

**The Perceived Impact of Gender and ICT on Taiwanese  
Female Students' English Learning in a British University**

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## Abstract

This empirical research study is the first integrationist investigation of English learning experiences of a group of female Taiwanese postgraduate students studying for academic purposes at a British university. The main aim of the study is to investigate the impact of gender and ICT on <sup>whose??</sup> their English learning. The present research study, conducted by using qualitative methods, focus group, in-depth interviews, and diaries, is sensitive to social and cultural contexts and gives a detailed account and explanation of the perspectives on interrelational phenomena of information communication technology, English for academic purposes, and gender.

Social factors, including socio-economic status, economic, cultural, linguistic capital, and gender expectation, are discovered by the present research study to be important dimensions in influencing their English learning both in Taiwan and in Britain. The main findings of the present research study not only lead to a number of explanations of the English learning of the participants, but also extend understanding on CALL and EAP. Other relevant issues, including issues related to EFL and anxiety, globalisation, development of English(es), gender roles and negotiation, age, and student welfare, are also closely examined and discussed in this thesis.

Some specific English learning difficulties are regarded as closely related to participants' family background, previous English learning experiences, cultural capitals, and familiarity with academic discourse in Britain. Language exchange with both native and non-native English speakers either face-to-face or via communication technologies is considered to be significant in relation to their English development. The Internet and World Wide Web are also important in their academic studies and social lives as they serve as extended academic and social space that help to integrate them into the academic community discourse, provide language and study resources, and enhance their understanding in British society and culture. The age and socio-economic factors, closely linked to the participants' gender expectation, English learning and ICT experiences, have been identified as influential in relation to the English learning for academic purposes in Britain. The main findings of the present research study enhance understanding of Taiwanese female students' English learning experiences in a British university.

## List of contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
List of Contents	iii
List of Tables and Figures	xv
List of Abbreviations	xvi

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

1.1. Preliminary note	1
1.2. The researcher's identity and background	1
1.3. The aims and rationale of the research	1
1.4. The nature of the research	3
1.5. The research approaches adopted	4
1.6. The schedule of the present research	6
1.7. Other related issues	8
1.7.1. Ethical issues	8
1.7.1.1. Privacy	8
1.7.1.2. Anonymity	8
1.7.1.3. Confidentiality	9
1.7.2. Triangulation	10
1.8. Content of each chapter	12

## Chapter 2

### Information on background of the participants

2.1. Introduction	14
2.2. Ideology and language	14
2.2.1. Definition of ideology	14
2.2.2. Linguistic imperialism	15
2.2.3. Cultural capital and linguistic capital	15
2.3. Taiwan's socio-historical context	18
2.3.1. History and language policy	19
2.3.1.1. Austro-Polynesian aboriginals	20
2.3.1.2. Dutch and Spanish rule	20
2.3.1.3. Ming and Qing rule	21
2.3.1.4. Japanese rule	21

2.3.1.5. KMT (Nationalist party) rule	22
2.3.1.6. The economy and American influence in recent years	23
2.3.2. Language eradication and assimilation	24
2.4. Language planning, English education development, and English education in Taiwan	25
2.4.1. Language planning	25
2.4.2. English education in Taiwan	26
2.4.3. A look at the future	28
2.5. Overseas students' learning experiences in the British higher education system	29
2.5.1. Research on overseas students in Britain	29
2.5.2. The socio-cultural challenges/differences/adaptation	30
2.5.2.1. Socio-cultural shock	31
2.5.2.2. Academic culture shock	33
2.5.2.2.1. Teaching and learning styles	33
2.5.2.2.2. Academic expectation	35
2.5.3. English learning for academic purpose in Britain (and the US)	36
2.5.4. University policy toward overseas students and their well-being	42
2.6. Summary	43
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
<b>Gender, literacy, and education</b>	
3.1. Introduction	46
3.2. Gender and patriarchy	47
3.2.1. Definition of patriarchy	48
3.2.2. Structure of patriarchy	49
3.2.3. Private patriarchy and public patriarchy	52
3.2.4. The situation in Taiwan: private and public patriarchy and its discourses	52
3.2.5. Structures of patriarchy in Taiwan	53
3.2.5.1. Household production	53
3.2.5.2. Paid employment	54

3.2.5.3. State	55
3.2.5.4. Male violence	56
3.2.5.5. Sexuality	56
3.2.5.6. Cultural institutions	57
3.2.6. Discourse at work, new capitalism and women	58
3.2.6.1. Female teachers	58
3.2.6.2. Female supervisors	59
3.2.6.3. Female workers in other workplaces	59
3.3. Gender and language	60
3.3.1. Gender-related literacy	60
3.3.1.1. Contradiction between girls' performance at school and their future development	60
3.3.1.2. Different leisure uses of literacy	62
3.3.2. Gender, communication strategies and use of language	63
3.3.3. Gendered talk in the classroom	66
3.3.4. Different distribution of means of communication technology	67
3.3.5. Gender inequality in the EFL classroom	70
3.3.6. Women's literacy in developing countries	71
3.4. Gender and schooling/education	74
3.4.1. Schooling and education in Taiwan	74
3.4.1.1. Chinese style of education	75
3.4.1.2. Examination-oriented learning and punishment system	75
3.4.1.3. Competitive ethos and social group structures on campus	76
3.4.2. Gender-biased education	77
3.4.2.1. Education access and family strategy with respect to women's education	78
3.4.2.2. Gender-stereotyped education	78
3.4.3. Female as Others in school	79

3.4.4. Gender and overseas female students in British universities	80
3.5. Summary	83
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
<b>Multiliteracies, ICT, and EFL</b>	
4.1. Introduction	84
4.2. Socioeconomic context and multiliteracies	85
4.2.1. Capitalism and schooling	86
4.2.2. Development of literacy	88
4.2.3. Literacy, technology, and learning	89
4.3. The reported impact on ELT	92
4.3.1. Informationalism	92
4.3.2. Economic and employment trends	93
4.3.3. English status and change: World Englishes and English as an international language	94
4.3.4. The implications for English language learning and teaching	98
4.4. Development of ICT and EFL	101
4.4.1. Development of CALL (computer-assisted language learning)	102
4.4.1.1. Structural approaches	102
4.4.1.2. Cognitive approaches	102
4.4.1.3. Sociocognitive approaches	103
4.4.1.3.1. Computer Mediated Communication	103
4.4.1.3.2. Hypertext/hypermedia (World Wide Web)	104
4.4.2. Reported impact of ICT on English teaching and learning in the classroom	105
4.4.2.1. Advantages of ICT in the classroom	106
4.4.2.2. Disadvantages of ICT in the classroom	109

4.4.3. New demands of digital literacy and the implications for self-directed English learning for academic purpose	112
4.4.3.1. New requirements in reading and writing	112
4.4.3.2. The impact of the World Wide Web on academic English	113
4.4.3.3. The impact of CMC on academic English	117
4.5. Summary	119
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
<b>Stage 1 Methodology and findings</b>	
5.1. Introduction	122
5.2. Methodology: the use of a focus group	122
5.2.1. The nature of a focus group	121
5.2.1.1. Definition	122
5.2.1.2. Use of focus groups	123
5.2.1.3. Advantages	123
5.2.1.4. Disadvantages	125
5.2.2. Schedule	125
5.2.3. Set up	126
5.2.3.1. Size	126
5.2.3.2. Sampling	127
5.2.3.3. Comfort and having something to say	127
5.2.3.4. Chairing and an assistant to take notes	128
5.2.4. Description of conducting the focus group	128
5.2.4.1. Asking questions	128
5.2.4.2. Conducting the focus group	128
5.2.5. Analysis and presentation of the research data	130
5.2.5.1. Transcription of focus group	130
5.2.5.2. Analysis and presentation of data	130
5.2.5.2.1. Phase one	130
5.2.5.2.2. Phase two	131



5.2.5.2.3. Phase three	
5.2.5.2.4. Phase four	131
5.2.6. Reflection on the process	131
5.2.6.1. Time	132
5.2.6.2. Languages used in the focus group	132
5.2.6.3. Recording and tape	133
5.2.6.4. Absence of the researcher	133
5.2.6.5. Difficult and sensitive questions	133
5.2.6.6. Diverse perspectives and opinions	134
5.2.6.7. Dominance of certain participants and contamination (group effect)	134
5.2.7. Summary	135
5.3. Findings and discussion	136
5.3.1. English learning experiences in Taiwan	136
5.3.1.1. Teachers' quality and teaching methods.	136
5.3.1.2. Educational institutions and educational systems	138
5.3.1.3. The teaching materials and non- authentic environments	139
5.3.1.4. Motivation in learning English	141
5.3.2. Experiences in Britain	142
5.3.2.1. Culture shock and language shock	142
5.3.2.2. Difficulties with academic work	145
5.3.2.3. Resources	146
5.3.2.4. Solutions	147
5.3.2.5. Hegemony and subordination	149
5.3.3. ICT use and experiences	150
5.3.3.1. ICT experiences	150
5.3.3.2. ICT and English learning	152
5.3.4. Gender issues	153
5.3.4.1. Distance from supervisor	153
5.3.4.2. Harassment in Britain	154
5.3.4.3. Hostile attitude from males	154

5.3.4.4. Distribution of housework and resources	155
5.3.4.5. English and women	156
5.4. Summary	157
<b>Chapter 6</b>	
<b>Stage 2 Methodology and findings</b>	
6.1. Introduction	161
6.2. Methods of diary studies	161
6.2.1. Use and conduct of diary	161
6.2.1.1. Advantages	161
6.2.1.2. Disadvantages	161
6.2.2. The use of diaries in the present study	162
6.2.2.1. Sample	162
6.2.2.2. Diary design	162
6.2.2.3. The conduct of the diary	162
6.2.2.4. Recording media	163
6.2.2.5. Recording format	163
6.2.2.6. Feedback from the researcher	164
6.2.2.7. Language	164
6.3. The use of in-depth interview	164
6.3.1. Use and conduct of interview	165
6.3.1.1. Semi-structured interview	165
6.3.1.2. The interview effect and personal identity	166
6.3.1.3. Personal involvement	166
6.3.2. The use of interview in the present study	166
6.3.2.1. Interview questions	167
6.3.2.2. Equipment used in the interview	167
6.3.2.3. Interview effect	167
6.3.2.4. Language	168
6.3.2.5. Interview skills	168
6.4. Analysis and presentation of the research data	169
6.4.1. Transcription of interviews and information from diaries	169
6.4.2. Analysis and presentation of data	169
6.4.3. Summary	170

6.5. Findings and discussion	171
6.5.1. English learning in Taiwan	172
6.5.1.1. Early age of English: school and family	172
6.5.1.2. Gender, equality, and education	173
6.5.1.3. English education in Taiwan	177
6.5.1.4. English learning with ICT as scaffolding in Taiwan	179
6.5.2. English learning in Britain	182
6.5.2.1. Language shock and culture shock	182
6.5.2.2. Scaffolding	187
6.5.2.3. Male hostility	189
6.5.3. ICT use in Taiwan	190
6.5.4. ICT in Britain	192
6.5.4.1. Access and computer facilities	192
6.5.4.2. WWW	194
6.5.4.3. CMC	195
6.5.4.4. Other media	195
6.5.4.5. Physical discomfort	196
6.6. Summary	196

## **Chapter 7**

### **Stage 3 Methodology, data analysis, and findings**

7.1. Introduction	198
7.2. Stage 3 methods: focus groups, interviews, and diaries	198
7.2.1. Focus group schedule	198
7.2.2. Setting up the focus group	198
7.2.2.1. Size	199
7.2.2.2. Sampling	199
7.2.3. Conducting the focus group	200
7.2.3.1. Making questions	200
7.2.3.2. Procedure and conduct	200
7.2.4. Interview and diaries	201
7.3. Analysis and presentation of the research data	201
7.3.1. Data analysis	201
7.4. Findings and discussion	202

7.4.1. English learning experiences in Taiwan	202
7.4.1.1. Early age of English learning: school and family	202
7.4.1.2. Gender, equality, and education	204
7.4.1.3. English education in Taiwan	207
7.4.1.3.1. English learning in high school	207
7.4.1.3.2. English learning at university and after	209
7.4.1.3.3. Special events and contact with English speakers	211
7.4.1.4. English learning with ICT as scaffolding in Taiwan	212
7.4.1.4.1. Radio	212
7.4.1.4.2. Computers and the Internet	213
7.4.2. Experiences in Britain	217
7.4.2.1. Academic studies	218
7.4.2.1.1. Academic reading	218
7.4.2.1.2. Academic writing	219
7.4.2.2. Speaking and listening	222
7.4.2.2.1. English(es) and intelligibility	222
7.4.2.2.2. Language discourse	226
7.4.2.2.3. Communication with supervisor	227
7.4.2.2.4. Discussion in a group	228
7.4.2.2.5. Oral reports in the class	229
7.4.2.3. Other language and gender issues	230
7.4.2.3.1. Vocabulary	230
7.4.2.3.2. Time	230
7.4.2.3.3. English learning resources	231
7.4.2.3.4. Subject knowledge	233
7.4.2.3.5. Tutoring presentation	234
7.4.2.3.6. Anxiety, 'face', and moral awareness	234

7.4.2.4. Resources and other problems	237
7.4.2.4.1. Male hostility	237
7.4.2.4.2. Problems and dissatisfaction with administrative staff	238
7.4.2.4.3. Lack of resources	239
7.4.3. ICT use in Taiwan and Britain	239
7.4.3.1. ICT use in Taiwan	239
7.4.3.2. ICT use in Britain	240
7.4.3.2.1. Access and service	241
7.4.3.2.2. World Wide Web	243
7.4.3.2.3. Computer Mediated Communication	244
7.5. Summary	246
<b>Chapter 8</b>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	
8.1. Introduction	249
8.2. Summary of the main results	249
8.2.1. Economic, cultural, linguistic capital and gender expectations	250
8.2.2. English for academic purpose in Britain	251
8.2.3. English, status and linguistic capital	251
8.2.4. ICT and English learning	252
8.2.5. Negotiation of gender roles and identities	253
8.3. Contribution to knowledge and understanding of EFL and CALL	254
8.3.1. Preliminary note	254
8.3.2. Issues related to EFL and anxiety	255
8.3.3. Issues related to CALL	256
8.3.4. Issues related to English for academic purpose	257

8.4. Limitation of the present research and suggestions for further research	257
<b>Bibliography</b>	261
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1. The development of literacy	285
Appendix 2. Language and translation	287
Appendix 3. Focus group questions in stage 1	288
Appendix 4. Informed consent form	291
Appendix 5. Focus group questions in stage 3	293
Appendix 6. Diary design	296
Appendix 7. Interview questions	299
Appendix 8. Participant 5's interview and diary account	300
Appendix 9. Participant 4's interview and diary account	305
Appendix 10. Participant 1's interview and diary account	306
Appendix 11. Participant A's interview and diary account	311
Appendix 12. Participant B's interview and diary account	314
Appendix 13. Participant E's interview and diary account	317
Appendix 14. Participant M's interview and diary account	322
Appendix 15. Participant P's interview and diary account	323
Appendix 16. Participant Y's interview and diary account	324
Appendix 17. Partial transcription from stage 3 focus group, interview and diary research	328
Appendix 18. Further explanation of 'impact'	337

Appendix 19. A graphic of the interrelation of the participants' English learning in Taiwan and in Britain	338
Appendix 20. Significant characteristics of the three participants (P1, P4, P5) regarding English learning, gender, and ICT use	339
Appendix 21. Participant 3's account	341
Appendix 22. Participant 2's account	342
Appendix 23. A table of the participants' characteristics regarding capital, English learning and digital literacy	343

## List of Tables and Figures

- Table 1.1 Table of empirical research
- Table 2.1. Timetable of arrival of groups, political power, and language policy in Taiwan
- Table 2.2. Language type and function in education in Taiwan
- Table 5.1. Age and study of the participants in stage 1
- Table 7.1. Age and study of the participants in stage 3
- Figure 1.1. A complementary combination of approaches



## List of Abbreviations

<b>CALL</b>	Computer Assisted Language Learning
<b>CHC</b>	Confucian Heritage Culture
<b>CMC</b>	Computer Mediated Communication
<b>EAP</b>	English for Academic Purpose
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>ELT</b>	English Language Teaching
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>GRE</b>	Graduate Record Examination
<b>ICRT</b>	International Community Radio Taipei
<b>ICT</b>	Information Communication Technology
<b>IELTS</b>	International English Language Testing System
<b>L1</b>	First language
<b>L2</b>	Second Language
<b>NBLT</b>	Network-Based Language Teaching
<b>TEFL</b>	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
<b>TESL</b>	Teaching English as a Second Language
<b>TESOL</b>	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
<b>TOEFL</b>	Test of English as a Foreign Language
<b>WWW</b>	World Wide Web

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1. Preliminary note**

The aims of this introduction are: (1) to make explicit the researcher's identity and background in the study, (2) to make a statement on the main aims and rationale of the research, (3) to provide an introduction to the nature of the research, (4) to introduce the ideological model of literacy and the research approach, (5) to provide the general research design and a schedule of the research, (6) to raise some of the issues involved in doing the research, and (7) to provide an overview of the content in each chapter.

### **1.2. The researcher's identity and background**

Throughout my life, I have always had a strong curiosity and a great enjoyment in trying different communicative and creative tools, especially using ICT. However, my interest in receiving and creating information via the new means has not always been approved of and encouraged due to the education system and beliefs in my native Taiwan. A gender-biased attitude toward girls, commonly held attitudes to their career path and the use of modern technology were restricting and detrimental to my development. As a girl, English was considered a natural and the best subject for me to study at university; being a teacher was also seen as the best job for me. However, a combination of factors has added challenges to my study in Taiwan and further study in Britain. Looking from my own perspective, I was interested in the impact of interaction among the three factors—ICT, gender, and English—on myself and other females and wondered what kind of experiences they had with ICT, English, and gender roles while they grew up, studied in Taiwan, studied abroad in Britain, and started their career. My curiosity about people's real-life experiences and their viewpoints on the social/cultural causes and effects of their positions drove the current research, which will try to shed new light on the socio-cultural aspects of English learning and the developing field of computer-assisted language learning.

### **1.3. The aims and rationale of the research**

The research aims to investigate the perceived impact of gender and ICT on the English learning of a group of Taiwanese female students in a British university. Despite the growing popularity of and increasing research interest in English learning in Taiwan, the present research literature on English learning experiences in Taiwan tends to treat English learning as a discrete linguistic skill and to ignore the

importance of social/cultural and gender aspects. Though there is an increasing number of overseas students and more research related to them in Britain, studies on overseas students' learning experiences in Britain also tend to overlook the importance of related factors, such as gender and technologies in students' learning and lives. There is also a lack of research focusing on the learning experiences of specific ethnic and gender groups of overseas students in the higher educational system in Britain. The present study attempts to take an integrationist approach (Rockhill, 1993) toward the complex issue of Taiwanese female students' English and digital literacy in a British university. To 'see through and to challenge the dominant distortions and myths' of English learning that rule the public domain in contemporary Taiwanese society, to avoid presenting English and other form of literacies (e.g. digital literacy) as fixed and unified technical skills to be acquired by the individual, and to prevent 'decontextualising' English and other literacies from learners' lived experiences, the present research is set up to explore the impact of the inter-relationship of gender, and ICT on Taiwanese women's English learning.

Specifically, the main aim of this study is to explore the perceived impact of gender and ICT on Taiwanese female students' English learning in a British university.

The subsidiary aims are:

1. to explore the role of English in the construction of gender and power;
2. to explore women's views about, and experiences within, prevailing ideology;
3. to explore Taiwanese female students' experiences of (and views about) gender and ICT;
4. to consider the ways ICT and gender influence their acquisition of language and learning;
5. to explore the possible change of ideologies to benefit women and their learning;
6. to explore the implications of gender and ICT for women's English learning.

The research question is: What is the perceived impact of gender and ICT on Taiwanese female students' English learning in a British university? 'Impact', rather than 'effect' or 'outcome', is chosen to be explored in the present research because 'effect' tends to be 'local, specific, and measurable' and 'outcome' can be used in 'both a narrow and broad sense'; while 'impact' tends to be 'generally understood in a broader way in the context of research studies' (Low and Beverton, 2003, p.9; 2004). Further explanation of 'impact' is given in appendix 18.

To understand the impact of the interaction of gender, English learning, and ICT on

Taiwanese women, it is essential to understand the status of English, English education, and women in the context of Taiwan. Learning experiences in Taiwan may have a long-term impact on their learning experiences in Britain, therefore, information on Taiwan's socio-historical background, English education policy, and English classroom discourse are provided in chapter 2. Background information on overseas students in British higher education is also presented in Chapter 2 as courses and changes experienced by the female students may also have an immediate and long-term impact on their attitude, motivation, learning results, and further development. Gender issues and women's situation in Taiwan shape women's identity and have an essential impact on their learning and development. These are explored in Chapter 3. The theories and practice of ICT and EFL are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5, 6, and 7 provide an analysis of the research results and discussion. Chapter 8 contains the conclusion of the research.

#### **1.4. The nature of the research**

Research, like experience and reasoning, is one of the means human beings use to explore the truth of the world around them (Cohen et al., 2000). Research refers to the process of obtaining and analyzing information data. As Kerlinger defined it: research is 'the systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena' (in Cohen et al., 2000). Mouly defined it thus: 'Research is best conceived as the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. It is a most important tool for advancing knowledge, for promoting progress, and for enabling man [sic] to relate more effectively to his environment, to accomplish his purposes, and to resolve his conflicts' (Mouly, 1978, quoted by Cohen et al., 2000).

The present research, focused on the area of the language learning of a specific group of female students in a cross-cultural context, is classified within the category of the combination of social and educational research. There have been numerous research studies carried out to observe language learners' learning process. However, there have been relatively few empirical research studies that have addressed, in an in-depth manner, the specific questions of the impact of ICT and gender on the English learning experience of a specific gender group in an authentic language environment. The present research is essential to understand this complex issue.

To gain insights into the English learning experience of Taiwanese female students, the qualitative tradition was considered to be the most appropriate one to adopt in

conducting this research because of its advantages that enable the researcher to explore and understand a complex phenomenon in depth (the use of qualitative research is discussed in section 1.5.). The design of this research comprised aspects of the qualitative tradition: (1) focus group; (2) interviewing; (3) diary.

### **1.5. The research approaches adopted**

The present research adopted the qualitative approach as it suited the aim and data collection of the study. The qualitative approach also allowed the researcher's identity to play a facilitative role.

Research conducted by western researchers on literacy studies has expanded from a field predominated by psychologicistic and culturally narrow approaches which focus on discrete elements of reading and writing skills to a field that contains more anthropological, sociolinguistic approaches. The latter focuses on social practices and conceptions of reading and writing, and cross-cultural frameworks with ethnographic perspectives (the requirement for detailed, in-depth accounts of actual practices in different settings) (Street, 1993, p.1-3). The use of an ethnographic approach has become popular in educational research since anthropological ethnographic studies in the early 1960s by Meek, Levi-Straus and others. Street suggested that the ethnographic conception 'is at the interface between sociolinguistic and anthropological theories, on the one hand, and between discourse and ethnographic method on the other' (Street, 1993, p.3). In addition, recent research on literacy practices also seems to have been characterised by bold theoretical models that recognise the central role of power relations in literacy practices—the 'ideological model'— as suggested by Street (1993). Research on literacies and development was categorised into an 'autonomous model' and an 'ideology model'. The exponents of an autonomous model of literacy, as Street stated, 'conceptualise literacy in technical terms, treating it as independent of social context, an autonomous variable whose consequences for society and cognition can be derived from its intrinsic character' (p.5). On the other hand, researchers who advocate the 'ideology model' view 'literacy practices as inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society, and recognise the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts' (Street, 1993, p.7). Instead of following the 'autonomous model' approach, a modified ethnographic approach and 'ideological model' has been employed on some studies of gender and multi-literacies to capture the conflicting

ideologies and perception in developing societies.<sup>2</sup> The modified ethnographic method is associated with the qualitative approach. The research methods applied in the present study include focus group, individual interviews, and diary, which are regarded as closely related to the qualitative tradition.

The most elementary distinction between quantitative methods and qualitative methods lies in the use of words or numbers as the basic units for analysis. Quantitative research tends to be associated with large-scale studies, researcher detachment, and a predetermined research design; while qualitative research tends to be associated with description, small-scale studies, holistic perspective, an emergent research design, and the exploratory nature of the relationship of variables in a phenomenon. Qualitative research, as Tesch (1990) indicated (quoted by Denscombe, 1998), is characterised by ‘a concern with meanings and the way people understand things’, and ‘a concern with patterns of behaviour’ (Denscombe, 1998, p.207). Human activities are seen as ‘products of symbols and meanings that are used by the members of a social group to make sense of things’, and qualitative researchers need to interpret the symbols and meanings as ‘text’. The qualitative researcher also focuses on the regularity of the activities of a social group, such as relationships and cultural norms.

The decision to employ a qualitative approach was based on the main interest and design of the present research study. As the qualitative approach is associated with exploration research and is explanatory of the relationship among factors and variables, it is considered suitable for research which aims to investigate the specific phenomenon of a certain gender group of Taiwanese female students’ English learning experiences, use of ICT, and the perceived impact of gender ideology on their English learning for academic purposes in a British university. Taiwanese female students’ English learning, use of ICT, and experiences as women in a British university were assumed to be interconnected with their learning, use of ICT, their life and studies in Taiwan. The research explores the interconnection of the factors and also investigates participants’ experiences both back in Taiwan, now here in Britain, and their development and experiences in continuum; therefore, even though the participants were currently in Britain, their views concerning the three elements in Taiwan were also sought. The importance of individual differences and the interconnection between factors was emphasized by the research. The researcher’s intention was to explore the inter-relationship among the three factors (gender, ICT, EFL) and

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<sup>2</sup> Stites’s study on household literacy in China in Street (2001); Zubair’s study on rural Pakistani women in Street (2001); Rockhill’s study on Hispanic women in America in Street (1993); Kobayashi’s (2002) study on Japanese female students’ attitude towards English learning.

accumulate as much in-depth information relating to issues existing in this area as possible.

It has further been suggested that the distinctive character of qualitative research lies not in the topics or the nature of its data, but in the fact that it has its own special approach to the collection and analysis of data (Denscombe, 1998). Qualitative data are the product of an interpretation process, in which the researcher's self plays a significant role. The researcher's self identity, belief, and values cannot be completely eliminated from qualitative research and inevitably the researcher's self can be seen as an integral part of the data analysis. It has been suggested that the researcher should come clean about the way the research has been shaped by their identity, experiences, and background (Denscombe, 1998).

Some researchers are advised to distance themselves from their normal beliefs and conduct themselves in a detached manner so the research 'is not clouded by personal prejudice'. However, Denscombe also suggested,

some feminist researchers and researchers in the field of 'race' make the case that their identity, values and belief actually *enable* the research and should be exploited to the full to get at areas that will remain barred to researchers with a different 'self.' In these cases, researchers' identity and self give them a privileged insight into the social issues and should not be regarded as a limitation to the research but as a crucial resource (p.209).

In order to make close observation of a specific gender group of individual students, the qualitative research tradition was regarded as the appropriate approach for the researcher to employ for this study. The qualitative research tradition suits the aim of the research, permits the researcher to study the issues in depth, and allows the researcher's self to play a role, which can be facilitative, as the researcher is concerned with these issues and has experiences of the situation. The researcher's identity—a Taiwanese female student studying in a British university—was considered as a crucial resource which gave her a privileged insight into the research area.

### **1.6. The schedule of the present research**

The empirical research was divided into three stages: stage 1, stage 2, and stage 3. The research method adopted in stage 1 was focus group; the research tools used in

stage 2 were diary and interview; and in stage 3, focus group, diary, and interview were used. Each stage served an evolutionary function for the follow-up stage. (Stage 1 and 2 served as the pre-pilot and pilot study of the present research and stages 3 as the main research.) The main purpose of the small-scale piloting studies in stages 1 and 2 was first to investigate the issues relating to this particular field and then to set the scene for the follow-up stage 3 of the study, the main empirical research stage. The findings from the small-scale piloting studies in stages 1 and 2 serve as an essential platform for the main research in stage 3 of the study. The findings drawn from stage 1 and 2 would indicate issues that needed further investigation in stage three.

The methods used in each stage, reflections on methodology, and issues of reliability and validity will be discussed below. Five participants took part in stage 1. Due to the unavailability of two of the participants, three participants were recruited for stage 2. Six participants were considered as a suitable number for stage 3 due to the small number of participants required in in-depth qualitative research and the time limit on presentation and analysis of the bulky amount of detailed data emerging from qualitative data collection in the research. A plan of the empirical research is shown in table 1. 1.

Table 1.1. Table of empirical research

Stage	Date	Methods	Sample Size
Stage 1	October-November 2001	Focus group	5
Stage 2	January 2002	Diary, Interview	3
Stage 3	October 2002-March 2003	Focus group, Diary, Interview	6

The main aim of the interviews, focus group, and diary, which were carried out in phase two of the study, was to gather as much in-depth information as possible on the language learning experience of the participants over a period of time to allow the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the participants' language learning experience.

The research question of the study was general enough to permit exploration and focused enough to delimit the study. In the present research, the focus group and interview questions addressed to the participants are linked to the areas in which the research interests are located. Each question is designed to explore the issues in an in-depth manner. The questions are —“what are the factors influencing your English learning in Taiwan?” and “why and how do they influence your English learning?”



The 'what' question gives the participants chances to tell the researcher about the influential factors in their English learning and the why and how questions give the researcher access to the functions and explanation of specific influential factors in the participants' English learning. Questions like "Reflect and talk about your English learning experiences" and "talk about the significant events in your life as a woman" were able to lead the participants to think about their experiences and views. Participants therefore can talk in detail and lengthily about themselves, their experiences, and views.

## **1.7. Other related issues**

The following paragraph will discuss ethical issues and triangulation related to the data collection methods in this research.

### **1.7.1. Ethical issues**

The nature of the investigation meant that the researcher became immediately involved in certain aspects of the participants' private lives. To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, ethical issues relating to the participants and the researcher needed to be addressed. Issues relevant to the research include privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.

#### **1.7.1.1. Privacy**

All 'information relating to a person's physical and mental condition, personal circumstances and social relationship which is not already in the public domain' (Pring, 1984, quoted by Cohen et al., 2000) can be regarded as private to the individual. Cohen et al. stated that 'the right to privacy may be easily violated during the course of an investigation or denied after it has been completed. At either point the participant is vulnerable' (p. 61). The data related to the individual participants' English learning and experiences in England via focus group, interview, and diaries is regarded as information that is strictly private.

#### **1.7.1.2. Anonymity**

The essence of anonymity, as Cohen et al. point out, is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity. A participant is considered anonymous when other people cannot identify the participant from the information

provided. To protect the participants of the research, anonymity was employed. Each of the participants was given a code, such as Participant 1 or Participant 2 to disguise their real identities. By doing so, the data gathered was protected and the publication of data will not embarrass them or harm them. The representative code was only known to the researcher.

An informed consent form had been signed by the participants and the researcher about the use of information they offered in the focus group and interview. The information provided by the participants could only be used in the research. Anonymity was also used in the writing and in verbal reports by the researcher. The researcher should not relate specific information about the participants to others and should be careful about sharing information with people at the research site.

### **1.7.1.3. Confidentiality**

Cohen et al. (2000) suggested that another way to protect participants' right to privacy is through the promise of confidentiality. Techniques listed by Frankfort-Nachmias (1992), quoted by Cohen et al. (p. 63), that allow public access to data and information without confidentiality being betrayed are:

1. Deletion of identifiers such as names, addresses of the participants.
2. Crude report categories, for example, releasing profession but not the specialty within that profession, general information rather than specific.
3. Microaggregation, for example, release the constructed 'average person's' data, rather than data on individuals.
4. Error inoculation, for example, deliberately introducing errors into individual records and leaving the aggregate data unchanged.

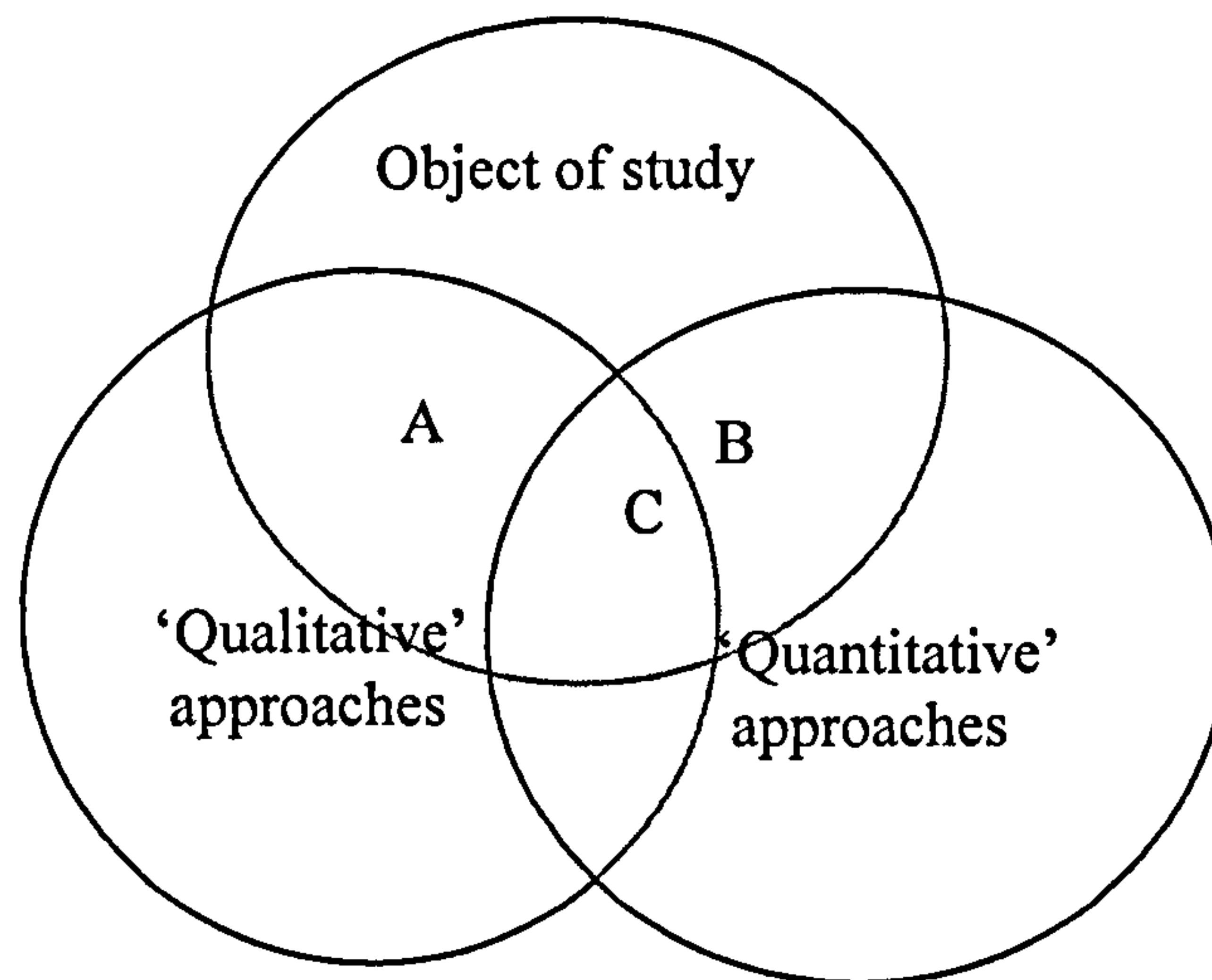
In the present research, deletion and crude report categories were utilized to protect the participants' right to privacy. Due to the small number of Taiwanese students at the university where the research was conducted and the small number of Taiwanese students in each department, information about the participants' study background and department may easily reveal their identity; therefore, they should also be kept anonymous. General categories, instead of specific information, were given. For example, the participant may be reported as a student in Science rather than being reported as a student in Computer Science. Rather than focusing on the specific department, the research aimed to explore relations between gender, ICT, and English learning. Therefore, general categories like this would not affect the validity of the data collected.

### 1.7.2. Triangulation

Among all the research methods that have their own advantages and disadvantages, researchers choose the methods most suitable for the specific context and subject to gain high validity. Various reasons have been advanced for triangulation methods—the use of two or more methods of data collection. These reasons include avoidance of limitation or bias derived from using one single method, compensating for the weakness produced by one method which contains a certain set of assumptions and inherent quality through the strength of another (Denscombe, 1998, p.84; Cohen et al., 2000), enhancing the researcher's confidence, trustworthiness and the validity of the research (i.e. the data and methods are 'right, accurate, honest, and on target') with multiple perspectives which serve 'as a means of comparison and contrast' to check findings from one method against findings from another, and to understand the topic in a more rounded and complete way (Gorard and Taylor, 2004; Denscombe, 1998, p. 84).

On the other hand, Gorard and Taylor (2004) argued that the merits of triangulation in social science research lie in the complementarity, rather than mutual validation or confirmation, of the methods. The metaphor of triangulation derived from land-surveying, and thus the use of methods for contrast and confirmation, can be confusing. In trigonometry, in surveying, and in the differing perspectives model of triangulation, observations using different methods need to be accurate to be able to lead to a reliable result in the target phenomenon. Two sets of methods or observations 'cannot be used to check up on each other and for triangulation' as when identical results are obtained from different methods, there will be no third point; and when the results are different, without knowing which one is in error, the researchers cannot use two different results to fix a third one either (Gorard and Taylor., 2004, p.8). It is argued that triangulation in social science research needs to shift its emphasis into complementarity and different methods need to be designed to investigate different aspects, to provide valuable differing partial pictures to be put into a complete picture of the object of study, in order to 'increase the amount and range of evidence', or 'to generate dissonance as a stimulus to progress' (Gorard and Taylor, 2004, p.9). As the figure below shows, C may represent the researched phenomenon of the study. The power of combining methods lies in seeing both A and B as also providing unique evidence about the study and using the results of A, B and C to increase the amount and range of evidence.

Figure 1.1. A complementary combination of approaches (Gorard and Taylor, 2004, p.9)



The validity of this study relies on the triangulation: the complementarity of data collected from different methods. Three data collection methods, focus group, in-depth interviews, and diary studies were utilised in stage 3. The use of three different methods could lead to an increased amount and range of valuable evidence about the study aims. Each method with its inherent quality was designed to investigate different aspects of the target phenomenon and had a complementary relationship to the other two (e.g. focus groups facilitated the observation of behaviour and meaning construction in the social context, individual interviews allowed in-depth exploration, and diary entries produced a textual account of the researched activities and the participants' reflection for a certain period of time). Rather than merely being used to confirm the methods and to check against each other, the findings produced with the use of the three methods were seen as valuable in providing further evidence to enhance the understanding of the research topic. The participants in the research show their interest in knowing more about the impact of ICT and gender on their learning and life, and therefore they participated in this research. They were willing to provide personal experiences and views in focus groups, interviews, and to record their daily experiences concerning English learning, ICT use, and gender issues by keeping the diaries.

## **1.8. Content of each chapter**

The present chapter provides an introduction to the research aims, research schedule, and qualitative methods adopted by the research.

Chapter two sets the context of the study: (1) by providing background information on the socio-historical context of Taiwan, where the participants had their previous English learning, ICT, and gender experiences; and (2) by providing background information on overseas students in British higher education. The main aim of this chapter is to identify the importance of language, power, social stratification, cultural capital, and the significant impact of English education policy in Taiwan on the participants' English learning and present situation in the British university. The learning obstacles in English learning for academic purposes in an authentic language environment are also presented to provide an understanding of the context and to serve as a fundamental consideration for the data analysis of the present research.

Chapter three reviews the theories and explanations on gender, literacy, and education, which are regarded as closely related to the present research. The objectives of this chapter are (1) to provide an account of patriarchy; (2) to highlight the importance of gender in language and communication; and (3) to emphasise the significance of gender and education. The implication is that gender ideology in the patriarchal system involves social structures such as the state, male violence, sexuality, and cultural institutions, language, and education. They have a profound impact on female learners' learning and development.

Chapter four consists of literature on EFL (English as Foreign Language) and ICT (Information Communication Technology). It provides an account of the changing technologies, means of production, and socio-economic order, thus new requirements of literacy. It provides discussions on the impact of globalisation and technologies' advancement on English, and new possibilities and limitations concerning teaching and learning English with ICT for the English classroom and self-directed study for academic purposes.

Chapter five consists of methodology and the findings of the stage 1 focus group. It serves as a pre-pilot study for the following stages, 2 and 3. Descriptions and discussion of the research method utilised in this stage are provided in this chapter. Discussions on the strengths and weakness of the present research in relation to the research methods and modification for the following two stages are also provided in

this chapter. The results obtained from stage 1 are also outlined.

Chapter six consists of discussion on methodology and findings of the empirical study in stage 2. The findings and reflection on methods drawn from stage 2 are also presented.

Chapter seven provides discussion on the main empirical study, stage 3. It provides the readers with a discussion on the triangulation of the focus group, diary, and interview. It also covers findings and discussions drawn from the data. Discussions of the findings in this chapter focus on three aspects: English learning experiences in Taiwan, experience in Britain, ICT use in Taiwan and Britain. Issues related to linguistic capital, gender expectation, English language status, language learning anxiety, English learning for academic purposes, and use of computers and the Internet for research and language learning are discussed. The use of computers and the Internet in language learning and study has been widely recognised by the participants. Though the availability of human resources is considered limited, the significance of power positions and linguistic capital have led the participants to look up to English used by English speakers in the 'inner circles' and to find validation from them.

Chapter eight provides a concluding discussion on the research. It covers a summary of the findings, reflections on the significance, contribution, and limitations of the thesis. Significant results and theories are presented in this chapter to conclude the present research and to inform the reader of its significance. Chapter eight also gives recommendations for policy and practices in English education, and suggestions for further research. The results that emerged from the present research serve to inform educators and researchers of the important issues concerning social factors and gender in the context of EAP and CALL. It is hoped that the present research can provide a starting point for more integrationist research into this area.

## **Chapter 2 Information on background of the participants**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter contains two main themes: background information on Taiwan and background information on Britain. Since ideology and communication are closely connected, language issues in a postcolonial country like Taiwan are bound up with issues of power, dominance, legitimacy, and social stratification. This chapter discusses the issues of ideology, cultural and linguistic capital. It also presents Taiwan's socio-cultural history, language planning, and a history of English educational development. The chapter serves to provide background information on Taiwan, where the participants of the present research started their English learning before going to Britain for their post-graduate studies. The background information on overseas students in the British higher education system and the specific institution where the participants conducted their post-graduate studies and their English learning in an authentic language environment are also presented to provide an understanding of the context. The chapter is divided into four sections: (1) Ideology and language, (2) Taiwan's socio-historical context, (3) Language planning, English education development, and English education in Taiwan and (4) Overseas students' learning experiences in the British higher education system.

### **2.2. Ideology and language**

#### **2.2.1. Definition of ideology**

It is argued by some sociologists that people make meanings out of what they perceive and the meanings are organised into systems or codes to help make the world comprehensible. However, only a relatively small number of codes are used to interpret reality. They become taken-for-granted sets of ideas, and are called 'ideologies' (Haralambos and Holborn, p. 940-941). Morrison and Lui (2000) pointed out that ideology is 'the values of dominant groups in society which permeate (maybe consensually) the social structure, to the advantage of the already dominant groups and to the disadvantage of the already disadvantaged' (p.471). The concept of ideology is important in the present research, which adopts an integrationist, modified ethnographic approach, and takes into account a power/political dimension to language learning. The theories of linguistic imperialism and cultural/linguistic capital are closely related to language and ideology. They have been used to understand language policy and language learning experiences. A discussion on these

theories is given in sections 2.2.2. and 2.2.3. They should help in understanding the language context in Taiwan. They will be further used for consideration of the findings.

### **2.2.2. Linguistic imperialism**

Phillipson (1992, 1998) argued for the importance of linguistic imperialism and he considered it to be useful for analyzing practices in the early days of colonial rule. He argued that language – particularly English – is the means for cultural, economic and political domination by the West under the guise of a helpful language. Skuttnab-Kangas similarly defined *linguicism* as ‘ideologies and practices which legitimate and reproduce asymmetries of power and resources (physical and immaterial) between groups “which are defined on the basis of language”’(quoted in Morrison and Lui, 2000, p.472). The theory of linguistic imperialism was criticised by Davis (1996) as being ‘(1) naive; (2) focus[ed] on negative rather than positive aspects of ideology; (3) ahistorical and non-dynamic’ (in Morrison and Lui, 2000, p.472).

The attitude and position of linguistic imperialism toward language policy and practice tend to be more negative, sceptical, and more suitable for analysis of language policy and practice in the earlier historical period of colonial rule in Taiwan. The notion of cultural/linguistic capital is more neutral, thus it is considered suitable in the present research to understand the issue of power, ideology, and language in post-colonial Taiwan. The issues of cultural/linguistic capital will be discussed in section 2.2.3.

### **2.2.3. Cultural capital and linguistic capital**

In the post-colonial period, the theory of linguistic capital has replaced the notion of linguistic imperialism and has become useful in explaining language policy and practices. Linguistic capital was regarded as

- (1) focusing on the positive aspects of ideology; (2) allowing for agency, intentionality and informed choice; (3) being historical and dynamic; (4) embracing a much wider range of issues than merely domination and suppression, that more closely captures the multi-layered nature of the MOI [Medium of Instruction] issue; (5) providing a more fitting account of the post-colonial, rather than the mono-causality of linguistic imperialism; (7) offering a theory of social, cultural and economic production and reproduction



through education that resonates with a theory of structuration; and (8) indicating the role for education in social and cultural production and reproduction (Morrison and Lui, 2000, p.483).

The notion of linguistic capital is closely related to Bourdieu's (1997) view of cultural capital. Linguistic capital will be explained later in this chapter (p. 18). The notion of cultural capital is used for its general explanatory value in this thesis. It helps to illuminate the research subject, and it is not to be used as a measurement tool. Cultural capital is a metaphor—only certain features of economic capital are transferred to the notion of cultural capital, not the use for precise measurement.

Bourdieu argued that to understand the structure and functioning of the social world, one has to embrace both the concept of 'mercantile exchange' recognised by economic theory and the concept of 'capital' in all its forms (Bourdieu, 1997). Capital is 'accumulated labour' with its 'accumulated effects' and can be presented in three forms that are convertible under certain conditions: as *economic capital* (money, property rights), *cultural capital* (*habitus*, disposition, cultural goods, institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications), and *social capital* (social obligation and connection). The root of the other two forms of capital is economic capital, which leads to possible acquisition of cultural capital (by having time to delay the entry into the labour market and prolong schooling) and social capital (by investing time, care, attention, and concern in social connection).

Power reproduction is processed via education. The major role of education is cultural reproduction, which involves only the reproduction of the culture of the dominant classes, not the culture of society as a whole. Bourdieu pointed out that economists taking only the monetary investment (cost of schooling) into account could not explain the different results of people from different classes because they ignored 'the system of reproduction strategies' and assume other forms of exchange to be 'noneconomic and *disinterested*'. They also overlooked the fact that 'the most determinant educational investment is the domestic transmission of cultural capital'—the cultural capital previously invested by the family (Bourdieu, 1997, p.48).

Cultural capital consists of three interrelated states: the embodied state ('in the form of disposition of the mind and body, *habitus*'), the objectified state (in the form of cultural goods: books, instruments, pictures, machines), and the institutionalised state (in the form of educational qualifications). Cultural capital in its embodied state is 'a labo[u]r of inculcation and assimilation' which costs time and personal effort ('libido,

privation, renunciation, sacrifice') (Bourdieu, 1997). Early domestic education is essential as it may give 'a positive value (a gain in time, a head start)' or 'a negative value (wasted time, and doubly so because more time must be spent correcting its effects), according to its distance from the demands of the scholastic market' (Bourdieu, 1997, p.48). Social power structure is reproduced when the economic capital is converted into 'the embodied state' of cultural capital 'as an integral part of the person (the disposition and *habitus*)' via domestic transmission and assimilation. Cultural capital can also be transmitted and assimilated quite unconsciously without any deliberate effort, and it thus 'manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition'. Because of its three interrelated states, the transmission and acquisition of cultural capital are more disguised than those of economic capital. It can become unrecognised as capital but recognised as 'legitimate competence' (Bourdieu, 1997, p.49). Cultural capital becomes even more determinant in the reproduction of social structure when the transmission of economic capital and the existing power structure is prevented or hindered (Bourdieu, p.55)

Furthermore, as not all the families have the economic and cultural capital to invest in their children's education and delay their entry into work. The few who can afford this add up and secure the values of their cultural capital.

[T]he symbolic logic of distinction additionally secures material and symbolic profit for the possessors of a large cultural capital: any given cultural competence [...] derives a scarcity value from its position in the distribution of cultural capital and yields profits of distinction for its owner (Bourdieu, 1997, p.49).

Children from the dominant classes have advantages in the education system and life chances because they have

the cultural background ('*habitus*') and dispositions (a positive attitude to school, motivation, parental support, social advantage, ease in dealing with authority, high culture, linguistic facility) so that when they meet school knowledge they can engage it comfortably and take advantage of it (Morrison and Lui, 2000, p. 473).

On the other hand, those without the valued cultural capital are disadvantaged and have reduced life chances as they are not familiar with the school culture and knowledge and cannot easily take advantage of it when they encounter it. Therefore,

the educational attainments of students are directly related to the amount of cultural capital they (and their family) possess. The educational system reproduces the social stratification by ‘sanctioning the hereditary transmission of cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1997).

The mechanism of cultural capital also works for linguistic capital. Linguistic capital is defined as ‘fluency in, and comfort with, a high-status, world-wide language which is used by groups who possess economic, social, cultural and political power and status in local and global society’ (Morrison and Lui, p. 473). The linguistic capital theory suggests that ‘students who possess, have access to, or develop linguistic capital, thereby have access to better life chances’ (p.473). It is argued that educational institutions offer better life chances for their students by providing access to a higher status language. Only a small number of students who have already acquired certain linguistic and cultural capital can take the advantages of the offer and advance their development. The majority is without such linguistic capital and thus has limited opportunities for better life chances. By teaching the dominant culture and language, the educational systems mainly address the needs of particular students with linguistic and cultural capital. The influence of linguistic capital continues throughout schooling. It is especially significant in the early years of school. Through language, educational institutions produce advantage for a few people at the expense of the majority and reproduce power stratification in society. Linguistic capital also has exchange value in a market-driven economy. A circle of capital transformation is formed with economic capital translating into linguistic capital, then into educational capital, then into the reproduction of cultural capital, and economic capital (Morrison and Lui, 2000).

Giddens’ structuration theory argues that ‘agency’ (e.g. parental aspiration) and ‘structure’ (e.g. parents’ cultural background and the school system) are combined together to produce and reproduce social structures and behaviour. Linguistic capital theory implies that educational institutions, through language policy and practices, become agents of social, cultural, linguistic legitimization, social reproduction and production (as discussed in Morrison and Lui). Taiwan’s specific case concerning linguistic policy and linguistic legitimization will be discussed in the following section within the context of its socio-historical background.

### **2.3. Taiwan’s socio-historical context**

Taiwan is formally known as the Republic of China (ROC). The main island is

separated from the south-eastern coast of mainland China. Taiwan is separated from China by the Taiwan Strait, which is about 220 km at its widest point and 130 km at its narrowest. It covers an area of 36,179 square kilometres and has a population of about 22.55 million (data from Government Information Office, 2003). The population consists mainly of four ethnic groups: the Taiwanese or Minnanern (Southern Min people) (73.7%), the Mainlanders (13%), the Hakka (12%), and the Austro-Polynesian aborigines (1.7%) (Tsao, 1999, p.329; Skoggard, 1996). Taiwan can be characterised as:

1. a multi-ethnic and multilingual society with four major ethnic groups
2. an immigrant society, the latest group being the Mainlanders
3. a Chinese society
4. a modern industrialised society (Tsao, 1999, p. 333).

### **2.3.1. History and Language Policy**

Taiwan's complex history has left the country with a diverse ethno-linguistic heritage. Different people came to the island at different times and left their marks in the makeup of Taiwanese culture and languages. A list of Taiwan's history of group arrival and language policy is presented below in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Timetable of arrival of groups, political power, and language policy in Taiwan

Time	Arrival of particular group	Language used or language policy
6000-8000 years ago	Arrival of Austro-Polynesians	
1624-1661	Arrival of Dutch	Non-discriminatory language policy
1626-1642	Arrival of Spanish	
1662-1683	Arrival of Zheng Cheng-Kong and his Ming royalists	Min dialects
1683-1895	Qing dynasty rule, massive immigration of Chinese	Min dialects
1895-1945	Arrival of Japanese	Japanization movement
1945-1999	Nationalist government rule American influence	National language movement
After 1999	DPP government rule	Aims for multilingual education and emphasis on English education

### 2.3.1.1. Austro-Polynesian aboriginals

Archaeological evidence has suggested that Taiwan's first inhabitants and aborigines were of Austro-Polynesian origin and arrived on the island from the south-eastern coast of the Asian continent about 6000 to 8000 years ago (data from GIO, Government Information Office, 2003). They were divided into two groups: Pingpu Zu (who live in the coastal plains) and Gaoshan Zu (who live in the mountain areas) and can further be categorized into eleven tribes (GIO, 2003).

### 2.3.1.2. Dutch and Spanish rule

During their colonial rule in southern Taiwan for 38 years, the Dutch used Taiwan as a trading centre for goods between Japan, China, Jakarta, Persia, and Holland. Sugarcane and rice also became the main export products of Taiwan under the Dutch cooperation with the migrated Chinese (GIO, 2003). The Dutch language policies were not particularly oppressive or discriminatory. Dutch missionaries taught the Dutch language and Christianity (GIO, 2003). A writing system for Siraya, an aboriginal language serving as a *lingua franca*, was created by the missionaries for missionary and trade purposes. It was in use for more than a hundred years before

Chinese characters replaced it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Tsao, 1999, p.330; GIO, 2003). The Spanish also ruled the north of Taiwan for 17 years until they were driven out by the Dutch in 1642.

### **2.3.1.3. Ming and Qing rule**

The rule (21 years) of Zheng Cheng-kong (a general from the Ming dynasty in China) and his family, replaced the Dutch in 1662 until being replaced by the Qing dynasty, which ruled Taiwan for 212 years (1683-1895). Zheng and his followers from Southern Fujian spoke the Southern Min dialect. Massive Chinese immigration took place around the period of the late Ming dynasty and the early years of the Qing dynasty, due to civil wars, political, economic, robbery, and famine problems in Fujian and Guandong (GIO, 2001). Many people left their home to search for a better life in south-east Asia or Taiwan. Those who went to Taiwan were mostly the Min from Fujian province and the Hakka from Guangdong province (Tsao, 1999, p.331).

The massive immigration from China led to fierce struggles and fighting for land, resources and power. The Han Chinese soon dominated the aboriginal groups and occupied different areas of the western coastal plains and foothill areas with their better farming equipment and irrigation skills, larger numbers, and the implicit support of the Qing government. The plains tribes lost their land and were fast assimilated; the mountain tribes were able to avoid harm at the hands of the Chinese (Tsao, 1999, p.331). The Chinese thus established Chinese society and replaced the aboriginals as the main inhabitants of the island (GIO, 2003).

### **2.3.1.4. Japanese rule**

In 1895, the Japanese came to the island. Taiwan was given to Japan by the Qing government after losing the first Sino-Japanese war to Japan in 1894. The Japanese rulers intended to integrate Taiwan fully into the Japanese Empire with policies of complete Japanization. They also planned a long-term, three-stage educational plan that was increasingly assimilatory in nature. The first stage involved establishing administrative mechanisms and suppressing resistance by local Chinese and indigenous people. The second stage involved compulsory Japanese education and cultural assimilation. The third stage involved the naturalisation of Taiwan residents as Japanese because of loyalty and labour force required of Japanese colonies for World War II (GIO, 2003). The official language and language in school was

Japanese; Chinese was banned in all public domains in the final stages of language planning (GIO, 2003). In the final stage, the Japanese launched an 'only-Japanese-speaking-families' campaign, to remove Chinese influence and indigenous language in the family domain. Taiwan was also developed as an agricultural sugar and rice producer to supply Japan's industrialisation and its expanding proletariat (Skoggard, p.44). The Japanese colonial administrators controlled Taiwan's economy by discouraging the emergence of local indigenous classes, keeping power in Japanese hands, and undermining the solidarity and autonomy of indigenous social groups with force and a 'baojia' system (joint responsibility for crime, violation and anti-Japanese activity) (Skoggard, p.46, Chen, et al. 1991). Within Japanese rule, the indigenous residents were second-class citizens and their languages were seriously harmed (Tsao, 1999, p.331).

### **2.3.1.5. KMT (Nationalist party) rule**

At the end of World War II in 1945, the Japanese government surrendered and Taiwan was returned to the Chinese government. The people's high expectations of improvement in their social and political status was not met due to the ill preparation and inadequate administration of Chen Yi, the Taiwan Provisional Provincial Government Administrative Head. In 1946, Chen banned the use of Japanese completely to eradicate the Japanese influence and language, which was used in the public domain in Taiwan. This is tantamount to taking Taiwanese residents' voices and power away (Tsao, 1999, p.340). The government was also found to be corrupt, incompetent, and unfair in its language policy as a number of indigenous people were reported to have been demoted and dismissed because of their poor proficiency in Mandarin (Tsao, 1999). The anti-government attitude, combined with other governmental economic policies (monopoly of industry left by the Japanese, manipulation of financial system, and land reform) and reports of corruption and inefficiency, soon turned the indigenous people against the government and the Mainlanders, who spoke mandarin Chinese. The resentment and conflict reached its peak in the tragic February 28 incident, 1947 (228 incident) (GIO, 2003). Thousands of Taiwanese (including many of Taiwan's elite and intelligentsia) and Mainlanders were killed in this incident. '[T]he decimation of Taiwanese political leadership and sheer brutality and horror' of the 228 incident not only undermined indigenous Taiwanese people's resistance to Nationalist rule for the next fifty years, but also traumatised the relationship between the indigenous groups and the Mainlanders (Skoggard, 1996, p.49; Tsao, 1999; Lui, 1991; Li, 1991, Wu, 1991).

In 1949, the Nationalist government lost Mainland China to the Chinese Communists and retreated to Taiwan. Mandarin had been made the national language when the Nationalist government ruled China from 1911 to 1945. Two million people (the Mainlanders), who had acquired and used Mandarin as a *lingua franca* through education or army service, came with the Nationalists to Taiwan. The Nationalists' policies of governing Taiwan included enforcement of martial law, political and economic monopoly, and ideology control (GIO, 2003). Fear of communist invasion and Taiwanese independence resulted in strict rule and decades of 'white terror' (GIO, 2003). The nationalist government's most important language policy was the propagation of Mandarin (the National Language Movement). The propagation of Mandarin took up many of the resources and has affected other indigenous languages and English education (Tsao, 1999, p.339).

In the 1950s, a successful land reform programme was launched and paved the way for agricultural development and for later industrialisation. During Taiwan's industrialisation between 1961 and 1980, the number of people in agriculture, industry, and the service sector reversed their rank order. Social change included a dramatic decrease in the agricultural population (56% in 1953 to 19% in 1983) and a significant increase in the per capita gross national product (US\$ 203 in 1950 to US\$ 2344 in 1980 and to US\$ 12,439 in 1995), the number of industrial workers (18% in 1953 to 41% in 1983), and the number of students enrolled in education (139.64 students for every 1000 people in 1950; there were 255.18 students in 1983) (Tsao, p.333).

#### **2.3.1.6. The economy and American influence in recent years**

The status of English as the world language is the result of two factors: 'the expansion of British colonial power, which peaked towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the twentieth century' (Crystal, 1997, p.53). It is the economic and military power of the United States that continues to explain the world language status of English and the popularity of English learning in Taiwan today. After World War II, Taiwan was on the border of the great political and ideological divide. Because of its geopolitical strategic importance in the Cold-war era against communist socialist regimes, Taiwan became an important military base for capitalist power led by the United States (Skoggard, 1996). From 1951 to 1965, the United States also provided financial assistance and expertise (around one hundred million US dollars per year) to help Taiwan rebuild its economy, the infrastructure ruined during the World War II bombing, and its military defence (Skoggard, 1996, p.49, Lui, 1999, p.19). For thirty



years, the United States and Japan were the main exporting countries for Taiwan's products. Scholars of the Taiwanese economy have defined Taiwan's economy from the 1950s to the 1970s as having the nature of peripheral capitalism, which depended strongly on major advanced capitalist countries (America and Japan) for capital, raw materials, technique and markets. Cheap and abundant labour from the agricultural villages in Taiwan attracted investment in electronic appliances, and chemical and electronic engineering products from America and Japan. A triangle of economic relationship between America, Taiwan, and Japan was formed. As Taiwan's industrialisation progressed, dependence on America also increased (Lui, 1991, p.24). Though American aid was cut off and the official relationship with Taiwan stopped in 1965, strong American influence in Taiwan can be found in political, economic, educational, mass-cultural, and techno-industrial domains today (Skoggard, 1996; Chen, et al. 1991).

Since the 1980s, some scholars have suggested that a sub-centre capitalism has formed in Taiwan as the nature of the labour division between Taiwan, Japan, and America has changed from a vertical to a more horizontal relationship. Due to international economic changes, Taiwanese industry had the chance to be upgraded from a labour-intensive industry to a capital/knowledge/technique intensive industry (GIO, 2003; Skoggard, 1996). Investment from Taiwan in other Asian countries (Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and China) has made Taiwanese industry and economy closely connected with the Asian economy. Therefore, increasing emphasis has been put on English competence for international and regional communication both on the part of the government and individuals. A prosperous economy and increased income also mean that tourism and study abroad have become a necessity for entertainment and status upgrading. Aside from the instrumental motivation that drove people's English learning, socio/cultural integrative motivation also developed as the Taiwanese acquired more information about other societies and people (from America and the West) through the mass media, business, tourism and study.

### **2.3.2. Language eradication and assimilation**

Romaine (1995) concluded after an extensive study of the language policies of many countries that

[t]he traditional policy, either implicitly assumed or explicitly stated, which most nations have pursued with regard to various minority groups, who speak a different language, has been eradication of the native language/culture and

assimilation into the majority one (quoted in Tsao, 1999, p.347).

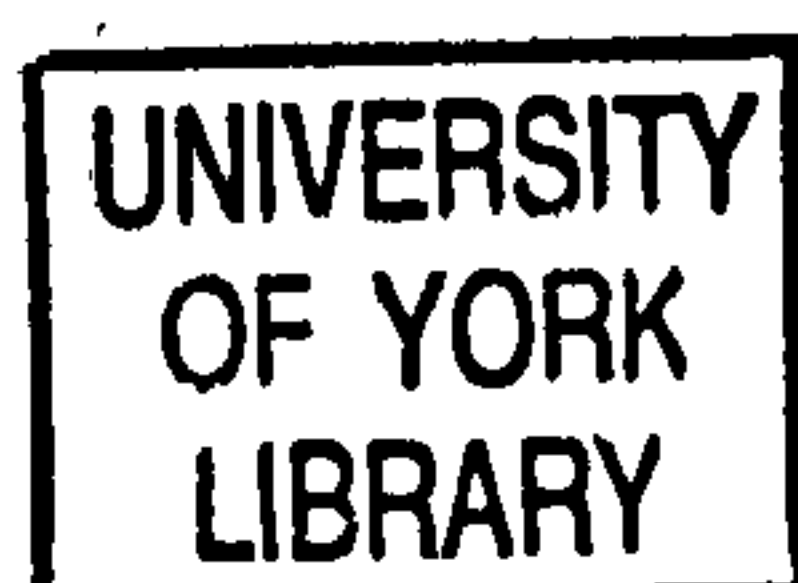
This language policy rule also applies to Taiwan. Due to the frequent changes of ruling powers, the indigenous inhabitants have had to continuously adjust their life according to the imposed language and cultures of the ruling class. The inhabitants not only suffered maltreatment and discrimination from their dominators, they were also denied the chance to develop their own cultures and languages (GIO, 2003). Under Nationalist rule, students suffered punishment and comment from teachers for speaking their home language until recently. Students 'were all indoctrinated with the idea of the imminent threat of communism as well as the importance of national unity, and the necessity to speak the national language' and the idea that it is 'unethical and unpatriotic' to speak in their mother tongue (Tsao, 1999, p.348). Control of newspapers and electronic media was also oppressive and Taiwanese (Min), Hakka, and the aboriginal languages were banned in electronic media for about ten years.

The national language policy has affected other languages negatively. Research (Huang and Chang, 1995, in Tsao, 1999; GIO, 2003) has shown that half of the indigenous languages in Taiwan will disappear in two generations. The traditional domains of Min and Hakka—such as the home and the marketplace—are also shrinking (Lin, 1995; Chan, 1994, in Tsao, 1999). In the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism and modernisation played major roles in determining language policy and language ecology in Taiwan. The National Language Movement (backed by nationalism) and economic prosperity (the results of modernisation and industrialisation), led to the prevalence of Mandarin and Han Chinese culture in Taiwan and a decrease in the number of speakers of the aboriginal languages and Min/Hakka languages (GIO, 2003). Its impact on English education in Taiwan is discussed in the next section.

## **2.4. Language planning, English education development, and English education in Taiwan**

### **2.4.1 Language planning**

Tsao reported that like many developing countries in the world, two main factors: (1) nationalism and national unification and (2) modernisation and economic growth, have determined Taiwan's language education policy (p.350). These two factors are not in agreement at all times and their interaction affects the 'language-in-education system'. Bamgbose (1991) suggested that a language-in-education system can answer



three questions ‘(1) what language? (2) for what purpose? (3) at what level?’ (in Tsao, p.351) The languages involved can be classified into three types: (1) the mother tongue, (2) the national language, and (3) other languages used for wider communication (LWC). In the case of Taiwan, the mother tongues are Southern Min, Hakka, Mandarin or the aboriginal Austro-Polynesian languages. The major languages of wider communication taught in Taiwan are mainly English, French, German, Spanish and Japanese ( Tsao, 1999. p.351).

The table made by Tsao (1999) concentrated on the questions ‘what language?’ and ‘for what purpose?’ It showed the nine possibilities of language type and function in education in Taiwan.

Table 2.2. Language type and function in education in Taiwan

	Literacy	Subject	Medium
Mother tongue	No	No	No
National language	Yes	Yes	Yes
LWC	No	Yes	No

‘Yes’ indicated realisation of the possibility and ‘No’ indicated the possibilities are actually not realised. LWC stands for Language for Wider Communication. (Tsao, 1999, p.352)

The language practice has existed unchanged for fifty years, with Mandarin acting as the national language, the only medium of instruction, and a language for literacy (Tsao, 1999). Competency in Mandarin plays a decisive role in a student’s examination results, academic achievements, and social mobility. The mother tongue was excluded from the education system until 1997 (Tsao, 1999, p.352).

#### 2.4.2 English education in Taiwan

English is compulsory in junior and senior high school and the first year of college. English used to take up five hours of instruction per week in high school. It only took up two or three hours per week when compulsory education was extended from six years to nine in 1970 (Tsao, p.352). Despite the close relationship between the US and Taiwan and the access English can provide to ‘the knowledge in technology and science needed for modernisation’, English has never been emphasised because it is

seen as a potential threat to nationalism. It is only a subject in the formal education system. Reanalysis of a survey conducted in 1974-1976 on English teaching in the secondary schools in Taiwan found that:

- (1) Most English teachers were inadequately trained, both in English and educational methodology.
- (2) Reading and writing had been emphasised in their training.
- (3) Despite being highly desirable, the availability of in-service training was low.
- (4) The weekly hours of English instruction were inadequate.
- (5) Grammar and translation were given disproportionate emphasis.
- (6) Most tests focused on reading and writing.
- (7) Audiovisual aids were woefully inadequate and underutilised.
- (8) English contact outside school was very limited (Tsao, 1999, p.353).

Tsao stated that English teaching remained much the same for the following twenty years with only two possible exceptions:

- (1) In-service training is now much more available to teachers, although what effect such a change has brought to actual teaching remains to be examined
- (2) English teachers' educational training does seem to have improved over the years. (Tsao, 1999, p.353)

The expansion of universities and graduate schools in Taiwan also influenced the improvement of English teachers' educational training.

Tsao also conducted a small-scale survey of language use in Taiwan. The particularly important findings include:

- (1) English is the foreign language most often used at work. After English, Japanese is most often used. German and French are rarely used.
- (2) Even English is not frequently used at work. When English is used at work, reading and writing skills are most often required.
- (3) Cram schools and English programmes sponsored by employers generally are not considered helpful.
- (4) Although significantly more respondents' attitudes towards English were positive, over one-third of them have an unfavourable attitude for nationalistic

reasons (p.354).

It was reported that over the years nationalism was slowly being replaced by pragmatic uses of and attitudes toward language. English and Japanese were regarded, learned, and used for pragmatic purposes (Tsao, 1999). The pragmatic attitude toward English and the traditional emphasis on education have led many Taiwanese parents to send their young children to private English classes (Boxiban) and private kindergartens advertising 'bilingual education', though the quality of English education provided and its impact on child development have been questioned (E-paper of the Education Department, Taiwan, 2004). As globalisation and the trend of English learning have grown rapidly, the Taiwanese government has changed its educational policies and introduced English as a compulsory subject at elementary level (Nunan, 2003).

The revolution of information and communication technology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has changed ways of life and modes of economic production. International communication and knowledge-intensive activity have become the main power for nations, organisations, and individuals to compete in the global economy. After Taiwan entered the WTO (World Trade Organisation), the government realised there had been a lack of information provided in English for foreign businesspeople and workers in Taiwan and started to set up English/Mandarin bilingual official websites of governmental departments in order to provide information on Taiwan and communicate with the wider international community (Taiwan News, 2003)

### **2.4.3. A look at the future**

Tsao (1999) pointed out that language policy has always been a one-way, top-down affair that allows little input from the public and experts. After the lifting of martial law, public opinion and expert advice are playing important roles in language policy in the democratic Taiwan. Some changes have been added to the language education system, including implementation of Mother-tongue education and English education at the elementary level in 2001. In 1997, aside from the three normal universities and nine teachers' colleges, other universities were also allowed to train primary and secondary teachers. This may provide enough teacher supply for more size-reduced classes and 'induce changes in the old teacher training institutions, which had become stagnant due to lack of competition' (Tsao, 1999, 369-370). The use of language is also 'less emotionally charged and more pragmatically oriented'. With an emphasis on multicultural and multilingual education, it is hoped that Taiwan will overcome its

traumatic bitter past of ethnic, class conflicts and achieve both internal harmony and international recognition and prosperity (Tsao, 1999, 369-370).

A brief summary of Taiwan's history and language policy as discussed above should provide a picture of the context and background of the participants. It indicates that the participants' language use and learning in Taiwan are intricately linked to social changes, language policy, and uses previously experienced by the society as a whole. It should also shed light on the impact of socioeconomic and cultural factors on their educational and English learning experiences in Britain.

## **2.5. Overseas students' learning experiences in the British higher education system**

### **2.5.1. Research on overseas students in Britain**

Due to the increasing number of overseas students in the education system of Anglo-Saxon English speaking countries (17% of total overseas students are in Britain and 70% in the US according to data in 1995, in McNamara and Harris, 1997), research attention has been drawn to focus on different aspects of their sojourn.

Research focusing on overseas students' learning experiences can be categorised into the following main subjects: the socio-cultural challenges/differences/adaptation; English for academic purpose; university policy on overseas students and their well-being (McNamara and Harris, 1997). Most research exploring overseas students' English learning and adaptation has been conducted in the US (Johanson, 2001, looked at English learning master and Ph.D students in US higher education; Lo, 2001, looked at the needs of MA TESOL program students in the US; Huang, 2001, looked at English learning strategies). Fewer studies have been conducted on overseas students in Britain (McNamara and Harris, 1997; Chen, 1999, looked at Taiwanese students' self-directed English learning in Britain). Though British universities have been doing well in attracting an increasing number of overseas students, the British higher education system is not without its own problems. *The Economist* (2002) reported that the problems facing British universities is a crisis of over-crowdedness, financial and resource shortages (1.1% of GDP expense on higher education with an enormous expansion of student numbers as more than one-third of British school leavers go to universities nowadays):

'the ratio of students to teachers has doubled from around 9-1 ten years ago to

18-1 now. [...] Building, facilities and equipment have deteriorated. The higher education sector as a whole is in the red...in addition to the around 8 Million pounds (\$13 billion) public money it receives annually, the sector needs an extra 9.94 billion over the next three years to put things right—a fantasy, says the government’ (the Economist, 2002, November, p.29).

As British universities were encouraged to depend less on public funds and taxation but to find alternative income, there has been a rapid expansion in overseas courses and recruitment since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. ‘The creation of wealth’, as *The Economist* noted, ‘is increasingly regarded as part of a university’s role’. However, the money-driven recruitment of overseas students can be detrimental to the quality of the education service and the resources provided to them, thus, also damaging the reputation of British universities (Times Higher Education Supplement, 1994, in McNamara, et. al, 1997). Aside from the fact that studying abroad changes and marks young people for life, overseas students can also be ambassadors of good international relations (Furnham, in McNamara and Harris, 1997, p.29). Therefore, their interest and welfare need to be taken into account; scrutiny of the service quality provided by the universities and research on aspects of students’ life and learning experiences also becomes important. To understand the situation of overseas students and the services provided by related organisations and staff to them, the literature on the previous research is needed. This section of the literature review is divided into three sub-subjects:

1. The socio-cultural challenges/differences/adaptation
2. English learning for academic purpose in Britain (and the US)
3. University policy and overseas students’ mental and physical well-being

These three aspects of overseas students’ learning experiences are intricately interrelated to each other and each can be the cause and consequence of the other; thus, they should be examined closely.

### **2.5.2. The socio-cultural challenges/differences/adaptation**

Research (Chang, 1999) on Taiwanese learners in an English university suggested that cultural factors, including the L1 and L2 cultural elements, are important in influencing their learning experiences in Britain. Two forms of psychological anxiety—socio-cultural and academic culture shock, and other relevant issues, such as

environmental contextual factors, individual learner factors and the time factor, are found to be closely related to students' learning experiences.

### 2.5.2.1. Socio-cultural shock

The concepts of 'culture shock' was first formulated by Oberg (1960) and he suggested there are at least six aspects of culture shock:

- *strain* due to the effort required to make necessary psychological adaptations;
- *a sense of loss and feelings of deprivation* in regard to friends, status, professions, and possessions;
- being rejected by and/or rejecting members of a new culture;
- *confusion* in role, role expectations, values, feeling and self-identity;
- *surprise, anxiety, even disgust and indignation* after becoming aware of cultural differences;
- *feelings of impotence* due to not being able to cope with the new environment.

(Furnham, 1997, p.15)

More symptoms of cultural shock found in overseas students include the suggestions that:

Cultural shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols and social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life....All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficacy on hundreds of these cues, most of which we are not consciously aware. Some of the symptoms of culture shock are: excessive washing of the hands; concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; the absent-minded, far-away stare (sometimes called 'the tropical stare'); a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality; fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed or injured; great concern over minor pains and eruptions of the skin and finally, the terrible longing to be back home.

(Oberg, 1960, in Furnham, 1997, p.15)



However, less attention has been paid to explaining the relation between the intensity of culture shock and individual factors (education level, age, personality, etc.) and how long it will remain. Some research on culture shock also suggested all people will suffer culture shock and it is a negative and stressful experience. However, Furnham (1997) argued that some people may enjoy the stimuli of the unfamiliar and some may find migrating or studying abroad 'a blessed escape', rather than a deprivation of status and possession. Furthermore, culture shock can be important for 'self-development and personal growth' as it can be seen as 'a transitional experience which can result in the adoption of new values, attitudes and behaviour patterns'. (Furnham, 1997, p.16)

Other factors, such as feelings of loss, grief and mourning resulting from 'being deprived of specific relationships and significant objects' including family, friends, occupational status, food, weather pattern, are also causes of culture shock and poor adaptation (Furnham, 1997, p.21). Personality and a person's perceived 'locus of control', expectation, negative life-events, and reduction in social support also contribute to ill-adaptation.

Literature on social support and friendship networks suggests that social support provides a person with information, emotional, monetary and moral support. People feel they are 'cared and loved; esteemed and valued and that they belong to a network of communication and mutual obligation' (Furnham, 1997, p.18); and therefore it is predicted that overseas students with such support and friendship may have reduced stress and adjust better than those without such a network. Bochner et al. (1985) studied the friendship patterns of overseas students and suggested three distinct social networks:

1. A *primary, monocultural network*, consisting of close friendships with other sojourning compatriots. The main function of the co-national networks is to provide a setting in which ethnic and cultural values can be rehearsed and expressed.
2. A *secondary, bi-cultural network* consisting of bonds between sojourners and significant host nationals such as academics, students, advisors and government officials. The main function of this network is to facilitate instrumentally the academic and professional aspiration of the sojourners.

3. A *third multi-cultural network* of friends and acquaintances. The main function of this network is to provide companionship for recreational, non-cultural and non-task oriented activities.

(Bochner et al., 1985, in Furnham, 1997, p.19)

Despite the importance of and increasing number of research studies on computers and the Internet in human communication and relationships, little has been said about the profound impact of communication technologies on students' adaptation to cultural shock, their social network and friendship. As human relations cannot be studied out of their wider context and without a consideration of the communication technology available, it is important to examine this aspect in this present research. The suggested solutions to reducing culture shock include orientation programmes, information giving, development of cultural sensitisation, and simple skills training (Furnham, 1997, p.26-27). It will be interesting to see if the rich resources of modern communication technology can have a certain impact on the overseas students in the present research.

### **2.5.2.2. Academic culture shock**

Aside from the culture shock mentioned above, another important factor resulting in overseas students' learning difficulties is academic culture shock. Academic culture shock results from differences in educational traditions and discourse. Academic culture, according to Cortazzi and Jin (1997), is the system of 'belief, expectation and cultural practices about how to perform academically' (p.77). Many aspects of academic culture may seem obvious but are seldom made explicit. The experience of academic culture shock in Britain by Taiwanese students was explored by Chang (1999) and was categorised into two concepts: (1) teaching and learning styles (2) academic expectation.

#### **2.5.2.2.1. Teaching and learning styles**

Cultural norms of interaction and expectations are essential in terms of mutual judgement by teachers and students (Thorp, 1991). Thorp (1991) suggested that academic staff needs to be aware of different learning styles resulting from cultural differences and the cultural specificity of their own cultural judgement on overseas students and their perceived 'good' learning. Students from Confucian heritage cultures were found to have a strong group ethic, a preference for lesson preparation, co-operative work, whole class, and rote learning (Thorp, 1991). In Taiwan, the

examination system that allows access to higher education, thus ‘success’ for life, has been criticized for focusing on ‘rote learning’ and ‘passive learning’. It is suggested that as these are the familiar methods known by Taiwanese students, their unfamiliarity with the English learning methods—questioning orthodoxy and emphasis on inventiveness—is likely to lead students to academic culture shock and anxiety when they are abroad (Chang, 1999). The teaching and learning styles of those students from Confucian-heritage cultures may have been considered negative and unproductive by academic staff in a western context.

However, Watkins and Biggs (1996) and Chan and Drover (1997) challenged the western misconception of CHC learning as passive, low-quality rote learning with a surface approach. They argued that CHC students’ learning strategies are not necessarily negative. Contrary to the western misconception, they found students from Confucian-heritage cultures actually have ‘a strong preference for high-level, meaning-based, and deep learning strategies’ according to the context and task (Watkins and Biggs, 1996; Chan, and Drover, 1997). As far as understanding and memorizing are concerned, CHC students do not use memorizing for understanding. On the contrary, ‘they aim to understand in order to memorize more effectively’ (Watkins and Biggs, 1996, p.272). In order to cope with the examination system and have their ‘academic souls’ ‘uncorrupted and unsullied’, students have developed both superficial strategies (a surface approach, which ‘aims to *satisfice*, not satisfy, task demands by investing minimal time and effort consistent with appearing to meet requirements’) to cope with assessment requirements, and a deep strategy and dispositions to ‘retain their integrity as learners’ and develop deep learning in their own way (Tang and Biggs, p.179, in Watkins and Biggs, 1996).

A distinction between ‘rote-learning’ and ‘repetitive learning’ should be made. ‘Rote learning’, defined as ‘learning in a mechanical way without thought of meaning’, is different from ‘repetitive learning’, with which students ‘use repetition as a means of ensuring accurate recall’ for the examination. CHC students may decide to *satisfice* their high-stress examination requirements by rote learning—to reproduce material without understanding, but they may also want to use a repetitive learning strategy—deep memorization, to ‘ensure accurate recall of already understood information’ for the examination preparation (Biggs, 1996, p.53). It was found that students actually make sure they understand the materials ‘for their own deep purposes’, and then use rote learning for the examination (Watkins and Biggs, 1996). Students simply choose different strategies to cope with their own intrinsic learning purposes and extrinsic assessment requirements (Biggs, 1994, in Chan and Drover, 1997). Thus westerners

may be wrong when they see Asian students as ‘preoccupied with a high degree of repetitive work’ and assume these activities to be ‘rote learning and a surface learning strategy’. In terms of creativity and skills development, teachers and learners from Confucian-heritage cultures, contrary to their western counterparts, value the development of skills with repetitive learning first, then being creative and explorative (Chan and Drover, 1997). It is suggested that when CHC students abroad face a different educational context and assessment format that require research and argument, they may possess the deep learning strategies and dispositions, yet only a few have the skills to do it appropriately, thus, they need training in research and writing assignments.

#### **2.5.2.2.2. Academic expectation**

Overall, there is a mismatch between the students’ expectation of the teacher/themselves, and the teachers’ expectation of the students/themselves. Students from Confucian-heritage cultures expect the teacher to be ‘an authority, an expert, a model, a parent, a friend, know the students’ problems, give clear answers and guidance’. The students think their roles are to ‘develop receptivity, collective harmony, apprenticeship, deductive learning’. They need to ‘respect the teacher and learn by listening and reflection’. They want to ‘learn the methods and the technical advances, and focus on the product of the study’ (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997, p.85). Chang (1999) also pointed out that the idea of the hierarchical relationship of Confucianism influenced Taiwanese people and the classroom roles. Teachers are considered superior. Fears of teachers and reluctance to approach teachers were Taiwanese students’ characteristics. Asking questions to teachers can even be ‘face threatening’ behaviour to their teachers because that implied that the teacher did not teach clearly (Thorp, 1991). On the other hand, Chan and Drover (1997) argued that modern Chinese universities foster a teacher-student social relationship that ‘seems well developed but very hierarchical and formal from the outside’. However, in reality there is a high degree of interaction, partly because of the close residence of both students and teachers on campus, partly because of ‘centuries- fostered inter-generational respect’ (Chan and Drover, 1997.).

In Confucian-heritage cultures, a teacher is viewed as a mentor who ‘provide[s] advice through all stages of learning’ while in the western educational system, a teacher is to advise students ‘while respecting individuality and autonomy’ (Chan and Drover, p.56). British teachers see themselves as ‘a facilitator, an organiser, a model of how to find out, and a friendly critic’. They think students should ‘develop

independence, individuality, creativity, inductive learning, critical thinking, participate and take part in dialogue, focus on process of learning and research skills, students should ask if they have any problems, and find answers by themselves, and know what to do or work it out'. (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997, p. 85) Therefore, during the class interaction, the British tutors expect them to have active involvement and verbal explicitness, yet the students may remain silent because they respect the teacher as a model and expert and prefer to listen to the teacher. They may seem passive, but actually they are active in their mind (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997).

It was also reported that worries of face loss and negative views (fear of being considered stupid) from their supervisor were the main source of Taiwanese students' anxiety in their relationship with their supervisors/tutors. Supervisors and students were also found to hold different expectations in matters such as giving feedback and proofreading. However, adjustment of learning styles and expectations in their new teacher-student relationships were found in some of the Taiwanese MPhil/PhD students (Chang, 1999). The process of transformation was found to take place without formal support from either English or Taiwanese academic bodies. Instead, peer students from the same country helped the new students by sharing personal knowledge and experiences (Chang, 1999). It was suggested that students and staff both need to be aware of cultural differences and adjust their formal teaching/learning approaches as the difference in learning styles reflect cultural values (Chan and Drover, 1997). Western educators need to understand that these students may be considered as 'passive and reluctant to participate in critical commentary' because of their traditional education, yet their traditional learning styles 'have helped them compete internationally and score well on standard academic tests.' (Chan and Drover, p.60).

Cortazzi and Jin (1997) suggested more aspects of culture related differences that may cause difficulties for overseas students: communication culture, learning culture, and the student-teacher relationship. Students from Japan and Taiwan were found to be hesitant in saying 'no' to prevent face loss on both sides and an inclination to say 'yes' to achieve harmony and indicate attendance even though they may not necessarily agree with others. A misunderstanding of academic, communication, and learning culture can lead to wrong assessment on both sides. Therefore, inter-cultural communication skills are needed for both students and teachers.

### **2.5.3. English learning for academic purpose in Britain (and the US)**

Studying at advanced level in the higher education institutions via the medium of a second or foreign language is the main problem for many overseas students. It can feel like 'seeing through a glass darkly' as these students bear a double burden: 'they have to deal both with the input of new information and ideas and with their presentation in an unfamiliar language' (Cammish, 1997). However, it was pointed out that students need not be left alone to overcome their linguistic problems; their teachers and learning institutions also have the responsibility to make efforts to help them.

The problems the overseas students have in Britain depended very much on their previous English learning experiences. Students who learn English as a foreign language via the 'communicative approach', may be confident at conversational level. However, their surface fluency can be 'deceptive' and they may have no experience of learning and listening to an academic subject through English for an extended period of time (Cammish, 1997). On the other hand, students whose previous English education focused on writing and reading skills may have problems in oral discussion. Vocabulary, technical terms, abbreviation and acronyms in the professional field can also be problems for some students (Cammish, 1997).

Students from countries where language materials reflect their traditional and cultural values rather than the western cultural norms may have linguistic competency to produce grammatically correct sentences, but not 'situational and cultural competent language skills' to communicate with native speakers in Britain whose language use can be full of culture-specific references and metaphors (Cammish, 1997). However, Rivers (1983) suggested that for students whose motivation to learn English is instrumental and their goal is to ensure social mobility and economic rewards, they may show little interest to understand the culture and language of the English-speaking countries. Language tutors need to note that as long as the students can understand and cope effectively with the demands of the second culture, their private and emotional identification concerning cultural values and attitudes need to be respected and not violated (Rivers, 1983).

Cammish (1997) explored linguistic challenges and solutions for overseas students in terms of four language skills essential for successful study in a British university: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

**Listening:** an overseas student will need to be competent in three listening areas: 'understanding the content of lectures, following the more rapid and informal registers

used in discussion, grasping instruction in more practical and /or face-to-face situations' (Cammish, 1997, p.149). Tutors are advised to prepare lists of technical vocabulary, an outline of the lecture, and a simple written introduction to the topic to prepare students for the talk and boost their comprehension. Once students lose track of a long talk, the 'affective filter' will protectively stop the reception (Cammish, 1997, p.149). Some short-pauses, changes of activity, and the visual build-up of the lecture outline on the blackboard or overhead projector can help the students to concentrate. A presentation aims to stimulate more senses of the students with visual support (facial expression, gesture, picture, diagrams) and an awareness of communicative strategies used by EFL teachers (restricting the vocabulary, being conscious of the words and structures used, repeating sentences with different words in different ways), will increase students' listening comprehension greatly (Cammish, 1997, p.149-150).

Unlike listening to a lecturer, who usually uses fairly standard English and speaks alone in the class, overseas students taking part in a seminar group discussion (when everyone with their regional accents speaks at the same time) can find the discussion quite 'unpredictable, unstructured, colloquial and elliptical', especially when the group is small and more social. Materials on the topic, careful choice of group leader and group composition, firm structure of the argument can be helpful for overseas students' comprehension (Cammish, 1997, p.151).

When it comes to understanding instructions, the students may feel a great level of stress and fatigue during supervisions and misunderstand the instructions given by their supervisors. It is suggested that decisions, comments, and instructions can be written down during the supervision. The students and supervisors should check over items to make sure it is understood before the end of the supervision and then the students can take away a written record (Cammish, 1997, p.151).

Speaking: to communicate properly in any situation, the students need to have linguistic competence and cultural /social competence to speak and interact properly in the particular context. Personality and cultural factors may play important roles in students' speaking competence. Pair work is suggested to help students to participate orally in a discussion (Cammish, 1997, p.153). It is suggested that immersion is the best approach for overseas students to develop their language competences as they need to think and live in the target language to 'build up automaticity in the lower-level language skills so that they can devote working memory space to content concerns' and develop deep level learning (Watkins and Biggs, 1996, p.281). A

supportive linguistic and collaborative context is considered necessary for language development. However, overseas students who live off-campus may not be able to have the chance to socialize with native speakers and experience cultural and language immersion. Overseas students participating in group discussion may also encounter the dominance of quick-speaking native speakers (Watkins and Biggs, p.281).

Reading and writing skills: 'Reading in a foreign language can be a slow and clumsy process when the level of difficulty is beyond one's competence' (Cammish, p.153). Reading lists with a clear indication of the essential and most accessible texts, teaching of some reading skills (scan, skim), and training in taking notes can be beneficial.

In writing, plagiarism in overseas students' work can be attributed to two causes: first, in some cultures, plagiarism is not a sin; it is acceptable to gather statements from others and put them into one's work. Second, fear of making mistakes and low confidence in composing and expressing their ideas make them stick closely to the reading sources. Minor grammatical mistakes are not serious yet lack of control of sentence structure can lead to distortion of meaning and miscommunication. Crammish suggested students should shorten their sentences, thus reducing the possibility of making structurally wrong sentences. Collaboration with language centre staff can help with problems such as mistakes in the use of words and other micro/macro language problems (Cammish, p. 153).

Johanson (2001) conducted research on Taiwanese in a US. University and showed that a lack of exposure to the writing genre and unfamiliarity with the discourse convention caused their writing difficulties and anxiety. Their previous learning experiences with English writing also led to their current difficulties in academic writing. Even for the students who have previously majored in English, they feel English courses in Taiwan did not prepare them adequately to cope with their graduate academic course requirements in the US. They have different conceptions on academic writing, depending on their roles as Master's or doctoral students. Academic writing is considered as an anxiety-provoking process that students apply a diversity of strategies to cope with (Johanson, 2001).

The Grammar Translation method, which was used in junior and senior high school in Taiwan to prepare students for entrance examinations, provided the students with a thorough understanding of English grammar, but 'place[ed] minimal emphasis on the



development of written or spoken competence' (ibid., p.25). The English lessons they had in Taiwan were reported to be predominately conducted in Mandarin, as showed in Tsao's findings discussed in 2.4. Grammar and translation were the main focus of English learning and students were not taught how to write by teachers. At university level, students reported that they were only instructed to compose 'free writing' exercises without being taught any writing skills (brainstorming, outlining, etc.) nor taught explicitly about the format and writing skills required for academic writing (p.26). The students felt that their English instruction in Taiwan had left them ill prepared for the writing tasks in graduate study. They were unsure about the terms such as 'essay, research paper, and term project' used by their tutors in the US. as they were totally different from what they knew in Taiwan. They were unfamiliar with the type of writing required for their graduate course and unsure of what to write.

For Master's students in Johanson's study, academic writing is 'cold', 'cruel', and 'formal' because it requires following certain regulations and the writing is dedicated to an audience (professors) who do not care much about the writer in person but will evaluate her according the text being submitted. However, personal writing (email to friends) is considered 'warm' and 'genuine' because it allows the students to be themselves, talk about their feelings to their friends, without the fear of being evaluated negatively. However, for the doctoral students, academic writing was considered positively as a language skill needed for them to develop their careers by publishing articles in journals, though it required undivided and continuous attention and thought. It is also a process of knowledge construction which helps the students to remember what has been learned and a way of presentating one's knowledge and showing understanding in the field to their tutors (Johanson, 2001).

The students in Johanson's study applied a diversity of strategies to cope with their academic writing demands. Their strategies include: discussion with tutors and classmates ('social interactive strategies'), 'extensive reading to maximize input and become familiar with the appropriate register of the genre, beginning writing projects as early as possible in the semester, creating graphs of subject matter as a means of constructing meaning, mining templates for terms to use in future writing assignments, divine intervention (prayer), extensive outlining and pre-writing organization, analysing native speakers' and non-native speakers' email messages, transferring L1 writing strategies to composing in the L2' (ibid, p.28).

Tremendous anxiety was reported relating to English academic writing by Johanson's participants. Aside from their lack of English writing experiences and the failure of

EFL instruction in Taiwan to prepare them for graduate studies, Taiwanese students also had high self-expectation and fear of negative judgement from unintended others by reading their writing.

Preoccupation with grammatical accuracy, a characteristic of students who are trained with the Grammar Translation Method, is detrimental as it causes them to 'over-monitor their written output' and blocks the writing process as the student cannot tolerate any mistakes and frequently has to stop the writing and thinking processes to attend to the grammar mistakes. The concern with grammatical accuracy and accuracy of the content led to the anxieties that their mistakes would be exposed to others (tutors and peers), who will judge them negatively. For the students who studied in English learning courses and were training to be English teachers in Taiwan, their success as English teachers would strongly depend on their grammatically perfect spoken and written English as the educational system in Taiwan put heavy emphasis on grammatical correctness. ('A teacher can not make mistakes.') Thus, they had very high expectations of themselves and were likely to be hyper-obsessive with grammar correctness in their writing and over-monitor their writing. This formed a vicious cycle for them as in order to produce 'mistake-free' texts, they would have to spend even more time expressing their ideas and finishing their writing (p.31). To avoid 'loss of face', the students adopt 'avoidance' strategies—reluctance in showing one's writing and participating in on-line discussion. It is suggested that English instructors can 'de-emphasise' the importance of grammar in the EFL classroom and place greater emphasis on English writing 'as a means of self-expression'. Teachers can adopt the role of learning coach and provide scaffolding through stages of the writing process, rather than being an 'autocratic authority whose chief role is to identify errors and dispense correct answers' (p.31). It is also suggested that the use of on-line communication tools in the English classroom can also encourage contact between students and 'reinforce the notion that [English writing is a] rewarding communicative activity'.

Blackboards, projectors, the classroom, handouts, and computers, are all tools people use to aid their learning. In Cammish's and others' research, as discussed above, though the aids of technology and computers were mentioned, there are not explored in depth. As information communication technologies have been consistently used for teaching, learning, and research in higher education, it will be interesting to explore the impact ICT has on students' English learning for academic purpose and tutors' teaching strategies to improve students' listening comprehension, speaking competence, academic reading and writing skills. The present study will address this

gap in the literature by investigating the impact of ICT on Taiwanese female students' English learning experiences as post-graduate students in a British university.

#### **2.5.4. University policy toward overseas students and their well-being**

To understand the challenges encountered by overseas students in Britain, it is necessary to understand the context and institution they are situated in and the policy and attitudes their host institutions hold to them. Harris (1997) examined the history of overseas students' reception by British universities. It has been argued that in addition to a lack of overseas student policy in universities, past research tended to be superficial and treat overseas students as a homogenous group. It is thus necessary to explore the specific groups and their needs (e.g. 'native English speakers and others, those from western industrialised societies and others, those financially self-sufficient and others, visible minorities and others, familial and single people, men and women' (Harris, p.34)). The beliefs and attitudes held toward overseas students by British universities have also changed with time. The belief that overseas students 'must assimilate into a pre-existing structure' and 'problems resulted from their personality, experience or behaviours of students themselves' has shifted to a perspective that sees the problem as 'a mismatch between the needs of the students and the responses of the universities' due to the intellectual, political shifts, and increasingly crucial economic roles played by overseas students in British higher education (Harris, p.36).

Harris also used a life cycle approach to understand overseas students. The experiences of overseas students start from the point of selection of universities in their home country, through the point of arrival and stay in the host country to the return home (Harris, p.37). In each stage, the student may face different problems and have different worries. Prior to arrival, students' expectations toward the care provided by their universities are found to be unrealistic. It is not clear whether this is a result of 'fantasy', 'prior experience of other more caring universities', or the attractive information produced by the university due to the economic pressure they have (Harris, p.37-38). As costs are the major worry, they may be anxious about the 'hidden cost' (for example, language course fees, language tuition or proof reading fees, and the cost of public transport between campus and accommodation).

The moment of arrival is found to be crucial and 'may colour subsequent attitudes'. Problems such as travel system break down and denial of access to promised accommodation may be viewed by students from the Far East not only as a sign of 'organisational inefficiency', but 'inhospitality and discourtesy to a guest' (Harris,

p.38). Students from the Western Pacific Rim are likely to experience disillusionment with facilities (Harris, p.41). During the stay, most students living in communal university accommodation seem to manage well though a minority may experience loneliness and isolation (Harris, p.38-39). Due to globalisation and modern information technology, Taiwanese students had experienced and acquired certain understandings of western life and culture (Chang, 1999). However, the weather played a crucial role and could be a big problem in their adjustment. Cold weather and short daytime in winter may cause low motivation and discomfort.

Research on students who reported racism or racially related awkwardness was found to be directly related to the course experience and ‘has historically focused on specific tension points such as seeking private accommodation and opposite-sex relationships’ (Harris, p.39). Little reporting is done on Taiwanese students’ experiences of racism or social awkwardness. The only research on Taiwanese students’ learning experience by Chang (1999) did not explore racial or gender problems. The present research will explore this aspect. Throughout their stay in Britain, ‘costs remain a constant source of anxiety’ (Harris, p.40). As overseas students are mainly funded by their families and relatives, their success and failure entail great consequences both financially and in relation to their ‘faces’. Students are vulnerable to family crisis or change of family situation. The problems overseas students have in reintegrating on their return include a need to adjust to a fast pace of life for Asian students and ‘sultry weather conditions’ (Harris, 1997, p.41). There was no evidence of prolonged difficulty reported, as least among Hong Kong students (Harris, 1997, p.41).

## **2.6. Summary**

The chapter has provided background information on the research participants—in Taiwan (history and language planning policy) and in Britain (overseas students’ learning experiences in the higher education system in Britain). The chapter has developed concepts which relate to the research. It has been shown that ideological, historical, social, cultural and individual (e.g. possession of capital) factors in the language environments both in Taiwan and Britain may have a profound and continuous impact on the learning experiences of the participants in the present research.

The chapter discussed theories of ideology, language policy, and cultural and linguistic capital. Two main factors (nationalism and modernisation) have governed English education in Taiwan. Even though Taiwan is a multi-lingual and multi-

cultural society, language policy-making before martial law was lifted in 1987 was always a one-way affair that tended to benefit the dominant ruling class at the expense of the dominated and their general communication needs. Even though English was important for the country's modernisation, English education did not receive important emphasis due to its potential threat to nationalism. English instruction was found to focus on grammar-translation and be exam-oriented. Now, as Taiwan moves toward democracy, public opinion is allowed in language policy making (Tsao, 1999). The use of language is becoming less emotionally and politically charged and more pragmatically oriented. English proficiency is highly regarded and pursued for its exchange value for cultural capital/economic capital in an economy-driven world.

Studying as an overseas student in an English speaking country was the ultimate investment on the path of pursuing linguistic/cultural/economic capital. However, all the factors, from cultural and linguistic distance, facility, different role expectations toward tutors and students, to the weather and food, can easily lead to maladjustment and disillusion. Students' long-established beliefs and practice from Taiwan, such as their learning habits and English ability, also had a profound impact on their academic studies. Most of the research on overseas students was found to be conducted in the US. The increasingly important ICT and its use to improve overseas students learning and life condition were also mainly found in the US literature. It has thus been concluded that it will be necessary to conduct research to explore in depth the impact of ICT and the interaction of environmental factors on Taiwanese overseas students in Britain.

The context of Taiwan was considered important and is presented in the first chapter because Taiwan's socio-historical state, prevailing ideology, and language policy inevitably shaped the participants' belief, language competence, and experiences in the present research. Being Taiwanese is part of their important self-identity. The participants inevitably carry with them influence from their educational history, language policy, their previous experiences of life, and their English learning experiences in Taiwan to the British university, an authentic English language learning environment with its unique value system and traditions different from the participants' original background. Background information on both Taiwan's socio-historical context and overseas students' learning experiences in the British higher education system provided an insight into the participants' learning experiences and difficulties in their current learning environment. Aside from their socio-historical-lingual background, being female is another important factor essentially shaping their life, identity, and experiences. The following chapter will address this other aspect

that had an essential impact on the participants' experiences and learning—gender.

## **Chapter 3 Gender, literacy, and education**

### **3.1. Introduction**

Language and the medium of communication in which it is conveyed have been intricately linked with the practice of power, manipulation, and exploitation among genders, classes, nations, and races. As Habermas (1979, 1984) argues, language and other means of communication both reveal and conceal social reality and help shape the way society works and people's views about it. Communication and language are closely connected with social reality experienced by both men and women. Women's development and equality rights depend greatly on their access to resources, improvement of their education, and their acquisition of (empowering) literacy and means of communication. Many research studies have drawn attention to the connection between language, education, and gender, and provide practical suggestions about how to tackle inequality in language within the education system (e.g. Swann, 1992; Millard, 1997); yet in the changing world characterised by the new work order, new literacy, and new technology, Feminist researchers urge more investigations to understand the diversity of women's experiences and location within the new world (Jackson, 1998). Among research on women and technology, in addition to the early emphasis on biological and reproduction technology, Feminist researchers have also started to recognize the importance of information communication technology to women and have integrated the sphere of information communication technology and its impact on women into the feminist field (Spender, 1995; Birke and Henry, in Robinson and Richardson, 1997). In a new age of globalization, English and ICT literacy (Information communicative technology, the new communication revolution since the invention of print) form the two main new means of communication, the former as a powerful international language and the latter as the instrumental vehicle of communication. Changes in the means of communication may lead to changes in the way people live, work, and think. It is considered important in this research to explore the implication of these two main trends of change and the emergence of new communication means for Taiwanese female students.

The key challenge of feminist theory today, as Jackson (1998) suggested, is 'understanding diversity among women and understanding the complex changing world within which women are variously located' (Jackson, 1998, p.10). In an era 'characterised by an increasingly globalised division of labour and transnationalist capitalist enterprise on the one hand, and fierce parochial nationalisms, civil wars and

dramatically shifting national boundaries on the other', Jackson suggested that researchers should balance the 'hype about a global community linked by the information super highway and ease of travel across continents' against 'the realities of the majority of women's (and men's) lives still bounded by local contexts and the widening gulf between rich and poor' (p.10). Further, she suggested that we recognize that although women's opportunities appear to be better with increased participation in paid work, education is still acquired by only some women; generally, women still 'bear the brunt of coping with the consequences of poverty' and on balance tend to be poorer than men (ibid, p.10).

To understand the real-life diverse experiences and tackle the inequality encountered by Taiwanese women in society and the education system both in Taiwan and Britain, it is essential to examine women's situation and status in the context of Taiwan and to examine the interaction of (1) gender differences in literacy and schooling; (2) the acquisition of the means of communication. In this connection, it is essential to understand the location of Taiwanese women in a changing world order and the roles Taiwanese women play in the trend of changes characterized within the prevalence of English language and ICT. This study aims to investigate what perceived impact gender and ICT have on Taiwanese women's English learning. The research subjects are Taiwanese female students in a British university; therefore it is essential to explore literature on gender in both Taiwan and the British university context. Discussions on the relationship between these discourses and factors in relation to a number of current research studies and with regard to the present research study will also be presented.

This chapter serves to provide an overall review of literature on the issue of gender, literacy/language, and schooling; it covers the literature of theoretical explanations on private and public patriarchy, practical descriptions of gender ideology and gender discourses in Taiwan, and literature on gender and language, and schooling. This chapter is divided into three sections: gender and patriarchy, gender and language, gender and school/education.

### **3.2. Gender and patriarchy**

Women's inferior status and subordinate position in the family and in society has been researched by numerous sociologists and feminist researchers in the western world. In the west, second wave feminism movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s led different schools of feminists to produce a range of theories and concepts of gender



and patriarchy to explain women's inferior and subordinate status in society. Discussions on patriarchy, its operation, and its combination with capitalism are helpful in explaining women's subordination. This section contains theories and literature on gender and patriarchy (section 3.2.1., 3.2.2., 3.2.3.) and related issues (work, ideology, new capitalism) concerning women in the context of Taiwan (section 3.2.4.).

### **3.2.1. Definition of patriarchy**

Feminist researchers have been exploring the inequality between men and women and women's subordinate position in society. Since the 1970s, different feminist groups (Radical group, Marxist group, Liberal group, Dual system group) have explained the inequality and come up with the concept of patriarchy and gender. The issue of women's/men's sex roles and differences were first drawn attention to by male sociologists (Marx, Engels, Weber, Durkheim, etc) in the age of capitalist industrialization, yet it was only given a marginal position in the studies (discussed in Jackson and Scot, 2001). In the 1970s, the concept of gender replaced the idea of 'sex roles' in the field of social studies. Previously, women's position in society and the differences between men and women were seen as natural. It is now well recognised that 'all aspects of social life are gendered' (Jackson and Scot, 2001, p.1.). Gender, defined by Jackson and Scot,

denoted a hierarchical division between women and men embedded in both social institutions and social practices. Gender is thus a social structural phenomenon but is also produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of every day interaction. The world we inhabit is always already ordered by gender, yet gender is also embodied and lived by men and women, in local, specific, biographical contexts and is experienced as central to individual identities. Gender thus encompasses the social division and cultural distinction between women and men as well as the characteristics commonly associated with femininity and masculinity. ...gender intersects other social divisions and inequality, such as class, "race" and sexuality, and ... the meanings of masculinity and femininity vary within, as well as between, societies (Jackson and Scot, 2001, p.1-2).

The social arrangement of the hierarchical gender relation—the notion of patriarchy, was also conceptualized in feminist social studies. Patriarchy is a contentious concept

in the field of feminist social studies (Jackson and Scot, 2001, p.10). It could be traced back to sociologist Max Weber, who defined patriarchy as a form of ‘socially legitimated power’ which gives the male head of household power and authority over ‘women, children, younger men, and servants’ in his household. The patriarchal authority hierarchically subsumes the lower level of social relation—internal household structure, and is subsumed by a higher level of authority, e.g. the feudal authority. However, Weber and other male sociologists did not consider the division of women and men and considered the ‘mother/child unit to be natural and therefore not sociologically significant’ (discussed in Jackson and Scot, 2001). From the 1970s, feminists have debated the notion of patriarchy with many dimensions, such as the expansion of its definition, its specificity, ahistoricity, applicability in contemporary society (Delphy) and connection with capitalism (Delphy, Hartman, Walby, Barrett) (discussed in Jackson and Scot, 2001). Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as ‘a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women’ (p.20), with an implication that this definition rejects ‘the biological determinism’ and ‘the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one’ (Walby, 1990, p. 20). The structures and forms of patriarchy suggested by Walby are used here in this thesis as the main frame to understand patriarchy and the gendered context in Taiwan.

### **3.2.2. Structure of patriarchy**

To Walby, patriarchy consists of six structures which are interrelated with each other: household production, paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and in cultural institutions (Walby, 1990, p.20). These six structures are considered as real, deep, and ‘necessary to capture the variation in gender relations in Western societies’ (Walby, 1990, p.20).

Through the patriarchal relation in household production, women exchange their household labour for their maintenance from their husbands. In modern Britain women are not bound to one husband and spend less of their lifetime involved in patriarchal household labour. However, full-time housewives still spend as much time on household work as women decades ago because standards for household hygiene and child care have increased with the advancement of technologies and education theories (Walby, 1990, p.81). Aside from organizing and doing most of the basic household chores, women’s unpaid work within the private household also involves helping the husbands or the male heads of the family with their jobs or family business (Delphy and Leonard, in Jackson and Scot, 2001). The variety of work done

by wives varies according to the job and the circumstances of the men. It can be very varied, personalized, and intimate, e.g. holding parties, picking up phones, giving moral support, etc. to cater for the men's professional and recreational needs (Delphy and Leonard, in Jackson and Scot, 2001). Staying in marriage is one of the options that women have in comparison with other options such as poverty, loss of maintenance from the husband, and low-paid jobs, as a result of being not married. Thus, women of different positions choose to strengthen or weaken the family according to what they perceive as their best interest. This has to be understood in relation to other patriarchal structures as discussed below (Walby, 1990).

In the patriarchal scheme of paid work, women are excluded from better forms of work and wages and segregated into the worse jobs that demand less skill. In modern Britain, there is only a small decline in 'the degree of inequality in terms of pay, conditions, and access to well-paid occupations' (Walby, 1990, p.59). Capitalism and the first wave of feminist struggle have led to a change from a private patriarchy to a public patriarchy, with more women being released from private household labour and 'entering as cheap labour' into a capitalist labour market (Walby, 1990, p.59). Job segregation by sex is argued by Hartmann (in Jackson and Scot, 2001, p.98) to be the main mechanism of male control over women in capitalist society as low wages for women force them to be dependent on men and marry them. Women's domestic labour 'weakens their position in the labour market' as women face limited choices of jobs and working hours due to their household responsibilities. At the same time, when men maintain their superiority and dominance in the public domain as a result of benefiting from their wives' contribution of household labour and helping with their jobs, they also physically and mentally enjoy and benefit from marriage; while the wives suffer from 'the housewife syndrome' with psychological distress like, 'nervousness, inertia, insomnia, trembling hands, nightmares, perspiring hands, fainting, headaches, dizziness, and heart palpitations'. (Bernard, in Jackson and Scot, 2001, p.215). The interlocking system of patriarchy and capitalism, argued Hartman (in Jackson and Scot, 2001, p.98), has 'created a vicious circle for women'.

The state is also patriarchal with a systematic bias toward patriarchal interests (Walby, 1990). In Britain, Walby argues that although some state policies have been greatly improved (ease of divorce, reduction of exclusion in education, state financial welfare support, etc), some of these changes in state policies are considered to have had little, or marginal positive impact on women's situation in the public sphere (e.g. contraception, abortion, and welfare provision) (Walby, 1990, p.171). Changes in provision for single female parents also causes suffering to them (Walby, 1990).

Male violence constitutes another structure of patriarchy. Male violence and its impact are routinely experienced by women. Male violence against women includes 'rape, sexual assault, wife beating, workplace sexual harassment and child sexual abuse' (Walby, 1990, p.128). Walby argues that instead of being considered as traumatic cases applying to only a few women, male violence should be considered as a social structure. In 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain, private male violence against women has been de-legitimated and reduced by the first and the second wave feminist movement. However, Walby still considers the state intervention in Britain to be ineffective and humiliating to the women who seek it (Walby, 1990, p.149). Another patriarchal structure is sexuality. Patriarchal relations in sexuality include compulsory heterosexuality and a double sexual standard. Walby argues that in Britain, control of female sexuality has also undergone a process from private control under one patriarchal agent for a lifetime, to 'a freer and more public situation' (p.127). Under patriarchal control, women also develop both resistance to, and accommodation towards, their interests in a patriarchal society (such as choice of sexual liberation or cultivation of the model of sexuality contained in marriage). However, in Walby's views, the sexual double standard still exists and women's sexuality still faces stricter censorship.

Patriarchal cultural institutions are perhaps the last structure of patriarchy. 'Differentiation of the discourses of femininities and masculinities' and 'valuation of masculinity above femininities' is, according to Walby (p.104), the key to the patriarchal cultural institution. The characteristics that consist of ideal femininities were varied across time, class, age, and ethnicity. Domesticities, selflessness, fragility, dependence on a husband or father, philanthropy (or domestic work with no payment) were the ideal feminine attributes for middle class women in the Victorian period (Walby, 1990). Although wages were important in the construction of femininities and masculinities, 'abstinence from paid work' is no longer essential in the discourse of femininities in modern Britain. The discourses of femininity also have shifted from 'private domesticity towards more public aspects of sexual attractiveness to men, outside as well as inside the family' (Walby, p.108). Another site of cultural institutions is formal education, the first public sphere fully open to women. Literacy was exclusively for boys before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though girls have been able to enter all levels of formal education since the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the gap in qualifications and degrees is closing, there is still a high level of segregation when it comes to the subjects studied (Walby, p.108).

### **3.2.3. Private patriarchy and public patriarchy**

It is important to recognise that there are also different forms of patriarchy. Walby distinguishes two types, which she labels: private patriarchy and public patriarchy. Private patriarchy is operated via a strategy of exclusion; public patriarchy is via a strategy of segregation and subordination. While private patriarchy operates at an individual level within household production, public patriarchy operates mainly within public structures such as employment and the state (Walby, 1990, p.24). These two forms of patriarchy are, however, inter-related and reinforcing. Within private patriarchy, a man as a husband or father controls and subordinates women in his household. It is through the mechanism of exclusion within private patriarchy that women are actively excluded from other public spheres (Walby, 1990, p.178). Within public patriarchy, women have access to both public and private spheres, but are nevertheless subordinated within them (Walby, 1990, p.178). The household remains one, but not the main, site of oppression. Moreover, women's subordination inside the private household is further strengthened by their non-admission to the public sphere (Walby, p.178). In many structures involving patriarchal relations, women are no longer excluded, but do remain subordinated within them.

From the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the chief site of patriarchy in Britain moved from private to public, as a result of capitalist power and feminist struggles. In general, in contemporary Britain, though women have improved their access to the public sphere, their situation inside many social structures remains subordinate and unequal. Walby argues that though in Britain women are no longer confined by the oppression of one single patriarch, they are left for the whole society to exploit, as patriarchy changes its forms and turns 'some of the hard-won changes into new traps for women (Walby, p.201).

### **3.2.4. The situation in Taiwan: private and public patriarchy and its discourses**

In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwan also underwent a series of dramatic changes, including industrialisation, modernisation, and the transformation of patriarchy. With the demand for labour from industry, women had the chance to go outside the traditional private household, and entered into the public sphere. However, in reality, they were still under patriarchal control in this newly transformed public patriarchy domain, as Skoggard points out: 'The interests of patriarchy and capitalism have converged to form a new system of dominance in which gender identities and relations are reconstructed to fit the needs of both household and factory' (Skoggard, 1996, p.134). Though rising middle class and feminist

movements in the cities challenged patriarchal power, most rural women have been channelled to household-based industrial production and low-ranking, low-wage, long-hour manual types of factory work. Skoggard comments: ‘Insider patriarchs and outside capitalists both lay claim to women’s labour, the former by virtue of kinship relations and the latter by virtue of the principles of market exchanges’ (Skoggard, 1996, p.146). Patriarchal culture and the state accommodated to the demands of capitalism with strategies that emphasize the primary importance of domesticity, women’s inferiority (e.g. women’s perceived mental and character deficiencies) and the justified segregation of jobs (inferior manual jobs for women and superior mental jobs for men) (Skoggard, 1996). To maintain a cheap labour supply and economic growth and to conceal the ‘exploitative relations of both patriarchy and capitalism’, Skoggard points out, the state had suppressed the women’s movement (Skoggard, 1996, p.146). Taiwanese women (female rural factory workers) are left in a devastating situation that can be summarised in the following statement by Skoggard.

For the sake of family, women have had to swallow the bitter pill of patriarchy, and for the sake of the modern nation-state, they are now expected to take another dose. Patriarchy persists because women’s silence and “high capacity for eating bitterness” (Kung 1994, 63) remains a necessary means of concealing the dark side of modernity. Patriarchy and capitalism have converged to construct a doubly demeaned subject, “a feminized proletariat,” who is the flange that allows the wheel of industrialization to turn. Without women there would have been no miracles, and their silence in this regard is imperative’ (Skoggard, 1996, p.146).

The patriarchal social structures of Taiwanese society also need to be taken into account to understand the different yet interrelated aspects of life for women. This will be presented in the next section.

### **3.2.5. Structures of patriarchy in Taiwan**

The established categories of six patriarchal social structures used by Walby (1990)—household production, paid employment, state, male violence, sexuality, and cultural institution—can also be applied to understand the patriarchal social context in Taiwan.

#### **3.2.5.1. Household production**

In Taiwan, feminist researchers (Liu, Yu-Hsiu, 1998; Huang, Shu-ling, 1998; Lin,

Wan-Yi, 1998) concerned with women's inequality in the family have endeavoured to depict the reality of women's situation within the private patriarchal household.

In Taiwan, Lin (1999) pointed out that the division of labour may usefully be understood ideologically in terms of the three binary oppositions: work/family, public/private, male/female. Work is defined as masculine and family as feminine. Men are regarded as breadwinners who work in the public domain, while women's care-taking at home is not regarded as 'work', but natural 'unpaid' labour in the private domain (Lin, 1999). Lin (1999) claimed that there is also a phenomenon of feminization of care-taking work in Taiwan, with the increasingly ageing population and an increase in nuclear families. The idea that care-taking work is only for women has been influenced and constructed by the ideology of a traditional patriarchy gendered structure. The reason women become caretakers is not because of their personal characteristics or inclination. Rather, it is a result of social construction (Lin, 1998). Feminization and the 'commodisation' of care taking exploit women's unpaid labour. Care taking is by nature long-term and tedious work, which requires considerable alertness and concentration. It has a negative impact on women's physical, psychological condition, social participation, finance, and employment, and also leads to women's psychological stress, economic dependence and low social participation resulting from unpaid work (Lin, 1998). It is essential, according to Lin, to shift the issue to the domain of state welfare, in order to change women's situation in the household and liberate them from being unpaid labourers in the private household (Lin, 1998).

### **3.2.5.2. Paid employment**

In northern European countries, where the labourer is protected, 'employment' has shifted from the sphere of economic policy to that of social welfare and been treated as a basic right for citizens' survival and self-realisation. 'Work' becomes a genuine 'right', not a tool to serve the national economy. In Taiwan, however, Liu (1998) has claimed, the new form of difficulty that labourers and women have encountered since the end of martial law has been the market-oriented economy. International economic competition and theories of a free market economy imported from America have turned labourers into pure commodities, with devastating results. Despite the serious problem of unemployment of the aboriginal groups and lower class citizens, a great scale of labour import from southern Asia has still been encouraged the government in recent years. In addition, long working hours, the lack of a retirement system, of transportation, of pregnancy leave, of nursery services, of leisure and re-education are

also problems in this vicious circle, which has led to the declining employment rate for women: the male employment rate is only 65% and the female about 45 %, which is lower than in Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, or South Korea. (Liu, 1998).

### 3.2.5.3. State

Liu (1998) suggested that the Taiwanese state welfare system, established on the basis of a clear gender-based division of labour, was characterized by both sex bias and class division. Male-related work outside the family often receives more state resources while welfare for women who do unpaid work in the private household is often ignored. It is difficult to elevate the issue of women's needs to the level of 'rights', because instead of being regarded as an issue in the domain of 'public politics', they are only considered appropriate to the private domain of the 'household' and 'the house economy'. The internalized value of 'female sacrifice' has also contributed to an ideological construction which places women's needs in the sphere of morality (Liu, 1998).

When the market mechanism enters the domain of nursing, education, medical care, and care taking, women's work is divided into an expensive 'commodity' in the privatized service market, and a 'labour of love', which represents the individual woman's unpaid labour for the family. The need for a caring service increases as the era of the nuclear family and an aged population approaches. The privatisation of nursing and the caring services has been encouraged by the government, despite its high prices and class division characteristics because service in a free market is not affordable to economically disadvantaged women (Liu, 1998). The high prices of private nursing and caring services in the free market disadvantages the majority who are in need—women, children, the elderly, patients, and the disabled. It keeps most women inside the private household for their unpaid nursing and caring work. As a result of gender division and the commoditisation of women, women's sexuality, bodies, and caring work are divided into a 'labour of love' or a 'commodity' in the market, to be exploited by men and society as a whole (Lin, 1998; Liu, 1998).

Male-constructed law also helps to give women an unequal deal. Feminist researchers note that, according to Taiwanese law before amendments, both women's property before marriage and income from labour after marriage shall be managed, and used by the husband; the household expenses shall be undertaken by the wife first; if there is anything left afterwards, only then does it belong to the wife (Liu, 1998). Laws and the patriarchy system instilled the importance and ideas of the



priority of family, husband, and family property in women, and instilled in men ideas such as 'my wife's sex, body, and property belong to me'. Unequal property rights have resulted in women's infinite self-sacrifice, providing money for husbands' needs, and taking on husband's debts; confusion of body rights resulted in many cases in long-time physical/mental abuse by husbands. Inequalities constructed by law and society justified and reinforced men's disrespect and attitudes that treat their wives and other women as exploitable property (Liu, 1998). However, amendments to family and marriage laws urged by feminists in recent years have changed the regulations on family property management and have improved women's situation in this respect.

#### **3.2.5.4. Male violence**

Walby noted that 'male violence against women includes rape, sexual assault, wife beating, workplace sexual harassment and child sexual abuse'. The use or the threat of violence by men on women helps to keep women's subordination to men unchallenged (Haralambos and Holborn. 2000, p. 153). A report on Taiwanese university students shows that as many as 24 out of 100 female students have experienced rape or sexual attack and 1 percent of working women had experienced rape or attempted rape (Taiwan women's information website, 1998). However, the sexual attack problem is characterized by a low-report rate, low-sentence rate, and high repeat rate (Data from Taiwan women's information website, 1998). Skoggard (1996) reports that newspaper stories of patriarchal violence about rape and murder also made Taiwanese women accept their status both at home and in society. The deteriorating social security problem due to industrialisation and modernisation also led to women's feeling of insecurity, anxiety, and it affects their right of public participation. Law regulation and police organisations based on patriarchal perspectives tend to ignore women's voices and human rights in matters of male violence and sexual attack.

#### **3.2.5.5. Sexuality**

In the traditional patriarchal society, female sexuality has been seen by men as something powerful and threatening that needs to be contained. The traditional strategy to control female sexuality is to confine women inside the home and construct ideological concepts that regard female reproduction-related biological processes as polluting (Skoggard, 1996, p.143). In industrialized Taiwan, the

commoditisation of female sexuality is, according to Skoggard, the new form of male control:

bordellos and posters of naked women are ubiquitous in the countryside and serve as constant reminders to all women of their unaltered status in the public arena. Under the new patriarchy, female sexuality continues to be controlled by men, but in a more insidious way; it is distorted and debased, the feminine reduced to an object of pure sexual desire. As women's sexual liberation has been commoditized for male consumption, women have become imprisoned in a new stereotype. In order not to bring shame and dishonour to their families, women have had to walk a narrow road between home and factory, one lined with brothels, massage parlours, and floor shows (Skoggard, 1996, p.143).

The commoditisation of female sexuality is essentially the result of male exploitation (Lin, 1998a, Huang, 1998). Since men unilaterally exploit the economic benefit and household labour from women, they have extra money and strength to engage in activities of business negotiation, leisure and socialization, which leads to the large scale of (legal and underground) prostitution and the pornography industries (with an estimate of more than 700 bordellos and 700 thousand people involved), which turns women into a sex commodity for sale and turns the public sphere into a sex market (Lin, 1998a, Huang, 1998).

### **3.2.5.6. Cultural institutions**

Walby states that 'differentiation of the discourses of femininities and masculinities' and the 'valuation of masculinity above femininities' is key to the patriarchal cultural institution (Walby, p.104). In the Taiwanese immigrant society of one hundred years ago, immigrants emphasised 'male-centred loyalties, sodalities, and alliances' in order to claim resources and compete in the era of class formation (Skoggard, 1996, p.149). Industrialisation, with its new approach to production and the accumulation of wealth, started another wave of class formation. A new structure of social relation was built on new ways of production. Because the family in Taiwan continued to treat 'risk as a basic and economic unit in Taiwanese society', it led to the necessary 'family self-exploitation distribution' which differentiates in terms of 'age, generation, and gender'. Women again were 'learning their proper place', 'accepting less from life', and becoming 'cultural necessary victims' (Skoggard, p.149). The patriarchal rhetoric of women as the inferior and unskilled sex also 'justified' the

segregation of manual/care-taking/low ranking women's work and the mental/management/higher ranking male work in industrialized Taiwan. Another site of cultural institution is language and formal education, which will be discussed in section 3.3. In 3.2.6. patriarchal discourses and the situation of female workers in specific work are discussed to present a more comprehensive picture of Taiwanese women's working discourses.

### **3.2.6. Discourse at work, new capitalism and women**

Discourses in the workplace require the 'making of different kinds of people'. Aside from the difficulties faced by rural factory workers discussed in sections 3.2.4., 3.2.5. above, women in other classes and work places also face dilemmas in industrialized Taiwanese society. Discourses in the different workplaces discussed here include discourses for female teachers, female supervisors, and female staff in the commercial world. These patriarchal workplaces require female workers to enact different kinds of roles and discourses that emphasise certain forms of 'femininity' yet which are not necessarily beneficial and positive to female workers themselves.

#### **3.2.6.1. Female teachers**

Research (Chiou, 1998; Lin, 1998; Shih, 2000; Lin, 2001, Lin, 2001; Chen 2000; Chen, 2000; Hu, 2002) that examined female teachers' work and life has revealed that social expectation, sexism, the family, and patriarchal social values and structures had a profound impact on women's personalities, lives, and career choices. Teaching has always been seen as a suitable job for women in Taiwan, especially at the level of compulsory education, because of the cheaper cost of teacher education and the ease with which family care taking can be combined with the schoolwork. As Wu (2003) suggested, female teachers' 'professional development is mainly based on motherhood'. As teaching is seen as an extension of mothering, the combination of family and school becomes part of the mainstream culture among female teachers in school (Chen, 2000). Work structure within the school also follows the gender labour distribution. Promotion to management level is not seen as the main goal of female teachers' careers. Female teachers are more likely to stay on the baseline and undertake pastoral care and nursery-related responsibilities. Since household responsibilities are more likely to be undertaken by female teachers, domestic work may interfere with and obstruct both teachers' career development and their personal life, including their recreation choices (Shih, 2000). Most female teachers face role restriction, pressure of entrance examination, and administrative cultures (Chen,

2000). The close connection between work, marriage, and family for female teachers, Chiou (1998) argued, has been detrimental to their professional ability and image. However, Wu (2003) suggested that the experiences of parenthood and teaching in fact reinforce each other and facilitate the understanding of students' parents and the teachers' own parental skills. Though female teachers' career development has been to some degree suppressed by patriarchal power, most of them are nevertheless, according to Shih, able positively to reconstruct their life and expand their life possibilities (Shih, 2000).

### **3.2.6.2. Female supervisors**

Research by Liu (2000) on Taiwanese female school supervisors showed that women encounter more obstruction than men when seeking career development. Three main obstructive factors on women's life and work include: structured hostility from men, inequality within the family, and the myth of beauty and femininity. Women need to work harder and encounter more difficulties to reach the same status as men (Liu, 2000). Great costs are paid for their 'visibility'. At an early age in Taiwan, 'sexuality'—their physical attraction—is assumed to be the secret of their success. Nowadays, successful women are expected by society and by themselves to succeed in both the household and in their career. Family and work are seen as intertwined and inseparable in women supervisor's lives. Teachers are usually more reluctant to accept woman supervisors' demands. Women supervisors therefore need to develop strategies such as stressing 'an absence of hierarchy' or emphasizing their 'femininity' to conceal the superiority due to their status when double standards are imposed on them.

### **3.2.6.3. Female workers in other workplaces**

Workplaces other than schools, such as international companies and airplane companies, due to their commercial and competitive nature, usually adopt the management culture of New Capitalism in order to obtain the greatest profit in international business. By creating a certain Discourse and reputation to attract a certain market niche, new capitalism requires workers to enact certain types of roles and value sets. These required roles of female workers tend to emphasise certain forms of femininity, which can be seen as a form of exploitative commodification of women.

Aside from English language competence, youth and appearance are also requisites in

the commercial English workplaces such as foreign companies and airplane companies. Ping (1998) reveals the conspiracy of capitalism and patriarchy in Taiwan with an example of a female staff recruitment advertisement by one Asian airline company in a Taiwanese newspaper. The qualifications stated in the advertisement for female attendants included: (1) the applicant should be single and under 25, (2) the applicant should be above 160 cm, and (3) the applicant should be thin, attractive, with fair skin. Ping argues that instead of using qualifications such as ‘alertness, health, calmness, politeness’, the airplanes chose to use the qualification and advertisement lexicons for a ‘beauty contest’ and turned the female attendants into targets of a male gaze that helped to bring in more male customers. Ping continues that the qualifications listed by the airplane company implicitly benefit the company via its mechanism of replacement as no female staff can remain single and slim forever. The company is saved from the expenses of accumulated wages with age, maternity leave, and benefits for illness, nurseries, and retirement. Female workers provide their youth and body to be exploited by male power in the commercial workplaces. When they get married, their household labour and age become obstructive factors to their career (Ping, 1998). Early retirement and unemployment are more often imposed on female workers, as they are easily considered redundant and unable to enact certain roles in the work place culture, which is gender-biased, age discriminatory, and exploits both physical and emotional efforts of the female employees.

In section 3.1., the ideologies of patriarchy and patriarchal social structures were discussed. The patriarchal social structures and patriarchal workplace Discourse in Taiwan were also presented. Even though women are no longer confined to performing purely household labour, they are now facing the combined power of public patriarchy and (old and new) capitalism, which sets out to exploit certain forms of women’s femininities—‘eternal youth’ and ‘physical and emotional labour’. The cultural institution of education and language are essential, for they reflect, resist, and (re) produce social structures. Discussion of women’s literacy and schooling will be presented in the following section.

### **3.3. Gender and Language**

#### **3.3.1. Gender-related literacy**

##### **3.3.1.1. Contradiction between girls’ performance at school and their further development**

In England and Wales over the last twenty years, girls' performance in examinations at 16 and at 18 has improved considerably. Research on literacy and numeracy since 1945 has shown that girls' literacy has increased slightly and boys' has remained constant (Brooks et al., 1995). Haralambos and Holborn (2000) suggested that a number of factors have contributed to the improved achievement of women as a whole in Britain. Changes in the labour market have led to a decrease in heavy industry and an increase in service-sector work and flexible part-time jobs. Research comparing girls' attitudes and priorities in the 1970s and 1990s also shows a number of changes: girls no longer attached primary importance to marriage and having children. Instead, in the 1990s, they attached more importance to education and career. Educators and schools, encouraged by the women's movement and feminist sociologists, also became aware of the existing gender ideology and changed their practices, so that they are less likely to disadvantage female students (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000, p.862).

However, researchers in Britain also argue that girls' better performance in school does not guarantee their later success in further education, work, or life. Even though girls are doing better in language related subjects and are found to have a more positive attitude toward writing and reading, their interest in reading and writing is not always to their own best advantage (Millard, 1997). Moreover, researchers such as Janet White (1986), cited by Swann (1992), claimed that it might even be harmful to them and disadvantage their development in the longer term (Swann, 1992, p. 114). White argued that:

girls are channelled into English at the expense of their success in other subjects and . . . girls' success in school English isn't reflected in their subsequent achievements: few [girls] ever make it to positions of power based on the strength of their apparent "giftedness", or their facility with written language (White, 1986; p. 561, cited by Swann, 1992, p. 146).

In the language-related field, Swann also argued that 'women write novels, but make up only a small proportion of writers studied on literature courses; they write journals, particularly in magazines, but are less often promoted to top jobs; they work in advertising, but more often behind the scenes' (p. 147). White further commented on women's contradictory achievements in school and after school:

We need to ask why it is that thousands of able girl writers leave school and go into secretarial jobs, in the course of which they will patiently revise and

type the semi-literate manuscripts of their male bosses, or else return in droves to the primary classroom, there to supervise the production of another generation of penwise girls. (White, 1986, p. 562; cited by Swann, p. 147)

Millard also pointed out that in the information age, it is essential to question whether girls' 'expressed literacy preferences are the best preparation for developments that are redirecting attention away from the page to the screen, from the pen to the mouse, and from a well-structured essay to a well-organized Web site' (Millard, p. 180). It was suggested that even though girls seem to be doing better in language and literacy-related subjects, their confinement to certain topics and their limited access to and engagement with newer forms of communication via ICT may not prepare them well for the future digital age (Millard, 1997).

### **3.3.1.2. Different leisure uses of literacy**

Boys' and girls' different literacy abilities, skills, and habits have been explored and compared. British research (Millard, 1997) has shown that though British girls and women read for longer periods of time, they are found to have the tendency to read books of a similar level or on the same topics: romance, marriage, child care, domestic themes, which is to confirm what they already know, not to challenge what they have up to then believed. When people read texts that 'confirm only a narrow, repetitive and stereotyped view of the world', their reading is what Barthes has called "lisible" (Millard, p. 97). The texts are merely

predictable re-orderings of what has already been read and confirm rather than challenge the readers' expectations. These "readerly" texts encourage a passive consumerism which is stale and unprofitable to the reader (Millard, 1997, p.97).

Boys and men, on the contrary, are said to use their reading skills to explore the world and attain new knowledge.

In writing, Steedman (1982) also suggests that girls' writing is not always practiced to their own advantages (discussed by Millard, p. 16). Girls' stories are often limited to a few topics such as marriage and other domestic themes (discussed by Millard, p. 16).

### 3.3.2. Gender, communication strategies and use of language

Differences in male/female language use and its relation to power dominance and issues of equality have been an area of interest for language and feminist researchers. It is argued that 'one of the ways women have been kept in a subordinate place is through a denial of women's right to be equal linguistic actors' (Cameron, in Jackson, 1993, p.154), and thus a denial of the 'power to name and define', which requires linguistic resources and means. The 'silencing' of women is exercised either explicitly ('through restrictions on the contexts and roles in which women may speak') or implicitly ('through less formal social practices which effectively restrict women in many everyday contexts: disparagement of our ability to tell jokes, refusal to recognize our contributions in discussions, disapproval of girls who are not "quiet" and "good" listeners' (Cameron, 1993, p. 154). However, women's linguistic activity can also be seen as one species of domestic labour, as women are restricted to talk in the public sphere, yet required to 'talk *more* than men in the private sphere' because they have the responsibility of the emotional maintenance of the family (Cameron, 1993, p.154).

There have been three phases in the research on gender differences in language use, represented respectively by the 'deficit model', the 'dominance model' and the 'cultural difference model' (Cameron, 1992, p.156). The 'deficit model' (the main proponent being R. Lakoff, 1975, in Cameron, 1992, p.156) suggests that women's linguistic characteristics are ineffectual because they are socialized in their family to display their femininity in a way that earns them approval, rather than to show authority. Theorists of the 'dominance model' disagree with the 'deficit model'. They claim that it is the subordinate positions of women compared to men that lead to their linguistic display combined with a lack of assertiveness (Cameron, 1992, p.155). The 'cultural difference' model is famous through its proponent Deborah Tannen (1991) and the related self-help literature. It emphasizes that it is the socialization with the peer group rather than the family that shapes boys and girls' language use. The self-help and verbal hygiene literature for women has provided female readers with explanations of 'the mysteries' of the difference between men and women and solutions to misunderstandings in their communication. In attempting to delineate gender communication differences and to provide a solution to communication problems, Tannen (1991) suggests that the fundamental causes of miscommunication are that males and females use language differently to fulfil their gendered social roles and functions. Tannen (1991) argues that women use language to build up relationships, connections, and 'rapport', and that they are therefore comfortable with private speaking. Men, on the other hand, use language to 'preserve independence



and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order' by telling jokes and giving information in larger groups—public speaking. (Tannen, 1991).

However, a feminist linguist (Cameron, 1995) argues that self-help and verbal hygiene literature has long existed in many historical periods by giving advice and regulations on language and behaviour to women who seek 'self improvement' and male approval that 'guarantee economic security and social respectability' (Cameron, 1995). New forms of self-help and verbal hygiene literature like Tannen's and many others' books have become popular as the urban industrial society has become 'more mobile and fragmented' and people need new sources of guidance on their behaviour from authority other than their own parents. Self-help literature backed by scientific data and an author with a Ph.D fills the roles of providing authoritative guidance (Cameron, 1995). It effectively creates a market by creating new anxieties and intensifying existing anxieties around language and the 'highly salient' but 'contested and extremely unstable' female gender identity plus 'the existence of the conflicting norms and the possibility of multiple feminine identities' (Cameron, 1995, p.169). However, Cameron argues that the explanations and suggestions provided in self-help literature do not really reveal the problems that most women encounter in reality. The phenomenon of 'silencing' and not being able to 'get access to the floor' was the first and only mentioned difficulty encountered by women in public domains (Cameron, 1995, p.201). Yet rather than coping with the issue of 'a lack of right to speech' which results from unequal social contexts and relationships, and thus the management of the speech floor, the self-help literature is ill-equipped to deal with structural inequalities. It merely diverts attention to speech style with an acceptance of dichotomy with respect to femininity/ masculinity, indirect/ direct, cooperative/ competitive, ineffectual/ effectual, powerless/ powerful speech styles. Tannen has also been criticized for ignoring the issues of sexism and the issues of social structure and gendered power relationships. If men and women do have different communication styles and goals, as Tannen suggests, they are not randomly produced from their peer groups. Rather, they are

the consequence of the sexual and sexist division of labour in which men are destined to inhabit the public sphere with its dominant values of status and competition, while women specialize in domestic nurturing, both in the family and in jobs that are seen as extensions of it (like childcare, teaching, nursing and social work) (Cameron, 1995, p.197).

Furthermore, the acceptance of the dichotomy of gender division in self-help literature

not only provides no explanations for the real problems, by giving expert assurances to common folk perceptions of gendered stereotypes, it also obscures 'the origins of difference in systematic social inequality'. By shifting the attention from women's problems of 'low wages, restricted job opportunities and poor promotion prospects' to women's speech (assertiveness training, for example), self-help literature covers up the roots of the real problem for women—'sex discrimination, heavy domestic responsibilities and lack of childcare provision, sexist corporate cultures and sex harassment' (Cameron, 1995, p.206) and leads the readers to a misbelief that women's subordinate status is only due to their own speech style. The implication of the 'cultural difference model', that women are better and are cooperative communicators, is also considered simplistic and essentialist and, as Cameron suggests, 'if the root cause of a situation is inequality and exploitation, then celebratory response is not appropriate' (Cameron, 1992, p.156). As self-help literature lets the sex-division of activities and labour go 'unchallenged and unexplained', Cameron also argues that feminism is about changing the codes, social relations, the 'arrangements root and branch', and 'questioning sexual divisions of labour in every sphere of life' rather than 'celebrating the skills required by women by our present arrangements' (Cameron, 1995, p.198).

Swann has examined different aspects of the speech and conversation of men and women (pitch, voice quality, amount of talk, language variety, conversation features, such as interruption, turn taking, and interaction). The amount of talk is said to be connected with conversational dominance. The context, audience, purpose and self-perceived roles of the speakers can all influence how much people talk. Research findings have reversed the image that women 'gossip and nag' and that 'men are the strong, silent sex' and show that in reality it is male speakers who talk more (Swann, p.26). Generally, by talking more, men are able to express their interest and opinions and remain in control of the conversation. However, although in formal, 'one person at a time' situations, male speakers have been found to talk more, in a 'collaboratively developed talk', male speakers talk less than in a formal situation, and less than women in a collaborative talk situation (Swann, p.27).

By looking at the male/female language interaction, Swann comes to the conclusion that there are several conversational features in male/female conversation interaction:

- Male speakers tend to interrupt more than female speakers. In mixed-sex talk, female speakers receive interruptions from male speakers.
- Male speakers use more 'direct speech' than female speakers; for example,

they make direct rather than indirect requests.

- Female speakers give more conventional support than male speakers—they use ‘minimal responses’ such as ‘Mmh’, ‘Yeah’ and ‘Right’ to encourage another speaker to develop their topic.
- Some studies have suggested that female speakers, more than male speakers, use features that indicate tentativeness, such as ‘tag questions’ (‘That’s good, isn’t it’), hedges (‘I wonder’, ‘sort of’, ‘I guess’), and other expressions that make them sound hesitant or uncertain. Other studies have failed to find evidence to support this. Some research suggests that, rather than being associated directly with female speakers, ‘tentative’ features are used by speakers of either sex in a relatively powerless position (Swann, 1992, p.28).

Though the context of speech and individual factors varies, it is said that in general, these findings suggest that female speakers are more collaborative and male speakers more competitive, thus leading to disadvantages for female speakers in mixed-sex conversation. By interrupting more, male speakers are also able to ‘cut off the current speaker’ and bring up their own topics. It is found that there are ‘more interruptions in mixed-sex than in single sex conversation’ and ‘boys interrupted girls more than twice as often as the other way round’ (Swann, p.29). Direct speech used by male speakers also helps them to stake a claim for their status in a hierarchically organized conversation. Female speakers’ conversation, on the other hand, is marked by collaborative decision-making, ‘minimal negotiation of status’ and ‘weakened requests’ with terms like ‘maybe’ or ‘requests for future action’—for example, ‘let’s ask her’ rather than direct commands like, ‘give me that!’ (Swann, p.39). These interactional features are said to ‘contribute to male “dominance” in mixed sex talk and to females “giving away power” in such talk’ (Swann, p 39).

### **3.3.3. Gendered talk in the classroom**

Classroom interactions are different from other contexts because the teacher has a formal status to give speakers rights to speak and to organize the interaction. It has been found that teachers help to reinforce gender differences and differences in language use in the classroom and favour boys at the expense of girls (Swann, p.49). It has also been found that classroom interaction is consistent with features found in male/female interaction discussed earlier (Swann, p.49). Furthermore, as the emphasis in education has shifted to student-centred learning, classroom talk also becomes essential to the learning process. However, girls are disadvantaged in this

form of learning, as it is found that boys out-talk girls by a ratio of 3:1 (Paechter, 1998). Boys' talk is also praised and considered more important than girls' by both teachers and students. The social practice of language in school 'reflects and prepares students for the gender inequality in [...]society' (Paechter, 1998). In addition, the nature of classroom talk is competitive—one gets the chance to talk by raising one's hand quickly or catching the teacher's attention. The competitive nature of the interaction further disadvantages those who are not good at formal talk and advantages those who are already good. As a result, girls lose their chance of learning in both collaborative discussions in mixed groups and in class discussions with the teacher.

Though pupils' behaviours may vary according to the contexts and other factors (such as class, ethnicity, personality, or perceived ability), generally, interaction features and inequality of talk in the classroom have been found to be as follows.

- While there are quiet pupils of both sexes, the more outspoken pupils tend to be boys.
- Boys tend to be generally more assertive than girls. For instance, a US study of whole-class talk (Sadker and Sadker, 1985) found boys were eight times more likely than girls to call out.
- Boys are often openly disparaging towards girls.
- In practical subjects, girls 'fetch and carry' for boys, doing much of the cleaning up, and collecting books and so on.
- Boys occupy, and are allowed to occupy, more space, both in class and outside—for example, in play areas.
- Teachers give more attention to boys than girls.
- Teachers tend not to perceive disparities between the numbers of contributions from girls and boys. Sadker and Sadker (1985) showed US teachers a video of classroom talk in which boys made three times as many contributions as girls—but teachers believed the girls had talked more.
- Teachers accept certain behaviour (such as calling out) from boys but not from girls.
- 'Disaffected' girls tend to opt out quietly at the back of the class, whereas disaffected boys make trouble (from Swann, p.51).

#### **3.3.4. Different distribution of means of communication technology**

The gender gap of computer experiences and attitudes has been a major interest for feminists and educationists, as they are concerned with the possible exclusion of women from the benefits of using computers in work, domestic, and leisure spheres (Colley and Comber, 2003). Feminist research in Britain has also explored the effect of the development of information technology on, and its disadvantages and advantages for, women (Birke and Henry, in Robinson and Richardson, 1997). As rapid communication around the globe has become easy with new technology and the Internet, some feminists have argued that this can help to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes and formulate new identities. However, it has been suggested that computer technology is gendered and women have to adopt a masculine persona to interact with computers (Birke and Henry, in Robinson and Richardson, 1997). In addition, the issues of access are also considered, as 'women outside the computer-based work force also face isolation and those with no time for or access to computers will miss out on a wealth of emerging knowledge (and, implicitly, power)' (p.231-232). The Internet and the emergence of new ways of transporting information have great consequences for women's movements globally and lead to questions such as,

Will Third World women receive information and [...] knowledge from the West, or will the development of computer technologies further alienate them from the scientific process that most often affects Third World people?...if women in the Third World have recently managed to permeate dominant Western literature with texts of their own, will new techniques of writing and reading mean that their knowledges remain peripheral to Western knowledge-making? Or, alternatively, that their cultures and language become part of a wider global network? (Birke and Henry, in Robinson and Richardson, 1997,p. 232)

Research in Britain in the 1990s on learning through ICT and gender equality also revealed boys' dominance of the newer forms of communication and girls' continuously disadvantaged situation within the education system. It showed that boys have more positive attitudes towards computing, make greater use of computers out of school, and dominate resources in school (Swann, 1992). Early reports such as Culley's (1988), cited by Swann (1992, p.54), on classroom interaction during computing lessons, also revealed that boys dominated the lesson, asked more questions, occupied newer computers, and made more comments on the content; while 'girls were marginal to the class in a physical sense'—'seated in groups at the back or sides of the room' and sometimes 'without access to computers at all' (Swann, 1992, p. 54). Research on interaction in mixed-sex or single-sex groups also

showed that when working on computers, 'girls are less likely to fight for control than boys— who often seemed concerned to establish their autonomy' and to 'try...to convince each other, which led to a competitive style of speech' (Hoyles and Sutherland, 1989, p. 175; cited by Swann, 1992, p.54). It has been argued that just like other media and technology skills acquired first and dominated by men, the newer communication technology and electronic literacy are also possibly falling into the hands of men (Millard, 1997). Though in Britain, boys are falling behind girls in language-based school subjects, boys' interest in electronic texts and girls' in the traditional reading of books may be a sign that 'boys are already staking a claim to the more powerful means of communication by participating more actively in the biggest revolution of literacy practices since the introduction of print' (Millard, 1997, p. 181). It is suggested by Millard that access to books in Western Europe after the Gutenberg revolution was confined for more than three centuries to only powerful men till the late nineteenth century. Hence, without more careful planning, 'general access to the newer forms of literacy may be similarly restricted to those in advantaged positions, thereby increasing the inequality between those who are information rich and those with no, or very limited, technological resources' (Millard, 1997, p.181).

It also seems to be the case that boys have greater access to and dominance in ICT and newer communication means both in and out of school. Paechter (1998) and Spender (1995) stated that, with the increasing importance of ICT both inside and outside school, accessing the Internet and other electronic communications systems will become more relevant to students' and teachers' progress and life chances, yet there is evidence that 'girls and women use the Internet less than do men and boys, and that they sometimes encounter sexual harassment when doing so' (Spender, 1995). Girls need to be persuaded that electronic communication can also benefit them (Paechter, 1998, p. 112-113). Paechter further suggested that schools needs to

find ways of monitoring gender variations, among both students and staff, in terms of their confidence, competence and use of the Internet, particularly as a work tool...It is also likely to be necessary, as with other uses of computers, to provide female-only sessions to encourage girls. Teachers are also going to need to develop strategies for supporting young women who are harassed in virtual space, so that they do not become permanently alienated from this important medium (p. 113).

Recent research has suggested that the Internet and the use of email has not had a positive impact on female attitudes to computers, though it has been found that in the

USA, the Internet has encouraged more women to use the computer as a tool for communication (Jackson et al., 2001, in Colley and Comber, 2003). However, the use of the Internet as a communication tool is not associated with discomfort related to computer use in general, thus, attitudes of the female participants in the USA towards computers remain negative (Singh, 2001, in Colley and Comber, 2003). Recent research (Colley and Comber, 2003) on school students has also suggested that the wider expansion of computers in the school curriculum and increased exposure to computers at home has not closed the gender gap of computer use among school students in Britain, though there are more age differences than gender differences (with younger students holding more favourable attitudes to computers). It has been found that the gender gap has narrowed with respect to the frequency of computer use (especially as regards the use of 'word-processing, graphics, programming and maths'), yet the gender gap in attitudes to computers remains, with boys having more self confidence in, and favourable attitudes to, computer use and older girls holding the least positive attitude to, lower self confidence in, and less favourable self conception with respect to computer use. This is possibly influenced by the cultural pressure of gender stereotyping as at the age of adolescence, children start to reduce their areas of interest to prepare for their adult roles according to gender norms and expectations attributed to their gender (Colley and Comber, 2003, p.157-158). It has been suggested that the 'age cohort effect' may also have given younger girls 'more opportunities to use computers' and 'catch up with their male counterparts (Colley and Comber, 2003, p.158).

The above is in effect a summary of research on gender different uses of ICT and language attainment in Britain. Little research appears to have been undertaken in Taiwan on gender differences in the use of ICT, or language attainment. Therefore, it is necessary for the empirical part of the present research to investigate Taiwanese female students' use of ICT and English, the two newer important means of communication.

### **3.3.5. Gender inequality in the EFL classroom**

A study by Liao (1997) on 'Sex Bias/Equity in Teacher-Student Interaction in Primary School EFL Classrooms' in Taiwan indicated that sex bias in classroom interaction exists even in local primary school EFL classrooms. Liao stated that sex bias in teacher-student interaction was found in 'praise or encouragement, acceptance, asking questions, giving information, giving directions, criticism, pupil responses, and pupil initiation'. Liao's study showed that EFL teachers in primary

schools of both sexes had more interaction with boys than with girls. Boys received more praise, encouragement, questions, acceptance, and were more likely to 'initiate their ideas or to call out their answers' in the classrooms. Though most teachers believed that they gave their attention equally to their students, actually it was boys who received most attention. Liao suggested that to reduce embarrassment, nervousness, and anxiety when girls are called on to speak, more response time should be given to them. Discussion and activity patterns can also be changed. Usually it encourages more female participation if activities are held first and followed by discussions (Liao, 1997).

### **3.3.6. Women's literacy in developing countries**

The research on gender and language discussed above revealed that even in the developed western countries, girls and women still encounter difficulties such as marginalization and a disadvantaging orientation of interest and career when they approach learning and education. In developing and post-colonial countries, the ability and practice of language and the use of different media have an essential role for life and work for women. The need to acquire official languages, which are often not the native languages of the majority of the population due to changes and conflicts of political power, has imposed difficulties on their learning. Furthermore, the increasing importance of English and the use of newer media in the trend towards globalization may lead to newer forms of inequality. Literature on discourse and conflicts of gender, education, and work concerned with language use, English learning, and the communication media will be presented in this section.

In a study of Hispanic immigrant women in the United States, Rockhill (1993) contrasted the voices and experiences of women 'who can not read and write English well, live literacy and power in their everyday lives', and the way literacy has been constructed in discourses of power—the male, state discourse of literacy and illiteracy. It was pointed out that dominant social science tended to decontextualise literacy from its lived experiences, present it as 'fixed and unified technical skills to be acquired by willing individuals' and to associate illiteracy with 'individual inadequacy, lack of intelligence, [and] unwilling[ness] to learn'. Rockhill therefore urged more 'integrationist' research as it is difficult to find studies that consider gender, race, ethnicity, and class together as they are lived. Most studies treat them as separate factors.

Rockhill's study of Hispanic women revealed how power is lived in everyday



practices, social regulations, and images that govern their sexuality and language use. It showed that

the construction of literacy is embedded in the discursive practices and power relationships of everyday life: it is socially constructed, materially produced, morally regulated and carries a symbolic significance which can not be captured by its reduction to any one of these. Literacy is caught up in the material, racial and sexual oppression of women, *and* it embodies their hope to escape. For women, it is experienced as both, a threat and a desire...(Street, p. 171)

Zubair's study on rural Pakistani women also revealed the same dilemma faced by women:

Literacy carries with it a promise and yet fear and threat. It holds a promise as it offers economic and financial gains as well as independence, therefore it is aspired to by younger women, who invest their dream in literacy. It is also a threat and fear because it empowers the individual, because it implies change in the old system and adapting to new identities and roles. Hence, the younger women's resistance to men's control over secular literacies and aspiration to self-enhancement through literacy and a newer identity (Zubair, p199, in Street, 2001)

On the other hand, in a developed country like Japan, women's superior attitude and motivation to certain types of literacy and language learning are also shown to be closely connected to social and cultural contexts; it cannot be explained and understood without exploring these social/cultural factors. A study of Japanese female students by Kobayashi (2002) showed that Japanese female students' positive attitudes towards English learning are affected by a combination of Japanese social and educational factors, as summarised below:

the characterisation of English as a women-dominant choice at Japanese schools, the schools as a site providing little opportunity for students' critical life planning, the language industry's presentation of English proficiency as an effective tool for women's achievement of better lives, women's marginalisation in Japanese mainstream society, and fewer social constraints involving women's departure from the society (Kobayashi, 2002, p.193).

To understand literacy, Rockhill claimed, it is necessary to explore wider contextual issues which seem to have nothing to do with it at first sight—women's dream of salvation, male violence, machismo, the dominant ideology of ideal Liberty. As Street (1993) stated, 'To frame literacy in terms of equality of opportunity, rights, or empowerment is absurd ...in a gendered society where the conception of rights is alien to women who have been told all their lives that they must obey and care for others' (Street, 1993, p.140). Literacy is women's work, not their right and when women want to enter the public domain men resisted this because 'literacy of women, public work and intelligence present a threat to men's position and undermine the gendered family structure they depend on'. Women, on one hand, see literacy as crucial to their dream of becoming 'somebody', 'a lady' seen in the dominant media; on the other, they see no necessary use of literacy to their life. On the one hand they see literacy as a means of 'empowerment'; on the other, it is a way to assimilate the dominant middle class American myths and fantasies. Street concluded, 'Once the social science discourse shifts, to expose the socially constructed nature of literacy, its insertion in "social and political relations, ideological practices and symbolic meaning structures", then we will be in a position to see through and to challenge the dominant distortions and myths of literacy that rule the public domain in contemporary society.' (Street, 1993, p.140.)

EFL practice and research in Taiwan has overlooked the social-cultural aspects and tended to take an autonomous approach and decontextualise English learning from the complex cultural-socio background and experiences of the learners. English is portrayed as a skill to be acquired through different levels of schooling and training. The present study attempts to 'see through and to challenge the dominant distortions and myths' of English learning in the public domain in contemporary Taiwan society, to avoid presenting English and ICT as fixed and unified technical skills to be acquired by individuals, and to prevent 'decontextualising' English and ICT from learners' lived experiences. Therefore, it takes an integrationist approach toward the complex issue of women and literacy and aims to explore the impact of ideology, power, and ICT and their inter-relationship in Taiwanese women's English learning.

To understand the interactional impact of ICT, gender, and English on Taiwanese female students in Britain, it is essential to understand these issues in the context of Taiwan and Britain.

In Britain, McNamara and Harris pointed out that research literature on overseas students' learning and experiences also tends to be 'gender blind' (McNamara and

Harris, 1997). Over against the emphasis on the importance of gender in general education over two decades and the wide recognition of gender as an 'important axis around which educational experiences may be structured, and one which must be pivotal to any initiatives promoting equal opportunities in education', little has been written on gender in higher education, especially in relation to overseas students (Wright, 1997, p.91). Wright suggested that multi-faceted approaches are needed in literature on overseas students, 'where issues of race, ethnicity, religious affiliation and nationality are particularly pertinent' (1997, p.106). Further discussion on female overseas students in Britain will follow in the next section, 3.4.

### **3.4. Gender and schooling/education**

#### **3.4.1. Schooling and education in Taiwan**

Schools and the education system produce and provide the workforce for workplaces that require people to enact certain types of roles and certain types of workplace Discourses. Discourses of schools, education, and workplaces, 'contain in their forms of public interaction the "mentalities" that learners are meant to internalize' (Gee, 1996). The concept of the 'hidden Curriculum' (Bowles and Gintis, 1976) is similar to the idea of school Discourses, in that school Discourses and culture are implicitly practised in the form of teaching and learning and in the way that schools are organized. School Discourses producing the workforce for old capitalism encouraged the acceptance of the prevailing hierarchy to produce a subservient workforce who learned to be motivated by external rewards (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). The fragmentation of school subjects also parallels a fragmentation of the workforce and knowledge in old capitalist Fordist-style production lines. However, New capitalism requires new types of people who enact newer roles and values to be produced by new forms of schooling.

Discourse and culture in the Taiwanese educational system will be further discussed to provide a context describing where and how Taiwanese participants in the present research received their primary educational training. The cultural and social factors that contributed to the forming of the specific old capitalism school Discourse in Taiwan (a. Chinese style of education b. Examination-oriented learning and punishment system c. Competitive ethos and social groups structures on campus) are presented as follows.

### **3.4.1.1. Chinese style of education**

The first socio-cultural factor influencing students' learning experiences in the school Discourse is the Chinese style of education. The success of Confucian heritage culture countries (CHC, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Korea) and the academic success in international studies of CHC students have led both Eastern and Western educational researchers to re-examine and revalue the Confucian ethic and its related teaching and learning styles and strategy. It is argued that the Confucius ethic culture emphasizes both the intrinsic and extrinsic goals of learning: the possibility of reaching perfection (human perfectibility) and sagehood by each individual; and at the same time, the worldly rewards of fame, family face, achievements, social mobility, and material attainments. Both intrinsic and extrinsic goals are believed by CHC people to be achievable by anyone with will, effort, and concentration of mind (Lee, in Watkins and Biggs, 1996). Therefore, whilst Western students, parents, and teachers attribute one's achievement to one's ability or intelligence, CHC students, parents, and teachers attribute one's achievements to effort. Effort attributions are more adaptive than ability attributions as the former leads students to work harder and harder by improving and changing their study strategies and the latter lead to 'resignation and disengagement' (Biggs, in Watkins and Biggs, 1996, p.59). On the positive side, effort-attribution education systems characterized by parental involvement in education, emphasis on education by the society as a whole, and students' higher acceptance of personal responsibility for their successes and failures lead to the success of CHC students. On the negative side, the stress effort-attributing and score-desperate teachers and parents create for students can make them overburdened by schoolwork, feel guilty and be blamed by their teachers and parents as failures. This can also lead to devastating results (Biggs, in Watkins and Biggs, 1996).

Furthermore, a comparison of parental and teachers' expectation between Western and CHC students shows that western students often receive unrealistically positive appraisals and lower expectation from their parents and teachers. However, CHC parents and teachers are often 'too harsh and punitive towards students' as 'they set high standards and seldom praise them for their accomplishments'. Watkins and Biggs state that while a high standard expectation from CHC parents and teachers may enhance students' motivation, 'it can affect their social and emotional development and mental health as well' (Watkins and Biggs, 1996, p.100).

### **3.4.1.2. Examination-oriented learning and punishment system**

Learning and teaching in the Taiwanese education system is largely exam-oriented, because of the emphasis on diplomas and success in Chinese society. Students of middle class families are often sent to cram school to study after formal school (Chiu, 2003). Formal school usually starts from seven in the morning and ends at five in the afternoon. Ten hours of formal schooling plus two hours at cram school will make a student study at least twelve hours per day. Aside from long study hours, one way of enhancing students' test results in school is the use of punishment and discipline management, which aims to exclude students from any possible distractions. Physical punishments, though legally banned, still exist in some schools. According to a report in the China Evening News (22, December, 2000), a parents' association revealed the existence of physical punishment in school, including cases of students committing suicide due to inappropriate punishment and humiliation by teachers. Research by Yu (1997) on pupils' views concerning their bodies and school discipline shows that in school, students' bodies are under strict gender-ideological regulations set up to meet the regulator's expectation of the 'monotonous, unified, pure nature of children' (Yu, 1997). Teachers are allowed to manage students' bodies and for all the years in school, students can never escape physical punishment. When school punishment is reported at home, parents are usually angry with the students, which leads to double punishment and the students' further silence (Yu, 1997). As Rockhill states, 'we need to know more about what it means to live in the face of male rage and violence'. In her case, when she 'lived daily in the face of threat, never knowing what act would be interpreted as transgression, [as] an attack upon MALE RIGHT or power', she did all she could 'not to set off that rage and withdrew into the safety of a kind of death' (p.169). In a classroom of punishment and strict regulation, it is unsurprising to see students adopt the strategies of withdrawal and silence in the face of authority and violence.

### **3.4.1.3. Competitive ethos and social group structures on campus**

Aronson's (2001) study on school social relationships categorises students in America into six groups, which are in decreasing order of social importance. It is argued that according to their social status, students have different levels of influence and power in the school. Students from the top groups can almost influence teachers' policy; students located near the bottom of the hierarchy are characterized as 'shy', 'not shrewd', and 'weird'; students at the very bottom are 'loners' who have no friends. Segregation strategies are enacted by the top groups with the use of 'humiliation, exclusion, and threats' against bottom groups. A psychiatrist, Wang (2001), suggests that in Taiwan social group structure in school is slightly different due to the Chinese

values regarding academic success. The top groups in Taiwanese schools are 'students with good scores, students from higher social classes, students who are active in class or in extracurricular activities'. Students in the bottom groups are characterized as shy, with poor scores and a bad relationship with their peers. They encounter humiliation, exclusion, and threats, not only from students in the top groups, but also from their teachers as well. Moreover, schools further encourage a competition culture by introducing comparison and competition systems with respect to academic results, discipline, and hygiene maintenance. The culture of competition and comparison leads to differentiation and exclusion. What follows with respect to differentiation and exclusion, Wang argues, is ubiquitous violence and hostility.

Aronson's suggested solution is that the school curriculum can be designed to increase cooperative interaction and the empathy of students from different groups. In the case of Taiwan, students are traditionally caught up in the (re)production mechanism which aims to cater for the old capitalist labour demands. Students are streamed into different further education levels and institutions according to their academic success, which largely determines their future ranking in the old capitalist working order. New capitalism demands new types of worker with new types of literacies, to work in an international competitive market. English and ICT literacies are two essential new forms of literacy as successful mastery of these two new media may determine students' future ranking in the new capitalist working order. The emphasis on English and ICT literacies in Taiwanese society, and the inclusion of English and ICT in the formal educational curriculum, may deepen the social group differentiation, which is segregated by academic success. Provision and access to language and information are closely connected to power and ideology. Students of particular genders and certain socio-economic classes are likely to have better access to information and learning resources for English and ICT. Without careful design and provision, the introduction of new forms of literacy can easily lead to reproducing gender/class imbalances and to an increased gap as regards access to power.

In section 3.4.1., the Discourse of school in Taiwan was discussed. School is also the site where gender relations are produced and reproduced. In section 3.4.2., a discussion of gender in the education system will be presented as part of the background picture to understand the problems faced by Taiwanese female students.

### **3.4.2. Gender-biased education**

### 3.4.2.1. Education access and family strategy with respect to women's education

Education distribution is closely connected to gender (in)quality and women's life chances. Research by Parish and Willis (1993) on family strategy on Taiwanese women's education explored the issues of family budgeting strategies as regards investment in education and its consequence for women's life chances. Family strategies with respect to children's education were categorized into four models: 1. Altruism, 2. Lingering Patriarchy, 3. Resource dilution, and 4. Credit constraints and conditional altruism. The four models present three main contrasting emphases: (a) conditional altruism, (b) current budget constraints, and (c) lingering patriarchy (Parish and Willis, 1993). Parish and Willis found that the model of *current credit constraints* worked best to explain Taiwanese family investment strategies. They found that credit constraints worked against altruistic parents' wishes to invest in their children's education. Early-born children in large families, especially females in poor families at earlier periods of time, who help with younger siblings of both sexes by working out or marrying away early, achieve particularly poorly. Parish and Willis' model of *conditional altruism* was also found to have good explanatory value. Their argument is as follows. In more recent periods, more affluent parents have more income, save more for old age and there are greater social benefits available from workplaces; consequently, people's sons and daughters can have a more equal education and there is less need to sacrifice one group for the other. Interestingly, Taiwanese family strategies are not found to fit the East Asian model of family strategy (lingering patriarchy). Thus, Parish and Willis suggest that 'one should avoid temptations to blame too much of the situation on parents' as 'what is more important to altruism may not be the will to treat sons and daughters equally, but the means to do so' (Parish and Willis, 1993, p.890-891).

### 3.4.2.2. Gender-stereotyped education

Although in recent years, women's participation in education has increased, the subjects and level of their education remain of a gender-stereotyped nature. Women are found to constitute only a relatively small proportion of the total population in higher post-graduate education (29% on Masters courses and 19.2% on Ph.D courses) in Taiwan (data from Taiwan women's information website, 1998). They are also found to be located in less prestigious colleges and private universities. Women's subjects, such as arts and humanities, are also more likely to be those considered consistent with the traditional image of femininity, which is associated with care-taking and is less competitive and profitable than male subjects, like science, engineering, computer science. Aside from their access to levels and the subjects in the education system, the Discourses for women within the system also need to be

discussed, in order to understand the construction of female students' social/cultural backgrounds.

### 3.4.3. Female as Others in school

In the school Discourse, women are positioned as the 'other', secondary to the all-important male students (Paechter, 1998). Paechter argues that in general, students are all oppressed and positioned as the 'other' in school, as they are powerless in the management of time and space and with respect to the form of valued knowledge in school. Girls and women in school are in an even more subordinate position, despite their recent academic success in language-related subjects. The otherness of women is a result of the human tendency to divide the world into 'me' and 'not me', and consequently of an asymmetrical power relation (Paechter, p.5). The definition of Subject depends on the opposition and exclusion of the Other. Paechter argues that traditional western dualistic thinking divides the world into a series of dichotomous pairs: mind/body, reason/emotion, public/private, with the positive attributes on the male side and negative attributes on the female side. The otherness and inferiority of women is established to the advantages of the male subjects.

The otherness and subordinate position of women in education are constructed in many ways. As formal education was originally developed for boys, the structure of power remains unbalanced, with males occupying a higher status in the hierarchy, from the lowest level of education. In higher education, women are outnumbered by men. The Discourse (organization, interpersonal relations, and content) of higher education becomes more masculine as

relations with teachers become more impersonal and there is a more pronounced emphasis on achievement and competition. The curriculum, particularly at secondary level, is dominated by reason and rationality... This dominance of masculine forms of knowledge and preferred social orientation positions girls and young women as the most constant Other of the education system (Paechter, 1998, p. 20).

Dominance of space and time in school also reflects the level of power distributed to each sex. Paechter argues that boys and men dominate both space and time in school, as girls are socialized to value 'goodness', 'being sensible', and 'selflessness' and to give up power to boys. Boys are also allowed more power and better access to school resources by having more freedom of movement in the school space such as



workshops, laboratories, and playing fields to play football. When it comes to using equipment, Paechter also argues that boys dominate 'the scarce items of equipment, even taking them away from girls who are already using them, so appropriating important academic resources'.

Teachers' attention is also more likely to be focused on taking care of boys' overt disruptive behaviours and teachers ignore other disruptive and distressing behaviours (such as name calling) on the part of girls (Paechter, 1998). Male harassment is another form of male dominance in school. It can be operated with a particular 'male gaze', comments on girls' body and appearance, or disrupting girls' confidential exchanges. In addition, girls are also more likely to be victims of bullying of the more severe form and boys the perpetrators. Avoidance is the strategy girls usually adopt when facing harassment; it leads to their dropping out of courses and leaving school. Paechter points out that sexual harassment, which is often found to be tolerated by male teachers, is another important part of the abuse male students impart in damaging girls' education. Even in graduate school, female students choose to leave or change their course in order to avoid the harassment (Paechter, 1998).

#### **3.4.4. Gender and overseas female students in British universities**

Drawing from the limited research literature on overseas students and insights from the literature on gender in general education (primary and secondary education), Wright (1997) explores the gender aspect of overseas students' experience in British higher education. Though there has been an increase in female overseas students in recent years, there is not enough research that looks into female overseas students' learning experiences and gender matters in Britain. The existing research literature on overseas students tends to ignore the question of gender, by simply focusing on 'the cost-benefit analysis of overseas student recruitment' for the benefit of the UK economy and UK institutions or 'collecting the diverse perspectives of overseas students on their educational experiences', which also usually lack gender consideration and awareness (Wright, p. 94).

Contemporary debate about gender and education, as Wright states, is a result of feminist research and enquiry on inequality in the 1970s and 1980s, which focused on the issues of class, social structure, education, and equality, and challenged the relationship between the 'myth of meritocracy' in education and the individual. As a result, it opened up 'the content and culture of education' for scrutiny (Wright, p.92). While different issues like gender, race, age, and sexuality have all been researched in

the context of primary and secondary education, it has been claimed that due to the 'reluctance of academics critically to examine their own institutions' (Thomas 1990, discussed in Wright, p.93), these issues of gender and race in higher education were only attended to later. The research literature also tended to pay more attention to issues such as gender *per se*, but only to the minority and subordinate groups themselves as a starting point. Three aspects, in particular (access, welfare, teaching and learning) are explored by Wright.

With respect to access, Wright claimed that the overall deficit of females in the overseas student population is a concern of equity. Goldsmith and Shawcross also agreed that it is important for women to 'have access to education to build their own self-awareness, confidence, and to equip them to challenge the discrimination they face and to develop their own skills' (Goldsmith and Shawcross, 1985, p.5). In general, women receive less funding and fewer scholarships than men; women from lower socio-economic classes also have less chance to enter higher education as both social, cultural, familial and economic factors (their responsibility for domestic and child care, poverty, cultural prohibition for women to travel alone, etc.) tend to restrict their chance of further education (Wright, 1997).

On the aspect of welfare, Wright suggests that culture and gender awareness is essential when considering the welfare needs of overseas female students. Accommodation and building up social networks are important to female student's wellbeing during their stay in Britain. It is important to have suitable accommodation for single or married women with children, secured in advance of arrival, as they may have different needs concerning their study, their cultural restrictions on interaction with the opposite sex, and child care. Wright also points out that female overseas students are more likely to feel isolated and excluded from the other students, as the British style of socialisation may not be acceptable for them. Furthermore, since for most women, 'the age of reproduction typically coincides with that for higher education, many women face a dilemma: children or higher education', Wright suggests that academic staff need to be sensitive to their 'multi-faceted lives' and the burden of child care (Wright, p.101).

Sexual or racial harassment is another important and un-separated aspect of female overseas students' experiences that needs to be addressed. Early work by Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985) suggested that stereotypes of racial characteristics are usually connected with stereotypes of women (e.g. Asian women tend to be considered docile and malleable), and the nature of sexual and racial harassment experienced by female

overseas students. They defined sexual harassment as ‘unwanted sexual attentions, advances or propositions. This ranges from assault and rape to sexual remarks, “jokes and innuendos”’ (Goldsmith and Shawcross, 1985, p.28). Female students are most vulnerable in public places, such as public transportation, to sexual and racial harassment. It affects both their academic and social life, as sexual and racial harassment intimidates women and makes them afraid to go out alone at night or to socialize with other students (Goldsmith and Shawcross, 1985). Goldsmith and Shawcross discussed racism together with the phenomenon of ‘English reserve’, as their early reports document overseas students’ experiences of English hostility, ignorance of other countries, polite distance, and unsympathetic treatment of their language difficulties. When there are problems such as these, there are few female members of staff students can turn to (Goldsmith and Shawcross, 1985). However, it needs to be noted that the research on racism and sexism by Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985) was conducted at least two decades ago. Further research needs to be undertaken to understand recent female overseas students’ experiences in this respect.

As regards teaching and learning, Wright argues that white, patriarchal, middle-class ideology remains unchallenged in higher education, making it difficult for those who do not share the same base of knowledge and identities, especially female overseas students (Wright, p.103). Due to their cultural socialisation, some female students may ‘show great deference to teachers’ and will not take the initiative to ask for help (Wright, p.104). Female overseas students may also experience more acute anxiety in the new environment because they tend to under-estimate their own abilities (Wright, p.105). However, not enough research on female overseas students’ teaching and learning experiences has been conducted and Wright (1997) urges more research to document female overseas students’ experiences.

What is really needed is a more integrational approach to research on gender dynamics and related factors— class, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, religion, affiliation, and nationality (Wright, 1997, p.106). It is important to take the precaution of avoiding a male-centred perspective, a perception that overseas students are necessarily a problem-group and that higher education institutions are the solution because ‘experiences of racism, cultural-shock, poverty, inappropriate provision, etc., have as much to do with British society as they do with individual overseas students’ (p.107). Wright suggests that more research should be carried out to examine the interface between the higher education institutions and students. The present research aims to explore the impact of gender and ICT on Taiwanese female students learning in a British university. It is in accordance with the research direction suggested by

earlier researchers (Wright, 1997; Street, 2001; Rockhill, 2001) which urges a more multi-faceted-approach to documenting female overseas students' learning experiences in the UK.

### **3.5. Summary**

This chapter has served to provide an overall review of the literature on the issue of gender, literacy, and schooling; it has covered literature on theoretical explanations of gender differences and theories of gender ideology and discourses in Taiwan and Britain. It contained discussion and literature on gender difference theory; Discourse, ideology, and women's situation in Taiwan; Discourse of workplaces, patriarchy, and new capitalism; gender different literacy: influence of gender on literacy and ICT; and schooling.

In this chapter I have argued that sociological ideologies, combined with social/political/economic factors, have a serious impact on women's education, acquisition of language, and use of technology. Gender ideologies negatively affect women's life chances, education, and acquisition of new technology. In Taiwan, private and public patriarchies, as well as old and new capitalism, demand women's labour yet obstruct women's development. New capitalism and public patriarchy require new forms of knowledge and produce new forms of social structures. As the communication tools and new literacies —English and ICT— have become increasingly important in the new era, it is also important to examine women's learning experiences with English and ICT in the process of education, the use they can offer and the roles they can play for women. In chapter 4, the literature on EFL (learning English as a Foreign Language) and ICT (information communication technology) will be presented.

## Chapter 4 Multiliteracies, ICT, and EFL

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter serves to provide a review of research related to ICT and EFL. The chapter is divided into three sections which cover reviews on (1) the socioeconomic context and multiliteracies, (2) the reported impact on literacies and ELT, (3) the development of EFL and ICT.

Language, the media of communication, and the means of cultural production are closely connected to power and dominance. The development and distribution of communication technology and power have undergone many historical transitions. Literacy and technology were traditionally the realms of the privileged and the powerful. Before the introduction of mass literacy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, the right to pursue knowledge and education, and further their life chances were limited to a small group of elites (Millard, 1997). With the prevalence of print literacy and technology, meaning making and the performance of certain skills of reading/writing have also become common practices. With the development of feminism and awareness of women's rights in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, literacy and higher education are more accessible for some women. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, researchers (New London Group, 2000; Gee, 1996; Gee, 2000; Warschauer, 2000; IALS, 2000) argued that the advancement of technology and global political/socioeconomic changes, have made new forms of literacy—the most prominent and influential among them being English and digital-electronic literacies—now essential requirements for individuals to perform the daily tasks of comprehension and communication in life and at work. These developments are important because they have affected every individual in the world who is involved in or wishes to participate in cultural, economic, and political life. As a result, the impact of new literacy requirements on women's life and work needs investigation and understanding.

As discussed in chapter 3, socio-cultural factors have a profound impact on women's education and development. For women from non-western countries, new forms of literacies—especially English and digital-electronic literacies—are important forms of cultural/linguistic capital that have a great impact on their life chances. With the trend of globalisation and consequently the requirement of international communication skills in many workplaces, studying in an English-speaking country to invest in cultural/linguistic capital and to further one's socio-mobility has also

become popular and common behaviour for women from certain Asian countries. As discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.5.) and chapter 3 (section 3.4.4.), while women students immerse themselves in a western environment to enhance their linguistic/cultural capital, they also face many challenges including: culture/language adaptation and conflict, social relationships with tutors/peers and family at home, gender role negotiation, difficulty with the local circumstances (weather, facilities, and resources). In addition, they also have to cope with new forms of literacies and the Discourses demanded of them to enact the roles of overseas students to complete their studies, and to participate in academic/social/cultural/economic life. Proficiency in both English language and communication tools are of vital importance to their success in their new learning community.

In response to the changing world socioeconomic order brought about by two main changes (globalisation and technological development), research in the field of education and English language teaching in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries attempted to explore the new world, its new notion of literacy, and its implications for teaching and learning English. It is important to look at different aspects of socioeconomic contexts, literacies/technology development, language learning, and the interaction between them, in order to understand the new challenges and the new demands. This chapter reviews literature concerning the major learning contexts and demands of the age. It provides a discussion on the nature and transition from old to new capitalism, the advancement of information technology, globalisation, the prevalence of English, and its consequent new demand—‘multiliteracies’. The research question for the current thesis is: what is the impact of ICT and EFL on Taiwanese female students in a British university? A review of the issues of multiliteracies will help to clarify the impact of multiliteracies (among them ICT and EFL and its related cultures/Discourse) on women and the kind of language competence and Discourses which Taiwanese women grasp in order to empower themselves and increase their life chances in times of rapid changes and severe competition.

Accordingly, this chapter is divided into three interrelated sections: (1) The socioeconomic context and multiliteracies (2) The reported impact on literacies and ELT (3) the development of ICT and EFL.

## **4.2. Socioeconomic context and multiliteracies**

The main socio-economic trend—capitalism, globalisation, and technological development in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries— has led to new demands on people in terms of their literacies and changes in school practices. Literacy demands vary according to the context and technological development at particular periods of time. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dominant economic trend, old capitalism and its hierarchal working order, required schools and workplaces to produce certain kinds of workers with a certain personality, literacy, and culture, to work on assembly lines (Gee, 1996, 2000). However, with the development of information technology and new capitalism, education researchers argued that new forms of literacies and schooling are needed to serve a new capitalism operating in the workplace. Schools also need to prepare individuals for new requirements for literacy in the new age.

#### **4.2.1. Capitalism and schooling**

Among the education researchers arguing for a new approach to literacy is Gee (1996, 2000). Gee compared the old capitalism and the new capitalism, and examined their different means of production/marketing, their related literacies and the Discourses demanded of workers, and their different schooling systems. Old capitalism, or Fordist-capitalism, emerged with the advancement of mechanisation, industry, and mass production/marketing. It involves authoritarian systems with ‘a (small) top controlling a (bigger) middle controlling a (yet larger) bottom in a top-down, linear flow of hierarchical and pyramidal power and information’ (Gee in Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, p.44). Each worker working on the Fordist assembly lines focuses on one segmented repetitive task without an understanding of the whole picture of production and mechanisation. The structure and ethos of old capitalism parallels those of old capitalist schooling, which is also characterised by a layered authoritative hierarchy and an emphasis on fragmented knowledge and with the indoctrination of certain kinds of culture (such as discipline, obedience, and being docile to authority). The students (workers) of old capitalism are described as being without real understanding and with no responsibility for problem solving (Gee, 2000, p. 47).

However, as a ‘knowledge-based society’ emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the new capitalist style of producing and marketing replaced the old capitalism of assembly lines and mass production/marketing. The nature of new capitalism lies in the knowledge ‘to design and create values, to produce it [the business] efficiently, and to market it effectively’ ‘to serve the identity, lifestyle, or interests of a particular type of “customer”, whether this be a person or another business’ (Gee, 2000, p.46). New capitalism is characterised by a flattened ‘distributed system’ with flexible workers

who are able to adapt and respond in the rapid-changing and competitive world, to be assembled and re-assembled into networked teams devoted to temporary projects. Instead of focusing on a particular task, workers are familiar with and involved in the whole process of the business (from design to sales and delivery) (Gee, 2000). According to Gee, in the new-capitalist work places, supervisors do not 'boss' and direct workers in new capitalism; instead they facilitate the networked relationship between the teams and workers, business and market (Gee, 2000). Workers are assembled and reassembled for different projects, and their knowledge shared with others within 'communities of practice' (Gee, 2000). The term 'portfolio people' is used to describe workers in new capitalist businesses who have a portfolio of 'rearrangeable skills' and knowledge acquired in their trajectory through all the projects they have worked on. This collection of skills can be a valuable asset to enhance their employability, as people can no longer depend on the security of life-long employment. The value of knowledge lies not in one individual head or one book, but in the 'networks of relationship'.

As a result, Gee commented that the seemingly humanistic and liberal educational notions of 'community of practice' (by Aronson, 1978; Brown and Campoione, 1994) and Vygotsky's 'Zone of Proximal Development' are responding to the new capitalist thinking. As the value of knowledge in the new age is often short-lived, the old-capitalist styles of schooling that encourage specialization in a narrow range of specific knowledge and skills are unlikely to work well in the new capitalist age. Knowledge in the fast-paced new capitalist age needs to work 'without having to explicate everything'. Educational notions in new-capitalist thinking suggest that students should internalize a core of the language, culture, and the Discourse of the target knowledge/competence by engaging in collaborative projects and by immersing themselves in the community made up of peers, teachers, technologies, activities that involve 'scaffolding'. Students (workers) ideally take up the core values and culture of the school (business) naturally and without being coerced to do so. However, Gee argued that without reflective awareness, new capitalist styles of schooling could lead to a form of mind control and exploitation. On the other hand, students whose schools are 'mired in the backwaters of old capitalism' are likely to remain underprivileged, as they can be stuck with the diminishing jobs of old capitalism production, the growing service sector of new capitalism business (routine-production service workers, such as, factory workers, routine information workers, payroll clerks), or face unemployment. Therefore, students need to be educated to develop multiliteracies to cope with increasing requirements in the new capitalist workplace. At the same time, they also need to be able to 'critique' the unequal nature of the



power structure in the world and in their educational and economic system. The concept of multiliteracies is thus closely connected with the notion of economic development. This will be discussed in the following sections.

#### **4.2.2. Development of literacy**

A historical understanding of the development of literacy, from where and how the notions of literacy evolve, is an essential basis to understand language learning, and the impact of computers and new technologies on literacy practice and education. Literacy, seen in the eyes of sociocultural educationists (Gee, 1996; New London Group, 2000; Street, 1993; Warschauer, 1999; Lankshear, 2000), is integral to and depends on particular societies, cultures, and contexts. Changes in technology development in human history, intersecting with social and cultural factors, have had an important impact on people's experience and conceptions of literacy (Warschauer, 1999, p.1). Notions of literacies have changed over time. It is necessary to look into the particular practices in particular contexts to understand the impact of new technologies on language learning and literacy practices. A brief summary of the literacy development in Europe and the US shows how literacy is conceived and practised differently within different contexts. This can be found in Appendix 1.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, globalisation, technological, economic, and organizational development in the new capitalist information age supply and demand a higher level of literacy skills (IALS, Adult Literacy Survey, 2000). Literacy is no longer suitable to be considered in terms of two arbitrary categories—the illiterate and literate—as it is understood nowadays that it is inappropriate to divide people into those who are educated and literate and those who are not. Instead, people have developed different levels of literacy skills and knowledge to cope with their daily tasks at a particular time and in a particular context. Literacy can be defined as 'the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community—to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential' (IALS, 2000, p. x). Literacy is divided by IALS into three domains (prose, document, and quantitative domains) and five levels along a continuum. Level 1 indicates people with very poor skills; at level 2 people have weak literacy skills and they can deal with simple tasks only; though they may develop coping strategies for everyday demands, they will have difficulties when facing new demands. People with literacy level 3 can deal with tasks at home and at work in an advanced industrialised society. At level 4 and 5, people have higher levels of information processing skills (IALS, 2000, p. xi). The findings of IALS suggest that literacy is

strongly connected with labour employment, distribution of outcome, health, and political participation of women in societies. However, as the findings suggest, even in the most economically advanced countries, the majority of the population fail to attain level 3—the minimum level for coping with modern life and work. Though people with a low level of literacy develop coping strategies, it is suggested that it will be more difficult for them as technology and information-based societies advance and the higher levels of literacy become essential. Furthermore, with the increase in global interaction in the economy, politics, and education, English is also included by many societies in their education curricula as an important tool needed to help people reach the higher levels of literacy and to perform communication tasks (Crystal, 1997). The issue of English language literacy is important in this thesis and will be discussed in section 4.3.

#### **4.2.3. Literacy, technology, and learning**

As literacies and literacy demands are changing, educators need to understand ‘the forces of change influencing literacy education if [they] are to respond effectively’ (Lankshear and Snyder, 2000, p.24). To understand issues of language learning in the present thesis, it is essential to understand the concepts of literacy, technology, learning, and their interrelation. The concepts of literacy, technology, and learning are understood differently by different people. They are also highly contested, ‘intensely value-laden’ and ‘never self-contained...[as] they are defined in relation to each other, as well as to other concepts’ (Lankshear, 2000, p.24).

It is sometimes argued that ‘literacy and technology are always integrally related’ (Lankshear, 2000, p.25). Literacy always involves some forms of technology available at a particular time and place, be it ‘marks on natural surfaces, the alphabet and other symbol systems, stylus and pencil, the printing press and [...] or “digital-electronic apparatus”’ (ibid, p.25). Literacy technologies are often taken for granted and treated as natural and inevitable, as people cannot imagine ‘doing literacy’ with other technologies different from what they possess at their time. Literacy is also continually-evolving, changing, and extending its boundaries as technology advances, as shown in a model of literacy transformations presented by Bruce (1998) in Lankshear and Snyder (2000, p. 26) below.

Literacy transformation

- primitive symbol systems
  - Complex oral language
    - Early writing
      - Manuscript literacy
        - Print literacy
          - Video literacy
            - Digital/multimedia/hypertext literacy
              - Virtual reality

From Lankshear and Snyder (2000, p. 26)

As we are currently in an age of a 'broadly-based shift from print to digital-electronics', both educators and learners need to learn to 'transform' to the new ways of human practices and new culture by attending to the issues of changing literacy, schooling, and equal access (Lankshear and Snyder, p.27). The sociocultural approach to literacy developed in the 1960s and 1970s disagrees with the traditional influence of psychology in education that views literacy 'as a largely psychological ability', where being literate is to achieve some kind of 'cognitive faculty' or 'inner capacity', and to insert necessary skills into people's heads so they can use these to pursue education, employment, and economic growth. The sociocultural approach to literacy is best captured by Street (1993, 2001) with his distinction between the 'autonomous' and 'ideological' model of literacy and Gee's (1996, 2000) concept of Discourse, as discussed in chapter 1.

Seen in the light of the sociocultural approach to literacy, digital-electronic literacy can be understood as forms of activities involving 'reading and writing' with new information communication technology, integral 'within the context of the social, cultural, political, economic, and historical practices' (Lankshear and Snyder, p.28). Seeing technology practice as a form of social practice, as Lankshear and Snyder pointed out, is more helpful to understand fully 'the inherently technological and changing nature of literacies' and the social and cultural dimensions of technology (Lankshear and Snyder, p.32).

Additionally, a Resource-Context model is useful to understand the impact of new technologies on learning. In this model, new technologies are seen as 'resources'

which cause two levels of effects on learners: learning process and context (Lankshear and Snyder, p.36). 'First level' effects refer to the anticipated benefits with the use of new technologies, such as increase in motivation and learning results. 'Second level' effects refer to the usually unanticipated and unpredictable changes brought by the technologies to the 'Context'—social circumstances including the environments (the classroom) and practices (teaching, administration, learning). The dynamic and reciprocal relationship of the Resource (technologies) and Context make up a feedback loop: using new technologies causes changes to the Context, which then acts on the subsequent use of technology, and then finally affects the Context (Lankshear and Snyder, p.36). Since technologies (the Resource) often have unpredictable and unanticipated impacts on the Context (both the practice and circumstance), it is accordingly important to consider the potential advantages, disadvantages, risks, as well as the possibilities of changing the concept, values, emphasis and practice of literacy education when using new information communication technologies in literacy learning (Lankshear and Snyder, p.37).

The sociocultural perspective of literacy can be used to understand language learning issues in Taiwan. A history of literacy changes in relation to the political, economic, sociocultural, and colonising power struggles in Taiwan was presented in Chapter 2 (sections 2.3, 2.4). Two major powers, modernisation and nationalism, are the main forces driving and contradicting each other in the governmental language education policies and the people's acquisition of certain literacies. On the one hand, needs for modernisation and integration into the link of global economic and intellectual interaction urged an education to develop people's English communication competence and wider access to other languages. On the other hand, needs for national identification and strong national/racial bonds emphasised an educational policy fostering the national language at the expense of other languages including the native languages of the aboriginal groups and the politically oppressed groups, and languages for wider communication. Education and communication media were rendered propaganda tools that serve the political power and old Capitalism-style economic development. With the changes of political power and rise of voices of the formerly oppressed groups, an education policy regarding language and use of communication media needs to strike carefully the balance between language education for wider communication, language education for national identification, and the renovation of the diverse native languages in the digital-electronic era. It also needs to address issues of developing competition and equality for the learners within the micro context of the classroom and the macro context of the global world. Section 4.3. covers literature addressing the impact of the changing socioeconomic

context on English and English language education, and its implications for Taiwanese English learners.

### **4.3. The reported impact on ELT**

The impact of socioeconomic changes and technological development on literacy, practices of literacy education, and schooling have been addressed by literacy researchers such as the New London Group (2000), Gee (1996), Gee, (2000), Street (2001), and Lankshear and Snyder (2000). A brief summary was presented in section 4.2. Socioeconomic changes and technological development also carry great implications for the field of learning English as a second/foreign language. The impact of socioeconomic changes and technological development on economic and employment trends, the employment-related requirements on English and digital literacy, the status of the English language, the changing nature and use of English(es), and roles of non-native English speakers will be discussed in this section.

The issue of *informationalism* (Castells, 1996) and its impact on English (addressed by Crystal, 1997; Warschauer, 2000) and the spread of English as the international language (addressed by Kachru and Nelson, 1996; Graddol, 1997; Crystal, 1999; Pennycook, 1995) will be presented in this section. It is suggested that the dominating economic trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, globalization, with economic and employment trends, will result in the further spread of English as an international language and will change the authority of non-native English speakers, the nature and status of English, and the ways English is used (Warschauer, 2000; Crystal, 1997). Furthermore, as they continue, new information technologies will transform notions of literacy, the practices of English language, and new working requirements, 'making online navigation and research, interpretation and authoring of hypermedia, and synchronous and asynchronous on-line communication critical skills for learners of English' (Warschauer, 2000, p.511) (this will be discussed further in 4.4.). The literature on globalisation and technological development and their impact on English will be presented below. Section 4.3.1. will discuss the driving force of *informationalism*; section 4.3.2. will discuss its implication for employment trends and new requirements at work; section 4.3.3. will discuss its implications for the status of English as the international language; section 4.3.4. will discuss its impact on the status of non-native speakers.

#### **4.3.1 Informationalism**

*Informationalism*, coined by Castells (1996), is the new term used to describe the trends of the rapid changing socioeconomic, technological developments, and the new stage of global capitalism which emerged with the development of computer technology and telecommunications in the 1970s. The rise of the network society from the past industrial societies to a post-industrialised economic order is based on a globally interdependent manufacturing and locally distributing economic and power system, with the application of science, information, and technology to manage productivity and economic growth (Castells, 1996, Warschauer, 2000). The rising network society

is characterised by the globalization of strategically decisive economic activities. By the networking form of organisation. By the flexibility and instability of work, and the individualisation of labour. By a culture of real virtuality constructed by a pervasive, interconnected and diversified media system. And by the transformation of materials foundation of life, and space and time... (Castells, 1997, p.1)

The impact of informationalism on people's world and lives is being shaped by the contradiction between globalisation and identity. People's lives are affected by powerful global networks via 'financial markets, transnational corporations, and the Internet' (Warschauer, 2000, p.512). Yet at the same time they face struggles for local identity ('the traditional seats of authority and meaning'—family, patriarchy, and nation) (Castells, 1997; Warschauer, 2000, p.512). The impact of the powerful global networks is that they have made the '*lingua franca*' or the 'international language' necessary for economic, cultural, scientific exchanges. *Informationalism*, which leads to new economic and employment trends, also made new requirements for people at work. This will be discussed in section 4.3.2.

#### **4.3.2. Economic and employment trends**

Castells (1996) reports that the impact of technology development on work and employment is that as the advanced industrialized societies shifted their economic activity from goods production to service and information industries, there has been a growth in jobs requiring information-processing and analytic skills. In countries where manufacturing industry is growing, their production, marketing and distribution services are also increasingly mediated through the application of technology and information management (Castell, 1996; Warschauer, 2000)

Reich (1991) categorised employees in the developed countries into three categories:

1. Routine-production service workers (factory workers, routine information workers, data processors, payroll clerks)
2. In-person service workers (hospital attendants, taxi drivers)
3. Symbolic analysts (software engineers, management consultants, strategic planners, lawyers, real estate developers, and research scientists) (quoted in Warschauer, 2000, p.517-518)

It is pointed out that symbolic analysts have an important role in helping their societies compete in the international economy in the age of *informationalism*. Therefore, the education of symbolic analysts and development of higher levels of skills have become essential in many countries (Castells, 1996; Warschauer, 2000, p. 518). The new skills required of them include 'critical analysis, evaluation, experimentation, collaboration, communication, abstraction, system thinking, and persuasion' (Warschauer, 2000, p.518). They are also required to use English to communicate and collaborate at a highly sophisticated level with people around the world. New tasks for symbolic analysts will be 'to write persuasively, critically interpret and analyze information, and carry out complex negotiations and collaboration in English' (p.518). However, these skills in English may not normally be developed in most English classes and it is suggested that teachers will have to find new project-based approaches to give students the opportunity to learn and practise these skills in English (Warschauer, 2000).

At the same time, as a result of tourism, international business, and the use of telecommunications, a larger number of employees in the in-person service and routine production sectors also need to develop English literacy. However, the English skills required for them are much more restricted than those for symbolic analysts as they are restricted to particular courses dedicated for their particular work (hotel workers, secretaries, factory workers) by English for occupational purpose (EOP) (ibid, p.519). It is suggested that English educators need to be aware of this inequality and promote curricula that help all the learners to develop the ability to think critically about their status and environment, and to express their views and identity (ibid, p.520).

#### **4.3.3. English status and change: World Englishes and English as an international language**

The issue of standard English and variation (and consequently the issue of intelligibility and identity) resulting from its global spread and the impact of technology development on English has long been a matter of concern for language researchers. As languages have spread, varied and adapted with time and space, a variety of 'Englishes' has developed and been used. The status of world Englishes, their speakers, and the power relationship among them have become the focus of discussion.

The result of historical colonialism, globalization, and *informationalism* is the development of English into the role of the international language used and known by more and more people in more and more venues. Crystal (1997, 1999) estimated one-third of the world population knows and uses English. There is also an overwhelming dominance of English use in the world market of international organizations, the film market and published articles in the academic fields. The increase of English users as non-native speakers in the outer-circle countries also means that there are at least three non-native speakers of English over against one old-country native speaker. As numerous learners and workers are required to perform higher levels of English skills at work, Crystal pointed out that there is a greater need for English to be taught as the first foreign language in many non-Anglophone countries. The unprecedented growth of English users has also resulted in a growth in the regional varieties of English(es) (Crystal, 1999).

However, the growth of English users has also led to diversification and the issue of equality. Kachru and Nelson (1996) drew attention to the issue of the global spread of English, the development of a variety of world Englishes, worries about language unintelligibility due to the variations, and the unequal relationships among them. They pointed out that users of American and British English are likely to be intolerant of the usage of those from the outer and expanding circles. Despite the fact that users of English in the outer and expanding circles (Singapore, Malaysia, etc.) use English mainly to communicate with other non-native users, they are more likely to be expected to look up to the usage of those from Britain and North America without consideration of the usefulness and appropriateness of British and American Englishes in their own contexts. Kachru and Nelson (1996) pointed out that 'these countries have always looked to external reference points [...] for their norms' due to the legacy of colonialism (Kachru and Nelson, 1996). In addition, the codification process of the English language (setting up the authority over the acceptable form and use of language via dictionaries, grammars, rhetoric books, and through socio-psychological pressure by referencing to immediate predecessors in popular media



and newspaper) exclusively in the inner circle countries 'has made it necessary for the outer and expanding circles to look to these sources when in need of citable authority, and it has functioned as a deterrent to their setting up authorities of their own' (Kachru and Nelson, 1996). However, Kachru and Nelson also pointed out that the development of a variety of Englishes should not be considered strange; it is the inevitable process of language variation as most of English teaching and learning is conducted by teachers and learners who may never have contact with the inner circle speakers. A functional view of language (by Halliday, discussed by Kachru and Nelson, 1996) explained the inevitability of language development and variation. It suggested that language texts involve interpersonal, ideational, and textual functions. Interpersonal functions involve 'social relationship and individual identity'. Ideational functions involve 'the meaning potential'. Textual functions involve 'the ability to construct recognizable and situationally appropriate discourse' (Kachru and Nelson, 1996). As one language enters one socio-cultural context, it naturally adapts to reflect the appropriateness of the three functions in those socio-cultural contexts.

As regards the status of English varieties, a three-level model of communication: (intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability) may even reverse the status ranking of inner, outer, and expanding circle users (proposed by Smith and discussed in Kachru and Nelson, 1996). Intelligibility refers to the word-level recognition; it requires consideration of the producers and the receiver, as well as the context of the text. Comprehensibility refers to the meaningful understanding of a text. Interpretability refers to 'the apprehension of intent, purpose or meaning behind an utterance' (Kachru and Nelson, 1996). Interpretability is the most important part of all to achieve effective communication, yet it is also most ignored in the language learning process. However, contrary to the assumption that native speakers' English is the best, most usable, and therefore the standard everywhere, Kachru and Nelson (1996) pointed out that the native speakers (from inner circle countries) are among the least intelligible, and possibly the least 'at the levels of comprehensibility and interpretability'. The three-level model of communication is useful in the present research to understand the English learning process of the Taiwanese participants. This will be further discussed in chapter 6.

Furthermore, aside from their function to serve human needs of intelligibility, English(es) also serve the needs of identity (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997). As languages serve as a source of identity, users of the outer and expanding circles may not wish to speak like those in the inner circle (Crystal, 1997; Kachru and Nelson, 1996). Since people inevitably need to learn and use English for international

communication, they also need to emphasize their own local variety of English to project their own identities and values. Warschauer and Crystal pointed out that rejection of Anglo-American English or British English happens both in the post-colonial outer circle countries (Malaysia, Singapore, and India, as a manifestation of post-colonial resistance) and the expanding circle countries where English has been used as a foreign language since American or British English can be inadequate in the local context (Warschauer, 2000b; Crystal, 1997). Furthermore, the varieties of Englishes may even influence the usage of English native speakers. For example, the emergence of 'Euro-English' has also made British speakers unconsciously accommodate to a usage of English featured with an emphasis on a 'syllable-timed rhythm', 'simplified sentence constructions, and the avoidance of idioms and colloquial vocabulary, a slower rate of speech, and the use of clearer patterns of articulation' (Crystal, 1999).

Aside from intelligibility and identity issues of English language, development in technology also helps to shape the usage of English. Two means of technology (print and broadcasting) have helped to maintain the standard and fixity of English in the past (Graddol, 1997). However, as electronic communication and satellite broadcasting advance with localization and fragmentation, Graddol pointed out that the central gatekeeping functions of editors and publishers and central networks of television, which used to establish and maintain the standard of the language, have been lost. What is left to maintain the international standard of English, according to Graddol, is the global English learning industry, with its teaching of vocabulary and grammar, though the older standard varieties of English also face competition as non-inner circle countries may also develop their own model of English, teaching curricula, materials and resources (Graddol, 1997).

The solution for both the needs of local identity and international intelligibility, Crystal (1997) suggested, is the emergence and use of WSPE (World Standard Print English) and WSSE (World Standard Spoken English). According to Crystal, local varieties of Englishes should be used in the family and local communicates (as people already do with different registers of languages at home and at work), while WSPE and WSSE could be used for wider intelligence and communication (Crystal, 1997, 1999).

On the other hand, the spread of English and its role as *lingua franca* has also caused concern and dispute on global language ecology and linguistic diversity. Phillipson (1998) and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) viewed global English as a medium for

linguistic imperialism and even 'genocide' as it has threatened the existence of other languages; while Crystal (1999) held a (comparatively) less politically contentious view and pointed out the importance of language ecology and making diversity the central principle of English learning and teaching policy as 'identity and intelligibility are both needed for a healthy linguistic life' (Crystal, 1999). It is also important to recognize that standards and accommodation of languages change with the ever-changing power centres. Therefore English native speakers may need to accommodate their usage to the changing power centre and its appropriate form of usage one day. After all, English has been coping with diversity and change all the time and has gained advantage from its flexibility to take in enormous foreign language input and accommodation (Crystal, 1999). In contrast to Crystal, Pennycook (1995) problematised the spread of English by pointing out that it should not be considered as 'natural, neutral and beneficial' and the issue of 'cultural and political implications of the spread of English' is lacking and needs to be addressed in the EFL field (Pennycook, 1995). Pennycook and Phillipson argued that English has been promoted purposely by the English-speaking countries to protect and promote 'their economic and political interest' and that within and between countries, it is used as the gatekeeper in distributing both material wealth and non-material prestige and in reproducing global inequality in wealth, resources, and knowledge (Pennycook, 1995; Phillipson, 1998).

Overall, though researchers disagree upon the impact of the spread of English and the role of English as the international language, diversity and language ecology have been the main concern for the field in English learning and teaching. They have addressed the importance of human intervention to healthy language ecology and promotion of a critical understanding and awareness of language, discourse, power, the implications of the spread of English and support to non-native speaking teachers (Warschauer, 2000, Pennycook, 1995). English education plays an important role in distributing wealth and resources, producing and reproducing inequality. This perspective of power and language will help to understand the impact of English in the Taiwanese and the British context in the present research.

#### **4.3.4. The implications for English learning and teaching**

The results of the spread of English, increase in non-native speakers and *informationalism* are the dominance of the communicative approach and the legitimating (validation) of a variety of regional 'Englishes' (Warschauer, 2000). The communicative approach arose in 1970s, most prominently in Europe as people

there need a *lingua franca* for their exchanges in international tourism, business, politics, and science (Warschauer, 2000, p.513). In other parts of the world, as the number of non-native speakers of English outnumbers that of native speakers, the emphasis of English learning also shifts to functional interaction with non-native speakers from other countries, rather than on achievement of native-like perfection (Warschauer, 2000). The rise of the communicative approach corresponds to the needs of using English as the *lingua franca* among non-native speakers. The status of global English has not only made workers in government, business, industry 'increasingly expected to develop proficiency in English'; it has also led governments around the world to change their educational policies and introduce 'English as a compulsory subject at younger and younger ages' with the assumption that language acquisition is most effective at a younger age (Nunan, 2003, p.591). However, these changes may lack consideration of the implications of changes in policies and practices on teachers and students, and the costs and benefits to these countries (Nunan, 2003).

In Taiwan, formal English education lags behind the societal changes and needs for a variety of reasons, such as nationalism, the promotion of mandarin Chinese, and the exam-oriented education system (as discussed in section 2.4.). English education in Taiwan is characterised by the prevailing use of grammar-translation methods and Chinese as the instruction medium. Private English institutions with native speakers, native language input, and communicative approaches, have emerged to cater for the communication and pragmatic language needs of those who are well-off and can afford the classes. In recent years, the emergence of English as the global language has made the Taiwanese government associate the importance of English education with promoting Taiwan as 'a major economic global player' (Nunan, 2003). The Taiwanese government has invested greatly in English education and lowered the year English was introduced to Grade 1 (age 6-7), with 1-2 hours per week in 2002. This is expected to produce students with a higher level of proficiency in English (especially in communication use) in the future (Nunan, 2003). However, English teacher training programmes were reported to be very limited; teachers who finished the training may still lack English proficiency to provide rich language input and pedagogical skills to teach young learners, and the ability to reach high learning targets set by the education ministry (Nunan, 2002, p.603). In 2004, a plan of introducing native speaker teachers into formal school was also made. However, the issue of early age English learning, access, and consequently, the quality of native speaker teachers and their teaching methods, in both private and public institutions, have also caused great concern (Lio, 2004a; Lio, 2004b; Lin, 2004; China Times,

Feb, 2004). In response to many countries' recent enthusiasm for English education and obsession with native-speaker teachers, Nunan argued that although the idea that teachers should have native or native-like English proficiency may be controversial and unnecessary, it is desirable to create effective English classes with rich language input and chances to participate in authentic communicative interaction, with help from local teachers with high levels of proficiency in English, appropriate technology and input-based programmes. As English education was often invested in at the expense of other aspects of the curriculum without reaching its desired goals, governments are recommended to review their English education policies and to make sure that

teachers are adequately trained in language teaching methodology appropriate to a range of learner ages and stages, that teachers' own language skills are significantly enhanced, that classroom realities meet curricular rhetoric, that students have sufficient exposure to English in instructional contexts (Nunan, 2003, p.610).

It is also suggested that issues of cost-effective means of English learning (CALL, distance learning, etc.), of English and the global economy and changing workplace, of access to English, power and economic advancement, and of the impact on other languages, are important and need to be further studied (Nunan, 2003).

On the other hand, considering the growing prominence of local varieties of Englishes, Warschauer (2000b) suggested English teachers need to take into account the diverse cultures of English speakers in the world and vary their approach according to the particular students and their purposes in learning English. He suggests that English educators also need to foster respect for bidialectalism and multidialectalism for effective communication in international settings as standard and 'correct' English used in Britain or North America may not be appropriate or communication-effective in certain contexts. For learners to learn and use English for their own benefit, they also need to view English as an additional communication language of their own, rather than blindly resist it as a language controlled by the 'Other'. English education also needs to provide learning opportunities based on learners' needs, cultural backgrounds and values, instead of depending on syllabi and materials developed by Britain and North America (Warschauer, 2000b, p.515).

The present research aims to explore the interrelationship of English learning, gender, and ICT. It is essential to understand the waves and ebbs in the field of English

language education and the issue of ideology, discourse, and power currently discussed by other important researchers. The literature review helps to clarify the issues of power, the spread of English and varieties of English(es). It will be helpful to understand the consequent impact of English (its ideology, development, and new requirements) on learning, life chances and the equality of the Taiwanese female students in the Taiwanese and the British contexts.

#### **4.4. Development of ICT and EFL**

In the last decade or so of the 20<sup>th</sup> and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the development of information technology has altered the nature of communicative competence. Everyday communication and language use is closely connected to information technology and people increasingly have to communicate with other people through the use of computers and information technology (Chapelle, 2001). New technologies and new demands of communicative competence have implications for English learners and users as their communicative competence in English will include electronic literacies—they will have to communicate via electronic information technology. Situated in an age of rapid computer technology advancement, many educators and learners in English learning have embraced the new technology and developed creative ways of using ICT in English teaching and learning. However, many teachers and learners remain sceptical, resistant to, or ignorant of the use and value of computers and the related technology. A 1995 survey suggested that 59% of foreign language programs and 65% of ESL programs used no form of computer technology in their courses (Cotton, 1995, in Warschauer, 2000b, p.2). The diversity of attitudes and use of ICT in English learning and teaching and its impact on learning and learners in both formal education and informal learning are the main interest of the present research. As research on ICT-assisted language learning is a relatively new field, the knowledge about the use and impact of ICT on language learning and the educational pedagogies deriving from it are not completely established yet, though there has been increasingly expanding research in this area in recent years.

Most of the research looking at the use of ICT in English learning for academic purpose in higher education has been conducted in the US. Warschauer (2000), studied EFL learners' use of ICT in universities and colleges in the US; Shu (2000), looked at the impact of the World Wide Web in English writing; Chen (2001), looked at the use of e-mail to make requests to professors; Bloch (2002), looked at teacher-student email interaction. There has been relatively little research carried out to look at the impact of ICT on overseas/Taiwanese students' in the higher education system

in Taiwan and Britain. The use of ICT on English learning in Taiwanese and British higher education have not been sufficiently investigated in spite of the increasing use of computers, the Internet, and e-mail in the academy for communication and research.

This section covers (1) developments in CALL (2) reported impacts of ICT on English teaching and learning in the classroom (3) new demands of digital literacy and the implications for self-directed English learning for academic purpose. A brief summary of the reported developments and impact of ICT on English learning for academic purpose will be presented below in 4.4.1.

#### **4.4.1. Development of CALL (computer-assisted language learning)**

The developments in English learning and teaching, as Warschauer pointed out, 'have paralleled the technology development from the mainframe to the personal to the networked computer' (Warschauer, 2000a, p.7). The development of computer-assisted language learning is also categorised into three stages—structural approaches, cognitive approaches, and sociocognitive approaches.

##### **4.4.1.1. Structural approaches**

The earliest computer-assisted-language-learning programs with grammar and vocabulary tutorials, drills, and practice, were developed in the 1960s and 1970s. The mainframe-computer programs, based on the behaviourist education approach and a belief in the importance and beneficence of 'repeated drill' in learning, were designed to provide immediate positive or negative feedback to learners on their responses (Warschauer, 2000, p.8). These programs were considered expensive and not technologically sophisticated. The CALL of this era was also considered as only a supplement to classroom instruction (Chapelle, 2001)

##### **4.4.1.2. Cognitive approaches**

With the emergence of affordable microcomputers, CALL became an international EFL/ESL professional concern in the 1980s (Chapelle, 2001). Krashen's (1981) popularity and language acquisition theory have affected the direction of CALL as researchers and language educators tried to promote CALL with its language 'acquisition' potential and claimed that computer use need not be limited to 'learning' activities (Chapelle, 2001). In the cognitive model of CALL programs, cognitive programs provided a responsive 'microworld' that learners can manipulate (Chapelle,

2001, p.13). It also allowed learners to ‘utilize their existing knowledge to develop new understanding’ (Warschauer, 2000, p.9). Some sophisticated programs, such as multimedia responsive videodisc programs with video, sound, graphics, and text, are also attractive to CALL learners and educators. However, though cognitive approach CALL programs were much more advanced than the tutorial and drill programs of the structural approach, they were still used in disconnected and restricted human-computer interactive ways. Artificial intelligence and interactive computer programs are not advanced enough to respond and evaluate according to the language input produced by users. The disadvantage of the microcomputer lies in the nature of its closed-system action which may ‘compromise the collaborative nature of classroom learning’ and the lack of genuine social communication and interaction (Warschauer, 2000).

#### **4.4.1.3. Sociocognitive approaches**

In this era, aside from the previous emphasis on cognitive aspects of learning, the importance of the social interactional environment is also recognized as an important factor in language learning (Chapelle, 2001). In the 1990s, the widespread use of networked computers expanded the potential of CALL. The new functions of computers included access to and organizing knowledge through databases and word processors as well as mediating human communication. These functions of the computer were recognized and integrated in language learning as a result of both a theoretical emphasis on meaningful interaction in authentic discourse communities and technological developments in computer networking (Warschauer, 2000). With the sociocognitive approach and networked computers, the dynamic of CALL shifted from ‘learners’ interaction *with* computers to interaction with other humans *via* computer’ (Warschauer, 2000, p11). Networked computers and the Internet, with their communication capability and the universal access to language learning materials and information, offer language learners and educators new possibilities. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) and globally linked hypertext/hypermedia (World Wide Web), the two important technological and social developments, serve as the medium of global and local communication and source of authentic materials. Their features and implications for language learning will be discussed below.

##### **4.4.1.3.1. Computer Mediated Communication**

As CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) technology and research develops, it is important to distinguish the multiple forms and shapes of CMC sub-technologies



and recognise their individual characteristics, functions, interface features, *affordances*, constraints, and the subsequent impact on learners, their behaviours, and 'information ecologies' (Smith et al., 2003). Smith et al. (2003) suggested that CMC programs can be distinguished by four fundamental qualities—temporality (synchronous vs. asynchronous), degree of anonymity, modality, and spatiality. Networked computers allow learners to communicate with other people in asynchronous or synchronous modes. Asynchronous communication (such as the use of email) with delay in the time the message is sent, received, and responded to, allows learners to compose a message at any time and have extra time to elaborate their writing (Chapelle, 2001). Synchronous communication takes place in real time and newer forms of synchronous CMC programs (such as chat-rooms and Yahoo messenger) allow synchronous multi-person communication and simultaneous textual, voice or visual image transition, which can be shared by teachers, students, classes, and many other people. The nature of asynchronous and synchronous modes of communication affect both the sender's and recipient's time and effort spent on composing/responding and contemplating/elaborating the message received and to send (Smith et al., 2003). The degree of anonymity of different CMC technologies also has a significant impact on users' attitudes and behaviour. Email offers less anonymity, compared to other CMC modes such as chat rooms. Different CMC technologies also support different modalities of text, sound, audio, video, or graphics and activate different sensory experiences. Some technologies also allow expressions of spatiality, which indicate the nature of the participants, the activity engaged in, and the quality and quantity of their interaction (Smith et al., 2003).

Most importantly, text-based CMC interaction led the Internet to be considered as 'the fourth revolution' in human communication and cognition after 'language, writing, and print' (Harnad, 1991, p.39 in Warschauer, 1999, p.6). Warschauer pointed out that, via CMC, fast-paced human interaction now takes place in a text-based form, which can be easily 'transmitted, stored, archived, reevaluated, edited, and rewritten' (Warschauer, 1999, p.6). Computer-mediated communication overcomes the historical divide of speech (medium for interactive communication) and writing (vehicles for interpretation and reflection), and merges the interactional and reflective aspects of language in a single medium (Warschauer, 1999, p.5-6).

#### **4.4.1.3.2. Hypertext/hypermedia (World Wide Web)**

The power of new computer development also lies in the globally linked hypertext/hypermedia (WWW). This serves as a revolutionary medium for

organizing, linking, and accessing information. Its important features are: '(1) informational representation through multilinear strands linked electronically, (2) integration of graphic, audio, and audiovisual information together with texts, (3) rapid global access, (4) ease and low cost of international publication' (Warschauer, 2000, p.12).

The links-connected, rather than the linear, nature of information storage and presentation in Hypertext 'create a very different meaning of author, reader, narrative and text' and allows readers to take a much more active role in deciding the reading order (Warschauer, 1996, p.7). With unprecedented amounts of information and unlimited resources offered on the WWW, language learners can access authentic and cross-cultural materials (Warschauer, 2000, Chapelle, 2001). Learners can also publish on the Web and create authentic, creative, multi-user and multimedia communication with the integration of text, image, sound, and motion video, which transforms the 'reading and writing process into multimedia interpretation and authoring' (Warschauer, 1996, p.8).

In a word, the computer plays multiple roles in language teaching and learning: it provides drills and practice, serves as a microworld for learners to explore and construct knowledge. With networked computers, learners can access local and global communication and authentic materials and interact with other learners.

#### **4.4.2. Reported impact of ICT on English teaching and learning in the classroom**

The Resource-Context model of technology and learning by Lankshare (as discussed in section 4.2.3.) showed that technology not only brings anticipated benefits, but also unanticipated and unpredictable changes to the learning context, process, and learners. It is important to consider the potential advantages, disadvantages, as well as the possibilities of changing the concept, values, emphasis and practice of language education with the use of new information communication technologies (Lankshear, 2000, p.37).

There has been a great amount of research on the use of ICT in the classroom (Huang, 1999; Warschauer, 2000; Shu, 2001, etc.). Research looking into the impact of networked computers on English learning in the classroom has examined the classroom discourse and interaction by using the ethnographic method and provided suggestions for classroom teachers to conduct their language class with ICT. Successful computer assisted classroom English learning is possible under certain

conditions. The use of computers in English learning classrooms has advantages, disadvantages, new possibilities and limitations according to the technologies involved and the circumstances of the classroom practice. These will be discussed in 4.4.2.1. and 4.4.2.2.

#### **4.4.2.1. Advantages of ICT in the classroom**

The reported advantages of using computers in connection with classroom writing are associated with breaking space limits, cross-cultural understanding, integration to community discourse, changes in patterns of classroom interaction and power structure, empowerment, shifts in teacher/student roles (collaborative and more student centred classroom dynamics), improvement in language acquisition, writing, and increased motivation.

Firstly, CMC allows computer-assisted English activities to be no longer limited to interaction in the classroom. Students can choose by themselves or under instruction by the teacher to interact with other people in other parts of the world for language learning (Chapelle, 2001).

Secondly, cross-cultural communication via CMC also enhances learners' understanding and attitudes toward the target culture (Chapelle, 2001). A study looking into the cross-culture email writing between Taiwanese and American students found that curiosity toward other cultures motivates continuous email writing (Liaw and Johnson, 2001). Email exchanges were found to promote sensitivity to cultural differences/subtleties and help cross-cultural understanding in various ways, such as personal, social spheres, the political system, the environmental sphere, religion, the arts, and the humanities (Liaw and Johnson, 2001). Email also serves as an easy and less threatening medium for culture learning, which can be seamlessly joined with language learning (Liaw and Johnson, 2001).

Thirdly, the communication functions of networked computers provide 'alternative contexts for social interaction' and can be used to 'facilitate access to existing discourse communities and the creation of new ones' (Warschauer, 2000, p.13). The anonymity of CMC is found to lead to distance between users, more self-disclosure, worry-free attitudes, and it imposes less pressure from other people's physical presence, which can be used to facilitate interaction (Smith et al., 2003). In addition, students learning English with ICT find learning electronic literacy valuable (Liaw, 1998). It also gives them learning chances to develop skills to compete in a world

'dominated by English and new technologies' (Warschauer, 2000, p.47). It also provides them with opportunities to develop familiarity with academic electronic literacy and discourse with access to on-line publishing and published materials, email lists, and online communication with other users (Warschauer, 2000). Since the Internet is a medium for the exploration and expression of cultural and social identity, students can use it to develop their 'real' selves and make 'life decisions based on their evolving identities'. It has been suggested that the CALL classroom should provide them with a chance to explore and express their evolving identity (Warschauer, 2000, p.57).

Fourthly, computers are associated with the potential to empower students in well-designed language learning environments and stimulate 'incidental learning' as Shu (2001) reported in her research on the attitudes and perceptions EFL learners have toward using the World Wide Web in their construction of discourse synthesis in a US university. Used in classroom interaction, synchronous written communication is reported to develop multilinear, autonomous, equitable, cooperative and associative interaction patterns (Smith et al., 2003). With certain text-modality CMC programmes, students are found to be able to focus on the task and provide repetitive revision suggestions to their peers, rather than being engaged in personal conversations and providing only short expressions of agreement (such as, yeah) or repetition as in the traditional oral classroom (Sullivan and Pratt, 1996, p.499). Synchronous CMC discussions are also found to promote equal classroom discussion turn taking, especially for non-native speakers or students from a culture which encourages listening but not speaking as non-verbal textual communication gives them the extra time to elaborate and check their input before publishing publicly and it provides comprehensible feedback in words (Warschauer, 2000). The opportunity of communicating and establishing friendship with an (unknown) partner in a foreign language gives email writing an exotic element and motivates students to engage in continuous email exchanges (Liaw, 1998). The friendship or collegiality connected with email exchange helps to build a sense of membership of a community.

Fifthly, in terms of changes in teacher/students roles and power structure, Sullivan and Pratt (1996) found that in the computer-assisted ESL/EFL classroom, the teacher is less dominant and authoritative in computer-assisted classroom discussion and students are able to construct interaction with autonomy and 100 percent rate of participation, compared to only 50 percent of student participation in traditional oral class discussion, which is dominated (unwillingly) by the teacher with more than 60 percent of time taken up by the teacher talking and asking questions answered by

herself. There is also a shift in the teacher's role from wisdom and knowledge imparter to facilitator, as suggested by Low and Beverton's critical in-depth review of the impact of literacy (Low and Beverton, 2003, 2004). Liaw (1998) reported that in the Taiwanese university context, students took responsibility for their own learning and communicating with their peers, while teachers serve to trigger and support (mostly technical) students' learning. As most Taiwanese students were not permitted to have relationships with people from the opposite sex before they entered university, they enjoy building friendships with students of the opposite sex after entering university. It was found that different combinations of gender email partnership can also motivate students to write continuously (Liaw, 1998).

Sixthly, some CMC programmes, such as CMC written interaction, or programmes providing sensory inputs of picture with text, or audio with text, are found to help learners 'notice' new words and grammar rules, therefore can promote language and vocabulary acquisition (Warschauer, 1999; Smith, et al., 2003.) Teaching methods based on students' curiosity about the world, eager for communication, and sense of responsibility with on-line publishing help to motivate their English learning (Huang, 1999).

Seventhly, as far as writing is concerned, comparative studies of computer-assisted and traditional ESL writing classrooms by Sullivan and Pratt (1996) and Braine (1997) showed that compared to traditional classes, computer-assisted classrooms provide a less threatening and anxiety-free environment. Writing quality improves significantly in the computer-assisted classroom as a result of students being more willing to take risks and participate actively in the text discussions, being more focused on the task, and spending more time on writing in their computer-assisted classroom than in the traditional class. They also give more repetitive revision suggestions to their peers. Students who participate in email writing to partners are also found to spend a great deal of time and effort on writing drafts, editing, and revising; they also show confidence in their ability to express their ideas though code-switching is used in culturally embedded messages (Liaw, 1998). In addition, feedback from the teacher also increased in the networked writing class (Braine, 1997). Liu and Sadler (2003) suggested that traditional face-to-face peer review, which provides students with the chance to learn to be sensitised and understand each other, can be combined with technological peer review to elicit the most effective peer review with 'positive affect (i.e. high motivation, low anxiety, and active participation) and a better effect (i.e. more comments, more revision-oriented comments, and more revisions)' (Liu and Sadler, 2003, p.222). Though students' writing was found to improve more in

traditional paper-pencil mode, it was explained that the first draft in computer-assisted writing is closer to students' maximal performance (Braine, 1997). Word processing programs are useful in improving writing and editing quality under some conditions; with support from teachers, discourse level revision is also possible (Low and Beverton, 2003, 2004). When it comes to gender differences, girls are found to make more revisions with computer writing than boys, develop a better attitude to writing and are more aware of the importance of writing and its positive link to achievement (Low and Beverton, 2003, 2004). As CMC technologies also provide an interactive context and opportunities for authentic language practice, purpose, audience interaction and task structure necessarily affect learners' syntactic complexity, lexical complexity, and grammatical accuracy in E-mail writing (Li, 2000). When there is an interactive audience, students are found to write linguistically complex texts. When students have more freedom and control over the writing activities, they are also found to write in a higher level of syntactic and lexical complexity, though grammatical accuracy is found to be lower as their information processing allocates attention to syntactic and lexical complexity at the expense of grammar. In a word, CMC allows human interaction to be 'text-based, many-to-many, and time-and place-independent' (Warschauer, 1999, p.5), and can be carefully chosen and designed to suit different pedagogical purpose and activities.

Finally, the purpose of CALL activities used in the classroom greatly determines students' views concerning the impact of ICT on learning. Students tend to find computer-assisted learning enjoyable, helpful, and useful if the task set for them is appropriate to their needs, language and intellectual level (Low and Beverton, 2003, 2004). If the students 'understand well the purpose of the activities, find the activity culturally and socially relevant, find the electronic medium appropriate for fulfilling the purpose, are encouraged and enabled to use the range of medium-appropriate rhetorical features to fulfil the purpose', then they will have 'high motivation engagement, strive for excellence, and learn to communicate more effectively in a new medium' (Warschauer, 2000, p. 52).

#### **4.4.2.2. Disadvantages of ICT in the classroom**

However, computer assisted classroom language learning also has its disadvantages and limitations. Reported disadvantages of using computers in language classrooms are associated with access and technical breakdown, the complex cognitive and emotion process involved, limitation to sociocultural context, problems resulting from

CMC technologies with different levels of temporality, anonymity, modality, and spatiality and difficulties of implementation.

Firstly, no matter in which context, accessibility and the reliability of computers is important for successful English learning. The supply of an adequate number of available computers is as crucial as support for technical problems, which often happen and can lead to negative response (Low and Beverton, 2003, 2004; Shu, 2001, Huang, 1999).

Secondly, learning with computers and the Internet is not only a cognitive process (with problems like information overload) but also a strongly affective-connected activity and can easily invoke strong emotional responses such as excitement and anxiety simultaneously (Shu, 2001, p.155). Students are found to experience dramatic emotion changes, verbatim responses, and work 'in a seesawing pattern of confusion, uncertainty, and optimism' when using the networked computer to explore their topic tasks and engage in collecting, evaluating, and using information (Shu, 2001). Information seeking on the Internet is 'a complex, purposeful learning process' involving 'search breakdowns, comprehension failure, reasoning blockages, discrepancies between their plans and the results', which lead to tension expressed in emotions such as 'fear, anxiety, confusion, frustration, and panic' (Shu, 2001, p.165). However, the feeling of uncertainty, ambiguity, and frustration in the earlier stages of learning will be gradually replaced by 'a sense of relief and clarity' when learners are able to shift from 'chaotic and fuzzy' to more 'clear and orderly' thinking in the later stages (Shu, 2001, p.165). In addition, rapid changes in computer technology have made younger learners constantly exposed to email, non text-based web-based communication, fast games, and mobile phone texting at home. Thus, they may be more confident in ICT and find it less exciting. It is necessary to teach them to 'slow down and concentrate' rather than teaching them basic skills in computers in the pre-course training (Low and Beverton, 2003, 2004).

Thirdly, ICT cannot form a teaching method and be all-powerful by itself; instead, the implementation of new technology is limited to the sociocultural context of the classroom and is influenced by the general institutional context and the particular beliefs of each individual teacher. Teachers and their institutions shaped their teaching and used technology to suit their own teaching beliefs and sociocultural context (Waschauer, 2000). When the purpose of CALL activities is irrelevant and inappropriate, students will be demotivated and even resist learning. It is specially noted that students' feeling of frustration may be even deeper if they expect

computers to enable them to participate in meaningful learning and activities (such as making difference in the society) but are denied the chance to so do (Warschauer, 2000).

Fourthly, the anonymity of CMC communications can also possibly lead to more expressions of hostility and prejudice, and fewer efforts spent on students on the task (Smith, et al., 2003). As feedback from other people via the Internet can be unpredictable and even critical and daunting due to anonymity, students also need to be well prepared and instructed in the appropriate rhetorical writing style for the Web and email to communicate (Warschauer, 2000). Though the combination of multiple sensory channels and spatiality of CMC technologies facilitate interpersonal communication, it may also lead to distraction, as students' attention is found to be directed to peripheral details and they engage in off-task interaction, rather than on-task interaction. Smith et al. argued that CMC technologies with different features in temporality, anonymity, modality, and spatiality, should be carefully chosen to suit different pedagogical goals (Smith et al., 2003). In addition, when using email for English writing practice, there is no guarantee that an email sent will always receive a reply, especially when there is no assigned topic and students run out of things to say. Liaw suggested that the instructors can maintain the student-centred approach by asking students to brainstorm email exchange topics (Liaw, 1998).

Fifthly, implementing CMC in English practices also increases the preparation workload of the teacher. Problems range from identifying correspondence partners, matching academic schedules, to finding appropriate computer access and technical support, although it has been reported that the efforts are worthwhile if the project is well planned (Liaw and Johnson, 2001).

The research reviewed above sheds light on the impact of ICT on language learning in the classroom. However, Shu's research was done on students within a short-term project and such tasks may be more suitable for more advanced levels. Li's (2000) and Liaw's (2001) research was conducted with students writing informal email in a pre-writing course and undergraduate course. Their research cannot claim any relationship with email writing and students' achievement in postgraduate academic writing. The research by Shu (2001), Warschauer, (2000) and Li (2000) is also limited as they worked in American universities with students of varied academic and cultural backgrounds. The review by Low and Beverton (2003, 2004) focuses on learners from age 5 to 16. They also suggested that further research needs to address, record, monitor, and investigate learners' ethnicity, existing level of English



proficiency, learning processes of particular software, and make a comparison between ICT-based learning processes and experiences with those of mainstream and of other forms of classroom/culture/ programmes (Low and Beverton, 2003, p.32; 2004). Li also suggested that other discourse features of writing, such as development of main ideas and organisation, as well as individual differences, such as motivation, attitude, gender, learning style, should also be considered (Li, 2000). The present research aims to explore the impact of ICT English learning for Taiwanese female students studying for academic purpose in a British university. Rather than learning in an instructed class, their postgraduate study and English learning is self-directed and academic-oriented. A brief summary of the reported impact of ICT on self-directed English learning for academic purpose in higher education in Britain and the US will be presented in the next section.

#### **4.4.3. New demands of digital literacy and the implications for self-directed English learning for academic purpose**

Section 4.4.2. has provided a review on the reported advantages and disadvantages of the use of ICT on language learning in the language classroom. The present research focuses on self-directed learning experiences of a group of post-graduate female overseas students' English learning for academic purpose in a British university. The courses in British higher education emphasise the self-directed approach that aims to foster students' self-managing and independent research ability. In the digital-electronics era, large amounts of reading, writing, and research are also moving to the screen. However, comparatively little research has been conducted to look at its impact on English learning for self-directed academic studies and it needs to be further explored. A review of different aspects of the impact of ICT on self-directed English learning for academic purpose, including communication and the capability to access and organize knowledge, will help to understand the learning experiences of these students. This section covers three aspects related to self-directed English learning for academic purpose: (1) new requirements in reading and writing; (2) reported impact of the World Wide Web; and (3) computer mediated communication in self-directed English learning for academic purpose.

##### **4.4.3.1. New requirements in reading and writing**

The new possibilities of computer-mediated communication and the World Wide Web transform the notions and practices of reading and writing, access to information and communication (Warschauer, 1996, p.8). In developed countries, the computer screen

has joined print as the medium of literacy as there is an exponentially increasing amount of writing and reading taking place with computers. Much of the writing in academia, business, and government is practised at computer screens and posted to others via networked computers rather than on paper. An increasing amount of reading is also done at the screen, including email and web browsing (ibid, p.8). Computers provide new possibilities for people working with knowledge and information; at the same time, the fact that so much on-line communication and screen reading/writing is in English also requires new skills of English learners and users in the academic context (Slaouti, 2002). English learners need to be exposed to them and helped to take advantage of the resources provided by the computer technology so that they can enter new authentic discourse communities and conduct their studies, which are increasingly located on-line and computerised.

#### **4.4.3.2. The impact of the World Wide Web on academic English**

As far as academic studies are concerned, the World Wide Web has been recognized as being increasingly relevant and offering new potential and legitimate sources for research in academic fields (Slaouti, 2002; Stapleton, 2003). The searching skill, the content of the World Wide Web, and its structure have implications for English learners for academic purpose.

A group of factors (cheaper and affordable computers, user-friendly browsers and software for webpage creation, sophisticated search engines, freedom and ease of the World Wide Web) have made the World Wide Web an exponentially growing field with rich resources covering an endless range of topics of a variety of quality (Slaouti, 2002; Stapleton, 2003). Finding relevant information in WWW databases is the first step students need to take. This can be an unsystematic and unfruitful process due to the different search engines used. Students need to have knowledge of the mechanisms of the search engines, which are constantly changing and developing at a rapid speed, to distinguish the cause of failure in search or overflow of results as a result of poor search skills or limitation of the search engine (Slaouti, 2002). Students need to establish their own cataloguing system, by saving site addresses and organising them with the help of Web browser bookmarks, to manage the information flow and their study (ibid, 2002).

Furthermore, non-native speakers are found to be in a disadvantaged position as searching ability is found to be correlated to language ability (Zoe and DiMartino, 2000). 'Sophisticated precision search techniques' in the Boolean system involve

manipulation and knowledge of language such as proper vocabulary, proximity connectors, and synonyms, which may not be easily possessed by non-native speakers whose language constructions are very different from English (Zoe and DiMartino, 2000). In addition to these skills of searching on the Internet, non-native speaker learners also need to perform skills of taxonomy, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating, which are less easy for them. Some arguments suggest that it is because these language learners 'come from collectivist cultures, unlike the individual-oriented cultures of native English speakers, they have not been socialized in an adversarial environment necessary for effective critical thought' (Stapleton, 2003, p. 232). However, Stapleton argued that they do have critical thinking ability, and that 'the perceived lack of these skills is more a result of differing assumptions and a lack of familiarity with the typically Western-oriented content' (Stapleton, 2003, p.232). The above two views may both stand true in different individual cases. In addition, social and cultural factors (such as the culture of face saving, reticence, learned self-suppression, and politeness) may also inhibit these learners from expressing their critical views even if they do have them in their mind.

As regards the content of the information, the virtues of the WWW come together with its many limitations. The nature of materials published on the World Wide Web is fundamentally different from traditional, screened, and filtered (by reviewers, editors, publishers, and librarians) research sources, such as books and journals in the library (Stapleton, 2003). Students' use of WWW sources in their academic work and awareness of quality differences between these and the traditional forms of knowledge are growing concerns for university educationists and researchers (Stapleton, 2003). Students in different departments in a British university have been found to have different knowledge and practices when using information from the WWW in their course work, driven by their own awareness, though students show uncertainty about the status and value of the websites over against conventional sources (Slaouti, 2002). A study by Stapleton (2003) on Japanese students' perception about the quality of sources found that printed sources were ranked higher than electronic ones. Professional and scholarly sources (library books, international journals, news magazines, national academic journals) were also ranked higher than governmental and personal ones, although Stapleton suggested that there may be a transition as people growing up with the dominance of electronic information and the Internet may prefer electronic forms of information to printed ones.

On the other hand, teaching staff have different opinions and advice about students' use of WWW sources (Slaouti, 2002). Students using the WWW are also found to

have to access different types of information and decide for themselves the validity and academic status of information sources. Slaouti suggested that students can apply strategies to assure themselves of the quality of the website source for their academic study (such as checking the authority and reputation by taking a step backward to the home page to identify the publishing environment, checking the domain keyword, e.g., *edu* and *com*, or the structure of the site address; checking the purpose and agenda to see if it is ideological or commercially biased as some websites students use most often for search, such as *google*, may be commercial and may misdirect users to advertisements and websites sponsored by commercial companies by putting them on the top of the result list (Stapleton, 2003), checking the 'coverage and objectivity', 'accessibility and currency', 'presentation and appropriateness' of the website (Slaouti, 2002, p. 9; Stapleton, 2003, p.230; Hartman and Ackermann, 2001; Kirk, 2002). The newly emergent electronic media such as e-journals and e-books, and other electronic forms of library resources provide new possibilities and advantages; there is a growing need for users to develop new skills and 'a more critical mindset' to use the WWW sources for research (Stapleton, 2003).

As regards the structure of hypertext, Slaouti pointed out that the structure and the way knowledge is organised in the World Wide Web liberates readers from a 'linear concept of text' and allows links and multiple directions to other links of relevant information in a deeper level of detail (Slaouti, 2002). In the process of navigating on the 'three-dimension collage of texts', readers play a more active part in constructing their own navigation and determining their own ends (Andrews, 2001, p.124). Screen reading involves psycholinguistic and social processes of information decoding, different from that involved in reading on a page. Reading from a screen with multi-linear links is seen as an active and 'a self-conscious act of creating knowledge from a variety of sources' (Warschauer, 2000, p.521). When reading academic hypertext, readers have to decide whether to stay in the main argument, or follow the links to other information on the author, reference, or the appendix as the links may serve to 'guide' the reader or 'mislead' and 'detract' them from the global reading (Slaouti, 2002). Readers may also have different reading processes according to their different learning styles, attributes, and their hypertext experiences (ibid, 2002). Unlike reading a paper book with the ease of grasping the book and 'having a view of the whole', reading on screen is a process of navigation with scrolling (Agarwal-Hollands & Andrews, 2001; Slaouti, 2002), which reveals only a little bit of the 'page' at one time and makes it less easy for readers to feel 'the whole' and judge its relevance and quality. To achieve effectiveness and avoid distraction in the information oceans, readers need to develop critical awareness of the status and

relevance of links to distinguish the thin line between 'acquiring deepening knowledge' and 'information overload' by the possibilities hypertext offers. (Slaouti, 2002, p.12).

Warschauer (2000b) suggested the following skills are essential for reading/research on the screen, and are applicable to academic research involving a heavy amount of reading and writing with computers.

- finding the information to read in the first place
- rapidly evaluating the source, credibility, and timeliness of information once it has been located
- rapidly making navigational decisions as to whether to read the current page of information, pursue links internal or external to the page, or revert to further searching
- making on-the-spot decisions about ways to save or catalogue part of the information on the page or the complete page
- organising and keeping track of electronic information that has been saved (Warschauer, 2000, p.522)

As for writing/authoring, Andrews (2001) pointed out that the value of ICT lies in the new modes of 'text production', which allows learning to occur via the information processing through the transformation of 'texts' between 'different channels of communication—speech, music, images (still and moving), text—and between different genres and forms' (Andrews, 2001, p.125-126). This model could well be applied to academic writing in higher education when students 're-create' and 're-purpose' their computer-based writing for their intended audiences (examiners and tutors), and change the 'channel of communication, genre, and form of the text, combining it with other elements in a new composition' (Andrews, 2001, p.126). Writing and reading with ICT can be seen as reciprocal activities (O'Donoghue, 2000; Andrews, 2001). As readers can change and respond to the texts they are reading, the process of reading and writing is similar to that of speaking and listening (O'Donoghue, 2000). Reading actually is a creative act as readers make their texts and construct the meaning while they read; while writers are 'informed' to a different degree by the reading they encounter (Andrews, 2001).

With the prevalence of ICT, Warschauer (2000) suggested that it is no longer sufficient for writers to put grammatically correct sentences on paper. Aside from

basic computer typing and operating skills, new types of writing/authoring skills are required:

- integrating texts, graphics, and audiovisual material into a multimedia presentation
- writing effectively in hypertext genres
- using internal and external links to communicate a message well
- writing for a particular audience when the audience is an unknown reader on the World Wide Web
- using effective pragmatic strategies in various circumstances of computer-mediated communication (including one-to-one e-mail, e-mail discussion lists, and various forms of synchronous [real-time] communication) (Warschauer, 2000, p.522)

In a word, with a range of texts of different genres and academic standards, the World Wide Web provides students of English for academic purpose a rich source of information and new ways to access and organise knowledge. The nature of the structure and content of the World Wide Web can be used as an authentic and less threatening chance to practise the critical and analytical skills highly required in the academic community (Slaouti, 2002). Reading and writing can be seen in the new light of 'reciprocal activity', and writing seen as the transformation of 'texts' into the 'academic work' for the intended academic community. The nature of the WWW as a research source, information processing mechanisation, and its implications for Taiwanese students of English learning for academic purpose in the British higher education context needs further investigation.

#### **4.4.3.3. The impact of CMC on academic English**

Email, as the increasingly important medium for human communication and interpersonal interaction, is recognized as a useful tool for language learning. The asynchronous nature of its communication and its being a hybrid of 'informality of speech' and 'written letter' (Chen, 2001; Goodwyn, 2000; Andrews, 2001) are found to facilitate teacher/student interpersonal interaction, reduce the speaking pressure on students, and provide an alternative to face-to-face communication. In addition, it also facilitates self-reflection and encourages students to take chances they will seldom respond to in the face-to-face context (Warschauer, 1999; Bloch, 2002). It is widely used by postgraduate students to communicate with their

instructors/supervisors and colleagues outside the classroom as it helps to extend the space of academic interaction (Bloch, 2002; Chen, 2001).

However, the hybridity and 'ephemeral' nature of email as a medium can also cause misunderstanding and conflicts in communication and writer-audience relationships (Bloch, 2002). Problematic email messages, so called 'flaming', can be a result of specific intent to harass and verbally attack, or as a result of hasty composition, and miscalculation of the relationship between writer and reader (Bloch, 2002). Social relationships also affect the response time and length of text of email interaction (Bloch, 2002). International students have been found to be able to employ a variety of rhetorical strategies to interact with their supervisors and show the ability to switch between formal and informal language according to the four main purpose of their email (1) phatic communion (2) asking for help (3) making excuses (4) making formal requests (Bloch, 2002). A cultural comparison between Taiwanese and American students of email strategies when writing email to professors by Chen (2001) suggested that the perceived power relations and familiarity between professors and students, the purpose of the email request, and the influence of Chinese culture lead Taiwanese students to adopt a deference politeness strategy, rather than a solidarity relation, as the American students do. Situated in a lower-status in the university hierarchy, they are found to address the professors formally, emphasise their nationality and status at the beginning of the email to get professors' attention and legitimate their requests. Their email writing is found to be 'writer-oriented' and contains fewer personal international discourses. Instead of building 'in-group' membership, they use compliments and expressions of appreciation to emphasise the importance of professors in their requests (Chen, 2001). Facework is also one important feature of Taiwanese students' email writing; this includes providing explanations for the request, delaying the introduction of request, making requests in an indirect, narrative style, using politeness as a requesting strategy (as politeness may lead to higher possibility of the addressee complying with the request). Chen (2001) suggested that cultural heritage greatly affects the way international students organise their knowledge and interpersonal behaviour; they may unconsciously apply it to English writing and their email writing should be considered 'different', rather than 'deficit'. In addition to email writing style, formality, standard, grammar, and focus on meaning and form have become important issues to be explored as non-native English speakers and their use of English on the Internet expand (Bloch, 2002).

Additionally, one piece of research looking at Taiwanese students' self-directed English learning experiences in higher education in Britain is by Chang (1999). She

found that computers and the Internet, considered by Taiwanese students as useful non-human resources which provide rich and diverse language resources and help to increase their vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, and listening ability are used for English learning. However, the research indicated that the slowness and small number of computers in a British university, the availability of Chinese Mandarin reading/writing software and Chinese websites, reduced the potential which the Internet offers to the EFL students.

Chang's research provided a brief picture of students' experiences and the perceived potential of using computers for English learning in a British university. It did not further explore the communication and knowledge organizing and access aspects of the Internet, and its impact on students' academic studies, affective, social, and cultural aspects. Since most research that integrated ICT into English learning in higher education was mainly conducted in the US, where technological development, academic culture, facilities, and institutional practices can be very different from those in the British system, the impact of ICT on English learning for academic purpose in the British university can be further elaborated and investigated in the present research.

#### **4.5. Summary**

This chapter firstly provided a review on socio-economic trends—old and new capitalisms, and their relations to the schooling of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It provided a review of the development of and the reciprocal relationship between technology and literacy and the emergence of a new concept of literacy—multiliteracies, put forth by a group of educationalists in the age of differences. It was suggested that an understanding of literacy practice cannot exist without a consideration of the broader economic and political context and technologies available at the particular period of time.

Economic changes and technology development have led to new requirements in workplaces, new approaches to learning, changes to Englishes, and the status of the speakers. These are the realities that have major implications for the life style, study, and social mobility of the female students in the present research. In a world saturated with international exchange and global English, overseas students are the products of globalisation and an export-oriented education service by educational institutions. New requirements of literacy (English and digital literacy) play important roles in their study and life. Their roles as users of these new means of



communication also have profound impacts on changes in English language and development in communication technologies.

The use of ICT in English learning has its advantages and limitations. ICT use in the classroom is associated with the benefits of cross-cultural understanding, integration with community discourse, changes in patterns of classroom interaction and power structures, empowerment, shift in teacher/student roles (collaborative and more student centred classroom dynamics), and improvement in language acquisition and writing. The reported disadvantages of using computers in language classrooms are associated with access and technical breakdown, the complex cognitive and emotional process involved, limitation to sociocultural context, problems resulting from CMC technologies with different levels of temporality, anonymity, modality, spatiality, and difficulties of implementation.

As far as EAP is concerned, the World Wide Web and Computer Mediated Communication technologies bring both new possibilities and disadvantages for English learners. The content of the World Wide Web provides rich sources of diverse quality for research, making students' critical awareness of their academic status important. The multiple direction structure of the WWW, differences between scrolling on screen and reading printed text, and the searching knowledge needed, can also disadvantage English learners. Their experiences of using the WWW for research need to be better documented.

New forms of computer mediated communication technologies provide new ways of interaction with people in the academic world. Yet CMC can be both inviting and daunting due to the specific features of different CMC technologies. Due to its nature of anonymity and temporality, the interaction and response received via CMC can be unpredictable and demoralising if students are not prepared well. Aside from the advantages and disadvantages related to the specific features of certain CMC technologies, students from different cultures may also use and apply different strategies to communicate with the new technologies. It is important that both teacher and students grasp the potential and understand the disadvantages of new technologies to reach a more open, more meaningful, and equal learning environment and education outcomes.

Research on the impact of ICT on English learning has been mainly conducted in the USA, where facilities and the academic environment can be different from those in Britain. Despite the importance of ICT, little research has been conducted to look at

its impact on English learning and overseas student life in a British academic institution. It is therefore considered necessary to conduct the present research and focus on this aspect. The present study will address the gap in the literature by investigating the impact of ICT on Taiwanese female students' English learning experiences as post-graduates in a British university. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 provide information on the three evolving stages of data collection, findings and discussions.

## **Chapter 5 Stage 1 Methodology and findings**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The purposes of this chapter are to present discussion concerning the use of a focus group in the first stage of the three-stage research and the issues related. The chapter includes discussion of the methodology adopted in stage 1, the focus group, and the findings drawn from the data gathered. The chapter consists of two parts: 5.2. methodology and 5.3 findings.

### **5.2. Methodology: the use of a focus group**

#### **5.2.1. The nature of a focus group**

Focus groups, as well as the other two methods (interviews, diaries) used in the present research, are closely related to the qualitative tradition, which is associated with exploration research and is explanatory of the relationship among factors. The decision to employ a qualitative approach and focus group for the present research study was based on the main interest and design of the present research study to investigate the specific phenomenon of a certain gender group of Taiwanese female students' English learning for academic purpose and use of ICT in a British university. The validity of this study relies on the triangulation and the complementarity of data collected from different methods, which could lead to an increased amount and range of valuable evidence about the study aims. As each method with its inherent quality was designed to investigate different aspects of the target phenomenon and to complement other methods, focus groups in the present research served as a modified ethnographic method that facilitated the observation of behaviours and meaning construction in the social context. Individual interviews allowed in-depth exploration, and diary entries produced a textual account of the researched activities and the participants' reflection for a certain period of time; they will be discussed in chapter 6 and 7. With the other two methods, the focus group helped to provide a valuable partial picture of the phenomenon, to 'increase the amount and range of evidence' and 'generate dissonance' for progress.

##### **5.2.1.1. Definition**

A focus group is a form of group interview in which participants interact and discuss a topic supplied by the researcher. In a focus group, a specially selected group of the

population discusses a particular topic. Participants in a focus group interact with each other, rather than with the interviewer, and insight and data emerge from their *interaction*. Thus, as the participants interact with each other, the views of the participants can emerge and the predominance of the researcher agenda can be avoided. (Cohen et al., 2000)

#### **5.2.1.2. Use of focus groups**

The focus group can be used in multi-method studies that combine two or more other qualitative methods, such as participant observation and individual interviews and no one primary method determines the use of others (Morgan, 1997). It can also be used as a self-contained method, in which it serves as the primary means of data collection. Vaughn et al. (1996) suggested the focus group offers variety and versatility to research methods; it can be used alone or with other methods to bring an improved depth of understanding to research. It can be used as the sole research tool, as a precursor to an investigation; it can also be used simultaneously with other data sources (Vaughn, 1996, p.15). Focus groups are useful for orientating to a particular field of focus, developing themes, topics, and schedules for subsequent interviews, generating hypotheses that derive from the insights and data from the group. (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 288)

#### **5.2.1.3. Advantages**

Cohen et al. (2000) state that 'the contrived nature is both its strength and weakness'. It is an unnatural event yet it focuses on a particular issue and may produce insights that might not have been available with other methods. It can produce a large amount of data in a short period of time, though it produces less data than one-to-one interviews (Cohen, p.288).

A focus group is compatible with the qualitative research paradigm. As Brotherson (1994) explained (cited by Vaughn et al., 1996) in the qualitative tradition, the nature of reality is viewed as phenomenological, and multiple views can exist (p. 15). Vaughn et al. (1996) suggested that in a focus group individuals are invited to participate in a discussion in which their opinions and perspectives are desired. The interactions between the moderator and the participants and the interactions between the participants have the potential to add depth and dimension to the knowledge and understanding (p. 16). As Vaughn et al. stated, in the qualitative tradition, the nature of a truth statement is influenced by perspective. It is explained by describing a

particular set of issues or concepts in relationship to a particular context. The goal is not to generalize to larger populations but to describe findings within a particular situation and 'to elicit a greater, more in-depth understanding of perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and experiences from multiple points of views and to document the context from which those understandings were derived' (p.16). Feminist qualitative research also emphasises the influence of social context and the necessity of a 'social constructionist stance' and 'the constriction of meanings and knowledge through interaction' (Wilkinson, 1998, p.111-119). Researchers use focus groups to 'obtain several perspectives about the same topic' and gain 'insights into people's shared understanding of everyday life and the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a group situation' (Gibbs, 1997, p.1). As participants can 'ask questions to each other, as well as to reevaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences', focus groups 'elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context' and reveal multiple understandings and explanations (Gibbs, 1997, p.2-4). Diversity within a group also means that participants have 'to explain the reasoning behind their thinking just as much when they give the "right" answer as when they give the wrong one' (Kitzinger, 1994). Through the challenge, disagreement, support, reasoning, and explaining, the meaning and understanding of the topic is 'co-constructed in a group context' (Wilkinson, 1998, p.119).

A focus group also offers opportunities for direct contact with subjects. Vaughn et al. stated: 'focus groups have the potential to bring the researcher closer to the research topic through a direct intensive encounter with individuals' (p. 16). The group format also offers distinctive advantages for data collection. Although other methods (interviews, observations) also bring the researcher in direct, intensive contact with individuals, the interactive group formats of focus groups 'encourage interaction not only between the researcher and the participants but also between the participants themselves. The group format offers support for the individual participants and encourages greater openness in their responses... [It] allows and encourages individuals to form opinions about the designated topic through interaction with others' (p.18). Participants in a focus group may also experience 'a sense of emancipation' as they have a chance to express their opinions in public, develop a relationship with the research, and have a say on things that matter to them (Gibbs, 1997, p.4). The information revealed by the less inhibited participants in the group may also encourage others to disclose more information and views regarding taboo or difficult experiences (Wilkinson, 1998, p.119).

At the early stage of the empirical research, to have a general insightful understanding of the research questions and to avoid bias and a predominance of the researcher's own point of views concerning the issue at stake, a focus group is considered as the suitable method to explore the questions. It is used in stage 1 as a self-contained primary means of data collection.

#### **5.2.1.4. Disadvantages**

As to the disadvantages of using focus groups, the data collected from focus groups are not suitable to make broad generalizations. It is also difficult to 'make a good theoretical case' using data from diverse focus groups (Wilkinson, 1998). Denscombe (1998) pointed that it is difficult to record the discussion of focus groups as participants may interrupt one another and talk simultaneously. As focus groups are not fully confidential and anonymous, there is also a possibility that the people may not want to disclose their thoughts on sensitive, personal, political or emotional matters in front of others (Descombe, 1998; Gibbs, 1997). People of extrovert character may also dominate the discussion and 'bully more timid members of the focus group into expressing opinions they would not admit to in private' (Descombe, 1998, p.115). People who are shy or not very articulate may find it difficult to participate in the discussion (Gibbs, 1997, p.5). In addition, it is not easy to assemble focus groups and get a representative sample (Gibbs, 1997, p.5, Wilkinson, 1998). To avoid this happening, the moderator/researcher needs experience and a careful selection of people to take part in the focus group (Denscombe, 1998, p.115). It is also necessary to have an assistant to keep notes and deal with practical matters (Wilkinson, 1998).

#### **5.2.2. Schedule**

The empirical study included three stages: stage 1, focus group; stage 2, interview and diary; stage 3, focus group, interview and diary. The main purpose of stage 1 and 2 is to first investigate the issues relating to this particular field and then to set the scene for the follow-up stage 3 of the study. The finding from stage 1 and 2 serves as an essential backbone for the main research in stage three of the study.

In stage 1, focus group, three periods were set to conduct the group: (1) recruiting and making questions, (2) focus group meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2001, (3) reporting. The process of recruitment of the participants started after the beginning of the new academic term in autumn 2001. The focus group was conducted on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, a

month after the start of the term, when students had already arrived and settled down for their study at the university. The reporting and analysis were completed in the following month.

### **5.2.3. Set up**

There are several issues to be addressed in running a focus group.

1. The size of the group. It is widely accepted that four to twelve people per group will be a suitable size for a successful focus group (Morgan, 1993, 1997).
2. Over-recruit by as much as 20 percent to allow people not to turn up.
3. Sampling is the key to the success of a focus group, ensuring that every participant is the best representative of the particular characteristics required.
4. Ensure that participants have something to say and feel comfortable enough to say it.
5. Chair the discussion to keep it open-ended but to the point (Cohen, p.288).

#### **5.2.3.1. Size**

Five to six was considered as the suitable number of people in this research; with the 20% over-recruit rule of focus groups borne in mind, seven people were recruited in the beginning. Due to the small number of Taiwanese students in the research environment (about 26 people enrolled in the academic year 2001/2002 according to student & staff statistics on the university website), the number of participants who can participate in the research is limited. In the present research, in order to recruit suitable and sufficient participants, the researcher had to try all the possible ways to contact and recruit participants to take part in the research. The researcher posted a notice on a Taiwanese students' website which the potential participants may visit, announced the news of research in gatherings, such as a welcome party and a birthday party, in which potential participants might appear, sent emails to participants' university email boxes, and asked orally for participants' permission to take part individually. As the researcher wanted to make sure there would be enough members to take part in the research, participants were offered four pounds in return for taking part in the focus group. Seven people agreed to take part. Two of them could not turn up for the focus group on the appointed day and thus there were five people taking part in the meeting.

### 5.2.3.2. Sampling

Among the five participants, three of them study humanity and arts, one social science, and one science. There were three out of five studying the humanities and two of them studying science; thus, there was a suitable proportion of representatives of different disciplines at the university.

As the factor of age played an important role in the use of new technology in this research, it is necessary to present the participants' average age in the research. The average age of the participants is 29. Cohen suggested that focus groups operate more successfully if they are composed of relative strangers rather than friends. In the present research, the participants may already have known each other and were not strangers since they are all Taiwanese students living in a foreign country who has already built connections, friendships, and mutual help networks to help themselves in life and studies. Therefore, it is not a group consisting of total strangers. Instead, some people among them already knew each other to different levels. The result of the group discussion may be slightly influenced by their acquaintance with other members than a group consisting of total strangers. The participants' age and studies are shown in the table below.

Table 5.1. Age and study of the participants in stage 1.

Participant	Age	Study
P1	31	Arts and Humanities
P2	32	Social Science
P3	25	Arts and Humanities
P4	28	Social Science/ Science
P5	30	Arts and Humanities

### 5.2.3.3. Comfort and having something to say

To help the participants feel comfortable and prepare them to talk, the focus group questions were emailed four days before the day of the meeting in both an English version and a Chinese version. The participants were asked to think about the questions beforehand. The participants were reassured that the atmosphere would be informal and notified that there would be tape recording and an assistant to take note in the meeting. The researcher's place was considered as the best place to have the focus group because most of the participants had already been to the place for a welcoming party and knew where it was. It is spacious and there was an oval-shape dining table and a sufficient number of chairs, which were also regarded as suitable



for the conducting of a focus group. Consent forms with research aims and participants' rights and confidentiality statement were also prepared for both the participants and the researcher to sign before the meeting started. Tea and snacks were also prepared.

#### **5.2.3.4. Chairing and an assistant to take notes**

To help the researcher concentrate on the chairing of the meeting and to have multiple ways of recording the meeting, an assistant was also recruited to take notes on the key points in the discussion. The researcher was also prepared to explain the questions asked and the terms in the questions. Even though the meeting was noted as informal, the researcher planned to take a more formal tone in asking questions and chairing the meeting in order to strike the discussion to a balance point and bring the interaction back to track in case of veering off the point.

The questions (and a Chinese version of the questions) asked in this focus group meeting will be found in appendix 3. A copy of the consent form will be found in appendix 4.

### **5.2.4. Description of conducting of focus group**

#### **5.2.4.1. Asking questions**

The questions asked were modified several times to make sure that they were relevant to the research questions and understandable by the participants. Difficult words and sentences were modified and avoided. Questions were divided into three main categories (English, ICT, and Gender) to ensure the clarity of sequence and flow of asking and answering questions. To help participants talk more about the issues, questions were set to ask about concrete things and their further explanation, such as 'What are your experiences?', 'what sort of things do you do?', 'what are your reasons for wanting to improve your English?', 'what difference do you feel between Taiwan and Britain?', 'what difficulties do you have? How to cope with them?' Difficult and sensitive questions regarding gender and ideology were put at the end of the question list.

#### **5.2.4.2. Conducting the focus group**

To make sure the group members felt comfortable with each other and the presence of an assistant, before the start of the discussion, participants and the assistant were introduced to each other. Consent forms were read and signed by both the participants and the researcher. An introduction to the topic of the meeting was given. Explanations were also given when the participants asked for clarification or there was a hint of incomprehension. For example, when the first questions 'Talk about your experience of English learning. What are your views about them?' were asked, there was a silence in the group and the researcher sensed that participants were reluctant to be the first to speak out. After a participant murmured quietly: 'Never think about that, English learning experience...' the researcher gave more concrete examples: 'for example, when did you start to be exposed to English? How long have you learned it?' After the easy example, participants were encouraged and interaction started to become intense.

When the more difficult questions such as 'Do you feel learning English put you in a position that is subject to somebody else?', and 'What are your views about English in the construction of gender and power?' were addressed, some participants asked the researcher to explain what 'being subject to somebody else' and explain more explicitly what the question meant. The researcher's explanation was followed by the examples and views of some other participants' who understood the questions and their examples and views explaining what being subject to somebody else is.

When there was silence in the interaction, it was known that the researcher's self-defence mechanism often operates and interrupts the participants' flow of thinking or talking by over-explanation or putting words into the participants' mouths. In this case, the researcher's views, rather than the participants' views predominate in the interaction. To avoid over-explanation and over-talk by the researcher, special care was taken to ensure that silence and time for thinking were allowed in the group.

Gibbs suggested that focus group moderators need to promote debate, challenge participants, and probe for differences and details. They also need to direct flows of discussions to move things forward or 'steer the conversation back on course' (Gibbs, 1997, p.6). To make sure all the members in the group express their views, the researcher took care to ensure everyone talked about every question. The quieter members were invited to talk by the researcher if they did not take part in the interaction with other members. When the researcher forgot that someone still had not talked and felt the question had been discussed and wanted to move on to the next question, the group members reminded the researcher that someone had not expressed

their views yet and attention was drawn to the question again. Care was also taken for the researcher/moderators not to show too much approval or give personal opinions to avoid influencing participants on any particular opinions.

### **5.2.5. Analysis and presentation of the research data**

Data analysis is the process of making order and meaning from the mass of collected data. Qualitative data is often voluminous and ambiguous; therefore qualitative data analysis can be a time-consuming and messy process. The aims of qualitative data analysis are to identify significant patterns and construct a framework for presenting what the data reveal.

#### **5.2.5.1. Transcription of focus group**

The tape-recorded focus group was transcribed by the researcher into manuscripts in Chinese characters and later some of them were translated into English as the researcher used them as quotations in this report. Since Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese share the same writing system, discussions and expressions in Taiwanese by the participants were also transcribed into Chinese characters. All of the completed manuscripts were categorized using the numbers given to the participants.

#### **5.2.5.2. Analysis and presentation of data**

Data analysis in all research is considered as the most challenging step (Morgan, 1993). Data collected by qualitative methods tend to be voluminous and it is important to analyze the data efficiently. Various methods of data analysis are proposed by different researchers. Denscombe (1998) suggested five steps: (1) coding and categorizing the data. (2) Reflection on the early coding and categories. (3) Identification of themes and relationships. (4) Return to the field to check out emerging explanations. (5) Developing a set of generalizations. (6) Using the new generalizations to improve any relevant existing theories.

Vaughn et al. (1996, p. 105-112) suggested four steps of data analysis: (1) identifying the big ideas; (2) unitizing the data; (3) categorizing the units; (4) identifying themes and use of theory.

##### **5.2.5.2.1. Phase one**

Identifying the big ideas. Vaughn et al. suggested that much of step one occurs during and immediately following the empirical research. At this step, the researcher considers the participants' words, the ideas that occupied the focus group, the intensity of participants' responses, as well as nonverbal communication, and identifies several *big ideas* that represent the findings from the focus group (Vaughn, et al., p, 105). This process is also regarded as sophisticated because it requires the researcher to beware of the idea when it is reported and to 'carefully digest all the key ideas and distinguish the strong, significant themes from the less significant ones'. The big ideas or themes are identified as impressions or hypotheses rather than definite findings and are likely to be changed and refined after further data analysis (p, 105).

#### **5.2.5.2.2. Phase two**

Unitizing the Data. This refers to identifying those units of information that will later become the basis for defining categories (Vaughn et al., 1996, p. 105). Vaughn et al suggested researchers to identify relevant information through one of two procedures. One is to use a highlighter to mark the information units and another is to type in the units into a computer. Vaughn et al. suggested that for the first-time analyst, entering the information into the computer is often a necessary step. After the units are identified, the next step is to cut the information units into separate slips of paper so that they can be categorized. All the information units, the relevant subject, and transcript location need to be provided through a code and codes and units are separated from the text.

#### **5.2.5.2.3. Phase three**

Categorizing the units. Categories are superordinate headings that provide an organization *theme* for the units of data (p.107). Categorizing brings together the information units that are related to the same content.

#### **5.2.5.2.4. Phase four**

Identifying themes and use of theory. Step four re-examines the big ideas generated in step one to identify the themes and determine the extent to which categories support these themes. The grouped information was carefully re-read to find patterns, consistency, or peculiarities.

The data analysis of this research was based on content analysis. Content analysis involves identifying coherent and important examples, themes, and patterns. The researcher read through all the transcript manuscripts of the focus group and noted down general differences and similarities in use of ICT, views on genders issues, and English learning experiences. After studying through and organizing the focus group, the researcher identified and categorized the primary themes and patterns. At this stage, certain fundamental issues relating to this research were revealed, such as the fact the gender-related factors played an essential part not only in participants' access to educational resources, but also in their life and studying in Britain. In the following stage, the researcher searched for explanations and quotations from the focus group to support the findings of this research. The final stage was the presentation of the data. In the stage of data presentation, researchers have to choose particular words to summarize and reflect the complexity of the data.

## **5.2.6. Reflection on the process**

### **5.2.6.1. Time**

In the present research, the preparation process started a month before the conduct of focus group. Participants were informed, recruited weeks before, and were reminded of the time and date before the focus group. They had no problems arriving at the focus group setting, the researcher's accommodation house, which was chosen as the as a good place because of its ease of access and location. The assistant arrived 30 minutes before the meeting to prepare with the researcher. Some of the participants arrived five minutes late but that did not constitute a problem for the conducting of the focus group. Participants had been informed that the focus group discussion would take about one hour, therefore one of them had another appointment one hour and half later. The focus group actually lasted for about two hours. One participant (participant 4) had to leave for her other appointment in the middle of the discussion and this might have disturbed the discussion and slightly impacted on other participants' mood. The other participants might already have felt tired after one hour of talking and had a feeling that it was time to finish the meeting and leave like P4, and thus they may have been less concentrated in the discussion. For the following research, the time factor will be carefully considered.

### **5.2.6.2. Languages used in the focus group**

In order to avoid linguistic difficulties and to allow all the participants to express themselves fully during the focus group, the mother tongue language, both Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese, were used in the discussion. During the focus group, Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese were used by the participants, but sometimes the participants used English lexical items or sentences mixing Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese in the focus group. Some (P3) of the participants in this study had been studying English and been in this country for some time, and may have felt more comfortable talking in English than those who had just arrived and had less experience of using English. English was also used occasionally by the participants who felt comfortable using it.

#### **5.2.6.3. Recording and tape**

Various pieces of equipment were used to enhance the process and the result of the focus group. A tape recorder was employed with one mini microphone left on the desk during the focus group. There was also a pair of earphones connected to the recorder of which the researcher put one in her ear during the discussion to detect any possible malfunction of the machine. During the focus group, the recorder never had any malfunction that interrupted the process of the discussion. The recording was interrupted and stopped when the tape was finished and the machine stopped automatically. However, discussion and interaction among the participants was not stopped by the stopping of tape. Therefore a small part of the conversation was not recorded while the researcher was changing the tape.

#### **5.2.6.4. Absence of the researcher**

The researcher had to leave the focus group setting twice. The first time, one of the participants indicated the coldness of temperature and the researcher had to leave to turn on the heater. The second time the researcher had to bring an extra tape from another room because of the unexpected longer hours of discussion. When the researcher left, according to the tape, the assistant seemed to take the chairing role and responded to the participants with sounds to encourage talking and to indicate understanding. Therefore, the discussion was not interrupted because of the absence of the researcher.

#### **5.2.6.5. Difficult and sensitive questions**

Because of the difficult control of time, questions asked earlier in the discussion might be explored better than questions asked later. In the meeting, a participant had to leave in the middle of the discussion and other participants might be affected and became restless. Questions asked in the latter part of the meeting are more difficult and sensitive in nature and may be better explored with individual participants in individual interview, in which the participants and the researcher establish a relationship of trust and the participants may be more open about their own experiences, which they are not ready to expose to the other participants in a group forum. Also, there may be more time to explore the questions in depth in an individual interview. Questions related to ideology, English hegemony, and gender are more difficult than the descriptive questions asked earlier; therefore some participants asked for further explanation. More explanation and examples will be needed if a focus group is used again in the future. Even though in the focus group participants also responded to difficult and sensitive questions, participants were more reserved and the answers given were more superficial compared to what the participants revealed in the interview and diary. Focus groups, thus, can be seen as warming up activities for opening up and revealing sensitive and difficult questions at the later stage.

#### **5.2.6.6. Diverse perspectives and opinions**

In a focus group meeting, individual participants' diverse perspective and opinions were desired and valued. Participants do not need to agree with others and special caution was taken with the group. In the present group, the participants expressed their different views and interacted with each other. The researcher listened and encouraged more talk with nodding, eye contact, and sounds indicating understanding. According to the result of the analysis, the participants' different views concerning the same issues were expressed and valued. Participants were willing to express their thoughts and provide diverse responses. When disagreements were expressed by a participant, there was usually a reason and explicit explanation of disagreement rather than sheer emotional disapproval of others' opinions.

#### **5.2.6.7. Dominance of certain participants and contamination (group effect)**

The problem of the domination of conversation by certain participants was especially taken care of. It was noted that when it comes to sensitive questions such as gender issues or difficult questions (English hegemony), participants (P2, P3) who had been in the research environment longer tended to speak more than newcomers (P1 and P5.

P4 has already left for her other appointment at that time). P2 and P3 have been in Britain longer than others and have also been studying in their fields for a long time. Therefore, they might be considered as having more knowledge on the issue discussed than other participants. They may also have more confidence in their opinions and have felt less shy in expressing them than those who had just arrived. Another important point is, since P2 and P3 are Mphil/Ph.D. students, they may have been exposed to a great deal of stress and experienced difficulties from their studies and life and therefore the focus group may have become a good chance for them to express their complaint. Newcomers in the environment may have different opinions or no opinions at all but because they did not want to offend 'the senior', sometimes they chose to remain silent and just listened when other participants expressed their own problems and opinions. This could also be because newcomers have not reflected on the issues at stake (such as the issue of English learning in Britain and the feeling of being subordinate to others). There was probably not enough time for them to experience and think about these issues because the focus group was held in November, not far away from the time they arrived at the university. P2 and P3 were also probably very keen on helping the researcher gaining more information and therefore when a question was asked, it was usually P2 or P3 who took the initiative to respond.

Contamination and group effect was therefore important and needed to be taken care of. Fortunately, findings from the focus group showed little evidence that participants had been influenced by other participants. Newcomers were able to express different opinions, remain silent and even express curious suspicion when other participants expressed their opinions. The solution to the possible domination of certain participants here in this case is to avoid recruitment of participants who had a big gap of study status or big differences of years spent in Britain among them.

### **5.2.7. Summary**

With the focus group, participants have a chance to reflect on the research questions asked them, which they might not have thought about and may not want to express if they had not seen others doing so (such as on harassment and gender issues.) Focus groups may provide an opening-up chance for them when they see others talking about sensitive issues without feeling shame and shyness, which is very helpful for the research in stage 2. The focus group can be considered as 'warming up' for the following research methods.



At stage 2, the participants who were recruited were all newcomers since P2 and P3 were not in Britain at that time. Diary and interview gave the chance for newcomers to express themselves completely and fully in what they felt too shy to say (such as personal growth history and personal study experience, which they may have felt freer to express in individual interview and diary) in the focus group.

Overall, the focus group serves as an efficient method to gain insights into the research questions and it also works as warming-up for research in the following stages. Precaution needs to be taken in the next focus group in stage 3 to avoid recruitment of participants for the focus group who had a huge gap of difference in terms of study status and years staying in Britain. Equal status of studies and years of experience may prevent the over-dominance of conversation by senior participants and silence or shyness of newcomers.

### **5.3. Findings and discussion**

The findings and discussion of the focus group can be categorized into (1) English learning experiences in Taiwan (2) English learning experiences in Britain (3) ICT use (4) Gender issues.

#### **5.3.1. English learning experiences in Taiwan**

Since English was one of the subjects in the national curriculum in junior high school and senior high school, the participants started their formal English education at the age of thirteen, the first year of junior high school. In the study, negative views concerning their previous English learning were constantly shown in the focus group discussion. The data analysis of the focus group showed that participants considered that the previous English education they received in Taiwan had not only not been beneficial to their studying and life adjustment when they arrived in an English-speaking country, but also had a negative impact on their learning and attitudes. They also reported more instrumental motivation in learning English. Participants' views concerning English learning experiences in Taiwan can be categorized as follows: (1) teacher quality and teaching methods, (2) educational institutions and systems, (3) learning materials and non-authentic environment, (4) motivation in English learning.

##### **5.3.1.1. Teachers' quality and teaching methods**

Inadequately trained teachers who lack English proficiency and pedagogical skills were regarded as the cause of the participants' disaffection with and difficulty in English learning. It was reported that their previous English education had caused unfavourable attitudes and even fear of English as remarks of disaffection or even anger towards their previous teachers and teaching methods were constantly shown in the focus group discussion. The English lessons they had in Taiwan were predominately conducted in Mandarin, with a grammar-translation approach. Their views are consistent with reports by Tsao (1999) and Johanson (2001) as shown in Chapter 2.

P1: The teacher also used Chinese in the English lessons. I thought the English lesson was half spoken in Chinese and half in English.

P2: I think the foundation building of English learning is most important in junior high school. But the teachers in junior high school were the worst.

P2: The way the teacher forced us to learn made us completely afraid of English. When I saw English my feeling was fear! I could not accept it! So it could not become part of my life...even now, I still do not like English.

P3: My teacher before was a mainlander. I could not understand his Mandarin, not to mention his English...He speaks with a strong and weird accent in English. So I never understood him. So it's that kind of English I learned...I didn't want to learn English because of the terrible English the teacher spoke.

P5: There were no good teachers to help you. If you understand, it's ok; if you don't understand, maybe there would never be anybody to help you...

One participant (P3) also reported that the English teacher was inadequate in teaching western culture and literature, thus could not interest students in learning. Due to the limit of cultural interaction in the earlier age when these participants received their English education, teaching materials on English culture might be considered detached from the students' or even teachers' living and cultural experiences. This was reported as the cause of incomprehension and feelings of alienation. This will also be discussed later in section 5.3.1.3. on learning materials and the non-authentic environment.

P3: I remember when we were young, the teacher taught us a poem by Yeats. Now I think the teacher taught it badly! He neglected a lot of things. If he could have taught it nicely, maybe we students would have liked it and would like to learn it.

### 5.3.1.2. Educational institutions and educational systems

The exam oriented education system has led the educational institutions to focus on preparing students for exams with a grammar-translation method. This was reported as one of the factors leading to students' learning difficulties. In both formal schools and private learning institutions, students were not instructed to learn English with other methods except repeating reading English texts and learning grammar. Participants felt demotivated by the grammar-focused courses and found the courses provided by private cram schools useless.

P1: I was also very afraid of English lessons in the end. How to cope with the exams? The only way is reading, read the texts.

P1: I spent a lot of money (attending cram school) but I often stopped half way. Why? Because whenever we learned, it was always the present tense, perfect past tense. I felt frustrated.

At tertiary level, the participants who attended English departments at a Taiwanese university also reported that learning materials and tasks in secondary school and university were very different. It was difficult for most of the students to bridge from their original level in high school to the much higher level and difficult tasks required at university

P3: I remember I made a two-hundred-page note of new vocabulary out of a fourteen-page text. I read it more than ten times but I still could not understand it. When we entered university, no matter how good your English is in high school, it is impossible to link the two levels together...it was really difficult for me in the first two years. I don't think there were many people who can really finish a novel in the four years because they do not have the ability. The classmates should be very good on average, but it is very difficult to study literature...

As a student in an English department, one participant (P3) also felt she was required

and judged to have a higher standard in English proficiency. It was reported that students might adopt an avoidance strategy to avoid being negatively judged. A high level of anxiety had contributed to the vicious circle of face loss and avoidance.

P3: The most serious problem is that speaking and listening ability will deteriorate because we just read the texts. Many people do not dare to speak. It is hard to imagine that students from the department of English literature would be afraid to speak and are afraid of facing English. Because you felt inferior. You would think: How come I understood nothing?!...Our education system did not prepare us in high school for the things we would need at university or in society...

### **5.3.1.3. The teaching materials and non-authentic environments**

The content of textbooks on western culture and English language were considered detached from their living experiences. Situated in Taiwan, where there were no real needs to use English, the participants also felt they were disadvantaged in terms of English learning.

P1: Before I came here (Britain), I really could not use English at all. I don't know what I had learned in school before...I started to learn it since junior high school, senior high school, college, there was no real need to use English... I felt there was really no environment for English learning. I have had no chance to use it...

P3: Even if you learn it, you will not use it in your daily life. No matter how well you learn, no one can talk with you, so I didn't want to learn it.

P2: In the textbooks, people all have golden-hair. We had never seen gold-hair before.

P2: When I had my English lessons in junior high school, I felt I was dreaming in fairyland because what we learned was totally different from our life. What the teacher taught were things we would never use in our daily life. They appeared only in the class.

P3: Yes, for example, when he taught us a suit with cross-chequered pattern, we had never seen anyone around wearing that kind of suit.

To solve the problems of the irrelevance English learning textbooks, P3 suggested the text materials should be changed from introduction of western culture into lessons based on Taiwanese culture.

P3: I think it is impossible to force all Taiwanese people to understand western culture or the essence of western literature. If the materials can be changed into something more close to the living environment of Taiwan, you can teach students that if they have foreign friends coming to visit: how you introduce Taiwan's landscape and folk culture to them...When I was doing private tutoring, the child asked me: 'I can not see relevance of what I have learned to my life. Why should I learn it?'

The participants who showed more positive views about their English learning experiences in Taiwan were participants 4 and 5. As Bourdieu (1997) suggested, economic and cultural capital are interchangeable. The possessions of economic capital, cultural, and linguistic capital of families from higher and middle classes help their children bridge into formal education, where culture and power are reproduced. Coming from a middle class family, P4 had family support and thus fewer problems in integrating into school requirements and culture. Therefore, she had a sense of achievement in English learning, while P5 was interested in literature and that led her to an interest in English.

P4: I started to learn English since I was very young. My parents bought me a child's desk with Chinese phonetic symbols and ABCD on it. Then I was sent to cram school in the fifth year of primary school. When I came back, my father would help me with the work. I became one of the best students in English. I got a sense of achievement. I liked to learn English throughout junior and senior high school, my score remained within the top ten. At university, it's freer. We still had English lessons, and the textbooks were all written in English, I got used to it as I read more and more.

P5: I felt most interested in English when I studied in a department of foreign languages. I started to read novels, essays, and started to enjoy what was written inside the text, and started to feel I knew more, to enjoy English.

The findings from the participants' views of their English learning experiences in Taiwan indicated that the factors that determine the participants' English learning are interconnected. Participants' previous learning experiences were determined mainly

by the factors of family background, teachers, teaching methodology, learning materials, non-authentic learning environment, and English educational institutions. Participants' early English education (since high school for most participants and for P4 before high school) had a major impact on their interest, attitude and further development in English learning.

#### **5.3.1.4. Motivation in learning English**

Instrumental motivation plays a major role in the participants' English learning. It was reported that the drives of instrumental motivation included work requirement, academic requirement, getting a better job, globalization and westernisation. Working in the design industry, P1 reported that she found one of her colleagues could read English magazines and applied the ideas from it to her design. Even though she also bought the magazine, P1's English proficiency obstructed her from gaining information and understanding the text. For P2, most of the textbooks at university were in English. After she started working, P2 had the chance to go abroad and therefore needed to improve her spoken English. As an English major student, P5 considered people's English ability greatly determined their work opportunities and economic factors motivated her to improve English.

Academic requirements, general recognition of English and success, and determination to achieve in Confucius-heritage-culture also play their parts in motivating the participants to improve English. At university, though P5 thought she worked very hard, she failed her English conversation course in the first year. To 'save her face', she made up her mind to improve her English, especially spoken English, which has become very important in her English learning.

Globalization and westernisation were also mentioned in the focus group as the motivation for people to learn English.

P2: I think the motivation to learn English is mainly from the outside; it's rarely because I feel like learning it from my heart. We may feel it is important to learn but it's not because I like English or I like the environment of the foreign countries, whatever...

P4: The global trend nowadays is: many people use English. If many people used Chinese now, we would only learn whatever interests us and not learn English.

In addition to instrumental motivation, the participants (P4 and P5) who showed more positive views concerning their English learning experiences also had intrinsic and integral motivation in learning English through learning about English culture via different media. P4 liked to learn English with things she was interested in, such as cartoons, movies, English TV programmes. P5 enjoyed literature, novels, and essays.

In a word, instrumental motivation (academic requirements, economic factors, work requirements, and emphasis on achievement in Taiwanese society) determined the participants' motivation of English learning. Participants 4 and 5, who had more positive views concerning their learning experiences, also showed more intrinsic and integral motivation. Their English activities involved understanding English culture and language via different media: TV watching, movies, cartoons, and novel reading.

### **5.3.2. Experience in Britain**

The English learning experiences of the focus group participants consist of (1) cultural shock and language shock, (2) difficulty in academic work, and (3) lack of resources. (4) solutions.

#### **5.3.2.1. Culture shock and language shock**

Findings from the focus group showed previous English learning experiences in Taiwan have led to the participants' difficulties in cultural and language adjustment in Britain. Participants who had negative and unsuccessful English learning experiences in Taiwan tended to report that they also experienced difficulty in Britain. The level of English proficiency required in the authentic English language environment to deal with daily life and academic needs was reported to be far beyond that of some of the participants. Their communication difficulties consist of unfamiliarity with English language, problems in expressing themselves and understanding what others said to them. Different accents and versions of English(es) used in Britain also caused comprehension difficulties to some participants. P3 and P1 found it difficult to understand people from certain areas of Britain (P3 did not understand people from Birmingham 'who spoke quietly') and certain countries (P1 only understood twenty percent of what her Greek classmates said). Communication via telephone was found to be even more incomprehensible as it was limited to vocal transmission of sounds without visual clues; thus P1 was afraid of telephone conversations and found friends to help her when she needed to make a phone call.

P1: When I first came here, I could not even open my mouth, I could not even say the most basic 'How are you?', I just felt—ah! It's so difficult to speak. Maybe I have learned some grammar before, but I have never used it in reality.

P2: I always thought if I put myself into an English-speaking culture—even if I don't learn English well in Taiwan, I can always learn it well later. But I found it is not true. If someone has some foundation, and then comes to an environment like this, then their progress will increase ... if their level is only at about junior high school and is put into this environment, it will be a difficult growing environment.

P1: I think it is difficult to answer on the telephone. Sometimes I really do not understand what the person is talking about, sometimes I really get angry and I just say: Ha! Sorry, I don't understand (in Taiwanese)! Because they may speak very fast, and with a strong accent. Sometimes when the native speaker kids called the children of my landlady, they spoke very fast. I cannot understand them at all, not even whom they want to talk to. Yes, telephone communication is very stressful for me.

P3: Especially what you hear is the local Yorkshire accent, difficult to understand.

P1: If it is face-to-face conversation, I can use body language when I don't understand. Answering the telephone is very terrifying for me. If I want to make a phone call, I will ask P2 to help me. I wanted to change my ticket, I asked P2 and J (a friend) to help me. I feel very afraid, so if the phone rings, I am praying: it had better not be for me.

Some participants were also sensitive to others people's opinions toward them and their English. Comprehension difficulties and people's reaction can lead to their feeling of frustration, disaffection, and alienation toward English.

P2: When I went to shops to buy things, my English was not very bad, but people would treat you differently because your English is not as good as theirs. Yes, I often felt very frustrated all the day at that time, because I encountered different frustration everyday...I first came to London; it is a very commercialized environment...If one's personality is shy, in the end one may just retreat to a Chinese community, not accept English at all, and



become marginalized ...

Culture distance, which cannot be easily bridged, was also a source of their difficulties in communication. Difficulty also existed in using the vocabulary that only existed in a particular culture, such as particular herbs and food. Explanation or translation on higher levels of language forms such as poetry or literature was also considered difficult for P1 and P2.

P2: The most important thing is, I don't know the word, and cannot describe the word.

P1: At home, when we tried to describe one thing or one vegetable. What is the name of that vegetable? Or sauces, we tried to explain to our housemates or our landlady. It's strange, we don't know— ah! It's difficult to describe, there is too much Chinese food to be [translated] in English.

P2: Especially Chinese herbs.

P1: For example, gou-gi (herb).

P2: Dang-gui, ginseng.

P1: We tried to explain these things to our landlady, ha! It's difficult! Then [she would ask] why eat these?

P2 and P4 have different views concerning learning English in Britain. For P2, English is a study subject that needs effort and hard work; it was separate from her academic studies. For P4, she did not feel she was learning English as English has been integrated into her life. Being in a British university has provided her with opportunities to use English naturally and understand other people's cultures and languages with greater depth. P4's account is given in appendix 9 (P4.1).

P2: I feel English is still a tool for my study, I only see it as a tool—I just feel strange. It's the feeling. It helps me to understand my profession. That's all. I have no feelings for English, no feeling. I have no feeling for an English word. I have a feeling for Chinese characters but I have none for English words! My problems is, I have been trying to use English when I think, but I have been restricted...

P2: I feel I am learning two main things at the same time. I am learning English, and I am learning my profession...they are two very separate things.

The fear of negative evaluation from others also constitutes a factor in English

learning. Participants may have fear talking in front of people whose English is considered better than themselves: native speakers or speakers who are from the same regions of the world. P1 and P2 had great concern about making mistakes and worried about others' evaluation (afraid to lose face) while P4 showed less concern about the fear of evaluation.

P2: I think I have no courage, I have patience but not courage. For example, when I meet a British person, there might be a barrier in my mind. Because I know their English is definitely better than mine, I am afraid to speak. When I am afraid, my English ability will get worse.

P1: That's just the opposite of me. I am very afraid when I speak English with Taiwanese people or people who understand Mandarin. Because I feel everyone's English is too good...when I speak with native speakers, I feel because we are called foreigners, it's natural that we make mistakes. I dare to speak casually with them; I say whatever is in my mind. Because it is their own language, they can clearly understand what I am saying. When I talk with them, I never think about the sentence (structure, grammar)—.

P4: I may be more familiar with the America accent, here it is quite different. But I think it's ok. I think maybe my face skin is thicker! I think that's all right...I just speak out. Yes.

### 5.3.2.2. Difficulties with academic work

The difficulties the participants have with their academic work include difficulties in writing and reading required texts. As graduate students, they were required to read huge amounts of texts in a short period of time. For the participant who studied modern English literature, she felt it was even more difficult for her as modern English is 'famous for its irregular use of English'.

P1: I read and finish the text and still do not know what it means. People asked me if I understand what the professor said in the seminar, I said I understand. But I do not understand the books. I know what he (she) talks about, but if you ask me if I have questions or not, I cannot find the questions. I really cannot understand it quickly...this is my biggest problem now.

As far as academic writing is concerned, repetitive revision of one's essays and thesis before submission was considered exhausting experiences. Seeing and receiving

comments from the supervisor was also considered an anxiety provoking experience.

P3: Thesis writing is difficult and nobody can help me. I read my thesis about twenty times before I handed in, yes, every time I read it, I made large scale changes. I also [asked] my supervisor to read that twice. She spent eight hours reading my thesis. It's always—ah, I think that is really difficult! I was scolded badly, so I just repeated, sat down and repeated, rewrote the same things...It is very difficult to study a master's and doctoral degree here. I still get scolded by my supervisor very often...Every time I call her, I have the psychological preparation that I will be scolded terribly...This was mostly due to the fact that our English education did not teach me well.

### 5.3.2.3. Resources

The resources provided in the environment were also discussed in the group. Compared with other universities, the participants of this group thought that few resources can be used in the environment and even if there are supporting courses, they are also considered as unaffordable and not useful to their needs.

P5: You asked us what resources we used here, I want to ask: what resources can we find here?

P4: Yes! Yes!

P3: I think it is a good question.

Researcher: For example, human resources, or technologies, instruments—

P5: I remember at my university, there is a 'conversation partner' activity. I think it is good. If you attend a language course, they will find you a conversation partner, and you can practise together. I think there are not many resources provided to international students here at this university.

P4: And they all charge money. All charge money! I had a friend in Newcastle before. She said: 'you have got to use the language centre, all free! All free!'

P5: I studied at X university [before], it is all free too. Since it's free there, I always thought it would be free here. I was planning the courses I would attend. Anyway it is free. Later I found everything—charges money.

P4: Yes!

P2: I think the price is not cheap. I think the fee is quite high.

P5: That's really expensive, yes. I wonder why there are no resources provided for us?

P3: Sometimes when we discuss whether a colon or a semicolon should be used, my supervisor can spend one hour telling you what should be used. She told you your English is very bad and said: do you want to consider having English courses. I said I don't mind spending money but I don't think anyone can teach me.

P5: I really mind spending more money. I have already paid so much tuition fee and need to pay more?

P3: That's all right for me as long as there is some effect. I spend so much money and there are no resources in the department. I think if they want to take overseas students they need to have the preparation that the overseas students' English cannot be as good as British...but they take the students and do not support you. I mean in every sense, you have like problems in your life, you don't know where to go to because you feel like, you know, you don't feel like going to your supervisor, but you go, you know, he or she, usually they would turn you down. (*She spoke in English*) So I think it is not useful. I think it is quite difficult to be an overseas student here.

The factors influencing participants' English learning experiences in Taiwan and Britain were considered as being interconnected. A graphic of the interrelation of the various English learning factors is given in appendix 19.

#### 5.3.2.4. Solutions

The participants applied a variety of solutions to solve the problems described above. Human resources (friends, housemates) and non-human resources (such as TV and radio, computer CMC technologies) were also used. Courses in some departments also provided the participants with chances to practise English.

Human resources: People (housemates, friends, and landlords) played an important part in their daily life and English learning. Help from native speakers sometimes provided major help in participants' life and learning in Britain.

P1: Friends! (We) can have direct conversation, I think it is very important.

P1: The environment just made you use English. When I first moved into my landlady's house, because they are English, to communicate we need to use English. Even if you cannot speak, I would force myself to check my dictionary. I wanted to ask her how to use the washing machine. How to say 'washing machine'? We didn't need to use English in Taiwan. I didn't need to remember the English words for washing machine or dishwasher at all in Taiwan. Because now I live in this environment, I communicate every day with my landlady about all the things in daily life. I felt this helps me a lot in my English. Fortunately my landlady is a teacher. She is very patient. In the beginning I did not understand her. She wrote it on a piece of paper and told me to take the dictionary to check...she is very nice; she is really a very nice person. Because of the environment, I think I have a lot of chances to use English...

P3: I use my housemates, all my friends...they also need to read my thesis.

P2: You know I pronounce English sounds in a Taiwanese way! So, I just cannot pronounce many sounds that need to curl up the tongue, such as 'r', 'l'. Our Norwegian housemate is also an English teacher, she knew where my problem was and told me how to pronounce.

P5: I had a friend, she is a mother. She is very nice. She corrected my pronunciation. We read stories together...sometimes I read, and she corrected my pronunciation and told me which word was mispronounced. For example, the word 'number', I cannot tell the difference between "lumber". Every time I read it as 'lumber'. I read 'number' as 'lumber'. I always read it like that in Taiwan and nobody ever corrected me...and I took a mirror and repeated practising. I think this kind of practice helps my pronunciation a lot.

P5: When I was at X university, I had a housemate who is very nice. She often corrected my pronunciation. She corrected me if I spoke in an American style, for example if I say, "cart", she would say, "trolley". She corrected me with some sentences I often used them wrongly. This is a very good help. (Focus group)

Non-human resources: TV and radio were frequently mentioned as they are easily accessible and commonly used. P2 and P5 improved their understanding and

pronunciation by watching TV or listening to radio and imitated English used in the media.

P2: Radio, TV... I think I will use TV, and imitate the person speaking, and feel I have some progress. Not only on pronunciation, but also understanding what they are talking about. (Focus group)

Courses at university: P2 considered the academic course and seminars in the department provided some chance to practise English. P5 considered at the current stage, English has become part of her life and she did not feel she was learning English. Because of her course, she read many novels, which was also natural and helpful in improving her English.

P2: There is a good chance to improve my academic English now. There is a seminar every Wednesday, and other seminars. This is very helpful to my profession. There was a stage that I could only hear words. I understand words but not the whole sentence. How to cope with that? Continuing listening...and then gradually I can understand the whole sentences. (Focus group)

Friends, TV, radio, and books, were the resources the participants usually access to improve their English. As to computer-related activities, though some of the participants had to use computer software for their studies and used commercial websites to search for information for trip planning, it was not considered as a proper way to learn English. It was also possible that the time for each participant was limited in the focus group and therefore the issue of the impact of ICT on their English learning will be explored in the following stage 2.

#### **5.3.2.5. Hegemony and subordination**

The participants' views toward the hegemony of English language and feeling of being subordinate differ according to the experiences they had and the people they encountered. However, the close connection of English with knowledge and power was recognized.

P3 reported strong feelings of being subordinate to others because of studying English. She thought others easily confused daily use of English with professional studies and became patronizing to her. P3 also reported feeling the strong connection among

English, intelligence, and success. She was upset that everyone can tell her how to speak English and people think one is stupid because one cannot speak English well. Her account is given in appendix 21.

P1 and P2 thought English expression ability might have some impact on the attention and interest one can gain from others. According to her experience, P2 felt the Taiwanese who came to Britain to give a speech might be neglected because of their English expression ability; therefore Taiwan's issues became marginalised compared to American and British issues. In addition, she felt native speakers can easily be considered as privileged and superior in Taiwanese government or educational institutions. Some native English speaker's attitude toward English and non-English speaking countries also made her feel the situation was unfair. P2 considered the international use of English is a form of cultural hegemony. However, P5 considered the people she met were all humble and nice. She did not think English learning put her in a position of being subordinate to others. P2's views are shown in appendix 22.

### **5.3.3. ICT use and experiences**

#### **5.3.3.1. ICT experiences**

TV and radio are commonly used by the participants from an early age as the main source for information. The participants had modest views concerning their computer ability and use. Computers were used since high school and most of the participants (P1, P3, and P5) use computers for the basic function: typing.

P5: I started to use a computer in senior high school, and I was not very good at computers. I only knew the basic things, such as typing. (Focus group)

P2 considered herself good at computers as she had the ability to deal with software and hardware problems before due to the prevalent use of computers in her working environment. However, as computer technology advances rapidly, her ability with computer did not upgrade with time.

P2: I sometimes use a lot of databases to check papers and data...it seems technology has become my strong point. I think it has something to do with the environment I worked in in Taiwan, because in the office we had one computer

for each person. Others may have no computer in the office and can only use the Internet at home. That costs a lot of money. Because in our office the accessibility is so high, it is irresistible. (Focus group)

When there was a problem with her computer, P1 needed her male relatives' help to deal with it. P3 expressed strong dislike for computers and male help.

P1: I need my male cousin to help me with this. Setting up the machine, connecting to the Internet, etc, all completed by my male cousin.

P3: Yes, my male cousin also did this. He would say: let me help you with this. But actually he just messed up the whole computer, because he was not familiar with it. If you could find a female to help you, she would tell you what exactly you need, explain to you how she would help you. I think I am afraid to have a man touching my computer. He messes up all the files, and I think my files are private; I don't like people touching my computer...

To P3, boys occupied the technology resources. She also had negative views regarding TV and technology.

P3: I think resources in Taiwan have been quite limited. In primary school, we did the scientific experiments and we were categorized into teams. Six people a team, what we can play were actually quite limited and were all occupied by boys. They thought: 'Only we can use it!' It is the same in universities, boys occupied all the Internet lines, and they would say: 'Girls can not use it, don't use it!' Most of the resources were occupied by boys.

P3: I had nearly no technology experiences. I don't like TV; I don't like to receive any information, I also don't like watching computers. I learned Chinese typing systems in junior high school and then I forgot it and never used it again. If possible I tried not to use it. In senior high school I had a part-time job, typing, I used it and then forgot it. So now I still cannot use Chinese typing. Ok, it was required at the university to type, so I then learned it. But I can only do typing so far. I rarely use the Internet even.

As Warschauer (2000a) suggested, when students are allowed access to new technologies, they have high expectations to use it for meaningful learning and activities. Students' feeling of frustration may be even deepened if they are denied



the chance to do so. Eventually, they may be demotivated and even resist learning (discussed in chapter 4, section 4.4.2.2). P3's strong expression of dislike for computers and technology is a sign of resistance to the meaningless task she was assigned to—typing. By refusing to learn, she was also protesting against the unfair distribution of resources and tasks to males and females. This sign of disavowal also expressed her refusal to recognise the authority that determined what she has, is, and has to learn.

### 5.3.3.2. ICT and English learning

Making friends and practising English through on-line communication programmes were discussed in the group. Due to the age factor (29 on average), the participants had no experiences of making friends on the Internet and communicating through on-line communication tools. However, they reported their friends or junior family members had such experiences. P2 and P5 showed resistance and disapproval of this kind of relationship and communication. More traditional ways such as radio, TV, video, which are easily accessible and already commonly used, were considered as more useful to them. Due to the age factor of the participants in the focus group, newly emergent on-line interactive activities were not as well accepted by them as the more traditional and familiar media: TV and radio.

P3: I have no experiences myself, but my sister used ICQ (on-line communication tool) and met an American boyfriend. I think there are lots of young kids using computers and practising English communication.

P1: My friend used email and met a British boyfriend...she was in Taiwan and used email very often. Her brother knew this boy because they were both interested in computers. They had discussions and then her brother introduced this boy to his sister. Then they became girlfriend and boyfriend...they used English to communicate. Sometimes talking on the phone. In Taiwan it is not common to use English in speaking. She said: 'I felt I had a lot progress in English, also in writing'. When they met each other, her boyfriend would correct her English and told her some English culture.

P2: Listen to radio, very traditional way, no making friends.

P2: Because I think it is not trustworthy, completely not trustworthy!  
(communication and making friends on line)

P5: I am also very traditional and conservative, I don't have that experience.

More traditional and mainstream ways of learning English were the use of radio, TV, and video. P1 reported watching TV and video helpful to her English learning. P4 reported using cartoon videos to teach children English and listening to 'Studio Classroom', an American English teaching programme in Taiwan, as a long-term English learning activity. As a result, she considered herself more exposed to the west American English and accent.

P1: I watch TV a lot, so I would use teaching video programmes...I think it is quite useful. For a person like me, it's quite useful. There are many of these types of programmes, they will focus on pronunciation, and my pronunciation is not very correct. In the class, the teacher could only teach once, I can watch what is pronounced, and rewind, and watch it again. I think it is quite useful to me.

#### **5.3.4. Gender issues**

Participants had different gender experiences. Difficulties in their life and study resulting from gender factors mentioned by the participants include (1) distance from supervisor, (2) harassment, (3) hostile attitudes from males, and (4) distribution of resources and housework in Taiwan.

##### **5.3.4.1. Distance from supervisor**

P2 reported that distance and precautions between male supervisors and female students had a negative impact on her academic life. Not being able to socialize and build up a friendship with her supervisor prevented her from asking many questions related to her study and life in Britain. On the other hand, P1 reported that she had not encountered gender difficulty as she had a father-daughter relationship with her previous male supervisors at work and brotherhood relationship with her teachers in Taiwan.

P2: Because I am female, I cannot go to drink beer in the pub with my supervisor. So the relationship is always teacher-student, we cannot become friends. So there are big obstacles in my studies. Because, you know, in a pub you can ask a lot of questions...Even if we go to pubs...you cannot be

very relaxed and casual...I think there is a barrier, a protection. My supervisor is a man. If my supervisor was a woman, I would feel closer. I could ask her questions, including questions in my life. I think my supervisor knows nothing about my life. He knows even only one-quarter of my studies. The communication is limited because I am a girl.

#### **5.3.4.2. Harassment in Britain**

Harassment in Britain was reported by P1 and P3. It was reported by Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985) that stereotypes of racial characteristics are usually connected with stereotypes of women (e.g. Asian women tend to be considered docile and malleable), and the nature of sexual and racial harassment. The findings showed that nowadays, overseas female students are still subject to male harassment, especially in public spaces in Britain. P1's account on this aspect is shown in appendix 10 (P1).

P3: It's safer in Britain, but here there are also boys who would harass Asia girls. Many of them. Once I was walking in the street with my friends, this man just stopped me, asked me questions: "Are you Chinese or Japanese?...Every time I went to a pub with my friends, (some man) just grasped you, and don't let go. I think I am continually being harassed. Being an Asian girl, he might think you are easy.

#### **5.3.4.3. Hostile attitude from males**

Male hostility is another form of male dominance over women. It can be expressed with verbal belittling and outright hostile attitudes.

P5: I had a terrible experience. Before I came to England, I went to take the train with many pieces of luggage. When I was climbing up the platform, two men just passed me. (They were) about forty years old. One said to the other: Should we help her? The other said: Aren't girls nowadays all talking about women's independence? Don't help her!

P5: And they went away.

P3: They have never helped women at all. We still need to help ourselves whether women are independent or not.

P5: The things he does not want to do—.

P3: —just blame it on women.

#### 5.3.4.4. Distribution of housework and resources

The participants also compared housework distribution in Britain and Taiwan. It was found that in Taiwan, even with some feminist progress, some of them still do most of the housework and are in a subordinate and inferior position in the family. The participants reported that they have undertaken an unfair distribution of housework and resources and were treated as inferior in the family. The housework distribution and family structure are changing in modern days, yet these changes may not have reached the rural areas where some of the participants lived. In Britain, they noticed that due to the society and cultural structure, even though there were many women who chose to stay at home, men also share housework. P2 considered that family support (childcare provided by grandparents) in Taiwan enables women to continue working, while in Britain, because of the law (financial support within three years of unemployment), women tended to choose to stay at home child rearing. P1 and P5 also reported experiences with the host family, where fathers served meals, did the household chores, and took care of children.

P3: At home, you have to cope with housework and homework at the same time. At school, things were also undertaken by girls.

P2: And the class leader is always a boy. Girls can only be the subordinate one.

P5: In real life, I am the one to be exploited. I am the Cinderella in my family because I have got three younger brothers. Most of the work of course was distributed to females. Yes, I did not enjoy that at all.

P1: In my family, girls do everything. Men feed themselves full and sit in the living room reading newspapers, drinking tea, and watching TV. Girls stay inside the kitchen washing dishes, chopping fruits. When our big family ate together, men sat on the seats and women stood aside.

P5: Is it still so now?

P1: No, it's just because when all the friends and family came, there were not enough seats in the house. So it was of course father and uncles who sat, and mothers and us, maybe because the table was big, and our kitchen was big, girls just running around like that.

As illustrated in the above quotation, in some participants' family, when there were not enough seats, men had the seat and women stood. This rule applies to the

distribution of other resources: men have the priority. In some families, it is considered natural that women should undertake most of the housework and were treated unfavourably. The ideology of patriarchy and male priority permeated so deeply that when she encountered questions by other participants, P1 naturally defended the behaviour of men in her family (because there were not enough seats, because the kitchen was big). However, the family structure was also considered as already changing, which may release women from the role of housework and childcare provider.

Some of the participants had to undertaken housework, received an unfavourable share of resources, and tolerate hostile attitudes from men in Taiwan. When they came to Britain to seek better educational opportunities, some of them had a distant relationship with a male supervisor, which could lead to reduced opportunities of gaining information and integrating into the academic discourses. Some of them encountered harassment in public space. Moreover, English, the main communication medium in Britain, can put them in a disadvantaged position as some of them did not have the level of English proficiency to cope with requirements from academic study and daily communication and may find study and life even more challenging.

#### **5.3.4.5. English and women**

As regards the impact of English learning on them, some participants (P2, P3) thought English is restrictive for Taiwanese women, that is, women are supposed to be good at English and take jobs that were English-related yet closely related to women's work in the private domain and restricted in their development (secretary, teachers). Despite its close connection with knowledge and power, English does not necessarily help women in gaining power. On the contrary, English only has marginal effects in women's power gaining.

P2: I think at work, English may help women in the position uplifting. But when you reach some point, no matter how good your English is, you are still stuck there. The factor of gender just restricts you...because your English is too good, you can never become a leader, you become like somebody's subordinate role. It becomes the only thing you know and others only see that, and forget your other skills and talents. Besides, you are a female. Ah! That's perfect!

P3: Yes, English secretary, English teachers.

P1: This is Taiwanese working place culture.

P2: I think if you have power, you can improve your English ability. English does not necessarily positively help women...I think English only has a marginal effect on women's power.

#### 5.4. Summary

This chapter has provided a description of methodology and findings from stage 1, which served as the backbone to set the scene for the following stages. The data collection method adopted in the stage 1 study is a focus group. It aimed to explore the impact of ICT and ideology on Taiwanese women's language learning in a British university. Twelve questions were asked in a focus group meeting with five participants. The research questions used in the main field study were further developed from the findings of focus group studies completed in November 2001. There were open-ended questions which allowed the participants to express their target language learning, gender experiences, and use of ICT fully. The three aspects were the dimensions that this research aimed to explore in revealing the insights and phenomenon in this research context.

The stage 1 focus group served as a warming up activity. It allowed the researcher to have some basic understanding of the issues at first and it also allowed the participants the chance to reflect on the three aspects of research questions and be prepared to open up in the following diary study and interviews. The languages used in the focus group were Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese, which were the mother tongue languages of the participants. By speaking in their mother tongue language, the participants were able to express their thoughts accurately and efficiently. The focus group was taped-recorded for analysis in the data analysis stage. Data analysis was an essential part of the research. The data analysis in this study was based on content analysis, which involves identifying important examples, themes, and patterns from the data.

The substance of data findings were categorized into (1) English learning experiences in Taiwan; (2) experiences in Britain; (3) ICT use and experiences; (4) gender issues. These analytic categories reflected the research aims to explore the role of English in the construction of gender and power and women's views about prevailing gender ideology; as shown in chapter 1. The aspects of the way ICT and gender influence their learning will be further investigated in the next two stages.

The reported factors that had a major impact on their English learning, such as learning materials, learning institutions, teachers, teaching methodology, non-authentic environment, were interconnected. Difficulties encountered in Britain, such as language and culture shock, problems in academic work, were considered as consequences of previous unsuccessful learning in Taiwan. More negative than positive views concerning their previous English learning in Taiwan were reported and more participants reported having instrumental motivation in English learning than intrinsic or integral motivation. Participants 4 and 5, who reported having intrinsic and integral motivation, also had positive views toward English learning.

Other difficulties encountered in Britain were mainly a lack of resources and support in studies and life. Help from native speakers who were housemates or friends of the participants played an important role in their life and language learning. Supporting language courses provided at the university were regarded as non-affordable. This might be because some of the participants were self-funded, of older age, and were from rural areas; therefore, they were relatively poorer. In Britain, non-human resources (TV, radio) were also commonly used to learn English. The computer is not mentioned as a medium of English learning but will be explored in the next stage.

Generally, participants had positive views toward the use of technologies. Most of the participants reported that they started to watch TV and listen to radio at an early age. Computers were used since high school but only for the basic function: typing and word processing. Learning English via TV, video, or other well-accepted and commonly used technologies were more often reported than via the Internet or computer. Participants reported friends or younger family members used on-line communication to learn English but they themselves did not have these activities. It is interesting to note that more traditional and familiar ways of learning such as watching TV, videos, listening to the radio were used more frequently. The age of the participants tended to be older (average 29) and this may be the reason for less familiarity and acceptance of computer-related learning activities and restricting themselves to their familiar tools. One participant showed strong dislike toward technology. It might be her expression of resistance toward a less meaningful task (typing), an inferior gender image regarding technology, and unequal resources distributed to her. Their use of computers as well as other reasons related to gender factors and learning style factors will be further explored in the next stage of the research.

As women, the participants had experienced unfavourable treatment in the family and society in Taiwan. Some participants had experienced difficulties and obstacles imposed by the society, learning institutions, and even their own family due to the unfair distribution of resources and workload. When they came to Britain, a distant relationship with male supervisors plus language and culture distance can lead to less access to resources and information, fewer chances of acquiring discourses and assimilation in the academic institution, thus making their study and life more difficult. Even though they thought it is safer in Britain, harassment in the public space was also reported.

English hegemony was illustrated as they felt English was also considered as the only standard of intelligence and the source of knowledge. Despite its connotation and connection with power and knowledge, participants (P2, P3) thought that English was restrictive to women and only had a marginal effect on women's power gaining; gender expectation still restricts women's development.

The findings from the stage 1 study showed that gender, language ideology, and the cultural capital of their family shaped women's life and learning. Their digital literacy and English literacy, the necessary tools for the completion of the study in Britain will be researched in stages 2 and 3.

The present chapter has provided a general view about the design, approaches, and findings in stage 1. The following chapters will provide descriptions of the methodology and the findings from stages 2 and 3. Precaution needs to be taken in the next focus group in stage 3 is to avoid the recruitment of participants who had a huge gap of difference in terms of study status and years staying in Britain. Equal status of studies and years of experiences may prevent over-dominance of the conversation by senior participants and silence or shyness of newcomers. The participants also need to be informed that they may have to spend two to three hours for the focus group; thus, they can reschedule their day in advance. The provision of refreshment also needs to be prepared for the long hours of talking. As regards difficult questions such as gender and hegemony, since some participants did not understand the meaning of these terms, the questions will be rephrased for the next focus group. More provoking questions will also be added to elicit more interaction.

As regards preparation for the next two stages, P1, P4, and P5 will be recruited for further exploration in stage 2 because of their availability. P2 and P3 were not in Britain during stage 2, therefore could not be recruited. In stage 1, computer-related



activities of English learning were not reported explicitly. This may be due to the age factor, learning style, lack of experiences, gender factors, and other individual factors of the participants. The limited time in a group discussion may also have inhibited the participants from expressing themselves fully. The focus group helped the researcher to observe the interaction and negotiation of meaning in a social context. The fact that it may lack data available from individual contact and in-depth reflection can be complemented by using other different methods. In stage 2, in-depth interview and diary will be applied to focus on and explore the issue in depth.

## **Chapter 6 Stage 2 Methodology and findings**

### **6.1. Introduction**

The chapter serves to provide discussion on the methods adopted in empirical research stage 2 and the related issues. It also provides discussion drawing on data collected from this stage via the methods of diary and interview. The chapter is divided into four parts: (1) method of diary, (2) method of interviews, (3) data analysis and presentation, and (4) findings and discussion.

### **6.2. Methods of diary studies**

A diary, as Bailey (1991) defines it, is 'a first-person account of language learning or teaching experiences, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analysed for recurring patterns or salient events'. Nunan (1992) noted that diaries and journals are important introspective tools in language research. They have been used widely to investigate many aspects of language learning, such as second language acquisition and teacher-learner interaction.

#### **6.2.1. Use and conduct of diary**

Nunan suggested that despite the possible embarrassment of the entries, the data collection should be as candid as possible. After the data collection, the researcher identifies patterns and significant events, and interprets the factors (e. g. social interpersonal, and affective factors) that appear to be important in language learning.

##### **6.2.1.1. Advantages**

Diary entries provide insights into the process of learning. These insights could be difficult or impossible to get in other ways. Nunan also suggested that diaries 'also have a great deal of potential for the investigation of learning strategies and learning preferences of second language learners' and insights into some of the psychological, social, and cultural factors in language development.

##### **6.2.1.2. Disadvantages**

Like other introspective data collection methods, diary studies have problems such as external validity (how conclusions based on data from a single subject can possibly be

extrapolated to other language learners), the status of the data, and the interpretation derived from them ‘to what extent do the diary entries realistically reflect what was really going on at the time the recordings were made?’ (Nunan, p.123-124).

The present study aims to explore qualitatively the research questions in depth, in the form of life history case study, with a small sample, rather than quantitatively with a big sample. A diary, which is useful for the investigation of language learning factors, learning development, language strategies and preferences, is considered as a suitable method for the research.

## **6.2.2. The use of diaries in the present study**

### **6.2.2.1. Sample**

Three participants from the previous focus group were selected to take part in the diary study because of their availability. The other two participants were not in the UK at the time stage 2 was conducted. The participants were informed and asked to take part in the diary study by email and by face-to-face conversation. Two of the participants taking part in stage 2 were studying art and humanities; the other one was studying science.

### **6.2.2.2. Diary design**

The diary design was divided into three sections as shown in appendix 6. The three sections of the diary were dedicated to the three topics respectively: English learning, ICT, and Gender. Participants were asked to write their diary under the title of the three questions about their activities and views concerning the three aspects. They were told to keep the diary for two weeks.

### **6.2.2.3. The conduct of the diary**

One of the participants (P4) started the diary writing before the researcher could deliver the design to her and she wrote in her own way. The other two participants used the form provided by the researcher, one responded to the researcher by email and one chose to write the diary with a pen. A book token was given to show the gratitude of the researcher. The participants kept the diary for two weeks and were informed that they would be interviewed after the diary keeping.

#### **6.2.2.4. Recording media**

Participants' access to and proficiency in recording technology—computer—may have had a particular impact on the motivation, frequency, and quality of the diary keeping. Participants P4 and P5 had easier access to computers and wrote high quality, lengthy diaries. Participant P1 had to rely on pen and paper. P4 and P5 also submitted their diary every day via email therefore there is no delay in recording by these two participants. P1 stated that she could not write with a computer for a long time and staring at the screen for too long made her tired. In addition, she lived far away from campus and had inconvenient access to the Internet and email facilities. Therefore, she chose to write on paper and submit the text to the research when she finished the entire diary. As a result, the researcher had no way of examining if she was keeping the diary every day or not. Since it is not possible to ask all the participants to come to campus every day and keep their diary on computer, what the researcher can do is to trust the participants and encourage them to keep the diary every day. The participant who chose to write with pen instead of computer (P1) wrote a shorter length of diary compared with other two participants (P4 and P5) who wrote with computer. The description of the activities she undertook during the day and her comments were usually as short as one sentence or a few words. It is possible that the participant did not know the format of diary writing the research required. It is also possible that the participant was so busy with her life and studies that she could not devote great effort and time to the diary keeping. In future research, a sample of diary writing may be provided to the participants who do not know the genre well as a reference for writing. Participants may have the importance of their efforts in writing in detail and length to the qualitative research explained to them.

#### **6.2.2.5. Recording format**

P4 is an enthusiastic and keen English learner with positive views toward learning and studying in Britain. When P4 was informed by the researcher that she would keep a diary of her daily activities related to English learning, she immediately started the diary without using the design form of the diary which was designed by the researcher later and followed by the other two participants. Instead of using the time section 'morning, afternoon, evening' to record the events, she recorded events that happened in the day all together with an arrow symbol to indicate each event. Her diary keeping, thus, is less limited by the design form and there is a greater level of freedom of reflection and exploration of her language learning. Therefore, in the main study, participants may be offered the choice to keep the diary in their preferred form or with the diary design provided by the researcher.

#### **6.2.2.6. Feedback from the researcher**

P5 also provided much valuable information with lengthy writing in her diary and she would write to the researcher about more thoughts that occurred to her even when the two weeks writing time has already finished. Highly cooperative and helpful participants were a great help to the research. The researcher had chances to talk to participants 4 and 5 during the course of their diary taking and gave them feedback on the diary keeping when asked in the campus and via email by P4 and P5 if their writing suited the researchers' need. P4's two-week diary was written with a word processor and sent to the researcher every day by e-mail. Thus, the researcher could also respond to her and encourage more writing without too much intervention (e.g. That's very nice. Thank you very much but can you give more description of details and keep a record of the conversations?) via e-mail. Feedback and encouragement from the researcher during the course of writing helps participants feel more supported, more secure about the way they keep the diary, and more motivated to write more about their thoughts and experiences.

#### **6.2.2.7. Language**

The participants were free to choose to write in the language that they felt most comfortable with. Two participants (P4, P5) chose to write in English and P1 chose to write in Mandarin Chinese. P1's diary was later partly translated into English by the researcher for the use of data analysis.

Overall, the diary design meets the need of the research aims. Interaction and feedback from the researcher during the time the participants were still keeping the diary may help them feel more supported and motivated. The use of computers and email also helps and encourages the writing of diaries. For the participants who did not use a computer and email to write, the researcher may need to call them occasionally and encourage them to try different recording media (such as tape-recorder) or merely ask them to devote more time to it. A sample of a diary format may be provided for participants who are less familiar with the diary writing required in the research.

### **6.3. The use of in-depth interview**

### **6.3.1. Use and conduct of interview**

Interviewing is a data collection method extensively used by qualitative researchers. The goal of this qualitative research was to collect as much detailed and person-centred information as possible. An in-depth interview is a reasonable option for collecting data when the research requires detailed information and when it is reasonable to rely on information gathered from a small number of informants. The present research goes for depth rather than breadth in the material and interview serves as one of the methods to collect data which is 'based on emotion, experiences, and feelings' and 'data based on sensitive issues' (Denscombe, p.111).

The research aims to investigate the emotions, experiences, and feelings of Taiwanese female student's English and ICT learning experiences within the spectrum of gender. The nature of emotions, experiences, and feelings is such that they need to be explored rather than simply reported in a word or two; therefore, interview was considered suitable as one of the methods of data collection.

The present research also deals with sensitive gender issues such as equal distribution of resources in the family, education access, technology resource distribution, women's views of treatment and attitude of the society and males toward them. As the research covers issues that might be considered sensitive or personal, a face-to-face approach is considered suitable to produce better data.

#### **6.3.1.1. Semi-structured interview**

Semi-structured interviewing was adopted in this research. As Denscombe (1998) stated, with semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered but she/he 'is also prepared to be flexible in terms of order of topics and let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher (p. 113).

Interviews are arranged conversation with a planned agenda for the discussion set by the researcher to explore specific questions. A notepad, a tape-recorder, and the researcher's ability to conduct a conversation, are the basic requirements for an interview. The superficial ease and similarity between an interview and a conversation can 'lull the researcher into a sense of false security' and 'interviewing may fail miserably unless there is good planning, proper preparation and a sensitivity to the complex nature of interaction during the interview itself' (Denscombe, p.110).

### **6.3.1.2. The interview effect and personal identity**

Research on interviewing showed that interview data are likely to be affected by the personal identity of the researcher. People respond differently depending on how they perceive the person asking the questions. In particular, the sex, and age, and the ethnic origins of the interviewer 'have a bearing on the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal' (Denscombe, p.116). As Denscombe further stated, "Interviewee, and interviewers...have their own preferences and prejudices, and these are likely to have some impact on the chances of developing rapport and trust during an interview'. On sensitive issues or personal matters, the interviewer's identity assumes particular importance. The interviewer's sex, ethnicity, and age in relation to those of the interviewees 'is very likely to influence the nature of the data that emerges—their fullness and their honesty' (Denscombe, p. 116). As our sex, age, ethnic origin, and all aspects of our self cannot be changed, there are limits to the extent that the researchers can disguise themselves during interviews. What researchers can do is to present themselves in a way not to upset the interviewee and remain neutral and non-committal on the statements made during the interview. The point is to get the interviewee to open up, and not to provoke hostility and put the interviewee on the defensive (Denscombe, p.117).

### **6.3.1.3. Personal involvement**

As Oakley (1981) argued (quoted by Denscombe), 'if the aims of the research are to help or empower the people rather than dispassionately learn from them', then the approach of the interview will need to change accordingly (p.117). The researcher 'becomes fully involved as a person with feeling, experiences and with knowledge which can be shared with the interviewee' and she /he will 'show emotion, respond with feeling and . . . engage in a true dialogue with the interviewee'.

### **6.3.2. The use of interview in the present study**

Three participants out of the five participants in the focus group took part in the interview research. These are Participants 1, 4, and 5. P2 and P3 were not in Britain at the time of interviewing. Participants were asked if they had any preference of time and place for the interview. The researcher's study room was considered the best place because it is on the campus and the participants can easily come to the study room once they are in campus for their study. Participants also chose the time that suited them best.

### **6.3.2.1. Interview questions**

The interview questions can be found in appendix 7. The questions were sent to the participants beforehand and participants had plenty of time to reflect and prepare for the interview. At the beginning of an interview, the interviewees tended to be nervous due to the awareness that they were being recorded but were able gradually to relax and open up on the topics discussed. Therefore, the easier questions such as description of their experiences were asked first and sensitive questions, such as gender issues, were asked at the end. The researcher also sensed their tense mood and tried to talk informally and reassured them that the interviews did not need to be formal and they could speak as they wanted. As time went by, all the participants were able to relax and open up on the issues at stake.

### **6.3.2.2. Equipment used in the interview**

As in the focus group, various pieces of equipment were used in the interview. A tape recorder with a mini-microphone, which the participants can hold in their hands or put in front of them, was used. There was also a pair of earphones connected to the recorder of which the researcher put one to her ear during all the interviews to detect any possible malfunction of the machine. The researcher chose the tape with 120 and 90 minutes for the interview but the interviews with P4 and P5 were longer than two hours and therefore were interrupted by the automatic stopping of the machine and the researcher had to change the tapes.

### **6.3.2.3. Interview effect**

Since the researcher shared similarity in many aspects of self-identity with the participants (Taiwanese female students studying in a British university), rapport and trust was easily built up. Participants were willing to open up on sensitive issues addressing gender and other matters and being cooperative to help the researcher gain as much detailed information as possible. However, solidarity and prejudice may also easily influence the data. The researcher was taking care to strike a balance between keeping a passive and detached stance, and being fully engaged with personal involvement with the intent to empower. During the interview, the researcher tried to maintain neutrality to most of the participants' statements and speak when it was necessary to probe and encourage more talking from the participants. Exchange of information on ICT and meaningful dialogue with participants triggered more talk on their experiences of learning and views. As far as sensitive gender issues were



concerned, talk about the researcher's own experiences as a woman with controlled feelings and emotions after or before the participants revealed theirs was efficient and helped to promote more talking about diverse perspectives from the participants. It was considered necessary and worthwhile for the researcher to reveal her own experiences first or after building on the rapport and reduce the level of embarrassment or defensiveness of the participants. Feedback from the researcher can also reduce the participants' feeling of insecurity and the impression that the interview is her one-person self-exposure. Thus, the participants could feel secure and were willing to continue the interview. It is also important to note that the researcher also engaged in mutual interaction with the participants in life, studies, and matters such as normal daily conversation, learning to use software, sharing information and technology resources. Compared to the rich information gathered from the interview, the influence of prejudice that may be caused by personal involvement was minor.

#### **6.3.2.4. Language**

The participants were free to choose the language they felt most comfortable using. One participant (P5) chose to be interviewed and answer in English as she is highly competent in English (she has spent one year in America, one year in Britain, and has been an English teacher for several years). She also felt that speaking in English could save the researcher's trouble of translation. The other two participants (P1 and P4) chose to use Mandarin Chinese. Taiwanese language was sometimes used when they can describe an event with vivid Taiwanese idioms.

#### **6.3.2.5. Interview skills**

As Denscombe states, a good interviewer is 'sensitive to the feelings of the informant, is able to tolerate silence during the talk, and is adept at using prompts, probes, and checks, and is not judgmental' (p.124-125). The researcher managed to be good at tolerating silence, using prompts and probes, and not being judgmental. However, there was a lack of using summary to check if there was any misunderstanding between what the interviewer understood and what the interviewees said. The reliance on the use of tape-recorder may have made the researcher believe that everything can be accurately recorded and replayed without any misunderstanding. Fortunately, email and other communication means help the researcher to clarify with the participants quickly if there is anything the researcher did not understand

completely. The skills of summary and checks will be developed for the use of follow-up research.

Overall, three participants provided detailed and rich information for the interview research and a balanced approach between personal involvement and detached neutral interviewing promoted opening-up and revelation on the questions asked. Since the identity of the researcher and the participants are not changeable and must have an impact on the data collected, the researcher was aware of the possibility of prejudice yet still considered the interviews as successful and worthwhile in gathering the data needed for the research.

#### **6.4. Analysis and presentation of the research data**

Data analysis is the process of making order and meaning from the mass of collected data. Qualitative data is often voluminous and ambiguous; therefore qualitative data analysis can be a time-consuming and messy process. The aims of qualitative data analysis are to identify significant patterns and construct a framework for presenting what the data reveal.

##### **6.4.1. Transcription of interviews and information from diaries**

The three tapes of interviews were typed into a computer after the conducting of interview. The interview with P5 was in English; therefore no translation was necessary. Interviews with P1 and P4 were in Mandarin Chinese, and were translated into English at the same time when they were typed into the computer. The researcher had already gained more confidence and experiences in translation after the experience of the focus group; therefore, the process of transcription of the tape into manuscripts in Mandarin Chinese and then translating them into English as in the focus group was not considered necessary.

Information from the diaries kept by participants 4 and 5 was in English and there is no need for translation. The diary kept by P1 was in Mandarin Chinese and was partially translated into English for the use of data analysis. Regularity in behaviour patterns and significant events concerning the research topics was marked and compared with the data gathered from the focus group and interview.

##### **6.4.2. Analysis and presentation of data**

The data analysis of this research was based on content analysis. Content analysis involves identifying coherent and important examples, themes, and patterns. In the present research, speech with the participants was analysed individually because the research emphasizes not only the coherent patterns of behaviour and attitudes but also the differences and variations between individuals. The researcher read through all the transcript manuscripts of interviews and diaries and noted down general differences and similarities in the use of ICT, views and experiences on gender issues, and English learning experiences. After studying through and organizing the interviews, and diaries, the researcher identified and categorized the primary themes and patterns. At this stage, certain fundamental issues relating to this research were revealed, such as the fact the gender-related factors played an essential part not only in participants' access to educational resources, but also in their life and studying in Taiwan and Britain. At the following stage, the researcher searched for explanations and quotations from interviews and diaries to support the findings of this research. The final stage was the presentation of the data.

In the stage of data presentation, researchers have to choose particular words to summarize and reflect the complexity of the data. The research aimed to investigate the impact of gender and ICT on Taiwanese female students' English learning in a British university. The facts revealed by this study, such as unequal resource distribution to women, fear of and lack of access to technology, help from female native speakers, use of ICT to help their English learning, and problems caused by males, are valuable and beneficial to Taiwanese female students who study for academic purpose in a British university. Learning from the findings of the research, Taiwanese female students will have an increased understanding of ICT use, language learning, and gender issues in a cross-cultural environment. The findings of this research may also help to inform British educators about the nature of the common problems Taiwanese female students come across in their life, academic work, and language learning in Britain.

### **6.4.3. Summary**

This chapter presents data collection methods and data analysis of stage 2, which aims to investigate the insights into the impact of gender and ICT on Taiwanese female students' English learning in a British university. The questions asked in stage 2 were open-ended questions, which allowed the participants to express their target language learning, gender experiences, and use of ICT fully.

The data collection methods adopted in stage 2 included diaries and in-depth interviews. The focus group in stage 1 served as a warming up activity in allowing the researcher to have some basic understanding of the issues. It also provided the participants with the chance to reflect on the three aspects of research questions and be prepared to open up in the following diary study and interviews. The participants chose the language used in diaries and interviews. Two of them chose to record the diary in English and two of them chose to be interviewed in Mandarin Chinese. By speaking or writing in their preferred language, the participants were able to express their thoughts accurately and efficiently.

All the interviews were taped-recorded for analysis in the data analysis stage. Studying the diaries kept by the participants allowed the researcher to acquire in-depth understanding of their daily language learning activities, ICT use, and their daily experiences and thoughts as a woman. The participants were also encouraged to report to the researcher by any means (email, oral conversation, telephone) their views and experiences relating to the three aspects of the research (gender, ICT, English learning). It was expected that the data collected from these sources would benefit the outcome of the research.

With the focus group in stage 1, participants had a chance to reflect on the research questions asked, which they might not have thought about and may not want to express if they have not seen others doing so (such as harassment and gender issues.) The focus group in stage 1 provided an opening-up chance for them when they saw others talking about sensitive issues without feeling ashamed and shy, which was very helpful for the research in stage 2. The focus group can be considered as 'warming up' for the following stages and contributed to the rich data collected in stage 2. Diary and interview gave the chance for participants to express themselves completely and fully on what they felt too shy to say (such as personal growth history and personal study experience, which they may have felt freer to express in an individual interview and diary) in the focus group. Focus group, diary, and interviews served as efficient methods to gain insights into the research questions.

The above sections have provided a general view about the design and approaches used in stage 2. The following section will provide descriptions of the findings from the diaries and interviews conducted with the participants.

## **6.5. Findings and discussion**

The findings from the data collected by diary and interview from each participant can be categorized into the following units: English learning in Taiwan, English learning in Britain, ICT use in Taiwan, and ICT use in Britain. Each unit is interrelated to each other. Quotation and analysis drawn from the data provided by P1, P4, and P5, who provided information via interviews and diaries, constructed the framework of the chapter. The gender factor is closely related to each unit and thus it is discussed together within that unit.

### **6.5.1. English learning in Taiwan**

#### **6.5.1.1. Early age of English learning: school and family**

The findings of stage 2 suggested that English learning experiences had a strong connection to the personal family background (parental social-economic status, parental education level, and rural/urban habitation) of the participants. P4 came from a middle class family and had parental support at an early age in studies and English learning. She showed positive attitudes and views toward English learning. The other two participants reported that they had no foundation of English learning supported by their family in their early life nor help from other family members. When they started English lessons in formal education (first year in junior high school, at age 13), English became a cause of low esteem and anxiety. This is the case with P1 and P5.

P5: It's extremely frustrating at the stage (junior high school)...because I wasn't a good student. I wasn't very bright, I think. My teacher, he wasn't a very patient teacher. If you cannot pronounce something, a particular word, he considered that you are a stupid student. I was extremely frustrated. I thought I must be very stupid because I couldn't pronounce English properly. Some of my classmates, they have brothers or sisters at home. So they can speak much better than I did. (Interview, P 5)

P1 also started English learning in the formal curriculum in junior high school and did not have English learning with private teachers or learning institutions due to her rural habitation and the education level of her family. P1 considered English learning at an early age would have been beneficial to her English learning. She thought it could have prevented problems in pronunciation fossilization if her parents had let her start with children's English lessons. Her account is given in appendix 10 (P1.3.).

An early age of English learning was considered essential and to have an important impact on English learning in later stages. P4 can be seen in contrast to P5 and P1, who had less family support and whose families had more conservative views about girls' education. P4 started English learning from primary school in a private cram school and had her father help her with English learning at home. Her English learning experiences in Taiwan are considered as positive as she stated that she liked English and being the one of the best among the class, she felt a sense of achievement with English learning. P4 also developed more integral and intrinsic motivation in English learning.

P4: At primary school fifth or sixth year, I went to cram school, children's English lessons, after the lesson at home my parents would [help me]...my performance is very good. I don't know if it is related to talent...because at home, father can help me study again. He would correct me how to write, pronounce...after his correction, I went to class and I found I have improved a lot. Being the top several among pupils, I felt more sense of achievement. I felt it's very nice. In the class, my pronunciation is quite correct. So, I want to learn it. (Interview, P4)

#### **6.5.1.2. Gender, equality, and education**

Access to education and resources also varies among participants as they grew older and faced the decision to continue education or start to work. P4, from the northern part of Taiwan, considered her family very supportive and not discriminatory toward gender roles. There were equal numbers of boys and girls in her family. There is also less obvious gender division of public and private patriarchy in her family as she reported her father also helped with housework. She considered she was the favourite child because of her straightforward personality and diligence in studies. She had no difficulty in access to educational resources and unequal distribution of housework.

P4: There is no difference between girls and boys. As long as you want, they would support you.

R: When you said you wanted to come here to study, your family didn't say girls cannot study?

P4: No! No! No! Of course there is no such thing. There is no gender difference at home.

Being well taken care of by the family and school, P4 developed intrinsic interest

and diverse skills in knowledge and learning. At the early stage of schooling, P4 felt her study was successful. Praise from teachers also motivated her learning. She also reported that at a later stage, the desire to pursue truth and gain knowledge motivated her into a higher level of education. Besides text reading, the primary focus of Taiwanese education, P4 reported that she also developed other learning strategies such as visual graphic comprehension.

P5 came from a countryside village in the south middle of Taiwan. Her family held traditional views toward girls' education and gender roles. Aside from unequal distribution of housework and family resources, she was denied the chance of further education after compulsory schooling and was also required to start work and follow the life path considered suitable for girls. P5 resisted the arrangement, found a cheaper vocational school, and persuaded her parents to let her continue her studies. Even though she finally managed to go to the vocational school, she did not trust her parents and constantly worried that some day her parents might change their mind and tell her to stop her schooling. The ideology that was held by her family toward gender roles might have hindered her from social mobility and equal life chances. The experience of P5 is shown in appendix 3 (P5.1).

P5's exasperation toward the oppression of patriarchal ideology, the restricted gender role she can play, and the resources she can gain was illustrated in her diaries, shown in appendix 3 (P.5.2).

Education distribution is closely connected to gender (in)quality and women's life chances. Research by Parish and Willis (1993), as discussed in chapter 2, showed that Taiwanese family strategies with respect to children's education work in a *current credit constraints* model. Early-born children, especially females, in poor families at an earlier period of time had to help with younger siblings of both sexes by working out or marrying away early; therefore, they achieved particularly poorly and had limited life chances.

Aside from family financial strategies, Taiwanese family structure and gender ideology also play major roles in women's education and life chances. Within traditional patriarchal social structures, as suggested by Walby (1990)—household production, paid employment, the state, male violence, sexuality, and cultural institutions—girls and women are of inferior status as the patriarchal structures confined them inside private households and domestic labour and excluded them from public participation.

In the industrialized society of Taiwan, Skoggard (1996) stated women have the chance to work outside the home, yet the public sphere is merely another domain controlled by men—the public patriarchy (p. 134). In P5's case, this is working as a hairdresser and as a worker in a clothes factory. As discussed in chapter 2, though rising middle class and feminist movements in the cities challenged patriarchal power, most rural women have been channelled to household-based industrial production and low-ranking, low-wage, long-hour manual types of factory work. Patriarchal dominance over young women's resistance is most effectively operated via the medium of mothers who have internalised the patriarchal value of female inferiority and thus can teach suitable female virtues to their daughters.

The way for P5 to escape low-rewarded labour devotion in both public patriarchy and private patriarchy is through education and then social mobility. Attending university and attainment in English proficiency was thought to be a way to achieve her dream of higher status, respect, and freedom. This will be discussed in the following section.

Overall P1 had not been treated unequally as a girl either at home or in school. Gender ideology here did not consist of explicit denial of access or oppression, but in the way of subtle gender and subject/interest streaming. Even though P1 reported no gender differential treatment in school, (moreover, she reported she even gained more attention and was preferred by male teachers), she also reflected the reproduction of gender roles at home and in school.

P1 reported that among family members, technology-related tasks or heavy jobs are naturally distributed to males, housework and 'light jobs' to females. P1 considered parental gender models important in shaping her behaviour and conceptions according to gender division. The explicit example is her resistance to computers and technology knowledge and her natural undertaking of housework and acceptance of female roles in the family. With the gender divided interest in mind, P1 recalled that she was not interested and not encouraged to undertake technology related work. Instead, she automatically undertook housework following her mother's example.

At school, P1 considered it advantageous that girls can receive help from males with heavy and dangerous technology jobs. Since the image of technology was closely connected to masculinity and danger, it was also considered as not a woman's field. Even though she had the chance to learn the skills, learned helplessness and fear toward machines let her give the chance of learning away to boys. P1's account is given in appendix 10 (P1.4.).



In the family, the conflict between traditional values and modernization was most explicit in the different settings of small family and gathering of extended family. In the small family, P1 reported family members are generally more equal in terms of housework but when it comes to a gathering in the extended family, women's status instantly fell.

P1: But when all the relatives come, because we have nine seats at home, men sit and women stand. In the big family, women's status just became lower and you have to do the housework. You just need to cook. Yes, men at one table and women at another table. Men don't need to move but women need to move (to tidy tables, bring more dishes, etc). (Interview)

In addition to the instant fall of women's status in the extended family and the gender division of work, other patriarchal structures essentially restrict women's space and social mobility. Aside from the masculine image connected to technology, safety matters and male violence also restrict P1's development and learning. As Skoggard (1996) stated, explicit accounts of patriarchal violence on public media made it easier for men and women to accept women's subordinate position both at home and in society (p. 144). Patriarchal violence at home also has a similar effect in maintaining the patriarchal order and domesticity of women. Safety matters often restrict girls' mobility and their freedom of going out (either going out of the house or going abroad to study).

P1 reflected her own experience of job choice and her fathers' concern with her safety and disapproval of her going to Taipei to work after graduation. Her sister's experience of being restricted from going abroad to study also demonstrated the close connection among male violence, safety, mobility, female role expectations, and their development.

P1: Because I am a girl, my parents are concerned about my safety. They wanted me to stay at home. After I graduated, I wanted to find a job and go to Taipei. My father said: 'Taipei is so far away and there are so many safety problems'. That may restrict my future development. I can come here to study because my relatives are here. When my sister wanted to go abroad to study, you don't know what kind of family revolution it was at that time! I have never seen my father so angry. He threw bowls and dishes and everyone went quiet. So there was no dinner and we just cleaned up the

dishes. My father didn't want my sister to go to places so far away. You are a girl and you run so far away. How can we help you if there are any problems?

P1: My father was so angry, just because we are girls. If I was a boy, my father would not worry so much and he wouldn't have such an extreme reaction... You also have to consider the safety matters; no matter if it is life or study. Because you are a girl, so you have to pay more attention to safety. Your parents would worry more about you.

P1: This time I came here, he also wondered why I wanted to leave. 'Why do you leave?' My father would think girls don't need to study so much. 'A degree is enough. You are also not young anymore. Women should find a man to get married to and that's it'. Girls are easily restricted by their age.

### **6.5.1.3. English education in Taiwan**

All the participants continued English learning either through school classes or access to English learning programs by themselves. English is required of every student in the secondary school and the first year of university.

The findings of the present research were in accordance with the findings of earlier research by Tsao (1999) presented in chapter 1 and the findings from stage 1. The participants started their formal English education at the age of thirteen, the first year of junior high school. They considered the previous English education they received in Taiwan did not benefit them in life, work, and study.

P5 undertook several part-time jobs for a year after graduating from vocational high school. She attended an English department at the university. The gap between her English proficiency and that required in the English department at university was big and challenging. As a student from a farming family in the countryside, P5 also had to overcome a lack of cultural capital, language capital, and discourses including confidence in dealing with people in authority, status and knowledge of how to behave and speak within the environment. A learning environment like an English department in Taiwanese universities could be harmful to students who are already disadvantaged as there was a strong connection between English proficiency and status superiority. Frustration and anxiety was often encountered as P5 reported that teachers tended to pay more attention to and praise those who are already successful

and looked down on or ignored those who were struggling to survive. As English ability in the English department became an indicator of people's value and social-economic status, students with better English were considered as more valuable and preferred.

P5: Then when I went to the university, I think it makes a big change to me. The first year, I wasn't good because all my education in high school and primary school are all in the countryside. I think in Taiwan it still makes a big difference. If you are from the city, your English should be better than those from the countryside. So I think I felt frustrated, too. We have about four classmates from the city and they can speak good English. They always get a lot of praise and compliments from teachers. But I don't remember they ever said anything nice to me. (Interview)

Her personality trait at that time—shyness—also hindered her learning. Language teachers trying to promote language output from students may also have had no awareness of the psychological and emotional aspects of language learning, and ignored students' background, preferred learning strategies, personality, and sensitivity to the connection between English proficiency and self-value. Further, their attitudes toward students with difficulties may be a source of anxiety, and low self-esteem for them. However, even though human resources (teachers) could not provide the scaffolding and help with her learning, P5 was determined to improve her English with the use of information technology (radio, TV). Her account is given in appendix 3 (P5.4).

P1 considered her institutional English learning in Taiwan with whole class teaching, examination, translation, vocabulary, and grammar learning, as inefficient and unsuccessful. She was not motivated by the curriculum design and the teaching methods applied in most English classes. Even though when she went to a college equipped with facilities such as an audio-visual classroom, it was not frequently used and the teaching method of applying audio-visual facilities in language learning was poor. Thus it had little impact on her learning.

English learning in Taiwan is generally exam-oriented. So are the English classes to prepare students to pass language exams and study abroad. P4 also experienced the same boredom with teaching methods that emphasise vocabulary and exam skills when she was preparing GRE lessons to study abroad and found the class irrelevant and useless.

Analysis drawn from stage 1, focus group, showed the factors that influenced participants' English learning were: (1) English teachers and teaching methods. (2) Educational systems and educational institutions. (3) Teaching materials and the non-authentic environment. The findings from stage 2 were consistent with those of stage 1. The English teachers participants had in Taiwan and their teaching methods were considered inadequate. They were even causes of their fear or unfavourable attitude to English. Since the aim of teaching and learning in Taiwan is to gain as high a grade as possible, participants had the experience of being forced to rote learn vocabulary, sentences, and text. English teachers' English proficiency and understanding of English culture was also doubted by the participants. Emphasis on grammar and scores both in formal education and private language institutes made participants bored and de-motivated. The different requirements of English level between high school and university also created problems and anxiety for students who studied English language or literature. In addition, irrelevant learning materials in textbooks and non-authenticity also caused a feeling of alienation. These factors are interrelated and also had an impact on their studying in Britain.

#### **6.5.1.4. English learning with ICT as scaffolding in Taiwan**

Due to the prevalence of information communication technology, the availability of English teaching programmes on TV or radio in Taiwan, and general recognition of the importance of English, participants generally had good access to English and better attitudes to English learning via information technologies. Even those who felt frustrated by the formal curriculum lessons had access to English language programmes broadcast via radio and TV. Radio and TV have become efficient, convenient, and useful tools for students to advance themselves.

Overall, P4 had satisfactory English learning experiences in Taiwan. Even though the formal curriculum and exam-oriented teaching may bore other learners, P4 was not demotivated because outside the class, she had access to meaningful English learning through other media.

P4: Outside the school, I listened to radio, radio is most often used, such as 'English Studio Classroom' (an American English teaching program)...I listened to ICRT (an American radio station) on the way to work. Listen to music, songs. Watch TV, there are many English movies, Discovery channel on cable TV... The best way of learning with ICT is through the technology

that is interactive. The second best is with those you can see the facial expression and movement. (Interview)

P5 had access to English programmes via radio when she was in high school and found that enjoyable. At university, P5 felt frustrated with the course of English conversation and was failed by the teacher. Therefore, she started to work hard to improve her English by listening to radio and watching films on TV. Information technology was considered by her as useful for English learning especially speaking and listening, because it created a language learning context with rich language input and provided models of target language for students whose native language is not English.

P5: I think radio is very helpful. No teacher can be more powerful than radio. In some programmes such as 'English Studio Classroom', a very famous teaching programmes in Taiwan, the reading was very slow, so you improve your pronunciation from listening to the radio, not from the teacher. (Interview)

P5: I spent about three hours a day, listening to all kinds of English programmes. I would record the programmes, and I played it over and over again. So the first thing I did in the morning was listening to the radio. The last thing I did in the evening was listening to radio, too. And I just had this kind of desire that I have to improve my English. But I don't think I enjoyed that kind of learning... (Interview)

As far as TV programmes are concerned, P5 reported that English programmes in Taiwan were mostly films from America and movies of pop culture with a lot of fighting and violence.

Like other participants who were not satisfied with the curriculum English lessons and who found English teachers in school not helpful, P1 used a variety of media (including CD-ROM, MP3, video recorder, TV, and radio) to improve her English, and found them more useful and motivating to her English learning. An account of P1's use of ICT is given in appendix 10 (P1.6.).

The role of the teacher or assistant is to structure the learning situation, providing what is often referred to as 'scaffolding' for the learner. Assisted performance was defined by Thrap and Gallimore (1988), quoted by Imison and Taylor (2001), as 'what

a child can do with help, with the support of the environment, of others and of the self'. The difference between assisted and unassisted performance is what Vygotsky described as the 'Zone of Proximal Development'. The list shows the four stages of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

1. Performance assisted by others
2. Performance assisted by self
3. Unassisted performance
4. De-atomization (Imison and Taylor, 2001, p 50)

The model of ZPD suggested that the process of learning is a repetitive cycle. When moving through the ZPD, the learner can take the role first as a spectator, then as a participant when their assistance is accepted. Then the learner can perform by himself or herself without assistance and further assistance is usually disruptive and irritating to the learner. Lack of use or practice lead to the de-automisation of the mastery of skills and concepts.

ICT, argued by Imison and Taylor (2001), 'can form an integral part of the scaffolding, by enabling the learners to participate more actively in the learning process' (p. 50). As illustrated in the learning experiences of the participants, when the teachers or assistants cannot provide secure scaffolding and the environment is not supportive to the learning process, ICT (here it indicates TV and radio) can at least provide rich language input and lead learners to the first stage (being spectators). By exposing themselves to the language environment they themselves created through engagement with radio and TV, they were actively engaged in learning at their own pace with less anxiety.

The findings from the focus group showed that participants in the present study preferred conventional media of English learning, such as TV, radio, and video. Computer and the interactive use of Internet were not reported as a tool for them to learn English. This could be because in the focus group, limited time for the participants restricted them from talking more about their use of computers. The age of the participants tended to be older (29 on average) and this may be the reason for their lower familiarity with and acceptance of computer-related learning activities. However, when they came to an authentic target language environment and knew some native speaker friends, email and Internet was also reported as a useful and interesting means to communicate with their friends and learn English. This will be

discussed in the section 6.5.2.2. gender and scaffolding, 6.5.3. ICT use in Taiwan, and 6.5.4. ICT use in Britain.

## **6.5.2. English learning in Britain**

### **6.5.2.1. Language shock and culture shock**

Language shock, defined by Schumann, is language learners' fear of making mistakes and having doubt about the accuracy of their use of the target language (discussed in Chang, 1999). Culture shock is described as 'anxiety that results from losing all the familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse' (Oberg, 1960, in Furnham, 1997). The findings showed that language shock and culture shock were commonly experienced by the participants. Participants' active engagement in the new community and the friendship circles they created around themselves helped to ease their culture and language shock. It also helped to familiarize themselves with the new culture discourses.

From a countryside farming family to attending an English course at the university, P5 had experienced dramatic change of language, culture, and discourse. Before she came to Britain, P5 taught English to save money, went to America to study and later taught for two years in Taiwan. Throughout university life, P5 has improved her English ability but considered her speaking still not good enough. Her personality—shyness—was considered by herself as the main factor that affected her language learning. After graduation, with two years of teaching experiences, her personality has changed and her economic status improved. The experiences of working as a teacher had changed her into a person who is more assertive and would take the initiative to communicate with people.

P5: One of my weaknesses in learning language is my personality. It's a bit, kind of introverted. You can say that I am a not very outgoing person. Some of my classmates are very outgoing and if they have any opportunities to meet a foreigner, an English speaker, they would start to have a conversation with them, but it will never happen to me...

P5: In junior high school, college, I was very shy so I did not like to talk to people. And so sometimes I did not like to communicate with people when we have problems. If I have a problem with you I don't want to talk to you, or if you do something to offend me, I would never talk to you, I just shut up

and maybe you don't know what is going on. So I am not very good at communication.

P5: When I was teaching, I called myself 'first lady'. When I started to teach, especially teaching in a private language institute, you have to learn how to communicate with your students. As a teacher you have to say hello to your students. If they did something to offend you, you have to talk to them first, instead of waiting for them to talk to you. So you have to do everything first. As a teacher you have got to go to your students and explain. (Interview)

With the clear recognition of the importance of English to her socio-mobility and the strong motivation to improve her spoken English, P5 went to America for studies. She also experienced difficulties of culture shock, lack of resources, unfamiliarity with discourses, and lack of friends. When she first arrived in America, anxiety, her strong desire to study English (thus avoid using Chinese) and her defensive attitude also caused her difficulties in making friends with people from Taiwan. Gradually she overcame the problems, joined new communities, and had help from female native speakers, who provided her with a chance to learn language and understand the culture. Studying in America was described as 'the best time' in her life.

P5: When I went there (America)... I was looking for all kinds of organizations that can help me to improve my English. So I went to the library, they've got free English lessons for foreigners. Every week I think I walked about one hour back and forth, to the library and I spent an hour there studying English. So, the time I spent walking is longer than the time I spent in the classroom! But I said it's ok because as long as I can find the opportunities to practise my speaking, I would be happy to do it.

P5: I remember when I first came to America, I was a bit tense. Even though I had strong desires to study English, I wasn't very confident. I must have looked really tense, some of my friends said to me: 'you look like you are a very cold person'. Actually I am not a cold person. Sometimes I look cold just because I don't know how to talk with people. And you don't know what to say. So, you just stay there without any facial expression...

P5: Because I had this strong desire to study English so I refused to speak Chinese. And people hated me a lot. So I couldn't find any friends for



about a month [...] I know it sounds extremely dramatic. But at that time, I just wanted to do anything to improve my speaking. (Interview)

Moreover, engagement with new communities also promoted familiarity with discourses in different communication communities, an increase in self-confidence, and positive personality change.

Even though P4 considered her English learning in Taiwan quite successful, communication and comprehension problems were still encountered when she came to Britain. P4 is a highly motivated and positive learner, yet communication is not always successful. Her listening and speaking difficulties led to problems in participation in conversations, telephone communication, establishing relationships, and miscomprehension in the lecture.

P4: I could not recognize whom the guy wanted to speak to whilst getting a phone call in the computer room. After lots of 'pardons' & 'could you repeat it again', in total about 5 times, I found the answer, finally. (Diary)

P4: For the lecturers, got lost in the very early part of it. It's quite relevant to my listening ability. (Diary)

P4: I did listen to radio for news this morning. But, I did not remember what happened. (Diary)

P4: This morning, I had listened to BBC news on air, too. I remember that every word was so clear, but I could not get the meaning. (Diary)

Throughout the diary, P4's reading and writing difficulties stemmed mostly from the problems at the lexical level. P4 paid lots of attention in the diary to describing the experiences how she tried to understand and remember new words. As a proficient user of Chinese language, P4 naturally applied the reading skills such as scanning and skimming when reading English text. However, the reading skills used by proficient L1 users do not necessarily apply well in a TL context. She reported that adjustment of reading skills would be needed if she wants to get the meaning of the text.

P4 showed strong integral and intrinsic motivation. Efforts were made to understand and integrate herself into English culture (football, pop culture, movies). She also tried to make friends with other English speakers by trying to join in the conversation

even though her efforts may not be appreciated and frustration and ignorance was encountered partly because of her English ability and partly because of a lack of interest on the part of other speakers. P4 also often used self-encouragement to motivate herself when comprehension and integration difficulties occurred. P4's account is given in appendix 9 (P4.3.).

P4's culture shock also includes unfamiliarity with local food and her economic status change. P4 did not have a transportation vehicle or TV. She had activity within her walking range and relied on radio to get information. P4 undertook a part-time job to solve her financial problems. P4's language ability also hinders her from taking some better-paid part-time job. As a student in science, P4 had to use software programmes in her studies. Learning the programmes and interface in the English version can also be a problem here.

P1 experienced language shock and difficulty in communication when she first arrived in Britain. Even though she had tried to improve her English with ICT in Taiwan, language difficulties were still encountered. Since P1 did not have the chance to use English in Taiwan, speaking in English was completely new and sometimes a scary experience for her. In the beginning, she had to rely on relatives to communicate even with her landlady. Female speakers (landlady), the English class, and the network of friends she built helped her overcome language difficulties. P1 attended English courses in England for three months before she undertook the university course and found that she preferred the private language course with lively teaching (dramatic performance) and non-Chinese speaker peers around. P1 preferred the 'top-down teaching' strategy in the language institute to the 'bottom-up' teaching strategy used in Taiwan. A target language environment, in which she can receive direct language input, use the target language all the time either in class or out of class (writing emails, talking with peers), provided her with the community for immersion language learning she found most efficient. A comparison of P1's English course in Britain and Taiwan is given in appendix 10 (P1.7.).

Contrary to the private language institute, P1 found learning in the language centre at the university very different from her ideal of learning English. She reported that she noticed her English ability was better before taking the course in the language centre. She had difficulty adjusting to the course that focuses on academic purpose of English learning from the more communication-oriented courses that she previously attended. In addition, there were many Chinese speaker students in the language centre and therefore what she heard in and after the class was all in Chinese. As her expectation

toward 'lively and interesting' English teaching and 'immersion in an English learning environment' was not fulfilled, she took a more defensive attitude toward the courses and had lower acceptance of the teachers. Her conception of language learning (demand and higher evaluation of language input and practice with native speakers rather than with EFL peers) and her attitude toward the course might have had an impact on her learning. P1 reported the only result she had was in knowing what is formal and informal writing.

P1: Maybe because they focus on academic writing. Some teachers, not all of them, speak so slowly and their actions were so slow. After the class of the whole day, *I really did not know what she (he) was talking about*. Not only me felt this way. One of the Japanese classmates, who was an English teacher and taught for five years in Japan, told me: 'I don't know what is going on...it has been a month.' They did provide speaking chances for us, but maybe I think the teaching methods of the teachers were not so lively so the classmates also became lazy to develop speaking skills. They would answer the teacher's question with a simple and short answer and did not really develop their ideas. After three months learning in the language centre here, I found I had no progress in my speaking ability. Just like presentation, I think it was a waste of time. Because they just let us talk about our presentation in private. There was too much time when we can talk privately. It's a waste of time and money. There was lots of self-studying time. I just want to listen to you native speakers, but you give us too much time to study and talk by ourselves. I think you can gain no effect from that. We can talk in private when we live our lives and do our own activities. In the class, the teacher spent half of the time letting the students talk with each other. When your language ability is not at a certain level, what you can talk about is quite limited. You cannot talk in depth. In the end we were just chatting. If your partner is Japanese, of course you use English. If your partner is Chinese, of course you will start to use Chinese. (Interview) (More of her views on the language course are shown in appendix 10 (P1.8.).

In addition, as some of the participants (P1 and P5) at this stage are of older age and from disadvantaged families in the rural areas, the language courses provided by the university were also considered unaffordable by them.

On the other hand, P1 had difficulties in reading comprehension and found some tutors would let students read handouts or articles in the class. Reading in the class was considered not useful and not helpful in understanding the text or engaging her in the following discussion. Comprehension difficulties, which result from unfamiliarity with topics and vocabulary, hinder her from learning effectively in her studies.

#### **6.5.2.2. Scaffolding**

Scaffolding is the structuring of learning situations by teachers or assistants. Learners perform through different stages: assistance by others, assistance by self, and unassisted performance. Learners perform as spectators, assistants, and then perform without assistance.

P1, P4, and P5 all had help and assistance from female friends when they were struggling to learn English, settle down, integrate to the new environments or understand TL culture. When P5 was in America, she often had assistance and help from other female native speakers. The American ladies she knew came to her place to help her with English reading and pronunciation. P5 and her American friends chose to read picture storybooks and articles from newspapers or magazines that were of interest to them. P5 considered interaction with native speakers very different from self-learning with a dictionary and very helpful in language and culture understanding. After the reading class, they would go to a restaurant where P5 learned English language and culture naturally through observation, conversation, and eating.

P5: After I had been there for three months I met an American lady. I asked her to be my English teacher. So she would come to my apartment and I would read to her. Sometimes if she happened to come across any interesting article she would show it to me so we read it together... So I've learned a lot from her. She and her mom, me, three of us would go to a restaurant almost once a week. It is very special experience to me. We would spend, sometimes, two hours in the restaurant and they would say hello to the waiters and waitress, so I got the opportunities to see how they communicate with each other, and I got to know their local culture and their relationship with the waiters and waitress. And we started to order meal, and they would introduce me to American food, so I learned a lot of food and desserts, then after that, we started to chat. There was always a lot of talking going on. You feel you are learning in a very relaxed and natural

environment. And it's not just the language itself, you also know the local culture, American culture. So I cherished this kind of experiences very very much. Eating, learning, they should be together! (Interview)

Instead of acting out a performance in public in the classroom which was described as 'torture' by P5, talking with a few ladies about topics which interested her—food, picture storybooks, local culture—was considered more helpful and pleasant than the formal presentation used in most English classrooms in Taiwan where the emphasis was focused on 'correct' and 'standard' pronunciation and 'perfect' presentation, with the knowledge and authority holder, the teacher, ready to point out flaws and correct them. This kind of private talking where information is shared and there is no status hierarchy was viewed by P5 as more a constructive and relaxed scaffolding of learning a language than formal, public presentation and drill practice.

P4's interaction with colleagues in the department represents the interaction of language learners and native speakers. At the beginning she was frustrated with interaction with people in the department. With some help and encouragement from female native speakers, she was taking the spectator roles in the beginning and gradually with some assistance, she started to be the participant in conversation and interaction. Her account is given in appendix 9 (P4.2.).

As P1 states, she likes to interact with people and when there is a problem, P1 seeks help from people around. The people around (landlady, housemates, and friends) also provide great help not only in language but also in life and culture understanding. Besides face-to-face communication, email enabled P1 to keep in contact with non-native English speakers of diverse nationalities and email content has become her English learning materials. Because P1 considered her English not good, seeking help from her supervisor (the representative of authority and correctness, talk with him makes her afraid, nervous, and her English even more broken) is the last thing she would do. Moreover, meeting and discussion in an academic setting, the university, could be an intimidating experience for students who did not have the cultural capital to understand the academic discourse and to cope with people in authority. With gradual understanding, P1 became less afraid of her supervisor and more fluent in communication with him. Her account is given in appendix 10 (P1.1.).

P1, P4, and P5 all encountered difficulties but managed to build their friendship circle. They also had help and assistance from friends when they were struggling to learn English, settle down, integrate to the new environments, or understand TL culture.

### 6.5.2.3. Male hostility

Contrary to her pleasant and happy experiences in America, when P5 was working in Taiwan and then came to Britain for another degree, unpleasant experiences with males were encountered. P5 reported that the males she encountered seemed to have a strong need to feel superior and secure by putting down females nearby. Males around P5 seemed to be competitive, which makes P5 feel uncomfortable. P5 interpreted the behaviour of those males who want to feel superior as a result of society's constructing virtual masculinity—a false image of the hero. They were reported to have the tendency to claim their superior social status by 'displaying' and 'showing off' their knowledge or securing their status by 'not sharing information' and holding a defensive and hostile attitude. P5's account of male hostility can be found in appendix 8 (P.5.3).

The hostility from males experienced by P5 could be a result of males' insecurity toward loss of superior status and positions. It could be an expression of discomfort when facing women with achievements and a great desire for upward social mobility (especially a move from farming/working class into middle class). Improvement in women's position in society, especially women from the working class, acted as new competitors for the scarce middle class resources and jobs. For the males P5 encountered, sharing information and knowledge with them could be a threat to their own social mobility. It might also be due to the 'demasculinising' experiences associated immigration recognised by Rockhill (as discussed in chapter 2).

P5's unpleasant experiences also included encounters with local boys in Britain. Her account is given in appendix 8 (P5.5)

As unpleasant encounters with local males were common experiences among all the participants, P1 also reported assault by local teenagers in addition to the harassment she reported in the focus group.

P1: There are too many bad kids here. I am very afraid when I walk in the streets here. You see, the male teenagers, especially the male teenagers, this is also a gender problem, because you are a girl alone, they will come to talk

to you, very impolitely and rudely. I just felt...Ah!!

P1: They just joked with you?

P1: If it is only joking, that's ok. Once it was snowing and they hit me with snowballs! I was so angry! (chi-si-le! Chinese expressions, very angry to the state of death). There were no other people in the street and they had three of them. When they outnumbered you, they think they can take advantage of you! Normally, girls would not do it. This is typical boys' characteristic!

P4 reported less harassment or hostile assault from males either in Taiwan or in Britain. The only two unpleasant events she mentioned were teasing, males telling dirty jokes about women, and unfriendly (pro-racist) attitudes and remarks from British people.

In general, life and study in Britain would be much better without the harassment or hostile attitude from males (or females) who need to secure their status and position. However, hostility, competition, and defensiveness seemed inevitable in terms of education, employment, and migration to a new country as more people all want a better life for themselves and need to compete for scarce resources and positions. In addition to interaction with people, access to resources and ICT was also essential to their learning and academic studies.

### 6.5.3. ICT use in Taiwan

Access to ICT and computers varies from person to person. Generally speaking, participants have better access to ICT and computer facilities in Taiwan than in Britain. Even though the participants generally had no interest in computer technology and did not consider computers their field, they can find male friends or family members to help them when there are problems with computers.

The ease of use and prevalence of a great diversity of media were considered by P1 as the advantage with learning English with ICT. P1 reported that she had used a variety of computer and information technologies extensively in Taiwan to help her study English.

Age and gender play important roles in some participants' attitude to and use in ICT. P5's language learning depended strongly on radio. P5 did not even like to watch TV. Her family is in the countryside and extra channels with more programmes were

considered not necessary. At home in Taiwan, P5 had little right to a TV monitor because her brothers had different tastes in channel choice. P5 considered herself as a book-person. When her brothers were watching violent TV with a lot of gun shooting and fighting in the living room, she stayed in her room reading.

She described the computer lessons in Taiwan as inadequate. Because of the limited number of computers, students usually stayed in a normal classroom talking about computers rather than using them. The computer was mainly a glorious typing machine for her. Internet and Email was never used at university.

P5 started to use a computer as a communication and research tool after she went to America and computer facilities there were reported to be very good and fast. After acquiring the ability to use email and the Internet, P5 considered the communication function of email and the searching function of the Internet very useful to her life and studies. P5 uses email to keep in contact with friends in America and keep in touch with people from different communities she used to stay with. Email writing also facilitates self-reflection and encourages students to take chances they will seldom do in the face-to-face context (Warschauer, 1999; Bloch, 2002, discussed in section 4.3.3.). Email writing not only provided her with a chance to practise English and maintain contact with friends, it also provided an outlet of her thoughts and self-reflection. P5's account is given in appendix 8 (P5.6.). P5 also considered the computer a very important research tool. It also helped her gaining information and reading news.

The disadvantage of using the computer all the participants reported was physical fatigue or eyestrain. The participants did not feel comfortable with using computers for a long time. They still prefer reading on paper to reading on screen.

The image of technology and gender could also lead female users to an illusion of imaginary difficulty. Learning and dealing with new technology was often connected with men and considered as male expertise in Taiwan. The strong connection of technology and masculinity, plus women's self under-estimation led them to dependence on men in terms of using or learning technologies. P5 reflected her and her friends' experiences of learning new skills and her own previous fear toward computers and technology.

P5: (the researcher) spent about ten minutes to show me how to use PowerPoint. I was thrilled to learn something new today. Honestly I am not



a technology person. I guess I belong to the old generation that would feel more comfortable to read a book under a tree than using the computer in the room to obtain knowledge. (More of P5's reflection on ICT is given in appendix 8 (P5.7.).

As mentioned earlier, P1 had acquired a conception of discrete division by gender and subject. Technology and computers were not considered as her field and thus there is no interest for her to understand more about computers except only to use them. When there is a problem with the computer, P1 took no action but relied on her brothers or male cousin (who is a professional computer maintenance engineer) to fix it. Her views on gender and technology are shown in appendix 10 (P1.9.).

Though P1 had applied a variety of technologies for language learning, ICT could not provide chances for her to practise speaking and pronunciation in Taiwan. Even though there might be some speaking programmes, their quality and efficiency was doubted.

P4 had sufficient access to information via a variety of digital communication media in Taiwan. All family members, including her parents, were good at computers. There were three or four computers at her home and the Internet service was fast and good. P4 also used computers and the Internet at work to read English websites, news and data. Therefore she had 24-hour Internet access and described herself as an addicted user.

#### **6.5.4. ICT in Britain**

##### **6.5.4.1. Access and computer facilities**

Generally, participants were not satisfied with the access to computers in Britain and their habit of using computers and studies had been affected by the lack of access to computers. P5 compared computers in US and in Britain and found that in US computers are faster, more efficient, and printing is free. In Britain, P5 had awkward access to computer facilities and average access to other ICT media in Britain. She found computers in Britain very slow and waiting for results could be a waste of time. Computer use on campus caused her problems with Internet searches, emailing, and even typing. As discussed in chapter 3, the disadvantages of using ICT are associated with technical breakdown, inadequate access, information searching

process, and the complex cognitive and emotional process (Shu, 2001). Technology problems with computers could be devastating as they not only had negative impacts on the task engaged in but also on the user's emotions and general attitude toward life and work.

P5: Here you have got to spend ages, waiting, and waiting, and waiting. Of course it's a frustrating experience. When you have to spend sometimes five minutes or ten minutes waiting, and you lose your inspiration! And you lose your patience and your motivation. But the worst thing is, by the time you left the computer lab, you became extremely frustrated about your study and your life. (Interview)

P5: I used the computer to take notes and write my short stories. It freezes so often that I often have to restart again and reorganize my thoughts. Sometimes I have to start to rewrite my notes, which makes my note-taking job become very tiring. (Diary)

P5: I finished the writing and sent them out to my supervisor. To my disappointment, it took me about 30 minutes to send out an email. I was losing my patience in the end. I don't understand how I have to spend my life dealing with the snail-like computers. (Diary)

P1 also was not satisfied with computer facilities in Britain and using computers was actually not a very pleasant and effective experience for her. P1 compared her ICT experience in Taiwan and in Britain and felt that the computer facility on the British campus was not very efficient or sufficient. In Taiwan, P1 had free printing access in the department and as soon as there was a problem, computer engineers instantly came and fixed it. However, computer facilities and maintenance systems in Britain were not very satisfactory. P1 did not read on the computer screen and preferred to print things out to read. To save money, P1 had to find a friend at the university who can provide her with free printing to print out e-journals. Aside from the embarrassment she had to bear for sneaking into other people's study room, she found that even this friend's printer was not in a satisfactory condition. She has faced a dilemma of 'saving money, or saving time'. Overall, the computer quality in campus demotivated her from using them. Her problems with computers are shown in appendix 10 (P1.2.).

P4 had convenient and good access to ICT and computer facilities in Taiwan, whilst

when she came to Britain, the access to ICT and computers is more limited and her habit of using ICT and computers changed. Due to the change of economic status, P4 did not have a TV set and only used radio. Her access to computers and other ICT facilities in Taiwan are very unlike her limited access and use of computers and ICT in Britain.

P4: The computers in my department are very insufficient. My habit has to change into using the computer before nine o'clock in the morning or even finish [my work] before nine. After six or seven in the afternoon, when all people have gone, I would go to use again. (Interview)

However, P4 held positive attitudes toward limited access to computer facilities. She considered limited numbers of computers can help to change her addictive habit of writing emails and using the Internet 24 hours a day.

#### 6.5.4.2. WWW

As research students, on-line search was an essential part of research. However, due to the older age of computers used at the university, it often took a long waiting time for on-line searches. Without proper training on search skills and provision of information about search engine mechanisms, users may also find the mismatch between the research expectation and results may also cause frustration (Slaouti, 2002; Stapleton, 2003).

P5: Sometimes if I am searching for something to do with my research, and I have to spend maybe several minutes waiting, and then if I find something that is not really what you want, and you got: what am I doing here? It seems maybe you spend maybe two or three hours sitting in front of a computer without accomplishing anything. (Interview)

Searching for information on the Internet was also troublesome for P1 and she often could not find what she wanted. P1 was furious that she could be easily distracted by advertisements and confused by the surplus amount of information on the Internet. She often wasted her time waiting and obtained no results in the end. The design of certain websites plus the English language medium used can be challenging and cause problems of information overload for non-native speakers with limited proficiency in English and Internet search skills.

P1: Sometimes, I feel it is quite troublesome to use the Internet. Very often you have to spend a lot of time waiting and after a long time waiting, the stuff might not be what you want. You spend the whole day and you really cannot find what you want! And one day has passed. It should be convenient but I don't know where things go wrong! (Interview)

P1: Maybe the computer is slow, maybe the problem is with downloading. Sometimes I feel I am an idiot in finding information on the Internet. I often cannot find the information I want. Even if someone has given me the web address, my god! There is so much information and I don't know where to find it! I don't know where I should go in next step. I get lost easily and very often, and you have to go back to the way you come, to and forth... (Interview)

#### 6.5.4.3. CMC

When P1 entered a community such as an authentic target language learning environment, all forms of communication enhanced her chance to be exposed to English language, whether it is oral, literal, in-person, or via digital communication. Joining a new community and knowing other English speakers enabled her to communicate in English by sending out replies and receiving feedback at fast speed via emails. P1 also kept contact with friends who used English. Their emails became life-relevant learning materials to her. P1 printed out emails in English and highlighted useful sentences for her own use later. Emails became meaningful and useful materials for her English learning.

#### 6.5.4.4. Other media

Functions such as spelling check, grammar check, synonyms, cut and past, in programmes such as Word also helped P1 with studies, and English writing at both the lexical level and paragraph level. P1 reported using 'cut and paste' functions to arrange sentence positions and the structure of the article. She found it very helpful in writing academic essays and her thought flow more logical and saved more time on writing and editing. Besides computers, P1 considered TV as a useful medium of language input in Britain. Conversation on TV programmes was considered useful, practical, and relevant to real life. P1 watched TV every day to familiarize herself with British intonation and pronunciation and to increase her vocabulary and sentence understanding even though she might not

understand what was going on.

#### **6.5.4.5. Physical discomfort**

However, P1 and P5 reported that looking at a computer screen for a long time made them tired and uncomfortable. They tried not to use the computer too much except when writing essays, mailing, and searching for information via e-journals for their studies.

### **6.6. Summary**

This chapter has provided a description of the methodology and findings from stage 2, which followed up and explored in depth by interview and diary the views and experiences of three (P1, P4, P5) of the five participants who took part in the focus group in stage 1. Interview and diary were found to be effective tools to investigate different aspects of the research aims (use of ICT for English learning, personal gender and education experiences, lengthy account and reflection on English learning in Britain) that was not fully explored and reported in stage 1 due to the characteristics and limitation of focus groups.

The findings from stage 2 were categorised into four themes: English learning in Taiwan, English learning in Britain, ICT use in Taiwan, ICT use in Britain. Gender issues were integrated into and discussed with the four main themes.

In Taiwan, women's access to education and early age English learning was strongly determined by factors such as socio-economic status, rural/urban difference, and gender ideology their family held. Learners from a northern Taiwan middle-class family who had family support in education felt more successful in integrating into school learning and felt more achievement at following stages. On the other hand, those who had fewer resources reported feeling anxious within formal schooling and neglected by teachers, with preference being given to the advantaged rather than the disadvantaged, and consequent struggling between different cultural and language discourses. Overall English education in formal curriculum in Taiwan was found to be focused on grammar-translation and exam preparation. It was considered even harmful and de-motivating for some. ICT (more conventional and well-accepted media, such as radio, TV, CD) was used by learners to build self-constructing scaffolding and provide rich target language learning input. It is a useful tool of self-advancing and self-education to develop language skills and understand English

cultures.

In Britain (and in America with P5), the difficulties encountered included language /culture shock and male hostility. With help from female friends, self-constructed webs of community, and English language learning environments via ICT (email, Internet, friends), learners can generally gain emotional and language help to overcome difficulties and integrate with the new discourses and culture. The nature of instant feedback of emailing helped them to have relevant English language input and practice. The self-constructed webs of community can be seen as a form of self-constructed scaffolding. For learners who are shy, interaction with female friends who are native speakers was considered as more efficient and comfortable compared with drill practice and public presentation in the formal curriculum. The major negative factor in their learning and well-being is from male hostility either at home or in public space. Male hostility comes not only from the British (teenagers), but also males from Taiwan or other nationalities. This can be interpreted as a defence mechanism against women's entry and competition for resources and their territory.

In Taiwan, discrete gender role division and the masculine image connected to computers and technology usually put female learners off taking an interest in and understanding technology. Aside from economic factors, gender related factors (learned helplessness, safety matters, reproduction of gender roles in school and at home) also increased gender differences in terms of education, housework distribution, and the use of ICT and technology knowledge. When there is a problem with computers, male relatives and friends can provide help in Taiwan. It was reported that older girls tended to hold the least positive attitude to, have lower self-confidence in, and less favourable self-conception with respect to computer use (Colley, 2003, discussed in 3.2.4.). Due to the age of the participants (29 on average), computers and new forms of media may not be their greatest interest and favourite tool of learning. However, when they are provided with help, proper equipment, and taught to use the media, they can immediately utilize the resources at hand and build a self-constructing language environment with relevant learning materials and interactions with English speakers for themselves. Learners generally had better access to ICT in Taiwan than in Britain. Even though ICT and computer access in Britain was not satisfactory, participants managed to establish their interaction with friends and learning on-line. The following stage of the research will further explore the impact of ICT on English learning for academic purpose and its impact on Taiwanese female students in Britain. A table of the significant characteristics of the three participants (P1, P4, P5) regarding English learning, gender, and ICT use is given in appendix 20.

## **Chapter 7 Stage 3 Methodology, data analysis, and findings**

### **7.1. Introduction**

The empirical study included three stages. The main purpose of stages 1 and 2 was to first investigate the issues relating to this particular field and then to set the scene for the follow-up stage 3 of the study. In the main research stage 3, three methods (focus group, interview, and diary) were used and six participants took part in the research. Adjustments and corrections were made to the research methods and questions according to the findings and reflection from stages 1 and 2.

### **7.2. Stage 3 methods: focus group, interviews, and diaries**

#### **7.2.1. Focus group schedule**

In the stage 3 focus group, two occasions were set up to conduct the group: (1) recruiting and making questions, (2) the focus group meeting itself on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2002. The process of recruitment of the participants started before the beginning of the new academic term in autumn 2002. The focus group was conducted on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, a month after the start of the term, when students had already arrived and settled down for their study at the university. The reporting and analysis were completed in the following months. Interviews and diaries were carried out from November 2002 to March 2003.

#### **7.2.2. Setting up the focus group**

In the light of the experiences from the previous focus group, there were several issues to be addressed in running the stage 3 focus group.

1. Recruiting participants who had fewer age or status differences, to avoid the dominance of higher status participants.
2. Avoiding certain members over-talking and controlling the conversation.
3. Dealing with interruptions and private conversations among participants during the groups to achieve a high quality of recording.
4. Avoiding interruptions by phone calls, visits, or the early departure of certain participants.
5. Better control of time: informing participants of the time needed for the group to allow them to plan for their next activities.

6. Providing enough refreshment to avoid the participants becoming tired and exhausted due to the long hours of talking.

### 7.2.2.1. Size

Five to six was considered as a suitable number of people in this research; with the 20% over-recruit rule of focus group borne in mind, six people were recruited at the beginning. Due to the small number of Taiwanese students in the research environment (according to the university student & staff statistics provided on the university website, 24 Taiwanese enrolled in the academic year 2002), the number of participants who could participate in the research was also limited. In the present research, in order to recruit a suitable and sufficient number of participants, the researcher had to try all possible ways to contact and recruit participants to take part in the research. All the procedures to recruit participants used in stage 1 and 2 were repeated (section 5.1, 6.1, and 6.2). These included asking orally and with computer-mediated-communication technologies the potential participants' permission to take part. Other things the researcher did to increase the chance of meeting and recruiting potential participants were: taking the responsibility for taking care of new students from 2 departments when they first arrived, taking them to the university from the railway station, introducing them to the city centre and the campus.

### 7.2.2.2. Sampling

Among the six participants, three studied humanities and arts, two social science, and one science. There was thus a broad representation of different disciplines at the university. As the factor of age played an important role in the use of new technology in this research, it is necessary to present the participants' average age in the research. The average age of the participants was 25.5, ranging from 24 to 31.

Table 7.1. Age and study of the participants in stage 3

Participant	Age	Study
A	24	Social Science
B	23	Science
E	24	Arts and Humanities
M	26	Arts and Humanities
P	31	Arts and Humanities
Y	25	Social Science



### **7.2.3. Conducting the focus group**

#### **7.2.3.1. Making questions**

The questions used in the focus group were changed in the light of reflection and findings from the previous stages. Statements intended to be provocative and controversial were inserted into the schedule to evoke diverse opinions and debate and thus to elicit socially constructed meaning and ideologies. In question 2, aside from the original question ‘What are your reasons for wanting to learn / improve your English? What is the importance of English to you?’, another statement ‘Being good at English can help you improve your social and economic status’, was added to elicit more conversation and opinions. A similarly provocative statement ‘Men and boys are naturally good at technology and computer use’ was added to question 6. Question 12 ‘What are your views about English in the construction of gender and power?’ was changed into ‘Your gender and English ability greatly determine your life chances and access to power in a society dominated largely by men. What do you think about this statement?’ since the original question used in stage 1 was considered too academic and difficult to understand.

#### **7.2.3.2. Procedure and conduct**

The stage three focus group was held on 2ed November 2002 in the researcher’s house with the six participants and one assistant. The assistant took notes on the focus group discussion and provided another means of recording. The schedule aimed to cover the three main research areas: English learning, ICT, and Gender, and twelve questions were asked.

The researcher’s house was considered as a suitable place because it is an informal place. Some of the participants had visited the place before and there was a round table and a sufficient number of chairs. The group started at around two thirty and finished at five. Tea, cake, and snacks were provided.

The procedure of the administration was similar to what had been done for the stage one focus group (see section 5.1). Focus group questions were sent via email five days before the meeting to allow participants enough time to think about the questions. Participants read and signed the consent form before the discussion, which was recorded onto audiotape. The nature and purpose of focus group was described via email and before the discussion. Since the participants were well informed about the

nature of the focus group and that it is through the 'interaction' among them that the research data emerge, rather than interaction only with the researcher, there was a great quantity of interaction and inter-interrogation among the participants. Thus, the focus group was considered very successful in exploring the diversity of their experiences, feelings, and attitudes, and obtaining several perspectives about the same topic.

#### **7.2.4. Interview and diaries**

The interviews were carried out in the choice of place of each participant, that is, either at the home of the participants, in the researcher's study room at university, or at the researcher's home. The interviews lasted between fifty minutes and two hours. The schedule aimed to cover the three main areas and involved 7 questions. Interviewees guided the agenda by the extent of their enthusiasm for topics. All the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

The diaries' design was sent to each participant by email and the feedback was sent back to the researcher either by email or on a floppy disc. The quality and quantity of diaries varied according to the time and effort spent by each participant. The researcher asked for two weeks of diary entries, but one participant (B) could not supply any diary entry and participants P and M could only supply a 3-day, or 5-day diary as most of the participants in the stage were doing a Master's course and were busily occupied with their studies.

### **7.3. Analysis and presentation of the research data**

#### **7.3.1. Data analysis**

Individual transcriptions of the focus group, interviews, and the diaries were read several times, and the data organised firstly into three broad areas, according to the three main research interests (ICT, gender, English learning) and the themes which emerged in stages 1 and 2. Gradually, with repeated readings of the data, particular topics and new topics became apparent within each of these areas and these were given a code. The relevant texts (from dialogue and diary) were pasted under the themes. The themes and passages were reconsidered in their context to make some interpretation of the individual's perspective concerning each topic. Discussions of the issue of language and translation are given in appendix 2.

## **7.4. Findings and discussion**

The findings and discussions of stage 3 were divided into 4 sections (1) English learning experiences in Taiwan, (2) Experiences in Britain (3) ICT use in Taiwan and Britain. Each section was further divided into sub-sections.

### **7.4.1. English learning experiences in Taiwan**

Discussions on English learning experiences in Taiwan were divided into (1) Early age of English learning: school and family, (2) gender, equality and education (3) English education in Taiwan and (4) English learning with ICT.

#### **7.4.1.1. Early age of English learning: school and family**

The participants all started their private English learning at an early age. Most of the participants' families tried to provide an introduction to English or a rich language-input environment for the participants by sending them to private English classes and kindergartens with native speaker teachers, setting up community practice with parents who can speak English, inviting native speakers or hiring native speakers for them at home. The effect and experience of early age English learning differed among participants in terms of institution, teacher, teaching and learning quality. Participants A, B, E, M, and P considered their early age of English learning with private institutions or community groups completely ineffective for their English ability development; in fact it was a waste of time and money. Their views concerning early age English learning was contrary to what was assumed by others who didn't have the chance of English learning at an early age and linked early age English learning with high English proficiency (e.g. P1 and P5 in stage 1).

Sending children to private language institutions was common for parents who wanted their children to develop English ability and a get 'head start'. However, private learning institutions introduced learning pressure and competition to learners from an early age, and were considered negative by the participants. The teaching methods used in these institutions also varied in terms of their quality and suitability for children at different ages. Some applied an approach by introducing words and sentences to learners without knowledge of the alphabet; some were 'cram schools' catering for students (and their parents) who were preparing for exams in the formal school system and therefore emphasised reciting the alphabet and vocabulary. Neither of them was viewed as useful.

B: In the fifth year of primary school, I went with my cousin to a private English lesson which was of junior high school level. I don't know why but I just couldn't remember the 26 letters of the alphabet...I started to learn English by reciting vocabulary and I couldn't absorb it. I just went there to learn English songs taught by the teacher before the class ended. This is all I can remember. (Interview, p. 1)

Some institutions emphasised the learning result and students were asked to sit for exams, be upgraded, and grouped according to their results. They also applied testing and a competition system (publishing all students' results and sending them to the parents), which was perceived by participant E as 'cruel' and learning English for her was 'no fun at all!'.

Native-speakers were considered important in providing models of English pronunciation and speech, however, the effect of learning with native speakers also varied among individuals. Mostly, the native speakers that participants encountered were not trained English educators, but missionaries and visitors to Taiwan. The young age (5-12) of the learners also caused difficulties for them to follow the lessons or understand the native speaker teachers.

A: I studied in a kindergarten sponsored by a church...I don't remember much, except that the nun there is a white woman. She spoke English, but of course I didn't understand it. (Focus group, p. 1)

Two participants had less negative feelings toward their early English learning. Y was not sent to a private learning institution even though her mother was an English teacher. She started English learning only in junior high school and found her English learning successful and interesting. Participant B enjoyed and found her one-to-one English learning with her private tutor at home which focused helpfully on conversation and pronunciation built her confidence in English learning. Her experiences are shown in appendix 12 (B6).

The accounts of participants suggested that for early age learners (5-12), group learning either with non-native speakers or native speakers in language learning institutions or at home is less effective than a one-to-one learning situation where the learners receive higher attention and feedback from the teacher and do not accommodate to the progress of other learners or compete with other learners. A learning environment with anxiety and pressure deliberately produced by the teachers

and teaching institutions was viewed as the worse of all for learners to learn.

Though the effect of early age learning language learning is debatable, the participants in this research showed that their early age English learning was very limited in terms of helping them with their later English learning. Though they have forgotten all that they might possibly have learned at a young age, one thing some of them definitely remember is the pressure and strictness imposed on them.

#### **7.4.1.2. Gender, equality, and education**

In this group, gender equality was considered not a problem in their early education and family experience. The participants reported no or little gender-biased attitude and treatment from their family and other adults. This may be due to their younger age than those in the previous group and their urban habitation (apart from B and P, other participants live in cities) where stereotypical gender roles and conventional gender restrictions may have less impact on a new urban family. The traditional preference for boys was not emphasised in some families (Participants A, E, and Y). Higher academic achievements of daughters than sons may even earn them preference from their parents (Participant Y). The cultural capital of a parent without gender-biased values is important in establishing children's interest in and accommodation to formal education and knowledge. B received equal and good education from her father, who is not only professional and knowledgeable, but also equal in his perception of education to males and females. This helped her to develop an interest in science and confidence in school study.

Y: Actually my parents always encouraged me to study. They think I am doing better than my two brothers. They have been very supportive. I don't have problems of suppression. As a girl, I have no problems. Whatever boys can do, I can do them too. (Interview, p.26)

Stricter gender expectations applied at an older age in terms of institutions of higher education, career choices, and further education abroad. In terms of career choices, some participants were encouraged to follow a traditional path for women—education. E, M and P attended teachers' universities and were teachers before they came to Britain. Teaching has always been seen as a suitable job for women in Taiwan, especially at the level of compulsory education, because of the cheaper cost of teacher education and its close relation to female roles. It is also seen as an extension of

mothering (Chen, 2000). However, role restrictions, the school system, the pressure of entrance examinations, and administrative cultures were a series of sources of stress for female teachers (Chen, 2000). The three of them all expressed dislike and tiredness toward their teaching career, which was decided on by their parents, who thought girls as female teachers are desirable matches in the marriage market.

Some participants encountered difficulties and opposition when they decided to pursue a higher degree abroad. Marriage, gender role expectations, and age were the forces pulling against their development. For those who are at the age 'suitable for marriage', or those who are already in a marriage, worries concerning their age and gender role often came from their mothers.

In the case of M, gender restriction was found in her career choices and further education abroad. M's father encouraged her to study because he recognised the potential a degree from a western university can bring to one's career. However, her mother was the one who was against her study because of her concern about M's age, marriage possibility, and the resulting sense of security. Struggles of different values on gender roles, priority (of career, study, or marriage) between mother and daughter and M's wish to win approval and recognition from her mother can be consuming and a source of frustration.

M: ...Actually I always wanted to go abroad. I have worked for three years. When I decided I wanted to study, my mother opposed it because she thought I was old enough to get married. This may be a common problem for single Taiwanese people who are of my age group [...] Its influence is: it made me upset. When I felt upset, many things were also influenced. How to solve the problem? You just have to insist. I insist that I want to do that. There is no finance support...then I saved money for one year and then borrowed a little loan [...] I think the main problem is money. I first overcame this problem and discussed the conditions with my mother.

R: So, it's your mother who opposed it, not your father.

M: But she didn't really oppose.

R: She worried about your marriage, age, and where to find a husband.

M: Yes. Yes. Yes. If I still want to study further, I have to talk with her. My father basically approved. (Focus group, p.30-31) (Further account from M describing problems of her mother's attitude towards her study and the impact on her is given in appendix 14 (M1)).

P considered her early education in the family equal and fair. Yet as she grew up, in her original family and marriage family, P's role was expected to be a care taker rather than academic-oriented. P's parents expected her brother to study for a higher degree, but she turned out to be more academically successful. P and P5 (from stage 2) were more academically oriented than their brothers and had their chance of studies after parents' great expectations of their sons failed. After marriage, P was expected not to continue further higher education but only keep her roles of a good wife; however, she managed to find her way into higher education and study abroad.

P: My parents always wanted my brother to study, not me. My mother often said a proverb: the deliberately fed pig didn't get fat. It is the dog that got fat. (Interview, p.10)

P: In the beginning, my parents had great expectations for him (her brother), but he failed university many times and my parents have just given up now. So, they think since there is no hope for the son, it is at least not bad if the daughter can go abroad to study. (Interview, p.10)

For married women like P, marriage was an obstruction to her education. She reported that people thought that studying abroad is something for her husband, not for her, and that after marriage women should stay at home to give birth to children and take care of them. Both sides of her family thought she should ask approval to study from her husband and she spent about half a year persuading him.

P: In Taiwan, because I am married, I have to go back to give birth to a baby. It is very troublesome. [...] Besides, there are problems with expectations. Because I am a woman, people would not expect you to have a very high degree, especially if you want a study abroad. (Interview)

The findings suggested that some young women continued to experience gender-biased expectation and restriction with the emphasis on family, marriage, and restricted gender roles imposed on them through their mothers or family. One of the structures through which patriarchy sustains its control on young women is clearly the advice and regulation concerning gender roles given from their mothers. Some mothers play important roles in suppressing young women's rebellions against patriarchy power. By discouraging young women's ambition or signs of independence or advancement in their career, emphasising and advising certain forms of femininities, such as sexuality, domesticity, obedience, having lower achievement

than men, and keeping certain forms of body image, mothers' good intention to pass on their survival strategies (learning to lose and please) in the male world serve to impose patriarchal expectations and regulation on young women. For young women, it is particularly distressing and difficult to fight against patriarchal control via the internalised gender ideology held by their mothers. Signs of disagreement against conventional gender roles and values may cause damage to the bond of affection between mother and daughter, thus causing them to lose important support and approval from their 'significant other'. It can also lead mothers to feel 'face loss' and to be blamed by men for not teaching their daughters and having them married well. Young women often face a situation of ambivalence—when they struggle and rebel against patriarchal control and pursue further development for themselves, at the same time they are also fighting against their mothers' internalised values and having the danger of hurting the mother-daughter bonding.

In addition, as Liu (2003) pointed out, parenting practices and parental messages, especially maternal messages, are significantly associated with girls' depressive symptoms. There was also a positive association between the socio-economic status of the family and positive parental messages, care, warmth, tolerance, support and involvement provided for their children. Negative messages and views on self, the world and the future sent out to daughters through their daily communication from their depressed and suppressed mothers might negatively affect mental health and the development of female students in the present research.

### **7.4.1.3. English education in Taiwan**

#### **7.4.1.3.1. English learning in high school**

Before 1999, formal English education started in the first year of junior high school and continued to the first year of university and college, where English is one of the foreign language options. English learning experiences in the formal curriculum also differ among participants in terms of institutions and teacher quality.

It was generally agreed that an English teacher was an important factor in their English learning. However, as Tsao (1999) and Nunan (2003) reported, many English teachers were inadequately trained with an emphasis of writing and reading. They may still lack English proficiency and pedagogical skills. Attitudes to English teachers were greatly connected to students' motivation. Without an appropriate teacher appraisal system, teachers' quality and teaching methods varied dramatically



among individual teachers and institutions. Participants who attended elite schools or special classes in the cities were more likely to have teachers who were likable, resourceful, and innovative. Participants also liked teachers who can communicate with students, introduced cultural materials (songs, stories, literature) and used multiple methods (listening to radio, conversation contests, role play) to motivate and provide rich language and cultural input for students. Participant Y attended an elite local girls' high school and an elite university in Taiwan; she liked her teacher, found her young, beautiful, and her English teaching inspiring and interesting. Participant M also attended special classes different from the formal curriculum. Those who had other activities other than grammar learning and vocabulary reciting found English learning more enjoyable. Their views toward English learning are shown in appendix 17 (X9).

Due to the exam system, the skills of writing, reading, grammar translation, and testing were emphasized in many participants' high schools. For some participants who were sent to private high schools which focus on preparing students for exams, English learning is related to exam pressure, anxiety, punishment, and strict competition throughout high school. Some participants reacted negatively to their teachers, who used unsystematic teaching methods, were limited to a traditional grammar-translation approach, and did not take students' feelings, interest, and learning states into consideration. Due to available access to in-service training in recent years, it is becoming common for teachers to continue to pursue a Master's degree. However, one participant found that even having teachers with an American university Master's degree could not guarantee the teaching quality.

Some participants (A, E, P) disliked their English teachers and found their English teachers in high school harsh. As Watkins and Biggs (1996) pointed out, parents and teachers of Confucius-heritage-culture were found to be too harsh and punitive to students due to their high expectations. They also seldom praised students for their accomplishments. Watkins and Biggs. stated that while high standard expectations from CHC parents and teachers may enhance students' motivation, 'it can affect their social and emotional development and mental health as well' (Watkins and Biggs, 1996, p.100). Participants A, B, E, and P complained that the harshness and strictness teachers imposed on them made them anxious and stressed. They also didn't like tests that were important part of English learning for practise to perfection. As discussed in section 3.3.1., teachers in Taiwan are allowed to manage students' bodies and for all the years in some primary schools, students can never escape physical punishment (Yu, 1997). Different forms of punishment (physical, scolding, or exclusion) were

used by teachers when the expected results were not reached in order to motivate students to study harder. English lessons were related to having tests and doing well to avoid punishment (being ignored, exclusion, physical punishment, and ill treatment). Private English classes (Boxiban), where more tests and grammar lessons were taught, were another place the participants had more English studies (and tests) after formal schooling. Though two participants (B and P) were good in the class and better adjusted to the strictness and competition of the system, not all of them found it enjoyable and beneficial. Participants' views toward English classes are given in appendix 17 (X10).

Due to the exam oriented English education, the unreliability of teacher quality, their English proficiency, and their ability to provide English language and cultural input in public schools, it was reported that some participants felt it all depended on themselves and their environment (family background and their ability to provide students with a rich language input learning environment) to learn English well. The participants' different opinions on their teachers and English learning are presented in appendix 17 (X5).

#### **7.4.1.3.2. English learning at university and after**

At university level in Taiwan, English is one of the foreign language options in the first year. Students are not required to attend language courses after the first year. English learning at university is completely up to one's own efforts and the opportunities provided in their environment. Family expectations of career choices had a major impact on their learning and motivation. Gender expectations for women often contradict their pursuit of higher degrees. Some of them (E and P) were expected to follow a career suitable for women—teaching—and studied in teachers' colleges. They found the learning institutions and their training in Taiwan put them into disadvantageous positions regarding studying for a higher degree abroad. Since participants E and P were studying in teachers' colleges and were expected to be teachers in Taiwan, they were not required to have contact with English texts and language. They felt their English ability deteriorated during the university years, which caused them difficulties in studying in Britain. E's account of a lack of English training at university level and the impact on her study in Britain is given in appendix 13 (E9).

Unlike students from teachers' colleges, some participants (B, Y) were not restricted by gender-biased expectations. They entered public universities and were expected to

continue further studies abroad. Therefore they were encouraged to read textbooks in English, have contact with English speakers, prepare for language tests for further study abroad, and become researchers or analytic analysts, who are of increasing importance and have a competitive advantage in the developing information society (as discussed in section 4.2.).

Y: The teacher in our department liked to use English textbooks. I had to take a course three times to pass. The main reason was: the book was in English. I felt too lazy to study it. Actually English textbooks were easy to read. It's not difficult. But it looks so huge and thick. The books for the theories were also in English. You had to find a Chinese version by yourself. If there is none, you just have to read the English one. The teacher wanted to encourage us to read English because that will help us a lot when we have to study abroad...You had to have a dictionary beside you and check it very often. I found it quite difficult. (Interview, p.4)

B: When I was in the third year, I started to prepare for TOEFL [...] It's very boring, very mechanical...There are a lot of things you would never need to use. I don't really like it...But when you have the lessons, you would study English, so you still make some progress in your English. At university, I also read English books. (Interview, p. 3)

The quality of the first-year university English course and English teachers varies among individuals. Contrary to teachers in high school, some participants reported that English teachers at university had a *laissez-faire* attitude toward English learning and did not have rewarding and interesting English classes. Though the students (E) may find the English cultural and language materials used relevant and interesting for them, it is a pity that their teachers seemed not able to facilitate and motivate further interest and learning and offer them a rewarding experience. E's account of her university English course is given in appendix 13 (E2).

A: At university, the teacher took it easy...he was very strange and the lesson was very easy to pass. As to English learning, it depends on your own reading, listening, and studying. (Focus group, p.1)

For those lucky enough to have high quality teachers, their first year English course was reported to be interesting, rewarding, and inspirational. Through this class, Y recognised the importance of cultural understanding via language learning. It also

motivated her to take up more courses. Her full account is given in appendix 16 (Y3).

#### **7.4.1.3.3. Special events and contact with English speakers**

Before going to Britain, all participants had opportunities to go abroad (for tourism or visiting friends and relatives) or have contact (via computer mediated communication technologies) with English speakers via church or university students' activities. After going abroad and comparing themselves with others, some realized their English proficiency in terms of communication was low and that listening and speaking needed more practice. Some of them were offered a chance to broaden their mind and achieve a better understanding of cultural differences. They also started to consider going abroad to study in the future.

A: I studied in the English department before. I was recruited as a travel guide for the activities held by a newspaper company in Taiwan... They wanted people who can speak English to take the children abroad so I was able to get the chance and go for a free trip. I came to England to study because I also took children to Nottingham before. (Interview)

B: At university, I had the chance to meet some friends from foreign countries. When they went back, I started to use emails to communicate frequently with them [...] They are Christian people of the church who came here to visit Taiwan. The church found university students to translate for them. So, you have a lot of chances to have contact with foreigners. (Interview, p.11-12)

Other participants' account on their special events and contact with English are presented in appendix 17 (X1).

As discussed in section 2.1.3., economic capital and cultural capital are interchangeable and closely connected. The family played an important role in the participants' learning and development. The positions of their parents' socioeconomic status and cultural capital had a major impact on the choices of schools and learning institutions. Some (Y) entered elite public schools that featured innovative teaching and quality teachers; some (A) attended private schools oriented to exam preparation and had teachers of diverse quality. The professional knowledge and cultural capital of some parents helped to bridge the gap between home and school and had a great impact on the participants' ability to take up school knowledge, adjust to the school

system, build positive relationships with school teachers, and deal with the competition and pressure imposed on them. When a participant (e.g. Y and B) felt her family was supportive, resourceful, and helpful in her development, she would be generally happier and more capable of dealing with difficulties encountered in learning or the school environment. The learning process was more pleasant and successful. Otherwise, they might be stumbling and struggling all the way and had little confidence in their learning.

Though all the participants finished their degree at the university level, two participants (B, Y) were encouraged to choose an academic-oriented and resourceful public university, in which they were expected to continue their further education abroad or in Taiwan, and then have a research-oriented job or teach in higher education. Three of the participants (E, M, P) were encouraged (coerced) to enter teachers' university or college because of the their parents' perceptions of the strong connection between the teaching profession and women's care-taking in the private domain, and the sense of stability and security related with the teaching job. Although teaching is considered as the best job for girls, the participants (E, M, P) who followed this path complained about the stress and tediousness at work and their dissatisfaction with their parents' choices of their career. Studying abroad is a way to break away from this stress and find another way to a better place.

As regards the gender aspect, it is interesting to note that most participants had a traditional male/public domain, female/ private domain family structure. Their mothers were housewives or teachers while their fathers worked in public or private companies. For some participants, the strict gender restriction and obstacles they encountered were imposed by their mothers. This could be because mothers are the care-takers at home, therefore they have the main responsibility to make sure their daughters 'behave well'. It could also be because mothers have remained all their lives in the private domain and internalised the gender-biased ideology; therefore, they were not able to see beyond their limited worldview and catch up with the changing society and needs for new sets of gender roles.

#### **7.4.1.4. English learning with ICT in Taiwan**

##### **7.4.1.4.1. Radio**

Radio is a common medium of authentic listening and reading practice in Taiwan aside from the formal curriculum. Due to their younger age, the participants had more

sources of language input than people from the previous group (stage 1 in section 5.2). Some schools also included listening to English radio programmes in their lessons and exam categories, which was considered useful and helpful in terms of improving listening ability.

E: When I was in junior high school...Every day you had to listen to 'Let's talk in English' and our teacher would test you the next morning. She didn't only test you according to the text in the magazine. She would test on the content of the conversation and chatting among the speakers so you just needed to listen to it. For the whole three years, our class was forced by the teachers to listen every day. So, I think I made a lot of progress and learned a lot during the three years... (Interview, p.2)

B: We started to listen to 'Studio Classroom' in senior high school. We started from 'Basic'...It was very difficult in the beginning. We didn't put it into the formal curriculum, but I listened to it continuously...when I was at university, I listened to it again and found it very easy. I then realized I had made some progress by listening to it continuously. (Interview, p.2)

Though radio programmes were considered helpful for those who were able to take up its content and listen to it continuously, it could become another source of pressure and anxiety for some. The content of the radio programmes was also much more advanced than the content taught within the formal English curriculum. Its relative difficulty and the learning activities/tests designed by individual teachers for their classes may have had a negative impact on students' confidence. Students were indoctrinated with the strong connection between scores and their self-worth (self image) and thus accordingly wanted to learn and maintain good scores. However, difficult learning materials, tests, study pressure, and the limit of the available technologies, difficulty in receiving the programmes, can result in students' refusal to learn, thus they can avoid failure and the negative assessment on themselves all together. Full accounts of A and E's experiences listening to the radio are given in appendix 17 (X2).

#### **7.4.1.4.2. Computers and the Internet**

Due to the economic and computer technology development within and outside Taiwan, many participants started to have their first computer at around the time they entered university. At university, participants used the Internet and communicative

software to keep in contact and practise English with English speakers they knew from the special events they attended as mentioned above.

E: I remember in my first year at the university, there was a huge development in computer technology. I started by using windows 3.5, but then suddenly, in the next term, Windows 95 appeared. Since teachers started to require us to type our work, we bought a computer when I was in the first year of the university...(Interview, p.13-14)

Y: We started to have a computer in the summer vacation when I passed the university entrance exams. The economic condition in my family was fine, so we could have whatever we wanted. (Interview)

The Internet and communicative software, which most of the participants frequently used during their university years (the latter half decade of the 1990s) due to the advancement of computer technologies and prevalence of networked computers in Taiwanese universities, shaped their virtual social lives and information lives. Using computers and the Internet was a common activity for the participants. Participants had easy access to the Internet as their dormitories were equipped with the free Broad Band system; they also obtained their knowledge about computers (Internet connection, new software, etc.) from their peers, friends, and relatives easily. Browsing the web and communicating with people on the Internet were regular activities for A, B, E, P, and Y. It was reported that computers were also used as word processors because teachers now required typed texts. Networked computers were used for personal leisure (reading news, discussions on students' Bulletin Board Systems), social interaction (chatting to friends with software called ICQ), and research.

E: I would read my emails from my friends or classmate first. I would have a look at news in Taiwan. I would also search for some information about Taiwan for my research topic. (Interview, p.13-14)

E: We had Internet connection in my university accommodation; it was free, very fast, broadband, infinite use. I thought it was so convenient. The first thing I did when I got back was to turn on the computer. You can just press one key and it was connected with the Internet. (Interview, p.13-14)

Y: I knew how to send emails and use the Internet and sometimes I searched for information, but I was not a big fan. After I came back from S university and I wanted to keep in contact with my foreign friends and keep up with my English, I was very often hung on the Internet. I sent emails and chatted with people with ICQ. [...] I started to know how to use ICQ...(Interview)

Usually participants used the Internet and communicative software to keep in contact with people they already knew, but Y was an example of an Internet user who seeks new friendship, excitement, information, and even a possible partner in life in the virtual world.

After Y came back from the travel-study trip to S university in the US, she wanted to keep in contact with people she knew and started to use emails and communication software (ICQ) frequently. After entering the world of on-line communication, she started her adventure with the new expanding virtual social relationship. The purpose of using ICQ is to find, chat, and make new friends of different nationalities and diverse cultural backgrounds, and possibly search for the potential perfect Other. Such activities traditionally were not explicitly encouraged for females to take an initiative in. She found the experience of talking with an unknown stranger via the computer programmes exciting. After endless hours spent on the Internet and chatting with many people, she found a boyfriend and then due to the limit of conversation topics, she lost her interest in chatting with people via communicative software. People around Y (her brother, friends, housemates, their friends, and younger sisters of some participants from stage 1) were all enthusiastic users of the Internet and those young people were part of the virtual on-line population who seek to fulfil their information and social needs via the Internet. Practising English was one of the goals of using the program as Y insisted on using the English version of the software and typed (chatted) in English. Her respondents, though mostly male, were not necessarily English native speakers (they could be French or German). English was the common language used among them on the net.

Y: There is a search function in ICQ, so when I used it, I would search for people with a very strange nationality, for example: Russian, French. But that is all before my boyfriend. Besides, I met my boyfriend through ICQ. Because I think using ICQ can improve my English typing skills. (Interview)



Y: A French man I knew from ICQ before, once he said he would like to call me. So I gave him my phone number. I lived in student accommodation at that time and he called to talk to us (her and her housemate). I found it very interesting! A Frenchman could call me from a foreign country! ...You found there are lots of chances for you to chat with people. Even with Taiwanese people, you can also use English to talk with them. (Interview)

However, though chatting via computer with unknown partners from a distant country can be thrilling, the limited and superficial topics for discussion can also quickly wear out one's interest and make on-line chatting boring and repetitive. For some people, after exploring a new medium, the craze wore out quickly.

Y: I am the kind of person who can get very addicted to and crazy with one thing and then suddenly get over it... When I was very attracted to it, I could spend many hours chatting with people till very late...I suddenly lost my interest in chatting on ICQ because all the conversations were all the same...(Interview)

Aside from social chatting via CMC, the Internet and emails were also important for studies as she found that search and making applications for university graduate schools via computers was much easier and more convenient. When she arrived in Britain, she browsed BBS (Bulletin Board system) in Taiwan to access specific information in Taiwan.

To summarise, the findings from the participants' learning experiences in Taiwan suggested that economic, cultural and linguistic capital are closely connected and interchangeable. Family background and parental social status played important roles in shaping the participants' learning and development. Bourdieu (1997), as discussed in section 2.1.3., suggested that 'the most determinant educational investment is the domestic transmission of cultural capital'—the cultural capital previously invested by the family (Bourdieu, 1997, p.48). Because the transmission and acquisition of cultural capital are more disguised than those of economic capital, it can become unrecognised as capital but recognised as 'legitimate competence' (Bourdieu, 1997, p.49). The advantaged students could build up more success and advancement based on their confidence and previous successes; while the disadvantaged might be further disadvantaged and demotivated as a result of a lack of economic capital, the right sort of dispositions, attitude, cultural and linguistic capital, and be channelled to work that

requires less skill, is more replaceable, and less competitive.

The effect of English learning at an early age was reported to be limited. Participants' English learning experiences differ in terms of teacher quality, teaching methods, and institutions, which is closely related to their families' *affordance*. Participants from both urban and rural areas attended English lessons at formal high school, which featured traditional grammar-translation methods. Strict teachers and formal tests were reported to be the source of anxiety and stress. However, participants who attended elite public schools in urban areas were more likely to have teachers who were more resourceful, attentive, and would use materials and activities aside from school textbooks (for example, English radio programmes, English songs, role-plays, and English literature), and use the communicative approach aside from the grammar-translation approach. These extra activities and resources provided students with authentic English learning materials and were reported to be effective and motivating in English learning and teaching. For the participants in the research, radio programmes were commonly used to improve their English listening either as assignments from teachers or self-study tools.

Most English radio programmes popular in Taiwan were recorded or produced by Americans. Some of them were assigned learning materials in some high schools and universities and were commonly listened to by the participants. These programmes were produced by American missionaries. One commercial English radio programme was originally set up for the American soldiers in an American military base. Thus, American English, rather than British English, was more commonly heard by the participants who used radio as a learning medium. Consequently, participants who were accustomed to American English used by missionaries and commercial broadcasting hosts may find British English used in British universities difficult and formal. No participants mentioned the use of computers in English learning in high schools or below. Computers were used as a communication tool or an English learning tool only after they went to university.

#### **7.4.2. Experience in Britain**

The findings and discussion on participants' experiences in Britain were categorised into four sections (1) academic reading and writing (2) speaking and listening (3) other language and culture issues (4) resources and other problems.

### 7.4.2.1. Academic studies

The sections on academic studies contain issues of (1) academic reading, (2) academic writing.

#### 7.4.2.1.1. Academic reading

Academic reading and writing are important for students studying for a post-graduate degree in Britain because the assessment of learning quality is based on judgment on students' writing in essays and theses. The process of constructing a piece of academic work involves reading intensively and extensively a huge amount of academic texts. Lecturers also assigned reading lists for seminar discussion. Reading in English for academic purpose was a task some of the participants had never done before. Participant A had great difficulty in following up the assigned reading list, therefore, she felt very anxious and frustrated with her progress. E also found academic reading difficult yet she managed to overcome the problem by applied reading strategies and talking to peers. To deal with a vast amount of new vocabulary in reading, she looked up new words only when they appeared more than three times. To deal with structurally difficult texts, she repeated reading it to have better comprehension. Though she was required to do a great deal of reading in a short period of time and felt nervous about it, she also found the pressure positive and it helped her to work hard and concentrated on the task. To understand the theories discussed in her course, she consulted her textbooks in Chinese and compared the translation text with the original one. Other strategies used by participant E can be found in appendix 13 (E3).

E: I started to write the essay, and then I have to read some stuff. Before I would look up every new word in the dictionary but then I found it took too much time. Then I tell myself that if this word only appears one time, then I would forget about it. If it appears more than three times, it shows that it will be used in the whole article, and then I will look it up in the dictionary.  
(Interview)

For those who were used to reading English textbooks in Taiwan (B, Y), they were more exposed to English and therefore had fewer problems and fear of reading English books. Reading was what B had been able to master and reading before and after the lecture helped her listening and comprehension of the content.

M: How about your reading? Is it fast?

B: No, at least I am not afraid of reading. I started to read English textbooks since university, so I wouldn't look at piles of books and feel afraid. I think it helped to overcome difficulties in the beginning, but of course you have to look up a lot of new words in the dictionary. But at least you are not afraid to read. (Focus group)

In the digital age, screen reading has also joined reading on printed paper as another venue where people communicate and obtain information. The possibilities and limitation of screen reading are discussed in 4.4.3.2. The interactive nature of screen reading will be discussed together with writing on screen in the next section 7.4.2.1.2.

#### **7.4.2.1.2. Academic writing**

English writing for academic purpose in Britain is different from the English writing training participants received in Taiwan before. As research by Johanson (2001) showed, in Taiwan, students were not exposed to a range of writing genres and were unfamiliar with the discourse conventions. Their previous learning experiences with English writing also led to their current difficulties in academic writing. Even for the students who have previously majored in English in Taiwan, they feel their English courses, in which they were told to write expressively on a topic (e.g., my summer vacation), did not prepare them adequately to cope with the demands required for their graduate academic studies. Students studying for a Master's or doctoral degree also have different conceptions on academic writing. Academic writing is considered as an anxiety-provoking event that students applied a diversity of strategies to cope with (Johanson, 2001). In the present research, some students attended pre-sessional language courses at the university and consulted teachers and handouts they received to make sure they achieved the standard. They also looked at works completed by previous students for reference.

E: I think in writing courses in Taiwan, they only ask you to write in a normal way. They wouldn't ask you to write in an academic way. I think when I come here, academic writing is required. I think the gap is quite big. Before, you can use words like 'get', 'make', but now, you cannot use these words. It feels very different. (Interview, her full account on different writing genres and coping strategies are presented in appendix 13 (E4))

Y: I thought my writing was good. But when it comes to academic writing, I think my writing is far away from the kind of normal English academic writing. (Interview)

In terms of support for academic English writing, for some participants, their departments also arranged in-session writing language courses for them. The courses and suggestions from tutors were considered very helpful for their writing. For doctoral student Y, her supervisor helped and proofread her English writing. However, some participants didn't know where to seek help and did not have in-session English writing courses arranged by their department. Their supervisors might also think students' problems with English academic writing was not their responsibility. When they heard about the Language Centre in the focus group, they were also told that the classes were full. They would have to depend on themselves, or seek private tutoring to help with their writing (See appendix 12 (B1)).

Y: ...my supervisor helped me a lot in writing. He is willing to do proof reading for me and help me with grammar errors. He didn't just send me to the language centre: 'go to learn English academic writing!' My supervisor gave me some time and let me explore my own writing style. He would also supervise and instruct me. So I am very grateful to him. (Interview, p.9-10)

Aside from unfamiliarity with academic styles, English writing is difficult because different languages were used in the thinking and writing processes. English writing for non-native speaker Y is translating one's thinking in Chinese into English, rather than writing it directly from English thinking into English.

Y: After all you are not a native speaker. You still think by translating Chinese into English, rather than writing directly from English thinking. (Interview)

The difficulty of writing with English as a non-English native speaker was further illustrated by three stages of reading, comprehension/memorization, and writing and B's metaphor of main idea/ details as skeleton/flesh, branch/leaves. In each of the three stages of information processing, a different language was used. The ability and capability of information processing was limited and reduced due to the language difficulties. In the reading stage, the participant read the text in English. To comprehend and memorize, she used Chinese for the task. However, to write up what she had learned, she had to switch back to English again. Because of the complex

language transformation, only the main idea (skeleton, branches) can be remembered in Chinese and the detailed information of the subject in English may be lost somewhere in these three stages of the process. To write up a piece of work in English, she had to go back to the English sources to pick up the lost leaves and put it up on her work, which might not be as good, natural, and easy as she wanted.

B: I think writing an essay is very difficult for me...let me put it this way, I think my thinking is still Chinese thinking. After I read something, I absorbed and saved the materials in Chinese. Now I have to write it, so it has to be in English. I think there is a gap in between. That is, today, I read things in English and save them up in Chinese inside me. I read ten things but what I remember is only five. *There is only the skeleton, not flesh.* I can remember the skeleton because I remember it with Chinese. Now I have to write it, I found there is only the skeleton, no flesh. Then I have to go back to find the English articles and see what the flesh looked like, then I can write it. So I find it very hard. In Taiwan, we also read for the main structure (branch), and then you grow the leaves by yourself because Chinese is easy for you. You just write by yourself and you can do it. But here, you have to go back to find the leaves on its original source.

R: You have the main idea, but when you want to write...

B: I don't know how to write it, how to describe it.

R: Before you could write like building a beautiful tree with lots of leaves.

B: Now I have to take others' leaves and put them on my tree. That is very frustrating.

R: Does your department require certain types of format or style for the essays or reports?

B: Format is all right for me. Because we had to read papers in Taiwan, we had the same format. It is scientific research and the format is the same. But there were few chances for us to write reports. We often read a lot, but seldom wrote. This is why it is hard for me. (Interview)

Most importantly, the advance of computer technology have given new meaning for English writing and reading for academic purpose. Writing and reading can be seen as reciprocal as readers play an active role in deciding what to read and constructing their text and meanings while writers are constantly informed and influenced by what they read. (Andrews, 2001; Warschauer, 2000; O'Donoghue, 2000; Goodwyn, 2000; in section 4.4.3.2.) In addition, ICT allows learning to occur via processing and transforming the information via different media and genres (Andrews, 2001). Thus,

learning occurs as the participants 're-create' and 're-produce' their writing for their academic tutors and examiners. The process of transformation and learning is significant for the participants in the present research as they not only have to transform information and 'texts' via different genres and forms, they also have to transform the meaning via two different languages.

#### **7.4.2.2. Speaking and listening**

This section covers (1) English(es) and intelligibility, (2) language discourse, (3) communication with supervisor, (4) discussion in a group, (5) oral report in the class.

Speaking and listening constitute the other two important elements of language communication. For the participants, living as overseas students in Britain suggests that they can use the best way—immersion in the target language environment—to improve their language capability (as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.3. by Watkins and Biggs, 1997). However, they may also find difficulties in speaking and listening.

##### **7.4.2.2.1. English(es) and intelligibility**

As discussed in chapter 4, section 4.2.3., global English and technology advancement have resulted in a diversity of English(es) used by people from different corners of the world. The issues of intelligibility, standards, and identity have been debated by a range of language researchers (Crystal, 1999;. Kachru and Nelson, 1996; Graddol, 1997). In the present research, the diversity of English(es) used in Britain by both British native speakers and people from other parts of the world were considered by the participants of the present research as one of the causes of comprehension difficulties.

Differences in use of words, structure complexity, pronunciation, and accent between Englishes used by overseas students and British native speakers can cause mutual comprehension problems. It was reported by some participants (E, P) that when communicating in English, students from overseas have no problems understanding other speakers from their original regions. Though tutors generally spoke clearly in the class and thus were more comprehensible, overseas Asian students found their British classmates incomprehensible and had difficulty in making themselves understood to both British tutors and their British peers.

P: I think I had difficulty in listening comprehension. They speak with a strong accent. Sometimes I really don't understand so I ask them to spell out the word for me.

A: Would you ask the teacher to do this in the class?

P: I think we understood most of the teachers' language. But we didn't understand what other classmates said. The teacher also didn't understand what I was saying, so I just spelt the word for the teacher. But sometimes it was strange because my classmates understood me but not the teacher.

A: Is it in daily conversation or a special term?

E: I think our class is special because our classmates are all Asian; there are no Europeans. Sometimes the teacher didn't understand what the Chinese students said, but (E and P together): we understood them.

P: I once said the word: extend. I pronounced the sound /d/ for /t/ but everyone except the teacher understood. After I spelled it out, the teacher said: oh! Extend.

E: This happened three or four times since the start of the term. The whole class understood what we were talking about except the teacher. He asked us which word you were talking about. I think that's because our class is more special. (Focus group, p.14) (For full account of P please see appendix 15 (PE1))

As British universities have recruited more and more overseas students in recent years, especially from China and Asia (in academic year 2002/2003, there were 306 students from China among the total 8663 students at the university), it was possible that in some special courses, the majority of the students were speakers of Chinese and other languages, and English became the minority.

As more and more countries include English in their formal curriculum, it is common for local teachers who are not native English speakers to teach local students and develop their regional variety of English use. In the case of Taiwanese students, though many of them had English learning and communication experiences with people from countries of the inner circle, few of them were long-term residents in these countries before they came to Britain. Some of them of older age (P1 and P2 in stage 1) even had little chance to be exposed to the English used in the inner circle and learned their English mainly in the traditional grammar-translation classroom with local teachers. It can be said that for some of the Taiwanese students, they were more familiar with the Asian/international versions of English and they had fewer



problems understanding people who used these versions of English. It was only during communication with their British teacher and peers that comprehension difficulty occurred.

As discussed in chapter 4, section 4.2.3. Kachru and Nelson suggested that a three-level model of communication (intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability) may even reverse the status ranking of inner, outer, and expanding circle users. The native speakers from inner circle countries are found by English L2 speakers to be among the least intelligible, and possibly the least comprehensible and interpretable (Kachru and Nelson, 1996). The expanding number of English L2 speakers may also challenge the sense of 'ownership' and standard of American or British English (Crystal, 1997). In a context where L2 speakers not only outnumbered native speakers but communicate well with English among themselves, the reputation of inner circle English as the standard for reference may seem questionable. However, in the present case, the purpose of communication and the status of speakers also played a role in language use. Though it is suggested that English speakers in the outer/expanding circles mainly use English to communicate with other speakers from their regions (Kachru and Nelson, 1996; Graddol, 1997), the overwhelming American influence in governmental, commercial, educational, mass cultural, and techno-industrial domains in Taiwan have led the Taiwanese to look to the western world for reference. Expectations of pursuing further postgraduate education in the US (or other inner circle English speaking countries) and the connection of English language capital with social mobility have operated continuously to fuel the growth of the private language industry and the need to learn English used in the inner circles. The students in the present research were coming to 'learn' something from British speakers and communication with the British tutor was important to their learning and central to the course as he played a crucial role in the group as the facilitator and information imparter. The validation of different diversities of English is closely related not only to the number of the speakers, but most importantly, to the power relation of the speakers. Though communication difficulties occurred, the Taiwanese participants did not have a strong rejection against Anglo-American English or British English. On the contrary, some participants (P4 in stage 1 and M in stage 3) thought it was not easy either to have communication with speakers using non-British English. For them, learning English is to learn the standard English used in the countries of the inner circle (Kachru and Nelson, 1996). Although British English might cause them difficulties in comprehension, P4 and M (and others, such as B, E, and P, might unconsciously do so as they seek validation of their English proficiency from native English speakers and wondered why they had no English housemates to practise

English conversation with) gave higher status to British English, considered British as the standard, showed strong motivation to learn British English, acquire British accents, and regarded acquisition of 'British English' as one of the indicators of successful language learning or a way to communicate better with British speakers. They also had a preference to speak English with British speakers, rather than other international speakers. Learning British English seems to be beneficial to them as it can serve as a status indicator when they go back to Taiwan where Englishes used in the inner circles are preferred.

M: I cook dinner with my English, German, and Chinese friends. I would naturally 'shut my ears' after I listen to German English and Chinese because it is quite difficult to understand them. Because I feel I came to England to learn English, I tend to speak more to English students. Though it is not very polite to the Chinese and German students, but...I felt I have made great progress compared to last term. I think it is relevant to my one-month stay in Switzerland. Because I lived in my friend's place, it helped me to adjust to English with different accents. (Diary)

After all, learning 'better' British English was possibly one of their goals of coming to study in Britain. In Taiwan, unlike other post-colonized countries, explicit acquisition of Englishes used in the inner circles is seen as a sign of power and status. As the participants may return to Taiwan, using standard British English may do them more good than harm in their economic and social advancement.

In terms of intelligibility and identity, their need for intelligibility is greater than that of identity. Crystal (1997) suggested language is closely connected to power. People who are competent in English(es) for local or international communication are in more powerful positions than those who are only good at one version. Competence in British English may provide access to international intelligibility. Access and affordability to the inner circle Englishes and knowledge may have certain impacts on Taiwanese society as acquisition of certain forms of English have for long served as gatekeeper to power. Taiwanese English users might be divided according to their exposure to two varieties of English—the English taught in formal schools by non-native local English teachers, and standard British/American English via the private or public ELT industry. People who can communicate with different forms of Englishes are more powerful than people who are good at only one. Those who can only receive English via formal schooling are in a disadvantaged position in terms of learning and recognition. English learning and the higher education industry in inner-

circle countries might help to serve not only as gatekeepers of standard English, but also power and resource distribution in these outer-circle countries.

In addition, from the perspective of capital, female participants see studying in an inner circle English-speaking country as the chance to enhance their linguistic, cultural, and social capital in English language and culture, rather than enhancing their understanding in their own language and culture. They may seek socialisation and contact with tutors and people from the target society, rather than those of similar origin, to increase their capital. From the perspective of the Subject/Other dichotomy, the ideology of Subject/Other involves race, class, gender, and power relations. Ideology works with the consensus of the disadvantaged (Morrison and Lui, 2000, p.471). Females, non-whites, and the dominated tend to see males, whites and the dominant as Subject and see themselves as the Other (Beauvoir, 1949). Rather than objecting explicitly against their subordinated status, the Other might consensually identify with the Subject with the hope of being able to be assimilated into the Subject, thus denying their own subjectivity and autonomy. By seeking validation from and assimilation to males in inner countries of the powerful language, the female students may unconsciously reinforce the power position of languages and speakers of the languages.

The economic connection between Taiwan and other Asian countries (Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and China) has led to the emphasis on English competence in international and regional communication both from the government and individuals. It seems to have little impact on the higher status of inner circle English perceived by the present participants. As language use and status usually takes centuries to occur (Crystal, 1997), globalisation, changes of English use, the emergence of regional English, WSPE (World Standard Print English) and WSSE (World Standard Spoken English), and its impact on learning required and their impact on the development of English learning in Taiwan need long-term investigation.

#### **7.4.2.2.2. Language discourse**

One of the reasons resulting in listening difficulties is the discourse (or style) of speaking English produced by English academic speakers. Participant A reported irritating difficulties in understanding her tutor's formal talk in the class due to his formal format of speech, which was like written English for her and was very different from casual American spoken English, which A was more familiar with. A's

full account is given in appendix 11(A3).

Language discourse and the way people express themselves through the use of language in British academia was also a novelty for an academic novice like A, who was more used to casual and simple forms of expressions.

A: I think the English spoken here is too formal, everyone behaves like they have a lot of culture. So when they speak, even though they can use simple sentences, they rather choose other words, which would be only used in the written English.

M: They deliberately choose the difficult and complicated words. (Focus group, p.15-16)

#### **7.4.2.2.3. Communication with supervisor**

Communicating with one's supervisor is also another problem facing some participants. In addition to difficulties in English communication, participants' perception of their role, self-image, expectation, image of supervisor as an authority figure (as discussed in P1's case in stage 2) and their supervisors' perception and attitude to supervision had a great impact on the success and quality of the communication and supervision.

As was reported in Chapter 3, section 3.3.4., female students tended to have lower confidence in and lower assessment of their abilities, thus they might experience more acute anxiety when they came to Britain (Wright, p.105). As novices to the academic environment, they often experienced anxiety and stress because they did not know what was expected of them in terms of academic performance and English proficiency, which leads to many unnecessary worries about their English ability and the consequent judgment they assumed people would have on them. As discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4.2. and 2.4.3. (by Chang, 1999 and Johanson, 2001) worries about face loss and negative views (fear of being considered stupid) from their supervisors were the main source of Taiwanese students' anxiety in their relationship with their supervisors/tutors. Participant E had a fear of face loss and negative evaluation from her supervisor and felt very nervous when seeing him.

E: I think in a week I speak most English when I see my supervisor...I was very nervous at the beginning. Last time I handed in my essay for him to

read. The next day when I met him, I was extremely nervous because I was afraid that he would ask me to rewrite. I was very nervous.

R: Why were you afraid that he would ask you to rewrite?

E: Because I was afraid that he couldn't understand what I wrote.

E: I am afraid that he might think how I could be so stupid! (laughed) It was quite worrying! (Interview) (For full account please see appendix 13 (E5))

Ironically, though situated in a British society, many participants felt they did not have many chances to talk to British people as their housemates were all of Asian origin. Seeing the supervisor was the only chance for them to continuously speak in English. Though this added to E's anxiety and stress, talking to her supervisor was also considered a good chance to practise English. Her full account is given in appendix 13 (E7).

Intercultural differences, awareness and communication skills are important for both supervisor and students to avoid negative assessment on both sides. Help from a supervisor who has awareness of intercultural differences and communication skills, is sensitive to students' feelings and perceptions, is responsible, patient and friendly, can act as a bridge to the new environment and its Discourse.

Against this, one participant (A) had a distant relationship and negative regard to her supervisor. She did not think her supervisor could provide her with any help. As discussed in section 2.4.3., there is usually a mismatch of expectations between students from Confucius-heritage cultures and their British supervisors (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997; Chan and Drover, 1997). CHC students viewed their teachers as mentors who provide clear answers and guidance while British teachers might see their roles as advisers who respect individuality and autonomy. Without an understanding of cultural differences, students and their supervisors may have negative assessment of each other. Participant A felt very distant from her supervisor and could not find any help from him in essay writing because he considered students' essay writing as a form of exam and thus offered no revision, opinions or feedback. A's full account of problems with her supervisor is given in appendix 11 (A4).

#### **7.4.2.2.4. Discussion in a group**

Group discussion is a method commonly used in seminars in British universities. As Cammish (in McNamara, 1997) suggested, reported in Chapter 1, students with

previous English learning focused on writing and reading may experience difficulties in participating in group discussion in Britain. When everyone with their regional accents all speak at the same time, it can be incomprehensible to overseas students. Aside from difficulties in listening in a group discussion, they may also encounter dominance by quick-speaking native speakers (Watkins and Biggs, 1997).

Two participants (A and B) thought it was fear of face loss and shyness to speak in public that held them back and insisted that one should overcome it and speak one's opinions in class discussion. However, other participants (M, E, and P) thought that it was the complicated process of thinking and expressing oneself in two different languages and the limit of time in group discussions that prohibited them from participating. They stated that even if they had a good idea, it took time for them to think first in Chinese, translate into English, organise the sentence, and then speak out slowly in English. Usually people would not have patience to wait for them. In the end, they became the onlookers of the group or subordinated their opinions to the well-spoken native speakers. (also see appendix 17 (X8))

P: Last time I discussed with my classmates. In the class, the others were all English except two of us. They let us feel that they didn't want to discuss with us because we didn't understand what they said and they didn't understand what we said. But I think today, in our own environment, if a foreigner wants to discuss with me and I can not understand anything said by him, I will not like to discuss with him either. After the discussion, we need to give feedback immediately. I don't have the time to listen to your repeated talk about simple things.

A: You feel you have no contribution, no feedback, no...

P: No, if you also go back to your classroom in the Chinese language environment, and one non-Chinese speaker tries to discuss with you. There is a time limit and you cannot spend a lot of time explaining to him. You are also divided into groups and you have to give your answers immediately. It is natural that they would choose to discuss with their peers and give the answers first. We choose to study abroad and we have to overcome the problem by ourselves or you just stay in your own language environment. (Focus group, p. 19)

#### **7.4.2.2.5. Oral reports in the class**

Oral reporting was also a challenge for some participants. It involves combined tasks

of processing information, putting it into the right English words, and overcoming nervousness in the public situation at a given period of time. Strategies such as writing down sentences and reading them aloud for the report, were applied by overseas students.

E: today it's my turn to have an oral report. Yesterday I already wrote down what I want to say because I was nervous and I was afraid that I would forget everything and my brain would go blank. Before the class, I have practised several times. But when it was the time for me to report, I found I spoke at a fast speed, faster than when I spoke in Chinese. When I saw the blank faces of my classmates, I speeded up because I was so nervous. I thought they didn't understand what I was saying. Before, when I had to report in Chinese, I only needed to list outlines and talk accordingly though I was also nervous. Now I have to write up every line and word in English. I think because of language differences, I cannot elaborate myself clearly in a short time. So I would write the sentences down beforehand. (Diary)

#### **7.4.2.3. Other language and gender issues**

This section covers (1) vocabulary (2) time (3) language learning resources (4) subject knowledge (5) tutoring presentation (6) 'face' and moral awareness (7) male hostility.

##### **7.4.2.3.1. Vocabulary**

Though reciting vocabulary was one of the important elements in English learning in Taiwan, vocabulary learned before in Taiwan may not be useful for their daily life errands or their postgraduate studies. Vocabulary learned through one's professional study was not really useful in one's daily life. However, one participant with a positive attitude (B) could always find a way to solve her problem by reading popular science journals to combine her professional and every-day-life vocabulary. (See appendix 17 (X3) for a full account).

##### **7.4.2.3.2. Time**

Unlike other participants in the group, Y was the only Ph.D student and had spent two years in England. Other participants stated that the one-year course and class arrangement was very limited for them and they often found themselves hurrying around and getting lost among the study materials. Y, on the other hand, had much

more time and more opportunities to attend courses (Master's course and undergraduate courses), get herself used to the English academic environment and discourse, and improve her English. Please see appendix 16 (Y2) for her account.

#### 7.4.2.3.3. English learning resources

As regards non-human resources, participants brought with them language tapes, CDs, DVDs of musical and films, to England for English learning and entertainment. Watching TV, DVD, and listening to radio were their main sources of English input. Some participants (M, P, Y) also use Interactive CD-ROMs to watch a film with multiple functions such as subtitles, explanation, and grammar teaching to learn English.

M: I brought some IELTS tapes with me. I would listen carefully, write it down, and imitate the accent. I like the English accent and I would pay a lot of attention to the way they speak. Musical play is also very good.

P: There are subtitles in DVDs, so you can listen to the voice and read the subtitles. (Focus group, 19-20)

For those who have been in the country for a longer time, they were familiar with different aspects of British lives and had expert knowledge on information and entertainment TV and other communication technologies on offer to them.

Y: I've learned some trivial but useful vocabulary through watching TV. Certainly watching/listening to news is one of the very important means to learn English. And I like watching the 'weather forecast' after the news—weather is very crucial for living in [the] UK. Now, I know what a 'Gale' is, what 'patchy rain' is, etc. (Diary)

As to human resources, housemates, classmates, supervisors provide chances for language practice and cultural interaction. Talking with classmates was a good chance for B to practise English; she also felt satisfied with the conversation content, quality and the pace of progress. Her account is given in appendix 12 (B2).

Some participants were shy and timid. It took them a while to relax and talk to their English housemates. Talking with housemates helped to boost their confidence in English. Though the participants may have already achieved a certain level of proficiency in English, comments and gestures of understanding from native speakers



served to set the final standard and validate their English ability. (see appendix 13 (E6) for E's account.)

To have conversations with English speakers was found difficult for some people because of their uncertainty about their own proficiency and reluctance to trouble others by wasting their time and asking them to repeat their sentences. However, B explained that in the game of conversation, each partner has to maintain an equal amount of input and feedback in order to let the conversation go on. Non-native speakers might find it frustrating because they could not provide as much language input as the native speakers; native speakers would also feel disappointed because they do not receive enough payback. Therefore, the conversation lasted only for a short time at a superficial level. B's account of conversation with native speakers is given in appendix 12 (B5).

Student accommodation was considered a good environment for English practice and building friendships as people live in one place and have many things to do and talk about together. However, due to the large number of Chinese students at the university, participants E, P and B also reported that even though they are in Britain, they did not have many opportunities to practise English with native speakers, whose English was considered 'more authentic' English learning.

P: The difficulty for me is: there were too many Chinese. Even though you are abroad for an environment to practise English, actually you spend the time speaking Chinese in our house...because your housemates are all Chinese speakers. (Focus group, p.14)

B: I think the annoying thing is, they allocated overseas students and English students to different accommodation. I lived in a college with only one English person living there. The others are all from overseas. I don't think it is a good arrangement. I think my situation is still better than people in another college where Taiwanese or Chinese live together. We at least have English as our common language. But you feel you have few chances to talk with native speakers, except chatting with my classmates after the class. I wondered where all the English people are?

R: They have no money to study for higher education.

B: I expected to have more English in my accommodation, at least to have more people from English-speaking countries, not so many people from

non-English-speaking countries. I think in your house, you have more chances to have conversation because people live together; they have more things to talk about. (Interview)

Ironically, negotiating with and complaining to administration staff is also used by some participants as a good chance to be exposed to different genres of English use and practice.

Y: It is important to mention that writing a complaint letter to the facility managers has made a great contribution to my English writing. You know your complaint letter must be convincing and official. I have written more than 6 times to the facility managers and each time I could see my improvement. (Diary)

#### **7.4.2.3.4. Subject knowledge**

In addition to English difficulties, lack of study background and certain subject knowledge for studying in a graduate school also led to difficulty in understanding the class and following up progress. In A's case, she had not been a student in the subject she was studying in Britain. She could not understand and follow the class, and found asking questions and seeking help from her supervisor was in itself a problem as she didn't know where to start. Specific terms, such as 'workshop', may also indicate different meanings and different perceptions from different educational institutions and countries. Meanwhile M and P were seeking all possible resources (asking tutors, course-mates) to solve their problems in understanding their study materials.

A: I don't understand what my supervisor says...I think I have a problem: I don't know where and how to seek the answers. My problem is too big! (Focus group, A's full account is given in appendix 17 (X4))

B also had difficulties in understanding the lectures not because of her English ability but because of the difficulty of the study materials. Her solution was to read the materials after and before the lecture by herself (see appendix 12 (B3)).

Unfamiliarity with the discourse in the academic environment also caused problems. Different disciplines may give different meanings to the words they use in an academic context and require different interpretation from the normal understanding perceived by people from another discipline or a student from another country. In

addition, the activities held in a classroom, such as a seminar, a workshop, a tutorial or supervision, may be unfamiliar to students from other countries whose academic environment is different from those in Britain and it may take them extra time and effort to get themselves used to it. Within the university, different departments also had different educational philosophies towards students and policies toward overseas students. Some departments may provide helpful language courses and support to overseas students (like E and P's department), while others may not be aware of the special needs and problems overseas students have (A's department).

#### **7.4.2.3.5. Tutoring presentation**

The way British universities organise graduate school courses also caused difficulties for students from other cultures. Students like B were used to organised guided lectures, while in Britain, she mainly attends seminars in which tutors talk about their own current research and studies by herself. As B stated, for some students who didn't have sufficient background training, it would be difficult for them to follow up to the advanced level. (See appendix 12 (B4))

#### **7.4.2.3.6. Anxiety, 'face', and moral awareness**

Ellis (1994) pointed out the profound impact of learners' affective state on their language learning and that 'learners' competitive nature can act as a source of anxiety' (p.480). Anxiety may come from comparison with others when they find themselves less proficient than their peers. Anxiety levels decrease when learners find themselves becoming more proficient and better able to compete (Ellis, 1994). Comparing the self with peers was found to be characteristic of many participants (P1, P3, P4, P5, B, P, Y). The participants reported that they felt anxious and upset when they felt less good than others (did not get picked to host a party, did not get praise by teachers as other students did, did not speak as well as others, did not have projects at work as good as their colleagues, etc.). Anxiety decreases when the participants felt they made progress and were better than their peers. The impact of anxiety on learners interacts with other factors and is complex. Participants P1, P5, B, Y were able to facilitate their anxiety to further their language learning, accumulate linguistic capital, and expand their life chances, so that they would be better able to compare themselves with others even though females from Asian society may want to show a harmonious surface and that 'they do not like to compete'. Other language learning anxiety, such as fear of negative evaluation and face loss, may also have facilitating or debilitating impacts on learners.

'Keeping face' is important for students of Confucius heritage cultures, and intercultural communication skills are important to avoid unnecessary conflicts and negative assessments (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997). Taiwanese students were reported to have very high self-expectation and fear of exposing their language output to unintended others and therefore being negatively judged by them (Johanson, 2001).

As email has become the prevalent medium of communication between academics, one of the problems that comes with its nature of temporarily and anonymity is 'flaming', a specific intent to harass and verbally attack, or as a result of hasty composition, and miscalculation of the relationship between writer and reader (Bloch, 2002). As email can be easily forwarded to a third person or third group, it can also expose the language input of students to unintended readers with unexpected feedback. M felt humiliated because her email and English was commented on by another person.

M: I have a very very very terrible experience. Two weeks ago, the term started. On the one hand, I had to overcome listening problems. We also had to find something on the Internet for one course. At one university in London, they had a summer course and a [...]festival. I can go there to have a placement and see what's going on there during the course, so I wrote to ask about this and asked if they can send the prospectus pack to me. The email address they gave us was not directly to the right place. They had to forward this via the head of department. The email they replied to the head of department, [and then to me] made me feel I was humiliated. In the email, it wrote: this is a piece of odd information by someone who needs to practise his English first. I just felt very upset. It was the first week and I had some English difficulties at the same time so that made me cry. Later, I discussed this with my housemate, an Iranian girl who has been here for nine months. She told me that actually that sometimes English people are just being direct, and being honest... there may be cultural differences here...  
(Focus group)

It was also reported that overseas students tend to be passive listeners and keep quiet in the class because of their cultures, which foster listening and obedience (Chang, 1999). In the present study, it seemed the participants were not happy with their marginal roles and silence in the class. It was reported that their quietness is more to do with incomprehension resulting from language ability, fear of face loss by

exposing one's weakness, and their reluctance to disturb others. Even though they had questions and opinions, they would pretend they did not because they were afraid of delaying the progress of class because of their slower speed in formulating questions and opinions in English (See appendix X4). One participant (M) was also sensitive to the feelings and responses of other students and would seek help from those who look friendly and were not so 'put off' by them.

M: I have to do an activity. I was not very pleased with the results even though we have tried 5, 6 times. It is because I didn't understand the instruction in English. (Diary)

M: If I can do it in Chinese, this kind of simple activity is not a problem to me at all. But in English...There was a mature part-time student sitting next to me. Every time I didn't understand something, I would ask him. He seemed to be mature and more understanding to foreigners. I kept asking him to repeat again. I have been with other classmates very often and asked them to repeat for me many times. I think in the class, asking this mature student is a better way so people would not dislike me. (Diary)

It was also suggested by one participant (Y) that British people tend to have lower tolerance and lower regard to the English used by people from non-western countries than the English used by people from western Europe as the British attach higher values to people and culture of these countries. (See appendix 17 (X6))

M admitted she felt upset having her English criticized and considered anxiety is facilitative for her to improve English. However, participants A and B argued that English is just a tool and there is no need to feel ashamed when others criticized your English. They suggested the implied values and moral connotations attached to English ability should be separated, even though it is very difficult as language, power status, and the attached values are closely connected and often taken for granted. (see appendix 17 (X7))

In addition, Johanson (2001) pointed out that the students who studied on English courses and would be English teachers in Taiwan are expected to perform with grammatically perfect spoken and written English as the educational system in Taiwan put heavy emphasis on grammatical correctness. ('The teacher can not make mistakes.') The high expectation imposed by themselves and others led to a higher level of 'face loss' and value anxiety reported by some of the participants. Some of

them even adopted avoidance (avoided writing emails to their English teachers in English, avoided showing work to others) and other strategies (P3 spoke at an unintelligibly fast speed, A included an apologetic note on her English in her email) to avoid negative judgments from others.

#### **7.4.2.4. Resources and other problems**

This section covers (1) male hostility, (2) problems and dissatisfaction with administration staff, (3) lack of resources.

##### **7.4.2.4.1. Male hostility**

As Rockhill (1993), Street (1993), and Zubair (in Street, 2001) illustrated, women's literacy and advancement in education can be regarded by some men as a threat to their power position. It implies change in the old system and adapting to new identities and roles for women. In addition, male immigrants often easily feel 'demasculinised' and frustrated in the new environment (Rockhill, 1993). Overt hostility through language by men to women may be one of the ways to express their resistance and anger.

Verbal bullying from male students was reported during the time of data collection. As Paechter (1998) pointed out, male harassment is another form of male dominance in learning institutions. It can be operated with a particular 'male gaze', comments on girls' bodies and appearance, and name calling, which has a distressing impact on girls. Female students who have just arrived Britain could feel intimidated by other Taiwanese or people who had stayed in Britain longer. People from outer circles countries, (e.g., Singapore, Malaysia) may also consider their English to be better and closer to standard English used in inner circle, thus, they can judge and criticise speakers from the expanding circle. Hostility towards female students from some male students may be the expressions of anger against the demasculinising immigration shock. Two participants (E and P) reported that one new Taiwanese female student was put to great distress and anxiety by one senior male student who exaggerated the difficulties of the study. The same male student also insulted one of the participants via telephone by calling her names and degrading her voice and ability. In addition to finding support from other friends, students may need to be introduced to anti-harassment and bullying programmes at the university so that such social problems and their negative impact on their studies can be reduced. In addition, sharing accommodation and a kitchen with people with different habits from different

cultures could be both a source of fun and dislike to each other especially when the soundproof equipment is inadequate and when the house is crowded.

Aside from hostility from male students, overseas female students are also the target of aggressive behaviour by local teenagers and sexual harassment in the public space (Goldsmith and Shawcross, 1985). Harris (1997) also reported that racism or racially related awkwardness were reported to be directly related to the course experience and 'has historically focused on specific tension points such as seeking private accommodation and opposite-sex relationships' (Harris, 1997, p.39, discussed in 2.4.4.). The researcher repeatedly warned other students about dangerous teenagers in the area. Unfortunately, within several days of arrival, M and another female student were attacked with stones by some children on their way to a nearby supermarket and after that, M regulated herself so that she went home before sunset. P was also disturbed by a drunken man in the train on her way from an airport to the city. Aside from these events, no attack or harassment was reported. However, getting home before dark was the common rule followed by newcomers who are not familiar with the environment.

#### **7.4.2.4.2. Problems and dissatisfaction with administrative staff**

Harris (1997) discussed in section 2.4.4., reported that costs are the major worry of overseas students and they may be anxious about the 'hidden cost' (for example, language course fees, language tuition or proofreading fees, and the cost of public transport between campus and accommodation). Hidden or extra costs charged on overseas students may also be the source of their discontent with administrative staff. Rather than having gender problems, Y and A reported that they had problems with administrators at the university. Y stated that an administrator discriminated against her, treated her as a secondary citizen, and ignored her complaints. English ability also put them into disadvantaged positions when negotiating about charges and facilities with administrative staff members. The same resentment was shared by some other participants. Y's account of her problem with administrative staff and its impact on her is given in appendix 16(Y1).

Lack of collaboration between different administrative departments at the university also caused inconvenience for students as when there was a mistake, they had to go to different department to correct it. (E's account on appendix 13 (E1)).

#### **7.4.2.4.3. Lack of resources**

A and Y also reported a lack of resources and a student welfare service at the university. A stated that the library books were not sufficient for the course needs and the copying fee is expensive. A's account on lack of resources and its impact on her studies was presented in appendix 11 (A1). While Y considered the university is not poor, as an overseas student, she is disadvantaged in asking for and getting resources. It is also interesting to note that problems of male frustration and outright aggression may be associated with some female students' often skilled and implicit verbal strategy to resolve the problems with resources shortage.

### **7.4.3. ICT use in Taiwan and in Britain**

#### **7.4.3.1. ICT in Taiwan**

Computers and the Internet were prevalent in Taiwan. Participants in this group started to use computers and Internet frequently when they entered university and enjoyed the service provided by universities in Taiwan with free printing, computer with LCD screen, and free Internet connection in their accommodation. They also formed the habits of using computers and the Internet for their study, research, social life, and entertainment.

A:...we have very good computer facilities at my university in Taiwan...Old computers are replaced continuously... Almost all the screens at our university in Taiwan were changed to liquid crystal display (LCD)...and it is upgraded and changed frequently. We have free Laser printing. It is very fast, we don't have to wait... Not to mention the speed. Everything is good. . (Interview)

B: I used computers to search for papers in Taiwan. I also use it to search for universities abroad. (Interview)

E: I felt I was using the Internet every day when I was in Taiwan because it is extremely convenient. Just press a key. No matter what time it is, nobody regulates you and there is no time limit. Even though there may not be many important things to do, you still hang to the Internet. (Interview)



The Internet also serves as an extended space for communication and academic research. Some participants reported that they had started using the Internet for study research in Taiwan. Familiarity with search skills and websites on the Internet helped their later studies in Britain.

B:...the Internet is very important for us. At university, we didn't meet each other very often. Announcements were put on BBS.

R: You said you used the Internet to find information or universities, do you find the information for reports?

B: Yes, or for reading. It's all on the Internet. The websites I used in Taiwan are the same as the websites I use here in Britain. (Interview)

The nature of anonymity of CMC communication also helped shyer students to express themselves and communicate with others easily. However, CMC and its advantages were used more as personal learning and communication tools, and were not reported to be exploited for language learning purposes in the formal class.

R: What did you do with the Internet when you were at university?

E: Receiving emails. Sometimes I chatted with my classmates...

R: With what kind of software program?

E: ICQ, [...]...When I was at the university in Taiwan, I sometimes met some senior students on BBS. I would never take the initiative to talk with them in real life. There was a senior in an extra-curriculum activity club. I seldom spoke to him. But once he sent a message to me and asked me about something. Then I found that we could talk more easily on the Internet than in real life. We wouldn't talk so often in real life even when we met each other. But when it is on the Internet, there is something, and you feel easier and more relaxed. (Interview)

It is interesting to note that even though many of the participants (A, B, M, and E) were using computers for a long time, they announced that they were not good with computers and were afraid of breaking the expensive machine and having to pay a huge amount of money in compensation.

#### 7.4.3.2. ICT use in Britain

#### 7.4.3.2.1. Access and service

Harris (1997), as discussed 2.4.4., reported that students from the Western Pacific Rim might experience disillusionment with facilities on arrival in Britain (Harris, p.41). In Britain, most participants were not satisfied with the computer and Internet service provided at the university. They found the charge for printing too high. The software was also out of date. There was not a free Internet network in their accommodation, and they had to walk a distance from the accommodation to computer rooms and wait for a long time before they could use the computer. The supply of computer services changed their habit of use. It was pointed out by A that the computer service is important for students with self-directed studies, yet the resources provided at the university were not worth the money students paid.

E: I felt I was isolated from the Internet when I came here. (Interview)

E: Before, I couldn't live without Internet. Now, if I really want to use the Internet, I have to go to the computer rooms, but there are so many people there. Sometimes you have to queue for a long time. I felt I gradually changed my habits of using the Internet every day. (Interview)

A: Actually I think there are not a lot of ICT resources in England. I think the Internet infrastructure is very bad compared to my university in Taiwan. There is no Internet system in accommodation. (Interview)

A: The computer facility here is very bad. At our university in Taiwan, the teachers have a mailbox. If you have any questions you can email directly to the teacher. Here, there is no—

R: Here teachers also have emails box.

A: Yes. Yes. They have that. But because of computer facilities...if you live in X college, it is still convenient because the fee is higher. If you live in other colleges, it is very inconvenient for you to go out and go to a computer room. I think it is very inconvenient compared to my university in Taiwan... It feels there are a lot of people who need to use, but there are not enough computers. [...] you have to queue for a long time. The point is, you recruit a lot of research students. They have high demands of computer facilities. But you didn't increase the number of computers. It is really very

inconvenient. I think...I don't know if it is because Taiwan's computer facility is really good or the computer facility in England is bad.

R: It is generally not very advanced in Europe. (Interview)

B and Y reported that they have good computer facilities in their department. The supply of computer facilities and resources varied in each department. It seemed that students in departments of science and social science tend to have better ICT facilities than those in the humanities and Arts.

B: ...We have a lot of computers in our department. There are three computer rooms in different places. People in our department have convenient access to computers.

R: You don't have to queue for a long time?

B: No.

R: Your department is quite rich.

B: Yes. Besides, we have computers in the lab as well. So, it's all right for me.

B: I lived in XX college near my department. I only need to cross a bridge and there is the computer room. I don't need to walk to other places. It is always open whenever I go. There is nobody else to fight for the computer with you. I have to pass X college computer room before I go upstairs; there are a lot of people queuing there. They all need to take care to avoid the peak time. But it is all right for me. So, for me, it is not perfect. But it is ok. (Interview)

Shortage of computer supply and the inconvenience of waiting made the idea of having Internet connection in one's own room very alluring. Participant E tried to connect to the Internet with her own computer in her room. However, the speed of the Internet line was so slow that she had to give up the plan in the end after a lot of money and time was spent. Her experiences with Internet setting up are shown in appendix 13 (E8).

Generally, compared to what they had enjoyed in Taiwan, computer facilities in the British university were not regarded positively by the participants. However, it is important to note that some departments have made great improvements by supplying more computers, upgrading the system, and providing free printing for some students during the time of completing this research.

#### 7.4.3.2.2. World Wide Web

The World Wide Web provides resources of a great range of quality. Websites set up and organised by the academic departments served as an extended space for academic research. They provided software and information of relevance and higher quality needed for students' studies.

B: Even though the Internet facility is not good here, the Intranet system in our department is very good. We have our own system, we have our own account. The teacher would put the information on the net and you can go to find it by yourself. It also contains the software we need for us. I didn't have this in Taiwan. In Taiwan, the department is not as good as this. Internet only belongs to the individual lab. But here, they already put the things we need up on the system. That's why we have our own system. (Interview)

Commercial websites and search engines were also used by the participants (A, E, and Y) for research and entertainment purposes.

Y: I make Internet searches often as well (Google). I visited the city's website once in a while to check what's on in the city. And reading IT news on the Internet has been important for my research. 'News.com' actually is set as my Home page. (Diary)

However, as discussed in chapter 3, information search on the Internet is a complex process involving cognitive and strong emotional activities (Shu, 2001). Due to their language disadvantages, overseas students may have some difficulties finding the information they need as searching ability is found to be correlated to language ability (Zoe and DiMartino, 2000). Finding relevant information in WWW databases can be an unsystematic and unfruitful process due to the different search engines used. In addition, they also need to develop knowledge about mechanisms of search engine and organise search results (Slaouti, 2002).

M: I used *google* to key in 'key words' for my three-thousand-words essay. I keyed in many different terms, but still couldn't find the one I want. I feel in a hurry and confused. I don't know what to do. I felt a bit regretful that I spent one month in Switzerland doing nothing. (Diary)

Some participants found that the library introduction course helpful for them to search on the Internet.

E: I went to listen to a talk on how to use the library and search for information. Maybe because I have taken a similar course before, I could quickly understand it by connecting old and new knowledge together. I realised that there are many types of search software on the university website, so I can not only find information in the library, but also use search software to find more relevant information. I felt I learned a lot from this. If I knew more convenient ways to find information, I would never sit in front of the computer and feel bemused again because I didn't know how to search (Diary)

Due to their language difficulties and limited knowledge of specific terms used in certain fields, some of the participants turned to search engines and WWW resources in Chinese to search for the information they needed. When A didn't know the specific term in her field, she used the Chinese search engines to find out its Chinese equivalent, definition, and information about it.

#### **7.4.3.2.3. Computer Mediated Communication**

CMC technologies provide opportunities to develop familiarity with the academic electronic literacy and discourse with access to on-line publishing and published materials, email lists, and online communication with other users (Warschauer, 2000, discussed in 4.3.2.). Email groups and discussion groups were used by an experienced participant (Y) to obtain knowledge and information in her research fields.

Y: Sometimes I join the discussions on newsgroups or mailing lists. I've signed up to more than 15 mailing lists (basically because my research is very interdisciplinary—I have to know many different research fields). (Diary)

Email and other forms of CMC were also used by participants to communicate with friends and relatives in Taiwan. Difficulties of sending email in Chinese while one was abroad also turned some of the participants to English for writing email, especially to their friends who are also abroad.

Y: I write email and read email daily...get email from friends in Taiwan, forward Taiwanese jokes to friends. I have access to Taiwanese BBS and I chat with my brothers and friends on BBS. I do these things daily. (Diary)

Though some of the participants fully exploited CMC technologies for their studies and research, some of them showed great hesitation and worry in using it, especially when the medium language is English. Aside from their need to avoid face loss (as discussed in section 6.2.), the status of the intended audience is also important in email communication. One of the participants was afraid to write in English especially to her English teacher. As a student studying English before, she felt she had to display a high level of English competence and was afraid to be judged negatively by her teachers. To avoid negative assessment and face loss, she put a note 'p.s. I do apologize for my poor English' at the end of the email.

Email and forum discussion via students' website also provided buffering and support for cultural shock. Introductions to the British system and explanation of different cultures /Discourse were provided by students with knowledge of British society. One student complained that she received 'racist' comments from a vendor when she shopped and picked fruits and vegetables for herself in the open market. She angrily posted a message of complaint on the website. Another student responded and called for a boycott. However, another senior student who has been in Britain for years replied to her message and pointed out that there were differences between Taiwanese and British ways of shopping as 'money-wise shopping culture from the East was actually a major taboo in the produce-pride market culture of the British'. It was acceptable for customers to make oral requests, instead of choosing by themselves in the venue like this. The senior student explained that as a small farmer selling his own products and facing severe competition with other supermarkets, he had pride in his products and would not like customers to accidentally damage his small produce and 'already meagre profit'. He provided a broader perspective on the event, suggested support, rather than a boycott, and warned against the easy use of the term 'racism' when conflicts emerged. He gave a suggestion on the suitable Discourse in this situation: 'If I wanted a couple of apples, I always smiled and said to the person behind the stand, "two please!" They would pick them for me and asked if they were OK'. He also provided suitable sentences in English to say to the vendor to explain the differences in shopping habits

Thinking about it now, I should have gone back and apologised to him, “I am terribly sorry, my dear fellow. I didn’t realise that it was a lousy thing to do to pick the apples myself. That’s how we shop back home, you see, to make sure that one picks the juiciest fruit. Awfully sorry, therefore, to have upset you. Could I have a couple of pounds of apples, please? Oh, a couple of pounds in money not in weight that is, please”.

Though Taiwanese students who are not as proficient in English as this senior student may still prefer ‘action’ to ‘oral request’ due to their shopping habit and their limited verbal ability, a venue to express their problems and have response and explanations from their fellow students served to provide another chance to understand British culture and feel themselves understood and valued.

Overall, the participants showed that they enjoyed different levels of access to computer technologies and services in Britain. They also performed at different levels of skill and showed different attitudes to the use of computers in their academic and social life in Britain.

## **7.5. Summary**

This chapter has provided a presentation of data collection, findings, and discussion of the final and main stage of the research. Three methods (focus group, and interview, diary) were used and six participants took part in the research. Adjustments and correction to research methods and questions in the light of the findings and reflection from stage 1 and 2 were made. The findings and discussion section covers issues of (1) English learning experiences in Taiwan, (2) experiences in Britain, (3) ICT use in Taiwan and Britain.

Age, family backgrounds, and gender expectations had profound impacts on English learning and ICT experiences. Compared to the participants from stage 1 and 2, more participants in stage 3 were younger and from a relatively urban background; therefore, they not only had more chances to be exposed to English language at a younger age with a diversity of media, but also had more resources and exposure to ICT in education. Gender expectations from the family also had an impact on the learning institutions, career path, English learning, and thus their study in Britain. A close connection among economic, cultural, and linguistic capital were also found as the participants (B, Y) who were from the higher-middle class and had parents with professional jobs reported that they had successful school and interesting English

learning experiences, had privileged educational and financial resources, and had fewer difficulties studying in Britain.

Aside from the English learning industry, higher education in countries in the inner circle served as another regulator of standard English. The compound impact of language and knowledge reinforces the role of English as gatekeeper to power and resources. As language is closely connected to power, people who can communicate with different forms of English are more powerful than people who are good at only one (Crystal, 1997). Access and affordability to the inner circle Englishes may have a certain impact on Taiwanese society as Taiwanese English users might be divided according to their exposure to two varieties of English—the English taught in formal schools by non-native local English teachers and standard British or American English via the private or public ELT and higher education industry. Those who can only receive English via formal schooling are in a disadvantaged position in terms of learning and recognition.

English language difficulties range from fear of face loss, anxiety, inadequate English learning in Taiwan, to the complex thinking process involving two different languages. Aside from cultural and language shock, the participants also experienced harassment, male hostility, due to the effect of ‘demasculinising’ immigration experiences, and problems with administrative staff.

Though the participants had used ICT in their private time for communication, language learning, and a research tool in Taiwan, it was reported that these advantages of ICT were not exploited in formal English classrooms, not even at the university level. Even though ICT access and service at the British university were not satisfactory, websites set up and organised by the academic departments served as high-quality extended space for academic research. Difficulties the participants encountered with use of ICT in their studies included information overload and researching failure due to their language disadvantages and lack of knowledge of web search skills.

In the age of ‘informationalism’ (Warschauer, 2000), in which English is the global language, Taiwanese female participants demonstrated a heterogeneity of access, capability, and orientation to the new world, ranging from total mastering, and self-empowering utilization of the new literacy skills and technology on the one hand, to an attitude of rejection, ignorance, and a state of poor capability and access on the other. As computers are an inevitable part of studies and research in higher education,



instruction in computer skills and adequate supply from the learning institution is crucial to students' successful learning in Britain. A table of all the participants' characteristics regarding capital, English learning and digital literacy is given in appendix 23.

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

### 8.1. Introduction

The purpose of the present chapter is fivefold: (1) to provide a summary of the main findings of the study; (2) to outline the implications for the field of EFL and CALL, specifically in EAP in an authentic target language environment; (3) to highlight the main contribution of the present research study to knowledge and understanding of EFL and CALL; (4) to point out the limitations of the present research and provide suggestions for further research.

The main aim of the present research was to use a qualitative approach to explore the perceived impact of gender and ICT on Taiwanese female students' English learning in a British university. The subsidiary aims were:

1. to explore the role of English in the construction of gender and power;
2. to explore women's views about, and experiences within, prevailing ideology;
3. to explore Taiwanese female students' experiences of (and views about) gender and ICT;
4. to consider the way gender and ICT influence their acquisition of language and learning;
5. to explore the possible change of ideologies to benefit women and their learning;
6. to explore the implications of gender and ICT for women's English learning.

The empirical research consisted of three stages, each stage serving an evolutionary function for the follow-up stage. It employed three methods: focus group, interview, and diary. The sample consisted of 11 female Taiwanese participants in a British university with a broad representation of study areas and age groups.

### 8.2. Summary of the main results

A global concept, a concept of economic, cultural, linguistic capital, and gender expectation, has been identified by the present research as essential to English learning, ICT, and gender experiences. The present findings suggested five main themes related to this concept: (1) economic, cultural, linguistic capital, and gender expectations of the family; (2) English for academic purpose in Britain; (3) English, status, and linguistic capital; (4) ICT and English learning; (5) negotiation of gender

roles and identities.

### **8.2.1. Economic, cultural, linguistic capital and gender expectations**

The research findings suggested that the economic, cultural capital, and gender expectations of the family had profound and continuous impact on the participants' English learning in Taiwan and studies in Britain. These factors were also influential to the participants' English learning in formal schools, learning institutions, educational resources, and career path.

The participants' English learning experiences in Taiwan differed in terms of teacher quality, teaching methods, and learning institutions, according to the rural/urban background, status, capital possession, and affordability of the family. English learning in Taiwan involved not only intellectual effort but also strong emotions, which ranged from feelings of anxiety, stress, anger, fear, due to inadequate teachers and teaching methods, to feelings of interest, sense of achievement, and strong intrinsic and integral motivation in understanding English culture and knowing English speakers. It also suggested that though the grammar translation approach was considered useful in building students' foundation for English learning, exclusive use of one approach without meaningful language/cultural input and activities, plus exam pressure, inadequate English proficiency of teachers, harshness and punishments from teachers, could lead to students' negative assessment of and attitude towards English learning and their own ability. Though English radio programmes were used in English classes and provided rich language input for those who can take up its content, inconvenience of receiving the programme, its requirement of a higher level of English proficiency, and study pressure can make disadvantaged students feel anxious and refuse to learn.

Previous English learning in Taiwan also played an important role in the participants' further education in Britain. The participants (P1, P2, P5) who were of an older age or who attended formal or private schools in rural and less advanced areas, were more likely to be restricted to grammar-translation teaching in Taiwan. The participants (E, Y, M) who attended teachers' colleges and were expected to become teachers in Taiwan were also limited in their chance to use English at university level. Thus, learning English for academic purpose in Britain became more difficult to those who were trained as teachers. On the other hand, the participants (B, Y) who attended elite schools and universities were more likely to have more chances to be exposed to multiple teaching methods and English, as they might be expected to pursue further

education abroad or a career involving analytic and English skills. In addition, participants (B, Y) with higher socio-economic status and better cultural/linguistic capital also had the advantage to further their learning and career experiences by attending a wide range of academic activities and projects, which help them develop into ‘portfolio people’—people who have developed a portfolio of skills and employability via participating in a series of learning and working projects (Gee, 1997).

### **8.2.2. English for academic purpose in Britain**

In Britain, aside from acute anxiety and concern about ‘face loss’, the participants identified the code switch in thinking and expression as a particularly serious language problem. The code switch involved three stages of information processing: reading/absorbing the English input, processing/memorizing in Chinese, and writing/expressing in English. Chinese and English were used in different stages of information processing. As a result, the ability and capability in information processing was often limited and reduced due to the language difficulties. Because of this complex language transformation/comprehension/translation process, only the main idea could be remembered in Chinese and the detailed information of the subject in English may be lost somewhere in these three stages. To write up a piece of work in English, the participants had to refer back to the English sources and put it into their work, which might not be as good, natural, and easy as writing in their first language could be. In addition, their slow code switch may also delay or obstruct their oral communication with native speakers, who might not be patient and tolerant with slower speakers like three of the participants (E, M, P) in the present research.

### **8.2.3. English, status and linguistic capital**

In Taiwan, class and status formation is closely related to the possession of means of production in acquiring powerful languages. The industrialisation revolution and the changing language policies imposed by the ruling powers have led to waves of class formation and struggle (Skoggard, 1996; Tsao, 1999, as discussed in chapter two, section 2.3 and 2.4). The new ways of production and communication resulting from globalisation and the information revolution might be leading to another wave of class formation, in which English proficiency is closely related to international intelligibility, cultural and knowledge capital, thus success and status mobility (Crystal, 1997, Warschauer, 2000, 2002b, as discussed in section 4.3). Though communication difficulties with English native speakers occurred, the English used

by native English speakers was considered by some of the participants (M, P4) as standard, 'better' and 'learning target' English due to the strong Western/American influence, admiration of the Western life style, and an attachment of higher status to the American/Western knowledge/technology/language needed for modernisation in Taiwan. Acquiring standard English and the knowledge of the West were seen as a sign of success; while any sign or suggestion of a lack of English proficiency might trigger anxiety and have strong moral indications at a time of severe competition and status order negotiation. English was also seen by the participants (P1 and P5) from disadvantaged backgrounds not only as a means to improve their economic status, but also as their hope to improve their social status—to become 'somebody', or a 'lady' (Rockhill, 1993). Thus, ELT and the higher education industry in countries in the inner circle might not only be regulators of standard English, but also gatekeepers of power and status distribution in an expanding-circle country like Taiwan, where users' status and value vary according to the level of acculturation to English used in powerful countries in the inner circle. From the perspective of capital, studying in an inner circle English-speaking country is seen by the female participants as a chance to enhance their linguistic, cultural, and social capital in English language and culture. They may seek socialisation and contact with tutors and people from the target society, rather than those of similar origins, to increase their capital. Their preference for English native speakers can also be explained with the ideology of Subject/Other (as suggested by Beauvoir, 1949, discussed in 7.4.2.2.1.), which involves race, class, gender, and power relations. Rather than objecting against their subordinated status, the Other (female, non-white, the dominated) might consensually identify with the Subject (male, white, the dominated) and deny themselves, with the hope of being assimilated into the Subject, thus denying their own subjectivity and autonomy. By seeking validation from and assimilation to males in inner countries of the powerful language, the female students may unconsciously reinforce the power position of languages and speakers of the languages. It may also have certain impacts on the development of regional English.

#### **8.2.4. ICT and English learning**

In Taiwan, computers and the Internet have been widely and intensively used by the younger participants (A, B, E, Y) in the present research for academic, communicative, social, language learning and recreational purposes. However, as a newly emerged and rapidly changing field, the advantages of CALL (such as reducing levels of anxiety, possibilities to explore multiple self identities with the modality of anonymity, promoting more student participation, providing textual feedback and rich

language and cultural input) was not fully recognised and exploited in formal English classrooms at the time when the participants studied in Taiwan.

On the other hand, ICT and general resources in Britain were not satisfactory. Though the participants had different levels of access and mastery in the technologies, many of them (P1, P4, P5, B, P, and Y) were able to take advantage of media and technologies available to them to construct a language learning and research environment while they were in Britain. It is also interesting to note that the participants' experiences of, proficiency in, and attitudes toward different ICT use, change with time, tasks, and the technologies used. Different technologies offered a diversity of advantages to the participants. Email was associated with offering communication opportunities, providing language-input, extension of academic discourse, and self-reflection. Though older users may hold a hesitant attitude toward computer technology, the social and interactive nature of email was found by P1, P5 to be an enjoyable activity that provided them with a great many opportunities for meaningful socialisation and English learning. However, email writing was also reported by A and M to be associated with problems such as flaming, confidence and face loss due to malicious comments on one's English via email or website discussion forums. On the other hand, although older participants (P1, P5) tended to have negative attitudes towards and lower level of proficiency in ICT, attending postgraduate courses and taking part in the research provided them with a chance to socialize with younger peers who can teach the older participants new ICT skills and broaden their mindset by sharing views on social values and experiences related to learning and socialisation on the Internet.

Websites set up by academic departments and educational institutions provided high quality research materials and extended academic space for participants (B and Y) who had high-level digital literacy and access, and can take up the opportunities to further their academic interests and career. However, searching for information on the Internet could be frustrating and unsuccessful for participants (P1 and M) with lower levels of digital literacy, especially when they also encountered problems in inadequate access, technical breakdown, English ability, unfamiliarity with academic discourse, and lack of subject knowledge and search skills.

#### **8.2.5. Negotiation of gender roles and identities**

The present research identified negotiation of gender roles (expectation) and male hostility associated with emigrational 'demasculinising shock' (Rockhill, 1993) as the

two main gender related difficulties experienced by the Taiwanese female students. Rather than a lack of inherited ability or proficiency, it was women's often contradictory interests toward work and their 'gender roles' that played the major role in obstructing their education and development. Female students often had to cope with their new learning task and an extra task to negotiate their gender roles and identities, at the same time. Since gender expectation is socially constructed and maintained (Jackson and Scot, 2001, as discussed in section 3.2.), other women of a different age, generation, social status, background, and value system, may help to police each other in terms of following the gender norms. Thus, female students often had to struggle against ideology and values held by other female (mothers, older women, and peers). Differences in social status, negotiation of new status, and conflicts on values and ideology held by them can often lead to damage of women's relationships. As the age of higher education often coincides with that of reproduction, the female students (P1, P5, M, P) sometimes encountered disapproval and pressure from their family in Taiwan, who wished they would follow the traditional path suitable for women, instead of the path seen by themselves as 'empowerment and independence'. In addition, women (P1, P5, P) who pursued higher education and new literacy were sometimes seen by men as a threat to the old social order, thus triggering their anger and resistance in the form of male hostility.

### **8.3. Contribution to knowledge and understanding of EFL and CALL**

#### **8.3.1. Preliminary note**

The present research followed suggestions of previous literacy/language researchers (Street, 1993, 2001; Rockhill, 1993; McNamara, et al., 1997) and adopted an integrationist approach, which attempted to broaden the perspective of the research by taking social and cultural dimensions into account. It aimed to explore the social/cultural aspects overlooked by dominant ELT discourse and to explore the inter-relationship of ICT, gender, and English learning. It was conducted in an authentic target language environment with a group of eleven female Taiwanese postgraduate EAP (English for academic purpose) learners. It sought to explore their gender, ICT, and English learning experiences both in Taiwan and Britain and the perceived impact of these experiences on their learning. The results that emerged from the present research study contribute to our understanding of Taiwanese female English learners in three ways: (1) issues related to EFL and anxiety (2) issues related to CALL (3) issues related to English for academic purpose.

### 8.3.2. Issues related to EFL and anxiety

Sources of anxiety associated with English learning have been identified in the present research. EFL education for some participants in Taiwan was reported not only to be punitive and anxious, but also inadequate to prepare them for study at a higher level abroad. Taiwanese students were reported to have very high self-expectation and fear of exposing their language output to unintended others and therefore being negatively judged by them (Johanson, 2001, as discussed in section 2.5.3.). Learning English for academic purpose in a British university was also an anxiety-provoking experience due to problems related to language and cultural shock (Chang, 1999, as discussed in section 2.5.2.). In addition, high expectation was also imposed on the participants who studied for English courses and prepared to be English teachers by themselves and others, which led to a higher level of 'face loss' and self-value anxiety. Some of them (A, P3) even adopted avoidance behaviour (avoiding writing emails to their English teachers in English, avoiding showing work to others) and other strategies (speaking at an unintelligibly fast speed, including an apologetic note about their English in their email) to avoid negative judgment from others.

The overwhelming American influence in governmental, commercial, educational, mass cultural, and techno-industrial domains in Taiwan has led the Taiwanese to look to the western world for reference. Expectations of pursuing further postgraduate education in the US (or other inner circle English speaking countries) and the connection of English language capital with social mobility have operated continuously to fuel the growth of the private language industry and the need to learn English used in the inner circles. In Taiwan, unlike other post-colonized countries (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia, India, as pointed out by Warschauer, 2000b; Crystal, 1997; discussed in section 4.3.3.), explicit acquisition of the Englishes used in the inner circles is seen as sign of power. Acquisition of native-like English used in the inner circle has long been associated with higher status and values. In addition, informationism and globalisation lead to changes of production and another wave of class formation and status anxiety. After Japanese and mandarin Chinese, English may serve as a gatekeeper of power and resources in Taiwan, where swift changes of political influence and economic trends have given powerful languages the role to validate one's values and status. Taiwanese English users may be divided according to their exposure to two varieties of English— standard British/American English learned via the private or public ELT industry, and English taught in formal schools by non-native local English teachers; the latter may be in a disadvantaged position in



terms of learning and recognition, thus encounter a high level of language related anxiety. With the reproduction of power and linguistic capital, English learning and the higher education industry in inner-circle countries may help to serve not only as gatekeepers of standard English, but also power and resource distribution in these outer-circle countries. The single mindedness of Taiwanese English users toward the English used in the inner circle may lead to their negative assessment of, and sidelining speakers of, other versions of English(es), including speakers who received local English education.

When staying in the target language environment, some participants' eager intention to acquire linguistic capital and assimilate to the target language community (or to escape from their own culture) may also impede the development of the primary monocultural networks which provide support and a venue to rehearse and express cultural values and may act as a buffer against culture shock. Learners' competitive nature can also act as a source of anxiety, especially when they feel they are less proficient in academic progress and language learning than their peers or compatriots (Ellis, 1994, in section 7.4.2.3.6.). Uncertainty with academic Discourse, eagerness to acquire educational capital, and worries about their academic progress in comparison with others, can lead to high levels of anxiety or extreme behaviour, such as bombarding tutors with questions and demand for feedback. In addition, older participants may have a more fixed mindset and habit and thus be more reluctant to follow advice or adapt to the new discourse required of them. When they face difficulties and do not meet their academic expectations, they may also have a strong defence mechanism which acts to protect them from anxiety resulting from comparison, low self-esteem, and a sense of failure, by creating a certain self-image and attributing reasons to the events. The participants may also seek alternative validation and shift their focus to other aspects of life to cope with the situation. However, defence mechanisms can also obstruct them from seeing the reality, understanding their own drawbacks and, consequently, making improvements on them.

### **8.3.3. Issues related to CALL**

The participants in the present research were able to construct networks of friendship via computer technologies with English speakers or other Taiwanese students for their socialisation and English learning. Though virtual networks via email writing or forum discussion may have no direct relation to their academic success, they served to provide language/cultural input, buffer against language/cultural shock, and contact

with the community they had joined or wished to integrate into when they were in Britain. On-line communication via email or websites initiated by students themselves provided instant support, introduction to English systems, and explanation of cultural differences produced by senior students who knew British society better. It helped resolve students' problems and conflicts resulting from cultural differences. Email extended academic space and encouraged non-native students to take the chances they normally would not take; the Internet also provided rich resources for academic research. However, their use of computers varied in terms of perceived relationship between reader/writer, and individual English proficiency, access to, attitude toward, and mastery in computers. The virtual world also extended social relationship in real life and acute conflicts occurred as a result of the use technologies with different formality in temporality (synchronous vs. asynchronous), degree of anonymity, modality, and spatiality (Bloch, 2002, in section 4.4.3.3. and Smith, et al., 2003, in section 4.4.1.3.).

#### **8.3.4. Issues related to English for academic purpose**

The present study has identified the transformation of meaning and 'texts' via different genres and forms, code-switching, previous English learning experiences, and concern about face loss and anxiety, as important factors in students' English learning for academic purpose. It also identified unfamiliarity with British academic Discourse as the source of difficulties in English learning for academic purpose. The participants found the language discourse enacted by British academia and tutors formal and incomprehensible. Lack of subject knowledge and understanding in the Discourses required in different disciplines and different tasks (workshops, essays, presentation, etc.) also made them puzzled and anxious. Students who study for a one-year-course Master's degree usually do not have the time and opportunities Ph.D. students have in observing their British peers and adjusting to the system. Thus, without proper explanation, MA and novice Ph.D students may not be able to accept the emphasis of self-directed studies in a British university.

#### **8.4. Limitation of the present research and suggestions for further research**

Due to the researcher student's status, the researcher had little authority to ask for all the participants' total devotion to the research project and also limited access to observe their English language activities, and English output (essays, theses, writing, emails, use of ICT) that was usually accessible by researchers/tutors. The research

was therefore based on the participants' self-reported comments, rather than on analysis of the texts and discourses produced. It might lack the insight other research/tutors can draw from data collected with students' classroom projects, assigned tasks and student/tutor emails. Therefore, future research aiming to explore the impact of ICT on English learning may need research with authority and easy access to students' language discourse and English activities in different formats (such as essays, theses, emails, and recorded language conversation).

Due to the small number of Taiwanese students at the university, only 11 participants took part. The small number of participants suggested that though the research findings shed light on issues concerning ICT, gender, and English learning, it needs to be read with an understanding of the context, and readers need to take precautions in generalising from the findings to other learners and institutions. Future research with a larger scale of sample may help to increase the validity and reliability of the research findings. Despite this, the methods used in the present research were considered appropriate and effective in providing different partial pictures that complemented each other and contributed to understanding in the researched phenomena.

The present research depends on students' self-report of their past English and ICT learning experiences in Taiwan. As the participants were in their mid 20s to early 30s, their school experiences may be different from what students in Taiwan have now as technology, educational policy and practices may have changed. Their accounts helped to understand the impact of their past experiences on learning and development. However, to have a more up-to-date understanding of current English and ICT use in Taiwan, future research needs to explore these aspects at each specific stage.

Code-switching in language and information processing has been found to be one of the difficulties Taiwanese students faced with regard to their English learning for academic purpose. Producing language output (writing/speaking) was described as a process involving three stages of language switch, with main ideas processed and memorized, while details were lost and had to be searched again to construct the work. Future research could explore the impact of ICT on the code-switching process and the help technologies can provide with coding detailed knowledge, memorizing main ideas, relocating detailed information, or possible changes in the information process altogether.

Changes in patterns of classroom interaction and power structure, empowerment, shifts in teacher/student roles (collaborative and more student centred classroom dynamics), improvements in language acquisition and writing have been identified as advantages of using CMC technologies in the L2 classroom. It was reported that overseas students often encountered difficulties in participation and comprehension and felt subordinate in relation to out-spoken native speakers. Taiwanese female students in the present research also reported that their code-switch language information processing, anxiety about face loss, and reluctance to disturb class progress put them in subordinate positions when communicating with native speakers in the classrooms. No research has ever explored the use of CMC technologies in the British classroom with mixed student populations of native and non-native speakers. With an increasing number of overseas students in many inner-circle countries, their learning experiences have become a concern for both CALL and higher education researchers. More research is needed to explore new technologies (multi-modal communication) and possible improvements in new ways of presentation, communication, and tutoring that allow students to learn via transforming meaning through different forms and media.

Informationalism, globalisation, the economic connection between Taiwan and other Asian countries have led to an emphasis on English competence in international and regional communication both from the government and individuals. Globalisation and informationalism seem to reinforce the higher status of inner circle English perceived by the present participants and their motivation to acquire standard English. As language use and status usually take centuries to occur, globalisation, the uses of local English(es), the possible emergence of regional English, WSPE (World Standard Print English), WSSE (World Standard Spoken English), the impact of ICT technologies on English changes, and the interactional impact of these factors on Taiwanese English learners need further investigation.

To conclude, the research started with the researcher's curiosity to understand her own and other women's experiences regarding gender, ICT, and English learning. It was understood that outer factors (such as history, politics, culture, economy, ideology, change of education philosophy, development of technology, societal changes), and individual factors (such as anxiety, learning habits, cultural capital, educational resources) are all intricately interrelated and closely related to a woman's education, life and experiences. The power of these factors may not be within the grasp of an individual person. However, with an understanding of the various factors that have an impact on many of us (women, learners, educators), educators and

learners may both develop sympathy to the process of struggling that any human agents face in the path of life and the trends of changes, and help themselves or others understand and overcome their difficulties. With the resources/technology available to us, and an understanding of gender, ICT, and the learning issues explored by the research, we may also learn to cope better with the challenges and possibilities in front of us, and even help to shape the world into a better place where everyone can learn and develop their potential.

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王浩威 別讓台灣校園槍聲響起 中國時報 2001, 03, 21

## **Appendices**

## Appendix 1. The development of literacy

A brief summary of the literacy development in Europe and the US shows how literacy is conceived and practised differently within different contexts (Warschauer, 1999). In Europe, Warschauer points out that before the introduction of the printing press in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, writing involved memorising and transcribing oral speech or copying classic manuscripts. Reading involved an orator slowly reading a manuscript out loud in public. After the introduction of the printing press, printing materials had a great impact on European society and the establishment of the knowledge system of modern science as information was organised in printed books with new ways of categorising and conceptualisation, such as the use of 'tables, figures, footnotes, and indexes'. It also had a significant impact on education as teachers and students were relieved from the labour of copying texts and could read books by themselves to receive innovative ideas. With the technology of printing, together with the other social changes in Europe (the emergence of a capitalist class, colonialism, "and a heightened sense of individuality and personality, of nationalism and secularism" (Murry, 1995, p.28, discussed in Warschauer, 1999, p.3), and later with the industrial revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mass print literacy was brought about in Europe.

In the United States, school-based literacy went through three phases. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century when land, power, and knowledge were controlled by few people, the pedagogical approach was obedience to tradition and power. Literacy education mainly involved 'rote learning, oral recitation, copying, imitation' of texts such as the Bible and 'a narrow selection of Greek and Roman literature' (Warschauer, 1999). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, A Deweyan progressive paradigm of literacy, with an emphasis on 'provid[ing] skills, knowledge, and social attitudes required for urbanised commercial and industrial society' (de Castell & Luke, 1986, p.103, in Warschauer, 1999, p.3), emerged in response to mass industrialisation. Literacy was viewed as a form of self-expression and its pedagogy involved 'teacher-pupil interaction and the discovery of method' with the use of 'civics, adventure stories, and self-generated texts' (Warschauer, 1999, p.3). However, a more technocratic paradigm, also understood as the old-capitalist style schooling referred to by Gee (1997, 1996), outgrew the Deweyan progressive model. Literacy was seen as 'programmed skills necessary to function in society', and its pedagogy involved 'programmed instruction, learning packages with teacher as facilitator and mastery learning of a common set of objectives' and 'decontextualised subskills of literate competence' (Warschauer, p.3). It aimed to produce workers who were required to 'carry out carefully programmed, narrowly defined tasks in the workplace' and served 'the needs of the dominant Fordist



industrial structure of the 1940s (Warschauer, 1999, p.4)

## Appendix 2. Language and translation

Birbili (2000) suggested that when translating data from one language to another, the researchers need to be explicit in describing their choices and decisions, translation procedures and the resources used.

Birbili (2000) also stated that when the researcher and the translator are the same person, several factors can affect the quality of translation: '(1) the linguistic competence of the researcher-translator, (2) the researcher-translator's knowledge of the culture of the people under study, (3) the autobiography of the researcher-translator, (4) the researcher's fluency in the language of the write-up' (p.1-2). Researchers are also advised to be aware that the translation process requires both time and effort and some problems may not be completely overcome.

When facing the decision to choose between gaining conceptual equivalence or comparability of meaning, Birbili (2000) suggested that the researcher's 'efforts should be directed towards obtaining conceptual equivalence without concern for lexical comparability' (p.3). Gaining comparability of meaning, Birbili (2000) stated, 'is greatly facilitated by the translator's proficient understanding of a language [...and] an intimate knowledge of the culture' (p.3).

Four techniques are recommended to deal with translation-related problems:

- (1) back translation: a) translation of data from the source language into the target language, b) independent translation of these back into the source language, c) the comparison of the two versions of items in the source language until ambiguities or discrepancies in meaning are clarified or removed.
- (2) consultation and collaboration with other people during the translation process;
- (3) pre-testing or piloting (Birbili, 2000, p.5).

Combining some or all of these techniques is seen as the best and most efficient way to deal with translation problems. The focus group and interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and the participants spoke in Mandarin Chinese. The audiotape was translated into English by the researcher. Translation and transcription were carried out at the same time with a transcribing machine and word-processing software. Ambiguous and difficult sentences were typed in Chinese and later discussed with other Chinese and English speakers. Two participants wrote their diaries in Chinese and the significant parts of these were also translated into English.

**Appendix 3. Focus group questions in stage 1****I. English language learning**

1. Reflect and talk about your experiences of English learning. What are your views about them?
2. What are your reasons for wanting to learn / improve your English? What is the importance of English to you?
3. What are the factors that influence your English learning? Why and how do they influence your English learning?
4. What kinds of difficulties do you have concerning your English learning and studies/work? How do you cope with them?
5. How do you organize your English learning activities? What are the resources you access to learn English?

**II. ICT**

6. What are your experiences of using ICT?
7. What sorts of things of ICT and culture, which are related to English, do you do?
8. What are your views about things you do with ICT and culture and what impact do they have on you and your English learning?

**III. Gender**

9. What sorts of things make it difficult for you in your life or study because of your gender? How do they influence you? How do you cope with them?
10. What differences do you feel between Taiwan and Britain from the perspective of women?
11. Do you feel learning English puts you in a position that is subject to somebody else?

12. What are your views about English in the construction of gender and power?

- ICT: information communication technology, e.g. TV, internet, radio, computer
- Many thanks for your participation and cooperation.

**Chinese version focus group questions****中文版 Focus Group 問題****一、英語學習**

1. 談談妳學英文的經驗？有什麼看法？
2. 是什麼原因讓妳想學習/增進妳的英文？英文對妳有何重要性？
3. 有什麼因素影響妳的英文學習？它們如何影響妳的學習？
4. 在妳英文學習、生活、課業上有什麼困難？如何應付這些困難？
5. 妳如何規畫或進行妳的英文學習活動？利用什麼資源？

**二、資訊傳播科技**

6. 談談妳使用資訊科技的經驗。
7. 妳如何使用現代資訊科技（電腦、電視、網路、傳播媒體、廣播）和文化活動來進行英文學習？
8. 現代資訊科技和文化活動對妳的英文學習有何影響或幫助？

**三、性別**

9. 工作學業或生活上，有什麼原因或事情是因為妳的性別的關係而帶給妳困難？它們如何影響妳？妳如何解決這些問題？
10. 從女性的觀點來看，妳覺得英國和台灣有什麼差異？
11. 妳會覺得學英文讓妳置身為一個從屬他人的地位嗎？
12. 從權力和性別的角度（資本主義、文化霸權），妳對英文的看法為何？

感謝您的參與和合作！

**Appendix 4. Informed consent form**

Huang Yu-Hsiu

黃郁琇

Department of

Educational Studies

University of York

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM****for participation in research**

The purpose of this document is to make explicit the nature of the proposed involvement between the researcher and the person agreeing to supply information (the participants), and to record that the research subjects understand and are happy with the proposed arrangements.

**The researcher** The research in charge of this study is Mphil/Ph.D. student Huang Yu-Hsiu in the Department of Educational Studies, University of York.

**The research** The purpose of the research is to investigate the impact of ICT, ideology, and culture on women's language learning.

**What participation in the study will involve** Participants will be asked to grant one focus group up to an hour duration. The focus group will be recorded on audiotape. It is understood that the participants are free to decline to answer any question, to terminate the discussion at any time and to require any section of the recording be deleted.

**Use of the Data** The aim will be eventually to present the research, along with data collected in other parts of the study, in appropriate contexts, academic and professional, through publications, conference presentations, teaching and so on. If so requested the researcher will refrain from using data that the subject considers sensitive. The participants will be given copies of any publications based on the research.

**Anonymity of participants** All information acquired will be treated as confidential. Unless specifically agreed otherwise, references in publications, talks etc, to particular jobs, organisations, individuals etc. will be anonymised and features that might make

identification easy will be removed.

**Declaration by the research subject:** I have read and am happy with the arrangements as set out above.

Signature of participants

Researcher's signature

Date

**Appendix 5. Focus group questions in stage 3**

Focus group questions

2PM Saturday 2 Nov 2002

**I. English language learning**

1. Talk about your experiences of English learning in Taiwan and Britain. What are your views about them?
2. What are your reasons for wanting to learn / improve your English? What is the importance of English to you? (Being good at English can help you improve your social and economic status. What do you think about this statement?)
3. What are the factors that influence your English learning in Taiwan and Britain? Why and how do they influence your English learning?
4. What kinds of difficulties do you have concerning your English learning and studies/work in Taiwan and Britain? How do you cope with them?
5. How do you organize your English learning activities? What are the resources you access to learn English?

**II. ICT**

6. What are your experiences of using ICT? Men and boys are naturally good at technology and computers. What do you think about this statement?
7. What sorts of things of ICT and culture, which are related to English, do you do?
8. What are your views about things you do with ICT and culture and what impact do



they have on you and your English learning?

### III. Gender

9. What sorts of things make it difficult for you in your life or study because of your gender? How do they influence you? How do you cope with them?

10. What differences do you feel between Taiwan and Britain from the perspective of women?

11. Do you feel learning English puts you in a position that is subject to somebody else? (feeling that you are inadequate when using English, you have to listen to others...)

12. Your gender and English ability greatly determine your life chances and access to power in a society dominated largely by men. What do you think about this statement?

- ICT: information communication technology, e.g. interactive TV, Internet, computer, mobile phone, etc..
- Many thanks for your participation and cooperation.

## 中文版 Focus Group 問題 Chinese version focus group questions

### 一、英語學習

1. 談談妳學英文的經驗？有什麼看法？
2. 是什麼原因讓妳想學習/增進妳的英文？英文對妳有何重要性？（英文好可以增加妳的社會和經濟地位？妳對這句話有何看法？）
3. 有什麼因素影響妳的英文學習？它們如何影響妳的學習？
4. 在妳英文學習、生活、課業上有什麼困難？如何應付這些困難？
5. 妳如何規畫或進行妳的英文學習活動？利用什麼資源？

### 二、資訊傳播科技

6. 談談妳使用資訊科技的經驗。男生天生就對科技和電腦比較在行。妳對這句話有何看法？
7. 妳如何使用現代資訊科技（電腦、電視、網路、傳播媒體、廣播）和文化活動來進行英文學習？
8. 現代資訊科技和文化活動對妳的英文學習有何影響或幫助？

### 三、性別

9. 工作學業或生活上，有什麼原因或事情是因為妳的性別的關係而帶給妳困難？它們如何影響妳？妳如何解決這些問題？
10. 從女性的觀點來看，妳覺得英國和台灣有什麼差異？
11. 妳會覺得學英文讓妳置身為一個從屬他人的地位嗎？（覺得使用英文時不自在，覺得必須聽從於他人...）
12. 從權力和性別的角度，妳對英文的看法為何？妳的性別和英文能力對妳在男性主導的社會裡要獲得權力和增進地位有很大的影響嗎？

感謝您的參與和合作！

## Appendix 6. Diary design

Diary Design

Date

1. Note down your activities related to the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and your thoughts today.

Morning

Afternoon

Evening

**\*\* You can note down things such as 1. Practical matters (reading manuals, recipe, instruction). 2. Daily conversation, communication. 3. Research topic. 4. Personal matters. 5. Entertainment. 6. EFL materials, etc.**

2. Note down your activities and thoughts related to ICT and computers today.

Morning

Afternoon

Evening

**\*\* You can note down activities related to TV, Internet, Email, Radio/CD, Cinema, computer, books or others.**

3. Note down things or thoughts you had today related to gender issues.

**Appendix 7. Interview questions**

1. Please reflect and talk about your education and English learning experiences at different learning stages. How did you come to the stage of present state? What factors influenced your education and English learning in Taiwan and Britain?
2. How do you cope with difficulties in English learning and studies?
3. What impact does your English learning acquisition and learning have on your identity, work, and life?
4. Describe your ICT use and experiences in Taiwan and Britain. What are your access to and activities of ICT? What factors influenced your access to and use of (motivation, habit, and learning) ICT?
5. What sort of English learning or studies do you think is benefited, enhanced, or influenced due to the use of ICT or factors related to ICT? Can ICT help you with the process of completing your study and English learning, and if so, how?
6. What are the factors or difficulties you have in Taiwan and Britain that are gender-related? What's the impact on you and how do you cope with them?
7. Reflect and talk about the significant events in your experience of studying, living, and working as a woman in Taiwan and in Britain?

**Appendix 8. Participant 5's interview and diary account****P.5.1**

P5: I grew up in a small village and in a very conservative family. So girls in the family are considered insignificant. My parents would tell me girls shouldn't have too much education. So, when I graduated from junior high school, I was about sixteen, and my parents did not want me to have further education. My mum wanted me to be a hairdresser. And most of the girls in our village would have this kind of, two types of occupation. You either have to be a hairdresser or to make clothes. When they worked in the factory, they might work for several years and find someone to get married to. And they might marry a farmer. And I did not want to be a farmer's wife. It was so horrible to me. Because my father is a farmer, I know what kind of life it is. So I did not want to be a farmer's wife. I refused my mother's arrangement. And I just feel kind of heart broken and frustrated about being a girl in my family because you are insignificant and you can't do what you want to do. They would consider boys should go first. So, if my brothers wanted to go to college, of course no problem. They would be very proud of him. But if I want to go to college, it would be a big dream. You couldn't do what you want to do. They already have their ideas about what kind of role a girl should play. A girl should learn a trade, some skills, and then they should find someone to marry, and have a lot of children. Sometimes I try to imagine what kind of life I would have if I was an obedient girl and I followed my mother's order. And I would become a hairdresser and then marry a farmer. And at this time, maybe I would have four or five children. And I spend my days cooking, working in the farm, I spend the rest of my life in a village and that's my life. Well...I am so happy I didn't have to go through this kind of nightmare. Maybe some girls would be happy to have this kind of life, but for me, I don't want to have this kind of life. I think I was shy, but somehow I felt I wanted to go to somewhere and I wanted to be free because my mum always restricted me from doing a lot of activities, like I couldn't go out because I am a girl so I have to stay home to do the house chores. And a girl is supposed to be kind of like a domestic animal, and she has to be home all the time. And she couldn't go anywhere...and the worst thing is: you can be a hard working mother, or a very good obedient wife, but you still couldn't gain any respect. You are still a *woman*. No matter how hard you worked, you are still beneath men. Especially in a small village. And my family is very big, we have a very very big family. And when we get together, when they talk about women, you can realize women are not considered important. (Interview, P5)

**P5.2**

P5: Born into a farming family, a little girl has to go through all kinds of training so that she can be a good farmer's wife in the future. My mother did a good job in making sure that I master every necessary skill, such as cooking, doing washing up, tidying up the room, and taking care of the animals. By the time that I passed all the training I was as skilful, domestic and submissive as a performance dog, which would constantly feel restless when his owners were around for fear that it might do something wrong. Once in a while, I slipped out of the training, which would result in the most severe curse from the trainer. "A girl like you will never find a man to marry you!" shouted my mother. Fortunately under the severe maternal supervision, I was successfully transformed into a future farmer's wife...I knew if I remained in this village for the rest of my life, my parents would just find me another family so that I can continue to do my cooking and washing-up. I could not understand why people around me only wanted to use me, rather than love me. You cannot force people to love you, but you can teach yourself to love yourself. (Diary)

**P5.3.**

P5: I had a male colleague in college in Taiwan. I had been there for two years and he just arrived and he considered himself an expert and he would like to teach me this and teach me that and...just make you feel he knows everything and you know nothing. Kind of give you a lot of suggestions on how to manage your class, how to do this and how to do that. You couldn't manage his class very well, but *he wanted to teach me how to do it!*

P5: I had a Taiwanese male classmate in XX University. In the beginning I thought we can get along very well because I am also from Taiwan. So I was very happy to talk to him about the whole situation in Taiwan. Maybe my English is a bit better than his, and his knowledge in the subject in Taiwan is better than mine. So it'd be very nice if we can cooperate then we can help each other. But somehow we did not get along very well. I was disappointed about that but I couldn't do anything. It seems he has this kind of strong desire to compete with me. When I want to discuss something with him, he makes me feel I want to take something away from him. Yeah, maybe to steal his precious ideas. And they just make me feel very bad because I don't want to compete with anyone. It'd be very nice if we can help each other. But no competition. I mean, we all have very different interests, but I just don't know why. We had a lecture, after the lecture we might discuss something, and he is always so conservative about his ideas. I might talk about how I feel, and



what I think, he would just give a very short comment, and I couldn't continue the conversation. It'd be very nice if he also shared his point of view. When we finished writing an essay, it'd be very nice if we might read each other's essay and to see each other's idea, but we never did that. I don't know why, maybe he is a male, so he thinks he has to be much better than I do, and so he just wants to be on top of me. And this kind of pressure makes me feel extremely uncomfortable. (Interview)

P5: I have got a Spanish housemate. I have got a very complicated feeling toward him because sometimes he is a pain, and he would like to teach you a lot of things, like how to eat healthy food, how to do this and how to do that. At first, I feel very upset with his behaviour, he seems to consider that he is very knowledgeable and he is superior to you. Sometimes people don't know what they are doing; they just want to *show off*. If what they teach you is something they really know very well, and they want to help you, I am very thankful. Because it is a very good opportunity to learn something from different people, but first of all, he has to make sure he knows what he is saying and he knows what he is doing. Because you are male but it doesn't mean you have to be superior to all females.

P5: I think they watch too much TV and films. Of course you can say originally it's from home education, they are boys so they are taught different from girls, and they are expected to behave like boys. And they watched a lot of TV programmes and movies, a lot of pop culture. They want to create a hero, instead of a heroine. So if you are a boy, you kind of have some kind of ideas about what kind of hero you want to be, but who gives you the image of hero? You don't just gain the knowledge or gain the image from nowhere, you learn it from your society, so it's related to the big society. (Diary)

#### P5.4.

P5: I especially remember in one of the courses called English conversation, one of the strategies that my English teacher used is—she would like us to have a presentation, a performance. She would give you a situation, and you act it out. You might have two or four partners and you tried to perform a situation and you had to write your own dialogue. I wasn't good at being someone else. I felt I was tortured because almost every week you had to have this kind of performance and you had to be someone. And you have to be a good actor...I was very shy. If you are very shy, and it's really difficult to be an actor to do the performance in public. So, I failed my English, and I was heart broken because I studied hard. Even though I couldn't speak very well, I think I

studied hard and I deserved a better mark. But because I couldn't be a good actor, I failed my English. Anyway, I became very angry in the particular summer because I had to stay in school to kind of retake the course. Then I made up my mind: I want to improve my English!! (Interview)

P5: Actually I was always frustrated in the listening lesson. The teacher has a lot to do with your learning. Our teacher at university had very strong personal likes and dislikes. She liked people who can speak English. If you can speak good English, she would think you are a very valuable person. If your English is not very good, you are like *nothing*...teachers with this kind of attitude just made those who were not confident even less confident. I did not learn a lot from the lesson. Maybe I was always in the anxious state, so I did not feel it is an interesting thing to speak English. (Interview)

#### P5.5.

P5: Morning: I was running in the park. I saw two boys walking toward me. They are about age 10 or 12. My experience tells me that little boys in this country could be quite dangerous, so I became alert to their coming. Suddenly one of the little boys started to speak to me. "Stop!" he said. I was scared by his gesture. He used his left hand pointing to me. In this particular hand, he held a burning cigarette. All of a sudden, all the terrible things about how much a burning cigarette can harm a person were coming into my brain, so I didn't feel it was wise to stop. He shouted after me, "why do you always run?" I answered back "Because I love running." I asked myself why I am paranoid about the young children here. I've had several unpleasant experiences and they remind me that I have to take precaution in face of young people. It is a shame! (Diary)

#### P5.6.

P5: At this moment, I think sending email is the most important thing for me to use the computer...Writing email helps me a lot with my writing. Because I've got American friends and we send each other email twice a day. Sometimes I might feel frustrated about my study or I've got something exciting I want to share with her, and through writing email, you have the opportunity to analyze, reflect on your life. By the time you finish writing the email, maybe you already feel you've got the answer. Maybe if you couldn't get the answer and you wait for the very next day and your friend would send an email to encourage you or to say something nice to you or say they are happy

for you that you have a good time. So, even though I am in a foreign country, by sending email, if you have a lot of friends and they are supporting you, so, it's very good. (Interview)

**P5.7.**

P5: I've enjoyed this kind of learning experience very much. Actually ICT does help us to look at the world from a different perspective and to have different experiences. In Taiwan I've got some friends who are afraid of using e-mail and do not want to have anything to do with computers. Their husbands are the ones who have the knowledge to run the computer, so it seems natural that they become the ones who are in charge of the computer and information. Therefore, every time those poor wives want to send a mail, they have to rely on their husband so that they can have access to the outside world. To imagine myself to be like one of the poor wives is a very scary experience...

P5: When I was in Taiwan, I didn't have any desire to spend time understanding technology. The reason is I have a brother who is extremely interested in computers, so all I had to do is to give him a call to tell him what kind of problems I have, then he would provide the answer. Perhaps I have to start to look for the answer by myself. (Diary)

## Appendix 9. Participant 4's interview and diary account

### P4.1.

P4: Actually I do not feel like I am learning English. I just feel I am learning how to express things. I think I came here to make friends. I think it is very international here and there are many people, including English native speakers, and many people who are not. The language among us, except body language, is English. [It's interesting] to understand others' culture. For example, I went shopping last week and found that 'what a good day!' is not necessarily a good day. A man and I tried to take the same things twice and then he said '*what a good day*'. I felt the feeling is not very a good one. I think in this way, I can gradually understand, not only using English for superficial communication, I can gradually learn to communicate things in depth. I think that is the thing that sometimes obstructs me from developing deeper relationships with native speakers.

### P4.2.

P4: I stayed in the library all the time [and didn't go to the department] last term. I felt frustrated in the beginning. Because the English themselves would build a circle and it's not easy to get inside. So, at lunchtime, everyone will go to eat together. I have language problems, to be honest. They think something is funny, and I cannot understand. I cannot just 'hahaha' (hollow laugh), that's fake. When I felt very frustrated and did not want to go to lunch again a nice girl [from Singapore] would ask me to go again. She took care of everyone. I think that also helps. Sometimes others talked and I can also add in some sentences. Even though it's just questions or following the previous joke. I think you will get used to it. I also think everyone will accept you after you have interaction with them. (Interview)

### P4.3.

P4: However, the atmosphere during lunchtime was not so comfortable. I have enjoyed every stay with my new friends N and C. But, as last time, some people just did not let you in their group. That's really a terrible feeling. But, I think it does not only result from the attitude of the people, but also from my English ability. In fact, I could not understand even a small part of their talking, both this time and last time. So, it strengthened my determination to learn British style English well...then I could find out the real reason why I did not feel comfortable with them. (Diary)

## Appendix 10. Participant 1's interview and diary account

### P1.1.

P1: Of course English people around you had a great impact on you. My landlady would tell me what happened to her today and when I couldn't understand some words she would explain to me.

P1: Besides, e-mail. I like to copy email by English people. I think their Emails are very relevant to living. I keep in contact with English friends and I printed out their emails and highlighted the useful sentences. Next time when I write, I would use that. My Norwegian housemates' emails became my learning materials, very relevant to life. I would copy their language. I also have some Turkish friends and I think friends are very important. They didn't speak English as a native language and I can also practice with them. I like to talk to friends who are neither Chinese speakers nor English speakers.

P1: But I would not ask the teachers here. I feel my English is so terrible. How to ask? I would ask friends, like you. I wouldn't write emails to the supervisor. The supervisor is my last choice. I think because I am not confident in my English. I can talk casually in daily conversation, but when I enter the field of studies, suddenly...when you are afraid, you are not confident, and when you are not confident, you are afraid to ask...I speak such broken English and I don't even know what the sentence structure is...

R: Then you are afraid to ask the supervisor?

P1: The first time I saw him, I was too nervous and I didn't even know what I was talking about. So he would think I have improved my English because I am less afraid now. When you have more contact with others, you feel less nervous so I speak more fluently now. (Interview)

### P1.2.

P1: I have no computer here. I have to go to campus to use it. Except reading friends' emails, there is nothing very motivating for me. Actually I don't like computers. I don't like to read on screen. When I find something, I will definitely print it out. Too expensive, seven pence per page. Last time I found a conference report with twenty pages. Twenty pages one hundred and forty pence, more than one pound! That's very expensive! You've got to find someone to help you print out! But his printer is also awful!! Too old! You have to feed the paper one by one. For twenty pages you have to send the paper twenty times! That's really too old! I really want to throw it into the bin but then I have to spend the money to print out. I really think we pay so much fees and

no facility is in perfect condition! Things don't need to be perfect, but they can't be too awful! You have to send the paper every page! I can spend half an hour printing twenty pages! To save money I have to waste time, then to save time I have to waste money! In college in Taiwan, we have free printing facilities in every department. I don't need to pay.

P1: In Taiwan, as soon as there is a problem, I instantly call the computer-engineering department. If I cannot print out, I call someone immediately. There are very good resources in Taiwan. As soon as you call, they come immediately. Here, you call for ages and nobody comes! You cannot find the solution and you are just stuck in the same place!

### P1.3.

P1: Maybe my family is in the countryside, so I did not learn English in my childhood. I did not have the environment either. My parents just worked, they didn't [send us to cram school] ...maybe because my parents had limited education, and therefore they would not think about giving more to the children.

P1: But I think if at that time, my parents had sent us to private English learning institute, my speaking English would have been better. Since in junior high school, it is a big class system. Teachers cannot correct your pronunciation one-by-one. It has been like that for so many years. Now I want to improve my pronunciation but I think it is really difficult. (Interview, P1)

### P1.4.

P1: Women don't need to understand. We drive a car but we don't need to know the car. We just cannot understand the machine. Anyway, if there is a problem with the car, my brother would fix it and drive it to be fixed. He did all the things.

P1: My father doesn't cook. My brothers also don't cook. When my brothers and I were at home, I cooked for them.

P1: Yes, it became a natural pattern. Boys conduct things related with machines and girls do the housework. Work that is strength and machine related is undertaken by boys. It is kind of a pattern. A kind of cycle. No one told me to cook for my brothers. My mother did not tell me to cook for my brothers. But when it is time to eat, I automatically go to ask my brothers what they want to eat today, noodles or rice...it became my responsibility and if I am at home, I have to cook. I don't know...the idea

may come from the family. Yes, my mother just serves everyone so well...so I may have learnt it from my mother.

P1: Because we study industry design, I think girls have another advantage here. Because we need to design models, sometimes it can be very huge. Because I am a girl, naturally people think you are weak, so you do not have to do heavy work. Especially when you see the machine tools, you feel afraid. Just say: please help me!

P1: For example because we have to make models, we have to use the lathe. I had a feeling that it can cut your hand when you use it. Because I am a girl, boys would help me and then I don't need to put my hands into it. This is an advantage but also a disadvantage. It's nice that someone can help you but then you lose the chance to learn a skill. You cannot learn it.

### P1.5.

P1: Every day I rode my bike to the class. It's uphill and I cannot ride up, so every time I got off the bike and walked up. A British man who might have seen me several times asked me: 'You can't ride up, can you?' and asked if I had time and wanted to have lunch with him. I said I had no time. 'How about tomorrow? The day after tomorrow?' I said, 'I am preparing for exams, I have no time'. I am busy every day. 'If you have lunch with me, you can practise conversation with me,' I said: It's not necessary!

### P1.6.

P1: I listen to ICRT, Let's talk in English from radio and with CD-ROM. There was grammar explanation...it was not boring and irrelevant. It was very relevant to life. When there was a holiday or festival, it will have different content related to it. I think it was very relevant to life and for me I could easily enter the field of learning English.

P1: Usually I would program the video and I recorded the program. They completely used native speakers. Every word was articulated clearly. You could understand completely what they were talking about. I might not be able to understand the first time I listen to it. But they also have the text in the magazine, and therefore I can read through the text. In addition, they also had MP3. Later, I converted MP3 into CD. Before I came here, it was a really nice tool to get yourself used to an English-speaking environment.

P1: I like watching TV! I think I like watching TV best! I like the programme 'Let's

talk in English'. They have neither English subtitles nor Chinese subtitles. They just keep on talking and talking. I liked to watch it very much. I think TV had a big impact on me, maybe because TV is more attractive to me.

**P1.7.**

P1: The teachers in English lessons were completely different from teachers in Taiwan, who focused on exams. They were very lively. When they talked about some words, they would act them out. For example, 'faint', he (she) suddenly fell down on the floor. I didn't know what had happened and everyone was watching. And then she (he) stood up and explained what this word means. He (she) would use the very simple English idioms to explain what it means. There were only five classmates in the class. You can easily get the chance to practise. Whenever the teacher had taught a sentence, you absolutely had the chance to think about how to make a sentence. For example, we learn 'how' to greet others. The teacher gave an example and immediately the whole class started to practice with each other. The teachers here were not like teachers in Taiwan, who taught from vocabulary. You got to know vocabulary before you know the sentences. Here, they let you know the words from the sentences. I think the methods were different. Besides, here all the input was English. I could not have any Chinese explanation. I needed to adjust to the environment. I think the environment is very important for an English learner. (Interview)

**P1.8.**

P1: Most of the time you talked with the other learners who are also English learners, and it's not very effective. Besides, we were required to draw pictures. My classmates said 'it's is not an art class, why do they ask us to draw?' They asked us to make a page of newspapers. You find your topic by yourself and you have to present it in a poster. My god! My classmates discussed and then the class passed. What I learned from the lesson was very limited. It's totally different from the private language centre.

P1: I don't think there is great help because the teacher just asked us to be a graphic editor, you add pictures and text. *You just put it on.*

R: So there is a mismatch between what they propose and what you want.

P1: Yes, this is not only my own complaint. Many other students also complained about it. (Interview)

**P1.9.**



P1: It is the same with computers that my brothers know more than I do. Even if they don't know it, he would open the computer up. I don't understand but I will never open the computer. The boys will take action. [...] Naturally I just resisted this kind of stuff. I draw a line and if I think it is not my field, then I will not do it at all. Actually I use the computer most often but unconsciously, I just resist it. This is not my field. When I use a computer, I can easily feel frustrated. When it freezes, I just turn it off. It might not be a big problem; it may be just too slow. I don't know what to do so I just turn it off and start all over again. Boys may try to fix it, try to key in different commands. I cannot be bothered. I just turn it off and start all over again. I have no interest at all in reading computer books and understanding computers. (Interview)

## Appendix 11. Participant A's interview and diary account

**A1**

**A:** I think the consumption cost in Britain is very high.

**A:** In my university in Taiwan, printing is free. Here in England, a small printing will cost 3 or 4 pounds. I am printing something of great importance and it still charged me money! Yes. I think the resources they give to students are not sufficient. This happens in a place where self-study is emphasized. But you didn't provide any resources. Then why do we pay the tuition fee? I needn't have paid the tuition fee and I could just have stayed at home and borrow books and read by myself. You don't provide the environment, how can you charge students so much?! That is unfair. You made students pay so much and let them queue for such a long time in the computer room. Besides, there are not enough books. Students have to fight for the key books. I think it is really not enough. I always cannot find the books I need. When my requested book arrives, sorry, we are on the next topic now. When people already return the books, then I think, ok, maybe it's better that I read the books about the new topic. See, I didn't want to do that (delaying her reading progress)! These are all external factors.

**R:** So this affects your studies?

**A:** Of course. Not only my motivation, but also the result. If I can read beforehand, I don't have to sit there with my empty brain in the seminar. My English listening is already bad, and you don't let me have the chance to pre-read. Ok...I don't want to complain...but it really made me angry. Even if you can borrow the 4- hour loans books, don't you need to copy and spend a lot of money? I really think the welfare in this university should be improved. Today, because you have not enough books, I have to copy it. If you have enough books, I don't need to copy it. If I can borrow the books, I don't need to copy it. It's not because I really like copying it and spending the money. Oh! For that piece of essay, I spent a lot of money on copying. If you have a lot of books in the library and I can borrow it, I don't need to spend so much money. Do you think it is fair to charge this? Paper is not so expensive. Besides I am a student here.

**R:** Actually they are building new libraries. That needs a lot of money.

**A:** All right, the university charges a lot because they want to improve their facilities. But the speed is too slow. Students cannot enjoy the result. You are not just founded today. You have existed for a long time. It is not possible that you had no money at all before. All things develop stage by stage. You said, ok, the university is saving money because they need to spend more money. Even if you are spending a lot of money, you cannot ignore students' welfare. For a country, even if it may not be a rich country, they still need to provide welfare for its people. It is not possible to say: ok, the government is too poor this year, no pension for the elderly. It is not possible! I really think

students' welfare in this university is really bad. (Interview, p. 10-12)

## A2

A: She (her high school English teacher) taught the lesson at a very fast speed. In thirty minutes, she could expand the lesson to an exaggeratingly wide state—ten words introduced can bring in fifty words more in thirty minutes. When you were taking notes, you sometimes just felt so angry... After the lesson, I just felt everyone around me was displeased.... My friends all felt the same toward her. (Focus group, p. 3)

A: We just disliked our teacher and we didn't want to have any more conversation or contact with her. If you had too bad scores or too good scores, she would want to talk to you. So you just kept a low-medium score then she might just forget who we are for the rest of her life. We really disliked her. (Focus group, p.3)

A: I was really ruined by the teacher in senior high school. I always thought if I had a good teacher, my English ability would not be the same...I really think if it had not been like that in my senior high school, I would be much happier and have greater interest in reading and studying by myself. But because of that teacher, Oh! I just cannot study when I thought of her. (Interview, p. 2-3)

## A3

A: I had very big problems. I didn't understand what the teacher was talking about at all...I felt very irritated because I couldn't understand anything...I understand conversational, daily English but when they started to give speeches, start to talk with the normal way English people speak English, (P: give lectures), yes, you couldn't understand. I talked about this kind of problem to a friend yesterday and... She wrote it down and read it out to me and I was very surprised. This is not what we were exposed to in Taiwan. Even Americans, they speak differently from the British. Our teacher was an American from Illinois University, which is a very good school and he/she is a very good teacher...When he (she) speaks, it is not as [formal] as English. It seems when English people speak, they speak out what they would write down. When I saw what the friend wrote, I said: huh? Would you speak like that? It's like composing an essay.

R: Very formal?

A: Very formal ...the difficulty lies not in trivial little things, but the style of their speech. (Focus group, p.15-16)

**A4**

**A:** I never talked to him (her supervisor), only in the beginning of the term. We talked for fifteen minutes. He is a nice, smiley man. We have a small group with five people. Some people have transferred to another department and some have taken a break... My supervisor was considered as a very traditional Englishman. Some students decided to change their supervisor because they felt he was not very enthusiastic in their work. He is not a bad person. He is nice and smiley. But some considered him bureaucratic. I think even if I tell him my problems, there is still no solution. (Focus group, p. 23)

## Appendix 12. Participant B's interview and diary account

### B 1

R: You didn't come to attend the pre-session language course?

B: No.

R: There is a language course in our department and the students said it is quite useful because the teacher would read your paper and give you suggestions and corrections.

B: Actually I don't know how much time I have in this term, but I really think I need a writing class.

R: if your department can open a writing class...

B: My department is very strange, it pays the tuition for us to learn a second foreign language, but it doesn't pay for an English course. I think for us overseas students, I need an English class more than the second foreign language class. Of course it is important for me to learn French, but my English isn't that good yet. I would hope they can pay the tuition fee for me to learn English, not the second foreign language.

R: Is that because there are not enough overseas students?

B: We have few overseas students in our department, most of them are English. So their English is good. (Interview, p.7-8)

### B2

B: Chatting with my classmates is very relevant to my life. You can naturally talk about what you have learned with them. My response would be quicker. In Taiwan, I had to think for a long time to say the sentence. Because of practice, I speak much more frequently now.

R: Some people said actually they didn't have deep conversation with their housemates: How are you, fine thank you! That's all. You have deeper conversation with your classmates?

B: We didn't have deep conversation either. But I am already very satisfied. I don't need to talk about important issues of the country. Life is like that, isn't it? When you speak in Chinese, do you spend a lot of time talking about very important issues? No, everyone just chats. For me, it is enough. As to my study, the words we used are very difficult. If you talk about my work to other people, they would only say: 'What? What do you say?' It is not interesting like that. (Interview)

### B3

B: Listening is very difficult, I think. It is very hard. I have to admit, I didn't

understand very well in the class last term. I didn't understand what the teacher was saying. I studied all by myself after the class. I think I will try in this term to read first before I go to the class. Maybe I will understand it better this way. I asked my English classmates and they said they also didn't understand the class. They told me this is not a language problem. This is because of the field. What the teacher talked about was very unfamiliar to us so if we couldn't understand it, it was not completely because of my language ability. I think to cope with this problem is to pre-read before the class. I think I would like to read before I go to listen to the class because reading is easier for me. When you read, you read with your own speed. When you listen, you have to follow others' speed. With listening, the pace (speed) is controlled by others. With reading, you can control your own speed.

R: Will you use a recorder to record the class?

B: No, because I don't want to listen to it again (laughed). I already felt very sleepy when I listened to it in the class; I know I would not want to listen to it again when I go back home. (Interview)

#### B4

R: Would they ask you to talk or report in the class?

B: No, it's very quiet. Everyone is quiet. After the class, the tutor asked us if we have any questions. We usually had no questions. No one had any question in the whole term. Then the class was dismissed (laughed). A very quiet class. Maybe people didn't think the topic was very interesting. I think that was because of the way they arranged the class. They used the teachers to do presentation for a seminar. They didn't teach the class from the beginning to the end in an organized way. What the tutor taught us was what he did at that moment. It is a very advanced thing. If you have no foundation knowledge, you will have no idea at all about what he is saying.

R: Maybe they think you are already postgraduate students and you should already have some foundation knowledge.

B: Yes. (Interview, p. 5-6)

#### B5

R: Those who chat with you are English?

B: Yes, English in our class.

R: They wouldn't ignore you because you are a foreigner and your English is not good?

B: They wouldn't ignore you. But...when you talk to him, he says five sentences, and you answer: yes. It is not fair for him because he gets no feedback and interaction. He

also wants to speak...when he talks about the same thing with the other English, they can continue for half an hour because they have interaction. You would feel a bit frustrated because he only talks for five minutes with you...I don't think the English in our class would ignore you because you don't understand them. I think that is because you cannot interact with them, they cannot talk a lot with you. I think it's ok. Anyway, I will make progress. I said one sentence this time, two next time, and then more and more. You don't need to become very good in one day and talk non-stop with them. I think I was a bit frustrated in the beginning when I arrived: why can't my English improve quickly? But now, I think it's all right. As long as it is enough for my needs. I can try to improve slowly. (Interview)

**B6**

B: Before I started junior high school, I had an English private tutor. The lesson focused on conversation. The native speaker teacher would correct my pronunciation. After I went to junior high school, my pronunciation was better than others. [...] I didn't have his lessons for a long time, only for one summer vacation. But it helps me greatly with pronunciation and I am not afraid when I speak with foreigners [...] My father didn't deliberately want to find a foreign teacher. He was also learning English at that time and he had the information and access to other English learning resources. It was a coincidence that a foreigner teacher happened to be there. He might not be a professional teacher, but he is a native speaker and it's a one-to-one conversation lesson. In junior high school, I had the chance to attend English speech contests. That helped you to build your confidence. If you have confidence, you will become interested. (Interview)

### Appendix 13. Participant E's interview and diary account

#### E1

E: I received a letter telling me that I haven't paid the accommodation fee. I noticed that the student number is not mine. This kind of thing has already happened before. I also went to Graduate office and Accommodation office to correct it. But it seems the Fee office hasn't changed my data so they sent a letter to tell me that I haven't paid them. It seems there is no computer network in this university. When there is a problem, we have to go everywhere to correct it. This is really very inconvenient.

#### E2

E: English class for the first year was compulsory. But the teacher was also quite strange. He also studied in America...I remember in the second term, the teacher chose a children's novel about a spider, *Charlotte's Web* for us to read. But he was also not very diligent. In the first lesson, he divided the class into groups and each group had to read two pages and summarize for the whole class. The student had to look up new words and tell the whole class what happened in these pages. He didn't teach us at all for the whole term. I remember I had read that book in Chinese before. This was my first time to read it in English. I found it quite interesting. I liked this book but his (the teacher's) classroom activities were quite boring. Everyone just took turns to stand behind the podium, read it aloud and told others in Chinese what happened. [...] I think he didn't work hard. He was lazy and fooling around. A teaching assessment system started only when I was in the third year. When I was in the first and second year, there was no such system, so the university could not know what the teacher's teaching was like. (Interview, p.4-5)

#### E3

E: I found that my comprehension levels are the same whether I look up all new words or only certain words in an article. I think I only check them when they appeared two or three times in an article. Another good thing is P also studies in the same department. If I really don't understand, I can ask her, and she would tell me her interpretation.

E: Sometimes there are so many things to read...my supervisor gave me a whole book to read. It was difficult for me to read for two or three weeks. I was nervous. I was afraid that I couldn't finish it before the next meeting... I think I can finish it if I don't fool around and be distracted by other things. Actually this pressure can also push me to finish reading. Yes, if there were no pressure, I would think I could leave it to



tomorrow and postpone the reading day after day. If there were a deadline, it can push you to study.

E: I found some writers' sentences so complicated. I couldn't understand it when I first read it. I had to do the presentation; I wanted to understand it well. So I checked all the new words, but I couldn't understand it at all even when I finished reading the whole article. Then I read it over again. After two or three times of reading, I understood it a bit better...the more times I read, the more I understood. If I have time, reading all over again several times can help. If you don't understand the first time, read it again and again and again and then you may understand the content better.

E: ...because I brought books in Chinese from Taiwan. Every week we talked about one theory in the seminar. Because we had heard about that before, I would read it in Chinese to have a brief idea about what's going on. It would help me understand better when I read books in English.... there are some quoted 'extracts' in Chinese books. They were extracts translated into Chinese. I would compare the translated one and the original one. (Interview)

#### E4

R: Have you had the experiences of English writing?

E: Yes. I had a writing course in the language centre in T University. But I find the things I learned there very different from what I learn here.

R: How?

E: I think in the writing course in Taiwan, they only ask you to write in a normal way. They wouldn't ask you to write in an academic way. I think when I came here, academic writing is required. I think the gap is quite big. Before, you can use words like 'get', 'make', but now, you cannot use these words. It feels very different.

R: Can you overcome the difference?

E: I found they are totally different. Their styles are very different. With making a quotation, what I learned here and before are different. I asked the teacher in the language centre about this, she said I have to use what she told me now, because this is acceptable in England. It may be because the teachers I had before were from America. So, I feel the required academic style is different from what I learned before.

R: Do the language centre course and writing course help you establish the writing style?

E: Yes. The teacher told us how to write. When I need to write an essay now, I would take out the handouts and have a look at what is required in the writing. I would check

if I reach the requirement.

R: Does it help if you can have a look at work done by others?

E: Yes! Of course it helps!

R: What kind of help?

E: You just have a look! I have to write methodology this Thursday. I never learned how to write in methodology. I only learned about normal writing. I would have a look at others' work and see what they wrote inside. Then I can go back to write. (Interview)

## E5

E: I think in a week I speak most English when I see my supervisor...I was very nervous at the beginning. Last time I handed in my essay for him to read. The next day when I met him, I was extremely nervous because I was afraid that he would ask me to rewrite. I was very nervous.

R: Why were you afraid that he would ask you to rewrite?

E: Because I was afraid that he couldn't understand what I wrote. He knew I was nervous, and he asked me if I was nervous. He told me I don't have to be nervous and he knew that I was an overseas student... But every time I see him, I still feel quite stressful. But I think he is very patient. When I tell him something, he would ask me again if he couldn't understand. He would tell me how to say it.

R: What do you think makes you nervous when seeing him? Because firstly you have to speak in English?

E: Yes.

R: What else? You are afraid that your work cannot match his expectation?

E: I am afraid that he might think why I could be so stupid! (laughed) It's quite worrying! (Interview)

## E6

E: When I first moved in to the house, in the beginning, I was nervous. One week later, another girl told me that actually the other English boys would like to talk to me, but they feel I don't want to talk to them. She told me to talk to them and don't worry about my English. Anyway, they know we are from Asia and cannot speak English well. One of them is very nice so I started to talk to him. He told me to change the time to sun saving time. (Focus group, p.20)

E: His (English housemate) comments on our English also gave us a lot of confidence. We told him sometimes it is not easy to understand English with an accent. Then he

said our English is good. This comment released a big stone hung in our heart. I felt assured since he knows what we are saying. This comment encourages us, especially when it is from a native speaker.

P: I felt the same. Last time I told my supervisor that I couldn't understand what other students said in the class. He said it is normal since sometimes he also couldn't understand what his daughter said. So he said this is normal that even if you are English, sometimes you have communication problems with twenty-year-olds. (Focus group, p.20)

E: Sometimes when he spoke, I couldn't understand. In the beginning I was too shy to ask him to repeat. Later, I just asked him to repeat again. Actually he would repeat again for me. Actually he is a nice person...I found actually he takes the initiative to talk to me every time. Every day he would ask me how my day is and what was happening...He is actually very nice. So, I think when you ask people to repeat, I think actually they are all happy to do that ... before I always pretended that I understood him if though I didn't. Later, I think you just need have to forget your shyness and ask him to explain. I was afraid to ask before because I was afraid he might think why I can't understand him.

R: You are afraid that he might think of you negatively.

E: Yes. But later I tell myself: forget about it. He is the only one except my supervisor who can speak English with me. Then I just tell myself: never mind, just let it go, no need to be so reserved and worried. (Interview, p.8)

## E7

E: I also gave him something today and I will go to see him tomorrow. I am worried. I can only feel a bit released after I leave his office. Because I think he is the only person around me who cannot speak Chinese, and I just need to speak [English] to him. When I talk to my housemates, we can speak in English, but when we don't want to speak or can't find the English word, I still can use the Chinese words to explain it. But I cannot do it with my supervisor. I just need to talk to him in English. He would also ask me about my thoughts. He would ask what I am thinking every time we meet. I need to elaborate it clearly and in English. It's quite stressful sometimes. Because he would continuously want to know my opinions.

R: Do you think there is anything that can help you? Meeting more?

E: Actually the meeting each time is quite long. It's about one and half hours. P said it is good because you can practise English for one and half hours a week. (Interview)

**E8**

E: Today my classmate told me the way to connect to the Internet in my room. I tried to connect to it as soon as I came back from the class. No matter what I tried, it didn't work. I felt very disappointed. Other people tried only once and they succeeded, but I have tried for such a long time, it still didn't work. I wanted to call my friend in Taiwan for rescue but it is already midnight there...so I just tried again to see if it could work. But it didn't work. I gave up in the end, but I really want to have the Internet connection in my room! (Diary)

E: My friend called me this morning; he helped me with the Internet connection. I tried as he said. It really worked. What a miracle. I was so happy so I used it immediately. But it was so slow that when opening up one web page, my computer broke down. So slow. I spent so much time trying to figure it out and the speed was slower than a snail. I was a bit angry. If I knew this before, I would just give up earlier. I spent so much time and money buying the line, in the end I have to go back to the computer rooms to use the computer. (Diary)

**E9**

E: I think keeping on learning English at university has some impact on your later studies. For example, now I study here in Britain. There were some special terms in this subject. When I read the paper given by the professor, I really didn't know what they meant. But when I took out my books in Chinese and looked up the terms, I realised that actually I already knew what they were, I just didn't know their English equivalents. I really feel that if some of the papers given by our teachers in university were in English, not all in Chinese, then when I finish reading the whole paper now, I would not know nothing about the specific terms and need to rely on books in Chinese. (Focus group, p.7-8)

#### Appendix 14. Participant M's interview and diary account

**M1**

M: Whenever I received a call from my mother, I felt upset [...] They turn their love into concern, then concern into worry, then it becomes my burden [...] My mother would continuously tell me...she would remind me that English currency is very expensive, and wish that I could finish soon and go back.

R: Yes. Finish soon and go back.

M: Yes. Yes. Yes. But the problem is, I have my own thinking. My mother is not so supportive... My mother thinks according to her life experience. She has always been a teacher in a primary school. It is an average, a good job.

R: A very stable one.

M: Yes. But she would think: why do you have to go abroad?

R: Yes, anyway you have a job, get settled down, and get married quickly.

M: But I think...before I went abroad, my sister told me: you still have to go abroad. It will make a difference. When I came here I thought, it is really worth coming.

(Interview, p.2-3)

M: My mother is so awesome. Every time she calls, she can turn my mood from excitement into anxiety [...] One day my mum called me after I had just learned something very exciting and wonderful. I told her what I just saw and did and that I was very excited. Then my mum just told me a daughter of my father's friend who studied in a similar field could not find a job now. (laughed) ... at that moment, I just felt I couldn't bear this any more.

R: You are so excited there and then she--

M: --pours a bucket of cold water on your head. Yes. It's quite frustrating.

R: But maybe she also sees the reality.

M: But I think that is because of different personality. People are different.

R: I think our mother's generation see things in a...they don't feel secure and have an insecure perspective toward things.

M: Yes.

R: You say you want to go ahead and see what I can do.

M: She told you not to do so but to settle down.

(Interview, p. 3-4)

## Appendix 15. Participant P's interview and diary account

### PE1

P: I think I had difficulty in listening comprehension. They speak with a strong accent. Sometimes I really don't understand so I ask them to spell out the word for me.

A: Would you ask the teacher to do this in the class?

P: I think we understood most of the teachers' language. But we didn't understand what other classmates said. The teacher also didn't understand what I was saying, so I just spelt the word for the teacher. But sometimes it was strange because my classmates understood me but not the teacher.

A: Is it in daily conversation or a special term?

E: I think our class is special because our classmates are all Asian, there are no Europeans. Sometimes the teacher didn't understand what the Chinese students said, but (E and P together): we understood them.

E: I know what they mean, but...

A: ...maybe because of the way they think...

E: No, it is because of vocabulary, the pronunciation. I know the words they were saying, but the teacher just couldn't understand them and asked them to spell out.

P: I once said the word: extend. I pronounced the sound /d/ for /t/ but everyone except the teacher understood. After I spelled it out, the teacher said: oh! Extend.

E: This happened three or four times since the start of the term. The whole class understood what we were talking about except the teacher. He asked us which word you were talking about. I think that's because our class is more special.

P: Yes, maybe because we were all from Asia.

Y: Maybe we have all got used to Asian accents.

P: Sometime I think it is because of the difference of phonetic systems. We learned KK phonetic systems (one phonetic system taught in Taiwan). (Focus group, p.14)

## Appendix 16. Participant Y's interview and diary account

Y1

Y: No, I have no gender problems, but I have ethnic problems. I really think there is racial discrimination when you are abroad. I didn't think so before... When we (she and her boyfriend) lived together...I always felt I was quite adapted within Europe. I got along with my colleagues well. I would go to their parties and they would invite me as well. So I always felt no problem with racial discrimination until I moved into the university accommodation. I realized: oh! This is how the administration staff in this university looks at overseas students! They think you are just easy game who comes to pay the money and buy the diploma. Because they think your English is bad, you are away from home, you are here to pay. If you have any problem, you just pay more to solve it. They seem determined to eat you up. They think you don't have the ability to fight back. If your English is not good, you have no way to argue with them. I am really very angry. Many times, because of accommodation problems, I really wanted to sue them. They would say, you cannot sue me, because you have already signed the contract...I said, ok, I can complain, but they didn't pay attention to you when you complain.

The facility manager in x College is super arrogant. No matter what your complaint, she was able to throw the responsibility back to you. I think the accommodation problem let me realize how low the status of overseas students is abroad. No matter how good your English is, it can only give you a little extra space to argue with them. In the end you still will lose to them because they are English and you are a foreigner. Ah! It made you feel very frustrated. I didn't really believe when I heard that there is racial discrimination in England. I always thought it is all right if everyone can live in peace. But because of accommodation problems, I believe the racial discrimination problem is quite serious.

Y:...The fire alarm often went off without real reasons. There were three times the alarms went off since I moved in. We had to run out. Once at 12 midnight, once at 2 in the night, and the other time was at 8 in the morning. These three times are the serious ones and we had to go out. There are other times it went off without any reason. I complained many times. I said: you have to compensate me. I was shocked because I had problems with my heart. When I am shocked, it hurts for a long time. I said: what happens if I have a heart attack? She said: 'This is just a test'. I don't believe you have a test at 12 midnight. Then she said this is a general machine error. Ok...You don't

have to compensate me, go to find the manufacturer to compensate for me. She just has the ability to push all the responsibility away. I was very angry. The most annoying thing is, I moved in July and moved to another flat in September. She said the microwave broke down and she changed it for a new one for people who would move in later; and she charged me for the microwave. Ok, the microwave is out of order, why didn't you tell me that and let me still use it. She said it is scraped and the X-rays or whatever rays would go out. Fine, it is dangerous for the human body. Why didn't you tell me and let me continue using it. If I die, do you want to compensate me? Now you charge to buy another new one for other people to use. I should sue you for letting me use this broken thing. I was really angry! Do you know that!? I complained to GSA, my supervisor, and student lawyer. Everyone said: 'It's just 20 pounds, a small money, that's all right! Just pay attention to your study, finish and leave! That's more important'. I realized how good these people are in pushing away their responsibility. Y: They are even better at this than the Taiwanese. I always thought our government is very bad. How do I know when I come to a country which I thought is more 'advanced', they also have the same attitude. Besides they treated you as second class citizens, why not go back to be a first class citizens? So, recently I felt I have a stronger feeling of going back. Yes. No matter what, it is best to go back home. Before, I thought it is all right if I have a chance to work in England for one or two years. Now I feel I don't want to stay one moment more.

## Y2

Y: As to speaking and listening, it was frustrating in the beginning because you didn't understand what others said. But I practised every day and then slowly I understood.

[...]

Y: Maybe because we have several years to compare. You find you are different every year. I don't know why...I came here in October, 2000. We went away to X (another European country) for Christmas. Every time I came back [to Britain], I found my English had improved. That's very strange! Every day when I came back, I felt suddenly I could understand what people said. Maybe I didn't listen to English for a long time. I only listened to [the language in that country], so I missed English. So when I listened to English, I felt like I was listening to my own mother tongue.

R: I think maybe you have been England for a long time and you didn't notice how much you have improved. When you went to another country and came back, you realized how much you had improved.

Y: Yes. Maybe this is the reason. Every time I went to X and came back to England, I realized how much I missed English! It is so comfortable to listen to English. It is a



language I can understand. I didn't understand what people said in X. When I came back, I found I understood what people were talking about and I could understand almost 99 percent of it. So you would feel you have improved a lot. So, if you want to know how much you have progressed, like what you said, detach yourself from the environment and come back, then you will see your progress.

Y: In the beginning, I was not used to the English accent because we were more used to American accent. But now I am not very used to listening to the American accent. I am more used to the English accent now. Besides, when I arrived, I attended Master courses. Actually I felt quite frustrated when I went to the course. During discussion, I couldn't understand what others said. Besides, I am not an expert in that area. I had a slow reading speed and I often could not finish my reading requirements. In the first year, I felt very frustrated when I attended the course. But gradually your listening and speaking ability improved, you knew what to discuss with others and you understood what they said. Now I have attended some undergraduate courses and my listening comprehension is all right. One main reason that I could not understand what others said in the Master's course is because we have more English students in the course. P said she felt the undergraduate course is more difficult than the master's course. They had a lot of Chinese or Taiwanese overseas students in their Master's course. When you have a lot of overseas students in the group, the discussion would slow down. We have a lot of English students in the graduate course... When they spoke fast, you cannot catch what they are saying. But gradually you get used to it and you would improve quickly and you see clearly what the course is doing.

Y: I think time is very important. Besides you have to take the initiative to speak. The more you speak, the more improvement you have. Many people are afraid to speak and they think they can just listen. Of course listening is also important but listening and speaking cannot be separated.

R: When you go to the Master's course, they would not neglect you?

Y: No, actually the teacher would ask me my opinions. We had three terms. In the first term I just sat there and listened. I found I had improvement. I spoke more in the second term than the first term. I spoke even more in the third term than the second one. It is also because of the environment. When you just arrived, you were not used to their environment and the way they discussed and the way they have their lessons... I think when you gradually get used to it, you would find improvement in yourself.

Y: I think...the more interaction you have with others, the more improvement you would have. (Interview)

## Y3

Y: Our teacher for the first year English course is a feminist...I think the teacher had a deep influence on me. The articles we read in the class were about feminism...As long as you hand in your essay, attend the class, and participate in you all have similar scores. She also often let us watch films without the subtitles. We watched things like: *The kiss of the spider women* , *Blue Velvet*, etc...You can discuss feminist topics...The English lesson let me feel that the most important thing about learning English is not English...it is not the most important thing to speak or just recite vocabulary. The most important thing is you have to understand the culture of those English-speaking countries. I liked it very much. Later, I became very interested and I also attend the course of women's studies to have a better understanding of this. (Focus group, p.4)

## Appendix 17. Partial transcription from stage 3 focus group, interview and diary research

### X1

E: In the summer vacation of the second year in high school, I went to visit my cousin in America and I spent three months there. I attended a language course there. At that time, I realised: huh, I didn't know how to speak at all. Because I had stopped for two years (because of the dislike of the teacher), I forgot everything. I had the experiences of wanting to express myself but didn't know the words. After I came back to Taiwan, I wondered why things turned out like this...I had the experience of feeling wordless and speechless and didn't know the words to express myself... I studied hard in the third year and I got not too bad scores for the English exams in Joint University Entrance Exams. (Focus group, p.7)

M: At university, I spent two summers attending activities held by the China Youth Club, and they wanted assistants to host young Chinese people from America, Canada, or other parts of the world. Since then, I realised the importance of English. In their conversation, there are some uses of English, or reaction, which we don't know. (Focus group, p.2)

M: I also went to America for my sister's graduation ceremony. I went there for only one week. But I found that there were a lot of things relevant to daily life...for example, we went to a café, you had to know how to order things...you felt very excited when you saw everything and you wanted to speak. That stimulated me to want to learn more English. [...] I have already overcome the fear I had when I went to America for the first time. So, now I can quickly understand the way people speak. Sometimes, when you are tongue-tied, sometimes we would say 'I am sorry, I am sorry'. But here I have overcome the feeling to think it is my fault. Before, I always thought if we are tongue-tied (can not say anything), it is our own fault. Now I would feel it is because of cultural differences. (Interview, p.2)

P: I wanted to learn English because I had the chance to go abroad for vacation. When you are abroad, you need to speak in English. I felt my English was bad [...] I like trips abroad a lot. Going abroad is a very big stimulus for me (Focus group, p.9-10)

Y: In the summer between the third and fourth year at university, we had a student exchange program, a study-trip abroad to S University for one month. It equals three credits. Then I found actually my English was so poor [...] In our group, there were

twenty students from Taiwan university. There were about seventy from Tokyo Empire University, and other elite Japanese universities...I realized my English was so poor...among the Taiwanese students, many of them studied English as their major. Everyone's English was so good! My English was poor! When I returned home, I studied hard [...] I thought I might go abroad to study later and I went to have some GRE preparation lessons. (Focus group, p.5)

## X2

A: In junior high school, I listened to 'Let's talk in English'. I felt it was very difficult at that time, which is why we asked the teacher not to test us. Once the teacher was very upset because everyone was yelling: 'Teacher, no more test!' It was difficult so it didn't last long. We didn't listen to it for three years, not even three or four months, then the teacher cancelled it. Then our listening ability became very bad...

A: I didn't like (the radio programmes) at that time. At that time, you were good in the test and there was no problem at all. Suddenly, you had this big frustration. The teacher tested you on the program and you knew nothing. Before, your score was 100 and then suddenly your score became only 40. When everyone said so, everyone agreed not to pay too much attention. At that time, we had to listen to the radio and there were no pre-recorded tapes. It was not possible for you to listen to it every day especially sometimes you had to go to other private lessons for Chemistry and Physics after school. You just felt very tired and sometimes the frequency was difficult to tune in to. You just felt there are too many external factors that affect your listening. You would not listen to it regularly (Interview, p.2)

E: In the beginning, they had only radio programmes and tape, but not MP3, which you can listen to whenever you want...They had a time list which tells you when the programme was broadcast. I felt anxious. Every day the program started at half past eight. You just got panic and nervous at around eight thirty. You were afraid that you might miss the program and tomorrow you would fail the test and lose your face. So every day at around that time, I paid great attention to the radio. The most terrible thing is Saturday. It is weekend and it is supposed to be more relaxing. But there were still programs on Saturday and the teacher would still give you a test on Monday. So, when we went out for dinner, I had to hurry my father: 'quick! It's already eight thirty. I have to go home or I will miss the program!' (laughed) (Interview, p.2)

**X3**

A: the problem in my life is, I really don't know what the words are. I went to supermarkets and I only knew white pepper and black pepper. As to other spices, I know them in Chinese but I don't know what they are in English. I don't know what kind of secret recipe it is. I think problems are everywhere. There is a lot of daily used vocabulary that you don't know. But [their] children [already] know it.

(Focus group, p.16)

B: I think lack of vocabulary is a problem. Another problem is that the vocabulary you have is not exactly what they would use; therefore, those words you recited before were of no use. (Focus group, p. 16)

B: I think in daily life, I rarely used the vocabulary I read from journals. I may recite a lot of vocabulary but it doesn't help me with daily English. Our tutor gave us many articles written by scientist to common lay people. Even though the articles were about scientific topics, they use daily language to explain them. I felt it helped me a lot. On the one hand, I am very familiar with those topics so I can quickly understand them; on the other hand, I also learned oral English usage. (Focus group, p.23)

**X4**

A: I don't understand what my supervisor says...I often imagine the [simulated] conversation with my supervisor. If I talk with him, I only understand the daily conversational English...I don't understand the whole thing...I think I have a problem: I don't know where and how to seek the answers. My problem is too big! My problem is not like: Oh! Supervisor, I don't understand question 1 and 2. I just don't understand what you say, not just what you say on a certain day, but what you say from the beginning to the end! How can I ask him questions? I am very jealous that you said you talked with your supervisor and found the solution. If I was a teacher today and a student comes to me and says: 'I don't understand what you say'. I cannot help you at all. I wonder how I can help you?

B: Just like today I finish this class and you said you don't understand and then I tell you one more time, but you still don't understand. That's because I use the same language and content.

A: Yes.

P: Maybe they will recommend you some books. I told the tutor I didn't understand and he (she) told me to start with the pre-reading list. That is very helpful because they talked about this during the class. Even though you couldn't understand all, when we

saw some words, you know those are what you have read before. I think it is very useful.

A: Mmm...

R to A: Do you have a pre-reading list?

A: We have too many, too much reading...I cannot finish reading at all...

M: I completely understand what you said. During the first one, two, three classes, when I realized that what the teacher said is on this paper, she (he) was going to another paper. When you finally realize what's going, they are going to another topic. I also often lost my concentration. I often got lost while the teacher spoke.

A: But the teacher would find out. The teacher would say: do you have any problem? In my heart I wanted to say: yes! I understood nothing! But I still said: Oh! No, it's fine. I still don't understand what they said.

Y: You remind me of my students in my class. I have two classes of different levels. I like the level 2 class very much because they have reached a certain level and they would challenge me and ask me questions... My level 1 students are very bad. There are 25 students in level 1 and 15 in level 2. When practising conversation, Level 1 students are not as loud as Level 2. When I ask them if they have any questions, they always said: we are fine, we are fine. Then I ask them to read a paragraph, but they didn't want to read! Ah! So annoying! The level 1 students really annoyed me.

A: Maybe I am the type of student who would annoy the teachers. (all: laugh)

Y: Because the teachers didn't know if you understood or not, they would expect you to tell them your problems.

P: Yes.

A: But, it is not a one-to-one class. (Y: it's all right) There are a lot of students.

P: I often went to talk with the teachers after the class. I told them I don't understand your class and they gave me suggestions of what to do, or asked me to write them emails and we can explain them to you via emails.

A: But that's because you find your problems. If they ask me: What's your problem? Ah! My problem...

M: But she (P) also finds her smaller problems from her big problems.

P: Yes.

A: You have the pre-reading list, and you have the background and you find the books and realize what the teacher is talking about. But now you have a lot of books, and your teacher knows everything and anything thoroughly. None of his words are from particular books and it is impossible for me to read the book. When he speaks, I don't know which book it comes from. I don't know that comes from which book and I don't know the word. If I don't know this is called: spoon, and the teacher said: spoon, spoon, I don't know what it is, even if I spell it out, s-p-o-o-n, I still don't know.

M: But gradually you will know that spoon is spelt like that. You don't know it but you point it out. It may take you one week to understand that—(A: you are lucky if you can understand it by listening)—maybe you hear something and you can ask your classmates and then they can tell you what that is. Last week, our teacher told us to do a 'workshop'. I don't know what a workshop is...I can also make a workshop, or a lesson plan. I just didn't understand what a workshop is. I thought it is a seminar. I asked five different people but I still didn't understand, until yesterday, I realized it is an activity in the class. You propose a project and let people interact in the class. When I finally realized what it is yesterday I felt so glad. People have talked for such a long time and so much but I always cannot understand. I cannot find the word in the dictionary either. When you finally know how to write your assignment, it is an ecstasy. It took me a week and I asked five people.

### X5

E: In senior high school, it was terrible. Nobody in my class liked the English teacher. Nobody liked to study English. [...] That teacher studied in America for her Master's degree in English. But when she spoke in the first lesson, the whole class was shocked. We found it strange. If she had studied in America, she should have been there for two years, but her English has a strong Taiwanese accent. [...] She liked to scold us and said we didn't work hard.[...] She liked to warn us that if we didn't study hard, we would have a bad score for the university entrance exams.

E: There was another male teacher in the second year. He was also very strange. Because of his military service and cheating, he got extra scores for the university entrance exams. He entered the English department in a teachers' university. He is a very strange person. He kept on talking about politics in the class. He didn't teach at all. Our classmates' textbooks were all blank without any notes or marking...

P: In senior high school, I think my learning environment was good because all of my classmates were good and liked to learn English. Yet the English teacher is just a facilitator. It doesn't matter if he (she) teaches well or not. English learning is your own business. There is no connection between teaching quality and your own English ability. We have no methods to evaluate our English teachers. One of my classmates was a celebrity who had a very different background and distinctive English ability (she was sent to America to study and learn English frequently by her parents and worked as an English teacher on TV). It just made me feel it all depends on yourself

and your environment to learn English. (Focus group, p. 8-9)

## X6

Y: I disagree. I think fundamentally the English are just discriminating against you.

M: No, because the person who wrote the email is Chinese. His name looks Chinese. I think maybe the person...

Y: They would not be like that to people from Germany or Europe.

M: Mmmm...

Y: I think sometimes they just have more prejudice against oriental students.

M: Discriminating...

Y: Your spoken English is not good. Even if you speak good English, they take it for granted. But when they hear English with a French accent, German accent, even Spanish accent or Italian accent, they would think: wow! They are...actually a lot of English words derived from Italian, French, German, they would think highly of those people.

A: But our friend said something very moving to me yesterday. She said actually she was very impressed by people from Asian countries, China, Taiwan. She was amazed how we could speak English so well. Our characters are completely different from the English. Take the Spanish example, they are very similar to the English. Our difference is bigger. If we take a French test and we both got the same scores as the English, we should be praised more. Because they are so similar, it is not a big deal for them to take a high score.

## X7

M: But even though people may comfort you or whatever, even my sister also told me before I arrived that if someone laughs at your English, you should tell them that if you study Chinese, you may not be able to speak it well, either...I know what people can say to comfort you. But I have to admit that my email may have structural and grammatical mistakes. I need to work harder to overcome this. I know we are foreigners but you still hope that at least you can reach 70 or 80 percent of English perfection.

A: Have you ever thought about this idea, if you only see language as a tool, like, if someone told you: 'you have to remember to bring your watch next time you come here!' Will you feel: ah! I am upset by this comment; I need to bring my watch next time!

All: (laugh) what? What kind of analogy is this?



A: No, what I mean is...I don't understand...today this man told you you have to practise English first...and you felt upset. But why don't you think like, you need to have the tool first. Language is just a tool. Today I angrily scolded you: 'you didn't bring your watch! How can you not bring you watch! You have to bring your watch next time!' Will you get upset? NO!

B: I understand what you mean. You didn't bring your watch means you don't have a watch or you didn't bring it. It doesn't mean you are not a punctual person or not a trustable and honest person. These are two different things. Another example, an idiot who grew up in England can still speak English, but he is an idiot.

All: (laugh) What kind of example is this?

B: No, What I mean is, being able to speak English doesn't mean a person is very intelligent or a person is of high class. These are two different things. Today, your English is bad, but it doesn't mean your brain is bad. It's only because that is not the environment you grew up in. So you don't have to feel ashamed of your English ability.  
(Focus group)

## X8

E: During the discussion, if someone speaks fluent English, she (he) can easily express their opinions. But while I am stilling thinking about how to translate them into English, other people have already spoken out.

P: So they can easily take the leader positions.

A: But do you think their opinions less good than yours?

M: Yes.

P: Yes, I often think so. But the problem is, you cannot express it.

M: It's not a good feeling.

P: Or when you say it, others cannot understand you. You have an idea, but they cannot understand it, so it is worthless.

A: In this case, you should speak slowly and tell them their deficits.

E: But sometimes when you want to speak, they just talk without stopping. When you come up with the way to express it, time is up.

P: Yes.

M: I am the only one from Asia among them. I may totally disagree with them but when I want to speak, I feel I will waste their time.

A: Don't think you are wasting their time. If you really think your opinions are good...

M: I think the problem is 'time'. P: Time, time.

R: If they give you more time...

A: Yes, if there were really more time, I could finish my statement...

P: It depends...aside from the fact that you speak slowly, you have to see if others have the patience to listen to you. I think other people's patience is very important.

[...]

P: You can have some words, but you are not in a position of leader [...] In our discussion, there is always a person who will jump out to be the leader.

A: I think it is not important to be in the position of a leader.

P: But sometimes in a group, the leader would lead everyone's pace. So, your idea can only be a tiny point even though it is very important for you.

M: It is more ideal in our focus group conversation now. We disagree with each other, and then I can argue with you.

P: Yes.

M: In our class, we are restricted into smaller and smaller circles.

P: Yes, yes, yes.

## X9

M: English was one of my favourite subjects in high school. I started to listen to '*The Sound of Music*'. There were activities for us to perform and I started to like these pieces of music very much. I listened to it even when I took showers. I also watched the video. Naturally I would imitate the way they speak. That more or less influenced my pronunciation. (Focus group, p.1-2)

E: The English teacher in the third year of our junior high school would tell us some stories based on western novels, such as *Gone with the Wind*. She could make us interested. We had to prepare for the senior high school entrance exams and didn't have too much time to read the novels, but the teacher would spend about five or three minutes per lesson telling us some stories. We liked to have her English lessons a lot.

Y: My junior high school English teacher is very good and I liked her a lot. She let us listen to 'Let's talk in English' and I liked it very much. In senior high school, [...] the teacher is also our class tutor. She was not married at that time and so she put a lot of effort into teaching us and we all liked her.[...] because the teacher was very good, I liked it very much. Besides, we listened to radio programs and I also found it very good. (Focus group, p.3)

Y: She also set up a lot of activities for us to practise English. For example, English conversation contests and role-plays. We also had English plays for Christmas and learned English songs. [...] We found: wow! It is so interesting to learn English! We can learn English not only with textbooks. (Interview)

**X10**

A: In junior high school, after school we would go to private lessons, but they were not teaching you English, they were to teach you grammar and how to pass exams. We recited a lot of vocabulary. In senior high school, I really didn't like the English teacher. She was very strict and we just continuously recited more and more vocabulary. It seemed I gained no other things. Even playing games was so stressful. We were so stressed and we felt it was so boring. We didn't find learning English in senior high school a very happy experience. (Focus group, p.1) (More of A's account was presented in appendix 11(A2)).

B: Everyone was very afraid because she was very very strict.[...] In the class, you are required to take notes. She would test you with content on the notes in the next lesson. If you didn't know the answer, you could not stay in the class, you had to go out. [...]She didn't beat us, but we were still very afraid. But I think she had a great impact on my English. (Interview)

B: I was very afraid. I was a little teacher-assistant in English at that time. After the vocabulary test, she would say to me: 'you are the English assistant and you only got this kind of grade!' I was not the worst, but as a 'little teacher', I could not be in the average. I had to be best. (Interview)

P: After school, I went to have private English lessons in the neighbourhood English teacher's place...Private lessons were more important because it was very strict. You got beaten if you got bad scores. [...] The teacher would beat you, so you would force yourself to study hard.

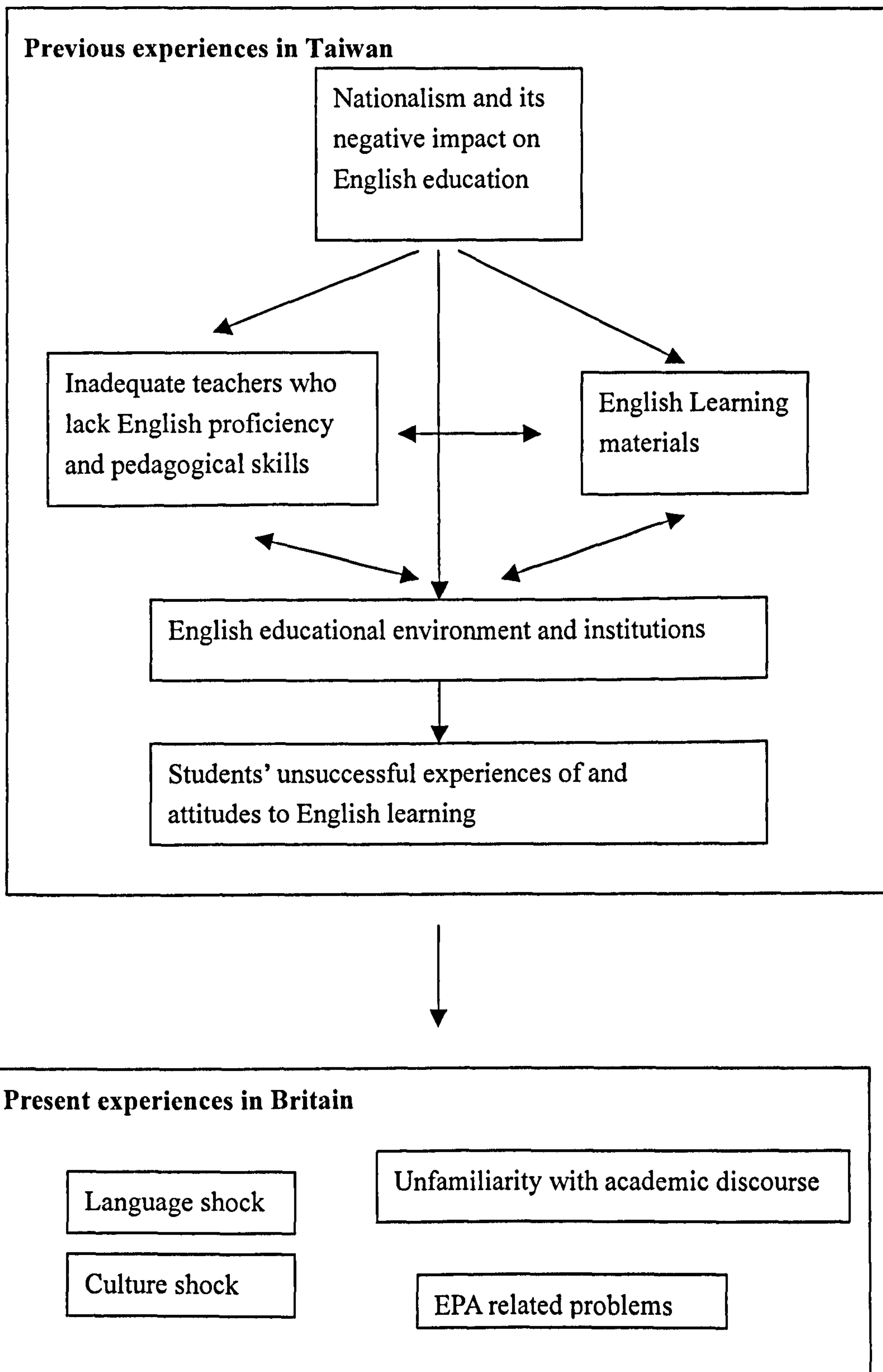
A: You spent money to get beaten?

P: I think it was very normal. In the community, we had many children of a similar age; therefore, there was a lot of competition among us. So, everyone worked hard, especially on English. I think studying English in junior high school equals having a lot of tests and comparison of scores with others. (Focus group)

**Appendix 18. Further explanation of ‘impact’**

‘Impact’ can be defined as ‘the totality of change, or altered capacity for change, in people or processes related to those involved in the research’ (Low et al., 2003, p.9; Low, et al., 2004). Impact can also be considered in two dimensions: the *subject* of impact (individuals, institutions) and a *temporal* dimension (timing of measurement) (Coles, 2002, p.30). The impact of certain factors might be felt in various ways by different people involved—learners, parents, educational institution staff, the organisation, the community, society and ‘seemingly unrelated entities’. (Low et al., 2003, p.9; Low et al., 2004; Coles, 2002). The change resulting from certain factors can change with time and can be continuous; e.g., learning some skills can lead to learning of more new skills (Coles, 2002, p.31). According to its nature, the change can be categorised into: immediate (people’s reaction to learning in a course or getting a job shortly after the completion of the course) or long-term impact (further development in the longer term) (Coles, 2002, p.31).

**Appendix 19. A graphic of the interrelation of the participants' English learning in Taiwan and in Britain**



**Appendix 20. Significant characteristics of the three participants (P1, P4, P5) regarding English learning, gender, and ICT use**

	P1	P4	P5
Early age of English learning	No family support, no class in private learning institute	Parent support, extra class in private institute	No parent support, no extra class in private learning institute
Gender and Equality	Gender-divided work and interests, gender different access	equal	Unequal access to education and resources, unequal distribution of housework
English education	Not successful	Instrumentally, intrinsically, and integrally motivated.	Formal English education was a cause of anxiety, Likes English because of self-study literature and radio
English learning with ICT as scaffolding in Taiwan	Use of a variety of media, radio, TV, video, PM3, computer,	Use of radio, video, TV	Use of radio, video, TV
Language shock and culture shock	Difficulty in communication and study	Difficulty in communication, and study	Less difficulty and shorter adjustment time because of longer time she spent in England and other English speaking country
Scaffolding and gender	With help from female landlady and housemates, Writes email to friends to learn English	With help from female colleges in the same department	With help from female friends when in US, and help from female housemates Writes email to friends to learn English

Male hostility	Teasing, and attack by British boys	Teasing in public area and at accommodation	Teasing and provocation from British boys; mental bullying by male housemate
ICT use in Taiwan	Didn't like computers, relied on male relatives to solve the computer problems	Big user of computer and internet	Doesn't like watching TV much and prefers traditional media, books, radio, to computers and other modern equipment.
ICT use in Britain	Dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of computers and facilities on campus	Positive attitude toward the insufficiency of computer facilities in Britain	Awkward access and facilities

**Appendix 21. Participant 3's account**

P3: I have a strong feeling as I study English. You said being subject to others, like you have to listen to others. It's not everyone who can use English then they also understand English literature. This is my profession and so far I have learned so much and you should respect me. Especially for people who study English literature, the feeling is worse. If you study English literature, everybody will talk with you about Shakespeare whatever, and tell you that 'you've come to the right place, I can speak English with you'. They think English equates to English literature. They cannot distinguish profession from daily use English. I think it's quite serious that everyone can tell me how to speak English. He just became patronizing. (Focus group)

P3: And they often let you feel that being unable to speak English well equates to being stupid.... They often use speaking English to judge if this person is smart or not. But I think this is a very tiny part in a person. I think a very superficial thing just became the standard...Speaking English became the representation of your whole person. If you speak slowly, people may think you are stupid. I think the idea of seeing English as equivalent to knowledge is very common here. (Focus group)



**Appendix 22. Participant 2's account**

P2: That day X (an English pop star) went to Taiwan. The attitude of his was very obviously hegemonic. First, the customs officer's movement was slow, and then his English was poor. He (this pop star) just showed his dissatisfaction. Isn't it a kind of cultural hegemony? Why should I speak English? Today you came to my country, you should learn my language! Why should I learn your language? This is cultural hegemony! We came to their country, because I came here of my own will, we ought to learn their language. Just like when we went to Italy, why did I still use English to talk with them? I should use Italian to show respect to people in that country!

**Appendix 23. A table of the participants' characteristics regarding capital, English learning and digital literacy**

Possession of economic/ cultural/ linguistic capital	Participant	English learning in Taiwan	Level of digital literacy	English learning in Britain
High	Y, B, P4	More likely to attend elite school and university, with innovative teaching method and quality teachers; more likely to be encouraged to learn with parental support and encouraged to be analytic analyst and researchers, encounter less gender restriction.	High	More confident and optimistic in their life and research, better resourced
Intermediate	P3,A, E, M, P	More likely to be restricted to traditional teaching methods, have teachers of a range of quality and proficiency, expected to undertake study (arts, language, education) and career considered suitable for women (teaching).	Low (P3), Intermediate (A, M) High (E, P)	Encounter different difficulties (gender, resource, knowledge, and language related
Low	P1, P2, P5	Older participants from rural areas, restricted to teachers and teaching methods of a low quality. More likely to encounter restriction on education chance.	Low (P1, P5) Intermediate (P2)	More likely to encounter high level of difficulties with language and study