A reflective account of two Hong Kong sub-degree college students engaged in independent learning of English as a second language

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List of Abbreviations

CS1	Case study 1
CS2	Case study 2
DSE	Diploma of Secondary Education
ILL	Independent Language Learning
ILLBs	Independent Language Learning Books
L2	Second language
PN1,2	Personal Narrative 1 (CS1) and Personal Narrative 2 (CS2)
SI0	Screening Interview for Jacky
SI1-3	Semi-structured Interviews for Jacky
SI4	Semi-structured Innerview for myself

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Thank you.

Daniel Lam

Abstract

In this paper I report upon a qualitative investigation of independent language learning (ILL) by two Hong Kong sub-degree students who studied English as a second language. They are myself and one of my students. I start with a contextual discussion which facilitates understanding of the specific language environment in which the learning took place. Data was collected by means of an innovative set of tools, including memory bag, personal narrative and semi-structured interviews, as well as an innerview, a new research method developed from this study. Utilising thematic analysis, five main themes were identified, namely ILL motivation, ILL autonomy, ILL outcomes, relationship between ILL and formal curriculum and parental influence on ILL.

Evidence from this study highlights the contribution of positive parental influence and the influence of the formal curriculum on effective ILL. Factors of successful ILL strategies include whether they are interactive, perceived as interesting, convenient and accessible, functional and inexpensive. However, ILL learners in this study encountered learning challenges, such as self-discipline, self-motivation and lack of expertise to choose appropriate learning and assessment strategies.

I conclude that ILL increased the language proficiency of myself and the other participant, but it also, and perhaps more importantly, contributed to development of confidence in relation to learning a second language independently. As an English language teacher, learner and researcher, the findings of the study contribute to the potential for myself and other teachers to raise awareness of our lifelong ILL. Furthermore, a key finding from this study shows that more in-depth self-reflexive data can be generated by innerview than by personal narrative when constructing an autoethnographic account.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This research project was a qualitative study exploring the ILL of two Hong Kong sub-degree students who learnt English as a second language. The research had two phases: the first one is about one of my students, the other is about myself. In other words, two case studies were conducted, with the second one as an autoethnography. I aim to investigate how the two language learners are motivated, how they exercise their learner autonomy and how they assess their ILL outcomes. I also want to know how ILL researchers can make use of innovative research methods and tools to extract as much data as possible.

I have chosen to focus on ILL due to three reasons. First, independent second language learning (L2) is less extensively researched than general L2 learning (Grainger, 2005; Ahmed, 2011; Ardasheva and Tretter, 2013). Secondly, ILL learners usually do not have the expertise of L2 learning, while school learners are offered ongoing, substantial and extensive guidance by teachers. Without teachers' active involvement, ILL learners need more empirical information from literature to enhance their learning. Hurd and Lewis (2008, p. xi) explain why more attention should be paid to ILL learners:

> Language learning strategies have long been the subject of research. However, the majority of studies and overviews have been based on classroom contexts, and less attention has been paid to strategies appropriate for ILL settings.

Hurd and Lewis' argument reminds me, as a language learning researcher, of the lack of attention to ILL research, which does not encourage language learners to conduct ILL, and may, arguably impede their learning progress. On the other hand, the empirical evidence can also help teachers act as language advisors to ILL learners. Thirdly, I argue that ILL learners engage in a continuously evolving language environment. The

contexts evolve more rapidly when compared to the formal school contexts. As a result, it is apparent that more research needs to be conducted in this area to inform support for language learners' development of autonomous learning strategies.

Language learners conduct much of the learning process outside the boundaries of a formal classroom (Mohammadi and Araghi, 2013). However, there are many possible reasons for learners engaging in ILL outside their formal classrooms. This research offers an opportunity to explore how the two learners were motivated to conduct ILL. ILL provides an alternative to learners who intend to increase their language proficiency, when they are engaging in or have finished studying the formal language curriculum. Also, the research reveals how I, as a language teacher, have been affected in terms of teacher identity and lifelong language learning. ILL prepares a learner to experience lifelong autonomous language learning. Weinstein *et al.* (2011, p. 41) claim that

> … we are currently experiencing a worldwide need for our citizens to be lifelong autonomous learners who can adapt to the rapidly changing and evolving demands of the modern world.

Thus, my inquiry contributes not only to ILL pedagogy, but also to other disciplines where independent learning is possible.

Variations in definitions of ILL are based on the degree of participation of independent learners and that of the teachers. For example, independent learning, according to Klassen (1998), is described as the situation where students set their own curriculum and goals, self-assessing their progress, while teachers function only as counsellors who give feedback after students evaluate their learning. Boothroyd (2013, p.1) defines an independent language learner as:

> someone in control of their own learning, and not relying on a teacher to learn a new language or to improve their language skills … make choices about what they want to learn, and how, and are responsible for how much progress they make, and how successful they are.

After considering Klassen and Boothroyd's definitions, I regard ILL as a process of acquiring a language by a self-motivated learner with minimum or no guidance by a mentor. By saying minimum guidance, I mean passive pedagogical support for ILL learners, who may actively seek advice from a teacher or learning advisor about how to plan learning or to implement learning and assessment strategies. However, the learners should make all their learning decisions.

Different ILL learners may have different learning motivations. For example, as a second language teacher, I regard ILL as an important means to learn a language well. During my primary and secondary education, my engagement in different forms of ILL was positively reinforced by my family. Equipped by my father with a variety of ILL strategies, I attempted to learn the language in an independent context and even create a language environment. Though the positive reinforcement was withdrawn after my secondary education, I maintained my ILL practice during the two-year sub-degree study, even after graduation and commencement of my teaching profession. This paper explores the relationship between my own identity, educational background and my engagement in ILL in the two-year sub-degree study. On the other hand, my student in the first phase of this study was initially motivated by his junior secondary school teachers. However, he did not decide to attempt ILL until his preparation for the university entrance examination, since he had such as an imperative incentive, along with his personal tutor's input of some ILL strategies.

As far as epistemology is concerned, I take a social constructivist (McKinley, 2015) approach where the practice of case study and autoethnography presumes that reality is socially constructed and where I, as a qualitative researcher and an autoethnographer, can contribute to the social construction of the researcher participants' account of ILL. Social constructivism suggests that knowledge is first constructed in a social context and is then appropriated by individuals (Bruning, Schraw and Norby, 2010; Eggen and Kauchak, 2010). I can construct a specific version of my social reality, while other language researchers can present their own versions. I argue that we contribute to constructing truths, through our own accounts. This may empower the researchers to express how they see the social world, providing a rationale or my choice of qualitative case study and autoethnography as my research approach.

The two case studies provided important insights into how sub-degree students engaged in their ILL without the presence of a language teacher. It explained how and why they sought ILL though they were concurrently engaging in the formal language curriculum. The first study reflects the engagement in ILL of a current student, who majored in Business Administration. He thought his English language ability was poor and wanted to improve his English proficiency through ILL, as he found the concurrent language curriculum at school was not enough to meet his target. The autoethnography is a critical record and reflection of my ILL 23 years ago, between September 1994 - August 1996. During this period I was studying for a teacher certificate in the Hong Kong Institute of Education (retitled "The Education University of Hong Kong" in 2016). Throughout my two years of teacher education, I used quite a large amount of time learning English as a second language in an independent language learning context.

Both of us encountered quite a few challenges. The most obvious one was the lack of expertise in ILL strategies and assessment strategies.

Chapter 2 traces who I am as a language learner, a language teacher and currently a language learning researcher. The first part is about my educational background, followed by my career path up to now. Then, I account for my epistemological stance, which locates myself in the chosen area of study: ILL. I argue that my epistemological stance and identity issues are interrelated. This chapter also acts as a preparation of developing the autoethnographic account of my ILL. After that, chapter 3 sets the scene for this research, illustrating the sociolinguistic background of Hong Kong. It helps explain the general ILL environments of the two research participants, my student and I. We learnt English as a second language and took our sub-degree courses in Hong Kong. However, the experiences are twenty years apart.

Through a review of existing literature in chapter 4, I intend to explore the theoretical concepts of two areas: independent language learning and learner autonomy. After reviewing the literature, I was able to draw three themes and the corresponding subsidiary questions from the main research question. Chapter 5 is the methodology part. Throughout the whole research project, I adopted an interpretivist approach, which leans towards the collection of qualitative data and uses methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation. As an interpretive researcher, I realise that I both influence and am influenced by the research activity I am involved with. The data collected from different research methods are organised in two corresponding sections in chapter 6. The first section presents the findings collected from documents, memory bag, learner diary, personal narrative, semi-structured interviews for my student's case study. The second section presents the findings from memory bag,

personal narrative and semi-structured innerview for my autoethnographic account. Four themes were developed from the two case studies for further discussions.

Chapter 7 consists two sections, namely independent language learning, and innerview and autoethnography. Based on the findings, the first section is to review how two Hong Kong sub-degree students engaged in learning English as a second language in an independent language learning context. The employment of the newly evolved research method, innerview, is fully justified. The second section discusses how innerviews can help explore autoethnographers' personal experience. The provided evidence encourages current language teachers and researchers, including myself, to raise their awareness of their lifelong ILL, if any, and also their students'. Chapter 8, being the last chapter, rounds up the whole research. It is ended with recommendations for different stakeholders of independent language learning, based on my findings and analysis.

Chapter Summary

In this introductory chapter, I have defined ILL as a process of acquiring a language by a self-motivated learner with minimum or no guidance by a mentor. I have also justified my choice of autoethnography. The case studies explored the ILL of two Hong Kong students, providing insights into how sub-degree students engaged in their ILL without the presence of language teachers. I take a social constructivist approach where the practice of case study and autoethnography presumes that reality is socially constructed and where I can contribute to the social construction of the researcher participants' account of ILL. I ended this chapter by a road map of the following chapters.

Chapter 2 My Education and Professional Identity

An important part of this research project is the autoethnographic account of my ILL. I need to first explore who I am as a language learner, a language teacher and currently a language learning researcher. Then, I account for my epistemological stance, which locates myself in the chosen area of study: ILL. I argue that my epistemological stance and identity issues are interrelated. The intention to conduct this research can be explained by my education and professional path.

2. 1 Formal Education

Most Hong Kong students learn English as a second language (L2) (Yung, 2011). Every primary and secondary school learner undergoes compulsory English Language education (Education Bureau of Hong Kong, 2014). Hong Kong is a competitive global city and good results in public examinations are the entrance ticket to higher education (Kwok, 2004). English language is therefore an important subject in the formal school curriculum of Hong Kong.

Being an L2 learner, I have learnt English mostly through the formal school curriculum from the age of three to twenty-one in Hong Kong. Based on my learning experience, most language lessons were teacher-centred and rote-learning was common. Cheung, Ling and Leung (2017) state that teacher-directedness and rote-learning are common in Hong Kong education. In my experience, teachers in Hong Kong tend to take control of most of the learning process, instead of promoting learner autonomy. Reflecting back on my experience as a learner, I can see that my teachers hardly equipped me with any ILL strategies explicitly or encouraged me to learn independently. Undertaking a considerable number of grammar exercises as homework, I believed that was sufficient

for obtaining good grades in the subject and promoting my language proficiency. Consequently, I did not have much motivation, nor ability, to engage in ILL.

However, I did engage in some extra-curricular L2 learning. It was from my father at home since my early primary school levels. He, though not a school teacher, designed English learning materials for me and asked me to revise them for reward of pocket money. The materials included difficult lexical and grammatical knowledge, which was about early secondary school levels. He set the payment for each learning point, assessed me and paid up. He kept reminding me, "English is very important in Hong Kong. Learn the language well, so that you will get more money in future." His encouraging words, together with the financial incentives, kept me studying L2 outside the formal school curriculum until the end of primary school. Moreover, from primary three, my mother bought me English cassette tapes from Linguaphone, a global language training provider. For about two years, I was required to listen to the tapes and do the listening exercises in the package for at least an hour a day. With such language learning experience, I started to believe that I could learn L2 without the supervision of a school teacher, but independently, and this has nurtured and developed my sense of ILL.

I entered a sub-degree programme at the Hong Kong Institute of Education after secondary education. During the two years of the sub-degree course for my teacher certificate, although the institute provided a general language programme, I attempted to learn English independently. The first reason was that I wanted to improve my English proficiency after my failure to enter the university at the first attempt, in the hope of getting promoted to a degree course upon graduation. Secondly, I believed the formal language course was not sufficient for my aim of achieving a higher English

standard, in order to become a competent English teacher. Specifically, I attempted a range of ILL activities, such as reading English newspapers, communicating with English-speaking friends and watching dramas on television. I graduated in 1996 with a bachelor degree in education with distance learning, and a Master degree in English Language education, both studied part-time. Being an off-campus learner, I spent most of my time learning independently and developed my own learning strategies, including keeping a personal vocabulary book and thinking in English. I will further discuss how I was motivated and engaged in ILL in the following stage.

2.2 Professional Phase

After graduation, I taught English as a second language in Hong Kong at different levels of formal schooling, ranging from primary school to community college, with two years in secondary school, followed by seven years in primary school and several months in a community college which offers associate degree and high diploma courses. I have observed that second language learners usually develop and improve independent learning strategies as they grow older. This is aligned with Gow and Kember's (1990) claim that older learners are more likely to adopt a deep learning approach and learn more independently. On reflection, I regret not consciously introducing ILL to my students, mainly because I was not aware of its importance. Based on my teacher perception, I thought a class teacher's main role was to cover the formal curriculum.

I became a private language tutor for individual learners or for extra-curricular classes in 2007. Compared to my previous teaching experience, I got a closer look at and understood more about the students' learning attitudes and motivation. I work with groups of less than 10 or sometimes individuals. In my experience, smaller class sizes lead to fewer problems arising from individual diversity. I tend to transfer more control

to the students and encourage learner autonomy. Learners in small groups usually expect me to cater for their individual needs. Some even take the initiative to ask for guidance on independent learning strategies, so that they can extend their language learning to non-lesson time. This was seldom the case when I taught in formal schooling contexts, where teachers closely supervise students' learning progress.

My ILL was initiated and motivated by my father with his self-designed learning materials during my primary school years. My mother reinforced it with ILL audio products. Unfortunately, my primary and secondary schools did not equip me with any ILL strategies or encourage me to engage in ILL. I did engage in ILL as a sub-degree student to improve my language skills. Such ILL experiences affected my teacher's perception later on. Although I did not encourage my school students to engage in ILL, I did so when I had a chance to teach smaller classes or individuals.

2.3 My Identity and my Epistemological Stance

I suggest that social constructivism is my epistemological position in which I best locate myself as a researcher. It is a view in philosophy according to which all "knowledge is a compilation of human-made constructions" (Raskin, 2002, p.4), "not the neutral discovery of an objective truth" (Castelló and Botella, 2006, p.263). I believe that truths are invented instead of discovered. My belief is shaped by my academic and professional background. I found myself and other fellow second language learners affected by a wide variety of factors. It is not easy to single out distinctive factors for particular learners. Instead, second language factors are "a compilation of human-made constructions" (Raskin, 2002, p.4). ILL makes the constructions more complicated because the learners interact in numerous human-made activities and materials. For instance, I argue my engagement in ILL can be considered as a specific social

phenomenon, which involves different social actors (ILL learners). This phenomenon can be justified by two popular L2 learning models, namely the socio-educational model (Gardner, 2011) and the social constructivist model (Williams and Burden, 1997).

Gardner (1985) formulated the socio-educational model suggesting that learning an L2 cannot be solely explained by people's competency to acquire a language. He asserted that individual differences were key factors affecting L2 acquisition such that in understanding how the L2 learning process and outcomes work, it is important to consider the cultural contexts, which influence people's attitude and motivation in learning another culturally distinct language (Gardner and Lambert, 1959). Gardner's model also attempted to explain that these motivational factors play out in two sites where L2 learning occurs: the formal site (i.e. the educational context), and the informal site (i.e. the cultural context). My research has focused on the informal site, as the participants are learning outside the educational context, which, as Gardner (2011) argues, is an area allowing the learners to become immersed in the other culture without providing any specific rules or instructions. For the purposes of this work, the informal site can possibly include the participants' home, working place and friends.

The other model which can justify my epistemological stance is the social constructivist model of learning (Williams and Burden, 1997). The model suggests a constructive nature of the learning process as emphasized by Piaget (1967), assuming that people are actively involved in constructing personal meaning right from birth, and brings the learner into central focus in learning theory as everyone is constructing their own sense of the world, which is key to the constructivist perspective. The learner is in control of his learning as a result of cognitive processing and organising, and the context in which he is learning. In other words, the learner is in control of what he learns, based on the

way he thinks, and the immediate environment he is in as well as any internal factors (mood, preoccupation, motivation, etc…). Four key elements (the learners, the teacher, the task, and the context) are outlined by this model as affecting the teaching-learning process as they interact with and act on each other.

Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (McMahon, 1997). In my research, I intend to investigate in-depth the ILL learners' learning culture and learning context. To study the learners' culture and context, I have to examine their education background, learning objectives, learning styles, learning strategies and current learning environment.

According to Kim (2001, p.4), social constructivism is based on specific assumptions about "reality, knowledge, and learning". Social constructivists believe that reality is constructed through "human activity". Members of a society together invent the properties of the world (Kukla, 2000). Reality cannot be "discovered: it does not exist prior to its social invention" (Kim, 2001, p.4). In my research, the ILL learners invented and constructed the reality through the learning process. The reality of ILL is a particularly complicated social invention because there are so many factors to affect the learning processes and outcomes. Before the research, I did not make any presumptions until the ILL learners engaged in the learning processes. Reality should exist after the ILL learners construct it. The research is to explore how the learners construct it.

To social constructivists, knowledge is a human product, and is socially and culturally constructed (Ernest, 1999; Gredler, 1997). Individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment they live in. Therefore, I need to analyse how the ILL learners interact with the learning culture and context and invent

the reality socially. For example, an ILL learner may choose to make friends with English speakers and interact with them socially. Interactions are two-way and dynamic. I need to explore why they make that learning choice, how they engage in it and how their learning choice affects their ILL learning process.

Social constructivists view learning as a social process. It does not take place only within an individual, nor is it a passive development of behaviours that are shaped by external forces (McMahon, 1997). Meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities. ILL is also a social process. This reminds me that sufficient time should be provided for the interactions between the ILL learners and the external forces, such as the people they meet, the books they read or the songs they listen to.

Opposing the view of the social actor as an outsider to the social world, Crotty (2003) claims that qualitative researchers, however accept that there is an objective reality with which our mind has to work to create meanings. Bryman (2012) stresses the role of social actors, as social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by them. In my research, the social actors are the ILL learners. Among them, there are individual variations: age (Mayberry and Lock, 2003), strategies used (Dörnyei, 2001) and motivational factors (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels, 1998). The actors act according to their individual variations. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) believe that the "social phenomena are in a constant state of revision". Therefore, it is meaningful to investigate ILL learners for a certain period of time. On the other hand, we may explore how ILL learners engage in their learning process with different social backgrounds. This justifies my choice of investigating a present case alongside one that took place 23 years before, seeing whether and how social actors at different times behave differently.

Social constructivism, strongly influenced by Vygotsky's (1978) work, suggests that knowledge is first constructed in a social context and is then appropriated by individuals (Bruning, Schraw and Norby, 2010; Eggan and Kauchak, 2010). In other words I, as a researcher, can construct a specific version of my social reality, while other language researchers can present their own versions. As a result, all practitioners including teachers and learners contribute to constructing truths, through their own accounts. This may empower the researchers to express how they perceive the social world, providing a rationalization for my choice of autoethnography as one of the research tools. I hope that more autoethnographical research will be conducted into ILL, so that knowledge of this field is constructed more comprehensively.

Cottone (2012), a social constructivist, explains his concept of "Bracketed Absolute Truth" (also called a "consensuality"), where a truth is held within a community as absolute, but outside the community it is held by observers as relative to other truths. This echoes Saldana's view (2011, p.23) that constructivism suggests

> … there is no absolute truth because it is contingent on context and multiple perspectives. Knowledge is constructed within the individual, rather than something outside of oneself waiting to be discovered.

Therefore, the social reality I am going to construct is never a finalized nor absolute version, and is open to other researchers to amend. For the same principle, I am empowered to amend the versions previously constructed by others.

As a continuously engaged L2 learner, and later on an L2 teacher, I have recognised the fact that L2 acquisition is a process in which learners with their internal factors (motivational factors) interact with the external factors (social milieu). The interactions contribute to constructing the social reality (social constructivism). My epistemological

stance is closely linked with my identity. In the whole research process, my epistemological considerations led my way towards the end.

Chapter Summary

In preparation of the autoethnographic account of my ILL, I have explored my identity as a previous ILL learner, and a language teacher. Then, I account for my epistemological stance, which locates myself in the chosen area of study: ILL. I, as a social constructivist, argue that my epistemological stance and identity issues are interrelated. The intention to conduct this research can be explained by my education and professional path.

Chapter 3 Research Context

This chapter sets the scene for this research, illustrating the sociolinguistic background of Hong Kong. It helps explain the general ILL environments of the two research participants. My student and I are both local Chinese, speaking Cantonese as our first language. We learnt English as a second language and took our sub-degree courses in Hong Kong. However, the experiences are twenty years apart. We graduated in 1996 and 2016 respectively. It implies that I received my education under the British colonial system, while his schooling started after the handover of sovereignty to China.

With its distinctive political history and geographical position, Hong Kong has possessed a rich linguistic capacity. For more than 170 years until 1997, according to Evans (2016, p.8) "English has been entangled in the successive process of colonialism and globalization that have been the principal drivers of the spread of English". However, Cantonese, the lingua franca in Guangdong Province of China and some neighbouring regions including Hong Kong (Sung, 2017), is widely spoken by the local population. The 2011 Population Census (Census and Statistics Department, 2012) states that 93.6% of Hong Kong people regard themselves as Chinese ethnically. The Census confirms that the principal language of Hong Kong is Cantonese, spoken by 89.5% of the population, plus 4.1% with Mandarin or other Chinese dialects as the first language. Only 3.5% of the population claimed English as their first language.

Evans (2016) claims that the status of English in Hong Kong has been ever changing due to political background. English even acted as the sole official language for most of the colonial era. Evans (2016, p.15) observed that "English was the primary medium of communication in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government" under the British rule. Although, after the handover of sovereignty of Hong Kong to the

Beijing government in 1997, English language has equal legal status to Chinese (Gao, 2018), with the mentioned sociolinguistic situations, English is not commonly used in daily encounters among the vast majority of the Hong Kong population. Cantonese is still widely used for normal trading and workplace communications, while English is only extensively used in the domains of government, law, and business (Li, 2018).

Hong Kong's education system used to broadly follow the system in England (Chan and Leung, 2003). As Schneider (2007) claims there were attempts by colonies after independence to abandon the English language, which was once the sole official language. Their intention might be political, as to remove the colonial language which was "an unwelcome reminder and heritage of colonialism" (p.2). There were pragmatic reasons that English was, like in Hong Kong, an alien language to a substantial proportion of the indigenous population. Nevertheless, Schneider observes that most colonies keep the colonist language after independence, though with some regional varieties. Since the handover to China in 1997, the Hong Kong government has adopted the biliterate and trilingual policy. Both Chinese and English are then acknowledged as official languages, with Cantonese being acknowledged as the de facto official spoken variety of Chinese in Hong Kong, while Mandarin is also accepted. In the formal school curriculum, English Language and Chinese Language are both compulsory subjects for all local primary and secondary schools (Education Bureau of Hong Kong, 2014). While the written form of Chinese is modern standard Chinese written in traditional script, the spoken form used by students in almost all schools is Cantonese.

The two languages are also used as the media of instruction for other subjects. Evans (2016) attempted to illustrate the language reforms in the education sector since 1990's (Diagram 1). Before the 1990's, in the primary sector, Chinese was used in all schools

with English normally taught as a foreign language. Since the education reform in 1998, the government policy for secondary schools was that the medium of instruction (MOI) should be determined by considering whether their pupils could manage in terms of English language proficiency. As a result, the biliterate (i.e. mastering of written Chinese and English) and trilingual (i.e. mastering spoken English, Mandarin and Cantonese) policy (Education Bureau of Hong Kong, 2016) is emphasized. Only the top 25% of the secondary schools are EMI (English as medium of instruction) schools, which are officially allowed to teach subjects other than Chinese in English.

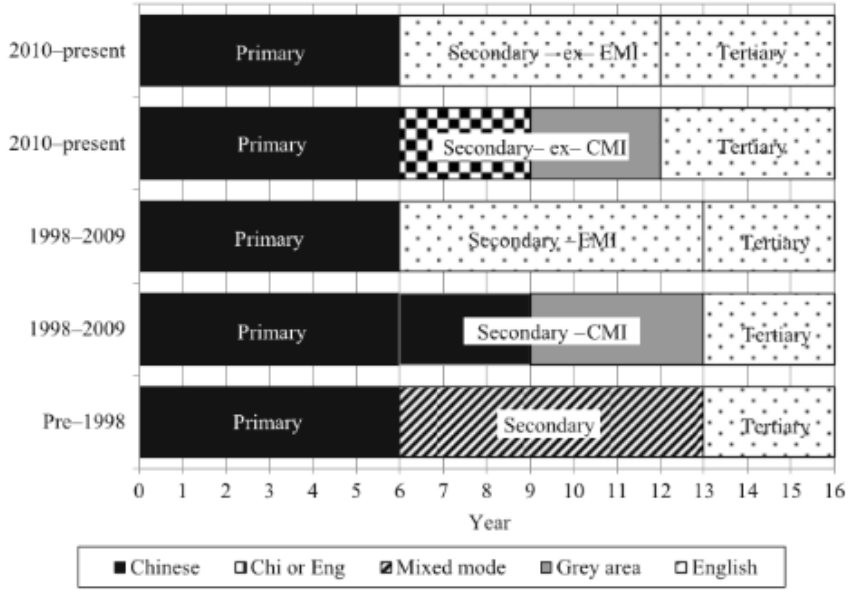


Diagram 1 Change and continuity in HK's education system (Evans, 2016, p.34)

When students enter the 3-year senior secondary levels (forms 4-6), they prepare themselves for the Diploma for Secondary Education (DSE) examination, which is the only public examination acting as the entrance examination to tertiary education. Good results in public examinations are the 'entrance ticket' to higher education (Kwok, 2004). The DSE examination selects the top 18% candidates entering the degree courses provided by the nine local universities (University Grants Committee, 2010, p.27). The

candidates need to take four compulsory subjects, two of which are Chinese and English, and at least two elective subjects. The basic requirement for entering the degree courses is Level 3 (Level 5, 5* and 5** being the highest) for English and Chinese, and Level 2 for the other two compulsory subjects and the elective subjects. In other words, candidates are unable to enrol in degree courses if they do not reach Level 3 for English, regardless of the high levels they reach for all other subjects. Some popular universities and faculties even require higher levels for English. As a result, students normally need a level 4 or above for English for a competitive degree course.

School teachers from different cultures practise the formal curriculum in different ways. Cheung, Ling and Leung (2017) state that teacher-directedness and rote-learning are common in Hong Kong education. Based on my learning experience, most language lessons were teacher-centred and rote-learning was common. Teachers in Hong Kong tended to take control of most of the learning process, instead of promoting learner autonomy. Learners were not well-equipped with different learning strategies and not many learners were aware of which learning strategies were suitable for them.

Secondary school leavers who fail to enter the local universities can choose to further their studies in the sub-degree courses. They include high diploma and associate degree courses, which usually take 2 years, half as long as the standard degree courses. Good performers in sub-degree courses are eligible to be promoted to the third year of the related degree courses. Therefore, sub-degree students have a second chance to compete for a degree course after failure in their previous university entrance examinations.

For Pennycook (2017, p.315), English has become an intrinsic part of Hong Kong's economic success. "English is a massive social divider in Hong Kong, demarcating social and economic prestige." Though the language is not widely used in social

domains for the majority of Chinese-speaking population, it divides our students into the elite group and others. In order to fight for academic and social prestige, Hong Kong school learners work hard to promote their English language competence. However, the status of English in the education system and the society as a whole was higher twenty years ago. English was normally employed as the MOI at schools, implying that students had more exposure to the second language in formal curriculum. After the handover of sovereignty, Chinese has become the normal MOI in the secondary schools, providing less exposure to the English language. The two research participants received education informed by quite different language policies. Under the British rule, I started my sub-degree course in 1994 and finished it in 1996, while my student started and finished his sub-degree course under the Chinese rule in 2014 and 2016 respectively. We should take the different sociolinguistic backgrounds into considerations when we discuss our engagement and motivations in ILL.

Chapter Summary

This chapter accounts for the sociolinguistic background of Hong Kong, which is the research context of my investigation. It helps explain the general ILL environments of the two research participants. My student and I are both local Chinese, speaking Cantonese as our first language. We learnt English as a second language and took our sub-degree courses in Hong Kong. However, the experiences are twenty years apart. We graduated in 1996 and 2016 respectively. It implies that I received my education under the British colonial system, while his schooling started after the handover of sovereignty to China. The roles of English language in Hong Kong, however, are not as different as many scholars predicted before the handover of sovereignty. English is still considered as a major, though not sole, official language in the city.

Chapter 4 Literature Review

Through a review of existing literature, I intend to explore the theoretical concepts of two areas: independent language learning and learner autonomy. After reviewing the literature, I was able to draw three themes and the corresponding subsidiary questions from the main research question.

4.1 Independent Language learning

First of all, I would briefly introduce what independent learning is. Field (2000) regards independent learning as a new educational context, which emphasizes the centrality of lifelong learning with its crucial relevance to education. Jin and Cortazzi (2006) and Kingston and Forland (2008) argue that, by whatever methods, focusing on independent learning should encourage lifelong learning.

Research related to ILL was initiated in the 1970s (Rubin, 1975). At the early stage, researchers were interested in how the learner choice, control and responsibility influence the language learning and teaching (Nunan, 1988; Brindley, 1989; Holec, Little and Richterich, 1996; Tudor, 1996). Those investigations developed a conceptual framework that language learners can be independent, and that this is an important learning attribute and goal.

Language learners appear to engage in independent learning even when their second language learning is primarily classroom-based. Nunan (1991), in a study of 44 learners who had developed high levels of foreign language competence, found that virtually all the learners attributed their success in part to the activation of their language outside the classroom. Pickard's (1995) descriptive study displays how proficient German tertiary learners of English used out-of-class learning in their schooldays. He found that

the students generally had a wide repertoire of out-of-class strategies, and that those strategies "stem from the learners' own volition rather than from a teacher" (p.37).

ILL, when compared with dependent language learning is particularly challenging for learners (Bown, 2006) due to remoteness from teachers' support. Also, their progress requires self-regulation and self-assessment. Therefore, I am interested in how ILL learners face their learning challenges. For example, learners may not have the expertise to teach or learn a language, so they may have difficulty interacting with their learning contexts. White (2008, p.3) argues that

> a fundamental challenge of independent language learning is for learners to develop the ability to engage with, interact with, and derive benefit from learning environments which are not directly mediated by a teacher … learners develop this ability largely by constructing a personally meaningful interface with the learning context, and that strategies play a key role in this regard.

Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman (2005) discuss motivation for independent learning where they claim that motivation promotes effort. When compared with dependent learning, motivation is more important to "keep up the emotional, intellectual effort required independent learning … and is the most basic condition for learning" (p. 207). School language learners have certain external motivations ILL learners may not have, which can be in the form of teachers' guidance, clear learning targets and more formalized language assessments. I am interested in how language learners are motivated to engage in an independent learning context when they take control of their own learning.

Hurd and Lewis (2008) claim that language learning strategies have long been widely researched. However, only a few researchers (White, 2008; Oxford and Lin, 2011) have paid attention to ILL strategies. The dominance of classroom-based studies in the field

of language education creates the impression that foreign languages are mainly learned in classrooms, partly because it is often a "private" activity (Hyland, 2004) and out-of-class language learning tends to remain hidden. My research proposes to fill this literature gap. For Oxford (1990), language learning strategies refer to the specific actions, behaviours, steps or techniques that students use to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing and using the second language. This implies different language learners have different actions and techniques to learn. Good language learners do different things than poorer learners (Gass and Selinker, 2008).

Cohen and White (2008) conducted a study about a course for first-year university students, aiming at enhancing the informed choices learners can make as they face numerous courses, contexts and options for language learning. The researchers suggest that learners can become skilled in choosing appropriate learning environments, and then, within those selected environments, can become more skilled in learning how to make best use of them. In my research, I investigated how I develop such skills over a period of time and the rationale behind my choice of learning environment.

Murphy (2011, p.73) states that "research has increasingly highlighted the significance of affective aspects of language learning in independent contexts". It is particularly critical for ILL learners to maintain self-motivation. Murphy's suggestion explains why I put ILL motivation as the first main theme of my research. It is worth analysing how the participants are self-motivated and the difference, if any, between the self-motivation of the dependent language learners and that of ILL learners. The importance of motivation in language learning is highlighted by Dörnyei, who proposes five groups of self-motivation strategies which learners can deploy (2001, p.110):

commitment control strategies (to maintain or increase commitment to the original goal for learning), metacognition control strategies (to control concentration), satiation control strategies (for eliminating boredom and adding extra attraction or interest to learning), emotion control strategies (for managing emotions or moods) and environmental control strategies (for dealing with negative, or exploiting positive influences in the learning environment).

One major factor affecting ILL learners' choice of self-motivation strategies, it could be argued that, may be their personalities. For example, impatient learners may seek more satiation control strategies, while emotional learners may require emotion control strategies. I explored how I chose specific self-motivation strategies, and the rationale behind my choice.

McCarthy (2011, p.103) claims that ILL learners need to "develop their metacognitive strategies such as setting appropriate goals, monitoring progress and reflecting on outcomes". She states that goal-setting is a commonly used metacognitive strategy and is a key component in ILL. Learners identify specific learning goals they wish to accomplish and to employ effective learning strategies to help them attain those goals. However, she claims that researchers discovered that "most learners were finding it difficult to break down their big goals into smaller, more manageable, interim goals".

McCarthy reminds us that, however, a perceived limitation in goal-setting theories is the negative result of learners becoming frustrated and giving up because they have not achieved their goals. In my research, I observed, interpreted and analysed the influence of goal-setting on ILL learners' performance.

4.2 Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy is a critical component for ILL (Benson, 2011). For Holec (1981, p. 14), "autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's own learning" is widely accepted.

Benson (2011) highlights that learner autonomy is not a method of learning, but an attribute of the learner's approach to the learning process. I agree with his argument that learner autonomy is a legitimate and desirable goal of language education. It is worth noting how ILL learners exercise their learner autonomy and take charge of their own learning. I summarize Benson's (2011) three important claims about learner autonomy:

1) The concept of autonomy is grounded in a natural tendency for learners to take control over their learning.

2) Learners who lack autonomy are capable of developing it given appropriate conditions and preparation. One condition for the development of autonomy is the availability of opportunities to exercise control over learning.

3) Autonomous learning is more effective than non-autonomous learning.

The first statement implies that learner autonomy is available to all, including ILL learners and school language learners with formal school curriculum. However, learner autonomy is apparently displayed in different ways and to different degrees according to the unique characteristics of each learner and learning situation. It is important for me to analyse how the ILL learners' characteristics relate to their learner autonomy. Benson's second claim has a significant implication that ILL learners should be given some basic concepts about learner autonomy. Therefore, they can develop and practise their own form of learner autonomy. For his third claim, I investigated how learner autonomy enhances the ILL learners' effectiveness. All the three claims justify the strong relationship between learner autonomy and ILL.

Benson (2011) concludes that learner autonomy is usually assumed to be one expected outcome of independent learning. The EuroPAL project conducted by Miliander and Trebbi (2008) has published data on autonomy in the language education policies of seven European countries, all of which were supportive of learner autonomy. Allwright and Hanks (2009, p.45) view autonomy as "a whole philosophy of education about the development of the self". Therefore, I argue that if learner autonomy is a significant expected learning outcome of language education, second language learning researchers should investigate how learners exercise autonomy through the learning process, and how teachers encourage it.

ILL learners exercise learner autonomy when they interact with the sociocultural contexts in which they are situated. Oxford (2003) developed a model of autonomy that included two "sociocultural perspectives": the first referring to Vygotskyan approaches and the second to "situated learning" theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). According to Oxford (2003, p.87), these perspectives emphasise "the context of autonomy rather than the individual exercising it": they point to the ways in which learner autonomy is socially conditioned and constrained. Therefore, the social context of my research has to be well-defined, and discussion about how the learners interact with the social context is expected. Also, as a social constructivist, I believe that the notion of learner autonomy has to be pondered because both social conditions and constrains justify learners' construction of the whole learning process.

Teachers can promote more learner autonomy (Miller, 2007; Sinclair, 2000) or take more control and transfer less learner autonomy (Lamb, 2009). Miller and Sinclair explain how an individual's autonomy can be practised and promote learning and teaching processes. Lamb, on the other hand, challenges the teachers' practice of taking

more control (less learner autonomy). He suggests teachers should “find ways of transferring control to the learners” (p. 67). Similarly, the aim of my research is to help teachers understand more about how learners exercise their autonomy and learn independently.

Benson (2011, p. 206) concluded in his work that there were ten research questions in the field of learner autonomy which had not been sufficiently addressed. I have selected and adapted four of the most relevant to my research focus, i.e. ILL.

1. How do language learners motivate themselves, monitor their motivation over time, and manage motivational ups and downs?
2. What do learners pay attention to and reflect upon during various kinds of language learning activities?
3. How do learners understand the purpose of their language learning?
4. What kinds of language do students want to learn?

Benson’s questions were useful for developing the initial themes, to be discussed in the following chapter. They were the basis of formulation of my subsidiary research questions and the initial innerview questions.

The existing literature has helped me explore the theoretical concepts of independent language learning and learner autonomy. Although research related to ILL was initiated in the 1970s (Rubin, 1975), it is less intensive and extensive as that related to dependent language learning. Researchers first investigated how the learner choice, control and responsibility influence the language learning and teaching (Nunan, 1988; Brindley, 1989; Holec, Little and Richterich, 1996; Tudor, 1996). They provided a conceptual framework that ILL is an important learning attribute and goal. Nunan (1991) and

Pickard's (1995) studies provided evidence that ILL led to successful language learning. Nevertheless, learning challenges were explored by Bown (2006), while Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman (2005) demonstrated that learning motivation is even more important for ILL than for dependent language learning. Learner autonomy is a critical component for ILL (Benson, 2011). Teachers can promote more learner autonomy (Miller, 2007; Sinclair, 2000). Benson's research (2011) is useful for developing my initial themes, my subsidiary research questions and the initial innerview questions.

Chapter Summary

The theoretical concepts of two areas: independent language learning and learner autonomy are explored through the literature review. I was then able to draw three themes and the corresponding subsidiary questions from the main research question. The themes are ILL motivation, ILL autonomy and ILL outcomes. These deduced themes also help me conduct the following thematic analysis.

Chapter 5 Methodological Discussions

Throughout the whole research project, I adopted an interpretivist approach. According to Livesey (2006), interpretivist methodology leans towards the collection of qualitative data and uses methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation that provide this type of data. As an interpretive researcher, I realise that I both influence and am influenced by the research activity I am involved with and that a relationship between the two develop naturally.

I conducted two case studies, one of my student and the other of myself as an autoethnography. A case study is a research approach involving a detailed investigation of a single individual or a single organised group (Creswell, 2009). Due to the fact that a case study relies on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014), it is a suitable research approach for me to collect extensive and in-depth data from the participants.

Thomas (2011, p.513) states that case studies are

> analysis of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems. The case that is the *subject* of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame — an *object* — within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates.

Case study is an appropriate means of formulating answers to my research questions in terms of data analysis. The research method led to analysis of persons (a language learner), events (independent learning process and outcomes), decisions (how did he prioritize the ILL strategies and the rationale behind his priorities?), and systems (independent learning context). In my inquiry, the subject is a sub-degree language learner who studies English as a second language. The objects are the ILL strategies and the ILL context. Like Duff (2007, vii), I consider case studies of language learners

to be a “valuable means of illustrating developmental issues connected with learning another language”.

Benson (2011) claims that language learning research often relies on snapshots of learners at a particular time and place. This is partly because longitudinal ethnographies and case studies may be difficult for practising educators. However, as a social constructivist, I believe that longitudinal case studies are useful to learn how learners interact with their social contexts. Introspective or retrospective accounts of learning can be gathered through qualitative tools such as diaries, written language histories and interviews (Benson and Nunan, 2002, 2005; Kalaja, Barcelos and Menezes, 2008).

Autonomy is a distinctive field of language learning research. Benson (2011, p. 201) claims that

> A great deal of the research on autonomy to date has been based on reflection and reasoning. Often, researchers draw conclusions about the nature of autonomy and the practices associated with it from reflection on their own and others’ experiences of practice.

Therefore, I need to examine how the participant exercises his learner autonomy with different research tools, in different stages of the research. The research tools to be applied should provide sufficient chances for the participant to express himself and reflect on his own ILL process. Mechanisms for gathering information/data in this study include learner diaries, semi-structured interviews and personal accounts. Benson also notes that the quantitative approach which involves systematic collection and analysis of data has been less frequent in research of autonomous learning. I believe that may be due to two reasons. First, it is a challenge to locate a substantial group of autonomous learners. When the potential participants are found in different institutions, it becomes another challenge to connect with and research a significant number of them. Second,

autonomous learners may have very complicated learning contexts with numerous learning variables which make it almost impossible to set up controls. Consequently, I find case studies more manageable than any quantitative methods and most suitable for ILL investigations.

A systematic approach was taken to analyse and interpret both of us as ILL learners. After reviewing the literature, I decided to explore three themes to investigate how I engaged in ILL, namely ILL motivation, ILL autonomy and ILL outcomes. The core research question, the three main themes and the subsidiary questions arising from them are presented as in table 1.

Core Question	3 Main Themes	Subsidiary questions
How did two learners studying in a Hong Kong sub-degree college engaged in learning English as a second language in an independent language learning context?	ILL motivation	1. Were the participants motivated to learn independently before the sub-degree studies? 2. Why were they motivated externally or internally to learn L2 independently? 3. How did they prioritise the ILL motivations and the rationale behind his priorities?
	ILL autonomy	4. What were their choices of ILL strategies? 5. How did they prioritize the ILL strategies and what was the rationale behind their priorities?
	ILL outcomes	6. What ILL outcomes did they expect? 7. How did they self-assess their ILL outcomes?

Table 1 Core research question and subsidiary questions

5.1 Case Study 1

In this investigation, I collected qualitative data from a single participant with semi-structured interviews, personal narratives, diaries and a memory bag. I studied how the

sub-degree college learner engaged in learning English as a second language in an independent language learning context. Having one participant in this phase of the research enabled me to conduct more in-depth qualitative analysis.

According to Creswell (2009), data collection in a case study occurs over a sustained period of time. I studied this case for a period of three months, which I believed to be sufficient for noticeable changes, e.g. learning attitudes, practice of learner autonomy of the participant and collection of adequate data for analysis.

5.1.1 Sampling

Among different sampling strategies identified by Berg and Lune (2012), I decided to adopt purposive sampling. I invited Jacky (pseudonym), one of my private language students who pursued their sub-degree courses. Purposive samples are chosen with thoughtful consideration to "ensure that certain types of individuals or person displaying certain attributes are included in the study" (p.52). I developed three criteria for selection: learning motivation, independent learning abilities and readiness to learn independently. Researchers using purposive sampling are reminded to "provide a rationale explaining why they selected the particular sample of participants" (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010, p.213). The criteria were developed for the following reasons.

First, the potential participant has to be self-motivated. Self-motivation is important for independent learners. Two second language motivation researchers, Williams and Burden (1997) developed a framework of motivation in language learning as an attempt to summarize motivational factors relevant to second language learning in the classroom setting. They asserted that motivation can be linked to self-efficacy, intrinsic interest and learning attitude (internal motivation) and importance of the target

language to the subjects, the learning environment and the significant others (external motivation).

I found Jacky, one of my private tutees, suitable for this project. Therefore, a screening interview (SI0) was arranged in early August 2016 with Jacky (see appendix J) to evaluate his learning motivation and his readiness to learn independent. He is a local Chinese student, aged 19. His father is a local Chinese as well, while his mother is a Mainland Chinese immigrant, who had settled in Hong Kong 20 years before. He has studied in Hong Kong for his kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary education. I got to know him and started to teach him as a private student when he was 17 years old and struggling for the DSE examination three months later. I taught him English language which he felt least confident in. The once-a-week tuition lasted for three months until the end of the public examination. He finished his secondary education then and was barely eligible for a high diploma course after obtaining five straight level 2s, which is exactly the basic requirement of a sub-degree programme in Hong Kong. He studied Business Administration for his 2-year sub-degree course.

5.1.2 Research methods

Hurd (2011) states that qualitative research tools provide a means of gaining insight into the processes involved in ILL and indicate the factors that influence the ways in which learners relate to their learning environment. Such tools include, for example, focus groups, interviews and diaries.

As soon as Jacky was selected, documents related to his language learning history, such as academic reports, were collected. Documents, according to Wolff (2004, p.284), are "standardized artefacts, in so far as they typically occur in particular formats".

Academic transcripts from Jacky's tertiary institution might reflect the formal language learning environments of the participant at the time he was engaging in ILL. His secondary school academic results might display his language strengths and weaknesses in terms of language skills before he started tertiary education. Flick (2009, p. 225) suggests that "although these records and documents are not produced for research purposes, they and the information they contain can be used for research". He adds that, like other approaches in qualitative research, researchers can "use documents and their analysis as a complementary strategy to other methods". Also, Flick (2009) reminds researchers that sometimes the necessary documents are not available, not accessible, or simply lost. Jacky's choice of whether to submit the relevant documents or which parts to submit, were fully respected.

At the beginning of his 3-month ILL period, I gave Jacky a learner diary. Diarists can freely write about their thoughts and have no need to answer some previously imposed questions for the research (Mackey and Gass, 2008). A well-known diary study in language learning is Schmidt and Fronta's (1986) research on Schmidt's Portuguese learning diary in Brazil. A learner diary can fill gaps between what I as a language researcher and teacher think and what diarists really think. It may also enhance learner autonomy. The participant can treat the diary as his learning plan and schedule. Putting down any learning progress and difficulties, learners can evaluate their ILL. Learner diaries, according to Hurd (2011, p.91) can

> encourage learners to think about their learning in a structured way. They can also help to build awareness of the process of learning and enable students to identify what personally motivates or inhibits their own learning.

Learner diaries can raise the participant's awareness of the ILL process. Hascher (2008, p.95) comments that "student emotion diaries… offer a precise view on an individual's perspective and enable a context-sensitive understanding of emotions." Therefore, Jacky was encouraged to record not only his chosen ILL strategies, but also his positive and negative emotions during the three months. Similar to his personal narrative, I acknowledged Jacky's choice to present the diary in written and/ or spoken (self-recorded) format.

Language learners may forget to report certain learning strategies in the learner diary (Yang, 2017). Graham (1997) suggests a way to overcome this problem by providing broad headings under which to write the diary entries. Nevertheless, asking learners to write under such headings may pre-judge that they are asked to adopt certain strategies and may interfere with their use of ILL strategies. Consequently, for this study, I did not provide any specific guidelines to the participant. I simply advised him to express anything relevant to his ILL, either in written form or in verbal form. This helped him jot down anything relevant to his ILL anytime and anywhere he liked. Learner diary also avoided the participant's memory loss after certain time when he was interviewed. I encouraged him to write in the diary soon after they had finished task. Richer data was therefore expected. Three semi-structured interviews provided opportunities to clarify what he had written and account for his ILL behaviours and emotions.

I asked Jacky to provide a personal narrative (appendix B) of his English language learning process since primary school until the moment he began his participation in the research. A personal narrative process is involved in a person's sense of personal or cultural identity, and in the creation and construction of memories. It is thought to be the fundamental nature of the self (McAdams, 2004). Jacky's personal narrative (PN1)

was a desirable reflection of his own identity as a language learner. I did not give him a structural framework of the narrative, but simply recommend a provisional title: “How have I learnt English language?” This encouraged Jacky to freely present any information he thought appropriate and relevant to his own English language learning, instead of being restricted by the researcher’s understanding of language learning.

I gave Jacky a memory bag, so that he could put in any artefacts to illustrate certain parts of his narrative. This memory bag together with PN1 provided insights into the formulation of questions for the following interviews, where Jacky could further elaborate on some parts of his narrative.

A semi-structured interview (SI1) was conducted with Jacky to elicit detailed information about his language learning context. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit information about his engagement in ILL. Interviews are the most commonly used data collection method (Taylor, 2005) and the semi-structured format is the most frequently used interview technique in qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006; Edwards and Holland, 2013).

The use of semi-structured interviews requires a certain level of previous study in the research area (Kelly, 2010) because the interview questions are based on previous knowledge. The questions are determined before the interview and formulated using the interview guide (Rubin and Rubin 2005). The guide covers the main topics of the study (Taylor, 2005). It offers a focused structure for the discussion during the interviews but should not be followed strictly. Instead, the idea is to explore the research area by collecting similar types of information from each participant (Holloway and Wheeler 2010), by providing participants with guidance on what to talk about (Gill *et al*., 2008).

Kallio *et al.* (2016) assert that developing a semi-structured interview guide rigorously contributes to the trustworthiness of a semi-structured interview as a qualitative research method. After their literature review of semi-structured interviews, Kallio *et al.* produced a five-step process to formulate an interview guide (p.2961). They are:

(1) identifying the prerequisites for using semi-structured interviews;
(2) retrieving and using previous knowledge;
(3) formulating the preliminary semi-structured interview guide;
(4) pilot testing the interview guide; and
(5) presenting the complete semi-structured interview guide.

Following the five steps, I formulated a semi-structured interview guide (appendix C).

The reason why the semi-structured interview is a popular data collection method is that it has proved to be both versatile and flexible (Kallio et al., 2016). The semi-structured interview method has been found to be successful in enabling reciprocity between the interviewer and participant (Galletta, 2012), enabling the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on participant′s responses (Polit and Beck 2010). I read the interview questions several times before the interview and planned to pose follow-up questions based on my student's answers.

Qualitative interviews offer the possibility of investigating respondents' points of view and the meaning and understanding they attach to their experiences (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). In the interviews, the participant could express his experiences about how he socially constructed the reality in the ILL process. This involved Jacky's language learning motivation, self-perception, learning attitude, language learning targets, previous language learning experiences and understanding of ILL strategies. According to Hurd (2011, p.90), interviews are "effective in encouraging self-awareness through his ability to probe and tease out deeper thought processes". Burgess,

Sieminski and Arthur (2006, p.75) suggest that "this kind of in-depth research can be very revealing as participants become aware of their own views and attitudes". Semi-structured interviews are "flexible enough to allow questions to be substantially modified for individuals … and to allow the researcher to improvise follow-up questions as the interview takes place" (Scott and Garner, 2013, p.283). Hurd's (2006, 2007a, 2007b) studies investigating the experience of ILL learners also reveal that semi-structured interview methods have yielded useful data on learner anxiety, motivation, effective time-management and individual approaches. A semi-structured interview guide (Scott and Garner, 2013, p.282) is a set of prepared questions that cover the basic topics and themes for the respondent to address.

I helped Jacky acquire some basic language learning strategies in advance of the three-month ILL engagement, so that he could learn independently. I introduced him to a selection of five learning strategies by Dörnyei (2001). I did not intend to influence Jacky's choice of learning strategies, so that Jacky could exercise his autonomy to decide himself whether to draw on them. This is important because, according to Cook (2008), language learners often know best what learning strategies are good. He comments that students must be encouraged to develop independence and suggests learner training (p.119):

> equipping the students with the means to guide themselves by explaining strategies to them… leads on to autonomous, self-directed learning, in which the students take on responsibility for their own learning.

Jacky could also employ his autonomy to explore his own ILL strategies. He was encouraged to consider establishing his own learning objectives, learning schedule and expected learning outcomes, taking his learning context and limitations into account. In other words, he was allowed to exercise learner autonomy throughout the three-

month duration of the study. This made it possible for me to answer the fourth and fifth subsidiary research questions:

- What was his choice of ILL strategies?
- How did he prioritize the ILL strategies and what was the rationale behind his priorities?

I advised Jacky to participate in ILL for a period of three months by adopting one or more learning strategies. At the end of the first month, an intermediate semi-structured interview (SI2) was conducted with Jacky. This acted as a checkpoint for three purposes: to study whether and how Jacky was adopting one or more ILL strategies introduced previously to him or "invented" by himself, to identify the specific problems Jacky encountered after a month, if any, and the causes of such problems, and, if he asked for help, to resolve any problems which might hinder significantly his ILL process during the remaining two months. After examining Jacky's learner diary, I asked him to elaborate on some of the notes in the learner diary and ensured the ILL process was recorded properly in the remaining two months. The interview guide for SI2 is shown in appendix C.

At the end of the three-month period, the last semi-structured interview (SI3) with Jacky was undertaken to act as a round-up discussion about Jacky's ILL attitudes, experiences and effectiveness as a whole. The guiding questions for SI3 were almost the same as those for SI2, except that he was asked whether he would be willing to engage in any form of ILL continuously after my research.

5.1.3 Ethical Considerations

Voluntary informed consent (BERA, 2011) is an important condition for research (Beauchamp and Childress, 1994). Flick (2009, p.37) defines "voluntary informed

consent" as "that the participants have agreed to participate in the research on the basis of information given to them by the researchers". I sought Jacky's formal permission before his participation in the investigation. He signed the research consent form (appendix A), before the 3-month ILL research period, after being fully informed of the facts, implications and consequences of his participation. I offered to respond to his concerns about his participation in the project. Since Jacky had reached the age of 18 and completed his secondary school education, I regarded him as a non-vulnerable person and I was confident that he had the competence to understand the research objectives, his rights and power relationships.

I have been sensitive to potential issues related to power relationships within the interviews and throughout the research (MacLure, 2003). As one of Jacky's language tutors, I explained my role as researcher and his role as participant. He had the right not to answer any questions in the semi-structured interviews or provide any documents. As stated in the research consent form, he could withdraw from participation at any time during the whole process, without being disadvantaged in any way. I confirmed I would treat his data in a confidential and anonymous manner (Anderlik and Rothstein, 2001). Data collected from Jacky was strictly anonymised. A pseudonym was used throughout the project, so that the information about him was only used in a way which made it impossible for other persons to identify him. He was assured that all information related to this project was only used to explore how sub-degree English language learners engage in ILL.

I was also concerned about "beneficence" and "autonomy or self-determination" (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001, p.339). "Research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit rather than simply be carried out for its own sake".

Through the project, I hoped that Jacky engaged in a valuable language learning process, which he might not have experienced prior to the project. The analysis and discussion of the data had been explained to him, which might help him make decisions about his future ILL. For autonomy or self-determination, "research participants' values and decisions should be respected" (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001, p.339). I guaranteed Jacky full freedom to exit the research process at any stage, for any reasons of his own, without worrying about any negative consequences so caused. Also, as mentioned, he could refuse to respond to any questions in the interviews.

Using machines for recording brought about ethical issues (Flick, 2009). After informing the participant about the purpose of the recording, "the researcher hopes that they will simply forget about the machine and that the conversation will take place naturally" (p.294). Therefore, in order to enhance trustworthiness of data by getting close to the naturalness of the situation, I restricted the use of recording technology to the collection of data necessary for responding to the research questions. I did not anticipate any particular benefits of videotaping, a more obtrusive means over photo-taking and sound recording. In fact, I asked the participant whether he was willing to be videotaped throughout the research, but he hesitated. That is why I avoided videotaping in the first two semi-structured interviews (SI1 and SI2). However, Jacky expressed his eagerness to be videotaped for the last semi-structured interview (SI3). I accepted his offer which might facilitate my analysis of the affective perspective of his ILL engagement.

Management of the data respected the confidentiality and anonymity that the participant was promised. The data were anonymised and kept securely only in my personal

computer with passwords. The data will not be shared or disseminated until they are published with my final thesis or presented at an academic conference.

5.1.4 Data interpretation and analysis

The artefacts from Jacky's memory bag, the personal narrative and transcripts from SI4 were thematically analysed. Thematic analysis is "a common form of analysis in qualitative research" and considered by many qualitative researchers as "a useful method in capturing the intricacies of meaning within a data set" (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012, p.11). I applied Braun and Clarke's process of thematic analysis with six phases to create "established and meaningful patterns" (2006, p.93). The phases are:

- Phase 1: Familiarization with data
- Phase 2: Generating initial codes
- Phase 3: Searching for themes among codes
- Phase 4: Reviewing themes
- Phase 5: Defining and naming themes
- Phase 6: Producing the final report

After drafting the final analysis report, I carried out member checking as a means to establish credibility (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012). I sent the analysis to Jacky, the participant to elicit feedback. The response that was relevant to the four themes was taken into account when I constructed the following discussion section.

5.2 Case Study 2: Autoethnography

Being the researcher, I was also at the centre of the investigation as a "subject" and an "object". This characteristics makes autoethnography a powerful research method since I could access inner-most thoughts (Ellis, 2009). Autoethnography is context-conscious,

intending to connect self with others, self with the social and self with the context (Wolcott, 2004). In my case, "others" included my language teachers, my family and fellow student-teachers. The context was my institute, my teacher-education course and the ILL environment. The connection of myself with the contexts was investigated and interpreted in-depth.

Autoethnography, as a special research approach, is "distinctive from others in three ways: qualitative, self-focused and context-conscious" (Ngunjiri, Hernandez and Chang, 2010, p.2). First, autoethnography is a qualitative research method (Chang, 2008). It takes a systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation about self and social phenomena involving self (Ngunhiri, Hernandez and Chang, 2010). Therefore, this systematic method is different from non-academic self-narrative writings such as autobiography. It is crucial to follow a recognised research process to collect, analyse and interpret data about my ILL process. Second, autoethnography is self-focused. The researcher is at the centre of the investigation as a "subject" and an "object". This characteristic makes it a powerful and unique research method since the researcher can access sensitive issues and inner-most thoughts (Ellis, 2009). Credibility can be enhanced. Third, autoethnography is context-conscious. The method is rooted in ethnography and intends to connect self with others, self with the social and self with the context (Reed-Denahay, 1997; Wolcott, 2004).

I needed to make a decision on choosing an appropriate approach for my specific research. There are interpretive autoethnographies (Adams, 2017) that use personal experience to promote an understanding of cultural experiences (Boylorn, 2013; Richardson, 2016; Speedy, 2015). In contrast, there are creative, performative and evocative autoethnographies that offer accessible, concrete, emotional and embodied

accounts of personal and cultural experience (Bochner and Ellis, 2016; Pelias, 2016; Spry, 2016). Moreover, there are critical autoethnographies, which focus intentionally and fiercely on identifying and remedying social harms and injustices (Berry, 2016; Boylorn and Orbe, 2014; Briscoe and Khalifa, 2015; Zibricky, 2014).

Adams (2017) identifies certain autoethnographic responsibilities. I categorize them into three responsibilities: autoethnographers "should not apologize for autoethnography or worry about ignorant and arrogant skeptics" (Adams, 2017, p. 65). Instead, I "should be accountable and able to articulate my perspective of autoethnography and what I hope to accomplish with a project". Secondly, autoethnographers should expect "feedback or evaluation" by readers, just like those of any other research accounts. The third responsibility is to care about the future of autoethnography, "showing what autoethnography can do that other research perspectives and practices cannot accomplish" (Adams, 2017, p.65). I believe this distinctive research method is still not yet familiar to language learners and professional practitioners, or even language researchers.

5.2.1 Justification of adopting autoethnography

Fulton and Hayes (2015) argue that autoethnography is an appropriate research method adopted within the context of the professional doctorate. Since doctorate candidates are expected to demonstrate the development of practice and their contribution to this in a fundamentally original approach, the researcher is central in the work-based situation. The process of autoethnography can structure and guide the research process, by providing structure to the process of reflexivity. Autoethnography provides a factually accurate and comprehensive overview of the professional doctorate candidate's career trajectory. It should act as a driver of self-explication for the professional doctorate

student thus providing a degree of both catalytic and educative authenticity, and provide an insight for the reader of the professional doctoral thesis.

According to Maréchal (2010, p. 43), autoethnography "involves self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing". The pursuit of a professional doctorate is in fact a journey of self-reflection. Taylor and Hicks (2009) encourage practitioner-researchers to develop their reflexivity. Pels (2000) claims that voice has become a central concern and has led to what could be called a reflexive turn with authors seeking to develop a more autobiographical and personalistic style. This acts to make visible both the authorial voice and what lies behind the particular description of the social world. Autoethnography stresses practitioner-researcher voice (Pels, 2000). This makes a researcher who is also an ILL learner and educator more powerful when reflecting on his experience of performing the three different roles.

Autoethnography most closely fits the purpose of my study. Ellis (2004, p.xix) defines autoethnography as "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political". In my case, my personal engagement in the ILL process is connected to my cultural, social and political contexts. For example, Schmenk (2005, p.112) argued that the promotion of autonomy as a universal good depends upon a "glossing over" of questions concerning "what autonomy might entail in specific social, cultural , or institutional learning contexts". Therefore, the concept of autonomy "has value" and "is not a universal and neutral concept and it encompasses a critical awareness of one's own possibilities and limitations within particular contexts" (p.115). As such, autoethnography is a powerful lens with which to interpret how cultural, social and political factors may affect ILL.

Clough (2000, p.290) argues that good autoethnographic writing can serve as a vehicle for thinking “new sociological subjects” and forming “new parameters of the social”. Bochner (2000, p. 271) indicates that “good personal narratives should contribute to positive social change and move us to action”. As an ILL learner, a language teacher and a language researcher, I am an appropriate informer as I can provide the required data in a truthful and straightforward way. Also, Chang (2008) argues that autoethnography offers a research method friendly to researchers and readers because autoethnographic texts are engaging and enable researchers to gain a cultural understanding of self in relation to others, on which cross-cultural coalition can be built between self and others. From the inquiry, I discovered more about myself and further develop my own language learning and language research. Moreover, the autoethnography is a reflection of my ILL for that particular period of time (from September 1994 to August 1996).

5.2.2 Screening of participant

Similarly as in case study 1, I attempted to ensure the participant fulfils the three criteria, namely learning motivation, independent learning abilities and readiness to learn independently. I needed to ensure that I conformed with the criteria before starting data collection. First, I was a student-teacher at sub-degree level, and was positively motivated to improve my English language proficiency for being a competent language teacher, which was my learning goal. I felt that the formal teacher education curriculum was not sufficiently appropriate for upgrading my language abilities to the standard of a language teacher. Evidently, I was willing and ready to learn the second language independently. That justifies the choice of myself as the participant for the second stage of the research.

5.2.3 Type of autoethnography to be adopted

In order to demonstrate how the personalized accounts about my engagement in ILL extend understanding of ILL, I addressed the self (auto), ILL (ethnos) and the writing and research process (graphy) (Reed-Danahay, 1997), recognising that I am "both the researcher and the researched" (Muncey, 2010, p.3). As mentioned, I take a social constructivist approach, where the practice of autoethnography presumes that reality is socially constructed (Ellingson and Ellis, 2008). As an autoethnographer, I can contribute to the social construction of what is known as ILL.

Evocative autoethnography (Bochner and Ellis, 2016) requires mainly the description of the researcher's own experiences and feelings. I was conscious that adopting such an approach might position myself at a distance from the ethnographic tradition. I have selected the interpretive autoethnography (Adams, 2017), rooted in the ethnographic tradition. Interpretive autoethnography, unlike evocative autoethnography, does not put emotional resonance as the key goal, but is constrained by its main aim, i.e. the analysis of data and comparison of the outcomes with other empirical data. The main reason I adopt interpretive autoethnography is that, as claimed by Thomas (2011), a case study should involve analysis of persons, events and decisions. An autoethnography is a case study, though not the most common one, and should share the fundamental assumptions of a case study. Therefore, I believe a comprehensive analysis, in addition to detailed description, of persons (myself and anyone relevant to my ILL process), events (the ILL process) and (my choice of ILL strategies) is crucial.

5.2.4 Research methods

Being a research participant, I recalled and wrote a personal narrative (PN2) in two parts (appendix E). The first part provided an account of my education background and any information which might be relevant to my language acquisition. The period of time is from my primary one to secondary seven, the last secondary school year. Information about my family education and social interactions in that period was relevant for my following engagement in ILL. For example, my father had a significant impact on my identity as a language learner. He even designed for me some learning materials outside the formal curriculum.

Personal narratives are not static (Linde, 1993). Tellers change their stories as their values change and as their understanding of their past changes. Twenty-three years passed and I have kept gaining different experience of language learning. I wrote the narratives with mixed identities, not only as a past learner, but also as a current language teacher. Personal narratives also function as a means of self-exploration. They may change who we are, creating new selves and transforming the existing self (Worthham, 2001). By recalling the memories of my ILL, I am reminded how I exercised my learner autonomy and encountered different learning challenges. Afterwards, I am able to appreciate my evolvement from an ILL learner to a language teacher.

In short, this part of data collection prepared myself for retrieving my memory and outlined my English language learning history, which was further developed into a more complete autoethnographic account. PN2 was also a desirable reflection of my own identity as a language learner. I did not give myself a structural framework of the narrative in advance, but simply suggested a provisional title: “How have I learnt

English language, including ILL?" This encouraged me to freely present any information I thought appropriate and relevant to my own English language learning.

In order to attain self-reflexivity, I gave myself a memory bag (Weber and Absher, 2003; Tumblety, 2013), so that I could put in any artefacts to illustrate certain parts of my narrative. This memory bag together with PN2 provided insights into the formulation of questions for the following interviews, where I, as the research participant, could further elaborate on some parts of my narrative and the artefacts.

Afterwards, I conducted a semi-structured innerview (SI4) with myself, which elicited detailed information about my language learning context. The newly evolved research method is to complement another research method, personal narrative, in order to expand my personal account as much as possible. Innerviews and traditional qualitative interviews are consanguineous relatives, sharing certain similarities. They both involve a viewer and at least one viewee, providing the researcher with qualitative data. They can be classified into structured, semi-structured and unstructured ones. After the interviewee or the innerviewee has provided the data, the researcher codes and analyses them. The fundamental difference is that an innerview involves only one person, performing the roles of the researcher (innerviewer) and the participant (innerviewee). In other words, I switched between the two roles until no more follow-up questions were asked for the innerview.

Innerviews are similar to interviews, which offer the possibility of investigating respondents' points of view and the meaning and understanding they attach to their experiences (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). As the participant, I expressed my experiences about how I had socially constructed the reality in the ILL process. This

involved my language learning motivation, self-perception, learning attitude, language learning targets, previous language learning experiences and understanding of ILL strategies. According to Hurd (2011, p.90), interviews are "effective in encouraging self-awareness through his ability to probe and tease out deeper thought processes". Burgess, Sieminski and Arthur (2006, p.75) suggest that "this kind of in-depth research can be very revealing as participants become aware of their own views and attitudes". Generally speaking, semi-structured interviews are "flexible enough to allow questions to be substantially modified for individuals … and to allow the researcher to improvise follow-up questions as the interview takes place" (Scott and Garner, 2013, p.283). Hurd's (2006, 2007a, 2007b) studies investigating the experience of ILL learners also reveal that semi-structured interview methods have yielded useful data on learner anxiety, motivation, effective time-management and individual approaches. A semi-structured interview guide (Scott and Garner, 2013, p.282) is a set of prepared questions that cover the basic topics and themes for the respondent to address. My initial innerview guide has been as shown in table 1, indicating the three provisional themes: ILL motivation, ILL autonomy and ILL outcomes.

Evidence from my previous phase of study (Lam, 2016) of my current student showed that the 193-word personal narrative produced a less detailed account of a participant's life history when compared with the semi-structured interview (11,880 words, excluding the interviewer's questions). The personal narrative provided data related to two themes only, while the interviews provided data related to all the four themes. However, the narrative served as a framework, which outlined the participant's ILL context. As a result, the previously established interview questions were enriched. In the second phase of study, based on the literature review and my personal narrative, I

constructed the semi-structured innerview guide. From the evidence of the previous phase of study, I expect to provide thicker description of my ILL engagement through the innerview, on top of my personal narrative.

Similar to the case study of my current student, I combined the above research tools because "triangulation may improve the reliability of a single method" (Silverman, 2013, p.133). Also, different tools may be required to respond to different subsidiary research questions. Most qualitative investigations incorporate a variety of methods to "gather a broader spectrum of evidence and perspectives to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of an analysis" (Saldana, 2011, p.31).

5.2.5 Data interpretation and analysis

I took out the artefacts which I believed relevant to my ILL from the memory bag. Together with PN2 and transcripts from SI4, a thematic analysis was conducted. Thematic analysis is "a common form of analysis in qualitative research" and considered by many qualitative researchers as "a useful method in capturing the intricacies of meaning within a data set" (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012, p.11). The thematic analysis was conducted in a similar way as in the previous case study of my student. I again applied Braun and Clarke's process of thematic analysis with six phases to create "established and meaningful patterns" (2006, p.93).

5.2.6 Ethical considerations

Autoethnographers are and are not ordinary qualitative researchers. Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2000, p. 93) argue that "ethical issues are present in any kind of research. The protection of human subjects or participants in any research study is imperative." However, autoethnographers have distinctive ethical concerns.

Ethical concerns are considered in accordance with BERA's guidance (2011). Voluntary informed consent is an important condition for research (Beauchamp and Childress, 1994). Flick (2009, p.37) defines "voluntary informed consent" as "that the participants have agreed to participate in the research on the basis of information given to them by the researchers". As any considerate qualitative researchers need to seek voluntary informed consent and should refuse to risk any participants' benefits for completing the research, autoethnographers should not risk our own benefits either. I decided to ask myself three questions before the data collection and analysis.

- Do I really want to be researched?
- Do I really not mind publicizing my own data?
- Do I really believe my data can contribute to the academic world?

My answers to questions one and three are positive. I was willing to be researched since I found myself an appropriate participant, who was able to give a detailed account of my own ILL. This is also related to my response to the last question: I believed my personal account would contribute to the academic world. My findings will be shared with ILL learners, language teachers and language researchers for their reference. However, all autoethnographers have to give up some degree of privacy when we disclose our stories, in this case, my learning experience. Fortunately, my ILL engagement was relatively enjoyable and I am happy to share it for academic purposes.

I am also concerned about "beneficence" and "autonomy or self-determination" (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001, p.339). Moreover, "research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit rather than simply be carried out for its own sake". The project resulted in a valuable learning process for myself. The analysis and discussion of the data helped me make decisions on my future ILL and guide my

student to engage in ILL. For autonomy or self-determination, “research participants’ values and decisions should be respected”. I guaranteed myself full freedom to answer any questions or not, provide any data or not, and even exit the research process at any stage, for any reasons of my own.

Using machines for recording can bring about ethical issues (Flick, 2009). In my study, “the researcher hopes that they [the innerviewee] will simply forget about the machine and that the conversation will take place naturally” (p.294). Therefore, in order to enhance truthfulness of data by getting close to the naturalness of the situation, I restricted the use of recording technology to the collection of data necessary for responding to the research questions. I did not anticipate any particular benefits of videotaping, a more obtrusive means over sound recording. That is why I avoided videotaping in the research.

According to Maréchal (2010, p.45), the early challenges of autobiographical studies were about “their validity on grounds of being unrepresentative and lacking objectivity”. Chang (2008, p. 54) warns autoethnographers of pitfalls that they should avoid:

> (1) excessive focus on self in isolation from others; (2) overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; (3) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source.

I responded to the concerns of Chang and Maréchal by conducting another case study, on top of that in research phase 1. Though my case took place 23 years ago, the participant chosen in the previous case reflected how a learner engaged in a current independent learning setting. “Excessive focus on self in isolation from others” (Chang and Maréchal, 2010, p.54) can be avoided. On the other hand, thematic analysis was conducted for further interpretations and discussions. In other words, narration is only collected as data for systematic analysis. I have also considered the concerns about

reliance on personal memory. It is inevitable for autoethnographers to rely on our personal memory as a main source of data. I am particularly confident in my memory about ILL because I have often shared my ILL experience with my friends and language students over the past 23 years. My repetitive verbal accounts enhance the trustworthiness and reliability of the contents. I could even validate my memory whenever I was uncertain or hesitant by asking my parents about my past learning.

Flick (2009) comments that qualitative research is often planned as very open and adapted to what happens in the field, and it may be difficult to foresee all ethical issues beforehand. I should be aware of any unpredictable ethical matters. Ethical considerations should not simply a *section*, but have been kept in mind all through my qualitative research.

Chapter Summary

Two case studies were conducted, one of my student and the other of myself as an autoethnographic account. I examined how the participants exercised their learner autonomy when engaging in ILL with different research tools. The research tools provided sufficient chances for the participants to express themselves and reflect on their own ILL process. They include learner diaries, memory bag, documents, semi-structured interviews/ innerviews and personal narratives. I explored three themes to investigate how the participants engaged in ILL, namely ILL motivation, ILL autonomy and ILL outcomes. I adopted purposive sampling, developing three criteria for selection: learning motivation, independent learning abilities and readiness to learn independently. I advised Jacky to participate in ILL for a period of three months by adopting learning strategies he preferred. Ethical considerations (BERA, 2011) include voluntary

informed consent, power relationships, confidentially and anonymity, beneficence and autonomy or self-determination. All data collected were thematically analysed.

The other case study was an autoethnographic account. Autoethnography is qualitative, self-focused and context-conscious. My autoethnography was an interpretive one, using my personal experience to promote an understanding of cultural experiences. My personal engagement in the ILL process was connected to my cultural, social and political contexts. The semi-structured innerview with myself elicited detailed information about my language learning context. The newly evolved research method was to complement another research method, personal narrative, in order to expand my personal account as much as possible. An innerview involves only one person, performing the roles of the researcher (innerviewer) and the participant (innerviewee). After collection of data, thematic analysis was conducted for both case studies, applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) process with six phases.

Chapter 6 Findings

The data collected from different research methods are organised in two corresponding sections. The first section presents the findings collected from documents, memory bag, learner diary, personal narrative, semi-structured interviews for my student's case study. Four themes were developed, namely ILL motivation, ILL autonomy, ILL outcomes and influence of formal curriculum on ILL. The second section presents the findings from memory bag, personal narrative and semi-structured innerview for my autoethnographic account. The first three themes were the same as the previous case study and the fourth theme was parental influence on ILL.

6.1 Case Study 1

During the screening interview conducted two weeks before the three-month duration of the study, Jacky displayed a high degree of language learning motivation, willingness and readiness to learn the second language independently. He stated before the research began that he had engaged in certain ILL in his secondary and tertiary education. The following table summarises the key quotes of Jacky in the screening interview.

	Criteria of purposive sampling	Jacky's quotes
1	learning motivation	*a) My English has not been good enough.* *b) I hope my English will improve and be as good as my schoolmates.* *c) I think better English enhances my study in school.*
2	independent learning abilities	*a) Yes, I tried some independent language learning in my secondary school, but I did not do it regularly.* *b) My tutor said I could learn the language independently. He mentioned some ILL strategies.*
3	readiness to learn independently	*a) I'm interested in learning English independently.* *b) Though I do not know much about how to learn the language independently, I think I will make progress bit by bit. I may ask you if I encounter problems.*

Table 2 Jacky meeting the criteria of purposive sampling

I concluded that he had fulfilled all the three screening criteria and thus was an appropriate participant in my research.

After collecting all available data from Jacky, transcribing and translating SI1, SI2 and SI3 from Chinese into English written form, I applied Braun and Clarke's process of thematic analysis with six phases to create "established and meaningful patterns" (2006, p.93). The potential codes included *external motivation, internal motivation, formal curriculum as a motivator, formal course materials, choice of strategies, outcomes, assessments, learning targets, emotions, learner's personality, teachers' role, new technology* and *previous learning experience*.

As many other qualitative research methods, thematic analysis can be inductive (bottom up) or deductive (top down) (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Themes or patterns within data can be identified in an inductive way or in a theoretical or deductive way. After consulting the literature, I proposed three provisional themes before the commencement of the research. They were ILL motivation, ILL autonomy and ILL outcomes.

I did not limit myself to apply the deduced themes only, but was aware that, after examining the developed codes, new themes might evolve. I also began considering how relationships were formed between codes and themes and between different levels of existing themes. An initially developed "thematic map" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 95) was constructed (appendix D) to display the relationships between the codes and provisional themes. Though provisional, the three themes were useful for me to have a rough framework of the available data and codes for developing new themes, if any.

After examining the provisional framework, I decided to add one more theme to my list: *influence of formal curriculum on ILL*. The reason is that the participant mentioned it numerous times in the interviews and he repeatedly related his engagement in ILL to the school curriculum. Unexpected codes such as *formal curriculum* and *formal course materials* arose from the interviews. In fact, this newly evolved theme is closely associated with the previously deduced themes. Nevertheless, when it was singled out to be an independent theme, the analysis of it would be more specific. A final thematic map was constructed for analysis (Diagram 2).

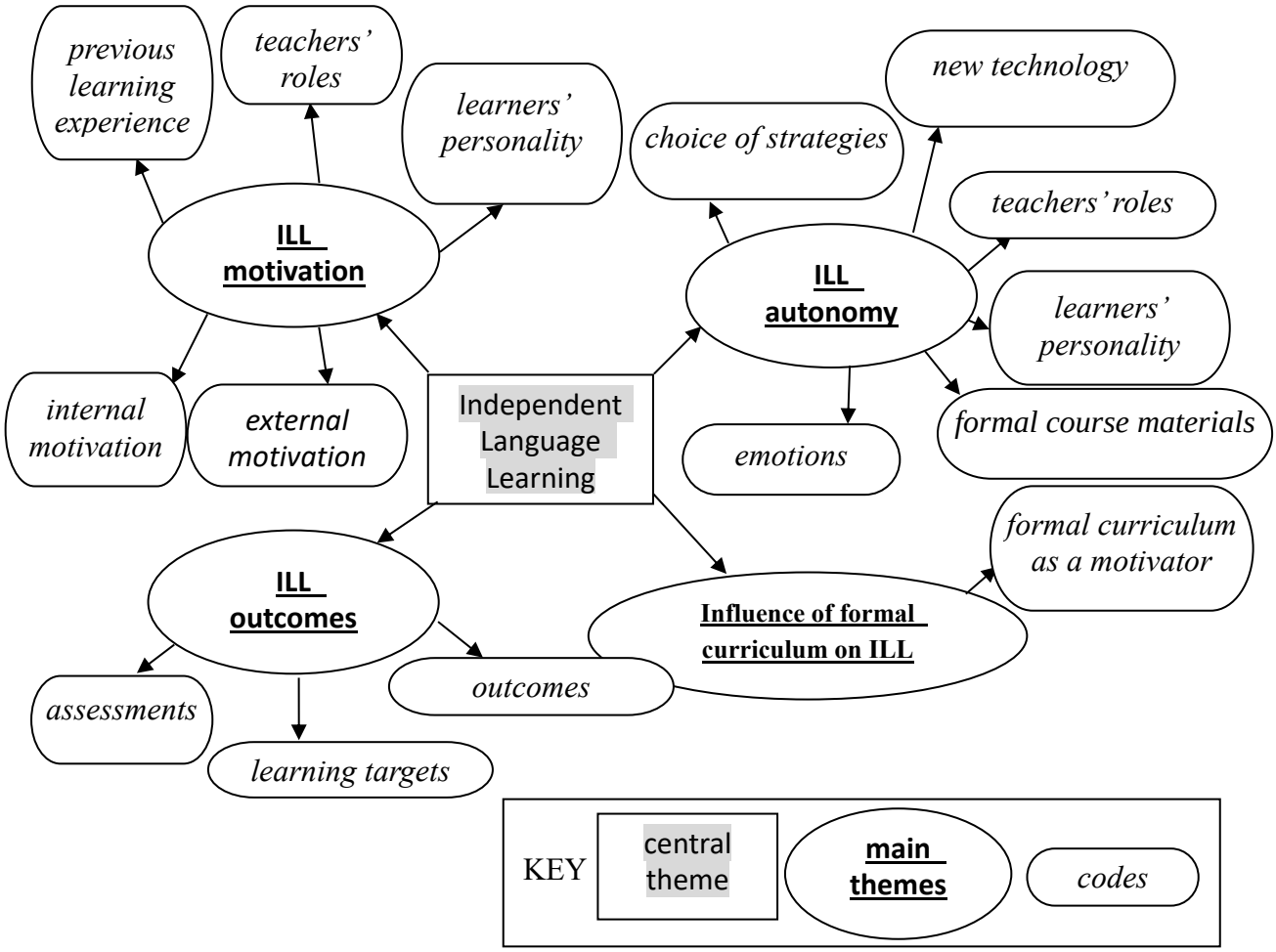


Diagram 2 Final thematic map, showing 4 themes (CS1)

Table 3 below explains the relationship between the themes and research methods.

Themes / Research methods		Deduced Themes			Induced Theme
		ILL motivation	*ILL autonomy*	*ILL outcomes*	*influence of formal curriculum on ILL*
Memory Bag		✓			✓
Learner Diary		✓	✓	✓	✓
Semi-structured	1	✓	✓		✓
	2		✓	✓	✓
	3		✓	✓	✓

Table 3 Relationship between themes and research methods (CS1)

I tried to describe each established theme briefly and that would help explain the relationship among the themes, the subsidiary research questions and the related codes. Table 4 is the summary which I used as a basis for producing the following analysis.

4 Themes	Brief descriptions	Related subsidiary research questions	Related codes
ILL motivation	Internal and external motivators and demotivators for the participant's ILL	1. Has the participant been motivated to learn independently before the sub-degree studies? 2. Why is he motivated (externally or internally) to learn L2 independently? 3. How has he prioritized the motivations and what is the rationale behind his priorities?	- *previous learning experience* - *teachers' roles* - *learner's personality* - *external motivation* - *internal motivation*
ILL autonomy	Participant's choice of different ILL strategies and the priority of his choice	4. What is his choice of ILL strategies? 5. How has he prioritized the ILL strategies and what is the rationale behind his priorities?	- *choice of strategies* - *new technology* - *teachers' roles* - *learner's personality,* - *emotions*
ILL outcomes	Participant's learning objectives and his assessment tools	6. What ILL outcomes does he expect? 7. How does he self-assess his ILL outcomes?	- *learning targets* - *outcomes* - *assessments*
influence of formal curriculum on ILL	Positive and negative impacts of participant's formal school curriculum on his ILL	Questions 2 to 7	- *formal curriculum as a motivator* - *formal course materials*

Table 4 Relationship between themes, codes and subsidiary questions (CS1)

6.1.1 Theme 1: ILL motivation

Jacky's memory bag was the first part of the data set to be analysed. The ambition of the data gathering method was to provide evidence of his previous English language learning, especially ILL. Although I invited him to put any objects related to his previous language learning, the only items collected were his school academic reports.

He explained that only his academic results came to mind when thinking about his previous education.

> *1.* ***" the only real objects related to my previous language learning I can think of is the academic reports."*** *(SI2)*

His emphasis on the academic results was further supported by his personal narrative. Throughout his self-introduction about his English learning background, his only description about his primary and secondary school was these schools' poor academic achievements.

> *2.* ***"I studied at XXX Primary School at Tuen Mun. It was a below-average school. I studied at XXX Secondary School. It was a Band 3 school. My schoolmates in these 2 schools were weak in English."*** *(PN1)*

His recurring remarks about the influence of the formal curriculum on ILL demonstrate that he wanted to engage in ILL in order to improve his academic results in English language. That will be discussed in Theme 4. His English examination results were poor in his secondary education. The English language results shown on thirteen academic reports Jacky put in the memory bag are summarized in appendix F. They include 6 from his secondary school, 2 for his DSE examination and 5 from his sub-degree college.

To facilitate analysis of his lower secondary levels (1-3), I converted his grades A to 5 marks, B to 4 marks and so on. Table 5 shows his average English results for each school year after conversion.

Secondary	Writing (5)	General English(5)	Listening (5)	Oral (5)	Dictation (5)	Total
1	1	0.5	2.5	2	0.5	26.0%
2	1.5	1.5	0	3	1.5	30.0%
3	2	1	1	3.5	3	42.0%
Total	30%	20%	23%	57%	33%	33.0%

Table 5 Jacky's English language exam results in Secondary 1-3 (conversion table)

Jacky improved his English language over the first three secondary years, though he still did not manage to pass (passing mark being 50). As far as language skills are concerned, his performance in Oral exam was relatively stronger, while General English and listening were his weakest points. When he was promoted to higher secondary levels (4-6), Jacky experienced his first pass in form four (see Table 6). He suffered a drop afterwards. Strength in speaking (equivalent to oral) skills remained while writing became his weakest area.

Secondary	Writing (50)	Reading (40)	Listening (60)	Speaking (50)	Total
4	25.5	25.5	37.5	31	59.8%
5	22	24.5	31	28	26.4%
6	13	15	16	29.5	36.8%
Total	40.3%	54.2%	46.9%	59.0%	41.0%

Table 6 Jacky's English language exam results in Secondary 4-6 (conversion table)

In addition, he did not seem to be interested in the language learning over the twelve years of study.

> *3.* ***"[Formal curriculum means] there are teachers, who lead and guide your learning. They asked us to hand in assignments and pieces and writings. These are compulsory. Although I think these are good, I think this cannot initiate our self-motivation. This cannot encourage us to develop a desire to learn."*** *(SI1)*

He had a rather negative attitude towards his previous formal language learning experience. He showed understanding about why school teachers asked him to submit assignments, but he regarded that as compulsory and failing to foster his self-motivation.

> *4.* ***"When you go to school, the teacher may say, 'Hey, Jacky. You quickly do this writing assignment, and submit it tomorrow… I do not really want to do it… But I am forced to write it. Then I write some meaningless stuffs. I have a strange feeling. I feel upset... I write even worse. The situations may get worse…someone indoctrinating you. When someone***

forces you, you can choose not to listen. I could sleep [in English class]. No one bothered." *(SI1)*

In the screening interview, he claimed that he wanted to catch up with his schoolmates' English and better English could help him study better in his school.

5. ***"My English has not been good enough... I hope my English will improve and be as good as my schoolmates…I believe better English can help me study better in my school."*** *(SI0)*

Jacky's English learning motivation had been mainly external. Examinations and academic competitions with schoolmates encouraged him to work hard. He did not mention any assessment tools for his English proficiency other than his academic reports. Although he admitted failure in his English academic results, he showed concern for improving his English. He did not want to keep on lagging behind.

Claiming that school teachers were not keen on encouraging him to engage in any form of ILL, Jacky could only recall four occasions that he came across ILL. The first two times were when he was in lower secondary levels (F.1 – F.3), while the third time was in his fourth form. It was Jacky who asked the teachers privately after school for suggestions on how to improve his language proficiency. He stated that three different school teachers suggested he should try ILL in order to improve English.

6. ***"I took the initiative to ask them for any ways…My question was 'What are the ways to improve my English?'."*** *(SI1)*

In other words, all these three teachers did not take the initiative to encourage him to engage in ILL and had never explicitly explained ILL, equipped students with ILL strategies or promoted ILL in formal classes. Apart from these three occasions, he could not recall any other formal or informal school activities related to ILL. However, he found the fourth occasion most impressive. He was in sixth form, three months before

the DSE examination. His private tutor taught him some ILL skills. He appreciated that and after trying some ILL, he found it motivating.

7. ***"I think this (ILL) is motivating. It helps me gain a sense of self-motivation. I am not forced by anyone else. And I feel very comfortable. There is no time limitation, no submission deadline for me."*** *(SI1)*

8. ***"[For ILL,] I look for knowledge…you desire for something badly, you look for it. Then you will find that you obtain something ... when I get to look for knowledge, I get more interested. I do not feel sleepy, and not losing messages easily. I feel that this (ILL] is a very impressive learning strategy."*** *(SI1)*

These comments presented a striking contrast with his impression about the formal curriculum. Table 7 summarises and compares Jacky's different perceptions of the formal curriculum and ILL.

Features	The formal curriculum (from evidence 3 and 4)	ILL (from evidence 7 and 8)
Nature of learning	"compulsory", "indoctrinating" "teachers, who lead and guide your learning"	"Motivating"
Feeling	"strange feeling", "upset"	"comfortable"
Motivation	"cannot initiate our self-motivation", "cannot encourage us to develop desire to learn"	"helps me gain a sense of self-motivation", "desire for something [knowledge] badly … you look for it. Then you will find that you obtain something ... I get more interested. I do not feel sleepy, and not losing messages easily. I feel that this (ILL) is a very impressive learning strategy."
Teacher-student interaction	"asked us to hand in assignments and pieces and writings"	"not forced by anyone else"
Assignment submission	"quickly do this writing assignment, and submit it tomorrow"	"no time limitations", "no submission deadline"

Table 7 Jacky's comparison between formal curriculum and ILL

Finding ILL more motivating and comfortable, Jacky showed excitement and enthusiasm for ILL in the interviews. Positive and affirmative phrases were frequently used to describe ILL. Also, it is important to note that he first engaged in ILL regularly for a considerable period of time three months before his public examination, before which he was encouraged to attempt ILL on three occasions in his secondary education. This implies the strong external motivation of the public examination. He asserted that there had been pressure from the university entrance examination, which decided his future.

> *9.* ***"there was pressure from DSE. DSE decides your future."*** *(SI1)*

Jacky's strong personality is a crucial element for his internal motivation to engage in ILL. When he elaborated on his perceptions of ILL, he used a phrase "keep moving forward".

> *10.* ***"You need to motivate yourself. Then, you can keep moving forward. This is ILL."*** (SI1)

He explained that he wanted to "move forward to learn more bit by bit". In short, Jacky had a sense of improvement. This was important for motivating him to engage in ILL, since there may be no teacher forcing him to.

> *11.* ***"I do not comply with the current state. I feel that what I have learnt is not enough …If I keep reading, I may accumulate... I can motivate myself in this way. I keep moving forward … not allowing myself to stop."*** *(SI1)*
>
> *12.* ***"I hope for improvement, and I would like to see how much I can improve… If I comply with the current condition, I will definitely be surpassed by others. I keep this mentality. I am very interested because I want to improve English…I want to succeed."*** *(SI1)*

However, he raised an interesting viewpoint. He admitted that before learning about this research, he did not have the momentum to engage in ILL because no one forced or guided him.

13. ***"Before you approached me, I did not have the momentum ... needs someone to force you a little bit, and guide you."*** *(SI1)*

On the one hand, Jacky wanted to improve his English and succeed, so he was interested in engaging in ILL. On the other, he needed someone to "force [him] a little bit, and guided [him]." This may demonstrate the importance of certain triggering factors, in this case the private tutor's encouragement and the approaching public exam, to engage in ILL even though he has been prepared and eager to do so. This will be further analysed in relation to Theme 2.

The last aspect about ILL motivation is Jacky's hope to support his family and related to his working environment. He secured a part-time job at Tsim Sha Tsui, one of the most prosperous commercial areas in Hong Kong, with many foreign businessmen and tourists. Jacky believed that English proficiency was a key factor for him to succeed in his career.

14. ***"I simply hope I can be able to earn a living for my whole family. The problem is ... English is already an essential requirement. Just like me, working at Tsim Sha Tsui. People all around speak English … I want to conform and match up with them [Jacky's] supervisors)."*** *(SI1)*

15. ***"many great agents of ABC [the company Jacky was serving] use English. Then I find English an essential requirement. They do not ask us to improve my English. But … If I want to be as great as them, first of all I need a good foundation. The foundation is English."*** *(SI1)*

Peer pressure makes him more eager to improve his English language. This echoes evidence 5 in which he wanted to catch up with other fellow students and thought better English could improve his studies.

6.1.2 Theme 2: ILL autonomy

Jacky described his ILL experience prior to the research. He talked about how he became familiar with ILL, his learning strategies and the criteria of choosing the

strategies. Then, he provided an account of his ILL engagement over the three months of the research.

As mentioned in the previous section, Jacky heard about ILL 4 times before the research, twice in the lower secondary school levels, twice in the upper ones. The first three times occurred in school though the teachers did not introduce ILL in class, but privately to Jacky. For the first 2 occasions, Jacky only heard the teachers' suggestions about ILL but did not practise it. He explained that he had been rather lazy. He felt that the formal school was good enough. Even when he was first told about ILL, he did not take it seriously. When he became a senior form student, however, he thought it was time to engage in learning English with more determination.

> *16.* ***"Because previously I had been rather lazy. I felt that the formal school was good enough… Even when I was first told about that [ILL], I didn't take it serious. But when I became a senior form student, I thought it's time to get determined to do it well…Because at that moment, there was formal English teaching… I didn't really follow the strategies until my sixth form when I nearly sat for DSE exam."*** *(SI1)*

From appendix F, Jacky showed improvement in his English results from Form 1 to Form 4. It might explain why he thought "the formal school was good enough". Another possible explanation was the faraway public examination which did not exert sufficient pressure on him. His first attempt at ILL was when he heard about ILL for the third time. He was in fourth form then as he critically thought of how to improve his English. The teacher suggested that he could "read more, listen to more, write more and speak more". He did not manage to recall the teachers' ILL suggestions for the first two times, but could provide a wealth of detail in his account of the third time.

> *17.* ***"She [Jacky's fourth form English teacher] answered me that … I could speak more, read more, write more and listen to more ... If I really***

have the heart to learn, I could look for people near me to communicate in English. First, I can communicate in English with friends on Whatsapp. This improves my English. Secondly, for listening more, I can change everything around me to English, including the songs I listen, the movies I watch, the TV I watch, all turned to English. This is listening more. For reading more, it is the similar idea. Change everything around you to English. Change everything on your cell phone screen to English. Although you know all the functions, you can learn how to spell the words…Then, write more. That depends on whether you have the heart. You can open a note book. Write vocabulary items on it and read them every day." *(SI1)*

His fourth form English teacher told him about some ILL strategies for reading, speaking, listening and writing respectively. Her suggestions were about how to create a better English language environment. Unfortunately, his first ILL attempt was not a success in terms of consistency, as he only spent two days on it.

18. ***"The first time was in my fourth form. I picked a vocabulary book, copied 10 new words to study… But after trying one or two days, I considered my resources... in fact I hoped I could carry on, but I felt really tired. I studied in Tuen Mun [quite far from Jacky's home]. After I finished school, it was nearly...because there were additional lessons... later than 6 pm... got home at about 8 pm. I was exhausted…there was formal English teaching... I found it was a heavy burden, as I could not handle both sides, because on one hand, I needed to cope with the formal English [learning]. I had to do assignments and so. On the other hand, I needed to squeeze time to learn independently. Later on, I felt that I was oppressing myself. So, I gave up."*** *(SI1)*

His ILL debut was challenged by his limited resources and time constraints, though he maintained that he "hoped he could carry on". He found it difficult to engage in ILL after exhausting school days and it became his "heavy burden". Another obvious challenge was that no teachers, including the one who gave him suggestions, followed up his ILL in any form. However, the three teachers' suggestions about ILL and his first

attempt, made over two consecutive days in fourth grade, built a foundation for his future ILL engagement, since he had been equipped with some basic ILL strategies.

Jacky received ILL advice for the fourth time when he received tuition from me, starting three months before his DSE exam. I encouraged him to attempt ILL.

> *19.* ***"Why did I pick it up again in my sixth form? You know there was a study leave before the DSE exam. There was time for me to think whether I wanted to be a salted fish or a fish. As Mr. Lam [the researcher] mentioned before, there are many ILL strategies, such as listening to English songs.*** *(SI1)*

He then shared his ILL engagement in preparation of the public exam. He seemed to be enjoying that ILL attempt. He was very determined to make use of ILL to upgrade his English language ability by evaluating his language strengths and weaknesses, studying idioms provided by me and enjoying his learner autonomy. He was more determined as he found the public exam was approaching.

> *20.* ***I had to be determined and tell myself... I must have the heart to focus on this… You have to hold yourself responsible ... my speaking was good... Then, he [the researcher] asked about my reading, integrated skills and writing. I said I was weak… Then, he gave me the idioms to study… I tried my best to use the idioms with asterisks in my writings… This was my self English learning – I jumped from Level 0 to Level 2 [DSE]. I started to feel that ILL was so powerful. Search for my own answer... Not forced by other people. Not scolded by others. Not urged by others.*** *(SI1)*

Also, I, as his private teacher checked his ILL progress once a week. This might encourage a more consistent ILL engagement. Table 8 summarises the comparison between evidence 19, 20 and 16, 17, 18.

	ILL without public exam pressure	ILL with public exam pressure
Evidence	16, 17, 18	19, 20
Source of ILL advice	school teacher	private teacher
Time of being advised	Form 4	Form 6 (3 months before DSE)
Number of times engaging in ILL	First	Second
Duration of ILL	2 days	3 months
Attitude	wanted to be determined	really be determined, tell myself, had the heart to focus, held himself responsible
ILL strategies employed	copied words on vocabulary book	used a vocabulary reference book, studied idioms given by teacher
Personal feelings during ILL	tired, exhausted, felt oppressing himself, ILL was a heavy burden	felt ILL was powerful
Challenges	Not enough time	(not mentioned by Jacky)
Anyone to follow up ILL	Nobody	Private teacher (checking his progress once a week)

Table 8 Comparison between ILL with and without public exam pressure (CS1)

After DSE, Jacky once got an ILL idea when considering where to work for his part-time job. He once considered working at a McDonald's at Golden Coast (a tourists' spot not really near Jacky's home) because there were many tourists. However, he did not put this into practice in the end as he found the restaurant too far from his home.

> *21.* ***"I once considered working at a McDonald's at Golden Coast [a tourists' spot not really near Jacky's home]. Because there are many tourists."*** *(SI1)*

In fact, it was already the closest place with a good amount of English-speaking people. Although no ILL was conducted, this evidence may still prove important for understanding Jacky's learner autonomy, since this was his first effort to deploy an ILL strategy.

> *22.* ***[I engaged in ILL] when I read the studying materials on my own. The materials are all in English. Of course the professors do not explain all the meanings of the English words one by one. I have to look up the dictionary after class.*** *(SI1)*

Jacky then started his tertiary education studying for his high diploma. When asked about his ILL experience during those two years, he shared his difficulties with reading the English materials on his own. He had to look up the words in the dictionary after class. I have reservations about his suggestion that looking up words in the dictionary to understand the course materials is a kind of ILL. It appears that Jacky regarded any language learning activities outside classroom as ILL. Apart from looking up dictionary meanings, he did not engage in any ILL prior to the research. When asked why, he explained that reviewing the course materials after the lessons and before tests and checking meaning in the dictionary were already ILL strategies.

Jacky confessed that if I had not invited him to engage in the ILL research, he would not have engaged in any form of ILL except looking up the meanings of the new words. He mentioned the concept of "momentum" in evidence 13. Being hopeful and cheerful, he shared his initial ILL plan at the beginning of the 3-month learning period.

> *23.* ***"It is a very good chance for me, so I actively grasp it… I can improve my English... it helps me know more ways to engage in ILL. Also, I can understand my standard… Although I am a research participant, I realize that this research is more valuable to me… It can change my life."*** *(SI1)*
>
> *24.* ***"I already got some plans. I feel that it is time to watch more BBC. I decided to watch one news every day... I will jot down the words I don't know and then review them… I write diary regularly every night. I have got one diary. I spend one hour at night for me to calm down, reflect and learn English."*** *(SI1)*

He admitted that it was a valuable chance to improve his English, or even change his life. His plan was to watch BBC news, jot down the new words and review them later.

At the time of SI2, Jacky had finished his first-month ILL engagement. His first response about the experience was that it was quite a difficult one, with many problems.

> *25.* ***"It was quite a difficult experience. It was not easy. I got quite many problems."*** *(SI2)*

He frowned at me, showing a very different expression to the one he had had one month before. His first explanation was about self-discipline and self-motivation. He found it difficult to keep himself self-disciplined and self-motivated.

> *26.* ***"I think the biggest problem is self-discipline. It is so difficult to keep myself motivated."*** *(SI2)*

I was concerned about how he overcame his ILL problems. He was always aware of the importance of self-discipline. At the time of the research, he was a tertiary student and having a part-time job. Sometimes, there was unpredictable over-time work. Fortunately, he showed effort to develop his self-discipline. He explained that Google Calendar was a phone app helping him develop his self-discipline.

> *27.* ***"I used Google Calendar. It reminded me to study English."*** *(SI2)*

When he set the timer, the software app notified him at 9 pm every night. This target had been set when the research began. He had planned to engage in ILL for an hour a day. However, he admitted meeting only half of the target for most of the days due to lack of drive and enthusiasm.

> *28.* ***"I can meet the target [an hour a day] for about 5 days in the previous month. For the remaining 25 days, I can only learn for about half an hour... If I got overtime work, I would go home late. And I would have no mood. I would spend less time studying English. My target is always one hour. But it is difficult to reach the goal.*** *(SI2)*

This does not mean Google Calendar was not helpful at all. He even felt guilty when he could not follow the ILL schedule.

29. ***"If I don't use Google Calendar, I am sure I cannot learn properly. I may have done other things when I am busy. I am not a very self motivated person. What's more, I feel very guilty when I do not manage to follow the time schedule. So Google Calendar facilitates my time management."*** *(SI2)*

Self-discipline, motivation and time management were promoted. He explained that not all important things were put in Google Calendar, because he did many important things automatically and did not need others' reminders. He wondered whether he would miss ILL easily if it was not scheduled. It is worth mentioning that he kept engaging in ILL every night for the whole month. If he had another commitment which clashed the scheduled ILL, he would do his best to adjust the time.

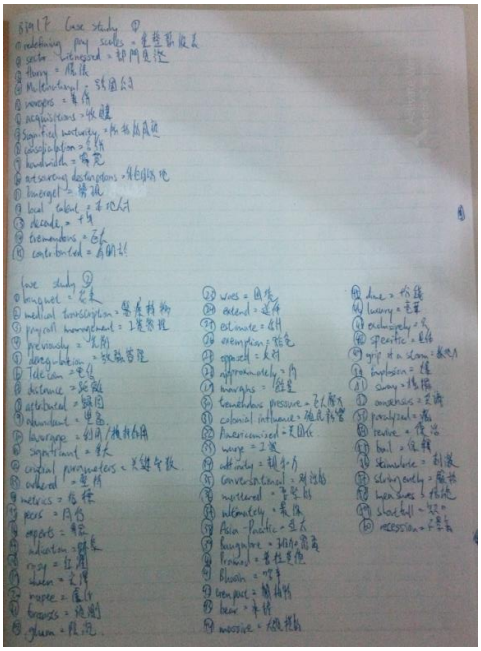
30. ***"In the last month, I tried to stick to the regular ILL studying time. But if I could not, I adjusted the time earlier or later than the regular time."*** *(SI2)*

I had offered to help him with any ILL problems before the commencement of the research, and he had promised to ask for help if necessary. However, although he experienced the above mentioned difficulties, he never requested assistance from me or anyone else. He claimed he did not want to disturb me, stating that ILL learners should solve their own problems.

31. ***"I did not want to disturb you. I think you are very busy too. I want to try to solve the problems myself, because it is independent learning. I should solve the problems by myself."*** *(SI2)*

I had given him the Learner Diary to record his ILL process. For the first month, he was not enthusiastic about recording his ILL experience there. Only two pages were covered with vocabulary items. He wrote the new words learnt from his formal curriculum. Checking their Chinese meanings, he added the translations in the diary.

32a.



32b.

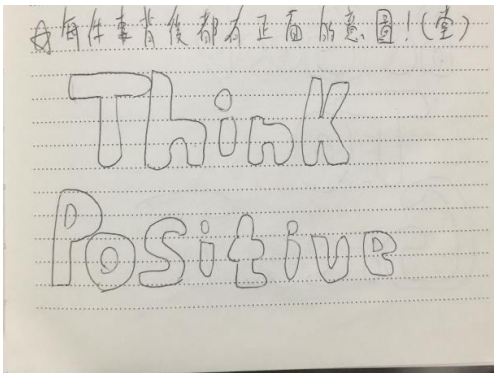


Diagram 3

Extracts from Learner Diary (CS1)

In the following 2 months, Jacky wrote more in the Learner Diary. In addition to vocabulary items learnt from the formal curriculum, he started to choose and write some idioms he had learnt before in the diary. The idioms were acquired from private tuition when he was in Form 6 and also from his friends' casual talk. Two years before, he had tried to memorise the idioms in preparation of the public examination. This time, he selected the idioms he liked for his own interest. He claimed that most of the idioms were chosen to encourage himself.

He explained that I had encouraged him to describe more about his ILL engagement. More description about his ILL process might help him monitor his learning process, although he failed to indicate how he could do that.

Jacky was keen on reading BBC news articles. The main reason was convenience. He said he used a lot of new technologies, such as ipad and cell phone. He could read BBC news with the phone app at any time he preferred. Also, it was free of charge.

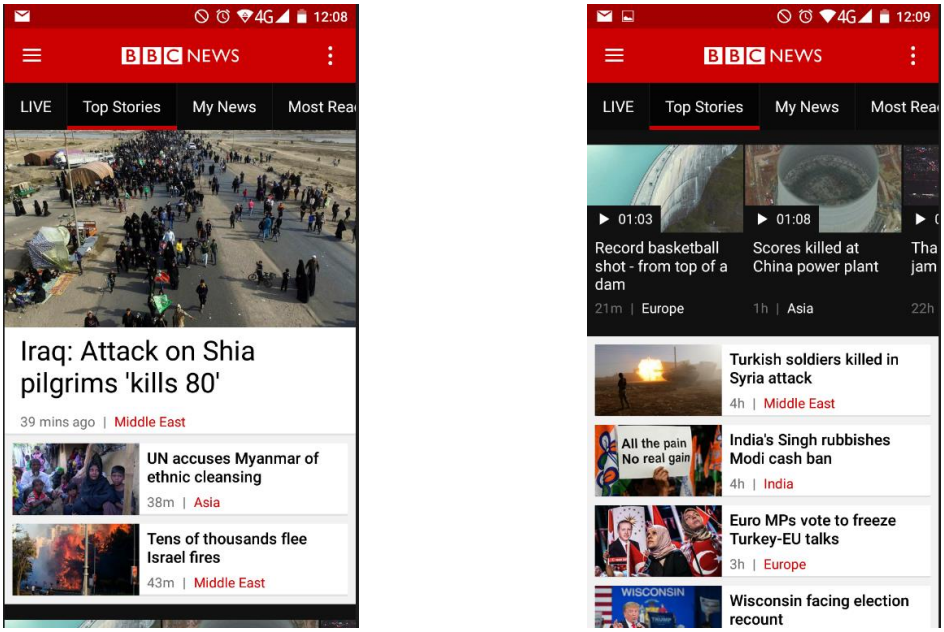


Diagram 4 BBC phone app (CS1)

The image in Diagram 4 was extracted from the phone app he used for ILL. He explained that the news articles he was interested in were related to his school course.

> *33.* ***"I searched for news articles which I found interested in. I would check the meaning of the words I did not know."*** *(SI2)*

When asked why he had not recorded anything about what he had learnt from the news software app, he explained that it was all right only knowing the meaning while reading. He claimed that he would not be checked whether he had known the words and it was faster to read without writing down the words.

> *34.* ***"I think it is all right only knowing the meaning while reading. Perhaps because I did not think I would be checked whether I knew them or not in future. And it is faster to read without writing down words."*** *(SI2)*

Another strategy that Jacky adopted was to watch Youtube. Being a Youtube and computer games lover, he chose to watch the foreigners who played computer games on Youtube to view. In order to learn more about how to play certain computer games better, Jacky watched some professional game players on Youtube. Although there were

Youtubers speaking Chinese, he chose to watch the English-speaking ones as a kind of ILL. He also explained that the English-speaking game players might not necessarily play better than the non-English speaking ones, but he intended to increase his exposure to the language while watching.

> *35.* ***"There are many foreign Youtubers. They play many computer games. I like playing computer games too."*** *(SI1)*

The next ILL strategy Jacky mentioned was his use of a grammar book. He consulted the relevant sections for reference occasionally when he forgot certain grammar items he came across his school learning materials. He explained that he did not have any grammar book for his sub-degree course and the lecturers did not teach grammar explicitly. Therefore, he consulted his old grammar book for reference.

> *36.* ***"I just used it occasionally. Sometimes I forgot certain grammar items which I came across my school learning materials. I would consult the relevant sections in the grammar book."*** *(SI1)*

Jacky's lastly mentioned ILL strategy was recording his own spoken English for reflection. In preparation of a class presentation, he recorded a soundtrack for his own analysis, such as checking his own pronunciation.

> *37.* ***I tried once recording my own verbal English…Because I was going to deliver a presentation in class. I want to hear my own English and see whether there is something wrong with my pronunciation.*** *(SI3)*

Jacky concluded that he used three criteria for choosing his ILL strategies. They were whether it can help him perform better in his classes at school, convenience and the cost. He claimed that the first one was his first priority.

> *38.* ***"Maybe whether they are convenient or not. For example, I find the BBC apps very convenient. Just need to download it. But whether they can help me with my school course is the most important. Maybe money is also a concern. I do not want to spend a lot of money."*** *(SI2)*

At the end of the 3-month ILL study, Jacky admitted that some instructions from teachers should have facilitated his ILL. They could also have provided constructive comments for him to improve his learning.

> *39. "**After these 3 months, I found that there should be some instructions for me. For instance, I could have written something and asked my teacher to give comments and tried to improve."** (SI3)*

He reflected that a useful strategy would have been for him to write something and receive feedback from the teachers. He stressed he preferred a passive role for the teachers. They might serve as advisors and facilitators. He argued that an ILL learner should take the initiative to choose what to learn, how to learn and even when the teachers should intervene.

> *40. "**I would write something and send it to the teacher for comments. The teacher will tell me what is wrong in my writing. It may cut my road shorter. If I really want to learn independently, I could surely rely on myself. But if there is someone to help you, you save a lot of unnecessary paths."** (SI3)*

6.1.3 Theme 3: ILL outcomes

Jacky had certain ILL targets. The first one he mentioned was to reach Level 2 in his DSE English exam.

> *41. **"I had a specific target. It was to reach Level 2 in my DSE English exam. It must pass it. I set it in my sixth form."** (SI1)*

Level 2 was the basic requirement for him to study a sub-degree course. Before the public examination, he expected he could pass the other subjects. However, he thought he might get Level 1 or Level 2. Therefore, English language was the limiting factor for his further studies. If he had obtained Level 1 for it, he believed he would have wasted one more year on a foundation course.

When Jacky started his sub-degree course, he aimed higher. He thought improving his English standard could lead to a better future. This echoes evidence 14, which was discussed previously about ILL motivation. Jacky mentioned that he thought English was an essential requirement for a better career path and enabled him to support his family.

> *42.* ***"I want to succeed. It is so simple. I simply want to earn a living for my whole family in future. This is my target."*** *(SI1)*

However, he was concerned about his learning progress and assessment. He compared his formal school assessment with his ILL assessment. Not being very confident about his own language proficiency, he was not sure whether his ILL process was on the right track and, if not, what was wrong. He was worried.

> *43.* ***"When you have a private teacher, you can ask him to assess your work. But when he is not there, I do not know where I go wrong."*** *(SI1)*
>
> *44.* ***"Did I learn properly? You know, at school you have teachers to help you. You can ask your teachers. But ILL … I should do it by myself. And I also want to see whether I am OK or not."*** *(SI2)*

Nevertheless, there was some evidence of assessing his own ILL.

> *45.* ***"I tried to check my reading speed. Before the last month, I needed about 1 minute to read an English passage of 100 words. The time is including looking up the dictionary for words I do not know. Very slow. I would like to read faster. I hope I can read about 200 words in 1 minute."*** *(SI2)*

He tried to check his reading speed and wanted to read faster and faster. Apart from measuring his reading speed, he admitted not having the expertise to assess his own ILL. The main reason was that he was not equipped with the assessment strategies by his school teachers who seldom encouraged him to engage in any ILL.

> *46.* ***"I don't know how to assess myself. I also considered that I might sit for ILETS after this research. I will try once…Sitting for IELTS can let me know whether I have got improved. Previously, I got Level 2 for my***

DSE. It is equivalent to about three point something for IELTS. Very low indeed. I would like to move forward to 5 or 6…I have one learning target for ILL. I have to obtain 5 points or above for IELTS. I must get it. I would set this target." (SI2)

Even if they did for 3 occasions in his secondary education, they never showed him how to assess his own ILL. Although I did not intend to suggest any self-assessment strategies throughout the research, I asked him whether he would look for ways to have his English language standard evaluated by someone else. He replied that he had considered IELTS. His learning target was to obtain 5 points or above for IELTS. He elaborated on his rationale behind taking IELTS, claiming that the internationally recognised language assessment was not only his ILL learning target, but also his learning motivation.

47. ***"But the problem is DSE is not as well-recognized as IELTS. IELTS is internationally recognized. I want to know what level I am at internationally, apart from the level in Hong Kong." (SI2)***

Although Jacky was unsure about how to assess his ILL, he hesitated to look for professional teachers to help him. He explained that asking them for comments was embarrassing.

48. ***"Teachers are professional. I would know how to improve my verbal English after they comment on my soundtrack. However, it is rather embarrassing. I am shy."*** *(SI3)*

Jacky had a number of learning targets. He revealed strong intention to prove his English language standard by public examinations, including DSE and IELTS. Also, he attempted to assess his reading speed. Apart from those, there is no explicit evidence of self-assessment, since he did not know how to do it.

When asked to evaluate the effectiveness of ILL compared to his formal language learning at school, Jacky did not hesitate to attribute his language learning progress to ILL. He explained as follows.

> *49. "**I would rather attribute my language progress to ILL because school teachers may not know all my weaknesses. They give general courses to normal students. But in my ILL, I pick up my weaknesses and practise correspondingly. For example, my vocabulary and reading skills are improved by ILL more. I know what vocab items I need to know. And I tend to read what I am more interested in."** (SI2)*

However, when asked about other language skills, he showed some reservations.

> *50. "**For writing and speaking, I am not very confident in the effectiveness of ILL, because I am not sure what I write or speak is correct or not if there is no teachers or instructors to guide me and comment on my language. Grammar learning is also a problem. I always make silly grammar mistakes, but never understand what is wrong with my grammar. I need someone to correct me and explain to me."** (SI2)*

6.1.4 Theme 4: Influence of formal curriculum on ILL

Jacky defined ILL as "the language learning outside school", but he very often compared his formal curriculum and ILL and linked them with each other (see Table 7). He even regarded the enhancement of his formal curriculum as his most important consideration about his ILL engagement (evidence 38), followed by the two other considerations (convenience and cost).

Both positive and negative influence of the formal curriculum on ILL were discussed by Jacky. For positive influence, formal curriculum provided a strong external motivation for his ILL. Three months before his public examination, he wanted to improve his writing skills and vocabulary power. He decided to engage in ILL to learn more new words and idioms. The public examination became a clear learning target for

ILL (evidence 41). When he entered tertiary education, he found his English standard not as high as his schoolmates. He failed to understand the English of his lecturers. Also, his reading speed was not good enough to follow the lectures properly, as he needed to read a lot of case studies for his sub-degree programme. The sub-degree language programme did not suit his language needs as no individual support was provided to him. He expected that ILL could improve the situation. For example, he tried reading BBC news articles online to improve his reading speed and vocabulary power. Table 9 summarises Jacky's attempt at corresponding ILL strategies to meet his specific language needs resulting from the formal curriculum.

Jacky's language needs resulted from formal curriculum	Jacky's corresponding ILL strategies	Period of time
- poor writing skills and weak vocabulary power	- learn extra new words from a vocabulary book, and idioms given by private tutor	secondary school
- slow reading speed	- reading BBC news articles online	sub-degree
- weak vocabulary power	- reading BBC news articles online - looking up word meaning in the dictionary to understand the course materials and jotting down the translations with the words in a notebook	sub-degree
- failing to follow the spoken English of the lecturers	- watching English-speaking Youtubers playing online games	sub-degree
- class verbal presentation	- recording his own verbal presentation for analysis	sub-degree

Table 9 ILL strategies to meet language needs resulting from his experience with the formal curriculum (CS1)

The table indicates that there were four occasions in which Jacky initiated ILL to cope with his language needs resulted from his formal curriculum. The first was preparing

for the public examination. In other words, he did not engage in any ILL to cope with his internal school language problems, although he was already encouraged to.

> *51.* ***"At that time, I just listened to the strategies. I did not really follow the strategies until my sixth form when I nearly sat for the DSE [Diploma of Secondary Education] exam. I really tried to do it at that moment."****(SI1)*

The subsequent three instances occurred during his sub-degree education. He indicated great concern about how to engage in ILL to improve his English language proficiency, in order to catch up with his formal curriculum. Again, the formal curriculum acted as his motivation for his ILL. Moreover, he showed ability to choose relevant ILL strategies to suit his specific language needs, which were directly related to his course.

The formal curriculum also affected his ILL engagement negatively. At his fourth secondary level, he attempted two days of ILL, which he gave up due to his formal curriculum. He explained that the formal curriculum made him too busy to maintain his ILL engagement.

> *52.* ***At that moment, there was formal English teaching…it was a heavy burden, as I couldn't handle both sides, because on one hand, I needed to cope with the formal English [learning]. I had to do assignments and so. On the other hand, I needed to squeeze time to learn independently. Later on, I felt that I was oppressing myself. So, I gave up.*** *(SI1)*

Even in his tertiary education, Jacky blamed his formal curriculum for hindering his ILL. However, he was determined to solve his problem with the help of a phone app, Google Calendar, which promoted his self-discipline and motivation.

> *53.* ***"I think the biggest problem is self-discipline. It is so difficult to keep myself motivated… I, you know, am very busy with my school work and part time job. Very often I feel very tired…I used Google Calendar. It reminded me to study English."*** *(SI2)*

Summary of Findings of Case Study 1

Towards the end of the thematic analysis, a diagram is constructed to summarise Jacky's ILL engagement since the start of his secondary education until the end of the 3-month ILL study. This concluding diagram will facilitate the following discussion.

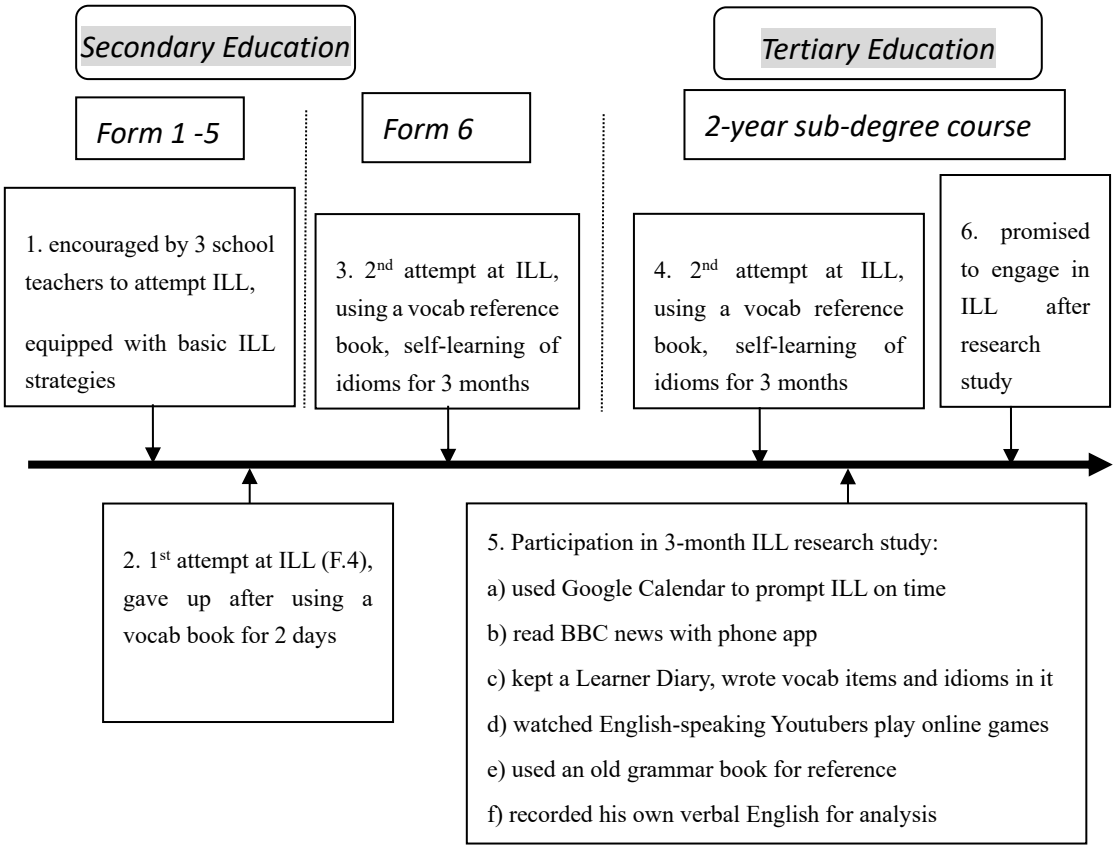


Diagram 5 Jacky's overall engagement in ILL: secondary education to the end of this research (CS1)

6.2 Case Study 2: Autoethnography

I first created the following potential codes: external motivation, internal motivation, formal curriculum as a motivator, formal course materials, choice of strategies, outcomes, assessments, learning targets, emotions, learner's personality, teachers' role, parents' attitude, parents' behaviour and previous learning experience. After consulting the literature, I proposed three provisional themes before the commencement of the research. They were ILL motivation, ILL autonomy and ILL outcomes. An initially

developed “thematic map” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 95) was constructed (appendix G) to display the relationships between the codes and provisional themes.

After examining the provisional framework, I decided to add one more theme to my list: parental influence on ILL. The reason is that I, as the participant, mentioned it numerous times in the innerview and I repeatedly related my engagement in ILL to my father’s intervention. Unexpected codes such as *parent’s attitude* and *parent’s behaviour* arose from the innerview and collected artefacts. In fact, this newly evolved theme is closely associated with the previously deduced themes. Nevertheless, when it developed to be an independent theme, the analysis of it became more specific. A final thematic map was constructed for analysis (Diagram 6).

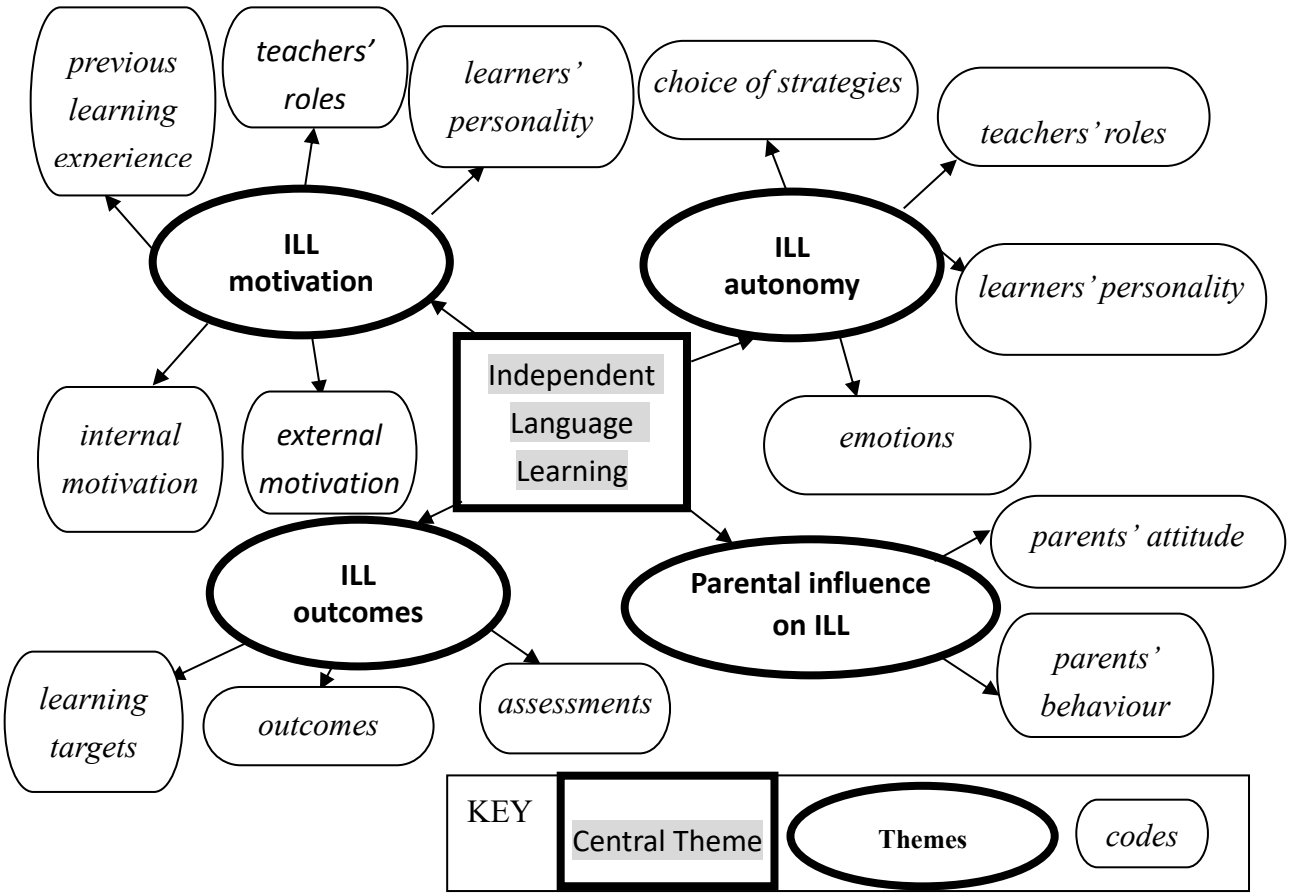


Diagram 6 Final thematic map, showing 4 themes (CS2)

Table 10 below explains the relationship between the themes and research methods.

Themes / Research methods	Deduced Themes			Induced Theme
	ILL motivation	*ILL autonomy*	*ILL outcomes*	*Parental influence on ILL*
Memory Bag				✓
Personal Narrative	✓	✓		✓
Semi-structured innerview	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 10 Relationship between themes and research methods (CS2)

In order to explain the relationship among the final themes, the subsidiary research questions and the related codes, table 11 is constructed. My thematic analysis is based on the final themes.

4 Themes	*Brief descriptions*	*Related subsidiary research questions*	*Related codes*
ILL motivation	Internal and external motivators for my ILL	1. Was I motivated to learn independently before the sub-degree studies? 2. Why was I motivated (externally or internally) to learn L2 independently? 3. How had I prioritized the motivations and what was the rationale behind my priorities?	- *previous learning experience* - *teachers' roles* - *learner's personality* - *external motivation* - *internal motivation*
ILL autonomy	My choice of different ILL strategies and the prioritisation of choices	4. What was my choice of ILL strategies? 5. How had I prioritized the ILL strategies and what was the rationale behind my priorities?	- *choice of strategies* - *new technology* - *teachers' roles* - *learner's personality,* - *emotions*
ILL outcomes	My learning objectives and my assessment tools	6. What ILL outcomes did I expect? 7. How did I self-assess my ILL outcomes?	- *learning targets* - *outcomes* - *assessments*
Parental influence on ILL	Parents' influence on my ILL engagement	Questions 2-7	- *parents' attitude* - *parents' behaviour*

Table 11 Relationship between themes, codes and subsidiary questions (CS2)

6.2.1 Theme 1: ILL motivation

From the personal narrative (PN2), the memory bag and the semi-structured innerview (SI4), I found myself very much motivated to engage in ILL by my family, starting during the lower primary school years. My father was regarded to be the main motivator and his contribution to my ILL will be presented later as theme 4. However, it was regrettable that the primary teachers never encouraged us to engage in any form of ILL (PN2:2). Teaching methodology was traditional, relying on mechanical drilling. The English lessons were usually conducted in a talk-and-chalk format. Teachers led us to read English articles, learn specific grammar rules, and then we did comprehension and grammar exercises (SI4:8, 10). The language seemed unrelated to the daily life outside the school curriculum. In other words, English was treated as a subject, rather than a language. Therefore, my formal primary school curriculum did not facilitate my ILL, except that the good academic results (SI4:8) might encourage me to keep focusing on learning the language in future.

My secondary school was well-known for its high English standard, instructing most subjects (except Chinese and Chinese history) in English. Although I tried hard, my English academic results at lower forms (F.1-3) were just average (PN2:6). I was not worried and did not give up, but spent more time studying English. However, I did not engage in ILL frequently, due to limited time. Another reason was that, similarly in primary school, secondary school teachers did not promote any form of ILL (PN2:6). They just asked me to submit English book reports once a month. Therefore, I read an English book every month. I did not do it whole-heartedly as I only treated it as school assignments. The teachers did not show me how to choose English books, how to read them and how to do book reports, but just told me when to submit them. From the

teachers' markings, I could tell that they did not read our book reports seriously, but just glanced over them (SI4:12). As a result, I just did them casually. Also, I was already very busy with the formal curriculum and did not afford extra time on ILL. Moreover, supposing the formal school curriculum was good enough to improve my language proficiency, I did not find it necessary to engage in extra ILL (SI4:12). As a result, I preferred to focus on studying the textbooks and did more exercises under the guidance of the school teachers.

My Hong Kong Advanced Level exam results were not good enough for me to enter a local university as planned. I received my initial teacher education with a sub-degree course and majored in English language. I was not happy about my academic failure and hoped to progress to a degree course after the two-year pre-service teacher education programme. I was highly motivated to upgrade my English language to gain a higher chance to enrol on a degree course (PN2:7). In addition, I found that the English language standard of the sub-degree course was not high enough to prepare myself for my future teaching career or the following degree study (SI4:28; PN2:8). Therefore, I was motivated to engage in ILL with different strategies, even though the lecturers did not promote much ILL. Fortunately, my parents had equipped me with and encouraged me to apply some basic ILL strategies. I employed some of them at sub-degree level.

When asked to prioritize the mentioned ILL motivators at sub-degree level, I responded as follows:

> ***"My failure of public examinations was the top reason for my ILL. Number two was my parents' previous encouragement and support, while my [future] teaching profession was the third. Finally, it was the low English standard of the sub-degree programme." (SI4:30)***

I will further discuss the ILL motivators and the corresponding priority in the next chapter. Table 12 is constructed to summarize the ILL motivators related to at different school levels and facilitate further discussions.

Priority of Importance / ILL motivators	Primary school and Secondary school	Sub-degree course
a) Parents' encouragement and support (further elaborated as Theme 4)	1	1
b) Future teaching career	- - -	2
c) Low standard of formal curriculum	- - -	3

Table 12 Summary of ILL Motivations at Different School Levels (CS2)

6.2.2 Theme 2: ILL autonomy

Based on PN2 and SI4, I engaged in ILL with a limited range of strategies when I was studying the sub-degree course at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Five ILL strategies were pointed out (SI4:32, PN2:8).

- reading English newspapers
- actively communicating with English-speaking lecturers
- watching English TV programmes (usually comedies and news reports)
- engaging in tourist hunting
- keeping a vocabulary book to record new words or useful phrases

I started reading English newspapers at the beginning of Year 1 of my sub-degree course (SI4:34). There were two local English newspapers, namely the South China Morning Post and the Standard. I chose to read the former one because it had a simplified version for students. I started with local news and sports news, which were usually easier to understand. Later, at the end of Year 1, I tried international news. In fact, I enjoyed

reading about social affairs in Chinese or English, thinking that a teacher-to-be should be more aware of politics, the economy and any international business. Also, newspapers were available at our school library, so I did not need to pay. I did not find reading English news articles difficult since I could easily guess the meaning of the words after knowing the news background from other Chinese media, such as newspapers and TV news. However, reading newspapers was sometimes boring and I could not do it for more than 15 minutes at a time. Also, I did not do it on a regular basis, but only twice or three times a week.

The activity I enjoyed most was communicating with English-speaking lecturers (SI4:34). In Hong Kong, there were not many chances to meet native English speakers. English was spoken as a usual language by 184,300 persons, or a mere 3.1 % of the population according to the 1996 By-census (Census and Statistics Department, 1997). However, take my Year 1 as an example, I came across about 12 lecturers while there were four English native speaking lecturers as native English speakers. Three of the remaining Chinese lecturers were ready to communicate with us in English if we initiated with English. As a student, lecturers were an excellent choice of interlocutor to practise my language with, as they were usually friendly and willing to chat with students about study problems or, for some sociable lecturers, chit-chat about any topics. They usually adjusted their language for our language standard and they seldom laughed at our language limitations. Also, this ILL strategy was interactive and made the learning experience enjoyable. Very often, I could choose the topics to be discussed. This made the experience even more pleasant.

Watching English TV programmes was interesting too, especially watching comedies (SI4:34). Every week day evening there was an American comedy with Chinese

subtitles. I sometimes read them and sometimes did not, trying to listen and understand by myself. It was enjoyable too as the stories were funny. And I could learn the culture of the Western world from the programmes produced in the States. If I was busy, I could video-record the dramas and watched them when I had time. The other genre I watched was news reports. I watched them about three or four times a week. Similar to reading English newspapers, they helped me know about the world and my city. English subtitles were given. I read them if I did not know much about the news, but tried to ignore the subtitles if I had got some background knowledge about it. Again, watching TV programmes was free, accessible and convenient, though not very interactive.

I knew about tourist hunting from a newspaper article in the second year of the sub-degree. The article talked about how Singaporean teachers brought their students to meet tourists on the streets or places with more tourists and communicate with them in English (SI4:34). I found it very interesting and effective. I tried it only in Central, a region in Hong Kong where there were a large number of hotels and tourists around, for about 5 times. Each time, I spent about an hour approaching tourists actively. I was quite nervous and excited on the first occasion. I chose those who were holding a map and looking for places. I appeared as a Messiah saving them and they were very pleased to be saved and communicated with me. I felt satisfied and successful since I could practise my oral English and helped the travellers at the same time. Usually they left with appreciation although my English was not good. Sometimes, even though I did not understand their English or failed to tell them how they could get their destinations, they still thanked me for the help. Since the second time, I became braver and more confident. Going to the hotel lobby, I approached some tourists without anything to do. They might be waiting for check-in or transportation to leave. I initiated by explaining

that I was a language learner hoping to engage in casual conversation for language practice. Most of them were willing to talk, perhaps for several minutes. The longest one was about half an hour. I found this strategy extremely interactive and interesting, while it cost nothing except my learning time and much bravery, which I got more and more. Most of the tourists gave me plenty of encouragement, such as saying my English was not bad or saying that I was very helpful. Also, they learnt more about Hong Kong and Chinese people, which was usually one of the main objectives of tourists.

From Year 2 onwards, I started to keep a vocabulary book, where I recorded useful new words and phrases (SI4:34). They came from anywhere, mainly from the mentioned ILL strategies. For example, I encountered vocabulary items on newspapers or TV programmes and recorded them for future revision. I wrote the Chinese translations against the word entries. Unfortunately, the strategy lasted for about 2 months and only thirty entries were inserted, without revising any of them. The failure was due to boredom, tedious and absence of teachers' supervision and check-ups.

Among the five ILL strategies, I enjoyed the *interactive* ones most. Communicating with English-speaking lecturers and tourist hunting were good examples. Then, I considered whether the strategies were *interesting*. Watching TV comedies was a good example. Next, I reflected on their *convenience and accessibility*. TV programmes could be regarded as convenient and easily accessible. After that, I thought about whether the strategies were *functional and fitted my life*. For example, reading newspapers and watching TV programmes served the function of understanding the world and my city. Finally, financial *cost* was also a criterion to be considered. The strategies I adopted were all free of charge (the newspapers could be obtained free of charge from the school library). Consequently, according to the above criteria, the

mentioned ILL strategies were ranked in the following order: (most preferred) tourist hunting, communicating with English-speaking lecturers, watching English comedies on TV, reading English newspapers and keeping an English vocabulary book (least preferred) (SI4:36).

Table 13 summarizes the order of importance (1-5) of the ILL strategies I adopted, the reasons for adopting the strategies, the order of importance of the reasons (i. to v.) and the corresponding affective descriptions (exciting, tedious, etc) revealed by the collected data.

ILL strategies / Reasons for preference*	Engaging in tourist hunting	Actively communicating with English speaking lecturers	Watching English TV programmes	Reading English newspapers	Keeping an English vocabulary book
(most important) *i. interactive*	✓✓✓	✓✓			
ii. interesting	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	
iii. convenient and accessible	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓	
iv. functional and fitting my life		✓	✓✓	✓✓	
(least important) *v. low cost*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Order of preference	1 (most preferred)	2	3	4	5 (least preferred)
Affective descriptions	nervous, exciting, interactive, interesting	interactive, enjoyable, pleasant	enjoyable, funny, not interactive	a little boring	boredom, tedious

Table 13 ILL Strategies, the Reasons for the Preference and the Affective descriptions (CS2) (* *in order of priority*)

As any language learner, I experienced certain learning difficulties in my ILL twenty three years ago. First, I needed to be very self-disciplined and self-motivated (SI4:44). I occasionally could not manage to engage much in ILL when I was busy with my school work. Fortunately, I was good at self-discipline and self-motivation whenever I had clear targets. When I was extremely busy, I did experience only short and temporary interruptions (absence of any form of ILL) for a few days.

My second problem was that I felt lonely when I engaged in ILL alone (SI4:44). There were no teachers or fellow learners, mainly because the school did not promote ILL. Consequently, I had to tackle any learning challenges by myself and failed to get timely positive reinforcement or support. Also, I could not assess my ILL properly. I did not know how to evaluate my own learning process and how to improve my ILL. In addition, my learning strategies were limited to my own knowledge. I did not get any advice of whether I was adopting the strategies suitable for me, or how I could maximize the strengths of the strategies. For example, when I was reading newspapers, I did not know which columns were suitable for my ILL. I simply picked those I was interested in.

Twenty three years ago, I did not know there were ILL strategies other than those I adopted (SI4:46). Therefore, I did not have any intention to tackle that "problem". When I looked back, it would have been better if I had been taught more alternative strategies. Because I was lonely, I responded by engaging in more interactive and interesting strategies (strategies 1 and 2 from table 13). On the other hand, I also ignored the lack of professional advice from teachers (SI4:44). I did not attempt to discuss my ILL challenges with my school teachers because of two reasons. First, I thought my school teachers were only responsible for my formal curriculum and should not bother them for my ILL. Second, I did not think it was necessary to tackle the challenges, since

I believed I did not need to solve all ILL challenges. There seemed to be many more important challenges that required tackling, such as family problems and formal curriculum problems.

Although I experienced some short interruptions of ILL for a few days when I was too busy, I did not regard that as a serious problem (SI4:44). On the contrary, it seemed to be positive for the ILL process as a whole. After short interruptions, I found ILL more stimulating and interesting. Therefore, I treated the interruptions as time-outs, though I tried to keep them as short as possible. As a matter of fact, over the two years, I resumed ILL within 3 days whenever I stopped it.

6.2.3 Theme 3: ILL outcomes

My ILL learning objectives were not as clear as those for the school formal curriculum. Apparently, for the school formal curriculum, I needed to submit all assignments, take examinations and obtain the required credit points in order to graduate. On the contrary, ILL was more flexible for me. I could lay out my own expected ILL outcomes.

My most obvious ILL learning objective was to upgrade my English language proficiency and become a qualified English teacher (SI4:38). Also, ILL might prepare myself for progressing onto a degree course. Although the grades of the modules related to English language at school were also an indicator of the success of my ILL, I did not set them as an ILL outcome since I believed the formal curriculum was to essentially train my teaching techniques, instead of enhancing my English proficiency.

I did not develop formal self-assessments for different ILL strategies (SI4:40). First, I did not know how to assess ILL, since there were no teachers guiding, monitoring, or even offering advice for my ILL. For example, I did not know how to measure my

learning outcomes of reading newspapers and watching TV programmes. Second, I simply did not like assessments. I thought assessment might demotivate my ILL, rather than motivate. For example, I tried to force myself to record one new word in my vocab book. However, I found that I did not like the pressure, and soon forgot the learning target. Third, I was rather sure that my ILL strategies were well-chosen and effective at that time. At least no one told me they were not. I was not worried about the effectiveness of the strategies, thinking that they should bring good learning outcomes.

Despite the absence of formal self-assessment, I could still identify certain ILL learning outcomes (SI4:42). During and after my engagement in ILL, I felt more confident in communicating in English. The formal curriculum usually located the learners in a comfortable zone. I meant I had learnt the language safely, too safely at school. However, real language contexts were different since they were always changing. I believed that ILL could locate me as a learner in more practical, complex and real language situations. For instance, the expected learning outcomes of tourist hunting and actively communicating with lecturers were to build up self-confidence in verbal English. Those strategies offered me experience of using the language authentically.

When I started to engage in ILL twenty three years ago, my two main learning objectives were to enrol in a degree course and become a qualified English teacher. As an ILL learner, I learnt the language at my own pace, according to my interests, with the resources I could afford and set my own learning outcomes. I found that I was the one who best understood my interests, my resources and my learning objectives. However, after the two-year engagement in ILL, I discovered the most important ILL outcome, which might affect my lifelong language learning. ILL built up my self-

confidence of learning the language by myself. I did not necessarily rely on professional teachers, or even have learning peers.

6.2.4 Theme 4: Parental influence on ILL

Evidence from PN2 (3,4,6), memory bag and SI4 (6,16,18,22,46) verifies parental influence on my ILL. As the most significant initiator, my father brought me into the ILL world and kept me there for most of my primary school years. Although he no longer pushed me to engage in ILL since the start of secondary school years, the influence lasted until my sub-degree course, and beyond.

Over the five years (primary 2 to 6), he wrote altogether 10 books of English learning materials (SI4:16) for his only child, myself. I called them independent language learning books (ILLBs), which were the only artefacts I put in the memory bag. Topics he adopted in the first two ILLBs when I was primary 2 and 3 included animals, occupations, school equipment, etc. He put in the ILLBs English thematic vocabulary items with diagrams. He was not good at drawing, but he tried hard to draw well to make my vocabulary study more interesting and effective. His intention was to encourage me to learn extra language on top of the school curriculum, so the vocabulary items were all new for me. There were also grammar learning materials. Again, they were far more difficult than the level taught at school. For example, he included sentence structures, question words and pronouns during my low primary school levels. Usually they were taught at higher primary levels at school.

The remaining eight ILLBs were created for me during my higher primary levels (P.4-6). The included learning materials were more difficult than the first two ILLBs. Idioms and good sentence phrases were entered and these concepts were not taught in my

formal primary school curriculum, so I found them useful and challenging. Diagram 7 is a page extract from one of the ten ILLBs.

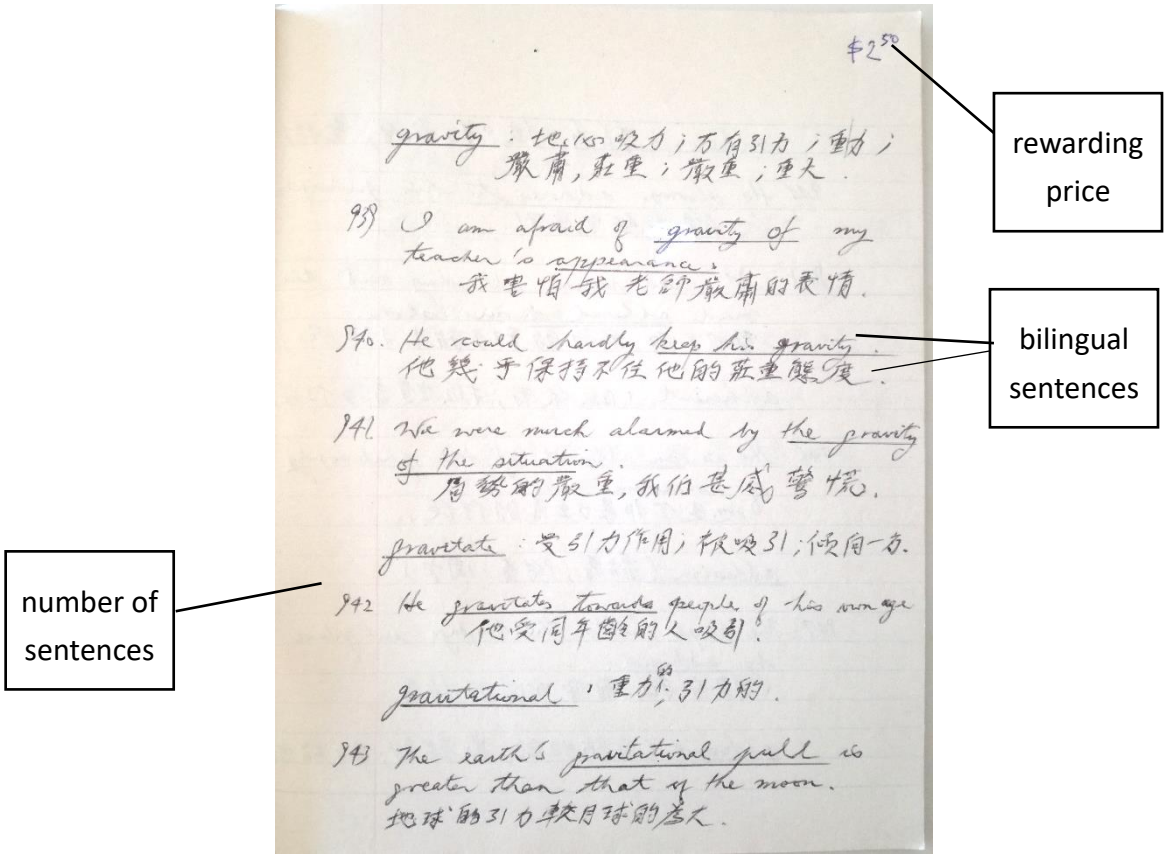


Diagram 7 A Page Extract from one of the 10 ILLBs (CS2)

The way the information is organized provides evidence of how my ILL had been influenced by my father. The bilingual sentences were labelled from 1 to 950. My father encouraged me to memorize both the Chinese and English versions. On the top of each page, a financial reward indicated how much I could get by reading aloud the sentences in front of him without looking at them. The price was assigned according to the difficulty of each page, ranging from HK$0.5 to $2. He asked me to study the pages again and again, so I still got money rewards for subsequent assessments. However, he would reduce the rewards whenever I finished a page, i.e. I would get less when I studied it for the next time. In the first 2 years (P.2 and 3), my father asked me to finish

studying about 2 pages for each weekend, allowing me to focus on schoolwork on weekdays. In the following 3 years, I was given the freedom of how many sentences to be memorized for each weekend. My father wanted me to engage in ILL and adjust my learning pace. This became a critical turning point as I started to exercise my learner autonomy. As a result, I studied the ILLBs even more in terms of amount of sentences learnt.

I enjoyed studying the ILLBs, especially at the later stage when I could exercise my learner autonomy (SI4:20). Being seven or eight years old (P.2 and 3), I treated the study as a game, which brought me pocket money. I also liked it because it seemed challenging: the learning materials were much more difficult than the school learning materials. I felt ILL could upgrade my language ability and helped me perform better at school (SI4:22). For example, I always found my vocabulary power was stronger than my school peers. Sometimes, the school teachers were surprised by my vocabulary power.

On the other hand, when I was in primary 3, my mother bought a Linguaphone learning kit for me to learn English independently (SI4:22). Linguaphone, originating in the UK, was an international company, which mainly developed ILL materials for different second language learners at different levels. My mother asked me to listen to the cassette tapes with native speakers' recordings. She encouraged me to listen to it for about an hour every morning, but she seldom monitored my learning process. She believed I would do it on my own. I enjoyed such ILL process because the recordings were interesting. I was self-motivated and self-disciplined mainly because I believed ILL could improve my English, and also could make my parents happy. Such ILL lasted

for about two years, until I joined some new extra-curricular activities and needed to focus more on schoolwork.

My father not only inspired my ILL with his ILLBs, but also with his attitude towards learning English and his behaviour (SI4:24). He was a competent English learner and claimed that he was proud of it. He achieved Level 2 in his Hong Kong Certificate of Education (previous public examinations for form 5 students), Level 1 being the highest grade. He worked as an assistant manager for the government. Under British rule, most documents were in English, and some of his supervisors were English-speaking. Therefore, he practised his English language skills substantially. His pronunciations and his writings were almost at native standard. In short, he was a positive role model for my language learning. His success in working as a civil servant made me believe good English language proficiency was important for my future achievement.

My father told me that, in order to improve his English, he grasped every chance to communicate with his English-speaking teachers in his secondary school (SI4:24). After school, he intentionally listened to English songs on the radio. He had kept log books on which he stuck many English newspaper cuttings that he was interested in. I saw some of his newspaper cuttings and he continued to do this when I was at primary school. He always reminded me that studying English was like a train running on a rail. The more frequently you practise the language, the deeper down the traces will be in your brain. That was a very positive encouragement for my ILL.

I was amazed when my father first showed me his old English newspaper cuttings on a log book. I was about eight years old and could not understand why newspaper cuttings were kept in this way. For each news article, he wrote down the date. Some dates were before my birth, as he started such strategy since his secondary school ages. He had

read them conscientiously, indicated by the highlighting marks, some short written comments of his own and occasionally some Chinese translations of vocabulary from the news articles. Although he had never asked me to keep newspaper cuttings like him, I started the habit of reading English newspapers later as mentioned. I also kept a vocabulary book to record new words.

He was also a very active English speaker. He and his friends were all Chinese-speaking, but he sometimes changed to speak English with them suddenly when I was present (SI4:24). I was studying in primary school then, so my English was not good enough to understand their conversations. Finding his behaviour interesting and brave, I started to believe that English was a language not only for school, but could be integrated in daily life. He also mentioned that he enjoyed speaking with his secondary school teachers in English. His aim was to create chances to practice his language. Again, although he had never asked me to act accordingly, his behaviour affected my future ILL. For example, I actively communicated with English-speaking lecturers after tutorials. I discussed academic matters with them and, with certain more friendly lecturers, some casual topics.

My father's most surprising behaviour was approaching tourists on the street when we went shopping. He enjoyed speaking English and helped the tourists look for places. As a primary school student, I was very curious why he did that. He simply did not know the tourists. I could not figure out why he stopped to spend three to five minutes with some strangers, speaking a second language. He did not explain, but I remember clearly my father's smile and the tourists' appreciation. The experience showed me that learning English was pleasurable. That equipped me with, not only the knowledge of the ILL strategy, but also the bravery I needed to approach English-speaking strangers.

Without justifying his English learning strategies, his positive attitudes and behaviours had promoted and nurtured my ILL motivation through his attitudes and behaviours. When I really had a chance to engage in ILL, I recalled his learning experience, considered my situation, and adjusted his strategies for exercising my own ILL.

Summary of Findings of Case Study 2

I conclude the thematic analysis with diagram 8, which summarizes my whole engagement in ILL from September, 1994 to August, 1996.

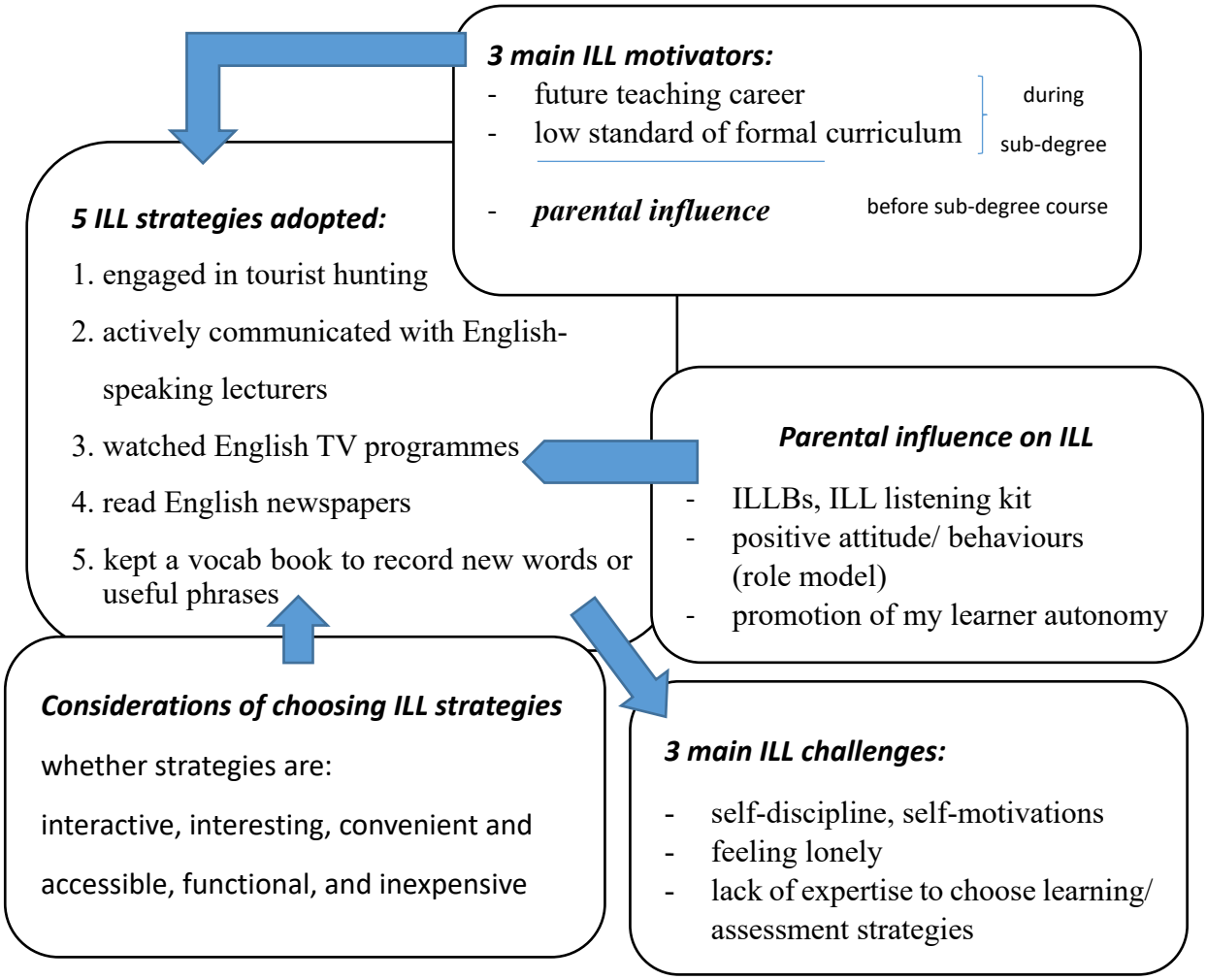


Diagram 8 Summary of my whole ILL engagement (CS2)

Chapter 7 Discussions

This chapter consists two sections, namely independent language learning, and innerview and autoethnography. Based on the findings, the first section is to review how two Hong Kong sub-degree students engaged in learning English as a second language in an independent language learning context. Previous studies have addressed independent language learning in Hong Kong (Chau, 2011), but the unique contribution of this study is the employment of the newly evolved research method, innerview, to deliver a comprehensive personal account. Therefore, the second section discusses how innerviews can help explore autoethnographers' personal experience. The provided evidence encourages current language teachers and researchers, including myself, to raise their awareness of their lifelong ILL, if any, and also their students'.

7.1 Independent Language Learning

Both being Hong Kong local school learners, I and the other research participant underwent compulsory English Language education (Education Bureau of Hong Kong, 2014) and acquired English as a second language.

Both participants noted that they felt they received very limited encouragement from their secondary school teachers to engage in ILL. This echoes Cheung, Ling and Leung's (2017) claim that rote memorization, drill-and-practice and teacher-directedness have long been adopted as the traditional approach in Hong Kong education. Such tradition has made it difficult for Hong Kong school teachers to motivate learners to engage in ILL. Yeung, Lee and Lam (2012, p.5) also conclude that "Given the limited time and resources, [Hong Kong school] teachers would focus on drilling examination techniques". However, further research is required to explore

whether the lack of ILL motivation from school teachers is attributable to lack of time, resources or expertise or belief in ILL.

Motivation is a critical element for both Jacky's and my ILL. Jacky had not started his ILL engagement until he was positively motivated. Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman (2005) assert that motivation promotes effort for independent learning. When compared with dependent learning, motivation is more important to "keep up the emotional, intellectual effort required independent learning … and is the most basic condition for learning" (p. 207). Jacky emphasized that he would not have engaged in ILL if he had not had his private tutor to force him and monitor him, even though he had recognised the benefits of ILL to his language learning. This implies that a triggering motivator is required for a self-motivating ILL learner. Otherwise, he may easily give up, just like his first ILL attempt for only 2 days. School teachers are therefore encouraged to initiate and facilitate students' engagement in ILL and provide any necessary advice.

When compared with formal school learning, internal motivation is particularly influential for ILL as there is much less supervision by teachers. Cheung, Ling and Leung (2017) state that teacher-directedness and rote-learning are common in Hong Kong education. Such tradition has made Hong Kong school teachers difficult to motivate learners to engage in ILL. This makes internal motivation more significant for engagement in ILL. Jacky's strong determination was a significant source of internal motivation for his ILL. He was determined to improve his language proficiency. Being self-motivating and self-disciplined, he managed to monitor himself and made good use of technology (phone app) to remind himself to maintain regular ILL. He had a strong will to perform better at school and motivated himself to spend extra time after class to learn the language independently. School teachers can consider recruiting the self-

motivating students for special ILL training, and make use of their self-discipline and self-motivation.

The public examination seemed to be Jacky's strongest external motivator for ILL. Jacky had not engaged in ILL for more than 3 days until his sixth form. It decided the chance of about seventy thousand secondary school graduates every year to enter the local universities. Candidates seek a good pass for English language, this being one of the four core subjects of the examination. As the participant stated, he would not have engaged in ILL without the pressure of the university entrance examination. This is aligned with Gow and Kember's (1990) claim that older learners are more likely to adopt a deep learning approach and learn more independently. I argue that school teachers should make good use of the examination pressure to encourage students to learn the language independently. Students can be motivated to prepare for tests and examinations with ILL at lower secondary levels, so that they can get used to ILL when preparing for the public examination.

Throughout Jacky's secondary education, however, no evidence revealed that any school teachers had introduced ILL explicitly in class. If he had not approached some teachers for ideas of how to improve his language, he would not have got the motivation to initiate any form of ILL. Even if he had done so, there was no school teacher to advise on, monitor and follow up on his ILL. Jacky was also a lonely ILL learner, as he could not observe any secondary schoolmates engaging in ILL. Further research is needed to investigate the reasons for the lack of Hong Kong secondary school teachers' encouragement for ILL. Possible reasons are that the teachers do not have the expertise to introduce ILL and they are already too busy coping with the formal curriculum. This conforms with Yeung, Lee and Lam's (2012, p.5) conclusion that "Given the limited

time and resources, [Hong Kong senior school] teachers would focus on drilling examination techniques". Teacher education institutes can consider introducing training of ILL strategies to language student teachers. The formal curriculum should allow sufficient teaching time to introduce ILL and motivate learners to attempt ILL as early as possible, since the curriculum at lower school levels may be less packed.

It is necessary for language learners to maintain their motivation until they achieve their intended goals (Murphy, 2011). I engaged in ILL clearly with self-motivation (Dörnyei, 2001), aiming to prepare for my future teaching career. Jacky argued that an ILL motivation is to survive in his working environment and to support his family financially. He thought his English language proficiency was not good enough to help him in his future career. Weinstein, Acee, Jung and Dearman (2011, p. 41) claim that

> we are currently experiencing a worldwide need for our citizens to be lifelong autonomous learners who can adapt to the rapidly changing and evolving demands of the modern world.

Jacky was an example of how to take up ILL in order to adapt to the rapidly changing and evolving demands of our modern world. In the hope of adapting to the rapidly changing and evolving demands of our modern education world, I was self-motivated to develop my ILL. My autoethnographic account reveals that a sub-degree ILL learner may extend the ILL after graduation. This facilitates continuous lifelong ILL. Teachers in the formal curriculum can consider promoting ILL strategies specifically suitable for lifelong ILL.

Another strong ILL motivation of mine is the parental support. Although I had a considerable amount of motivations to engage in ILL at sub-degree levels, I argue that I would not have initiated ILL without the preceding parental encouragement. Many

language research studies have confirmed the positive correlation between parental support and children's language development and language learning motivation (Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez, 2009; Cole, 2008). However, there has been no noticeable evidence specifically linking parental influence and ILL. In fact, parental influence can be in different forms. According to Tam and Chan (2005), many Hong Kong parents actively guide their primary school students to do homework. Their study also reveals that there is negative correlation between the direct parental involvement in students' homework and their academic performance. Therefore, I was lucky that my parents did not offer any direct support with my homework, but developed a platform for me to learn the English language independently. Such practice made me believe in my own ability and recognise the fact that I should be responsible for my own learning. On the other side, Jacky did not have any parental influence upon his ILL, while he was mainly motivated by his tutor. Before further research on the parental influence on ILL, one possible conclusion is that an ILL learner should be at least positively motivated by either parents or school teachers.

Thomson (1996), supported by research conducted by some educational psychologists (Hatano and Inagaki, 1990) claims that we are born independent learners and young learners know how to take charge of their own learning. When we observe babies learning their mother-tongue, they do not have formal lessons as most parents are not language teachers. Nevertheless they figure out the grammar rules and syntax of the language by themselves. However, when they are growing up, they start to unlearn their ILL skills but are told to follow teachers' directions. My experience was different. My parents managed to help me retain my ILL skills that I had originally possessed.

Compared with my fellow students, my language learning appeared to be more independent and self-directive. My fellow students' seemed to be more teacher-directed.

It was important that my father let me engage in ILL at my own pace since primary four. That was the first time I tasted learner autonomy (Al Asmari, 2013), and entered the world of ILL. I no longer felt that language learning was simply following instructions of teachers or parents. It was very wise of him to transfer the autonomy to me two years after I started to study the ILLBs. The transfer was timely because I had got used to learning with the ILLBs, and became mature enough to spend appropriate time on ILL. Although my father no longer asked me to engage in ILL since secondary school, he had helped me develop my positive intrinsic motivation (Richard and Deci, 2000) for future ILL.

Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman (2005) claim that motivation promotes effort for independent learning. The way I was motivated would influence my choice of ILL strategies when I exercise learner autonomy (Benson, 2011). I was given learner autonomy by my father to engage in ILL. Similarly, Jacky was given learner autonomy to engage in ILL. He could choose any ILL strategies over the three months. Benson (2011) regarded ILL autonomy as a critical component for ILL. He concludes that autonomous learning is more effective than non-autonomous learning. This conforms with Jacky's and my claim that ILL is more effective than formal language learning as we can exercise our autonomy to select our ILL strategies.

English, the second language, is not widely used for cultural and social communication in Hong Kong and hence learners are not immersed in a good language environment. In order to enhance their English proficiency, the learners need to increase their exposure to the language outside the formal curriculum. ILL is therefore a possible

solution as learners can extend their learning after school. Frontline teachers should create an ILL learning environment at school, such as developing ILL centres, and take every chance to encourage language learners to engage in ILL. Specialised personnel should be assigned to promote the ILL development of the school.

Jacky was not equipped with ILL strategies throughout his formal secondary and tertiary education. Even though he was self-motivated to engage in ILL, he did not have the expertise to select appropriate strategies. The major problem is that he did not know the characteristics of different strategies. Consequently, he failed to choose strategies to suit his specific language needs, and he was limited to very few strategies, which caused boredom. Pickard's (1995) descriptive study displays how German tertiary learners of English generally had a wide repertoire of out-of-class strategies, and how those strategies "stem from the learners' own volition rather than from a teacher" (p.37). The difference reveals that Jacky was not as lucky as his German counterparts, who had acquired more ILL strategies than he had. I cannot conclude whether Jacky favoured the teachers' strategies or his own strategies because he had never been an experienced ILL strategies user.

Moreover, the findings of both case studies reveal that ILL learners may engage in diversified activities according to their own interests and hobbies. Cohen (2011) claims that learning strategies can be developed. This implies that the language learners, if they wish, can learn new strategies, or develop those already established to enhance their language learning. Jacky, like some other young learners, enjoyed playing online games, so he watched English-speaking Youtubers play his favourite games. He admitted learning the language effectively with such a comfortable and pleasurable way. Other ILL learners, for example, may be interested in music, sports or literature. Language

teachers should be aware of learners' different interests and encouraged them to engage in their leisure activities with the target language. Curriculum planners can design ILL packages specifically for learners of diversified interests.

Cohen and White (2008) conducted a study about a course for first-year university students. The researchers conclude that learners can become skilled in choosing appropriate learning environments, and then, within those selected environments, can become more skilled in learning how to make best use of them. In my research, Jacky gave up two strategies (a, b), developed a new one (f) and demonstrated an effort to keep three strategies over the three months. Table 14 shows the six strategies he adopted.

<table>
<tr><th>Period of time</th><th>First month</th><th>Second and Third month</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Strategies adopted by Jacky</td><td>a. used Google Calendar to prompt ILL on time</td><td rowspan="2">f. recorded his own verbal English for analysis</td></tr>
<tr><td>b. read BBC news with phone app</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">c. kept a Learner Diary, wrote vocab items and idioms in it
d. watched English-speaking Youtubers play online games
e. used an old grammar book for reference</td></tr>
</table>

Table 14 Jacky's choice of ILL strategies over three months

Jacky was clear about why he used certain strategies and gave up one later. He explained he had used Google Calendar to remind him of engaging in ILL. He no longer needed the phone apps because he had more flexible spare time for ILL in the second and third month. He also found reading BBC news no longer effective to adapt to his formal curriculum and therefore gave it up. Instead, he developed a new strategy, recording his

verbal English for analysis. The rationale behind it was that he had found it difficult to assess his own ILL. He attempted the new strategy to help himself monitor his progress.

Jacky indicated his favour in preference for using new technology to learn independently. It has become an irreversible trend for new generations to communicate and learn online. That indeed provides a good platform for language teachers to introduce ILL and make ILL part of the learners' daily life. Teachers can collect websites and phone apps appropriate for students at different levels. They can include videos, songs, news articles and online stories. According to Oxford (2008), the Digital Age has arrived and changed the nature of language learning. Oxford and Lin (2011, p.157) call it a "technological wave". They suggest that the Digital Age "has opened up a plethora of creative routes for digital language learning" (p.157). However, Oxford and Lin (2011) propose nine challenges of digital language learning. For example, ILL learners may need to "resolve confusion about which digital language learning programs to use" (p.158) because certain programs have been misrepresented by their creators. There may be "insufficient exposure to authentic discourse in the target language". Also, the collection of ILL resources has to be updated from time to time for the ever changing online world. Schools should be funded by the government for adequate teaching facilities and software which can promote ILL. It should also consider subsidizing underprivileged learners who cannot afford new learning assistance technology. Further investigations are needed to study how ILL learners benefit from digital learning contexts and overcome the corresponding problems.

Jacky reflected that he was challenged by limited ILL learning resources and time constraints. He also found self-motivation and self-discipline very challenging for him as an ILL learner. However, he attempted some strategies to overcome them, such as

watching foreign Youtubers play video games to motivate himself, and using his phone to remind him of ILL time to improve his time management and self-discipline. On the other hand, school teachers can consider designing different learning activities which promote ILL outside school. For example, students can be brought or encouraged to communicate with tourists on the streets. They can be asked to watch particular online news and share their reflections in class. More mature language learners, such as the sub-degree students, can be encouraged to design their own ILL activities, so that they can fully exercise their learner autonomy. Good invention and practice of ILL should be shared among the whole school, or even with other schools.

Hurd (2011, p.90) states that the learner diary is a qualitative research tool providing a means of gaining insight into the processes involved in ILL. It also indicates the factors that influence the ways in which learners relate to their learning environment. Jacky's case study has revealed the effectiveness of keeping a record of the learners' ILL engagement. When learners exercise learner autonomy, they can invite teachers' advice and timely guidance. Teachers can interpret and analyse their learning track record from the learner diary, providing professional learning support and reinforcement accordingly. For example, on the Learner Diary, Jacky simply wrote the Chinese translations next to the vocabulary items he intended to learn. Therefore, I advised him to make a sentence for each item, so that he would be more familiar with the word usage.

ILL, when compared with dependent language learning is observed as challenging for learners (Bown, 2006) due to remoteness from teachers' support. Despite the current rapid growth of interest in independent learning among language teachers, little attention has been paid to the assessment of independent learning (Canning, 2004). Jacky was very concerned about whether he used the language well when he engaged

in ILL. For me, I did not seek formal language assessment due to lack of expertise. Both case studies give evidence of ILL learners experiencing problems related to assessment. When students learn the language independently, however, they need to identify their own strengths and mistakes. Jacky himself thought of three self-assessment strategies: measuring his reading speed, comparing it with his fellow students', and recording his own verbal English for analysis. Table 15 summarizes his choice of ILL self-assessment strategies.

ILL self-assessment strategies	Formative/ Summative (Mctighe, 2005)	Norm-referenced/ criterion-referenced (Atkins *et al.*, 1993)
1. measuring his reading speed	Formative	norm-referenced
2. comparing it with his fellow students' reading speed	Formative	norm-referenced
3. recording his own verbal English for analysis	Formative	criterion-referenced

Table 15 Jacky's ILL self-assessment strategies

Little (2011) argues that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) offers ILL learners an instrument to play a role in evaluating learning outcomes. The framework (see appendix H for an extract) is an apparatus for describing communicative language use. It can help mature ILL learners conduct self-assessment. However, before learners apply the framework, they need guidance on how to use it. Without the framework and teachers' support twenty-three years ago, I, for example, failed to conduct any formal self-assessment for my ILL.

Other limitations of evaluating my ILL outcomes were also recognised in the research. First, I did not wish to assess simply because I did not want to be assessed. I had already got too many assessments at school. Moreover, ILL is even more difficult to evaluate than the formal curriculum. I wondered how to assess my tourist hunting, which was one of my ILL strategies.

An interesting finding is that the absence of formal assessment of my ILL brought about an impressive advantage. Formal assessment is undoubtedly an external motivator, pushing learners to study harder. However, it also leads to a negative backwash effect (Cheng and Fox, 2013), which hinders learners' internal motivation. ILL learners may be given too much pressure and lose the interest in learning. In my case, assessments were mostly stressful. The pressure made me study hard, but mainly aiming at obtaining higher exam grades. During and after the language assessments, I actually felt less interested in the language due to the anxiety. On the contrary, without formal ILL assessments, I developed my language skills in a pleasurable manner and with a manageable schedule. My interest in language learning kept increasing over the two years. The enjoyable ILL engagement might lead to more commitment to the future language learning, in the form of ILL or in other forms.

The effectiveness of learning is usually evaluated by the employment of pre- and post-tests. However, any form of quantitative approach to assessing ILL may be problematic. Lau (2017, p.416) identifies two problems for assessing independent learning.

> First, it is difficult to make solid claims about whether the gain, be it positive or negative, is a result of participating in self-access language learning. Second, any gain requires participants' sustained involvement, but most self-access activities are voluntary, which poses difficulties in tracking any forms of gain.

Lau's explanation accounts for the absence of quantitative assessments adopted by me. Both research participants found it difficult to assess their own ILL. Jacky, however,

demonstrated a small degree of quantitative assessments by comparing his reading speeds before and after ILL. A possible reason for his decision to assess his reading quantitatively only is the difficulty to do it for other language skills. The limited adoption of quantitative ILL assessments also implies the suitability of qualitative data collection methods for ILL. This echoes Lau's (2017, p.416) claim that "participants' perceptions have always been the main indication of how effective and successful an independent learning component is", instead of numerals and marks.

Another ILL characteristics revealed by the study is that an ILL learner may have specific learning targets. It is particularly understandable if the learner is mature enough. They may have a good knowledge of their own language needs and problems, sometimes better than their school teachers. For instance, I aimed at reaching higher language standard for my future studies and teaching career. Jacky wanted to improve his grammar, writing and reading, as he found his listening and speaking were better. The conventional language curriculum usually offers a balanced learning agenda for various language skills. Learning time may be wasted if spent on the skills in which some learners are competent, while insufficient for the weak ones. To entertain individual learning targets, ILL can be a good resolution, since ILL can be performed with different learning agendas, at different pace. Learners, with the help of the teachers, are encouraged to identify their own language needs, and apply different ILL strategies to meet their individual learning targets and produce their expected learning outcomes.

After the first month of ILL, Jacky attributed his language progress to ILL more than the formal school language course. This echoes Nunan (1991)'s study, in which all 44 participants attributed their success to the activation of their language outside the classroom. The difference is that Nunan's participants were ILL learners with higher

proficiency. It is interesting if Jacky participates in future research to study whether his attribution to ILL further enhanced while his language is at higher standard. My findings reveal that Jacky could practise particular language areas by ILL, and improve accordingly. It is therefore reasonable for him to claim that ILL can offer particular improvement in his language weaknesses and enhance his overall language ability. Further investigations are required to verify his claim that ILL is particularly beneficial to vocabulary and reading learning, while less beneficial to grammar, speaking and writing. At this stage, I can only doubt that average learners like Jacky are unable to evaluate their production language skills (writing and speaking) while they are more confident to assess their reception skills (reading and listening).

There is little evidence of the influence of the formal curriculum on ILL from the current literature. I myself do not find my formal curriculum have any significant impact on my ILL. Jacky however distinguished clearly between formal English language curriculum and ILL. Often linking the two learning modes with each other, Jacky regarded the formal curriculum as a major motivator of his ILL. I argue that the influence of his formal secondary school curriculum was different from that of his tertiary curriculum in three senses. English was one of the four compulsory subjects during his secondary education, but was only a supporting subject for his tertiary education. The level he obtained for his DSE English language examination directly affected his chance of entering a local university. His English lessons took about 1 to 1.5 hours every school day. On the other hand, among the 34 modules he needed to take over the 2-year sub-degree course, there were only 5 English language modules. Out of the total 306 credit points required for graduation, the English language modules were assigned only 40 credit points. This implies the relative importance of the language and

more contact hours in his secondary school. However, all secondary school subjects except English language were delivered in Chinese, while all modules at tertiary level were taught in English. Consequently, Jacky had less language input but more language learning needs for his sub-degree course. To avoid language barriers in all the lectures, Jacky was very keen to engage in ILL to facilitate his sub-degree learning.

In addition, Jacky majored in business administration for his sub-degree and Hong Kong is an international city where English is an important lingua franca (Sung, 2017). All his business reference books and related course materials were written in English, as well as the assignments and projects. Knowing that he was going to start his career in the commercial field, he was concerned about his English proficiency. In fact, he had experienced language difficulties in his part-time job for an international insurance company, as he found his colleagues, supervisors and sometimes the clients communicated in English. He was determined to improve his language proficiency through ILL, in order to enrich his specialized vocabulary and manage to write and speak more fluent formal English for his business career.

As far as ILL is concerned, the most significant new knowledge constructed by this study is the positive influence of parents and formal influence on ILL. Parents and school teachers can both initiate ILL and keep our learning motivation. Public examinations seem to be a strong ILL motivator, but it is not long-lasting. Sub-degree ILL learners, without being motivated by the public examinations, need internal motivation and support from teachers of the formal curriculum. We should acquire sufficient expertise to exercise our learner autonomy effectively, including how to apply appropriate ILL strategies and self-assessment strategies. Constantly facing different ILL challenges, we also need appropriate language advice to overcome them.

7.2 Innerview and Autoethnography

The evidence of this study shows that the newly evolved innerview can complement personal narrative or other autoethnographic methods to produce thick description of a personal account. This is the result of the different natures and functions of the two qualitative research methods.

Choi (2017) claims that autoethnographers have the advantage of having immediate access to a larger pool of data, particularly in terms of being able to gain access to deeper layers of the phenomenon under study. On the use and value of personal memory data in autoethnographic studies, Chang (2008, p.71) states that

> as an autoethnographer, you not only have a privileged access to your past experiences and personal interpretations of those experiences, but also have first-hand discernment of what is relevant to your study. What is recalled from the past forms the basis of autoethnographic data.

The problem is how to enhance the reliability of the memory if the autoethnographic work is conducted in relation to life history events that happened in a remote past. Leavy (2011) suggests that researchers using personal narratives should first ask broad and open-ended questions, inviting the participant to give extensive accounts. In order to produce an unrestricted narrative of my ILL engagement, I developed an open-ended question: "How have I learnt English language, including ILL?" Since the question was open-ended, it was not specific enough. Consequently, my narrative was relatively brief and general. For example, I listed the four ILL strategies I adopted during my sub-degree study (PN2:8), without explaining the rationale behind my choice. I can however clarify and elaborate certain parts from the personal narrative with the subsequent innerview. There are hence two sources of semi-structured innerview questions. One is from the literature review and the other is from my personal narrative. The literature

helped me formulate three main themes of ILL and some of the subsidiary questions. My personal narrative, on the other hand, initiates follow-up questions to make clarification. For example, I asked in the innerview,

> ***How do you prioritize the ILL learning strategies and what is the rationale behind your choice? (SI4:35)***

The innerviewee's response (SI4:36) perfectly complemented the information gap between the personal narrative and the required data. The semi-structured nature of innerview also offered flexibility for me to raise follow-up questions. For example, I, as the innerviewee, responded that my father's positive attitudes were influential (SI4:16). I raised the follow-up question to elicit more information about my father's English language background (SI4:23). Some more examples of unanticipated follow-up questions posed in the innerview are listed in table 16. They reveal the fact that innerviewees have opportunities to provide more comprehensive stories with more solid details after innerviewers probe and follow up responses given by innerviewees.

Innerviews can be conducted in similar ways as interviews and similar techniques are employed. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) propose a 7-stage process of interview (p.23): (1) thematizing, (2) designing, (3) interviewing, (4) transcribing, (5) analysing, (6) verifying and (7) reporting. Throughout the process of innerview of this study, I basically followed their seven stages except certain necessary modifications in the stages 2 and 3. Table 17 summarizes my implementations for innerviews.

Responses given by innerviewee	***Follow-up questions by innerviewer***	***Elaboration given by innerviewee***
The only assignments regarded as ILL might be book reports… produced about 1 book report every month at secondary school. (PN2:10)	Did you enjoy doing the only ILL assignments? (PN2:11)	The teachers not really care our ILL, but they only focused on the formal school curriculum… asked us to do book reports only to fulfill the school requirements…[The teachers] did not encourage us to do more. (PN2:12)
I was already busy with the formal curriculum and did not afford extra time on ILL…I did not need to engage in extra ILL. (PN2:12)	You think ILL was extra? (PN2:13)	… when I was at secondary school, I thought ILL was redundant and unnecessary. And I did not believe ILL could improve my English standard. I thought I should focus on the school formal curriculum. (PN2:14)
I did not do anything to assess my ILL engagement. I really did not know how, and I hated assessment.. (PN2:46)	If you knew how to assess your ILL, would you still refuse to assess your ILL? (PN2:47)	I think not. If I had been earlier equipped with certain ILL assessment strategies, I would have tried some. That might have helped me improve my ILL. (PN2:48)

Table 16 Examples of unanticipated follow-up questions posed in innerview

Stages of interviews proposed by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015)	Brinkmann and Kvale's purposes	My implementations for innerview
2. Designing	Planning and designing the study, with regard to obtaining the intended knowledge	a) conducing a literature review about the study b) finalizing the themes of the study c) composing a personal narrative around the themes
3. Interviewing	Conducting the interviews based on an interview guide and with a reflective approach to the knowledge sought	d) constructing an innerview guide based on the literature review and the personal narrative e) performing the roles of both the innerviewer and innerviewee

Table 17 A five-stage process of innerviews

Autoethnographic innerviewers should make good use of personal narratives to construct semi-structured innerview guides. The purpose is not only to cover the themes from the literature review, but to expand the participant's life story as much as possible.

When compared with interviewers, innerviewers face particular challenges, especially when they are conducting semi-structured ones. Both have the responsibility to follow the inner/interview guide and probe follow-up questions where appropriate. However, this task is more demanding for innerviewers, who are also playing the role of the innerviewees while listening to the responses. Interviewers have the privilege to focus on the viewees' answers and evaluate what and how follow-up questions are to be asked. Innerviewers on the other hand can perform the process in a slightly different way from the interviewers to overcome the challenge.

Innerviewers should prepare a tape-recorder, the previously drafted literature review and personal narrative. Tape-recording is essential for innerviews. Each time innerviewers obtain the responses, they should stop the recorder and play back the response just obtained. The purpose is to listen actively for the true meaning of the innerviewee, buy time to glance over the written personal narrative and literature review, and accordingly generate effective follow-up questions relevant to the personal narrative and literature review. Innerviewers should also jot down relevant notes for subsequent questions. Starting the recorder again, the innerviewers ask the newly generated question for clarification and further elaboration by the innerviewee. Like other interviewers, innerviewers proceed to the next proposed question once no more follow-ups are required. The process can be summarized in the diagram 9.

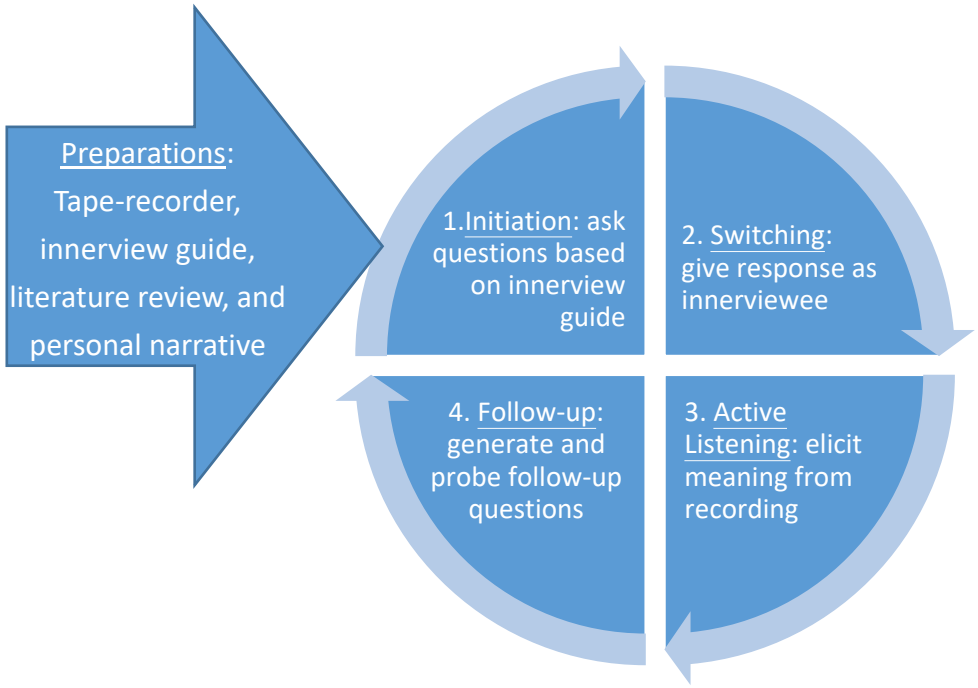


Diagram 9 4-step Approach for Innerviewers

Chapter Summary

In order to produce a comprehensive autoethnographic account, the personal narrative initially provided a broad and general framework for my ILL engagement. I read through the collected data and highlighted the information gaps that need further clarification and elaboration. Performing both roles of researcher and participant, I created a platform for myself to expand the data through a semi-structured innerview. Innerviewers can make use of the 4-step approach to facilitate generation of effective follow-up questions, promoting autoethnographers' self-reflexivity.

Chapter 8 Conclusions and recommendations

Independent language learning (ILL) is the main theme of the whole research. Two case studies were analysed to show how Hong Kong sub-degree learners engaged in learning English as a second language in an independent language learning context. Autoethnography was adopted to reveal how myself both as a Hong Kong sub-degree learner, and later an English language teacher, engaged in learning English as a second language as an independent language learner twenty three years ago. Data were collected by memory bag, personal narrative, academic documents, semi-structured interviews and innerview (a newly evolved research method), and a thematic analysis of data underpinned the discussion of findings.

As an interpretive autoethnographer (Adams, 2017), I treat personal experience as tangential to the fieldwork experience (Heath, 2012), code and thematise personal ILL experience (Kestenbaum et al., 2015), and adhere to traditional academic-writing structures and practices (Zibricky, 2014). My account has demonstrated that autoethnography is particularly suitable for research related to family influence (Adams and Manning, 2015). However, autoethnographers should further investigate how innerviews and other research methods complement each other and encourage a higher degree of self-reflexivity.

8.1 Contribution to academic world and my personal practice

Evidence reveals the associations among ILL motivation, ILL autonomy, ILL outcomes and parental influence on ILL. Parents' assertive attitude and behaviours can promote ILL learners' motivation. My ILL autonomy was affected by the expected learning outcomes. Before choosing appropriate ILL strategies, I had considered what I wanted

to achieve. Other significant factors include sufficient internal motivation (learner's personality, self-motivation and self-discipline), sufficient external motivation (teachers' initiation, influence of examinations). The other research participant brought out the importance of school teachers' encouragement and influence of the formal curriculum.

When exercising learner autonomy, the participants set learning targets, developed learning strategies and assessment strategies, which were influenced, and rather limited by previous knowledge and learning experience. Jacky regarded convenience and whether to enhance his formal curriculum the most important considerations when deciding which strategies to adopt. I preferred the learning strategies which were interactive, interesting, accessible, functional and inexpensive.

ILL learners encountered particular challenges, including time management, lack of self-discipline and learning resources, feeling lonely and lack of expertise to choose appropriate learning strategies and assessment strategies. Though I encountered difficulties in assessing my ILL, I argue that it is not very important whether or how I should assess my ILL. Instead, the process of ILL itself should provide a pleasurable language experience, which might result in more commitment to future language learning. With our strong self-determination to learn the language, we attempted to deal with the learning challenges with our own resources and expertise instead of seeking help from professional teachers.

As far as methodology is concerned, I have demonstrated how innerviews can produce more abundant description of participants' stories. This is more obvious when a researcher is working out an autoethnographic account. Autoethnographers as researchers themselves have required a good knowledge of how semi-structured

interviews can be conducted. We can ask reflexive follow-up questions when we encourage ourselves to recall and provide more personal data. Innerviewers can make use of my 4-step approach to facilitate generation of effective follow-up questions, promoting autoethnographers' self-reflexivity.

As a professional doctorate research, it contributes significantly to my personal practice. When I investigated the changes in my learning attitudes, behaviours and objectives over the four-year period of my professional doctorate. I identified myself as an Asian doctorate candidate. Reflecting on my upbringing and education backgrounds, I have also made some observations about my doctorate classmates from the western culture, who in my view have shown more initiative and contributed more confidently to the doctorate workshops. Deeply rooted in Confucian culture, I had been trained differently from them in relation to educational interactions and knowledge acquisition. Consequently, I decided to learn from them. Examples are that I participated more in class discussions, challenged professors and other classmates' arguments.

On the other hand, I reflect on my learning objectives. I gradually shifted from aiming to gain knowledge, to understanding what I have not learnt, but what knowledge I need to acquire in my future career path. Finally I reflect on methodological originality. I argue that research novices may tend to refrain from developing innovative research methods, but to be bound by existing ones from the current literature. I conclude that I should think out of the box and justify my innovations and originality which suit my research needs, in readiness to launch my future professional career.

8.2 Recommendations to various stakeholders

The findings emerging from the two case studies show that oneself, certainly the most significant stakeholder, needs the effort of other stakeholders for successful ILL. The resulting thematic analysis provides different stakeholders with some insights. The findings also show that different ILL learners encountered different challenges which may be reduced with the effort of certain stakeholders.

For sub-degree ILL learners

They should learn a wide variety of ILL and self-assessment strategies. When exercising learner autonomy, they can choose specific strategies to suit their own learning needs and interests. Being aware of their strengths and weaknesses, ILL learners should set practical learning targets and design their ILL schedule properly. New technologies may be considered to make ILL convenient and effective. They are advised to take initiative and create their own authentic ILL environment with more exposure to the language. They should seek language teachers' advice on learning and assessment strategies.

For school language teachers, curriculum designers and teacher educators

Language teachers should investigate their own ILL experience. They can become their students' role models, sharing their own experience and demonstrating different ILL strategies. Primary, secondary and sub-degree language teachers should equip students with suitable ILL and self-assessment strategies. Where appropriate, advice should be provided to reinforce ILL. Teachers should co-operate to create an interactive and interesting language environment, so that learners can learn in a pleasurable way. Considering their students' characteristics, specific ILL activities can be designed and

incorporated in their lessons. Sub-degree teachers should realise the students' language difficulties and adjust the teaching materials, teaching schedules and contents to promote ILL at school and after school.

Where appropriate, ILL should be introduced in the formal language curriculum or extra-curricular activities. Teacher training should develop ILL education to both novice (pre-service) and experienced (in-service) teachers. The formal curriculum should allow language teachers to have sufficient contact time to introduce ILL and motivate learners to attempt ILL as soon as possible. ILL centres can be set up in schools or public libraries to promote ILL.

For language learners' parents

Parents could and should promote learner autonomy as soon as children start learning English language. At the beginning, more guidance and supervision are required to show learners how to adopt certain ILL strategies. When learners have got used to the strategies, parents can gradually transfer more autonomy to them. Parents can also seek school teachers' advice when children encounter ILL challenges. Moreover, they should themselves set a role model, showing positive attitude towards ILL or even demonstrate some forms of ILL.

For language learning researchers

Further research is needed to investigate different aspects of ILL in primary and secondary school levels, such as how learners are motivated, how they exercise learner autonomy in ILL, how they can self-assess their ILL outcomes and how they are influenced by parents and the formal curriculum. Researchers should also explore the associations among the mentioned aspects. Specifically, autoethnographers should

further investigate innerviews as a new research method to achieve a high degree of self-reflexivity.

Chapter Summary

I conclude that ILL does not only upgrade my language proficiency and build up my confidence to communicate in English authentically, it is more important to develop my confidence with regard to learning the second language independently. As an English language teacher, learner and researcher, this study encourages myself and other teachers to raise awareness of our lifelong ILL and our students'. Our own ILL experience can tell us more about our students' engagement in ILL and possible challenges. Language teachers, language learners, language curriculum designers, teacher educators and learners' parents should work together to promote ILL. Autoethnographic researchers should consider in more detail how innerviews can facilitate generation of effective follow-up questions, promoting autoethnographers' self-reflexivity.

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Appendices

Appendix A	Research Consent Form (CS1)
Appendix B	Jacky's Personal Narrative (CS1)
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Appendix A

Research Consent Form

9 August 2016

Dear Sir,

I would like to invite you to take part in a research about English independent language learning (ILL). You have been chosen as a participant for three reasons:

1. *You are a Hong Kong sub-degree student,*
2. *You have some knowledge of ILL strategies, and*
3. *You have interests in engaging in ILL.*

You will be asked to engage in ILL for a period of 3 months. Three interviews will be conducted with you, before the commencement of your ILL, one month after that and right after your ILL respectively. You may withdraw from participation at any time during the whole process, without being disadvantaged in any way.

Information related to this project will be used to explore how sub-degree English learners engage in ILL. It will also be published in a final research thesis through Nottingham Trent University. All information related to your identity will be, however, kept confidential. Please feel free to contact me at the email below if you have any questions about the project.

If you are willing to be involved, please fill in and return this consent form to me.

☐ *I wish to take part in this research project.*

Participant's name: _____(please print)

Signature: _____Date: _____

Best regards,

Daniel LAM

lchiyung@yahoo.com

Appendix B

I am XXX, 19 years old. I was born in Hong Kong. I received education in Hong Kong, three years of kindergarten, six years of primary school, six years of secondary school and nearly two years of sub-degree course. I studied at XXX Primary School at Tuen Mun. It was a below-average school. I studied at XXX Secondary School. It was a Band 3 school. My schoolmates in these 2 schools were weak in English. Chinese is the medium of instructions.

I also did not study very hard. I was lazy. My English was poor, no matter reading, writing, and listening. My speaking was little bit better.

I did not engage in any form of ILL at primary school. No primary teachers encouraged me. I did some ILL at secondary school, mainly because of the encouragement of my private tutor. I got five Level 2s for my DSE public examination. That means I was barely eligible for a sub-degree course. It was a high diploma. I was very lucky.

My major was Business Administration. It is a 2-year course. I did little ILL these 2 years, again because no teachers encouraged me to.

Jacky's Personal Narrative, Translation from Chinese (CS1)

Appendix C

3 Main Themes	Subsidiary questions	Semi-structured interview/ innerview questions
ILL motivation	1. Has the participant been motivated to learn independently before the sub-degree studies? 2. Why is he motivated (externally or internally) to learn L2 independently? 3. How does he prioritize the motivations and the rationale behind their priorities?	1. Can you share your English learning experience so far since your primary school? 2. Did you engage in any form of ILL learning? If any, why did you engage in it? Otherwise, what discouraged you from doing it? 3. How have you arranged the importance of the motivators or demotivators and what is the rationale behind your priorities?
ILL autonomy	4. What are his choices of ILL strategies? 5. How does he prioritize the ILL strategies and the rationale behind his priorities?	4. Can you share your experience of applying any ILL strategies? How did you learn them? Which one(s) did you prefer and actually adopt? 5. How have you arranged your preference of the strategies and what is the rationale behind your priorities?
ILL outcomes	6. What ILL outcomes does he expect? 7. How does he self-assess his ILL outcomes?	6. What are your ILL aims? 7. How do you know you have achieved your aims?

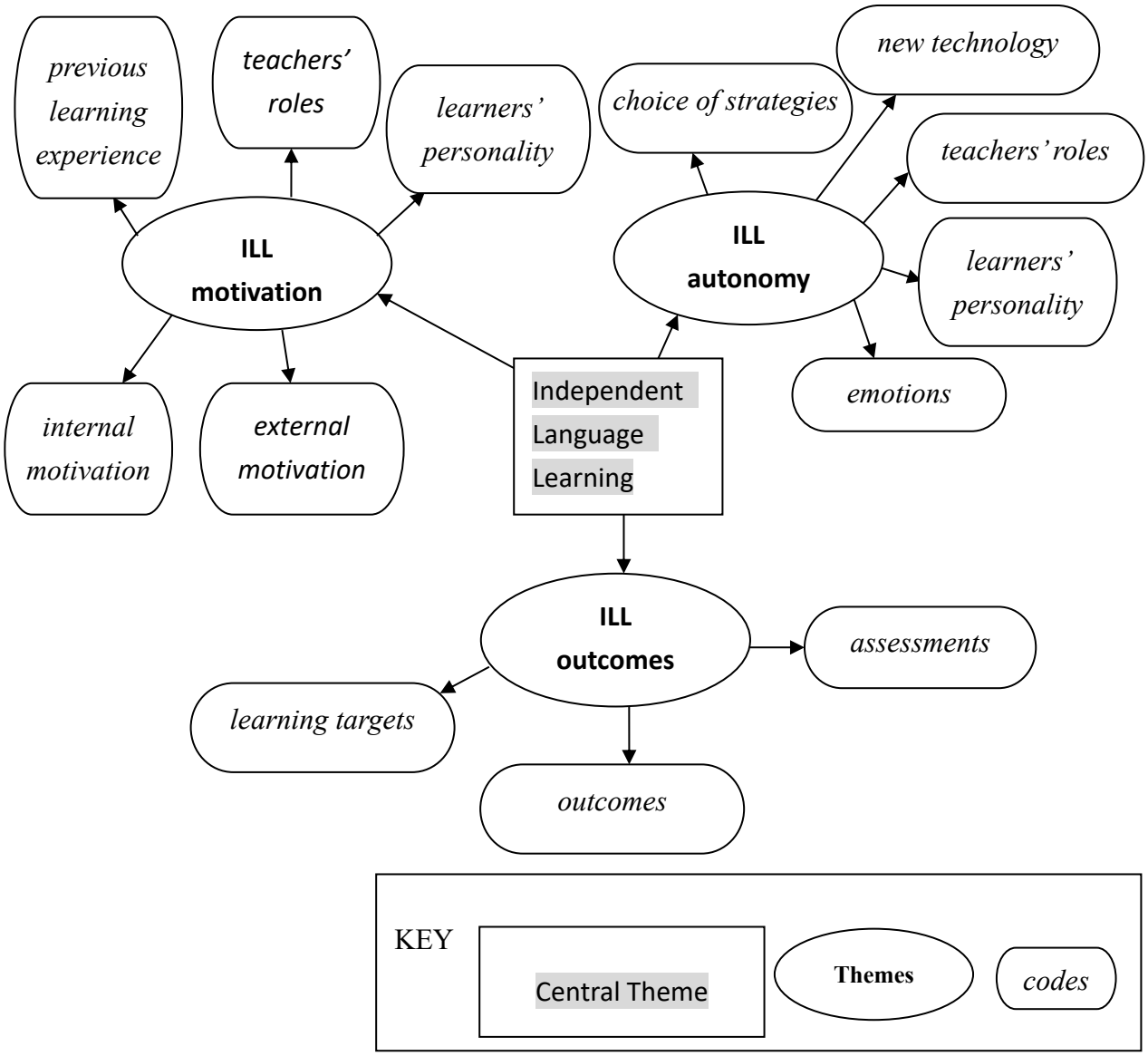
Semi-structured interview/ innerview guide for SI1/ SI4

Appendix C (continued)

3 Main Themes	Subsidiary questions	Semi-structured interview questions
ILL motivation	1. Has the participant been motivated to learn independently before the sub-degree studies? 2. Why is he motivated (externally or internally) to learn L2 independently? 3. How does he prioritize the motivations and the rationale behind his priorities?	1. Can you share your English learning experience in the last month? 2. What encouraged or discouraged you from engaging in ILL in the last month? 3. How have you arranged the importance of the motivators or demotivators and what is the rationale behind your priorities?
ILL autonomy	4. What are his choices of ILL strategies? 5. How does he prioritize the ILL strategies and the rationale behind their priorities?	4. Can you share your experience of applying any ILL strategies in the last month? Which one(s) did you prefer and actually adopted? 5. How have you arranged your preference of the strategies and what is the rationale behind your priorities?
ILL outcomes	6. What ILL outcomes does he expect? 7. How does he self-assess their ILL outcomes?	6. What were your aims of ILL in the last month? 7. How do you know you have achieved your aims in the last month?

Semi-structured interview guide for SI2/ SI3

Appendix D



Initially developed thematic map, showing 3 themes (CS1)

Appendix E

My Personal Narrative

1	I am Daniel Lam, aged 41. I am currently a part-time student for Doctor of Education at Nottingham Trent University. The main theme of my research study is independent language learning (ILL).
	Kindergarten and Primary school ages
2	Just like most local Hong Kong Chinese students, I acquired English language as a second language. I started to learn English at the age of four since kindergarten. English language was the only school subject delivered in English in my primary school years, other subjects in Chinese (Cantonese). It means there were only about 6 lessons or 3.5 contact hours each week taught in English. The English teachers never suggested any form of ILL. I did not notice any of my schoolmates engaging in ILL.
3	My parents, especially my father, were very concerned about my English language ability during my primary school years. My father graduated from his secondary school in 1960s. He was very interested in English language and always believed, and made me believe, that English is very important subject in Hong Kong, not only as a school subject, but also as a language for my future career. He always said that good English could guarantee good education opportunities and a good job. Therefore, he continuously urged me to study hard to improve my English.
4	My father was not a teacher, but he was very keen on strengthening my English abilities at home. He was the first, and most important motivator for my ILL. He prepared and tailor-made a lot of English language materials for his son. He even encouraged me to study his English learning materials by money rewards. Yes, no kidding. The more and better I learnt, the more money he rewarded me. He regularly evaluated my learning progress with formal assessments. Again, higher marks meant more money.
5	My English ability was above average in my primary school, a rather high-standard school. I mostly obtained 90 to 95 marks in English school tests and exams.
	Secondary school ages

6	I entered a renowned secondary school. All subjects except Chinese and Chinese history were conducted in English. The English language standard was very high. I struggled for keeping a fair English academic results. My father no longer supported my English learning. He believed I could manage my own learning. I engaged in very little ILL throughout my secondary education, since I did not have enough time. Another reason is that, similar to primary school education, secondary school teachers did not suggest any form of ILL.
7	<u>Sub-degree levels</u> My first choice was to study for a degree course in a local university. However, I did not obtain good results for my public examination (Hong Kong Advanced Level) and failed to enter a local university. Consequently, I studied for my two-year sub-degree course (Certificate of Secondary Education). It was a pre-service teacher education. I majored in English language. I was not happy about my academic failure and hoped to advance to a degree course afterwards.
8	I found that the English language standard of the sub-degree course was not high enough to prepare myself for a future teaching career or the following degree study. Therefore, I engaged in ILL with different strategies. I read English newspapers, English books, watched English TV programmes and movies. I kept a vocabulary book to record the new words I learnt through ILL.

Appendix F

3a.

Secondary	Grades Obtained (A-F)				
	Writing	General English	Listening	Oral	Dictation
1	E	F	D	E	F
	E	E	C	C	E
2	E	E	F	C	D
	F	D	F	C	E
3	D	F	E	C	C
	D	D	E	B	C

Jacky's English language exam results in Secondary 1-3

3b.

	Marks Obtained (Total)				
Secondary	Writing (50)	Reading (40)	Listening (60)	Speaking (50)	Total (200)
4	24	27	35	27	113
	27	24	40	35	126
5	25	26	34	30	115
	19	23	28	26	96
6	14	11	10	30	65
	12	19	22	29	82

Jacky's English language exam results in Secondary 4-6

3c.

Levels Obtained (1 / 2/ 3/ 4/ 5/ 5*/ 5**)				
Writing	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Total
1	2	2	2	2

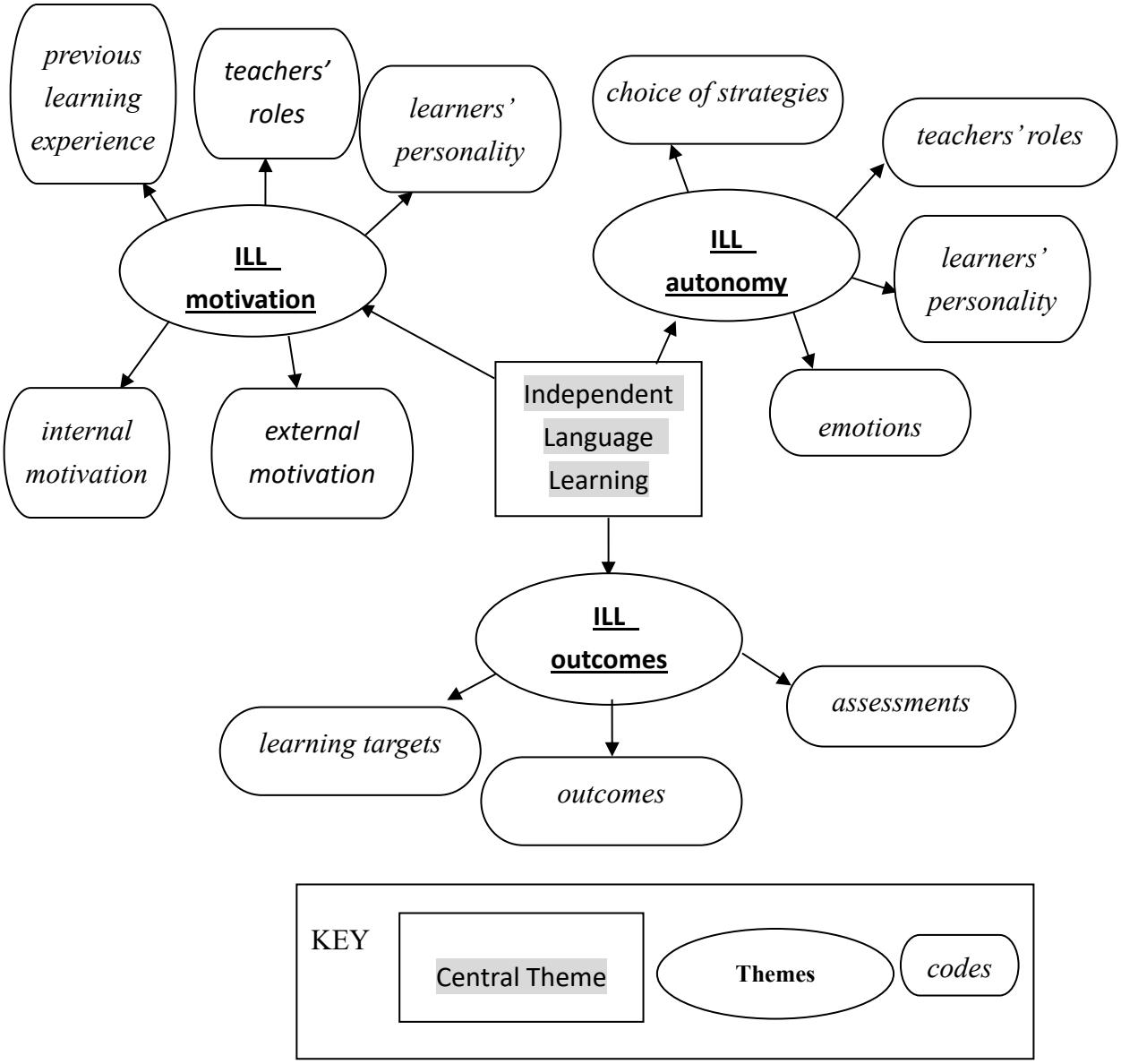
Jacky's English language results in DSE exam

3d.

Year/ Semester	Grades (A-D / F)	Programme	Modules
1/1	C+	English and Communica-tion	Workplace Interaction
1/2	C		Workplace Correspondence
1/3	D		Reports
2/1	C+		Persuasive Presentations
2/2	C+		Promotional Materials

Jacky's English language results during sub-degree

Appendix G



Initially developed thematic map, showing 3 themes (CS2)

Appendix H

A1	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.
A2	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.
B1	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
B2	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.
C1	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.
C2	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.

European language levels - Self Assessment Grid *(Spoken interaction)*

Extracted from:

Council of Europe (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Appendix I

Date: 31 March 2017

Innerviewer and Innerviewee: LAM Chi Yung, the researcher

Time : 6 pm – 6:39 pm

Duration : 39 minutes 33 seconds

Venue : Researcher's home

Recording tool: Audio recorder

Innerview questions:

3 Main Themes	Subsidiary research questions	Semi-structured interview questions
ILL motivation	1. Has the participant been motivated to learn independently before the sub-degree studies? 2. Why is he motivated (externally or internally) to learn L2 independently? 3. How does he prioritize the motivations and the rationale behind their priorities?	1. Can you share your English learning experience before your sub-degree studies? 2. Had you engaged in any form of ILL learning before sub-degree? If any, why did you engage in it? Otherwise, what discouraged you from doing it? 3. How had you arranged the importance of the motivators and what was the rationale behind your priorities?
ILL autonomy	4. What are his choices of ILL strategies? 5. How does he prioritize the ILL strategies and the rationale behind his priorities?	4. Can you share your experience of applying any ILL strategies during sub-degree studies? How did you learn them? Which one(s) did you prefer and actually adopt? 5. How did you arrange your preference of the strategies and what was the rationale behind your priorities?
ILL outcomes	6. What ILL outcomes does he expect? 7. How does he self-assess his ILL outcomes?	6. What were your ILL aims? 7. How did you know you have achieved your aims?

Transcripts

There are totally 48 turns, odd numbers from the researcher and

even numbers from the participant.

1	Hi, Daniel, thanks for participating in the research. I am sure you know very well about what the research is for. It aims at studying how you engaged in your independent language learning (ILL) as a sub-degree student. I am going to ask you questions about your ILL motivation, ILL autonomy and ILL assessment. Having the right whether and how much to answer, you can also quit the research at any time you like. However, you should understand that your identity has to be disclosed as it is an autoethnography. Your ILL experience will therefore be disseminated.
2	**That's fine.**
3	Let's start then. First of all, can you share your understanding about ILL?
4	**ILL is learning a language independently, without or with minimum teacher's guidance or supervision. It can be self-motivated or motivated by significant others, such as parents or school teachers. There are different learning strategies. Different strategies are specifically appropriate and interesting for different ILL learners. Learners can set their own learning objectives, at their learning pace and assess their own learning.**
5	Good. You seem to have a very good understanding about ILL. First of all, I would like to know about your language history. Can you share your language learning history until the end of your secondary study?
6	**My first language is Cantonese (Chinese). My family speak Cantonese. I started to learn English at the age of four at kindergarten. Two years at kindergarten, six years at primary school and seven years at secondary school. English is my second language and had been a compulsory subject until the end of my secondary ages.** **At primary school, I got about 7 to 8 English lessons a week, meaning about 4 contact hours. Other subjects were instructed in Chinese.** **At secondary school, I got about 8 to 9 English lessons a week, slightly more than that in primary school. It was an EMI school (English as medium of instructions), so all other subjects were conducted in English, except Chinese and Chinese history. However, Cantonese was used by all students and teachers in most non-lesson time.** **I quite enjoyed learning English since I believe I am a rather quick language learner. Also, my father always reminded me that English is**

	very important in Hong Kong. I would get better chance of entering a local university and acquire a good job if I learnt the language well.
7	How do you evaluate your language ability in that period of time?
8	**I did quite well for my English language, especially at primary school. I usually obtained more than 85 marks for English language examinations at primary school. The school spent most of the time on grammar and comprehension. So my grammar and reading were good, but my speaking and listening skills were relatively poorer.** **Whereas at secondary school, I struggled at form 1 as I entered a high standard secondary school. The English language curriculum was demanding. My marks were low. I spent much time on studying the language and had got used to it since form 2. My English language marks were higher. I think … about 80 marks. Improved steadily until the end of the secondary school ages.**
9	That sounds nice. Other than the formal school curriculum, can you share your ILL experience at primary and secondary schools?
10	**Sure. I must say that no primary or secondary school language teachers explicitly encourage any ILL. They simply followed the formal curriculum. They relied heavily on the textbooks. After the language lessons, I was assigned workbooks, worksheets and related exercises developed by the textbook publishers. The only assignments regarded as ILL might be book reports: I could borrow any English books from the library and produced about 1 book report every month at secondary school.**
11	Did you enjoy doing the only ILL assignments?
12	**Not really. First, I found the teachers not really care our ILL, but they only focused on the formal school curriculum. I felt that the teachers asked us to do book reports only to fulfill the school requirements. For all my schoolmates and me, it is only an insignificant assignment. The teachers never taught us how to do it, not to say how to do it well. They did not encourage us to do more. From the teachers' markings, I could tell that they did not read our book reports seriously, but just glanced over them. As a result, I just did them casually. Second, I was already very busy with the formal curriculum and did not afford extra time on ILL. Third, I thought the formal school curriculum was good enough to improve my language proficiency. You know, the secondary school was well-known for its English language standard. I did not need to engage in extra ILL.**
13	I see. You think ILL was extra?

14	**Yes, when I was at secondary school, I thought ILL was redundant and unnecessary. And I did not believe ILL could improve my English standard. I thought I should focus on the school formal curriculum.**
15	Do you mean you did not engage in any ILL at primary and secondary schools? Why did you think ILL was redundant and unnecessary?
16	**I just said book report was the only ILL assignments in my secondary school, but the teacher did not take it serious and just marked it casually. They did not teach us how to improve our book reports. They just spend all the time dealing with the formal curriculum. Therefore, we students also focused on it only.** **I did engage in some ILL outside the school. I mean… at home. My father's positive attitudes were influential. He did quite much to guide me to learn the language independently. There seemed to be two stages, according to the degree of independence. The first stage was primary 2 to 3, the second stage, primary 4-6. Over the five years, he totally wrote ten books of English learning materials. Let me call them independent language learning books (ILLBs). The first two were mainly about basic grammar rules and difficult vocab items. He put in the ILLBs English thematic vocabulary items with diagrams. He was not good at drawing, but he tried hard to draw well to facilitate my vocab study. Themes he adopted included animals, occupations, school equipment, etc. His intention was to encourage me to learn extra language on top of the school curriculum, so the vocab items were all new for me. The grammar learning materials were far more difficult than the level taught by the school. For example, he included sentence structures, question words, pronouns, etc, at low primary school levels. Usually they were taught at higher primary levels at school. Another category of learning materials was idioms and good sentence phrases. They were never taught in my formal school curriculum, so I found them very useful.**
17	You mentioned there were two stages of ILL provided by your father. Can you share how different were the two stages?
18	**I defined the first two years (primary 2 and 3) as the first stage because I was guided and monitored to a larger extent then. In order to encourage me to study the ILLBs, my father wrote down a different rewarding price for each page on the ILLBs. I would get the assigned price after studying and passing my Dad's assessment. The price for each page was assigned according to the difficulty of each page, ranging from HK$0.5 to $2.5. He encouraged me to study the pages again and again, but would reduce the rate whenever I finished the page, i.e. I would get less when I studied it for the second time. At stage one, my dad asked me to finish studying 2 pages for each weekend, allowing me to focus on the school curriculum on weekdays.**

19	How did you feel about the first stage?
20	**I enjoyed it very much. Being seven or eight years old, I treated it as a game, a game which brought me pocket money. I felt that it was challenging because the learning materials in the ILLBs were much more difficult than the school learning materials. I felt ILL could upgrade my language ability. I felt my language ability was better than my peers because of the ILLBs.**
21	What about your second stage?
22	**When I was primary 4, I got used to studying the ILLBs. My dad tended to let me engage in ILL at my own pace. Also, I was too busy with my schoolwork, so I did not afford to engage in ILL every weekend. My father was also too busy with his work. Therefore, I studied the ILLBs when I had time at weekend. However, I was quite self-motivated at stage two. I developed self-motivation in Stage 1. I tried very hard to squeeze time on the ILLBs.** **On the other hand, when I was primary 4, my mother bought a Linguaphone learning kit for me to learn English independently. It was for ILL for different levels. As a learner, I listened to the cassette tapes with native speakers' recordings. The learning kit was originated in the UK. My mum encouraged me to listened to it every day, but she seldom monitored my learning process, as she believed I would do it on my own. I enjoyed such ILL process quite much because the recordings were very interesting. I was self-motivated and self-disciplined mainly because I believed ILL could improve my English. Of course, my parents' encouragement and support were important motivators.**
23	You mentioned your father's positive attitudes towards English language and your English learning. What did you know about his English ability? How did he learn English himself?
24	**He was good at English language. He was proud of it. However, I do not think his English ability was the key factor affecting my English learning, but his positive attitudes.** **He got Level 2, the best of all subjects in his Hong Kong Certificate of Education (past public examinations for form 5 students), Level 1 being the highest grade. He worked as an assistant manager in the housing department for the government. Under British rule, most documents were in English. Some of his supervisors were English-speaking. Therefore, he practised his English language skills quite much. I heard his pronunciations and read his writings, which were almost at native standard.** **He told me that he had some English-speaking teachers at secondary school, and he grasped every chance to communicate with them. After**

	school, he intentionally listened to English songs on radio. He kept log books on which he stuck a lot of English newspaper cuttings that he was interested in. I saw some of them because he did not throw away and his habit maintained when I was at primary school. He always reminded me that studying English was like a train running on a rail. The more and more frequently you practise the language, the more deep down the marks will be in your brain. **He was also a very active English speaker. He and his friends were all Chinese-speaking. But he suddenly changed to speak English with them. His friends laughed and kept speaking English with him. I did not understand his English when I was a child, but I found his behaviour very interesting, and tried to understand his verbal English, and I suppose that was his purpose. For many times, I observed that he took initiative to help tourists on the street when we went shopping. He enjoyed very much speaking English and helped the tourists.**
25	Did you keep on engaging in any ILL since you entered the secondary school?
26	**Not at all. Too busy with my formal school curriculum.**
27	I see. Let's move on to your sub-degree course. How was your language studies there?
28	**I failed in my university entrance public examination (HKAL). Therefore, I entered a sub-degree programme. It was a teacher certificate for secondary education, major in English language. I was not happy about the offer. Anyway, I had to accept it. I was required to learn about TESL (teaching English as a second language), local English curriculum and language studies. Honestly, as it was only a sub-degree programme, the English standard was not high. I believed that the English curriculum of the sub-degree programme could not equip me well for being a language teacher. Therefore, I was determined to engage in ILL and improved my English. I hoped I could upgrade my English proficiency as soon as possible before I began my teaching profession. Also, I knew that ILL could improve my English as I had some successful experience in my primary school years.**
29	I could hear several ILL motivators for you. Please rank them and explain the rationale behind your priority.
30	**My failure of public examinations was the top reason for my ILL. Number two was my parents' previous encouragement and support, while my teaching profession was the third. Finally, it was the low English standard of the sub-degree programme.**
31	All right, so what forms of ILL did you engage during the two-year sub-degree programme?

32	**I adopted different ILL strategies. I read English newspapers, watched English comedies on TV, engaged in tourist hunting and communicated with English-speaking lecturers.**
33	Please share your experience of different ILL strategies.
34	**I enjoyed most communicating with English-speaking lecturers. In Hong Kong, there were not many chances to meet native English speakers. As a student, lecturers were nice targets to practise my language with. They were usually friendly and sociable. The lecturers usually adjust their language for our standard. Also, this ILL strategy was most interactive and made the learning experience enjoyable. Very often, I could choose the topics to be discussed. This made the experience even more pleasant.** **Watching English comedies on TV was interesting too. Every week day evening there was an American drama with Chinese subtitles. I sometimes read them and sometimes did not, trying to listen and understand by myself. It was enjoyable too as the stories were funny. And I could learn the culture of the Western world. I could video record the dramas and watched them when I had time. However, it was not interactive enough. The other genre I watched was news reports. There were English sub-titles.** **I knew about tourist hunting from a newspaper article in the second year of the sub-degree. The article talked about how Singaporean teachers brought their students to meet tourists on the streets or places with more tourists and communicate with them in English. I found it very interesting and effective. I tried it several times in Central, where there were lots of hotels and tourists around. Each time, I spent about an hour approaching tourists. In the first occasion, I chose those who were holding a map and looking for places. I appeared as a Messiah saving them. They were of course very pleased to be saved and communicated with me. I felt satisfied and successful since I could practise my oral English and helped the tourists at the same time. Usually they appreciated my help although my English was not good. Sometimes, even I did not understand their English or failed to tell how they could find their way, but they still thanked me for the help. Since the second time, I became braver and went to lobby of the hotels. I approached some tourists without anything to do. They might be waiting for check-in or transportation to leave. I initiated by explaining that I was a language learner and asking for casual talks. Most of them were willing to talk, perhaps for several minutes. The longest one was about half an hour. I found this strategy extremely interactive and interesting. It cost nothing. But it required a lot of bravery, which I got plenty of. Most of them gave me a lot of encouragement, such as saying my English was not bad. Also, they learnt more about Hong Kong and**

	Chinese people, which was usually one of the main objectives of tourists. **I also read English newspapers. I usually read the local news, which seemed more familiar to me. It was easier for me to understand the English articles which I already had a general idea of. I spent about an hour reading news every week. It was not much. Maybe because it was not interactive or interesting.** **Starting from Year 2, I started to keep a vocabulary book. I wrote useful new words and phrases on it. The words and phrases came from anywhere, mainly from the mentioned ILL strategies. For example, I came across vocabulary items on newspaper or TV programmes and recorded them for future revision. I wrote the Chinese translations against the word entries. Unfortunately, the habit was kept for about 2 months and only thirty entries were inserted, without any revision. The failure was due to boredom, unreactive and absence of teachers' supervision and check-ups.**
35	How do you prioritize the ILL learning strategies and what is the rationale behind your choice?
36	**First, I enjoyed the interactive ILL strategies most. Communicating with English-speaking lecturers and tourist hunting were good examples. Then the convenience and accessibility is an important consideration. Third, the strategies should be functional and fit my life. Reading the newspapers and watching TV are good examples. Fourth, the ILL strategies should be interesting. Watching TV comedies was a good example. Finally, cost was also a criterion to be considered. The strategies I adopted were all free of charge (the newspapers could be obtained free of charge from the school library).** **Therefore, according to the above criteria, the mentioned ILL strategies were ranked in the following order: (most preferred) tourist hunting, communicating with English-speaking lecturers, watching English comedies on TV, reading English newspapers (least preferred).**
37	I see. Did you set any learning objectives for your ILL?
38	**The most obvious ILL learning objective was to upgrade my English language proficiency before I graduated from the sub-degree and become a qualified English teacher. Although the grades of the modules related to English language at school were also an indicator of the success of my ILL, I did not set them as an ILL objective since I did not think the programme was challenging enough.**
39	I see. How did you assess your ILL then?
40	**I did not have formal self-assessment of my ILL. First, I did not know how to assess ILL, since there were no teachers guiding and monitoring**

	my ILL. Second, I did not like assessment. I thought assessment might demotivate my ILL, rather than motivate. Third, I was pretty sure the ILL strategies were well-chosen and effective. I was not worried about the effectiveness of the strategies.
41	So do you think ILL could really upgrade your English proficiency?
42	**I think so. I became more confident in communicating in English. Formal curriculum usually located the learners in a comfortable zone. I learnt the language "safely", too safely. However, real language contexts were different. They were always changing. ILL could locate learners in more practical and real language situations. Also, as an ILL learner, I learnt the language at my own pace, according to my interests, with the resources I could afford and set my own learning objectives. Who knew about my interests, my resources and my learning objectives better than myself?**
43	Can you share the difficulty you experienced in your ILL?
44	**There were not many. First, I needed to be very self-disciplined and self-motivated. Luckily I was. I occasionally could not manage to engage much in ILL when I was busy with my school work. But there were only short and temporary interruptions. Second, I was quite lonely when I engaged in ILL alone. There were no teachers or fellow learners, as the school did not promote ILL. I had to tackle any learning problems by myself. Third, I could not assess my ILL properly. I did not know how to evaluate my own learning process. Fourth, my learning strategies were limited to my own knowledge. I did not get any advice of any other possibilities.**
45	How did you respond to those challenges?
46	**I described myself as self-disciplined. Although I did not set regular time sessions for ILL, I maintained engaging in ILL over the two years. I spent approximately 1 to 2 hours a week on ILL. My personality responded very well to the challenge.** **Oh yes, I engaged in ILL alone but not lonely. Again, it was due to my personality. I did not mind learning alone, or, more accurately, I enjoyed learning alone. Another reason I did not feel lonely was that I enjoyed interacting with people when learning. I could interact with English-speaking tourists and lecturers, instead of fellow learners or language teachers.** **I did not do anything to assess my ILL engagement. I really did not know how, and I hated assessment, and I was quite confident that my ILL could improve my English.** **I did not think the limited number of ILL strategies was a problem. I thought I was lucky as I had come across several ILL strategies at home**

	when I was in primary school. I felt the strategies were suitable for me. Therefore, I did not intend to respond to the challenge. But when I looked back, it would be better if I was taught more strategies.
47	You mentioned you did not know how to assess your ILL and hated assessment. If you knew how to assess your ILL, would you still refuse to assess your ILL?
48	**Er… I think not. If I had been earlier equipped with certain ILL assessment strategies, I would have tried some. That might have helped me improve my ILL.**
49	Thank you very much Daniel for your time. The innerview is about to end. I will let you know if I have further questions about the research.
50	**Thank you, it is my pleasure. Feel free to approach me if you want me to clarify anything.**

Appendix J Raw data collected from 4 Semi-structured Interviews (CS1)

Screening Interview (SI0)

Date : 7 August 2016
Interviewee : Jacky (pseudonym), the potential research participant
Interviewer : LAM Chi Yung, the researcher
Time : 4:08 – 4:19 pm
Duration : 11 minutes 5 seconds
Venue : Participant's home
Recording tool: Audio recorder
Translation : From Cantonese (both the interviewer and the potential participant)

There are totally 18 turns, odd numbers from the researcher and **even numbers from the potential participant.**

1	Thank you for your participation in the research project. It is to study your independent language learning (ILL) experience. To make sure you are eligible for the project, I would like to ask you some questions. Are you ready?
2	**OK.**
3	Are you studying in a Hong Kong sub-degree course?
4	**Yes, it is Business Administration High Diploma.**
5	Are you willing to engage in independent language learning, which means learning English language on your own?
6	**Yes, I think my English has not been good enough.**
7	What do you mean by "good"?
8	**I hope my English will improve and be as good as my schoolmates. And I think better English enhances my study in school.**
9	Did you try any form of ILL in before?
10	**Yes, I tried some independent language learning in my secondary school, but I did not do it regularly.**
11	Oh, great. How did you initiate your ILL?
12	**Some teachers told me I could do ILL to improve English. My tutor said I could learn the language independently. He mentioned some ILL strategies.**
13	If you really participate in my research project, you are supposed to engage in a 3-month ILL period. Are you willing to try?

14	**Yes, I'm interested in learning English independently. 3 months is OK for me.**
15	Why are you interested in learning English independently?
16	**Though I do not know much about how to learn the language independently, I think I will make progress bit by bit. I may ask you if I encounter problems.**
17	Sure. I am ready to answer you any questions related to ILL. I am going to print you a letter of consent for your signature. Then you will engage in a 3-month ILL period, during which we will conduct 3 interviews. Do you have any questions about the project at the moment?
18	**Not now. I will approach you if I do.**

First Semi-structured Interview (SI1)

Date : 21 August 2016 (before the commencement of the 3-month ILL period)
Interviewee : Jacky (pseudonym), the research participant
Interviewer : LAM Chi Yung, the researcher
Time : 6:00 – 6:41 pm
Duration : 41 minutes 26 seconds
Venue : Participant's home
Recording tool: Audio recorder
Translation : From Cantonese (both the interviewer and the participant)

There are totally 137 turns, odd numbers from the researcher and **even numbers from the participant.**

1	Hi, Jacky. Thank you for participating in the research. It is about independent language learning (ILL) of Hong Kong sub-degree students. Therefore, I would like to know as much as possible about your ILL. First of all, I would like to know your understanding of ILL.
2	**According to my understanding, ILL is the language learning outside formal schools. What do I mean by language learning outside formal schools? There are teachers, who lead and guide your learning. They asked us to hand in assignments and pieces and writings. These are compulsory. Although I think these are good, I think this cannot initiate our self-motivation. This cannot encourage us to develop a desire to learn.** **On the contrary, ILL... in fact I tried that before. I started to try it since I entered senior secondary forms.**
3	Great! You tried ILL before?
4	**Yes, at that time, I got to know a private tutor. He taught me some English ILL skills. I thank him very much. Since then, I have kept reading one piece of BBC news article about once a week. I translate the words I don't know to Chinese. Then, I found that reading English is more impressive than reading Chinese. When I tried to understand the news by translating the words I did not know, I found that I got more impressed by the news.** **For example, Syria... I remember that the first BBC news I read was about Syria. It was not long ago. Maybe about one and a half year. When I read it, I thought, "Oh, it is not bad!" Recently, I read a BBC**

	news about the South China Sea. I got the whole passage translated. I had not used to care about social issues, but reading BBC news helps me learn English and learn about social issues. I believe this is also a kind of ILL. I think this is motivating. It helps me gain a sense of self-motivation. I am not forced by anyone else. And I feel very comfortable. There is no time limitation, no submission deadline for me.
5	How would you compare your experience of formal learning and ILL?
6	**Normally, your formal learning... When you go to school, the teacher may say, "Hey, Jacky. You quickly do this writing assignment, and submit it tomorrow. I feel that I do not really want to do it. And I have no ideas how to do it. But I am forced to write it. Then I write some meaningless stuffs. I have a strange feeling. I feel upset. I am not a good writer. But when I have not ideas how to write, I write even worse. The situations may get worse. However, ILL has no time constraints. Whenever you want to learn, you pick up a book... watch a Youtube extract, watch BBC news and many other ways. You can watch news on Pearl [a popular Hong Kong English TV channel] to learn English. There are many ways to motivate myself. Only if you push yourself, without anyone to force you, you can obtain the core knowledge. I think getting someone to force you is the best learning strategy. You need to motivate yourself. Then, you can keep moving forward. This is ILL.**
7	What motivate you to engage in ILL?
8	**I am this kind of person. I do not comply with the current state. I feel that what I have learnt is not enough. Always not enough. I want to move forward to learn more bit by bit. Although it is not a big deal, like the professors or foreigners who read more than 10 news articles every day, I may only read one a day. But I think if I keep reading, I may accumulate... Many little drops make an ocean. I can motivate myself in this way. I keep moving forward, like I keep on running, not allowing myself to stop.**
9	You enjoy motivating yourself to learn by yourself.
10	**Certainly, that can make me keep moving forward. But the mentality is very different. On one hand, the knowledge teaches me. On the other, I look for knowledge. They are two different levels. You try to think: you desire for something badly, you look for it. Then you will**

	find that you obtain something. It is better than someone indoctrinating you. When someone forces you, you can choose not to listen. You can ... in the past I got two consecutive English lessons. The 1.5 hours … this is nonsense. I could sleep. No one bothered. The point is when I get to look for knowledge, I get more interested. I do not feel sleepy, and not losing messages easily. I feel that this [ILL] is a very impressive learning strategy.
11	What are your criteria for choosing ILL strategies?
12	**My criteria. I am one of the post-90s. I use a lot of technologies like cell phones, ipads and the internet. A lot of teachers recommend BBC news to me. If you want to learn English independently, you should read BBC news. It is quite convenient. You just need to log in the BBC website. There is a mobile application. I just need to download the application. When I have free time, I click it and read. This is because it is free of charge. It is convenient. It is fast. So I choose BBC news.** **Secondly, Youtube. There are many foreign Youtubers. They play many computer games. I like playing computer games too. My idea is, listening to Chinese is not as good as learning English when doing it. So I watch their Youtube clips.**
13	To sum up, convenience, free of charge and fitting your hobbies.
14	**Yes.**
15	You mentioned your private teacher told you about ILL strategies.
16	**Yes. As Mr. Lam [the researcher] mentioned before, there are many ILL strategies, such as listening to English songs. And as I live near Ginza Plaza where there are a lot of foreigners. I think I will try to communicate with them.**
17	You only thought of the ILL strategies suggested by Mr. Lam?
18	**No. But I also had an idea. I once considered working at a McDonald's at Golden Coast [a tourists' spot not really near Jacky's home]. Because there are many tourists.**
19	Did you really try it out?
20	**No.**
21	Why not?
22	**Maybe too far away. Not convenient.**
23	Did anyone other than your private tutor tell you about ILL before?

24	**Yes, in my schools. I studied in a Band 3 [the lowest band in Hong Kong] secondary school. The teachers taught very enthusiastically, but many of my schoolmates did not listen to them in class. However, during my senior secondary school ages, at my form 4, I started to think critically. I asked my teacher how I could learn English better. She answered me that if I really wanted to learn better, I could speak more, read more, write more and listen to more. She said so. I asked what was "speak more, read more and write more". She claimed that it was simple: If I really have the heart to learn, I could look for people near me to communicate in English. First, I can communicate in English with friends on Whatsapp. This improves my English. Secondly, for listening more, I can change everything around me to English, including the songs I listen, the movies I watch, the TV I watch, all turned to English. This is listening more. For reading more, it is the similar idea. Change everything around you to English. Change everything on your cell phone screen to English. Although you know all the functions, you can learn how to spell the words.**
25	Great. What about read more?
26	**Then, write more. That depends on whether you have the heart. You can open a note book. Write vocabulary items on it and read them every day. The above were taught by school teachers.**
27	Altogether how many teachers talked about ILL to you?
28	**Three school teachers talked to me about that.**
29	All of them were secondary school teachers?
30	**Yes.**
31	What school levels were the teachers from?
32	**They were from both senior and junior forms. There was even one I did not know. She did not teach me in class, but we had good chats.**
33	You took initiate to approach them?
34	**Correct.**
35	How did you approach them?
36	**Privately. Because I like approaching teachers in person to chat, so they talked to me privately.**
37	How did you ask them?
38	**I took the initiative to ask them for any ways.**
39	I mean… what exactly did you ask them?

40	**My question was "What are the ways to improve my English?"**
41	You wanted to improve your English?
42	**Right. Because previously I had been rather lazy. I felt that the formal school was good enough. Listen to some, not listen to others [learning materials]. Being laid-back. Even when I was first told about that [ILL], I didn't take it serious. But when I became a senior form student, I thought it's time to get determined to do it well.**
43	You thought you got the determination.
44	**Yes.**
45	How did you respond to the teachers' suggestions of ILL strategies?
46	**At that time, I just listened to the strategies. I didn't really follow the strategies until my sixth form when I nearly sat for DSE [Diploma of Secondary Education] exam. I really tried to do it at that moment.**
47	You tried ILL due to your public exam?
48	**Yes.**
49	Why did you not try out ILL properly before the public exam?
50	**Because at that moment, there was formal English teaching. In fact, I spent one or two days employing the [ILL] methods. But then I found it was a heavy burden, as I could not handle both sides, because on one hand, I needed to cope with the formal English [learning]. I had to do assignments and so. On the other hand, I needed to squeeze time to learn independently. Later on, I felt that I was oppressing myself. So, I gave up. Why did I pick it up again in my sixth form? You know there was a study leave before the DSE exam. There was time for me to think whether I wanted to be a salted fish or a fish.**
51	If you had enough time, you would have tried ILL even before the public exam.
52	**Yes, I would have tried.**
53	Can you share specifically how you started ILL?
54	**The first time was in my fourth form. I picked a vocabulary book, copied 10 new words to study. I did not start to read BBC news at that time. But after trying one or two days, I considered my resources... in fact I hoped I could carry on, but I felt really tired. I studied in Tuen Mun [quite far from Jacky's home]. After I finished school, it was nearly...because there were additional lessons... later than 6 pm... got home at about 8 pm. I was exhausted.**

55	Ok. That's why you gave up early. What were your ILL learning targets?
56	**You mean what time?**
57	Say, since your engagement in ILL at your sixth form.
58	**I had a specific target. It was to reach Level 2 in my DSE English exam. It must pass it. I set it in my sixth form.**
59	What was the specific time you started ILL at your sixth form?
60	**3 months before the DSE exam.**
61	It was a relatively longer time than your first attempt at the fourth form.
62	**Yes, relatively longer time.**
63	Can you share your specific ILL experience during the 3 months?
64	**The 3 months. My ILL experience was...first of all... I had to be determined and tell myself: OK, I had been laid-back enough, I had played enough. I must have the heart to focus on this. I myself need to use my heart to find the answer. You have to hold yourself responsible. The problem is that you cannot force yourself. When it approaches you very closely, you start to realize it is time to ... At that time, funny enough, I met a private teacher. In fact, I thought I would definitely die... I mean my English. But he encouraged me, "Never mind. Never too late to change!" He said that to me, giving me a book for vocabulary and a good pile of idioms. Why a good pile of idioms? He asked me what I was weak in. I said my speaking was good and was not worried about this part. Then, he asked about my reading, integrated skills and writing. I said I was weak. My writing was rubbish. Then, he gave me the idioms to study. If I did not have the determination, everything became useless. Even he gave idioms, I would not read them... useless. But at that time, I was determined to study. Choose some suitable idioms. He asked me to put ticks on the idioms I had revised, and asterisks on the suitable ones. In this way, I kept these idioms. I tried my best to use the idioms with asterisks in my writings. Then I gradually found that was very useful. This was my self English learning – I jumped from Level 0 to Level 2 for my writing. I started to feel that ILL was so powerful. Search for my own answer. It was so useful. Not forced by other people. Not scolded by others. Not urged by others. You found your own answer and it could be so powerful.**
65	You found ILL improved your English language.

66	**Yes, I improved from Level 1 to Level 2 for English. That was my final DSE exam result. And for listening, Mr. Lam also gave me some suggestions. Listen to more songs. Listen to more songs. So I listened to many songs. I did not simply listen to them, but also downloaded the lyrics and tried to understand them. After that, though my friends said the audio of listening exam was very fast, I felt it was not. And he taught me a lot of DSE skills. For example, as I decided to do paper 1, I should choose part B1 and ignore part B2. I knew I was not to aim at Level 5**, as I was not good enough to get Level 5**. But it was all right because my target was to pass.**
67	What do you mean by B1 and B2?
68	**There were part B1 and paper B2. B1 was easier but awarded less marks.**
69	You chose B1 because you thought it fit your standard.
70	**Yes.**
71	Why did you aim at Level 2 for your English public exam?
72	**Because I wanted to enter the High Diploma course. True. I did not want to waste one more year to study the Foundation Diploma course.**
73	Did you finally succeed in entering the High Diploma course?
74	**Yes, it is in Tuen Mun. High Diploma at IVE (Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education).**
75	What subject?
76	**Business Administration.**
77	Can you share your formal English language learning experience, if any, during your sub-degree course, I mean your High Diploma course?
78	**At IVE, the English lessons focused on the application of English at workplace.** **First, we focused on learning how to write emails, letters of apology and complaint letters. Then, speaking and presentation. And how to write reports. Yes, these several areas.** **As you know, I changed from a CMI [Chinese as the medium of instructions] secondary school to a tertiary institute where everything is in English. That makes me unconsciously learn English.**
79	How would you describe your English learning experience when you moved on from secondary to tertiary education?
80	**Difficult, because I came across a little bit of English for my**

	secondary education. But at my tertiary education, suddenly everything is in English. Very tough for me. But again, I got a strong mentality of not to fail. From GPA of 2.6 in the first semester, to 3.6 in the final semester. They granted me a scholarship. With the strong mentality of not to fail, I have kept moving and moving, and absorbed English continuously. In fact, for my subjects, the English materials are rather homogeneous. Yes.
81	Did you engage in any ILL activities during tertiary education?
82	**Yes, when I read the studying materials on my own. The materials are all in English. Of course the professors do not explain all the meanings of the English words one by one. I have to look up the dictionary after class. When I study, I have to look up the dictionary. From time to time, I put the words into my brain.**
83	I wonder whether looking up the dictionary is an ILL activity. Any other ILL activities during tertiary education?
84	**If you do not count my ILL related to the IVE subjects, such as Management and Marketing – yes. [Jacky meant no other ILL activities]**
85	What motivated you to engage in the ILL activity you just mentioned?
86	**I got to know about ILL when I spent the 3 months on ILL at my sixth form. I was scared when I found everything in English [at IVE]. I think of how I can improve myself. I spend the extra-curricular time originally for ILL on the subjects I need to study here. I make use of the strategies: when I have free time, I look up the dictionary for the unit I just learnt in class, to understand it better. Keep on trying to understand. I gradually feel good about using the strategy. Even before the simple tests, I reviewed the learning materials again one month in advance. Even there was no teacher reminding me [to study], I reviewed the materials again and again.**
87	Pressure has become your motivation for ILL.
88	**True. There was pressure from DSE. DSE decides your future. The learning life at IVE has pressure too, especially at the first semester, I needed to take 4 examinations, with only two days in-between. The pressure was tremendous. I could still cope with it, because I applied the strategies I practised at my sixth form. The target, however, is no longer news articles. It shifted to the learning materials of other**

	subjects, such as Marketing and Management.
89	When I told you about the research project, what motivated you to say yes?
90	**Very simple. As I mentioned earlier, I am a person not willing to comply with the current state. When you told me about the project, I felt that it was quite funny. Be honest. I can treat it as a game. Give myself some time to try. As I could pick it up previously, why can't I pick it up now? As I could pick it up at my sixth form, why can't I pick it up again after the past 2-year sub-degree course, which has been tough? Why can't I try hard to pick it up? I hope for improvement, and I would like to see how much I can improve, just like how I improved from GPA of 2.6 to 3.6. I felt so proud, but I would not keep being proud since there are always people better than myself. If I comply with the current condition, I will definitely be surpassed by others. I keep this mentality. In fact, before you approached me [for this project], I was wondering what I could do to improve my English. It was such a coincidence that you approached me for this research. I am very interested because I want to improve English. So I am very interested to participate in this research. What's more, the period of time is not too long: 3 months only.**
91	You think the research can help you improve your English.
92	**Correct. It is a very good chance for me, so I actively grasp it. This research, on one hand, can help myself. On the other hand, I can improve my English. Thirdly, it helps me know more ways to engage with ILL. Also, I can understand my standard. It makes me understand myself more. Although I am a research participant, I realize that this research is more valuable to me. Although you are a researcher, the research is more valuable to me. It can change my life.**
93	Can I say that you would not try ILL if I did not approach you for this research?
94	**You can say so. Before you approached me, I did not have the momentum. Why do I say so? Momentum needs someone to force you a little bit, and guide you. Yes. Obviously, at that time, I was still looking for learning strategies. In simple words, I did not have the momentum to do. But I also did a little bit [ILL], not doing nothing. During the free time at my part-time work, I surfed something, such as BBC news. The hottest news article that week.**

95	As you know, you are supposed to engage in ILL in the coming 3 months. Have you got any plans yet?
96	**I already got some plans. I feel that it is time to watch more BBC. I decided to watch one news every day, instead of every week. Starting with one news a day. I will jot down the words I don't know and then review them. There are some words...even I watch it again, I still don't know the words. But when I try to split the words, I gradually find the meaning of the words. I then understand. I will watch more news and learn English. Jot down the words I don't know. Study them when I have time. Now, I write diary regularly every night. I have got one diary. I spend one hour at night for me to calm down, reflect and learn English.**
97	You mentioned learning diary. Can you show it to me?
98	**Let me show you. [Jacky went to take the diary] Here you are.**
99	Oh, I can see some English sentences. When did you start it?
100	**A few days ago. Every time after the one-hour self-reflection, I write some English sentences to encourage myself.**
101	Why did you start using this diary?
102	**Because I met a person at work at that time. He says if a guy wants to get on the right track ... he knows that I want to succeed...**
103	He suggested you starting a diary for self-reflection.
104	**Yes. He knows that I want to succeed. He suggests that if I want to succeed, I need to learn to reflect on myself and consider how I can keep improving myself. After he said that, he gave me a diary to me on 8 August 2016. He said, "You can use it when you have something to write in the future. Spend some time every night, say one hour to reflect on yourself." He took Chiang Kai-shek as an example. Mr. Chiang also kept a diary. Always bringing along with him, he wrote anytime he came across any interesting things. He spent one hour every night to reflect on himself. After his death, people found his diary from his relics. The diary even recorded when he visited a prostitute. He wrote these sorts of things on his diary.**
105	Did he suggest you using English to write on the diary?
106	**No. But why did I decide to write English on this diary? It has always been my hope that I can reach a certain English standard. Even it is a very very small step. Moving forward. Although I know it is not**

	enough, the problem was I still did not have the momentum. I would like to start from this and further develop it.
107	Why did you want to reach a certain English standard?
108	**Very simple. I want to succeed. It is so simple. I simply want to earn a living for my whole family in future. This is my target.**
109	Why did you think ILL can help you succeed?
110	**Very simple. ILL does not definitely lead your way to succeed. But you bound to fail without engaging with ILL. If you comply with the current conditions, you will never reach the standards of the elites. I do not aim at being one of the elites. I simply hope I can be able to earn a living for my whole family. The problem is ... English is already an essential requirement. Just like me, working at Tsim Sha Tsui. People all around speak English. When I am using Chinese, the people there all use English. I want to conform and match up with them.**
111	What do you mean by "people all around" who speak English at work?
112	**Supervisors. I am working for an IT company, serving ABC. I support the IT of ABC. I find many great agents of ABC use English. Then I find English an essential requirement. They do not ask us to improve my English. But I tell myself. If I want to be as great as them, first of all I need a good foundation. The foundation is English. Also, you know, the globalization makes English more important in my career. So I keep on thinking about the idioms you taught me before, such as "Time is money". I write the idioms on my diary. I think it is very useful. Perhaps I read it again one month later, I will see... oh in fact it was like this... and I will have a sense of success.**
113	What challenges did you experience in your previous ILL?
114	**The difficulties are tremendous. First, if you do not have the heart, you cannot learn independently. This is the biggest problem.**
115	Heart. You mean determination? Any other ILL challenges?
116	**Yes, why did I give up ILL when I was in junior forms? When I came across the vocabulary items, I felt exhausted. Then I would give up. But in my sixth form, I became stubborn. I did not give up easily, saying to myself, my private teacher believed I was able. I also needed to believe I was able. As far as I believed in myself, why not go to learn it? First you need the heart. A second problem is when you have**

	a private teacher, you can ask him to assess your work. But when he is not there, I do not know where I go wrong. This is the most difficult part.
117	Good. Any other learning challenges?
118	**No method to assess my ILL. I just make myself read more. They make sentences, using some connectives. Then I try to learn that. I do not have any special methods to assess my ILL.**
119	Then, how do you know your ILL learning progress?
120	**I don't know how to assess myself. I also considered that I might sit for ILETS after this research. I will try once.**
121	You have planned to sit for ILETS.
122	**Correct. Sitting for ILETS can let me know whether I have got improved. Previously, I got Level 2 for my DSE. It is equivalent to about three point something for ILETS. Very low indeed. I would like to move forward to 5 or 6.**
123	Good. Hope you can succeed. Can you summarize the learning challenges that you may experience in the coming 3-month ILL period?
124	**One difficulty is how to assess myself, just as what we mentioned. I may not know whether I have improved, but at the same time, I need to keep learning. Perseverance is required. I need sufficient perseverance and determination. I will continuously remind myself I have to insist.**
125	You worry that you are not determined enough?
126	**I have this worry...it is part of my worries. But at the moment, I am not scared. What I am afraid is about my time management. I need to allocate my time in a very good way.**
127	What do you think will happen if you don't have good time management?
128	**I will not be able to learn, engage with ILL. No time to learn and then give up. I feel that it is a pity. So I think the greatest problems are time management and criticism.**
129	Did you say "criticism"?
130	**Yes, I mean criticizing and assessing myself. I am not worried about resources. Once you open the internet, you have a great deal of English. You can learn in any way your like. I am not worried about the resources. I am only worried about the two things.**
131	I think our interview is about to finish. Do you have any other concerns

	related to your ILL?
132	**I would like to add one thing. I have one learning target for ILL. I have to obtain 5 points or above for ILETS. I must get it. I would set this target. Because this is also my drive.**
133	Good. Why ILETS? There are quite many alternative English exams.
134	**Very simple. I fell down once at my DSE. I could sit for DSE once again. It is not a big deal. But the problem is DSE is not as well-recognized as ILETS. ILETS is internationally recognized. I want to know what level I am at internationally, apart from the level in Hong Kong. That's why I have to take ILETS once.**
135	I have no more questions to ask. If you have any other concerns related to ILL, especially in the coming three months, please fill free to tell me.
136	**If I have got any, I will ask you later.**
137	Thank you very much for your time and responses.

Second Semi-structured Interview (SI2)

Date : 21 September 2016 (1 month after the commencement of the 3-month ILL period)
Interviewee : Jacky (pseudonym), the research participant
Interviewer : LAM Chi Yung, the researcher
Time : 6:14 – 6:34 pm
Duration : 20 minutes 31 seconds
Venue : Participant's home
Recording tool: Audio recorder
Translation : From Cantonese (both the interviewer and the participant)

There are totally 91 turns, odd numbers from the researcher and **even numbers from the participant.**

1	All right. It has been a month for your engagement in ILL. This interview is about how you feel at the moment. First, I would like to know whether you have any new understandings about ILL.
2	**It was quite a difficult experience. It was not easy. I got quite many problems.**
3	Could you share about your difficult experience?
4	**I think the biggest problem is self-discipline. It is so difficult to keep myself motivated.**
5	Why do you think self-discipline is the biggest problem?
6	**I, you know, am very busy with my school work and part time job. Very often I feel very tired. And you need to learn English, you need effort.**
7	How do you cope with this biggest problem?
8	**I used Google Calendar. It reminded me to study English.**
9	How did you use it?
10	**It is a phone application. I set the timer 9 pm for every night. Every night 9 pm it notified me, and I learnt English.**
11	Every night?
12	**Er… yes, that has been my target the previous month. If I have the mood, I learn English independently for an hour.**
13	Oh, an hour.
14	**Yes, I think … I can meet the target [an hour a day] for about 5 days in the previous month. For the remaining 25 days, I can only learn for**

	about half an hour.
15	What do you mean by “have the mood”?
16	**I mean I am busy. If I got over time work, I would go home late. And I would have no mood. I would spend less time studying English. My target is always one hour. But it is difficult to reach the goal.**
17	So Google Calendar is not always useful for you?
18	**Yes, it is. It is still useful. Because it reminds me at 9 pm. The most important thing is to facilitate my self discipline. If I don’t use Google Calendar, I am sure I cannot learn properly. I may have done other things when I am busy. I am not a very self motivated person. What’s more, I feel very guilty when I do not manage to follow the time schedule. So Google Calendar facilitates my time management.**
19	So Google Calendar facilitates your self discipline and time management. What is the relationship between self discipline and time management?
20	**If you do not have self discipline, you will have messy time management. Because I am very busy, I mean I need to work part time job and study, I cannot do many things without making time tables.**
21	But do you put every personal business in your Google Calendar?
22	**Certainly not. I only put important things into it only. But the point is…most important things do not need to be put in Google Calendar, because we do many important things automatically. We don’t need others to remind us. But if I do not use Google Calendar to remind me of ILL, I may miss it easily.**
23	I see. Except self discipline, what are the other things you want to share?
24	**The second problem is I did not know whether I did well or not. Did I learn properly? You know, at school you have teachers to help you. You can ask your teachers. But ILL … I should do it by myself. And I also want to see whether I am OK or not.**
25	OK, anyway, when I said you can approach me if you have problems, I really mean it. So free feel to ask for help in the remaining 2 months of ILL.
26	**OK, thank you.**
27	Why did you want to know whether you did well or not?
28	**Certainly I wanted to. Just like at school, teachers assess our performance. They assess our English. They tell whether I am OK or**

	not. But ILL, I have to assess myself. Otherwise, how can I know I am good or bad?
29	I see. Did you do anything to assess yourself?
30	**Sure. I tried to check my reading speed. Before the last month, I needed about 1 minute to read an English passage of 100 words. The time is including looking up the dictionary for words I do not know. Very slow. I would like to read faster. I hope I can read about 200 words in 1 minute.**
31	Any other ways to assess your ILL?
32	**Er, let me think. No more, I think.**
33	Then, do you think you have got any progress?
34	**I think I have got some progress. Yes, reading faster.**
35	So far, you mentioned two things, self discipline and self assessment. Do you want to share any special things about your ILL in the last month?
36	**Er, not much at the moment.**
37	I see. Have you set any learning targets for your ILL?
38	**I think I said before. I want to sit for IELTS. You know, IELTS is internationally recognized. I would like to obtain 6 for IELTS. As I just mentioned, I want to read faster. More words in a shorter time.**
39	Yes, you mentioned IELTS before. Why do you want to read faster?
40	**I read too slowly at school. I find my fellow students read very fast. We need to read a lot of case studies for my course. They spend only a few minutes to finish reading about 1000 words, while I can read about half of it.**
41	Why do you want to read faster at school?
42	**Usually the lecturers ask us to read some case studies. They give us time limits, but I usually fail to finish reading before the lecturers start to discuss the case studies. Since I have not finished reading, it is quite difficult for me to follow the discussion. That is disturbing.**
43	I see. Let me see the diary I gave you for recording your ILL.
44	**Here you are. In fact, I have not put down many things there.**
45	Thank you. Oh I can see you write down a lot of English words, and the translations.
46	**Yes, they are from the course I am studying in university. I don't understand these words. The lecturers do not explain them. So at night, I write them on the diary, and look up the dictionary. And then**

	I spend time to revise.
47	Do the lecturers ask you to write down those words?
48	**No, they may expect me to have known them. Or they expect me to check the meanings ourselves.**
49	I see. So you take the ILL learning time to learn the course materials.
50	**Yes. But that's only part of it.**
51	You mentioned 2 problems with your ILL in the past month, and I had told you that you can ask me for advice if you encounter any problems with your ILL. Why didn't you contact me in the past month?
52	**I did not want to disturb you. I think you are very busy too. I want to try to solve the problems myself, because it is independent learning. I should solve the problems by myself.**
53	I got it. Nice to hear that you want to solve your ILL problems yourself. But I am still there. Please feel free to let me know if you have any ILL problems. Also, it may not be problems. Feel free to share with me anything, happy or not, about ILL. By any means: whatsapp, phone… ILL does not mean absolute isolation from any advice.
54	**OK. I will.**
55	Do you spend time other than the 9 pm for ILL?
56	**I don't think so. You know, I am too busy with my part time job and study.**
57	Ar… what about if you got something to do at 9 pm, crashing your regular ILL studying time?
58	**In the last month, I tried to stick to the regular ILL studying time. But if I could not, I adjusted the time earlier or later than the regular time.**
59	So have you skipped any day for ILL?
60	**No, I did it every night. But might adjust the time when there was time crash.**
61	I see. Except vocabulary items, you have not put down anything on your diary yet. Can you explain why and tell me any other ways or strategies you applied in the last month for ILL?
62	**Yes, because I did not want to spend too much time keeping the written record.** **I also read BCC news articles as before. I have a phone apps to do it.**
63	Can you share your experience?

64	**I searched for news articles which I found interested in. I would check the meaning of the words I did not know.**
65	Where did you record them?
66	**No, I did not. I just translated the words and carried on reading.**
67	Why didn't you write them down, in the same way you recorded the school vocabulary items on the diary?
68	**I think it is all right only knowing the meaning while reading. Perhaps because I did not think I would be checked whether I knew them or not in future. And it is faster to read without writing down words.**
69	I see. Will you consider recording the vocabulary items?
70	**Sure, I will try.**
71	You mentioned you searched for news articles which you found interested in. What do you mean by "you found interested in"?
72	**In fact, I am learning about different case studies in my school course. I tend to look for news related to my course. For example, my current course is about global business. I remember I read some news about Brexit and also American presidential election. I think the news articles can get me more familiar with the school learning materials.**
73	I see. So far I have heard that, for your ILL in the last month, you read BBC news with a phone apps and recorded vocabulary items related to your school course. Except these two strategies, what other things did you do?
74	**I also used a grammar book.**
75	How did you use it for your ILL?
76	**I just used it occasionally. Sometimes I forgot certain grammar items which I came across my school learning materials. I would consult the relevant sections in the grammar book.**
77	I see. When did you buy it?
78	**I bought it when I was in Secondary 4, and kept it until now. It was not a course book. I just bought it for reference.**
79	I see. So it is for your secondary study. But why didn't you consult the books you used in your sub-degree course or you are using in your university study?
80	**In fact, I do not have grammar book for my sub-degree course and university course. English lecturers only gave me sample writings to**

	read and follow. They do not teach grammar explicitly.
81	I see. So altogether you got three ILL strategies. Any other strategies? What are the criteria did you consider when selecting your ILL strategies?
82	**No more. I think … I don't know. Maybe whether they are convenient or not. For example, I find the BBC apps very convenient. Just need to download it. Also, whether they can help me with my school course. Maybe money is also a concern. I do not want to spend a lot of money.**
83	I see. So in the coming 2 months, do you anticipate any learning problems with your ILL?
84	**I think the problems are still time management and self discipline. I need to manage my learning time and be self-disciplined.**
85	Good, feel free to approach me for any learning advice. I am always there to help.
86	**Thank you.**
87	The last thing. I observed that you put only your previous academic reports in the memory bag.
88	**True. Because the only real objects related to my previous language learning I can think of is the academic reports.**
89	By the way, does your school provide any facilities for ILL? Can you share your experience of using them?
90	**I am afraid the school does have some ILL facilities in the school library. The library told us about that at the beginning of the course. There are some self-learning books, videos and CDs. But I never tried them, because I don't think the facilities can cater the needs of all individuals. I prefer planning and carrying out my ILL myself.**
91	OK. I see. Hope you enjoy your ILL. See you 2 months later for the last interview.

Third Semi-structured Interview (SI3)

Date : 21 November 2016 (the end of the 3-month ILL period)
Interviewee : Jacky (pseudonym), the research participant
Interviewer : LAM Chi Yung, the researcher
Time : 6:30 – 7:09 pm
Duration : 39 minutes 18 seconds
Venue : Researcher's home
Recording tool: Video recorder
Translation : From Cantonese (both the interviewer and the participant)

There are totally 136 turns, odd numbers from the researcher and **even numbers from the participant.**

1	Thank you Jacky. We meet again. We got an interview 2 months ago. Today, we have the third interview for rounding up the whole ILL experience. First, I would like to ask whether you have new thoughts about ILL after the 3-month engagement in ILL.
2	**In fact, yes. 3 months ago, I thought ILL was very easy. Read by myself. Do it by myself. After these 3 months, I found that there should be some instructions for me. For instance, I could write something and asked my teacher to give comments and tried to improve. ILL was not as simple as expected. When I kept on engaging ILL, I found myself learn more and always not enough. I felt I did not write well and did not understand why people could use the language in a particular way.**
3	I remember I encouraged you, 2 months ago, to ask me for any problems you encountered in ILL. You immediate answer was you were worried about disturbing me. I said no. Secondly, you claimed ILL should be conducted by yourself. Now, you really think that some instructions for ILL should be better for you. If you carry on ILL, what sorts of instructions would you prefer from the teachers?
4	**In fact, I would write something and send it to the teacher for comments. The teacher will tell me what is wrong in my writing. It may cut my road shorter. If I really want to learn independently, I could surely rely on myself. But if there is someone to help you, you save a lot of unnecessary paths.**
5	I got it. You mean you still want to choose what to learn.
6	**Correct.**

7	Not the teacher to ask you what to learn.
8	**No. Still myself to initiate writing something, or communicating with the teacher in English, and see what grammar mistakes I may make.**
9	For example, you wrote something to me last week for my comments. I did not realise you thought it was ILL. Er… it could be. Or you could record a soundtrack in English, and whatsapp it to me. You can decide what to send to the teacher when you decide what kinds of assessment you expect from the teacher. Do you mean this?
10	**Yes, you can say in this way. When I engage in ILL, I want to see what I can improve. For example, if I find my speaking weak, I can record a soundtrack and send it to the teacher, so that he can tell my about my pronunciation problems. Or if I am weak in writing, I can write something to someone who can check my grammar, so that I can improve.**
11	Very important now. Over the last 2 months… you mentioned you got certain ILL strategies. You read online BBC news articles with a phone app. You got Google Calendar, setting it at 9 pm for your ILL. If there was time crash, you would adjust your ILL schedule. In the first month, you did not skip any single day for ILL. You might change the original time. And you did not manage to keep learning independently for one hour every day, but managed for only a few days. For the other 20 something days, you approximately spent half an hour on ILL. You also jotted down some new vocabulary items you came across at school on an exercise book, checked the Chinese meanings and reviewed them. And you mentioned you wrote down idioms to learn. Ah… where did you get the idioms?
12	**Sometimes, the idioms were said by my friends, such as "no pain, no gain". Or when I read some articles, there may be some idioms, such as "share of wallet".**
13	I thought you used the idioms I gave you 2 years ago.
14	**No. I lost them. But I also use some of those idioms which I can remember.**
15	You have to understand the idioms I gave you 2 years ago were mainly for your public exam but might not be very useful for upgrading your language ability. I found your strategy of recording the idioms you come across occasionally a good one, because you find them useful, not I find

	them useful and ask you to remember. Two questions. Did you keep on using the strategies you used in the first month? The second question is did you use any new strategies?
16	**I gave up reading BBC news articles, because I started to find some lecture materials difficult to understand. I focused more on the course materials. If I had some words I did not understand, I still jotted them down and looked for their meanings. My strategy was to read the whole passage first and tried to guess the meaning of some of the new words. I only jotted down the words I could not guess and looked for their meanings. This enhanced my impressions about the words. I would not do that previously. In the past, I looked up the meanings of the words straightaway. Recently, I have learnt many new words with this new strategy.**
17	This is a good strategy. Sometimes you look up the meaning of a word, you may not really totally know the word, because it may have a lot of meanings. Or after reading some more sentences after it, you may manage to guess its meaning. Then, you improve your comprehension ability. Guessing the word meanings is more important than looking up the word meanings. If you only look up the dictionary for the word meaning, you may easily forget it and you need to spend extra time to study it.
18	**Yes, this makes me remember the words better. My word power is stronger now.**
19	You mean you have given up reading the BBC news articles only because of time shortage, not because it is bad.
20	**No. Just because I cannot manage my time. When I failed to understand some course materials, I would first focus on them.**
21	Do you mean the case studies you mentioned before?
22	**There are something more, such as definitions and examples.**
23	Related to some theories, with some new words you don't understand?
24	**Yes, and even some simple words, such as "ski store".**
25	After you read some articles, how do you try to understand articles with a lot of new words?
26	**Sometimes there is only one new word in the whole passage. I can read the whole passage first and try to guess its meaning. But if there are many unknown words, I would look up the dictionary first and then try to understand the passage. Next, I can remember the**

	passage. Just like the word "deliver". I previously thought it only meant "send", but later on I knew it could also mean "provide".
27	You now know you have to be careful when looking up the dictionary - word can have different meanings. Chinese or English. For English, sometimes we are too concerned about a single meaning of a word, but in fact, it can mean differently in different situations. You need to realise that more. Now, I find your comprehension ability is improving. Do you have any other ILL activities in the previous 2 months?
28	**In the past 2 months, I tried once recording my own verbal English.**
29	Why did you do that?
30	**Because I was going to deliver a presentation at school. I want to hear my own English and see whether there is something wrong with my pronunciation. I would check whether I still have got the soundtrack, and send it to you if I have.**
31	You audio-recorded the contents you were going to present at school and checked your verbal English by yourself. Very good. This is a very good strategy. It would be better if you even send it to a teacher for comments. This means although you engage in ILL outside school, you would like to deal with your school learning with ILL.
32	**Yes, for my school study.**
33	What did you feel about your own verbal English?
34	**I found my verbal English better than expected, as far as pronunciation is concerned. However, it still sounded like Hong Kong accents. I am considering how I can improve my accents, and change them to British or American accents.**
35	What do you think about my idea about sending your soundtrack to teachers for comments?
36	**I think it is good. Teachers are professional. I would know how to improve my verbal English after they comment on my soundtrack. However, it is rather embarrassing. I am shy.**
37	Because you are worried about your poor English?
38	**Yes, something like that.**
39	You only need to send to a teacher who would not laugh at you.
40	**Only need to send to a teacher who helps me whole-heartedly.**
41	And worried about disturbing teachers?
42	**Yes.**

43	What if the teacher says he does not mind?
44	**That's ok then.**
45	Anymore strategies?
46	**No more.**
47	Did you still use Google Calendar?
48	**It is still reminding me every night. But because I have stopped my part-time job and focused on my study, I have more time engaging in ILL. I can start to study at 3 pm every day. Reading the course materials and case studies, I looked up the new words. After my meal, I carried on studying. I do not need Google Calendar anymore. Studying has become my life.**
49	You spend much more time studying now.
50	**Yes, I spend more time studying and read and understand. This is because I started to find myself lagging behind.**
51	It seems that you were not engaging in ILL unrelated to your formal curriculum. For example, you mentioned reading BBC articles and idioms.
52	**I have one more thing. I got some entertainment at my leisure. I find myself make more contact with more English recently. I tried to watch foreign Youtube clips, hearing their English, watching them playing online games. Sometimes, I even jotted down something. For instance, I once intended to learn simple present tense. Then I searched for Youtube educational clips and learnt.**
53	Did you watch the Youtubers playing online games live?
54	**Sometimes live, sometimes not.**
55	But there were usually no subtitles, weren't there?
56	**No subtitles.**
57	Did you understand their English?
58	**I understood, but I thought I could not speak as well as they could.**
59	Did you watch the foreigners playing online games because they played well?
60	**No, I watched them because I really wanted to learn English.**
61	Hong Kong Youtubers also played well. Many people watched local Youtubers to avoid language barriers. Did you communicate with the foreign Youtubers when watching them?
62	**Not really. Only listened to them. I wanted to immersed in their**

	English, and at the same time I could enjoy the entertainment.
63	In fact you enjoy playing online games very much.
64	**Yes, I like playing online games, but at the same time I want to learn English. Playing online games on Youtube can be in English, Cantonese or Putonghua. But I preferred to watch the English ones, then Putonghua. I would not first watch the Cantonese ones.**
65	Not because they played specially well.
66	**No, for learning English.**
67	Other than speaking English about the online games, will they also say something about their daily lives?
68	**Yes, it may be very interesting. They may laugh at the other game players by describing them as "boosters". Something like that.**
69	In fact you don't know that expression? The textbooks are traditional and may not teach you daily English expressions. First, you like playing online games. And online games are their lives, so you can learn English by watching them play online games.
70	**Yes.**
71	That sounds very nice. How often do you watch Youtubers play online games?
72	**I watch Youtubers play online games every day, whenever I take rest. That serves as both entertainment and rest. That's useful. It helps me understand the lecturers' verbal English. I am so happy. There are no subtitles, either.**
73	Do the Youtubers have British or American accents?
74	**Mostly American accents. They play the game League of Legends.**
75	You have to be careful about the accents of different people online. There may be different Englishes all over the world even worse than Hong Kong English. I support you watching American Youtubers, as their American accents are good for you. Any other strategies?
76	**No more. This is not related to formal curriculum.**
77	Can I say in this way: previously you had a part-time job. If you didn't have Google Calendar, you might fail to stick to your ILL schedule, because you were tired or lazy. But now you have more time, so you don't need to make use of Google Calendar. You once said there were 3 criteria for choosing ILL strategies. But I did not ask you about the priority for the criteria. Now, I repeat your criteria.

	They are their convenience, whether they facilitate the formal curriculum and their cost.
78	**The most important is whether they facilitate the formal curriculum. The second is their convenience, and the last one is the cost.**
79	The most important is whether the ILL strategies can facilitate the formal curriculum. What about if you were not studying, or when you graduate? Will you still engage in ILL?
80	**I will. I got an experience in my part-time job. I was responsible for making phone calls. I remembered I received a phone list totally in English. Suddenly I felt I was so trifling. In fact, I could understand their English, and they understood my English, but I still felt frightened. I had hesitations. I wanted to improve my English, so that I could communicate with others smoothly.**
81	You mean you need further ILL after graduation, for your future career.
82	**Yes.**
83	You mentioned before some ILL targets. First, you wanted to read faster as you found you did not read as fast as your classmates. And you wanted to learn more vocabulary items. This was your short-term target. Second, you claimed you planned to sit for IELTS. Do you still have those two ILL targets?
84	**No, I have not changed. I think I have reached my short-term targets. I have learnt many more vocabulary items. I read more and more quickly. But for the long-term target, I am not very confident in sitting for IELTS, because my writing is still poor.**
85	Have you got any new ILL problems? You mentioned you were busy and you did not know how to assess your ILL.
86	**I do not have any other new ILL problems. I think I have fixed the problems. First, I quit my part-time job and so I have got more time for ILL. Second, I decided to ask teachers to comment on my writings.**
87	I would like to follow up some questions. There is a very interesting point. You mentioned that ILL is free for learners, not the same as being forced to learn at school. But you also mentioned ILL learners need someone to push you. Is there any conflict between these two concepts?
88	**Yes, there is conflict.**
89	What sort of ILL do you think is the best for you?

90	**I think curiosity and self-motivation are most important. You want to get improved. You need to be self-disciplined. In fact, you don't need someone to force you, because you can develop your own self-discipline. You can make use of many things to help you, such as Google Calendar, develop your self-discipline. Yes, self-discipline is a problem. There is contradiction. Human beings are lazy. So when we are being forced to do something, it may be good, but we may resist and fail to put things into our brain.**
91	Over the previous 3 months, in fact I considered approaching you and pushing you to do something for your ILL.
92	**I don't think that is a good idea. Even if you approach me and push me to do something for my ILL, I may need to deal with you. When teachers push or force an ILL learner, he may lose his self-motivation, but simply cope with the teachers, and submit something assigned by them. I do not think this is a good ILL strategy. It is better for an ILL learner to initiate certain kind of assessment by the teachers.**
93	This is your self-initiation. Not me to ask for assessment.
94	**Yes.**
95	I really appreciate that. That is parallel to what you insist about self-motivation and self-initiation. You may have a lot of assignments, but you can choose the one you want to get assessed. How do you consider which assignment to be assessed?
96	**I would choose those with more substantial contents, and I am least confident in. Let you see my lowest standard, so that I could improve.**
97	Over your secondary and tertiary education, did you meet any schoolmates who also engaged in any form of ILL? I remind you. You mentioned that there were three secondary teachers encouraging you to start ILL, two in junior secondary levels, one in your form 4. You only engaged in ILL for 2 days when you were form 4. You engaged in ILL for 3 months before DSE exam, since your private tutor (me) encouraged you.
98	**As far as I can remember, there were no schoolmates engaging in ILL. For tertiary education, I remember there was an old secondary schoolmate retaking public exam. He did not take any tertiary course, but retake DSE. He had English tuition and kept on learning English independently.**

99	What about in your tertiary institute?
100	**Not really. The English learning atmosphere is very weak in the tertiary institute. The lecturers leave when they finish teaching.**
101	You mean you are never affected by your schoolmates when ILL is concerned.
102	**I am not affected by my schoolmates when ILL is concerned. I know what paths I should walk in. I can set a path for myself. I think about what to do to achieve my goals.**
103	Have you considered joining your schoolmates to engage in ILL together during your secondary and tertiary education?
104	**Actually I considered before. But I knew that was not practical. My schoolmates might say, " Are you kidding? Let's play online games!"**
105	They did not have self-motivation.
106	**No, as I studied in a Band 3 school. No matter I studied or not, I got similar rankings. I did not think it was necessary to study hard.**
107	What about your tertiary education?
108	**For tertiary education, we may meet outside school to study different subjects, but never English language.**
109	You and your schoolmates rather emphasized the subject matters, but not focus on English language.
110	**Correct.**
111	Ok, the final part. What is the biggest benefit you got from this research project?
112	**The biggest benefit I got from this research project was … I learnt a lot more vocabulary items. I read faster. And the biggest improvement is I have learnt to discipline myself. I can tell myself I know how to discipline myself. This is very valuable. First, you need to discipline yourself before you can improve. At the beginning, I might think it was not beneficial but at the end it could be very helpful.**
113	Can I say that you were not sure the ILL engagement was helpful for you?
114	**At the beginning I was not sure whether ILL was useful. I treated as a game. But now I am sure ILL is useful.**
115	Good. From today until the end of your tertiary education, do you think you will carry on your ILL?
116	**Surely I will. I do not think I am good enough. I need to improve my**

	writing and listen to more English. It is because I am quite a self-demanding person. I do not easily stop. I like to upgrade myself continuously. Now, I focus on vocabulary items. And later on I hope I can further improve: listen to more, read more, write more. Learning how to write. Give myself some challenges, because I know I am still at quite a low level.
117	If you had not engaged in this 3-month ILL, do you think you would have tried ILL yourself?
118	**Honestly speaking, this ILL project has changed my whole life. If I had not engaged in this 3-month ILL, I think I would fool around and would not have any directions or targets. I did not know how to learn English. Now I know learning English independently is very simple. I only need to have a mission.**
119	3 months ago, you said you would not motivate yourself to engage in ILL.
120	**Right. I would not even try ILL if I was not invited to.**
121	Until your graduation?
122	**Not even tried until my graduation.**
123	Now, I think I would carry on ILL in future. It becomes my hobby.
124	**Because you think it is useful, and you feel confident in this mode of learning?**
125	Yes, I think ILL really works. When I discover I have learnt more vocabulary items, I know I have improved.
126	**I have no further questions. Do you have any questions about your future ILL?**
127	For the future, I have a plan. For the previous 3 months, I have focused on vocabulary. I will keep it until the end of the first semester. When the second semester begins, if I have enough time, I will try different ILL environments. By the way, where did you write your idioms for your ILL?
128	**What idioms? I remember I did not write any idioms. I wrote vocabulary items.**
129	You mentioned you had a colleague encouraging you to use an exercise book to write down something.
130	**Oh, I got it. That book. Yes.**
131	It doesn't matter. You can take the photos of the book and send them to me. You mentioned your colleague did not intend to encourage you to

	learn English …
132	**I remember what you are talking about. At that time, I wrote a summary for my diary every day.**
133	In Chinese or English?
134	**English.**
135	Yes, I tried to write something positive to encourage myself. Keep my strong mind. I wrote some idioms too. Ok, I will take photos and send them to you.
136	**Thank you very much. Let's finish here.**