Yin (2008) on undergraduate Chinese EFL learners in China and by Zhong (2012) on undergraduates in New Zealand. Though there exist some researches in SLA done from international students in Malaysia (Groves, 2013) and Chinese students' attitude to English language (Chew, 2013) there are

few researches done on understanding postgraduate students from China studying in Malaysia with English as a second language context. Since learner beliefs and strategies are the key variables in influencing the outcome of language learning success as is said by Yin (2008), this study was thus conducted to identify the beliefs and strategies of learning English among Chinese postgraduates from China studying in UM.

From the literature reviewed and based on the personal experiences shared by friends, there was an understanding that many Chinese learners from China who are not doing well in their academic pursuit in foreign universities because of their weak English language proficiency. Despite the fact that many had acquired band 6 for their International English Language testing system (IELTS), their written and spoken English still was unable to meet the requirements of the academic study (IPS, University of Malaya, 2014). Interviews with some of the postgraduates mentioned that they face difficulties in their study because of their incompetent English. It appears that local Malaysian Chinese students have a better language learning environment as compared to the learners from China even though both share the same mother tongue and culture to some extent. The current study, will not focus on the Malaysian local Chinese students, the emphasis is exclusively given to the postgraduates from China study in UM.

1.4 Research Objectives

The present study will focus on 82 postgraduates from China taking up postgraduate studies in the university. As all of them have Mandarin as their first language and it is imperative for all of them to acquire English in their pursuit of a higher education in the Malaysian context, this study attempts to locate their beliefs in learning the language and their strategies for learning. Then it attempts to identify the relationship between their beliefs and

their English language proficiency as well as the relationship between their strategies adopted and their proficiency. It is claimed in previous studies that the more positive their beliefs, the better their competence in the language, and the more strategies they utilize, the better proficiency level they achieve. (Yang, 1999 & Yin, 2008) The current study is going to prove that whether this is true for Chinese learners in Malaysian context.

1.5 Research Questions

In relation to the objectives outlined, the research questions being probed are:

1. What are the English language learning beliefs of the Chinese postgraduate students from People's Republic of China (PRC)?
2. What is the relationship between the English language learning beliefs and the proficiency level of the Chinese postgraduate students from PRC?
3. What are the English language learning strategies of the Chinese postgraduate students from PRC?
4. What is the relationship between the English language learning strategies and the proficiency level of the Chinese postgraduate students from PRC?

1.6 Significance of the Research

The result of this study which attempts to identify the language learning beliefs and also the language learning strategies of 82 postgraduate students from China will be of value to teachers of English as well as the learners in China. The pedagogical implications of this study are that the information acquired can be used by teachers of English for Foreign Language (EFL) to enhance their students' beliefs about studying English. The information can also be used as insights into understanding the kinds of learning strategies which could

be taught to the different students coming from different backgrounds. Additionally, the information acquired can also be used to develop teaching materials for use within an EFL context in the various locations situated in China. The additional information extracted in terms of the factors that could have affected their language learning may also be beneficial which could be one way of either raising their personal self-esteem or lowering their learning anxieties.

1.7 Definitions and abbreviations of the Relevant Terminology

For the purpose of clarifying the various concepts often encountered in second language acquisition (SLA) research, the following section will address the various terms used in this study.

SLA: learning of English as a second language, rather than as one's mother tongue.

ESL: English as the second language.

EFL: English as a foreign language.

Learner variables: the different elements that can determine or influence language learning effects, such as language learning beliefs, language learning strategies, personality traits, learning styles, learner's aptitude, attitude and motivation, etc.

Beliefs: the psychological perspective an individual has with regards to the surroundings (Richardson, 1996). It is deduced that students who have strong beliefs of what they learn will engage more positively in the learning activity and are so more persistent (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990).

Language learning strategies: the various methods and tactics use by learners in their language learning tasks (Anna, 2005). It is the kind of techniques employed by learners for

the purpose of facilitating their own understanding, mastery and application of the knowledge learnt. Six categories of learning strategies (Oxford, 1990, p 439):

- a. Memory strategies: the way learners memorize language;
- b. Cognitive strategies: the way learners analyse the learning activity;
- c. Compensation strategies: the way learners compensate for their limited way of learning;
- d. Metacognitive strategies: the way learners plan and manage their learning activity;
- e. Affective strategies: the method that is related to learners' psychological aspects in the learning activity such as anxiety, attitude and motivation;
- f. Social strategies: the communication and interaction learners have with others in order to achieve their learning goals.

English language proficiency: the ability to use English by means of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

BALLI (beliefs about language learning inventory): this is a questionnaire which contains five main aspects: 1). beliefs on the difficulties of learning certain languages. 2). Beliefs on foreign language aptitude, which is about the intellectual capacity of an individual to acquire the target language; 3). beliefs on the language learning process which relates to the way the learner thinks about the learning method or how to learn a language; 4). beliefs on the method that can be used to interact with others; and 5). Beliefs on motivation and expectations. All these were adopted from Horwitz (1988).

SILL: this is another set of questionnaire which focuses on Language Learning Strategies and it was adapted from Oxford (1990). This model recognizes the relevance of cognitive functions such as rehearsal and memorization for learning a target language. It additionally acknowledges that metacognitive, affective and social elements are very important variables for the success of learning a target language. There are in total six major strategies: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, compensation strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Many factors could determine the selection of language learning strategies which are used to achieve the learning outcome.

1.8 Limitations

As is pervasive in all research, this research also holds some limitations and one of these is that the participants of this study are confined to those studying in the University of Malaya. Although they are from various faculties, they have gone through formal classes of English which trained them in oral, reading and writing skills. Moreover the sample is small as only 82 participants were recruited. Although the current population is not large, they are homogenous in the fact that they all come from China and have Mandarin as their first language. Moreover, this study focuses on only three learner variables: beliefs, learning strategies and language proficiency levels.

1.9 Summary

This chapter is a comprehensive introduction to the study. It describes the background of the research, the research problem, the research objectives, the research questions, the definitions used, significance of the research as well as the limitation of the research. The chapter also made it very clear that the two major constructs of this research focus on language learning beliefs and learning strategies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature focusing on beliefs and strategies of learning the English language. First, the various elements of learner beliefs would be explained via previous works, and then elements of learner beliefs will be reviewed respectively. Last but not the least, the relationships between learners' beliefs, language learning strategies as well as their English language proficiency mentioned by previous studies will also be reviewed.

2.2 Elements of Learner Beliefs

In Chapter one, the concept of 'belief' was defined as the psychological perspective an individual has with regards to the surroundings (Richardson, 1996). It was further mentioned that students with strong beliefs of what they learn would engage in the learning activity more actively and are more persistent in their tasks (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). In this section, the concepts of second language learning beliefs are further elaborated.

Beliefs on second language learning have been increasingly researched on over the last three decades. This could be triggered by the desire to understand why some learners are more successful than others in acquiring an additional language. As mentioned earlier, beliefs on language learning are related to psychological variables in the learning process. They include learners' attitude, motivation as well as language learning anxiety. Richardson (1996, p. 103) describes beliefs as "mentally held perceptions and cognitions" which one has in regard to and one's feelings of the outside world. The need to assess the

beliefs which language learners bring to the language classroom is a crucial one for both the language instructors as well as those who design the syllabus. This is because one's beliefs can affect one's predispositions to action as stated by Rokeach (1968, p. 113). In the past three decades, there have been various definitions of language learner beliefs and among these is Horwitz's definition (1987), which treats it as a preconceived notion learners have of the language (p. 119). This is unlike Abraham & Vann (1987) who view the notion as the philosophy a learner develops about the ways that the target language can be acquired (p.96). Another researcher, Gardner (1988) suggests that language beliefs are the result of the motivation and outlook existing in the mind sets of teachers, parents and students while in the process of learning the second language. Research done in the late 1990s on language learning beliefs involved more cultural and social perspectives about the language learners' beliefs. Cortazzi and Jin (1996), for example, consider beliefs as cultural aspects of teaching and learning. They perceive the notion of language learning belief as having a cultural originality but they did not venture further to elaborate on what it could further encompass. Kalaja (2003) claims that beliefs about language learning are socially related as a result of what people may have acquired from others through communication and interaction. Overall, previous reviews of the definition of what is meant by language learner beliefs either emphasize the cognitive dimension or the culture and social impact.

The cognitive issue in language learning is related to the psychological or elements that are involved in the brain during the processing of the language learning or acquiring. On the other hand, the social-cultural impact means that learning a language is an activity that must be immersed in certain context where the culture aspects served as the background which should be taken into consideration when language learning is expected to achieve the rather satisfied outcome. The current study mainly focuses on the learners' beliefs about

learning the language, which involves learners' cognitive process and mental elements in learning the language. On the other hand, language learning strategies includes learners' interaction between one another, learning the target culture in order to better acquire the language. Therefore, the current study is relevant to the notion of cognition and social and culture context.

2.3 Pioneer Study of Language Learner Beliefs

The proposition of the importance of beliefs as a defining factor for their learning as held by learners is very much supported by educational psychology. Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) maintain that learner beliefs can affect a learner psychologically as students who believe in the idea that their study can be interesting and important are usually those who end up more actively engaged in the learning process. In this regard, they are also more persevering in their academic work. The writers also assert that language teachers need to know their students on a personal basis in order to be able to organize classroom activities more efficiently for learning. Horwitz (1988) was the pioneer in the detecting beliefs of learners in language learning and he was also the pioneer in developing a questionnaire called BALLI (Belief About Language Learning Inventory) which aimed at assessing learners' psychological perspective of the language learning process. BALLI is a questionnaire consisting of 34 items divided into five main areas namely: the difficulty of language learning; foreign language aptitude; the nature of language learning; learning and communication strategies; motivation and expectations. This questionnaire was first administered on the freshmen students in the University of Texas, Austin. All the subjects were from the language faculties. Among them, 80 were German majors, 63 were French majors and 98 were Spanish majors. In other words, all the respondents were language learners. Comparison and contrast were made among the three target groups for the purpose

of eliciting any variation located in their responses. Each of these language learner groups was further divided into two subgroups in terms of gender. The German major subgroup consisted of sixty-eight percentage of males and thirty-two of females; the French major subgroup consisted of thirty-five percentage of males and sixty-five females, The Spanish major subgroup consisted of fifty-six percentage of males and forty-four of females.

The result acquired from the administration of this questionnaire indicates that there is a similarity of beliefs in language learning among the three target groups. The BALLI questionnaire is thus shown to be useful for investigating language learner beliefs towards learning a particular language. Learners with a more positive belief towards learning the language tend to have better language learning outcomes. The results also indicate that in all the three groups, the learners held some degree of beliefs in the language learning. However, beliefs can change over time and so to some extent, the results acquired from the BALLI questionnaire may pose to create some sort of validity problems.

The limitations of the previous studies such as Yin (2008) and Zhong (2012) as well Groves (2013) and Chew (2013) are taken into consideration. Yin's (2008) study mainly focused on Chinese students from China learning English as a foreign language, prompting that there is a need to explore Chinese students learning English or immersing in English medium of instruction in other settings. Zhong's (2012) study dealt with first year students in the university. While Groves's (2013) study looked at international students learning English in Malaysia and Chew's (2013) research is to identify the language attitude of Chinese students in Beijing. There is no previous research looking at Chinese students learning English in Malaysian context, and at the same time a few previous study had mainly focused on undergraduates. Therefore it is uncertain whether after years of English language learning, the same batch of students would still be holding similar strong beliefs

about the learning the target language. Therefore, further research need to be done on postgraduate students from China in understanding their beliefs on language learning. The current study is hereby to fill the gap.

2.4 Recent Studies Conducted Using the BALLI Questionnaire

Recent studies (Sibel et al, 2004; Esmail & Mahdi, 2014) which use the BALLI questionnaire in evaluating learner beliefs about language learning seem to illustrate results which were considered as quite significant. This is traced to Esmail & Mahdi (2014), for example, who examine the correlation between Iranian students' beliefs on learning the English language and their language proficiency level. The researchers utilized the BALLI questionnaire and key English test (KET) to uncover students' beliefs about learning English and this was then correlated to their proficiency level of the English language. The researchers apparently divided the students' English language proficiency into three groups namely: low proficiency group (LPG), intermediate proficiency group (IPG) and high proficiency group (HPG). They then applied Pearson's correlation to locate the correlation between learners' beliefs and their language proficiency level. The findings show that most participants have strong beliefs towards the language learning motivation and expectation. However, participants have low beliefs towards the nature of the language learning. Overall, the researchers claim that, there is a positive relationship between learners' proficiency level and their learning as well as communication strategy and their motivation. In HPG, there was only a negative low correlation ($r = .32$) between the HPG's proficiency and the element of foreign language aptitude. In the IPG, there was a weak positive correlation ($r = .229$, $p = .043$, $p < .05$) between the IPG's proficiency and the difficulty of language learning. However, there was no significant correlation between the LPG proficiency and any of the constructs of beliefs. The findings of the study discussed here

reveal that high proficiency learners as compared to low and intermediate groups, are highly motivated about learning the new language and they were more optimistic about the future of their language learning. They also tend to have higher expectations of their English language learning. Consequently, they would use various learning strategies to facilitate their learning. The study conducted had focused on secondary school language learners in Iran, a country that is considered as homogenous in language and culture, just like China. However, the current study will focus on the learners from China in the Malaysian context.

There were also studies done to investigate different language learning groups. Sibel, Dalim, & Irem (2009) examined the beliefs of learners of English, German and French in a Turkish university. There were a total of 343 participants in this study who were required to fill two questionnaires: one is BALLI, and another one is about their demographic information. Sibel et al. (2009) had aimed to identify the differences that could be existing among the three languages learners in terms of their beliefs. All the participants were freshmen. The results of the study provided very comprehensive facts. To begin with, in terms of the difficulty of the language learning, 82% of the French learners, 62% of the German learners and 29% of the English learners considered their target language as difficult. In addition, the results also indicate that 66% of the English learners and 59% of the German learners had supposed that it would take a maximum of two years for them to be able to speak the foreign language fluently.

Overall, the results showcased that there was insignificant difference concerning the difficulty of language learning among all three groups of learners learning different languages. In terms of the foreign language aptitude, most students in the three subgroups agreed with the notion that “some people were born with the ability to learn the language

better than others.” Only less than 40% of the students had believed that women are better than men in language learning. In terms of the nature of language learning, the results show that there were more differences between English language learners and the other two language learners. For example, 55% of French students and 63% of German students agree that it is important for one to learn the culture of the language one is learning in order to acquire that language. Only 28% of the English students had agreed with this.

When the students were given the item, “Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words”, the results showed a slight difference to be existing among the three language groups. Overall, 79% to 81% of the English and German students agreed with the statement whereas only 68% of the French learners had believed in that. In terms of the learning and communication strategies, nearly all the students believe in the importance of practices in the language learning process. A total of 91% of French students believe that excellent pronunciation is very important for spoken language but only 51% of the English students and 71% of the German students agreed with that item. When given the item “If I heard someone speaking the language I am trying to learn, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language”, 90% of the French learners agreed with the statement. This is in contrast to the 57% of English learners and 75% of German learners. Compared with the English students and German students, French students were less self-aware and they seized more opportunities to talk to native speakers. In the region of language learning motivation and expectation, it appears that all the learners from the three subgroups agreed that “if they are able to speak well in the target language, there will be more opportunities for them to better use the language” which could indirectly be interpreted as paving some form of success for them in the future. This study has shown us that there are significant differences of learning beliefs among different

language groups in the Turkish university context. Further study thus needs to focus on the other age groups of learners in different EFL or ESL context.

2.5 Defining Language Learning Strategies

In chapter one, the term of ‘learning strategy’ was defined as the various methods and tactics used by learners in their language learning tasks. (Chamot, 2005). It refers to the kind of techniques employed by learners for the purpose of facilitating their own understanding, mastery and application of the knowledge learnt. Ever since the 1970s, the issue of language learning strategies has attracted a considerable number of researchers. (see Rubin, Stern, Weinstein and Mayer below, etc.) Different scholars have given different perspectives of the definition of language learning strategies.

Rubin (1975) treats the term as the skill or tool learners require in order to better acquiring a certain knowledge. Stern, however, (1983) mentions the term as an approach for learning a target language. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) consider the term as encompassing actions and a thinking process which a learner is committed to in order to enhance his/her learning outcome. Wenden (1987) gives a more comprehensive definition by linking language learning strategy to the behaviours which language learners tend to observe for the purpose of regulating and facilitating their own learning. It also includes the process of how learners perceive the nature of learning a language and the different aspects of the language.

Oxford (1990) is the signature researcher who believes that the purpose of language learning strategies is to make the language learning process more efficient, more pleasant and more self-monitored by the learner him/herself. In recent years, researchers have also added the component of consciousness (conscious or subconscious mind) as the major variable to describe the language learning strategy. Cohen (2003), for example, makes it a

conscious or semi-conscious statement of learners who, he says, has the overt aim to improve their internalization of the languages. Griffiths (2008) treats the term as a conscious choice made by the learners so as to better regulate the whole process of the language learning.

This discussion of one term defined differently by different scholars suggest that the term language learning strategy is a broad term which encompasses techniques, tools, conscious or semi-conscious choices as well as something that learners apply in their own learning so as to make learning more efficient, pleasant and liberating as it is self-empowered. (Rebin, 1975) In other words, language learning strategy is anything that a learner engages in so as to make learning, particularly language learning, more worthwhile and beneficial.

2.6 Previous Study of the Relationship Between Language Learning Strategies and Learners' Beliefs as well as Language Proficiency

There are many studies done before showing the significant relationship between learners' language learning strategies and their language proficiency. As said earlier Oxford (1988) was the pioneer in researching into learner strategies and by 1990, Oxford had established a model for language learning strategy. This was applied by several other scholars some of whom include, Yin (2008) who conducted a very comprehensive study in identifying the relationship between language learning strategies and language learners' attitude, motivation and beliefs in relation to their language proficiency. The participants were 1201 undergraduate students in China. Yin (2008) used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in her study. From her results, it was found that there were two variables which do influence the language learners' learning strategies. One of these was their beliefs and the other was their orientation towards motivation particularly, the orientation in the

competition and self –perception of their academic activities. The beliefs and orientation towards motivation combined with other variables such as intrinsic motivation and compensatory strategies in vocabulary were found to contribute to positive outcomes of language learning. The findings of Yin’s (2008) study also show that in an English language classroom where English may be a first or second language, the popularity and social status of the use of the English language, in other words, prestige, can affect the learners’ attitude and motivation and this indirectly can influence the learners’ language learning strategies.

Zakia (2014) conducted a study looking at the correlation between language learning strategies and the proficiency level of participants’ academic writing from university students. A total of 88 Fiji freshmen students learning English for academic purposes were involved in the study. The instrument utilized in the study consisted of two parts: one was the adopted SILL questionnaire version 7.0 which generated the quantitative data and the other one was an interview conducted of 18 volunteer students who had participated in the longitudinal study. In looking at the data showing the proficiency level of the students’ academic writing, three sources were applied encompassing a diagnostic test which was conducted at the start of the semester before students were given the instruction of the language learning strategies. The second and third source made up of students’ weekly assignments and their final examination. The study used Pearson’s correlations and the analysis of variance (ANOVA) to analyse data. The results revealed that students with a higher level of proficiency in academic writing used more language learning strategies than the students with lower level of proficiency. In the overall findings, the most frequently used language learning strategy appears to be metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies. The social strategies were used by quite a number of students while the affective

strategies was least used by students. The results indicate that metacognitive language learning strategy and the learners' academic proficiency level are positively related to each other. It also appears that the affective language learning strategy has a weak significant relationship with students' language learning outcomes. However, further studies need to be conducted in order to focus on the affective elements of the learning process since this component contains vital factors such as learners' attitude, motivation and language learning anxieties which are all equally important variables in determining the success of learning a target language. In addition, language learning strategies should not be isolated from one another as different language learning strategies should work together to produce a better learning outcome. Future studies should also be conducted in different language setting with different level of students.

Another study conducted in the Malaysian context was quite thought-provoking. Wong (2006) identified the correlation between language learning strategies and the language learning self-efficacy of learners. Self-efficacy is a term that belongs to the field of learners' beliefs. (Yang, 1998) This study focused on 74 graduate pre-service teachers. All the 74 participants majored in English as a second language (TESL). Among them, 13 were males and 61 were females. They were considered prospective English teachers who are currently doing their English language teaching diploma in a specific college. The questionnaire for language learning strategies, SILL, and the language self-efficacy scale were administered for the purpose of generating quantitative data. To validate the study qualitatively, semi-structured interviews were employed and administered on a shortlisted participants. The aim was to acquire a more profound detail of the language learning strategies these participants applied. Pearson's correlation analysis was used and the analysis indicates that the relation between language learning strategies and language self-

efficacy was positively significant. Results from the interviews further proved the hypothesis that, teachers with higher language self-efficacy tend to use more types of language learning strategies than teachers with lower language self-efficacy. These findings strengthened the current researcher's viewpoint that good self-efficacy or strong self-beliefs of the learners in learning the language is positively related to the variety of language learning strategies the learners utilize. Such research focuses on the pre-service teachers, but the current study will deal with postgraduate students to see whether the results are identical to the previous study.

Gabriella (2013) tried to identify how good language learners utilize language learning strategy in order to produce an effective learning outcome. As a lecturer in one Korean university, she created some practical opportunities for her students by introducing several websites which offer them metacognitive strategies which was considered as the explicit way to take charge of the language learning process and for gaining a desirable learning outcome. These inputs were really helpful for the students to choose their own preferred methods to improve their language skills.

Trying to find out what the correlation may be between beliefs, language learning strategies and language proficiency has benefits which are grounded towards the need to gain an understanding of how learners learn a target language and what can be done to facilitate this learning process.

Zhong (2012) conducted a comprehensive research to figure out the correlations between learner beliefs, language learning strategies and learning outcome. Her study focused on lower level proficiency Chinese students learning English in New Zealand. Multi-methodologies were employed for this study including interviews and observations. Zhong

(2012) discovered that changes of beliefs were found among the learners during the whole study period. To elaborate, first, the students began to use more practical approach for language learning, for example, they would watch TV, which was different from the previous approach, such as only learning by memorizing the grammatical rules. Second, learners began to shift their attention from accuracy in learning a target language to fluency. Third, learners gradually believed in the importance of social strategy that is learning English by interacting with others whether as a group or as pairs. Finally, all the learners were able to enhance their self-efficacy beliefs as their language proficiency improved. The language learning strategies applied also developed along with their learners' beliefs over the study period. Last but not the least, learners utilization of cognitive strategies had also increased. This study performed by Zhong (2012) on Chinese students in New Zealand showed that strong learner beliefs could strengthen learners' language proficiency. On the other hand, it is fair to say that the various utilizations of the language learning strategies applied may also enhance learners' learning outcome.

Zhong's (2012) study focussed on undergraduate Chinese students and none so far had looked at postgraduate students in other contexts. In that respect, the current study formulated can help to fill the gap by conducting a study to look at Chinese postgraduate students using English in the Malaysian context.

2.7 Summary

The Chapter reviews the relevant literature on learners' beliefs in learning the English language, learners' language learning strategies. It begins by giving comprehensive definitions of beliefs and strategies in language learning made by the famous scholars in this field, followed by pioneer studies and recent studies in such research areas, finally it

elaborate the previous studies on the relationships between beliefs and language proficiency as well as the relationship between language learning strategies and proficiency. The gaps were identified in order for the researcher himself to fill in by the current study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology of the study. Firstly, it introduces the research design of the whole study; next, it describes the instrument used to categorise participants' proficiency level, the demographic background of the population is also provided followed by an introduction to the instrumentation utilized in this study. The sampling of the study is then discussed before the section proceeds to discussing the procedure for data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The current study aims to identify three variables related to second language acquisition, in particular, learning English as a second language. They are namely: beliefs, strategies and proficiency level of English language. The current research aims to examine the relationship between beliefs of learners in learning the English language and their language proficiency as well as the relationship between language learning strategy and their language proficiency. By using two most frequently administered questionnaires (BALLI and SILL), this study aims to elicit a corpus of quantitative data from a total of 82 participants. Another approach was also applied by conducting an interview with open-ended questions in the need to solicit qualitative data that can be used to enhance the validity of the quantitative data. Thus, this study is considered as a research that embodies a mixed method. As stated in chapter one, four research questions were formulated in accordance with the aim of the study. The first two questions are to find out students' beliefs and the relationship between their beliefs and their language proficiency level while

the third and fourth questions aim to locate the students' language learning strategies and the relationship between their language learning strategies with their English language proficiency level.

In this study it is necessary to provide a common background of the participants so as to eliminate confounding variables which could affect the research outcome and one way to deal with this is to locate a common benchmark to distinguish the participants, hereby also termed as students or learners' proficiency level in English.

In this regard, the tool applied was participants' IELTS scores which were obtained from the relevant institutions. IELTS hereby termed as International English Language Testing System which is a global English assessment test organized by the English language examination committee of the Cambridge University of the United Kingdom (UK). It contains four parts: listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to the score standard of the IELTS, Score Band below 5 and 5.5 are considered as low and upper low level both of which will be showcased in the data set as 5 and 4. Score Band 6 and 6.5 are considered as low intermediate and upper intermediate level and likewise, these too will be showcased in the data set as 3 and 2 while Band 7 or above are considered as high level and this too will be showcased in the data set of SPSS as data 1. The IELTS is a very systematic assessment and is a world renowned examination that is used to identify non-native English speaking students' English language proficiency.

3.3 Population

This study was conducted among 82 Chinese postgraduate students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and they are currently pursuing their postgraduate programmes in one of the most established universities in the country, the University of Malaya (UM),

Malaysia. From the investigation (2014) made at the university's Institute of Postgraduate Studies, it was found that a total of 137 students from China (PRC) were either pursuing their master or doctoral (PhD) programmes. Of these, there were 85 females and 52 males. They have all achieved the requirement of the English language proficiency prior to entering the University of Malaya of which it was found that Band 6 for IELTS was the acceptable score. Among the 82 subjects of this study, 48 students got Band 6, 7 students got Band 6.5, 6 students got Band above 7. Of the population identified, 26 (17 females and 9 males) Chinese postgraduate students are currently under the language proficiency programme in a sub-unit of the University of Malaya that is the University of Malaya Centre for Continuing Education. (UMCCed). These were admitted into the university based on a conditional offer. The reason why these students were selected as participants for this study is because their English language proficiency level did not meet the standard of the requirement of the University of Malaya, thus, they represent the rather low proficiency group. Among them, 14 students got IELTS Band 5.5, 12 students got Band below 5.0. The present study began by selecting participants of all proficiency level so as to make this research comprehensive and representable. Postgraduate students were selected since they have learned the English language for more than 10 years in their country (PRC) and their learning experience is considered as rather rich compared with other groups, for example, undergraduates as is showcased by Yang (1992), who focused on undergraduate students in Taiwanese universities.

As mentioned in chapter 2 earlier, this current study proposes to look at postgraduate students of Chinese from China who are studying in a Malaysian university. The intention is to fill in a literature gap as well as to locate the beliefs among learners of English, their

language learning strategies and the relationships between their language proficiency levels.

3.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is explained in the Chart below:

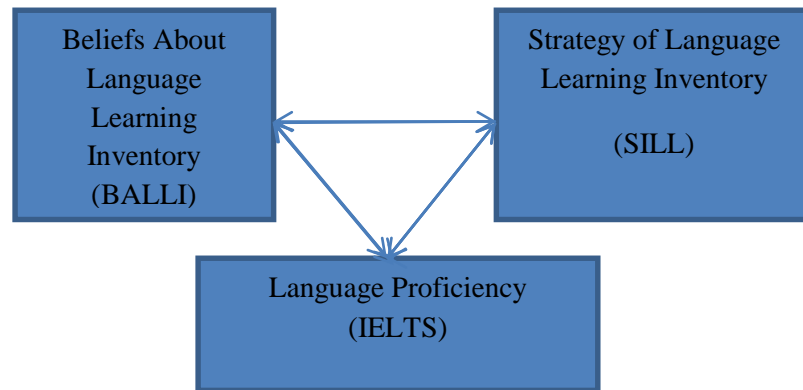


Chart 3.1

The major concepts in this study are learner beliefs and language learning strategies. Past researches had been done to show the significant relationships between learners' beliefs and the strategies in use. (e.g., Wenden, 1986; Abraham & Vann, 1987; Horwitz, 1987). Those researchers claimed that learners' perceptions and their beliefs to learning of the language will influence the utilization of their language learning strategies. Many researchers have proved directly or indirectly that there is correlation between these two variables. Wenden (1986a) found that students are not only able to identify their beliefs in the mind about learning the language but also adopt the language learning strategies in accordance with their beliefs, and their beliefs about learning the language could enable them to better choose the consistent strategies.

It has been argued that in practice more strategy utilized and the rather strong beliefs are crucial to some learners in enhancing their language proficiency (e.g., Skehan, 1989; Green & Oxford, 1995; Halbach, 2000). The current study, intends to verify that whether in Malaysian context, the situation of students from China could be identical to the previous research.

3.5 Instrumentation

As has been mentioned in Chapter two before, Horwitz (1988) developed the BALLI questionnaire while Oxford (1990) established the SILL questionnaire. Both these models have been duly applied by educational and psychological researchers as a way of understanding learner beliefs and the language learning strategies. Then interview was conducted to get the qualitative data so as to enhance the validity of the quantitative data.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

Although any research conducted needs to be triangulated for the purpose of verifying research validity and reliability, the current research is only able to apply two approaches: survey done via two trusted questionnaires (see BALLI and SILL) and interviews which can elicit qualitative data that can be used to enhance the validity of the quantitative data extracted from the questionnaire.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the BALLI and SILL questionnaires

For every tool used in any research, there is always a need to justify. This section will provide the explanation illustrating the two instruments or questionnaires employed in this research.

The Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) Questionnaire

The Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) questionnaire model was first established by Horwitz (1988) in the University of Texas at Austin, USA. This questionnaire was developed for the purpose of evaluating students' beliefs in learning a language. Despite being used by many researchers in various fields of language learning, the questionnaire has been criticized by some researchers (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006) who mentioned what Kuntz (1996a) has claimed that: Firstly, the statements in the questionnaire is mostly dealing with teachers' beliefs rather than that of the learners. Secondly, the topics of the students' beliefs in the questionnaire are not involving students' responses statistically. Nonetheless, this model is still being used and approved by considerable studies (Park, 1995, Truitt, 1995) to which show the feasibility and demand of the model. Horwitz's (1988) instrument is somehow considered an appropriate tool for conducting research on language learning beliefs in various sociolinguistic settings regardless of what language being the target language (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006).

Details of the BALLI model:

The BALLI questionnaire consists of 34 items which can be divided into 5 components in terms of learners' beliefs. Each component belongs to one focusing factor which is then categorized as follows according to the items. Among the 34 items listed, items 1, 2, 6, 16, 19 were defined as foreign language aptitude, or Factor 1. Items 4, 10, 11, 25, 34 were considered as difficulty of language learning, or Factor 2. Items 3, 27, 30, 33 examined the nature of language learning, or Factor 3. Items 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 22, 23, 26, 28 identified learners' learning and communication strategies, or Factor 4. Items 5, 20, 21, 24, 29, 31, 32 elicited learners' motivation and expectation respectively, or Factor 5 (Yin, 2008).

The Likert scale was used to indicate the degree of each item and this is detailed as follows:

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Questionnaire

The utilization of language learning strategies by EFL learners has been widely examined over the past 30 years by various elicitation methods and tools (see Dörnyei, 2005; White, Schramm & Chamot, 2007). One of the most widely used measures has been the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) which is a structured questionnaire that was developed for the purpose of assessing how often learners employ specific language learning strategies. The tool enables language teachers to document the strategy profile of their students and to provide their learners with the kind of strategies they are likely to apply when learning English as a second or foreign language (see Oxford, 1990).

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire was designed by Rebecca Oxford (1990) for EFL or ESL learners. Other researchers such as Cohen (1998) and Dörnyei (2005) also began employing the questionnaire and other tools to solicit language learning strategies among their learners. A considerable number of controversial comments have emerged in their studies in terms of reliability. However, Oxford's questionnaire seem to gain approval as it was found by many to be the most effective means in this field (Zhong, 2012).

The questionnaire has been criticised to be very controversial in its conceptualization. LoCastro (1994) has mentioned that using one particular questionnaire in different contexts can cause some problems since the researchers are too concerned with ‘universal’ and have therefore underestimated the importance of contextual variations. However, Oxford (1996) says that apart from this model, it is highly unlikely that anyone can develop one that can suit any context and any set of learners as it will be very difficult to develop a single theory that is universally accepted in the context of second language learning strategies.

According to Oxford (1993), the SILL elicits standardized data which are very useful for statistical treatment and group summaries although it does not provide any space for the individual’s creative responses (see Oxford 1993). “The SILL instrument has been widely used in more than 15 studies involving EFL/ESL learners from many countries and cultural backgrounds, such as Hispanic, Egyptian, Jordanian, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, Korean, and Puerto Rican.” (Khalil, 2005, p48)

Details of the SILL questionnaire

This questionnaire comprised 50 items. Each item describes a language learning strategy and learners are asked to respond to the SILL items by indicating how often they employ these strategies by selecting one response out of five Likert scale options. The SILL questionnaire classifies language learning strategies into 6 factors.

Factor 1 is the memory strategy which contains 10 items. Factor 2 is the cognitive strategy which contains 13 items. Factor 3 is the compensatory strategy which contains 6 items. Factor 4 is the metacognitive strategy which contains 9 items. Factor 5 is the affective strategy which contains 6 items. Factor 6 is the social strategy which contains 6 items (Yin,

2008). The Likert-scale was also used to indicate the degree for each item. The details of the Likert scale are noted as:

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

In the current study, the model of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire was simultaneously applied with the BALLI model on the 82 participants for the purpose of identifying the participant's language learning beliefs and language learning strategies so as to identify the rather important variables that could influence learners language learning outcome, hereby referring to language proficiency.

Benefits of using the Questionnaire

Questionnaires enjoy many advantages. For a start, they are the most economical instrument if the researcher has limited time and resources. It is especially appropriate for large samples to be examined and compared for general phenomenon occurrences. Questionnaires, when administered, are less intimidating than observations. They also allow participants to be accessed at different times, in different locations and at various sites without any form of protocol. Thus, this eliminates anxiety and stress both for the researcher and participants.

3.5.2 Interview

The interview section is the component which is added in line with the questionnaire so as to enhance the validity of the data. The study conducted by Yang (1999) did not use interview data to support the questionnaire. The present study, however, intend to enrich the data by making it more comprehensive and persuadable and such purpose is accomplished through the interview data. The procedure for conducting interview is in the subsection 3.6.1 in this chapter.

3.5.3 Tool for ensuring English Language Proficiency Level

It was mentioned in the section above that consistency is crucial and in this study, it was necessary to ensure that the participants' English language proficiency level was benchmarked appropriately and suitably for all concerned. On the other hand, all the participants are required to take the IELTS exam prior to entering the university. In this respect, the English language score of the UK based assessment; IELTS was used as the tool to evaluate the participant's language proficiency level. The IELTS scores has been explained earlier. Since the scores of the IELTS possessed by the participants ranged from below 5 to above 7, it was necessary to find a better approach to code the data in the SPSS accordingly. For this purpose, five levels were developed as the following shows:

1=above 7.0 (IELTS score) (high)

2=6.5 (upper intermediate)

3=6.0 (intermediate)

4=5.5 (low)

5=below 5.0 (low)

In the data set, the numerical of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 serve as the proficiency data.

3.6 Procedure of Data Collection

3.6.1 Procedure of quantitative data

The administrations of the two questionnaires were conducted in the following manner. First, participants were identified from the list provided by the university's postgraduate institute (IPS). The two questionnaires were then sent out to all the postgraduate students via their student email addresses. Contacts were first befriended to help bridge the rapport whilst also to enable the researcher to inform participants of the aim and intention of the study. The email mode was used instead of the physical distribution of questionnaires because it is more economical to use the email to distribute the questionnaires and participants need not have to have physical contact which can cause stress and anxiety. As the questionnaire was written in English language and the participants were postgraduate students, it was assumed that they would have no difficulty in responding to the questionnaires. Nonetheless, the researcher also provided the option of meeting them face to face if necessary to clarify certain doubts about the items or questions.

The email is useful for spreading the use of questionnaires as the target population is not living in one location within the university campus. They were all spread in different parts of the state and some were also engaged in part time jobs in different places. The email data collection was conducted from 5th May to 20th May, 2014 in the main library of the University of Malaya. Due to the fact that some of the target participants do not open their UM official email on a regular basis, the same questionnaires were sent out to participants who did not respond for the second time. This was also accomplished via the participants' private email. This approach could be achieved by the extensive social network of the researcher. Two weeks after spreading out the 163 questionnaires, only 74 responses were

received and subsequent to that an additional 8 responses followed so in total 82 responses. This figure is equated to the margin error¹ of 7.8% which was worked out based on and the confidence level² of 95% and the response rate³ 50.3% which are highly successful. (Bui, 2009).

The participants were given consent form informing them that they could take part in this study following their own will and they are free to withdraw from the study at any time. At the same time they are well informed that all the data were for the exclusive purpose of research which is highly confidential.

The time period located for the interview was between 1st Dec, 2014 to 19th Jan, 2015. This was conducted after the statistical figures were analysed.

3.6.2 Procedure of the Interview

Of the total of 82 participants involved, 12% of the participants (10 participants) were invited for interview. This is considered as the adequate sample size for interview (see Dworkin, 2012). The criteria to choose interview participants is based on their level of proficiency they have and their locations and times which could enable the researcher to easy get access to. The researcher, following the aim of the study, chose three low level proficiency participants and three intermediates and four high level participants.

The interview would be conducted through social network such as Facebook and the Chinese QQ (on-line chatting). Chinese QQ is the Chinese version of Facebook which is a popular platform for on-line chatting. The reason why social network is utilized for the interview is because most participants stay far away from the UM campus and this impeded

¹ The margin of error: a range of likely or allowable values. Normally it is feasible to be below 10%.

² Confidence level: a desired percentage of the scores (often 95% or 99%) that would fall within a desired range of confidence limits.

³ Response rate of 10%-54% is acceptable.

a face to face follow up. However, through the social network, the interview atmosphere becomes unthreatening and so it is perceived to be quite relaxed and this reduces the participants stress level of being nervous and anxious.

The interview protocol was adopted and modified from Yin's (2008) model of Investigating Learner Variables in the EFL Context in China, where learners' beliefs in learning English and language learning strategies and motivations were elicited. Sample questions of the interview are: a) How long have you been learning English? b) How did you learn English before starting your postgraduate program? c) Do you like learning English? Why or why not? d) Why are you learning English? e) Is English important to you? Why or why not? f) Using what kind of methods do you learn English?

Taking into consideration the low proficiency students' difficulties in organizing the language, the interview questions were asked in English but the participants were allowed to answer in English or Chinese. Appropriate and relevant data elicited from the interviews would then be translated into English. The translations were then verified by one student who is doing English major and a lecturer in the field of languages and linguistics.

As mentioned in the questionnaire, participants in the interview were also given the consent form and their data were guaranteed by the researcher to be confidential.

3.6.3 Profile of Participants

In order to make clear the academic background of the sample, tables are presented to demonstrate the details of all the participants and their academic background. They are as follows:

Table 3.1 Participants' Academic Background

No. of participants	Faculties
8	Economics and Administration
8	Business and Accountancy
9	Education
14	Languages & Linguistics
7	Science
4	Arts and Social Sciences
3	Institute of Graduate Studies
4	Institute of Asia-Europe
6	Built Environment
3	Culture Center
7	Engineering
4	Computer Science of Information Technology
5	International Institute of Public Policy and Management

As can be seen, the participants are from different faculties of the university.

Table 3.2 Gender of the Participants

Sample	Gender
34	male
48	female

The table above shows that there are more females than males.

Table 3.3 the Profile of the Interviewees

(All are given pseudonym for the confidentiality)

Participants	Proficiency level	gender	Years spent learning English
Yang Yi	Low (5.0 for IELTS)	Female	7 years
Huang Peng	Low (5.0)	Male	11 years
Zhang Yong	Low (5.5)	Male	10 years
Gong Feng	Upper Intermediate (6.5)	Male	12 years
Chang Xiao	Intermediate(6.0)	Male	10 years
Tong Yao	Intermediate (6.0)	Female	12 years
Li Ling	High (7.0)	Female	15 years
Li Yuan	High (7.0)	Female	10 years
Yang Fang	High (7.0)	Female	13 years
Gao Juan	High (7.5)	Female	12 years

These participants were selected based on their proficiency level

3.7 Procedure for Data Analysis

Data extracted from the two questionnaires were analysed via SPSS (version 21).

3.7.1 Quantitative data

By using SPSS, the variables of beliefs in learning the English language, language learning strategies and English language proficiency were analysed following the sequence of frequency, reliability, and normality. Then Spearman Correlations was used to identify the relationship between learners' beliefs and learners' language proficiency level and the relationship between language learning strategies and their proficiency level.

3.7.2 Interview data

Data from the interview were then analysed by *understanding and reflecting* on how the participants answer the interview questions which could showcase a whole picture of their preconceptions of English language learning, or their beliefs towards learning the English language and the strategies they utilize to learn the language. Such interview data were extracted to strengthen the data obtained from the questionnaire.

The framework of the analysis is structured in the table below.

Table 3.4 Procedure for Data Analysis

Data	Procedure of Data Analysis SPSS (version 21)
Beliefs of the English Language learning	Frequency;
English Language Learning Strategies	Reliability;
English Language Proficiency (IELTS score)	Normality
Relationship Between Beliefs and Language Proficiency as well as Strategies and Language Proficiency	Spearman Correlation
The Interview Data	

3.8 Summary

This Chapter introduced the methodology used in the present study. It attempts to highlight the study as a mixed research method encompassing quantitative and qualitative data. The instruments used combined by questionnaire and interview were duly explained and justified. The identification of the participants was also justified and their profile was provided so as to allow for an insight into their respective proficiency levels. How they were determined in terms of their scores via IELTS was also explained and a procedure for

stating how data were analysed was also provided. It was also mentioned that two constructs forming the basis of this research was the BALLI and SILL questionnaire and some aspects of Educational Psychology was touched on. Chapter 4 will focus on the results.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the findings of the research in accordance with the research questions. The beliefs of the participants on learning English were solicited through the BALLI questionnaire (*Beliefs About the Language Learning Inventory*). The strategies of the participants on learning the English language were collected from data extracted from the SILL questionnaire (*Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*). Both sets of data would be analysed via SPSS and results would be presented in tables. The outcome of the questionnaire would also be revealed in terms of factors and these would then be discussed.

Following the quantitative data, findings extracted from the interviews would then be presented. In addition, the relationship between learners' language learning beliefs and their English language proficiency as well as the relationship between learners' language learning strategies and their language proficiency would also be presented after the data were analyzed by Spearman Correlation coefficient. This chapter is developed through the attempt to answer the research questions which had been mentioned in Chapter 1.

4.2 Findings

Findings of a research need to be presented clearly and in this thesis the process is systematically revealed by answering the research questions.

4.2.1 Research Question 1: What are the English language learning beliefs of the Chinese postgraduate students from People's Republic of China (PRC)?

As mentioned in Chapter 1 and 3, beliefs refer to the psychological perspective an individual has with regards to the surroundings (Richardson, 1996). It was also mentioned that learners who have strong beliefs of what they learn will engage more positively in the learning activity and are so more persistent (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990). The current study intends to verify that whether in the Malaysian language learning context, the Chinese students could be found the identical results with the previous study. For the purpose of this section, findings extracted from the quantitative data (i.e. the BALLI questionnaire) will henceforth be discussed under the five factors indicated in Chapter 3.

Foreign Language Aptitude

It was mentioned that Items 1, 2, 6, 16, 19 from the questionnaire were defined as foreign language aptitude (Horwitz, 1988) or Factor 1 and the central tendency of Factor 1 is hereby illustrated in table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1: Factor 1: Foreign Language Aptitude

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	1.83	1.02
2. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	1.82	.756
6. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	3.04	.909
16. I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	3.17	.927
19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	2.83	1.06

Overall mean: 2.54

As the analysis shows, Factor 1 allows the participants to think about their beliefs in relation to the foreign language aptitude they possess and the overall mean detected is 2.54 which is lower than 3 (the neutral value). This means that the majority of the participants held positive beliefs about their foreign language aptitude (for this questionnaire, since data

1-5 stands for the viewpoints ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, the lower the data is, the more positive beliefs it shows). It appears that the Standard Deviation (SD) of item 19 is the largest in Factor 1 and this means that participants' response have the highest diversity, i.e. , they have different opinions especially when comparison is made between men and women. The SD of item 2 is the lowest in Factor 1 and this means that participants' responses have the lowest diversity. This implies that they all agree with the perspective that some people have better language skills than others.

Difficulty of Language Learning

It was also mentioned that items 10, 11, 25, 34 were considered as difficulty of language learning (Horwitz, 1988) or Factor 2. The central tendency of Factor 2 is illustrated in Table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2: Factor 2: Difficulty of Language Learning

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	2.57	.943
11. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	3.66	1.02
25. It is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language.	2.96	1.06
34. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	3.06	1.08

Overall mean: 3.06

Factor 2 assesses the participants' beliefs about the difficulty of language learning and here, the overall mean is 3.06 which is a slightly higher than neutral (mean=3). This means that participants have lower negative beliefs in the difficulty of language learning. There were more participants who do not agree with the idea that people who are good at mathematics are not good at learning foreign languages and here the mean was 3.66). In this factor, item 34 seems to be having a rather higher standard deviation than other items. This implies that

participants have the highest diversity to choose their answers. They demonstrated different opinions when focusing on the degree of difficulty in the four skills of: reading in English, writing in English, speaking in English and listening to English.

Nature of Language Learning

It was mentioned that items 3, 27, 30, 33 examined the nature of language learning. (Horwitz, 1988) or factor 3. The central tendency of factor 3 is presented in table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3: Factor 3: the Nature of Language Learning

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	2.13	.940
27. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects.	2.37	.809
30. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	2.43	.930
33. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	1.96	1.04

Overall mean: 2.22

Factor 3 allows the participants to think about the nature and characteristic of learning the language and the overall mean is 2.22 which is much lower than neutral (mean=3). This indicates that participants, on the whole, have strong beliefs with regards to the nature of language learning. The standard deviation of item 7 is the lowest which means that most of the participants agree with the item of “learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects”.

Learning and Communication Strategies

It was mentioned that items 7, 8, 12, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 26, 28 identified learners' language learning and the communication strategies, (Horwitz, 1988) which can be considered as Factor 4. The central tendency of Factor 4 is presented in table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4: Factor 4: Learning and Communication Strategies

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.	1.91	.958
8. It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.	2.22	1.02
12. It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.	1.65	.880
14. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in English.	2.11	.889
17. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.	2.62	1.07
18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	1.66	.878
22. If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.	3.24	1.61
23. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.	3.21	1.00
26. It is important to practice with cassettes or tapes.	2.39	.978
28. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.	3.24	1.10

Overall mean: 2.425

Table 4.4 continued

Factor 4 aims at eliciting participants' strategies of learning the language and the communication strategies used. The overall mean is 2.425 which indicates that participants have strong beliefs in their strategies of learning English. Among all the items, item 12 has the lowest mean (1.65) and this indicates that participants strongly agree with the idea that it is best to learn English in an English speaking country. Item 18 is also within the comparatively low mean (1.66) and this means that participants think positively about the strategies of repetition and practices.

Motivation and Expectation

It was mentioned that items 5, 20, 21, 24, 29, 31, 32 elicited learners' motivation and expectations. (Horwitz, 1988) and these can be categorized into Factor 5. The central tendency of Factor 5 is illustrated in table 4.5 below:

Table 4.5: Factor 5: Motivation and Expectation

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
5. I believe that I will learn to speak English very well.	2.10	.764
20. People in my country feel that it is important to speak English.	2.12	.894
21. I feel timid speaking English with other people.	3.32	1.02
24. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know international people better.	2.26	.979
29. If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.	2.13	.940
31. I want to learn to speak English well.	1.49	.758
32. I would like to have non-Japanese English speaking friends.	2.83	.979

Overall mean: 2.32

Factor 5 helps to assess participants' beliefs in language learning motivation and expectation and this item has the overall mean of 2.32 which is lower than neutral (mean=3). This indicates that participants, on the whole, have strong motivation and expectation in learning a foreign language. Among all the items, item 31 has the lowest mean (1.49) and the lowest SD (.758). This shows that participants have the strongest motivation when they are desirable to speak English well. And item 21 has the highest mean (3.32) and the rather low SD (1.02) which shows that participants don't necessarily

feel timid about speaking English, so that they have strong beliefs about the motivation in learning English.

This section has discussed the results drawn from the BALLI questionnaire. The following section will discuss the correlations.

4.2.2 Research question 2: What is the relationship between the English language learning beliefs and the proficiency level of Chinese postgraduate students from PRC?

To answer this question, Spearman correlations analysis was applied and the results are showcased in table 4.6 below. In this respect, DV refers to the dependent variable which is determined by the independent variable and IV means the independent variable which determines the dependent variable. Participants’ interview data were also used in order to demonstrate the correlation.

Table 4.6: Spearman Correlations Analysis Between IV and DV

DV: English language proficiency	Correlation coefficient	Sig
IV: Beliefs about language learning		
Factor 1: foreign language aptitude	-.101	.347
Factor 2: difficulty of language learning	-.269*	.015
Factor 3: the nature of language learning	-.147	.187
Factor 4: learning and communication strategy	-.310**	.005
Factor 5: motivation and expectation	-.336**	.002

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The Spearman Correlations Analysis showed that the beliefs to the learning and communication strategy and the beliefs to the motivation and expectation significantly correlated with learners’ language learning proficiency.

Interview data

The interview, as mentioned in chapter 3, was conducted of only 10 participants from the total respondent number. It was also mentioned that Yin (2008)'s open ended question was applied in this interview for the purpose of drawing out the data and these are then subsequently extracted for the purpose of supporting the research question. The questions applied are provided and they are supported by respective interviewee's data. Names of the participants have been changed to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

Question: Do you like or dislike learning English?

When asked about the interest of English language learning, some participants said that they had to learn English even though they do not like English. The episodes of the interviews are as follows:

Answers:

Huang Peng (low proficiency level): I don't like to study English, I don't like it since childhood.

Yang Yi (low): 50 percent, for instance, as we know, English is a course in our country, so, it has very more test (many tests)...In this chapter, (aspect) I don't (don't) like it...

Chang Xiao (intermediate): Not so much, because I cannot remember the words and this is a very staff (tough) process for me, but I need to learn, because I need to study the subjects in English.

Tong Yao (intermediate): I do not like learning English because I have a bad memory.

Participants with higher proficiency level of English seem to enjoy learning English.

Gong Feng (upper intermediate): Yes, I like it. The reason is that I believe English is an important tool for me to see a bigger world out of my horizon and to understand other cultures beyond my country.

Yang Fang (high): Yes, because it's useful. I like learning because I can use it to meet people, find a job.

Gao Juan (high): I like to learn English since the initial stage, because I feel like speaking fluent English and I just have certain interest in learning languages.

Li Yuan (high): yes, it is my interest.

Li Ling (high): yes I do. There are so many reasons. One is I fell in love with it because my first English teacher was great, funny and made things easier. Since then I have developed my love for English. Plus it is a beautiful language to me, very musical. And it is a change from Mandarin too, which is a different language.

The interview episodes above showed that some participants enjoy learning the English language either because of the beauty of the language itself or the usefulness of the language as well as the pleasure they acquire from the learning process.

The subsequent question attempts to ask participants what they think of the importance of learning English and the reasons for learning English.

Question: *Do you think that learning English is very important in your life? Can you explain?*

Answers:

Huang Peng (low): yes it is important. For the exams. I need to use it in class, and to communicate with course mates.

Yang Yi (low): first of all, English is a compulsory subject in my country; secondly, I would like to improve the standard of living, to know more people and to go to more places as well as to communicate with others better. Yes, it is important. The reasons are as follows: firstly, it is the need of study, no matter it was in the old educational system of china or the new educational system of overseas. Secondly, the individual need, if you don't know English, you will lose the pleasure from communication with others, and even lose the chance to get to know the culture of foreign country.

Gao Juan (high): I think it's important since I'm majoring in English and I want to engage in English related profession after graduation.

Li Yuan (high): It can help me expand my knowledge.

Li Ling (high): It is the language I am using and also learning now. And it is the language I use to interact with people from different countries, the medium of instruction here. And the learning of the language is different from before, more academic stuff.

Gong Feng (upper intermediate): the reason I learn it is that, before I studied abroad, I learn English simply because the programmes in my previous schools required me to learn

English well. Since I came to Malaysia, studying English has become an inner desire from my bottom heart as English is frequently used in everyday life here.

Gong Feng (upper intermediate): Of course it is important. As a language most commonly used around the world, English has almost become a necessary skill for youth in 21st century. Apart from that, as the globalization continues to influence China, it's imperative for we Chinese student to learn English as a way to emerge ourselves into the globalized world. .

From the answers given by the participants, it was deduced that the reasons for learning English can be diverse. Some participants (low proficiency level students) mentioned that they have to study English because of the current use in Malaysia (see Huang Peng's interview). Some mentioned that the educational system in China which made English as a compulsory subject compelled participants to learn it. In addition, making English as a requirement to enter institutions of higher learning (see Yang Yi's interview) imply that participants see the benefits of learning English but other participants (the intermediate level and the high proficiency level) had claimed that having mastery of a foreign language like English will benefit them in the future as they can see better prospects in their career (see Gao Juan's interview). Other participants see the more opportunities of meet foreign people with their newly learnt language as an advantage as they can become better global citizens (see Li Ling and Gong Feng's interview. These answers drawn from participants' interviews indicate the probability of the instrumental and integrative motivation of learning the English language developing among the participants. In particular, low proficiency students seem to have instrumental motivation while high proficiency students seem to have integrative motivation. This shows the relationship between participants' beliefs and their language proficiency level.

In short, the low proficiency level participants have lower beliefs to the motivation and expectation than the rather higher level participants.

The next question posed to the interviewees is as follows.

Question: What do you think is the most difficult part of learning English?

Answers:

Huang Peng (low): To me the most difficult part is the listening and oral English. In China it is only necessary to memorize the meaning of words rather than paying attention to the pronunciation.

Yang Yi (low): Writing to me is the most difficult part. Because writing requires the accuracy of grammar, otherwise, the readers will misunderstand. In addition, you need to have a large amount of vocabulary, which is my weak point.

Yang Yi (low): Regarding to writing, using simple sentences to express oneself is Ok for ordinary student, but for master student, it is not as easy as you can imagine. You need to be more familiar with and even master the words in your professional field, to make the right argument and show your opinion flexibly is very important. That involves the amount of vocabulary, grammar and the depth of your thinking. Therefore, to express one's idea in the mind accurately has certain difficulties in the native language, needless to say it is for the second language?

Gao Juan (high): Yes, I found that the output of English, by which I mean how to write and speak as native speakers is quite difficult. And when you leave it aside for quite a while, the English would become less proficient.

Li Yuan (high): Reading is the most difficult part.

Li Ling (high): Academic writing is challenging. Sometimes I also think certain pronunciations are not so good.

Yang Fang (high): Academic writing is very difficult.

Zhang Yong (low): I think it is the pronunciation and the understanding of the language context.

From the above interview data, it can be deduced that participants had various language learning difficulties. Participants with higher proficiency level had the opinion that writing, academic writing in particular, is quite difficult to acquire. In contrast, participants with low proficiency level found that in every aspect of the learning process of English, be it for reading, writing, listening or speaking, it is very difficult to master it.

4.2.3 Research Question 3: What are the English language learning strategies of the Chinese postgraduate students from PRC?

This question attempts to answer research question 4 by focusing on the data extracted from the SILL questionnaire. As mentioned in chapter 3, the learning strategies were also categorized specifically into five strategies which were also noted as factors.

Memory strategies

It was mentioned that items 1-10 can be categorized as memory strategies (Oxford, 1990), or Factor 1. The central tendency of Factor 1 is in table 4.7 below:

Table 4.7: Factor 1: Memory Strategies

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in the SL.	3.27	.903
2. I use new SL words in a sentence so I can remember them.	3.37	.896
3. I connect the sound of a new SL word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	3.24	1.03
4. I remember a new SL word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	2.88	1.04
5. I use rhymes to remember new SL words.	2.63	1.18
6. I use flashcards to remember new SL words.	2.51	1.10
7. I physically act out new SL words.	2.32	1.06
8. I review SL lessons often.	2.94	1.15
9. I remember new SL words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	2.89	1.20
10. I say or write new SL words several times.	3.35	1.07

Overall mean: 2.94

As the questionnaire indicates, Factor 1 was developed for the purpose of identifying participants' memory strategies. Since the Likert scale in this questionnaire ranges from 1). Never or almost never true of me to 5). Always or almost always true of me which is in the total opposite direction of the BALLI model, some adjustments need to be done. For

example, data 1 will change into 5. Others follow similarly: 2 into 4, 4 into 2, 5 into 1, 3 remains.

In the context of this thesis, it is hereby indicated that if the mean of each item is higher than 3, it would show the positive response of the participants. Results indicate that the overall mean is 2.94 and this means that participants in the present study do not normally use memory strategies. However, item 2 acquired the highest mean (3.37) and it was also higher than 3 but the SD is the lowest in this factor. This indicates that participants would normally use new second language (SL) words in the sentence. This item indicates that participants have the lowest diversity for the responses.

Cognitive Strategies

It was mentioned that items 11-23 can be categorized as cognitive strategies, (Oxford, 1990) or Factor 2. The central tendency of Factor 2 is presented in table 4.8 below:

Table 4.8: Factor 2: Cognitive Strategies

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
11. I try to talk like native SL speakers.	3.45	1.13
12. I practice the sounds of SL.	3.68	1.04
13. I use the SL words I know in different ways.	3.17	.927
14. I start conversations in the SL.	3.37	1.04
15. I watch SL language TV shows spoken in SL or go to movies spoken in SL.	3.62	1.16
16. I read for pleasure in the SL.	3.23	1.05
17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in the SL.	3.29	1.09
18. I first skim an SL passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.	3.20	1.05
19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in the SL.	3.12	1.09
20. I try to find patterns in the SL.	3.26	1.19
21. I find the meaning of an SL word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	3.21	.899
22. I try not to translate word for word.	3.23	1.20
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in the SL.	2.99	1.04

Overall mean: 3.29

Table 4.8 continued

The purpose of Factor 2 was to solicit participants' use of cognitive strategies. In this context, the overall mean is slightly higher than 3 (mean=3.29). This indicates that participants tend to normally use cognitive strategies. Among all the items, item 12 has the highest mean (3.68). This implies that more participants prefer to practise the sounds of SL. In addition, the mean of item 21 appears to be comparatively high (3.21) and it also has an SD of .899 which is the lowest among all. This indicates that most participants would search for the meaning of a SL word by dividing it into parts so that they can understand.

Compensatory Strategies

It was mentioned that items 24-29 are categorized as compensatory strategies, (Oxford, 1990) or Factor 3. The central tendency of Factor 3 is illustrated in table 4.9 below:

Table 4.9: Factor 3: Compensatory Strategies

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
24. To understand unfamiliar SL words, I make guesses.	3.39	1.04
25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in the SL, I use gestures.	3.35	1.03
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in the SL.	3.01	1.08
27. I read SL without looking up every new word.	3.29	1.06
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in the SL.	3.17	1.19
29. If I can't think of an SL word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	3.56	1.03

Overall mean: 3.30

The purpose of Factor 3 was to identify participants' compensatory strategies. Here, the overall mean is 3.30 which is higher than 3. This indicates that majority of the participants use compensatory strategies. Among all of the items, item 29 appears to carry the highest mean (3.56) and the lowest SD (1.03). This implies that more participants choose to use a word or phrase that means the same thing if they cannot think of another SL word. In the context of this discussion, it appears that the answers provided by participants carry the lowest diversity.

Metacognitive Strategies

It was mentioned that items 30-38 are categorized as metacognitive strategies, (Oxford, 1990) or Factor 4. The central tendency of Factor is presented in table 4.10 below:

Table 4.10: Factor 4: Metacognitive Strategies

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my SL.	3.17	.991
31. I notice my SL mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	3.41	1.03
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking SL.	3.51	1.07
33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of SL.	3.74	1.05
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study SL.	3.04	1.06
35. I look for people I can talk to in SL.	3.15	1.04
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in SL.	3.17	1.10
37. I have clear goals for improving my SL skills.	3.16	1.07
38. I think about my progress in learning SL.	3.22	1.02

Overall mean: 3.29

Factor 4 was developed so as to elicit participants' metacognitive strategies. The overall mean here shows that it stands at 3.29 which is higher than 3. This indicates that on average, participants tend to use metacognitive strategies. Among all of the items, item 33 has the highest mean (3.74) which indicates that more participants choose to have positive answers. In other words, they would like to find out how to be a better learner of SL. Item 30 has the lowest SD (.991) which means that the answers given by participants for this item is lowest in diversity. More participants choose to find as many ways as they can to use SL.

Affective Strategies

It was mentioned that items 39-44 are categorized as affective strategies, (Oxford, 1990) or Factor 5. The central tendency of Factor 5 is demonstrated in table 4.11 below:

Table 4.11 Factor 5: Affective Strategies

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using SL.	3.30	1.05
40. I encourage myself to speak SL even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	3.46	1.09
41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in SL.	2.85	1.21
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using SL.	3.02	1.17
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning dairy.	2.18	1.19
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning SL.	2.76	1.11

Overall mean: 2.93

The purpose of Factor 5 was try to get an understanding of participants' usage of affective strategies. The overall mean here is 2.93 which is lower than 3. This indicates that on average, participants seldom use affective strategies. Among all of the items, item 40 has the highest mean (3.46) which means that more participants choose to encourage themselves to speak SL.

Social Strategies

It was mentioned that items 45-50 are categorized as social strategies, (Oxford, 1990) or Factor 6. The central tendency of Factor 6 is presented in table 4.12 below:

Table 4.12: Factor 6: Social Strategies

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
45. If I do not understand something in SL, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	3.54	.958
46. I ask SL speakers to correct me when I talk.	2.84	1.01
47. I practice SL with other students.	3.22	.956

48. I ask for help from SL speakers.	3.01	1.09
49. I ask questions in SL.	3.30	1.09
50. I try to learn about the culture of SL speakers.	3.34	1.04

Overall mean: 3.21

Factor 6 was meant to elicit participants' social strategy. The overall mean here is 3.21 which is slightly higher than 3. This shows that participants' answers are low positive. Item 45 seems to have the highest mean (3.54) indicating that more participants choose to ask other person to slow down or to say something again if they do not understand what is being said in SL. Here, the SD of item 45 is comparatively low (.958) and this shows that the answers given by participants are lower diversity. This implies that participants normally use this strategy.

4.2.4 Research Question 4: What is the relationship between English language learning strategies and the proficiency level of the Chinese postgraduate students from PRC?

Since the questionnaire of SILL conveys a totally opposite direction of the Likert scale with the model of BALLI, adjustments had to be made. Here, the researcher recode the data of the various strategies by changing the direction as follows: 1→5, 2→4, 3→3, 4→2, 5→1 even though in the questionnaire data set, the Likert scale is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Spearman correlations analysis was showcased and this is illustrated in table 4.13 below:

Table 4.13 Spearman correlations analysis between IV and DV

DV: English language proficiency	Correlation coefficient	Sig
IV : language learning strategies		
Factor 1: memory strategies	.075	.503
Factor 2: cognitive strategies	.187	.092
Factor 3: compensatory strategies	.202	.069
Factor 4: metacognitive strategies	.129	.247
Factor 5: affective strategies	.030	.087
Factor 6: social strategies	.163	.143

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

(DV: dependent variable; IV: independent variable)

The Spearman Correlations Analysis showed that participants' use of language learning strategies are weakly correlated with their language learning proficiency. Other variables should also be taken into consideration.

In order to link the participants' proficiency level to their language learning strategies, the following interview question was posed.

Interview data

***Question:** What kind of learning methods do you use to learn the English language?*

Answers:

Huang Peng (low): I feel like memorizing the vocabulary, reading books, reading newspapers, watching TV.

Yang Yi (low): Speaking to my classmate, listening some tapes, writing once a week, sometimes watching TV sitcoms.

Zhang Yong (low): Learn it in school and by myself.

Gong Feng (upper intermediate): I was learning English through the following methods: reading news from websites like BBC, New York Times, and the like; Listening to BBC radio; read articles in my field.

Gong Feng (upper intermediate): As for studying techniques, I would like to share with you what I learned from some English teaching experts in China. They tend to view the English learning process as a combination of both input and output. Input refers to the process when you absorb information from outside by listening and reading and then this information are stored in your brain. Output, on the contrary, is a process when you express yourself by using the information you gathered in the input process. In this sense, the process of learning is a closed cycle. To further illustrate the point, expert structured English learning into four basic columns: Listening, reading, speaking and writing. Listening and reading, as the input process, ought to be strengthening as a basis for learning speaking and writing which are the output process. In simple words, the more input you provide, the more output you can produce.

Li Ling (high): Read more English news, books and academic papers. Writing a thesis also helps, watching English films, sitcoms, and listen to English radio.

Gao Juan (high): Actually I'm not sure about the exact method, but I have been taught under the English curriculums in China. Now I'm studying in foreign country in order to have myself immersed in English-speaking environment.

Gao Juan (high): well, as for reading and writing, I just follow the courses since I began to learn English. I tried to build and enlarge my vocabulary and I master the English grammar in order to avoid mistakes. In addition, I regard listening and speaking as a whole in the process of learning. I tend to listen to English music and watch English drama. More importantly, I communicate with native English speakers if possible.

When interviewed about the current method participants would use for learning the English language, they reported various strategies. Among the many, they mentioned watching English drama, reading the English newspapers and magazines, listening to the radios in English as the self-study strategies as well as listening to lectures given by relevant teachers. From the data, it should be noted that high proficiency level participants showed autonomous learning strategies. In other words, they seem to have their own way of learning English whereas low proficiency level participants just followed other students' learning strategies.

4.3 Discussions and interpretations of all the Research Questions

Findings of the study will be discussed according to the research questions and the details are as follow:

Research Question 1: What are the English language learning beliefs of the Chinese postgraduate students from People's Republic of China (PRC)?

The comparison of the overall mean of the different factors of the English language learning (ELL) beliefs of the participants will be tabulated in table 4.14 below.

Table 4.14: Overall Mean of the Different Factors for ELL Beliefs

Factors	Name of the factor	Overall mean
Factor 1	Foreign language aptitude	2.54
Factor 2	Difficulty of language learning	3.06
Factor 3	The nature of language learning	2.22
Factor 4	Learning and communication strategies	2.43
Factor 5	Motivation and expectation	2.32

From this table, it can be seen that the overall mean for factor 2 is the highest (3.06) comparatively. This indicates that participants in this study have the lowest belief in the difficulty of language learning. The overall mean for factor 3 is the lowest (2.22) and this shows that participants have the strongest belief towards the nature of language learning. This particular finding is different from the findings of Esmail and Mahdi (2014) who found that their students showed the strongest belief in the motivation and expectation of language learning but in contrast had the lowest belief in the nature of language learning. Nonetheless, their study was conducted among participants from secondary schools in Iran. The current study was conducted in Malaysia and it focuses on postgraduate students from China with different age groups but homogenous in the sense that they were all from China. In this regard, it appears that the findings of the current study differed from previous study. The current set of findings imply that students in this study have strong beliefs towards language learning and language learning communication strategies (mean=2.43) as well as language learning motivation and expectation (2.32). Such findings indicate that the postgraduates from China in UM have positive attitude and motivation to the language learning process and they are determined to achieve a rather higher language learning

outcome and they are willing to utilize as many language learning strategies as they could. Their beliefs towards foreign language aptitude is comparatively lower but nevertheless, still positive since the mean score is lower than 3 (mean=2.54), (in this questionnaire, the lower the data, the more positive the result), which showed that in their perspective, the foreign language aptitude is a rather important variable for language learning outcome but it is not the determined factor.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between the English language learning beliefs and the proficiency level of the Chinese postgraduate students from PRC?

Finding from the previous sub-chapter suggests that the correlation between factor 2, the difficulty of language learning and the language proficiency of the Chinese postgraduate are negatively weak but significant ($r=-.269^*$, $p=.015$, $p<.05$). This indicates that the more difficulty they perceive in language learning, the lower the proficiency level the participants will get. The complexity of the language learning process is also a determined factor for the learning outcome. This particular finding differs from Esmail & Mahdi (2014)'s study which found that the proficiency level of their students had weak positive correlation ($r = .229$, $p = .043$, $p < .05$) with regards to the difficulty of language learning. There is no definite answer to explain this variation but the most plausible reason could lie in the fact that Esmail and Mahdi's finding was based on the intermediate level participants while the current study had divided the participants into various levels of proficiency level. In addition, the correlation between factor 4 which is learning and communication strategy and language proficiency among the Chinese postgraduate students is strong negative and significant ($r=-.310^{**}$, $p=.005$, $p<.01$) which could mean that it may not be true that the more strategies they use, the higher their proficiency. Participants need to engage the strategies effectively and efficiently as well as constantly so as to achieve the

ideal learning outcome. This finding also differs from part of the findings extracted from Esmail and Mahdi's (2014) study which found that overall, students' language proficiency has positive strong correlation with language learning and communication strategy. In looking at the correlation between factor 5, motivation and expectation and the language proficiency among Chinese postgraduate students, the indication is that it is also a strong negative and significant ($r=-.336^{**}$, $p=.002$, $p<.01$). This finding indicates that the motivation itself may not necessarily be linked to the action. People may say something in a particular way, but they could end up doing something in another way (Yang, 1999). (Likewise, this finding is also different from the findings of Esmail and Mahdi (2014) who found that there was strong positive correlation between students' motivation and expectation and their language proficiency. From what has been unveiled in the current study, it appears that the finding of the current study do show that postgraduate students who have strong beliefs may not physically perform the action in order to accomplish in their language learning. This implies that some gaps between one's beliefs and one's action exist.

Research Question 3: What are the English language learning strategies of the Chinese postgraduate students from PRC?

The comparison of the overall mean of the different factors as recorded in the language learning strategies (LLS) of the participants are tabulated in table 4.15 below.

Table 4.15: Overall Mean of the Different Factors in the LLS of Participants

Factors	Name of the factor	Overall mean
Factor 1	Memory strategies	2.94
Factor 2	Cognitive strategies	3.29
Factor 3	Compensatory strategies	3.30
Factor 4	Metacognitive strategies	3.29
Factor 5	Affective strategies	2.93
Factor 6	Social strategies	3.21

As the above table illustrates, the overall mean of factor 3, compensatory strategies, is the highest (mean=3.30). This indicates that participants in the present study used the compensatory strategies more often than other strategies. This finding is different from previous studies such as Zakia's (2014) study which focused on Fiji freshmen undergraduate students learning English for academic purposes. Zakia's (2014) finding showed that generally, Fiji undergraduates utilized cognitive and metacognitive strategies more. In contrast, the present study found that postgraduate participants used the compensatory strategies most. This could mean that the Chinese postgraduate students have different preferences in the way they employ learning strategies. Although further evidence needs to be collected, there is a high possibility that it could be due to the Chinese traditional way of teaching and learning the English language, an educational system that emphasizes on examinations and which thereby, neglects critical thinking and cognition in the learning process. The finding of the current study also indicate that participants use a certain amount of cognitive (mean=3.29), metacognitive (mean=3.29) as well as social strategies (mean=3.21), but not in the high level which indicates that participants from

China tend not to think about their learning process very much and they socialize in order to learn but they are still in the state of conservative and not a very high level. It could be due to the Chinese culture that emphasizes the inner heart cultivation (keep feeling to oneself) rather than opening to outer culture. Due to the influence of this culture, Chinese students tend to learn by themselves and do not like to communicate with others nor collaborate with the outside world. Sometimes they could be quite narrow-minded and reluctant to learn through socializing with different people simply because of their culture. Lastly, they appear to be using affective strategies (2.93) the least which shows that Chinese students in this study are not strong in the aspects of emotion management during the learning of the language. This finding is reflected in Zakia's (2014) study of Fiji undergraduates who were found to be using affective strategies the least.

Research question 4: What is the relationship between English language learning strategies of the Chinese postgraduate students from PRC?

As mentioned in chapter 3, the language learning strategies are classified into factors. In the current study, findings seem to show that each factor of the language learning strategies as indicated by the participants has low negative correlation with their language proficiency. Such finding is different from previous study such as Zhong's (2012) study which investigated undergraduates learning the English language in New Zealand where it was deduced that learners' language learning strategy will strengthen their proficiency level as well as learners' beliefs. As the current study was conducted among Chinese postgraduate students learning English in the Malaysian context, it is assumed that this can affect learners who may have different language learning styles and that for them to accommodate to the Malaysian context also requires them to adjust to a different culture. Attempting to balance this for the postgraduate students may induce some differences which could affect

the outcome of the survey. Nonetheless, the findings shown here indicate that the language learning strategy is only one of the many variables that could determine the language learning outcome. It is argued that learners' learning style and personality style could also influence their proficiency of language learning.

4.4 Summary

This Chapter presents the major findings for the research. It begins by showing the results of the data analysis according to the research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative results were showcased. Then, discussions or interpretations of the results were put forward comprehensively. The insights and conclusions of the current study will be in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

As all research must be brought to a closure, so too does this thesis which will be finalized in chapter 5 as Conclusion. This chapter will attempt to summarize what the current study has done, what its findings are and then it hopes to provide limitations of the study and further recommendation for future proceedings to be carried out.

The current study, as has been mentioned in chapter 1, aims to identify three variables of learning English as a foreign language among participants who come from a country that rarely uses the language for communication. In this regard, the language learning beliefs of the learners, the language learning strategies they employ as well as their English language proficiency are given emphasis. The statement problem stated in chapter 1 has indicated that students from China often find their reliance to use English, particularly in Malaysia where English serves as the second most important language, stressful because they seldom feel confident and they also seem to lack vocabulary. In addition, informal conversations with some of these students who had studied some time also indicate that they were not doing as well as they should be in their respective courses not because they lack the intelligence but because of their weak proficiency level. Consequently, the researcher, having reviewed the relevant literature before, decided to do a study in order to gather some evidence which could show that Chinese students from the PRC or hereby term as China, encounter many problems in English language learning. It is deduced that because of such difficulties in language learning, these participants may lose the momentum in learning and consequently, develop an attitude that is not positive as well as diminished levels of

motivation in learning. All of these, it is argued, can affect the learning outcome and in this regard, their academic pursuit which can also affect their future career. At the same time, it appears that there are few reports of studies focusing on postgraduate students learning English particularly in the Malaysian context. Hence, it is deduced that the current study helps to fill in the gap.

In this study, it was mentioned that a mixed research design was employed in terms of extracting data that uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. First and foremost, four research questions were developed as stated in chapter 1 and these questions were then addressed respectively in chapter 4. As stated in chapter 3, the main instrument used in the current study comprises two questionnaires and interview. First the BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) model that was established by Horwitz (1988) was administered via emails on 82 participants. The purpose of using this questionnaire was to elicit participants' beliefs in learning the English language. Data were compiled and then analysed via SPSS version 21.

In the next step, another model of questionnaire, SILL (Strategy Inventory of Language Learning) that was developed by Oxford (1990) was simultaneously administered in the 82 participants so as to solicit learners' language learning strategies. The results were further validated by interview data that was extracted from a combination of high and low proficiency level participants.

It was also mentioned in chapter 3, how participants were located and contacted and as a result, a total of 82 participants who were also postgraduates from China pursuing their postgraduate studies in the University of Malaya. Some were doing their master and others their doctoral (PhD) studies. From the total of this, 10 participants were selected for

interview and they were selected based on their English language proficiency level. It was highlighted in chapter 3 that to classify them accordingly, the participants' IELTS scores were used. Chapter 3 has laid down all the procedures of doing this classification and selection.

Analysis of data was performed by using analysed by SPSS (Version 21). The questionnaire results were analyzed in the form of frequency, reliability as well as normality. The Spearman correlates were used to identify the relationships between the major variables.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

From the findings analysed, it appears that Chinese postgraduate participants have the strongest belief in the nature of language learning but the weakest belief in the difficulties of language learning. The findings give the information that Chinese students, having learned the English language for around 10 years, know clearly what the English language learning will be like and what will be involved in the English language learning process. In addition, they are aware that the complexity of the language learning will be one of the obstacles for them to achieve a rather good learning outcome. It was also indicated that the finding of the current study seems to be slightly different from previous studies such as Zakia's study done of Fiji undergraduates in 2014.

This study also found that Chinese postgraduate participants used the compensatory strategies the most and the affective strategies the least. That means the Chinese students tend to be more familiar with the traditional Chinese teaching method, the grammar-oriented learning system which emphasize repetition and memorization to make up what they could not understand, critical thinking and cognitive process are rather weak for the

Chinese learners. And on the other hand, they are not doing well in emotion and stress management during the language learning process. The finding appears to be the same as those found in previous studies (see Zakia, 2014).

In terms of looking at the relationship between participants' beliefs in learning English and their proficiency level as well as their language learning strategies and their proficiency level, the findings indicate the following. First, the correlation of Chinese postgraduate participants' beliefs of the difficulty of language learning and their language proficiency level seems to be negative weak but significant ($r=-.269^*$, $p=.015$, $p<.05$). This indicates that the more difficult the language learning, the lower the proficiency level the participants will get. Participants tend to see the complexity of the language learning process as the fairly important obstacle for them to overcome in order to achieve the level of proficiency they expect. Findings also show that the correlation between factor 4, participants' language learning and communication strategy and participants' language proficiency is strong negative and significant ($r=-.310^{**}$, $p=.005$, $p<.01$). which indicate that effectiveness, efficiency and consistency, rather than variety of the use of learning strategy should determine the language learning outcome. The correlation between factor 5, participants' motivation and expectation and their proficiency level is also strong negative and significant ($r=-.336^{**}$, $p=.002$, $p<.01$). That finding shows the gap between learners' beliefs and their actions.

Findings from the current study show that each factor that is related to the language learning strategies which were employed by the participants indicates a low positive correlation with their language proficiency. That means, language learning strategies can be one but not the only one factor for language learning outcome.

5.3 Conclusion

The author from this study, having gone the whole journey of research, intends to conclude that postgraduates from China have certain beliefs to the learning of the language but such beliefs could be enhanced through more intensive practice, in other words, learning something by doing it should be the crucial factor to achieve the good language learning outcome. Participants could use certain kind of strategies, however, the efficiency of the use of the strategies should be further developed. Beliefs and strategies are among the most important factors to determine language proficiency, but these two variables must be combined with other factors, such as learners' personality types and their cognition style as well as language learning context.

5.4 Insights for Further Research

The current research was conducted among postgraduates from China studying in one of the public universities in Malaysia. Though the sample size is big enough for quantitative research, nonetheless, the findings cannot be generalized because of the constraint laid on the context of this study which focused on one public university. Further research should focus on acquiring more participants particularly others from different ethnic groups and age groups and in various contexts.

The present study dealt with three important variables in English language learning: beliefs of the learners in learning English, language learning strategies as well as English language proficiency. Future research might want to consider taking in other variables which play an important role in the outcome of language learning, which should also be taken into account and might encompass learners' personality types, cognition style as well as their language learning anxiety, etc.

The pedagogical implications accessed from this study suggests that language teaching methods engaged by instructors could strengthen students' language learning motivation and attitude and thereby increase their learning interests. Instructors should also be noted that individual differences among the students do matter and affect learning particularly when it comes to employing the various language learning strategies during instruction. Appropriate teaching methods and teaching materials should be given to the students with the learning strategy and learner's beliefs accordingly, only by this, better language learning outcome and idealized teaching fruit could be achieved.

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APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

Dear friends, I am currently doing a research in beliefs and strategies and proficiency of UM postgraduates from China in learning English, please kindly fill my questionnaire, it will take about 20 minutes. Please be noted that your answers will only be used for research which will be highly confidential, thank you very much for your cooperation.

The questionnaire is divided into three parts, Part A: Background information from the participants; Part B: Beliefs about language learning inventory; Part C: Strategies inventory of language learning. Just click the answer to show your opinion of each item.

Part A: Background information

The degree that you are/will undertaking:

Degree () master () PhD ()

Are you a male() or female ()?

The major you are/applied is ()

From faculty of ()

How many years have you spent in Malaysia?

Less than 1 year () 1-3 years () 4-6 years ()

more than 7 years ()

Part B: The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)

Below are beliefs that some people have about learning foreign languages. Read each statement and then decide if you:

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree

There are no right or wrong answers. Please write the appropriate

number next to the statement. Questions 4 and 15 are slightly different and you should mark them as indicated.

1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language. ()
2. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages. ()
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others. ()
4. English is: ()
 - a. a very difficult language
 - b. a difficult language
 - c. a language of medium difficulty
 - d. an easy language
 - e. a very easy language
5. I believe that I will learn to speak English very well. ()
6. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages. ()
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation. ()
8. It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English. ()
9. You shouldn't speak anything in English until you can say it correctly. ()
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one. ()
11. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages. ()
12. It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country. ()
13. I enjoy practising English with the Americans I meet. ()
14. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in English. ()

15. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language how long would it take them to speak the language very well? ()
- a. less than a year
 - b. 1-2 years
 - c. 3-5 years
 - d. 5-10 years
 - e. You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day
16. I have a special ability for learning foreign languages. ()
17. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words. ()
18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot. ()
19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages. ()
20. People in my country feel that it is important to speak English. ()
21. I feel timid speaking English with other people. ()
22. If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on. ()
23. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar. ()
24. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know international people better. ()
25. It is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language. ()
26. It is important to practice with cassettes or tapes. ()
27. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects. ()
28. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language. ()

29. If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job. ()
30. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent. ()
31. I want to learn to speak English well. ()
32. I would like to have non-Japanese English speaking friends. ()
33. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language. ()
34. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it. ()

Part C: Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

This form of the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) is for students of English as a second language (ESL) OR foreign language (EFL). Please read each statement and fill in the bubble of the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells HOW TRUE THE STATEMENT IS. (SL means second language.)

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

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.

Part A memory strategies

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in the SL. () (SL means second language.)
2. I use new SL words in a sentence so I can remember them. ()
3. I connect the sound of a new SL word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word. ()
4. I remember a new SL word by making a mental picture of a

situation in which the word might be used. ()

5. I use rhymes to remember new SL words. ()

6. I use flashcards to remember new SL words. ()

7. I physically act out new SL words. ()

8. I review SL lessons often. ()

9. I remember new SL words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign. ()

Part B cognitive strategies

10. I say or write new SL words several times. ()

11. I try to talk like native SL speakers. ()

12. I practice the sounds of SL. ()

13. I use the SL words I know in different ways. ()

14. I start conversations in the SL. ()

15. I watch SL language TV shows spoken in SL or go to movies spoken in SL. ()

16. I read for pleasure in the SL. ()

17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in the SL. ()

18. I first skim an SL passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully. ()

19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in the SL. ()

20. I try to find patterns in the SL. ()

21. I find the meaning of an SL word by dividing it into parts that I understand. ()

22. I try not to translate word for word. ()

23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in the SL. ()

Part C complementary strategies

24. To understand unfamiliar SL words, I make guesses. ()

25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in the SL, I use gestures. ()

26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in the SL. ()

27. I read SL without looking up every new word. ()

28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in the SL. ()

29. If I can't think of an SL word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing. ()

Part D metacognitive strategies

30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my SL. ()

31. I notice my SL mistakes and use that information to help me do better. ()

32. I pay attention when someone is speaking SL. ()

33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of SL. ()

34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study SL. ()

35. I look for people I can talk to in SL. ()

36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in SL. ()

37. I have clear goals for improving my SL skills. ()

38. I think about my progress in learning SL. ()

Part E affective strategies

39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using SL. ()

40. I encourage myself to speak SL even when I am afraid of making a mistake. ()

41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in SL. ()
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using SL. ()
43. I write down my feelings in a language learning dairy. ()
44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning SL. ()

Part F social strategies

45. If I do not understand something in SL, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again. ()
46. I ask SL speakers to correct me when I talk. ()
47. I practice SL with other students. ()
48. I ask for help from SL speakers. ()
49. I ask questions in SL. ()
50. I try to learn about the culture of SL speakers. ()

Your IELTS score: ()

Your TOEFL score: ()

I am doing my English language proficiency program in UMCCED () AND I am in level

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 () 6 ()

Thank you very much for your time and patience!

APPENDIX B: Samples of Interview transcripts

(Interview to Li Ling, High proficiency level)

Researcher: hi li ling can i interview you right now?

Li Ling: hi there.

Researcher: can we begin?

how long have you been learning english?

Li Ling: over 15 years

Researcher: do you like learning it? why?

Li Ling: yes I do. there are so many reasons. such as i fell in love with it because my first english teacher was great, funny and made things easier. since then I have developed my love for English. plus it is a beautiful language to me, very musical. and it is a change from Mandarin too, which is a different language.

Researcher: is english very important in your life? why or why not?

Li Ling: it is important. because now it is the language in use for me in Malaysia

Researcher: and?

Li Ling: (omg you better pay me for long answers, hmmm). and it has become part of my life

i give you gift

Li Ling: was joking.

Researcher: elaborate?

Li Ling: it is the language i am using and also learning now. and it is the language i use to interact with people from different contries, the medium of instruction here. and the learning of the language is differerent from before, more academic stuff.

Researcher: what do you think the learning of english is all about? or what does english language learning means to you?

Li Ling: it depends on the purpose of study. To me as an English user, it requires 4 skills, so each skill needs to be polished up.

Researcher: For instance, do you think that learning English is remembering as many new words as possible?

Li Ling: if you can that helps since you have a considerable vocabulary, but memorizing vocabs alone is not enough.

Researcher: you also involve what other things?

?

besides vocabulary.

Li Ling: yeah, how to use the vocabs, speaking, reading, listening writing should be balanced

Researcher: right now what method do you utilize to learn the language?

Li Ling: read more english news, books and academic papers. writing a thesis also helps, watching english films, sitcoms, and listen to english radio.

Researcher: by the way, do you meet some difficulties in learning english right now though you are quite good?

Li Ling: thanks. i find i can remember new words very well. i.e. came across a new word and next time i see it, can really think about the meaning and academic writing is challenging . sometimes i also think certain pronunciations are not so good

Researcher: what is your expectation for your future english language learning?

Li Ling: i hope i can write better

Researcher: ok, thanks a lot, your answer really helps.

Li Ling: no problem. best of luck (luck)

Researcher: wish you good life in Malaysia!

Li Ling: thx, u too.

Researcher: good night!

Li Ling: night.

Interview to Huang Peng, Low proficiency level, mandarin interview with English translation

Questions:

1. English learning experience:

Researcher: a) How long have you been learning English?

Huang Peng: 11 年: 11 years

Researcher: b) How did you learn English before starting your postgraduate program?

背单词、看书、看报纸、看电视 (memorizing the vocabulary, reading books, reading newspapers, watching TV.)

2. Liking of learning English:

Researcher: a) Do you like learning English?

Huang Peng: 不喜欢 (I don't like)

Researcher: b) Why or why not?

Huang Peng: 从小就不喜欢 (I don't like it since childhood)

3. Reasons for learning English:

Researcher: Why are you learning English?

Huang Peng: 考试 (for the exams)

4. Importance of learning English:

Researcher: a) Is English important to you?

Huang Peng: 重要 (yes it is important)

Researcher: b) Why or why not?

Huang Peng: 以后上课要用英文，和同学交流也是

(I need to use it in class, and to communicate with course mates.)

5. Current language learning strategies:

Researcher: a) How do you learn English?

Huang Peng: 和以前一样 (as same as before)

Researcher: b) What specific techniques and methods do you think are very useful in learning English?

Huang Peng: 看美剧 (to watch the American drama)

Researcher: c) How do you know that they are useful or not useful?

Huang Peng: 周围人都这么做 (everybody around me does so)

6. Beliefs about language learning:

Researcher: a) What do you think learning English is all about? In other words, what does learning English mean to you?

Huang Peng: 学习专业课 (it means learning the academic subject)

Researcher: b) For instance, do you think that learning English is remembering as many new words as possible?

Huang Peng: 重复、多看书、报纸 (it is about repetition, reading more books and newspapers.)

Researcher: c) Please explain.

Huang Peng: 只有重复多了才能记得住 (I can only remember them by repetition.)

7. Learning difficulties:

Researcher: a) What do you find very difficult about learning English?

Huang Peng: 对于我来说就是听力和口语 (to me the most important part is the listening and oral English.)

Researcher: b) Please explain.

Huang Peng: 因为在国内只背单词意思，对发音不关注 (since in China it is only necessary to memorize the meaning of words rather than paying attention to the pronunciation.)

APPENDIX C: Yin Cheng bin (2008)'s PhD Interview Protocol

Investigating Learner Variables in the FFL Context in China

Time: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee Student ID: _____

The purpose of this interview is to understand how the following learner factors, (1) attitude and motivation,(2) learner beliefs, (3) learning strategies, manifest in the Chinese English as a foreign language (EFL) context and how they are developed in this context.

Questions:

1. English learning experience:

a) How long have you been learning English?

b) How did you learn English before starting your undergraduate program?

2. Liking of learning English:

a) Do you like learning English?

b) Why or why not?

3. Reasons for learning English:

Why are you learning English?

4. Importance of learning English:

a) Is English important to you?

b) Why or why not?

5. Current language learning strategies:

a) How do you learn English?

b) What specific techniques and methods do you think are very useful in learning English?

c) How do you know that they are useful or not useful?

d) How did you find out about those methods to learn English?

6. Other strategies:

a) What are the other ways that you know that could be used to learn English but you do not use them?

b) How did you find out about them?

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c) Do you think that they might be useful?

d) Why or why not?

7. Beliefs about language learning:

a) What do you think learning English is all about? In other words, what does learning English mean to you?

b) (If the students needs a prompt) For instance, do you think that learning English is remembering as many new words as possible?

c) Please explain.

8. Learning difficulties:

a) What do you find very difficult about learning English?

b) Please explain.