A Case Study of the Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use of Twenty Chinese ESL Learners in Australia

Elizabeth Moon Yu Wong

B. A., National University of Singapore, 1984
M. A. (English Language), National University of Singapore, 1996
Graduate Certificate in Applied Linguistics, Griffith University, 2005
Graduate Certificate in Research Management, Southern Cross University, 2009

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

School of Education & Professional Studies
Faculty of Education

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY
February 2014
I certify that the thesis “A Case Study of the Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use and Preferences of Twenty Chinese ESL Learners in Australia”, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education, is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other institution. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where the reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed: ……………………….. Elizabeth Moon Yu Wong

Date: …………………………..
ABSTRACT

This case study investigates the vocabulary learning strategy use of twenty Chinese ESL learners in Australia to examine what implications these have for ESL vocabulary learning and teaching.

The sample of twenty Chinese ESL learners was selected from different batches of ESL graduates from an Australian English Language Institute before they commenced their university studies in Australia.

Data were collected using a combination of information-elicitation techniques: a vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire, an interview, and a reading vocabulary task. The questionnaire survey and the interview were used to elicit information about their vocabulary learning strategy use and vocabulary learning experiences. To increase the validity and reliability of their face-to-face interview responses, the interview questions were emailed to the participants to answer online. The think-aloud protocols and discussions during the vocabulary task performance provided a greater insight into the thinking process behind the participants’ VLS selection and showed how they deduced word meanings of unfamiliar English vocabulary in the reading vocabulary task. The data analysis was mainly qualitative but some quantitative analysis was required in some sections.

The Chinese ESL learners in this study apparently show a greater preference for the translation, metacognitive regulation, memory and cognitive strategies than for the determination, metacognitive and social strategies. The findings demonstrate the indirect influence of learners’ previous English vocabulary learning on their English language skill development. This study also suggests a close link between vocabulary learning strategy selection, vocabulary knowledge and language skill development.

Though these Chinese ESL learners found that rote memorization without understanding or word use to be ineffective for long-term word retention, it is still popular with learners who find this strategy effective for short-term word retention, especially for passing their English language tests and examinations. The Chinese ESL learners in this study show a high preference for autonomous and self-initiated vocabulary learning, which is associated with more successful learners and learners at
higher academic levels, as shown in previous studies. Participants’ comparatively low preference for metacognitive strategies, which play a crucial role in learning, is an area of concern. Their low preference for learning more about vocabulary or reading English books beyond what were given in class could have contributed to their low English vocabulary range and limited vocabulary knowledge. They displayed a low level of social strategy use. However, they preferred to learn with/from their peers more than from parents or family members, and this preference is further confirmed with their recommendation for more vocabulary learning through group activities and peer-learning than for learning vocabulary on their own.

Based on the findings in this study, ESL pedagogies should (1) incorporate metacognitive strategy instruction to develop the learners skills in planning, controlling and evaluating their vocabulary learning, (2) develop vocabulary lesson materials and activities that introduce vocabulary which is relevant, important and interesting to the learners, (3) encourage learners to read more English books besides their textbooks to increase their vocabulary knowledge and (4) utilize the potentials of modern technology such as the computer and information technology to enhance learners’ vocabulary learning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the following people for their invaluable contribution to this research project:

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to my two principal supervisors, Associate Professor Rod Gardner and Dr. Maria Dobrenov-Major, whose counsel, encouragement, patience and support throughout these years have enabled me to complete this thesis. Rod has challenged me to look at my project from a different perspective and has increased my confidence with his patient guidance, invaluable advice, motivation and unwavering moral support throughout the whole project. Maria’s great moral support and willingness to help beyond her call of duty has been a tremendous encouragement and motivation. She has also painstakingly helped me to examine details that I would have otherwise overlooked. I’m touched by her great sense of responsibility and magnanimity to continue her supervision even after she has retired. I am very fortunate and privileged to be supervised by them, one to look at the wide picture and the other to examine the nitty-gritty of the project. Thank you, Maria and Rod, for bringing my project to another level of understanding, and for being with me throughout this long and challenging journey.

Secondly, I would also like to acknowledge the counsel and encouragement of the late Dr. Gary Birch, my former supervisor, who was one of the people who have made it possible for me to undertake this Doctor of Education program. I will always be thankful for his teaching and guidance.

Thirdly, I would like to thank Teresa Tan, an ESL instructor in Taiwan, who helped me to translate from English to Chinese, the consent form and vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire. Thank you very much for the hard work and time.

Fourthly, special heartfelt thanks to my Chinese ESL participants who took the time and trouble to participate in the questionnaire survey, interviews, vocabulary task and other activities related to this project. Without your participation and the data collected, this research project would not have been possible. Thank you very much for your involvement and assistance, and for giving me so much of your time despite your busy schedule.
Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for their well wishes, moral support, patience and understanding.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

**ESL: English as a Second Language**

**EFL: English as a Foreign Language**

**IELTS: International English Language Test System**

**ISLPR: International Second language Proficiency Ratings**

**L2: Second Language**

**QIBT: Queensland International Business and Technology;**

**SILL: Strategy Inventory of Language Learning**

**SLA: Second Language Acquisition**

**VLS: Vocabulary-Learning Strategy**

**CoS: Cognitive Strategy**

**DS: Determination Strategy**

**MMS: Memory Strategy**

**MRS: Metacognitive Regulation Strategy**

**MS: Metacognitive Strategy**

**SS: Social Strategy**

**TS: Translation Strategy**

**VTS: Vocabulary Teaching Strategy**
# TABLE OF CONTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAGRAMS &amp; TABLES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study  
1.2 The Study  
1.3 Research Questions  
1.4 Significance of the Study  
1.5 Structure of Thesis

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Importance Of Vocabulary Knowledge in Language Skill Development  
2.2 Process of Vocabulary Acquisition  
2.3 Close Relationship between Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Comprehension  
2.4 Vocabulary Learning Difficulties  
2.5 Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs)  
2.5.1 Schmitt’s (1997) Vocabulary Learning Strategy Taxonomy  
2.5.2 Seven Vocabulary Learning Strategy Categories
   2.5.2.1 Metacognitive Strategies  
   2.5.2.2 Social Strategies  
   2.5.2.3 Determination Strategies  
   2.5.2.4 Memory Strategies  
   2.5.2.5 Cognitive Strategies  
   2.5.2.6 Metacognitive Regulation Strategies  
   2.5.2.7 Translation Strategies  
2.6 Effectiveness of Learners’ Vocabulary Strategy Use  
2.6.1 Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used to Achieve Three Vocabulary Learning Goals  
2.6.2 Effective & ‘Ineffective’ Vocabulary Learners’ Strategy Use  
2.6.3 Active and Passive Strategy Users  
2.6.4 Limitations of Vocabulary Learning Strategy Research
2.7 Relationship between Language Learning Culture and Strategy Preference  
  2.7.1 Chinese Learners’ Learning Strategy Preferences
  2.7.1.1 Common Beliefs about Chinese Learners and Rote Learning
  2.7.1.2 Chinese Learners’ VLS Preferences
  2.7.1.3 Influence of Language Proficiency on VLS selection

2.8 Vocabulary Strategy Instruction  
  2.8.1 Benefits of Vocabulary Strategy Instruction

2.9 Summary and Conclusion

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
  3.1 Rationale for the Case Study Approach
  3.2 Participants
    3.2.1 Rationale for the sample group
    3.2.2 Participants’ Background and English Proficiency Level
    3.2.3 Criteria for sampling
  3.3 Roles of the Researcher
  3.4 Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedure
    3.4.1 Structure of the Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) Questionnaire
    3.4.2 Interviews
    3.4.3 Specific Reading Vocabulary Task & Think Alouds/Discussion
  3.5 Differences Between This Study & Previous Studies
  3.6 Time Frame and Procedure
  3.7 Summary and Conclusion

4. PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS
  4.1 Analysis of Participants’ Interview Responses
  4.2 Relationship between Vocabulary Knowledge and Language Skill Development
    4.2.1 Most Difficult English Language Learning Skills
    4.2.1.1 Main Reasons Given For English Listening Difficulties
    4.2.1.2 Main Reasons Given For English Writing Difficulties
    4.2.1.3 Main Reasons Given For English Speaking Difficulties
    4.2.1.4 Main Reasons Given For Difficulties in English Reading, Vocabulary Learning, Spelling & Grammar
    4.2.1.5 Summary
    4.2.2 Participants’ Easiest English Language Learning Areas
    4.2.2.1 Main Reasons why English Speaking is Easiest
    4.2.2.2 Main Reasons why English Writing is Easiest
    4.2.2.3 Main Reasons why English Reading is Easiest
    4.2.2.4 Main Reasons why English Listening/Vocabulary Learning/ Spelling – Easiest
4.2.3 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Previous Vocabulary Learning and their English Language Learning Difficulties

4.3 Relationship Between Learners’ Previous Vocabulary Learning Experience and Vocabulary Learning Strategy Preference

4.3.1 Use of Chinese & Translation Strategy to Teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

4.3.2 Use of Textbook, Grammar Focus and Explanation of Meaning

4.3.3 Requiring EFL Learners to Memorize a Vocabulary List

4.4 Role and Effectiveness of Rote Memorization

4.4.1 Role of Rote Memorization

4.4.2 Participants’ Perception of the Effectiveness of Rote Memorization

4.4.3 Discussion of Findings on Rote Memorization and its Effectiveness

4.5 Vocabulary Activities Participants Recommended to Enhance Vocabulary Learning

4.5.1 Interesting and Meaningful Vocabulary Activities

4.5.2 Uninteresting and Meaningless Vocabulary Activities

4.6 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Interview Responses

5. VLS QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

5.1 Analysis of the VLS Questionnaire Survey Data

5.2 Participants’ Reported Metacognitive Regulation Strategy (MRS) Use Frequency

5.2.1 Participants’ MRS Use Ranking

5.2.2 Discussion of Findings and Pedagogical Implications

5.3 Participants’ Reported Metacognitive Strategy Use Frequency

5.3.1 Participants’ MS Use Ranking

5.3.2 Use of Metacognitive Strategies related to Listening (MS-6, MS-8 and MS-9)

5.3.3 Use of Metacognitive Strategies related to Watching (MS-7 and MS-8)

5.3.4 Comparison of Metacognitive Strategy Use: Listening and Watching

5.3.5 Use of Metacognitive Strategies related to Reading (MS-10 and MS-11)

5.3.6 Use of Metacognitive Strategies related to Word/Idiom Skipping (MS-13 and MS-15)

5.3.7 Use of Other Metacognitive Strategies (MS-14, MS-16 and MS-17)

5.3.8 Discussion of Finding on Participants’ Reported MS Use Frequency
5.4 Participants’ Reported Social Strategy Use Frequency
5.4.1 Participants’ SS Use Ranking
5.4.2 Use of Social Strategies related to Learning in Groups/Pairs
5.4.3 Use of Social Strategies related to ‘Asking’ for Translation or Paraphrase
5.4.4 Use of Social Strategies Related to ‘Practice’
5.4.5 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Reported SS Use Frequency

5.5 Participants’ Reported Determination Strategy Use Frequency
5.5.1 Participants’ DS Use Ranking
5.5.2 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ DS Use Frequency

5.6 Participants’ Reported Memory Strategy Use Frequency
5.6.1 Participants’ MMS Use Ranking
5.6.1.1 More Frequently Used Memory Strategies
5.6.1.2 Less Frequently Used Memory Strategies
5.6.2 Use of Memory Strategies related to Word Association
5.6.3 Use of Memory Strategies Related to the Use of New Word, Keyword Method, Rhymes and Semantic Maps
5.6.4 Use of Memory Strategies related to Memorizing
5.6.5 Use of Memory Strategies related to the Study of Word Meaning, Spelling and Sound
5.6.6 Use of other Memory Strategies
5.6.7 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Reported MMS Use Frequency

5.7 Participants’ Reported Cognitive Strategy Use Frequency
5.7.1 Participants’ CoS Use Ranking
5.7.2 Comparison of Participants’ Use Frequency: Verbal and Written Repetition
5.7.3 Comparison of Participants’ Use Frequency: ‘Keeping Vocabulary Notebook’ and Using Vocabulary Section
5.7.4 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Reported CoS Use Frequency

5.8 Translation Strategy Use Frequency
5.8.1 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Reported TS Use

5.9 Participants’ VLS Category Use Frequency
5.9.1 Participants’ VLS Category Use Frequency Ranking
5.9.2 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ VLS Category Use Frequency

5.10 Summary of Findings & Conclusions

6. READING VOCABULARY TASK
6.1 Analysis of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used in the Reading Vocabulary Task
6.2 Difficulty Level of the Vocabulary Items
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1</td>
<td>Relationship between Extensive Vocabulary Knowledge &amp; Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.2</td>
<td>Relationship between Limited or Low Vocabulary Knowledge &amp; Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Schmitt’s (1997) Vocabulary Learning Strategy Taxonomy</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Dimensions of Vocabulary Learning Strategies in Schmitt’s (1997) VLS Taxonomy</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>A Summary of Schmitt's (1997) VLS Taxonomy (Jurkovic, 2006, p.26)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Summary of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used to Achieve Vocabulary Learning Goals</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Summary of Effective/Active &amp; Ineffective/Passive VLS Use</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire Format</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Differences between My Study and Other Studies</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Participants’ Most Difficult &amp; Easiest English Language Learning Areas</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.1</td>
<td>Main Reasons for Participants’ ESL Listening Difficulties</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.2</td>
<td>Main Reasons for Participants’ ESL Writing Difficulties</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.3</td>
<td>Main Reasons Given for Participants’ ESL Speaking Difficulties</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.4</td>
<td>Main Reasons Given for ESL Vocabulary Learning Difficulties</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.5</td>
<td>Main Reasons Given for Ming’s ESL Reading Difficulties</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Easiest English Language Learning Areas</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10.1</td>
<td>Main Reasons Given why English Speaking Is Easiest</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10.2</td>
<td>Main Reasons Given Why English Writing Is Easiest</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10.3</td>
<td>Main Reasons why English Reading is Easiest</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10.4</td>
<td>Main Reasons why English Listening/Vocabulary Learning/Spelling - Easiest</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Relationship between English Language Learning Difficulties &amp; Limited/Insufficient Vocabulary/Vocabulary Knowledge</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>Relationship between Vocabulary Learning Difficulties and Limited/Insufficient Vocabulary &amp; Vocabulary Knowledge</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Relationship between EFL Vocabulary Learning Experience and Vocabulary Knowledge</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>Main Reasons Why Certain Language Learning Areas Are Easiest</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td>Participants’ EFL Teachers’ Vocabulary Teaching Strategies</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 16</td>
<td>Abbreviations and Number of Vocabulary Learning Strategies in Questionnaire</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17</td>
<td>Participants’ Reported MRS Use Frequency</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17.1</td>
<td>Participants’ Reported High, Medium and Low MRS Users</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17.2</td>
<td>Participants’ MRS Use Frequency Ranking</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 18</td>
<td>Participants’ MS Use Frequency</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 18.1</td>
<td>Participants’ High, Medium &amp; Low MS Use</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 18.2</td>
<td>Participants’ MS Use Frequency Ranking</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 22.4  Comparison of Participants' Reported CoS-50 and CoS-52 Use Frequency
Figure 23     Participants' Reported TS Use Frequency
Figure 24     Overview of Participants' VLS Category Use Frequency
Figure 24.1   Ranking of Participants' VLS Category Use Frequency
Figure 25     Participants' Most & Least Frequently Used Vocabulary Learning Strategies
Figure 26     Vocabulary Items in the Reading vocabulary Task
Figure 27     Percentage of Participants Who Gave Right or Wrong Answers or Skipped
Figure 28     Use of Direct Translation & Contextual Clues, & Right Answers Given
Figure 28.1   Use of Direct Translation
Figure 29.1   Use of Word Association ('farm-girl')
Figure 29.2   Use of Word Association ('re-invent')
Figure 29.3   Use of Word Association ('face-lifts')
Figure 29.4   Use of Word Association (Transformation)
Figure 29.4a  Trio G's Discussion on 'Transformation'
Figure 29.5   Use of Word Association ('implants')
Figure 29.6   Use of Word Association ('liposuction')
Figure 29.7   Use of Word Association ('modestly')
Figure 29.8   Use of Word Association ('designer clothes')
Figure 30.1   Participants Who Initiated Discussion
Figure 30.2   Number of Turns and Participants Who Gave Right Answers
1. INTRODUCTION

‘…without an adequate core vocabulary, foreign readers have considerable difficulty in focusing on the entire message of the text, in guessing unknown lexical items and in applying other reading strategies’ (Sim & Laufer-Dvorkin, 1984, introduction)

1.1 Background to the study

Research studies have shown that vocabulary knowledge is crucial to reading comprehension and writing skill development (Basurto, 2004; Biemiller, 2004; Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002). A lack of vocabulary knowledge can affect negatively not only reading comprehension and writing, but also the overall language proficiency development of a learner. Many second language (L2) learners have identified “vocabulary deficiencies as their biggest problem in mastering a second language” and the lack of vocabulary knowledge appears to be “a problem across all skill areas”, especially in ESL (English as a Second Language) reading (Folse, 2004, p. 110; Meara, 1980). Inadequate core vocabulary may result in serious comprehension problems for learners who could face difficulties in applying reading strategies, such as focusing on the text message and guessing unknown lexical items (Sim & Laufer-Dvorkin, 1984). Among the researcher’s ESL learners, a greater percentage of the Chinese ESL learners¹ were observed to have more difficulties with reading comprehension and writing than with speaking and listening, thus reinforcing Folse’s observation.

¹ The ESL final grades of the Chinese participants in the current study show that a greater percentage of them had more difficulties with reading and writing than with listening and speaking (see Appendix 2A).
Vocabulary learning strategy (VLS) research has shown that learners’ vocabulary learning strategy use can affect vocabulary learning to a certain extent (Sanou, 1995; Stoffer, 1995; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Moir and Nation, 2002; Folse, 2004). Vocabulary learning strategies are what learners ‘do to find out the meaning of new words, retain them in long-term memory, recall them when needed in comprehension, and use them in language production’ (Jurkovic, 2006, p. 25). Many Chinese learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) were observed to be memorizing new English words mechanically (Liu, 2010; Zhao 2009). Liu (2010), a Chinese researcher, suggested that more efficient strategies were needed to increase their English vocabulary learning.

Compared to the research studies on language learning strategies and child vocabulary learning, VLS research is a relatively new area of studies, especially those related to Chinese adult ESL learners interested in furthering their studies at tertiary levels in an English-speaking country, such as Australia. According to Liu (2010), vocabulary learning and teaching have “been undervalued in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) for many years in China” and vocabulary learning strategy research is “absolutely needed and has significant practical value” (p. 154). The lack of study in this area motivated the researcher of the current study to conduct this investigation to find out more about young Chinese adult ESL learners’ VLS use. The findings of this study could be a contribution to future VLS research in China as well as other English language learning and teaching communities.

This project adopts the qualitative case study approach to investigate, firstly, twenty young adult Chinese ESL learners’ VLS use and, secondly, the vocabulary learning strategies they used to guess or deduce the word meanings of unfamiliar English vocabulary in their
reading. There are three main parts to this research study: an interview, a questionnaire survey and a reading vocabulary task. It is essential for ESL teachers to develop an understanding of their learners’ VLS preferences in order to enable them to create needs tailored, learning promoting, creative and motivating vocabulary learning environments. This research demonstrates how teachers could elicit information and data on their students learning strategy use. A number of research studies (e.g., Chamot & Kipper, 1989; Mayo & Lecumberri, 2003; Erhman & Oxford, 1995) have shown that strategy use can be indirectly influenced by learners’ language proficiency level, their learning culture as well as other learning variables. Moir and Nation’s (2002) study demonstrated that their participants’ previous vocabulary learning experience had some indirect influence on their L2 VLS selection. This study goes a step further by examining not only the relationship between the Chinese learners’ previous English vocabulary learning experience and their VLS selection, but also the relationship between learners’ English vocabulary knowledge and their English language skill development.

There are three main reasons which have prompted this research study:

i. There are not many research studies that examine the vocabulary learning difficulties and the VLS use of young adult Chinese ESL learners prior to their entry into a university in an English speaking country. The current study could fill this gap in vocabulary learning and vocabulary learning strategy use research.

ii. This is to give a voice to a group of Chinese ESL learners, who were preparing to enter an Australian university, to express their English vocabulary learning problems, and to demonstrate their actual vocabulary learning use in a reading vocabulary task. Research studies (Gu and Johnson, 1996; Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Schmitt, 1997,
Moir and Nation, 2002; Nation, 2001) have demonstrated that learners differ in their VLS range and application, therefore it is important to inform educators about the vocabulary learning needs and VLS use of this target group.

iii. This is to draw the attention of language educators to the need for explicit vocabulary teaching and VLS instruction not only in China but also in ESL language institutes in countries where ESL students intend to study in an English speaking environment.

Despite the importance of vocabulary knowledge in language learning skill development (Basurto, 2004; Biemiller, 2004; Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002), vocabulary development has been given a low priority in both language teaching and language-learning research until the last two decades. In some EFL countries, such as China and India, vocabulary learning has long been limited to memorizing word-lists, dictionary definitions and translation (Liu, 2010; Mehta, 2009). Unproductive vocabulary instruction strategies, such as definition copying, were sometimes implemented “to save time and progress to more meaningful content instruction” (Philips, Foote & Harper, 2008, p. 62), until recent years when researchers called for a more direct vocabulary instruction that goes beyond dictionary definitions. Direct vocabulary instruction may help to increase the breadth of learners’ vocabulary knowledge (i.e., vocabulary size), but vocabulary instruction alone may not be enough to help learners increase their depth of vocabulary knowledge (i.e. their level of understanding vocabulary items). The effectiveness of the learners’ vocabulary learning is also dependent on the application and use of the learners’ vocabulary learning strategies.

In the last two decades, there has been a great increase of English learning in China and other Chinese-speaking countries, such as Taiwan, Hong Kong & Macau and China is currently the
Chinese–speaking country with the highest population of English Language learners. “English is now the most widely taught foreign language in China” and “has the largest English learning population in the world” (Gil, 2005, p. 6; Crystal, 1997), with more than 250 million people learning the English language (Chen & Hu, 2006). English is not only “an integral part of China’s reform and modernization” (Gil, 2005, p. 5) but is also “a utilitarian tool for science, technology, national development and modernization” and essential “for acquiring technological expertise from abroad and for fostering international trade” (Wang, 1999, p. 45). However, despite the importance of English learning in the Chinese society, the current English vocabulary teaching methods in China are apparently still rather inadequate to develop students’ competence in actual use of English (Liu, 2010). Research shows that many Chinese teachers were observed to be employing traditional approaches to the teaching of English, especially the Grammar-Translation approach, (Zhan, 2010, p.121; Ministry of Education, 2002; Zhang & Adamson, 2007) and mechanical rote memorization strategies were still highly popular with many Chinese and Taiwanese EFL learners. Hence, Liu (2010) suggested that more efficient strategies are necessary to enhance English vocabulary learning. The findings of this study may raise a greater awareness of the vocabulary learning strategies which Chinese ESL learners may need in order to enhance their English vocabulary learning.

Another impetus for this research study was the researcher’s personal interest to enhance her ESL students’ vocabulary learning. These ESL learners were learning English to attain the English Language proficiency level required to enrol in an Australian university diploma or degree program. Her personal contact with young adult ESL learners with English language learning difficulties due to their limited English vocabulary knowledge had increased her interest to find out more about their vocabulary learning and VLS use. The sample in the current study consists of twenty Chinese ESL learners who were recent graduates from an
Australian English language Institute and their participation in the research project occurred prior to their university studies in Australia.

1.2 The Study

Hosenfeld observed that there was too much focus on “what students should be doing” and recommended that “we should begin by asking what students are doing” (Hosenfeld, 1976, p. 128, cited in Schmitt, 1997, p. 217). Schmitt suggested that “one way forward is to continue research into which vocabulary learning strategies learners are using”. Hence, the main aim of this study is to investigate twenty young adult Chinese ESL learners’ VLS use, and the vocabulary learning strategies used to perform a reading vocabulary task. It also looks at the learners’ previous English vocabulary learning experiences to investigate whether these experiences have any effect on their English language skill development. This study is more focused on the learners’ depth (i.e., their level of understanding vocabulary items) than their breadth (size) of vocabulary knowledge, which helps and increases vocabulary retention (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 1991). To reduce differences in strategy use that could have resulted from cultural influence, only learners with similar first language learning culture are selected.

For the purpose of this study, Chinese ESL learners were selected mainly because of the researcher’s familiarity with the Chinese learning culture and her knowledge of some Chinese languages such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Foochow and Hokkien. This would reduce the need of a translator to help conduct the interview and vocabulary task and transcribe the audio recordings. The researcher’s Chinese ethnicity is an advantage as it helps the Chinese ESL participants to identify with her as from the ‘same ethnic group’, who faced the same problems as they while acquiring English language proficiency.
1.3 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How did the twenty Chinese ESL learners’ previous English vocabulary learning experiences in their home country affect their English language skill development?

2. Which vocabulary learning strategies were more frequently reported to be used by the twenty Chinese ESL learners to learn English vocabulary?

3a. What were the main vocabulary learning strategies used by these Chinese ESL learners to perform the reading vocabulary task?

3b. How effective were these vocabulary learning strategies used in the reading vocabulary task?

4. What activities did these Chinese ESL learners recommend to enhance vocabulary learning?

Research has shown that the use of appropriate vocabulary learning strategies may increase learners’ vocabulary development, but not all learners develop appropriate vocabulary learning strategies on their own. Vocabulary development among learners may vary due to certain factors such as learners’ proficiency level, language learning culture, gender, personality, motivation and other learning variables (Chamot & Kipper, 1989; Mayo & Lecumberri, 2003; Erhman & Oxford, 1995). Learners’ culturally influenced beliefs, goals, attitudes, and decisions may also influence their approach and attitude towards second language learning and teaching, and affect their second language learning and vocabulary learning to a certain extent. To reduce these conflicts between ESL learners’ culturally
influenced Vocabulary learning strategies and the ‘desired’ vocabulary learning strategies, strategy instruction may “help students see the value in ‘new’ language learning strategies” (Oxford, 1996, p. 59) and encourage them to try out these strategies in their new language-learning environment. However, prior to giving learners the strategy instruction, it may be essential for teachers to develop a greater awareness of their second language learners’ language-learning culture, in order to help the learners adopt more appropriate second language-learning strategies.

1.4 **Significance of the Study**

This study, which adopted the qualitative and inductive case study approach to provide a thick description of learners’ vocabulary learning experiences and their VLS use, could contribute more to the body of knowledge on VLS research. Most VLS studies focus on the ‘what’, such as, ‘What vocabulary learning strategies do learners use?’ This study went a step further and attempted to explore the ‘why’ and ‘how’ besides the ‘what’: ‘What’ are these ESL learners’ English vocabulary learning difficulties? ‘What’ are their more frequently used vocabulary learning strategies? ‘Why’ do learners select certain vocabulary learning strategies? ‘Why’ do they deduce the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary? To address the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ issues, the current study used a combination of information-elicitation techniques such as an adaptation of the learners’ think-alouds, group discussions, an interview and a questionnaire survey.

This study differs from previous and vocabulary learning strategy studies as its findings provide a greater insight not only into the Chinese ESL participants’ vocabulary learning difficulties and VLS use but also into the thinking process behind their VLS use. The findings of the study could prove to be beneficial to both ESL and EFL learning and teaching.
communities, especially for those in China where English plays an increasingly important role for reform, modernization, science, technology, national development and communication. This research study hopes that by raising a greater awareness and understanding of Chinese EFL/ESL learners’ vocabulary learning difficulties and their VLS use, the EFL teachers in China and other Chinese speaking countries would consider more urgently the need to implement more effective vocabulary learning programs and activities.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One introduces the background to the study, states the problem, the main aim of the study, and the research questions, and highlights the significance of the study. Chapter Two reviews literature related to this study on the importance of vocabulary learning, vocabulary learning strategies, Chinese ESL learners’ VLS preferences, and other issues. Chapter Three provides information on the research methodology, participants, the information-elicitation techniques and other issues related to the research methods and approach used in this study. Chapters Four, Five and Six analyse and discuss the findings of the data collected from the Interview responses, Questionnaire survey and the Reading vocabulary task performance respectively. Chapter Seven summarises the findings more specifically in response to the Research Questions cited in Chapter One, and provides the Pedagogical Implications, Conclusions, Limitations of this study and Recommendations for future related research studies. The term, ‘Figure’ (e.g., Figure 1.1 in section 2.3), is used in general to refer to a diagram, table, or bar/pie chart used in this study.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary learning begins with the awareness of a vocabulary item, followed by the retrieval of word either receptively or productively to reinforce the memory of the word, linking the form and meaning of the word (Baddeley, 1990; Joe, A., Nation, P. & Newton, J. (2003)).

This section reviews the literature and research findings in the field of vocabulary learning and vocabulary learning strategies related to this current research study.

2.1 Importance of Vocabulary Learning in Language Skill Development

In recent years, there has been a greater awareness of the important role vocabulary learning and vocabulary development play in literacy and language learning. Vocabulary learning, or word learning, is more than collecting and storing words through listening and reading, or learning dictionary definitions of target words. Vocabulary learning begins with the awareness of a vocabulary item, followed by the retrieval of word either receptively or productively to reinforce the memory of the word, linking the form and meaning of the word (Baddeley, 1990; Joe, Nation, & Newton, 2003). Vocabulary learning is also about using words to communicate through writing and speaking. A rich vocabulary makes the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing easier to perform (Nation, 1994). Studies have shown that deriving word meaning and remembering the meaning are two different issues. Schmitt (1997, p. 205) made this distinction between “the initial discovery of a word’s meaning” and “remembering that word once it has been introduced”. There is no guarantee that a learner will remember a word’s meaning after discovering the meaning through the written context, usage or explanation (Joe, Nation, & Newton, 2003). To enhance the retention of the meaning of a word, vocabulary learning should also involve the metalinguistic development, that is, developing strategies to reflect on, manipulate, combine, and recombine word components.
Learning strategies are “steps to accomplish a particular task” (Beckman, 2002, p. 1). Learners’ personal interests and choice of vocabulary learning strategies are found to be very powerful aides to vocabulary learning (Blachowicz and Fisher, 2004). They may contribute to the degree of differences in vocabulary development among learners in the same class.

### 2.2 Process of Vocabulary Acquisition

Most learners identify vocabulary acquisition as the greatest source of their language learning problems, but vocabulary acquisition has been side-stepped by applied linguists and language teachers (Maiguashca, 1993) until the recent two decades when more researchers highlight the importance of vocabulary acquisition for second language (L2) learners (Lawson and Hogben, 1996, p. 102; Allen, 1983; Laufer, 1986; Nation, 1990). Vocabulary acquisition leading to increased vocabulary knowledge is believed to be “the key to understanding both spoken and written language” (Johnson and Pearson, 1984, p. 1). Vocabulary acquisition is not only about acquiring the knowledge of the word and its meaning but is an ongoing learning about word phonology, morphology and syntax, especially in relation to other words and various contexts. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to segment speech sounds; morphological awareness, the awareness of word-part meanings, and syntactic awareness, the awareness of how a word may function in language use (Carlisle, 1995). However, the process from the first encounter of an unfamiliar word to the conceptualization of the word and word use is a complex cognitive process. It is widely believed that L2 can acquire vocabulary incidentally such as through reading like L1 learners but studies have demonstrated that incidental vocabulary acquisition for L2 learners is “a time-consuming and unpredictable process” (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006, p. 1).
Evolution of teaching methods includes the Audio-lingual Method, Grammar-Translation Method, Natural Approach, Communicative Language teaching, the Lexical Approach and the Cognitive Linguistic Approach. Each of these methods focuses on a specific aspect of vocabulary learning. For example, the audio-lingual emphasizes on “structured drills or patterns” and word substitution (Folse, 2004, p. 36), while Grammar-translation approach focuses heavily on the teaching of grammar and the use of L1(translation) to teach L2. The Communicative Language Teaching advocates the incidental learning of language use and vocabulary through communicative and interactive learning while the Lexical approach focuses on the understanding and production of lexical chunks. The Cognitive Linguistics is usage-based with great emphasis on context and the language user’s world knowledge. The Cognitive Linguistics is further discussed here as it is relevant to the participants’ use of contextual clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary in the reading vocabulary task (see Chapter 6 of the current study).

One approach² of Cognitive Linguistics is the Experiential View, in which the language users transfers their world knowledge and experience of things and events that they know well to unfamiliar objects and events, including abstract concepts. To Cognitive linguists, context not only comes first but is also an essential part of meaning. Requejo (2007), taking the Cognitive Linguistics stand, suggests that “context is what leads to the process of meaning construction” (p. 177). In her case study, Requejo (2007) demonstrated how a learner could construct meaning using context. For example, the sentence, “Blue is a new black” (p. 172), the hearer would try to understand the sentence and search in their memory for a similar experience and situation when ‘blue is black’, but the problem to their understanding was more a lack of proper context than a lack of stored memory. On the other hand, when a

---

² Ungerer and Schmid (1996) distinguish three main approaches to Cognitive Linguistics: the Experiential view, the Prominence view and the Attentional view of language.
sentence from a magazine article, ‘Aqua Blue Crush. A first glimpse at “the new black”.’ (Requejo, 2007, p. 174), was given with the visual image of a model in an aqua blue gown in the middle of a fashion parade, the blue colour of the gown reached the reader’s mind first and there was no doubt what shade aqua blue is. Though there would be the categorization of black, from the negative connotations of “death”, “mourning” and “darkness” to the positive connotation of “Excellence” (Requejo, 2007, pp. 174-176), the learner would use their world knowledge of fashion and relate the blue with fashionable clothes and elegance. In this manner, a new meaning to black is stored in the memory of the learner who would be able to use the term in a new sentence such as “Nancy Reagan almost single-handedly made red the new black” (Requejo, 2007, p. 176). In a similar manner, learners can use contextual clues to help them guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word.

Nonetheless, no “particular method or approach” has been found to be “much more successful than another” (Folse, 2004, p. 36), hence, L2 instructors will need to select the most suitable teaching approach that caters to their learners’ vocabulary learning needs and enhance their vocabulary acquisition process.

2.3 Close Relationship between Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Comprehension

Vocabulary knowledge is found to play a critical role in reading comprehension development, while an expansive and varied set of vocabulary words results in better writing (Basurto, 2004). Vocabulary is considered “a key component of reading ability” (Folse, 2004, p. 24). Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, (1991) defined vocabulary knowledge in terms of the ‘breadth’ and ‘depth’ of vocabulary knowledge. ‘Breadth’ refers to the levels of our understanding of words while ‘depth’ refers to ‘the size and scope of our vocabulary’, that is,
“the words we use, recognize, and respond in meaningful acts of communication” (Tompkins & Blanchfield, 2004, p. 1; Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 1991). It is important for learners’ vocabulary development to reflect the depth of their understanding to the full concept knowledge (Perez, in Tompkins and Blanchfield, 2004) and their ability to “integrate the concept into meaningfulness” (Allen, 1999, p. 13). Otherwise, vocabulary taught will not be retained, stored or retrieved effectively for future.

The English language results of the Chinese ESL learners in this study suggest that a greater percentage of them have difficulties with English Reading comprehension and Writing than with Listening or Speaking (see Appendix 2A, Participants’ Final ESL Grades). Various research studies have shown a close link between vocabulary knowledge levels and reading comprehension (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002; Biemiller, 2004; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Scarborough, 1998). Studies have suggested that besides a teacher’s guidance and intervention, word learning can occur “normally and incidentally during normal reading” (Baumann & Kame’enui, 2004, p. 221; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985). Extensive exposure to new words could help optimize word learning, and reading widely could provide this exposure to a substantial number of unfamiliar words. Vocabulary knowledge is crucial to reading comprehension development since readers need to learn the meaning of unfamiliar words to enable them to fully understand the plot of a story or to better comprehend what they read. Comprehension “comprises two ‘skills’: word knowledge or vocabulary and reasoning” (Davies, 1942, p. 76), and a key ingredient in reading comprehension development is a “continuous, steady vocabulary growth” (Johnson & Pearson, 1984, p. 4). Figures 1.1 and 1.2 summarize the close relationship between vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension and reading.
Successful readers are those who are able to recognize and produce a wide range of vocabulary. Figure 1.1 illustrates how growth in reading power could lead to enrichment and expansion of reading vocabulary (Whipple, 1925, cited in National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 3-4).

On the other hand, studies by researchers such as Baumann and Kameenui (1991), Kucan & Beck (1996) and Nitschke (2004) demonstrated that, ironically, students who need the vocabulary most are not reading widely because they do not understand the text due to their limited vocabulary knowledge. Figure 1.2 shows the close relationship between limited vocabulary knowledge, reading and low reading comprehension level. Poor readers with low vocabulary development are observed to display less ability to use context to derive meaningful information due to their vocabulary limitation. This phenomenon signals the great need for more attention to be given to increase students’ vocabulary learning, which could in turn enhance their reading comprehension and increase reading.
2.4 Vocabulary Learning Difficulties

As mentioned in section 2.1, vocabulary learning is a crucial part of language learning. A wide vocabulary range not only helps learners in their reading comprehension and listening but it also helps learners to express themselves more effectively in both speaking and writing. However, various vocabulary learning difficulties could slow down some learners’ vocabulary learning. One reason behind word learning difficulties could be the complexity of vocabulary acquisition process (see section 2.2), especially for an adult L2 learner. Learners are required to know many other aspects of the word besides the pronunciation and spelling of a word, such as: what part of speech it can function as, how it is inflected, the range of meaning it has, its core meaning/s, the prefixes and suffixes it can take, with what other words it can collocate with, and what grammatical patterns it fits into (Nation, 1994, p. viii).

Other vocabulary learning difficulties include deciding which vocabulary items are worth learning, as well as remembering and retrieving specific vocabulary to be used in their oral and written communication.

Liu (2010) observed that learning vocabulary is a “bottleneck in English learning” for many students in China as “many Chinese students just memorize new words mechanically and there is no systematic research in vocabulary learning” (p. 153). Liu felt that the neglect in vocabulary teaching could contribute to the relatively slow speed of vocabulary improvement among the Chinese EFL learners. Some teachers (e.g., in China) are still using what researchers have deemed as time-consuming and inefficient traditional vocabulary teaching methods that “focus on the conceptual meaning and neglect other aspects of vocabulary like collocation, connotation, denotation, synonyms and so on” (Liu, 2010, p. 153). Zhao’s (2009) study demonstrates that most college students were aware of the importance of vocabulary
learning but failed to learn vocabulary effectively or use vocabulary learning strategies appropriately.

A greater awareness of their learners’ vocabulary learning difficulties may help EFL and ESL instructors implement more effective vocabulary strategy instruction and/or vocabulary lessons. The interview responses of the participants in this study could provide more insights into the vocabulary learning difficulties they encountered and the relationship between their English vocabulary knowledge and their English language learning difficulties.

2.5 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

This section will review relevant literature on Schmitt’s VLS taxonomy and seven main VLS categories which are of great significance to the framework of this research project, especially for the development of an appropriate VLS questionnaire to elicit information about Chinese ESL learners’ VLS use. Studies on learners’ VLS use (e.g., Gu and Johnson, 1996; Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Schmitt, 1997, Moir and Nation, 2002; Nation, 2001) have shown that learners differ in the range of strategies they use, such as ‘simple’ strategies (e.g., use of rehearsal, repetition, and looking at illustrations), and more complex strategies (e.g., word-part analysis, guessing from context clues), and a range of elaborative strategies (e.g., the keyword technique). The effectiveness with which they apply the various strategies also varies from one learner to the other.

2.5.1 Schmitt’s (1997) Vocabulary Learning Strategy Taxonomy

Schmitt, one of the first researchers to investigate vocabulary learning strategies, developed his own VLS taxonomy, which is based mainly on Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL). Schmitt’s (1997) VLS taxonomy consists of fifty-nine items
grouped into five main categories (Determination, Social, Memory, Cognitive & Metacognitive strategies). Figure 2 summarizes the dimension and classification of strategies used in Schmitt’s (1997) VLS Taxonomy.

*Determination Strategies* refer to the strategies an individual uses ‘when faced with discovering a new word’s meaning without recourse to another person’s expertise’ (Schmitt, 1997, p. 205). Schmitt’s VLS taxonomy comprises this Determination strategy category and four other categories: Social, Memory, Cognitive and Metacognitive strategy categories. Some researchers group the social strategies and affective strategies together as socioaffective strategies, that is, strategies that “have to do with social-mediating activity and interacting with others” (Brown, 2000, p. 124). Schmitt’s VLS taxonomy excludes affective and compensation strategies as categories. Instead, Schmitt moved some of these strategies to other groups.

*Figure 2 Schmitt's Vocabulary Learning Strategy Taxonomy (Schmitt, 1997)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schmitt’s Taxonomy of Vocabulary Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Strategy Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension</strong></td>
<td><strong>Classifications of strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Determination strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery &amp; Consolidation</td>
<td>Social strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation</td>
<td>Memory strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitive strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metacognitive strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Schmitt made a distinction between “the initial discovery of a word’s meaning” and “remembering that word once it has been introduced” (Schmitt 1997, p. 205), and grouped the vocabulary learning strategies into two main dimensions: Discovery and Consolidation strategies (Figure 3). Schmitt adapted Nation’s (1990) discovery strategies and the consolidation strategies to reflect two different processes:

- **Discovery** strategies refer to strategies for gaining initial information about a new word, such as the Determination strategies;
- **Consolidation** strategies refer to strategies used to remember the word, such as the Cognitive, Memory and Metacognitive strategies.

Schmitt’s (1997) study, using his VLS taxonomy, revealed that the most frequently used discovery strategies are using a bilingual dictionary, guessing from context, and asking classmates for help, while the most frequently used consolidation strategies were verbal repetition, written repetition, and studying the spelling of the word. Other researchers such as Jurkovic (2006), Catalan (2003), and Harley and Hart (2000) also used Schmitt’s VLS taxonomy in their VLS research studies. Jurkovic (2006) summarized Schmitt’s VLS taxonomy very adequately in Figure 4. To encourage deep processing of vocabulary for long-
term retention of vocabulary learnt, Moir & Nation (2002, p. 15-16) suggested that learners should use strategies such as Schmitt’s (1997) memory strategies and cognitive strategies, and spaced repetition and review, which relates to Schmitt’s metacognitive strategies. Wu’s (2005) study on the vocabulary learning strategies used by Taiwanese secondary and university students revealed that most of them used discovery strategies such as Chinese-English bilingual dictionaries, guessing from textual context and asking classmates for word meaning/s. The same study also showed that the consolidation strategies most widely used were studying the sounds of words and repeating word forms. The current study would also attempt to find out whether the participants use these consolidation strategies frequently.

**Figure 4  A Summary of Schmitt’s VLS Taxonomy (Jurkovic, 2006, p.26)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VL STRATEGIES</th>
<th>DISCOVERY</th>
<th>CONSOLIDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>e.g. guess from textual context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>e.g. ask classmates for meaning</td>
<td>e.g. interact with native speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>e.g. use semantic maps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>e.g. keep vocabulary notebook</td>
<td>e.g. use L2 media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schmitt’s inclusion of the Determination strategies, and the distinction he made between Discovery and Consolidation Strategies would be very useful in categorizing the various types of vocabulary learning strategies learners used, hence, the VLS Questionnaire (see Appendix 2B and Appendix 2C) used in this current study to explore twenty Chinese ESL learners’ VLS use is based mainly on Schmitt’s vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) Taxonomy. The different categories of vocabulary learning strategies will be further elaborated in the following sub-sections.
2.5.2 Seven Vocabulary Learning Strategy Categories

The questionnaire survey in the current study comprises seven categories of vocabulary learning strategies: metacognitive, social, determination, memory, cognitive, metacognitive regulation, and translation strategies.

2.5.2.1 Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies are techniques learners use to organize, plan, focus and evaluate their learning (Oxford, 1990), such as associating new information with already known one, looking for opportunities to practice, and self-monitoring. “Efficient use of time” and knowing when to study a new word actively are considered to be useful metacognitive strategies (Kalahaji, 2012, p. 140). Some examples of metacognitive strategies that could help learners increase their vocabulary are listening to the radio/tapes of word lists, watching a video/movie/TV program, reading newspapers, learning words from commercials, writing meaning/s of new words, skipping difficult words, and others. Zarafshan (2002) discovered that the reasons behind Iranian students’ low use of metacognitive strategies were the curriculum design which did not promote collaborative and social learning, and the educational institutions which did not provide much opportunity for the use of these strategies. Similarly, the Chinese college students who participated in Zhao’s (2009) study were revealed to rarely use metacognitive strategies in their vocabulary learning, and the metacognitive strategy related to ‘planning’ was the least used. Zhao’ study shows that despite their awareness of the importance of vocabulary learning, they failed to learn vocabulary effectively and neither did they know how to use vocabulary learning strategies appropriately. On the other hand, studies by Gu and Johnson (1996), Wen and Johnson (1997), Wu and Wang's (1998) showed that older Chinese learners (such as the post senior
high school students) were active users of a variety of metacognitive strategies. One of the sub-goals of the current study is to investigate whether the participants are active MS users.

2.5.2.2 Social Strategies

Social strategies are techniques learners use to facilitate interaction, especially by asking questions, developing cultural understanding and cooperating with others in the learning process (Oxford, 1990). Some examples of social strategies to increase vocabulary are learning by pair/group work in class, asking teachers, classmates, friends and family members for clarification of meaning, paraphrase, synonym or translation, and practicing with others new words they have learned. Group work and cooperative group learning could promote “active processing of information and cross modeling/imitation” (Schmitt, 1997, p. 211). Australian foreign language students were observed to use more social strategies than the Indonesian foreign language students in Lenganawati’s (2003) study. Wu’s (2005) study revealed that consulting classmates for word meanings was one of the most frequently used social strategies among Taiwanese high school and university students. More details about Chinese learners’ use of social strategies are given in sub-section 2.7.1.2. The reading vocabulary task in the study could offer great opportunities to observe whether the participants used social strategies actively when working in pairs and threes.

2.5.2.3 Determination Strategies

Determination strategies are techniques learners used “when faced with discovering a new word’s meaning without recourse to another person’s expertise” (Schmitt, 1997, p. 205) and these strategies “facilitate gaining knowledge of a new word” (p. 208). Some examples of determination strategies are using a thesaurus, using a dictionary (picture, bilingual, monolingual, etc.), using word lists made by the language teacher, and guessing from textual
context in reading. Some studies (e.g., Gu and Johnson, 1996; Wang, 2005) have shown that
Taiwanese and Chinese EFL learners of higher academic level used the determination
strategy, ‘guessing from context’, very extensively. The current study also examines which
determination strategies the participants reported more frequently to use.

2.5.2.4 Memory Strategies
Memory strategies (also known as mnemonics) are techniques learners use to enter new
information into memory storage, to be retrieved when required for communication (Oxford,
1996). They involve relating the stored word with previously learned knowledge, using
imagery, or grouping (Schmitt, 1997). Some examples of memory strategies are associating a
word with its coordinates, using a new word in sentences, connecting the word to already
known words/personal experience, studying or practising the meaning in a group, learning
and memorizing idioms from stories, memorizing the meaning of affix and roots, memorizing
parts of speech, imaging word’s meaning, using rhymes/semantic maps/ keyword method,
studying the spelling/sound of a word, and saying a new word aloud when studying.
Zarafshan (2002) study showed that Iranian students use memory strategies very frequently.
Chinese learners were also observed to have a high level of MMS use (AMEPRC, 2005;
Chamot, 2004, Lengkanawati, 2003; Griffith, 2003; Oxford 1993). This study will examine
whether the participants demonstrate a similar high MMS use.

2.5.2.5 Cognitive Strategies
Cognitive strategies are techniques learners use to link new information with existing
schemata, as well as to analyze and classify it (Oxford, 1990). Learners use cognitive
strategies to get the ideas quickly and transfer information. Cognitive strategies focus more
on repetition and mechanical means than on manipulative mental processing to study
vocabulary (Kalahaji, 2012). Some examples of cognitive strategies are putting English labels on physical objects, using the vocabulary section in textbook, keeping a vocabulary notebook, verbal/written repetition, note-taking, writing a wordlist of new words learnt and paraphrasing the word’s meaning without help from others. Wu’s (2005) study revealed that some Taiwanese teachers and students were still using traditional methods of rote learning such as memorizing words and grammatical forms of the words in word lists. On the other hand, some other studies (Schmitt, 1997; Gu & Johnson, 1996) showed that university students perceived learning from word lists and using flashcards not very useful and did not use these cognitive strategies often. Zarafshan (2002) study showed that Iranian students had a greater preference for memory strategies and cognitive strategies than for metacognitive strategies and social strategies. Wenden (1987) observed that learners attaching importance to learning are likely to employ cognitive strategies. This study will examine which cognitive strategies the participants reported more frequently to use.

2.5.2.6 Metacognitive Regulation Strategies

Metacognitive regulation strategies are the goal-setting and vocabulary-selection strategies, and self-initiation strategies to evaluate and monitor personal vocabulary learning progress (Gu and Johnson, 1996). Learners who use the most self-initiation strategies are observed to be more successful in vocabulary learning and are more proficient in the language than other participants in Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study. However, despite the important roles of metacognitive regulation strategies in vocabulary learning, these strategies are not included in Schmitt’s (1997) VLS taxonomy or others’ taxonomies (such as Stoffer, 1995; & Oxford, 1990). Hence, in addition to the investigation of the participants’ MS use, the current study included the metacognitive regulation strategies from Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study to examine the participants’ use of ‘selective attention’ and ‘self-initiation’ in their vocabulary
learning, which are identified by Gu and Johnson (1996) as two metacognitive regulation strategies that “best predict overall proficiency in EFL learning” (p. 658). This study went a step further than previous investigations into participants’ MS use that focused on participants’ vocabulary learning at a more general level, that is, learning vocabulary they encounter in their daily life as well as those required in their English Language studies. Besides the participants’ MS use, the current study also examined at a deeper level the participants’ MRS use to learn English vocabulary they have a special interest in or personally keen to learn. The findings could be crucial to future VLS research. Stoffer (1995) recommended that learners be trained to “take charge of their own learning” and be more “independent of their teachers” (p. 148). To develop this independence, it is essential for learners to reflect on behaviour and progress as well as to adapt and adjust accordingly.

2.5.2.7 Translation Strategies

Translation strategy is defined as the use of the first language as a base to understand and/or produce the second language (Chamot et al., 1987). Hayati’s (2009) study demonstrates that ‘in EFL context, using translation in a communicative framework enhances vocabulary learning at deeper levels of cognitive processing leading to deeper vocabulary gains for unknown words’ (p. 153). The questionnaire used in this study included one item from Oxford’s (1990) Translation strategy category, ‘Write meaning of new words in your native language’, which is not included in Schmitt’s VLS taxonomy. This is a strategy that the researcher used very often in her personal foreign language (FL) learning. With the help of the bilingual dictionary or the teacher’s explanation, the advantages of using the translation strategy are that it is ‘quick, simple, and easy to understand’ and the translation method could

---

3 The findings reveal a difference in the participants’ MS and MRS use. They were revealed to be low MS users but High MRS users. This suggests that low MS use does not necessarily lead to low MRS use and vice versa.

4 In the researcher’s case, when she was learning Japanese as a foreign language in the university, she would write the meaning of the Japanese vocabulary in English.
be used as ‘an explicit mode of instruction’ for elementary level ESL learners (Nassir, 2012, p. 6). While using the translation strategy might help learners to remember the vocabulary items, using the translation strategy is not always easy as “there are many words that do not have one-to-one translation equivalents” (Folse, 2004, p. 62) and “words are polysemous”. It will be even more difficult to use the translation strategy if the two languages involved (e.g., Chinese and English) have more differences than similarities in cognates. This study will examine whether the participants in the current study demonstrated a high or low translation strategy use.

2.6 Effectiveness of Learners’ Vocabulary Strategy Use

Some researchers such as Nyikos (1991) and Vann and Abraham (1990) have suggested that some active strategy users are less successful in learning another language due to ineffectual application or the use of inappropriate language-learning strategies. This theory may also apply to vocabulary learning and learners’ VLS selection.

2.6.1 Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used to Achieve Three Vocabulary Learning Goals

Moir and Nation (2002, p. 16) recommended three vocabulary learning goals to be included in a vocabulary learning program:

- the learning of useful vocabulary,
- vocabulary retention and
- making the vocabulary available for meaning-focused use both receptively and productively.

To achieve these goals, they recommended that learners apply various strategies of appropriate choice (i.e., “choosing the most useful words”) and focus (i.e., “deciding what to learn from them”), strategies that encourage deep processing such as Schmitt’s (1997)
memory strategies and cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies such as spaced repetition and review (Moir and Nation, 2002, p. 17). For long-term recall, the successful learners in Lawson & Hogben’s (1996, 104) study not only analyzed and rehearsed the new word and its meaning, but they also elaborated on the word-meaning complex and established it within a suitable network of meaning. (See Figure 5 for a summary of Vocabulary learning strategies used to achieve the three vocabulary learning goals.)

**Figure 5  Summary of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used to Achieve Vocabulary Learning Goals**
*(based on Schmitt, 1997; Moir and Nation, 2002; Lawson & Hogben, 1996)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Learning Strategies to Achieve Vocabulary Learning Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Choosing the most useful words (strategies of appropriate choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Deciding what to learn from words selected (strategies of focus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Deep processing (memory and cognitive strategies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Repeating and reviewing (metacognitive strategies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Analyzing and rehearsing new word and its meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Elaborating on word-meaning complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Established new word within a suitable network of meaning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.6.2 Effective & Ineffective Vocabulary Learners’ Strategy Use

In terms of successful vocabulary learning, Moir and Nation (2002) found significant differences in strategy use between one learner (Abdi) and nine other participants, and distinguished Abdi as the most effective vocabulary learner in their study. Abdi, whose vocabulary test scores were significantly higher than the others, stood out as a learner with the “highest level of responsibility for his own learning” (Moir and Nation, 2002, p. 26), reinforcing Stoffer’s (1995) and Gu and Johnson’s (1996) findings on the relationship between self-initiation and vocabulary learning. Abdi’s use of a “greater range of strategies to learn the words selected” (p. 27) than the other participants, confirmed other researchers’ observation about good learners (e.g., Ahmed, 1989; Folse, 2004; Brown & Perry, 1991;
Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Gu and Johnson (1996). Studies, such as those by Ahmed (1989) and Liu (2010), showed that their ‘good’ learners used more vocabulary learning strategies and relied more on different types of vocabulary learning strategies than the ‘poorer’ learners did. Good learners were observed to utilize “a variety of strategies to successfully learn new vocabulary or to deal with unknown words in a text” (Folse, 2004, p. 100). They made the words they learned come alive instead of memorizing the words mechanically like the less effective vocabulary learners (Liu, 2010). Sanoui’s (1995) study showed the ‘good’ learners used a definite plan or strategy for vocabulary learning, a strategy which the ‘weaker’ participants did not report using. Other studies (e.g., Brown & Perry, 1991; Lawson & Hogben, 1996) similarly showed ‘good’ learners possessing more strategies and using vocabulary-learning strategies more widely and more consistently than less successful vocabulary learners. Liu’s (2010) study revealed the freshmen being dependent on their teachers and textbook, and not having their own vocabulary learning strategies though the emphasis is on self-learning. Hence, Liu recommended that learners be provided with proper vocabulary learning strategy training.

Moir and Nation (2002) suggested that the reason behind the others’ less effective vocabulary learning might be their use of a very limited range of strategies, with rote learning and copying being the most common strategies used by them. Though learners were taught various strategies such as “guessing from context, using word cards, using mnemonic techniques like the key-word technique and word parts, and dictionaries” (Moir and Nation, 2002, p. 32), they were not comfortable using these strategies. This study will examine the roles ‘rote learning and copying’ play in the participants’ vocabulary learning.
Another distinction between Abdi and the others was their previous vocabulary learning experience. Among the participants, Abdi was the only learner required to select his own vocabulary to learn in his home country, and his familiarity with the “process of learning collocations and grammatical information” (Moir and Nation, 2002, p. 31) could have increased the effectiveness of his vocabulary learning. Unlike him, the others showed more anxiety related to learning something new in an unfamiliar context. This suggests that learners’ previous vocabulary learning experience could have an indirect influence on the effectiveness of their second language vocabulary learning. One of this study’s goals is to determine whether the participants’ previous EFL vocabulary learning experience has an indirect influence on their vocabulary learning strategy selection and vocabulary learning in their ESL environment. The findings of this current study may also provide a greater insight into the effectiveness of Chinese ESL learners’ VLS selection.

2.6.3 Active and Passive Strategy Users

Like Moir and Nation, Gu and Johnson (1996, p. 662) discovered that the most effective learners in their study displayed strong self-initiation, especially in their use of strategies for “guessing and contextual encoding of new vocabulary”, and “deliberate use of new words”. One group of effective learners in their study, the Active Strategy users, not only displayed high self-initiation and motivation, but were also highly flexible in strategy use. This group used more strategies than other groups and was more willing to try new strategies, demonstrating that “using more strategies is better than using fewer” (Gu and Johnson, 1996, p. 664). Two differences between the Active Strategy users and the most effective group (the Readers) in the study are in the use of memorization strategies and the extracurricular time spent on vocabulary study. The Readers do not believe in the use of memorization, or spend as much time as the Active Strategy users on vocabulary study. They believe more in picking
up words through natural exposure and giving attention to word form. The least effective vocabulary learners in the study, the Passive Strategy Users, believe strongly in memorization and effortful studying of new words. This group also relied most heavily on visual repetition, a common primary school strategy used to memorize the Chinese characters. Gu and Johnson, unlike Moir and Nation (1996), suggested that the ineffectiveness in vocabulary learning might not be due to ineffective vocabulary learning strategy use but due to their lack of effort (p. 666).

Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study is very relevant to this study as the subjects in both studies are similar in terms of language and cultural group, that is, they are Chinese. Two basic differences between their study and the current study are that their subjects are EFL learners in a university in China whereas the subjects in the current study are ESL learners in Australia, preparing to commence their tertiary education in Australia. This study is interested to investigate whether there are any differences in VLS preferences between the participants and Gu and Johnson’s participants. Differences in motivational needs might affect their vocabulary learning strategy use, but the focus of the current study is not on whether there is a difference in VLS selection between EFL and ESL learners.

Figure 6 summarizes what some researchers (e.g., Moir and Nation, 2002 & Gu and Johnson, 1996) have identified as ‘Effective/Active’ and ‘Ineffective/Passive vocabulary learners’ VLS use. Eighth, VLS instruction could help equip learners with more appropriate VLS to improve their vocabulary learning which may in turn increase reading comprehension and improve language proficiency.
### Figure 6  Summary of Effective/Active and Ineffective/Passive VLS Use
[based on studies by Moir and Nation (2002) and Gu and Johnson (1996)]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Learners</th>
<th>Effective or Active Vocabulary Learners</th>
<th>Ineffective or Passive Vocabulary Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VLSs used</td>
<td>Higher level of responsibility for own learning</td>
<td>Lower level of responsibility for own learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of responsibility for own learning</td>
<td>Use a greater range of strategies to learn the words selected</td>
<td>Use a very limited range of strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of strategies used</td>
<td>Highly flexible</td>
<td>Less flexible than Effective/Active learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility in strategy use</td>
<td>More willing</td>
<td>Less willing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to try new strategies</td>
<td>Previously use this strategy in home country.</td>
<td>No previous experience of using this strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting own vocabulary for learning</td>
<td>Familiar with these processes</td>
<td>Unfamiliar with these processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with process of learning collocations and grammatical information</td>
<td>Rote learning</td>
<td>Don't use this strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guessing from context</td>
<td>Dictionaries</td>
<td>Deliberate use of new words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using mnemonic techniques (e.g., key-word technique and word parts)</td>
<td>Dictionaries</td>
<td>Memorization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.6.4 Limitations of Vocabulary Learning Strategy Research

VLS research studies have provided invaluable insights into learners’ VLS use and preferences as well as the VLS use of successful vocabulary learners, but there are limitations to what VLS research studies can achieve and three limitations will be mentioned here. As mentioned in Chapter 1, various factors, such as learners’ gender, learning culture, language proficiency level and other learning variables can influence learners’ VLS use (Chamot & Kipper, 1989; Mayo & Lecumberri, 2003; Erhman & Oxford, 1995). Hence, findings of studies can only be limited to the influence of specific factors on VLS use of a particular
group of learners. Another limitation is the difficulty of identifying what is a ‘good’ or ‘successful’ vocabulary learning strategy. There is no specific method or approach that has been proven to be better or more successful than another (Folse, 2004). Studies by Ahmed (1989), Brown and Perry, (1991), Lawson and Hogben (1996), Gu and Johnson (1996), and Liu (2010) have provided evidence that ‘good’ or successful vocabulary learners used “a variety of strategies to successfully learn new vocabulary or to deal with unknown words in a text” (Folse, 2004, p. 100). Findings of studies on ‘good’ or ‘successful’ VLS users or vocabulary learners could only be limited to that specific group in the studies. The third limitation is the research instruments and subjects used in the investigation. Some findings are inconclusive as different research approaches could lead to different outcomes. For instance, studies by Liu (2010), Wu and Wang (1998), Wu (2005), Wharton (2000), and Gu and Johnson (1996) achieved different findings about Chinese learners’ VLS use (see section 2.7.1.2). Nonetheless, despite the limitations, these VLS studies do provide important pedagogical implications for developing teaching strategies and for strategy training in particular learning or cultural contexts.

2.7 Relationship between Language Learning Culture and Strategy Preference

One teaching implication derived from previous VLS studies is to raise learners’ awareness of as many strategies as possible so as to provide learners with various options to achieve a greater depth in word knowledge. Various researchers (Stoffer, 1995; Sanaoui, 1996; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Schmitt, 1997; Moir & Nation, 2002; Folse, 2004) recommended that learners be given VLS training to enable them to become autonomous learners both in and outside classrooms. While proper VLS training is beneficial to a learner’s vocabulary development, teachers should also be more aware of strategies relating to learners’ cultural and educational background, and their language learning culture.
Language learning culture refers to the culture within which the language learning occurs. Culture “determines what we perceive, how we react to situations, and how we relate to other people” (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 136). Learning a second language requires learning the linguistic aspects of the culture within which the language learning takes place. Brown (1980) points out that learning a second language in a foreign culture (i.e., the culture of the target language) involves a deeper form of acculturation than learning the target language as a foreign language in the student’s home country.

Brick’s (1991) study demonstrates that differences in first and second language learning cultures could also affect learners’ response to certain teaching approaches in the second language. One participant, an Australian learning Chinese in China, commented that the trouble with Chinese teachers was that they were textbook-based and students had little opportunity to talk. On the other hand, another participant, a Chinese student studying in Australia, commented that the problem with the friendly Australian teachers was not having a thorough grasp of their subject and that the lack of a definite system. Both participants felt that learning did not occur, and the teaching was ineffective. However, the real problem may not lie with the teaching but with the learners learning a language in a foreign culture that requires the use of language-learning strategies different from what they are accustomed to in their own home country. The difference in strategy preferences due to the indirect influence of individual learner’s learning culture would have a significant impact on second language learning and teaching, especially in a multi-cultural class.

As “learners from different culture groups sometimes have different opinions about the usefulness of various learning strategies” (Schmitt, 1997, p. 202), second language learners might value some language-learning strategies that are not valued by a teacher from another culture. For example, students from a language learning culture where rote learning and
memorization are widely used may think that these are useful strategies in learning English (Richards & Lockhart, 1997), but teachers who are used to the communicative learning and teaching culture may not value these strategies and may try to discourage their use by learners. This conflict in learners’ strategy preferences influenced by their culture and their resistance to learn or use the new strategies introduced during their language learning in the foreign culture may impede the attainment of the goal of strategy instruction to train the learners to use appropriate learning strategies. Hence, it is essential for teachers to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the previous language learning culture of their second language learners in order to help their learners adopt more appropriate second language-learning strategies in their learning. A teaching or learning style, or strategies that are deemed ‘ineffective’ in one country, place or institution, may work very effectively in another. Folse’s (2004, p. 102) advised that if these are successful, then their use should be encouraged even when the strategies are against what the teachers would use or were taught.

2.7.1 Chinese Learners’ Learning Strategy Preferences

The following discussion on the influence of culture on learning strategy use will be limited only to the Chinese learners.

2.7.1.1 Common Beliefs about Chinese Learners and Rote Learning

Chinese learners are believed to have a greater preference for memorization strategies than Australian students (AMEPRC, 2005; Lengkanawati, 2003). Chinese learning culture apparently discourages guessing but emphasizes the mastery of knowledge, recognizing patterns of Chinese scripts, and memorization of presented materials to pass tests and examinations (AMEPRC, 2005). This may contribute to some Chinese learners’ high level of memory and metacognitive strategy use, and their apparent high preference for visual
learning and rote learning strategies but low preference for compensation strategies such as
guessing or affective strategies, strategies which could be useful for language learning
(AMEPRC, 2005; Chamot, 2004; Lengkanawati, 2003; Griffith, 2003; Merrifield, 1996;
Oxford 1993; Lee 1976). Wu’s (2005) investigation revealed that Taiwanese secondary and
tertiary students still practice rote learning such as memorizing words and grammatical forms
of the words. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) believed that successful learners from a culture
whose educational system emphasizes rote memorization may have highly developed
memory strategies but less developed problem-solving and comprehension strategies. Biggs
(1996) suggested that the Chinese learners’ memorization strategies might not always be rote
memorization strategies but repetition strategies with the intention to understand, and
provided evidence that Chinese learners are not passive rote learners as commonly believed
since they have performed better than their Western counterparts academically. This high
level of achievement is difficult to attain with mechanical rote learning without
understanding.

It is also believed that in some Chinese homes observing traditional family values, talking
back to the parents or questioning authorities is frowned on; hence, many Chinese learners
may be reticent in asking questions or talking to people of authority such as their parents and
teachers who are still dominant figures in the family and the education system. Teachers are
viewed as sages or savants, and possessors of unique wisdom (Widdowson, 2003). The
emphasis on ‘mastery of knowledge’ may also influence their low use of social strategies
such as asking for clarifications or corrections, as learners are reluctant to appear ignorant.
Apparently, any errors made by a language learner are regarded as ‘deficiency in the learner’s
capability’ and a demonstration that the learner has ‘not mastered the new knowledge’ (Zhan,
2010).
Many ESL Chinese learners in Australia who expect to rote-learn, reproduce language, or learn grammar rules, rather than deduce patterns, may find the unfamiliar Australian strategy of finding main ideas or using contexts to interpret unknown words rather daunting and stressful, and may find the unfamiliar focus on everyday language in their ESL classes inappropriate. Without an in-depth understanding of cultural difference in strategy use, the findings might lead to the misconception that Chinese learners use fewer ‘good’ language learner strategies or that they have strategy preferences similar to those used by lower level students, such as memorization strategies and metacognitive strategies. These misconceptions may undermine the Chinese learners’ intelligence and other factors such as personality and determination. The investigations also do not provide sufficient information about the relationship between learners’ strategy preference and learning difficulties. Some findings are inconclusive as different methods of testing produce different kinds of results. Active strategy users may not always be successful language learners, if they “failed to apply strategies appropriately to the task at hand” (Vann and Abraham, 1990, p. 191). Nonetheless, such research on the relationship between culture and strategy preferences does provide important pedagogical implications for developing teaching strategies and for strategy training in particular cultural contexts. The reading vocabulary task in the study could provide a greater insight about the use of social strategies by the participants who worked in pairs/threes. The findings of the study might provide insight into why they use certain social strategies to help them complete the vocabulary task.

2.7.1.2 Chinese Learners’ VLS Preferences

a) Social strategies: Different studies (e.g. Liu, 2010; Wu and Wang, 1998; Wu, 2005; Wharton, 2000; and Gu and Johnson, 1996) achieved different findings about Chinese learners’ learning strategy preferences. Wharton’s (2000) study reported that the ethnically
Chinese, bilingual Singaporean university foreign language students had a greater preference for social strategies than affective strategies, which is contrary to the common belief that Chinese learners have a low SS preference. The current study sought to investigate the participants’ social strategy use and find out which social strategies were more frequently reported to be used by them.

b) **Metacognitive strategies:** Studies by Wu and Wang (1998) and Gu and Johnson (1996) revealed that Chinese EFL learners are active strategy users who employ a variety of vocabulary learning strategies, especially metacognitive strategies. On the other hand, the Chinese college students in Zhao’s (2009) study showed that they rarely used metacognitive strategies in their vocabulary learning, and planning was the least used metacognitive strategy. Zhao’s (2009) findings showed that most of the participants not only failed to learn vocabulary effectively but they also did not know how to use the vocabulary learning strategies appropriately. The findings also showed that they left the management of their time to their teachers and parents, could not study cooperatively, and were reluctant to share their learning experience with their peers, or ask for their teachers’ help. The positive note is that Zhao’s (2009) study demonstrated that with proper metacognitive strategy instruction, the participants’ use of metacognitive strategies increased and this had a significant effect on their vocabulary learning.

c) **Rote memorization:** Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study revealed that their 850 Chinese EFL participants generally rejected rote-memorization, a strategy often associated with Chinese language learners. According to Gu and Johnson, their Chinese participants saw memorization as only a part of the learning process (p. 670). Except for oral repetition, other rehearsal strategies (often associated with rote-learning) were rarely used. The participants,
sophomore non-English majors at Beijing Normal University, were ‘reported using more meaning-oriented strategies than rote strategies in learning vocabulary’ (p. 668), and observed using guessing strategies extensively when reading, with encoding strategies (least ‘rote’) ranking highest use among other strategy use.

**d) Use of Other Vocabulary Learning Strategies:** Wu’s (2005) investigation of Taiwanese EFL secondary and university students’ VLS use revealed that most students (like those in Gu and Johnson’s study) used strategies such as ‘guessing from textual context’, and repeating a word’s form frequently. Like those subjects in Wharton’s study, most of students in Wu’s (2005) study would ask classmates for the meaning of words. However, unlike Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study, rote learning, such as rote-memorizing words and grammatical forms of the words in word lists, is still popular with Taiwanese students. Liu’s (2010) study involving 390 non-English majors from Beihai College of Beihang University also confirmed previous studies that one of the most used VLS among Chinese students was ‘guessing from context’. Other popularly used vocabulary learning strategies among the students in Liu’s study were the use of ‘bilingual dictionary’, ‘oral and written repetition’, ‘reading new word aloud’, and ‘asking teacher for a sentence that includes the new word’ (p. 160). The same study (Liu, 2010) showed that some of the least used vocabulary learning strategies were ‘asking classmates for the word meaning’, ‘analysing part of speech’, ‘asking teacher for Chinese translation’, ‘repeating article content that includes the new word learned’, ‘enhancing the memory of words by extensive reading’, ‘using English (monolingual) dictionary’, and ‘analysing affix and word root’ (p. 161).

These studies provide evidence that Chinese foreign language learners may use other strategies contrary to what has been commonly believed of Chinese learners’ strategy use,
and suggest that previous VLS studies may have misconceptions about Chinese learners’ high MS use and low SS use. Moreover, researchers doing L2 studies do not frequently research affective strategies and social strategies, and learners often do not pay attention to their own feelings and social relationships as part of the L2 learning process (Oxford, 1990; Shmais, 2003). Some researchers see social and affective strategies as one category - socio-affective strategies (Brown, 2000). In addition, Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study and Wharton’s (2000) study involved learners of higher learning, whereas Wu’s (2005) study involved a mixture of secondary and tertiary students. The current study is interested to investigate whether the strategy use of the participants, who are post senior high school learners preparing to go to a university in Australia, reflects those used by the Chinese foreign learners in the studies by Liu (2010), Wu (2005), Gu & Johnson (1996), or Wharton (2000).

2.7.1.3 Influence of Language Proficiency on VLS selection

It has been suggested that “language proficiency may play an even greater role in determining a vocabulary strategy’s effectiveness” than culture (Schmitt, 1997, p. 202). Higher level students, like successful learners, are found to use language-learning strategies of all kinds such as metacognitive, cognitive, compensation, memory, affective, and social strategies more often than the lower level students who apparently prefer using strategies involving memorization, management of feelings and learning (Griffith, 2003; Green and Oxford, 1995). Liu’s (2010) study also showed the influence of different academic levels on VLS use. The study revealed that students of a higher academic level had more self-learning and awareness than students from a lower academic level. The first group was perceived to focus on actual use while the latter group learned step by step mechanically. Hence, Wharton’s (2000) and Gu and Johnson’s (1996) participants’ strategy selection may actually reflect that of higher academic or higher language proficiency level learners, demonstrating that the
influence of learner’s academic and language proficiency level could be greater than cultural influence, thus confirming Schmitt’s observation. The study by Liu (2010) showed that besides the influence of language proficiency levels on VLS use, gender could also play a part on the choice of VLS use. Liu’s study revealed that the female students “use more strategies”, “willing to pay more time to learning’ and ‘put them into practice”, than the male students (p. 161).

As different research approaches could lead to different outcomes, a more in-depth investigation that combines various information-elicitation techniques is required to contribute further to the findings of previous studies. This is what the current study aims to do, that is, to offer a rich description of the ESL learner participants’ thinking process and the vocabulary learning strategies used when performing the vocabulary task. This study differs from other strategy studies by using a combination of information-elicitation techniques, such as interviews (Moir and Nation, 2002), surveys (Ahmed, 1989; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Schmitt 1997; Stoffer, 1996), and ‘think-alouds’ (Lawson and Hogben, 1996; Nassaji, 2003). The findings of the current study are based on both the participants’ report of their VLS use frequency in the questionnaire survey as well as the internalization of their vocabulary learning process as they thought aloud or discussed with their partner/s while performing the vocabulary task. Despite the shortcomings of the adapted think-aloud protocol to elicit information, such as learners’ difficulty in verbalizing their thoughts, or their performance being hampered by the awkwardness of verbalizing or the search for words to verbalize, it might provide us with a deeper insight of their thinking process which the questionnaire survey alone (such as Gu and Johnson, 1996) was unable to project. Interviews, observation and vocabulary notebook alone such as in Moir and Nation’s (2002) study depend greatly on verbal recalls and may be insufficient to capture the actual vocabulary learning experiences.
One of the goals of using the combination of different information-elicitation techniques in this research project is to provide a thicker and richer description of the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ in relation to participants’ vocabulary learning process and vocabulary learning strategies selection and use when performing the reading vocabulary task.

2.8 Vocabulary Strategy Instruction

Strategy instruction has an important role to play in developing more effective vocabulary skills. Research studies (e.g. Liu, 2010; Folse, 2004; Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Brown & Perry, 1991; Ahmed, 1989) have provided evidence that ‘good’ learners possess more strategies and use vocabulary-learning strategies more widely and more consistently than less successful vocabulary learners. Hence, there is a great need for learners to be provided with proper vocabulary learning strategy training to enhance their vocabulary learning. The main goal of strategy instruction is to help students become more active, more ‘self-directed, autonomous, and effective learners through the improved use of language learning strategies’ (Oxford & Leaver, in Oxford, 1996, p. 227). Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) recommended exposing the learners to a variety of vocabulary learning strategies to help them decide which ones are more appropriate for their personal vocabulary learning.

2.8.1 Benefits of Vocabulary Strategy Instruction

As learners have different learning styles, it is useful to expose them to several task-appropriate strategies as well as a combination of language-learning strategies associated with successful language learners. Kalahaji (2012, p. 144) suggests that it is necessary to ‘help learners become aware of their own styles, preferences and habits’ and get them to practise both effective and good strategies as well as to take charge of their own learning. The interview in the current study provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on the
effectiveness of their vocabulary learning strategies used. Proper strategy instruction could help students be better learners in several ways, such as training them to identify and improve the strategies they are using, besides learning those strategies that are helpful for tasks at hand. Introducing learners to a variety of alternative vocabulary learning strategies and getting them to practice them are considered effective ways to achieve more effective independent vocabulary learning. For instance, Zhao’s (2009) participants who rarely used metacognitive strategies showed a big and significant progress after receiving the metacognitive strategy training which helped enhance their MS use on the planning, monitoring, evaluating without exception. The MS training was seen to have facilitated the participants’ vocabulary learning. However, Folse (2004) cautioned that vocabulary strategy training is only secondary and not be regarded a substitute for knowing vocabulary. Nonetheless, teachers need to find out more about their learners’ VLS preferences and VLS use before appropriate VLS instruction can be implemented.

2.9 Summary and Conclusion

Until the 1990s, VLS research related to adult ESL learners was a relatively new area of study compared to those related to child learners and language learning, hence, more in-depth studies are required to have a greater understanding of adult ESL learners’ vocabulary learning as well as their VLS use and preferences. The issues discussed in this section provide the basis and framework for the proposed study. First, vocabulary learning plays a crucial role in language learning and literacy, and it is closely linked to reading and reading comprehension. More reading will lead to a larger vocabulary size which in turn can result in better reading comprehension. The reverse applies to poor readers with limited vocabulary acquisition. Second, vocabulary learning difficulties could impede a learner’s vocabulary learning progress. Third, various factors, such as language learning culture, language
proficiency level, academic level and previous vocabulary learning could have some indirect influence on their VLS use and preference as well as language skill development. Fourth, the application of appropriate or effective vocabulary learning strategies can help increase vocabulary learning and language proficiency. Fifth, Schmitt identified fifty-nine items and grouped them into five categories. Schmitt further differentiated the Discovery strategies from the Consolidation strategies. Schmitt’s (1997) VLS taxonomy is the most appropriate to assess the participants’ VLS use in the current study. Sixth, Chinese learners were believed to show high preference for memorization, rote-learning strategies, metacognitive and metacognitive regulation strategies but low preference for social strategies. However, some studies dispel the common beliefs of Chinese learners’ as high MS users and low SS users. Seventh, successful or more effective vocabulary learners were observed to demonstrate control over self-learning, and use a combination of strategies and would generally reject rote-memorization and visual repetition strategies. Poor vocabulary learners were found to display low self-initiation, use fewer strategies and rely more on rote-memorization and visual repetition. Eighth, VLS instruction could help equip learners with more appropriate VLS to improve their vocabulary learning which may in turn increase reading comprehension and improve language proficiency. One pedagogical implication of strategy research studies is that before the implementation of any strategy instruction program, ESL instructors need to be more aware of their learners’ language learning culture and contextual factors that may be influencing their students’ VLS use. Learners’ personal choice of vocabulary learning strategies may also contribute to the degree of differences in vocabulary development among learners in the same class. While second language teachers are encouraged to expose learners to vocabulary learning strategies used by good learners, and to get them to use a variety of vocabulary learning strategies, they have to be aware of their learners’ cultural learning behaviour which may cause them to resist some alternative vocabulary learning strategies.
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research procedures used in this study. The first section provides the rationale for the case study research design and the subsequent sections provide the information about the selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, and the steps taken to increase reliability and validity of the study.

3.1 Rationale for the Case Study Approach

This study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to explore twenty Chinese ESL learners’ English vocabulary learning difficulties and their vocabulary strategy use. The qualitative methods consisted of a semi-structured interview and a reading vocabulary task, and the quantitative data were collected through a vocabulary learning strategy (VLS) questionnaire survey. An adaptation of the qualitative and inductive case study approach was employed in this investigation as ‘it helps investigators gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning while the interest lies in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a particular factor, and in discovery rather than conformation or generalization’ (Jong, 2007, p. 36; Merriam, 1998). This qualitative case study design helped the researcher to focus on the in-depth, long-term interaction with the twenty young adult Chinese ESL participants, and learn more about their English vocabulary learning difficulties, their VLS use to learn new English vocabulary and how they use the vocabulary learning strategies to guess or deduce the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary during the reading vocabulary task.

Though a case study design may not allow researchers to make generalizations for the rest of the population the sample belongs to, this approach offers great research insights into the
thinking process that influences the participants’ vocabulary learning strategy selection, and allows for holistic and rich description of the participants’ vocabulary learning strategy use.

3.2 Participants

To explore in greater depth the issues raised in this study, a sample of twenty young adult Chinese ESL learners was used for two main reasons as discussed in the following section.

3.2.1 Rationale for the Case Study Approach and Sample Group

Firstly, the sole researcher was also the observer, interviewer, transcriber and translator. The process of selecting suitable participants (see section 3.2.3), building a good rapport with the participants, conducting interviews with each participant, translating and transcribing the audio recording of the participants’ interview responses and their think-alouds and oral discussion from Chinese to English would require a greater commitment of time than the time required to conduct a questionnaire survey with a large group. Secondly, it would be difficult to examine their VLS use in terms of learners’ thinking process quantitatively. Hence the case study approach was the most appropriate for this research study. Though the sample of twenty participants is too small a group to be representative of the young adult ESL learner population, the sample allows the researcher to provide thick descriptions of the participants’ vocabulary-learning difficulties, their vocabulary-learning behaviors and their VLS use. The ‘thick description’ makes possible ‘thick interpretations’ in which the researcher ‘has no privileged voice in the interpretations that are written’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 15). This could increase the objectivity and the depth of the study beyond the surface level, as well as provide a more descriptive and holistic analysis of participants’ actual vocabulary learning.

---

5 The researcher, a Singaporean Chinese, possessed a Master in English Language and G.C.E ‘A’ level Chinese as a Second Language. Her studies in the Institute of Education in Singapore included the module on English-Chinese translation. See Appendix 1, 1A.
process, instead of relying on only verbal reports such as the interview and the questionnaire survey.

3.2.2 Participants’ Background and English Proficiency Level

Twenty participants from a similar cultural background were selected in order to reduce the occurrence of differences that could have arisen due to cultural influence. Twenty post-senior high school Chinese ESL learners were personally approached and invited by the researcher to participate in the research study, which included the completion of a questionnaire survey, an interview and a reading vocabulary task. All of them had recently graduated from an Australian English language institute after achieving the ISLPR scores\(^6\) required to enrol into their program at QIBT\(^7\) or at an Australian university. The age of the twelve female and eight male participants ranged from nineteen years to early twenties. Thirteen of them were from mainland China, one from Macau, one from Hong Kong, and five were from Taiwan (see Appendix 2A, Figure 2A for more information on the participants’ background). Since the participants’ ESL proficiency level had already been measured by their institution, the study did not require the participants to take another ESL proficiency assessment. Their ISLPR score ranged from ISLPR 2.5 to 3. These participants were most appropriate for the study as they were able to communicate in at least the basic level English, and read a passage included in the reading vocabulary task set by the researcher for information elicitation and data collection purposes. Nonetheless, participants were allowed to use Mandarin, Cantonese or Hokkien/Taiwanese besides English during the interview and the reading vocabulary task performance. The researcher’s primary roles in the investigation were to administer the questionnaire survey, to conduct the interviews, and to sit in as a non-participatory observer.

\(^6\) The participants’ English Language Institute used ISLPR scores to assess their English Language Proficiency level, and these scores were their results at the end of the English language programme.

\(^7\) QIBT: Queensland International Business and Technology; ISLPR score requirement: 2.5.
during the participants’ reading vocabulary task performance. The researcher’s interaction with the participants during the vocabulary task performance was sometimes necessary when the participants encountered some problems or lapsed into silence in the midst of their think-aloud or discussion session. Other roles of the researcher included translating and transcribing the audio/video clips from Chinese to English.

3.2.3 Criteria for Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Though there was no specification of age, occupation or educational level of the participants, the sampling for this study was, in reality, restricted by certain specific requirements. One significant point about the participants in this study is that they were taught by the researcher before, and after their graduation from the English Language Institute, they were specifically invited by the researcher to participate in the research study based on the following five main criteria:

a. Participants are able to answer the questionnaire and interview questions in English or in one of the Chinese languages (Mandarin, Cantonese or Taiwanese/Hokkien).

b. They are Chinese (from China, Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan) and ESL learners in Australia.

c. They are recent graduates from an Australian English Language institute, before they enter an Australian university.

d. They have achieved an English language proficiency level of at least level 2+ (ISLPR scale).

e. They are willing and available to complete a questionnaire survey, attend an interview and perform a reading vocabulary task.

Other criteria would include a good rapport between the researcher and the participants, and the availability of time, and adaptability to the environment where the interview and
vocabulary task were conducted. Time and location constraints were two of the greatest obstacles in the research study. The participants were also required to answer the same interview questions online. The responses obtained in the online interview helped to increase the reliability and validity of the subsequent translation and transcription of the audio/video recording of the face-to-face interview. The first ten participants answered the online interview questions after the interview to allow them to include any information they had omitted during the interview. For the subsequent ten participants, the online interview questions were answered prior to the interview to help prepare them for the interview. One main reason for this change was that some participants after attending the interview would disregard the online interview questions, and move on to what could be more important to them (e.g., their university study and other personal commitments).

**Language requirement** is restricted to English and/or one of the three Chinese languages which are languages the researcher is familiar with. Communicating in a language that the participants were most proficient in could help to clarify their doubts and answer their queries that might arise during the questionnaire survey, interviews and think-aloud/discussion sessions. It could also help to increase the interaction between researcher and participants, and reduce unnecessary communication breakdown. Understanding the participants’ language also reduces the need for an interpreter or translator, especially when transcribing and translating the audio/video-recording of participants’ interview responses as well as their think-alouds and discussion. However, English was the primary language used by the researcher-interviewer during this research study, though the researcher would rephrase in the participants’ language whenever necessary.
**ESL proficiency requirement:** The ISLPR 2+ minimum ESL language proficiency requirement was to ensure that the participants would not find the questionnaire and the reading text too difficult to understand. Otherwise, it would appear to be more of a vocabulary and reading comprehension test than an investigation into the participants’ VLS use. Participants might end up being frustrated if they were to find too many unfamiliar English words in the text due to inadequate language and vocabulary acquisition.

**Culture requirement:** Learning strategy use is believed to be indirectly influenced by learner factors such as gender, culture, learning motivation, personality and other variables besides language proficiency level (Mayo & Lecumberri, 2003; Erhman & Oxford, 1995; Chamot & Kipper, 1989; Chamot and O’ Malley, 1984). Hence, participants from only one specific culture were invited to participate in this research study. Chinese subjects were chosen for this study due to the researcher’s familiarity with the Chinese culture and three Chinese languages (Mandarin, Cantonese and Hokkien/Taiwanese). The common language knowledge could help not only to reduce inhibition but also help increase communication and interaction between researcher and participants as well as among participants, a social situation that is important and essential in language learning. With less inhibition, the participants could be more active in their discussions.

### 3.3 Roles of the Researcher

As mentioned earlier, the sole researcher took on multiple roles in this research study: the interviewer, the administrator for the questionnaire survey, a non-participating observer.

---

8For the purpose of this study, the culture of participants and researcher are grouped under a common category, ‘Chinese culture’. The researcher, nonetheless, acknowledges that though the participants and researcher belong to the same ethnic group, ‘Chinese’ and appear to share the Chinese culture, there may be some differences in their learning environment and education system, that may affect their learning style and, in turn, their vocabulary learning strategy use, especially if they are from different countries, such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and others.
during the reading vocabulary task sessions, and the person in charge of the audio and video recordings during the interviews and the reading vocabulary task sessions, as well as the translator and transcriber of the interview and reading vocabulary task audio/video recordings. The researcher’s main role was only to elicit information and it was not the researcher’s role to agree or disagree with the information given by the participants, or to provide personal opinions on the issues presented in the interview. It was also not the researcher’s role to correct the participants when they gave the incorrect word meaning while performing the reading vocabulary task. The correct or accepted meanings of the eight vocabulary items in the reading vocabulary task were given only after the completion of the task. The good rapport between researcher and participants built prior to the research study helped to reduce inhibition during the interview as the participants felt comfortable with the researcher, especially when using their first language, Mandarin, to communicate with the researcher and their fellow participants (for those who worked in pairs/threes). (See Appendix 1A for more information on the researcher’s language background and qualifications.)

The researcher personally approached each participant when they graduated from the English Language Institute and explained what the research study was about and the three main components which they would be involved in should they gave their consent to participate in the research project. They were assured that confidentiality would be maintained both throughout their participation and after the completion of the thesis writing. Only their pseudonyms would be used in the thesis. The data collected was used by only the researcher for the purpose of the current research study and the information collected was not shared with other participants. The participants were given the freedom to decline the invitation to participate or opt out of the research study at any time without any fear of being penalized. Chinese ESL learners from various classes who graduated from the English Language Centre
when the current study was conducted were invited to participate in this study but only the data of these twenty participants in the study were found to be in the most complete form, that is, the completion of the questionnaire survey, the interview (face-to-face and online) and the vocabulary task session. A little gift was given by the researcher to every participant as a token of appreciation for their participation.

3.4 Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedure

This study is primarily qualitative but requires numerical data to support the research findings. Three main information elicitation techniques were used to collect naturalistic data and elicit information for this study – questionnaire, interview, pair/trio work, and an adaptation of the think-aloud protocols. The interview, and the reading vocabulary task discussion and think-aloud sessions were audio/video recorded. The audio data collected were subsequently transcribed and translated by the researcher. Schmitt’s (1997) vocabulary learning strategy taxonomy was adapted here to investigate the participants’ vocabulary learning strategy selection because of his taxonomy’s relevance to this study. The researcher was the main research instrument as mentioned in section 3.3. The combination of data collection methods aimed to provide a more holistic view of the participants than using only one data collection method. The triangulation of data collection methods could also help to increase the reliability and validity in the research inquiry as it “prevents the researcher from relying on initial impressions” and “helps correct observer’s biases” (Johnson, 1992, p. 90). The questionnaire survey was to elicit information about the participants’ VLS use. However, the questionnaire was structured and might have restricted their responses, hence the interview was included to elicit more information than their questionnaire responses could provide. The interview elicited information about the participants’ language learning difficulties and their previous vocabulary learning experience in their homeland. It also
provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their English vocabulary learning and VLS use, and to recommend vocabulary learning activities which they felt would lead to more effective vocabulary learning. Since the questionnaire survey and the interview responses were self-reported responses, and could be more subjective than objective, the vocabulary task would provide a more objective picture of the participants’ actual selection of vocabulary learning strategies used to derive the meaning of an unfamiliar English word. Hence, the combination of data-collection methods used could help provide a deeper understanding of participants’ vocabulary-learning behaviour and their VLS use from different perspectives. A more detailed description of each data collection method used in this qualitative inquiry is presented in the following sub-sections.

3.4.1 Structure of the Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) Questionnaire

At the initial stage, participants provided their responses to a Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) Questionnaire, in either English or Chinese (Appendix 2B and Appendix 2C). The questionnaire, formatted and drafted by the researcher in English, was used to elicit information on the type of vocabulary learning strategies they reported to use to learn more about unfamiliar English words they encountered. To increase the reliability, validity and accuracy of the bilingual (Chinese and English) questionnaire, the researcher enlisted the assistance of an EFL teacher in Taiwan to translate the English questionnaire into Chinese. This questionnaire survey was administered by the researcher and the questionnaire was completed at the participants’ own time. The completed questionnaire, which was an indication of their consent to participate in the research study, was returned to the researcher on their next meeting.
There are two parts to the VLS Questionnaire. Part 1 elicits information about their cultural and linguistic background, and Part 2, their selection of vocabulary learning strategies. There are fifty-eight vocabulary-learning strategies listed in part 2 of this questionnaire. Figure 7 summarizes the VLS Questionnaire format used in the current study to elicit information about the Chinese ESL participants’ VLS use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VLSs Adapted from</th>
<th>Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs)</th>
<th>No. of VLSs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Strategies</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Determination Strategies</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memory Strategies</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitive Strategies</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford’s SILL (1990)</td>
<td>Translation Strategy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total VLSs</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2 is based mainly on Schmitt’s (1997, pp. 207–208) five VLS categories (*number within brackets indicates the number of items in a particular category*): Metacognitive (12), Social (8), Determination (6), Memory (18) and Cognitive (8) strategies. In addition to Schmitt’s five above-mentioned VLS categories, the questionnaire also includes *five* Metacognitive Regulation strategies from Gu & Johnson’s (1996, pp. 674–675) study, and *one* Translation strategy from Oxford’s Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (1990).

The VLS questionnaire took about 30–40 minutes to answer. The highly structured questions in the questionnaires allowed the researcher to have “complete control over the questioning”, but they reduced the opportunity for respondents “to elaborate on the answers” (Oxford,
This shortcoming was rectified by the semi-structured interview conducted at a later date. The interview which took place some days after the completion of the questionnaire allowed the discussion of topics of interest that were excluded in the questionnaires. However, the resulting increased volume of more highly individualized data “could prevent the researcher from determining overall patterns” (Oxford, 1996, p.91). Despite these problems, this questionnaire survey method allowed participants to reflect on their vocabulary learning experience and served the purpose of this study by providing an insight into the participants’ VLS use.

3.4.2 Interviews

The interview was conducted some days after the completion of the Questionnaire survey, usually within one-two weeks, depending on the availability of time and place. Prior to the interview, the researcher provided a brief explanation of the research focus and clarified any doubts participants might have about the research study. The interview was subsequently audio/video-taped. The semi-structured interview lasted 30-40 minutes but “the duration and depth of the response were left largely to the respondents’ discretion” (Oxford, 1996, p. 91). The semi-structured interview questions (Appendix 3A) would focus on the following issues:

- most difficult and easiest areas in English language learning
- difficulties faced when communicating with native English speakers, and in expressing themselves in English
- importance of vocabulary learning
- previous vocabulary learning experience
- English vocabulary-learning difficulties
- effectiveness of their vocabulary learning strategies
- recommendation for more effective vocabulary learning in the classroom
The first ten participants were given the interview questions on the day of the interview. The interview questions were asked in English but, whenever required, clarification would be made in the Chinese language they were more proficient in. The same interview questions were emailed to them after the interview to give them an opportunity to review the questions and add or amend information that was given during the interview. This helps to increase the reliability and validity of the analysis of their interview responses. One disadvantage of emailing the interview questions after the interview was the difficulty of getting a prompt response from the participants. Hence, for the subsequent ten participants, the online interview questions were emailed to them prior to their interview. Besides allowing the researcher to receive the participants’ prompt response to the interview questions, it also allowed the participants to be more prepared for the interview. They were more interactive than the first group which was emailed the online interview questions after the interview. A sample of a participant’s response to the online interview questions is included in Appendix 3B. The main purpose of the interview was to elicit information to gain a deeper understanding of their English language learning difficulties especially in terms of vocabulary-learning, their strategies to overcome them and their strategies to learn the meaning of English words encountered in different contexts – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Information elicited from the different perspectives could help to provide a better overview of participants’ vocabulary learning behaviour and their VLS use.

3.4.3 Specific Reading Vocabulary Task and Think Alouds/Discussion

The participants were required to perform one reading vocabulary task, which would allow the researcher to observe the vocabulary learning strategies used to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary among the eight vocabulary items from a reading passage selected by the researcher, an experienced ESL instructor who was familiar with both the participants’
English language proficiency level and the course book their English language institute used for their level. A text, instead of a word-list, was used to provide a more meaningful context for the vocabulary learning task.

**a) Focus of Reading Vocabulary Task**

The main focus of the specific reading vocabulary task was on the vocabulary learning strategies used during reading, and how they arrived at their answers. It was neither a vocabulary test nor a measurement of their vocabulary size. The term, ‘reading vocabulary’, in this study refers to the vocabulary items in the reading passage given to the participants to perform the reading vocabulary task. The rationale for the focus on reading vocabulary is that the learners’ vocabulary learning process during reading is more easily observable than during speaking, listening and writing.

**b) Definition of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used in Vocabulary Task**

It is debatable whether some of the strategies used during the vocabulary task performance were ‘learning’ or ‘guessing’ strategies. Gu (2003) shows a close relationship between ‘guessing’ the word meaning and ‘incidental’ vocabulary learning. Some research studies suggest that second language learners are less effective guessers and less effective incidental learners of English vocabulary (Gu, 2003). In relation to the reading vocabulary task in this research study, guessing the word meaning requires the use of vocabulary learning strategies such as memory strategies (associating the word with its coordinates, connecting word to already known words, image word’s meaning, using keyword method, using semantic map and others), determination strategy (guessing from textual context in reading), and social strategies (learning by pair or group work, asking friend or teacher for meaning, paraphrase or synonym). Hence, the strategies used to guess the word meaning of eight vocabulary
items in the vocabulary reading task in this research studies are also referred to as ‘vocabulary learning strategies’.

c) Selection of Reading Text

To ensure that the reading text used in the research study was appropriate for the participants’ English Language proficiency level, the short text for the vocabulary task was extracted from a reading passage from *New Cutting Edge: Upper Intermediate* (Cunningham & Moor, 2007, p. 118), an English course book that the participants used at their English language institute.

**Reading Passage for Vocabulary Task**

Until 1988, Cindy Jackson was just an ordinary-looking *farm girl* from Ohio in the United States. Then, on inheriting some money from her father, she decided to *re-invent* herself through cosmetic surgery. She spent $100,000 on *face-lifts*, *nose jobs*, *chin reductions*, *implants* and *liposuction* to remove fat from her knees, thighs and waistline. “I wanted to be Barbie,” says the forty-eight year old. ‘Now I am.’ She now runs a business in London advising other people on cosmetic surgery. She has written two books, and has made a video about her life and *transformation*.

“Twenty years ago, I didn't exist,” she says. “Now life is more than I ever dreamed it would be. But I have worked very hard for everything. Having said that, I’m not interested in *designer clothes* – with the right face and body you can look good in anything. I live very *modestly*.” I have a *flat* in London, a second-hand *Mercedes* and three adorable *cats*. I value my friends and family far above material things. Anyone who criticizes my choices probably has too much time on their hands and not nearly enough fulfillment in their own personal lives.

*Source: New Cutting Edge: Upper Intermediate* (Cunningham & Moor, 2007, p. 118)

The selection of the text *(above)* and the following eight researcher-selected words for the vocabulary task were based on the researcher’s ESL teaching experience and her perception of the participants’ world knowledge and language experience. The words selected were ‘*farm girl*’, ‘*re-invent*’, ‘*face-lifts*’, ‘*implants*’, ‘*liposuction*’, ‘*transformation*’, ‘*designer clothes*’, and ‘*modestly*’. As the vocabulary knowledge of the twenty participants is varied,
the unpredictable outcome of the answers given would be one of the great challenges of this inductive research study.

d) Think-Alouds

The researcher adapted the think-alouds to observe the thinking process behind participants’ VLS use during the reading vocabulary task performance. Four participants who opted to perform the vocabulary task individually were to think aloud as they tried to deduce the meaning of the eight selected words, while the other sixteen worked together in pairs and threes to deduce the meanings of unfamiliar English words. The think-aloud protocols required the learners to articulate their thinking process as they selected strategies to deduce the meaning of the vocabulary item. In recent years, strategy identification and classification were found to be data-driven through think-aloud protocol analysis (Chamot, 2004; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999). Learners were observed to give accurate think-aloud data, and could identify and verbalize their strategies, but they also “frequently offered less accurate retrospective thoughts” and “teachers’ assumption about their students’ strategies were often wrong” (Oxford & Crookall, 1989, p. 408). One strategy recommended to rectify this problem was to audio/video record the session for the purpose of playback when in doubt. During the think-aloud procedure, participants sometimes might not be able to verbalize their thoughts due to language limitation, inhibition, nervousness or the inability to link their thoughts to their actions at the moment. Trying to think of what to say while performing the vocabulary tasks might actually hamper both thinking process and task performance. At this juncture, it is important to specify that it is not the purpose of this study to assess their reading comprehension level, reading ability, or their pronunciation of the target words. Hence, allowing the participants to use the language (such as Mandarin, Cantonese,
Hokkien/Taiwanese) they are more fluent in could help to rectify these shortcomings. The researcher became the prompter when the participant fell silent during the thinking process.

**e) Oral Discussion in Pairs/Threes**

Discussion was another strategy used in the current study to gain a greater insight into the participants’ VLS use during the reading vocabulary task performance. Ten participants opted to work in pairs and six participants worked in threes. Group work has been found to be beneficial for learning or practicing vocabulary as “it promotes active processing of information and cross modeling/imitation” (Schmitt, 1997, p. 210). While the use of think-aloud protocols is very useful to gain an insight of an individual’s thought process when performing the vocabulary task alone, the use of group discussion has an added advantage over think-alouds. Besides gaining an insight into the participants’ thinking process as they work together to deduce the meaning/s of unfamiliar English words, the researcher could also observe participants’ use of social strategies⁹ to interact with one another, eliciting information by asking questions, or expressing agreement/disagreement, and providing information required by their partner/s. Social strategies are techniques learners could employ to ask someone who may know the meaning, or they could be asked to “give help in a variety of ways” (Schmitt, 1997, 210), such as giving the L1 (first language) translation, a synonym or a paraphrase.

### 3.5 Differences Between This Study and Previous Studies

There are some differences between this study and some other VLS studies. Figure 8 summarizes some differences between this study and other VLS studies. For instance, Moir

---

⁹ The findings of the participants’ SS use may provide the researcher with a better understanding when social strategies are used, or whether there are any grounds for believing that Chinese learners were low SS users.
& Nation’s (2002) findings, which was based on their learners’ self-report and retrospection, have provided useful information on the effectiveness of learners’ VLS choice on their depth of vocabulary knowledge. The current study went a step further by adapting the think-aloud protocols which gave an insight into their thinking process and their approach adopted to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary in the reading vocabulary task, in addition to the learners’ self-report in the interview and a questionnaire survey. Another difference is between the study of Gu and Johnson (1996) and the current study. Though the subjects in both studies are Chinese and have learned English as a foreign language (EFL) in their home country, the participants in the current study were also learning ESL in Australia when the research project was conducted. Three other differences between Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study and this study are in terms of:

- sample size
- participants’ English language learning experience
- participants’ English language learning motivation

Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study involved eight hundred and fifty university students who had learnt English as a foreign language (EFL) for six years and needed to pass the College English Test Band 4, whereas the current study involved twenty Chinese ESL learners who were recent graduates from an Australian English language institute. The participants had achieved the English Language Proficiency scores required by QIBT or the Australia University they were enrolling in and this study was conducted before they commenced their tertiary studies. Given the differences between Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study and this study, the findings of this study, which focused more on finding richer data through the additional instruments used, could provide a deeper understanding of the thinking process that leads to the Chinese ESL learners’ use of certain specific vocabulary learning strategies. This
understanding could provide some significant contribution to the findings of their study and be a motivation for more in-depth VLS studies in the near future.

**Figure 8 Differences between This Study and Other Studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences between This study &amp; Other studies</th>
<th>This Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moir &amp; Nation’s (2002) findings</strong> - based on learners’ self-report and retrospection</td>
<td>This study went a step further by using the think-aloud protocol analysis in addition to the use of other information elicitation techniques such as an interview and a questionnaire survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study:</strong> - Chinese EFL learners in China - sample size – 850 - learning motivation – to pass English exams in the university - information elicitation technique – Questionnaire survey</td>
<td>- Chinese ESL learners in Australia - sample size – 20 - learning motivation - to attain the required English Proficiency level to enroll in an Australian university - information elicitation techniques – interview and vocabulary task &amp; Questionnaire survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lawson &amp; Hogben’s (1996)</strong> - vocabulary tasks - based on sentences containing the target words - might be lacking in authenticity.</td>
<td>- to add a greater meaning and authenticity to the vocabulary task - a reading passage from their English Language course book was used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most VLS studies focus on individual responses and individual perception</td>
<td>- this study encouraged participants to work in pairs and in threes while performing the vocabulary task to provide an opportunity for the researcher to observe the interaction and social strategy used during the think-aloud protocols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most VLS studies focus on the ‘what’: e.g. What vocabulary learning strategies do learners use?</td>
<td>- explores the ‘why’ and ‘how’ besides the ‘what’: ‘What’ are these ESL learners’ English vocabulary learning difficulties? ‘What’ are their VLS preferences? ‘Why’ do learners select certain VLS? ‘How’ do they deduce the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third difference is in terms of vocabulary tasks. The *vocabulary tasks* in Lawson and Hogben’s (1996) study were based on sentences containing the target words whereas the current study used a reading passage in the reading vocabulary task to add a greater meaning and authenticity to the vocabulary task. To ensure that the task was appropriate for their language proficiency level, the reading passage was selected from the English language coursebook used by the participants’ English Language Centre’s Academic English Program.
Like Moir and Nation’s (2002) study, this study is more concerned with learners’ depth of vocabulary knowledge than their breadth of vocabulary knowledge (Gu and Johnson, 1996).

While most VLS studies focus on individual responses and individual perception, the current study also encouraged participants to work in pairs and in threes while performing the reading vocabulary task to provide an opportunity for the researcher to observe their verbal interaction and social strategies used during their discussion session.

3.6 Time Frame and Procedure

It took about a year to collect the data that is used in this study. The number of participants increased from the original recommended target of eight participants to twenty participants in order to provide a more holistic description and clearer picture of Chinese ESL learners’ VLS use. There was a time-lapse between participants (or cases) due to various factors such as the restrictions and constraints imposed by the specific purposive sampling criteria, ethical protocol, as well as the availability of suitable participants, finding a convenient time for both participant/s and researcher (who was also working irregular hours), as well as looking for an appropriate location to conduct and audio/video the interviews.

a) Ethical Clearance

Ethical clearance was obtained through Griffith University in 2008 (Appendix 1B, GU Ref No: EPS/31/07/HREC) and extended in 2009. The participants indicated their agreement to participate in the research study by filling in the English or bilingual (English/Chinese) consent form (Appendix 1C and 1D). As required by the ethical protocols, the participants were personally briefed by the researcher about the research objectives and aims, the participants’ roles, and they were given the options to opt out of the research project at any time without questions asked or penalty imposed. Contact particulars of researcher,
supervisors and counselors were given to participants. All the interview and vocabulary task sessions were audio recorded. Video recording was done only whenever permitted, such as in a private room.

b) **Data collection:** Data collection for each participant (or case) began with the questionnaire survey which was completed at either on or off campus. This was followed by an interview and a vocabulary task session at a later date. There would be an audio/video recording of the interview to elicit information about the participant’s personal profile, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, vocabulary-learning difficulties and learning strategies used to learn vocabulary. Following that was the audio/video recording of the think-aloud/discussion during the vocabulary task session. Additional data collected included their responses to the written interview questions online.

c) **Analysis Procedure:** The collected data were translated and transcribed by the researcher. The data were analyzed holistically and inductively while taking the participants’ perspectives into account. Preliminary analysis began during data collection and was ongoing throughout the study. Data analysis took into consideration the emergent patterns, issues, or themes related to the research questions of this study.

3.7 **Summary & Conclusion**

The qualitative and inductive case study design was used to conduct this exploratory investigation as it allows the researcher to make ongoing modification and reorientation of study questions\(^\text{10}\) to gain understanding of issues (Johnson, 1992, p. 77) related to the participants’ VLS use English vocabulary learning. A combination of various research techniques such as a questionnaire survey, an interview and think-aloud protocols were used

\(^\text{10}\) Modification and reorientation of study questions were ongoing throughout the research project and during the writing process.
to triangulate the data-collection and increase this investigation’s reliability and validity of the investigation. An alternative to the individual’ think-alouds for those who worked in pairs and threes was the discussion strategy which allowed the researcher to also observe the participants’ social strategy use. The interview was used to elicit information on their previous vocabulary learning experience in their home country, their vocabulary learning difficulties and their VLS use. The questionnaire was used to find out more about the selection of vocabulary strategies used to learn new English vocabulary. The reading vocabulary task provided the opportunity for researcher to observe the participants’ actual VLS and SS use to work out the word meaning/s of unfamiliar vocabulary items and the thought process behind the VLS use. The online interview questions provided participants with the opportunity and time to reflect more deeply on their vocabulary learning experience and their VLS use, thus increasing the validity and reliability of the interview.

The sample of twenty ESL learners in the current study may be small when compared to Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study. However, the qualitative and inductive approach using a combination of information elicitation techniques may help to provide a better understanding of Chinese ESL learners’ vocabulary learning process and difficulties, than a large-scale quantitative research that relies on only questionnaire surveys which may be insufficient to observe and analyze the actual thinking process during vocabulary learning. Though the findings are applicable only to these twenty ESL participants and cannot be used to make generalizations about other ESL learners, they could still offer valuable “insights that can be constructed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research” (Merriam, 1988, p. 32) of vocabulary learning. This qualitative case study could contribute significantly to previous and future VLS studies, in terms of its rich description of the learners’ thought
process behind their VLS use when working out the word meaning/s of unfamiliar English vocabulary.

The findings may also provide useful in-depth information about the effectiveness of rote memorization, and the indirect influence of the learners’ previous EFL vocabulary learning experience in their home country on their VLS use as well as the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language skill development. The increased knowledge obtained from this study might help raise a cross-cultural awareness in the ESL teachers to enable them to help learners develop more appropriate vocabulary learning strategies to achieve more effective vocabulary learning, which in turn may result in more successful language learning, especially for older ESL learners who are interested to study in a university in an English speaking country such as Australia.
Follow-up  There are three parts to the following analysis of the research data:

Chapter 4:  Participant Interviews
Chapter 5:  Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) Questionnaire Survey
Chapter 6:  Reading Vocabulary Task

Chapter 4 provides a qualitative analysis of the participants’ self-reported English language learning and vocabulary learning difficulties, their previous vocabulary learning experience, and their recommendation of vocabulary activities for more effective English vocabulary learning in the classroom. From the interview response data, the study seeks to investigate whether there is a link between their English vocabulary knowledge and their English language learning difficulties. Secondly, the interview provides a greater self-awareness for learners to reflect on the effectiveness of their vocabulary learning as well as their vocabulary learning strategy use. Thirdly, their recommendation of vocabulary activities will provide a greater insight about their vocabulary learning strategy preference.

Chapter 5 provides a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis of the participants’ self-reported vocabulary learning strategy (VLS) use frequency in terms of seven main VLS categories and fifty-eight vocabulary learning strategies – Metacognitive Regulation, Metacognitive, Social, Determination, Memory, Cognitive, and Translation strategies. The questionnaire survey seeks to find out which of the fifty-eight vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) were reported more frequently to be used by these twenty Chinese ESL learners. The greater awareness of their VLS use would be a useful guide for ESL instructors to plan their vocabulary strategy instruction more effectively, while focusing on essential vocabulary learning strategies which the learners have avoided using.
Chapter 6 provides a qualitative analysis of the participants’ actual use of Vocabulary learning strategies to perform a reading vocabulary task. Their think-alouds or discussion/verbal interaction with their partner/s or researcher-observer would provide a deeper insight into the thinking process behind their VLS use to guess or deduce the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary items in the reading vocabulary task. The findings could provide a better understanding of these twenty Chinese ESL learners’ VLS use.
4. PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

4.1 Analysis of Participants’ Interview Responses

Previous research studies have shown that vocabulary learning is an important part of language learning and there is a close relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language learning. The study of Moir and Nation (2002) suggests that learners’ previous vocabulary learning experience could have an indirect influence on their L2 learning and vocabulary learning. Questionnaire survey alone could not show us the participants’ difficulties in language learning, vocabulary learning or language use. Hence, the interview provided the participants with the opportunity to share some information about their previous English language/vocabulary learning in their home country, their perception of the effectiveness of their English vocabulary learning strategies, especially that of rote memorization, and what they would consider as the most/least interesting vocabulary games and activities. Their recommendation of vocabulary games and activities that are interesting to them could indirectly reflect their vocabulary learning strategy preferences.

The following is an analysis of the interview responses collected from twenty Chinese young adult ESL learners in Australia. The primary aim of the face-to-face interview, which consists of fifteen questions (refer to Appendix 3A), was to elicit more information on the following issues from the participants’ perspective:

- relationship between their English vocabulary knowledge and their English language skill development
- relationship between their previous English language experience and vocabulary learning
- effectiveness of rote memorization
- participants’ recommendation of vocabulary games and activities
The main objectives of the interview are to:

a) provide information which could not be obtained from either the questionnaire survey or the vocabulary task;

b) gain a greater understanding of their vocabulary learning difficulties;

c) investigate how their previous vocabulary learning experiences
   i. affect their ESL vocabulary learning in Australia;
   ii. influence their vocabulary learning strategy selection

d) have a greater awareness of their vocabulary learning needs

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the interview questions were emailed to the participants to obtain a more accurate perspective of their viewpoints and to increase the reliability and validity of the interview. The interview response data collected are a compilation of responses from both the face-to-face interview and the online interview questions. The participants were allowed to use English, Mandarin, Cantonese or Hokkien/Taiwanese to respond to the interview questions. The interview was audio/video recorded. Only information related to the interview questions was transcribed and translated. A sample of a participant’s written responses to the online interview questions and an extract from a participants’ translated transcript are given in Appendix 3B and Appendix 3D respectively.

4.2 Relationship between Vocabulary Knowledge and Language Skill Development

In recent years, there has been a greater awareness of the importance of vocabulary learning and vocabulary development in literacy and language learning, and vocabulary knowledge is regarded as ‘the key to understanding both spoken and written language’ (Johnson and Pearson, 1984, p. 1). A rich vocabulary could help learners to listen, speak, read and write
more adequately (Nation, 1994). The participants’ interview responses to Interview Question 6 (*How important is vocabulary learning to you?*) show that they were well aware of the importance of vocabulary learning and the crucial role vocabulary learning plays in their English language learning. All the participants regarded vocabulary learning as not only important to language learning but also as one of the most basic and fundamental foundations in language learning. To the participants, vocabulary learning is ‘learning to write and spell the words’, and ‘learning more about the words, their meaning, how they are used and the environment where one can use the words’ (words within quotation marks are quotes from their interview responses). However, understanding what vocabulary learning is and being aware of the importance of vocabulary learning in language skill development do not bring about an increase of vocabulary knowledge or vocabulary acquisition, which has been identified as the greatest source of many second language learners’ problems. Vocabulary learnt will not be retained, stored or retrieved effectively for the future unless the word concepts are integrated into meaningfulness (Allen, 1999, p. 13) The analysis of the participants’ responses to Interview Questions 1 and 2 which elicit information about the participants’ most difficult and easiest areas in ESL learning suggests a possible link between their English vocabulary knowledge and their English language skill development. (Interview Questions 1 and 2 respectively: *Which, do you think, is the most difficult area in learning English? Which, do you find, is the easiest?*)

4.2.1 Participants’ Most Difficult English Language Learning Areas

Figure 9, which illustrates the participants’ most difficult English language learning areas, indicates that *Listening* and *Writing* were the most difficult English language learning areas for more participants than the other language learning areas.
Listening was the most difficult in ESL learning for six of the participants (Jo, Yun, Hao, Ping, Mark & Jing), and ‘Writing’ for another six participants (Tian, Zhen, Jan, Jake, Wen & Dale). Three participants (Ed, Gail & Luke) found Speaking the most difficult ESL skill to master. Only one participant, Ming, claimed that Reading was the most difficult ESL learning skill. For the remaining four participants, the most difficult learning skill was Vocabulary Learning for Hua and Lin, Spelling for Ann and Grammar and Use of Words for Ce.

4.2.1.1 Main Reasons Given for English Listening Difficulties

Six participants (Jo, Yun, Hao, Ping, Mark & Jing) cited ‘Listening’ as the most difficult language area in their ESL learning. Two most frequently mentioned reasons for their English language listening difficulties were:

- the English\textsuperscript{11} speakers’ speaking pace was too fast for them
- they were unable to understand what the English speakers and English teachers were saying due to their limited vocabulary and inadequate word use knowledge

\textsuperscript{11} English speakers refer to their ESL instructors, English native speakers and non-English natives who speak English very fluently.
All, except Dale, found the English speakers’ pace of speaking too fast for them and they had some difficulties catching the words, especially linking words, polysemous words and words with weak forms. In addition, when they missed the key words, they were ‘too embarrassed’ to ask the speakers to repeat themselves. They were also unable to understand the English speakers because they did not understand and/or were unfamiliar with the words, colloquialism or idiomatic expressions used. They might be familiar with the vocabulary used but unfamiliar with the contexts or the parts of speech the vocabulary was used by the speakers (e.g. in the vocabulary task, they have difficulty deducing the word meaning when the word ‘designer’ was used as an adjective in ‘designer clothes’ instead of the familiar noun form).

Other reasons given were that there were ‘too many words to learn and remember’\textsuperscript{12}, and they had ‘difficulties with especially multi-meaning words’. Some related their listening difficulties to their ‘limited vocabulary’. One participant, Yun, also linked her English language listening difficulties to both her speaking and vocabulary learning problems. Dale gave his main reason for his English listening difficulties as the insufficient English listening practices when learning EFL in his home country, China. One other reason given for their English listening difficulties was that they were not used to the speakers’ accent and/or pronunciation, which Yun, Hao and Jing found to be different from those used in their home country. Yun realized that it was too difficult for her to learn to pronounce words accurately due to the diversity in English speakers’ accent and pronunciation in Australia and China. The main reasons for the participants’ ESL listening difficulties are summarized in Figure 9.1.

\textsuperscript{12} phrases within single quotation marks are quotes from their interview responses
Figure 9.1 Main Reasons for Participants’ English Listening Difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN REASONS FOR ENGLISH LISTENING DIFFICULTIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related to Speakers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native speaker’s accent &amp; English pronunciation – different from what they were familiar with in their home country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native speaker’s speaking pace – too fast for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related to Learners</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not used to Australian English pronunciation &amp; accent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn’t understand what the native speakers were saying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn’t retain what the native speakers were saying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed key words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related to Learners’ Vocabulary Knowledge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessed limited/insufficient English vocabulary to communicate with English native speakers confidently or fluently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were unfamiliar with the way certain words used by native speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were unfamiliar with Australian colloquialisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were unfamiliar with Australian idioms and idiomatic expressions used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had difficulties with polysemous words – knew only the more common meanings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9.1 shows that apart from those English language listening difficulties related to the speakers’ unfamiliar English accent and pronunciation and fast pace of speaking, which were beyond their control, their difficulties in understanding what the English speakers were related more to their vocabulary knowledge. Their unfamiliarity with colloquialism, idioms/idiomatic expressions and polysemous or multi-meaning words, as well as with the way certain vocabulary was used by the English native speakers reflects a limited range of English vocabulary and insufficient vocabulary knowledge of word meaning and word use in terms of their listening skill could have also affected their English speaking and their confidence to communicate with English native speakers fluently. One participant, Yun, linked her listening difficulties to her learning difficulties in other English language skills.
Below is an extract from Yun’s interview responses:

Yun: “I have difficulties in listening, speaking and vocabulary learning and I feel that the problems are linked together. I feel that there are too many words to learn and remember. I have difficulties, especially with multi-meaning words with profound meanings. Some vocabulary words learned are redundant as I don’t use them, so I don’t know how to use them or know which are important. So I have limited vocabulary. I can’t pronounce many words accurately because different people have different accents and pronunciation. I have no opportunity to express myself in English, so I have speaking problem. I am also not able to understand the English speakers. Once said, it is over and I am too embarrassed to ask them to repeat.”

4.2.1.2 Main Reasons Given for English Writing Difficulties

Writing was the most difficult ESL learning area for six participants (Tian, Zhen, Jan, Jake, Wen & Dale). The most frequently mentioned reason was related to ‘vocabulary use’. All but Wen said that they might know and understand certain words but they did not know how to use them in their writing, and they were also unsure of what words were appropriate to use in their writing. Unlike the others, Wen related her writing difficulties to the insufficient writing practice in her EFL lessons in China. Though the students were given some English articles to read, they did not have the opportunity to write such kind of articles, hence, she found writing the most difficult area in her English language learning.

The next two most frequently mentioned reasons for their English writing difficulties were related to their ‘vocabulary knowledge’ (i.e., limited/insufficient vocabulary) and ‘language use’. Four of the six participants (Tian, Zhen, Jan & Jake) felt that due to their insufficient English vocabulary range and limited vocabulary knowledge, they had difficulties in expressing themselves effectively in writing, especially in extensive essay writing. In addition, they observed that writing encompassed many other aspects such as the application of grammar, vocabulary and other structures which were very different from those in their Chinese language writing system. Due to the difference in writing style requirements in
Australia and China (as well as Taiwan, Macau and Hong Kong), the Chinese ESL learners could encounter writing difficulties and might have to relearn how to write from the basics all over again in Australia. Hence, they felt that English writing was the most difficult, compared to the other English language learning skills. Only one participant, Tian, attributed her limited vocabulary to her inadequate English vocabulary learning. Below are quotes from the participants’ interview responses:

Tian: Most difficult. Writing. Sometimes I understand what the word means but I don’t know how to use it in writing. Vocabulary learning is also difficult. Without appropriate vocabulary, I can’t write.

Zhen: …we had limited vocabulary, so it is difficult to express ourselves, especially in extensive writing. I feel that writing encompasses many aspects such as the application of grammar, vocabulary and other structures which are very different from those in the Chinese system. So I feel writing is the most difficult.

Jan: Agree with Zhen. I also don’t know how to use certain words.

Figure 9.2 summarizes the main reasons given by the participants for their English writing difficulties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Reasons for Participants’ ESL Writing Difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related to Learner’s Vocabulary Knowledge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient Vocabulary Knowledge and limited range of vocabulary – unable to express themselves adequately in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related to Word Use Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May understand what the words mean but unsure of how to use them in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related to Language Use Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure of how to use complex sentence structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure of the appropriate application of grammar, vocabulary and syntax. Application of these is different from their Chinese language writing system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient writing practice &amp; insufficient use of vocabulary in their home country – unable to express themselves adequately in writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 9.2 suggests a close link between writing difficulties and learners’ insufficient knowledge of vocabulary use, limited vocabulary knowledge as well as insufficient knowledge of language use. This could imply that vocabulary learning that focuses on vocabulary knowledge is not enough as vocabulary knowledge does not automatically lead to the knowledge of vocabulary use and language use, especially in writing. One participant, Tian, showed an awareness of a close link between vocabulary learning and vocabulary knowledge, as well as a close link between vocabulary knowledge and her writing ability. Below is an extract from Tian’s interview responses:

Tian: ...without vocabulary learning and sufficient vocabulary, I would not be able to write

### 4.2.1.3 Main Reasons Given for English Speaking Difficulties

*Speaking* was the most difficult area in ESL learning for three participants (Ed, Gail & Luke).

*Figure 9.3 Main Reasons For Participants’ ESL Speaking Difficulties*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Reasons for Participants’ ESL Speaking Difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related to Learner's Vocabulary Knowledge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient Vocabulary Knowledge and limited range of vocabulary – unable to express themselves adequately in speaking; and unable to understand the polysemous words, idiomatic expressions and colloquialism used by the English native speakers. Could only use the simplest English to complicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related to Word Use Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May understand what the words mean but unsure of how to use them in speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Related to Language Use Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure of how to use complex sentence structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure of the appropriate application of grammar, vocabulary and syntax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient speaking practice &amp; insufficient use of vocabulary in their home country – non-English speaking environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 9.3 illustrates the main reasons given by the participants for their English speaking difficulties, such as their limited vocabulary and the lack of a conducive English environment in their home country to provide them with adequate speaking practice. A consequence of the lack of speaking practice and a non-English speaking environment in their home country is inadequate word use knowledge to communicate fluently with native English speakers in Australia.

Ed linked his English speaking problem to his limited English vocabulary and vocabulary learning difficulties. Examples of vocabulary learning difficulties are that there are too many words to learn and remember, and not knowing how to use the word. His vocabulary learning difficulties had resulted in a limited range of vocabulary and he was unable to communicate with English native speakers fluently due to his inadequate English vocabulary knowledge. Another participant, Luke, said that they could only use the simplest English to express their main ideas due to their limited English vocabulary. Gail linked her English speaking difficulties to the insufficient speaking practice and the lack of a conducive English speaking environment when learning EFL in her home country. Here, it shows the important role that learners’ vocabulary learning and possessing an adequate range of vocabulary play in their English speaking skill development.

4.2.1.4 Main Reasons Given for Difficulties in English Reading, Vocabulary Learning, Spelling & Grammar

Vocabulary Learning was the most difficult ESL language learning area for two participants (Hua & Lin). Figure 9.4 shows why vocabulary learning was difficult for these two participants. Both felt that they were unable to understand the message if they did not know
the meaning of the words. They felt that were also unable to express themselves appropriately due to their insufficient English vocabulary range.

Hence, they memorized words and their meaning, feeling that the more English words they memorized, the better they could cope with the other English language skills. Hua and Lin apparently associated vocabulary learning with the memorization of English words. However, the great obstacle in using the memorization strategy for vocabulary learning is that there were too many words to learn and remember, and it is not enough to know only the word and its meanings without learning about the word use.

Ming was the only one to cite Reading as the most difficult ESL learning area. Figure 9.5 suggests a possible link between reading difficulties, limited vocabulary and vocabulary learning difficulties. Ming felt that if he did not understand the meaning of certain vocabulary
in a paragraph, he would not be able to understand the meaning of the text. In addition, his EFL lessons in his home country focused more on speaking and listening, whereas his ESL lessons in Australia focused more on reading and writing. Hence, he found ESL reading and writing more difficult for him than listening and speaking in Australia. Ming’s reading difficulties, as illustrated in Figure 9.5, show that the learner’s vocabulary range and vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in reading skill development.

Only one participant, Ann, cited *Spelling* as her most difficult ESL learning area, as she often got her spelling wrong even though she might know both the pronunciation and meaning of the word. She would spell a word the way she thought it was pronounced, but the guessed spelling was usually wrong. Ce was the only participant to cite *Learning Grammar and Word Use* as the most difficult area in her ESL learning. She felt that she could substitute one word with another word in Chinese easily but found it difficult to do the same thing in English. Ce’s word use difficulty could also be due to a limited vocabulary range and insufficient vocabulary knowledge and hence, she was unable to substitute one word for another.

### 4.2.1.5 Summary

From the perspective of the participants, vocabulary knowledge evidently plays a crucial role in their ESL or English language learning skill development. Their language learning difficulties are seen to be closely linked to their limited English vocabulary range and insufficient vocabulary knowledge as well as inadequate word use knowledge. Though only a few of the participants mentioned vocabulary learning as the most difficult English language learning area, many others mentioned vocabulary as a contributing factor to their difficulties in RWSL (*Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening*). Without a broad vocabulary range and an adequate vocabulary and word use knowledge, the participants found difficulties in understanding academic texts, and English native speakers who not only speak at a pace that
was too fast for them but also used words that were unfamiliar to them. Even when they were considered to have a ‘good’ vocabulary range, they were hampered by their lack of word use knowledge and were unable to express themselves appropriately in speech and in writing, demonstrating that knowledge of a word meaning is insufficient if there is no word use knowledge. They linked their insufficient vocabulary and word use knowledge to their previous EFL vocabulary learning in their home country.

4.2.2 Participants’ Easiest English Language Learning Areas

Figure 10 shows that Speaking was the easiest ESL learning skill for more participants than the other language skills. Six participants (Ming, Ping, Zhen, Jan, Jake & Ann) found Speaking easiest, compared to four participants (Jo, Yun, Hao, & Jing) who claimed Writing to be their easiest ESL learning skill. For the others, the easiest English language learning skill was Reading for four other participants (Ed, Gail, Luke & Wen), Listening for three participants (Jo, Lin, Dale), Vocabulary Learning for two participants (Ce & Mark) and Spelling for one participant (Tian).
(For more specific information on the participants’ most difficult & easiest English language learning areas, see Appendix 3E, Figures 3E.1 & 3E.2.)

4.2.2.1 *Main Reasons Why English Speaking is Easiest*

Figure 10.1 illustrates three main reasons why *Speaking* was the easiest the language learning skill for six of the participants (Ming, Ping, Zhen, Jan, Jake, Ann) – the EFL classroom focus on speaking, a conducive English speaking environment and most of all, ample opportunities to converse with English native speakers. For the Taiwanese students (Ming, Zhen and Jan), their EFL lessons in Taiwan focused more on speaking and provided a lot of opportunities for them to speak English with English native speakers, especially in their senior high school. One outcome of this was their high confidence level in speaking with native speakers. They claimed that they were not afraid of making mistakes and had no anxiety when speaking to a native speaker.

*Figure 10.1 Main Reasons Given Why English Speaking Is Easiest*
Ming said that he could communicate well in his IELTS speaking examinations, but not read or write as well as he did in the IELTS speaking test. Below is an extract from Ming’s interview responses:

Ming: Speaking, I think is the easiest because in Taiwan, we have a lot of chance to speak English to English speaking foreigners, so we can get a lot of practice. In Taiwan, English lessons, a lot of preparation planned for students focused more on speaking, then reading. In IELTS, can't read or write well but can speak well.

Like Ming, Zhen (Taiwanese) was not afraid to speak in English or to make grammatical and pronunciation mistakes. She felt that as long as one dares to speak, it is easy to be proficient in the spoken language. Speaking was the easiest for Jan as she could use the non-verbal language when she was lost for words. Both Zhen and Jan said that vocabulary learning was not difficult but it was the word use that was difficult. They found that only those words used in everyday situations were easier to remember and to use. They discovered that some words learned and used in Taiwan could not be used in the same way in Australia.

Though their EFL lessons in China focused more on Writing than Speaking, one of the Chinese participants, Jake, found speaking the easiest language learning area since he was speaking in English every day when he was in Australia and did not need to consider whether his grammar was correct or not in his verbal discourse. Another Chinese participant, Ping, who also found Speaking easier than the other language skills was not anxious during the English speaking tests which he treated as chatting sessions. Ann found Speaking even easier than writing, as she found it possible to converse, even if her range of English vocabulary words and phrases was limited. She believed that the more one speaks, the easier it would be.

Below are extracts from some of the mainland China participants’ interview responses:
Ping: Speaking is easier than the others...I treat speaking test as a chatting session, so I am not anxious during the speaking test.

Jake: Speaking, talk every day (in Australia). I don't need to think whether grammar is correct or not.

Ann: Speaking, even when my range of words and phrases is limited, it is possible to converse, the more you speak...speaking is the easiest, easier than writing.

4.2.2.2 Main Reasons why English Writing is Easiest

Writing was the easiest ESL learning area for four participants (Jo, Yun, Hao, & Jing).

Figure 10.2 Main Reasons Given Why English Writing Is Easiest
Figure 10.2 illustrates the three main reasons given by the participants for the reasons why English Writing was easiest to them – that is, their previous EFL focus on writing, ample opportunities for writing and a great interest in writing. The outcomes of their ample writing practice were the acquisition of the basic writing skills and a high confidence level. They were also unafraid to make mistakes. Jo’s reason was that she liked to write and was unafraid of writing in English. To Jo, as long as she had some key points for the content, she had the confidence to write. Her IELTS teacher taught the class what parts of speech, synonyms and main ideas were and Jo would look through them daily. Both Yun and Hao said that China focused more on writing practices, and the Writing component was given the most time among the four language skills and the Writing skills were also used more often than reading and listening in their tests and examinations.

This confirms what some studies revealed about the greater focus on reading and writing in EFL lessons in China (Zhan, 2010, p. 121). Yun found writing easier than reading which might include idioms which she did not understand. Writing was easiest to Jing as she had learnt some writing techniques before coming to Australia, and she felt that as long as she had the basic techniques, it was easy for her to write. Here again, there was no mention of their writing being hampered by limited or insufficient vocabulary and vocabulary knowledge. Below are extracts from two participants’ interview responses:

Yun: Writing, more practice in China. Easiest compared to the others.

Hao: Writing, China focuses more on writing practices, and given the most time, more than the other three skills.

### 4.2.2.3 Main Reasons Why English Reading is Easiest

Reading was the easiest ESL learning area for four participants (Ed, Gail, Luke & Wen). Figure 10.3 illustrates three main reasons given by these participants why Reading was
easiest to them – their EFL lessons that focused on simple Reading texts with not too many difficult words, their high interest in Reading, and lastly, their Reading skill was unaffected by other language learning skills (i.e., if they were weak in Listening, Speaking or Writing, it did not impede their Reading skill). Their Reading skill could be directly affected by their vocabulary knowledge but not by vocabulary learning. Ed suggested that one could learn new words from reading while Gail felt that it was not necessary to understand every word. Both Gail and Wen suggested that understanding the key-words and their meaning should be enough to help them understand the main ideas of the text. For Luke, Reading was the easiest English language learning area, especially in China where simple English texts were used, and not texts with many difficult words.

Figure 10.3  Main Reasons Given Why English Reading Is Easiest
4.2.2.4 Main Reasons why English Listening/Vocabulary Learning/Spelling - Easiest

Listening was the easiest ESL learning area for three participants (Hua, Lin, & Dale) while it was Vocabulary Learning for two participants (Ce, & Mark) and Spelling for one participant, Tian. Tian felt that as long as she knew the pronunciation, she could spell the word. In terms of listening, both Hua and Lin felt that if they understood the vocabulary used, there was no problem understanding what was being said. For Dale, his listening score in the IELTS examination was the highest among the four English language skills, providing the evidence that Listening was the easiest language learning skill for him. In terms of vocabulary learning, Ce claimed to have a good memory and was able to remember the meaning of the words easily. Mark felt that all he needed to do was to memorize English vocabulary and their meanings, even if this practice might appear meaningless to others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Learning Skills</th>
<th>Main Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>All that need to be done was to memorize the vocabulary and meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand vocabulary, understand message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Learning</td>
<td>Good memory, could remember meaning of words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All that needed to be done was to memorize the vocabulary and meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Could spell the word as long as she knew the pronunciation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10.4 illustrates the main reasons given by some participants why (a) Listening, (b) Vocabulary Learning and (c) Spelling are considered as the easiest area in their ESL learning. Ce, & Mark linked vocabulary learning with memorization and a good memory while Tian related spelling with pronunciation. Dale found listening easiest as he was better in this area.
than in other language learning skills. Hua and Lin linked listening to understanding the vocabulary. Indirectly, one needs to have some level of English vocabulary knowledge to understand what is being said.

4.2.3 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Previous Vocabulary Learning and their English Language Learning Difficulties

With reference to Research Question 1 of this study, ‘How did the twenty Chinese ESL learners’ previous English vocabulary learning experiences in their home country affect their English language skill development?’, the following discussion provides strong evidence that the participants’ previous vocabulary learning has significant influence on their language skill development, which was seen to be closely linked to their English vocabulary knowledge.

Figure 11 Relationships between English Language Learning Difficulties and Limited/Insufficient Vocabulary/Vocabulary Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship between Limited Vocabulary, Vocabulary Knowledge and Language Learning Difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Learning Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two main reasons which were frequently cited for the learning difficulties in the four main English language skills (i.e., Listening, Writing, Speaking and Reading) were the ‘lack of practice’ and their ‘insufficient vocabulary/limited vocabulary knowledge’. Figure 11
summarizes the relationship between the participants’ language learning difficulties and insufficient vocabulary/limited vocabulary knowledge discussed in previous sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2. Participants attributed their language learning difficulties to their limited vocabulary range and insufficient vocabulary knowledge. To illustrate the link between their limited vocabulary range/vocabulary knowledge and their listening/reading difficulties, they cited their unfamiliarity with colloquialisms, idioms, idiomatic expressions, technical terms and multi-meaning words as one of the factors for their difficulties in understanding the native speakers and academic texts. They attributed their speaking and writing difficulties to both their limited vocabulary knowledge and insufficient knowledge of vocabulary use. They were unsure of which words to use to express themselves appropriately in speech and in writing, or, in some cases, they knew the meanings of some of the words they wanted to use but were unsure of how to use them.

Figure 12 summarizes the relationship between vocabulary learning difficulties and insufficient vocabulary and limited vocabulary knowledge as presented in the previous sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for English Vocabulary Learning Difficulties</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Too many words to learn – difficult to remember all the words learnt</td>
<td>• Insufficient English Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Memorize list of words and their meaning/s mechanically &amp; without understanding</td>
<td>• Limited English Vocabulary Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Insufficient English Vocabulary Use &amp; Knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the participants linked their limited English vocabulary knowledge to their inadequate previous vocabulary learning experiences in their home country, which they associated with memorization of numerous words and their meanings mechanically and without understanding, but the main obstacle to memorizing vocabulary and word meaning is that there are too many words to learn or remember.

**Figure 13** Relationship between EFL Vocabulary Learning Experience and Vocabulary Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ EFL Vocabulary Learning Experience in Home Country</th>
<th>Vocabulary Knowledge Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EFL Vocabulary Learning Experience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Knowledge Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-centred,</td>
<td>Learners - dependent on teachers; Vocabulary learning – confined to specific requirements by their teachers, tests &amp; examinations. Vocabulary range/vocabulary knowledge - limited to what was taught in the classroom and what was necessary to pass their examinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook-based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test/examination based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More focus on words &amp; meanings than on word use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Chinese to explain difficult words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Teaching Strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Learning Strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memorization</td>
<td>Motivation – unmotivated in learning beyond what was required. Retention – short-term word retention – good enough to pass test &amp; examinations. Vocabulary – limited to their study requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetitive recitation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetitive writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Learning Difficulties</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Learning Difficulties</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many words to learn, memorise &amp; remember</td>
<td>Forget most of the words after tests/examinations. Inadequate vocabulary knowledge. Inadequate word use knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of conducive English vocabulary learning environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of word use practice in relation to other language learning skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13 shows the relationship between the participants’ vocabulary learning and their vocabulary knowledge. Their vocabulary learning was usually teacher-centred, textbook-based and examination oriented, suggesting that the vocabulary they learned was most likely limited to the specific requirements by their EFL teachers, EFL tests/examinations. The
implication of the common vocabulary learning strategies used in their home country such as the use of word-lists memorization, repetitive writing/reciting, was the learning of vocabulary by themselves contrary to their preference for learning vocabulary from/with the peers. These strategies could be demotivating for them to learn more vocabulary beyond their EFL classroom and textbooks. The consequences of having too many words to learn and remember, insufficient word use practice in terms of the four main language learning skills due to the non-English language environment would inevitably be a limited vocabulary range and insufficient vocabulary knowledge and inadequate word use knowledge.

This will be further discussed in greater details in later sections (see sections 4.3.3 and 4.4). Figures 12 and 13 suggest that there is a link between the participants’ English vocabulary learning, vocabulary knowledge and their English Language learning difficulties. This finding concurs with other studies (such as Basurto, 2004; Johnson and Pearson, 1984) that vocabulary acquisition leading to increased vocabulary knowledge is the key to understanding both spoken and written language, and vocabulary knowledge plays a critical role in reading comprehension development, and an expansive vocabulary range which results in better writing.

The participants’ interview responses about their most difficult and easiest language learning areas suggest that vocabulary knowledge as well as language skill proficiency, practice, interest, confidence, and understanding the message play an important role in their language learning skill development. Figure 11 provides a strong evidence of the close relationship between limited/insufficient English vocabulary/vocabulary knowledge and English language learning difficulties and the very crucial role vocabulary knowledge plays in language learning skill development.
Figure 14 summarizes why participants found certain English language learning areas easiest, and the most frequently mentioned reasons are EFL classroom focus, ample opportunities to practise, a conducive English language environment, acquisition of the basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills required, and a higher proficiency in that particular language skill than the other language skills. Vocabulary knowledge might not be directly mentioned but participants’ interview responses such as comments like, ‘as long as I understand the message’, ‘use simple texts with not many difficult’, ‘understand the vocabulary used’, ‘as long as I know what to write’ and ‘I have a good memory’, indirectly referred to their vocabulary knowledge. High interest in that particular skill was also mentioned and this concurs with the study of Blachowicz and Fisher (2004) which demonstrated that learners’ personal interests besides choice of vocabulary learning strategies are very powerful aides to vocabulary learning.

**Figure 14  Main Reasons Why Certain Language Learning Areas Are Easiest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Reasons Why Certain Language Learning Areas Are Easiest</th>
<th>Language Learning Experience</th>
<th>Language Skill Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous EFL lessons in home country</td>
<td>Placed more focus on these language learning areas</td>
<td>Acquired the basic skills/technics/vocabulary required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provided ample practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Created conducive environment for language learning skill development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Confidence Level</td>
<td>Not afraid to try</td>
<td>Able to use the basic skills acquired to communicate and express themselves confidently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not afraid of making mistakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Interest Level</td>
<td>Like using the skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Relationship between Learners’ Previous Vocabulary Learning Experience and Vocabulary Learning Strategy Preference

Moir & Nation’s (2002) study provided the evidence that a learner’s previous vocabulary learning experience could have some influence on their second language vocabulary learning and VLS use. The discussion of findings in the previous section suggests a close link between the participants’ previous vocabulary learning and language skill development. To understand more about the participants’ previous EFL vocabulary learning experiences in their home country better, we have to take a closer look at their EFL teachers’ vocabulary teaching strategies (VTSs) in their home country. Previous research studies (Cheng & Wang, 2004; Hu, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2002; Zhang & Adamson, 2007; Zhang & Adamson, 2007; Zhan, 2010, p.121) have provided strong evidence that Chinese middle schools teachers are not changing much in their EFL teaching and are typically employing traditional approaches such as the Grammar-Translation approach (Zhan, 2010), and focusing more on reading and writing than speaking and listening. Liu’s (2010) study demonstrated that current English vocabulary teaching methods in China are apparently still inadequate to developing students’ competence in their use of English, and many Chinese EFL learners are still memorizing new English words mechanically.

4.3.1 Use of Chinese & Chinese Translation to Teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

According to some participants, most of their EFL teachers in China and Taiwan were Chinese native speakers and they had a tendency to use Chinese and Chinese-English translation strategies to teach English, that is, they explained the meaning of ‘difficult’ English words in Chinese. Using translation is a technique that Grammar-Translation Method depended heavily on (Folse, 2004, p. 61). While this use of Chinese translation strategy
helped the learners understand the meaning of the English vocabulary there and then, they felt that translating from English to Chinese was not very effective as they might only know the word meanings but not how the words were used in different situations and contexts. Below are quotes from some of the participants’ interview responses to whether their EFL teacher used Chinese or English to teach:

Mark: Chinese or our native language (the Chinese used in his province).
Jo: We all speak in Chinese. It is easier to understand in Chinese than in English.
Jing: Chinese in secondary school (equivalent to Australian high school levels), and English in post-secondary (equivalent to Australian senior high school levels) but the teacher would explain in Chinese if we don't understand.
Jake: In those days, the teacher taught according to the textbook, the Secondary Two textbook, very rigid, or translate from Chinese to English, or translate from English to Chinese…teacher used mostly Chinese to teach English until senior high when English is used most of the time unless there were some particular details to understand, and that is when Chinese explanations were given. Most of the English language (EFL) teachers are native Chinese.

4.3.2 Use of Textbook, Grammar Focus and Explanation Of Meaning

Apparently most of their EFL teachers focused a great deal on grammar and would explain the meaning of the vocabulary the students were supposed to be learning. Some would teach according to the textbook, e.g., Jake’s Secondary Two (equivalent to Australian Year Eight level) EFL teacher was rather rigid in sticking to the textbook. According to some participants, such as Jo and Ed, their EFL teachers’ teaching style and focus were different from those of their ESL teachers in Australia, who focused more on writing than on grammar and vocabulary. The Taiwanese participants’ EFL teachers apparently focused more on vocabulary, parts of speech, word-meaning; and they might even tell their learners what to put in the blanks – e.g. the verb or the noun, or adjective…etc. Consequently, the Taiwanese learners might only be able to relate the words to that particular part of speech and not others. Below are some quotes from the participants’ interview responses on vocabulary teaching:
Ed: My high school EFL teachers focused on grammar, and provided explanation.

Jo: My high school EFL teachers in China focused on grammar, and gave explanation. They are different from my English teachers in Australia who focused on writing.

Ming: My EFL teacher pronounced the new word, gave the meaning and made a sentence that contained the word.

Dale: My EFL teacher taught new vocabulary words mainly from the textbook. In the textbook, there will be difficult words or a section on vocabulary building and the teacher will give a simple explanation of what the difficult words mean.

4.3.3 Requiring EFL Learners to Memorize a Vocabulary List

The EFL learners in China had to memorize a list of words and their meanings for their English language tests and examinations. For example, one of Jake’s EFL teachers required his class (forty-five to fifty-five pupils) to memorize a list of about thirty words per day during the twenty-five minute morning break and the night before. Similarly, Ann’s EFL teacher forced them to remember a list of words and gave them dictation at the end of every unit of study. The teacher would select twenty words or phrases from the word-lists (about fifty-seventy words and phrases) they had learned in relation to a particular unit. If they could not get at least sixteen of them correct, they would have to copy the whole text in that unit repeatedly (e.g., three times). This was rather similar to the way Ann learned Chinese vocabulary – dictation and copying texts. For Mark, it was a writing strategy used in primary school. His EFL teachers would give the meaning of new English words they were learning, and teach them how to read and use the words, and subsequently they had to remember the words. If they were to write the words down incorrectly, their punishment was to write the words down a few times repeatedly until they could remember them. They also had to memorize the words for their examination. Below are some quotes from three other participants’ interview responses on how they were taught vocabulary:

Jo: We memorized vocabulary for examinations. Though we passed the examinations, we are unable to use them in our daily routine. After some time, we tend to forget them.
Gail: The teacher would lead us to read the text or words a few times, explain the meaning, and get us to memorize the words. Two days later, we had to write them down from memory.
Hao: Every day, the teacher would give us homework such as memorizing the words....

Figure 15 summarizes the participants’ EFL teachers’ vocabulary teaching strategies, illustrating that the participants’ previous vocabulary learning in their home country was teacher-centred, textbook-based and their most common vocabulary learning strategies were rote memorization, repetitive writing/copying of vocabulary and learning from word-lists. Their ‘incentive’ for memorizing vocabulary and their meanings was ‘an exemption from being punished with more repetitive copying of vocabulary and their meanings’. Any errors made by a language learner are regarded as ‘deficiency in the learner’s capability’ and a demonstration that the learner has ‘not mastered the new knowledge’ (Zhan, 2010). The participants’ perception of the effectiveness of these strategies, especially rote memorization, is further discussed in the following section 4.4.
4.4 Role and Effectiveness of Rote Memorization

The following discusses the role and effectiveness of rote memorization to the participants in this study.

4.4.1 Role of Rote Memorization

Rote memorization, a learning process that involves repeating information until it is remembered verbatim, was one of the main vocabulary learning strategies used to pass their English language tests and examinations. Memory and memorization strategies are not synonymous with rote learning (Biggs, 1996; see also Appendix 2B of the current study, section E of Questionnaire, Memory Strategies). Rote memorization was only one of the memorization strategies the participants used to learn vocabulary. It was not unusual for them to memorize a list of words and their meanings for their EFL tests and examinations. These findings reinforce the findings of Wu’s (2005) and Liu’s (2010) studies that Taiwanese secondary and tertiary students and many Chinese students still practice rote learning such as memorizing words and grammatical forms of the words. All the participants related how they had to memorize a word list of twenty to a hundred words almost daily. Studies have shown that deriving word meanings and remembering the meanings are two different issues, and there is no guarantee that a learner will remember the word meanings after discovering the meanings through the written context, usage or explanation (Joe, Nation, & Newton, 2003). One of their EFL teachers’ strategies to ‘assess’ their English vocabulary knowledge was getting them to spell the words on the blackboard or their notebook or spell it verbally in class. If they did not achieve the desired number of correct words, ‘punishment’ in the form of repetitive writing was used to reinforce their English vocabulary learning. With rote memorization apparently playing a great role in the Chinese learners’ attempts to learn

---

13 “Memorization of vocabulary list” in vocabulary teaching practice is very common in China (Dai & Yang, 2011, p. 61).
English vocabulary, it is a great concern about how effective rote memorization was in their English vocabulary learning.

4.4.2 Participants’ Perception of the Effectiveness of Rote Memorization

Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study revealed that the 850 Chinese EFL learners in their study generally rejected rote-memorization, a strategy often associated with Chinese language learners. According to Gu and Johnson (1996), their Chinese participants see memorization as only a part of the learning process (p. 670). Most of the participants in the current study felt that the rote memorization strategies they used to learn new English vocabulary were rather ineffective as they might know the words and their meanings but they did not know how to use the learned words them. One participant, Luke, gave a Chinese analogy about memorizing the A-Z wordlist. Apparently, the A-words and the Z-words would be the most memorized words as most students would start from the beginning or the end of the list. However, most are unable to persist in memorizing the rest of the words and, moreover, there are so many words in the A-wordlist that it is impossible to complete memorizing the ‘A’ words. Hence, memorizing words and their meanings were apparently not very effective or productive to most of the participants, though some felt that memorizing the common verbs was useful to them. Extensive exposure to new words could help optimize word learning, but merely memorizing the words mechanically without understanding or without using the words in various contexts is found to be rather ineffective for long term word retention.

On the other hand, some participants, such as Jan and Zhen, think that rote memorization was effective though one of the most boring strategies to them, “it is still useful for learning new vocabulary words and their meanings – memorize, then be tested the next day, and in the

14 Gu, (http://www.nus.edu.sg/cecl/research/books/relt/vol9/no2/105to118_gu.pdf, p. 109) “…many spend years memorising vocabulary lists or even dictionary entries from A to Z. This results in some very low frequency words being remembered.”
weekly tests. In this way, we would do well in examinations…” Ann personally did not find rote memorization effective but acknowledged that “many friends memorize English words and phrases and they claim that it is effective, but to me, it is of no use.”

Though rote memorization of vocabulary did not prove to be an effective strategy for most of the participants, especially when in Australia, it was effective for short-term word retention especially before their English language examinations when they have to memorize 50 words per chapter. Some of their EFL teachers would keep testing repeatedly until they were ‘well prepared’ for the examinations. Jake elaborated on how they had to memorize sentences and questions, about three sentences a day, especially when he was in Secondary Two. Being obedient, he would comply with whatever the teacher asked his class to memorize. This ‘obedience’ seems to be a common trait in most of the participants’ English vocabulary learning and confirms what some studies have shown about the Chinese learners’ talking back to the parents or questioning authorities would be frowned on (refer to sub-section 2.6.1.1). Jake added that if they did not comply with their teacher’s instructions, they would be punished. This concurs with the perception that the teachers are regarded as sages or savants, and possessors of unique wisdom (Widdowson, 2003) as well as strict disciplinarians. However, despite his efforts, Jake found that he could no longer remember any of the sentences he had spent so much time memorizing. Hence, he felt that rote memorization was ineffective and unproductive since he was only memorizing words and meanings, and not learning more about the word use. On reflection, Jake felt that the second reason for the ineffectiveness of rote memorization was memorizing them without understanding. Nonetheless, he felt that it could be effective for short term memory retention. These feelings about rote memorization were common among most of the participants. For instance, Ann’s vocabulary learning was more often a memorizing task to her. Due to the
repetitive copying of words and phrases, and repetitive memorization, she was able to perform intuitively during the English Language examinations, such as filling the blanks with the correct words, and was able to guess the meaning and understand what she was reading. Jake and some other participants, such as Yun, Hao, and Ping, recommended that a conducive environment with ample opportunities to learn and use new vocabulary was important, such as school, mass media (such as newspaper, radio and TV) and daily conversation in English with others, would be more effective in enhancing vocabulary learning than the mere use of the rote memorization strategy.

4.4.3 Discussion of Findings on Rote Memorization and Its Effectiveness

The findings of the current study concur with Gu and Johnson’s (1996) findings that rote memorization was regarded as only a part of Chinese learners’ vocabulary learning process, and it was neither their personal VLS selection nor preference. In short, the use of rote memorization is a vocabulary learning strategy that was more enforced upon them by their EFL teachers than a voluntary VLS choice in their English vocabulary learning. Though they used rote memorization very frequently, rote memorization without understanding could only achieve short term effectiveness in helping them to pass their English vocabulary tests and examinations. Rote memorization could be relatively ineffective for most of the participants when it comes to word use or long term retention of the words and their meanings. On the other hand, some admitted that they would still use rote memorization out of habit, or if they want to remember new words and their meanings quickly even though they would also forget them quickly when they do not use these words. Most of them were aware that a conducive English learning environment, practice and word use would help enhance their English vocabulary learning more than mere use of the rote memorization strategy. These findings could contribute to other research studies on ESL learners’ VLS use, and help verify whether
Chinese students indeed learn prevalently by memorization which is one of the stereotypes about Asian as well as Chinese learners. This study neither implies that rote memorization is not beneficial nor suggests that it should be discarded. The pedagogical implication is to substitute or complement the rote memorization strategy with another more effective vocabulary learning strategy that increases word understanding and word use. The successful learners in the study by Lawson and Hogben (1996, p. 104) were observed not only to analyze and rehearse new words and their meaning/s, but also to elaborate the word-meaning complex and establish it within a suitable network of meaning.

4.5 Vocabulary Activities Participants Recommended to Enhance Vocabulary Learning

The following discussion relates to Research Question 4 of this study, ‘What activities did these Chinese ESL learners recommend to enhance vocabulary learning?’ Teacher-based activities as well as activities that integrate vocabulary learning with other language skills were highly recommended by the participants, who also suggested an increased use of interactive vocabulary games and activities. Most of them see learning to use ‘new’ or unfamiliar vocabulary during their interaction and communication as more effective than mechanical memorization and repetition which do not lead to word retention or understanding of word use. Based on the participants’ interview responses, the vocabulary activities which the participants considered as interesting/meaningful as well as those which they considered as uninteresting/boring are listed in the following sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 respectively.
4.5.1 **Interesting and Meaningful Vocabulary Activities**

The following is a compilation of vocabulary activities which were mentioned in the participants’ interview responses as interesting/meaningful. Interacting and communicating in English with English native speakers and others, interactive vocabulary games and activities, watching English movies/video clips with English subtitles, were the three most frequently recommended by the participants.

Contrary to the common belief that Chinese learners have a low preference for social strategy use and are reticent, the participants in the current study demonstrated a desire to move away from the totally teacher-centred classroom with their recommendation of more opportunities to practise speaking with English native speakers, and more interactive group vocabulary games and activities. Their recommendation of more group work was in agreement with Schmitt’s notion that group activities are beneficial for “studying and practicing vocabulary” (Schmitt, 1997, p.226). They felt that they not only could learn vocabulary from one another but also practise other language skills such as speaking and reading. One participant, Lin said, “Group discussion is still the best, discussing the meaning and use…able to remember the words better.” Vocabulary competitions and quizzes were recommended to stimulate learners’ brains. Relating vocabulary learnt to articles, jokes and daily life routines was another suggestion to help enhance vocabulary and word use knowledge. Ann recommended learning vocabulary from ‘manga’ (Japanese animation in English), which she found to be effective for herself. The use of computer software for vocabulary learning was also recommended. Perhaps, ESL instructors or ESL curriculum developers could consider these recommendations for more effective vocabulary learning. These vocabulary activities would greatly increase the learners’ use of social strategies, metacognitive strategies and memory strategies.
4.5.2 Uninteresting and Meaningless Vocabulary Activities

The following is a compilation of vocabulary activities which were considered as uninteresting/meaningless to the participants. The three vocabulary activities most unpopular among the participants were rote memorization, repetitive copying and recitation of words. These were strategies they had used for their EFL vocabulary learning in their home country and they found these strategies boring and unproductive for enhanced vocabulary learning.

Other uninteresting and meaningless vocabulary learning activities to the participants include repetitive reading/copying of words/spelling/recitation, making one sentence after another, recording words in their vocabulary notebook without understanding, repetitive reading of the same words, underlining/circling words without understanding, doing direct translation from English to Chinese, and using the dictionary to look up the meanings whenever they encountered an unfamiliar word. They preferred to look up the dictionary when they felt that the word was relevant, meaningful or interesting to them. Some preferred to record in their vocabulary notebook words that they were interested to learn and which they felt would be useful in their everyday life, instead of the list of words and their meanings given by their teachers. Perhaps, ESL instructors should try to avoid or reduce these mechanical and non-stimulating repetitive activities but instead, reinforce their learners’ vocabulary learning with more interactive and stimulating vocabulary activities as recommended in section 4.5.1.

4.6 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Interview Responses

The analysis of the participants’ interview responses provides a greater insight into the participants’ previous vocabulary and language learning experiences in their home country. This discussion will focus more on findings that relate to the participants’ vocabulary
learning and those that show the role their English vocabulary knowledge play in their English language learning skill development.

With reference to Research Question 1 of this study on how the learners’ previous English vocabulary learning experiences in their home country could affect their English language skill development, the findings from the participants’ interview responses suggest that their previous EFL vocabulary learning experiences in their home country have a strong influence on their ESL language skill development in Australia. The findings show that there is a close relationship between their language learning difficulties and their previous vocabulary learning as well as their vocabulary knowledge. Their vocabulary learning in their home country was greatly associated more with memorizing lists of words and their meanings than with understanding their meanings and how the words were used in different contexts. Hence, a great number of the participants linked vocabulary learning to memorization and having a good memory. Besides using word-lists and emphasizing on rote memorization, their EFL teachers’ vocabulary teaching strategies include explaining word meanings in Chinese, and repetitive writing/copying of vocabulary & meanings. Punishment for not meeting the minimum requirement was repetitive writing/copying of vocabulary and meanings until ‘requirements’ were met. Some of the outcomes of their previous EFL vocabulary learning in their home country were:

- short-term retention of English vocabulary & their meanings
- learners relying more on their memory than on understanding new vocabulary
- learners being able to pass their EFL tests & examinations but most of what was learnt was soon forgotten
learners possibly recognizing certain words and knowing their meanings but not being able to use them to communicate with English speakers or express themselves in writing.

- learners with a limited range of vocabulary and inadequate vocabulary knowledge, and limited ability to understand the English native speakers in Australia, and had difficulties expressing themselves in speech and in writing.

Most of the participants linked their limited English vocabulary knowledge to their previous inadequate teacher-centred, textbook-based as well as test and examination oriented vocabulary learning which they strongly associated with the memorization of numerous words and their meanings.

The findings show a close relationship between limited English vocabulary, insufficient vocabulary knowledge and language learning difficulties. Most of the participants felt that their limited English vocabulary had an adverse effect on their English language skill development. Participants who were unable to understand English native speakers in Australia, and had difficulties expressing themselves in speech and in writing linked their language learning difficulties to their limited vocabulary range and inadequate vocabulary knowledge. These finding concur with other studies (such as Basurto, 2004; Johnson and Pearson, 1984) that vocabulary acquisition leading to increased vocabulary knowledge is the key to understanding both the spoken and written language, and that vocabulary knowledge plays a critical role in reading comprehension development, and an expansive and varied set of vocabulary words results in better writing.
According to the participants, the ‘keys’ to more effective vocabulary learning are a good memory, an understanding of word meaning and word use, a conducive environment and ample opportunities to use new English vocabulary to practise their language skills such as listening and speaking in English every day in Australia. The most effective vocabulary learning for these participants was to:

- first, look at how the words are written/spelt or listen to how they are pronounced,
- second, understand what they mean and how they are used;
- third, use them in their conversation and writing by emulating others or create a situation to use the new vocabulary.

This study reinforces the findings of other research studies that Chinese learners used rote memorization very frequently when learning EFL in their home country but the findings of the current study suggest that the use of rote memorization might not be personal VLS preference, but a VLS that was enforced upon them to learn vocabulary from word-lists, and to pass their English vocabulary tests and examinations. The participants in this study were aware that rote memorization may not be very effective for long term retention or word use, and frequent skipping of words in a text may hinder their understanding of a text. However, despite being unproductive and ineffective for long term memory retention, rote memorization was a common strategy used in most of the participants’ EFL classes and in their personal vocabulary learning as they found it effective for short term memory retention and useful for passing their English language tests and examinations. Nonetheless, rote memorization is only one of the memory and memorization strategies used in vocabulary learning; and the learners’ vocabulary learning could be enhanced if rote memorization is used together with other memory, memorization or vocabulary learning strategies. Most of the participants acknowledged that a conducive language-learning and vocabulary-learning
environment (such as in Australia) as well as memorization with understanding would be more effective than merely rote memorizing without understanding. Persistence and perseverance were seen to be essential to increase the effectiveness of the vocabulary learning strategies used. Effectiveness was also increased for words that they encountered more often and for words that were related to their daily life routines, studies and work.

Chinese learners have been commonly portrayed as low social strategy users but previous studies did not provide more information about what kind of social strategies they have a greater preference for. The findings of this study reveal that recommended vocabulary games and activities that require social strategies involving learning vocabulary with their peers and classmates as well as pair/group work were popular with the participants. They recommended that a combination of teacher-based vocabulary activities and vocabulary learning through group interaction, as well as vocabulary learning from watching English video clips and practising with English speakers, would be more effective than learning vocabulary on their own or learning vocabulary mechanically through rote memorization, repetitive writing,copying, making sentences and recording words in their vocabulary notebook without understanding.

The pedagogical implications to draw from here for vocabulary teaching are to create a more conducive English language environment to provide more opportunities for word use practice in relation to the four main language learning skills. These practices not only could enhance learners’ vocabulary knowledge and their four main English language learning skill development (speaking, listening, reading and writing) but they could also increase their confidence in the use of new English vocabulary they encounter in their daily life. More

---

15 The findings related to the questionnaire survey in the current study reinforce the participants’ high use of strategies related to the learning of vocabulary with/from their peers.
interactive group vocabulary games and activities could be included to increase the use of social strategies for peer vocabulary learning. As learners are becoming more computer literate, the potential of technology, internet, multi-media and English video clips as vocabulary teaching aides to increase learners’ interest in learning vocabulary.

**Follow Up** The findings from the interview demonstrate that the participants’ English vocabulary learning has an impact on their overall English language skill development. To reinforce the above findings, a VLS questionnaire survey was conducted to find out more about their VLS use and preferences. Vocabulary learning strategies are found to be very powerful aides to vocabulary learning (Blachowicz and Fisher, in Baumann & Kame’enui, 2004) and numerous studies (e.g. Folse, 2004; Moir and Nation, 2002; Schmitt, 1997; Gu and Johnson, 1996; Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Stoffer, 1995; Ahmed, 1989 & others) have shown that the learners’ use of vocabulary learning strategies has an influence on their vocabulary learning. The increased awareness of Chinese ESL learners’ VLS preferences could help ESL instructors to focus on certain essential vocabulary learning strategies which their Chinese ESL learners have no knowledge of or have avoided using due to certain personal or cultural learning habits and reasons. There are two parts to the following analysis of the Chinese ESL participants’ VLS use. It examines, firstly, which of the seven VLS categories and fifty-eight vocabulary learning strategies were reported more frequently to be used by the participants in the current study. These will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.
5. VLS QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

5.1 Analysis of the VLS Questionnaire Survey Data

The following is an analysis of the Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) questionnaire responses collected from twenty Chinese ESL learners in Australia. The primary aim of this questionnaire is to elicit information on the type of vocabulary learning strategies the participants reported to normally use to increase the depth of their vocabulary knowledge about unfamiliar English vocabulary they encountered. The VLS Questionnaire\textsuperscript{16} consists of two parts. Part 1 (Questions 1-8) elicits information about their personal particulars and linguistic background, and the collected information is included in the section about the participants in Chapter 3, section 3.2 and Appendix 2A, Figure 2A. Part 2 consists of fifty-eight questions related to seven VLS categories. Figure 16 shows the abbreviations (in alphabetical order) and the number of items (within brackets) for the seven VLS categories used in this research study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs)</th>
<th>No. of VLSs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CoS</td>
<td>Cognitive Strategy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Determination Strategy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMS</td>
<td>Memory Strategy</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRS</td>
<td>Metacognitive Regulation Strategy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Metacognitive Strategy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Social Strategy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS</td>
<td>Translation Strategy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7 VLS Categories</td>
<td>58 VLSs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants are categorized into three different groups of VLS users in term of high, medium and low frequency users.

\textsuperscript{16}For more information about the Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS) Questionnaire format, please refer to Chapter 3, Figure 7.
**High Users:** Participants who reported to ‘Usually’ and ‘Always’ use the strategy.

**Medium Users:** Participants who reported to ‘Sometimes’ or ‘Often’ use the strategy.

**Low Users:** Participants who reported to ‘Never’ or ‘Seldom’ use the strategy.

These categories will help the researcher to examine which of the fifty-eight vocabulary learning strategies these Chinese ESL learners reported more frequently to use to learn more about new English vocabulary they encountered in their daily life. The analysis will only reflect the consolidated data of the participants’ reported VLS use frequency as a group. In the discussion, the following abbreviations are used to refer to High, Medium and Low use in the diagrams and pie/bar charts:

HU – High Use; MU – Medium Use; LU – Low Use;

The term ‘VLS category’ refers to a specific category (or group) of vocabulary learning strategies, e.g. Metacognitive Regulation strategy (MRS) category. The main objective of investigating the participants’ VLS use frequency is to provide a deeper understanding of these Chinese ESL learners’ VLS use. The findings could provide a clearer picture about not only their VLS use but also about whether these ESL learners were avoiding the use of certain essential vocabulary learning strategies that contribute to more effective vocabulary learning. Although the findings of these Chinese ESL learners’ use cannot be used to generalize the VLS use of the whole population of Chinese ESL learners, the greater awareness of their VLS use could help ESL instructors to cater more appropriately to future Chinese ESL learners’ vocabulary learning in terms of vocabulary lessons and vocabulary strategy instruction. As there are a number of strategies in each category and the learners could be using more of certain vocabulary learning strategies in a particular VLS category,
while avoiding others which could be essential for their vocabulary learning. Sections 5.2 to 5.8 of this study examine in greater depth more specifically which vocabulary learning strategies in each of the seven VLS categories were reported more frequently to be used than others by the participants whilst section 5.9 summarizes which VLS categories were reported to be used more frequently than others by the participants. Section 5.10 discusses the findings of the participants’ VLS use.

5.2 Participants’ Reported Metacognitive Regulation Strategy (MRS) Use Frequency

Five strategies are listed in the Metacognitive Regulation strategy (MRS) category in Section A of the questionnaire. Metacognitive regulation strategies are ‘Selective Attention’ strategies (that is, goal-setting and vocabulary-selection strategies), and ‘Self-Initiation’ strategies to evaluate and monitor personal vocabulary learning progress. Some research studies (e.g., Gu and Johnson, 1996; Stoffer, 1995) suggest that there could be a close link between learners’ self-initiation in learning and their vocabulary sizes, which in turn is closely linked to language proficiency. Stoffer (1995,) recommended that learners take charge of their own learning and be more “independent of their teachers” (p. 148). Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study provided the evidence that Metacognitive regulation strategies play a great role in vocabulary learning and learners who use the most ‘self-initiation’ strategies are observed to be more successful in vocabulary learning and are more proficient in the language than other participants in their study. The numbering of the metacognitive regulation strategies used in the analysis follows the numbering given in the questionnaire for easy cross referencing. Figure 17 provides an overview of the participants reported MRS use frequency of the the five Metacognitive regulation strategies listed in the questionnaire in
terms of the six categories, from ‘Never’ to ‘Always’, and the percentage of the MRS High, Medium and Low users among the participants.

Figure 17: Participants’ Reported MRS Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Metacognitive Regulation Strategies (MRSs)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Find out the meaning of words I'm interested in.</td>
<td>0  0 1  7  5  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Make a note of words important to me.</td>
<td>0  0 0  7  8  5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Read other English books besides textbook.</td>
<td>3  2 8  6  1  0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Learn other vocabulary items not given by teacher.</td>
<td>0  1 7  5  5  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Find out more about vocabulary items I am not sure of.</td>
<td>0  1 5  8  2  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of MRS Users</strong></td>
<td>3%  4% 21% 33% 21% 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key:</strong></td>
<td>0 – Never 1 – Seldom 2 – Sometimes 3 – Often 4 – Usually 5 – Always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17 shows that there are more Medium MRS users (54%) than High MRS users (39%) and Low MRS users (7%). However, there are 32% more High MRS users than Low MRS users, suggesting that the MRS use among the participants was relatively high. Only 3% of the participants reported that they ‘Never’ used metacognitive regulation strategies and 4% reported to ‘Seldom’ use them, compared to 18% participants who ‘Always’ used Metacognitive regulation strategies and 21% who ‘Usually’ used them. This is strong evidence that the participants in the current study were active MRS users.

5.2.1 Participants’ MRS Use Ranking

Figure 17.1 shows more specifically which of the five metacognitive regulation strategies are used more frequently than others in terms of High, Medium and Low use. It shows that MRS-1, ‘Find out the meaning of words I'm interested in’, and MRS-2, ‘Make a note of words important to me’ were used more frequently than the other three Metacognitive Regulation
strategies. There were more High MRS-1 and MRS-2 users than the High users of the other three metacognitive regulation strategies, ‘Learn other vocabulary items not given by teacher’ (MRS-3), ‘Learn other vocabulary items not given by teacher’ (MRS-4), and ‘Find out more about vocabulary items I am not sure of’ (MRS-5). In addition, MRS-1 and MRS-2 users reflect no Low users, compared to 25% Low MRS-3 users, 5% Low MRS-4 users and 5% Low MRS-5 users, thus indicating that MRS-1 and MRS-2 were used more frequently than the other three Metacognitive regulation strategies by most of the participants.

Both MRS-1 and MRS-2 reflected 100% High and Medium users and no low users, but MRS-2 reflected 5% more High users than MRS-1. Hence, MRS-2, ‘Make a note of words important to me’, is ranked the most frequently used MRS, followed by MRS-1, ‘Find out the meaning of words I'm interested in’ (see Figure 17.2). Among the five Metacognitive regulation strategies, MRS-3 has the lowest percentage of High users (5%) and the highest percentage of Low users (25%), suggesting a low MRS-3 use frequency among the participants. 15% participants were ‘Never’ MRS–3 users, which confirms a lower use
frequency for MRS-3, ‘Read other English books besides textbook’, than for the other Metacognitive regulation strategies. Thus MRS–3 is ranked the least frequently used MRS (see Figure 17.2). This finding of Low MRS-3 use among the Chinese ESL learners in this study concurs with Liu’s (2010) study which reveals that “enhancing the memory of words by extensive reading” is one of the least used vocabulary learning strategies his participants.

Between MRS-4, ‘Learn other vocabulary items not given by teacher’ and MRS-5, ‘Find out more about vocabulary items I am not sure of’, Figure 17 shows 10% more ‘Always’ MRS-5 users and 15% more ‘Often’ MRS-5 users than MRS-4 users. This suggests that ‘Find out more about vocabulary items I am not sure of’ (MRS-5) was used more frequently than ‘Learn other vocabulary items not given by teacher’ (MRS-4) by the participants. Hence, based on the participants’ High, Medium and Low MRS use, the participants’ MRS use frequency can be ranked as shown in Figure 17.2

**Figure 17.2 Participants’ MRS Use Frequency Ranking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>MRS No.</th>
<th>Metacognitive Regulation Strategies</th>
<th>Low Users</th>
<th>High Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Make a note of words important to me.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Find out the meaning of words I'm interested in.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Find out more about vocabulary items I am not sure of.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Learn other vocabulary items not given by teacher.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Read other English books besides textbook.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1 – most frequently used; 5 – least frequently used

### 5.2.2 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ MRS Use Frequency

With reference to Research Question 2 about the participants’ VLS selection to learn new English vocabulary, the findings of the participants’ MRS use\(^\text{17}\) show that the participants

\(^\text{17}\) The analysis of the participants’ VLS category use frequency in section 5.9 shows that the MRS category was the second most frequently reported to be used VLS category among the Chinese ESL learners in this study.
demonstrated a higher MRS use frequency for making notes, and learning more about the vocabulary that is important and relevant to them or interesting to them, than learning the vocabulary that is not given by their teachers. The participants also reported more frequently to use those Metacognitive regulation strategies (such as MRS-1 & MRS-2) that helped them to find the meaning of words that are important and interesting to them than those (such as MRSs 3, 4 & 5) that help them to find meanings of word that are unrelated to them or their needs. The pedagogical implication is that ESL teachers need to consider introducing more vocabulary that is meaningful to them or show the learners why they are learning the vocabulary instead of getting them to learn vocabulary without understanding the significance of what they are learning. In terms of reading, they were found to be more textbook-centred as they reported the least frequently the MRS used for reading other English books apart from their textbook, which could have resulted in some participants’ insufficient vocabulary knowledge. Some studies (such as Baumann and Kameenui, 1991; Fisher and Blachowicz, 2005; Kucan & Beck, 1996; Nitschke, 2004) have shown that one reason why most are not reading widely is because they do not understand the text due to their limited vocabulary knowledge. Two pedagogical implications would be not only to introduce vocabulary items that are more relevant, important and interesting to the learners, but also to create more activities to encourage learners to read more English books besides their textbooks, as reading is one constructive way to increase a learner’s vocabulary knowledge.

5.3 Participants’ Reported Metacognitive Strategy (MS) Use Frequency

Twelve strategies are listed in the Metacognitive strategy category in Section B of the questionnaire. Metacognitive strategies are used as “a conscious overview of the learning process and making decision about planning, monitoring, or evaluating the best ways to study” (Schmidt, 1997, p. 205). Some studies (e.g., Gu and Johnson, 1996; Wen and Johnson, 1997; Wu and Wang, 1998) revealed that older Chinese learners and Chinese EFL learners
are active MS users. On the other hand, the Chinese college students in Zhao’s (2009) study were found not using metacognitive strategies frequently but their vocabulary learning improved when their MS use increased after being given MS instruction. Figure 18 provides an overview of the participants’ reported MS use frequency of the twelve metacognitive strategies listed in the questionnaire in terms of the six categories, from ‘Never’ to ‘Always’, and the percentage of the MS High, Medium and Low users among the participants. The numbering of the Metacognitive strategies used in the analysis follows the numbering given in the questionnaire for easy cross referencing.

Figure 18 Participants’ MS Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Metacognitive Strategies (MSs)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Listen to tape of word lists.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Watch a TV program in English.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Watch a video in English.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Listen to English songs.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Read English newspapers.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Read English news and articles online.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Listen to an English radio program.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Skip or pass difficult English words.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Use spaced word practice.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Skip difficult English idioms.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Learn English words written on commercial items.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Write meaning of new words in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of MS Users</strong></td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18 shows that there are more medium MS users (55.7%) than high MS users (22.6%) and low MS users (21.8%). There are slightly more High MS users than Low MS users. 3.75% of the participants reported ‘Never’ using certain metacognitive strategies, and 17.90% reported ‘Seldom’ using some of the metacognitive strategies. Only slightly more than half of
the participants (54.6%) reported using metacognitive strategies at least 60% of the time (i.e., ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’), suggesting that the MS use frequency is slightly above 50%.

5.3.1 Participants’ MS Use Ranking

Figure 18.1 shows us more specifically which of the twelve metacognitive strategies has a higher use frequency than others in terms of High, Medium and Low Use. When the percentage of Low users for two or more metacognitive strategies is the same, the percentage of High Users is used to determine the participants’ MS use frequency ranking. Figure 18.1 shows that MS-9, ‘Listen to English songs’, was the most popular MS among the participants as all the participants of them reported using this strategy. 50% of the participants are found to be high MS-9 users and there are no low MS-9 users. MS-14, ‘Use spaced word practice’ was the least frequently used MS among the participants. The participants’ reported MS use frequency will be discussed in greater details in sections 5.3.2 to 5.3.7.
Based on the participants’ High, Medium and Low MS use, the participants’ MS use frequency can be ranked as shown in Figure 18.2. Figure 18.2 shows that besides listening to English songs, watching an English TV program, writing the meaning of new words in English and watching an English video were among the more popularly used metacognitive strategies among the participants. On the other hand, besides the use of spaced word practice, learning English words from commercials, listening to an English radio program and tape of word lists were among the four least frequently used Metacognitive strategies.

![Figure 18.2 Participants' MS Use Frequency Ranking](image)

To understand the participants’ reported MS use frequency more clearly, the twelve metacognitive strategies are further put into five main groups:

a) Listening  

b) Watching  

c) Reading  

d) Word/Idiom skipping  

e) Others

### 5.3.2 Use of Metacognitive Strategies Related to Listening (MS-6, MS-8 & MS-9)

The three metacognitive strategies related to listening in vocabulary learning are MS-6, ‘Listen to tape of word lists’, MS-9, ‘Listen to English songs’ and MS-12, ‘Listen to an English radio program’. 
With reference to the High and Low MS use, Figure 18.3 shows that of the three metacognitive strategies related to listening, more participants reported using MS-9, ‘Listen to English songs’ than MS-6, ‘Listen to a tape of word lists’ and MS-12, ‘Listen to an English radio program’.

50% of the participants were High MS-9 users and there were no Low MS-9 users, thus suggesting a higher use frequency for listening to songs than for listening to a radio program or a word list tape. Given the popularity of the MS use of listening to English songs to learn vocabulary, one pedagogical implication is to explore the use of English songs to enhance vocabulary learning and to reduce the reliance on tapes of word list. Out of the twelve metacognitive strategies, ‘Listen to an English radio program’ (MS-12) and ‘Listen to a tape of word lists’ (MS-6) were among the least frequently used metacognitive strategies. They ranked tenth and eleventh in terms of the participants’ MS use frequency (see Figure 18.3).

Figure 18.4 shows that MS-6, ‘Listen to a tape of word lists’, had slightly fewer ‘Never’ users than MS-12, ‘Listen to an English radio program’. Two participants reported to ‘Never’ use
MS-6, compared to only participant who ‘Never’ used MS-12. thus providing the evidence that ‘Listen to a tape of word lists’ (MS-6) was reported to be used by fewer participants than ‘Listen to an English radio program’ (MS-12), and hence ranked as less frequently used than MS-12.

Figure 18.4 Participants’ MS-6 and MS-12 Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Metacognitive Strategies (MSs)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to an English radio program.</td>
<td>1 5 6 8 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to tape of word lists.</td>
<td>2 5 6 6 1 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 0 – Never 1 – Seldom 2 – Sometimes 3 – Often 4 – Usually 5 – Always

Source: Extracted from Figure 18.

5.3.3 Use of Metacognitive Strategies Related to Watching (MS-7 and MS-8)

The two metacognitive strategies related to watching in vocabulary learning are MS-7, ‘Watch a TV program in English’ and MS-8, ‘Watch a video in English’. They ranked second and fourth respectively in terms of the participants’ use frequency (see Figure 18.5).

Figure 18.5 Participants’ MS Use Related to Watching

b) WATCH

MS-7, an English TV
MS-8, a video in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ Metacognitive Strategy Use Frequency Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1 – most frequently used; 12 – least frequently used
Source: Extracted from Figure 18.2
All the participants reported using MS-7 and MS-8, and both MS-7 and MS-8 show an equal percentage of High Users but MS-8 had 15% more Low users than MS-7, thus suggesting that ‘watching an English TV program’ (MS-7) was more popularly used among the participants than ‘watching an English video’ (MS-8).

5.3.4 Comparison of Metacognitive Strategy Use: Listening and Watching

Figure 18.6 compares the metacognitive strategies related to listening and watching in vocabulary learning. Just for recapitulation, MS-6, MS-9 and MS-12 are metacognitive strategies related to listening to ‘tape of word-lists, ‘English songs’ and ‘an English radio program’ respectively, whilst MS-7 and MS-8 are metacognitive strategies related to watching ‘an English TV program’ and ‘an English video’.

As mentioned earlier, MS-9, ‘Listen to English songs’ has the highest percentage of High users and there are no Low MS-9 users, suggesting that MS-9 was both used by more participants, and used more frequently than the other metacognitive strategies. Figure 18.6
shows that apart from MS-9, ‘Listen to English songs’, metacognitive strategies related to watching (MS-7 and MS-8) reflected a higher use frequency among the participants than those related to listening (MS-6 and MS-12). ‘Watch a English TV program’ (MS-7) and ‘Watch a video in English’ (MS-8) reflect a higher percentage of users and more High MS users than those of MS-6, ‘Listen to a tape of word lists’ and MS-12, ‘Listen to an English radio program’. Hence, a pedagogical implication is to utilize English TV program and video as vocabulary teaching aides.

5.3.5 Use of Metacognitive strategies related to Reading (MS-10 and MS-11)

The two metacognitive strategies related to reading in vocabulary learning are MS-10, ‘Read English newspapers’ and MS-11, ‘Read English news and articles online’. They were ranked sixth and seventh in terms of participants’ use frequency (see Figure 18.7). The participants reported a higher use frequency for the online version of English news and articles than the hard copy English newspapers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>MS No.</th>
<th>Metacognitive Strategies</th>
<th>Low Users</th>
<th>High Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Read English news and articles online.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Read English newspapers.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1 – most frequently used; 12 – least frequently used
Source: Extracted from Figure 18.2.

Figure 18.7 shows that the percentage of Low MS users is the same for both MS-10, ‘Read English newspapers’ and MS-11, ‘Read English news and articles online’ (20% participants each), but there are more High MS-11 users than High MS-10 users, suggesting that MS-11
was used more frequently than MS-10. In addition, Figure 18.8 shows that more participants reported ‘Always’, ‘Usually’ and ‘Often’ using MS-11 than using MS-10, thus reinforcing the evidence that MS-11, ‘Read English news and articles online’ was used more frequently and used by more participants than MS-10, ‘Read English newspapers’. This should not suggest that hardcopy newspaper be discarded but that the online English news and articles be utilized for vocabulary learning in addition to the hardcopy newspapers.

**Figure 18.8 Participants’ MS-10 and MS-11 Use Frequency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Metacognitive Strategies</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read English newspapers.</td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read English news and articles online.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key: 0 – Never 1 – Seldom 2 – Sometimes 3 – Often 4 – Usually</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.6 **Use of Metacognitive strategies related to Word/Idiom Skipping (MS-13 and MS-15)**

The two metacognitive strategies related to skipping difficult words and idioms are MS-13, ‘skip or pass difficult English words’, and MS-15, ‘skip difficult English idioms’. MS-13 and MS-15 ranked fifth and eighth respectively in term of the participants’ MS use frequency (see Figure 18.2). The participants demonstrated a greater tendency to ‘skip words’ than to ‘skip idioms’ and would try to understand difficult English idioms than other difficult English words.

**Figure 18.9 Participants’ MS Use Related to Skipping Words/Idioms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ MS Use Frequency Ranking</th>
<th>Metacognitive Strategies</th>
<th>Low Users</th>
<th>High Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Skip or pass difficult English words.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Skip difficult English idioms.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1 – most frequently used; 12 – least frequently used

Source: Extracted from Figure 18.2.
Figure 18.9 shows that there were more High MS-13 users than High MS-15 users and Figure 18.10 reflects more participants reporting ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ and ‘Always’ to use MS-13, ‘skip or pass difficult English words’ than MS-15, ‘skip difficult English idioms’. This suggests that more participants would skip words than idioms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Metacognitive Strategies</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13  Skip or pass difficult English words.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15  Skip difficult English idioms.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 0 – Never  1 – Seldom  2 – Sometimes  3 – Often  4 – Usually  5 – Always

Source: Extracted from Figure 18.

Though both MS-13 and MS-15 reflect one ‘Never’ user, there are more participants who reported to ‘Seldom’ ‘skip difficult English idioms’ (MS-15) than those who ‘Seldom’ ‘skip or pass difficult English words’ (MS-13). This reinforces the evidence that more participants would skip difficult English words than difficult idioms. The higher use frequency of Metacognitive strategies among the participants for understanding and learning the idioms than words may have something to do with the focus on Chinese idioms when learning their first language (Chinese) academically. However, one of the findings discussed in Chapter Four has revealed that the participants found English idioms and idiomatic expressions used by the native speakers in Australia difficult to understand. Hence, another pedagogical implication is not only to expose them to more English idioms but also to help them understand what they mean and how to use them.
5.3.7 Use of Other Metacognitive Strategies (MS-14, MS-16 and MS-17)

The three remaining metacognitive strategies, are related to the ‘Use of spaced word practice’ (MS-14), ‘Learn English words written on commercial items’ (MS-16), and ‘Write meaning of new words in English’ (MS-17).

Figure 18.11 shows that MS-16 and MS-17 reflect the same percentage of High users (15%) but MS-17 has fewer Low users than MS-14 and MS-16, providing the evidence that MS-17, ‘Write meaning of new words in English’ was more frequently reported to be used by the participants than MS-16, ‘Learn English words written on commercial items’ and MS-14, ‘Use of spaced word practice’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ MS Use Frequency Ranking</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>MS No.</td>
<td>Metacognitive Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Write meaning of new words in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Learn English words written on commercial items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Use spaced word practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1 – most frequently used; 12 – least frequently used
Source: Extracted from Figure 18.2

MS-14, ‘Use of spaced word practice’, reflects the lowest percentage of High users and highest percentage of Low users among these three Metacognitive strategies, suggesting the lower use frequency of MS-14 among the participants than the other two metacognitive strategies. MS-14 ranks one of the bottom two least frequently used MS among the twelve.
metacognitive strategies. On the other hand, MS-14, ‘Use of spaced word practice’, reflects the lowest percentage of High users and highest percentage of Low users MS-14 low use frequency among the participants. MS-14 also ranks one of the bottom two in terms of the participants’ overall Metacognitive strategy use.

**Figure 18.12** Comparison of Participants’ Reported MS-14, MS-16 and MS-17 Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Metacognitive Strategies</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14  Use spaced word practice.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16  Learn English words written on commercial items.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17  Write meaning of new words in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key: 0 – Never  1 – Seldom  2 – Sometimes  3 – Often  4 – Usually  5 – Always
Source: Extracted from Figure 18.*

Comparing MS-14 and MS-16 in terms of Low Users, Figure 18.12 shows that MS-14 has a higher number of ‘Never’ and ‘Seldom’ users than MS-14, providing evidence that MS-14 was not only used by fewer participants but also less frequently than MS-16. MS-17 ranked third, MS-16 ranked ninth and MS-14 ranked twelfth among all the twelve metacognitive strategies (see Figure 18.11), suggesting that writing meaning of new words in English (MS-17) and learning English words written on commercial items (MS-16) were more popular with the participants than using spaced word practice (MS-14).

**5.3.8 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Reported MS Use Frequency**

The following discussion relates to Research Question 2 in terms of the participants’ MS use.

The findings reveal suggest that MS-9, ‘Listen to English songs’ was the MS most frequently reported to be used by the participants among all twelve metacognitive strategies listed in the questionnaire, and MS-6, ‘Listen to a tape of word lists’, the least. Apart from MS-9, ‘Listen
to English songs’, there was a higher use frequency among the participants for metacognitive strategies that involve watching (such as watching a TV program or English video) and writing (‘Write meaning of new words in English’) than for those that involve listening (such as listening to an English radio program and a tape of word list), or for those that involve practice such as MS-14, ‘Use spaced word practice’. The participants showed that they were more likely to skip difficult English words than difficult English idioms. They also demonstrated a higher MS use frequency for reading newspapers articles and news online than for reading the hard copy newspapers/news articles. This could have something to do with both the increase in young people’s computer knowledge and the greater amount of time that people nowadays are going online, from surfing the net for general information to online shopping, as well as engaging in social networking online. Other reasons could include the easily accessible news websites as well as the variety of news and articles online made available to internet users, and the learners’ convenience of using their personal computer/laptop to read them. The pedagogical implications could be, firstly, to consider the great potential of using movie/video clips, the computer and the internet as vocabulary teaching tools and vocabulary learning aides. Secondly, the Chinese ESL learners demonstrated a greater likelihood of skipping unfamiliar words than unfamiliar idioms, suggesting an interest to learn meaning of idioms and idiomatic expressions. Yet, the findings of Chapter 4 reveal that these learners have problems with understanding idioms and idiomatic expressions used by native speakers. Folse (2004) cited an example how learners can be confused “when they find out the opposite of put on clothing is not put off clothing” (p. 9) Hence, vocabulary instruction should include providing learners with more opportunities to learn, understand and use English idioms meaningful and interesting to them.
5.4 Participants’ Reported Social Strategy Use Frequency

Eight strategies are listed in the Social strategy (SS) category in Section C of the questionnaire. Social strategies are strategies used to seek correction, ask for clarification, work with peers, and develop cultural understanding (Oxford, 1990). VLS studies by different researchers (e.g. Liu, 2010; Wu and Wang, 1998; Wu, 2005; Wharton, 2000; and Gu and Johnson, 1996) showed different findings about Chinese learners’ SS preferences. Wharton’s (2000) study revealed that the ethnically Chinese, bilingual Singaporean university foreign language students had demonstrated a greater preference for social strategies than affective strategies, which is contrary to the common belief that Chinese learners have a low preference for social strategies. Wu (2005) and Wharton (2000) reported that most of their participants would ask classmates for the meaning of words. On the other hand, Liu’s (2010)’s study showed that some of the least used social strategies included ‘asking classmates for the word meaning’ and ‘asking teacher for Chinese translation’, whilst some popularly used social strategies among the students in Liu’s study included ‘asking teacher for a sentence that includes the new word’ (p. 160).

Figure 19 Participants’ SS Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Social Strategies</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Learn by group work in class.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Learn by pair work in class.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Ask your English language teacher for translation into your native language.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Ask your tutor/learning support teacher/classmate for a paraphrase or synonym.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Ask family members for translation into native language.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Ask classmates/friends for translation into your native language.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Practise with your friends.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Practise with your family members.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Percentage of SS Users**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>24.4%</th>
<th>16.9%</th>
<th>13.8%</th>
<th>21.9%</th>
<th>15.6%</th>
<th>7.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 19 provides an overview of the participants’ reported SS use frequency of the eight social strategies listed in the questionnaire in terms of the six categories, from ‘Never’ to ‘Always’, and the percentage of the SS High, Medium and Low users among the participants. The numbering of the social strategies used in the analysis follows the numbering given in the questionnaire for easy cross referencing. With reference to Figure 19, there are more Low SS users (41.25%) than Medium SS users (35.63%) and High SS users (23.1%) among the participants. 24.4% of the participants reported ‘Never’ to the use of social strategies while less than half of the participants (44.91%) reported using social strategies ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’, and only 7.5% of the participants reported ‘Always’ using social strategies. This report provides strong evidence that the participants’ reported SS use frequency\textsuperscript{18} is low. This low SS use among the Chinese ESL learners in this study concurs with the findings of some other studies on Chinese learners’ VLS use (e.g., Liu, 2010; Zhan, 2010; and Gu and Johnson, 1996). The following analyzes more specifically which Social strategies were used more frequently than others by the participants.

\textbf{5.4.1 Participants’ SS Use Ranking}

In terms of participants’ High, Medium and Low SS use, Figure \textbf{19.1} shows that SS-18, ‘Learn by group work in class’ was most frequently reported to be used by the participants and SS-22, ‘Ask family members for translation into native language’, the least. Social strategies related to learning in groups/pairs in class were found to be used more frequently than other social strategies (especially those social strategies that involve their family or teacher). Among the eight social strategies, SS-18, ‘Learn by group work in class’ and SS-19, ‘Learn by pair work in class’ reflect the same lowest percentage of Low users (5%) but SS-18 reflects 5% more High users than SS-19, suggesting that SS-18 was reported to be

\footnote{The comparison of the participants’ VLS category use frequency in section 5.9 shows that the participants’ SS category use frequency was the lowest among the seven VLS categories listed in the questionnaire.}
used slightly more frequently than SS-19. SS-24, ‘Practise with your friends’, may have the highest number of High users (50% participants) but it has fewer Medium users and more low users than SS-18 and SS-19, suggesting that, learning by ‘group work in class’ (SS-18), and ‘pair work in class’ (SS-19), had a higher use frequency among the participants than ‘practising with friends’ (SS-24).

![Figure 19.1 Participants' Reported Social Strategy (SS) Use Frequency](image)

Figure 19.1 shows that SS-20, ‘Ask your English language teacher for translation into your native language’, SS-22, ‘Ask family members for translation into native language’ and SS-25, ‘Practise with your family members’, have rather high percentages of Low users’: SS-20 (75%), SS-22 (80%) and SS-25 (70%). They were apparently the three social strategies least frequently used by the participants. Based on the participants’ High, Medium and Low SS use, their SS use frequency can be ranked as shown in Figure 19.2 In order to understand the participants’ SS use frequency more clearly, the eight social strategies are further put into the following three main groups:

a) Learn  
b) Ask  
c) Practise
5.4.2 Use of Social Strategies Related to Learning in Groups/Pairs

The two social strategies related to learning in groups/pairs in class are SS-18, ‘Learn by group work in class’ and SS-19, ‘Learn by pair work in class’.

The discussion in the previous section 5.4.1 provides the evidence that these two social strategies, SS-18 and SS-19, were used most frequently among the eight social strategies. They ranked first and second respectively in terms of the participants’ reported SS use frequency ranking. Both reflect the same percentage of Low users but SS-18, ‘Learn by group work in class’ reflect 5% more High users than SS-19, ‘Learn by pair work in class’.
Figure 19.3 shows that SS-18 has a slightly higher use frequency than SS-19, suggesting that social strategies related to learning from group work could be more popular with the participants than those related to learning from pair work in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ SS Use Frequency Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ranking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key: 1 – most frequently used; 8 – least frequently used*

*Source: Extracted from Figure 19.2.*

Figure 19.4 shows that SS-18 and SS-19 reflect identical percentages of ‘Usually’ (25%), ‘Often’ (40%), and Low/’Seldom’ users (5%). There is only a 5% difference between them in terms of ‘Always’ and ‘Sometimes’ use frequency. Their recommendations of vocabulary games and activities (in section 4.16) also reflect this preference for the use of group/pair work for vocabulary learning as they believe that they could learn more about word meaning together with their group members as well as from one another. Studies have demonstrated that learners can learn or practice vocabulary from group work (Schmitt, 1996). Hence, a pedagogical recommendation would be to utilize this preference for SS use related to group work.
work to learn vocabulary together with their peers, by including more interactive group vocabulary games and activities.

5.4.3 Use of Social Strategies Related to ‘Asking’ for Translation or Paraphrase

The four social strategies related to ‘Asking’ someone for translation or paraphrase are SS-20, ‘Ask your English language teacher for translation into your native language’, SS-21, ‘Ask your tutor/learning support teacher/classmate for a paraphrase or synonym’, SS-22, ‘Ask family members for translation into native language’ and SS-23, ‘Ask classmates/friends for translation into your native language’.

Figure 19.5 shows that among the eight social strategies, SS-21, ‘Ask tutor/learning support teacher/classmate for a paraphrase or synonym’ and SS-23, ‘Ask for translation into native language from classmates/friends’, ranked fourth and fifth respectively in terms of the participants’ SS use frequency. On the other hand, SS-20, ‘Ask your English language teacher for translation into your native language’, and SS-22, ‘Ask family members for translation into native language’ ranked the bottom two-of the participants’ SS use frequency ranking. Figure 19.5 shows that among these four social strategies, SS-21, ‘Ask your tutor/learning support teacher/classmate for a paraphrase or synonym’ was more popularly used by the participants than the other social strategies, and SS-22, ‘Ask family members for
In terms of asking for translation into their native language (SS-20, SS-22 & SS-23), SS-23 (asking their classmates) has a higher use frequency than for SS-20 (asking their ‘English language teacher’) and SS-22 (asking their ‘family members’). This finding concurs with Wu’s (2005) and Wharton’s (2000) findings which show most of their participants asking their classmates for the meaning of words. Though both SS-20 and SS-22 reflect 10% High users, SS-20, reflects 5% less Low users than SS-22, suggesting there is a slightly higher SS use frequency for asking for translation into their native language from their English language teacher than from their family members for translation.
5.4.4 Use of Social Strategies related to ‘Practise’

Two social strategies related to ‘Practise’ are SS-24, ‘Practise with your friends’ and SS-25, ‘Practise with your family members’. They ranked third and sixth respectively in terms of the participants’ SS use frequency.

Between practising with friends and family members, Figure 19.6 shows very clearly that SS-24 (practise with friends) reflects a higher use frequency than SS-25 (practice with family members). SS-24 reflects 50% more High users and 45% fewer Low users than those of SS-25 users. There are no High SS-25 users and 70% participants are Low SS-25 users. Figure 19 shows that 45% of the participants ‘Never’ practise with their family members (SS-25), compared to 10% who ‘Never’ practise with friends (SS-24), thus providing strong evidence of their more frequent selection of social strategies related to ‘practising’ with friends than with family members.

![Figure 19.6 Participants’ SS Use Related to ‘Practice’](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ SS Use Frequency Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SS No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1 – most frequently used; 8 – least frequently used
Source: Extracted from Figure 19.2.

5.4.5 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Reported SS Use Frequency

The following discussion relates to Research Question 2 in terms of participants’ SS use. The findings of the participants’ reported SS use frequency reveal that social strategies which
involve working with peer groups such as doing ‘group work’ (SS-18) and ‘pair work’ (SS-19) in class, and ‘practising with friends’ (SS-24) were more frequently used than social strategies related to ‘asking for translation’ from their teachers, friends or family, (SS-20, SS-22, & SS-23). However, they do not mind asking somebody to paraphrase for them (SS-21). One pedagogical implication could be to include more interactive group/pair work activities to enhance vocabulary learning through teamwork and peer group learning. The use of social strategies that involve their classmates and friends was also more popular with the participants in the current study than those that involve their family members. 45% of the participants reported ‘Never’ to ‘practice with family members’ (SS-25). One reason for this phenomenon could be the small family size and the ‘working class’ culture in China. Due to China’s ‘one-child’ policy, most of the Chinese students do not have siblings and most of them have both parents working, hence, in reality, they do not have many family members to turn to. Moreover, there is a common Chinese saying which suggests that when you are outside your home, you rely on your friends, and the ESL learners who took part in this study were studying in Australia and living apart from their family members in China. Another reason could be that most of them would probably communicate with their family members, their parents and other elderly family members, more in their first language, Chinese, than in English. The participants’ higher use frequency of SS-23, ‘Ask classmates/friends for translation into your native language’ than that of SS-20, ‘Ask your English language teacher for translation into your native language’ and SS-22, ‘Ask family members for translation into native language’ concurs with the findings of some studies that demonstrated the Chinese learners’ reticence when it comes to asking for help from those in authority, such as their teachers and parents. The findings also reveal a high percentage of participants who reported ‘Never’ to the use of social strategies related to ‘asking for translation’ from their English language teacher (SS-20, 50%) and family members (SS-22, 50%). These findings
reinforce the findings of Liu’s (2010) study which demonstrated that ‘asking teacher for Chinese translation’ was one of her Chinese learners’ least used vocabulary learning strategies. One main reason for their low use of these social strategies to ask for translation from their English language teacher, family members or classmates/friends could be the availability of English-Chinese translation on the participants’ English-Chinese bilingual dictionary and online.

5.5 Participants’ Reported Determination Strategy Use Frequency

Six strategies are listed in the Determination strategy (DS) category in Section D of the questionnaire to examine the participants’ reported DS use frequency of the use of ‘a thesaurus’, ‘picture dictionary’, ‘bilingual dictionary’, ‘monolingual dictionary’, ‘teacher-made word list’ and ‘guessing from context during reading’. Determination strategies are strategies an individual uses ‘when faced with discovering a new word’s meaning without recourse to another person’s expertise’ (Schmitt, 1997, p. 205). Some studies, such as Liu’s (2010) study, demonstrated that two popularly used vocabulary learning strategies by Chinese students were ‘guessing from context’ and the ‘use of bilingual dictionary’ (p. 160), while one of their least used vocabulary learning strategies was ‘using English (monolingual) dictionary’.

Figure 20 provides an overview of the participants’ reported DS use frequency of the six strategies listed in the questionnaire in terms of the six categories, from ‘Never’ to ‘Always’, and the percentage of the DS High, Medium and Low users among the participants. The numbering of the determination strategies used in the analysis follows the numbering given in the questionnaire for easy cross referencing. Figure 20 shows that there are more high DS users (39.2%) and medium DS users (39.2%) than low DS users (21.7%) and 56.7%
participants reported using determination strategies at least 60% of the time (i.e., ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’), suggesting that determination strategies were reported to be used relatively frequently by more than half of the participants. The following analyzes which determination strategies were used more frequently than others by the participants.

**Figure 20  Participants’ Reported Determination Strategy Use Frequency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D. Determination Strategies (DSs)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Use a thesaurus.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Use picture dictionary.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Use a bilingual dictionary.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Use a monolingual dictionary.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Use word lists made by language teacher.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Guess from textual context in reading.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of DS Users</strong></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 0 – Never 1 – Seldom 2 – Sometimes 3 – Often 4 – Usually 5 – Always

### 5.5.1 Participants’ DS Use Ranking

Apart from DS-31, ‘Guess from textual context in reading’, the other five Determination strategies relate to the use of a ‘thesaurus’, ‘dictionary’ and ‘teacher-made word list’.

With reference to the participants’ High, Medium and Low DS use frequency in Figure 20.1, DS-26, ‘Use a thesaurus’, was found to have the highest use frequency among the six determination strategies and DS-27, ‘Use a picture dictionary’, the least. 85% of the
participants were High DS-26 users, which was the highest percentage of High DS users among the six determination strategies, and there were no Low DS-26 users among them.

45% of the participants reported to ‘Always’ ‘use a thesaurus’ (see Figure 20), which reinforces the evidence of the participants’ high DS-26 use. On the other hand, DS-27, ‘Use a picture dictionary’, reflects the highest percentage of Low users (60% participants), and ‘Never’ users (30%), suggesting the participants’ infrequent or low DS-27 use frequency. Based on the participants’ High, Medium and Low DS use, their DS use frequency can be ranked as shown in Figure 20.2.

Figure 20.2 illustrates that DS-26, ‘Use a thesaurus’, DS-28, ‘Use a bilingual dictionary’ and DS-31, ‘Guess from textual context in reading’, are ranked first, second and third respectively in terms of the participants’ reported DS use frequency. These three determination strategies have no Low users, and their percentage of High users is higher than that of the other three
Determination strategies. DS-28, ‘Use a bilingual dictionary’ reflects the second highest use frequency after DS-26, ‘Use a thesaurus’. 70% of the participants were High DS-28 users and 25% were ‘Always’ DS-28 users (see Figure 20), demonstrating the participants’ high DS-28 use. DS-31, ‘Guess from textual context in reading’, was the third more popularly used determination strategy among the participants. 40% of the participants are High DS-31 users and 20% are ‘Always’ DS-31 users, providing the evidence that ‘Guess from textual context in reading’ (DS-31) was frequently used by the participants.

On the other hand, none of the participants reported to ‘Always’ use ‘a picture dictionary’ (DS-27), ‘a monolingual dictionary’ (DS-29), or ‘word lists made by language teacher’ (DS-30). These three strategies ranked sixth, fourth and fifth respectively in terms of the participants’ reported DS use frequency. As mentioned before, DS-27, ‘Use a picture dictionary’, reflects the highest percentage of Low users (60% participants), followed by DS-30, ‘Use word lists made by language teacher’ (45% Low users) and DS-29, ‘Use a monolingual dictionary’ (25% Low users). DS-29 reflects more High users (25% participants) than DS-27 (10% participants) and DS-30 (5% participants), suggesting that the use of ‘a monolingual dictionary’ (DS-29), was more popular with the participants than the use of ‘word lists made by language teacher’ (DS-30), or ‘a picture dictionary’ (DS-27).
5.5.2 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ DS Use Frequency

The following discussion relates to Research Question 2 in terms of the participants’ DS use. The findings show that there are more High and Medium DS users than Low DS users. They reveal that the use of ‘a thesaurus’, ‘a bilingual dictionary’ and ‘guessing from textual context in reading’ have a higher use frequency than the use of ‘a picture dictionary’, ‘a monolingual dictionary’ or ‘teacher-made word lists’. The findings concur with Liu’s (2010) findings about ‘guessing from context’ being one of the more popularly used vocabulary learning strategies by Chinese learners.

The findings about the participants’ higher use frequency for the use of thesaurus over the use of a bilingual dictionary are contrary to the researcher’s personal observation as an ESL instructor. In the researcher’s ESL classes, the researcher observed the ESL learners using their electronic bilingual dictionary most of the time. However, at the higher level of ESL learning when they were allowed to use only the monolingual English-English dictionary and the thesaurus, which were both available in the classroom, more students chose the thesaurus more often than the monolingual English dictionary. One reason could be that the thesaurus provides the synonyms for a certain word instead of the wordy explanations or definitions given in the (English) monolingual dictionary which may confuse the learners even more. The participants’ higher use frequency for the bilingual dictionary (especially the electronic version) than for the monolingual dictionary and picture dictionary is understandable as they could find it easier and faster to understand the meaning/s of the word given in their first language in their bilingual dictionary than the English definitions given in the monolingual English dictionary.
These findings reinforce Liu’s (2010) findings which provide the evidence that ‘using the bilingual dictionary’ is one of the more popularly used vocabulary learning strategies whilst ‘using English (monolingual) dictionary’ is one of the least used vocabulary learning strategies among her Chinese learners. The participants claimed that another advantage of using their electronic bilingual dictionary is its inclusion of the software that provides both the English word meaning and the word pronunciation. The use of the picture dictionary is the least frequently used determination strategies as it may not cater to the participants’ vocabulary learning needs, since their English language proficiency level is more than beginner level and they were learning English for academic purposes. They most probably regarded the use of a picture dictionary as being childish. Their low DS use frequency for teacher-made word-lists (DS-30) reinforces the findings of their MS use (section 5.4.2) which reveal that ‘Listening to tape of word-lists’ was one of their least used vocabulary learning strategies, demonstrating their low selection of vocabulary learning strategies related to learning vocabulary from word-lists made by teachers or commercially. One of the pedagogical implications to draw from here could be to avoid using word-lists alone for vocabulary learning. The problem with the use of word-list could be how the word-list is being utilized for vocabulary learning, whether it is merely memorizing the words and their meanings from a word-list (as these Chinese learners had mentioned was part of their previous vocabulary learning experience) or the audio-lingual method that emphasizes on structured drills or patterns, or the grammar-translation method that includes word lists. Folse (2004) pointed out that “there is little research to show that using lists actually hinders foreign language learning” (p. 36).
5.6 Participants’ Reported Memory Strategy Use Frequency

Eighteen strategies are listed in the Memory strategy (MMS) category in Section E of the questionnaire to examine the participants’ reported use frequency of memory strategies related to word association, word connection, studying/practicing of word meaning, memorizing idioms, affix and roots, using rhymes/semantic maps/keyword method and other memory strategies. Memory strategies are used to create mental linkages and to store new information into the memory storage to be retrieved later. Chinese learners’ high level of memory strategies and MS use and high preference for visual learning and rote learning strategies may partly be due to their Chinese learning culture that emphasizes on the mastery of knowledge, recognizing patterns of Chinese scripts, and memorization of presented materials to pass tests and examinations (AMEPRC, 2005; Chamot, 2004, Lengkanawati, 2003; Griffith, 2003; Merrifield, 1996, Oxford 1993; O’ Malley and Chamot, 1990). Wu’s (2005) study demonstrates that Taiwanese students still practise rote learning such as memorizing words and grammatical forms of the words. Liu’s (2010) study shows that ‘oral and written repetition’ is among her participants’ more popularly used vocabulary learning strategies whilst ‘repeating article content that includes the new word learned’ is one of the least used vocabulary learning strategies.

Figure 21 provides an overview of the participants reported MMS use frequency of the eighteen memory strategies listed in the questionnaire in terms of the six categories, from ‘Never’ to ‘Always’, and the percentage of the MRS High, Medium and Low users among the participants. The numbering of the memory strategies used in the analysis follows the numbering given in the questionnaire for easy cross referencing. Figure 21 shows that there are more Medium MMS users (55.3%) than High MMS users (33.3%) and Low MMS users.
(14.5%) among the participants. More than half of the participants (61.95%) reported using the memory strategies ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’.

Figure 21  Participants’ MMS Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E. Memory Strategies (MMS)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 Associate the word with its coordinates.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Connect the word list to its synonyms and antonyms.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Use new word in sentences.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 Study and practise meaning in a group outside of class.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 Connect word to already known words.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 Learn idioms from stories.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Memorise idioms learnt.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 Memorize the meaning of affix and roots.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 Memorize parts of speech.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 Group words together within story line.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 Image word’s meaning.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 Use rhymes to remember new words.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 Connect word to a personal experience.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 Study the spelling of a word.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Study the sound of a word.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 Say new word aloud when studying.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 Use Keyword Method.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 Use semantic maps.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Percentage of MMS Users | 5.6% | 8.9% | 23.6% | 31.7% | 19.2% | 11.1% |
|                              | 14.5%| 55.3%| 30.3% |

Key: 0– Never 1 – Seldom 2 – Sometimes 3 – Often 4 – Usually 5 – Always

5.6.1 Participants’ MMS Use Ranking

Figures 21.1 and 21.2 illustrate the ranking of participants’ MMS use frequency based on the participants’ reported High, Medium and Low MMS frequency and ‘Never’ use. These data will be used to discuss and compare the use frequency of different groups of memory strategies, such as memory strategies related to word association/connection (MMS-32, MMS-33, MMS-36 and MMS-44, see section 5.6.3).
As there are eighteen MMS strategies, the analysis of the participants’ reported MMS use frequency will be organized in a different approach from the analysis of the other VLS categories. It will be discussed in terms of firstly, the more frequently used memory strategies (ranked 1-9)) and less frequently used memory strategies (ranked 10-18). Secondly, the memory strategies are further organized into five main groups:

a) Associate/connect  b) Use  c) Memorize  d) Study  e) Others
The participants’ more frequently used memory strategies (ranked 1-9) were found to be related to the study of word sound (MMS-46), ‘use Keyword method’ (MMS-48), ‘image word meaning’ (MMS-42), memorising parts of speech and the meaning of affix and roots (MMS-40 and MMS-39 respectively), ‘use new word’ (MMS-34), and associating or connecting word with its coordinates\(^\text{19}\), synonyms and antonyms or personal experience (MMS-32, MMS-33 and MMS-44). The findings reveal a higher use frequency for memory strategies that involve the use of new words, memorizing and word association. The three memory strategies most frequently reported to be used by the participants among the eighteen memory strategies were ‘Study the sound of a word’ (MMS-46), ‘Use Keyword Method’

\(^{19}\)coordinates – the Chinese ESL learners had no problems understanding the meaning of this term in the questionnaire as they were using the bilingual Chinese-English questionnaire.
(MMS-48), and ‘image word meaning’ (MMS-42). The high MMS use frequency of ‘imaging word meaning’ and studying the sound could be an indirect indication of their preference for visual and aural learning. The findings also reveal a higher use frequency for memorizing idioms (MMS-32) than the meaning of affix and roots (MMS-33) and parts of speech (MMS-44). The comparison of various memory strategies will be discussed in greater details latter sections.

5.6.1.2 Less Frequently Used Memory Strategies
The participants’ less frequently used memory strategies (ranked 10-18) were found to be related to saying new word aloud, ‘connecting word to already known words’, ‘studying word spelling’, ‘learning idioms from stories’, ‘memorizing idioms’, ‘grouping words in a storyline’, ‘using rhymes’ and semantic maps, and studying and practicing meaning in a group out of class. The last three memory strategies mentioned (MMS-49, MMS-43 and MMS-35) were the three least frequently reported to be used by the participants among the eighteen memory strategies. The less frequently used memory strategies, such as ‘connecting word to already known words’, ‘grouping words in a storyline’, using rhymes and semantic maps could be related to an inadequate vocabulary range. The following will discuss in greater details the participants’ MMS use frequency in terms of the five main groups mentioned in section 5.6.1:

a) Associate/connect  b) Use  c) Memorize  d) Study  e) Others

5.6.2 Use of Memory Strategies Related to Word Association/Connection
The four MMs related to ‘Word association/connection’ are ‘Associate the word with its coordinates’ (MMS-32), ‘Connect word list to its synonyms and antonyms’ (MMS-33), ‘Connect word to already known words’ (MMS-36) and ‘Connect word to a personal
experience’ (MMS-44). They ranked seventh, eighth, eleventh and ninth among the eighteen memory strategies in terms of the participants’ MMS use frequency.

Among these four memory strategies, connecting a word to ‘already known words’ (MMS-36) and ‘personal experience’ (MMS-44) reflect a higher percentage of high users than ‘associating the word with its coordinates’ (MMS-32) and connecting a word list to ‘its synonyms and antonyms’ (MMS-33), suggesting that they had a higher use frequency than MMS-32 and MM-33.

Figure 21.3 Ranking of Participants’ MMS Use Frequency Related to Word Association/Connection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>MMS No.</th>
<th>Memory Strategies</th>
<th>Low Users</th>
<th>High Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Associate the word with its coordinates.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Connect the word list to its synonyms and antonyms.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Connect word to a personal experience.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Connect word to already known words.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1 – most frequently used; 5 – least frequently used
Source: Extracted from 21.2

However, both MMS-36 and MMS-44 had one ‘Never’ user (see Figure 21.4), indicating there was one less participant reporting the use of MMS-36 and MMS-44 than MMS-32 and MM-33. Hence, in terms of the number of participants reporting using them, MMS-36 and MMS-44 are ranked lower than MMS-32 and MM-33. However, in terms of the frequency of
use by those who reported using these four memory strategies related to word association or connection’, MMS-44, ‘connecting word to personal experience’ reflects a higher use frequency than the other three memory strategies. On the other hand, MMS-33, ‘connecting a word list to ‘its synonyms and antonyms’ was used the least frequently among them. The lower use frequency if MMS-33 could be linked to an inadequate vocabulary knowledge of an unfamiliar and its antonyms and synonyms.

Figure 21.4 Participants' MMS Use Frequency Related to Word Association/Connection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E. Memory Strategies (MMS)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 Associate the word with its coordinates.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 Connect the word list to its synonyms and antonyms.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 Connect word to already known words.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 Connect word to a personal experience.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 0 – Never 1 – Seldom 2 – Sometimes 3 – Often 4 – Usually 5 – Always
Source: Extracted from Figure 21.

5.6.3 Use of Memory Strategies Related to the Use of New Word, Keyword Method, Rhymes and Semantic Maps

The four MMs related to the use of new word, Keyword method, rhymes and semantic maps are MMS-48,’Use Keyword Method’ MMS-34, ‘Use new word in sentences’, MMS-49, ‘Use semantic maps’, and MMS-43, ‘Use rhymes to remember new words’. They are ranked
second, fifth, sixteenth and seventeenth among the eighteen memory strategies in terms of the participants’ MMS use frequency ranking. These are memory strategies related to the use of something to help them remember the target word method.

**Figure 21.5  Ranking of Participants’ MMS Use Frequency Related to ‘Use’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>MMS No.</th>
<th>Memory Strategies</th>
<th>Low Users</th>
<th>High Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Use Keyword Method.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Use new word in sentences.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Use semantic maps.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Use rhymes to remember new words.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key: 1 – most frequently used; 5 – least frequently used
Source: Extracted from Figure 21.2*

Figures 21.5 and 21.6 show that both MMS-48 and MMS-34 reflect only 5% Low users and 0% ‘Never’ user but MMS-48 reflects the most High users (45% participants), and ‘Always’ users (20% participants) among these four memory strategies. 75% participants reported using it at least 60% of the time (i.e., ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’). These suggest that MMS-48, ‘Use Keyword Method’ was used by more participants and used more frequently than ‘Use new word in sentences’ (MMS-34), ‘Use rhymes to remember new words’ (MMS-43), and ‘Use semantic maps’ (MMS-49).

**Figure 21.6  Participants’ MMS Use Frequency Related to ‘Use’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E. Memory Strategies (MMS)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Use new word in sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Use rhymes to remember new words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Use Keyword Method.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Use semantic maps.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key: 0 – Never    1 – Seldom    2 – Sometimes    3 – Often    4 – Usually    5 – Always
Source: Extracted from Figure 21*
On the other hand, among these four memory strategies, ‘Use rhymes to remember new words’ (MMS-43) reflects the least High users (25%) and ‘Always’ users (0%), but the most Low users (40%) and ‘Never’ users (15%), thus suggesting that MMS-43, ‘Use rhymes to remember new words’, is used by fewer participants and less frequently than the other three memory strategies. Between MMS-34, ‘Use new word in sentences’ and MMS-49, ‘Use semantic maps’, Figures 21.5 and 21.6 show that ‘Use semantic maps’ (MMS-49), has more High users, ‘Always’ users and ‘Often-Always’ users than those of ‘Use new word in sentences’ (MMS-34). MMS-49 also reflects 25% more Low users and 10% more ‘Never’ users than MMS-34, providing the evidence ‘new word in sentences’ (MMS-34) was more frequently used than ‘semantic maps’ (MMS-49).

In summary, out of these four memory strategies, the participants show the highest use frequency for MMS-48, ‘Use Keyword Method’, followed by MMS-34, ‘Use new word in sentences’, MMS-49, ‘Use semantic maps’, and last of all, MMS-43, ‘Use rhymes to remember new words’. MMS-43 was also the second least frequently used MMS among the eighteen memory strategies (see Figure 21.2).

5.6.4 Use of Memory Strategies Related to Memorizing

The three memory strategies related to the use of memorization are MMS-38, ‘Memorize idioms learnt’, MMS-39, ‘Memorize the meaning of affix roots’, and MMS-40, ‘Memorize parts of speech’. Figures 21.7 and 21.8 show that out of these three memory
strategies, MMS-39 reflects the most High users (30% participants) and ‘Always’ users (15% participants) as well as the most participants using this strategy at least 60% of the time (80% participants). In addition, MMS-39 reflects the least Low Users (5%) and ‘Never’ users (0%). This suggests that all the participants reported memorizing ‘the meaning of affix and roots’ (MMS-39) and they used it more frequently than memorizing ‘idioms learnt’ (MMS-38) and ‘parts of speech’ (MMS-40).

Figure 21.7 Participants’ MMS Use Frequency Ranking Related to ‘Memorise’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>MMS No.</th>
<th>Memory Strategies</th>
<th>Low Users</th>
<th>High Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Memorize the meaning of affix and roots.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Memorize parts of speech.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Memorise idioms learnt.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1 – most frequently used; 5 – least frequently used
Source: Extracted from 21.2.

Between memorizing idioms (MMS-38) and parts of speech (MMS-40), MMS-38 reflects 5% more High users, and 10% more ‘Always’ users. However, MMS-38 also reflects 5% more Low users and 10% more ‘Never’ users, which provide the evidence that more participants reported using MMS-40 than MMS-38.

Figure 21.8 Participants’ MMS Use Frequency Related to ‘Memorise’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E. Memory Strategies (MMS)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Memorise idioms learnt.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 Memorize the meaning of affix and roots.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 Memorize parts of speech.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 0 – Never 1 – Seldom 2 – Sometimes 3 – Often 4 – Usually 5 – Always
Source: Extracted from Figure 21.

In summary, MMS-39, ‘Memorize the meaning of affix and roots’ has a higher use frequency than MMS-40, ‘Memorize parts of speech’ and MMS-38, ‘memorize idioms learnt’. All the
participants might make an attempt to ‘Memorize parts of speech’ (MMS-40) but more would ‘memorize idioms learnt’ (MMS-38) more frequently.

5.6.5 Use of Memory Strategies related to the Study of Word Meaning, Spelling & Sound

The following three memory strategies relate to the study of word meaning, spelling and sound:

Figures 21.9 and 21.10 shows very clearly that MMS-46, ‘Study the sound of a word’ reflects the highest use frequency among these three memory strategies. MMS-45 reflects the most High users (55% participants) and ‘Always’ users (30% participants). In addition, MMS-46 has the least Low users (5% participants) and ‘Never’ users (0% participant). These provide strong evidence that MMS-46, was used by all the participants and it was used more frequently than MMS-35, ‘Study and practise meaning in a group outside’ and MMS-45, ‘Study the spelling of a word’.

Figure 21.9 Participants’ MMS Use Frequency Ranking Related to ‘Study’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>MMS No.</th>
<th>Memory Strategies</th>
<th>Low Users</th>
<th>High Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Study the sound of a word.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Study the spelling of a word.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Study and practise meaning in a group outside of class.</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 1– most frequently used; 5 – least frequently used
Source: Extracted from Figure 21.2.
On the other hand, MMS-35, ‘Study and practise meaning in a group outside’ reflects the least High users (25% participants) and ‘Always’ users (5% participants), and the most Low users (35% participants) and ‘Never’ users (20% participants), providing strong evidence that MMS-35 was the least frequently used and used by fewer participants than MMS-45 and MMS-46.

**Figure 21.10 Participants’ MMS Use Frequency Related to ‘Study’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E. Memory Strategies (MMS)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 Study and practise meaning in a group outside of class.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 Study the spelling of a word.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Study the sound of a word.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:** 0 – Never 1 – Seldom 2 – Sometimes 3 – Often 4 – Usually 5 – Always

5.6.6 Use of Other Memory Strategies

The remaining four memory strategies, MMS-37, ‘Learn idioms from stories’, MMS-41, ‘Group words together within story line’, MMS-42, ‘Image word’s meaning’ and MMS-47, ‘Say new word aloud when studying’, are grouped under ‘Others’. Figures 21.11 and 21.12 show that MMS-42, ‘Image word’s meaning’ reflects the highest use frequency among these four memory strategies MMS-42 reflects the most High users (35%) and the least Low users (5%) and ‘Never’ users (0%), which suggests that all the participants reported using MMS-
42, ‘Image word’s meaning’. In contrast, MMS-41, ‘Group words together within story line’, was found to have the lowest use frequency among these four memory strategies. It has the least High users (15%) and ‘Always’ users (0%), but the most Low users (20%), and 10% of the participants reported ‘Never’ using this strategy.

**Figure 21.11 Participants’ MMS Use Frequency Ranking Related to ‘Others’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>MMS No.</th>
<th>Memory Strategies</th>
<th>Low Users</th>
<th>High Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Image word’s meaning.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Say new word aloud when studying.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Learn idioms from stories.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Group words together within story line.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key: 1 – most frequently used; 5 – least frequently used*

*Source: Extracted from Figure 21.2.*

MMS-37 and MMS-41 had more ‘Never’ users than MMS-42 and MMS-47 (see Figure 21.12) providing the evidence that more participants reported using MMS-42 and MMS-47 than MMS-37 and MMS-41. In summary, among these four memory strategies, MMS-42, ‘Image word’s meaning’, has the highest use frequency and MMS-41, ‘Group words together within story line’, the lowest. Memory strategies related to imaging word’s meaning (MMS-42) and saying ‘new word aloud when studying’ (MMS-47) were found to be more frequently used by this group of Chinese ESL learners than those memory strategies used for learning idioms from stories (MMS-37) and grouping ‘words together within story line’ (MMS-41).

**Figure 21.12 Participants’ MMS Use Frequency Related to ‘Others’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E. Memory Strategies (MMS)</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 Learn idioms from stories.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 Group words together within story line.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 Image word’s meaning.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 Say new word aloud when studying.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key: 0 – Never    1 – Seldom    2 – Sometimes    3 – Often    4 – Usually    5 – Always*

*Source: Extracted from Figure 21.*
5.6.7 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Reported MMS Use Frequency

The following discussion relates to Research Question 2 in terms of the participants’ reported MMS use frequency. The analysis shows that a greater percentage of the participants were medium MMS users and there were more high MMS users than low MMS users. The more popularly used memory strategies among the participants were found to relate more to personal experience, the study of meaning, spelling and sound of the word, word and image associations, and idioms. The Chinese ESL learners in this study apparently might make more effort in memorizing idioms, affix and meanings but not in memorizing the parts of speech\(^{20}\). The reason could be due to their preference to memorize words and idioms that contain specific meanings than to memorize ‘parts of speech’ which may not have specific meanings that the participants could relate to. The Chinese and English languages are totally different phonologically, linguistically and grammatically, hence, it could be relatively difficult for Chinese ESL learners to relate the ‘parts of speech’ in the English language to their Chinese language, especially in terms of word transformation (see footnote). There is also a higher use frequency for memory strategies that require them to connect new vocabulary to ‘already known words’ or to ‘their personal experience’ than to associate new vocabulary ‘with its coordinates’ or ‘connect the word list to its synonyms and antonyms’.

The less frequently used memory strategies were found to be those that require the use of word association/connection to already known words or antonyms and synonyms, use of

\(^{20}\) In the Chinese language, there is no change to the Chinese word regardless of the part of speech it occurs in. For e.g., the Chinese word for poison, 毒【dú】.

(Active Verb) 毒死【dúsǐ】 kill with poison; poison.

(Passive Verb) 中毒【zhōngdú】 be poisoned (usu. accidentally); poisoning, toxicosis.

(Adj.) 毒计【dújì】 venomous scheme; deadly trap.

(Noun) 消毒【xiāodú】 disinfect; sterilize;

Source: NJstar Chinese WP
semantic maps, rhymes/stories, and studying/practising meaning in a group outside class time. The MMS use frequency for ‘memorizing idioms learnt’ and using ‘Keyword Method’ was higher than for ‘learning idioms from stories’ or using ‘semantic map’. Perhaps this could raise the awareness of ESL instructors and vocabulary curriculum developers of the Chinese learners’ low use of rhymes and stories to learn new vocabulary or idioms, which might be due to their limited vocabulary range and insufficient vocabulary knowledge. Most of the participants in this study indicate that they did not read extensively beyond their language textbooks. As mentioned in Chapter 2 of this study, there is the vicious cycle of not reading extensively due to the lack of vocabulary knowledge, and the inevitable outcome of the learners’ insufficient reading is the limitation of vocabulary range and insufficient vocabulary range. Two pedagogical implications to draw from here are firstly, to encourage learners to read more extensively, and teaching learners to group words with the storyline as well as learning new vocabulary and idioms from stories. Secondly, it is to raise the awareness in ESL learners of the importance of understanding parts of speech besides understanding affix and roots.

5.7 Participants’ Reported Cognitive Strategy Use Frequency

Eight strategies are listed in the Cognitive strategy (CoS) category in Section F of the questionnaire to examine the participants’ reported CoS use frequency of ‘putting English labels on physical objects’, ‘using the vocabulary section in textbook’, ‘keeping a vocabulary notebook’, ‘verbal/written repetition’, ‘note-taking’, ‘writing a wordlist of new words learnt’ and ‘paraphrasing the word’s meaning without help from others’. Cognitive strategies are strategies used to practise and repeat new words; deduce reasoning, translate, analyze, take notes, highlight and summarize (Oxford, 1990), and they are used for getting ideas quickly and for transferring information. Liu’s (2010, p. 160) study demonstrated that ‘oral and
written repetition’, was a popular vocabulary learning strategies with his Chinese participants whilst ‘repeating article content that includes the new word learned’ was one of their least used vocabulary learning strategies. Figure 22 shows the participants’ reported use frequency of the eight cognitive strategies listed in the questionnaire. The numbering of the cognitive strategies used in the analysis follows the numbering given in the questionnaire for easy cross referencing.

Figure 22  Participants’ CoS Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F. Cognitive Strategies</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 Use the vocabulary section in your textbook.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 Put English labels on physical objects.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 Keep a vocabulary notebook.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 Do a verbal repetition.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 Do written repetition.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 Take notes in class.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 Write your own wordlist of new words.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57 Paraphrase the word’s meaning by yourself.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of CoS Users</strong></td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 0 – Never  1 – Seldom  2 – Sometimes  3 – Often  4 – Usually  5 – Always

Figure 22 shows that there are more Medium CoS users (48.1%) than High CoS users (34.4%) and Low Cos users (17.5%) among the participants and 82.5% of the participants reported using cognitive strategies at least 40% of the time (i.e., ‘Sometimes’, ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’). Only 6.9% participants reported to ‘Never’ use some of the cognitive strategies, suggesting that cognitive strategies are used relatively frequently by almost all the participants. Figure 22.1 show more specifically which of the eight cognitive strategies are reported to be used more frequently by the participants in terms of High, Medium and Low CoS use frequency.
5.7.1 Participants’ CoS Use Ranking

Figures 22 and 22.1 show that among the eight cognitive strategies, ‘Take notes in class’ (CoS-55) has the most High users (75% participants), ‘Always’ users (25% participants), and ‘Often’ users (50% participants). In addition, there are no Low CoS-55 users, providing the evidence that all the participants reported ‘taking notes in class’ (CoS-55) at least 40% of the time (i.e., ‘Sometimes’, ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’). Hence, CoS-55, ‘Take notes in class’ is ranked the CoS most frequently reported to be used by the participants.

In contrast, CoS-51, ‘Put English labels on physical objects’, has the least High users (5%) and 0% ‘Always’ users, but the most Low users (45% participants) and ‘Never’ users (15% participants). These provide evidence of the participants’ low use frequency of CoS-51 as only 55% participants reported using this strategy, ‘Put English labels on physical objects’, at least 40% of the time (i.e., ‘Sometimes’, ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’). Hence, CoS-51, ‘Put English labels on physical objects’, is ranked the least frequently used by the participants among the eight cognitive strategies. With reference to Figures 22 and 22.1, the participants’ reported CoS use frequency can be ranked as shown in Figure 22.2.
Four other cognitive strategies with higher use frequency than the others are CoS-50, ‘Use the vocabulary section in your textbook’, CoS-56, ‘Write your own wordlist of new words’, CoS-57, ‘Paraphrase the word’s meaning by yourself’ and CoS-54, ‘Do a written repetition’. They ranked second to fifth respectively in terms of participants’ CoS use frequency (see Figure 22.2). Among these four cognitive strategies all the participants reported using the ‘vocabulary section in their textbook’ (CoS-50). On the other hand, CoS-54 reflects 10% ‘Never’ users, and both CoS-56 and CoS-57 reflect 5% ‘Never’ users, providing the evidence that the use of the ‘vocabulary section in their textbook’ (CoS-50) was used by more participants than the other three cognitive strategies. Among the three cognitive strategies (CoS-54, CoS-56 and CoS-57), there are also more CoS-56 and CoS-57 users than CoS-54 users. In addition, there are more High CoS-56 and CoS-57 users than CoS-54 providing the evidence that ‘Do a written repetition’ (CoS-54) is used less frequently than the other three cognitive strategies, ‘Use the vocabulary section in your textbook’ (CoS-50), ‘Write your own wordlist of new words’ (CoS-56), and ‘Paraphrase the word’s meaning’ (CoS-57).
The remaining two cognitive strategies, CoS-52, ‘Keep a vocabulary notebook’, and CoS-53, ‘Do a verbal repetition’, ranked sixth and seventh respectively in terms of participants’ CsS use frequency (see Figure 22.3). Between these two cognitive strategies, the participants’ use frequency of CoS-53 is slightly higher than that of CoS-52. Both CoS-52 and CoS-53 reflect 10% ‘Never’ users but there were 20% more High CoS-53 users than CoS-52 users, and 5% more participants reported using CoS-53 at least 60% of the time (i.e., ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’) than CoS-52. Hence, CoS-52, ‘Keep a vocabulary notebook’, and CoS-53, ‘Do a verbal repetition’, were respectively the participants’ second and third least frequently used cognitive strategies after CoS-51, ‘Put English labels on physical objects’ (the least frequently used cognitive strategy).

### 5.7.2 Comparison of Participants’ Use Frequency: Verbal and Written Repetition

Contrary to Liu’s (2010, p. 160) findings which demonstrated that ‘oral repetition’ and ‘written repetition’ are some of her Chinese college student participants’ popularly used vocabulary learning strategies, these two cognitive strategies were not as popularly used among the Chinese ESL participants in the current study as other cognitive strategies, such as ‘taking notes’, ‘using their textbook’s vocabulary section’, ‘writing their own wordlist of new words’ and ‘paraphrasing the word’s meaning themselves’. This suggests that among the participants in the current study, ‘repetition’ strategies were not as popularly used as other cognitive strategies that encourage autonomous and self-initiated learning. These findings are consistent with the findings in Chapter 3 on their VLS category use, which demonstrate the participants’ higher use frequency for strategies that encourage autonomous and self-initiated learning such as the metacognitive regulation strategies than other strategies (apart from translation strategy).
Comparing the participants’ reported use frequency for verbal (CoS-53) and written (CoS-54) repetition strategies (see Figure 22.3), both strategies reflect the same percentage of High users (30% participants) and ‘Never’ users (10% participants). However, CoS-54 reflects more Medium users and fewer Low users than CoS-53 users, and 15% less Low CoS-54 users than Low CoS-53 users, providing the evidence that CoS-54, ‘Do a written repetition’ was used slightly more frequently than CoS-53, ‘Do a verbal repetition’.

### 5.7.3 Comparison of Participants’ Use Frequency: ‘Keeping Vocabulary Notebook’ and ‘Using Vocabulary Section’

Keeping a vocabulary notebook is not only greatly encouraged but is also an essential requirement in most ESL classes. This strategy is believed to enhance vocabulary learning and increase vocabulary knowledge. However, this study reveals that ‘Keep a vocabulary notebook’ (CoS-52), is the second least frequently used cognitive strategy among the eight cognitive strategies (see Figure 22.2). Between ‘Use the vocabulary section in your textbook’ (CoS-50) and ‘Keep a vocabulary notebook’ (CoS-52), the use of the ‘vocabulary section in their textbook’ has a higher use frequency than keeping ‘a vocabulary notebook’.

Figure 22.4 shows that while CoS-50 and CoS-52 reflect the same percentage of Medium users (55% participants), there are 25% more High CoS-50 users than High CoS-52 users,
and 25% less Low CoS-50 users than Low CoS-52 users, suggesting the higher use frequency of ‘Use the vocabulary section in your textbook’ (CoS-50) than ‘Keep a vocabulary notebook’ (CoS-52). In addition, Figure 22.4 shows that 100% of the participants reported ‘using the vocabulary section in their textbook’ whereas 10% of the participants reported that they ‘Never’ ‘keep a vocabulary notebook’, which provides the evidence more used the vocabulary section in their textbook (CoS-50), than keep a vocabulary notebook (CoS-52). This finding reveals that although keeping a vocabulary notebook is one of the basic requirements for most ESL classes, it was the second least frequently used cognitive strategy among the eight cognitive strategies in terms of the participants’ reported CoS use frequency.

Figure 22.4  Comparison of Participants’ Reported CoS-50 and CoS-52 Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F. Cognitive Strategies</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Terms Of Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 Use the vocabulary section in your textbook.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 Keep a vocabulary notebook.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 0 – Never   1 – Seldom   2 – Sometimes   3 – Often   4 – Usually   5 – Always
Source: Extracted from Figure 22.

5.7.4  Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Reported CoS Use Frequency

The following discussion relates to Research Question 2 in terms of the participants’ CoS use frequency. The analysis of the participants’ CoS use frequency reveals that ‘Take notes in class’ and ‘Put English labels on physical objects’ were the participants’ most frequently and least frequently used cognitive strategies respectively. One possible reason for CoS-51, ‘Put English labels on physical objects’, to be the participants’ least frequently used cognitive strategy could be that their English language proficiency level was higher than beginner level and their learning motivation was to enter a university in Australia. Hence, putting English
label on physical objects was not only childish to them but also insufficient since it was essential for them to acquire a wider range of vocabulary for their English language learning than beginner ESL learners.

The participants demonstrated a higher use frequency for cognitive strategies that encourage more autonomous and self-initiated learning, such as ‘taking notes in class’, ‘using the vocabulary section in their textbook’, ‘writing their own wordlist’, ‘paraphrasing word meaning’, than for ‘repetition’ strategies (such as doing a ‘written repetition’ and ‘verbal repetition’), ‘keeping a vocabulary notebook’ and ‘putting English labels on physical objects’. These findings are consistent with the previous sections’ findings on the participants’ reported use frequency related to the SS use (section 5.4) and DS use (section 5.5), and reinforce the findings on the participants’ greater higher use frequency for vocabulary learning strategies that encourage autonomous and self-initiated learning than those for mechanical learning or asking another person for assistance. These findings show that the participants have a higher use frequency for MRS category, ‘making their own wordlist’ (CoS-56), ‘paraphrasing the word’s meaning themselves’ (CoS-57) than using ‘teacher-made word list’ (DS-30), and asking their ‘tutor/learning support teacher/classmate for a paraphrase or synonym’ (SS-21). Some studies (e.g., Gu & Johnson, 1996; Stoffer, 1995) have demonstrated that learners who use strategies that encourage autonomous and self-initiated learning are more successful language and vocabulary learners than those who use repetition strategies frequently, especially when the repetition strategies are used without understanding.

The participants’ low use frequency for ‘keeping a vocabulary notebook’ (CoS-52) is a significant revelation to me. The use of the ‘vocabulary section in their textbook’ was more
popularly used by the participants than ‘keeping a vocabulary notebook’. The vocabulary section in their textbook could be more useful to the learners as the words in the vocabulary section were more likely to relate to what they were learning from the textbook. Most ESL instructors, including the researcher, will encourage their learners to keep a vocabulary notebook, believing that this strategy will enhance their vocabulary learning and increase their vocabulary knowledge. These findings demonstrate that CoS-52, ‘keeping a vocabulary notebook’, may not be meaningful or useful to our learners if it is only keeping a record of the words and meaning learnt. During the interview, one of the participants mentioned that keeping a vocabulary notebook was not really useful to her as she would forget whatever she had written in her vocabulary notebook, especially since she did not refer to the notebook. Another participant mentioned that he preferred making his own list of words and meaning on papers than keeping a vocabulary notebook based on words recommended by the instructor. These findings revealed that ‘keeping a vocabulary notebook’ was not by choice but a cognitive strategy that could be imposed on the learners.

One pedagogical implication here could be to determine the importance and the rationale of getting the ESL learners to keep a vocabulary notebook. Vocabulary notebook can be helpful for students to observe their vocabulary progress but it is not enough for instructors to simply impose the rule of keeping a vocabulary notebook without providing guidelines or the rationale for keeping a vocabulary notebook. This strategy will be more meaningful to their ESL learners if they have a say in the words to be included in the vocabulary notebook and if the words are relevant to their studies and every day routines.
5.8 Translation Strategy Use Frequency

Figure 23 reflects the participants’ reported use frequency of this translation strategy, TS-58, ‘Write meaning of new words in your native language’. All the participants reported using TS-58, ‘Write meaning of new words in your native language’ and there are no Low TS-58 users. 45% of the participants reported ‘Always’ using it. 95% of the participants reported using it at least 60% of the time (i.e., ‘Often’, ‘Usually’ or ‘Always’) and only 5% of the participants reported using this strategy ‘Sometimes’. These suggest the high frequency use of TS-58, ‘Write meaning of new words in your native language’ by most of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G. TRANSLATION STRATEGY (TS)</th>
<th>No. of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use *Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58 Write meaning of new words in your native language.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percentage of TS Users</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key: 0– Never 1 – Seldom 2– Sometimes 3 – Often 4 – Usually 5 – Always

5.8.1 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Reported TS Use

With reference to Research Question 2 about the participants’ VLS selection and use, the findings show that this strategy, TS-58, ‘Write meaning of new words in your native language’, is the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategy among the fifty eight vocabulary learning strategies used by this group of Chinese ESL learners. It is a strategy popularly used by second language and foreign language learners, especially if the language is learnt after the acquisition of the writing system of their first language. The researcher’s native language is Foochow, and the researcher picked up Cantonese and Hokkien from her neighbours as a young child. the researcher can speak these three Chinese languages at least at the basolectal level. The researcher did not make use of the Translation strategy, ‘Write meaning of new words in your native language’, when the researcher was learning both English and Chinese (i.e., Mandarin) simultaneously in school as academic subjects. Neither did the researcher translate English and Mandarin into the researcher’s native

21Translation Strategy (TS-58)
the researcher’s personal learning of a foreign language, Japanese, as an academic subject at
tertiary level in the researcher’s adulthood, the researcher questions the effectiveness of this
strategy on vocabulary learning (see footnote). the researcher ‘always’ used this translation
strategy when the researcher was learning Japanese but due to insufficient exposure and lack
of practice, the researcher has forgotten most of the Japanese vocabulary she had learnt,
phenomenon which some of the participants were facing in their English language learning.
The pedagogical implication here is to encourage learners to supplement this translation
strategy, ‘Write meaning of new words in your native language’ (TS-58), with greater
exposure and practice of the vocabulary learnt.

5.9 Participants’ VLS Category Use Frequency

Figure 24 shows an overview of the participants’ reported use frequency of the seven VLS
categories in terms of:

a. High users

b. Medium users

c. Low users

*These percentages of participants’ VLS use frequency are taken from Figures 17, 18, 19, 20,
21, 22 and 23. They are the consolidated percentages of High, Medium and Low users of the
seven VLS categories listed in the questionnaire.
Figure 24  Overview of Participants’ VLS Category Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VLS Categories</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use *Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A MRS</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B MS</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C SS</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D DS</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E MMS</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F CoS</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G TS</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: 0–Never  1–Seldom  2–Sometimes  3–Often  4–Usually  5–Always  
Source: From Participants’ Reported Use Frequency in Sections 5.6.2 to 5.6.8.

Based on the data in Figure 24, Figure 24.1 illustrates the ranking of the participants’ VLS category use frequency and the percentage of the high, medium and low users in each VLS category. Figure 24.1 helps to determine which VLS categories were used more frequently than others by the participants.

5.9.1 Participants’ VLS Category Use Frequency Ranking

Figures 24 and 24.1 show that among the seven VLS categories, the TS category reflects the highest percentage of High users (70%) and ‘Always’ (45%) users whereas the SS category reflects the highest percentage of Low (41.8%) and ‘Never’ (21.9%) users, thus providing the evidence that TS was used by all the participants and used more frequently than all the other Vocabulary learning strategies. On the other hand, the SS category was reported to be used fewer participants and less frequently than the other VLS categories.

Figure 24.1 shows that, in terms of the total percentage of the participants’ High+Medium VLS category use frequency, the Translation (100%), Metacognitive Regulation (93%), memory (89.4%) and Cognitive (82.5%) strategy categories reflect higher use frequency than
the Determination (78.4%), Metacognitive (78.4%) and Social (58.8%) strategy categories. In terms of ‘High + Medium’ users, the Determination and Metacognitive strategy categories reflect the same percentage of users (78.4%) but the DS category has more High users (39.2%) than the MS category (22.5%), suggesting that the DS category has a higher use frequency than the MS category.

5.9.2 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ VLS Category Use Frequency

The findings of the participants’ VLS category use relate to Research Question (RQ) 2 of this study, ‘Which vocabulary learning strategies were more frequently reported to be used by the twenty Chinese ESL learners learn new English vocabulary?’ The Translation strategy category was found to be the participants’ most frequently used VLS category, and the Social strategy category the least frequently used VLS category among the seven VLS categories. The analysis of the participants’ VLS category use frequency reveals that the a
Translation, Metacognitive Regulation, Memory and Cognitive strategy categories reflect a higher use frequency than the Metacognitive, Determination and Social strategy categories. The findings on the participants’ high MRS use frequency concurs with the findings of Gu and Johnson’s (1996) study which provided evidence of their participants’ high use for metacognitive regulation strategies, which encourage autonomous and self-initiated learning. These strategies are found to be associated with more successful vocabulary learners. The participants’ high MMS use frequency and low SS use frequency confirm the findings of studies, such as AMEPRC (2005), Chamot (2004), Lengkanawati (2003), Griffith (2003), Merrifield (1996), Oxford (1993) Lee (1976) and others, which claimed that some Chinese learners show low preference for social strategies such as asking questions or talking to people of authority who are dominant figures in the family and the education system (e.g., parents and teachers). On the other hand, the findings on the participants’ low MS use frequency differs from that reported by the Chinese participants in a number of studies (e.g., Wu and Wang, 1998; Gu & Johnson, 1996) which demonstrated that their Chinese EFL learners were active strategy users who employ a variety of vocabulary learning strategies, especially metacognitive strategies. The participants in the current study demonstrated a low MS use frequency, which was ranked among the bottom three in terms of their VLS category use frequency, concur more with the study by Zhao (2009) whose Chinese college participants were found to rarely use the metacognitive strategies in their vocabulary learning. Graham (1997, cited in Rasekh, 2003) believed that Metacognitive strategies, which enable students to plan, control, and evaluate their learning, have the most central role to play in learning, and these strategies are included as strategies used more often by successful learners (Griffith, 2003; Green and Oxford, 1995). Zhao’s (2009) study demonstrated the effectiveness of Metacognitive strategy instruction on increasing the learner’s vocabulary knowledge, that is, Zhao’s participants’ vocabulary learning showed improvement after they
were given metacognitive strategy instruction. Hence, one pedagogical recommendation is to provide low metacognitive strategy users with metacognitive strategy instruction to help them plan, control and evaluate their vocabulary learning. This will provide them with a greater variety of vocabulary learning strategies than what they were using.

5.10 Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

Figure 24 summarizes the participants’ most and least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies as reported in the questionnaire survey. The following discussion relates to Research Question 2 of this study, ‘Which vocabulary learning strategies did the twenty Chinese ESL learners report to use more frequently to learn new English vocabulary?’ The Translation strategy category was found to be the participants’ most frequently used VLS category and the Social strategy category, the least frequently used VLS category.

| Participants’ Most & Least Frequently Used Vocabulary Learning Strategies |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Types of Vocabulary Learning Strategies | Most Frequently Used | Least Frequently Used |
| VLS Categories | Translation strategy category | Social strategy category |
| A. Metacognitive Regulation | Find out the meaning of words I’m interested in. (MRS-1) | Read other English books besides textbook (MRS-3) |
| B Metacognitive | Listen to English songs. (MS-9) | Listen to a tape of word lists. (MS-6) |
| C Social | Learn by group work in class. (SS-18) | Ask family members for translation into native language. (SS-22) |
| D Determination | Use a thesaurus. (DS-26) | Use a picture dictionary. (DS-27) |
| E Memory | Image word’s meaning. (MMS-42) | Study and practise meaning in a group outside of class. (MMS-35) and Use rhymes to remember new words. (MMS-43) |
| F Cognitive | Take notes in class. (CoS-55) | Put English labels on physical objects. (CoS-51) |
| G Translation | Write meaning of new words in your native language. (TS-58)” | |
Figure 25 lists the most and least frequently used strategies in each VLS category. The findings show that the Translation, Metacognitive Regulation, Memory and Cognitive categories have a higher use frequency than the Metacognitive, Determination and Social strategy categories. The Chinese ESL participants’ high MRS and MMS use and low SS use concur with the findings of previous studies such as Gu and Johnson (1996), AMEPRC (2005), Chamot (2004), Lengkanawati (2003), Griffith (2003), Merrifield (1996), Oxford (1993), Lee (1976) and others. The participants’ low MS use differs from the findings of studies (such as Wu and Wang, 1998; and Gu and Johnson, 1996) which demonstrated the high MS use of Chinese learners’. However, it concurs with Zhao’s (2009) study which demonstrated the low MS use of the Chinese college EFL participants. The learners’ low MS use is an area of concern as metacognitive strategies are believed to aid learners in planning, controlling and evaluating their learning more effectively and are used more frequently by successful learners. Zhao’s study (2009) provided evidence that the learners’ vocabulary learning improved after metacognitive strategy instruction was given. One pedagogical implication would be for ESL instructors to include Metacognitive strategy instruction in their vocabulary teaching to help learners with low MS use to evaluate, plan and organize their vocabulary learning in a more effective manner.

Strategies that encourage autonomous and self-initiated learning were more popularly used among the participants in the current study than those for mechanical learning and repetition strategies. Autonomous and self-initiated learning strategies such as the metacognitive regulation strategies, ‘making notes’, ‘taking notes in class’, ‘making their own wordlist’, ‘paraphrasing word meaning’ themselves’ were more frequently reported to be used than strategies such as ‘listening to tape of word-list’ or ‘using teacher’s word-list’, or ‘asking family members’ for assistance in translation and paraphrasing word meaning.
In terms of the participants’ MRS use, metacognitive regulation strategies that relate to the learners ‘finding out the meanings they are interested in’ and ‘making notes of words important to them’ were more frequently used than those that relate to vocabulary that they are not sure of or not interested in. The low use frequency for ‘reading other English books besides their textbook’, might be one of the reasons for some the participants’ insufficient English vocabulary knowledge. This is another area of concern as studies have shown the close relationship between vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension and reading (see section 2.2). The participants’ VLS use reports also revealed that they were more textbook-based and more interested in learning words that are relevant, meaningful and useful to them. These support the evidence of their low use of strategies that encourage them to read other English books besides their textbook, which is further confirmed by their more frequent use of the ‘vocabulary section in their textbook’ than ‘maintaining a vocabulary notebook’. The pedagogical recommendation for ESL instructor here is to include more activities to encourage learners to read more English books besides their textbooks, as reading extensively is one constructive way to increase a learner’s vocabulary knowledge.

In terms of the participants’ MS use, metacognitive strategies that involve watching (such as ‘watching’ an English TV program and English video) and writing (e.g. ‘Write meaning of new words in English’) reflected a higher use frequency than Metacognitive strategies that involve listening or practice. ESL instructors could consider the great potential of using movie/video clips as vocabulary teaching tools and vocabulary learning aides. The findings show a higher use frequency among the participants for ‘listening to English songs’, reading online newspapers articles and news, and ‘skipping difficult English words’, than for listening to a ‘tape of word-lists’ or to an ‘English radio program’, hard copy newspapers/news articles and ‘skipping difficult English idioms’.
In terms of the participants’ SS and DS use, social strategies that involve their classmates and friends, working with peer groups such as doing ‘group work’ and ‘pair work in class’, ‘practising with friends’, and ‘asking somebody to paraphrase for them’ reflected a higher use frequency than those that involve their family members and teachers, such as ‘asking for translation’ from their teachers, friends or family. ESL instructors could consider including more group/pair work activities to enhance vocabulary learning through teamwork and discussion. Determination strategies such as using ‘a thesaurus’, a ‘bilingual dictionary’ and ‘guessing from textual context in reading’ than using ‘a monolingual dictionary’, ‘a picture dictionary’ or ‘a teacher-made word-list’. The participants’ high use of ‘the bilingual dictionary’ and low use of ‘the monolingual dictionary’ concur with the findings of Liu’s (2010) study.

In terms of the participants’ MMS use, ‘Use of Keyword Method’ and memory strategies that relate to ‘personal experiences’, ‘the study of meaning’, ‘spelling and sound of the word’, ‘word and image associations’, and ‘memorizing idioms, affix and idioms’ were found to have a higher frequency than the ‘use of semantic maps, rhymes/stories’ and memory strategies that relate to ‘parts of speech’ and those that require them to associate/connect target words with ‘its coordinates’, or with ‘antonyms/synonyms’. The participants also demonstrated a low MMS use frequency for ‘studying/practising meaning in a group outside class time’. Their low use frequency for memory strategies, such as ‘rhymes’ and ‘semantic maps’, could be related to their limited vocabulary range and insufficient vocabulary knowledge, especially since most of them reported that they did not read extensively beyond their language textbooks.

In terms of the participants’ CoS and TS use, cognitive strategies that encourage more autonomous and self-initiated learning, such as ‘taking notes in class’, ‘using the vocabulary
section in their textbook’, ‘writing their own wordlist’, ‘paraphrasing word meaning’ were found to have a higher use frequency than the use frequency for written and verbal repetition strategies, and ‘keeping a vocabulary notebook’ and ‘putting English labels on physical objects’. Their high use of cognitive strategies that encourage autonomous and self-initiated learning is consistent with their strategy use frequency in the MRS, SS and DS, and reinforce the findings on the participants’ higher use frequency for autonomous and self-initiated learning as well as for making their personal wordlist of words that are interesting and meaningful to them than for mechanical learning, asking another person for assistance, listening to tapes of word-lists or using teacher-made wordlists. The pedagogical implication here could be to reduce the use of wordlist in vocabulary teaching and increase the teaching of vocabulary that is more relevant, meaningful and interesting to the learners in their daily routine. The higher frequency of using ‘the vocabulary section in their textbook’ than keeping ‘a vocabulary notebook’ provides another evidence of their textbook based learning. The translation strategy, ‘Write meaning of new words in your native language’ was revealed to have the highest use frequency among all the vocabulary learning strategies.

**Follow Up**  After finding out more about the participants’ VLS use, this study went a step further to investigate what vocabulary learning strategies were used to perform a reading vocabulary task and how effective these were in helping the participants to deduce word meanings, and this will be discussed in greater details in Chapter 6.
6. READING VOCABULARY TASK

6.1 Analysis of Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used in the Reading Vocabulary Task

As part of the research study, the participants were required to perform one reading vocabulary task, to enable the researcher to observe the participants’ use of strategies to work out the meaning of eight vocabulary items selected from a reading passage by the researcher. The selected reading text below is an extract from *New Cutting Edge: Upper Intermediate* (Cunningham & Moor, 2007, p. 118).

### Reading Passage for Vocabulary Task

Until 1988, Cindy Jackson was just an ordinary-looking (1) **farm girl** from Ohio in the United States. Then, on inheriting some money from her father, she decided to (2) **re-invent** herself through cosmetic surgery. She spent $100,000 on (3) **face-lifts**, nose jobs, chin reductions, (4) **implants** and (5) **liposuction** to remove fat from her knees, thighs and waistline. “I wanted to be Barbie,” says the forty-eight year old. ‘Now I am.’ She now runs a business in London advising other people on cosmetic surgery. She has written two books, and has made a video about her life and (6) **transformation**.

“Twenty years ago, I didn’t exist,” she says. “Now life is more than I ever dreamed it would be. But I have worked very hard for everything. Having said that, I’m not interested in (7) **designer clothes** – with the right face and body you can look good in anything. I live very (8) **modestly**. I have a flat in London, a second-hand Mercedes and three adorable cats. I value my friends and family far above material things. Anyone who criticizes my choices probably has way to much time on their hands and not nearly enough fulfillment in their own personal lives.

*Source: New Cutting Edge: Upper Intermediate* (Cunningham & Moor, 2007, p. 118)

This study is not a test of the participants’ vocabulary knowledge but an investigation into how the participants deduced the meaning of unfamiliar words and what strategies were used to work out the word meanings, hence, it is imperative that the selected text should not contain too many ‘difficult’ words or unfamiliar words to the participants. The selection of the text and eight vocabulary items (see Figure 26) were based mainly on the researcher’s

---

22 Difficult: i.e., difficult to work out the meaning of the words
experience as an ESL instructor and her familiarity with the participants’ English Language proficiency level.

Great effort was made to ensure firstly, that the theme of the text was something familiar and interesting to the participants, and secondly, the selected vocabulary items ranged from the more familiar to the less familiar words. This text was selected as the theme of plastic surgery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vocabulary Item</th>
<th>Parts of Speech</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>farm girl</td>
<td>*Adj + Noun phrase (&quot;Noun used as an adj)</td>
<td>First sentence of the 2-paragraph text, ‘Until 1988, Cindy Jackson was just an ordinary-looking farm girl from Ohio in the United States.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>re-invent</td>
<td>Prefix + verb</td>
<td>Second sentence of paragraph 1, ‘Then, on inheriting some money from her father, she decided to re-invent herself through cosmetic surgery.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3</td>
<td>face-lifts</td>
<td>Noun Phrase</td>
<td>Second-third sentences of paragraph 1, ‘She spent $100,000 on face-lifts, nose jobs…’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4</td>
<td>implants</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>Second-third sentences of paragraph 1, ‘She spent $100,000 on face-lifts, nose jobs, chin reductions, implants and liposuction to remove fat from her knees, thighs and waistline.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5</td>
<td>liposuction</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>The same sentence as vocabulary items 3 (‘facelifts’) and 4 (‘implants’), ‘She spent $100,000 on face-lifts, nose jobs, chin reductions, implants and liposuction to remove fat from her knees, thighs and waistline.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6</td>
<td>transformation</td>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>Last sentence of paragraph 1, ‘She has written two books, and has made a video about her life and transformation.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7</td>
<td>designer clothes</td>
<td>*Adj + Noun phrase (&quot;Noun used as an adj)</td>
<td>Second line of paragraph 2, ‘I’m not interested in designer clothes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8</td>
<td>modestly</td>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>Third line of paragraph 2, ‘I live very modestly.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: New Cutting Edge: Upper Intermediate (Cunningham & Moor, 2007, p. 118)*
would be familiar to the participants, and the extract of two paragraphs provided clues to what the main theme was about, that is, ‘Cindy Jackson’ and ‘cosmetic surgery’. Nonetheless, the outcome of the vocabulary task would be unpredictable as the vocabulary knowledge of individual participants was varied. This is one of the challenges of this inductive research investigation. The participants’ performance of the reading vocabulary task was audio/video-taped, and subsequently transcribed and translated by the researcher. The participants had the choice to think aloud/discuss with their partner/s in either English or any of the Chinese languages they felt comfortable in using to complete the vocabulary task. All of them chose to communicate more in Mandarin, though some English words were used occasionally in their think-alouds /verbal interactions with one another.

The participants were given the option to perform the vocabulary task individually, in pairs or in threes. Four participants performed the task individually23, ten participants worked in pairs24, and six participants worked in threes25. The grouping of the participants was of the participants’ choice. Though having three different conditions of groupings had increased the researcher’s difficulty in analyzing the data and reporting the findings, the participants working together in pairs or threes allowed the researcher to examine the participants’ social strategy use besides their vocabulary strategy use. The discussion strategy was a good alternative to the individuals’ think-alouds, as their verbal interaction was an insight into their thinking process as they worked together to deduce the word meaning/s. Studies have provided evidence that group work and cooperative learning can help to promote “active processing of information and cross modeling/imitation” and the social context enhances the participants’ motivation (Schmitt, 1997, p. 211).

23 Individual work: Tian, Jake, Ann & Dale;
24 In pairs: Jo & Ed; Ce & Luke; Ming & Gail; Hua & Lin; Zhen & Zhen;
25 In threes: Yun, Hao & Ping; Mark, Jing & P19-Wen
This part of the analysis examines:

- the main vocabulary (learning) strategies used to guess or deduce the meaning of the eight vocabulary items in the reading vocabulary task.

- the social strategies used by those in pairs and in threes to guess or deduce the meaning of the eight vocabulary items in the reading vocabulary task.

This part of the analysis is crucial to the research study on VLS use and vocabulary learning. Besides revealing what vocabulary learning strategies were used to work out the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary, it could also provide a deeper insight into why the meaning of certain English vocabulary items is more difficult for learners to guess or deduce than others. The level of difficulty to guess or deduce the meaning/s of a word could also have a direct influence on VLS use. Words that appear common and ‘easily understood’ to English native speakers may not appear as easy for Chinese ESL learners to understand due to various reasons, such as different cultural connotations, use of words in a part of speech different from what the learners are more familiar with,…etc. The Chinese translation and suggested answers for the eight researcher-selected vocabulary items in the reading vocabulary task are given in Appendix 5A, Figure 5A. This was used only as a guide. Other similar answers, definitions and explanations given by the participants were accepted. For a sample of the participants’ Think-alouds/Verbal Interactions with one another to work out the word meaning for V1, ‘farm girl’, see Appendix 5B, Figure 5B.

To maintain the consistency of terminology used in this project, the term, ‘vocabulary learning strategy/strategies’, used in this part of the analysis include the strategies used to guess or deduce the meaning of the eight researcher-selected vocabulary items. Moir & Nation (2002) also used the term ‘vocabulary learning strategies’ to refer to the strategies their participants used when they performed the vocabulary test in the study. Some readers
might argue that the participants were not learning vocabulary when performing the vocabulary task, and that the strategies used were more ‘guessing strategies’ than vocabulary learning strategies. According to Gu (2003, p. 4), ‘guessing’ is ‘an important part of vocabulary building’. The term ‘Direct translation’ used in the analysis of the participants’ reading vocabulary task performance here is defined as the translation of a vocabulary item in the vocabulary task from English to Chinese without any elaboration provided, and it refers to what the participants believed or guessed was the Chinese equivalent for the English word. Some might argue that ‘direct translation’ is more an indication of the learner’s word knowledge than a vocabulary learning strategy. Direct translation is included here as a vocabulary strategy26 as the participants could be guessing the word meaning based on their personal word knowledge, and some of the ‘word-for-word’ English to Chinese translations given by the participants were incorrect. Thus, learning from their mistakes could lead to vocabulary learning. Hayati’s (2009) study demonstrates that ‘in EFL context, using translation in a communicative framework enhances vocabulary learning at deeper levels of cognitive processing leading to deeper vocabulary gains for unknown words’ (p. 153). Though the use of the Chinese language to understand the unfamiliar English vocabulary was not obvious in the vocabulary task, their attempts to provide the direct translation allowed the researcher to examine whether they understood the word meaning. Direct translation is also included here to compare the number of participants who provided the translation of the vocabulary with those who guessed the meaning using contextual clues.

The findings of the current study reveals that the participants used the following vocabulary learning strategies more frequently than other vocabulary learning strategies:

- direct translation and guessing based on personal word/world knowledge

26 The findings of the participants’ translation use demonstrate the Chinese ESL learners’ difficulty to use the translation strategy to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary due to difference in cognates in English and Chinese languages.
• guessing using contextual clues
• use of word association
• social strategies, e.g.
  ▪ ask questions
  ▪ provide suggestions of word meaning
  ▪ ask for confirmation
  ○ verbal interaction

6.2 Difficulty Level of Vocabulary Items

Before discussing the participants’ vocabulary learning and social strategies used to guess or deduce the word meanings in the reading vocabulary task, an analysis was made to examine the difficulty level of the vocabulary items for the participants, (in terms of the correct answers given). The difficulty level of the vocabulary items refers to participants’ difficulty to guess or deduce the word meaning/s of the eight vocabulary items. Figure 27 illustrates the percentage of participants who gave the correct/right/accepted answers (RA), or wrong answers (WA) or skipped (SK) the word (or gave up after looking for contextual clues). According to Figure 27, the least difficult word to the participants was ‘transformation’ (V6) as all the participants got it right. The second and third least difficult words were ‘face-lifts’ (V3) and ‘farm girl’ (V1) respectively. 70% participants gave the correct meanings for ‘face-lifts’ and 65% participants, for ‘farm girl’.
The two most difficult words for the participants to guess or deduce the meaning/s were ‘implants’ (V4) and ‘designer-clothes’ (V7). None of the participants could guess or deduce their meaning/s correctly. Between the two vocabulary items, ‘implants’ (V4) and ‘designer-clothes’ (V7), the meaning of ‘implants’ was apparently more ‘difficult’ to guess than that of ‘designer-clothes’ as 35% participants skipped or gave up guessing the meaning for ‘implants’ whilst only 5% skipped ‘designer-clothes’ after looking for contextual clues. The second most difficult word was ‘modestly’ (V8). Only 20% participants gave the correct meaning/s. The remaining two vocabulary items, ‘re-invent’ (V2) and ‘liposuction’ (V5) were not easy for them to guess/deduce the word meaning either, as less than 50% participants gave the correct word meaning. 45% participants gave the correct meaning for ‘re-invent’ and 40% participants, for ‘liposuction’. The difficulty level of the eight vocabulary items for the participants to guess or deduce the meaning could be ranked in the following order (from the easiest to the most difficult):
The vocabulary item number and the percentage of participants who gave the right or accepted answers (RA) are given within the brackets.

(1 – easiest, 8 – most difficult)

1. transformation (V6, 100% RA)
2. face-lifts (V3, 70% RA)
3. farm girl (V1, 65% RA)
4. re-invent (V2, 55% RA)
5. liposuction (V5, 30% RA)
6. modestly (V8, 25% RA)
7. designer clothes (V7, 0% RA)
8. implants (V4, 0% RA)

The following sub-sections discuss the main vocabulary learning and social strategies the participants were observed to use to guess or deduce the word meaning of the eight vocabulary items. The findings could provide a greater insight into why the participants had difficulty in guessing/deducing the word meaning of some of these vocabulary items.

6.3 Use of Direct Translation and Contextual Clues

The previous analysis of the participants’ VLS use (see section 5.2.1) reveals that among the fifty-eight Vocabulary learning strategies listed in the questionnaire, the Translation strategy was most frequently used by the participants, followed by the use of the dictionary. Since the participants were not allowed to use a dictionary when performing the reading vocabulary task, they had to rely on their vocabulary knowledge, personal world knowledge and/or contextual clues to guess or deduce the word meaning/s of the eight vocabulary items. Schmitt (1977) defined guessing from context as “inferring a word’s meaning form the surrounding words in a written text” (p. 209). Some studies (e.g. Liu, 2010; Wu, 2005; Gu &
Johnson, 1996) show that ‘guessing from textual context’ is among their Taiwanese/Chinese participants more frequently used strategies. The findings of the current study’s participants’ self-reported VLS use in Chapter 5 reinforced their findings as ‘guessing using contextual clues’ was among their top three most frequently used determination strategies. The following analysis of the participants’ use of contextual clues to guess or deduce the word meaning/s could offer a deeper understanding of how and when they used this strategy to help them guess or deduce the meaning of unfamiliar English words and how effective/ineffective this strategy was to them.

Figure 28 illustrates the percentage of participants who used direct translation and those who used contextual clues to guess/deduce the word meaning of the eight vocabulary items. Providing the correct translation suggests that the participants could have prior knowledge of the word meaning. Nonetheless, this study also examines what has helped the learner to learn or ‘know’ the meaning & remember it. For example, some of the participants associated the vocabulary item, ‘transformation’ with the movie, ‘Transformers’, suggesting that the movie title has helped them remember the meaning of ‘transformer’ and they had used this knowledge to apply to the verb form, ‘transform’.

‘RA’ refers to the ‘right’ (that is, correct or accepted) answers given by the participants using various vocabulary learning strategies. ‘CC’ refers to contextual clues and ‘DT’ refers to ‘Direct Translation’. The percentage of right or accepted answers given allows us to examine whether there is a relationship between the ‘difficulty level’ of the vocabulary items and the selection of vocabulary learning strategies used to guess/deduce word meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary. Figure 28 shows that most of the participants would give the direct translation from English to Chinese if they were familiar with the vocabulary items. On the other hand,
the more unfamiliar the vocabulary items, the more frequently they would use contextual clues to guess or work out the meaning of the vocabulary items. For example, the vocabulary item, ‘transformation’ (V6), reflects the highest percentage of the participants giving the right/accepted meanings (100%) and the highest percentage of the participants giving the direct translation (95%) and the lowest percentage of participants using contextual clues (5%).

For vocabulary items (‘transformation’, ‘face-lifts’, ‘farm girl’ & ‘re-invent’) that ranked 1-4 in terms of difficulty level (i.e., first four easiest), there were more participants who gave the direct translation than those who looked for contextual clues. This could suggest a link between the use of direct translation and the familiarity of vocabulary item, that is, the more familiar the vocabulary item is to the Chinese ESL learner, the more frequently direct translation from English to Chinese is used. However, the results for ‘V2’ (‘re-invent’) shows that not all those who gave direct translation provided the accepted answers. 70% of the participants gave the direct translation for ‘re-invent’, 25% looked for contextual clues and
5% gave up but only 55% of the participants gave the accepted answers for ‘re-invent’. Figure 28.1 shows the number of participants who gave the direct translation, as well as those who gave the correct/incorrect translation. These figures do not include those who used contextual clues or skipped/gave up.

![Figure 28.1 Use of Direct Translation](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Items</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 farm girl</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 re-invent</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 face-lifts</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V4 implant</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V5 liposuction</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V6 transformation</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V7 designer clothes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V8 modestly</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, for vocabulary items (‘designer-clothes’, ‘implants’, ‘modestly’ & ‘liposuction’) which ranked 5-8 in terms of difficulty level (i.e., the four most difficult), none of the participants gave the direct translation for these vocabulary items from English to Chinese. Instead, the participants would either look for contextual clues to guess the meaning, skip the word or gave up after looking for contextual clues and could not guess the word meaning. Apparently when the vocabulary item was more difficult to guess or deduce the word meaning even after looking for/at the contextual clues, more participants would skip the word or gave up. For instance, ‘liposuction’ (V5), reflects the highest percentage of participants (95%) using contextual clues to work out the word meaning/s but only 30% of the participants provided the accepted answers for ‘liposuction’. 10% of the participants used contextual clues for ‘farm-girl’ (V1), 25% for ‘re-invent’ (V2) and 30% of the participants used contextual clues to work out the meaning of ‘face-lifts’ (V3). However, more
participants provided the correct answers for these vocabulary items (‘farm-girl’, ‘re-invent’ & ‘face-lifts’) than for ‘implants’, ‘liposuction’, ‘designer clothes’ & ‘modestly’. On the other hand, as mentioned before, ‘transformation’ (V6) reflects the lowest percentage of participants (5%) using contextual clues to work out the word meaning/s but 100% of the participants provided the accepted answers for ‘transformation’. Apparently, the more difficult it is to guess the meaning of a word, the more the participants would look for contextual clues to guess or deduce the word meaning. The findings suggest a link between the use of contextual clues and the difficulty level to guess the word meaning, as well as a link between the use of contextual clues and a learner’s vocabulary knowledge.

6.3.1  **Difficulties Using Contextual Clues to Guess Word Meaning**

The results for V4 (‘implants’) and V8 (‘modestly’) demonstrate that looking for the contextual clues does not always help the learners to guess the correct word meaning. In some instances, explicit context clues were not available. Stahl (1999, p. 27) categorizes contexts as “directive” (provide explicit and detailed information about a word), “generally directive” (provide general information about a word), “nondirective” (provide less information about a word), and “misdirective” (lead to misunderstanding). The following discusses the possible reasons why some vocabulary items were difficult for the participants to use contextual clues to guess their word meaning.

(i)  **Unfamiliarity with Vocabulary Items**

The vocabulary items, ‘implants’ (V4) and ‘modestly’ (V8), show a high percentage of participants using contextual clues to guess the word meanings - 85% and 80% participants respectively. However, none of the participants provided the accepted meanings for ‘implants’ and 30% of the participants gave up after looking for contextual clues. The word,
‘implants’, could be an unfamiliar word to the participants, and most felt that since the theme of the text is on ‘cosmetic surgery’, it could not have anything to do with ‘plants’. Only one participant, Hao, asked whether the word had anything to do with ‘plants’. Since ‘implants’ is used as a noun in the text, the participants were probably thinking more of the noun, ‘plant’ than the verb, ‘plant’ or the idea of ‘planting’, (i.e. putting) something into the body such as the breast or lens implants. (See footnote: The Chinese language has different words for the noun and the verb forms of ‘plant’27.) The participants could also be confused or misled by the surrounding words or what they thought were ‘clues’, such as ‘face-lifts’, ‘liposuction’ and ‘removing fat’. They guessed that ‘implants’ could be a form of plastic or cosmetic surgery but were unsure of what kind of plastic surgery. Clearly, while the contextual clues, ‘remove fat from the thighs’ were directive clues for ‘liposuction’, they were misleading clues for ‘implants’. Hence, without explicit or directive clues, the strategy, ‘guessing using the contextual clues’ is ineffective. At times, skipping the vocabulary item or giving up after looking for contextual clues does not necessary imply that these learners lack vocabulary knowledge but suggests that these learners had sufficient vocabulary knowledge to guess that the contextual clues they were looking for could not be found in the text or that the surrounding words did not give a clue to the meaning of the targeted vocabulary.

ii) Difference in Learners’ Understanding of Connotations

Only 25% participants provided the accepted answers for ‘modestly’ (V8). The contextual clues, ‘a flat in London, a second-hand Mercedes and three adorable cats’ may not be symbols of living ‘modestly’ for some participants as can be seen from some participants’ responses, ‘very rich; sense of being very fortunate’ (Dale), ‘living rather comfortably; rather

27树【shù】 tree; plant; (noun)
种【zhòng】 grow; plant; cultivate. (verb)
well’ (Ann), and ‘living in honour and glory’ (Tian). Some other participants were misled into thinking that these were signs of ‘modern’ living or ‘modified’ lifestyle (keeping to the theme of transformation and changed lifestyle). This demonstrates that though the contextual clues were generally directive, the learners were still misled because the connotations of material goods are different for learners and writers due to their cultural, societal and economic differences. Hence, teachers need to be aware of the difference in financial, cultural and social background between the learners’ and those reflected in a text, as the same words could have different connotations for the learners, for instance, the symbols of wealth may also be different in communist and capitalist contexts. Some participants tried to link the word, ‘modestly’ with ‘cosmetic surgery’ and ‘fashion’.

iii) Unfamiliarity with Nouns used as Adjectives

Only 55% of the participants looked for contextual clues to deduce the meaning for ‘designer clothes’ (V7), but none of the twenty participants provided the accepted meaning for ‘designer clothes’. Most of the participants understood the noun and verb forms of ‘design’ (e.g., ‘designs’, ‘designing’ and ‘designer’), but they could have some difficulty in grasping the meaning when the term, ‘designer’, was used as an adjective in the phrase, ‘designer clothes’. Instead of providing the meaning for the adjective, ‘designer’, they transformed the adjective into the verb form, ‘design/designing clothes’, or noun form, ‘clothes designs/designer’. Only those who recognised it as an adjective tried to substitute it with another adjective, such as ‘working’, ‘appropriate’ or ‘fashionable’ clothes or clothes that made her ‘look good’. Their difficulty with guessing the word meaning could be related to their grammar and syntax knowledge besides vocabulary knowledge. The pedagogical implication to draw from here is that vocabulary knowledge alone, without grammar and syntax knowledge, is not enough. Hence, vocabulary instruction should also be integrated
with grammar and syntax instruction for a greater understanding how the word is used in a sentence. (See Appendix 5C and Appendix 5G for findings on Gender differences in VLS use.)

6.4 Use of Word Association

Besides the use of direct translation and contextual clues, another popular VLS used by the participants is the use of word association. The analysis of the participants’ self-reported VLS use (see Chapter 5) revealed that ‘associate the word with its coordinates’, ‘connect word to already known words’, ‘connect word to a personal experience’ and ‘use of semantic map’ were less frequently reported to be used than the other memory strategies. ‘Use of semantic map’ falls among the bottom three of the participants’ memory strategy use. The following examines the participants’ use of association/connection between the eight vocabulary items and ‘already known words’, ‘personal experience’ and others.

a) Vocabulary Item 1: Farm-girl

Figure 29.1 Use of Word Association (‘farm-girl’)

With reference to Figure 29.1, 30% participants (Ming, Tian, Hua, Ping, Wen & Dale) associated ‘farm-girl’ (V1) with a girl who had lived, grown up or worked in a farm, while 15% participants (Gail, Ann & Jing) associated the vocabulary item with ‘countryside’ and ‘village’. 25% other participants (Jo, Ed, Ce, Luke & Jake) associated it with the connotation
of being ‘很土’ (‘hěn tǔ’, meaning ‘very unrefined/plain/simple/unenlightened; ugly’). Their responses could be an indication of their personal understanding and vocabulary knowledge of the vocabulary item, ‘farm-girl’. Without prior knowledge of the meaning of ‘farm girl’, it would have been difficult for learners to guess the meaning of this phrase as there were no explicit contextual clues to the meaning. Such vocabulary in the text could increase the level of difficulty for foreign and second language learners to guess the word meaning/s using context. In the case of this study, most of the participants demonstrated that they were familiar with both the denotations & connotations of the phrase, ‘farm girl’.

b) Vocabulary Item 2: Re-invent

With reference to Figure 29.2, Gail and Hao associated the prefix ‘re-’ in ‘re-invent’ (V2) with ‘again’ as in ‘re-do’. Four other participants (Jo, Ed, Jing & Wen) did not give the meaning of ‘re-invent’ but associated the phrase with ‘plastic surgery’. Gail’s and Hao’s answer could be an indication of their understanding and vocabulary knowledge of the prefix, ‘re-’, while the answer of Jo, Ed, Jing & Wen could reflect their attempts to associate the word with the surrounding contextual clues. Wen was actually elaborating on what Cindy did to ‘re-invent’ herself and Jing agreed with her.

Two pedagogical implications here could be firstly, to increase the learners’ understanding and knowledge of the various affixes (prefixes & suffixes), and secondly, to be clear & more specific in our instructions. For instance, instead of providing the meaning for ‘re-invent’, Wen elaborated on what Cindy did to ‘re-invent’ herself could mean that the instruction was
not specific enough. Wen’s elaboration and Jing’s agreement may be an indication that they
did understand what ‘re-invent’ mean, though they did not provide the expected answers.

c) **Vocabulary Item 3: Face-lifts and Vocabulary Item 6: Transformation**

![Figure 29.3 Use of Word Association ('face-lifts')](image)

![Figure 29.4 Use of Word Association (Transformation)](image)

With reference to Figures 29.3 and 29.4, most participants had little problem with ‘face-lifts’
(V3) and ‘transformation’ (V6). They gave the Chinese translation for ‘face-lifts’ and for
‘transformation’ promptly. Some participants, for example, Trio G (Mark, Jing and Wen),
made references to the movie, ‘Transformers’, to support their answers. Figure 29.4a
illustrates Trio G’s discussion on the vocabulary item, ‘Transformation’. The numbers in the
‘Turn-taking’ reflect the sequence of their discourse:

---

28 ‘face-lifts’: (‘整容’【zhěngróng】; & ‘拉皮’【lapi】, meaning ‘pulling the skin back’)
29 ‘transformation’: (‘转换’【zhuǎnhuàn】; ‘转变’【zhuǎnbiàn】; both words meaning ‘change; transform’;
or ‘改造’【gǎizào】which means ‘transform; reform; remould; remake’).
Figure 29.4a  Trio G’s Discussion on ‘Transformation’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Turn-taking</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mark</strong></td>
<td>3. 转变【zhuǎnbiàn】</td>
<td>转机【zhuǎnjī】 turning for the better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. yes, transformer</td>
<td>转变【zhuǎnbiàn】 change; transform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jing</strong></td>
<td>1. 转机【zhuǎnjī】 turning for the better.</td>
<td>变机【zhuǎnjī】 turning for the better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. 转变【zhuǎnbiàn】</td>
<td>转变【zhuǎnbiàn】 change; transform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. I see.</td>
<td>变机【zhuǎnjī】 turning for the better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Oh, yes, the Transformer</td>
<td>转变【zhuǎnbiàn】 change; transform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wen</strong></td>
<td>2. her life…transformation should be 轉變【zhuǎnbiàn】</td>
<td>轉機【zhuǎnjī】 turning for the better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. It is a kind of 变化【biànhuà】 change; vary.</td>
<td>变化【biànhuà】 change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Yes, if you watched the 变形金刚 (bian xing jin gang) the ‘Transformers’.</td>
<td>变机【zhuǎnjī】 turning for the better.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is not only a reflection of the participants’ vocabulary knowledge but also the use of the memory strategy and their ability to make word connection to their personal experience, i.e., a movie they have watched (Rod’s comment: Add ‘using the memory strategy’. Revision done: Included recommended phrase.) . This demonstrates that watching movies could be an effective way of increasing their vocabulary range & knowledge. In this case, the movie title as well as the ‘Transformers’ could have helped them to word meaning but it is still essential for them to have some knowledge of grammar and word transformation to apply the meaning of ‘transformers’ to ‘transform’ (i.e., the verb, ‘change’) and ‘transformation’ (i.e., the noun, ‘change’). Their discussion demonstrates that the first translation, ‘转机【zhuǎnjī】 turning for the better), given by Jing was incorrect and the second participant corrected her by given the correct translation, ‘转变【zhuǎnbiàn】 change; transform). Mark confirmed the answer. In this case, Jing’s direct translation of ‘transformation’ is the use of the guessing strategy. She could have guessed that it had something to do with ‘变【biàn】 change’.
With the help of Wen and Mark, she understood the meaning of ‘transformation’ more clearly. Wen continued with an elaboration of the meaning with ‘變化 (【biànhuà】 change)’. To reinforce the meaning, she referred to first the Chinese title of the movie, 变形金刚 (bian xing jin gang), and then the English title of the movie, the ‘Transformers’. The moment she mentioned the Chinese and English movie titles, the word meaning and association with the movie title clicked immediately in the mind of the other two members. Their use of association between ‘transformation’ and the movie, ‘Transformers’, reflects their use of Metacognitive strategies, such as ‘Keyword Method’, and ‘word association’ (see p. 242, Questionnaire, E. Memory Strategies. This study examines not only what vocabulary learning strategies were being used but also how they derived the meaning. Figure 29.4a demonstrates the process in which the word association strategy was used to arrive at the word meaning. In addition, understanding the meaning of the movie title, ‘Transformers’, and what the movie characters do (transforming from vehicles to robots) could have helped them to learn and remember the word, ‘transformer’ and its meaning. In the vocabulary task, they applied both grammar knowledge (that is, word transformation) and vocabulary knowledge of ‘transform’ to the noun form, ‘transformation’, which is actually a different meaning from ‘transformer’.

**d) Vocabulary Item 4: Implants**

On the other hand, when the participants were unsure of the meaning of a vocabulary item, there would be more guesses and more word associations done (see Figure 29.5). For instance, most of the participants claimed that they had never seen the word, ‘implants’ before but guessed that it could have something to do with plastic surgery, except that they were unsure of which part of the face/body and what kind of plastic surgery. Except for Hao
who asked his partner whether it had something to do with ‘plants’, most of them associated the word with face-lifts or plastic surgery on different parts of the face and body, such as ‘eyebrow trimming’, ‘fixing the mouth/nose/lower jaw/waistline’ and one participant (Mark) even mentioned ‘body hair’.

![Figure 29.5 Use of Word Association ('implants')](image)

Others associated ‘implants’ with ‘removing something/fat’ and ‘body shaping/reducing weight/slimming down’. Some tried to link ‘implants’ with ‘face-lifts’ and ‘liposuction’. Here, it shows that what the readers thought were ‘contextual clues’ could sometimes be more misleading than providing clues to the word meaning. The participants did not connect the connotation of ‘plants’ in ‘implants’ with ‘planting/putting’ something in their body, such as ‘implants’ for breast enhancement or ‘lens implants’. Most did not associate vocabulary item with already known words, ‘plants’ and the participants did not show any indication of understanding the meaning of the prefix ‘im’. They were apparently looking for more association with the surrounding words and made greater use of surrounding words as contextual clues.
e) **Vocabulary Item 5: Liposuction**

In some cases, the participants broke up the syllables of a vocabulary item (refer to Figure 29.6), and associated meaning of the word with a certain syllable they were familiar with, such as ‘lip’ and ‘suction’ in ‘liposuction’ (V5), instead of ‘lipo’ and ‘suction’. Apparently, this was another unfamiliar vocabulary item to most of the participants. One participant, Ming, associated ‘liposuction’ with plastic surgery and three participants (Ce, Luke & Dale) associated the word with ‘implants’ as both words appeared in the same sentence.

Participants (Jo, Ed, Gail & Yun) who focused on the ‘lip’ in ‘liposuction’ associated the vocabulary item with various parts of the face such as ‘lips’, ‘mouth’, ‘face’ and ‘nose’ whereas participants (Zhen, Jan, Jake) who focused on ‘suction’ and participants (Tian, Mark, Jing & Wen) who looked at the surrounding contextual clues associated the word with ‘sucking out’ or ‘removing’ something or ‘removing fat’ (*contextual clue*). The breaking up of unfamiliar word into syllables and guessing the meaning by looking at the syllable they were more familiar with may suggest a link between the use of this strategy and their vocabulary knowledge, associating ‘liposuction’ with already known words, ‘lip’ & ‘suction’ as well as with surrounding words.
With reference to Figure 29.7, some participants (Ming, Gail, Lin, Ping & Zhen) also broke up the word, ‘modestly’ (V8), into three syllables, and linked the word with another word with similar first syllable, ‘mod’, such as ‘modern’ and ‘modified’. Tian guessed that it had nothing to do with ‘model’ although both words start with similar first syllable, ‘mod’. Jo and Yun associated ‘modestly’ with ‘fashionable/fashion’ while Ed associated it with ‘lifestyle pattern’. Only four participants, Jing, Wen, Ce and Luke associated it with the adjective, ‘modest’ (or humble) and ‘simple’ way of living.

g) **Vocabulary Item 7: Designer Clothes**

Figure 29.8, shows that the participants have difficulty deducing the meaning of ‘designer clothes’ (V7) which occurred in a part of speech (i.e. as an adjective) different from what they were more familiar with (i.e., the noun form). This could also reflect their grammar and syntax knowledge as well as vocabulary knowledge of the phrase, ‘designer clothes’. More than 50% of the participants thought the phrase, ‘designer clothes’ as synonymous to either ‘clothes designs/designers’, or ‘designing/design/designs clothes’. Only 30% of the
participants (Jo, Tian, Lin, Ann, Jing, & Mark) substituted the adjective, ‘designer’, with another adjective, ‘working/appropriate/fashionable’ (clothes). This could be an indication of the participants’ problems with words that could be used in different parts of speech in English language.

**Figure 29.8 Use of Word Association (‘designer clothes’)**

6.5 Discussion of Findings on Vocabulary Learning Strategies used in Reading Vocabulary Task

With reference to Research Questions 3a and 3b of this study, the following discusses the main vocabulary learning strategies the participants used in the reading vocabulary task and their effectiveness in helping the participants to guess or deduce meaning/s of the eight researcher-selected vocabulary items. The findings reveal that there is a close relationship between the use of direct translation and contextual clues and the user’s vocabulary knowledge, as well as a close link between the difficulty level to guess or deduce the word meaning and the use of direct translation and contextual clues. Direct translation was given if the word was familiar to them, however, the direct translation for some of the vocabulary

---

30 3a. What were the main vocabulary learning strategies used by these Chinese ESL learners to perform the reading vocabulary task?

31 3b. How effective were the vocabulary learning strategies used in the reading vocabulary task?
items from English to Chinese was incorrect, suggesting that they were guessing the word meaning and did not guess the word meaning correctly. The reading vocabulary task provides strong evidence that without prior knowledge of the word and its meaning/s, it is difficult for Chinese ESL learners to use the Translation strategy to guess the word meaning/s of unfamiliar English vocabulary. One main reason is that there are more differences than similarities between the Chinese and English languages in terms of cognates, speech, writing system, grammar and syntax. Even though the hanyu pinyu (Chinese phonetics) used the English alphabet system, the phonics attributed to the letters are different. Hence, without prior knowledge of vocabulary items, such as ‘implants’ (V4), and obvious directive contextual clues, the translation strategy is ineffective in helping the participants to guess the word meaning/s.

When it was difficult to guess the meaning of a vocabulary item, there would be a greater use of the contextual clues to work out the word meaning. However, the findings show that looking for contextual clues and reading the text repeatedly may not always provide the desired outcome. The findings suggest that the use of contextual clues to guess the word meaning of the vocabulary items might be ineffective due to various factors such as:

- insufficient/limited knowledge of vocabulary (especially words with multiple meanings), English grammar & syntax rules, word use & collocations.
- difference in understanding the cultural connotation of certain vocabulary
- misleading or misdirective contextual clues
- lack of directive or generally directive contextual clues
- misinterpretation of contextual clues

For more information on the differences between the Chinese and English languages, go to [http://tecfaetu.unige.ch/staf/staf-e/sun/staf15/scenario.html](http://tecfaetu.unige.ch/staf/staf-e/sun/staf15/scenario.html).
The participants’ use of word association provides evidence that the more difficult it is to guess the meaning of a vocabulary item (e.g., ‘implants’), the more word associations are used, especially when explicit, directive or generally directive contextual clues cannot be found. The use of word association was the least for ‘transformation’ (V6), which they were apparently most familiar with. When they were more familiar with a vocabulary item, such as ‘farm girl’, they were also able to associate the vocabulary with its metaphorical connation besides its literal meanings. For example, Hua and Lin’s discussion on ‘farm girl’:

Hua: Live in a farm, like a country girl
Lin: Very simple
Hua: A girl who has grown up in a farm
Lin: A very simple, unrefined and unenlightened girl (很土的女孩, hěn tǔ de nǚ hái)

Another strategy they used was breaking up certain vocabulary items (e.g., ‘liposuction’ and ‘modestly’) into recognizable syllables and focus on a syllable they were familiar with to either guess the word meaning or associate it with another word with similar syllable (such as ‘modestly’ with ‘modern’ & ‘modified’. When a word was located in a part of speech different from what they were accustomed to, they would associate it with the part of speech they were more familiar with. For example, when the word ‘designer’ was used as an adjective in the text, they treated it as a noun the part-of speech they were more familiar with and associated it with other nouns. One pedagogical implication here is to integrate vocabulary instruction with grammar and syntax instruction as well as to provide more teaching on affixes. The participants’ use of word association demonstrates their difficulty of guessing the meaning of certain words, such as ‘implants’, ‘liposuction’, ‘designer clothes’ and ‘modestly’, and suggests a close link between the use of word association strategy and their vocabulary knowledge.
6.6 Think Aloud - Thought Process Behind Participants’ VLS Selection

Four participants, Tian, Jake, Ann and Dale did the reading vocabulary task individually and they had to think aloud as they guessed or deduced the meaning of the eight vocabulary items. The following is an analysis of the thought process behind some of their VLS selection and use. The discussion is a response to Research Questions 3a and 3b, showing the main vocabulary learning strategies these four participants used to perform the reading vocabulary task and examine whether these strategies were effective to help them guess or deduce word meanings. The discussion in this section will not elaborate on the use of ‘direct translation’ from English to Chinese, ‘guessing from contextual clues’ and ‘word association’ as these have been discussed in details in sections 6.3 and 6.4, unless it provides more insight into their thinking process.

6.6.1 Tian

Besides giving the correct direct translation for ‘farm girl’ (V1), ‘face-lifts’ (V3), and ‘transformation’, Tian elaborated further that Cindy wanted to make herself a sexier person, suggesting a link between a learner’s confidence of knowing the meaning and the elaboration strategy. This could be an implication of the learner’s vocabulary knowledge and understanding of the word meaning. Other strategies Tian used were guessing based on word knowledge and guessing using the contextual clues. For example, Tian did not know what ‘implants’ (V4) means but guessed that it had something to do with plastic surgery and, after reading the text again to look for contextual clues, guessed that it might have something to do with ‘fat’, linking ‘implants’ with the surrounding words, ‘liposuction’ and ‘sucking out fat’. She linked ‘liposuction’ (V5) with the surrounding words, ‘sucking out fat’. She wondered whether the contextual clues for ‘modestly’ (V8), ‘London flat, second hand Mercedes, three adorable cats’, could mean ‘榮耀【róngyào】honour; glory’. The misinterpretation of
meaning could be due to the difference in social and economic backgrounds; Communism and capitalism may have imposed different status for material gains, too.

The pedagogical implications are that symbols of wealth and modest living may be different for learners from a different culture or country. Tian was observed to use slightly more strategies than the others. In addition to the usual strategies used by the others such as ‘direct translation from English to Chinese’ and ‘guessing from contextual clues’, she also read the text aloud, used the elimination strategy (for V1, ‘farm girl’ & V8, ‘modestly’) and looked at the root word before the prefix (‘re-invent’). Tian used the elimination strategy more than the other three participants. For instance, she thought of ‘farm girl’ as a girl who grew up on a farm, but guessed that it was not referring to a village girl. She had not seen the word, ‘modestly’ (V8), before but guessed that it had nothing to do with ‘model’ (though both words have similar first syllable, ‘mod’). The following is an extract from Tian’s think-aloud while performing the reading vocabulary task, and giving the meaning of ‘modestly’ (V8).

Tian: (repeated the word, ‘modestly’ a few times) Have not seen this word before. Modest…ly…an adverb…nothing to do with model…London flat, second hand Mercendes, three adorable cats…could it mean ‘榮耀’ (【róngyào】honour; glory)? (Gave up after reading the text for clues and could not guess the correct meaning.)

The strategy she used to guess the meaning of ‘re-invent’ (V2), was focusing on the root-word first before looking at the prefix. For instance, she gave the meaning of the root word, ‘invent’ first (造【zào】invent) before giving the meaning of ‘re-‘ in ‘re-invent’ as ‘anew’, and then tried to join the meaning for the prefix and the root word and came up with the answer, ‘starting anew’, which was different from her first translation of the root word, ‘invent’. Tian’s think-aloud provides evidence that the use of translation is sometimes not straightforward. Below is an extract from her think-aloud:
Tian: 造【zào】 invent; re- could mean anew; perhaps, it could mean starting anew

Tian demonstrated that she knew the meaning of both the root-word and affix of ‘re-invent’, yet her final answer, ‘starting anew’ was not different from the combination of her initial translation for ‘invent’ (造【zào】 invent). Her final answer did not show any connection to the surrounding clues or the main theme of the text. Like the other participants, guessing using contextual clues is difficult was ineffective for ‘implants’ (V5) but effective for ‘liposuction’ (V5). For ‘designer clothes’ (V7), she was aware that the meaning had something to do with clothes, and used the word substitution strategy by substituting ‘designer’ with ‘designed’ and ‘fashionable’. The guessed meaning was quite close though incorrect.

6.6.2 Jake

Jake used the contextual clues to guess or deduce the word meaning most of the time, except for ‘face-lifts’ (V3) and ‘transformation’ (V6) and ‘designer clothes’ (V7). He gave the correct translation for ‘transformation’. He guessed that the term ‘face-lifts’ had something to do with plastic surgery on the face but did not said specifically what kind of surgery. Jake mistranslated V8, ‘designer clothes’, as ‘clothes designer’, thinking that the phrase was referring to a person. His response also shows that he was more familiar with the word ‘designer’ being used as a noun than as an adjective. It could suggest that Jake was making a connection between the phrase, ‘designer clothes’, and what was familiar to him. His mistranslation shows the difficulty of using the translation strategy due to the difference in grammar rule in relation to parts of speech. After some thinking, he concluded that the phrase could be referring to an occupation and not a person. The pedagogical implication here could be to expose learners to the various parts of speech that a word can be used in when introducing a new vocabulary item.
Jake relied a lot on his personal world knowledge and contextual clues to guess or deduce the word meaning and use elaboration to further illustrate the meaning even when he had misinterpreted the meaning. He would self-correct if he thought that the meaning he had given earlier on was wrong. Jake would read the text repeatedly to look the contextual clues to help him guess/deduce the word meaning. Jake’s main contextual clues was apparently the term, ‘plastic surgery’, as he linked a few of the vocabulary items to it – ‘farm girl’ (V1), ‘re-invent’ (V2), face-lifts (V3). The following is an extract from Jake’s think-aloud when giving the meaning of ‘farm girl’ (V1).

Jake: ugly, rather bad-looking, ugly girl...ugly...so ugly...
Researcher: How did you come to the conclusion that she is ugly?
Jake: she said that she had plastic surgery...perhaps she is a farm girl...mostly not...those beauties...most do not come from farms...she is not happy with how she looks

To Jake, plastic surgery was linked to dissatisfaction with looks. He used the clue, ‘plastic surgery’, to deduce that Cindy was ugly and unhappy with her looks, and that was why she had plastic surgery. His personal world knowledge was that beauties do not come from farms. Jake did not know what ‘implants’ and ‘liposuction’ meant but guessed that they could have something to do with extracting something from the knees, since ‘face’ had been mentioned, and the clues after ‘implants’ and ‘liposuction’ had something to do with sucking out fat from the knees. Hence, he guessed that ‘liposuction’ could have something to do with ‘suction’, the act of sucking something out. There was a long silence when it came to ‘implants’ and he gave up after reading the text a few times and could not guess the meaning. He even looked at ‘liposuction’ to see whether it held any clues to ‘implants’. He associated ‘modestly’ with ‘living in a city’ based on the clue, ‘flat in London’. After reading the text again, he looked at the part of speech. He pondered about it being an adverb and thought that it could mean ‘very good, not too bad’. Here again, it reinforces the fact that learners could have a different wealth and social status concept of living in a ‘flat in London’ (a city & capital of England),
that is, if it is being compared to having a flat in Beijing (city & capital of China). Jake’s use of contextual clues to guess the meaning was effective for generally directive contextual clues for ‘liposuction’. For vocabulary items like ‘re-invent’, the use of contextual clues was only effective for him to deduce what Cindy did to ‘re-invent’ herself but not to deduce specifically what ‘re-invent’ meant.

6.6.3 Ann

Ann engaged in more social and verbal interaction with the researcher than the others did and would ask the researcher for affirmation of her answers. Like Jake, Ann would use the elaboration strategy to further illustrate the word meaning. Ann used the contextual clues of Cindy’s inheritance to link it with V2, ‘re-invent’. Her first initial response to V2, ‘re-invent’, was linking Cindy’s inheritance with what one would do in her (Ann’s) society (China), and what it means by being successful, such as building a career and using some of the money to build up a business. Later on, when Ann was giving the meaning for V6, transformation, she realized that the meaning for ‘re-invent’ could be linked to ‘transformation’ (something to do with change) and not about building a career or starting a business. The use of think-aloud protocol allows an observer/researcher/teacher to have a greater insight into how a learner arrives at a certain answer, or progresses from a ‘wrong’ answer to a more ‘correct’ answer. One pedagogical implication to draw from here is that vocabulary learning should be a learning process that allows a learner to think about the word, its meaning/s, its functions and association with other words.

Ann was not sure what ‘face-lifts’ actually means but relied on her personal world knowledge of ‘plastic surgery’, guessing that it had something to do with “tidying oneself up (i.e., have a haircut, a shave, etc.)” and guessed that “Cindy was not happy with the shape of her face and wanted to cut off some part of it.” (extracts from her interview responses). Ann linked
‘transformation’ to ‘creation’, thinking of Cindy being first ‘created’ by her mother and now re-creating herself (linking it to V5, ‘re-invent’). Ann guessed that ‘modestly’ was a positive word and had something to do with living rather well and comfortably, since the text mentioned that she had an apartment and a car (then she read the text again). Ann mentioned that since Cindy was not interested in designer clothes, it did not matter what kind of clothes she wore. Ann felt that Cindy would look good in whatever she was wearing, since she would have a good body after plastic surgery. She was not sure what ‘face-lifts’ (V3) mean but looking at the surrounding words, ‘nose job’, she guessed that it could have something to do with the face and plastic surgery and deduced that it could have something to do with face-pulling. For ‘designer clothes’ (V7), she read the text a few times for contextual clues, and first guessed that it could mean ‘fashionable clothes’ and later wondered whether the phrase could refer to clothes that have already been designed. She also used the Elimination strategy like Tian, and guessed that ‘farm girl’ (V1) referred to a girl who lives in the countryside, and not in the city. Ann had a greater tendency to ‘skip/give up’ more often than the others when the vocabulary item was difficult to guess/deduce the meaning even after reading the text a few times. She would have skipped ‘implants’, ‘liposuction’, ‘designer clothes’ and ‘modestly’ if the researcher did not encourage her to think more about these vocabulary items. She commented that the most important point was that Cindy wanted a complete change and be like a Barbie, and wanted to have plastic surgery done on the various parts of her body. Ann’s ‘skip the word’ strategy might reflect an inadequate vocabulary knowledge of the target words but it also shows that Ann had sufficient vocabulary knowledge to know that the contextual clues she was looking such as those related to ‘implants’ were not available. Like Tian, the contextual clues for ‘modestly’ was misleading to her due to cultural difference in connotations about the symbols of ‘a flat’ and a ‘second-hand Mercedes’ which
were luxurious items to her, hence, she misinterpreted living ‘modestly’ as ‘living well and comfortably’.

6.6.4 Dale

Dale had a tendency to give short answers during the interview, though he would elaborate when asked further questions. Dale translated both ‘re-invent’ and ‘transformation’ as 改变 (gǎibiàn) change; alter; transform). Dale did not know the meaning of ‘implants’ (V4) & ‘liposuction’ (V5), but guessed that they might have something to do with certain ‘alterations’ made to ones’ own body, such as doing something to lose weight/slim down. The following is an extract from Dale’s think-aloud when trying to work out the meaning of ‘farm girl’, ‘implants’ and ‘liposuction’:

Dale: farm girl...could be someone working in a farm or an ordinary girl. I feel that it may not be just farm...it could refer to a girl from a village or an ordinary girl. This is what I understand from the text.

Dale: I really don't know what these two words ('implants' and 'liposuction') mean but I think that they have something to do with alterations made on one's own body, such as doing something to lose weight or to slim down. I don't really know the meaning.

Though Dale did not provide specific meanings for ‘farm girl’, ‘implants’ and ‘liposuction’, his think-aloud’ provides us with a better understanding of his thought process as he worked out the meaning of the three vocabulary items. His guessing of the word meaning was apparently based more on his personal word and world knowledge than the contextual clues as he did not make use of the generally directive contextual clues, ‘to remove fat from the knees’, to guess the meaning of ‘liposuction’. Dale mispronounced the word ‘implants’ as ‘impatience’, suggesting that he was trying to connect an unknown word (‘implants’) to another word (‘impatience’) that he was familiar with. He thought ‘designer clothes’ (V7)
was about designing clothes (extracts from his responses), and that ‘modestly’ (V8) meant ‘very rich’ or ‘a sense of being very fortunate’ (extracts from his responses). His responses reinforces the previous findings for the other three participants about the concept of wealth and social status, and the confusion caused when a certain vocabulary appears in a different part of speech they are familiar with.

6.6.5 Discussion of Findings on Participants’ Think-Alouds

The think-alouds provided a greater insight of the thinking process behind the four participants’ VLS selection and use as well as how they guessed or deduced the word meaning of the eight vocabulary items. It could be seen how the elimination strategy was used to eliminate the different options, and also how the learner progressed from an ‘incorrect’ answer to a more ‘accurate’ answer. Their thinking process reinforces the previously mentioned notion that ‘skipping’ or ‘giving up’ is not an indication of a learner’s lack of vocabulary knowledge but a suggestion that the learner has enough vocabulary knowledge of the word to guess that the surrounding words or the text did not give the clues to the word meaning. The four participants’ responses to the vocabulary items, ‘farm girl’ and ‘modestly’, provided strong evidence that learners from different countries and culture could have different concepts of wealth and social or financial status from those of the writer, and various connotations of certain vocabulary, such as ‘farm girl’. Adverbs were apparently easier to recognize than the other parts of speech for Jake and Ann. Both recognized that ‘modestly’ as an adverb, but did not mention the parts of speech the other vocabulary items were in. The think-alouds also provided a strong evidence of the close relationship between a learner’s vocabulary knowledge and guessing from contextual clues: the more difficult it is to guess the word meaning, the more the learner would look for contextual clues and more elaboration to illustrate the word meaning would be made.
Another finding reinforces the close link between a learner’s knowledge of grammar and syntax and vocabulary knowledge. These participants were used to the lexicon, ‘designer’, being used as a noun, and the lexicon, ‘modest’, as an adjective, and hence, were a bit confused when ‘designer’ was used as an adjective and ‘modest’ was transformed into an adverb, ‘modestly’. Jake’s mistranslation of ‘designer clothes’ shows the difficulty of using the translation strategy due to the difference in grammar rule in relation to parts of speech. The effectiveness of the use of contextual clues was greatly dependent on whether the contextual clues were directive, generally directive, non-directive or misleading. Contextual clues for ‘modestly’ may be directive to English native speakers but misleading for ESL learners from a different culture or from a country with a different economic setting. The pedagogical implications are that ESL instructors should be more aware of learners’ cultural, financial and social differences that could lead to various connotations of certain vocabulary, and to integrate their vocabulary instruction with the teaching of grammar and syntax, and especially to expose learners to examples in which words are used as various parts of speech. Most of all, vocabulary learning is not only about learners learning vocabulary and their meaning/s, but it is also about learners going through a learning process that allows them to think more about the word, its meaning, its functions and its association with other words.

6.7 Use of Social Strategies

Use of social strategies could also contribute to more effective vocabulary learning. The analysis of the Chinese ESL participants’ self-reported VLS category use frequency revealed that the Social strategy category was the least frequently used VLS category among the seven VLS categories. However, their recommendations of vocabulary games and activities in the interview suggest that there is a greater preference to learn vocabulary with others through group activities and competitive games than learning vocabulary alone by themselves. These
findings reinforce the findings of the questionnaire survey which reveals a higher use frequency for ‘group work’, ‘pair work’, and ‘practising with friends’ among the participants than for ‘asking for translation’ from their teachers, friends or family. Besides promoting “active processing of information” and encouraging “cooperative learning”, group work also provides learners with “more time to actually use and manipulate the language in class” (Schmitt, 1996, p. 211). The analysis of the next part of the study examined when social strategies were used by the participants during the vocabulary task performance. In the questionnaire survey, the term, ‘social strategy/strategies’, is used more broadly to refer to learning by group/pair work in class, asking others for translation into native language, a paraphrase or synonym, and practising with friends/family members. Social strategy use also include the learners being asked to “give help in a variety of ways” (Schmitt, 1997, 210), such as giving the L1 (first language) translation, a synonym or a paraphrase. To reduce confusion, the term, ‘social strategy/strategies’, is used in this section more specifically to refer to the strategies used by the participants who worked in pairs/threes to help them guess or deduce the meaning of the eight vocabulary items together, such as:

- asking questions
- building on one another’s answers
- others (e.g. expressing agreement/disagreement; asking for confirmation)

The following analysis of the participants’ social strategy use in the reading vocabulary task could provide us with a greater insight into when some of the social strategies were used and why. The four participants (Tian, Jake, Ann & Dale) who did the reading vocabulary task individually were excluded from this part of the analysis. This insight may help ESL instructors and curriculum developer decide what kind of vocabulary games and activities to
create the use of specific social strategies to enhance vocabulary learning through peer learning and teamwork.

6.7.1 Initiation of Discussion

(See Appendix 5D, Figures 5D.1 and 5D.2 for tables that display the initiation of discussion by participants, and the strategies used to initiate a discussion.)

Three main strategies were observed to be used by the participants to initiate a discussion:

- asked question – such as what the vocabulary item could mean
- offered a suggestion and waited for a response
- offered a suggestion and asked for affirmation that the suggestion was correct

Initiation of discussion does not necessarily reflect the learner’s English language proficiency level nor does it imply that the initiator of discussion has more vocabulary knowledge than his/her partner/s. It may reflect more of their personality or the group dynamic. For instance, the Ce-Luke pair, Ce was from mainland China while Luke was from Macau but both of them were from the same ESL class and were comfortable with each other. Luke was apparently a gentleman who adopted the ‘ladies first’ practice and waited for Ce to start the discussion for most of the vocabulary items, even when he knew the word meaning of some vocabulary items. He would affirm her answer or prompt her when she was unsure of the word meaning. Though Ce was the main initiator of discussion, Luke was the one who provided the correct answers or guided her to the correct answers.

Pairs: In mixed pairs (Pairs A, B & C), the female participants were observed to initiate the discussion more often than their male partner. For the female pairs (Pairs D & E) the outcomes are contrasting. Hua from Pair D initiated the discussion for six of the vocabulary items. Lin, would let her partner, Hua, give her answer first, and would offer some
suggestions only when Hua was stuck at ‘designer clothes’ (V7). On the other hand, Pair E, Zhen & Jan (both from Taiwan), initiated discussion for an equal amount of vocabulary items (three each).

**Trios:** The single male/female member in the groups of three (Trio F & Trio G), was observed to let his/her partners initiate the discussion more frequently. Male Hao (from Trio F) and female Wen (from Trio G) who initiated the discussion more frequently in their groups of three reflected more of their leadership and their confidence in their vocabulary knowledge. In Hao’s group (Trio F), more discussion occurred between the boys (Hao & Ping) than with their female partner while the female member initially took more time than the males to think through her answers for the first few vocabulary items. In Trio G Wen and the other female member, Jing, initiated the discussion for seven of the vocabulary items while the single male member initiated the discussion for only one vocabulary item, ‘liposuction’ (V5).

Figure 30.1 illustrates that overall, the females initiated discussion more frequently than the males. The ratio for females:males initiation of discussion is 3.6:2 The one who initiated the discussion for most of the vocabulary items was Ce. She used various strategies to generate the discussion, such as asking questions when she did not know the meaning, offering suggestions and asking for confirmation. She was also looking more to her partner, Luke, for the word meaning. The participants who initiated the discussion for the least number of vocabulary items were Lin, Luke and Mark. As mentioned before, this does not imply that these three participants have less vocabulary knowledge than others. It could reflect more of their personality and the group dynamics, than their vocabulary knowledge.
The pedagogical implication here could be that ESL instructors should be more conscious of the group dynamics when implementing pair or group work for more effective learning. It would be advantageous to have a group with mixed language abilities and different vocabulary range. Another option is to allow the learner to choose their own partner/partners, so that they could be comfortable with one another and be less inhibited during the interview and when performing the reading vocabulary task.

**Summary**

The initiators of discussion offered suggestions, asked for affirmation of their answers or asked questions about the word meaning. The analysis shows that when the participants were familiar with the vocabulary items, such as ‘farm-girl’ and ‘transformation’, most of them would give the meaning or Chinese translation for the words straightaway and there was not much discussion for these vocabulary items. The one who initiated the discussion for most vocabulary items was Ce (7 times), while three participants (Lin, Luke & Mark) initiated the discussion least frequently (1 time each). Initiation of discussion reflects neither the English language proficiency nor the vocabulary knowledge of the initiator or their partners. It
reflects more of their personality, confidence and group dynamics. However, it helps to get a response from their partner/s or a collaboration to deduce the word meaning/s together. The female participants were found to initiate the discussion more frequently than the males, especially in a mixed pair. There were contrasting findings for the two female pairs. In terms of a mixed group of three, the single male/female member would more frequently let the other members initiate the discussion. One pedagogical implication is that ESL instructors might also consider the learners’ personality, where they come from (especially in a multicultural class) and the group dynamics when pairing or grouping the learners in order to maximize vocabulary learning.

6.7.2 Relationship between Verbal Interaction and Difficulty Level of Vocabulary Items

This part of the analysis examines the relationship between the level of discussion (verbal interaction) and the difficulty level of vocabulary items, by looking at the number of turn-takings that occurs for each vocabulary item. With reference to the earlier section 6.2, the difficulty level of the eight vocabulary items was ranked in the following manner:

(1) the least difficult; (8) the most difficult

1. transformation (V6)  4. re-invent (V2)  7. designer clothes (V7)
2. face-lifts (V3))   5. liposuction (V5)  8. Implants (V4)
3. farm girl (V1)   6. modestly (V8)

Figure 30.2 illustrates the total number of turn-takings (TT) in the discussion for each vocabulary item and the number of participants who gave the correct (or right/accepted, RA) answers: the higher the number of turns, the higher the level of verbal interaction. Figure 30.2 shows that V8, ‘modestly’, reflects the highest level of verbal interaction, followed by V7, ‘designer clothes’ and V6, ‘transformation’. The high level of discussion generated for V8,
‘modestly’ and V7, ‘designer clothes’ that suggests that the more difficult the vocabulary item is to guess the word meaning, the more discussion it would generate.

However, V4, ‘implants’, which is ranked the most difficult word did not generate as much discussion as these two vocabulary items, V8, ‘modestly’ and V7, ‘designer clothes’. Instead, there was not much discussion, perhaps due to the participants’ insufficient vocabulary knowledge of ‘implants’. Hence, there could also be a link between learners’ vocabulary knowledge and level of discussion. One possible reason for the higher level of discussion for V8, ‘modestly’ and ‘designer clothes’ than for V4, ‘implants’ could be that the participants had more vocabulary knowledge of ‘modest’, ‘design/designer’ than of ‘implants’ which the participants claimed that they had not encountered before.

Figure 30.2 demonstrates that more discussion does not necessarily result in a greater percentage of participants giving the accepted answers. For instance, V8, ‘modestly’ may generate the most discussion but it reflects the lowest number of participants (zero) providing
the accepted answers. Instead, V6, ‘transformation’, which generate little discussion, reflects all twenty participants providing the accepted answers. There was not much discussion over the meaning of V6, ‘transformation’, but it generates slightly more discussion than for the other five vocabulary items, due to some participants’ elaboration showing the connection between the word, ‘transformation’ and the movie, ‘Transformers’.

The number of turns taken in the discussion for the other vocabulary items is rather close with slight difference between one to four turns: V3, ‘face-lifts’ (twenty-three turns), V5, ‘liposuction’ (twenty-three turns), and twenty-two turns for the remaining three vocabulary items (‘farm girl’, ‘re-invent’ & ‘implants’). The findings could suggest a possible link between learners’ vocabulary knowledge and the level of discussion to guess the word meaning, i.e., if the learners think that they know the word meaning of the vocabulary items, there will be less discussion, (e.g., ‘farm girl’ & ‘re-invent’). If the vocabulary item is completely unknown to them and contextual clues cannot be found, there is also a low level of discussion. A high level of discussion does not imply that the correct word meaning would be given but it reflects their attempts to use what is familiar to them about the word to guess the word meaning, or their attempt to use what they think as contextual clues to help them guess the word meaning. The pedagogical implication here is for the ESL instructor to guide the learners to have a more productive discussion to guess the word meaning of target vocabulary.

6.7.3 Influence of Social Interaction on Strategy Use

The main social strategies the participants were observed using during the vocabulary task performance were providing translation, paraphrasing, building on one another’s answers, agreeing/disagreeing with the answers given, asking questions, asking for translation, and
seeking confirmation of their suggested answers. The following is an extract from the social interaction of Ce and Luke. The pair was reading initially reading silently until the researcher reminded them that the study is interested to observe their thought process. Ce started reading slowly and loudly, then asked Lucas:

Ce: farm girl...what does it mean (then Ce read the text again) ...ordinary farm-girl...what is this...farm
Luke: farm...farmer, 很土的女孩【hěn tǔ de nǚ hái, a very simple, unrefined and unenlightened girl】...
Ce: can't be...ok...I think I write it down 很土【hěn tǔ】... you sure?
Luke: 很土【hěn tǔ】, then you write 不太知識【bùtàizhīshí, not very knowledgeable】
Ce: not very pretty...you answer ...(thinking)
Luke: must write in simplified Chinese?
Ce: up to us
Luke: will write in the traditional Chinese. Haven't written in Chinese for a long time...

Their social interaction provides a greater insight into how Ce used strategies such as asking questions to obtain an answer from her partner who apparently knew the meaning of ‘farm girl’. Next she asked Luke for confirmation of his answer. Luke not only provided both the denotation as well as the social and cultural connotations of the word, ‘farm girl’, he also used the elaboration strategy to reinforce the word meaning. The findings showed that another strategy Ce used during their social interaction was writing down the answer to help her to remember the meaning, hence, she asked Luke to confirm that his answer was correct. Their interaction reveals an insight that even the researcher had overlooked, that is, though Hong Kong is part of China, their Chinese writing system (traditional Chinese) differs from that used by the mainland Chinese learners (simplified Chinese). Luke is from Hong Kong and Ce is from mainland China, hence, their decision on which writing system to follow.
The participants’ social strategy use might not always lead to the deduction of the correct word meaning but it did increase the use of other strategies such as guessing based on their word/world knowledge, looking for contextual clues and word association. For example, Pair E’s (Zhen and Jan) discussion on ‘implants’ ‘liposuction’, which were difficult words for them to guess their meanings. Both could not work out meaning of ‘implants’ after looking for the contextual clues. They decided to skip the word and moved on to the next word. The following is an extract from their verbal interaction:

Jan: Guess that it has something to do with suction.

Zhen: What about the second part of the sentence, after the word, ‘liposuction’, ‘to remove fat from her knees, thighs and waistline’. Does it have something to do with ‘suction’?

Jan: (looking at the text) It has something to do with sucking the fat from her knees, thighs and waistline.

Zhen: What about the word ‘implants’ that appears before the word, ‘liposuction’ – ‘implants and liposuction to remove fat from her knees, thighs and waistline’? How does it link with the vocabulary ‘implants’ – which occurs before the word ‘liposuction’

(Zhen referred to the line from the text, “implants and liposuction to remove fat”.)

Both participants tried to link the two words, ‘implants’ and ‘liposuction’, to the concept of ‘sucking fat’ by looking at the words that follow after them, and tried linking ‘implants’ to ‘liposuction’ and sucking fat out. Their social interaction provided an insight how these learners used the contextual clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary. In the case of Zhen and Jan, strategies used in their social interaction were first ‘skip the difficult word’, and move on to the next one. Next, identify the part of the word which could have given the clue to the word meaning, that is, ‘suction’ in liposuction, and the generally directive contextual clues reinforces the word meaning, “remove fat…” Subsequently, they attempt to link the meaning to the target word which they had skipped, possibly because of their knowledge of the function of the conjunction ‘and’ and thought that there could be a
connection between ‘implants’ and ‘liposuction’ as well as ‘remove fat…’ but their vocabulary knowledge apparently caused them to be doubtful of this connection, hence, they read the text a few times to look for the contextual clues and gave up eventually. Even after the researcher explained the meaning of implants and let them look up their bilingual dictionary for the meaning, they had problems comprehending the meaning as it has multiple meanings.

6.8 Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

Vocabulary learning should be a learning process that allows a learner to think about the word, its meaning/s, its functions and association with other words. The use of think-aloud protocols allows an observer, researcher or teacher to have a greater insight into how a learner arrives at a certain answer, or progress from a ‘wrong’ answer to a more ‘correct’ answer. The discussion strategy used in this study enables the researcher not only to observe the process of the participants working together to deduce the word meaning/s but also when and why certain social strategies were used. The findings discussed in chapter six are based on only these twenty Chinese ESL participants who performed this reading vocabulary task, and limited to these eight vocabulary items and could not be used to represent the whole population of Chinese ESL learners. However, the study provides a valuable insight into how these learners apply their vocabulary strategies when actually confronted with unfamiliar vocabulary in context. Despite the limitations imposed by using only one reading vocabulary task, these findings do provide a greater insight into these Chinese ESL learners’ vocabulary strategy use to deduce or guess the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary when performing this task. The following summarizes, in relation to research questions 3a and 3b:
RQ 3a. What were the main vocabulary learning strategies used by these Chinese ESL learners to perform the reading vocabulary task?

RQ 3b. How effective were these vocabulary learning strategies used in the reading vocabulary task?

The findings of the current study show that all the participants used contextual clues at least once. It was observed the more difficult it was for the participants to guess or deduce the word meaning/s, the more frequently they would use strategies such as guessing using contextual clues and world knowledge, more word associations and social strategies. This suggests an indirect influence of the difficulty level to guess or deduce word meaning/s on vocabulary strategy use. According to Schmitt (1996), learners need two prerequisites for guessing using context, that is, “have a certain level of language proficiency” and an “adequate background knowledge of subject” (p. 209). Apart from the direct translation from English to Chinese, the main vocabulary and social strategies used in the reading vocabulary task were:

- guessing based on their word and world knowledge (e.g., ‘transformation’ & the movie, ‘Transformer’), and contextual clues. English video clips can be useful vocabulary teaching aids as can be seen in the connection between the word, ‘transformation’, and the movie, ‘Transformers’. All the participants know the meaning of ‘transformation’.

- guessing using word association
  - semantic – literal & metaphorical meanings
  - movie title and movie characters

- breaking up a word into syllables
  - associating the first syllable with another word with the same first syllable (e.g. ‘mod’)

...
• breaking up a long word into two or three separate words and linking the meaning with that of a familiar word (e.g., ‘lip-o-suction’)

• use of social strategies such as:
  o initiating discussion by asking questions, asking for confirmation, offering a suggestion,
  o offering suggestions – all the participants were active users of this strategy, though some were more active than others.
  o asking questions
  o building on partner/s’ answers (discussion/verbal interaction)

The findings suggest a possible close relationship between the use of contextual clues and the user’s vocabulary knowledge as well as between the use of contextual clues and the difficulty level to guess or deduce the word meaning. The more difficult it is to guess the meaning of a word, the more the participants would look for contextual clues to guess word meaning. The findings also show a relationship between the use of word association and the difficulty level to guess the word meaning. The more difficult it is to guess the meaning of a vocabulary item (e.g., ‘Implants’), the more frequently word association will be used, especially when no obvious or directive contextual clues could be found.

There is also a close link between the use of SS use and the difficulty level of guessing the word meaning. The more uncertain the participants were of the word meaning, the more frequently social strategies were used, such as asking questions, asking for clarifications, or building on one another’s answers. On the other hand, there would be less social interaction when they thought that they knew the answers. In such instances, they would give the direct translation from English to Chinese and moved on to the next vocabulary item. However, the
The frequency of SS use could also depend on the personality of the participants, the group dynamics and how comfortable they were with one another. Hence, the findings between the link between the difficulty level and social strategy use are still inconclusive and more future in-depth studies Chinese ESL learners’ SS use are required.

This study provides evidence that unless the participants had some prior knowledge of the English word and its meaning, it is difficult for Chinese ESL learners to use the translation strategy to guess or deduce the word meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary. The participants’ direct translation from English to Chinese during their reading task performance was an indication of their personal vocabulary knowledge and the use of the memory retrieval strategy. However, the difficulty level of the vocabulary to guess the word meaning/s was reflected in the percentage of mistranslation and misinterpretation of word meanings given, reinforcing the difficulty of using the translation strategy.

The findings of the current study demonstrate that looking for contextual clues and reading the text repeatedly might not always be effective or produce the desired outcome due to various factors such as the lack of obvious contextual clues or misinterpretation of contextual clues. Another factor is vocabulary being used in a different part of speech from what they were used to, and the learners’ confusion with affixes, e.g., the meaning of ‘im’ in ‘implants’ is different from ‘im’ in ‘impossible’, likewise with ‘re’ in ‘re-invent’ & ‘re-do’. Hence, more teaching of affixes is required there should be more practice with word transformation (e.g., adjective ‘modest’ to adverb, ‘modestly’), and the use of a word in different parts of speech and, e.g. use of a ‘noun’ as an ‘adjective’. Vocabulary instruction should also be integrated with grammar and syntax instruction—as vocabulary knowledge without grammar and syntax knowledge is not enough. Difference in connotations due to difference in cultural, social and
economic contexts between learners and texts could also lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. For example, ‘a flat in London, a second-hand Mercedes and three adorable cats’ could be symbols of wealth to the learners and not ‘living modestly’ as suggested in the text. Hence, the ESL teachers also need to be aware of the difference in financial, cultural and societal background of the learners and those reflected in a text, as the same words could have different meanings for learners from different countries.
7. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will begin with the synopsis of the study followed by a summary of findings in relation to the four research questions (see Chapter One), pedagogical implications, conclusion, limitations of study and recommendations for future studies.

7.1 Main Objectives of the Study

This study adopted the qualitative and inductive case study approach to investigate the VLS use of twenty Chinese ESL learners in Australia. Three main information elicitation techniques (an interview, a questionnaire survey and a reading vocabulary task) were used to investigate, firstly, how the participants’ previous EFL vocabulary learning experiences affected their English language learning skill development. Secondly, the study examined ‘what’ vocabulary learning strategies were more frequently reported to be used by these learners and ‘why’ certain vocabulary learning strategies were used (or not used). Thirdly, the investigation used the think-alouds protocol and oral discussion strategies to find out ‘how’ they deduced the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary in the reading vocabulary task. The investigation also explored whether there is any significant relationship between vocabulary knowledge and VLS use. The participants’ recommendation of vocabulary activities provided a greater insight into their vocabulary learning strategy preferences.
7.2 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Research Questions

With reference to research question one\(^{33}\), the findings of this study reveal that the participants’ previous vocabulary learning in their home country had a great influence on their English vocabulary learning strategy use, which inevitably affected their English language learning and English language skill development. Findings of research studies (such as Basurto, 2004; Johnson and Pearson, 1984) demonstrated that vocabulary knowledge plays a critical role in reading comprehension development and an expansive vocabulary range is the key to understanding both spoken and written language. The Chinese ESL learners in this study found their knowledge of English vocabulary and word use to be insufficient for communicating with English native speakers, comprehending texts with more complex vocabulary or expressing themselves adequately verbally and in writing in Australia. Most of the participants in this current study felt that their inadequate English language skill development could be due to their limited English vocabulary and insufficient vocabulary knowledge. They linked their English vocabulary and language learning difficulties faced in Australia to their previous EFL vocabulary learning in their home country, which they associated more with having a good memory and memorizing lists of words and their meanings than with understanding their meanings and how the words were used in different contexts. Their previous vocabulary learning was also more textbook-based, teacher-centred and examination-oriented. Their EFL teachers’ vocabulary teaching approach was similar to the Grammar-Translation approach, with the use of Chinese as the main language of instruction. The reinforcement of vocabulary learning was repetitive copying of the words and word-meaning/s. The findings from the participant interviews provide evidence that rote memorization was one of the most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies among the memorization strategies in the students’ previous EFL learning. Most of them considered

\(^{33}\) RQ 1: How did the twenty Chinese ESL students’ previous English vocabulary learning experiences in their home country affect their English language skill development?
memorizing lists of words daily as an ineffective and unproductive way of learning vocabulary. Though rote memorization and the use of written repetition strategies without either understanding or appropriate word use were ineffective for long term word retention, these strategy were still effective for short term word retention and sufficient for passing their EFL tests and examinations. Another factor that could contribute to their inadequate knowledge of vocabulary and word use was their low use of the metacognitive regulation strategy, ‘Reading other English books besides their textbooks’.

With regards to research question two and the ‘what’ issue of this study, the translation, metacognitive regulation, memory and cognitive strategy categories were reported to be used more frequently than the other three categories (metacognitive, determination and social strategies). The translation strategy was most popular with this group of Chinese ESL learners, probably because of the ease and speed by which a word meaning can be found, especially with the help of a bilingual dictionary. More significantly, these learners showed a higher use frequency for metacognitive regulation strategies and other vocabulary learning strategies that encourage autonomous and self-initiated learning, (such as making their own wordlists), than for mechanical learning or asking another person for assistance. The high use of these strategies is associated with more successful vocabulary learners and students of a higher academic and language proficiency level, reflected in studies such as Liu (2010), Wharton (2000) and Gu and Johnson (1996).

---

34 Not all memorization strategies are rote memorization. Rote memorization was only one of the strategies used by the participants during their EFL learning and they found it to be useful and effective for short term retention and a quick way to learn a word and its meaning.

35 RQ 2: Which vocabulary learning strategies did the twenty Chinese ESL learners report to use more frequently to learn new English vocabulary?
The more frequently used vocabulary learning strategies were the metacognitive regulation strategies relate more to making notes, and learning interesting, important and relevant vocabulary; memory strategies that relate to personal experience, the study of word meaning, spelling and sound, image associations and idioms; metacognitive strategies such as listening to English songs, reading online articles and news online, watching English video clips and skipping difficult words; social strategies that involve their classmates and peers as well as learning in pair/group and practising with friends in school; determination strategies such as guessing from contextual clues, using a thesaurus and using a bilingual dictionary; and cognitive strategies such as taking notes, writing personal wordlist, and paraphrasing word meaning themselves. The high frequency for memorizing idioms could be due to their Chinese language learning, which has a high focus on idiomatic expressions, especially on four-character idioms and wise sayings. However, memorizing idioms is not synonymous with understanding what these idioms mean and how they should be used. One of their difficulties is understanding the idiomatic expressions and colloquialism used by English native speakers.

The participants’ high use frequency for memory strategies and guessing from contextual clues concurs with findings of other studies (Liu, 2010; Gu and Johnson, 1996), and this VLS use should be further encouraged. The participants’ higher use frequency for the use of a thesaurus and a bilingual dictionary than that of a monolingual dictionary, could be because the synonyms given in the thesaurus and the translation from English to Chinese given in the bilingual dictionary help them to understand the word meanings more quickly than a monolingual dictionary that could contain more difficult vocabulary for them to understand. In some ESL classrooms, the use of monolingual dictionaries is enforced while bilingual dictionary use is greatly discouraged. ESL instructors will have to consider whether using the
monolingual dictionary is more important than understanding the meanings and use of vocabulary. Most electronic bilingual dictionaries include the monolingual English to English dictionary and the Chinese ESL learners in the current study will look at the English-Chinese translation first to understand the word meanings before they refer to the English-English version.

The less frequently used vocabulary learning are metacognitive regulation strategies that relate to learning about vocabulary or reading English books beyond what is taught in their English class or textbook; memory strategies that relate to semantic maps, learning idioms from stories, memorizing parts of speech or connecting the word to its synonyms and antonyms; metacognitive strategies such as reading hardcopy newspapers, skipping idioms and listening tapes to word list; social strategies that involve asking their teachers, parents and family members for translation or clarification; determination strategies such as using a monolingual or a pictorial dictionary; and cognitive strategies such as verbal and written repetition, keeping a vocabulary notebook, and learning from teacher-made wordlist. Their low SS use involving their parents and teachers concurs with findings about Chinese learners’ reticence in consulting figures of authority and parents.

Two significant findings relate to the participants’ DS use and low SS use. The SS category was the least frequently used among the seven VLS categories. On closer examination, their SS use reveals a higher use frequency for those related to pair/group work and classmates than asking for translation or paraphrase from parents and family members. One will need to understand the mainland Chinese family dynamic, the education system, work ethics and the language environment in China to understand the reason for this low SS use. Due to the one-child policy in China and predominantly Chinese environment, most of the participants did
not have many family members to ask for help in English, especially if both parents were working. In addition, the English language proficiency of their parents or family members was unknown. In most cases, they communicate in the first language with their parents and other family members (if any). Hence, the conclusion that these Chinese ESL learners were low SS users could be misleading as it could be a different conclusion if the SS use is related to their first language. Their DS use ranked one of the three least frequently used strategies. On closer examination, it is revealed that this could be related to their English language proficiency level. They showed very low DS use for ‘picture dictionary’ and ‘word lists’ as they were studying English for academic purposes and their English language proficiency level was higher than beginner level, hence these two strategies were deemed as childish and unproductive to them. On the other hand, they show high use for ‘the use of thesaurus’ and ‘guess from contextual clues’ and. Hence, this provides the evidence that a learner’s language proficiency level can be influence DS use and reinforce the findings about the similarity between their VLS use and those associated with learners of higher language proficiency level.

On the one hand, their VLS use suggest that they were still very examination-oriented and textbook-based as they restricted their vocabulary learning to the textbook and would rather use the vocabulary section in their textbook than learning vocabulary items and reading books not given by their teacher. On the other hand, their higher use frequency for cognitive strategies such as taking notes, writing personal wordlist, paraphrasing word meaning themselves than for verbal and written repetition, keeping a vocabulary notebook, or learning from teacher-made wordlist (DS) or tape of word list (MS) reinforce the earlier findings about these Chinese ESL learners’ high preference for autonomous and self-initiated learning. Pedagogical implications are that ESL instructors should expose their learners to a variety of
vocabulary learning strategies and encourage learners to use a combination of vocabulary learning strategies that would help to increase their vocabulary learning most effectively. Their generally low MS use and the low MRS use for reading books besides the textbooks are areas of concern. Metacognitive strategies are crucial for planning, controlling, and evaluating vocabulary learning. Inclusion of MS training and vocabulary activities that encourage reading English books beyond the textbooks are strongly recommended. Hence, it is necessary for ESL instructors to develop lesson materials and create activities that encourage their learners to learn vocabulary and read books more extensively to increase their vocabulary range, as well as to expose their learners more to the learning of idioms from stories, the use of idioms, antonyms and synonyms and the use semantic maps. The potentials of movie/video clips and online articles as vocabulary learning aids could also be utilized to help enhance their MS use.

With regards to research question three\(^\text{36}\), the analysis of the participants’ VLS use in the reading vocabulary task is crucial to this study as it provides a greater insight into ‘what’ vocabulary learning strategies were selected to perform the reading vocabulary task, and ‘how’ they used vocabulary learning strategies to guess or deduce the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary and ‘why’ they used these strategies. Their think-alouds and verbal interactions with one another allowed the researcher to have a better understanding of their thinking process behind their VLS selection and observe how they arrived at a certain answer. Chapter 6 (Reading Vocabulary Task) shows that all the participants used contextual clues at least once. The main vocabulary learning strategies used in the reading vocabulary task are direct translation from English to Chinese, guessing using their personal word and

\(^{36}\) RQ 3a: What were the main vocabulary learning strategies used by these Chinese ESL learners to perform the reading vocabulary task?

RQ 3b: How effective were these vocabulary learning strategies used in the reading vocabulary task?
world knowledge, contextual clues and word association, such as breaking up a word into syllables or familiar words. The findings suggest a close relationship between the use of direct translation, contextual clues and the user’s vocabulary knowledge. The findings show that the more familiar the vocabulary item was to my participants, the greater the use of translation from English to Chinese, but less use of contextual clues and word association strategies to guess or deduce the word meaning, less SS use and less discussion (aka verbal interaction). On the other hand, when they encountered unfamiliar English vocabulary or were unsure of the word meaning, there would be less direct translation of word meaning from English to Chinese but a greater use of the contextual clues, word association strategies and an increase in the use of social strategies to work out the word meaning. The study provides evidence that it is difficult for Chinese ESL learners to use the translation strategy to deduce the word meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary if they do not have any prior knowledge of the word and its meanings, due to the difference in cognates, writing system, and grammatical and syntactical rules between the Chinese and English languages. Other vocabulary learning strategies used in the reading vocabulary task include breaking up the word (e.g., ‘liposuction’ and ‘modestly’) into recognizable syllables and focusing on a syllable they were familiar with to either guess the word meaning or associate it with another word with similar syllable (e.g. ‘modestly’ with ‘modern’ & ‘modified’.)

The findings also show a close relationship between the learner’s SS use and their vocabulary knowledge. The most common social strategies used when performing the vocabulary task were asking for affirmation after giving the direct translation of word meaning or offering suggestions, and asking for word meaning. Apparently, the more uncertain the participants were of the word meaning, the more social strategies were used, such as asking questions, asking for clarifications, building on one another’s answers, and more compromises were made. With an increase of social interaction, there was also an increase of guessing using
contextual clues, and word association, and those who were more familiar with the word meaning would use more elaboration strategy to help the other member/s. On the other hand, there was little SS use or verbal interaction when they thought that they knew the answers or when they find it difficult to guess the meaning after looking for contextual clues. If they thought they knew the word meaning, they would provide a direct translation and move on to the next vocabulary item. If the word was too difficult to guess the word meaning, some would skip the word. Hence, the findings suggest a possible link between learners’ vocabulary knowledge and the level of discussion for the word meaning. There was a low level of discussion or verbal interaction in two different situations – one, when the learners thought that they knew the word meaning, and two, when the word meaning was completely unknown to them, and explicit contextual clues could not be found. However, the level of discussion or verbal interaction is not synonymous with the accuracy of word meaning deduction. More discussion does not necessarily result in more participants giving the accepted answers. For example, ‘modestly’ (V8) generated the most discussion but none of the participants providing the accepted answers. On the other hand, ‘transformation’ (V6) generated little discussion all twenty participants provided the accepted word meaning. Though a high level of verbal interactions does not imply that the correct word meaning would be given, it does reflect their attempts to use what is familiar to them about the word to deduce the word meaning, and their attempts to use what they thought were contextual clues to help them guess the word meaning. The participants’ SS use does not necessarily reflect the learners’ vocabulary knowledge or their English language proficiency level but it could be influenced more by their personality, the group dynamics and how comfortable they were with one another.
The findings on the participants’ use of vocabulary learning strategies to perform the reading vocabulary task reveal that the effectiveness of ‘guessing using contextual clues’ decreases when the contextual clues were less obvious. Guessing using contextual clues could become ineffective due to various factors, such as the learner’s insufficient vocabulary knowledge, non-directive contextual clues or misleading contextual clues, unfamiliar use of vocabulary, and misinterpretation of meaning due to cultural and social differences. The think-alouds and pair/trio work provide a greater insight into the thinking process behind the participants’ VLS use, and how they arrived at their answers. The use of pair/trio work allowed the researcher to observe the social and verbal interaction used by the participants to work out the word meaning with their partner/partners. The SS use was more effective if one of the partners was familiar with the word meaning. It could become less effective despite a high level of verbal interaction if none of the members was familiar with the word meaning and there were no explicit contextual clues.

With reference to research question four[^37], the activities recommended by the participants to enhance vocabulary learning indirectly reveal their high preference for teacher-based vocabulary activities, interactive vocabulary games and activities, integration of vocabulary learning with other language skills, and learning vocabulary through group interaction, watching English video clips with English subtitles and practising with English speakers. These reinforce the findings that show their greater inclination for social strategies which involve group/pair work and learning from/with their classmates than other social strategies. Besides interactive games/activities and group discussions, other interesting and meaningful vocabulary learning activities to the participants include reading ‘manga’ (Japanese

[^37]: RQ 4: What activities did these Chinese ESL participants recommend to enhance vocabulary learning?
animation) in English, relating vocabulary learnt to articles, jokes and daily life routines, vocabulary competitions/quiz, and independent vocabulary learning.

They displayed a low preference for what they considered as ‘boring’, unproductive or meaningless English vocabulary learning strategies (or activities) for learning vocabulary mechanically through rote memorization, repetitive writing/copying and making sentences. Recording words in their vocabulary notebook without understanding that do not lead to word retention or understanding of word use was also regarded as a boring vocabulary learning activity although this strategy was highly recommended by EFL and ESL instructors. Other meaningless vocabulary learning activities are underlining or circling words without understanding, and activities that require direct translation from English to Chinese. They would prefer to look up the dictionary when they encounter a word which is meaningful or interesting to them than looking up the dictionary whenever they encounter an unfamiliar word.

Despite their high preference for autonomous and self-initiated vocabulary learning, the learners demonstrated that they were still dependent on their teachers and classmates/peers for their vocabulary learning. Hence, one pedagogical implication for teaching is to include a combination of teacher-based activities and interactive group vocabulary games and activities, which would be beneficial to the learners in their vocabulary learning. Two other pedagogical implications are the great potential of the multi-media and English video/movie clips as vocabulary teaching aides, and the use of native English speakers to provide more opportunities for learners to practice communicating in English in speech and/or in writing. These practices not only could enhance their vocabulary knowledge and their four main
English language learning skill development but they could also increase their confidence in the use of English language.

7.3 Implications for Teaching

First, despite the growing importance of English in the Chinese speaking countries and other EFL countries, the interviews provide strong evidence that both mechanical rote memorization and repetitive copying of list of words and their meanings without understanding are still being practised in their English vocabulary learning. The Chinese ESL learners in this study claimed that these strategies are unproductive and ineffective for long term word retention and word use. The reformation of vocabulary teaching will have to begin with the EFL teachers as this study reinforces the findings of previous studies that previous vocabulary learning experiences in the students’ home country have a significant effect on their ESL vocabulary learning strategy use. Vocabulary learning should be a learning process that allows a learner to think about the word and its meanings, functions and collocation with other words. In addition, vocabulary instruction should be integrated with grammar and syntax instruction. A better structured teaching of morphology including lexicographical means and sources of word building are required. Students would benefit from an in-depth understanding of the structure of words and their inflectional characteristics. They would easier decipher word meanings and better process new word meanings. The evolution of language teaching approach (from Grammar-translation, Audiolingual, Natural, Communicative to the Lexical approach) and vocabulary teaching strategies have been ongoing for the last fifty years. Research studies have shown that successful vocabulary learners do not rely on a single specific VLS but used a combination of vocabulary learning strategies (Moir and Nation, 2002; Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Sanaoui, 1995; Ahmed, 1989). Hence, EFL and ESL instructors should not be relying on a particular vocabulary teaching
approach or using a specific vocabulary teaching strategy as one approach that is effective for one group may not be as effective for another. There is no evidence to prove that one particular approach is more successful than the others (Folse, 2004). Instead, the implication is for the ESL instructors to identify their learners’ vocabulary learning needs and develop the teaching materials according to the approach that caters best to these needs.

Second, the performance of reading vocabulary task provides evidence that learners from a different cultural, financial and socio background from the writer’s or the ESL teacher’s, may have different connotations of certain vocabulary, as well as different concepts of value categories such as wealth, decency, honour and success. Hence, ESL teachers have to be more aware of these differences that might lead to learners’ misinterpretation of the word meaning when guessing from contextual clues, especially when it is a multi-cultural and multi-nationality class.

Third, the Chinese ESL learners are found to be autonomous and self-initiated vocabulary learners to a certain extent but they show a low use frequency for learning English vocabulary beyond what their teachers have given, as well as a low use frequency for reading English books apart from their English textbooks. These could be one of reasons why the participants showed limited vocabulary knowledge and insufficient vocabulary range. The students showed more interest in learning words which were more meaningful and relevant to them than words that they felt were unimportant due to lack of word use. The Chinese ESL learners were found to be low SS users but among the social strategies, they have a greater inclination for social strategies related to group/pair work and learning through communication and interaction, than those that involved practice outside classrooms, their parents or family members. This suggests that teachers could include more group activities
that would motivate their learners to read more extensively beyond their textbook and to share with their peers certain vocabulary which they find interesting. The Internet and reading and researching relevant and challenging topics through the Internet could be an exceptionally useful strategy to motivate students to widen their vocabulary. The learners showed a higher use frequency for making their own wordlists than learning from teacher-made or commercially made word lists. This could be utilized to give students the opportunity to make their own choices what vocabulary they want to learn and retain as relevant beyond the vocabulary that the textbook offers.

Other implications for teaching include looking into the potentials of modern technology such as the internet, online articles, English movies/video clips and songs as vocabulary teaching and learning aides, and exposing the learners to colloquial spoken language, idioms, and idiomatic expressions interesting, relevant and meaningful to the learners.

7.4 Conclusion

The main task of this investigation has been to explore the selected Chinese ESL learners’ VLS use. The findings of this study reinforce the findings of previous studies on the influence of learners’ early English vocabulary learning experiences on their VLS choice and language learning skills development. The Chinese ESL learners in this study associated their English language learning difficulties with their insufficient vocabulary and limited vocabulary knowledge, which they in turn attributed to their previous inadequate vocabulary learning in their home country. Further investigation revealed that their previous vocabulary learning is mainly teacher- and textbook-based as well as examination oriented. Their main vocabulary learning strategies included the use of translation, rote memorization, repetitive copying and teacher-made word lists, which they found to be useful for passing their English tests and examinations but unproductive and ineffective for long term retention and word use. Like Gu
and Johnson’s (1996) Chinese participants, they rejected the use of rote memorization as an effective VLS but accepted it as part of their EFL vocabulary learning. They claimed that mechanical rote memorization and repetitive copying of words and their meanings without understanding are boring and meaningless and not helpful as they forgot most of what they had learnt. The outcomes of their previous EFL vocabulary learning include short-term retention of English vocabulary and their meanings, difficulty with word use or expressing themselves in speech and writing, and problems with their English language learning skill development. Their limited knowledge of vocabulary use also contributed to their reading and listening problems as well as their difficulties in expressing themselves appropriately or adequately in writing and in speech.

The findings about this group of Chinese ESL learners’ VLS use suggest that there is a greater influence of their academic and language proficiency levels on their VLS use than cultural influence. Their high use frequency for vocabulary learning strategies that encourage autonomous and self-initiated learning is associated with more successful vocabulary learners and students of a higher academic and language proficiency level (Liu, 2010; Wharton, 2000, & Gu and Johnson, 1996). Other more frequently used vocabulary learning strategies relate more to their interest and daily life, personal experience, already known words, learning of idioms, watching movie/video, reading online. Strategies related to peer learning in pair/group and practice with classmates were more popular with them than learning vocabulary on their own outside the classroom or with their parents and family members. Their low use frequency for vocabulary learning strategies related to vocabulary learning beyond what was given in class or reading books apart from the textbook could be two factors that led to the insufficient vocabulary and limited vocabulary knowledge of some of the participants. Their low use of metacognitive strategies which are crucial for vocabulary
learning and generally associated with successful language learners and planning is another area of concern. Metacognitive strategy instruction will be beneficial for these learners as Zhao’s (2009) study provides strong evidence that MS instruction could help increase learners’ Metacognitive strategy use to enhance vocabulary learning.

The investigation into the learners’ vocabulary learning and SS use when performing the reading vocabulary task reveals a close relationship between learners’ vocabulary knowledge, their vocabulary learning and social strategy use. The use translation, contextual clues, word associations and social strategies are linked to the learners’ word knowledge. More word knowledge results in an increase of translation but a decrease in the use of translation, guessing using contextual clues, word association and social strategies. The opposite occurred when the meaning of a vocabulary item was unknown to them. Learners’ insufficient vocabulary and language knowledge, misleading contextual clues and different cultural connotations could lead to the misinterpretation of word meaning. These findings suggest that vocabulary learning should be more holistic, integrated with learning about parts of speech, word semantics, building blocks of words, inflectional features, affixes and other grammatical and syntactical aspects. In addition, the learners should be exposed to the different connotations and denotations as well as possible context and functions of a newly learned word. It is also essential for ESL teachers to be aware of the differences in word meaning for learners from different cultural, economic and socio backgrounds.

The insights obtained from this study suggest that reforms of vocabulary instruction should begin with EFL instructors and EFL vocabulary teaching strategies. For instance, the language of instruction in an EFL classroom should be English as much as possible instead of Chinese. The findings of the study highlight the urgency for both EFL and ESL instructors to
modify their teaching approach to cater to their learners’ learning needs. The EFL teaching community may need to consider a change in their vocabulary teaching strategies to encourage more incidental vocabulary learning. The learners in the current study were greatly aware that ample opportunities to practice the vocabulary learnt, a conducive language and vocabulary learning environment, as well as the confidence and interest to use the language skills and vocabulary learnt are also crucial to their vocabulary learning. It is recommended that they consider moving away from the time-consuming and inefficient traditional vocabulary teaching methods (such as the Grammar-Translation teaching approach) to the more communicative or lexical approach of teaching vocabulary. More creative and meaningful vocabulary instruction should be developed to cater to their learners’ vocabulary learning needs and also focus attention on the other aspects of vocabulary learning such as word use collocation, connotation, denotation, synonyms, parts of speech. The participants’ recommendations of vocabulary games of activities to enhance vocabulary learning include the use of technology such as computer software and video clips, interactive group activities that promote peer learning and team work, quizzes and practice with native speakers. These provide evidence that these learners have a good understanding of their own language learning needs and effective vocabulary learning approaches.

7.5 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of the study are limited to only the twenty Chinese ESL learners in this study and cannot be used as generalizations for the whole population they belong to. Though one reading vocabulary task is insufficient to make generalizations about the use of vocabulary learning and social strategies to guess or deduce the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary items, the think-alouds and verbal interaction provide a greater understanding of the thought process behind their VLS use. The use of both MRS and MS categories could be
confusing for those unfamiliar with the MRS category. However, the inclusion of the MRS category provides a better understanding of the learners’ use of self-initiation and autonomous learning strategies, which are associated with successful vocabulary learners.

The think-alouds which are limited to only the four participants who chose to perform the reading vocabulary task individually may be insufficient to provide a deep understanding of the thinking process behind learners’ VLS use to deduce the word meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary. However, the data gained are very informative and useful in highlighting cognitive processes and therefore more research in this technique should be encouraged. In addition, the findings of this study have provided useful information about Chinese ESL learners’ vocabulary learning strategy use and show what, when, why and how certain vocabulary learning and social strategies are used to guess or deduce meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary. The individuals’ think-alouds and as well as the pair/trio’s verbal interaction during the reading vocabulary task have also provided a greater insight into the thinking process behind the students’ VLS selection and promoted a better understanding of the processes that occurred while working out the word meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary. In summary, the data provided a clear insight into the investigated Chinese young adult ESL learners’ vocabulary learning experiences, their VLS use, their struggle to cope with English vocabulary acquisition, their recommendations of vocabulary activities to teachers to enhance learners’ vocabulary learning as well as their view on the effectiveness of their vocabulary learning strategies (such as rote memorization), and what would help them in improving their vocabulary learning. Future studies should focus on issues such as the relationship between vocabulary learning and gender/ethnicity, and to involve a larger sample of participants and include more diverse vocabulary tasks.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1

1A) Researcher’s Language Background & Qualifications

(i) Researcher’s Language Background

My first spoken language is Foochow, a minority Chinese dialect in Singapore, which I use to communicate with my parents, siblings and relatives. I learn to speak Cantonese and Hokkien from my immediate neighbours. It was only when I started school at age 7 that I learned the English, Chinese and Malay languages. Academically, I studied English as the ‘first language’, Chinese as a ‘second language’ and Malay as the National language. I studied Chinese as a second language right up to my senior high, and obtained a Master degree in the English Language. I also learned the Japanese language as a minor subject in the second and third year of my Bachelor degree.

(ii) Researcher’s Professional Qualifications

I started teaching in 1976 as a teacher-trainee and specialized in English, English Language and Art. From 1978-1998, I taught English to students from secondary one to secondary five levels in high school in Singapore, and taught General Paper in Junior College in 2001. I was an ESL volunteer-tutor with TAFE from 2004-2007 in Australia. I was an ESL instructor in the English Language Centre of an Australia university in Queensland from 2008 to 2011, and also taught Literacy and Numeracy to native speakers in 2010.

(iii) Researcher’s Translation Experience


38 In my school days where there were various language stream schools, Singapore’s definition of first language is in terms of the main language used to teach the various subjects in school, that is whether it is an English, Chinese, Malay or Tamil stream school. Another language taken by the students apart from the main language used in the school, is regarded as the second language. However, in the present day Singapore, all schools are English stream schools, and English is regarded as the first language taught in school.
Dear Ms Wong,

I write further to your application for a variation to your approved protocol "'A Case Study To Investigate The Vocabulary Learning Strategy Preferences Of Four Chinese Adult ESL Learners, With Special Reference To Their ESL Proficiency Level' (GU Ref No: EPS/31/07/HREC). This request has been considered by the Chair.

The Chair resolved to approve the requested variation:

Requested:

i) a change to the participant pool to include adult ESL learners;

ii) a change to the title of the project from 'A Case Study To Investigate The Vocabulary Learning Strategy Preferences Of Four Chinese Adult ESL Learners, With Special Reference To Their ESL Proficiency Level' to 'A Case Study To Investigate The Vocabulary Learning Strategy Preferences Of Ten Chinese Adult ESL Learners of Higher Learning.'; and

iii) an increase to the number of participants from 8-10 to 10-20.

This decision is subject to ratification at the next meeting of the HREC. However, you are authorised to immediately commence the revised project on this basis. I will only contact you again about this matter if the HREC raises any additional questions or comments about this variation.

Regards

Dr Gary Allen
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University
ph: 3735 5585
fax: 3735 7994
e-mail: g.allen@griffith.edu.au
I am Elizabeth Wong. I hope that you are able to participate in my research project to help me complete the partial requirement of the Doctor of Education program with Griffith University. Below is my proposed research project. Thank you.

**Research Topic: A Case Study to Investigate the Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use & Preferences of Chinese ESL Learners.**

This research requests your assistance to help us to explore the strategies adults use to learn new English words when they are learning English as A Second Language.

Your participation is voluntary. You are allowed to use Chinese, Cantonese or Hokkien (Taiwanese), besides English. You have the option to withdraw at any point of time of the research, with no penalty or discrimination. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

1. fill out a questionnaire in which you can indicate what kind of strategies you use and how often you use them to learn vocabulary. It will take about 20-30 minutes to complete. (Chinese translation of the questionnaire is available.)
2. attend an interview
3. perform a Reading vocabulary task

Days and Time: Depending on the days and time convenient to the participants
Place: Joint decision by the researcher and participants

There will be audio-recording (and possibly video-recording). At the end of the project, there will be a little gift as an appreciation for your involvement.

Your data will be used by only the researcher, Elizabeth Wong (S2185552), for the purpose of her Doctor of Education dissertation, which is to be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Doctor of Education with Griffith University (Australia). Your data will never be used for any other purposes. Your name will never be identified nor your privacy violated. If you have questions about the project or how the data will be used, please feel free to ask the researchers listed below, any questions face-to-face, by phone or via e-mail.

Your response and feedback will be a great contribution to the ESL teaching and learning communities in Australia and other parts of the world. Thank you for giving your time.

With appreciation,
Elizabeth Wong
Certificate of Consent:

I was informed and understand what the project is and how my data will be used. Thus, by signing below, I give my consent to participate in his project.

Name of participant: __________________

Signature of participant: __________________

Date: ____/___/____
Month/Day/Year
CONSENT FORM 同意书

Faculty of Education 教育系
教育专业研究学校
School of Education and Professional Studies
Griffith University (Australia) 大学 (澳洲)

我是伊利莎白(Elizabeth)。我希望您能参加我的研究项目，帮我完成Griffith大学(澳洲)教育博士学位的部分要求。以下是我的研究计划。谢谢

Research Topic: A Case Study to Investigate the Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use & Preferences of Chinese ESL Learners.

研究主题：专案研究调查华人ESL学习者词汇量学习策略的特选。(ESL - 以英文为第二语言)

这项研究需要您的协助，探索成人以英文为第二语言，学习英文新单字和词汇的策略

您的参与是自愿的。除了英文之外，您也可以使用中文、广东话或者福建(台语)。您可以随时取消参与研究，不会被罚或受歧视。如果您愿意参加，请您完成以下各项：

1. 请填写一份问卷调查，您可指出您用什么方法学英文单字和词汇？多久使用一次？完成问卷大约需20至30分钟。
2. 参加一次的面谈。
3. 完成一次词汇练习作业

日期和时间: 参加者选择方便日子和时间
地点: 参加者和研究者选择方便地方

将会录音 (甚至可能会录影)。研究项目完成之后,会赠送每位参加者一份小礼物显示我们的谢意。

您的资料将只被研究者，伊利莎白黄(S2185552)，用来做为她的教育博士学位论文研究，提供完成Griffith大学(澳洲)教育博士学位的部分要求。您的资料将不会被用来做任
何其他用途。您的名字将不会被公开，也不会侵犯您的隐私权。如果您对此项研究有任何问题，或者对于资料将被如何使用等，请尽管向研究者(如下列)询问，面对面、电话或e-mail皆可。

您的回覆及回馈，对澳洲及世界上其他地区第二语文的教学及学习，将会有很大的贡献。谢谢您拨冗阅读此文！

非常感谢！

Elizabeth Wong

研究项目队员
副教授 Rod Gardner
主审
教育专业研究
Griffith 大学
email: r.gardner@griffith.edu.au
电话: 3735 3472

研究项目队员
Maria Dobrenov-Major 博士
陪审
教育专业研究
Griffith 大学
email: m.dobrenov-major@griffith.edu.au
电话: 3735-5860

伊莉莎白黄 (Elizabeth Wong)
研究生 (教育课程博士)
E-mail: liz_poly@yahoo.com.
电话: 3245-1460

同意证明书:

我被告知，也了解这是什么研究，及我的资料将被如何使用。因此，我在下面签名，同意参与此项研究。

参加者姓名：____________________

参加者签名：____________________

日期：_____/_____/______

月/日/年
APPENDIX 2

2A) Participants' Particulars

Figure 2A Participants' Particulars & Final ESL Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>*Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>ISLPR Score</th>
<th>English Language Centre Overall Test Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ed</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ce</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Macau</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hua</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lin</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yun</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Hao</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ping</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Zhen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Jing</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Wen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dale</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not the participants’ real name. Pseudonyms used for the purpose of this research study.

Hong Kong: 1 Female: 12
Macau: 1 Male: 8
Taiwan: 5
China: 13

Age range: mostly 20 years old or early 20s
VLS Questionnaire (English)

VLS QUESTIONNAIRE (English)
Faculty of Education
School of Education and Professional Studies
Griffith University (Australia)

Research Topic: An Investigation of The Vocabulary Learning Strategy Use & Preference of Twenty Chinese ESL Learners in Australia

This research requests your assistance to help us to explore the vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) adults use to learn new English words when they are learning English as A Second Language.

Your participation is voluntary. You are allowed to use Chinese, Cantonese or Hokkien (Taiwanese), besides English. You have the option to withdraw at any point of time of the research, with no penalty or discrimination. If you agree to participate in this project, please kindly fill out a questionnaire in which you are asked to indicate what kind of strategies you use and how often you use them to learn vocabulary. It will take about 20-30 minutes to complete. (Chinese translation of the questionnaire is available.)

The completion of the questionnaire indicates your given consent. Your data will be used by only the student researcher, Elizabeth Wong (S2185552), for the purpose of her Doctor of Education’s dissertation, which is to be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Doctor of Education with Griffith University (Australia). Your data will never be used for any other purposes. Your name will never be identified nor your privacy violated. If you have questions about the project or how the data will be used, please feel free to ask the researchers any questions face-to-face, by phone or via e-mail.

Your response and feedback will be a great contribution to the ESL teaching and learning communities in Australia and other parts of the world.

Thank you for giving your time.

Elizabeth

Research Team Members

Associate Professor Rod Gardner
Chief Investigator
Education and Professional Studies
Griffith University
email: r.gardner@griffith.edu.au
major@griffith.edu.au
Tel: 3735 3472

Dr. Maria Dobrenov-Major
Co-Investigator
Education and Professional Studies
Griffith University
m.dobrenov-
Tel: 3735-5860

Elizabeth Wong
Student Researcher (Doctor of Education Program)
E-mail address: liz_poly@yahoo.com
Tel: 3245-1460
VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer questions 1-10 in Part 1 first, before you continue to Part 2 of the questionnaire.

Part 1

1. Name: ______________________  
   (You can use a nickname. Your name or nickname will be kept confidential.)

2. Age (Circle your answer):  a. 20-30  b. 31-40  c. 41-50  d. 51-60  e. 61 and above

3. Nationality: _________________

4. Native Language: __________________

5. ESL Class Level: ________

6. How long have you been learning English as a Second Language: ______________

7. Reason/s for learning English: Please circle the answer/s. You learn English because you _________________
   a. need it for your work
   b. need it for your study
   c. want to communicate with people who speak this language
   d. are interested in the language
   e. want to understand movies/dramas in that language
   f. Others: _____________________________________________________

8. Do you have a language tutor or a language learning support teacher besides the classroom language teacher?  Yes/No  
   (Circle one)

*****

Part 2

The following is a list of vocabulary learning strategies. Learning strategies here refer to the methods you use to learn vocabulary (or words). The researcher is interested in what you actually do, NOT what you should do or want to do. Please indicate how often you have used a certain strategy over the last two weeks. It can be related to any skills (i.e. listening, reading, speaking, and writing) and any place of learning (e.g. school, work, and home).

Please circle one of the following numbers next to each strategy:

0) Never: If you do not use the strategy at all, please circle the word never.
1) Seldom: If you use the strategy about ‘20%’ of the time
2) Sometimes: If you use the strategy about ‘40%’ of the time
3) Often: If you use the strategy about ‘60%’ of the time
4) Usually: If you use the strategy about ‘80%’ of the time
5) Always:  f you use the strategy about ‘100%’ of the time

For example, if you use a bilingual dictionary 80% of the time when learning vocabulary, please circle the number (5):

If you want to amend your answer, please cross it out and circle the answer you want. Circle only one of the words. In this questionnaire, there are no correct or wrong answers. Also, you can indicate the use of one particular strategy simultaneously with another one. For example, if you use both a bilingual dictionary and a monolingual dictionary 60% of the time when you try to learn vocabulary, please circle the word, often in the items 23 and 24 below. This way, please indicate the frequency of the strategies you use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Strategy Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### A) METACOGNITIVE REGULATION STRATEGIES

1. Find out meaning of words I am interested in.  
   - 0 1 2 3 4 5
2. Make a note of words important to me.  
   - 0 1 2 3 4 5
3. Read other English books besides textbook.  
   - 0 1 2 3 4 5
4. Learn other vocabulary items not given by teacher.  
   - 0 1 2 3 4 5
5. Find out more about vocabulary items I am not sure of.  
   - 0 1 2 3 4 5

### B) METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

6. Listen to tape of word lists.  
   - 0 1 2 3 4 5
7. Watch a TV program in English.  
   - 0 1 2 3 4 5
8. Watch a video in English.  
   - 0 1 2 3 4 5
9. Listen to English songs.  
   - 0 1 2 3 4 5
10. Read English newspapers.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
11. Read English news and articles online.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
12. Listen to an English radio program in that language.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
13. Skip or pass difficult English words.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
14. Use spaced word practice.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
15. Skip difficult English idioms.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
16. Learn English words written on commercial items.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
17. Write meaning of new words in English.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5

### C) SOCIAL STRATEGIES

18. Learn by group work in class.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
19. Learn by pair work in class.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
20. Ask your English language teacher for translation into your native language.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
21. Ask your tutor/learning support teacher/classmate for a paraphrase or synonym.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
22. Ask family members for translation into native language.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
23. Ask classmates/friends for translation into your native language.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
24. Practise with your friends.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
25. Practise with your family members.  
    - 0 1 2 3 4 5
### D. DETERMINATION STRATEGIES

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Use a thesaurus.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Use picture dictionary.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Use a bilingual dictionary.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Use a monolingual dictionary.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Use word lists made by language teacher.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Guess from textual context in reading.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### E. MEMORY STRATEGIES

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Associate the word with its coordinates.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Connect the word list to its synonyms and antonyms.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Use new word in sentences.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Study and practise meaning in a group outside of class.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Connect word to already known words.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Learn idioms from stories.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Memorize idioms learnt.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Memorize the meaning of affix and roots.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Memorize parts of speech.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Group words together within story line.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Image word’s meaning.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Use rhymes to remember new words.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Connect word to a personal experience.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Study the spelling of a word.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Study the sound of a word.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Say new word aloud when studying.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Use Keyword Method.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Use semantic maps.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### F. COGNITIVE STRATEGIES

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Use the vocabulary section in your textbook.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Put English labels on physical objects.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
52. Keep a vocabulary notebook. 0 1 2 3 4 5
53. Do a verbal repetition. 0 1 2 3 4 5
54. Do written repetition. 0 1 2 3 4 5
55. Take notes in class. 0 1 2 3 4 5
56. Write your own wordlist of new words. 0 1 2 3 4 5
57. Paraphrase the word’s meaning by yourself. 0 1 2 3 4 5

G) TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

58. Write meaning of new words in your native language. 0 1 2 3 4 5

Please write any other strategies you have used that are not written above, if any. If there is no strategy you can think of, please give me any comments, or ask me any questions about this questionnaire or my research. Any comments or questions are welcome. Thank you very much for your cooperation. I will use your answer as effectively as I can.
VLS QUESTIONNAIRE (Bilingual)

封面

教育系

教育专业研究学校

Griffith 大学 (澳洲)

词汇单字学习策略问卷

研究主题：专案研究调查二十位华人成人 ESL 学习者词汇与单字学习策略的特选。(ESL - 以英文为第二语言)

这项研究需要您的协助，探索成人以英文为第二语言，学习英文新单字和词汇的策略。

完成问卷表示您已同意。您的资料将只被研究生，伊利莎白白黄(S2185552)，用来做为她的教育博士学位论文研究，交给 Griffith 大学(澳洲)以完成教育博士学位的部分要求。您的资料将不会被用来做任何其他用途。您的名字将不会被公开，隐私权也不会被侵犯。如果您对于此研究有任何问题，或者对于资料将被如何使用等问题，请尽管向研究者 (如下列)询问，面对面、电话或 e-mail 皆可。

研究项目队员

副教授 Rod Gardner (主审) Maria Dobrenov-Major 博士 (陪审)
教育专业研究 (Griffith 大学) 教育专业研究 (Griffith 大学)
email: r.gardner@griffith.edu.au m.dobrenov-major@griffith.edu.au
电话: 3735 3472 电话: 3735-5860

伊莉莎白白黄 (Elizabeth Wong)
研究生 (教育课程博士)
E-mail: liz_poly@yahoo.com. 电话: 3245-1460

谢谢您拨冗阅读此文！非常感谢！

Elizabeth Wong
26th August 2007
单字学习策略问卷

在您继续回答问题的第二部分前，请先回答第一部分的1~10题。

第一部分

1. 姓名：______________________
   日期：_______
   (您可使用昵名，您的姓名或昵名将会被保密。)

2. 年龄(圈选)： a. 20-30 b. 31-40 c. 41-50 d. 51-60 e. 61 以上

3. 国籍：_________________

4. 母语：__________________

5. 第二语言级数： _______

6. 您学英文为第二语言有多久了？： _______________

7. 学英文的原因(可复选)：请圈选答案。您学英文是因为 _______________
   a. 工作需要
   b. 上课需要
   c. 想和说英文的人沟通
   d. 对英文有兴趣
   e. 想要了解英文的电影或戏剧
   f. 其他： ________________________________

8. 除了学校的英文老师之外，您还另有英文家教或英文辅导老师吗？有/没有(请圈选一个)

*****

第二部分

以下是词汇与单字学习策略的清单，是有关您用来学英文词汇与单字的方法。研究者感兴趣的是您实际在用的，而不是您应该或想要用的方法。请指出最近两个礼拜期间，您使用某种策略多久？可以和任何技巧(例如听、说、读、写)，及任何地方(例如学校、工作地点及家里)有关。

请圈选每种策略旁边的一个号码：

0) 从未：如果您从未使用过此策略，请圈选‘0’。

1) 不常：如果您大约有百分之二十的时间使用此策略。

2) 有时候：如果您大约有百分之四十的时间使用此策略。

3) 时常：如果您大约有百分之六十的时间使用此策略。

4) 经常：如果您大约有百分之八十的时间使用此策略。

5) 总是：如果您大约有百分之百的时间使用此策略。
举例来说，当词汇与学单字时，如果您有百分之八十的时间使用双语字典，请圈选号码「5」。

如果您想修改答案，请划掉，再圈选您想要的答案。只能圈选一个。此份问卷，答案没有对或错。您也可指出某个独特的策略和另一个。举例来说，当您尝试学词汇与单字时，如果您有百分之六十的时间，同时使用双语字典和单语字典，请在以下第23及24项圈选「时常」。而且也请指出您使用这些策略的频率。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>使用策略的频率</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A) 后认知管理策略 METACOGNITIVE REGULATION STRATEGIES

1. 查明令我感兴趣的字的意思。Find out meaning of words I am interested in. 0 1 2 3 4 5
2. 记下我认为重要的字。Make a note of words important to me. 0 1 2 3 4 5
3. 读课本以外的英文书。Read other English books besides textbook. 0 1 2 3 4 5
4. 学不是老师给的其他词汇与单字。Learn other vocabulary items not given by teacher. 0 1 2 3 4 5
5. 查明更多我不确定的词汇与单字。Find out more about vocabulary items I am not sure of. 0 1 2 3 4 5

B) 后认知策略 METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

6. 听词汇与单字录音带。Listen to tape of word lists. 0 1 2 3 4 5
7. 看英文电视节目。Watch a TV program in English. 0 1 2 3 4 5
8. 看英文录影带。Watch a video in English. 0 1 2 3 4 5
9. 听英文歌。Listen to English songs. 0 1 2 3 4 5
10. 看英文报纸。Read English newspapers. 0 1 2 3 4 5
11. 看线上英文新闻及文章。Read English news and articles online. 0 1 2 3 4 5
12. 听英文广播节目。Listen to an English radio program in that language. 0 1 2 3 4 5
13. 略过困难的英文词汇与单字。Skip or pass difficult English words. 0 1 2 3 4 5
14. 使用词汇与单字填空练习。Use spaced word practice. 0 1 2 3 4 5
15. 跳过困难的英文片语。Skip difficult English idioms. 0 1 2 3 4 5
16. 学习商业项目上的英文单字。Learn English words written on commercial items. 0 1 2 3 4 5
17. 用英文写新词汇与单字的意思。Write meaning of new words in English. 0 1 2 3 4 5

C) 社会化策略 SOCIAL STRATEGIES

18. 在班上分组学习。Learn by group work in class. 0 1 2 3 4 5
19. 在班上配对学习。Learn by pair work in class.

20. 请求您的英文老师翻译成母语。
    Ask your English language teacher for translation into your native language.

21. 请求您的家庭教师或同学解释意思或给同义字。
    Ask your tutor/learning support teacher/classmate for a paraphrase or synonym.

22. 要求家人翻译成母语。Ask family members for translation into native language.

23. 要求同学或朋友翻译成母语。
    Ask classmates/friends for translation into your native language.

24. 和朋友一起练习。Practise with your friends.

25. 和家人一起练习。Practise with your family members.

26. 使用词典。Use a thesaurus.

27. 使用图画字典。Use picture dictionary.

28. 使用双语字典。Use a bilingual dictionary.

29. 使用单语字典。Use a monolingual dictionary.

30. 使用英文老师做的单字表。Use word lists made by language teacher.

31. 阅读时依文章前后文猜字意。Guess from textual context in reading.

D. 决断力策略 DETERMINATION STRATEGIES

32. 联结同类字。Associate the word with its coordinates.

33. 同义词和反义词的联想。
    Connect the word list to its synonyms and antonyms.

34. 用新字造句。Use new word in sentences.

35. 课外小组研究及练习意义。
    Study and practise meaning in a group outside of class.

36. 把字连结到已经知道的字。Connect word to already known words.

37. 从故事中学习片语。Learn idioms from stories.

38. 记住已学习的成语。Memorize idioms learnt.

39. 记住字尾、字首或字根的意义。Memorize the meaning of affix and roots.

40. 记住演讲的些许部分。Memorize parts of speech.

41. 用故事情节将字组合在一起。Group words together within story line.

42. 想像字的意义。Image word's meaning.

43. 用押韵来记新的单字。Use rhymes to remember new words.

44. 把字联结到个人的经验。Connect word to a personal experience.

45. 学习拼字。Study the spelling of a word.

46. 学习字的拼音。Study the sound of a word.
47. 学习时，大声说出新字。Say new word aloud when studying.  
48. 使用关键字。Use Keyword Method.  
49. 使用有意义词汇与单子的示意图。Use semantic maps.  

F. 认知策略 COGNITIVE STRATEGIES  
50. 使用课本上的词汇单字表。Use the vocabulary section in your textbook.  
51. 在物品贴上它的英文字。Put English labels on physical objects.  
52. 随身带词汇单字笔记。Keep a vocabulary notebook.  
53. 重覆口语练习。Do a verbal repetition.  
54. 重覆书写练习。Do written repetition.  
55. 上课做笔记。Take notes in class.  
56. 写下您自己的新词汇单字表。Write your own wordlist of new words.  
57. 自己解释词汇单字的意思。Paraphrase the word's meaning by yourself.  

G）翻译策略 TRANSLATION STRATEGIES  
58. 用母语写下新字的意思。Write meaning of new words in your native language.  

如果可以的话，请写下您使用过，而未列在上表中的任何学英文词汇单字方法。如果您未想到任何方法，请给我一些批评，或者问我任何有关此份问卷及我的研究的问题。欢迎任何批评或问题！非常感谢您的合作。我会尽力善用您的回答。
3A) A Sample Of Interview Questions

Name: __________________     Date: ____________

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please answer the following questions. Your answers can be written in Chinese, or a combination of Chinese and English. Please write as much as you want. Please do not worry about language fluency or accuracy. I am more interested in your views about your personal English vocabulary learning and vocabulary learning in general.

1. Which, do you think, is the most difficult area in learning English? E.g.
   a. Listening
   b. Reading
   c. Speaking
   d. Writing
   e. Spelling
   f. Learning Vocabulary
   g. Others

   Please highlight the answer in another colour, and elaborate why that area is the most difficult to you.

2. Which, do you find, is the easiest?

   Please write down the answer in another colour, and elaborate why that area is the easiest to you.

3. What is the greatest problem you face when communicating with native speakers?
   E.g.
   a. understanding what they say
   b. expressing yourself
   c. others

4. Why do you think ESL learners have difficulty understanding native speakers? E.g.
   a. fast pace of speaking
   b. don’t understand vocabulary used
   c. don’t understand idioms used
   d. different pronunciation
   e. not used to the accent of speakers
   f. not sure what speakers mean
   g. others

   There can be more than one answer. Please highlight the answer(s) in another colour, and provide reasons or examples.

5. Why do you think ESL learners have difficulty expressing themselves? E.g.
   a. lack of confidence
   b. limited vocabulary
   c. lack practice
d. others

There can be more than one answer. Please highlight the answer(s) in another colour, and provide reasons or examples.

6. How important is vocabulary learning to you?
7. How did your teacher teach you vocabulary in your first language?
8. How did you learn new vocabulary on your own in your first language?
9. Do you think we can apply the same strategies to English vocabulary?
10. What do you normally do when you come across new English words?
11. Do you think your vocabulary learning strategies have helped you to learn new English words in an effective manner?
12. What do you think is the most boring way of learning new English words?
13. What, in your opinion, is the most interesting way to learn new English words?
14. What are your suggestions for more effective Vocabulary learning in the classroom?
15. Any other comments which you would like to add about learning new English words.

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer the interview questions

*****

3B A Sample Of Participant’s Online Interview Question Responses (Original Version)

The sample of the Online Interview Questions & Participant’s Responses (Original version) was randomly selected from among all the other participants’ responses to the online interview questions. The online interview questions are the same questions used in the face-to-face interviews. The researcher emailed the interview questions to the participants to give them another opportunity to reflect on the questions and their responses. The highlighted responses as well as the responses in Chinese in the sample are P13-Zhen’s original responses.

Translation of participants’ responses from Chinese to English: by the researcher, Elizabeth Wong, who tried to maintain the individual participant’s tone, essence and writing style as much as possible.

Verification of translation: by the researcher’s personal friend, Theresa Tan, a Taiwanese and an EFL teacher in Taiwan
Please answer the following questions. Your answers can be written in Chinese, or a combination of Chinese and English. Please write as much as you want. Please do not worry about language fluency or accuracy. I am more interested in your views about your personal English vocabulary learning and vocabulary learning in general.

1. Which, do you think, is the most difficult area in learning English? E.g.
   a. Listening
   b. Reading
   c. Speaking
   d. Writing
   e. Spelling
   f. Learning Vocabulary
   g. Others

Please highlight the answer in another colour, and elaborate why that area is the most difficult to you.

我覺得本來寫作就包含了很多東西，像是文法、詞彙的運用跟一些架構都跟中文有很大的不同，所以要兼顧所有的東西，是我認為寫作是最困難的部分。

[I feel that writing encompasses many aspects such as the application of grammar, vocabulary and other structures which are very different from those in the Chinese system. Hence, I feel that writing is the most difficult, compared to the other skills.]

2. Which, do you find, is the easiest?

Please write down the answer in another colour, and elaborate why that area is the easiest to you.

Speaking.

雖然可能我本身的口語也不是說很好，但是因為之前從國中開始就有在上EFL的課程，所以儘管文法上或發音有錯誤，但是原則上我還是滿敢開口的，那我認為口語基本上只要敢開口講，就會比較容易熟練。

[I personally do not consider myself to speak very well, but I had attended ESL lessons in China before and regardless the mistakes made in grammar and pronunciation, I in principle dare to open my mouth to speak. I feel that as long as one dares to open the mouth and talk, it is easy to be proficient in the spoken language.]

*Participant’s use of the term ‘ESL’ here is actually referring to EFL (English as a foreign language). According to the Taiwanese participants, learning Chinese (Mandarin) is regarded as the first language, and learning English is regarded as ‘the second language’ in Taiwan. ].
3. **What is the greatest problem you face when communicating with native speakers?** E.g.
   a. **understanding what they say**
   b. expressing yourself
   c. others

   因為在臺灣我們學的英文都是美式英文，所以原本英式英文對我們就是一項挑戰，可是澳洲本身又有自己的英文，那難度就會再提高；那口音跟速度我覺得是最大的問題。
   [In Taiwan, we use American English, hence, British English is a challenge. However, Australia has its own kind of linguistic system, and thus increases the difficulties; I feel accent and speed of talking are two biggest problems.]

4. **Why do you think ESL learners have difficulty understanding native speakers?** E.g.
   a. **fast pace of speaking**
   b. don’t understand vocabulary used
   c. **don’t understand idioms used**
   d. different pronunciation
   e. **not used to the accent of speakers**
   f. not sure what speakers mean
   g. Others

   There can be more than one answer. Please highlight the answer(s) in another colour, and provide reasons or examples.

5. **Why do you think ESL learners have difficulty expressing themselves?** E.g.
   a. **lack of confidence**
   b. **limited vocabulary**
   c. lack practice
   d. Others

   There can be more than one answer. Please highlight the answer(s) in another colour, and provide reasons or examples.

   自信心不足我覺得是我身邊朋友的通病吧！因為面對native speaker大家多少都會怕怕的，怕人家聽不懂或是自己無法表達問題，那基本上我覺得會有這種感覺應該跟單字量有直接的關係。

   [I believe that lack of confidence is a common failure among ESL learners. When we face the native speakers, ESL learners will inevitable be afraid/apprehensive – due to fear that the other party does not understand what]
they say, or the fear of not being able to express themselves. Basically, I feel that this kind of feeling has a direct link to the range of vocabulary one possesses.]

6. How important is vocabulary learning to you?
非常重要，因為我認為writing是很重要的一個部分，那像是我之前提的，因為它包含了很多英文需要注意的事，所以我覺得要寫好一篇文章，最重要的就是單字要足夠。

[Very important, because I feel that writing is a very important component. As mentioned before, because writing involves many other aspects of the language, I feel to write a good article, it is most important to have sufficient vocabulary.]

7. How did your teacher teach you vocabulary in your first language?
臺灣的老師通常會先講一個單字的詞性先解釋一下，之後再帶句子去練習，然後會說一下發音。

[In Taiwan, the teacher normally explain the syntactical functions and morphological features of a word, followed by some examples to be practised on. Subsequently, the pronunciation is given.]

8. How did you learn new vocabulary on your own in your first language?
原則上因為我在臺灣唸英文是因為要考試，所以我在學新字的時候都是一直唸跟一邊寫那個單字，那同時那個字的意思也會比較有印象。

[In principle, I studied English in Taiwan as an examination subject, hence when I learned a new word, I would recite the word as I wrote the word. In that manner, the meaning of the word would be more deeply imprinted in my mind.]

9. Do you think we can apply the same strategies to English vocabulary?
我覺得不太需要改變這邊的教學方法，因為在臺灣我們的教法是針對考試，可是在這邊是針對日常生活跟日後升學的需要。

I feel that it is not very necessary to change the learning strategies used **here** because in Taiwan, the teaching strategies were focused on examination, but here, the focus on learning English here is for everyday use and for further studies.

**(The participant was in Australia when responding to the interview questions and the term ‘here’ is probably referring to Australia.)

10. What do you normally do when you come across new English words?
11. Do you think your vocabulary learning strategies have helped you to learn new English words in an effective manner?

I feel that this strategy is very useful. However, one needs to be persistent, and not be lazy.

12. What do you think is the most boring way of learning new English words?

Perhaps the Taiwan way! Because we learn vocabulary for the purpose of passing the subject, hence the answers are very stilted (and dead) whereas a language is something that is alive and in constant use. Once it transforms into something dull and liveless, the learners also will have no motivation to learn it.

13. What, in your opinion, is the most interesting way to learn new English words?

To apply the word in our writing and speaking – once you are able to apply the word in speaking, that basically means that the word belongs to you, and it will somewhat be applied to writing.

14. What are your suggestions for more effective Vocabulary learning in the classroom?

I feel that the best strategy is to gather together similar topics for conversation and writing for a certain period, some new words which may recur frequently will enable the learners to see how the words are used in various contexts, and in various functions and structures, or see how they co-occur with other words.

15. Any other comments which you would like to add about learning new English words.
Because to us, those who are learning language, at the beginning we don’t know how to start, so the teacher can perhaps give us a sense of direction, such as focusing on a certain topic. We can start by first reading up on the topic, followed by a small-scaled debate which can deepen our impression of the words to be used. We can also increase our understanding by researching for more related information/material for the topic of discussion. Finally, it can be concluded with summary writing. I feel that these strategies, within a short time, will help us accumulate our knowledge as well as help us understand the application and use of English.

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer the interview questions

*****

3C. Jake’s elaboration on his vocabulary learning

P15-Jake elaborated on his vocabulary learning. When he was learning English words and phrases, he was of the opinion that there could probably be about 3000 of these words and phrases that were very essential to him. He believed that once he had mastered these 3000 words and phrases, it should be enough and he did not have to learn any more, unless necessary. With regards to superfluous words and future new vocabulary that he would come across but did not understand during lectures, he felt that he would then have to bear the consequences. Nonetheless, whenever he came across a difficult new word, he would be curious about it, and tried to learn more about it. He reiterated that those 3000 words and phrases should be enough. His suggestion was to remember them – not memorise them by rote learning but to gradually learn about them.

*****

3D. A sample extract from the spontaneous and unstructured interview questions and responses (in relation to Interview Question 9, ‘Do you think we can apply the same strategies to English vocabulary?’)

Sample 1 [R/O: Researcher/Observer; Participant: P15-Jake (J)]

R/O: Did your teacher require you to memorize the words?

J: Yes, one of the requirements – such as memorizing words, a text…teacher asked us to remember them…so we had to memorize them…but I am no good at memorizing.

R/O: How did your teacher teach you English?
J:  The alphabet; then the basics, followed by dialogue… I still remember one of my English text: The teacher said “Good morning” and we repeated “Good Morning to you” “Nice to meet you,” and we repeated, “Nice to meet you too”… and so on.

This is the most basic dialogue… subsequently, longer dialogues...

Teacher wanted us to memorize – this may not be the case for every school, but this is the practice in my school...

Then we come to the vocabulary words and phrases – a list - list down the new words, explained what they mean, how to read the words

R/O:  Did the teacher teach you how to use the words/phrases?

J: Yes – with reference to the text in the textbook – first, the teacher would teach us how to read the text, then identify some of the words for teaching in greater details – then, explain what they mean, and show how they were used in the text, and further elaborate on the word transformation – such as when to use “to”...

These words would be subsequently used for our spelling, and if we couldn’t spell the words, they would have to copy the words repeatedly.

R/O: Did your English teacher use Chinese or English to teach you English?

J:  I took English when I was in primary 7. It would depend on the standard of the school. Schools with a higher standard will require the English Language teachers to use English. In most of the schools, English Language is taught in Chinese. For me, my English Language teacher used Chinese to teach English. Most probably, they themselves did not know how to explain in English. If English was used to do the explanation, it would be only in a few sentences. Students from better schools would also have a higher level of English proficiency.

R/O: When do you use the dictionary?

J:  Not really use the dictionary, that’s why my vocabulary is limited. I relied more on listening to teachers’ explanation during the lessons, and reading books.

R/O: Do you feel that your vocabulary is limited? You have scored ‘A’s’ in your last ESL assessments. How do you accumulate your vocabulary?

J: Actually, I have a wide range of vocabulary… I have read a lot and I have come across a lot of words… I may not know the meaning when it occurs by itself but I am able to guess the meaning when it occurs in a certain context. Now that I am overseas, I have the chance to use a lot of words, words that I have forgotten but they pop out of my memory.

R/O: Did your vocabulary increase since you came to Australia?
J: Yes, being in the English language environment has helped a lot. After encountering certain words a few times, I am able to remember, understand and use them. This is a good language environment. Moreover, my housemates’ English is good and they speak mainly in Eng. Initially, I don’t really understand them, but after some time, I was able to understand them.

R/O: Do you get to use the new words you encounter?

J: Most of the time, no; but I will try some new words on my housemates. When I use them wrongly, they will explain to me why it is wrong to use these words. Besides my housemates, I do not dare to try the new words on other people.

3E) Participants’ Most Difficult/ Easiest English Language Skill to Learn

Figures 3E.1 (below left) and 3E.2 (below right) show the overall percentages of participants who find the following English language skill most difficult/easiest to learn.

3F) Summary of the most boring vocabulary learning strategies to the participants:

- Memorization
- Repetitive Copying words
- Repetitive Reciting words
- Repetitive Spelling words
- Remembering Vocabulary (different from rote-memorising)
- Making one sentence after another
- Recording words
- Repetitive reading words
- Underline/circle words without understanding
• Lots of lesson materials (but without understanding)
• Teacher Rushing through materials
• Teacher translating from Eng to Ch
• Looking up dictionary

3G) Categorization of the Most Interesting Vocabulary Learning Strategies

• Teacher-based: Teacher to
  o find opportunities to chit-chat with students
  o correct words mispronounced or misspelt
  o go through new words students come across
  o write new words on the board/card
  o associate new words with other words
  o discuss new words
  o associate new words with other words
  o introduce new words within a sentence
  o link new words surrounding environment

• Learner-based: Learners to
  o discuss new words with group members
  o repeat the sentences teacher made
  o memorise interesting words and phrases
  o Use the vocabulary learnt
  o Watch movies
  o Label objects
  o Take English courses
  o Read magazine
  o Read manga
  o hear the way it is spoken
  o speak the word
  o Relate words to a short article or a joke

• Interaction and communication in English with English native speakers and others
• Conducive and relaxed English language environment
• Words
  o Common words
- Meaningful words
- Link vocabulary to our daily life

- ESL learning software - words with pictures
- Vocabulary Games and activities
APPENDIX 4
Analysis of Questionnaire Survey Data

The following tables display the participants reported VLS use frequency and they are placed here for easy referencing.

4A) Figure 4A. Participants’ VLS Category Use Frequency Ranking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VLS Category Use Frequency Ranking</th>
<th>*Preference Ranking</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users of strategies ‘Sometimes’ to ‘Always’</td>
<td>TS</td>
<td>MRS</td>
<td>MMS</td>
<td>CoS</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>DS</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Users</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4B) Figure 4B Vocabulary Learning Strategy Category Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Vocabulary Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use *Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Metacognitive Regulation Strategies (MRS)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Metacognitive Strategies (MS)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Social Strategies (SS)</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Determination Strategies (DS)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Memory Strategies (MMS)</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Cognitive Strategies (CoS)</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Translation Strategy (TS)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### A. Metacognitive Regulation Strategies (MRSs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use</th>
<th>*Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Find out the meaning of words I'm interested in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Make a note of words important to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Read other English books besides textbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Learn other vocabulary items not given by teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Find out more about vocabulary items I am not sure of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of MRS Users</strong></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B. Metacognitive Strategies (MSs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use</th>
<th>*Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Listen to tape of word lists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Watch a TV program in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Watch a video in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Listen to English songs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Read English newspapers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Read English news and articles online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Listen to an English radio program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Skip or pass difficult English words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Use spaced word practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Skip difficult English idioms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Learn English words written on commercial items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Write meaning of new words in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of MS Users</strong></td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4E  Participants' Social Strategy Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Social Strategies (SSs)</th>
<th>No. of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Learn by group work in class.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Learn by pair work in class.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Ask your English language teacher for translation into your native language.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Ask your tutor/learning support teacher/classmate for a paraphrase or synonym.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Ask family members for translation into native language.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Ask classmates/friends for translation into your native language.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Practise with your friends.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Practise with your family members.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of SS Users</strong></td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>169%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4F  Participants' Determination Strategy Use Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D. Determination Strategies (DSs)</th>
<th>No. of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Use a thesaurus.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Use picture dictionary.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Use a bilingual dictionary.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Use a monolingual dictionary.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Use word lists made by language teacher.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Guess from textual context in reading.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of DS Users</strong></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### E. Memory Strategies (MMS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E. Memory Strategies</th>
<th>No. of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use *Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32  Associate the word with its coordinates.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33  Connect the word list to its synonyms and antonyms.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34  Use new word in sentences.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35  Study and practise meaning in a group outside of class.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36  Connect word to already known words.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37  Learn idioms from stories.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38  Memorise idioms learnt.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39  Memorize the meaning of affix and roots.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40  Memorize parts of speech.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41  Group words together within story line.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42  Image word’s meaning.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43  Use rhymes to remember new words.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44  Connect word to a personal experience.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45  Study the spelling of a word.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46  Study the sound of a word.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47  Say new word aloud when studying.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48  Use Keyword Method.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49  Use semantic maps.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Percentage of MMS Users** | 56% | 8.9% | 23.6% | 31.7% | 19.2% | 11.1%
**Figure 4H  Participants’ Cognitive Use Frequency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F. COGNITIVE STRATEGIES (CoS)</th>
<th>No. of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use *Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of CoS Users</strong></td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4I  Participants’ Translation Strategy Use Frequency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G. TRANSLATION STRATEGY (TS)</th>
<th>No. of Participants In Terms Of VLS Use *Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentage of TS Users</strong></td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5

Analysis Of Participants’ Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used In Vocabulary Task

5A) Figure 5A shows the Chinese Translation and suggested answers of the 8 researcher-selected vocabulary items in the Reading vocabulary task. This is used only as a guide and other similar answers, definitions and explanations given the participants are accepted.

Figure 5A Chinese Translation of 8 Vocabulary Items in Reading vocabulary Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Items</th>
<th>Chinese Translation of Vocabulary Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. farm girl</td>
<td>农场的女孩（nóngcūn nǚ hái）– farm girl (literal meaning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note: In terms of the context, ‘ordinary farm girl’, the more appropriate answer will be the literal meaning, and not the metaphorical meaning. Suggested answers: 农村女孩（nóngcūn nǚ hái), 农场女孩（nóngcháng nǚ hái） or 乡村女孩（xiāngcūn nǚ hái） or other answers related to these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Re-invent</td>
<td>Invent: 造【zào】 make; build; create; invent; cook up; concoct; train; educate; 造成【záochéng】 create; cause; give rise to; bring about. 改造【gǎizào】 transform; reform; remould; remake.  Note: The prefix ‘re’ used here refers to ‘anew’ more than ‘again’. Suggested answers: 改造（gǎizào）; transform; remould; remake(Re-invent), 新创造 (create anew) or other answers related to these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Face-lifts</td>
<td>Suggested answers: 整容（zhěngróng）, 拉皮（lāpí） or other answers related to these. 拉皮【lāpí】: face-lift; pulling back of skin 整容【zhěngróng】: face-lifting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Implants</td>
<td>Suggested answers: 植入物【zhírù wù】 or other answers related to this. E.g. breast implants: 乳房植入物【rúfáng zhírù wù】 植【zhí】 plant; grow; set up; establish. 入【rù】 enter; join; 物【wù】 thing; matter; substance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Liposuction</td>
<td>Suggested answers: 吸脂术【xīzhīshù】 or other answers related to this. 吸【xī】 suck up 脂【zhī】 fat; grease 术【shù】 art; skill; technique; method; tactics. 抽【chōu】 take out (from in between); take (a part from a whole)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Figure 5A  Chinese Translation of 8 Vocabulary Items in Reading vocabulary Task (Cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Items</th>
<th>Chinese Translation of Vocabulary Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **6. Transformation** | Suggested answers: 转变【zhuǎnbiàn】 , 转型【zhuǎn xíng】 , or other answers related to these.  
转变【zhuǎnbiàn】 change; transform.  
转型【zhuǎn xíng】 change (mould; model; type; pattern) |
| **7. Designer clothes** | Suggested answers: 名牌服装【míngpái fúzhuāng】 , or other answers related to this.  
名牌【míngpái】 famous brand; nameplate; name tag.  
服装【fúzhuāng】 dress; clothing; costume. |
| **8. Modestly** | Suggested answers: 朴素地【pǔsù dì】 , 简单地【jiǎndān dì】 or other answers related to these.  
朴素地【pǔsù dì】 simply; plainly.  
简单地【jiǎndān dì】 simply.  
适度【shìdù】 appropriate measure; moderate degree.  
Modest (adj) + person:  
谦卑【qiānbēi】 humble; modest.  
谦【qiān】 modest.  
谦虚【qiānxū】 modest; self-effacing; make modest remarks. |

References:
### Figure 5B  A Sample of Participants' Think-alouds/Verbal Interaction

Source of Hanyu Pinyin and meaning of words: NJ Star

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Farm-girl</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jo</strong></td>
<td>Hen tu very unrefined/plain/simple, ugly</td>
<td>P1 &amp; P2 Discussion: very unrefined/plain/simple (很土 - hen tu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ed</strong></td>
<td>Lao tu very unrefined/plain/simple, ugly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ming</strong></td>
<td>Live in a farm, countryside</td>
<td>P3 &amp; P4 Discussion: Answered very promptly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gail</strong></td>
<td>Country girl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tian</strong></td>
<td>I feel that it is a girl who has grown up in a farm, not a village girl</td>
<td>Think-aloud Answered the question after reading the text aloud.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Ce**       | 1. farm-girl...what does it mean? (then read the text)...ordinary farm-girl...what is this...farm  
3. can’t be...OK...I think I write it down 很土【hěn tǔ】 ... you sure?  
5. not very pretty...you answer ...(thinking)  
7. Up to us | P6 & P7 Discussion: Initially, silence as they read the text, until Researcher/Observer laughingly reminded them that the research is interested in their thoughts as they processed the meaning of the words.  
Ce started reading slowly and loudly, then asked Lucas. |
| **Luke**     | 2. (in response to Ce) farm...farmer, 很土的女孩【hěn tǔ de nǚ hái, a very simple, unrefined and unenlightened girl)...】  
4. 很土【hěn tǔ】 , then you write 不太知識【bùtàizhīshí, not very knowledgeable】  
6. must write in simplified Chinese?  
will write in the traditional Chinese. Haven’t written in Chinese for a long time... | Luke, from Hong Kong learn uses the traditional Chinese to write whilst Ce, from mainland China writes in simplified Chinese |
| **Hua**      | 1. Live in a farm, like a country girl  
3. a girl who has grown up in a farm | P8 & P9 Discussion: Initially, silence – reading and thinking; then they summarize the key points of the text. P8-Hua initiated the discussion and both built on each other’s answers. |
| **Lin**      | 2. Very simple  
4. A very simple, unrefined and unenlightened girl (很土的女孩/hěn tǔ de nǚ hái) | |
| **Yun**      | Yun was busy reading when the Hao and Ping were discussing the meaning of the two words. | P10, P11 & P12-Discussion: |
| **Hao**      | i) Mother and father are farmers; lives in a farm | |
| **Ping**     | ii) Grows up in a farm from young | P13 & P14-Discussion: |
| **Zhen**     | Country girl, very plain | No problem with this word |
| **Jan**      | Simple-minded | |
V1 & Participants’ Think-alouds/Verbal Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Farm-girl</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>Ugly, rather bad-looking, ugly girl...ugly...so ugly R/O – how did you come to the conclusion that she is ugly? J – she said that she had plastic surgery...perhaps she is a farm girl, mostly not...those beauties ...most do not come from farms... she is not happy with how she looks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>A girl who lives in the countryside...not in the city...a countryside feeling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jing</td>
<td>2. Village girl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wen</td>
<td>1. Girl living in a farm 3. or ya (agreeing with P18-Jing’s answer).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale</td>
<td>‘Farm girl’. Could be someone working in a farm or an ordinary girl. I feel that it may not be just ‘farm’... it could refer to a girl from a village or an ordinary girl. This is what I understand from the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5C) Relationships between Gender & Use of Contextual Clues

Figure 5C (below) shows the individual participants’ frequency use of contextual clues to work out the meaning of the 8 vocabulary items. With reference to the X-axis, the participants ranging from ‘Ann’ to ‘Tian’ are the female participants and the participants ranging from ‘Jake’ to ‘Mark’ are the male participants. Figure 30 shows that all the participants use contextual clues at least once. Ann is shown to have used this strategy most frequently among all the participants, while Tian, and Mark used this strategy less frequently than the others. The average use frequency of contextual clues, appears to be slightly higher for female participants (50 % ) than for male participants, (45.31%).
Though the findings seem to suggest that the Chinese female ESL learners in my study used contextual clues to work out unfamiliar vocabulary items more frequently than the Chinese male ESL learners, the results are rather inconclusive as they are only relevant to the 20 participants who performed this reading vocabulary task. In addition, one reading vocabulary task is not enough to provide adequate information to compare the strategy use frequency of the use of contextual clues between the female and male Chinese ESL learners.

5D) **Initiation of Discussion**

Figure 5D.1 shows the participants who initiate the discussion for the word meaning of the vocabulary item.

**Figure 5D.1 Initiation of Discussion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Users</th>
<th>Initiation of Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO.</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Jo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Ming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Gail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>Ce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>Luke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8</td>
<td>Hua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D9</td>
<td>Lin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E10</td>
<td>Yun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E11</td>
<td>Hao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E12</td>
<td>Ping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F13</td>
<td>Zhen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F14</td>
<td>Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G17</td>
<td>Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G18</td>
<td>Jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G19</td>
<td>Wen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5D.2 shows the kind of strategies used to initiate the discussion for word meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No. of times</th>
<th>Vocabulary Items</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Offered suggestions (V4; V7; V8)</td>
<td>Both provided the Chinese translation for V1, V2, and V3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Ed</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Offered suggestions (V5; V6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Provided translation (V2)  Offered suggestions (V4; V6)</td>
<td>Both gave their meaning for ‘farm-girl’ (V1) instantly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Asked for confirmation of answer (V3)  Offered suggestions (V5; V7; V8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>Ce</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Asked questions (V1)  Asked for confirmation of answer (V2; V3)  Offered Suggestions (V4; V5; V6; V8)</td>
<td>Ce’s use of questions was to generate discussion with her partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Offered Suggestions (V7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8</td>
<td>Hua</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Offered suggestions (V1; V3; V4; V5; V6)  Asked questions (V8)</td>
<td>Both gave the Chinese translation for ‘re-invent’ – no discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D9</td>
<td>Lin</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Asked questions (V7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E13</td>
<td>Zhen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gave Chinese translation (V6)  Offered suggestions (V7; V8)</td>
<td>Both gave their word meaning for ‘farm-girl’ (V1) but skipped ‘implants’ (V4) or gave up after looking for contextual clues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E14</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Offered suggestions (V2; V3; V5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trio</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No. of times</th>
<th>Vocabulary Items</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F10</td>
<td>Yun</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Offered suggestions (V7; V8)</td>
<td>All three provided the Chinese translation for ‘transformation’ (V6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F11</td>
<td>Hao</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Offered suggestions (V1; V2; V3; V5)  Asked questions (V4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F12</td>
<td>Ping</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G17</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Offered suggestions (V5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G18</td>
<td>Jing</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gave Chinese translation (V6, V8)  Asked for confirmation of answer (V7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G19</td>
<td>Wen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Offered suggestions (V1; V2)  Asked for confirmation of answer (V3)  Asked questions (V4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**5E) Turn-Taking**

Figure 5E  Amount of Turn-Taking for Each Vocabulary Item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Users</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Participant s</th>
<th>Number of Turns taken</th>
<th>Vocabulary Items</th>
<th>Amount of Turn-taking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V1</td>
<td>V2</td>
<td>V3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Ed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>Ce</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8</td>
<td>Hua</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D9</td>
<td>Lin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E13</td>
<td>Zhen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E14</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F10</td>
<td>Yun</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F11</td>
<td>Hao</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F12</td>
<td>Ping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G17</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G18</td>
<td>Jing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G19</td>
<td>Wen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V = Vocabulary
### 5F) Right, Wrong & Skipped Answers

#### Figure 5F Right, Wrong & Skipped Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Asking Partner/s for a Confirmation/Answer</th>
<th>VOCABULARY ITEMS</th>
<th>No. of RA</th>
<th>%age of RA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jo</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7 V8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ed</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 Skip V6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gail</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tian</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ce</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Luke</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hua</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lin</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yun</td>
<td>Skip</td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Hao</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ping</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Zhen</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jake</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Skip</td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Skip</td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Jing</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Wen</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dale</td>
<td></td>
<td>V1 V2 V3 V4 V5 V6 V7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total No. of RA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13 9 13 0 8 20 0 4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Right Ans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65% 45% 65% 0% 40% 100% 0% 20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Skipped Ans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 5 0 0 5 0 5 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V- Vocabulary  RA-Right Answers
5G) Findings about some Gender Differences in Reading Vocabulary Task Performance

- Chinese female ESL learners in my study used contextual clues to work out unfamiliar vocabulary items more frequently than the Chinese male ESL learners

- both the male and female participants were almost equally responsive in offering suggestions to provide the word meaning of the vocabulary items; male participants offered suggestions for slightly more vocabulary items than the female participants (only 0.2 difference)

- highest percentage of correct answers was provided by my female participants: 62.5% (5 of 8 correct answers, by Tian, Jan, Jing & Wen), which is also 12.5% higher than the highest percentage of correct answers given by the male participants. However, the lowest percentage of correct answers is also given by a female participant (1 out of 8 correct answers)- 12.5% lower than the lowest percentage of answers given by the male participant. In terms of the overall average percentage of correct answers given, The results for the average percentage of correct answers given by my female and male participants are quite close, only a difference of 2.08%, though the female participants gave more correct answers than the males.

- One of the female pairs (Pair E) and the Trio G with more females seemed to provide a greater percentage of correct answers than the others, but this finding is still rather inconclusive as the other female pair (Pair D) provided the same percentage as the mixed pair.

- Greater amount of discussion does not necessarily imply a greater percentage of correct answers given. For example, between the two female pairs, the Pair E that discussed less provided more correct answers as they gave the answers straightaway.

- Findings are limited to the participants’ vocabulary knowledge of these 8 vocabulary items, & do not reflect their personal overall English vocabulary knowledge or English language proficiency level.

*****