

**The English Language
Learning Strategies of
Senior Secondary School
Students in Hong Kong**

The English Language Learning Strategies of Senior Secondary School Students in Hong Kong

**Thesis submitted in part-fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Education at the University of Leicester**

By

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September 2001

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Abstract of thesis entitled
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submitted by

H. Hepburn

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In Hong Kong, the demand for school leavers with effective English skills has been exceeding supply for some time. Attempts to redress the problem by schools have been hampered by the lack of research evidence which would help produce more students with the required/relevant skills, hence recommendations e.g. Education Report No. 4 (1987) that more research should be undertaken into effective English learning strategies.

This study seeks to extend, within a Hong Kong context, the research devoted to factors involved in successful language learning. It investigates the relationship between attitude/motivation, language learning strategies and achievement in English of Form 7 students in nine Hong Kong senior secondary schools (N = 476), selected from Bands 1/2 and 4/5.

Several instruments were used: a questionnaire; a language competence rating scale; interviews with 13 teachers and 42 students, identified by their teachers as high / low achievers (HA / LA); plus student think-aloud tasks.

The quantitative data were analysed by a variety of multi-variate techniques while the transcribed interview data were analysed for representative statements to illuminate the research questions. The analyses identified the language learning strategies significantly associated with competence and also indicated several problems: lack of exposure to English, the learning demands of an exam culture and the lack of adequate facilities in the classroom.

Clear differences emerged between the HA's and the LA's in attitude, motivation and choice of language learning strategies. The HA's were more active and ready to see problems as challenges whereas the LA's were more passive and gave up quickly when a problem surfaced. The factors that make for a successful learning plus a language learner profile, which may remain specific to Hong Kong, are outlined and indicate the role of attitude, motivational orientation and language learning strategies adopted to cope with the vicissitudes of language learning.

Limitations are outlined with suggestions for further research

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Instrumental Motivation, Intensity of Motivation, Self-Rating
Exposure to English, Attitude, Integrative Motivation
Parental Encouragement

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Preamble

'In my discipline they all want to rote learn material than think ... Students from Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong appear to be much more inclined to rote learning.' (Tertiary lecturers' opinions quoted by Samuelowicz, 1987, p. 123). This apparently typical perception by outsiders of the Asian learner needs to be modified in the light of the findings of more recent research as described in chapter 3. Whilst such research has been undertaken in a global sense, and in some Hong Kong schools, to date practically no studies have been carried out in secondary schools with regard to the learning of English i.e. there is a need for investigations concerned with gathering and analysing data related to the learning of English in the local context where English is studied as a second/foreign language.

Accordingly, this study is concerned with gathering and analysing data (in quantitative and qualitative form) relating to learner variables, namely, attitude, motivation, exposure to English and language learning strategies. It is also an attempt to determine the relative status of these learner variables and their relationship with competence in English. Given the criticisms of the current standards of English in Hong Kong, such a study would be relevant to teachers of English as well as to policy makers who are involved in the task of improving output from language learning programmes. For example, if strategies that lead to successful learning could be identified, then teachers would be in a better position to understand their students' strengths and weaknesses and could advise them accordingly.

The background to this study is complex given the far-reaching educational changes Hong Kong has recently experienced. Hence, a grasp of historical and current issues in these areas is needed for a better understanding of the context of the investigation.

In the first two chapters an outline of the setting is given i.e. the status and role of English in Hong Kong and the nature of the problems regarding language education in Hong Kong. Chapter 3 describes relevant work in the field with particular reference to local research. The research questions, rationale and methodology are detailed in

chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the findings. Discussions and conclusions follow as chapters 6 and 7 respectively. Statistical tables, charts and figures appear in the text and appendices, their location being indicated at the point of reference.

1.1 The Setting

At the end of 1996, official estimates (Hong Kong Government, 1997) of the population of Hong Kong were put at 6.3 million people, living within a land area of some 1095 square kilometres consisting of Hong Kong Island itself, the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories to the north. Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated places on earth with an average of 26,460 people per square kilometre in the main urban areas. (Op cit) The age distribution of the population has changed since 1980 when about a quarter were under 15 but it is still young overall with some 18% under 15 (ibid.) and some 70% being of working age.

Despite having been a British colony since the 1840's, non-Chinese presence is minimal in population terms as it is commonly quoted that approximately 98% of the population is Chinese of varied origin within China, with native Cantonese-speakers originating from Guangdong Province in southern China forming a majority of around 60%. (ibid.) Hong Kong is hence, overwhelmingly Chinese in population and culture, despite being superficially a Westernised city subscribing to international business and commercial mores.

Since 1974 the official languages of Hong Kong have been both English and Chinese, used with equal official status in all manner of communication between the Government and the public. In practice, however, Cantonese is the spoken language of the majority of the population and serves as a lingua franca for almost all Hong Kong Chinese inter-dialectal communication. In essence, the Cantonese-speaking population have what Giles and Johnson (1972) term a 'positive' ethnolinguistic identity, in that they tend to maintain their linguistic identity by keenly maintaining use of their ethnic language within the family and close social contact.

The status of Putonghua (Mandarin), the official language of China, is still unofficial. It does not seem to be used as a means of communication between different dialect

groups, though the lead-up to Hong Kong's reversion to China in 1997 saw a marked interest in learning the language. The status of English in everyday life is much weaker than the duality of official languages would imply. Hong Kong has a flourishing Press which at the close of 1996 was publishing some 58 newspapers and 625 periodicals (Hong Kong Government, 1997). Of the daily newspapers, 38 were Chinese-medium and two English. Luke and Richards (1982) in their survey found that only a small proportion of the sample read unabridged fiction, magazines and newspapers in English and that not more than 10% of the respondents spent any time watching English channels despite Chinese subtitling for nearly all programmes in English.

The use of English within the education system is a complex matter. Currently English is taught throughout the school system as a foreign language in primary schools (where Cantonese is the medium of instruction) and until 1998, as a second language in the theoretically English-medium secondary schools which originally formed the vast majority. In the minority Chinese-medium secondary schools, English was taught as a foreign language. However, this pattern changed in 1998 when 114 secondary schools (about 25% of the total) which satisfied the eligibility criteria laid down by the Education Department of Hong Kong were allowed to continue teaching through the medium of English. All other secondary schools have to use mother-tongue teaching i.e. Cantonese with new cohorts, at least from S1 to S3, the first three years of secondary school. In these schools English is now taught as a foreign language. The new situation means that the vast majority of students are now taught through the medium of Cantonese.

Primary education has been universal in Hong Kong since 1971 and junior secondary education (i.e. to the end of Form Three) since 1978. Effectively this means that over 90% of the school population currently complete 5 years of secondary school, with 85% taking the Hong Kong Certificate of Education at that point. The remaining students follow full-time craft courses at Technical Institutes. It is estimated that one-third of the students who proceed beyond Form Three become eligible for Form Six places.

Academic competition is intense at all stages, culminating in the struggle to obtain a place at one of the universities; the English-medium universities which comprise The University of Hong Kong, The University of Science and Technology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (theoretically Chinese-medium but in practice many subjects are taught in English or 'mixed-mode' due to shortages in resources at tertiary level, both human and material); and the Chinese-medium universities i.e. Baptist, Hong Kong Polytechnic and Hong Kong City. Lingnan College is seeking university status while the Hong Kong Institute of Education (an amalgam of the four Colleges of Education and the Institute of Language in Education) though historically restricted to the training of non-graduate teachers for primary and junior secondary schools, has now started its own B.Ed degree for primary teachers.

1.2 Language in Education in Hong Kong

Criticisms of the calibre and character of language education in Hong Kong are not new. In 1878 John Pope-Hennessy, the then Governor of Hong Kong, expressed doubts about the adequacy of the teaching and learning of English in both the Government Central School and the village schools of that time (Bickley, 1989). Burney, a visiting British education inspector in the 1930's, felt that too much time was being devoted to the teaching of English and that as rote learning on a large scale was practised in order to satisfy the formidable examination system in place, standards were found to be unimpressive (cited by Fu, 1987). Burney recommended increasing the emphasis on Chinese language teaching while tailoring the teaching of English to levels at which students would find it vocationally essential.

This opinion would not have been out of place in the current controversy over medium of instruction and alleged falling standards (particularly in English) which has had a high profile in Hong Kong for over a decade, effectively since the extension of compulsory free education to nine years in 1978. Despite a specially commissioned report by the Hong Kong Government (1982), seven Education Commission Reports (Hong Kong Government, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996), and a specific inquiry into language improvement measures needed (Hong Kong Government, 1989), the debate continues at all levels from intuitive, often emotive statements by those not always directly involved in education to erudite, academic arguments.

An indication of the feeling and range of topic involved may be seen from the selection of extracts from relevant letters in the 'South China Morning Post'(SCMP), Hong Kong's largest circulation English language daily newspaper, most of which were published during a period of public consultancy on newly produced Government proposals for language teaching and curriculum reform, embodied in Education Commission Report Four (Hong Kong Government, 1990).

Government registered schools are full of teachers who are not qualified ... Many of the teachers who are supposed to teach English cannot even speak a few simple sentences ... All the truly awful schools in Hong Kong are Government registered - many are government-run.' (Davies, 1990).

... after receiving training in the language for around 14 years, the competence in English of most students entering the universities is so poor that lectures are for many almost a complete waste of time.' (Goldstein 1990)

The system of compulsory nine year education in Hong Kong has succeeded in producing Form Three students who cannot even remember all the letters of the English alphabet. With the planned expansion of tertiary education places, more students who are not proficient in English will be pushed into the Colleges. (Chan, 1990)

Clearly there is something seriously wrong with an educational process that spends 10 years teaching a skill, at the end of which process the majority of students would be assessed as at elementary grade by an adult education establishment.' (Chamberlain, 1991)

The main strands of concern appear to be those of perceived falls in academic standards generally and in English language proficiency at all levels within the education system, unqualified and/or poorly qualified teachers and the lack of clear, practical and appropriate policy-making and prioritising.

It is appropriate to provide an overview of educational events and trends in Hong Kong since the extension of free universal education to nine years in 1978, as this is essential if the attitudes, motivation and proficiency of the students being researched are to be understood in as full and true a framework as possible.

Since 1978 (and even before, as indicated earlier) there has been much discussion about the standards of proficiency of English of Hong Kong students, particularly at

secondary and tertiary levels, with comments from a variety of sources in the media (e.g. see above) to the effect that these standards are in serious decline.

The abolition of the Secondary Entrance Examination in 1978, which had required students to sit tests in English, Chinese and Mathematics (and which were often concentrated on in the final two years of primary schooling, reputedly at the expense of the other curriculum subjects), was seen as a significant factor affecting the standard of English of students moving from primary to secondary school, causing a decline in the standard of Form One English in the years immediately following the abolition, as English was no longer allotted such an enforced high priority in primary schools.

In addition, the social mix of students entering the junior secondary forms was considerably modified by the extension of compulsory education to Form Three, resulting in students who would previously have failed to complete their primary school courses successfully now being obliged to remain in school for three more years.

It is against this background that concern about 'falling standards' began to make itself felt, accompanied by a simultaneous worldwide trend for English to become increasingly important as a lingua franca, leading in turn to increased demand for English proficiency in Hong Kong as the language transcended its previously restricted usage (Government, law, higher business strata, 'high society' etc.) and became a language of wider communication for a growing range of people, a trend which reflected the growth of Hong Kong in the 1970's and 1980's as a major international trading, business, banking, tourism and communications centre, e.g. Anley et al. (1992) who found that '... the demand for school leavers with effective English skills is exceeding the current supply.' (Anley et al., 1992, p.12)

Paradoxically, despite such a high level of concern over the English-medium system of education, the vast majority of parents prefer to send their children to

(theoretically) English-medium secondary schools rather than to schools which use Chinese as the medium of instruction. The number of students entering Chinese-medium schools had been steadily dwindling from 14 % in 1980 to 9% in the 90's, despite the pedagogical arguments put forward in their favour and positive discrimination by the Government in terms of very favourable comparative resourcing.

Therefore, despite the doubts expressed about the educational value of English-medium schooling e.g. Cheng (1973), Anglo-Chinese schools flourish, largely based on the perceived instrumental advantages which Chinese students have been found to discern e.g. Pierson et al. (1980). As a result some 90% of Hong Kong school children transferred from Cantonese-medium primary schools to English-medium secondary schools in which, it has to be stressed, the use of English was restricted to the classroom and varied considerably in form as Luke and Richards (1982) found:

The language of the corridors, canteens and playground in all schools for Chinese children is Cantonese, not English. Within English-medium schools, however, actual classroom practice varies between the use of a 'textual explanation approach' on the one hand and an 'English-medium' approach on the other, with various intermediate situations possible. By a textual approach we mean one in which textbooks and all written work is in English but the primary language of instruction is Cantonese. In recent years, as a result of nine years of compulsory education, a great number of students now enter secondary schools having minimal comprehension of English. Schools are thus obliged to make greater use of Cantonese, particularly in the lower secondary levels. (Luke and Richards, 1982, p. 50)

The existence of this situation was tacitly acknowledged by Government sources:

The reality in most Hong Kong classrooms in which English is used as the medium of instruction is that the teacher is obliged to use Cantonese for explanations and discussions and to permit students to use Cantonese too.

At its best, code-switching can be seen as a pragmatic way of dealing with the inadequate level of English among learners. At its worst, where word by word translations of English textbooks have to be made, and where learning is reduced to rote memorisation of notes and facts in English, with little time left for discussion, exploration, problem-solving and reflection, the cognitive development of students may well be seriously disadvantaged. (Hong Kong Government, 1989, p. 28).

Fu (1987) cites an essay by a 'successful' first-year English-medium secondary student, after experiencing the 'linguistic' shock of moving from six years of Chinese-medium primary schooling to a large English-medium secondary school:

At first I could not understand fully the lessons taught in English. But I somehow managed to memorise all of them by heart - Grammar, Reading, Bible ... etc. After getting good marks for the first test without knowing how, I was always referred to when my class teacher scolded somebody for laziness. Fortunately I could gradually understand more and more of the lessons I tried to learn by heart. Before long I had formed the habit of memorising every lesson in every subject, including arithmetic. (Fu, 1987, p.31)

Rex King (1987), the then Chief subject officer (English) for the Hong Kong Examinations Authority, attempting to refute claims made about falling standards, did, however, admit:

... in November of their form 1 year, some 49% of the students in our Anglo-Chinese secondary schools cannot be expected to independently read the simplified readers that are specially designed for them ... The fact that nearly a quarter of all Form 3 students (approaching the end of their period of compulsory education) have achieved no worthwhile improvement over their Form 1 standard testifies to the futility of much of what is being attempted amongst less-able students in the junior forms of our secondary schools ... The English standard of many Sixth form students is inadequate if they are serious about tertiary studies ... There can be no doubt about the standard represented by a grade 'E' in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and yet some 10,000 students a year are entering Form 6 classes with such a qualification. (King, 1987)

The language standard of the most able students had not deteriorated. Falling standards should be more properly interpreted as larger numbers of students achieving lower standards as a direct result of larger numbers being present as a result of the 1978 reforms. He concludes somewhat pessimistically that '... a point has been reached, especially in the junior forms of the newer aided schools, where there are so many sub-standard English speakers that it seems too daunting a challenge to enter the fray'. (Op cit)

He goes on to identify as major problems the language standard of the teaching staff, the teaching methodology and curriculum employed, the size of classes, the attitudes and motivation levels of both staff and students and the 'unhealthy tension' between the Chinese and English traditions.

King's 'unhealthy tension' refers to cultural confusion among the youth of Hong Kong, resulting from the emphasis on the importance of the English they encounter, which they see as downgrading their own Chinese heritage. English-medium education may lead to greater vocational opportunities, but this perceived pre-eminence may also result in cultural implications and conflicts which, for language learners may well mean that the more proficient they become, the more pressures they may encounter which will affect self-awareness and sense of belonging. Wong (1984) believes that 'English is not a neutral code of communication in Hong Kong, but it carries the connotation of superiority... In a Chinese society, there are cultural rules prohibiting verbal demonstration of one's success.' (Wong, 1984, p. 13)

Cheung (1984) agrees that English is essential for success in Hong Kong but '...using it for intra-ethnic communication is regarded as being in very bad taste and an indication of severance from the Chinese community along with its culture.' (Cheung, 1984, p.2). King (1987) was equally direct: '... the use of English to improve one's English is now considered eccentric - ostracism awaits those who attempt to swim against the tide.' (Op cit)

Professor Harris, (1989) agreed with this view and stated that the 'unhealthy tension' between the two language traditions and the attitudes towards English engendered by it were at the core of the question of English proficiency in Hong Kong and that the issue was primarily not educational but attitudinal:

What we have is not an educational problem as such, except that it has educational implications. We have a problem about language attitudes ... People in China are very keen to learn English, and this presents such a striking contrast with the reluctance here of people who can use it but choose not to if it could be seen as not showing solidarity with the local community or in any way trying to be clever. (Harris, 1989)

Given such attitudes, it is not surprising that attempts to influence changes in curriculum and methodology have not been particularly successful because they have

sought to transplant teaching approaches and techniques wholesale, without taking cognisance of the Hong Kong cultural factors involved.

Young and Lee (1987) in a paper on E.F.L. curriculum innovation and teachers' attitudes concluded that programmes for attitude change were unlikely to be productive '... given the apparent stability of Chinese teachers' attitudes and the radically different norms of Chinese and Anglo teachers, the approach of designing a culturally appropriate curriculum may in the long run be more effective in promoting better E.F.L. teaching and learning than attitude change...' (Young and Lee, 1987, p.97)

Many non-Chinese descriptions of the characteristics of 'the Chinese approach' by Hong Kong students are often rather judgemental in tone e.g.:

In my discipline they all want to rote learn material than think ... Students from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong appear to be much more inclined to rote learning. Such an approach does not help problem solving. (tertiary lecturers' opinions quoted by Samuelowicz, 1987, p.123)

Typically, in Hong Kong, classes are relatively large, comprising 40 plus in primary and lower secondary, curricula are centralised, external examinations are important, if not dominant in determining what goes on in the classrooms. Teaching methods are almost exclusively expository, with students listening and taking careful notes of the teacher's best bets as to the exam content (usually very accurate); teachers believe that any expository teaching style, in which they lecture and provide notes, is the most *efficient way* (whatever they might privately prefer) of meeting what the examination syllabus requires of them and of the students.

The curriculum is geared to the minority (less than 10%) who proceed to post-secondary education. There is emphasis on school spirit and morale raising ceremonies Content, method, assessment and climate seem inevitably to maximise surface learning, given what we know about effects on approaches to learning.' (Biggs, 1991, p 30)

MacLennan's (1987) study confirmed the gap that exists between western notions of what constitutes a 'good teacher' and the traditional concept of the same in that Chinese students and foreign teachers rarely share the same views of the nature of the teaching process. Modern communicative methods may be doomed if the learners' perceptions of what sound teaching and learning practices should be like are not realised, leading to learner confusion and possible resentment. She concludes that:

It appears likely that a discrepancy does exist between the preconceptions and expectations which Hong Kong and Macau students bring to the classroom and the view of the teaching/learning situation held by teachers using a communicative approach... Students may be sabotaging their own learning by subconsciously developing attitudes towards learning, and expectations of the learning situation, which are unhelpful.' (MacLennan, 1987, p. 72).

In the light of these considerations, the rather limited success of schemes to reform language teaching in Hong Kong by bringing its methodology into line with current trends becomes understandable. Two examples of evidence of this were the new English syllabus with its emphasis on communicative approaches which fitted rather uneasily, if at all, into the teaching psyche of Hong Kong and confirmed by repeated expressions of anxiety by teachers on courses for the Target Oriented Curriculum; and the initial Expatriate English Teachers' Scheme of 1987-1989 where English native-speakers were appointed as teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools, a scheme which attracted a great deal of criticism and the evaluation of which suggested that the scheme had not had the hoped-for success (Hong Kong Government, 1991, p.152). The apparent lack of success was seen as being due to the native speakers and their methodology having been imposed on the schools without real consultation, leading to resentment by the Chinese teachers, and puzzlement, incomprehension, boredom and indiscipline in students faced with communicative approaches which they considered too informal and ethereal in comparison with the methods used by their usual teachers throughout their schooling up to that point.

In its review of language improvement measures, the Government (1989) noted the criticisms and admitted the existence of many of the problems which had been attracting attention:

(i) *Teachers' levels of proficiency in English*

The use of English as a medium of instruction would provide a much greater level of effective exposure to English, and has been shown to be successful in a few feeder schools in Hong Kong. This would only work more generally, however, where the English of the teachers was good enough for them to be able to simplify their talk to the level of the learners. It would lead to grave problems where either teachers or learners were unable to cope with the language demands

or were attitudinally resistant to using English. In the vast majority of primary schools, therefore, it would seem sensible to consolidate the use of Chinese as a medium of instruction. (Hong Kong Government, 1989, p.9)

(ii) *Poorly qualified or unqualified teachers*

In Hong Kong there is still a number of teachers without adequate language and professional training, particularly at secondary school level. While much has been done to bring improvements to this situation, much more needs to be done.

It is estimated that 44% of teachers of English in primary schools are not subject-trained. It is estimated that 46% of English teachers in secondary schools are not subject trained ... many of the teachers using English as a medium of instruction in other subjects of the curriculum have an inadequate competence in English to sustain this. (Hong Kong Government, 1989, p. 60)

(iii) *Low quality of learning environment*

It is perhaps in its physical environment that Hong Kong is most severely handicapped, with shortage of space, a high density of population and schools built beside heavily used roads, airports, flight paths, industrial sites and other noise-creating places.' (Hong Kong Government, 1989, p.13)

Fu (1987) summarised these problems as follows:

From the students' point of view, the crowded classroom and the overworked teacher often mean that they can neither ask nor receive individual attention. Given the noises rising up from the street in some schools and chanted recitations from adjoining classrooms, the students are often unable to hear (much less comprehend) what is going on in the front of the classroom. In the Anglo-Chinese school, of course, much of what goes on at the front of the classroom is in a language which is not native to either students or teachers. Under these circumstances, only self-assured teachers who are confident of their ability in the foreign language can take on an honestly vital and innovative role in the classroom. Given class size and class schedules, however, even the most capable teachers find themselves falling back again and again on The Textbook. For teachers who are sure of their English, the textbook provides a kind of confidence - a crutch if you will - and a kind of immunization against making too many mistakes.

For a teacher who is moving from class to class, the textbook provides a ready-made approach to the subject and a ready made lesson plan for the day. The syllabus must be covered, the class must be put through its paces, and heaven help the individual. (Fu, 1987, p.32)

The language improvement measures referred to above, like King (Op cit), maintained that despite the evident problems, standards had in fact improved after an initial decline due to the expansion of the school system, the broadening of the curriculum and abolition of the Secondary Schools Entrance Exam in 1978. The problem was seen as one of supply and demand, with the education system unable to keep pace with the ever-increasing demand for students with effective communication skills in English.

In November 1990, the Hong Kong Government published its fourth Education Commission Report (ECR4), which, inter- alia, dealt with language in education, and recommended that a framework for language reforms be adopted. One innovation, acknowledging the realities of English language proficiency levels in schools, took effect from September 1998 and envisaged a vast expansion of Chinese-medium education and a consequent reduction in English-medium education, estimating an approximate 30:70 English: Chinese ratio, compared with the previous 80:20 situation. However, the following comments by disaffected students are revealing; 'It is so unfair.' (SCMP, 4 December 1997); 'People want to hire people who speak English. (SCMP, 1 December 1997) and 'You can get better jobs as you talk to people better.' (SCMP, 1 December 1997).

Despite the somewhat negative tone which has prevailed in the above consideration of the current school language learning situation, Hong Kong people generally appear to have a high degree of interest in English which goes beyond the requirements of the public examination system which is probably a reflection of the pragmatic outlook referred to earlier, in which English is seen to mean better money-making potential and better educational and professional opportunities. Whatever the motives of their students, private English language schools flourish. The extra-mural Departments of both Hong Kong University and Chinese University have to turn away people wishing to attend evening classes while the British Council runs courses for over 20,000 Hong Kong residents at its Language Centre, together with its summer school for over 5000 secondary school students.

The debit side of such a high level of interest in learning English outside the formal school system, is that it may well be seen as conveying a de facto dissatisfaction of the perceived effectiveness of English language teaching within that system. Of particular interest was the largely negative reaction of students to the methods used by the expatriate teachers, a reaction which raised the very intriguing question of how students in Hong Kong learn English, which, given the new status of English language teaching, is a matter for concern and is examined in some detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Context of the Study

2.0 Preamble

It is apparent from chapter 1 that the Hong Kong system of education as a whole and the issue of language in education in particular, is very much in a state of transition, with certain Governmental recommendations (outlined in chapter 1) being put into operation. In such a situation, opportunities exist for research and the very richness of these possibilities proved an initial problem in designing this study. Given the many promising lines of investigation, restricting the scope of the project to manageable proportions was far from easy.

As this project is concerned with how students in Hong Kong secondary schools learn English, it emerged that the most practical, useful and interesting focus lay within schools with which my own Institute had connections via previous research and former/current participants of the In-service courses.

This was practical in that the mechanics of carrying out the data collection could most easily be accommodated within a familiar environment, which provided a relatively stable sample population and in which a reasonable degree of cooperation could be anticipated.

The research is potentially of great value as it is concerned with the success of English as a subject and of English-medium instruction, both important current issues in Hong Kong. It also focuses on an aspect of Government policy at a time when the findings can help successful implementation of that policy. The further usefulness of the study lies in the hope that the results of the research could be expected to have worthwhile applications within the Institute (through various courses) and ultimately within the field of second language research on Chinese students.

2.1 Background to the Study

In the Hong Kong education system, the terms English-medium schools and Chinese-medium schools differentiate schools whose medium of instruction is English from those whose medium of instruction is Chinese. The English-medium schools formed over 80% of the school population in Hong Kong. The majority of these schools have now replaced English with Cantonese as the medium of instruction for the 1998/9 cohorts onwards in accordance with the Government policy directives of 1997 and the recommendations of the Hong Kong Government's Education Commission Reports (ECR) dating from 1994. English is now taught as a subject except for the approved 114 schools which will continue as English- medium schools.

However, Professor Cheng (1998) considers more changes are necessary:

Students at the primary and secondary levels have too many subjects to learn. ... When students have to memorise a mass of information to prepare for multi - choice examinations, you can not expect them to improve their language standards. In general, proficiency in both English and Chinese are in decline. Students have no time to read.

The other fundamental issue is creativity, a weak spot among East Asians because they tend to follow their teachers without raising questions and challenging their teachers' ideas.' (Cheng, 1998).

In another article entitled 'Asian crisis spurs lesson in learning', Professor Morris (1998) wrote 'the economic crisis and the transition from factory to service economies are causing the goals of education to be questioned. Singapore is asking the same question as Hong Kong: whether students have the capacity to learn over a lifetime. They want to move away from schools providing an established body of knowledge to promoting ways of thinking and problem-solving.' (Morris, 1998)

How to enhance thinking skills and prepare young people for the information age is of increasing concern to educators and governments in the region. At a conference on creativity in schools held in Singapore, Soh (1998), a lecturer at the National Institute of Education said: 'The whole school ethos must change to bring about this creative-thinking process. A change in measuring students achievements was necessary and should include assessing thinking skills and mastery of knowledge.' (Soh, 1998).

These views showing a range of concerns expressed by academics will now be placed in the context of a brief examination of cross-cultural issues in teaching and learning.

Communication is a process whereby a message is conveyed between a sender and receiver in a context of mutual understanding that includes deep cultural meaning. This meaning may be unrecognized by a non-native participant in the communication paradigm which suggests that in a classroom conducted in a foreign language both student and teacher may be unsuccessful communicators because of unfamiliarity with the cultural loading of the communication.

Cortazzi and Jin (1994) echo this view when they state that ‘ Culture refers to the attitudes, beliefs, frameworks of interpretation and patterns of thinking and behaviour of social or ethnic and also those of major occupation groups, such as teachers.’ (Cortazzi & Jin, 1994, p.76)

Such concepts have direct bearings on teaching and learning. The image of Asian students in much of the Western world (e.g. Samuelowicz, 1987) is that of an unimaginative, industrious compliant rote - learner. How much of this is due to misconceptions regarding form and style of learning is an unresolved issue.

There is little doubt that there are significant differences which must be understood and addressed if cross-cultural teaching is to be effective. Bickley (1989) provides an insightful synopsis, indicating that the problem faced by teachers and students, not only transcends mere conversation and knowledge, but incorporates culture, pedagogy, curriculum and learning.

Lee (1996) presents the Confucian perspective on the perfectibility of humans, their educability, the role of effort and will power in learning while pointing out the social and personal role of education. The Confucian tradition puts great emphasis on

personal initiative, social responsibility and respect for teachers. There is the underlying belief that everyone is educable, that effort is a much more important factor than natural ability and that attaining success through education brings honour to the family and prepares one to assume a leadership role in society. (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992; Cheng, 1995; Lee 1996; Watkins and Biggs, 1996).

Watkins and Biggs (1996) provide interesting insights into the Chinese learner and raise many questions regarding some of the beliefs attributed to the manner, scope and style of the learning. The work of Stevenson and Stigler (1992), Wong and Cheng (1996) and Watkins (1996) show that very often the picture of the Chinese learner is a stereotype based generally on inappropriate analysis, lack of hard information or significant contact or interaction with Chinese learners. Many westerners create these stereotypes when they discover the Chinese student does not readily embrace the material, curriculum and the methods employed in the classroom.

The problem is that despite the success of Hong Kong students in international comparisons, especially in Mathematics and Science (Brimer and Griffin, 1985; Holbrook, 1989), there is a noticeable failure of even able students to meet the demands from the business community and tertiary institutions for high levels of English (Johnson and Cheung, 1992). It has also been clear for some time that the demand for school leavers with effective English skills is exceeding the current supply (Anley, Hepburn and Winters, 1992). In addition students' ability to use text books were shown to be weak. (Cheung, 1985, Kwan, 1989).

The results of the examinations for the years 1995-1997 are illuminating. They are taken from the Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA) Annual Reports. Syllabus A refers to Chinese-medium schools and Syllabus B to English-medium schools. No comparison is intended as they are not equivalents but they indicate that the vast majority of students fail to score higher than a grade C and that a large minority (usually over 30%) fail both exams.

Table 1: English Exam. Results (taken from HKEA Annual Reports, 1995-1997)

Date	1995		1996		1997	
Grade	A-E	A-C	A-E	A-C	A-E	A-C
Syllabus A	63%	12%	60%	14%	68%	12%
Syllabus B	55%	7%	56%	9%	61%	7%

The unequal levels of achievement of the two groups of students are to be expected. Students from the English-medium schools should do better since they learn their school subjects through the medium of English; thus their opportunity to hear and use English is appreciably greater. But what cannot be explained away as simply is why students from both types of school fail to achieve the measure of communicative competence needed for post-secondary work after having studied English as a subject throughout their school career. The editorial in *The South China Morning Post* (6 August, 1998) commented on the 1998 examination results: 'It is still the case that standards in both languages leave much to be desired. English remains the main teaching medium, but the failure rate is 40%.'

Clearly there was a need for the education system to respond to the requirement for English in tertiary institutions and to the growing demand for better English in the work place. It was against this background that the Hong Kong Government (1990) produced Education Commission Report (ECR) Number 4 (ECR4) which carried a series of recommendations, one of which was that research should be undertaken into effective teaching and learning strategies for English classrooms. This recommendation was echoed by ECR5 (Hong Kong Government, 1992) in its third objective ('to initiate educational research'), ECR6 (Hong Kong Government, 1995), with its proposal that '.... there should be continuing monitoring and research into language use in secondary schools' (Hong Kong Government, 1995, p. 83); and ECR7 (Hong Kong Government, 1996) which indicates that school education should be such that '.... our students become independent -minded ... equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes which help them to lead a full life.' (Hong Kong Government, 1996, p. 10).

One measure which was initiated was the appointment in 1997 of a large number of expatriate teachers of English trained in the communicative approaches to the teaching of English. Problems quickly surfaced and stemmed basically from the tension generated by trying to integrate the training and experience of the expatriate teachers in dealing with the teaching of English communicatively, into a system in which this student-centred approach is not established; and which in many ways, is contrapuntal to the established teaching tradition which is teacher-centred.

The expatriate teachers faced with what they felt were rote learning and parroting of materials learned, the passive nature of students in the classrooms and the apparent inability of the vast majority to use 'cognitive' strategies, considered the problem to be culture -specific, a view supported by Politzer and McGroarty in their 1985 study. However, to the contrary, Huang (1984) and Jin and Cortazzi (1998) found that successful Chinese students of English in China used many of the strategies listed in inventories obtained from non-Chinese sources e.g. Rubin (1975), Stern et al. (1975). Clearly intervention was needed.

Societies in which cultural, social and economic factors have the greatest effect on bilingual education are those where the target language is widely used outside the classroom e.g. India where English is used as a lingua franca and Canada where immigrant children need to learn the language of the majority. In Hong Kong English is rarely used by the 98% of the population who speak Cantonese. As cultural, social and economic factors are less significant in explaining the situation in Hong Kong, the research focusses on educational factors where intervention is possible.

It has been clear for some time that some students are more successful in language learning than others e.g. Rubin (1975), Stern et al. (1975), Naiman et al. (1978), Huang (1984), Wenden and Rubin (1987), O'Malley, Chamot and Kupper, (1989). It is assumed that such students use certain cognitive processes which allow them to be more successful language learners e.g. Chamot (1987) ' successful language learners are not mere sponges acquiring the new language by osmosis alone. They are thinking, reflective beings who consciously apply mental strategies to learning

situations both in the classroom and outside of it.' (Chamot, 1987, p. 82) If these processes could be identified, they could be made available and possibly used by the less successful learners thus enabling them to learn the second language (L2) more effectively.

Skehan (1989, p.98) regards our knowledge of learner strategy as still 'embryonic'. In a general overview of language learning strategies, his overall conclusion is that conflicting results and methodologies have been based on no clear theoretical framework and have led to conflicting methods and results. For example, in a study which focussed on L2 speaking, listening and vocabulary building strategies, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) found that Asian students had resisted using the strategies during training and had preferred to use rote repetition.' (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990, p.175). In contrast, they found that Hispanic subjects had willingly followed the alternative strategies.

Oxford (1989) believes that ethnic background and national origin have been shown to have a 'strong influence on the strategies used by language learners'. (Oxford, 1989, p. 242) According to her, Asian students seem to prefer rote memorization and language rule strategies compared with more communicative strategies (c.f. Politzer and McGroarty, 1985). Skehan (1989) suggests that in relation to ethnic background, strategy research is culturally loaded and predictions will not necessarily work. Oxford et al. (1990) comment that though '... the choice of language - learning strategies relates strongly to ethnicity, the matter of rote learning in Asian contexts is complex, questionable and problematic, as, although it is likely that there are cultural differences in the approach to learning, the question of rote learning remains unclear'. (Oxford et al. 1990, p. 199)

In the Hong Kong context, Biggs (1990) argues that a rote learning explanation is dubious. He notes from his Learning Process Questionnaire (Biggs 1987), that Chinese students have a more 'academic' approach to learning. In addition, research applicable to a North American ESL context, will not necessarily yield the same results in an Asian ESL setting (Watkins and Biggs, 1996). Although, the sometimes

conflicting results of studies are indicative of subtle cultural factors, it is clear that more research is necessary to help clarify the importance of the hypothetical rote learning factor in the learning strategies and approaches of Asian students e.g. are their memorisation strategies rote or meaningful and productive?

Chamot and Kupper (1989), noted two stages of strategy research:

- (i) identifying strategies used by effective language learners (Rubin, 1975; Naiman et al., 1978; Bialystok, 1979; O'Malley et al., 1985a; Chamot and Kupper, 1989; O'Malley, Chamot and Kupper, 1989)
- (ii) training to use effective strategies in second language contexts through intervention studies (Cohen and Aphek, 1980; Hosenfeld et al., 1981; O'Malley et al., 1985b; Wenden, 1986; Barnett, 1988; Talbot, 1995; Dornyei, 1995; Nunan, 1997; Cohen, 1998)

This study is concerned with the first stage only. The second stage belongs to a subsequent study and hence will not be considered here.

Since the 80's, there has been a growing interest in Hong Kong about how Chinese learners process their learning (e.g. Bickley 1989, Biggs and Moore 1993, Lee 1996, Tang 1996, Watkins and Biggs 1996, Gu 1996); but these have largely dealt with individual skills, meta-cognition and matters of cultural concern. Nowhere has there been drawn up an inventory of language learning strategies which teachers in schools could easily access and use to help in the training of their students in English; hence the earlier quoted recommendations by various ECR's for research into language learning issues. This study is not meant to be comparative but the ethnic factors are worth noting and may help to explain findings not in accord with other research.

Early explorations into this field in Hong Kong were disappointing. Many classroom observations by the author yielded little tangible information about learning strategies, as most lessons, for various reasons, tended to be teacher-centred. Similarly Tsui (1985) noted: 'The teacher determined the topic of talk; all exchanges were teacher - initiated. Pupils were seldom given a chance to express their opinion, feeling and

personal experience; nor were they encouraged to raise questions or to make comments freely.' (Tsui, 1985, p. 25) Consequently, students had few opportunities to engage in active learning with observable strategies. Discussions with teachers also produced little evidence, as although teaching details could be given, teachers were uncertain how students went about learning the materials presented to them. This study was therefore prompted by the need to:

- (i) find out the factors within the learning environment that contribute to successful language learning;
- (ii) gather information on learner variables such as learning strategies, motivation, attitude and exposure to English.

It should also be noted that among students there are varying degrees of success in learning English. English teachers are often heard to remark that students in Science classes are more proficient in English than their counterparts in the Arts/Commerce streams; or that students in the New Territories are not so well motivated as those on Hong Kong Island. Such statements cannot be supported until research is carried out within the local situation and relevant data obtained.

Such data would make it possible to answer with greater confidence this question: 'What strategies and techniques are employed by students who are more successful at learning English?'

The next chapter is concerned with a review of relevant literature and the influence of the insights provided by relevant previous research on the design and methodology of the actual research of this project.

Chapter 3

Review of the Literature

3.0 Preamble

In the previous chapter there was indicated the need to obtain data on how secondary school students in Hong Kong learn English. Attitude and motivation have long been cited by language learning theorists as well as language teachers to account for variation in attainment among students learning a second language. However, as English in Hong Kong is essentially a foreign language, exposure to English and the strategies employed by students in learning English form significant components of the learning environment.

The review of literature will be discussed under subheadings corresponding to the major areas of interest in this study: (1) *Attitude and Motivation*, (2) *Learning Strategies*, (3) *Exposure to English* and (4) *Think-aloud techniques*.

3.1 Attitude and Motivation

A considerable body of second language acquisition/learning research exists (though most classroom learning is not acquisition) relating to the pursuit for differential success in language learners. Among the factors explored have been age, language aptitude, cognitive style, learning strategies, personality, and social psychological elements, both individually and in combination.

Attitude and motivation have often been cited by language learning theorists as well as practising teachers to account for variation in attainment among individuals learning a second language under the same set of conditions. The two are generally seen as related since it seems logical that a positive attitude towards foreign language study and towards the target language, in particular, is one factor that motivates the learner to expend the effort required to learn a second language.

Although motivation and attitude appear to be acknowledged as important factors in seeking to explain success or lack of it in language learners, it seems that an ongoing

problem of definition exists to some extent. McDonough (1986) stresses that any consideration of motivation should be viewed as a collective term in which at least seven distinct concepts should be distinguished - *energy, willingness to learn, perseverance, interest, enjoyment of lessons, incentives and benefits of knowing the language*. He cautions, however, that, in language teaching contexts, sources of motivation may be within the classroom or external, that few types of motivation are amenable to manipulation by the teacher, that some seem applicable to the process of learning while others relate to the product and that any motivational technique is influenced by students' values, in the creation of which attitudes have a formative role. In this sense, then, attitudes seem to be subsumed within the greater concept of motivation.

Gardner and Lambert (1959) did not seriously distinguish between attitude and motivation in their seminal work, in which they identified two factors responsible for second language proficiency; aptitude and a composite factor comprising a collection of attitudes towards target language speakers, intensity of motivation and type of motivation. This was refined over time (e.g. 1972, 1976), so that by 1979 Gardner was describing a linear cause-and-effect relationship in which attitudes influenced motivation which then influenced second language acquisition i.e. language attitudes, formed through learners interacting with the social environment '... make a direct link between the cultural milieu and the motivation to acquire a second language and ultimately proficiency in that language.' (Gardner, 1979, p. 206). Language attitudes, therefore, are seen as mediating between the learner as an individual in society and the actual effort a learner makes to acquire a second language successfully. This would seem to justify social-psychological research by language teaching professionals many of whom probably feel that attitudes account to a large extent for the degree of student response in the classroom and eventually contribute to achievement levels in the classroom.

In his revised social-psychological theory, which had been criticized, Gardner (1985) proposed that motivation should be seen as consisting of effort plus desire to achieve a goal plus attitudes. 'Effort' might comprise several discrete elements, not necessarily

associated directly with language learning e.g. need to achieve, study habits, social influences, desire to please. His (1985) definition of attitudes ‘ an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent’ (Gardner, 1985, p.9) and his view of their function ‘The accumulated evidence in the area of second language acquisition indicated that attitudes are related to behavior, though not necessarily directly.’ (Op cit) lead him to conclude ‘... that attitude measures account for a significant and meaningful proportion of the variance in second language achievement and that some attitude variables are more relevant than others.’ (Gardner, 1985, p.50). While attitudes are not seen as having direct influence on learning, they lead (in combination with effort and desire to reach a goal) to motivation which does have direct influence. Van Els et al. (1984) hold a similar view, considering motivation to be a combination of those factors which marshal energy and initiative and direct behaviour towards achievement of goals. They see attitudes as directly related to motivation, which in turn is directly related to achievement.

Gardner (Op cit) further subdivides attitude into two significant types: attitude towards people who speak the target language (integrative) and attitudes towards the practical use to which the learner feels the language can be put (instrumental). He suggests that the effect of the two types of attitude are different, with the former being more consistently related to achievement and the latter more variable.

In a response to Au’s (1988) criticisms of his socio-educational model, Gardner (1988) states that attitudes form a basis for motivation ‘... sets of attitudinal variables (integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation) provide a foundation for an individual’s motivation to learn a second language and such motivation orients him or her to seek out opportunities to learn and practise the language (in both formal and informal contexts). The experience will have both linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes that will in turn have attitudinal and motivational implications ... this is a dynamic process.’ (Gardner, 1988, p.114).

Spolsky (1989) was quite explicit: 'A learner's attitudes affect the development of motivation.' (Spolsky, 1989, p.150). For the purpose of this study this statement of cause/effect will be used, it being considered that favourable motivation will tend to lead to greater achievement in language learning.

Motivation itself, according to MacDonough (1986) is a far from simple construct that comprises several different components. Skehan (1989), for example, identifies four possible sources of motivation; *intrinsic* (from the learning activity itself), *resultative* (from success or lack of it i.e. consequential), *internal* (degree of motivation which the learner brings to the learning situation itself) and '*carrot and stick*' (derived from rewards/ sanctions dependent on level of success). Skehan sees the four sources as being capable of interacting and posits a 2 x 2 matrix within which the four types operate, utilising dimensions external to the individual as influences upon motivation within the learning context (materials, teaching etc.) or as a result of learning (rewards / sanctions) - or within the individual, again either within the learning context (success / failure) or a result of learning (goals). The latter dimension emphasizes the role of the learner, the effect that the degree of success has on motivation and the goals that the learner pursues which bear on persistence and effort in learning. Motivation to learn a language, then, is not only determined by attitudes, but by other motivational forces such as the desire to please teachers and parents, promise of rewards, experience of success etc.

Whatever the source of motivation, Gardner (1985) emphasizes its crucial function:

'... motivation is a major determinant of second language acquisition. The source of the motivating impetus is relatively unimportant provided that motivation is aroused.' (Gardner, 1985, p.169).

Having established this, the next section will discuss the major investigations into the role of motivation and attitude in language learning.

3.1.1 *Research into Motivation and Attitude in Language Learning*

Gardner and Lambert (1959) were pioneers in demonstrating that language aptitude was not the only factor that could be shown to have a statistically significant relationship with second language acquisition. Their views on motivation were derived from Mowrer's (1950) ideas on first language acquisition. Mowrer (1950) stressed the importance of identification with a valued person for success in first language acquisition, initially taking the form of links with immediate family, but later expanding to the speech community as a whole. From this concept, Gardner and Lambert developed their integrative motivation construct, which they contrasted with what Gardner saw as a less effective construct, instrumental motivation.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) made a firm distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation, the former being defined as applying to those learners who wish to identify with and eventually to become members of the speech community that uses the target language. It is internally generated, rather than an externally imposed form of motivation, intrinsic in that the language cannot be divorced from the speech community's culture of which it forms a part. Instrumental motivation is defined as the reflection of an external need i.e. the student may not be really interested in or derive pleasure from the study of the language, but the important motivating force is an external need which may have varying sources i.e. it '... is characterized by a desire to learn the language for its utilitarian value e.g. to secure a better paid job.' (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, p.14).

Gardner and Lambert (1972) held that attitude and motivation are related to achievement in second language learning, and that motivation of an integrative orientation, in particular, makes for more successful learning than motivation of an instrumental orientation.

Support for their hypothesis was found in their further studies (e.g. in Montreal 1959, Hartford, Connecticut 1972 and the Philippines 1972) and in other studies by Naiman et al. (1978) and Bialystok and Frohlich (1977) who reported that ' attitude composed

of integrative orientation, motivational intensity ... has been shown to be an important predictor of achievement.' (Bialystok & Frohlich, 1977, p.12).

However, there was contrary evidence from studies carried out by Carroll (1966), Savignon (1972) and Clement et al. (1977) who found that students with a positive attitude towards learning English have a high degree of integrative motivation but that 'the Integrative Motive factor is not strongly associated with achievement in English.' (Clement et al., 1977, p.10)

Biggs (1988) in his discussion of extrinsic motivation and surface learning in Hong Kong describes some of the practical manifestations of instrumental orientations as follows:

.... based on extrinsic motivation, the students see (school) learning as a means towards some other end, such as obtaining a better job, or just keeping out of trouble. Students adopting this approach need to balance avoiding failure against working too hard. The strategy appropriate to meeting that intention is to limit the target to essentials, reproducible through rote-learning. A student who adopts a surface approach sees the task as a demand to be met, and focusses on the concrete and literal aspects of it, such as the actual words used, rather than on their meaning. The components of the task are thus seen as unrelated to each other or to other tasks, and as being learned through memorization of these components. Affectively, the student avoids personal meanings the task might have, tends to resent the time taken by the task, but worries about failing. (Biggs, 1988, p. 24)

This seems to be a rather bleak view, but Gardner and Lambert (1972) argued that both forms of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic, are probably factors in most language learning, but that each exercises a varying degree of influence depending on a number of other factors (e.g. age, experience, occupational needs, social pressures); and that integrative motivation is more likely to be effective over an extended period and to maintain the drive necessary to achieve success in language learning.

By 1977 definitions of integrative and instrumental orientations had been modified somewhat to become less extreme, but the categories were still clear:

Integrative reasons are defined as those which indicate an interest in learning the language in order to meet and communicate with members of the second language

community. Instrumental reasons refer to those reasons which stress the pragmatic aspects of learning the second language without any particular interest in communicating with the second language community.' (Gardner et al., 1977, p.244).

However, the superiority of integrative reasons in terms of motivation was no longer automatically assumed. 'In general these studies are in agreement showing that measures of achievement in the second language are substantially related to measures of attitude and motivation. Examples of such motivation include attitudes towards French speaking people, the French language, the course and the teacher, desire to learn French, and interest in learning French for either integrative or instrumental reasons.' (Op cit)

Motivation is also an important element in Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis and some support for integrative motivation is found in his work. He considers (1981) that certain attitudinal factors perform one or both of two functions relating to second language acquisition. Thus, engaging in activities which involve communication in the target language resulting in linguistic intake (which must be comprehensible to the student) will only be effective if appropriate attitudinal factors are also present so that the intake is internalised and made part of the learner's automatic behaviour. Krashen's (1982) opinion is that research in the 1970's had established a relationship between success in second language acquisition and certain affective factors, of which he identifies motivation, self-confidence and low anxiety as being the most important and in this regard he writes that '... performers with high motivation generally do better in second language acquisition (usually, but not always, 'integrative').' (Krashen, 1982, p.31).

However, evidence also began to appear in favour of superiority, or at least parity, in the influence of instrumental orientation e.g. Lukmani (1972), such that Gardner and Lambert (1972) were ready to qualify their earlier view.' It seems that in settings where there is an urgency about mastering a second language - as in the Philippines and in North America for members of linguistic minority groups - the instrumental approach to language study is extremely effective.' (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, p.141).

Later studies (e.g. Clement et al. 1977, Clement 1980, Gardner et al. 1982) continued to ascribe a powerful function to instrumental orientation and it became apparent that the situation was not as clear - cut as it initially appeared. Clement and Kruidenier (1983) sought to explain the conflicting findings by pointing to ambiguities in definitions, particularly of integrative orientation, thus enabling both respondents and researchers to draw whatever conclusions they wanted:

.... there seems to be much variance as to what constitutes an integrative reason. It seems that any goal which is not financial or concrete and pragmatic is, ipso facto, classified as integrative. For example, 'having a chance to be away from home' and 'finding out more about what I am like' were considered to be integrative by Spolsky (1969) ... While 'travel abroad' was classified as instrumental by Lukmani (1971), it was interpreted as integrative by Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen and Hargeaves (1974). (Clement and Kruidenier, 1983, p. 274)

Clement and Kruidenier (1983) further commented on context as a factor influencing orientation and lessening the validity of universal generalisations. 'Previous studies of the relative importance of orientations seem to have assumed, a priori, the universality and exhaustiveness of integrative and instrumental orientations ... The emergence of orientations is, to a large extent, determined by 'who does what in what milieu.' (Clement & Kruidenier, 1983, p.288)

Long and Larsen - Freeman (1991) point out that this importance of context in the form of specific goals had received support from a number of other sources, e.g. Cooper (1981) 'If most students had to know a given foreign language in order to accomplish some goal to them, then most would learn it.' (Cooper, 1981, p.133)

Kraemer (1990) investigating attitudes and motivation among Israeli Jewish students studying either Arabic or French made use of causal modelling to link language attitudes, motivation and indices of proficiency in the target language. She found that motivation was the main indicator in the prediction of language achievement but that integrative attitudes were not significant contributors to motivation. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) comment: 'This study is particularly informative because it shows how it is necessary to consider carefully the factors that can contribute to the motivation

to learn another language in different socio-cultural contexts. (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993, p.3).

Oxford and Anderson (1995) in their cross-cultural look at learning styles go further. 'Language learning is fully situated within a given cultural context. ... In this view, learning is never a mere process of transmission or transfer but is instead nothing less than a process of transformation.' (Oxford and Anderson, 1995, p. 212) and that view raises the question of associated learning styles. 'Although culture is not the single determinant, and although many other influences intervene, culture often plays a significant role in the learning styles adopted by many participants in the culture.' (Oxford, Hollaway and Horton-Murillo, 1992, p.441)

In a re-working of Gardner's (1988) socio-educational model, Gardner and MacIntyre (1992) reinforce the above view in that '... the individual difference variables are viewed as having an influence through their interaction with both formal and informal language acquisition contexts.' (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1992, p. 212). They distinguish between formal (classroom) and informal (outside the classroom) contexts and point out that because the informal context is voluntary, '... it is anticipated that only motivation would play a direct role in informal contexts, in that it will determine whether or not the individual even enters into that situation.' (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1992, p. 213).

This seems to account for discrepancies in findings regarding motivation type and strength. It seems reasonable, for example, to expect that someone studying a language as a foreign language is less likely, all other things being equal, to wish to integrate with the target language community than a student who relates to the target language on a second language basis.

It is, however, to be noted that practically all the research on the link between attitudinal-motivational variables and second language learning has been conducted in a North American setting with English speakers of French and vice-versa. There is a paucity of related research in Hong Kong with learners of English as a foreign language.

Considering the practical and economic importance of English, one would expect instrumental motivation rather than integrative motivation to be the source of the drive to succeed in language learning. However, a study of a sample of Singapore secondary students by Tan (1978) indicates that the type of motivation has no differential effect on achievement. Whether motivation was of an integrative or an instrumental orientation, students achieved creditable levels of competence, provided their motivation was of sufficient intensity. Empirical research would show if Tan's results hold true for Hong Kong secondary students, and contribute to a clearer picture of the English language learning situation in an EFL context.

More recent attempts to describe the motivational variables in language learning are by Dornyei and Otto (1998) who point out that '... there is no shortage of competing motivational theories in social and motivational psychology.' (1998, p.43) but, as they consider none of these entirely appropriate for their purpose of '... designing classroom interventions to motivate language learners' (ibid.), they propose a Process Model of L2 Motivation which would '... account for the dynamics of motivational change in time and to synthesize any of the most important motivational concepts to date.' (ibid.)

Their model consists of two dimensions: Action Sequence and Motivational Influences. 'The first dimension represents the behavioural processes whereby initial wishes, hopes and desires are transformed first into goals, then into intentions, leading eventually to action and achievement of goals, after which the process is submitted to final evaluation' (Dornyei & Otto, 1998, p.47). They distinguish between goals and intentions, in that intention contains the element of commitment, which they explain accounts for the difference between the many ideas, hopes and long-term plans and the fewer actual intentions the individual makes to carry out these resolutions.

The Action Sequence dimension consists of three phases: preactional, actional and postactional, each of which is described in some detail in a sequential pattern of the motivational process. The preactional phase contains goal setting (wishes, hopes opportunities), intention formation (action plan and commitment) and intention (initiation of intention enactment). In the actional phase, choice motivation is replaced by executive motivation or action and here the processes of subtask generation and

implementation, an ongoing appraisal process and a variety of action control mechanisms come into play. The postactional phase begins when the goal has been attained or action terminated. The main processes at work here entail evaluation of the action outcome and making possible future plans.

It is on these phases that the Motivational Influences operate which Dornyei and Otto (1998) consider ‘...underlie and fuel the behavioural process’ (Dornyei & Otto, 1998, p.51). These energy sources can also enhance or inhibit the successful achievement of the goal or inhibit the learner’s endeavour. The motivational influences form five clusters, corresponding to the five phases of the motivation sequence they effect i.e. goal setting (e.g. incentive value of goal related action, outcomes and consequences, language / language learning related attitudes), intention formation (e.g. expectancy of success, perceived goal difficulty, relevance, cost-benefit calculations), initiation of intention enactment (perceived behavioural control, distracting influences and obstacles, perceived consequences for not acting), action and postactional evaluation (quality of learning experience, perceived progress, teachers’ and parents’ motivational influence, performance appraisal).

Dornyei and Otto (1998) point out that educational settings differ from many achievement situations in that most of the decisions and goals are not the learner’s own products but are imposed on them by the system thereby limiting the importance of the choice aspect of motivation. ‘... in school environments, the key motivational issues involve maintaining assigned goals, elaborating on subgoals, and exercising control over other thoughts and behaviours that are often more desirable than concentrating on academic work.’ (Dornyei & Otto, 1998, p.45) They suggest that ‘... in classroom contexts, we need to focus on executive motivation’, that is consider motivational influences that operate during task engagement, facilitating or impeding goal-directed behaviour.’ (ibid.) They also suggest that since most tasks in schools are imposed on the students, there is often little preaction activity by the students. Therefore ‘choice motivation’ is weak and needs ‘active scaffolding’ (ibid.) during the actional phases.

Wenden (1998) in discussing metacognitive knowledge and language learning makes a similar point: ‘If learners determine that they have the skills and the competence to do the task and if they consider that the task’s purpose will serve their learning goals, they

will expand their knowledge to gain new skills. On the other hand, if the appraisal is negative, learners may choose coping oriented goals i.e. they try to minimize the discomfort resulting from their lack of skill, or choose to avoid the task completely.' (Wenden, 1998, p.522).

What emerges is that the construct 'motivation' is context-dependent and can change from one situation to the next. It is not a fixed aspect of the learner's psychological make-up but is sensitive to context. The next section looks at research in Hong Kong.

3.1.2 *Research into Motivation and Attitude in Hong Kong*

Research on attitudes and motivation in Hong Kong is not extensive and centres mostly on work carried out by practitioners at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, notably Pierson, Fu and their associates, who have developed a research interest in ethnicity in the Hong Kong learning situation. It has become apparent that language attitudes in Hong Kong are shaped largely by the way in which the ingroup (Hong Kong Chinese) and the outgroup (Westerners) are evaluated. Generally they view language attitudes operationally as dispositions or feelings that learners have towards a target language or culture, thus enabling the use of Likert-type scales to measure these feelings in students. They see motivation more vaguely as something prompting a learner to act in a specific way or manner. They make no claim to assess motivation precisely, but merely suggest that motivation can be implied from attitude measures.

They accept Gardner's (1979) concept of motivation '... a combination of a positive attitude (desire) to learn the language and effort expended in that direction.' (Gardner, 1979, p.205) and attitude function '... to make a direct link between the cultural milieu and the motivation to acquire a second language and (ultimately) proficiency in that language.' (Op cit). This indicates the mediation of language attitudes between the individual in society and the actual effort that an individual makes to learn a second language. This is seen as justifying social-psychological research into language aptitudes by language teachers who may feel intuitively that learners' attitudes account to a large extent for effort and (ultimately) achievement in the second language classroom.

In 1975 Fu administered a questionnaire to students in five different Hong Kong schools. The questionnaire used direct questioning to elicit attitudes and thereafter to draw up a Hong Kong learner profile. The attitudinal data from the study is summarised as (i) the students saw English as an important academic subject (ii) they felt uncomfortable using English (iii) they took pride in Chinese culture (iv) a significant number held negative views towards Western culture and English-speaking people. However, the student responses indicated areas worthy of further investigation and the need to devise methods which might explain the underlying relationship between the language attitudes expressed and motivation; and also how these two variables mediate between the desire to learn English and actual attainment.

In 1980 Pierson, Fu and Lee's more comprehensive study using Form Four students in eleven secondary schools. Attitude indicators were obtained using both direct and indirect sources. The language of the questionnaire was Chinese thereby eliminating second language comprehension problems. E.S.L. proficiency was determined by means of an Oller et al. (1977) type cloze test.

Factor analysis of the direct measure revealed the following factors - *freedom of language choice, desire to learn English, lack of self-confidence in learning English, discomfort about Chinese using English and English as a mark of education* - which were then correlated with cloze test scores.

Pierson et al. (1980) explain that the strength of correlation with language achievement is not as great as they had hoped:

The predictive value of the attitudinal values is not as powerful as the researchers might have expected. English proficiency could not be easily predicted from attitudinal measures, but some attitude variables appeared to be better predictors than others ... The lack of power in these measures may be further indication of the complexity of issues involved in language attitude studies.' (Pierson et al. 1980, p.303)

Despite the somewhat tentative nature of the findings, in their 1982 review of language attitude research in Hong Kong and its relevance for second language instruction,

Pierson and Fu (1982) felt able to outline certain implications for the Hong Kong language classroom:

One possible interpretation of this research for L2 teachers might be that achievement in L2 learning is not due simply to the effects of faulty instruction and inadequate L2 materials but also to the imperceptible effects of cultural attitudes in conflict with the L2 learning process and target culture ... One result of this data analysis is an indication that L2 achievement is related to a strong sense of cultural identity, something akin to a healthy self-concept ... It might, therefore, be an additional task of teachers to maintain and support the student's sense of cultural identity and self-concept to facilitate effective L2 learning.... Curriculum planners responsible for designing L2 programmes should make a positive attempt to introduce and integrate the cultural attitudes and values of the target cultures in the L2 curricula. (Pierson and Fu, 1982, p.214)

This view is somewhat contrapuntal to that of Kruidenier and Clement (1986):

... the integrative orientation, thought by many to be a necessary component of language learning, probably does not exist in the traditional classroom setting. Designing a language course around this concept in an attempt to expose the student as much as possible to life in the second culture - a not uncommon method in secondary schools and undergraduate university courses - will probably not serve to motivate students and may, in fact, discourage them from learning the language. (Kruidenier and Clement, 1986, p. 74)

Fu et al. (1985) sought to investigate language attitudes and both general achievement and language achievement by comparing findings between Anglo-Chinese (theoretically English-medium) and Chinese-medium secondary schools using Form Three and Form Four students. The findings were consistent across different groups showing a relationship between attitudes and achievement, though not a particularly strong one. Attitudes towards English similarly correlated reasonably well with attainment generally, but not very significantly. The relationship between attitudes towards Chinese and general achievement, in comparison, was weak or even negative, with male Anglo-Chinese students carrying this over to achievement in Chinese language as a subject. The general achievement of Chinese-medium students as a whole appeared more related to attitudes towards English than to Chinese.

Fu et al. (1985) see this as representative of the importance of the instrumental motive in Hong Kong:

It is quite possible that the Ss, influenced greatly by their parents, perceive that English ... is a means for eventual social mobility in Hong Kong. It would seem that the instrumental type of motivation for second language learning first suggested by Lambert and Gardner (1959) is most likely a powerful factor in motivating the Ss to achieve in school and on public examinations. (Fu et al., 1985, p. 83)

Fu et al. (1985) suggest reasons for the surprising nature of some of the findings, but they also point out the need for further research to clarify the influence of society, culture and politics, especially with the advent of the change in sovereignty:

The interesting thing is that Chinese-medium students did not, as might be expected, have a more positive attitude towards Chinese, although English-medium students did have a more positive attitude towards English. Students with higher grades in Chinese did not have a significantly better attitude towards Chinese, but they did have a better attitude towards English.

Several factors should be considered when analysing these results ... Chinese-medium schools are generally the less prestigious schools in Hong Kong and the less sought after by parents for their children. Students in these schools may thus have a rather negative attitude towards their educational situation in general; this might preclude a positive and confident approach to the Chinese language by extension. Secondly, it may be that the more intellectually able students do better in both English and Chinese, and that doing better, they have positive attitudes towards their subjects. Finally ... Chinese as a first language may elicit less conscious response than does English as a second language, at least in the Hong Kong context. (Op cit).

However, two studies by Pennington and Yue (1994) and Axler, Yang and Stevens (1998) replicating the Pierson, Fu and Lee study (1980) found that attitudes towards language in Hong Kong had changed in the past few years, particularly after the reversion of Hong Kong to China in 1997. 'English no longer poses a threat to Hong Kong Chinese identity, ... nor do young people feel 'unpatriotic' when they speak English, which is an international and no longer primarily a colonial language.' (Axler, Yang and Stevens, 1998, p.337).

These findings are in contrast to those of Richards (1998) who found that, among his students, the implicit cultural code restricted '... the use of English, a language carrying connotations of superiority, among local Chinese students, whose culture traditionally prohibits verbal expressions of superiority.' (Richards, 1998, p. 320). More

importantly Richards (1998) found that students motivated by 'a strong intrinsic interest in learning the language ... have a greater preference for communication-based learning activities and use English more frequently than students who are motivated by a desire to pass exams....' (Richards, 1998, p. 303). This finding was supported by Lin and Detaramani (1998) who found that students with high intrinsic motivation are those who achieve the highest level of language proficiency.

Interesting as these studies are, they do not link student attitude and strategy use with competence in English. The current study tries to do so in an attempt to identify those strategies which give rise to optimum performance in English.

This concludes the outline of major developments in the field of attitude/motivation and language proficiency in Hong Kong. The role of language learning strategies will be discussed in the following section.

3.2 Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

Reference has been made earlier (e.g. MacLennan 1987, Biggs 1991) to the possibility that Hong Kong students may favour specific learning styles or strategies which may not correspond to conventional wisdom as to the most effective methods of language learning. It is therefore appropriate to look at some of the more important studies in this field and relate them to the Hong Kong context.

3.2.1 Research into Language Learning Strategies

Spolsky's (1989) summary of the state of knowledge of learning style is generalised but is a useful starting point for discussion: 'Learners vary (both individually and according to such characteristics as age, level and cultural origin) in their preference for learning style (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile and mode (group or individual); as a result, learning is best when the learning opportunity matches the learner's preference.' (Spolsky, 1989, p.110).

Much research has centred around investigating common factors in approach and technique (usually with a high degree of self-report involved) identified in successful language learners.

Rubin (1975), Stern (1975) and Naiman et al. (1978) all developed inventories of learning styles, superficially differing but essentially the same. Rubin (1975, p.43) produced a list of seven strategies defined as '... the technique or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge.' She categorised the good language learner as (1) a willing and accurate guesser (2) having a strong desire to communicate (3) not being inhibited, willing to take risks (4) willing to attend to form (5) actively seeking to practise (6) monitoring his own speech and that of others (7) attending to meaning in a social context. Rubin does warn, however, that this is not as straightforward as it might seem and that use of these strategies depends on a number of factors - target language, age, context, cultural differences, individual style and the specific task in question.

Stern (1975) undertook similar studies, and as a result compiled a longer (10 items) but not significantly different set of 'good language learner strategies'. The greatest departure from Rubin was emphasis given to the third of his ten strategies: 'a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers.' (Stern, 1975, p. 312) Rubin did not agree with the first part of this strategy, but the second, with its clear links to Gardner and Lambert's integrative orientation, went rather further.

The 'Good Language Learner' project continued this tradition. Naiman et al. (1978) identified five major strategies listed below and associated minor and sub-strategies plus, at an even more detailed level, a large number of specific techniques. The techniques are interesting in themselves (having contact with native speakers, repeating aloud etc.) but it is at the macro-level of major strategy that comparison is worthwhile in that the five strategies listed below can be seen as a refinement of Rubin and Stern's earlier findings.

Thus, typically good language learners actively involve themselves in the language learning task. They develop and use an awareness of language as a system and as a means of communication and interaction which is culturally appropriate. They cope effectively with affective demands made on them by language learning and actively monitor and adjust the language they are in the process of acquiring as their knowledge grows. The minor strategies, sub-strategies and techniques which are subsumed under these major strategies provide considerable detail and thus the study can be seen as both refining the work of Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) and as expanding their work in providing a wealth of detail about the mechanisms involved. The results may be due to the more structured data gathering techniques used by Naiman et al. (1978) in contrast to the more introspective methodology used by Stern (1975).

The general conclusion reached by Naiman et al. (1978) bears a striking similarity to that of Spolsky (1989) '... good language learners take advantage of potentially useful learning situations, and if necessary create them. They develop learning techniques and strategies appropriate to their individual needs.' (Naiman et al., 1978, p.25)

This is not say that there has been no progress reported in this field other than the studies above. After a series of studies, Hosenfeld (1976, 1979), suggested that different aspects of language proficiency (form, meaning, communicative effectiveness) may well operate simultaneously rather than following a linear progression. All the usual problems associated with introspective study validity apply e.g. self-report affective measures might also function as a test of verbal intelligence which would then weaken the predictability of language proficiency/self-report affective measure correlations; the desire for approval and tendencies towards self-flattery and consistency of response could increase the likelihood of distorted response patterns (Oller, 1977; Oller and Perkins 1978), together with difficulty of generalisation due to sample size (her 1979 paper has a single subject); but the idea is interesting.

Since the publication of her (1975) article, Rubin and her colleagues spent several years eliciting and classifying language learning strategies using classroom and tutorial observations, student self-reports and diaries. Two types of strategies were subsequently

identified (Rubin, 1981): those that contribute directly to learning and those that contribute indirectly to learning. Under the first category were (a) clarification / verification, (b) monitoring, (c) memorization (d) guessing / inductive strategy (e) deductive reasoning (f) practice. The second category included (a) opportunities for practice and (b) production tricks.

Seliger's (1984) distinction between macro- and micro- techniques is similar: the former creates circumstances in which the learner is enabled to access language input, the latter provides the input.

Any review of the earlier research on learning strategies must exercise caution in view of the problems inherent in the design of many of these studies. Although Naiman et al.'s (1978) interviews, for example, were structured to some extent, the final content was respondent driven. In contrast, Rubin collected data on a more rigorous basis, using what Skehan (1989) described as a set of hypotheses loosely relating cognitive functioning to language acquisition, to bring order to the elicitation of data from her subjects. In addition, number of subjects and type of sample in the different studies varied widely, making generalisations difficult, if not impossible. This was exacerbated by doubts regarding the validity of self-report data i.e. it is difficult to confirm objectively, and, in any case, attitudes towards the task, the researcher and situation can have a marked influence on the data provided, especially in self-report exercises. Skehan (1989) feels that it is not possible to use such data to suggest causal relationships, due to the nature of the reporting/analytic mechanism and of language learning:

There is an even greater complication. This is that what accounts for the reporting of the strategies and the language learning success are the same thing - greater powers of articulateness. It is possible, in other words, that some people are capable of more precise, detailed and organised thought perhaps because of decontextualization ability, analytic capacities with verbal material, or memory, or other factors. This is what enables them to reflect on their own language learning experiences effectively, and report them so well. These same abilities may be those which are also important in language learning success. Less successful learners may not have experienced success for the same reason they could not report strategies i.e. lack of these very same capacities. Consequently, retrospective accounts in such cases may not enable us to identify what the causal variables are and to choose between the two competing explanations.' (Skehan, 1989, p.80)

In later work, also essentially focussing on self-report data, O'Malley et al. (1985 a, b) made a distinction between metacognitive strategies, e.g. advance preparation, self-evaluation, self-monitoring and cognitive learning strategies such as deduction, inferencing or translation.

This distinction seems similar to the Rubin (1981) and Seliger (1984) categorisations outlined earlier, but a major difference lies in O'Malley's (1985b) findings that as proficiency increased, so, proportionately, did use of metacognitive strategies. Thus beginner level students are seen as unfocussed: 'Students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction or opportunity to review their progress, accomplishments, and future directions.' (O'Malley et al. 1985b, p.561)

In another questionnaire-based self-report study, Politzer and McGroarty (1985) investigated 37 Asian and Hispanic students enrolled in a pre-session English course in the USA. Responses were correlated with three proficiency tests (aural, grammar and communicative competence) administered before and after the course. The results were disappointing in general: 'Some behaviours were associated with conscious learning, while others were related to acquisition and gains in general communicative competence.' (Politzer and McGroarty, 1985, p.103).

Of more direct interest to the present study is their conclusion that cultural background influences the types of language strategy selected:

Another conclusion strongly suggested by the findings - and certainly no surprise to the EFL teacher - is that cultural background has a great deal to do with the type of language learning behaviour likely to be used by students. Some of the good language learning behaviours discussed in recent publications may indeed be ethnocentric, or at least lead to gratuitous advice that students, depending on personal characteristics and above all cultural background, may find difficult or impossible to follow. Even after good learning behaviours have been identified, there will always be the challenge to teachers to match their teaching behaviours with the learning behaviours of their students. (Politzer & McGroarty, 1985, p. 119)

Politzer and McGroarty (1985) also found that Asian students report fewer 'good learning behaviour' strategies than Hispanics suggesting that the idea of 'the good

language learner' and his expected 'ideal' behaviours might well be ethnically biased towards Western cultural values. MacLennan's (1987) study which investigated the criteria which Hong Kong students of English used in judging whether a teacher was 'good' or 'bad', reinforces this notion of the necessity of matching teaching and learning styles and the problems that arise if this is not done. She writes:

... failure to meet students' expectations may generate negative attitudes. When, for example, the teacher's programme, methods or behaviour don't accord with their expectations students are likely to become confused and even resentful.

... students may consider the activities the teacher sets up as a waste of time, while the teacher will often regard the habitual learning practices of students, based as they often are on rote-learning methods, as misguided and unproductive.' (MacLennan 1987, p.71).

Implicit in this view is the premise that language learners should, initially at least, be taught in their preferred learning style with a view to ameliorating the effects of what Krashen (1982) calls the affective filter. Conversely students may be able to modify their learning styles. O'Malley found weak support for this view but stronger support is available in Tarone's (1979) study which found that learner style could vary, dependent on context and Cohen's (1984) finding that learners will adopt proven successful strategies.

Abraham and Vann (1987) studied 15 students learning English at an intensive ESL training programme at Iowa State University. Their aim was to create learner profiles including background factors (motivation, personality, cognitive style etc.), approaches to language learning and learning strategies. In their report, two Spanish-speaking ESL students, a successful (Gerardo) and an unsuccessful one (Pedro) were compared in these respects with particular attention on the language learning strategies (LLS) they used. It was found that Gerardo used more strategies than Pedro both during interview sessions and think aloud tasks; and that Gerardo also used more varieties of learning strategies than Pedro did. Summarising the differences between the two learners, Abraham and Vann (1987) noted that Gerardo was concerned with both the form and function of the language while Pedro cared about function only e.g. 'talk to girls on the beach', providing evidence for both Rubin and Stern's original positions that a realisation of language as a system and developing corresponding strategies to attend to form is one of the precursors to success in second language learning.

Another interesting difference between Gerardo and Pedro ‘... lies in their flexibility in using strategies.... Gerardo’s ability to match his choice of strategy to the demands of the task was probably an important factor in his success on each one. He also showed flexibility in his use of time.’ (Abraham and Vann, 1987, p.95). However, the initial clear - cut difference disappeared when they (1990) reported that ‘the unambiguous contrast between Gerardo and Pedro was not typical,’ because ‘the number of strategies used by several of the successful and unsuccessful subjects fell within the same range’, and that ‘ the unsuccessful learners used many of the same strategies as the successful ones.’ (Vann and Abraham, 1990, p.182). Two other learners, Mona and Shida, both Arabic speaking unsuccessful ESL learners, were also examined in detail. Findings suggested that both students had similar repertoires of LLS as the successful learners and both of them actively used various strategies. What made them unsuccessful was that:

.... they often failed to apply strategies appropriately to the task at hand. Apparently they lacked certain necessary higher order processes, what are often called metacognitive strategies or self-regulatory skills which would enable them to assess the task and bring to bear the necessary strategies for its completion. (Vann and Abraham, 1990, p.191).

More germane to this study was the O’Malley et al.’s (1985b) project in which data was collected from learners in a secondary school through teacher and learner interviews as well classroom observation. It was found that the observations and teacher interviews were unsatisfactory in eliciting LLS which were often unobservable. Twenty-six LLS were found and classified into three categories after Brown (1982): metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social mediation.

Summarizing previous research on LLS classification, O’Malley and Chamot (1990) produced a revised scheme which include three ‘generic strategies’ i.e. metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies and 15 ‘representative strategies’.

Over the years, Oxford (1985, 1989) has tried to amalgamate almost every strategy uncovered in previous research under her classification scheme. Using her Strategy

Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), Oxford and her colleagues (Oxford and Ehrman, 1989; Oxford and Nyikos, 1989) conducted a series of factor analysis studies. Results showed that motivation, gender and self-perceived proficiency had the strongest influence on the choice of LLS. Highly motivated students used more strategies more often than the less motivated ones. Females were found to use LLS more often than males and self-perceived successful language learners used more strategies than those who did not view themselves as successful language learners.

To sum up, the quest for language learning behaviours has produced a picture that is more complex than anticipated. The most revealing studies have been those qualitative analyses of interviews that either examined the successful language learners alone (Naiman et al. 1978) or compared successful learners with unsuccessful ones (Abraham and Vann, 1990). As McDonough (1999) points out: 'More generally there is a need to flesh out the concept of the 'skilled learner' and to answer basic questions such as whether a skilled learner has a better set of strategies, or greater flexibility in applying and discarding strategies according to whether they work for him/her, or a strongly developed monitoring sense giving the skilled learner a head start in selecting strategies of maximal generality.' (McDonough, 1999, p.14)

Oxford's (1993) claim that '...successful language learners in general use more and better learning strategies than do poor learners.' (Oxford, 1993, p.178) is not supported by Abraham and Vann's studies which showed that simple strategy counts both in terms of number and variety, and in terms of frequency of strategy application did not distinguish the successful from the unsuccessful learners. By analyzing the unsuccessful learner's strategy, however, they were able to show that the unsuccessful learners lacked flexibility and appropriateness.

Huda (1998) found that '... fair learners reportedly used far more strategies than good learners...' (Huda, 1998, p.50) for which Cohen (1998) suggests that '... higher-proficiency learners may be able to perform well using fewer consciously selected strategies.... In contrast, the lower-proficiency learners may keep trying different strategies without comparable success, and so they end up using more strategies

altogether. ... Whereas the successful completion of some tasks may require the use of a variety of strategies used repeatedly, the successful completion of others may depend on the use of just a few strategies, each used only once but successfully.' (Cohen, 1998, pp.8-9)

The view that successful language learners employ a larger repertoire of strategies has not been confirmed. The hypothesis that successful language learners use LLS more frequently has not been substantiated. This suggests that besides quantitative differences, learners may differ in other respects, such as their effectiveness in using the same LLS. Only empirical research will reveal if this is true for Hong Kong students.

3.2.2 *Research into Language Learning Strategies in Hong Kong*

Research into learning strategies in Hong Kong is recent in origin, not extensive and owes a great deal to the work of Professor Biggs and his associates at Hong Kong University. Much of the work is tangential to the present study since it is concerned with cross-cultural studies or metacognition rather than identifying actual strategies used in schools. The main thrust of Biggs' work was concerned with approaches used by students in tackling their learning tasks and involved comparisons of students in different (mainly Asian) countries and took its impetus from earlier work carried out in Europe.

In an investigation of students' learning in Sweden, Marton and Saljo (1976,1984) identified two approaches that students adopted to learning tasks, namely, 'deep and surface approaches'. A deep approach to learning is characterized by a focus on the meaning or message underlying the learning material, on 'what is signified' by the material. In contrast, a surface approach is characterized by a focus on the learning material itself, that is, on the sign. This distinction highlighted a major difference in the ways in which the students carried out the learning task. The approach that students adopted was shown to be related to what they had learned. These two approaches to learning were also identified among students in Australia (Dall'Alba, 1986) and the Netherlands (Van Rossum and Schenk, 1984). Biggs (1987) in developing his Learning Process Questionnaire (LPQ) and its tertiary counterpart, the Student Process Questionnaire (SPQ) added a third approach 'achieving' as 'Students adopting this approach try to achieve the highest possible grades by using such strategies as working

hard and efficiently, and being cue conscious.' (Watkins, 1996, p.7). They would use any strategy e.g. rote memorising lots of facts, or understanding basic principles, that they believe would maximise their chances of academic success.

These questionnaires have been used primarily in Australia and Southeast Asia. Research results obtained with the use of LPQ and SPQ suggest that students in Hong Kong and a range of other Asian countries at both levels are more oriented to deep and less oriented to surface learning. However, in the interpretation of these results a surface approach is frequently treated as being characterized by rote learning while a deep approach is associated with understanding. Biggs (1989) in comparing Chinese students, who used their second language (English) in learning, with native English speakers, found that Chinese students scored higher on deep and achieving approaches. In another study by Biggs (1990), Chinese students attending English-speaking expatriate schools were compared with students attending Anglo-Chinese schools. The results reveal that secondary students in both types of school scored higher on deep approach measures than primary students. Biggs (1990) also found that Chinese students in Hong Kong scored higher on deep approach and lower on surface approach measures to learning than Australian students.

Ho et al. (1995) carried out a study among high (HA) and low (LA) achieving secondary students in Hong Kong. The results reveal that the two groups did not differ much in the use of deep motives and strategies. However, high achievers were higher on achieving motives and strategies than low achievers. Low achievers, on the other hand, were higher on surface motives and strategies. This may reflect their respective history of success and failure. For students with a high expectation of success, achieving, rather than deep-learning strategy, enables them systematically to plan and organize their learning to ensure coverage of exam materials. For those with low expectation of success, getting a pass is the main aim, hence surface strategy is the consequent choice.

A project that approximates to the present study is the one carried out by Wong (1997), in which she sought to examine the strategies used by Primary 6 students learning English as a second language and to compare the strategy use of successful and unsuccessful learners, based on their English language achievement. Results show that, 'in terms of the range of strategies adopted, there was no significant differences between

the two groups.’ (Wong, 1997, p.89). However, differences between the two groups were found in other areas. When meeting an unknown word in reading comprehension, high achievers tended to use strategies of guessing meaning from context whereas the low achievers resorted to the use of the dictionary immediately but this ‘... did not guarantee that they would be competent dictionary users.’ (Wong, 1997, p.92). To facilitate the learning of new words, the use of the L1 and translation seemed to be the most frequently used strategy by both groups. ‘However low achievers showed a higher tendency to adopt strategies that involve mechanical drilling such as spelling a word repeatedly, copying and reading a word repeatedly to practise pronunciation.’ (Wong, 1997, p.91). In homework strategies, low achievers, in contrast to the high achievers, were more prone to lack independence and relied more on tutors or parents to supervise their learning: ‘When they have problems in homework, they have a higher tendency to ask for help.’ (Op cit). When asked questions in class, high achievers were more willing to risk error. Low achievers seemed to be intimidated by making errors and ‘would adopt strategies to avoid doing so e.g. remaining silent when they did not have a confident answer.’ (Op cit). In conclusion, Wong (1997) emphasises ‘...the importance of providing students instructions on how to use strategies ...’ (Wong, 1997, p.93) which implies as a first stage the availability of such strategies and the need to identify these for a Hong Kong context. In terms of secondary schooling, this is what this project is about: to identify those strategies used by high achievers and to make these available for the use of all students. The ultimate goal of this kind of analysis and strategy use is to allow students to become autonomous and effective language learners.

These findings also tend to underscore the importance of cultural values and situation factors in determining student approaches to learning. The findings cast doubt on the validity of observations indicating that Chinese students are rote learners who use low level cognitive strategies in learning. Further research into the matter will show if this obtains for Hong Kong secondary students as well. ‘Recognition of cultural influences on learning style modalities can guide teachers in developing ‘culture-sensitive pedagogy’ that views these influences as instructional strengths upon which to build further learning and not just as educational weaknesses to be mediated.’ (Stebbins, 1998, p.116)

3.3 Exposure to English

Most teachers of second languages will concur with the view that exposure to the target language contributes to success in learning the language. An explanation of how this is so is offered by Bialystok and Frohlich (1977) in their model of second language learning which identifies two types of linguistic knowledge: explicit and implicit. 'Explicit Linguistic Knowledge (ELK) refers to the rules and vocabulary consciously learned while Implicit Linguistic Knowledge (ILK) refers to the rules and other features of the language which are felt to be instinctively right. It is exposure to the target language that provides input into the Implicit Language Knowledge.' (Bialystok and Frohlich 1977, p.3-4). Stern (1975) expresses a similar idea with his description of exposure as 'unconscious absorption (latent learning) one contributory way of learning.' (Stern 1975, p.315). Latent learning through exposure to the language is implied in Krashen's (1985) model for adult second language performance. According to Krashen (1985), the adults, aside from learning consciously through formal instruction, also learn through a subconscious, constructive process of acquisition.

The importance of exposure to the target language should not be lightly dismissed. Logic would suggest that the more the learners are exposed to the language the more competent they will become. It is, however, difficult to ascertain whether it is contact with the L2 that increases proficiency or whether it is better proficiency that motivates such contact. The first task is to establish if there is a significant connection between exposure to English and competence and is dealt with in the next chapter.

3.4 Think-Aloud Techniques

The final consideration in this review of relevant literature concerns 'think-aloud techniques' which the students involved in this study were required to handle.

'Think Aloud' is defined by Cohen (1984) as a '... stream-of-conscious disclosure of thought processes while the information is being attended to.' (Cohen, 1984, p.102) Essentially the learner externalizes his/ her thoughts while engaged in a learning task. Garner (1988) notes that 'Think-aloud procedures produce concurrent verbalizations

about an activity that is temporarily interrupted for the provision of the verbal report.’ (Garner, 1988, p. 65) Thus the procedure aims to make accessible what is normally a covert activity (Brown, 1982). There are, however, problems with such an approach, including how reliable and complete data collected in such a form may be.

Garner (1988) lists areas of concern for think-aloud studies: whether accessibility to cognition is possible; whether the actual disrupting of cognitive processes alters the processes themselves; and whether second language subjects lack the verbal facility to think-aloud in the L2.

The accessibility of mental processes is concerned with the question of whether conscious awareness is limited to the products of mental processes. Seliger (1983), for example, regards verbal reports as no more than a source of information about how subjects use what has been learned and not as a way of describing innate systems responsible for language performance. Nisbett and Wilson (1977) believe that one can ‘... doubt people’s ability to observe directly the workings of their own minds.’ (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977, p. 232) Ericsson and Simon (1980) suggest, however, that subjects ‘... do have accessible memory of cognitive processes and awareness of the information while the process is going on.’ (Ericsson & Simon, 1980, p. 245) They note that one possible source of incomplete data is when some recurrent processes have become automated and are unavailable to Short Term Memory (STM) and, hence to accurate verbal reports. One should perhaps heed the injunction of Meichenbaum (cited in Garner, 1988, p. 68) who suggests that think-aloud protocols should be regarded as incomplete (but useful) records of thinking. This avoids the error of equating language with thought, or performance with competence.

The second question concerns whether the actual disrupting of cognitive processes alters the processes themselves. According to Ericsson and Simon’s model (1980) ‘... when the subjects articulate information directly that is already available to them, the model predicts that thinking aloud will not change the course and structure of the cognitive processes. The key is that reliability is gained by not requiring the subjects to give reasons for their actions. If reasons are given, there may be substantial effects from the

disruption to normal processing and also from loss of information in the STM'. (Ericsson & Simon, 1980, p. 227). Wade (1993) suggest that certain procedures will increase reliability, e.g. using an actual text and not relying on a hypothetical situation and asking questions after the first reading. Ideally therefore, procedural approaches should aim to minimize the effects of interruptions.

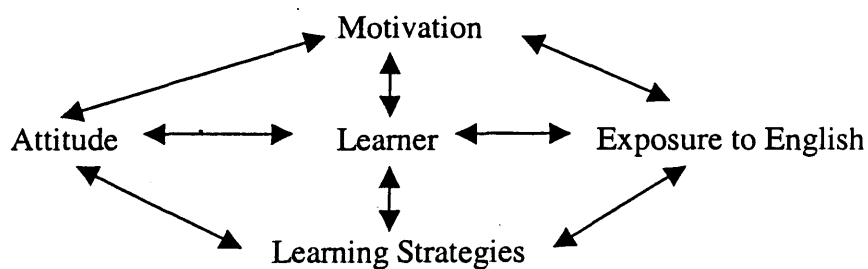
Subjects' verbal facility can also be a problem in using think-aloud techniques, especially if the thinking-aloud is in the mother tongue. It may encourage translation and other strategies not normally used. Some researchers have found good results working in the subject's second language. For example, Block (1986) arranged two pilot studies with second language subjects of varying levels of proficiency and found that 'Even those with relatively little fluency in English could be prompted rather easily to think aloud, and their responses were very revealing of their problems and strengths as readers.' (Block, 1986, p.469). Rankin (1988), however, comments that '... a certain level of linguistic competence must be assumed.' (Rankin, 1988, p.122). Overall, it appears that if subjects have a reasonable level of second language proficiency, they should be able to report in their second language.

The concerns mentioned above - accessibility, disruption of cognitive processes and verbal facility - are relevant to using a think-aloud approach with L2 subjects but these should be corroborated by further data using different methods. Garner (1988) suggests a multi-method way so that verbal report data on process can be combined with empirical product data. Kail and Bisanz (1982) point out that '... no single approach is sufficient for unambiguous and comprehensive identification of a person's cognitive strategies.' (Kail & Bisanz, 1982, p. 252). Essentially then, when think-aloud data are used with other methods, they offer a convergent validity for other findings, e.g. Ericsson and Simon (1980) who conclude that '... verbal reports, elicited with care and interpreted with full understanding of the circumstances under which they were obtained, are a valuable and thoroughly reliable source of information about cognitive processes.' (Ericsson & Simon, 1980, p. 247).

This concludes a review of the relevant literature and has shown that there is a need to provide researched data on the English learning environment in Hong Kong secondary schools i.e. the learning situation (e.g. exposure to English), attitude, motivation and language learning strategies.

The project is important because it will identify the variables that have a significant association with competence in English. However, the variables described above (exposure to English, attitude, motivation and learning strategies) do not function in a linear fashion. Rather they seem to interact in an almost circular kind of way as shown in the diagram below:

Chart 1: Intervention Point for the Variables Below



The problem is to find the most appropriate way (s) of intervention. The methodology involved in trying to provide answers to the issues raised in this study is explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.0 Preamble

As previously explained there is a need to identify the strategy use of students in the upper forms of secondary schools in Hong Kong. This study is therefore, an exploratory investigation into the relationship between *outcome* in language learning and *learner variables* held to be related to language learning according to theory and previous research as outlined in chapter 3. It attempts to fulfill the need indicated in chapter 3 for data concerning variables related to language learning in the Hong Kong context where English is studied as a second or foreign language. More specifically, this is an attempt to determine the strength of different learner variables e.g. attitude and motivation, and their degree of correlation with achievement in language learning.

Previous research, carried out almost entirely in North America with English-speaking students of French, (discussed in chapter 3) indicates a significant relationship between favourable attitudes and integrative motivation on the one hand, and success in language learning on the other. However, the importance of French to English-speaking students in North America is not equal to the importance of English to students in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, English is an important tool of communication in trade, foreign affairs and, in some cases, for tertiary education abroad. Conclusions from research in North America cannot be generalized with complete confidence for the language learning situation in Hong Kong. Therefore research should be carried out to find out if variables such as favourable attitudes towards the foreign culture and integrative motivation might be related to higher achievement where English is studied as a second or foreign language in Hong Kong.

As part of its focus, this study is interested in how the successful Chinese language student learns, what strategies and techniques (s)he uses and what factors in the learning environment (e.g. stream, motivation etc.) influence the choice of specific learning strategies and techniques. Strategies are not used in isolation and the project

is hence also interested in the environment in which these strategies are used, especially by the High Achievers (HA's) as opposed to the Low Achievers (LA's) which might also lead on to indicate the factors which hinder or encourage learning.

Answers to these questions would be relevant to language teachers as well as policy makers who are involved in the task of improving output from language learning programmes at school level. For example, if it is possible to identify the strategies and techniques that correlate with successful language learning, then teachers might be in a better position to understand their students' problems and advise them on using appropriate strategies thus perhaps allowing them access to the target language more easily.

However, a caveat about the relationship between proficiency and strategy use has to be made. Findings discussed in chapter 3 (e.g. Politzer and McGroarty, 1985, Abraham and Vann, 1987, Green and Oxford, 1995) indicate an association between reported strategy use and proficiency, but the exact nature of this association, especially the issue of causality, is a subject of some debate. Skehan (1989) among others has pointed out that the existence of correlation between the two does not necessarily suggest causality in a particular direction. 'Whether the strategies cause the learning or the learning itself enables different strategies to be used has not been fully clarified, however.' (Mitchell and Myles, 1998, p.19)

McIntyre (1994) has attempted to unravel the relationship between the two variables and stresses caution when looking at studies which suggest that more proficient students make better use of strategies. 'This might be interpreted to mean that either proficiency influences the choice of strategies or that strategy choice is simply a sign of proficiency level.' (McIntyre, 1994, p. 188). However, in answer to his own question whether strategy use results to or leads from increased proficiency he is not quite so cautious. 'The answer, undoubtedly is BOTH.' (McIntyre 1994, p. 189). This idea that strategies are both the causes and outcomes of improved language proficiency needs much more investigation before such a confident conclusion can be warranted.

Green and Oxford (1995) in their Puerto Rican study suggest a causal relationship between strategy use and proficiency level and that ‘ ... this relationship is best visualized not as a one-way arrow leading from cause to effect but rather as an ascending spiral in which active use strategies help students attain higher proficiency, which in turn makes it more likely that students will select these active use strategies.’ (Green and Oxford, 1995, p. 288). This may be plausible but it could equally be argued that strategies do not contribute to proficiency but are simply features of it i.e. only by reaching a certain level will a student be likely to use a given strategy. This point is made by Skehan (1989). ‘One can argue that learner strategies do not determine proficiency, but are permitted by it.’ (Skehan, 1989, p. 97).

The notion that strategy use and proficiency are both causes and outcomes of each other complicates the situation and has implications for the way any such study is conducted. Hence the purpose of this study is to investigate strategy use in Form 7 of Hong Kong schools where what is sought is not direction of causality but, as a first step, an association between competence and various factors such as attitude, motivation and strategy use. Even if direction of causality cannot be established on statistical grounds, high correlation would make it worthwhile to try out certain paths of intervention.

To this end students were identified as High Achievers (HA’s) or Low Achievers (LA’s) by their teachers using the Language Rating Scale described in 4.2.3.2. This competence was then related to attitude, type and intensity of motivation and strategy use. However, within these variables other factors are involved e.g. the school environment and learning situation. The relevant research questions are shown below.

4.1 Research questions

This study focuses on several variables. The dependent variable is the *student’s competence* as measured by a specifically devised rating scale for internal use by each school to make for greater refinement and analysis of the data obtained. The independent variables are:

- 1 ***The Learning Situation*** e.g. location (Kowloon, New Territories), extent of exposure to English
- 2 ***Attitude and Motivation***
- 3 ***Language Learning Strategies***

4.1.1 Variable 1: *The Learning Situation*

For the variable, the learning situation, a connection is sought between degree of **competence** and **the learning situation** e.g. stream, location, type of motivation. Accordingly, the following research questions are posed:

- i. in which stream are students more strongly motivated to learn English?
- ii. are students in certain locations more strongly motivated to learn English than in other areas?
- iii. do students in certain locations experience a higher degree of exposure to English than in other areas?
- iv. which type of motivation is greater for learners of English in Hong Kong?
- v. what language learning strategies for learning English are in common use among Upper Secondary students?
- vi. do students prefer a visual or an aural mode of presentation of learning materials?

4.1.2 Variable 2: *Attitude and Motivation*

For the second variable, ***Attitude and Motivation***, the following research question is posed: is ***the degree of competence in English*** associated with any of the following?:

- i. favourable attitudes towards the English language and the culture of English-speaking peoples
- ii. intensity of motivation
- iii. instrumental motivation
- iv. intrinsic motivation
- v. parental encouragement

4.1.3 Variable 3: *Language Learning Strategies (LLS)*

In terms of *Language Learning Strategies*, the following research question is posed: is *the degree of competence in English* associated with any of the following?:

- i. the searching for meaning
- ii. memorisation (sentences / rules)
- iii. the use of contextual clues to infer meaning
- iv. an inductive strategy to infer rules and patterns
- v. pattern practice
- vi. role play
- vii. constant practice
- viii. vocabulary learning
- ix. exposure to English
- x. repetition of sounds / words
- xi. readiness to use English for communication
- xii. modality preference
- xiii. willingness to tolerate the risk of error

For this study, English language competence is a composite measure of ability in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. For the purposes of answering certain questions in the questionnaire, the language competence of the student is his/her competence as judged (a) by the teacher, relative to other students in the class and (b) in the school, based on their examination results. This study is interested in this relative competence and how it relates to the independent variables.

Alternative measures of language competence include the test by the International English Language Testing Services (IELTS), the Cambridge Proficiency Certificates and the Use of English test by the Hong Kong Examinations Authority. However, this study uses the Language Rating Scale and the less precise indicators of (a) and (b) above which are much in line with the daily practices of most class teachers and administrators regarding competence and meant that data could be more easily obtained. Use of the alternative resources (indicated above) would have necessitated the use of further texts, questionnaires or experimentally derived measurements,

which would have been very time-consuming and interruptive of school time-tables; and would have meant denial of access and feasibility.

A student is considered **Low** if (s)he is equal to or below the class median and **High** if above the class median i.e. there are High and Low achievers in each class relative to class norms. Despite the apparent limitation of using teacher assessment, statistically significant results may be obtained. For example, if within a class those with higher exposure to English have higher competence ratings, there will be a significant association between competence and exposure. If this situation is consistent for all classes, there will be a very significant association between exposure and competence even though the measure used is that of relative competence.

4.2 Methodological Approach

As indicated above, assumptions about the direction of causality are likely to influence the analysis procedures. In this study, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the significant variation. However, the use of ANOVA necessitates the setting of the independent variable. Does this posit an implicit direction of causality? Oxford and Nyikos (1989) consider this to be the case: 'Causality is by definition involved in the use of the ANOVA technique; indeed, that is why researchers use it (when possible) instead of less explanatory techniques like correlation.' (Oxford and Nyikos, 1989, p. 295).

In Green and Oxford's (1995) study the independent variables are gender and proficiency, and the dependent variable is strategy use. Gender would have to be an independent variable as the direction of causality in this relationship can only be in one direction. In the case of proficiency, given that the goal of learning strategy research is to establish whether it is likely that strategy use has a positive effect on the enhancement of proficiency, it would seem more appropriate to set strategy use as an independent variable. Thus in this study, proficiency is made the dependent variable and the learning situation, attitude and motivation and strategy use form the independent variables.

Where percentages were required e.g. in instrumental motivation and strategies used by students in Variable 1 (The Learning Situation), frequency counts were used. Where interrelationships required analysis e.g. motivation and location, ANOVA was used. For analyses of categories, e.g. modality preference, Chi-square was used. The full list is shown in 4.3.2.

To obtain the required data and respect the limitations imposed by the school timetables, it was decided to use a self-report questionnaire survey augmented by other techniques. Other techniques are available for helping to identify strategy use in schools e.g. observation where TV cameras are used in the classroom to catch the student at work or the think-aloud technique whereby the students talk into a recording machine to record their thoughts as they complete their tasks. Neither of these was considered suitable for secondary classrooms as their use would have been too time-consuming, intrusive and unmanageable and would have led to the schools denying the researchers access to the students.

One instrument for eliciting levels of strategy use that has gained currency through being administered in a variety of learning environments is Oxford's (1989) Strategy Inventory for Language Skills (SILL) which Ellis (1994) describes as 'perhaps the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date.' (Ellis, 1994, p.539). Accordingly, it was decided to use self-completed questionnaires, employing a five-point Likert scale ranging from never to always, as these would be very efficient in terms of researcher time and effort and are useful for statistical treatment and group summaries. There are problems though in that the data are somewhat superficial and there is little check on the seriousness or honesty of the responses. Therefore, additional material was sought through interviews with teachers and students in that these offered a rewarding means of accessing the often valuable perceptions and insights of the respondents thus fleshing out statements made in the questionnaire. In addition, think-aloud tasks were given to a sample of students during which students discussed their typical learning behaviour, thereby increasing the knowledge gained

from the questionnaires i.e. a kind of triangulation was used in which additional techniques were used to augment the knowledge gained from one source.

4.2.1 *The Sample*

The questionnaires were given to twenty Form 7 classes from nine secondary schools. Form 7 students in Hong Kong were chosen as they were in the final year of their secondary studies and, as such, represent the apex of secondary school learning. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20 and most had studied English from kindergarten for about 15 years, in English-medium schools. It is felt they would provide the most mature evidence sought by this project.

For each of Hong Kong's three administrative areas of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, schools were divided into two types, Band 1 / 2 and Band 4/5. At the end of Primary 6, students are allocated places in Form 1 of a secondary school through the Secondary Schools Placement Allocation (SSPLA) which has the following components:

- (a) A centrally administered Academic Aptitude Test given to all P.6 students
- (b) A scaled internal school assessment covering all subjects taught since the second half of Primary 5
- (c) The 19 school districts (catchment areas) in which schools are described as Band 1-5 with Band 1 the highest and Band 5 the lowest i.e. the top students are allocated to Band 1 / 2 schools and the bottom students are assigned to Band 4/5 schools.

Two Band 1 / 2 schools and one Band 4/5 school from each area were randomly selected for the survey making a total of 6 Band 1/2 and 3 Band 4/5 schools. However, when some schools were approached, they declined to participate and so other willing schools were sought. For each selected school all form 7 students were included in the survey. This procedure ensured that a representative sample of Form 7 students was chosen across different areas and different Bandings. As a result, from

the three areas, there were selected nine schools which involved 20 classes and just under 600 students. Their distribution is shown in table below.

Table 2 : Distribution of Students by Area by Banding

Banding	Area			Total
	Hong Kong	Kowloon	NT	
Band 1/2	143	174	123	440
Band 4/5	18	59	52	129
Total	161	233	175	569

4.2.2 Data Collection

The choice of using the survey-by-questionnaire method meant that the collection of the data could be completed within two months. For each selected school, the following procedures were carried out:

- (i) All students were asked by their teacher and the writer to complete a self-administered questionnaire (Appendix 1) to ensure that any problems could be dealt with right away. The questionnaires were presented in both Chinese and English.
- (ii) Four to eight students were asked to attend focus-group interviews, with two to four in each group. Teachers were asked to choose from each class, 2-4 students they considered to be HA's and LA's. The writer interviewed the HA's and a very experienced researcher interviewed the LA's. The instrument (Appendix 3) was discussed and trial interviews held before the actual interviews took place. Students were also asked to complete some think-aloud tasks. (Appendix 4) Due to time constraints these interviews had to be completed within one lesson. The interviews were conducted in English.
- (iii) Teachers were asked to rate each student on their competence in English in terms of reading, writing, speaking and listening according to the Language Rating Scale. (Appendix 2)

- (iv) Teachers were asked to complete a short questionnaire (Appendix 5) dealing with the attributes of HA's and LA's and to indicate the problems they see facing English learners in Hong Kong.

Teachers and students were briefed in class beforehand on the objectives of the survey and the uses of the data collected. It was stressed that the project was important to Hong Kong and to the teaching/learning of English. Accordingly, for the questionnaire, students were asked to write down what they actually did and not what they thought they were required to write. To reassure the students and teachers, it was stressed that the data obtained would be confidential. Students were asked to give their consent on the questionnaire, for the researchers to use the data obtained. The questionnaires were administered over a period of eight weeks, in normal classroom environments by teachers to their own classes at the beginning of the school term. The questionnaires were completed within one lesson and collected from the schools by the researchers on the day of their administration.

Altogether 569 questionnaires were administered and returned but those incompletely filled and/or lacking accompanying data were withdrawn. In one school, two classes were taught by teachers new to the school who consequently felt they did not know their students well enough to rate them on their language competence. In another school, one class used pseudonyms on their questionnaires which made impossible their identification on the Language Competence Rating Scale. This left 476 for analysis. Of these 347 came from Band 1 / 2 schools i.e. HA's and 129 from Band 4/5 schools i.e. LA's. (Table 2)

4.2.3 *Instruments*

Four instruments were used to obtain the required data:

- (1) a student questionnaire, (Appendix 1),
- (2) a Language Competence Rating Scale (Appendix 2),
- (3) student interviews using the Naiman et al. (1976) Adult Interview (Appendix 3) plus think-aloud tasks (Appendix 4)

(4) a teacher interview guide (Appendix 5).

The instruments are described below with details of the sources from which they are derived.

4.2.3.1 *The Student Questionnaire*

The specifically devised pre-coded, school-administered questionnaire was based on previously published research which had been moderated/validated. It was decided to devise an instrument particular to the Hong Kong learning situation rather than use an existing instrument such as the Strategies Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990). SILL has been used widely but it carries certain inherent problems for Hong Kong learners. These are described below.

(a) Some of the statements that constitute the different items to which students are to respond seem vague and open to a range of interpretations. For example, 'I pay attention when someone is speaking' (item 32). It is not clear who the someone is. (S)he could be a friend, a teacher in a classroom or a friend with whom the student has to communicate. Even when SILL is translated into the student L1, it is difficult to see how such potential ambiguity or vagueness could be avoided.

(b) Furthermore, the lack of contextualisation raises questions about the student understanding of the items. Respondents in LoCastro's (1994) study were cited as criticising '... the lack of contextualisation of some items Overwhelmingly, they suggest it depends on the situation and the people.' (LoCastro, 1994, p.412).

(c) Cultural context also affects student interpretation. For example, 'I look for words in my language that are similar to new words in English.' (Item 19). If this were a group of German learners, it would be natural to assume that they would look for cognate words in German which are similar to English words, of which there are many. There are very few English cognates in Chinese and for students it is unclear what this might mean in a Chinese context.

(d) Equally, it cannot be assumed that a particular strategy e.g. 'I ask questions' (Item 32) will be useful in any cultural context. In many learning contexts this is seen as a positive form of participation but this depends on what one thinks positive participation is: in one environment it might mean offering ideas and asking questions, but in another e.g. Hong Kong, it might mean not asking questions as questions might be construed as being disruptive and even disrespectful (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998) 'The British students are so rude. They keep asking questions in class.' (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998, p.753) Thus the interpretation of items and the views of what might have a positive effect on learning will vary from place to place. Furthermore, do they represent behaviours that can be translated into teachable techniques?

Given the decontextualised nature of the SILL questionnaire items and the problems of interpretation this might cause for at least some of the items, many of the strategies may appear vague because they lack a context and might seem to be little more than a set of broad practice behaviours. It was hence decided to devise an instrument which would be more relevant to the Hong Kong situation.

Rationale for and Sources of the Questionnaire Design

As this was an attempt to produce an instrument particularly relevant to Hong Kong and as user-friendly as possible, it was decided to review original research into student learning as a basis to design a more contextualised instrument for students in Hong Kong. However, in terms of the Language Learning Strategies, the questionnaire deals essentially with cognitive strategies as these were the ones that teachers and students had complained most about in the lead-up to this project. The questionnaire design was hence derived from moderated/validated sources cited in the literature review including, Carroll (1963), Heien (1969), Gardner and Lambert (1972), Glicksman, Gardner and Smythe (1982), Pierson and Fu, (1982), Rubin (1975), Wenden and Rubin, (1987) Naiman et al. (1978). These are explained below with indications of the main derivative sources.

Attitude

Attitude refers specifically to the beliefs, states of emotions and thought and readiness to act in relation to the English language, to the learning of English and to the culture of English-speaking peoples (Gardner, 1985). 'English-speaking peoples' is a blanket term to cover any group of people perceived by the Hong Kong student as being speakers of English as a first language. The questions are derived from Glikson, Gardner and Smythe (1982) and Pierson and Fu (1980).

Motivation

Motivation may be explained as the emotions and needs that constitute the source of the drive to expend effort required to learn a second or foreign language. In this study motivation is seen from two aspects, (see chapter 3) corresponding to the two sources of a learner's emotions and needs.

First, a learner's emotions and needs may arise from within - from his/her perception of the value and gains to be obtained from learning a second language. Under this aspect of motivation we may consider Gardner and Lambert's (1972) view of motivation as having an integrative or instrumental orientation. Briefly, integrative motivation is present when a student's reason for studying a second language is interest in the culture of the group that speaks the language, while instrumental motivation is present in the student who is learning a second language for a utilitarian purpose (Gardner and Lambert 1972). In either case the motivating interest and need originates from within the learner and so may be termed 'intrinsic motivation'.

Apart from the different characteristics of the nature of motivation, the study also looks at the intensity of motivation. Intensity of motivation is the strength of the learner's interest, desire or need that maintains perseverance of effort in the learning process whether it is instrumentally or integratively driven.

Language Learning Strategies

As indicated in chapter 3 there is an extensive body of published work dealing with language learning strategies. This study is essentially concerned with cognitive strategies drawn from various sources indicated below. Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) drew up lists of strategies characteristic of good language learners. Stern (1976) defined strategies as general approaches, to be considered as distinct from specific techniques which the learner uses to cope with the problems of learning a second language. One very essential strategy is described by Naiman as 'an active task approach' (Naiman et al, 1978, p.30) in that the good language learner is actively involved in the learning task and develops and uses specific techniques of study e.g. memorization or the practice of pronunciation, unlike the poor learner who does not develop any definite and effective study habits. In keeping with the active task approach the good language learner takes specific steps to discover meaning when he encounters material he does not understand. According to Stern (1975) '...the good language learner constantly searches for meaning by whatever method available.' (Stern, 1975, p.311) unlike the poor learner who '...does not treat his failure to understand as a challenge.' (Op cit). Hence questions were devised to tap into factors such as exposure to English and willingness to use English.(section II and questions 16, 17 of section III)

Another important strategy reported by a number of successful learners in Naiman's (1978) study is to approach the target language with the view that language is a system. In dealing with language as a system, the language learner constantly analyses material in the target language and makes hypotheses about it, which he proceeds to test and so discovers the rules of the system operating in the language. Rubin (1975) describes the good language learner who is able to induce the rules as '...a willing and accurate guesser.' (Rubin, 1975, p.45). Carroll (1963) identified a similar characteristic as necessary for language learning. His term for it was 'inductive language learning ability' (Carroll, 1963, p.1088) and he listed it as one of the identifiable abilities in language aptitude. Accordingly questions on inductive learning were included. (Questions 7, 8 of section III)

The kind of guessing Rubin refers to in her description of the good language learner as 'a willing and accurate guesser' is inherent in the method of inferring meaning through the use of contextual clues in the lexis, grammar or in the communication situation. Carton (1971) calls this 'inferencing'. He showed that relatively young students (8th and 9th grade students beginning French) could make use of contextual clues to correct miscomprehension about the meaning of unfamiliar French words. Hence questions on the use of contextual clues were included. (questions 1, 2 of section III)

Anyone who has learned a second language will acknowledge the importance of practice as a learning strategy. 'Willingness to practise' is one of the strategies listed in Stern's (1975, p.314) and also in Rubin's (1975, p.47) inventories of strategies of good language learners. There are many techniques of practice in language learning, and the choice of one or more techniques in preference to others is possibly the result of a combination of factors - the personality of the learner, the teaching approach and the language skills the learner is interested in acquiring. Among the frequently used techniques reported by adult interviewees in the Naiman et al. (1978) study were: repeating aloud, role-playing, memorizing structures, memorising vocabulary, putting words into structures and drilling oneself, listening to tapes and reading materials of various kinds e.g. magazines, newspapers and comics. As a result, constant practice was included in the questionnaire. (See Questions 3-6 of section III)

Of the practices listed above, memorisation has long been recognized as essential for language learning. Carroll (1963) mentions 'rote memorization ability' for foreign language materials as one aspect of the aptitude for foreign languages. Heien (1969), who concluded at the end of his study that memorisation was not a necessary method of learning grammatical principles, nonetheless acknowledged the importance of 'verbal memorization' since '...a ready recall from a reserve of expressions and sentences may be useful in the construction of spontaneous verbal utterances.' (Heien, 1969, p.42). Thus memorisation was also included. (See questions 12,13 of section III)

Another strategy reported by the respondents in Naiman et al.'s Adult Interview Study (1978) is the development of an awareness of language as a means of communication and interaction. (Naiman et al., 1978, p.14). Stern (1975) comments that the good language learner '...seeks every available opportunity to bring his newly acquired competence into use.' (Stern, 1975, p.314). To do this the language learner has to accept that he is likely to make mistakes and he must be undeterred by his mistakes. This is what Rubin (1975, p.47) meant when she describes the good language learner as 'uninhibited.' In Naiman et al.'s (1978, p.9) Adult Interview Study, inhibition was named as a hindrance to language learning. Hence willingness to risk error was included. (questions 9, 10, 11 of section 3)

It seems unclear how modality preference - the preference for a visual or an aural presentation of learning materials relates to language learning. Such preference is currently considered in terms of learning style (Reid 1998). Is the task of learning a second language made easier when language material is presented orally or when it is presented visually? Is the preference for either mode related to the stage of learning (advanced or elementary) or is it related to some personality factor?

Research has not provided definitive evidence. Carroll (1963, p.1079) reported that an experiment by Dunkel showed that vocabulary was learned equally well whatever the mode of presentation, but that the learning of grammar was retarded when the student had no visual stimuli. Research by Kessman (1959) indicates that faster learning rates occur when stimuli is presented visually but a study by Pimsleur and Bonkowski (1961) noted faster learning when the material was presented aurally. In summarising the knowledge that had accumulated in the study of verbal learning, Carroll (1966) maintained that '... materials presented visually are more easily learned than comparable material presented aurally.' (Carroll, 1966, p.105).

In the Classroom Study part of their investigation into the good language learner, Naiman et al. (1978) found that nearly half the students said they learned better through the written medium. Of the remaining students, half said they preferred an aural mode of learning while 50% expressed no definite preference. They noted,

however, that more weak than top students claim to be eye-minded (Naiman et al., 1978, p.79) which seems to support Carroll's view that it is easier for a learner to process visually presented material. Reid's (1987) study also found Chinese students to be strongly visual. Modality is therefore included, as preference for one mode of learning may well influence the choice of learning techniques. (Questions 14, 15 of section III).

That this modality preference is currently considered worth investigating is confirmed by Kroonenberg's (1995) research into 'sensory learning style' preferences and Kinsella's (1995) 'perceptual learning preferences' survey and a similar inventory of Reid (1998).

The questionnaire also drew on the ideas in Oxford's (1989) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) where she uses six categories i.e.:

- Remembering more effectively e.g. I review English lessons often
- Using all your mental processes: e.g. I use English words I know in different ways
- Compensating for missing knowledge e.g. to understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.
- Organising and evaluating your learning e.g. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.
- Managing your emotions e.g. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.
- Learning with others e.g. I practice English with other students

Composition of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of six sections with an extra page dealing with student 'passivity' (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was presented in two languages i.e. Chinese and English, to ensure that failure to understand the instructions or questions

would not affect the responses. The questionnaire covers the following areas in the order in which they appear:

- (I) *Background information***
- (II) *Exposure to English***
- (III) *Learning strategies and techniques***
- (IV.1) *Attitude***
- (IV.2) *Motivation***
- (IV.3) *Intensity of Motivation***
- (V) *Student self-rating***
- (VI) *Parental encouragement***
- (VII) *Student Passivity in Class***

The relevant scores and scales are described in the section dealing with data analysis.

(I) Background Information

Section I has eight items and asks for information pertaining to the sex of the respondent, the educational stream, educational level of parents, and for details to ascertain the socio-economic status of the respondent.

(II) Exposure to English

The questions in section II consist of twelve items and are for the purpose of measuring the amount of exposure to English the student experiences, based on how often the student currently (i) has contact with reading material in English, (ii) listens to English through radio or television and (iii) speaks English to family and friends.

(III) Language Learning Strategies

Section III is designed to obtain information about learning strategies and techniques. Questions 1 and 2 ask about two learning techniques related to the strategy of searching for meaning. Questions 3 to 6 cover the strategy of constant practice,

dwelling on the following specific techniques: the learning of vocabulary in context, repetition of difficult sounds, role-play and pattern practice.

Questions 7 and 8 seek to establish if the student uses an inductive learning strategy. Willingness to tolerate the risk of error is operationalised in questions 9,10 and 11, which attempt to find out how the student feels about making errors when speaking English. Questions 12 and 13 deal with two techniques of memorisation of sentences and rules respectively. Questions 14 and 15 attempt to ascertain the student's modality preference in the presentation of language material.

Questions 16 and 17 ask about the student's readiness to use English for communication when the opportunity presents itself. Question 18 allows the student the chance to indicate any other technique which he feels has helped him to learn English.

(IV.1) Attitude

Section IV.I contains a set of ten Likert-type items to measure attitude towards English and the culture of English-speaking peoples. Culture is operationally defined as television programmes, films, songs and values in English. Items 6 to 9 were adapted from items in the French attitude scale of Jakobovits (1970) and the Preference for America over France scale used by Gardner and Lambert (1972). The attitude scales devised for use in the North American setting could not be used without modification because of the multi-racial composition of that sample. The remaining items were taken from Glicksman et al's (1982) Attitude-Motivation Index (AMI) but modified for the specific circumstances, e.g. changing Hong Kong for Canada and English for French.

(IV.2) Motivation

The Orientation Index (Section IV.2) is a measure of the relative strengths of instrumental, integrative and extrinsic motivation. Items 1 and 6 reflect extrinsic reasons for studying English - reasons supplied by the education system or the

teacher. Items 2, 4 and 7 reflect an instrumental orientation while 3, 5 and 8 indicate an integrative orientation.

(IV.3) *Motivational Intensity*

The motivational intensity scale (Section IV.3) contains questions to determine the degree of interest and perseverance in learning English. The assumption is that the greater the student's interest in learning English, the greater the effort (perseverance) he would spend in study.

(V) *Student self rating*

Section V consists of 5 items designed to determine the student's view of his/her own competence in English and later to relate these to the teacher ratings. The items were taken from Fu (1975).

(VI) *Parental encouragement*

Section VI consists of 6 items designed to establish the degree of parental encouragement as seen by the student. These items were taken from Fu (1975).

(VII) *Student passivity*

Section VII contains a set of 12 Likert-type items dealing with reasons for not asking questions in class. These were taken from a study carried out by Cortazzi and Jin in 1996.

Reliability of the questionnaire

The measure used for testing the internal consistency of items was Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. Cronbach's 'alpha' is an estimate of the correlation to be expected between the observed score and a 'true' score i.e. the score that would be obtained from a perfect measure of the scale variable (Frude, 1993).

The reliability of the questionnaire data was analysed using the SPSS RELIABILITY command. The original alpha values for some sections of the questionnaire were not considered to be sufficiently high, e.g. just over 0.5 for the sections on exposure to English, attitude and motivation. To achieve acceptable reliability e.g. a higher alpha value, certain items which had been identified (before the current analysis) as

lowering the alpha value were further examined and deleted for the reasons given below:

(i) *Exposure to English*: items 11 and 12 in Section 2. Since almost all the students are Cantonese, none of them speak English at home or to their family. Including these items lowered the alpha reliability coefficient and so the items 'languages spoken at home' were not included.

(ii) *Attitude*: items 7 and 9 in Section 4 part 1. Item 7 contains a negative and is in reverse order to the other items while item 9, apart from being lengthy, calls for 'speculation' if the student is unfamiliar with English-speaking families. These items were also deleted.

(iii) *Type of motivation* : item 1 in section 4, part 2. This item correlated negatively with the other items in this section. For this item 'I learn English because it is on my school time-table.' the HA's would not say it is true and so it was deleted.

By deleting these items the alpha coefficient was increased to above 0.6. The results are shown below.

Table 3: Alpha Reliability, Means and Standard Deviation for the Scales Below

Scale	Alpha	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	CoV
Attitude towards English	.6119	563	28.86	3.78	0.13
Exposure to English	.6626	569	3.72	2.36	0.63
Motivation	.6175	568	15.46	2.40	0.15
Intensity of Motivation	.6310	549	13.13	2.51	0.19
Self Rating	.8503	567	9.72	1.85	0.23
Parental Encouragement	.6525	565	23.26	3.19	0.14
Learning Strategies	.6833	547	25.30	5.80	0.22

CoV: Coefficient of Variance

The different measures of reliability are greater than 0.6 for all sections. Although the reliability of these revised scales is below the value that might be expected of a major test of personality or intelligence, it does reflect a moderate reliability, especially as the number of items for the different sections was kept to a minimum to allow for completion of the questionnaire within the time made available by the participating schools. The small number of items has a bearing on the reliability coefficient in that

the coefficient of variance (SD/mean) is less than 0.25 for the above scales (apart from exposure to English) which indicates that the lowish reliability figure is not due to large variance but rather to the small number of items. The reliability coefficient, therefore, might have been higher, if there had been more items, other things being equal. However, account is taken of these reliability scores in subsequent data analysis.

Validity

Although it can be argued that reliability and validity are interrelated to some extent, for clarity of discussion at this point it is more useful to distinguish between them. Ebel's (1965) contrastive definition of the two concepts, as quoted by Cavanaugh (1976) illustrates the essential differences. 'The term 'reliability' means the consistency with which a set of scores measures whatever they do measure. The term 'validity' means the accuracy with which a set of test scores measures what they ought to measure.' (Cavanaugh, 1976, p. 155).

Establishing the validity of an instrument entails determining whether the instrument actually measures what the designer thinks it measures. A variety of types of validity exist and whilst a perfectly designed study would seek to achieve and demonstrate acceptable standards in all relevant types, in many cases this is not possible, or, indeed necessarily desirable e.g. predictive validity is not always a major concern in instrument design.

The present instrument is based largely on established theory and methodology which are explained above in detail. As such it may be expected to have adequate construct validity in that it reflects the essential aspects of the theories on which the measure is founded. For example, as discussed above, the questions on attitude are based on Jakobovits (1970), Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Glicksman et al (1982); and the questions on Language Learning Strategies on the discussion in chapter 3 e.g. Wenden and Rubin (1987). It can therefore be said to possess convergent validity in that it harmonizes with other instruments seeking to measure the same concepts (e.g. Glicksman, Gardner and Smythe's 1982 Attitude and Motivation Test Battery -AMTB) and less closely but certainly in the same tradition as the measures devised by Pierson and Fu (1980), Rubin and Wenden (1987). Gardner et al's (1982) instruments had

been subject to criticism e.g. Oller and Perkins (1978) (see Chapter 3) but the objections concerned the possibly suspect nature of self-report measures. There had not been a concerted attack of the individual scales or the questionnaire as a whole, which was possibly a tacit acceptance of the lower level of validity of the test scales themselves as Skehan (1989) pointed out:

There may still be some way to go in the development of reliable and valid measures of attitude and motivation, but Gardner's work has surely demonstrated that considerable progress has been made. The painstaking nature of the approach to scale construction should be an example to other investigators of how measurement problems can be made more tractable in the Social Sciences. (Skehan, 1989, p 64).

Concurrent validity is addressed internally in that the internal scale correlations are satisfactory e.g. between practice and motivation ($p < 0.01$) i.e. subjects' responses appear to vary in terms of expected direction of reaction to the scales perceived similarity or dissimilarity. Externally, it is possible to confirm this in that positive expressed attitudes generally correlate more highly with competence than more negative attitudes.

Face validity i.e. that the measure apparently reflects the content of the concept in question, based on subjective judgement is often the easiest type of validity to demonstrate and this is so in this case, with informed pre-and post-test consultation taking place between the researchers, the pilot study subjects and informed and experienced practitioners in this field to decide the final form taken by the questionnaire in order for it to be an effective measure of the variables examined in this study.

It is contended, therefore, that the questionnaire in its final form and the data resulting from its administration to the subjects in this study are sufficiently reliable and valid in overall terms to enable conclusions to be drawn in conformity with the stated aims of the study.

Pretest

The questionnaire and the rating scale were pre-tested in a Band 1 school using four Form Four classes. The purpose of the pre-test was to find out if the questions and the

instructions, especially the translations into Chinese, were comprehensible and whether the questionnaire could be completed within one lesson of 35-40 minutes. The rationale was if these students understood the questions, then Form Seven students (the target group) should also be able to do so. It was found that some of the Chinese translations were rather literal and so those sections were revised to read more like modern Chinese.

The split-half reliability of the attitude scales was computed, using the Spearman-Brown formula and found to be 0.55. An r of 0.55 exceeds the critical value for r (for 34 degrees of freedom) that could be expected to occur by chance at the 0.01 level. Furthermore, the items were not highly homogeneous as they were designed to measure more than one aspect of attitude.

On the assumption that strength of motivation influences the amount of effort a learner will expend, the answers from items 3-6 in section III of the questionnaire, denoting frequency of practice, were tabulated against the three categories of motivational intensity. A Chi-Square test showed a statistically significant association ($p < 0.01$) between practice and intensity of motivation. The items measuring frequency of practice therefore, can be described with some confidence as having a degree of construct validity.

4.2.3.2. The English Language Competence Rating Scale

One technique that could have been used for establishing competence was some form of testing. Schools, however, declined to accept any form of testing since the students had just gone through a series of rigorous exams. Hence it was decided to devise a Language Competence Rating Scale to group rank the subjects according to level of achievement. This specially devised Language Competence Rating Scale had been previously piloted in a secondary school with Form 4 students. The rating scale consists of a 5-point scale ranging from 1-5 (High to Low) with explanatory notes and illustrations for each section. Teachers were asked, on the basis of exam results and class work, to assign each student to a grade on the rating scale for each of the four language skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking.

In the pilot study the English language competence rating scale and the accompanying letter were judged to be fully comprehensible and not too time-consuming for the teacher. An explanatory note about the term 'reading' was added when it was discovered that one of the teachers thought that 'reading' might be understood as reading aloud rather than reading comprehension.

This scale was used to augment the information provided by the Secondary School Places Allocation system (SSPLA), explained in the section describing the sample. Using the external SSPLA to confirm student proficiency seems acceptable, in that, through the use of internal school exams and standardised tests, the process of promotion from primary 6 to secondary 3 to secondary 6, acts as a system of grading refinement so that, by Form 7, Band 1/2 schools genuinely contain Band 1/2 students.

What is sought here is not a precise measure of student performance but a mechanism which would indicate general trends with a particular school i.e. it is a refining instrument. Furthermore, the teachers involved formed a stable body of highly experienced practitioners who had been teaching for many years in their current school. Therefore their wisdom of practice in the assessment of competence was believed to be reliable.

4.2.3.3 *Student Interviews.*

Interviews with students were also conducted in English. The samples of students were purposively drawn to complement the data collected from the questionnaire e.g. High and Low achievers according to teacher assessment. The students were interviewed using a semi-structured format, based on the Naiman et al. Adult Interview (1978) which allowed for flexibility on the part of the interviewer. The Naiman et al. study (1978) was carried out in two stages. The first was an interview study of adult language learners and the second consisted of observations of the classroom behaviour of the students during language lessons. The latter stage did not reveal any significant new information in the area of learning strategies and techniques and it was concluded that '...strict observation in language learning classrooms does not reveal language learning strategies or specific techniques.'

(Naiman et al., 1978, p. 99). Rather it was found possible through interviews with students to identify strategies and techniques used for language learning.

The Adult Interview, therefore, was found to be more fruitful as it demonstrated that successful learners do employ common strategies and techniques of learning which they claim contributed to their success and was accordingly used in this study.

However, the interview was also seen as an opportunity to gain an insight into the cognitive processes learners use by engaging them with tasks and 'guided think aloud' activities. Those who were able to do so unprompted were encouraged to do so. Others, who were less certain, were encouraged to explain afterwards how they arrived at their conclusions.

4.2.3.4 Teacher Interviews

The Form 7 teachers were also interviewed using a semi-structured format which included questions on the differences in attitude, motivation and where possible the strategies used by specific High achievers (HA's) and Low achievers (LA's). In addition teachers were asked to comment on the present English language teaching situation in Hong Kong and to suggest possible remedies or steps which could be taken to improve the current English learning situation in Hong Kong.

Using these mechanisms it is felt that rich data of some substance was obtained which would help to throw light on the current English language learning situation in Hong Kong.

4.3 Methods of Data Analysis

All data were carefully checked and formatted. The final format used was Dbase III as it is compatible with most applications e.g. the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) which was used for the analyses.

A matching exercise was carried out in which, for each student, competence as rated by their teachers, was matched with his/her answers in the questionnaire. For ease of input, data were first coded so that codes went up in number from top to bottom and from left to right. At a later stage the data were recoded so that higher numbers indicated more favourable ratings e.g. 1 = never and 5 = always. For those items with a reverse direction from the others, the codings were reversed before a scale was formed. Missing items were coded as 0.

4.3.1 *Scoring system*

Scales for scoring the data were established as follows:

Competence

The average of the teachers' ratings for each student in reading, writing, speaking and listening was calculated. Students with a score below or equal to the class median were treated as Low achievers (LA's) while students scoring above the median were treated as High achievers (HA's).

2 *Exposure to English*

The scale for exposure to English was formed by summing the items in section II of the questionnaire as follows:

- * Number of books read (Q2.2). Scores are 2 for reading more than 4 books in English in a year, 1 for 2 - 4 books, 0 otherwise.
- * Regularly buy English magazines (Q2.3). Scores are 1 if bought regularly, 0 otherwise.
- * Types of English newspaper (Q2.4). Scores are 1 if bought regularly, 0 otherwise.
- * Number of English programmes watched. Scores are 2 for watching more than 4 English programmes per week, 1 for 3-4 programmes, 0 otherwise.

- * Hours of watching English programmes. Scores are respectively 2 for watching more than 4 hours, 1 for 3-4 hours, 0 otherwise.
- * Watching a TV programme in English. Scores are 2 for 'listen to the dialogue and do not read the sub-titles', 1 for 'sometimes listen to the dialogue or sometimes read subtitles, 0 for 'usually read the sub-titles'.
- * Hours listening to radio programmes in English. Scores are 2 for listening for more than 4 hours, 1 for 2-4 hours, 0 otherwise.
- * English spoken to friends. Scores are 2 if the student speaks English always or most of the time, 1 for sometimes, 0 otherwise.

The scale for exposure was formed by summing the scores of the above items and is treated as the measure of the degree of exposure to English. For purposes of tabulation the variable is categorised as follows:

Degree of Exposure to English	Low	Moderate	High
Score	0-6	7-9	10-14

3 *Attitude*

A scale for attitude towards English was formed by summing the scores for all items in section IV.I of the questionnaire (Appendix 1). However, two items (7, 9) were found to have a negative correlation with the other items and were deleted to maintain a higher reliability. These items may have been confusing in that item 7 contains a negative and item 9 asks students to 'speculate' if they have little or no experience of English speaking families. The sum of the scores constitutes the measure of the student's attitude to English i.e. the higher the score, the more favourable the attitude. On the basis of the scores, three levels are distinguished:

<u>Attitude</u>	<u>Score</u>
Very favourable	Over 70%
Moderately favourable	50% - 70%
Unfavourable	Below 50%

4 *Type of Motivation*

Three types of motivation were included in Section IV.2: extrinsic, (items 1, 6), integrative (items 3,5,8) and instrumental (items 2,4,7). Item 1 'I learn English because it is on my school time-table', showed a negative correlation with the other items. The negative implies that it is the LA's who tended to rate item 1 as very true the reason that they study English because it is a requirement of the school curriculum. Hence it was deleted and not analysed in order to maintain a higher reliability. Scales were formed by averaging the component items.

5 *Intensity of Motivation*

The scale here was formed by adding the scores of all items in section IV.3. On the basis of the scores three categories of motivational intensity are distinguished: Strong (Above 70%); Moderate (50% - 70%); Weak (Below 50%)

6 *Self-rating*

A scale was formed by adding the scores in section V.

7 *Parental Encouragement*

A scale was formed by adding the scores for all items in section VI.

8 *Learning Strategies*

- * Searching for meaning: The scale was formed by averaging items 1 and 2
- * Constant Practice: The scale was formed by averaging items 3,4, 5 and 6.
- * Use of inductive learning: The scale was formed by averaging items 7 and 8.
- * Willingness to risk errors: Scores are 3 for the first two categories in items 9,10,11; 2 for the first two categories in any two of the 3 items, 0 otherwise.
- * Memorisation: The scale was formed by averaging items 12 and 13.
- * Modality (items 14, 15): Students are classified as visually or aurally minded if both questions indicate either written or spoken as the preferred mode and no decided preference if there is a different answer to each question.
- * Readiness to use English (16,17). Scores are 2 if students try to speak English in the circumstances indicated, 1 otherwise.

4.3.2 Analysis of the Quantitative Data

Various techniques were used for the analysis of the statistical data as described below.

- (i) Frequencies of different types were calculated e.g. the strategies most used by students.
- (ii) The statistical data were also analysed using techniques such as means, standard deviation and valid percentages of variables.
- (iii) In addition, t-tests, ANOVA and Regression analysis were also used to establish significant relationships among dependent and independent variables.
- (iv) Pearson Chi-Square Statistics in contingency table analysis were computed to test the significance between two categorical variables.
- (v) Stepwise regression is a means of selecting independent variables which will provide the best prediction possible of the dependent variable. This method involves the construction of a prediction equation, one variable at a time, starting with the variable which is the best predictor, then adding the next variable that is the best predictor in conjunction with the first variable and so on.

4.3.3 Analysis of the Qualitative Data (Interviews and think-aloud tasks)

Two ways were used to analyse the qualitative data: (1) extracting key words or sentences from the transcripts and grouping them in tabular form, (2) searching the complete transcribed dialogues between researcher and subjects for relevant information. The process is shown below with an extract taken from the interview with Teacher 3 in the section dealing with factors that encourage or hinder learning.

Teacher 3.

- I *What do you see as the major problems facing your students in learning English?*
- T *They have little intrinsic motivation, have little exposure to English outside lessons and are passive in their learning*
- I *How important is English to your students?*

- T** *They don't need English to survive in Hong Kong as Cantonese is their language of communication...and so their exposure to English is little and probably incidental ...perhaps a film on TV ... pop songs on the radio.*
- I** *How do they go about their learning? Can you tell me?*
- T** *They are not independent ... as ... learners. A large majority relies too much on their teachers. They need a lot of guidance from teachers.*
- I** *How do you think they can be helped?*
- T** *Create a more English-rich environment for students in school to improve their interest in language and exposure. Give more time for interesting lessons, task-based lessons, more pair work and group work activities.*
- T** *That's how I think we may improve their English but we don't have time because of the exam demands.*

The points that emerge from the above are:

- * students receive insufficient opportunity to practise English in school**
- * students need help to become more independent learners**
- * the solution lies in more frequent practical work e.g. interactional activities such as group work**
- * implicit in the above interview was the wash-back effect of the external examination in inhibiting suggested classroom activity.**

From this extract, Table 23 was filled in for Teacher 3 as follows:

Problems: lack of motivation, do not need English, lack of exposure to English, passive, need guidance.

Solutions: activity work, pair/group work, less crowded timetable, less exam pressure.

In this chapter the research questions for this study have been indicated. The means and instruments used to provide answers to these questions have also been described and explained. The findings are discussed and reported in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Description and Analysis of Results

5.0 Preamble

This chapter presents the background of the students and then goes on to deal with the analysis of the data gathered from the student questionnaire as well as student and teacher interviews, as per the research questions posed in chapter 4. This chapter is long as extracts from various interviews have been included to give illustrations of the learning culture within which these students operate.

5.1 Student Background

The questionnaire results reveal that students in this sample come mainly from fairly comfortable, professional homes (Appendix 6). Nearly 50% of the fathers proceeded to Form 4 schooling and are either professionals, administrators or in the service industry. Most homes have the appliances associated with a degree of affluence e.g. televisions, air-conditioners, washing machines, refrigerators, video-recorders and laser disc players. In terms of the father's salary, Hong Kong Island ranks highest, Kowloon second and the New Territories third. For each of the three areas of Hong Kong, Band 1 schools top the father's earnings list. However, only about 30% of the fathers earn less than \$10000 per month which figure is above the Hong Kong mean of \$8000.

Table 4 reveals that there were more male students (56.60%) in the sample than female (43.10%). It also shows that there were more Science (52.20%) than Arts (39.20 %) students.

Table 4: Gender and Stream of the Students

Gender	Male	56.60%	Female	43.10%	Missing	0.30%
Stream	Science	52.20%	Arts/Others	47.50%	Missing	0.40%

Table 5 shows the distribution of scores on certain scales for the percentage of students below 50% of the maximum score, for those between 50% and 70% and for those above 70%. It also shows that most students have little exposure to English outside the classroom. They do have a favourable attitude towards English with a moderate intensity of motivation towards the learning of English. Instrumental motivation is higher than integrative motivation and they rate themselves rather low in proficiency in English. They do receive strong encouragement from their parents.

However, parental encouragement would seem to be largely restricted to school work as only a small minority (some 2%) can be categorised as experiencing a high exposure to English i.e. using English as a second language. For most students, English functions as a foreign language. This conclusion, however tentative, has far-reaching pedagogical implications and will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 5: Percentage scores for students on the following scales.

Scale	Below 50%	50%-70%	Above 70%	Total
Exposure to English	87.2	10.9	1.9	100
Attitude towards English	6.9	59.4	33.7	100
Integrative motivation	30.6	45.3	24.1	100
Instrumental motivation	1.8	19.2	79	100
Intensity of motivation	23.1	45.8	31.1	100
Self rating	52.2	42.9	4.0	100
Parental encouragement	5.5	31.8	62.7	100

To provide an overview of the distribution of students in the various scales, a descriptive one-way analysis of the scales was carried out. The results in Table 6 reveal that except for exposure to English, self-rating by students and parental encouragement, all scales are negatively skewed which indicates that most students have very little exposure to English. In terms of self-rating, the vast majority have a negative view of their competence in English and gave themselves low ratings, despite indicating a moderately strong motivation to learn English and exhibiting a favourable attitude towards the language. (Appendix 7)

Table 6: Descriptive One-way analysis of the scales in Table 5.

Variable	Median	Mean	Skewness	Min	Max
Exposure	3	3.27	.903	0	14
Attitude	29	28.86	-.532	11	38
Integrative	6	6.35	-.033	3	9
Instrumental	6	5.28	-.904	2	6
Intensity	13	13.13	-.411	6	19
Self-rating	9	9.72	.336	4	16
Parent. encour.	24	23.26	.542	13	30

It was decided to test the degree of association between gender and competence to which end Pearson Chi-Square statistics were computed. Table 7 shows that there are significantly more high achievers among the female students (41.45%) than the males (28.8%).

Table 7: Competence and Gender

	Count Col Pct	Male 1	Female 2	Row Total
Low	1.00	168	99	267
		71.2	58.6	65.9
High	2.00	68	70	138
		28.8	41.4	34.1
	Column	236	169	405
Total		58.3	41.7	100.0

Chi-Square	Value	DF	Significance
Pearson	6.96717	1	.00830
Number of Missing Observations 71			

5.2 Data Analyses

The analyses consist of a statistical examination of (1) the quantitative data and (2) a more qualitative examination of the interview data.

5.2.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

Dbase III Plus was used for the final format as it is compatible with most computer applications. The questionnaire data were processed by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). There were two stages of analysis. The first included calculating

means, frequencies, standard deviation and valid percentages of variables. The second one used Cronbach's Alpha to examine the internal consistency of various items. When an acceptable reliability coefficient was established, as described in the previous chapter, further in-depth examinations were made using t-tests, ANOVA and regression analyses.

For the rest of this chapter the results of the statistical analyses will be presented in the order of the research questions relating to the three variables outlined in chapter 4.

5.2.1.1 Variable 1: The Learning Situation

i. *In which stream are students more strongly motivated to learn English?*

A One Way ANOVA analysis of variance shows that there is no significant difference between *Science* and *Non-Science* students in terms of *integrative motivation*. There is a marginal, but not significant difference for *instrumental motivation*. The figure for *intensity of motivation* was found to be significant at the .025 level with the mean of the difference between Science and Non-science stream being higher for *Arts* students indicating that Arts students are more strongly motivated to learn English. The mean scores support this conclusion. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: ANOVA One Way Analysis of Variance of Different Motivation Scales by Educational Stream.

	DF	F	Signif of F
Integrative motivation	2/ 465	.052	.949
Instrumental motivation	2/ 465	2.373	.094
Intensity of motivation	2/ 456	3.707	.025

Intensity of Motivation by Stream

	Science	Arts	Others
Mean	12.87	13.48	13.02
N (sample size)	(257)	(187)	(12)
Standard Deviation	2.52	2.42	2.72

ii *Are students in certain locations more strongly motivated to learn English than those in other locations?*

A One Way ANOVA analysis of variance was carried out to examine the relationship between motivation and location. No difference was found for integrative motivation and intensity of motivation although *instrumental motivation* seemed to be significantly lower for the New Territories (NT) group than for the other two groups (Hong Kong, Kowloon). This particular result may be due to sensitivity to sampling variations and may require further research as other studies in Hong Kong into motivation have revealed no such difference. Rather, the figures were revealed as not robust in that samples from different designs produced different results. The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: ANOVA One Way Analysis of Variance of Different Motivation Scales by Location

	DF	F	Signif. of F
Integrative motivation	2/465	.494	.611
Instrumental motivation	2/465	3.561	.029
Intensity of motivation	2/456	1.684	.187

Mean Table

	Hong Kong	Kowloon	NT
Instrumental motivation	2.66	2.68	2.57
N sample size	(127)	(198)	(140)

To confirm these results a post-hoc test was used i.e. Tukey's HSD test. It was found that there was no significant difference between Hong Kong and Kowloon (significance = 0.845). A very marginal relationship was found between Hong Kong and N.T (significance = 0.148) and a significant relationship was found between Kowloon and N.T. The results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10 : Tukey's HSD Test for Multiple Comparisons

Tukey HSD. Dependent variable: instrumental motivation				
(I) location	(J) location	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Hong Kong	Kowloon	-0.024	0.043	0.845
	N.T.	0.087	0.046	0.148
Kowloon	Hong Kong	0.024	0.043	0.845
	N.T.	0.111	0.042	0.025
N.T.	Hong Kong	-0.087	0.046	0.148
	Kowloon	-0.111	0.042	0.025

- iii. *Do students in certain locations experience a higher degree of exposure to English than students in other areas?*

Table 11 shows that no significant difference was found between exposure to English and location.

Table 11: Anova One way Analysis of Variance between exposure to English and location

	DF	F	Signif. of F
Exposure to English	2/465	2.216	.110

- iv. *Is integrative motivation as important as instrumental motivation for learners of English in Hong Kong?*

Frequency counts reveal that for most students, motivation of an *instrumental orientation* is the main driving force for learning English i.e. the language was being learned to further certain educational or career goals.

Table 12: Valid Percentage for Items on Integrative and Instrumental Motivation

Integrative Motivation	Not true	Quite true	Very true
Item 3	37.1	49.5	13.4
Item 5	12.8	48.0	39.2
Item 8	10.2	47.4	42.4
Instrumental Motivation			
Item 2	2.1	37.1	60.7
Item 4	2.1	26.1	71.8
Item 7	11.6	56.0	32.4

To check the relationship between integrative and instrumental motivation, a paired samples t-test was carried out. Table 13 reveals that *instrumental motivation* is highly significantly more important than integrative motivation for each student in the sample.

Table 13: Paired samples t-test: Instrumental Motivation and Integrative Motivation

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Instrumental	465	2.6417	.426	.018
Integrative	465	2.1156	.485	.020

t Value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.
21.56	567	.000

v. *What language learning strategies for learning English are in common use among upper secondary students?*

Frequency counts were used to establish the most frequently used strategies which are shown in Table 14(a).

Table 14(a): Percentage of Students Using the Following Strategies

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
Strategy for searching for meaning	0.0	.9	22.7	62.9	13.5	3.89	0.62
Contextual clue (q3_2)	.2	6.3	35.0	42.2	16.3	3.68	0.83
Dictionary (q3_1)	.2	6.0	40.9	41.7	11.2	3.58	0.77
Constant practice	1.8	46.9	48.9	2.3	0.0	2.52	0.58
Vocabulary in context (q3_3)	20.9	50.4	24.1	3.7	.9	2.13	0.81
Repetition of difficult sounds (q3_4)	6.9	19.9	36.9	31.1	5.3	3.08	0.99
Role play (q3_5)	27.2	46.7	20.2	4.0	1.6	2.06	0.88
Pattern practice (q3_12)	13.7	46.2	31.6	7.4	.9	2.35	0.84
Memorization of sentences (q3_12)	3.7	18.6	48.2	22.7	6.9	3.10	0.91
Memorization of rules (q3_13)	.5	7.7	28.1	45.9	17.8	3.37	0.86

Table 14 (b) deals with categories and as such the results could not be presented in the same way as the frequency counts in Table 14 (a). Hence they are shown separately in Table 14 (b). In Table 14 (b) the percentages refer to answers to questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16 and 17 of Section III of the questionnaire. On the basis of the scores to these questions, three categories were established-yes, no and probably. The percentages refer to students whose answers indicated yes, no or probable use of the strategies of inductive learning, willingness to risk error and readiness to use English.

Table 14(b): Percentage of Students Using the Following Strategies

	Yes	Probably	No	Mean	SD
Use of inductive learning	41.8	32.3	23.0	1.81	0.79
Willingness to risk error	24.4	33.9	41.7	2.17	0.80
Readiness to use English	40.4	-	59.6	2.19	0.98

Tables 14 (a) and (b) indicate that the most frequently used strategies are:

- (i) ***Search for meaning*** where the use of *contextual clues* takes precedence over the *use of the dictionary*. The consistent use of such strategies demands the ability to understand the surrounding content and function words which suggests a certain developed competence. This point is further discussed in the next chapter.
- (ii) ***Memorization of rules***, the relatively consistent use of which contrasts with the low rating given to the memorization of sentences, probably reflecting the judgement that the more general strategy of rule memorization is more useful.
- (iii) ***Use of inductive learning***, by which students are taught to move from the particular to the general.
- (iv) ***Readiness to use English*** where nearly half the sample indicated they were willing to use English for communication rather than just as an academic exercise which may also be a reflection of competence i.e. the more competent the student the greater the readiness to use English.

Students in this sample, therefore, generally *search for meaning using contextual clues and a dictionary*. They also *memorize* a lot but lack constant practice in vocabulary repetition of difficult sounds and pattern practice. This point is also discussed in the next chapter.

vi. *Do students prefer a visual or aural mode of presentation of learning materials?*

Modality was included as it was felt that preference for one mode of learning would be likely to influence consciously or unconsciously, the choice of learning techniques. However, Table 15 indicates that more than half the students have no clear preference for either the visual or aural mode in the presentation of language learning materials. Of those who expressed preference, the *visual mode* was much the more favoured, indicating a distinction in favour of the eye-minded over the ear-minded. The fact that more than half expressed no preference or either suggests that the students had chosen multiple learning styles. Reid (1987) claims that 'Research with native speakers of English strongly suggests that the ability of students to employ multiple learning styles results in greater classroom success.' (Reid, 1987, p.101). If this is true then these students should be successful English learners. However, there are militating factors which are discussed in chapter 6.

Table 15: Modality Preference in the Presentation of Language Learning Materials

Value Label	Frequency	Percent
Visual only	149	31.9
Aural only	59	12.6
No preference or sometimes visual, sometimes aural	259	55.5
Total	467	100.0

When tested for significance, the Pearson Chi-Square statistics were 1.76 for 3 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.623. This indicates no significant relationship between competence and modality. The Pearson R correlation was 0.000669 indicating that the correlation between modality and competence is not significant.

5.2.1.2 Variable 2. Attitude and Motivation

Given the economic importance of English to Hong Kong, it is thought that instrumental motivation (as opposed to integrative motivation) would be a significant factor in the successful learning of English, especially as Table 5 shows that nearly 80% of the students are instrumentally motivated. Accordingly, the following research question (chapter 3) is posed: is competence in English associated with any of the following?:

- (i) *Favourable attitude towards English*
- (ii) *Intensity of Motivation*
- (iii) *Instrumental Motivation*
- (iv) *Integrative Motivation*
- (v) *Self-rating*
- (vi) *Parental encouragement*
- (vii) *Exposure to English*

Table 16 shows the relationship of competence in English with these independent variables, arranged in decreasing magnitude of t-values in a 2-tailed test. Very significant relationships are found between competence and *self-rating, intensity of motivation, exposure to English and integrative motivation*. A marginally significant relationship was found with attitude. The figures suggest the first four factors and possibly the fifth (attitude) have a differential effect on achievement in English. However, no significant relationship was found with parental encouragement and instrumental motivation. The significance of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 16: Independent samples t-test of Independent Variables with Competence in English.

	t Value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tail Prob.	Means Low (B)	For High (A)
Self rating	-6.33	318.38	.000	9.3082	10.4294
Intens. Of motiv.	-5.47	358.93	.000	12.6136	13.8780
Exposure to Eng.	-4.99	290.18	.000	3.3072	4.4529

Integ. Motiv.	-2.90	335.52	.004	2.0503	2.1863
Attitude	-1.68	364.56	.053	28.6179	29.2118
Instr. Motiv.	1.16	343.28	.247	2.6508	2.6029
Parent. Encour.	.36	333.09	.723	23.2557	23.1437

To check the findings, a further in-depth examination of the data was carried out using a Stepwise Regression analysis with the results shown below. The stepwise regression analysis stopping at stop 3, indicates that when all the variables are added together, then *self-rating, intensity of motivation* and *exposure to English* are significantly related to **competence in English**. Those not entered in the equation are either correlated to those already in the equation (integrative motivation, attitude); or (ii) not correlated with competence e.g. instrumental motivation and parental encouragement.

Table 17: Stepwise Regression with the Following scales

Step	Variables entering
1	Self-rating
2	Intensity of motivation
3	Exposure to English

Variables in the Equation

Variables not in the Equation

Variable	Sig T	Variable	Sig T
Self rating	.0000	Integrative mot.	.04845
Intensity of motivation	.0009	Attitude	.6873
Exposure to English	.0072	Parent. Encour.	.0684
(constant)	.0181	Instrumental Mot.	.0643

5.2.1.3 Variable 3. English Language Learning Strategies

In connection with learning strategies, the following research question (see chapter 4) is posed: is competence in English associated with any of the following?:

- (i) *Constant regular practice employing specific practice activities*
- (ii) *searching for meaning*
- (iii) *the use of contextual clues to infer meaning*
- (iv) *an inductive strategy to infer linguistic rules and patterns*
- (v) *memorization*
- (vi) *willingness to tolerate the risk of error*
- (vii) *Readiness to use English for communication*

As the competence scores have been converted into a category scale (HA v LA) Chi-square was used for the analysis. The results shown in Table 18, indicate the level of statistical significance between competence and various learning strategies which were here broken down into their component parts e.g. constant practice included vocabulary, repetition, role-play and pattern practice.

Table 18: The Significance of Various Learning Strategies with Competence and the Percentages Marked ‘Very Often’ and ‘Always’ by High and Low Achievers

Learning Strategy	Significance	Low	High
Searching for meaning	0.00122	70.3	85.3
Dictionary	0.05851	54.6	55.3
Contextual clues	0.01419	52.3	66.5
Constant practice	0.00211	0.7	4.1
Vocabulary	0.00288	3.3	7.6
Repetition of difficult sounds	0.0004	43.8	26.5
Role play	0	3.3	10.6
Pattern practice	0.00003	3.9	15.9
Use of inductive learning	0.16083	21.1	28.7
Memorization	0.01127	54.9	70
Willingness to risk errors	0.00375	35.6	49.4
Readiness to use English	0.00062	54.6	70.6

From Table 18 very significant relationships are found between most of the learning strategies with competence except for the use of inductive learning. The *high achievers*, generally use most strategies more often than the low achievers, except for the repetition of difficult sounds. The *high achievers* use *contextual clues*, *role play* and *pattern practice* relatively more often than the low achievers. They also *memorize more*, *are*

willing to risk error and are more *ready to use English*. In general, the *low achievers* use fewer strategies but they are also likely to use the strategies of *searching for meaning*, the *dictionary* and *repetition of difficult sounds*.

The above analysis indicates statistically significant relationships between memorization and competence with the high achievers memorizing more than the low achievers. To investigate whether memorization of rules or sentences was the main factor, further analyses were carried out.

Cross tabulations were applied to memorization of sentences and rules with competence as shown in Tables 19 and 20.

The Pearson Chi-Square statistics reveal a very significant relationship between *memorization of sentences* and competence (0.0032) but only a marginal relationship between memorization of rules and competence (0.059). Memorization of sentences hence contributes more to the significant relationship between memorization and competence.

Table 19 (Q3.12): Memorization of Sentences with Competence

	Count Col Pct	Low 1.00	High 2.00	Row Total
Almost never	1	14 4.6 %	4 2.4 %	18 3.8 %
Seldom	2	66 21.6 %	22 12.9 %	88 18.5 %
Sometimes	3	152 49.7 %	80 47.1 %	232 48.7 %
Very often	4	60 19.6 %	44 25.9 %	104 21.8 %
Always	5	14 4.6 %	20 11.8 %	34 7.1 %
	Column	306	170	476
	Total	64.3 %	35.7 %	100.0 %

Chi-Square	Value	DF	Significance
Pearson	15.85814	4	.00322

Table 20 (Q3.13): Memorization of Rules with Competence

	Count Col Pct	Low 1.00	High 2.00	Row Total
Almost never	1	1 .3 %	1 .6 %	2 .4 %
Seldom	2	25 8.2 %	10 5.9 %	35 7.4 %
Sometimes	3	97 31.7 %	35 20.6 %	132 27.7 %
Very often	4	135 44.1 %	88 51.8 %	223 46.8 %
Always	5	48 15.7 %	36 21.2 %	84 17.6 %
	Column	306	170	476
	Total	64.3 %	35.7 %	100.0 %

Chi-Square	Value	DF	Significance
Pearson	9.05167	4	.05982

In addition, 37.7% of the high achievers ticked 'very often' and 'always' for memorization of sentences as compared to 24.2% for the low achievers. This relative difference is higher than the relative difference found for memorization of rules; 73% for high achievers and 59.8% for the low achievers. Given the situation that high achievers tend to memorize more, the difference is more apparent for memorization of sentences than for memorization of rules.

The correlations in Table 21 also indicate that the memorization of sentences (0.0001) is more significant than memorization of rules (0.0118).

Table 21: Correlations Between Memorization of Rules and Sentences

	Sentences	Memorization rules
Correlations	0.1774	0.1153
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0001	0.0118
N	476	476

5.2.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data (interviews and think-aloud tasks)

5.2.2.1 Teacher Interviews

Thirteen teachers agreed to be interviewed (Table 22).

Table 22: Background of Teachers

Teacher	No. of years teaching	No. of years in school	ELT training	Major subject	Intake
1	2	1	CU	Lit. / Trans	1 / 2
2	13	7	HKU/UK	TESL	1/ 2
3	21	18	HKU/HK	English	1/ 2
4	7	7	HKU	Soc. Stud	4/5
5	21	21	HKU	English	4/5
6	10	10	HK/UK	English	1/ 2
7	30	30	HK/UK	TESL	1/ 2
8	22	17	HKU	English	1/ 2
9	5	3	CU/UK	Bio/ELT	1 / 2
10	20	1	HK/UK	Lit	1/ 2
11	16	12	CU	Phil/ELT	1 / 2
12	4	4	HK	-	4/5
13	10	-	HK	-	4/5

Key: CU - Chinese University; HKU - Hong Kong University; UK - United Kingdom
Lit.- Literature; **Trans.-** Translation; **TESL-** Teaching of English as a Second Language;
Soc. Stud - Social Studies; **Bio-** Biology; **ELT-** English Language Teaching; **Phil.-** Philosophy.

They were almost all very experienced, with only two having taught for less than 5 years. Nearly all have been in their current schools for several years and almost 50% for over ten years. Apart from one teacher (Social Studies) all had been trained in English and had qualified in Hong Kong and/or the UK.

Teacher comments on the differences between High Achievers (HA) and Low Achievers (LA) are summarized in Table 23. The salient words are taken directly from the interview guides or interviews themselves and indicate differences in the two types of learners as noted by their teachers.

Table 23: Salient Points from Teacher Interview Guides on HA and LA Students

Teacher	High Achievers (HA)	Low Achievers (LA)
1	Hardworking, serious, very good behaviour, self-motivated, pays attention, jots down notes	Similar to the HA
2	No comment	N/A
3	Highly motivated, responsive, active, willing to take part, leader in clubs and activities, asks questions	Shy, reserved, passive, quiet, works alone, does little work outside the classroom
4	Enthusiastic, good, motivated, willing to ask questions, eager	Passive, poor, tardy, needs guidance
5	Average, well-behaved, outstanding (he'd achieved B in the HKCEA but did badly in other subjects, interested in improving his English	N/A
6	Enthusiastic, willing to do extra work, responsive, good attitude, willing to speak, eager to improve	Lacks motivation, minimal workload, poor attendance, doesn't do homework, passive
7	Bright, analytical, industrious, attentive, practical, interested	Smart but little effort, easily distracted, bored, daydreams
8	Strong, attentive, takes notes, works more	Weak, sleeps, little work, bored
9	Able, capable, confident, high, good memory, organized, serious, participates	Diligent, shy, well behaved, low concentration, not interested, mechanical
10	Excellent, practical	Weak, average, not practical
11	N/A	N/A
12	Eager to improve, motivated, attentive, cooperative, active in group/pair work, asks questions, mature, works on her own	Lacks confidence, initiative & learning skills, passive, shy, reserved, seldom speaks to others, relies on teacher
13	Above average, extra work, eager to learn, asks questions	Lazy, learning problems in all subjects, low skills level

Teachers characterise HA's as being attentive, self-motivated, participatory, interested and actively involved in the learning process. They are prepared to take notes, ask questions in class and do extra work outside the classroom. They also seem to have developed particular ways of conducting their studies e.g. taking notes, memorizing materials, participating in pair, group work.

In contrast the LA's are typically described as being uninterested, given to day-dreaming, inattentive, lazy even, solitary, bored and have low concentration levels. They do not seem to have developed ways of coping with the learning materials, remain passive and are not interested in doing any extra work outside the classroom. They also tend to hand in their homework late.

One outstanding difference noted is the outgoing nature of the HA's who seem interested in doing things in association with others. They also tend to be leaders in learning activities and student clubs. The LA's seem to be reserved, quiet personalities who prefer to work alone or do only the minimum required.

The following representative extracts from interviews with Teachers 12 and 13 will illustrate the above points. I is the interviewer and T is the teacher.

Teacher 12

I *What is the biggest problems that the HA's face?*

T(12) *Their writing skills need to be improved. They have to learn more about the style of writing and the tone. They have the grammar, they know the language, but the different styles used in different contexts, there ... they are still not very ... familiar with.*

I *How does this show? Is it in their writing?*

T *From their assignments.*

I *Is that to do with tenses?*

T *I think it is their usage of language more than tenses.*

The point that emerges is that the students have a **basic repertoire** of language items but do **not use these appropriately**. Further probing produced the following insights.

I *What then, do you think, are the HA's strengths?*

T *Very good grammar in their writing. They can understand better...*

Here it turned out that **expertise in grammar** referred to **success in answering discrete, sentence-type** grammatical exercises. This issue will be further discussed in the next chapter.

I *Do they do a lot of independent work?*

T *Some of them.*

I *What sort of things do they do?*

T *Doing some extra exercises. Practising oral English with classmates and teachers.*

I *Interesting. How do they do this?*

T *Chatting in English.*

I *Oh? Really?*

T *That's with classmates as well as teachers.*

I *When? Intervals? Recess?*

T *Whenever they feel like it. But it's not a regular practice.*

What is revealed here is the **willingness** of the HA's **to engage actively** in the learning process. Further questions as to the behaviour exhibited in class by the HA's elicited some of the ways in which they actively tried to learn English. These include **paying attention, note-taking, attempts at error correction and a willingness to try out newly-learned items.**

I *Could you give me some examples of the ways in which the HA's learn English?*

T *I think they are very attentive in class. They pay attention to whatever you say and they will take notes. And then, if you have taught them something for their assignment, they will try to use it. Say you teach them one or two vocabulary, then they will try to use it in their composition. Then when you have pointed out some common mistake, they will remember it, write it down and they will try to avoid that.*

I *Why do you think they want to learn English?*

T *I think studying English may guarantee getting a better job ... and also, I think they have intrinsic motivation.*

Given the earlier indications that instrumental motivation was the main driving force for learning English and as this was a Band 4/5 school, the point about **intrinsic motivation** was new, interesting and hence followed up.

I *That's interesting. Tell me more about this...*

T *Because when they are good at something, they try to work harder on those areas ... because if they invest time and effort there they know that they will get a return... and they can have a sense of achievement. So, they would like the subject more and try hard in those areas.*

Similar comments were made by **Teacher 13**.

T *In my class I will teach them mechanical exercises. Tell them to understand what the message is, the use of the language...*

I *Can they cope with it?*

T *Actually it's very difficult and they don't want to do it.*

I *What do you think is the main problem facing your students?*

T *Lack of vocabulary.*

I *How do you improve their vocabulary...?*

T *I ask them to learn some new words every day. To find out the meaning and how to organise them and then tenses and sentences. Most of them give up as it is very difficult to learn vocabulary.*

I *Do you think tenses are a problem?*

T *Tenses. Yes. One of the major problems. But I try to increase their language awareness. I think we have to give them more opportunity to speak English*

I *How do you do that?*

T *Because ... I encourage them to get English after school. For example, I ask them to interview foreign visitors ... and then ask them to report back. I find that they differ a lot in their project work.*

I *Now what about your HA?*

- T** *He's eager to learn and to ask questions. He has mastered the basic English but he is quite dominant in discussions... he likes to express all the ideas, questions and expects the others to follow... it provides me with a base from which to solve his problems*
- I** *His weaknesses?*
- T** *A bit lazy. He's not very attentive. It depends. If he is interested in a topic, he will try his best to get the opportunity to express himself. If he is not interested he doesn't participate any more.*
- I** *What does he do to learn English?*
- T** *Memorize. Remember rules and vocabulary.*
- I** *OK. Let's look at the LA's. What are their weaknesses and strengths?*
- T** *I think they are careless... and they usually get all grammatical items mixed up. They are very confused when using the language functions, using tenses, grammar etc. ... and sometimes they have difficulty to understand written work.... because I find that they are poor ... in doing ... comprehension.*
- I** *Reading, listening comprehension?*
- T** *Both.*
- I** *And their strengths?*
- T** *I think their strength is ... they keep trying even though their performance is not very good... they work hard to improve.*
- I** *What about their behaviour in class?*
- T** *Some of them are attentive in class and some of them are not. I think they have to rely on the classmates very often. Because I have noticed that sometimes when I give them some assignments to do, they have to turn round and ask the classmates how to do it. What does the teacher mean? How can they get the answers etc.*
- I** *Why do you think they learn English?*
- T** *I think they just want to learn a language, make fewer mistakes, get a pass.... I think they are quite passive.*
- I** *If English were optional, do you think they would still take English?*

T *I think they would....because people in Hong Kong always stress that if you can speak English well you can get better jobs. So, I think even if they don't like English, or they are or doing well in that area, they will still take it.*

An anomaly here seems to be that the LA's work hard which stems apparently from the particular nature of the school and the extra attention given by the teachers (gleaned in private conversation later). **Teachers 3, 7 and 10** all teach in Band 1/2 schools and their observations are similar in nature to those cited above with the exception of the anomaly indicated above.

I *Can you describe any differences in the behaviour of the HA and the LA?*

T(3) *The HA is highly motivated, active and responsive in class... one of the top students. The LA is quite shy and reserved and does little work outside the class.*

I *What reasons would you give for their different achievements?*

T *His (HA) eagerness and motivation have helped him in his achievement. He asks questions regularly, is active in class activities and does a lot of work outside class.*

I *And the LA?*

T *He is attentive but not responsive ... rather tardy and passive and does little outside class.*

I *How would you describe the HA and LA?*

T(7) *The HA is bright, analytical and industrious. He is also attentive, responsive, sensible and practical. The LA is smart but does not put in much effort. He is easily distracted, mind wanders but he has some brilliant outbursts. He follows the lesson but would look bored.*

T(10)A *(HA) is excellent in behaviour and academic achievement while B (LA) is average in behaviour and weak academically. A shows initiative and does extra work but B is lazy, does not hand in work on time and has to be pushed.*

The factors which teachers see as problems and their possible solutions will now be examined. The salient words used by teachers on their interview guides, illustrating their viewpoints, are shown in Table 24.

Table 24: Problems and Solutions Indicated by Teachers on their Interview Guides

Teacher	Problems	Possible Solutions
1	Lack of practice	Provide more oral work
2	Lack of motivation, insufficient exposure, limited vocabulary	Increase exposure, promote reading
3	Lack of motivation, do not need English, lack of exposure to English, passive, need guidance	Activity work, pair/group work, less crowded time-table, less exam pressure
4	Lack incentive, exam pressure	Language labs
5	Lack of time, lack of exposure, exam pressure, poor oral skills	Improve oral skills, reduce exam pressure
6	Unfavourable environment for English, exam demands	Change school/community ethos, incorporate English into their lives, higher entrance demands from unis., higher rating for English
7	No need to communicate in English, lack of exposure, noisy environment	Develop integrative motivation, language labs
8	Lack of exposure, low university entrance demands	Higher Univ. entrance demands, revise exam syllabus, arouse student interest in English
9	Lack of exposure, speaking English to each other makes them feel foolish	More expatriate teachers of English
10	Inadequate exposure and interaction	Increase exposure and practice
11	Exam pressure, less exposure to English and culture, passive learners	Exposure, access to more authentic use of English
12	Lack of English skills, lack of vocabulary, out-of-date text books, heavy teaching/learning load, lack of exposure	Games, colours, radio, newspaper articles
13	Lack of ability in English, uninteresting text books, don't want to learn English, just want to pass the exam, overcrowded time-table, confused over tenses etc.	Set up a resource centre, native-speakers to force interaction, more exposure to English, reduced time-table

While these views do not on the whole answer any of the specific research questions, they do throw light on the background of learning in their respective schools and the way

in which strategies are or are not used and are therefore included in this section. For example, one problem noted is exposure to English (or lack of it) which is a strategy more widely used by the HA's than the LA's. Another problem cited is the pressure of exams which invites the use of certain strategies e.g. rote learning by the LA's.

All teachers mentioned **lack of exposure to English** as a serious problem followed by **motivation difficulties, crowded time-tables, exam pressures and the perceived low university entrance demands**. A special problem was how to overcome the **perception that English could be learned in the way that other subjects are learned** e.g. History. There was a need to handle **the passive nature of much of the learning**. Particularly problematic for **Band 4/5 schools** was the **low level of achievement** in the various **English skills, especially in grammar** and the need to find a short-cut given the demands of the external exam. **Lack of relevant resources** was also mentioned, e.g. language labs.

The teacher interview guides were further analysed through statements taken from the interview data, in order to present the problems and possible solutions, as perceived by the teachers. Examples of the analysis are shown below. The question here concerns the features which promote / hinder learning in English. Here I indicates the interviewer and T the teacher

Teacher 11

- I *What do you see as the major problems facing your students in learning English?*
- T *The majority are passive learners and have less exposure to English and the English culture.*
- I *How important is English to your students?*
- T *Their parents...and us teachers...have certain expectations and these can be realised they are exposed to more things English...I mean British. They will understand more ..*
- I *How do they learn English? Do you know?*

- T** *There is the exam pressure. They want only what will be useful to them in the exam. Everything else is regarded as not helpful.*
- I** *How do you think they can be helped to learn English?*
- T** *Reduce the exam pressure, and then give them more access to authentic use of language.*
- I** *Any final comment?*
- T** *These ways would help our students and increase intrinsic motivation.*

The points that emerge from this interview are:

- *** **The students are passive learners and have insufficient exposure to English**
- *** **The exam pressure seems to have an inhibiting effect on desired classroom activities**
- *** **Exposure to the target culture would increase motivation.**

Teacher 12

- I** *What do you see as the major problems facing your students in learning English?*
- T** *But I think the main problem is... they have special learning difficulties not only in language subjects but also other subjects. For example, they are not good in Mathematics even Chinese. Some of them are ineffective multi- learners. Weak in both Chinese and English.*
- I** *How important is English to your students?*
- T** *It's difficult. But when I teach them I have to use Cantonese to get them to understand what ... you are going to say... The teacher's workload. It is very difficult to mark their classwork because they got lots of mistakes.*
- I** *How do they learn? Do you know?*
- T** *Actually I have to prepare...sheets to simplify the task in the textbook because they are not able to do the task...I just simplify.*
- I** *How do you think they can they be helped to learn English?*
- T** *Because ... English concert at the end of the year. I find they are very active in joining such kinds of activities...and they...told me...that they have got chances to*

practise English. I think we need a language lab. To use as a centre. In an English lab, they can...cause they don't have a chance to practise English. And students can ...choose...the section that they like to improve.

I *Any final comment?*

T *interesting, authentic materials, reading or writing charts...video...video is interesting.*

Points emerging from the above are similar to the previous two sets of comments.

- *** **Students lack exposure to authentic English**
- *** **There is a lack of appropriate resources in the school to encourage the use of English**
- *** **Students do not know how to learn. As a result short cuts are taken, e.g. use of mother- tongue and simplified materials for teaching.**
- *** **A language lab. is seen as offering some help but in further conversations it turned that a learning centre was what the teachers envisaged where videos, listening and speaking facilities would be available.**

Teacher 13 made similar points.

I *What do you think are the major problems facing your students in learning English?*

T *They don't want to learn the language and use the language. They just want to pass the exam.*

I *How important is English to your students?*

T *They get notes given by the tutorial schools. They memorise that. They believe that it is useful in the exam and they don't know that learning a language does not have short-cut. There are hundreds of students going to these...And students are not doing so well. I have a reading programme from a tuition school and I just hope it is in the minority. I hope the majority don't work in that way. I wonder to what extent these are official*

- I *How do they learn English? Do you know?*
- T *How many vocabulary they can remember. How many different sentence structures they can use. They just memorise the sentence structure. They say, O Miss X, I write this sentence structure in the exam, then I will get one mark. If I write that vocab., I will get another mark.*
- I *How do you think they can be helped to learn English?*
- T *The chances to use the language. If there are more native speakers of English, they need to use English. Make teaching languages interesting, it can motivate the students. And I think one way to make it interesting is to increase multi-media resources. Getting technical support from the Government, language lab., some educational CD ROMs which can help them learn English in a very interesting way. Films. Some of the CD ROMs actually teach students English. Also there should be a visualiser. We can project things onto the screen.*
- I *Any final comment?*
- T *Change the format of the exam. I mean public exam. If the format doesn't change, the publishers will not produce that kind of books that are activity-oriented. If there are such materials they won't buy it...if it is not related to the exam. So it is exam driven.*

Summary of Teachers' Views

Points from this interview reinforce earlier comments that the students are *passive learners*, *do not have a repertoire of learning strategies*, are *informant-reliant* and subject to *exam pressures* and resort to *techniques* that they hope will help them pass the exam but which are *not considered helpful* by the *teachers*. Teachers feel *exam changes* are needed as the *current situation* is seen to *encourage* the development of *exam passing techniques* rather developing the learning of English for communication. They also feel that more *hi-tech. materials and equipment* should be made available. One interesting point mentioned by Teachers 6 and 8 was (in their view) the *low requirements for entry to university*. They felt that an increase in the entry requirements would have a positive effect in raising the standard of English. This point is also discussed in the student interviews and in the next chapter.

5.2.2.2 Student Interviews (Appendix 3)

A total of forty-two students agreed to be interviewed, 22 males and 20 females. Percentages refer to the total sample of the students answering the questions unless otherwise stated. The interview was based on the Naiman et al. (1978) Adult Interview Study. However, not all the questions in the Naiman et al (1978) Interview Study were pertinent to this study and so these will not be discussed e.g. questions 5, 8, 9 and 10. Questions that provided answers to the way in which these students learn or thought they would like to learn English are discussed below. The interview consisted of two parts.

Part 1 of the interview

Each part of the interview will be presented separately. Percentages refer to the total sample of the 42 students unless otherwise stated.

Questions 1-4.

Since the individual's environment, internal (the home) and external (wider community) has potential influence on language acquisition, it was decided to include data about the family.

Only two students did not have a monolingual family background as they were born in PRC (People's Republic of China). Five other students were born in PRC but their language at home and in the neighbourhood was Cantonese. For the other students, the language spoken in the family (Cantonese) was the same as that spoken in the neighbourhood.

Question 7

Another factor influencing achievement is the environment which can be formal i.e. a school or a university; or informal, i.e. non-school e.g. immersion programmes, independent study etc. Apart from Japanese and French, all language learning began in a formal school setting. The vast majority also attended some form of evening class or tuition school in an effort to improve their proficiency. Rarely was there contact with

native speakers or any learning in an informal setting except incidentally when students bumped into foreigners and were asked for help with directions etc.

Almost all students were taught in a teacher-centred environment with the traditional emphasis on vocabulary and grammar and many commented on the fact that they were weak in oral / aural skills. They also reported that in primary school only 23% had teachers who spoke in English all the time whereas in secondary school 69% reported that their teachers used English all the time and a further 8% indicated that only in Form 5 was English used exclusively for teaching. Some reported that in primary school some teachers used films from the Educational Television Programmes (ETV) made by the Education Department. They also reported that for the most part they were passive in their learning, oral work usually consisting of repeating words and phrases spoken by the teacher. Writing was based on a model but on closer questioning it became clear that, in primary school, even the composition exercises consisted mainly of blank filling rather than writing at discourse level.

In secondary school exposure to English was obtained from radio programmes (pop songs), TV (mainly reading the sub-titles) and visits to the cinema to see topical films, e.g. Titanic (girls) and Lethal Weapon (boys).

Question 11

Students were asked if they were satisfied with their achievement levels in the different languages. All stated that for languages other than English they were not satisfied except for writing and reading in Putonghua which are, in essence, mother tongue skills. For English, eleven students indicated satisfaction and eight of these were LA's. Reasons given were that they could not see how they could improve or that any improvement would mean extra time for English at the expense of other subjects, an outlay they were not prepared to make.

I *Are you satisfied with what you have achieved in English?*

S5 *Yes, I am satisfied, I cannot improve more.*

I *Why do you say that?*

S5 *No time. Other classes. English too much.*

In contrast, a conversation with two HA's, produced the following.

I *Now, are you satisfied with your achievement in English?*

S21 *Yes, my marks are good. But I will do...work hard.*

I *And you (student 22)?*

S22 *No,*

I *Why?*

S22 *I think I still do not meet the requirements I set for me.*

I *What is your requirement?*

S22 *I want to understand the presenters on TV news in the English Channel. But I will also work hard.*

Here the second student has actually set a goal for himself and feels he has not managed to reach it.

Question 12

Another factor allegedly involved in second language learning is attitude. An attitude test was not administered but evidence was sought for student estimation of their 'gift' for languages.

Only two students felt they were strong at languages, or as they understood the question in English. One of them had spent a month on an intensive course in the UK and the other had an Australian brother-in-law. Half of the remainder felt they were 'medium' strong in languages and the other half thought they were weak. Some 17% thought they had an 'ear' for languages while nearly 40% reported that they did not have good memories.

Question 13

To find out the factors the students themselves thought as influential in their language learning process, they were asked whether they attributed their success to their teachers, their methods of teaching, the school environment, special study habits which they developed personally or to some particular personality characteristics.

Most students mentioned a combination of factors, in particular, the school, teachers and parental encouragement, with self coming well behind these three. There did not seem to be any special study habits. However, many of the HA's mentioned themselves as being influential in their learning processes whereas few of the LA's mentioned themselves as being significant in their learning.

Part Two of the Interview

In this part of the interview the questions were more directed and students were expected to restrict their answers to the questions asked. Additional questions were available if the interviewer thought they would be useful in obtaining more data. Basically the students were asked to put themselves in hypothetical learning situations so that they could combine their recollections of their past learning with current insights.

Question 1

To investigate the students' attitudes towards learning another language, they were asked to indicate their feelings at being asked to learn another language given the time and opportunity. Sixty percent said they would either look forward to it or be excited at the idea (HA's accounted for 50% of these answers), 24% were ambivalent in that they would not mind doing it while the remaining 16% were scared or hated the thought of doing it.

The most frequently mentioned language (dialect) was Putonghua since that was the language of the Government of Peoples Republic of China (PRC). Japanese was mentioned in terms of business and trade but French, and Italian and German included reasons such as holidays, travelling, nice sound (I like the sound of the language) and

culture. Specific goals included the ability to speak, understand and read; or (overwhelmingly) to speak, understand, read and write the language.

Question 2.1

Opinions vary as to which language learning setting is more effective, the classroom or the L2 environment. Research has provided evidence that formal instruction enhances achievement in a foreign language (Krashen, 1976). An immersion programme is another way (Swain 1974) of providing opportunities for using the language for learning. Students were hence given options about the desired way of learning a second language and asked to select ones they thought most appropriate.

Forty-two percent chose to go to the L2 country and either take a language course there or immerse themselves in the language. Fifty-four percent chose some kind of instruction either a language class, a language school or private tuition. Only two students opted for a combination of instruction first followed by a visit to the L2 country.

Question 2.2

Research has not produced conclusive results as to whether it is better to study a language intensively or gradually (e.g. Carroll, 1981, Stern et al., 1976). Students were asked how they would like to learn a language - gradually or intensively. For these students intensive study meant doing grammar, reading and listening exercises. Sixty percent indicated they would like to learn the language gradually while two students thought a combination of intensive then gradual suited them best.

Question 3.1

Teachers are faced with the problem of what to teach first. Most teaching programmes emphasize the spoken language in the early stages of instruction. However, in Hong Kong grammar and vocabulary are stressed in primary school and despite recent innovations e.g. the Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC), most textbooks are structural rather than communicative in design. The students were hence presented with several options for initial content for language learning. Three percent opted for a combination

and these concerned reading, writing and the cultural background. The others nearly all chose an aspect of the spoken language e.g. 30% chose the spoken language, 13% pronunciation and 20% conversational phrases; while 16% wanted to learn about the grammar of the L2. The remainder wanted to learn about reading, writing or the cultural background.

Question 3.2

Given that most students had been studying English for many years with varying degrees of success, it was felt to be of interest to establish whether they wished to be guided by a teacher or be left to their own devices. All but two of the students wanted to be guided by the teacher who would organise their learning materials for them. The two dissenting students, both HA's, wanted a combination of both.

Question 4

In Hong Kong there is some discussion whether language learners should be receptive or active participants in the learning process right from the start. Accordingly students were asked if they basically wished to be active or passive participants in the learning process. Only 17 students wanted to be passive participants. The rest were quite clear that active involvement was what they wanted.

Question 5

To find out how students saw the content of language learning at the intermediate and advanced stages, the students were asked what they wanted to learn at these stages. The answers were overwhelmingly in favour of more oral work and then grammar and writing.

Question 6

Stern (1975) points out that the language learner has to decide whether to treat the learning process as a systematic mental task or whether (s)he '...wants to avoid thinking about the language and absorb the language more intuitively.' (Stern, 1975, pp.311). The vast majority of students (72%) felt that their language learning was a conscious and

systematic process. Those who felt absorption to be applicable to them may have been influenced by words in the question i.e. 'they hate grammar' as they indicated a certain distaste for doing formal grammar exercises. Two students thought that both applied. *'If you stand in the rain for long enough, you will get wet.'* (Student 40).

Questions 7 and 9

Another problem the learner has to face is the presence of the L1 and the effect of the learning of the L2. Students felt that knowledge of a related language helped in the learning of the L3 e.g. knowledge of Cantonese helped with writing in Putonghua but not with what they considered an unrelated language e.g. English and Japanese. *'I think when I learn Putonghua, it (L2) helps in writing but I think English it's not very helpful.'* (Student 1 and 2). This point is further illustrated by Students 5 and 6.

I *How did you think your Cantonese helped you to learn English?*

S5 *I think ... not ... er ...much.*

S6 *I don't think so.*

I *To what extent do you think your English will help you learn Italian? (In question 8 student 5 had indicated Italian as her choice for a 3rd language).*

S5 *For English construction...sentences...e.g. a sentence involves a subject, object and verb. I think Italian also consists of these.*

I *How do you (S6) think English can help you learn Japanese?*

S6 *I think ... may not help.*

Students also felt it was useful to translate into the L1. *'Because when you don't understand what the passage say, you can find it in the dictionary. It helps you to understand the meanings.'* (Student 7).

As learners are often advised to use monolingual dictionaries, students were asked their preference. The majority (70%) said they preferred using bilingual dictionaries. *'I cannot understand English to English. I only understand Chinese to English'* (Student 4). Of those who indicated a preference for a monolingual dictionary, only two were not HA's

(21 and 38) and one had been on an immersion programme to the UK and the other had obtained a 'B' grade for English in his Form 5 HKCEE examination.

Question 8

Stern (1975) pointed out that the ideal outcome of second language learning is native-like competence e.g. '... the intuitive mastery of the linguistic, cognitive, affective and socio-cultural meaning expressed by language forms' (Stern 1975, p. 16). In other words the learner has learned to think in the second language.

Most students (70%) thought that one could think in the L2 but that it was not possible for them to do so at the current time as they felt their proficiency was inadequate. They felt that more practice and greater exposure to the L2 would enable them to think in the foreign language.

Question 11

As indicated in chapter 3, theorists have often discussed the role of affective variables in second language learning (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). At the end of the interview, students were asked about their feelings when learning English. The first sub-question dealt with negative feelings the students may have felt during their learning experience. All students indicated that at some time they had felt frustrated or upset but for most HA's these feelings were intermittent and not continuous. Generally the HA's had a more positive attitude towards English.

I *In general what is your feeling towards English?*

S23 (brightly) *Interesting.*

I *S24, what's your attitude to English?*

S24 *Interesting.*

I *Why?*

S24 *I just love languages.*

For the LA's the problems seemed less transient. However, they were quite open about their problems. *'My writing is not very good. So, in the examinations I was very upset. Very sad'*. (Student 3). *'Sometimes unhappy, sometimes happy. Unhappy ... I do not understand the teachers to learn things.'* (Student 4.)

Other sought to find remedies for their negative feelings. *'In fact, I regard English as quite an interesting subject. But if I want to learn better I need to put many, many effort. I am quite passive in learning English. I always miss the chance. This always makes my efforts not so satisfactory.'* (Student 9)

Some LA's were quite explicit about their feelings towards English. *'I think it is so boring. When I read books, I think it is so long. Not interesting. I just want to learn some elementary language systems not the content of the book.'* (Student 5)

Others were candid about their feelings and lack of interest in learning English.

I *What is your feeling about learning English?*

S13 *No comment.*

S14 *No differences*

I *What does that mean?*

S14 *Same as no comments.*

Further probing elicited the response that English was being taken because it was a compulsory subject.

I *Now, if your job did not require English, would you still take English?*

S13 *I think ...may not.*

S14 *I agree with S13 that English is necessary only in job.*

LA's also indicated rather more fundamental problems in their inability to cope with difficulties.

I *You find English interesting?*

S7 *No, I don't think so.*

I *You feel discouraged?*

S7 *Yes, especially writing.*

I *How do you cope with that?*

S7 *In fact, nothing I can do.*

The same feature is illustrated in the interview with student 22.

I *What is your general feeling towards English?*

S22 *No comment.*

I *Do you find it difficult?*

S22 *Yes.*

I *How do you overcome that?*

S22 *No methods.*

The HA's had problems but these were seen as temporary and due to specific situations. The LA's seemed to have problems of a more long-lasting nature and showed little idea of how to cope with their difficulties.

Question 10

There were two parts to this question. In the first part of the question, students were asked to indicate how they handled their learning of English. In the second part, they were given certain language learning situations and asked to 'talk-aloud' or report on what they had done in finding the answers set by the questions.

(i) First Part of the Question

It was noted that the LA's relied a great deal on the teacher or informant to complete the work set for them. One or two read aloud to themselves to develop their pronunciation but rarely spoke to anyone in English outside the classroom. The books that they read were mandated by the teacher and were from the list of class readers or the school library. Only in vocabulary learning was their initiative shown, usually through the use of a notebook into which new words were written. However, few attempted to make sentences

with the new words or to use them later. One or two listened to the radio or CD's mainly to pop songs. Extracts from the interviews are shown below.

- I *What sort of things did you do to learn the sounds of English?*
- S1 *I like...repeat*
- I *Did you read aloud?*
- S1 *Maybe. Yes.*
- I *No, not may be. Tell me what you did. For example, did you read aloud?*
- S1 *No.*
- I *OK. Did you repeat any words or sounds silently?*
- S1 *No.*
- I *In grammar...what did you do/ Did you memorise rules...?*
- S1 *Yes.*
- I *What sort of things did you do?*
- S1 *(Answer was incomprehensible and not to the point)*
- I *What about you Miss 2? Did you memorise rules?*
- S2 *No ... I don't know the question.*
- I *When you learned grammar, did you memorise rules about grammar or...?*
- S2 *I will try to remember the vocabulary.*
- I *OK. And how did you remember the vocabulary?*
- S2 *I will write it out in a note-book and try to memorise it.*
- I *Do you listen to the radio, TV or CD...?*
- S1 *Listen to the radio*
- S2 *Also.*
- I *Thank you. Do you try to speak to English people?*
- S1 *I will try.*
- S2 *No.*
- I *So where do you get your English? Only in school and from school work?*
- S1/S2 *Yes*
- I *Do you read any books or magazines?*
- S1 *I will read books.*

- I *What kind of books?*
- I *The story.*
- I *From the school library? Set by your teacher?*
- S1 *Yes*
- I *S2?*
- S2 *Magazines.*
- I *What kind?*
- S2 *Time!*
- I *Time. Do you read it regularly?*
- S2 *Sometimes.*
- I *Do you ever write to a pen-friend or do anything like that?*
- S1/2 *No.*

What is revealed is that these students (LA's in a Band 4/5 school) are very dependent on the teacher for their learning and do only what is required of them and no more despite the fact that the teachers asked them to review newspaper articles and items on the radio on a regular basis.

The following extract is taken from the interview with two students who were designated by their teacher as HA's in a Band 4/5 school.

- I *Do you practice...?*
- S8 *I read aloud alone.*
- I *S7?*
- S7 *No.*
- I *What about grammar? Did you memorise, read or what ...?*
- S7 *Yes, memorise the rules.*
- I *Can you give me a rule you memorised?*
- S7 *Add 's' to the he or she..*
- S8 *I expect to do more, practise more in order to familiarise the sound.*
- I *OK. You use practice. Now what about vocabulary?*

- S8 *I will write down the vocabulary e.g. the new word, adapt it and the part of speech...of how to use it and make a sentence and read it aloud for several times.*
- S7 *I will write down the word and find out the meaning in the dictionary and then make some sentences with it.*
- I *What about listening?*
- S8 *I will listen to English songs.*
- I *Where?*
- S8 *At home.*
- I *How?*
- S8 *My CDs.*
- I *Any particular ones?*
- S8 *Forever Folk, volume 2.*
- I *S7?*
- S7 *I listen to the radio and watch TV.*
- I *Which programmes?*
- S7 *I don't remember the name...but...can I see how...*

There seems to be a contradiction here in that S8 behaves in a more independent manner but it was later revealed that he was a Band 3 student who could not find a Band 3 school to accept him and so had to find a place in a school of a lower Band. S7 exhibited the teacher/informant reliant syndrome of other LA's.

It was decided to look at students in a Band 1/2 school who had been designated as LA's by their teacher.

- I *Are there any methods you have used to learn the sound system of English?*
- S22 *Symbols in the dictionary.*
- S21 *No, not really.*
- I *Any methods for grammar and vocabulary?*
- Ss *No specific methods.*
- I *Speaking?*

Ss *Just speaking.*

I *Reading?*

Ss *No.*

At this point the interview seemed to be getting nowhere, so a different tack was used.

I *So, in general you do not have any methods...?*

S21 *Just practise more.*

I *How do you do that?*

S21 *For example, read newspapers, listen to the radio. If I can't find someone to speak to, I just read aloud the newspapers.*

S22 *By looking at the teachers' and foreigners' mouths more.*

I *Any ways...for learning grammar?*

Ss *Doing exercises.*

I *Listening?*

Ss *Also exercises.*

I *talking?*

Ss *Talk more to others.*

I *Reading?*

Ss *Read more books, magazines.*

What became apparent was that the students were assuming the interviewer knew more about their learning habits than he actually did, and their answers were accordingly, rather elliptical. Further probing revealed greater insight into the ways in which they approached their learning as shown in the extract below.

I *In general, what are your methods of learning English?*

S21 *Firstly, you have to grasp the skill, and then, by getting more knowledge you should read more to consolidate what you have learned.*

I *How do you consolidate what you have learned?*

S21 *Listen more, speak more, practise more.*

I *Tell me more about this.*

S22 *Reading more is the most specific way.*

I *But to consolidate is another process...*

S21 *I think try to use it in real life.*

I *But what do you mean by consolidate?*

S21 *You hear someone say a phrase...you think about it and you repeat it this in your life.*

S21 *Try to use it...*

S22 *But before you use it you have to...*

S21 *Try to get the meaning and try to remember it.*

S22 *You hear something, get the meaning, memorise it, then you use it again.*

Here both students revealed an active approach to their learning and had developed ways of learning i.e. first get the meaning of the item to be learned, memorise and then use it. However, all of this only came to light through an interview which allowed probing to elicit more relevant responses.

(ii) *Second Part of the Question*

For this part students were given five small tasks and asked to think aloud as they sought answers to the questions. However, nearly all of them found this distracting and so were asked to report on what they had done. The tasks required the students to:

- 1** *Use contextual clues to find the meaning of a nonsense word substituted for the word 'read' in a short passage.*
- 2** *The same as for question 1 but for a longer text taken from a Form 5 exam. practice book.*
- 3** *Identify correctly the illustration (garden implement) described*
- 4** *Decipher a coded message using given instructions*
- 5** *Indicate the correct grammatical item missing from a short passage.*

The LA's had great difficulty in finding the answers even though the work was set at a standard below that of Form 7 students. The extract below illustrates this.

- I *Now I want you to read this and tell me what the word 'bing' means.*
- S1 *I read now spell it look at every word in the text If I jump one*
- I *S2?*
- S2 *He thinks several words in one...but when they are learning things, young children think only one word at a time.*
- I *So what do you think?*
- S2 *You ask us the meanings?*
- I *Yes.*
- S1 *I think...*
- S2 *I think...is guess...*
- I *Go on...*
- S1 *Let me see...*
- S2 *It is a question ... I am trying to guess.*

The questions were not correctly answered and the students did not seem to have ways of tackling the problem set.

- I *Let's look at another passage. One word is missing from each line. Tell me if you can find the missing words.*
- S1 *Find the missing words?*
- I *Yes*
- S1 *I don't know.*
- S2 *No...what does it mean?*

These students did not exhibit any evidence of independent ways of learning but seemed to rely on an informant.

The above situation is to be contrasted with that of two students described by their teacher as LA's in a Band 1/2 school. In fact they were HA's.

I *Now, can you read the following passage and tell me what the word 'bing' means?*

S11 *Read something.*

I *Why?*

S12 *Because the sentence talks about how to read.*

I *OK. Now read this passage and tell me what the word 'awe-inspiring' means.*

S12 *Fast speed.*

I *Which words told you?*

S12 *... swing ... speed.*

I *Now, can you read this passage. There is one word missing from each line. Can you tell which word is missing and where?*

S11 *That caused by.*

S12 *Caused by.*

I *Any more?*

Ss *Apart from.*

I *OK. Now can you read this last passage and tell me what the message is?*

Ss *Meet you at the palace.*

I *Well, that was quick.*

S12 *Well, I just tried up and down twice. Since going down told me nothing, I tried going up first and then down again.*

Here the student found that the first technique did not work and so he tried another to find the correct answer. This persistence in finding other ways of answering questions was a feature of the HA's whereas the LA's depended on some external aid to help them in their learning. Where none was available they gave up e.g. student 1 and 2. Yet if LA's were forced to think about their learning, they were able to find the correct answers as shown in this extract for student 39.

I *Codes and ciphers. I want you to read the instructions and tell me what the message is.*

S39 *Emma...*

I *Read the second letters. (Pointing to instructions)*

S39 *Sorry...*

I *I want you to read the rest of this (pointing to instructions)*

S39 *No reply...*

I *Read UP (emphasised) the column.*

S39 *Only the second letter?*

I *That's what it says. The second letter.*

S39 *Emma...*

I *Read up.*

S39 *Meet you at...*

I *Well, go on. What must you do? What's the message?*

S39 *Repeat please.*

I *Read down...*

S39 *The palace.*

I *So what's the message?*

S39 *Meet you at the palace.(smiling).*

The difference between HA and LA students in Band 1/2 schools lay in the greater use made of learning methods and practices to obtain correct answers. Essentially, the difference was one of degree.

5.2.2.3 Student Passivity in Class

Section 7 of the student questionnaire dealt with reasons for alleged student passivity. Students were asked to indicate which options they felt explained student reticence in class. They were asked to mark their responses on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table 25 shows that despite the view that teachers do encourage students to ask questions (only 11.6 % disagreed) more than half (57.5%) reported that members of the class do not ask questions even though only 14% indicated that they had no questions to ask. The main reason given for not asking questions was fear of being laughed at followed by fear of making mistakes and shyness on the part of the student. Almost half (49.1%) felt they did not know enough English to ask questions while about 33% indicated they would try to find the answers themselves. Culture (23.2 %) and reluctance to interrupt (23.3%) seem not to play important roles in student reticence. It seems that there is a sensitivity to the way errors are handled in the classroom.

Table 25: Reasons for Student Reticence in %

Description	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD	J + C
Q7-1 shy	1.8	5.8	17	53.8	18.5	3.84	0.86	3.124
Q7-2 afraid others laugh	1.9	7.7	14.4	55.2	17.4	3.81	0.89	3.194
Q7-3 culture	6.5	25.1	41.7	20	3.2	2.88	0.92	3.031
Q7-4 not want to interrupt	4.7	33.4	35.3	22.1	1.2	2.81	0.89	2.969
Q7-5 ask after lesson	3.5	20.7	30.2	37.1	5.3	3.21	0.96	3.411
Q7-6 afraid of making mistakes	0.9	5.8	11.6	59.6	18.5	3.92	0.79	3.333
Q7-7 not know enough to ask	1.1	17	29.5	42.2	6.9	3.38	0.89	3.395
Q7-8 too lazy	5.8	25.5	35.5	24.1	6	2.99	1.00	2.449
Q7-9 nobody asks	1.8	11.6	25.7	47.8	9.7	3.54	0.89	2.953
Q7-10 teachers do not encourage	14.1	45.2	25.7	10.2	1.4	2.38	0.91	2.651
Q7-11 find answers themselves	2.11	19.33	41.8 3	29.7	3.87	3.14	0.86	3.574
Q7-12 have no questions	17.05	27.94	37.8	11.2	2.8	2.53	1.00	2.225

J&C- Jin and Cortazzi (1998)

The means support the above analysis but these results compare with Jin and Cortazzi (1998) where the means indicate students in China either ask after the lesson or find the answers for themselves. The affective factors (shyness, fear of being laughed at etc.) are more significant for Hong Kong students.

Jin and Cortazzi (1998) further indicate that Chinese students ask questions after learning because they do not want to disturb the class or waste time; rather they prepare mentally before asking. In comparing British and Chinese students it was found that 'The heuristic value of questioning ... is therefore based on different cultural values: the Chinese ask after knowing, the British know by asking.' (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998, p.753).

5.3 Summary

The various instruments used in this study, produced information which not only gave valuable insights into the learning situation of these students, their attitudes, motivation and strategy use; but also provided supportive and corroborative evidence obtained from the varying sources used to provide the relevant data. For example, the Think - Aloud tasks elaborated information on student strategy use obtained from the questionnaires; and the qualitative data obtained from the teachers and shown in Table 23 gave supportive evidence to the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires and shown in Table 16.

The data gained from the questionnaire, teacher and student interviews and think-aloud tasks were subjected to various techniques of analyses to obtain findings which could be accepted as statistically significant. Table 18 shows the level of statistical significance between competence and learning strategies i.e. from the use of contextual clues to the use of inductive learning. The correlation matrices (Appendix 6) summarize the relationships of the various factors for the variables 1,2,3 described in chapter 4.

The information also indicates that the HA's, unlike the LA's, tend to use all types of language learning strategies, are goal-oriented, have developed means to realise these goals and of coping with difficulties. They also extend their work outside the classroom

and have a greater degree of integrative motivation. Teachers also identified certain problems for which they suggested possible solutions.

The implications of the most significant results are further discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Discussion of the Results

6.0 Preamble

The discussion of the results in chapter 5 is predicated on two caveats: the moderate reliability of the coefficients for the questionnaire data and the caution needed in using self-report data concerning learning behaviours. As Politzer and McGroarty (1985) point out they can ‘ ... reflect general intelligence, a desire to give the right answer to please the teacher and so on.’ (1985, p.118).

The analysis of the research questions posed in **Variable 1** (the Learning Situation) indicate that there is no significant difference for stream (Arts/Science) and location (Hong Kong, Kowloon, New Territories). *Instrumental orientation* was found to be the main driving force for learning English and the main strategies used in learning English were *search for meaning, contextual clues, memorization of rules, inductive learning* and *readiness to use English for communication*.

The analysis of the results for **Variable 2** indicates that *self-rating, intensity of motivation, integrative motivation* and *exposure to English* are all significantly related to *competence* in English while **Variable 3** reveals that *competence* in English is significantly associated with *contextual clues, readiness to use English, memorization, searching for meaning, constant practice, willingness to risk error* and *use of inductive learning*. The data also indicate that the strategies most used by HA's include *contextual clues, role play* and *pattern practice*. They also memorize more, are willing to risk error and are more ready to use English.

The significant results are therefore discussed in this chapter under the following headings:

Variable 1: *The Learning Situation: Exam and Learning Cultures, Teachers and Society at Large*

Variable 2: *Attitude, Motivation and Exposure to English*

Variable 3: *English Language Learning Strategies*

6.1 Variable 1: The Learning Situation

6.1.1 Exam Culture

The main results from the quantitative data are summarized above. The qualitative data obtained from the student and teacher interviews provide further insights into the learning situation in that both students and teachers alike made repeated mention of the stress of exams and the inhibiting effects of the exam pressure on the learning of English. As the wish to mitigate these effects was also expressed, it would seem appropriate therefore, to discuss the effect of exams in the learning situation, to examine those factors thought to be inhibiting and to suggest ways of remedying these concerns.

In addition to these concerns, there was also expressed the need for more appropriately qualified teachers of English and for more relevant teaching facilities. These will also be examined in this section as they give further insight into the learning situation.

6.1.1.1 The Influence of Examinations

'In Hong Kong, the thinking of teachers, students and parents is dominated by examinations.' (Biggs, 1993, p. 220). The implications of such an examination culture are considerable, in that learning becomes score-oriented, is conducive to rote learning with the emphasis on reproduction of knowledge and not on analysis, synthesis or evaluation. Biggs (1996) writes that students see the test as '... seeking amounts of information and as requiring low-level cognitive strategies like rote learning, memorizing and reproducing.' (1996, p.176). However, the HA's in this study saw the test as requiring both understanding and memorizing: a good understanding of the learning materials, and the need to memorize what they had studied and understood. The LA's did not have this same concept and seemed to be at the level of rote learning without much understanding.

The result is to put pressure on all concerned e.g. Teachers 3, 8 (Table 24). The students face pressure to succeed in examinations and not necessarily in the principles of the subject and hence rely on model answers, notes and become increasingly

dependent on teachers and texts. The teachers are judged by examination results and so teach to the test and may judge themselves by the examination results and hence may feel disempowered. Parents may accept the examination-oriented values and because of anxieties for the future of their children spend enormous sums on examination preparation.

The end result is an environment where students demand spoon-feeding, work only for grades, expect immediate rewards and are, as a result, inadequately prepared for higher education and study in a kind of externally induced state of helplessness (Teachers 3, 11 interviews). The impact of an examination culture on language learning is that language is seen as content and diverts teaching from language performance to test performance. Almost half the students who took the Secondary 5 examinations failed to achieve E grades, and a grade E is worth very little in the eyes of human resources managers hungry for talent (Anley et al. 1995). The passing grades at the crucial grade C or above in the Form 5 English examinations is only 7% (Table 1).

One effect is to produce graduates who have passed the examinations but cannot function effectively in English in their post-secondary careers, the consequences of which are considerable. Over 20% of the Swiss Business Council (1998) claimed that their firms had suffered because their staff could not speak enough English. The problem is widespread as illustrated by Mr. Yip (1998), the general manager of San Miguel Breweries who claimed ' We receive job applications in English and do not know what the applicant is trying to say.' (Yip, 1998)

The above discussion describes an environment which is not considered by teachers to be conducive to learning. The main features are summarized below.

6.1.1.2 An Environment that Inhibits Learning

An environment that *hinders* learning appears to have the following characteristics:

- * a culture driven by examination demands and the need to satisfy these demands by whatever way available e.g. rote-learning

- * students who lack properly thought-out goals
- * students who lack the means to achieve whatever goals have been set
- * students who are dependent more on others than themselves for achievement
- * students who are passive and expect others e.g. teachers to be wholly in charge of their learning
- * students who do the minimum amount of work and are not prepared to expend the necessary time and energy needed to develop language proficiency
- * students for whom goals are unrealistic and unattainable, leading to loss of self-esteem and hence demotivation e.g. LA's / Band 5 students

However, the Chief Executive's policy addresses of 1998 indicated a review of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA) and is likely to lead to more classroom based assessment which will have far-reaching effects on educational practice which are further discussed below. Teachers, students and the education authorities seem to be searching for a replacement to the exam-driven environment e.g. a learning culture which is discussed below.

6.1.1.3 *The Need for a Learning Culture*

The figures quoted above for 'good' passing grades (Table 1) suggest that there has always been a core of high quality achievers. The problem is that Hong Kong currently needs more than that core in its work-place and poses the question as to how that core may be satisfactorily increased. One way is to replace the current examination culture with a learning culture.

In a learning culture, learning is learner-centred, initiates critical thinking and emphasizes knowledge creation and not knowledge reproduction. Furthermore curriculum materials are appropriate to local needs cf. the comments on form, function and frequency above. Yet Biggs (1993) points out that all Bands of school are prepared for the external tests but '... the material in the normal run is designed for Bands 1 / 2; the 4's and 5's have little hope.' (Biggs, 1993, p. 221, Teachers 12, 13).

Changes to the examinations system indicated above will allow teaching and assessment to go hand in hand, each supporting the other. Teachers can then focus on

communicative and academic skills and students can demonstrate through their accumulated portfolios of work, that they have the capacity for sustained, high quality work. A learning culture hence demands time for the students to develop their skills and the opportunity and motivation to become more confident, all of which requires an environment that is conducive to learning as listed below.

6.1.1.4 An Environment That is Conducive to Learning

The results also suggest that an environment that is *conducive* to success in language learning includes the following:

- * a goal-oriented school with a clear vision how these goals may be attained
 - * goal-oriented students who have clear aims with attainable objectives allied to an action plan which will facilitate realisation of their goals.
 - * the necessary support systems and facilities to underpin realisation of these aims and objectives.
 - * a learning culture environment with its emphasis on building new knowledge rather than on recycling existing knowledge
 - * a fully subject-trained teaching complement in harmony with the methods and techniques for realizing the above.
 - * training students in the use of various strategies so as to enhance learning.
 - * setting goals for students e.g. through student contracts, that are realistic and hence attainable e.g. for Band 5 students, thereby enhancing motivation and ultimately achievement
 - * making provision for the above, right from the start of secondary education
- However, such a situation demands the establishment of properly trained teachers of English and therein lies the next problem which is discussed below.

6.1.2 Teachers

The teachers in this study are well-qualified (Table 22). However, in a survey carried out in 1996 by the Education Department, the number of English-trained teachers practising in Hong Kong secondary schools was put at 54%. There is obviously a need to produce more subject trained English teachers, if the proposed changes are to

be effected. In most teacher-education courses, preparation in methods of student assessment, assessment design and setting out scores is a minor component. Student teachers are often taught how to use progress tests that come with published materials, or how to develop simple classroom tests, but little else. This lack of in-depth training in assessment is becoming more evident as the assessment mechanism for the Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) is being developed.

In an article, Professor Hamp-Lyons (1998) wrote: 'In my own research into portfolio-based assessment in second language writing classes, teachers needed a great deal of training to see how their decisions about class materials, explanations they gave to students, tasks they set and how they helped students doing assessable tasks all had a great impact on what students thought was important to learn.' (Hamp-Lyons, 1998). Clearly changes are needed in teacher-education, re-training and In-service courses if the needs of the envisaged changes are to be met. Currently the Government intends to increase such opportunities and to set up a Benchmarks test which all new teachers of English are expected to pass.

6.1.3 Teaching Facilities

In schools, certain subjects have specially designed rooms e.g. Science, Home Economics and Physical Education. English does not have such rooms and yet if the changes envisaged above materialize, then such subject-specialist rooms for English will need to be out in place.

Dr. Falvey (1998) in an article, stated that ' Soon, all projects will be done on a computer, compositions will be written and, more importantly, revised on a PC. Students will talk freely in English to students in other lands on ICQ or e-mail and, when voice recognition software develops, massive changes to language learning practices will take place, both in and out of the classroom.' (Falvey, 1998)

Such a situation envisages specially equipped, sound-proofed rooms with low / high tech. facilities and well-prepared English teachers who are prepared to make their rooms rich sources of language information e.g. posters, reference materials and who are clear speech models for their students.

6.1.4. Society at Large

Changes to the education system need to be accepted by the local community if they are to generate credence and this means that the society at large needs to be informed so that reasonable decisions can be made. The TOC is being implemented in primary schools and is intended to reverse the much-criticised examination-based system by allowing a pupil to be assessed by learning targets set according to ability. Teachers work out learning strategies for students to fit individual needs and abilities instead of comparing them against classmates. The idea is to allow the development of thinking skills and produce people who are capable of coping with the changes of the 21st century. Student performance is described through criteria and not by rank ordering. The Education Department spent a lot of time making public through induction courses, school visits, parent evenings etc. what TOC was about. As a result nearly 90% of primary schools are busy implementing TOC.

However, such a situation has to be off-set by a decision made by the Legislative Council of Hong Kong who passed a motion (21/1/1999) calling for the suspension of the TOC initiative as it conflicted with principle of 'survival of the fittest'. One lawmaker said 'If there is no competition, what will our community become? Do we have to draw lots to get a job or promotion?' Clearly a lot of work still needs to be done, if the lawmakers are to be more properly briefed about such innovations so that they may make informed decisions.

6.2 Variable 2: Attitude, Motivation and Exposure to English

6.2.1 Attitude

Table 5 indicates that most students generally have a moderately strong motivation to learn English and display a favourable attitude towards English. However, Naiman et al. (1978) found that 'A positive attitude ... does not guarantee success.' (1978, p.78). Attitude towards the target language, if favourable, should be a motivating factor in the study of the language. If favourable attitude contributes to competence, it is through increased motivation in the learners in applying themselves to the task of language learning. This point is supported by the results in table 16 which indicate

that HA's have a more favourable attitude to English than the LA's, the respective means being 29.2118 and 28.6179.

These findings accord with both Fu et al's (1985) study where different groups in that study showed a relationship between attitude and achievement but not a strong one; and subsequent studies by Pennington and Yue (1994) and Axler, Young and Stevens (1998) who found that after the reversion of Hong Kong to China in 1997 that English no longer posed a threat to Hong Kong Chinese identity.

6.2.2 *Intensity of Motivation*

Table 16 shows a very significant relationship between competence and intensity of motivation (.000), the HA's displaying a greater intensity than the LA's, the respective means being 13.8780 and 12.6136. These figures accord with findings of other studies in North America e.g. the Gardner and Lambert (1972) study in Maine, Louisiana and Montreal and the Singapore project of Tan (1978) which support the view that motivation plays an important part in the development of second language competence. The problem is how to activate this motivation. The discussion below suggests possible pointers.

Dornyei and Otto (1998) further examine how these various factors interact and suggest that important factors include the following:

- 1 A selected goal which must be regarded as attainable which takes account of features such as self-confidence, perceived goal difficulty, expected support, and the coping potential of any planned action. An important feature according to Locke and Kristoff (1996) is that goals that are perceived as difficult and challenging, but attainable, lead to higher performance than goals that are easy, provided they are specific rather than vague.
- 2 The perceived relevance of the goal and the cost benefit calculations made by learners. Here learners have to prioritize their objectives and consequent plans and to weigh up the costs involved in expended time and effort, anxiety, possible attainment and fear of failure.

- 3 An action plan which is an 'imperative to forming a fully operational intention' (ibid.) in that learner autonomy is considered to go hand in hand with motivation to learn e.g. '... enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility ... and perceiving that their learning successes and failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies...' Dickinson (1995, p. 173 -174).
- 4 In addition to the learner there are other figures which affect the motivational quality of learning e.g. parents, teachers, the learner group, classroom climate and the school environment. One important feature is the way teachers structure their classroom teaching. Dornyei (1998) has shown that cooperation in the classroom augments motivation to learn.
- 5 Dornyei and Otto (1998) also suggest that ' An important source of scaffolding and enhancing motivation is the knowledge of and skills in using self-regulatory strategies.' (1998, p. 60). They distinguish three types i.e. goal setting, action maintenance and learning strategies.

Goal setting strategies are more related to motivation and in the case of long lasting activities such as language learning, the setting of short-term objectives, such as tests, passing examinations, may provide a powerful motivating function in that they indicate progress and provide feedback.

Action maintenance strategies are directed at maintaining motivation and are useful '... with distal goals to help individuals to maintain their priorities in the face of temptation and adversity'. Dornyei and Otto (1998, p. 60).

By using learning strategies, a learner demonstrates motivation since they involve processes whereby the learner activates certain behaviours to increase the effectiveness of his/her own learning. 'The fact that learning strategies enhance achievement generates positive affect in the learners about how and what they study, thereby reinforcing their motivated disposition.' (ibid.) It is noted in Question 13 of Part 1 of the student interview that the HA's saw themselves as being influential in the learning process whereas few of the LA's viewed themselves as being significant in their learning.

The discussion below of the results of the data on motivation obtained from the questionnaire confirms observations made in the above considerations of motivational forces in that the HA's seem to be more goal oriented than the LA's, have some kind of action plan and make use of coping strategies.

6.2.3 Motivation Orientation

Gardner and Lambert (1972) concluded in the Philippine study that both instrumental and integrative orientation are important for success in English i.e. students who are competent in English may have either instrumental or integrative orientation. In this study it appears that successful students (HA's) tend to be both instrumentally and integratively motivated i.e. they are equally interested in the utilitarian and cultural aspects of English. This finding is compatible with Tan's (1978) findings of Singapore students of English and is explained below.

Table 5 shows that about 80% of the students have a high instrumental motivation – as did Richards (1998) and Lin and Detaramani (1998)- but that only some 24% of the students have a high integrative motivation. However, Table 16 reveals that a significant relationship (.004) exists between competence, and integrative motivation. Table 16 also shows that integrative motivation is greater for HA's than for LA's, the respective means being 2.1863 and 2.0503.

The explanation for the LA's almost entirely instrumental orientation may lie in a cost-effective approach to their learning of English e.g. Students 13 and 14 who felt that a grade 'D' in the Hong Kong certificate of Education was sufficient (all things being equal) to ensure selection in the work-place or for further academic study. Conversations with Students 9 and 10 and Teacher 12 indicated that students feel D is sufficient and that the work needed to achieve a higher grade is not worth the effort. The students are therefore taking a realistic view of their abilities, in that once grade D is reached there is no need to strive further. However, a further point merged from discussions with students. In the marking system, the full range of marks is not used in order to stimulate the student to greater efforts. The LA's particularly become imbued with the feeling that they have a long way to go before they meet the standards required of them which may cause frustration levels to rise since, no matter

the amount of effort expended, the rewards will be less than expected. Motivation could well suffer as a result e.g. Hepburn (1992).

These figures also suggest that cultural features so determinedly omitted from language teaching materials nowadays may have a greater role to play than had been envisaged given the relationship between competence and integrative motivation (e.g. Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). It is also noted that the HA's used the word 'culture' or made reference to cultural features when asked in their interviews to give reasons for wanting to study a particular language. Furthermore, Teachers 9 and 13 indicated their wish to include more cultural elements in their teaching materials. Morgan (1993) points out that '... teaching a language is not enough in itself and that some kind of 'background information' is necessary... Thus in language textbooks, sections in English are included giving background information about the target country.' (Morgan, 1993, p. 63).

Classroom implications from the above discussion indicate that strong motivational influences include goal setting which is particularly important (or else the TENOR syndrome prevails i.e. teaching English for no obvious reason) and should include an action plan which contains specific, clearly laid-out attainable objectives, plus support mechanisms such as scaffolding, feedback for the maintenance of learning and 'psychological' support to sustain any set-backs.

6.2.4 Exposure to English

The students in this sample come from fairly comfortable, mostly professional home backgrounds. Families are small and parental encouragement is high. This encouragement, however, seems to be restricted to school work as only about 2% (Table 5) can be described as experiencing a high exposure to English i.e. enjoying English as a second language. For the vast majority English functions as a foreign language. This view, however tentative, has far-reaching pedagogical implications, especially where English is learned as a foreign language.

Since English is now largely taught as a foreign language, students can gain extra exposure to English through films, TV, music, computer software etc. An important

concern, however, is the content of the English lesson, especially with regard to the teaching of grammar. With less time now at their disposal for teaching English teachers have to optimise their teaching and for that they need statistical information.

Hong Kong teachers claim that students know grammar yet have difficulty in using this knowledge correctly e.g. Teachers 12, 13. Below, therefore, is a brief discussion as to how the concept of frequency might be applied to the teaching of grammar.

Learning a language means learning the grammar of the language so that the forms of the language may be used in their appropriate functions. However, most grammar syllabuses are overcrowded and try to give a comprehensive survey of the language. If the learner is expected to display knowledge of a fairly large number of items, each given equal weighting, then the results may not reflect the learner's ability beyond the control or test situation. Learners who can write fluent English may not score well on such tests if they are unfamiliar with items which are less frequent in ordinary English and therefore of little use to the learner. An important aspect of grammatical proficiency is the ability to predict those high frequency items which would reveal the extent to which the learner is familiar with the 'code' of English. It seems reasonable, therefore, to teach a range of the most frequent items rather than give a comprehensive cover of English grammar and thus include forms, not so much for the value they have for the learner, but because there exists a grammatical description of these forms.

This view of grammar as consisting of an inventory of discrete items with little reference to their function has seen recent thinking place greater emphasis on the integration of grammar within the four language skills and that teaching should be arranged around form, function and frequency (e.g. Hepburn, 1991). It is hence suggested that that a programme with a more modest objective should be implemented with some degree of thoroughness. It should not have such a wide range of sentence patterns and grammatical items that teachers and learners alike have great difficulty in establishing them. The programme should present the patterns and features that occur frequently. The need is for a 'core' language within which the learner can take the initiative without producing too many errors.

In establishing such a programme, the concept of frequency has considerable relevance because:

- 1 given that English is essentially a foreign language, more and more learners in Hong Kong do not use English outside the school as the voice of the home, school and environment is the local language. It seems more economical therefore, to use the most frequent items to allow greater access to the L2 which is frequently English.
- 2 It shows which items are most frequently used and these can then determine the sequence of teaching items and the weighting to be given to a particular item. It would seem better to spend more time on high-frequency items as they are more useful. Too much time spent on low-frequency items restricts the learners in the progress they make.
- 3 Competence with high frequency items would have the benefit of allowing the generation of useful, fluency-oriented sentences for communicative situations i.e. the spin-off of grammar ability.

A complex item seems more difficult to acquire than a simple one and the complex item receives more learning time. Yet frequency of use (and hence usefulness) is in inverse proportion to complexity. A brief examination of verb forms will illustrate this point.

According to the figures contained in the report on a Verb-form Frequency count, a monograph produced by George (1963) at the Central Institute of Hyderabad, the most frequent are the one-word forms e.g. stem (clean), stem + -s (cleans), stem + -ed (cleaned). The two-word forms (is cleaning, has cleaned) are less frequent. Three and four-word forms (has been cleaned, must have been cleaned) are even less frequent and the five-word form (must have been being cleaned) is rare.

Examining large numbers of stem and stem + -s forms in different contexts it becomes clear that a use which is typical of these forms is, respectively, instruction and description and that of stem + -ed, narration. The above observations are summarised in Table 26.

Table 26: Summary Diagram of Verb Forms, Function and Frequency

Form	Stem	Stem+-s	Stem+-s (non-finite)	+Stem+-ed	Stem+-ed
Examples	Write	Describes	is	+ added	Called
	Sketch	Flows	Are	+ felled	Bought
	Draw	Shows		+ heated	Carried
Function	Instruction	(straight)	Description	(process)	Narrative
Frequency	20%	50%			30%

Adapted from McEldowney (1982)

The summary diagram shows that this kind of English involves three main function areas, instruction, description and narrative. These functions are established on an examination of the grammatical items which focus most efficiently on the correlation of verb form and function, the verb being the pivot of the sentence thus allowing a viable description of the language used in each function area. Such a system allows for more systematic processing, storage and recall of items to be learned.

It seems reasonable to suppose that greater exposure to English would, in the long run, contribute to success in learning English. The assumption is that the more students are exposed to English, the more competent they are likely to become. This assumption echoes Krashen's (1985) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis which considers that exposure is the main factor in determining success or failure in second language learning.

There is another aspect to be considered. Explicit knowledge of the language e.g. rules and vocabulary, can be consciously learned but implicit knowledge e.g. those features of the language which are intuitively felt to be right, is not easily taught. One way is by increasing exposure to English through a subconscious process of acquisition (Krashen, 1981) or unconscious absorption (Stern, 1975). As an aid to learning, exposure to English should not be lightly dismissed and every teacher mentioned their students' lack of exposure to English.

However, there is a problem. In a second language environment, the work in the classroom is supplemented by further exposure to the L2 in the form of outside agencies e.g. shops, signs, notices, media etc. where the required interaction is supplied by such ancillary agencies. In a foreign language situation these agencies do not function to the same extent, if at all; and consequently exposure to the L2 is experienced, by and large, only in the school; which is what seems to happen in Hong Kong despite the availability of these L2 agencies.

Though Hong Kong is ostensibly a bilingual community, the figures for exposure to English (Table 5) indicate that, despite the availability of contact with English outside the classroom, very little contact is made with English outside the classroom, except for a small minority. The big question then is: 'How can a teacher of English in a Hong Kong school increase student exposure to English in school?'

The question is a particularly pertinent one, as the majority of students will not receive any real increase in exposure to English at home. There, the competition from adults, older or peer members of the household in Chinese language environment makes it virtually impossible for English to compete. School, hence, seems to be the place where this exposure is likely to take place. Teachers can increase their students' exposure to English in various ways by interacting with them as far as possible but it will mean a change of role. Interaction involves giving students a greater role in developing and carrying through activities, of being more tolerant of errors students make when trying to communicate, of accepting a higher noise level, less regimented rows of students and of encouraging those with little or no experience of using initiative or participation in co-operative learning and sharing. Littlewood et al. (1995) found that university students in Hong Kong claimed they had few opportunities to speak in class but that 'The frequency of speaking activities in Forms 6 and 7 also had a significant effect on the HKAL English results and the HKAS English results... This suggests that students who had lots of oral practice got better results in public examinations.' (Littlewood et al.,1995, p.3). Littlewood et al. (1995) also found that students '... welcome opportunities for active participation. It is interesting to note that this desire to participate in active communication is

accompanied by an almost equally strong desire to have their mistakes corrected by their teacher.' (Littlewood et al., 1995, p.6).

Littlewood et al. (1995) also found that '... students love small discussion groups' (ibid.). These 'buzz' groups break the monotony of the normal question-answer-feedback system and present less risk or threat to students because they have the safety of the group. 'To put it simply, buzz groups allow for greater learner participation and responsibility, more practice opportunities, and a more supportive learning environment.' (ibid.).

The teacher therefore, from being a giver of information and controller of events, has to become a resource person whose role is to give advice, provide explanations, help find suitable materials, suggest procedures and pass on information coming from other learners (Cohen, 1998, pp. 97-102). The teacher hence is a person who can help find answers to questions, who helps in the learning tasks and is an informed guide when required. To allow for the special needs of the 'exam' class i.e. Form 5 and 7 students, this student-centred approach should start in Form 1 so that by Form 5 the student is, to a large extent, an independent or semi-independent learner. Such an approach would not interfere with preparation for the examinations but enhance it.

Although students liked interactive tasks, Littlewood et al. (1995) found that students with low proficiency tend not to adopt strategies which they would normally use when speaking in the L1. 'There seems to be a case for addressing this issue at the linguistic level, e.g. reminding students of or teaching them the kinds of strategies needed for successful spoken communication.' (Littlewood et al. 1995, p.8). Cohen (1998) reinforces this point: 'The underlying premise is that language learning will be facilitated if students become more aware of the range of possible strategies that they can consciously select during language learning and use.' (Cohen, 1998, p. 65).

Teachers should therefore indicate the available strategies and explain why they are useful. When a workman is given a job of work to do, he is usually given the tools he requires and shown how to use them. Language learning is no different. When students are given the tools for language learning and are shown how to use them,

they will be better prepared to use English as a medium for communication. O'Malley (in Wenden and Rubin, 1987) found that training in the use of strategy employment was effective for listening and speaking which suggests that when teachers provide students with learning tools they can use on their own, even outside the classroom, they will be able to make more effective use of the learning opportunities they encounter. Talbot (1995) also found that strategy training helped students. 'Overall, by demonstrating that the treatment group significantly outperformed the control group from pretest to posttest, the intervention study has shown statistically the effectiveness of strategy training in expository text structure awareness.' (Talbot, 1995, p.297). Cohen (1998) also provides detailed accounts of how strategy training may be successfully managed as does Michonska-Stadnik (1993) who considers that 'Learning strategies are conscious processes and are teachable. It seems important to make learners aware of the existence of strategies as a significant aid in language acquisition.' (Michonska-Stadnik, 1993, p.101)

6.3 Variable 3: English Language Learning Strategies

Tables 14 (a) and 14 (b) indicate that the *most frequently used strategies* by the students in this study are *searching for meaning, memorisation of rules, use of contextual clues, dictionary use, an inductive strategy* and *readiness to use English*. The strategies that are *least* used are connected with *practice* e.g. *constant practice, role play* and *pattern practice*. This pattern is also revealed when the strategies used by the HA's and LA's are compared.

Table 18 shows that the most frequent strategies / techniques used by the HA's are *searching for meaning, readiness to use English, memorisation, contextual clues to find meaning, use of the dictionary* and *willingness to risk errors*. The LA's also use these strategies but not to the same extent although memorisation was ranked higher for the LA's than for the HA's. The HA's make little use of the strategies associated with practising English while the LA's rarely use them. These findings are similar to those of Green and Oxford (1995) who found that the majority of strategies used more frequently by more successful learners involved active language use. They suggest that 'A crucial role in L2 learning appears to be played by strategies involving active use of the target language.' (Green and Oxford, 1995, p. 291).

Very significant relationships are noted in Table 18 between competence and all the learning strategies except for inductive learning. According to Table 18 the **strategies of searching for meaning** e.g. the *context clue* approach, **constant practice** e.g. **repetition of difficult sounds** and **readiness to use English for communication** seem to be most strongly associated with *competence*. The method of *inferencing* meaning from the context is dependent on the ability to understand the surrounding vocabulary and grammatical signals. The HA's are better equipped in this respect which probably explains why the technique is more widely used by them as shown in Table 19. This skill of drawing meaning from the context through inferencing can be taught; but like any other skill needs practice to allow for development e.g. Nation (1980), Ingham and Bird (1995), MacLennan (1987). Many teachers, however, feel it is too time-consuming in a time-constraint situation and hence ignore it.

Readiness to use English is the next most significantly used technique. This strategy can be seen as a measure of confidence arising from competence in that over 70% of the HA's reported using it against just over half for the LA's (Table 18).

In the student interviews most students indicated that they could differentiate between various stages in their language learning process e.g. between the elementary and advanced stages. When the learner's knowledge is still at an elementary stage, the learning task is that of acquiring a new code and learning techniques such as memorisation are seen as essential for progress. When a degree of mastery has been achieved, the learning task is not so much the acquisition of a new code but the maintenance and improvement of one has already been acquired. Table 18 shows that memorization, though ranked ninth in order of significant levels with competence, is used by more HA's than LA's. The Pearson Chi-Square analyses (Tables 20 and 21) reveal that, given the situation that HA's memorise more and the very significant relationship between competence and memorisation, memorisation of sentences contributes more to the significant relationship between competence and memorisation. The HA students indicated that they wanted to enlarge their reservoir of language items and used memorization to accomplish this end. However, this feature is rather more complicated than it would seem.

In Western countries memorization and rote learning are generally equated and it is commonly believed that they do not lead to understanding. Furthermore, given the combination of the cultural belief that the words of authorities should not be altered and the problems of expressing themselves in English, essentially a foreign language to them, Chinese students reproduce the words in texts and notes. Such behaviour may seem to be rote learning but in the interviews the role of understanding surfaced e.g. Students 21 and 22. It also seems to relate back to the stage of development of the student.

Watkins (1996) suggests that there are four stages through which the learners pass, the aim in each being :

- 1 to achieve everything through reproduction; the strategy is to rote learn everything.
- 2 to achieve through rote learning important things.
- 3 through reproduction: the strategy is to understand first
- 4 to understand and achieve: the strategy is to understand or to combine understanding and memorizing.

The Stage 1 level accords with the findings of Liu (1986) who suggests that two of the guiding rules for Chinese learners are that the best way to acquire knowledge is to memorize it and the best way to acquire a skill is to practice it. In the interviews students emphasized this rote learning aspect in primary school. However, as the learners move up through secondary school, they realize, that though the reproduction of model answers was still helpful in gaining good scores in examinations, the amount to be learned was becoming excessive. Hence at the Stage 2, they rely first on given advice e.g. by their teachers as to the most important facts to be rote learned. Later the more advanced students begin to choose for themselves the points considered worth remembering. This is perhaps a very important stage as it signals the beginning of the transition from teacher to self-reliance and indicates the start of students becoming responsible for their own learning.

By Stage 3, the students combine memorizing and understanding. Stage 4 is a further extension of Stage 3. The difficulty is to decide whether the learner's aim is to memorize through understanding or to understand through memorization. This difference may be a significant factor later when the quantity of learning is not of the same magnitude.

Marton et al. (1996) provide part of the answer when they described memorization as being 'mechanical and with understanding' (1996, p.76). They further distinguished memorization with understanding as consisting of 'memorizing what is understood' and 'understanding through memorization' (ibid.), a finding similar to that of Watkins' (1996).

It seems that in this study the HA's have advanced to Stage 3 and possibly Stage 4 whereas the LA's are still at Stage 2, which observation is supported by comments made by various teachers (Table 24). Support is also found in Kirby et al. (1996) who, citing a study by Yee, report that 'Asian university students commonly respond to the intense pressure of academic achievement by adopting memorization strategies, and this may be particularly true for such students in English language.' (Kirby et al., 1996, p. 144). However, in their own study they report that '.... less fluent L2 students are indeed likely to adopt such strategies in a learning task.' (ibid.). Biggs (1996) points out '... the English standard required (in exams) is well above the level of proficiency of most students. Hence the various strategies (e.g. rote memorization) that enable students to survive without really understanding what they are reading'. (Biggs, 1996, p.276).

The strategy of **searching for meaning** also seems strongly associated with success according to Table 18. It is the strategy most frequently used by the HA's and the LA's but more so by the HA's. (Table 19). Those who are rated as more competent are likely to be those who are not complacent about what they do not know but treat their failure to understand as a challenge. The result is supported by the behaviours noted during the 'think-aloud' exercises where the LA's tended to give up quickly whereas the HA's were prepared to wrestle with the problem to find a solution. Support is also found in Stern's (1975) description of the good language learner as

one who ‘... constantly searches for meaning by whatever method available.’ (1975, p. 314).

Constant practice seems very little used, yet Table 18 shows a significant relationship between competence and practice. Practice would seem to be an important feature in developing language competence especially in the learning of new structures and vocabulary. It is also important for the maintenance of language items learned and for continued development of fluency cf. the interviews with Students 21 and 22 who were designated LA’s in a Band 1 / 2 school. It is noted in Table 18 that the HA’s also used the strategies of role play and pattern practice more than the LA’s. It is significant that both groups of students used pattern practice more than role play. This is perhaps an indication of the insecurity felt by the learners in this study which they indicated by the low ratings they gave themselves for English. The greater reliance on pattern practice reflects the more clearly stated parameters inherent in such a technique, in that the items to be learned (e.g. structures) are fixed and stated and hence more easily learned. Putting these practice techniques into practice is the problem which is seen in the lower scores given by the LA’s for constant practice, role-play and pattern practice. It also reflects back to the views expressed by Teacher 13 who felt the students wanted to learn English as if it were a subject like Science where the learning materials are more fixed and not subject to the creativity and instant manipulation of items which a language demands.

Although more than half the students in both groups were prepared to use *English for communicative purposes*, only some 36% of the LA’s and about 50% of the HA’s were prepared to run *the risk of error*. Various researchers e.g. Stern (1975), Rubin (1975) have suggested that the good language learner tries to put newly acquired language skills into use as soon as possible. To do this the learner must be prepared to accept the situation that mistakes will occur and that embarrassment over mistakes should not be a deterrent or inhibiting force which can act as a hindrance to successful language learning.

This inhibition may well relate back to the way error is handled in the classroom. In the classroom, the overwhelming emphasis is on accuracy and the avoidance of

mistakes so that students may do well in the exams. There is nothing inherently wrong with such an orientation but in a teacher-centred situation e.g. Hong Kong where errors are not seen as part of the developmental process but as mistakes to be corrected as soon as possible, the emphasis on accuracy only can be an inhibiting force. The LA's are the ones most likely to make errors and in a situation as described above these students feel intimidated and hence are reluctant to run the risk of error. It is noted that the main reasons for student 'silence' in the classroom were fear of being laughed at and of making mistakes (Table 25).

Biggs and Watkins (1996) further suggest that 'Large classes and a strongly teacher-centred approach, provide limited opportunities for the students to speak in English, and indeed most students fear being asked to speak in English...' (1996, p.276). They go on: 'There is often an unwritten agreement between the students and teachers that the teachers will only ask questions that the students' limited English can handle no matter the curriculum requirements of the subject.' (ibid.).

Littlewood et al. (1995) found that students' affective attitudes towards speaking English seemed to be related to the way they perceive their speaking proficiency. 'One inference that could be drawn from this is that students may feel uncomfortable speaking English because they think they are not performing well.' Or as he put it later '... because they have not had much practice in speaking.' (Littlewood et al., 1995, p.4).

Yet in the interviews, students indicated that they did not mind making errors provided that the atmosphere in which the errors were made was not inhibiting. It would appear the students are not passive per se; rather their 'passivity' seems to be a reflection of the teaching environment. Traditionally in Hong Kong the teaching/learning situation is a teacher-centred one with heavy reliance on preparation for the external examinations with little interaction in it for the students. To accommodate this strategy, teachers will have to review their practices, the external examination notwithstanding, which, in effect, will demand more management and organizational skills rather than the 'testing' system currently still widely used i.e. the emphasis

should be not on establishing whether students know the right answers but on showing them how to obtain the right answers.

One characteristic of the good language learner, according to Stern (1975) and Rubin (1975), is an awareness of language as a system. Such an awareness involves constantly probing the language to see the underlying structure, setting up hypotheses until the target language is met. Such a process implies having some linguistic knowledge and technical know-how about learning a second language. The use of *inductive learning* as a strategy implies an awareness not only of the structures of a language but of the language as a system and the way the system (and sub-systems) operate. This aspect does not seem to feature prominently in the study habits of the students in this investigation in that just less than a third of the HA's and about a fifth of the LA's consistently use this strategy (Table 18). In other words, the approach of viewing language as a system is not a prominent feature in the study habits of the students taking part in this survey. Such a situation may well mirror current teaching practices whereby teachers are required to spend less time on grammar per se but to teach English more as a system for communication rather than as a means of expressing formally correct structures. 'This means that communicative effectiveness, ability to use the language will receive as much attention as the production of correct English sentences.' (Hong Kong Government, 1983, p.15). As a result students may not be appropriately equipped with the wherewithal to analyse the system of English and to approach learning with a more consciously 'rule-based' approach. It was noted above that memorization was greater for sentences than for rules although for the HA's the strategy of rule memorisation (Table 20) was far higher than the LA's (73% v 59.8%) which suggests that learners can effectively make inferences about the language.

Just over 50% of the students in both groups said they used *a dictionary* for which there was a marginally statistical significance (0.058, Table 18). During the student interviews over 70% of the students said they used a bilingual dictionary which suggests a lack of confidence in 'decoding' English. Of those who said they used monolingual English dictionaries, the majority were HA's which point echoes the

views of teacher 3 who felt that students, especially the LA's, were too informant-dependent.

6.4 Summary

The ultimate goal of any research trying to establish connections between strategy use and learning success should be to establish the extent to which strategy use contributes to the learning process. In this study, statistically *significant relationships* were found with certain learning strategies e.g. *use of contextual clues, readiness to use English, memorisation, searching for meaning, constant practice, willingness to risk error and exposure to English.*

In terms of other variables, **positive correlations** were found between *competence* and *intensity of motivation, integrative motivation* and a *favourable attitude* towards English. It was noted in the student interviews that the HA's were more inclined to use their English when opportunities presented themselves which echoes the findings of Littlewood et al. (1985) as to the efficacy of oral work in developing favourable attitudes towards English.

In terms of learning profiles, the main differences between the HA's and the LA's (Table 16) are outlined below. The HA's were found to have a more favourable attitude to English, were motivated both instrumentally and integratively, unlike the LA's whose orientation was instrumental, and had a greater motivational intensity. As the HA's were actively engaged in their learning they saw learning difficulties as challenges and used a variety of strategies to solve their problems whereas the LA's tended to rely on an informant. The HA's were also goal-oriented and developed means to realise these goals whereas the LA's depended on external sources e.g. teachers for solutions. The LA's did the minimum work necessary but the HA's extended their work beyond the classroom in the hope of increasing their exposure to English.

There remain some residual issues to be discussed e.g. constraints on the research study and these are discussed in the next chapter

Chapter 7

Conclusions

7.0 Preamble

This thesis has shown that for Hong Kong secondary school students of English, significant links exist between competence in English and certain factors in the language learning environment as identified by the research involved in seeking answers to the questions posed in chapter 4. These are summarised below.

7.1 Summary of Findings

This study has attempted to identify, within the constraints of the methodology used as set out in chapter 4, explained in chapter 5 and discussed in chapter 6, attitudinal and motivational factors and a set of language learning strategies which are positively related to competence in English. Tentative profiles of the 'HA' and 'LA' learners of English are also postulated. Various instruments were used in this study for data gathering i.e. a student questionnaire and interviews with teachers and students who were also given think-aloud tasks.

Two kinds of variables were used: **a dependent variable** (competence in English) and **three independent variables** (Learning Situation, Attitude/Motivation and Learning strategies). For these various techniques of analyses were used, as described in chapter 4, to produce data of two types: **quantitative** and **qualitative**.

Each variable was operationalised through a series of questions. Results for each variable are described in Chapter 5, the qualitative data following on from the quantitative analysis.

Variable 1 concerned The Learning Situation which indicated that :

- Instrumental motivation was the main driving force for most students
- The most frequent learning strategies used were: searching for meaning, use of contextual clues, use of a dictionary, inductive learning, and readiness to use English

- In terms of learning styles there was a preference for visual rather than aural inputs but interestingly nearly half indicated no preference which suggests the use of multiple learning styles which Reid (1987) claims should make for efficient learners.

Variable 2 concerned **Attitude/ Motivation** variables. It was found that competence in English correlated significantly with self-rating, intensity of motivation, exposure to English and integrative motivation.

Variable 3 dealt with **The Learning Strategies** used by the different types of student i.e. HA v LA. The results show that significantly statistical correlations exist between competence in English and contextual clues, readiness to use English, memorization (esp. of sentences) search for meaning and constant practice. The results also showed that both HA's and LA's use similar strategies but that the HA's used them more often than the LA's.

The quantitative data were derived from interviews with teachers and students, the latter being subjected additionally to 'think-aloud' tasks. The results from the teacher interviews showed that:

- **Clear differences exist between HA' s and LA' s as shown below:**

HA' s	LA's
Active	passive
A problem is a challenge	rely on informants
Solve problems on own	tend to give up easily
Plan their work	depend on teacher for work load
Diligent	lazy

- **Certain problems are endemic in learning English for which solutions were suggested. The main points are shown below:**

Problems	Solutions
Lack of practice/ exposure to English	Increase Exposure/practice
Lack of motivation	More interesting techniques

Lack of time	Less crowded t/table
Exam pressure	Revise exam syllabus
Quality of textbooks	More interactive c/room work
Lack of resources	Resource centre, expat. teachers

The student interviews reinforced and supported the views of the teachers in that the HA's gave evidence that they were more motivated and active in their learning of English both in and out of school whereas the LA's were 'content' to be guided by the teacher of other informants. Significantly, in Question 13 of Part 1 of the student interview, HA's saw themselves as being influential in the learning process whereas the LA's did not see themselves as such which syndrome was shown in the 'think-aloud' sessions where the LA's were more inclined to give up instead of trying to use a different approach to the problem when success eluded them at first. These results were exemplified and described in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6.

However, as explained and discussed in chapter 4, it was not possible to establish the direction of causality but the findings nonetheless provide valuable information and guidance to teachers and course and syllabus designers in Hong Kong as outlined in the next section.

7.2 Applications of the Findings

The findings have some utility because the number of students (476) and teachers (13) involved was large enough to provide empirical support for some tentative conclusions and suggestions. As such, the study is of potentially great value for the following reasons:

- (i) it is concerned with the success of English as a subject and of English-medium instruction (EMI), both important issues for Hong Kong
- (ii) it focuses on an aspect of Government policy at a time when the findings can help in the successful implementation of that policy
- (iii) the findings will be of interest to students and teachers of English, to teachers using English as a medium-of-instruction (EMI), to publishers and their textbook writers, to curriculum developers concerned with EMI

courses and to potential employers who run in-house English training schemes

- (iv) the findings have already been translated into teaching materials for some of the HKIED pre-service enhancement courses for prospective lower secondary school teachers.

However, this study carries certain limitations which are indicated below.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

- 1 The moderate coefficient of reliability means that although significant relationships were found, some of the findings must be seen as exploratory. Any stated conclusion therefore should be treated as tentative and subject to further study for confirmation or further development of an instrument appropriate for the local cultural and linguistic context.
- 2 Due to the lack of sufficient time and resources, no attempt has been made to investigate all the learner factors involved in second language learning e.g. general intelligence, language aptitude, personality factors etc.
- 3 Because some schools originally selected for inclusion in the project declined to participate (one school withdrew the day before the agreed date of visit), alternative schools had to be found which caused the project to be delayed and created time problems.
- 4 Limitations were also placed on the data gathering exercise by:
 - (a) lack of financial resources which allowed for only one extra interviewer. This meant that students had to be interviewed in pairs and in some cases in small groups of four, thereby diluting the richness of the anticipated data.
 - (b) the school schedules. Hence, some of the student interviews had to be curtailed for lack of time, particularly the think-aloud exercises, which it was hoped, would produce more illuminating data. Several teachers could not be interviewed due to their teaching duties but they completed their interview guides in a helpful way.
- 5 There is a range of factors that can affect the picture of strategy use that emerges from elicitation instruments such as the questionnaire used in this study. Such a combination i.e. of an elicitation instrument and proficiency

scores, is perhaps not in itself sufficient to provide practical, useable insights into the relationship between strategy use and proficiency level. When an analysis is made of student levels of strategy use in conjunction with proficiency levels, what is provided is a general idea of the associations between the two at one moment in time. What is not being measured is the effect of one on the other. If this relationship is to be explored, a much narrower focus is needed. It would be necessary to establish what these strategies actually mean to students in their particular learning situation and to find ways of converting them into teachable techniques, the effect of which could be measured over a period of time with different groups of learners.

Such limitations lead on to areas for further research following from the findings of this study. These are outlined below.

7.4 Further Research

7.4.1 *Elicitation Techniques*

The data collected indicated what students believe they do or would do in certain learning situations. It would seem that a more controlled, experimental second stage of research is needed. Seliger (1983) argues that any self-reporting data should be treated with caution since they cannot be independently confirmed. It might also mean giving the data-gatherer answers which the student thinks he would like to have. However, Cohen (1998) is more optimistic: 'We saw that less conventional methods, such as verbal report, may provide insights about the strategies used before, during, and after performing language learning or language using tasks.' (Cohen, 1998, p. 265)

It is also possible, and this study bears out this point to some extent, that some people are capable of more precise, detailed and organised thought because of analytic capacities with verbal material which enables them to reflect and report effectively on their own learning experiences. 'These same abilities may be those which are also important in language learning success.' (Skehan, 1989, p.80). Less successful learners may not have experienced success for the same reason they could not report strategies

i.e. lack of those same capacities. Results from such studies need to be tested by setting up effective conditions to allow researchers to establish whether the strategies or the articulateness which might underlie them are the causal variables.

A longitudinal study would seem to be more appropriate to find out any differences between self-reported behaviour rather than the brief time given to this feature during the student interviews

7.4.2 Data Collection

There is a need for further research into the strategy of approaching language as a system. One way of seeing these processes at work, and of gauging the amount of learning they produce, would be through controlled studies, followed by in-depth interviews with the subjects involved. Interviews are necessary, since using the linguistic product alone as a basis for discussing the nature of the learning strategies employed, is not always reliable.

7.4.3 Causality

Green and Oxford's (1995) view that active use of the target language is crucial in L2 learning holds if one accepts that strategy use has an effect on proficiency, but the issue of direction of causality still remains open. Skehan (1989) points out that 'greater strategy use might lead some students to higher levels of performance. Equally higher performance might enable the use of more strategies. (1989, p.92) Goh and Kwah, looking for variation among learners of different levels of proficiency, seem clear about the direction of causality.' Results from two-way ANOVA showed that the proficiency level of the students had a significant influence on the use of two categories of learning strategies; cognitive and compensation.' (Goh & Kwah, 1997, p.48). The implication is that by raising the proficiency level of students, we would be helping them to use strategies more frequently. If strategies are not causes of increased proficiency, they are not really worth investigating as they are simply outcomes of increased proficiency, and the increase has to be accounted for in some other way. If, however, they are contributory factors towards increased proficiency, and the implicit direction involved in using ANOVA suggests that the use of strategies is a cause rather than an outcome of proficiency, then there is a need to

investigate the effect of very specific strategies, on localised aspects of proficiency, in specific contexts, over a period of time. 'For that a longitudinal study and the monitoring of change over time would be necessary.' Skehan (1989, p.92) A starting point could be Table 18 which shows the relationship between competence and various strategies in ascending order of significant levels.

7.4.4 Strategy Training

Early attempts at strategy training described by McDonough (1999) as 'discouraging' (McDonough, 1999 p.13) produced mixed results (e.g. Wenden, 1986, O'Malley 1987). More recent studies (e.g. Talbot 1994, Dornyei 1995, Nunan 1997 and Cohen 1998) produced more significant results so that Cohen (1998) commenting on 'strategies-based instruction' (SBI) writes: ' This approach is considered by a growing number of experts to be the most natural, most functional, in some ways the least intrusive, and potentially the most supportive means of getting the message to learners that how they mobilize their own strategy repertoire will have significant consequences for their language use and learning.' (Cohen, 1998, p.266). Teachers can identify the strategies that are associated with proficiency for their students and embed these strategies in teaching materials and tasks. Further research, is therefore needed in Hong Kong to find out the effect of strategy training on acquisition and if the acquisition is temporary or permanent.

7.4.5 Materials Production

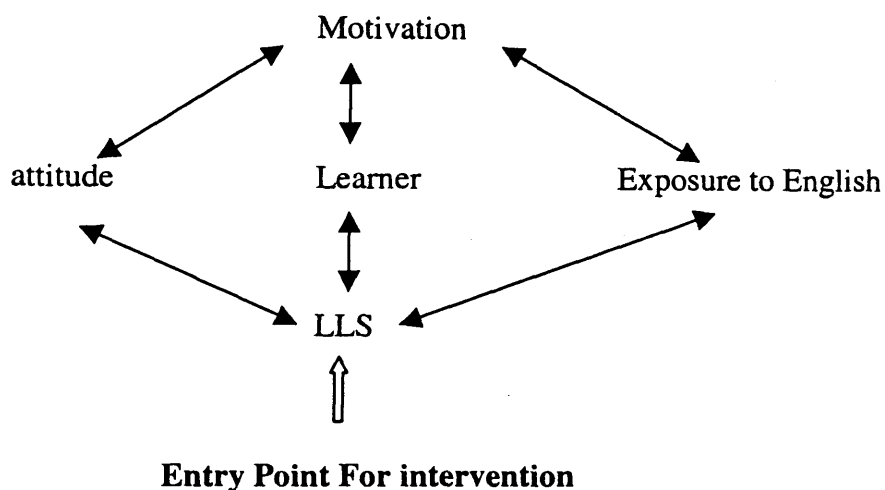
There has been no attempt to give much practical expression to the findings by way of actual examples or development of materials. A project in developing relevant materials and then testing their potency would involve a longitudinal study of some time which, nonetheless, would be of considerable value to teachers and students of English in Hong Kong.

7.5 Some Concluding Thoughts

The diagram at the end of chapter 3 sought an entry point for intervention. Based on the findings of this study intervention is suggested through language learning strategies. Effective strategy use would seem to be the entry to more favourable attitudes, in that success breeds success. This should lead to increased intensity of

motivation (even integrative) to increased exposure to English, which in turn, should increase competence in English. The diagram might now be organized accordingly.

Chart 2: Intervention Point in Relation to the Variables Below.



All teachers identified lack of exposure to English as a major problem exacerbated by the fact that English functions as a foreign language for 98% of the cohort. The exposure, therefore, should be appropriate in terms of the form, function and frequency concept outlined in chapter 6 so as ‘... to enhance the storage, retention, recall and application of information...’ (Cohen, 1998, p.4).

This study makes no claim to have identified all, or even a majority, of the factors involved in learning English in Hong Kong. It is hoped that the findings may in some small way extend knowledge in the field of learning English and that the insights gained with regard to attitudes, motivation and language learning strategies may prove useful in developing further lines of research, possibly in the field of culture-specific motivational factors and the identification of culture-specific language learner profiles. It is also hoped that the findings may have positive future relevance to all practitioners involved in the teaching and learning of English in Hong Kong.

Finally, the quotation below attributed to Chang Chih-tung, a Chinese philosopher was much used in the May 4th (1919) movement in China. The quotation was supplied by a Chinese colleague and although a rough translation of the Chinese

(Zhongxue wei ti; Xixue wei yong), it provides an interesting comment on the problems facing teachers of English in Hong Kong:

Chinese for the essentials;

English for the practical applications.

Questionnaire on the problems faced by students in learning English 問卷調查

The reason for this questionnaire is to find out what problems, you, as a student face in learning English. Your answers, if frank and accurate, will be very helpful in trying to develop better ways of teaching English.

本院編製這份問卷，目的在找出你作為學生在學習英語方面的困難。如果你能如實填答這份問卷，可以幫助我們設計更有效的英語教學方法。

These questions will only be read by the research team and will have no influence on your test marks or school reports.

你的答案只供研究人員參考，絕不會影 你測驗的分數和學業成績。

Thank you for your help.
謝謝你的合作。

Name: _____ S.I.D.: _____

I consent to the data being used in the report.

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 1

第一部

- 1. Please write the name of your school.**

請寫下你學校的名稱

- 2. Occupation of your father (or guardian):**

你父親（或監護人）的職業：

1

3. Please write down the number of brothers and sisters you have (including those who are not living at home with you). Do not count yourself.

不計算你本身在內，你共有多少名兄弟姊妹（包括不在家居住的兄弟姊妹）？

brother(s)

名(兄弟)

sister(s)

名(姊妹)

Total 合共:_____名

4. Sex 性別: Male ☐ Female ☐

男

女

- ### 5. What stream are you in?

你修讀的學科是

Science 理科	Arts 文科	Commerce 商科	Technical 工科	Others (specify) 其他 (請說明)

- 6. What is the monthly income of your father or guardian?**

你父親或監護人每月的收入是

less than \$5,000 不足 \$5,000	\$5,000 - \$10,000	\$10,001 - \$15,000	\$15,001 - \$20,000	More than \$20,000 超過 \$20,000

Appendix 1

7. The following do you have in your home?
你家裡有沒有以下物品？

kerosene stove 火水爐	
sewing machine 縫紉機	
radio 收音機	
electric fan 電風扇	
refrigerator 電冰箱	
gas stove 煤氣 / 石油氣爐	
television 電視	

electric stove 電爐	
washing machine 洗衣機	
piano / organ 鋼琴 / 風琴	
dehumidifier 抽濕機	
air-conditioner 冷氣機	
video-recorder 錄影機	
laser-disc 鐳射機	

8. What is the highest level of education of your parents?
你父母最高的教育程度是

Level 程度	Father	Mother
less than Form 1 中一以下		
Form 1 - 3 中一至中三		
Form 1 - 4 中一至中四		
Form 1 - 5 中一至中五		
Form 1 - 6 中一至中六		
Form 1 - 7 中一至中七		
College / University 專上院校 / 大學		
Don't know 不知道		

Section II**第二部**

Answer these questions by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box(es):
請在適當的方格內加上「✓」號。

1. Do you read books from the school library or any other library?

你有沒有借閱學校圖書館或任何其他圖書館的書籍？

Yes ☐

有

No ☐

沒有

2. If 'Yes', how many English books from the library have you read this year?

如「有」，你在本年內共閱讀了多少本由圖書館借回來的英文書籍？

more than four 超過四本	two - four 2 -4 本	one 1 本	part of one book 不足一本	none 1 本也沒有

3. Does your family regularly buy English magazines or periodicals?

你的家人有沒有定期購買英文雜誌或期刊？

Yes ☐

有

No ☐

沒有

If 'Yes', write below the names of the magazines or periodicals.

如「有」，請寫下這些雜誌或期刊的名稱。

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

4. _____

Appendix 1

4. Is a newspaper (in any language) available in your home at least 3 days a week?
你家裡一星期是不是最少有三天購備報紙（任何語言）？

Yes ☐ No ☐
有 沒有

If 'Yes', write below the names of the newspaper(s).
如「有」，請寫下報紙的名稱。

1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____ 4. _____

5. Do you watch T.V. more than three times a week?
一星期內你是不是看電視超過三次？

Yes ☐ No ☐
有 沒有

- 6 How many English programmes do you watch on T.V. each week?
你每星期看多少個英語電視節目？

none 沒有	1 - 2 1 - 2 個	3 - 4 3 - 4 個	5 - 6 4 - 6 個	more than 6 超過 6 個

7. How many hours (on average) do you spend every week watching English programmes?
你每星期平均看幾小時英語電視節目？

less than 1 hour 少於 1 小時	1 - 2 hours 1 - 2 小時	2 - 4 hours 2 - 4 小時	4 - 6 hours 4 - 6 小時	more than 6 hours 超過 6 小時

8. When you watch an English programme, do you listen to the dialogue or read the sub-titles?

你看電視英語節目時是聽對白或是看字幕呢？

I usually listen to the dialogue and do not read the sub-titles 我通常是聽對白而不看字幕	
I usually listen to the dialogue but sometimes read the sub-titles 我通常是聽對白但有時也看字幕	
I usually read the sub-titles but sometimes I listen to the dialogue 我通常是看字幕但有時也聽對白	
I usually read the sub-titles 我通常是看字幕	
None of the above 非以上任何一項	

- 9a. Do you listen to RTHK or any other radio programme?

你有沒有收聽香港電台或任何其他電台的節目？

Yes ☐

有

No ☐

沒有

- 9b. If 'Yes, how many per week do you usually spend listening to radio programmes in English?

如「有」，一星期內你通常聽幾小時英語電台節目？

less than 1 hour 少於 1 小時	1 - 2 hours 1 - 2 小時	2 - 4 hours 2 - 4 小時	4 - 6 hours 4 - 6 小時	more than 6 hours 超過 6 小時

10. When you speak to your friends, do you use English?

你會用英語跟朋友交談嗎？

Always 總會	Often 經常	Sometimes 有時	Seldom 很少	Never 從不

11. What language do you usually speak at home to your family?

你在家與家人交談時通常用哪種語言？

Language 語言	Father 父親	Mother 母親	Brothers/Sisters 兄弟 / 姊妹
Cantonese 廣州話			
Mandarin 普通話（國語）			
English 英語			
Others (Specify) 其他（請說明）			

12. What was the first language you spoke at home?

你在家裏最初是說哪種語言？

- Cantonese ☐
- 廣州話
- Mandarin ☐
- 普通話（國語）
- English ☐
- 英語
- Others (specify) ☐
- 其他（請說明）

Section III**第三部**

Answers these questions by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box(es).
請在適當的方格內加上「✓」號。

1. In my reading, if I meet a word which I do not understand, I will look it up in a dictionary.

閱讀時如遇到不明白的生字，我會查閱字典。

Always 總會	Often 經常	Sometimes 有時	Seldom 很少	Never 從不

2. In my reading, if I meet a word I do not understand, I try to find out its meaning by examining the words or sentence before or after it.

閱讀時如遇到不明白的生字，我會根據這個字之前或之後的字或句子來理解它的意義。

Always 總會	Often 經常	Sometimes 有時	Seldom 很少	Never 從不

3. When I meet a new word, I make sentences with it, so that I can remember it better.

遇到新字時，我會用它造句以加深記憶。

Always 總會	Often 經常	Sometimes 有時	Seldom 很少	Never 從不

4. I practise saying English words which have sounds I find difficult to say, e.g. 'th' in 'mother' and 'v' in 'ever'.

當我遇到一些在發音上有困難的英文字時，如'mother'的'th'音及'ever'的'v'，我會加以練習。

Always 總會	Often 經常	Sometimes 有時	Seldom 很少	Never 從不

5. I practise English speaking by imagining I am playing a part in a situation and talk aloud.

我會假設自己在某個場合扮演某個角色，並且用英語高聲說話，以操練英語。

Always 總會	Often 經常	Sometimes 有時	Seldom 很少	Never 從不

6. I try to improve my English by writing sentences similar to those taught by the teacher or found in the text-book, e.g. 'Would you mind writing this letter?' or 'Would you mind buying some bread?'

我嘗試仿效老師所教或課本上的句子造句，以提高自己的英文水平。例如：「請你寫這封信好嗎？」或「請你買些 包好嗎？」這類句子。

Always 總會	Often 經常	Sometimes 有時	Seldom 很少	Never 從不

7. When you are not sure which form of a word or sentence is correct, e.g. whether to use 'came' or 'had come', which of the following do you usually do?

當你不能確定某個字或某個句子是否正確時，例如：不知應使用 'came' 或 'had come'，你通常以下面哪種方式處理？

Refer to previous lessons and try to think out for myself the rule to follow in this case. 翻看以前的課文，嘗試自己找出這個情 所應依據的法則	
Refer to a book on English grammar 翻看有關英文文法的書籍	
Ask the teacher or someone who knows English better 向老師或英文程度較佳的人士請教	
Don't think it is necessary to do anything 不了了之	
Others (describe what you do) 其他（請說明你的做法）	

8. When you are puzzled by some aspect of grammar, e.g. you are not sure when to use 'wrote' and when to use 'has written', what do you do?

當你對文法的某些方面百思不得其解時，例如：當你不能確定什麼時候要用 'wrote' 和什麼時候要用 'has written'，你會怎樣做？

Examine sentences in different books or passages and try to think out some guideline or rule. 翻閱不同書本或文章中的句子，盡量找出一些可依循的指引或法則	
Refer to a book on English grammar 翻看有關英文文法的書籍	
Ask the teacher or someone who knows English better 向老師或英文程度較佳的人士請教	
Don't think it is necessary to do anything 不了了之	
Others (describe what you do) 其他（請說明你的做法）	

9. When your teacher asks you a question during the English lesson and you know the right answer but you are not sure whether your English is right or wrong, what do you usually do? (If this has never happened to you, think of what you would do if you found yourself in such a position.)

當老師上英文課堂上問你一個問題，假如你知道答案，但並不確定你的英文是否正確，通常你會怎樣做？（假如這種情況從未發生在你身上，則假設你遇到這種情況時會怎樣做。）

I make a guess and say what I think is correct 我會猜度說出我認為是正確的答案	
I say something which I know is correct English but which may not answer the question 我會運用我認為是正確的英文作答，但這可能會答非所問	
I answer very softly so that the teacher will not hear my mistakes 我會低聲作答，以免老師聽到我的錯處	
I tell the teacher I don't know the answer 我會告訴老師我不知道答案	
I keep quiet and say nothing 我會默不作聲	
Others (describe what you do) 其他（請說明你的做法）	

Appendix 1

10. If you answer a question in the English lesson and you make a mistake, do you feel shy or embarrassed?

假如你在英文課答問題時犯了錯誤，你是否會感到羞怯或尷尬？

Usually I don't feel embarrassed 通常我不會感到尷尬	
I seldom feel embarrassed 我甚少會感到尷尬	
I usually feel embarrassed 我通常會感到尷尬	
I never answer if I think I am going to make a mistake 假如我認為會犯錯誤，便不去作答	

11. Some teachers believe that students should be encouraged to express their ideas in English even if their English is full of mistakes. Would you like to learn English in such a teacher's class?

有些老師認為即使學生的英文錯漏百出，也應當鼓勵他們用英文表達意見。你喜歡在這類老師所任教的班級學習英文嗎？

Yes, very much 十分喜歡	Yes 喜歡	Not sure 不知道	No 不喜歡	No, never 絕不喜歡

12. When I am reading, I select phrases and sentences which I think I can use in composition writing or conversation and I learn these phrases/sentences off by heart.

閱讀時我會挑選一些我認為可以在作文或交談時派上用場的片語和句子，然後加以熟讀和記誦。

Always 總會	Very often 多數會	Sometimes 有時會	Seldom 甚少會	Almost never 幾乎從不會

13. If your teacher tells you of a rule in grammar, such as you must add an 's' to the present tense verb after singular nouns (e.g. 'he writes, she writes'), do you learn the rules off by heart?

假如老師將一條文法規則告訴你，譬如必須給單數名詞之後的現在式動詞加上's'（例如 'he writes, she writes'），你是否會熟讀和記誦這條規則？

Always 總會	Very often 多數會	Sometimes 有時會	Seldom 甚少會	Almost never 幾乎從不會

14. When your teacher teaches a new word or sentence, do you remember better when you see it written down or when you hear it spoken a few times?

當老師教授新字或新句時，看 老師把它寫下來，或是聽 老師把它念幾遍，哪種方式你會記得更牢固？

Remember better when I see it written down 看 老師把它寫下來會記得更牢固	
Remember better when I hear it spoken a few times 聽 老師把它念幾遍會記得更牢固	
No difference whether it is written down or spoken 不論寫下來或念出來，都沒有分別	

15. When your teacher wants you to repeat a sentence, do you find it easier if she says the sentences several times or if she writes part of the sentence on the board?

假如老師要你複述一個句子，老師把這句子念幾遍，或者將句子的一部分寫出來，哪種方式對你較有幫助？

No difference whether she writes it down or says it several times 不論老師是否把句子寫出來或念幾遍，都沒有分別	
Easier if she says the sentence several times 老師把句子念幾遍會較有幫助	
Easier if she writes part of the sentence on the board 老師把句子的一部分寫在黑板上會較有幫助	

16. Suppose you are at a social function where you meet a guest from England and you want to be friendly, which of the following do you do?

假如你在社交場合遇見一個來自英國的賓客，而想對他表示友善，你會採取下列哪種方式？

Show friendliness with a smile as I cannot speak English 用微笑表示友善，因為不會說英語	
Speak to him/her in Chinese hoping (s)he understands the language 用中文與他 / 她交談，希望對方懂得這種語言	
Try to speak to him/her in English although my English is not good 雖然英語不好，但仍嘗試用英語與他 / 她交談	
Speak to him/her in English as speaking English is no problem for me 用英語與他 / 她交談，因為我講英語沒有困難	

17. Suppose you have learnt something new in an English lesson (a new word or sentence) do you use it when speaking to your friends?

當你上英文課時學到一些新東西（例如一個新字或一個句子），你和朋友交談時會不會用上它？

Yes, I usually try to do so 會，我通常會嘗試這樣做	
Yes, I sometimes try to do so 會，我有時會嘗試這樣做	
No, I don't speak English with my friends 不會，我並不用英語和朋友交談	

18. Is there any other way of learning or practising English (other than here) that you have found useful in helping you improve your English? If so, describe it briefly.

除這裏所述的方法外，你可有其他提高自己英語水平的學習或練習方法？如有的話，請簡述一下。

Section IV.1**第四部, 一**

The statements below are opinions often expressed by students of your age. Many people agree with each statement and many disagree. Please show how far you agree or disagree by writing a number in the blank after it, following the scale given.

下列每一句都是和你同年紀的同學所經常表達的意見。每一種意見既有許多人同意, 也有不少人不同意。請你根據下表所列的等級, 將適當的數目字分別填寫在每一個方格內, 以說明你對每一句意見的同意或不同意程度。

1	2	3	4	5
I strongly disagree 非常不同意	I disagree 不同意	I am not sure 不能確定	I agree 同意	I strongly agree 非常同意

1. Television in Hong Kong should show more English programmes ☐
本港的電視應播放更多英語節目
2. Films from the U.S.A. or Britain are better than films from countries in Asia or South East Asia ☐
來自美國或英國的電影, 較來自亞洲或東南亞國家的電影好看
3. English songs are more pleasant to listen to than songs in other languages ☐
英文歌曲較別種語言的歌曲悅耳
4. Chinese people who can speak English are smarter than those who can't ☐
會說英語的中國人比不會說英語的中國人更為出眾
5. It is important that the members of the Government should be able to speak English ☐
政府公務員能夠說英語, 至為重要
6. When I hear some-one speaking English fluently I wish I could speak English like that ☐
當我聽到別人說流利英語時, 我希望自己也能夠說得同樣流利
7. The children of people who don't speak English are better mannered than the children of English speaking people ☐
不操英語人士子女, 比操英語人士子女較有禮貌
8. English speaking people have contributed to the development of Hong Kong ☐
操英語人士對香港的發展作出了貢獻

Appendix 1

9. From what I know, family life is more important to Chinese people than to people from English speaking countries like the U.S.A. and Britain ☐
據我所知，與來自像美國等英語國家的人相比，中國人比較重視家庭生活。
10. Chinese should not use words borrowed from English ☐
中文不應採用從英文借來的字詞

Section IV.2**第四部, 二**

People learn English for different reasons. Some of these reasons are listed below. For you, how true is each of the following statements? Write 3, 2 or 1 against each of them according to the scale below:

人們爲了不同原因學習英文, 以下是其中一些原因。對你來說, 以下每個原因的真確程度如何? 請按以下註釋在每題的方格內填上 3、2 或 1:

3 = very true, a main reason

非常真確, 是個主要原因

2 = quite true, one reason

頗爲真確, 是其中一個原因

1 = not true, an unimportant reason

不真確, 是個無關重要的原因

1. I learn English because it is on my school time-table ☐
我學習英文, 因爲這是在學校要修讀的其中一科
2. Learning English will enable me to further my education in a university or other institution of higher learning ☐
我要學習英文, 以便將來在大學或其他的高等教育機構繼續進修
3. I want to learn English so that I can read famous works in English (novels, plays, short-stories etc) ☐
我想學習英文, 以便閱讀英文名著 (如小說、戲劇、短篇故事)
4. Knowing English will help me get a good job when I finish my education ☐
懂得英文, 有助我在完成學業後找到理想的工作
5. I am studying English so that I can visit an English-speaking country and make friends with the people there ☐
我要學習英文, 以便遊覽以英文作爲交際語言的國家, 並與當地人交朋友
6. I like learning English because the lessons are interesting ☐
我喜歡學習英文, 因爲這科的課程有趣
7. I want to study English so that I can read books in English on Science, Mathematics, Economics and other subjects ☐
我想學習英文, 以便閱讀用英文寫成的科學、數學、經濟學和其他科目的書籍

Appendix 1

8. I am learning English so that I can speak to people who cannot understand Chinese ☐
我要學習英文, 以便和不懂得中文的人士交談

Section IV.3**第四部, 三**

Put a tick (✓) in the box which best describes what you feel or do. Please put only one answer.

請在適當的方格內加上(✓) 號, 以表明你的想法或做法。請只選擇一個答案。

1. When I have English homework to do, I usually:
當我要做英文科的家課時, 我通常會:

try to do it by myself 嘗試自己完成	
Ask some-one to help me 請別人協助	
Borrow my friend's book to see how it is done 借朋友的家課簿, 看看怎樣做	
Forget to do it 忘記做	
Other (please explain) 其他 (請解釋)	

2. During English lessons, I usually:
上英文課時, 我通常會:

Feel tired and sleepy 覺得疲倦和昏昏欲睡	
Think about other things 想其他事	
Pay attention to the teacher 留心聽老師講解	
am interested in what the teacher is saying 對老師所說的感興趣	

3. Before an English test, I usually:
參加英文科測驗前, 我通常會:

Read my notes and revise my previous lessons 溫習我的筆記和以前的課題	
Read some of my notes and a few pages of my English book the night before the test 在測驗前一晚, 溫習我的筆記和幾頁英文書	

Appendix 1

do nothing because I don't think I can do anything to prepare for any an English test 什麼也不做, 因為我覺得不能為英文測驗作任何準備	
Other (please explain) 其他 (請解釋)	

4. If the school decides that English is optional and you are free to attend as many or as few English lessons as you like:
如果學校決定將英文科改為選修科,並讓你自行選擇上多少節英文課:

I would not attend any English lessons 我不會上任何英文課	
I would attend fewer lessons than I am doing now 我上英文課的節數會較現在少	
I would attend the same number of lessons as now 我上英文課的節數跟現在相同	
I would attend more English lessons than I am now 我上英文課的節數較現在多	

5. When I have no English homework, I usually:
如果我沒有英文科家課要做, 我通常會:

do not open my English books 不會翻閱英文書籍	
read or practise some English 閱讀或練習英文	
read an English book to improve my English 閱讀英文書, 提高本身的英文水平	
revise the lesson taught that day or prepare for the next English lesson 溫習當天學習過的東西, 或預習明天的英文課	

Section V

第五部

Check the statements that best apply to you. Put a tick (✓) at the appropriate box.
請選出最適當的句子，並在後面的方格內加上(✓)號。

1. I speak English:
我說英語的能力:

Not at All 我不懂得說英語	
a little 我懂得說少許英語	
fairly well 我的英語說得不錯	
Fluently 我懂得說流利英語	

2. I read English:
我的英文閱讀能力:

Not at All 我看不懂英文	
a little 我看得懂少許英文	
fairly well 我的英文閱讀能力不錯	
Fluently 我的英文閱讀能力良好	

3. I write English:
我的英文書寫能力:

Not at All 我不懂寫英文	
a little 我懂得寫少許英文	
fairly well 我的英文書寫能力不錯	
Fluently 我的英文書寫能力良好	

Appendix 1

4. I understand spoken English:
我聽英文能力:

Not at All 我聽不懂英語	
a little 我聽得懂少許英語	
fairly well 我聽英語能力不錯	
Fluently 我聽英文沒有困難	

Section VI
第六部

Please answer these questions by writing an appropriate number in the box beside each question. Use this scale:

請按以下說明在每條問題後的方格內填上適當的數字:

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

1 = definitely yes 肯定是

4 = no 不是

2 = yes 是

5 = definitely no 肯定不是

3 = sometimes yes, sometimes no 有時是, 有時不是

1. My parents encourage me to study English ☐
 我的父母鼓勵我學習英文
2. My parents think that in school other subjects are more important than English ☐
 我的父母認為學校的其他科目比英文更重要
3. My parents stress the importance of English for me when I leave school ☐
 我的父母強調英文對我離開學校後的重要性
4. My parents think studying English is unimportant ☐
 我的父母認為學習英文是不重要的
5. My parents make sure I do my English homework ☐
 我的父母設法要我完成英文科家課
6. My parents want me to learn English ☐
 我的父母想我學習英語

Section VII

REASONS FOR NO QUESTIONS IN CLASS

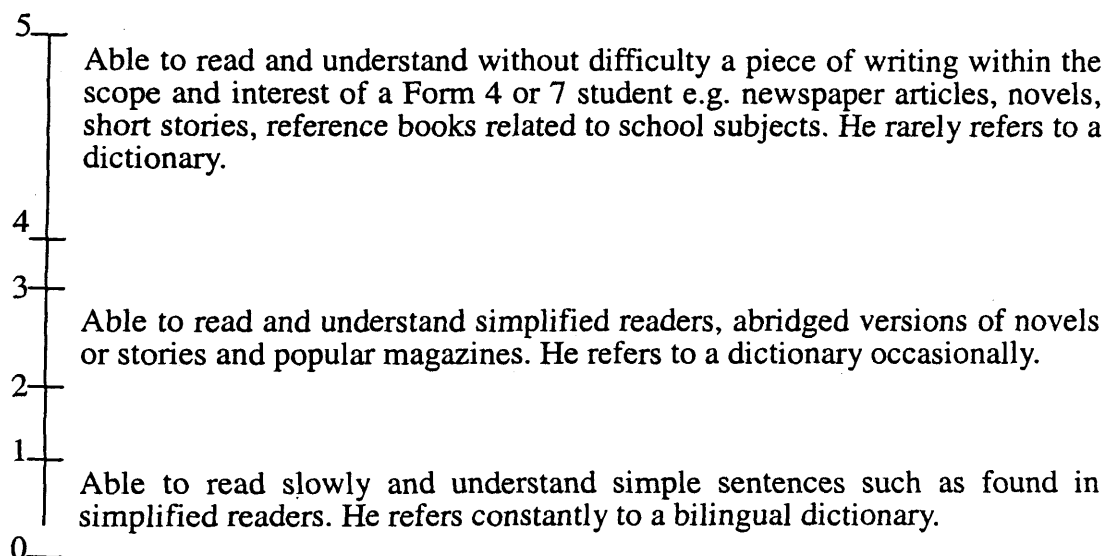
Reasons why students don't ask questions	Strongly disagree	disagree	I am not sure	agree	strongly agree
they are too shy					
they are afraid others may laugh					
prevented by culture/tradition					
they do not want to interrupt					
they ask after the lesson					
they're afraid of making mistakes					
they do not know enough to ask					
they are too lazy / bored					
nobody else asks					
teachers don't encourage questions					
students find answers themselves					
they have no questions					

Other reasons for not asking questions in class are _____

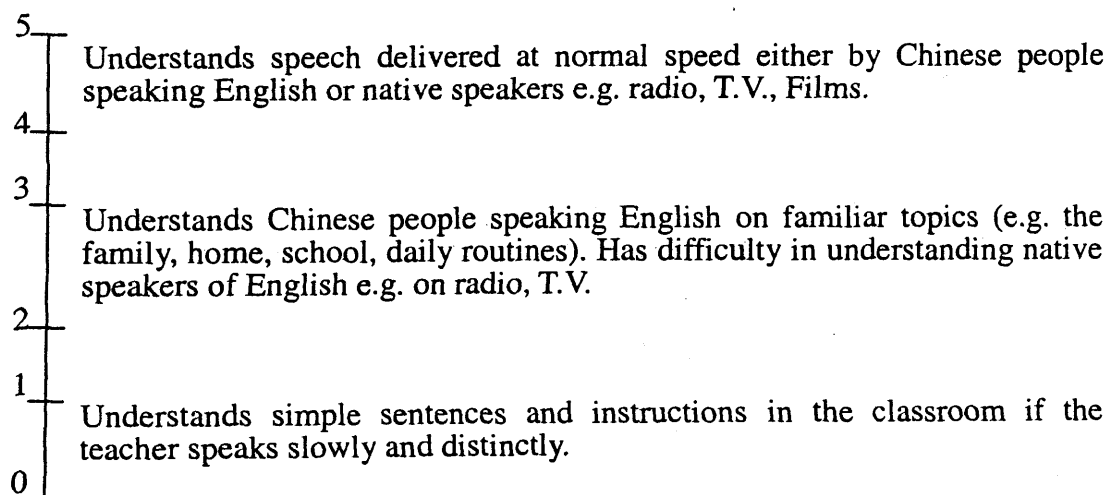
Language Competence Rating Scale

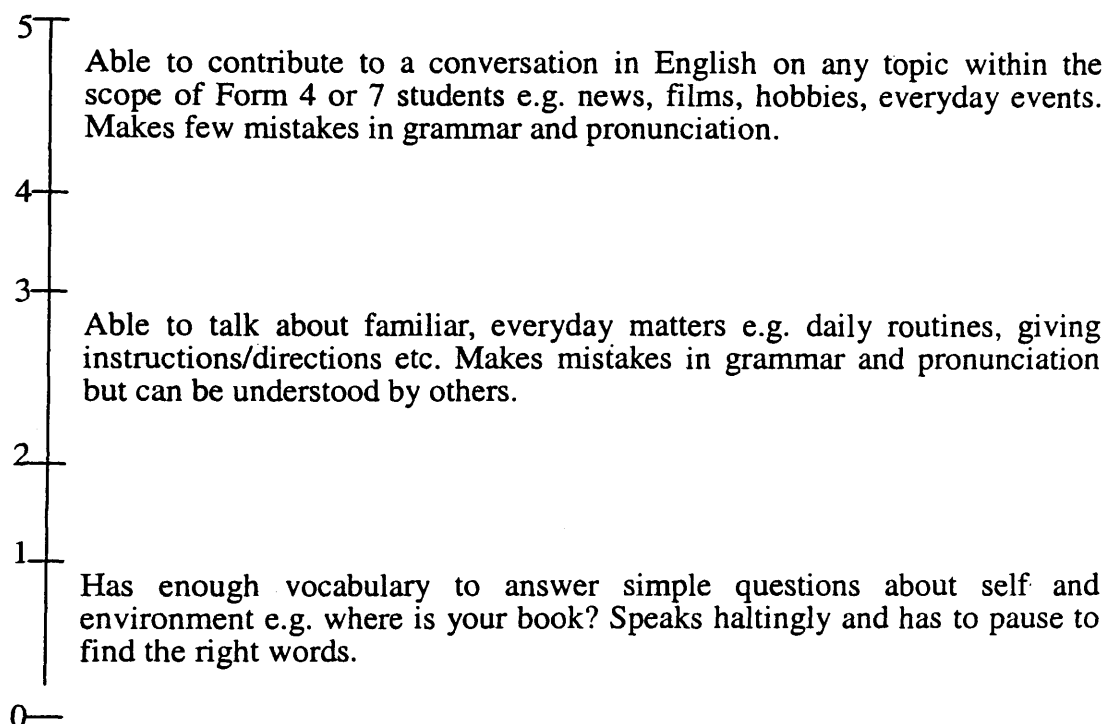
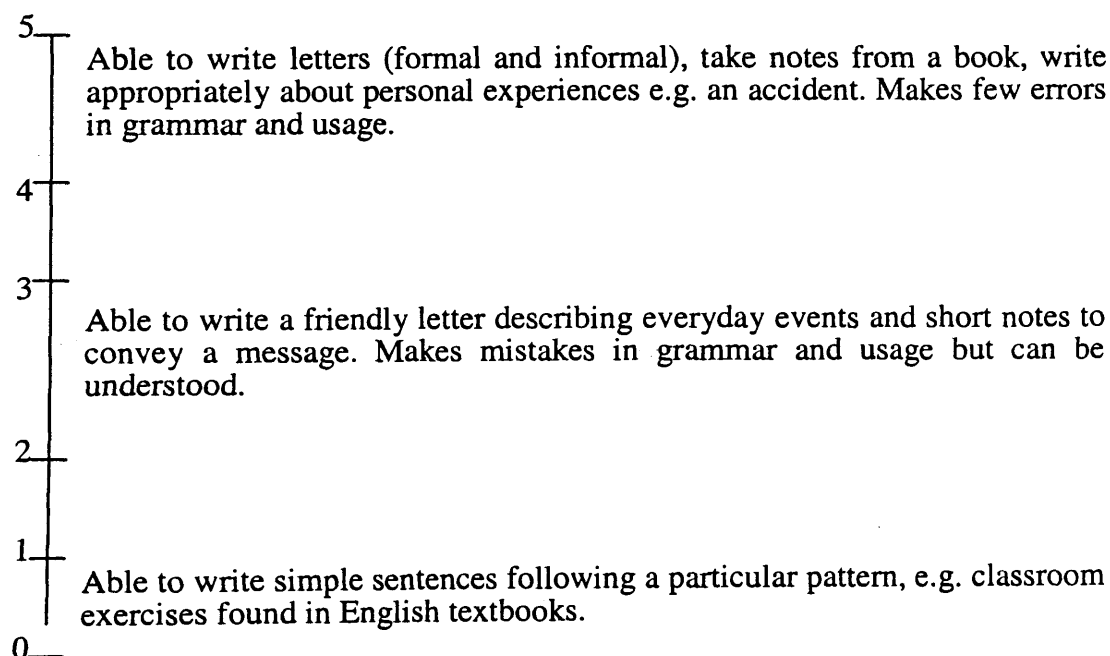
1. Reading

Please note that reading refers here to the student's ability to understand what he reads, usually through silent reading, and NOT to the skill of reading aloud.



2. Listening/Understanding



3. Speaking4. Writing

Student Interview

Part I

I'd like to ask you some facts about yourself and your language learning experience from your childhood to the present time.

- (1) Where were you born?
- (2) Where did you spend your childhood?
- (3) What languages were spoken in your home?
(3.1) What do you regard as your native language?
- (4) What languages were spoken in your neighborhood?
- (5) Which was the first foreign language you learned...?
- (6) When did you start and how long did you learn...?
- (7) Where and under what circumstances did you learn...?
- (8) Which other languages have you studied or tried to study?
- (9) Which of these languages have you maintained to the present?
- (10) Could you tell me how well you know these languages *now* or when you were *at your best*?

	Below Elementary	Elementary Proficiency	Working Knowledge	Advanced
Understanding				
Speaking				
Reading				
Writing				

- (11) Are you satisfied with your achievement in ...(the different languages) or would you like to know more?

Satisfied:

Language:

More:

Language:

Other:

- (12) Some people say they have a gift for languages, others say they haven't. Would you regard yourself as strong or weak in languages?

Strong:

Weak:

Medium:

- (1) Do you think that you have a good ear for languages?

Yes

No

Other:

- (2) Do you have a good memory?

Yes

No

Other:

- (3) Do you like to take the language apart and analyze it?

Yes

No

Other:

(Do you like to figure out the language on your own or would you rather have the teacher tell you rules, etc.)

(13) If applicable:

Considering your level in (your success/failure in learning...), would you say this was due to the teacher/s (thanks to the .../ the teacher's fault.)
or did it have something to do with the school *or the environment*
or would you say that you developed some special *study habits*
or that you may have *some particular personal characteristic* that helped/hindered you in learning...

Part II

I would now like to ask you a few more specific questions concerning language learning. Some of the questions may not apply to you. Don't feel obliged to answer.

1. Imagine that you had the opportunity and time to learn another language now. What would you be inclined to say at the thought of learning a new language?

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) I hate the thought of it. | 1 |
| (2) It scares me. | 2 |
| (3) I don't mind doing it. | 3 |
| (4) I would look forward to doing it. | 4 |
| (5) I am very excited at the idea of it. | 5 |

If answer (1):

If you had to do it nevertheless, which language would you choose?

For what reasons would you choose...?

What would you expect to get out of it in the long run?

Subquestions:

Would your final goal be to...

Speak and understand the spoken language?

Read and write the language?

Speak, understand and read?

Speak, understand and write?

Other:

II. Let's now consider how you would actually go about learning...

What would you like to do *first* of all?

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) Travel to the country and simply immerse yourself in the language? | 1 |
| (2) Travel to the country and take a language course there? | 2 |
| (3) Buy a course and study by yourself? What kind of course? | 3 |
| (4) Go to a teacher or a language school for private lessons? | 4 |
| (5) Join a language class? | 5 |
| (6) A combination of these? Specify: | 6 |
| (7) Other: | 7 |

Can you suggest a reason for your choice?

II.1 If time were no consideration, would you prefer to learn the language in a concentrated effort (e.g. an intensive course for 4 weeks)?

or gradually (e.g. 2 hours a week + homework) over a longer period of time?

Intensive:

Gradually:

Combination:

III. Some people think that learning a language is different at the elementary, intermediate and advanced stages.

Would you agree or disagree with this? And could you tell me why?

III.1 Beginning now with the early stages of language learning, what would you mainly like to do at that level?

I'll give you some examples. Please tell me which of these you regard as most important. But feel free to disregard them or add your own ideas.

- (1) I'd mainly like to learn to *understand the spoken language*.
- (2) I'd mainly like to learn to *read*.
- (3) I'd mainly like to learn the *pronunciation*.

- (4) I'd mainly like to learn simple *conversational phrases*.
- (5) I'd mainly like to learn how to *write* the languages.
- (6) I'd mainly like to get an overview of the *grammar*.
- (7) I'd mainly like to learn about the *cultural background*.
- (8) I would like a combination of these. Could you please specify?
- (9) Other:

III.2 At the elementary stages would you prefer to be *firmly guided* by the teacher or a course,

or would you rather be left to your own devices and learn the language in your own way?

(By 'firm guidance' I mean, for example, doing language drills with the teacher or following a text-book and doing prescribed grammar exercises regularly.

In contrast to that you might prefer to work mainly on your own, at your own speed, selecting your own learning material, etc.)

Guided:

Own devices:

Combination:

- IV. Some of the ways of learning a language seem to involve you as a learner more *actively* (for example, in some cases you are made to speak right from the start.) Others allow you to be more *passive* (for example, you just listen to the teacher or you read widely).

Generally speaking, would you prefer to be relatively passive or rather active in the early stages of language learning:

Active:

Passive:

- V. You have mentioned what you would like to learn at the early stages of language learning. Can you think of anything you would particularly like to learn or emphasize at an intermediate or advanced level?

Intermediate:

Advanced:

- VI. Some people say that you *cannot* make a conscious effort in learning a foreign language. They hate to study grammar; they say you must simply allow the language to sink in gradually.

Others argue that language learning is a conscious and systematic process. You set about it by studying, practising, by constantly asking for explanations and rules. In short, by actively thinking about it.

Which of these ideas would more represent your point of view?

Unconscious:

Conscious:

- VII. Some people find that in learning a new language you must completely forget

your native language. Others say you cannot and should not. To what extent do you find that comparing your native language with the foreign language helps you in learning a new language?

- (1) To what extent do you find translations useful?
- (2) Would you prefer to use a bilingual dictionary or rather a dictionary that offers explanations in foreign language?

VIII. Do you feel that one can actually learn to think in the foreign language:

Yes:

No:

- (1) If yes: How do you think one might achieve that?
- (2) How important do you think it is?

Very:

Not so much:

IX. If you have learned a third or fourth language, to what extent did you find that your learning was influenced by your previous language learning experience:

(Interviewer: Wait for reaction and then summarize)

In general, would you say that knowing another foreign language helped you or hindered you in learning a new language?

Helped:

Hindered:

X. So far, we have talked about what you'd like to learn, how you would go about doing it and how your native language might influence your learning other languages.

Considering all this, would you say that you have developed any language study habits (gimmicks, tricks, ways, techniques) that you would find useful in learning the new language?

- (1) in learning the *sound system*
e.g. reading aloud to yourself (in front of a mirror), repeating words silently to yourself after the teacher, etc.
- (2) in learning the *grammar*
e.g. memorizing rules through humorous rhymes, etc. forming hunches about regularities and rules and then applying them etc.
- (3) in learning *vocabulary/words*
e.g. by repetition, by finding relations between words, writing down words, etc.
- (4) in developing *listening comprehension*
e.g. by listening to records, to the radio, etc.
- (5) in learning to *talk*

e.g. through contact with native speakers, by insisting on constant correction or by imagining dialogues in your mind or by talking to yourself, etc.

(6) in learning to *read*

e.g. by reading popular magazines or books on your own

(7) in learning how to express yourself in written form

e.g. by writing to a pen-pal

XI. My final question now concerns your *feelings* about your language learning experience.

Many language learners feel very negative about their learning experiences.

(1) They say they feel

(a) discouraged

(b) frustrated

(c) impatient

or (d) confused by the difficulties of the language learning task.

Have you experienced any of these feelings?

Could you tell me more about your feeling of...?

(2) Other language learners say that the new language feels (e) absurd to them, and that they feel (f) ridiculous expressing themselves in the foreign language.

Did you ever feel that way?

(3) Some people feel very (g) inhibited and (h) helpless when they actually *use* the language.

Is this experience familiar to you? Could you elaborate?

In general, as (if) you shared (some of) these feelings, what did you do to overcome them?

(Interviewer: This question could be asked after each particular experience, if appropriate.)

Student Tasks

Exercise 1

(a) READ SILENTLY:

A good binger does not usually look at every word in a text. When he bings, his eyes 'jump' from one part of a line to another: he bings several words in one jump. But when they are learning to bing, young children bing only one word at a time.

(b) NOW PUT ONE WORD IN EACH BOX

to bing	= to	
he bings	= he	
A good binger	= a good	

Exercise 2

Orang-utans are huge apes which swing gracefully through the trees at an awe-inspiring speed. If Tarzan was brought up by the apes, then it is these creatures he imitated when swinging his way through the jungle.

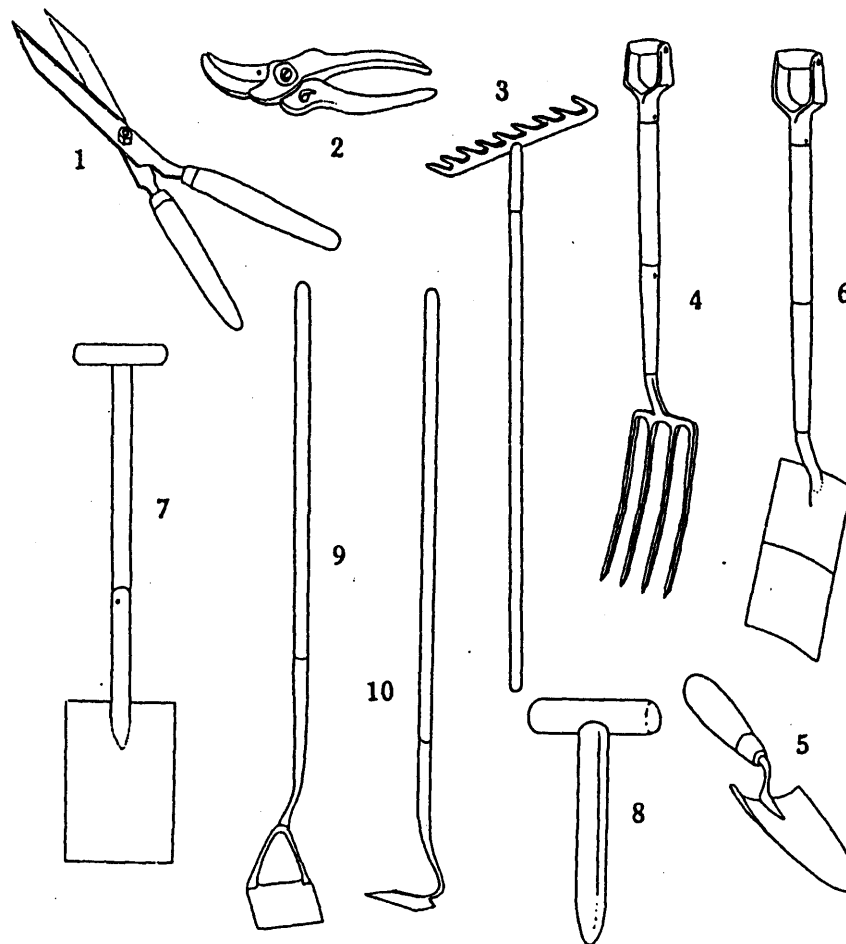
Before the 1970s, orang-utans—the name means 'forest people'—were as mysterious to Science as they were to the human inhabitants of the rainforest who often thought they were ghosts. Since then, two long-term studies conducted in Indonesia and Borneo have uncovered a way of life strikingly different from those of the orang-utans' gregarious relatives—chimpanzees, gorillas and humans.

- In line 2, 'awe-inspiring' means...
 - ☐ A. terrifying.
 - ☐ B. amazing.
 - ☐ C. relaxing.
 - ☐ D. frightening.
- The function of paragraph 1 is to...
 - ☐ A. describe how orang-utans move.
 - ☐ B. describe how orang-utans resemble Tarzan.
 - ☐ C. attract the reader's interest.
 - ☐ D. attract the reader's sympathy.

Garden Implements

Read below the definitions of garden implements and then complete the table overleaf with the appropriate definition.

Dibber	A small wooden stick fitted with a horizontal bar and having a pointed end used for making holes in the soil for planting seeds
Secateurs	A pair of pruning clippers or shears with curved blades, usually held in one hand when used for trimming plants
Trowel	A short-handled flat or scoop-shaped tool often used for lifting plants
Shovel	A scooping and digging tool with a long handle and a broad, slightly curved steel blade
Spade	A tool with a long handle and a very sharp, straight-edged cutting blade, usually flat and rectangular, used for digging holes and cutting turf
Draw hoe	A tool with a long handle and a sharp metal blade set at right angles to it. It has a chopping action and is used for breaking up the surface-soil and for cutting weeds
Shears	A clipping instrument with two pivoted blades meeting as in a pair of scissors. Its long handles are held in both hands when trimming hedges
Rake	An implement consisting of a pole with a metal crossbar toothed like a comb at the end. It is used for drawing grass or hay or for smoothing loose earth
Dutch hoe	An implement with a sharp blade set on a U-shaped base in the same plane as its handle. Its sliding motion dislodges small weeds.
Fork	A fork is used for digging and breaking up lumps of soil. It consists of a long pole at the end of which are a number of long metal prongs



1		6	
2		7	
3		8	
4		9	
5		10	

Exercise 4

Here is an example of a code.

a) ATTEMPT
 CALABASH
 FUMIGATE
 LOLLIPOP
 GYMKHANA
 ETHEREAL
 RETSINA
 GENERIC
 IMMATURE

Here the message is hidden in other words. If the second letters are read up the column of words the first part of the message will appear. The message can be completed by reading down the final letters of each word.

Exercise 5

In the following passage *one* word has been omitted from each line. Mark the place where you think it has been omitted (^). Write, in the spaces provided, the words you think have been omitted.

You should fly with a severe cold in the head. If you are	_____
Unable to relieve the changes of pressure caused a climb or a descent,	_____
You may seriously damage your ears. Apart having slower reactions	_____
And feeling ill, there is a real risk of bursting eardrum or	_____
Developing a very painful inner ear infection.	_____

Interview Guide for Teachers

- 1(a) How long have you been teaching in this school?
- (b) How long have you been teaching English?
- (c) Where did you receive your ELT training?
- (d) What was your major subject?
- 2 What is the intake of Form 1 in this school e.g. what Bandings are the Form 1 students?
- 3 In general what is the standard of English in this school in terms of the HKCEE exams?
e.g. passing rate, % of credits/ distinctions.
- 4 Please comment on student A and B in terms of his/her general academic ability and performance.
- 5 Please comment on A and B's behaviour in class and outside class.
- 6 What is his/her English standard compared to the students in his/her class and in the Form level?
- 7 What are the student's strengths and weakness in English?
- 8 What do you think about the student's approach to studying English?
- 9 Can you give some examples about A and B's learning behaviour in class?
- 10 What kind expectation do you have of these students?
- 11 What do you see as problems facing learners of English in Hong Kong?
- 12 What sort of solutions would you suggest?

Appendix 6

Correlation Matrix for Variables 1 and 2

	SELF	INTEN	EXPOSE	MOT_INT	ATT	PARENT	MOT_INS
SELF	1.0000	.2410**	.2970**	.1281*	.1257*	.0218	-.0174
INTEN	.2410**	1.0000	.2668**	.2596**	.1847**	.1102*	.0774
EXPOSE	.2970**	.2668**	1.0000	.2712**	.1349**	.0756	.0483
MOT_INT	.1281*	.2596**	.2712**	1.0000	.1994**	-.0193	.1755**
ATT	.1257*	.1847**	.1349**	.1994**	1.0000	.1307*	.1880**
PARENT	.0218	.1102*	.0756	-.0193	.1307*	1.0000	.2188**
MOT_INS	-.0174	.0774	.0483	.1755**	.1880**	.2188**	1.0000

N of cases: 476 1-tailed Signif: *-.01 **-.001

Correlation Matrix for Variable 3

Correlations:	SEARCH	CONSTAN T	MEMORY	INDUCT	WILL	READY	MODE
SEARCH	1.0000	.2890**	.3308**	.1793**	.1875**	.1646**	-.1233*
CONSTANT	.2890**	1.0000	.2958**	.0969	.1646**	.2157**	-.1029*
MEMORY	.3308**	.2958**	1.0000	.1757**	.1352**	.2038**	-.1369*
INDUCT	.1793**	.0969	.1757**	1.0000	.0585	.0355	-.0275
WILL	.1875**	.1646**	.1352**	.0585	1.0000	.2171**	.0105
READY	.1646**	.2157**	.2038**	.0355	.2171**	1.0000	.0008
MODE	-.1233*	-.1029*	-.1369**	-.0275	.0105	.0008	1.0000

N of cases: 476 1-tailed Signif: *-.01 **-.001

1. Father's occupation

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Unemployed & retired	0	79	13.9	13.9	13.9
Professional	1	56	9.8	9.8	23.7
Administrative	2	54	9.5	9.5	33.2
Clerical	3	32	5.6	5.6	38.8
Sales	4	6	1.1	1.1	39.9
Service workers	5	197	34.6	34.6	74.5

2. Father's income

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
<5000	1	33	6.9	7.1	7.1
5000-10000	2	123	26.0	27.1	34.2
10001-15000	3	132	27.4	28.6	62.8
15001-20000	4	63	13.4	13.9	76.7
>20000	5	106	22.3	23.3	100.0
	0	19	4.0	Missing	
	Total	476	100.0	100.0	

Valid cases 457

Missing cases 19

3. Level of Parental Education (in %)

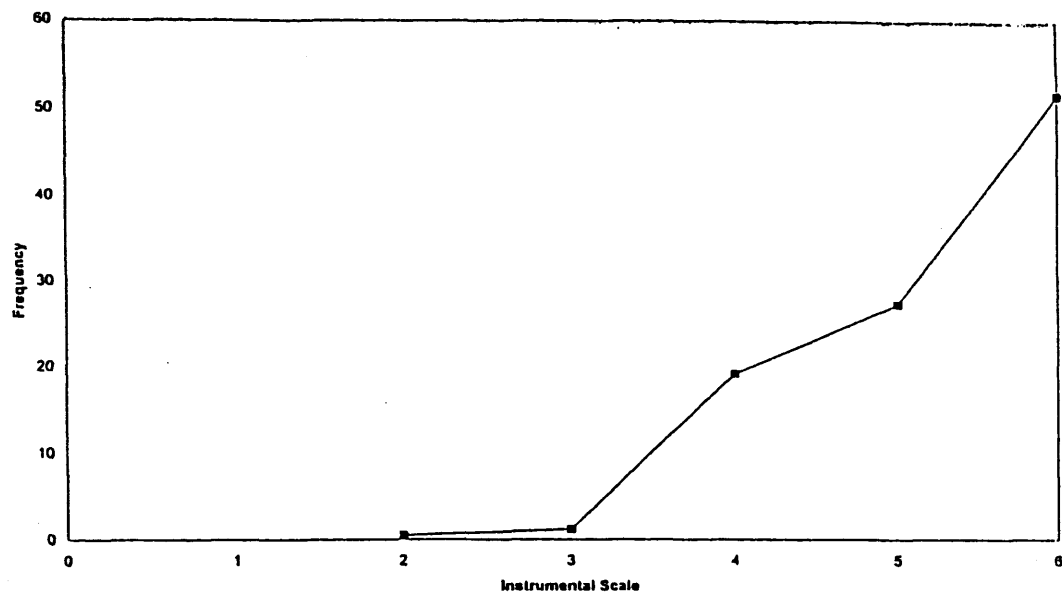
	Father	Mother
Less than form 1	28.8	40.1
F1-3	16.5	14.6
F1-4	3.0	2.5
F1-5	17.9	19.0
F1-6	1.2	.7
F1-7	8.3	7.9
College/university	14.1	5.1
Don't know	9.3	9.8
Missing	.9	.4
	100.0	100.0

4. Percentage of Houses with these Appliances

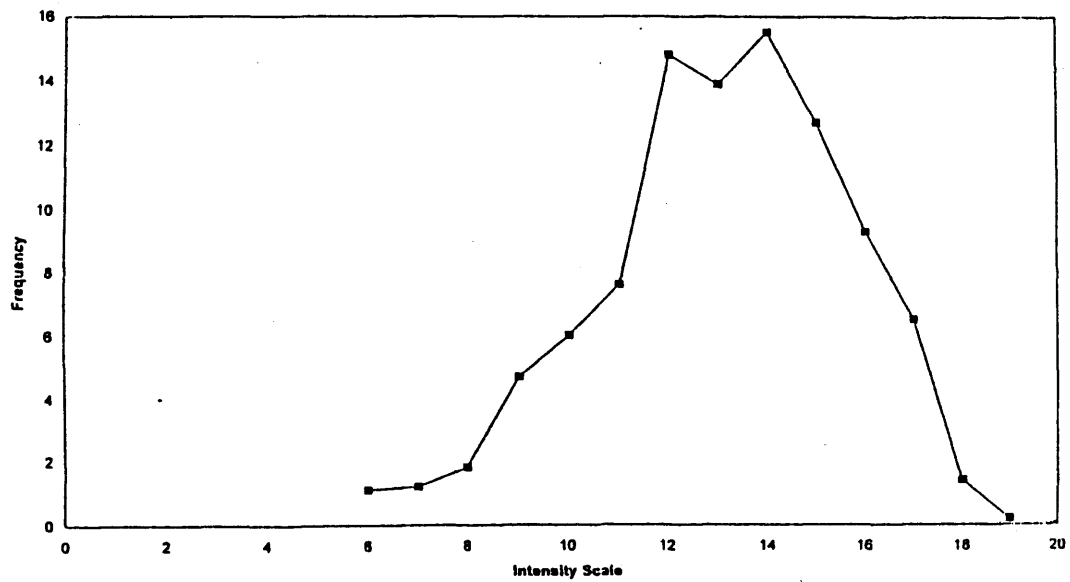
Q1_7_1	Kerosene stove	9.3
Q1_7_2	Sewing machine	36.6
Q1_7_3	Radio	97.5
Q1_7_4	Electric fan	96.3
Q1_7_5	Refrigerator	97.7
Q1_7_6	Gas stove	92.8
Q1_7_7	Television	98.2
Q1_7_8	Electric stove	28.5
Q1_7_9	Washing machine	96.5
Q1_7_10	Piano/organ	23.0
Q1_7_11	Dehumidifier	40.9
Q1_7_12	Air-conditioner	93.1
Q1_7_13	Video recorder	85.2
Q1_7_14	Laser-disc	57.6

SPECIAL NOTE

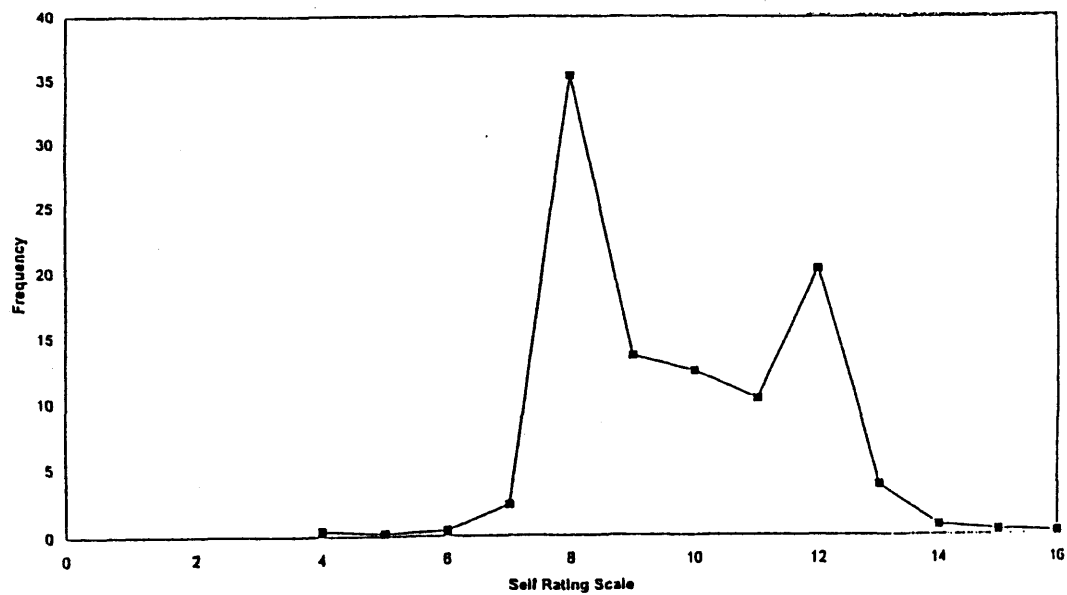
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PAGINATION IS AS SEEN**

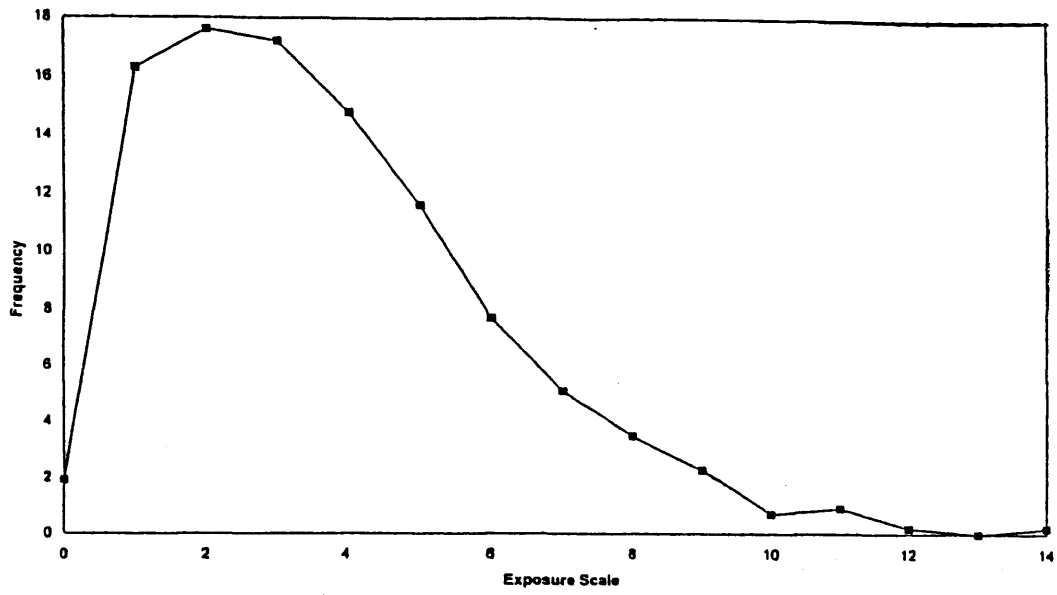


Intensity of Motivation

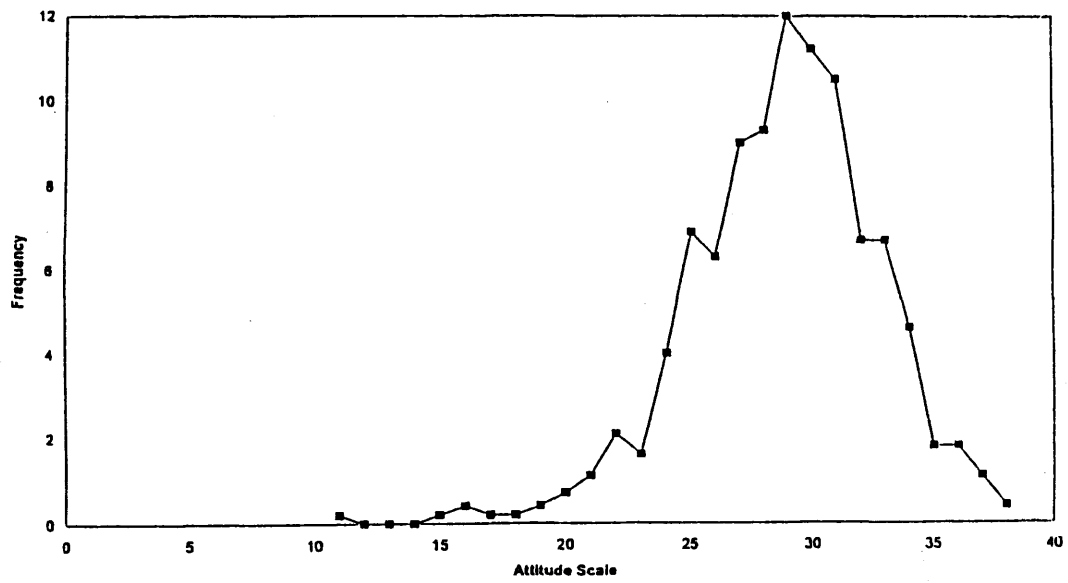


Self Rating

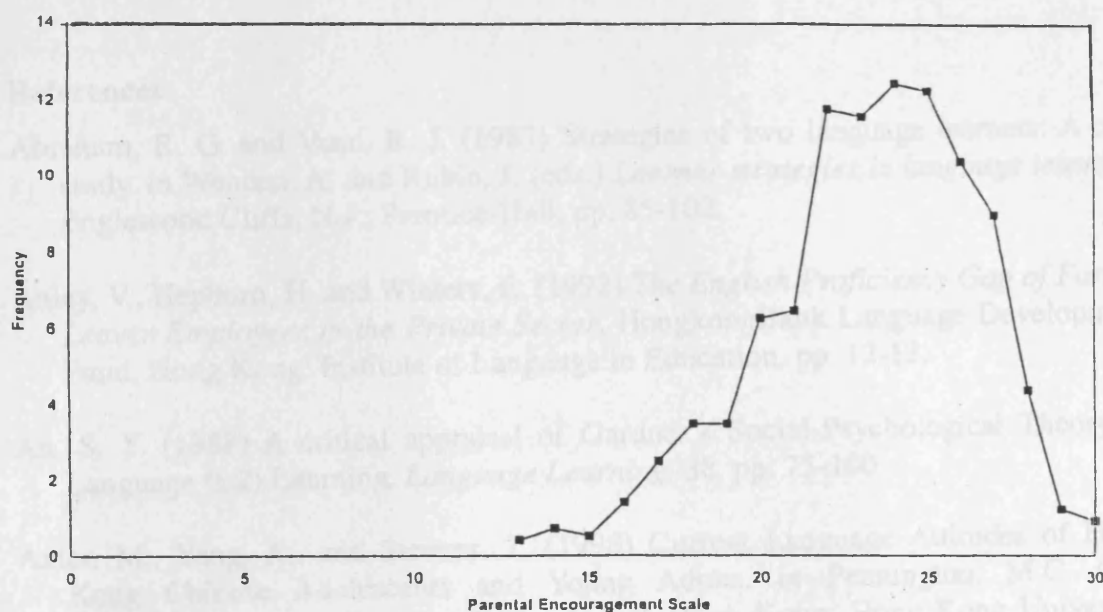




Attitude



Parental Encouragement



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