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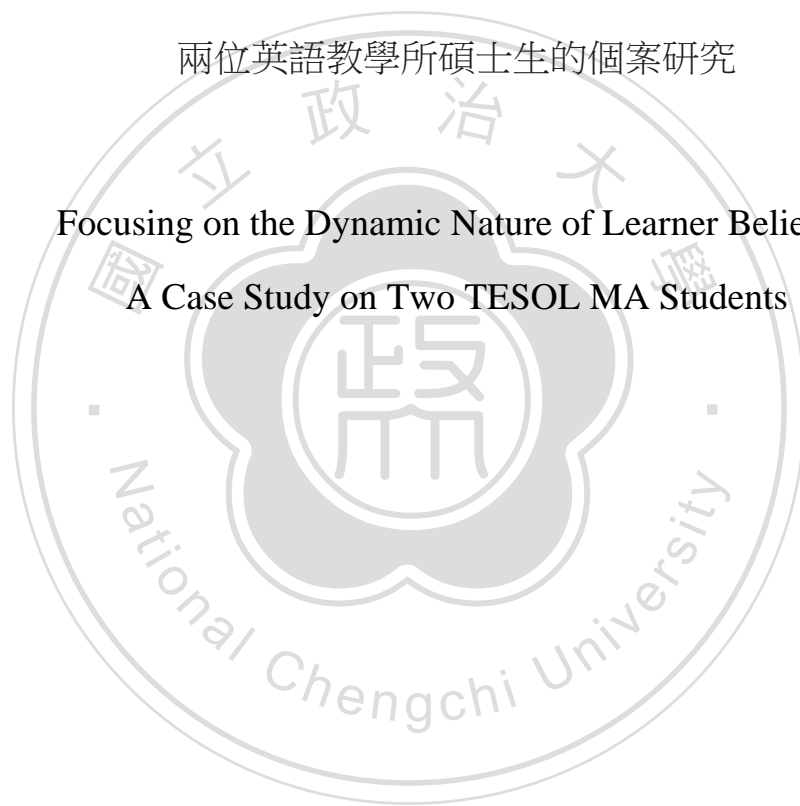
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探討學習者的語言學習信念之動態本質：

兩位英語教學所碩士生的個案研究

Focusing on the Dynamic Nature of Learner Belief：

A Case Study on Two TESOL MA Students

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Focusing on the Dynamic Nature of Learner Belief：

A Case Study on Two TESOL MA Students

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碩士論文提要

論文名稱：探討學習者的語言學習信念之動態本質：兩位英語教學所碩士生的個案研究

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論文提要內容：

本文旨在探討學習者的語言學習信念之動態本質。研究對象為兩位北部英語教學所的碩士生，研究方法主要包含半結構式訪談和研究對象自己寫的英語學習歷程，目的在於了解研究對象在人生各個階段的語言學習信念。資料分析方式採用「整體─內容」的分析法。研究結果顯示研究對象的學習信念會依他們和其所在情境的互動關係而改變，而這樣的改變彰顯了學習信念並非固定不變。而是動態的。此外，研究結果發現學習信念和情境、自我、以及身分相關。值得點出的是，雖然學習信念會依情境而改變，但是重點並非情境本身，而是學習者如何看待和解讀情境。除了情境因素，本研究亦探討不同自我（理想自我和應該自我）與身份（核心身份和情境身份）如何影響學習者的語言信念。在所有階段，兩位研究對象都表示努力是語言學習的關鍵，而學習者和所學語言之間的關係會決定學習者願意投入多少心力在語言學習上。最後於文末提出教學和研究上的建議。

關鍵字：學習者信念、英語學習經驗、自我、身分

Abstract

The study aims to explore the dynamic nature of learner belief through investigating two Taiwanese MA-TESOL students' beliefs at different stages of their lives. The participants are two TESOL MA students in a graduate school in northern Taiwan. Data collection methods mainly include written narratives and semi-structured interviews. The data collected are further analyzed using a holistic-content approach. The results of the study show that the participants' beliefs shift in interaction with the context and thus reveal that the nature of learner belief is dynamic. Moreover, the study indicates that learner belief is connected with context, self, and identity. It is noted that what really matters is not the context itself but how learners perceive and interpret the context. Then, the conceptions of ideal self vs. ought-to self and core identity vs. situated identity are introduced to shed light on their relationship with learner belief. Across all stages, while both participants claimed that effort is critical to language learning, it is how they relate themselves to the target language that determine how much effort that they are willing to make into language learning. Finally, it is expected that the study can help educators as well as researchers better understand the dynamic nature of learner belief. Pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research are provided at the end of the thesis.

Keywords: learner belief, English learning experiences, self, identity

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

Recognizing the importance of belief in language learning, studies on learner belief have mushroomed in the SLA field over the past decades. Research indicates that learner belief can influence learning in various aspects, including learners' proficiency (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003), motivation (Uckun, Tohumoglu, & Utar, 2011), autonomy (Cotterall, 1995; Zhong, 2010), classroom anxiety (Cheng, 2001), and strategy use (Liao & Chiang, 2004; Li, 2010; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1998, 1999; Wu, 2011; Yang, 1999).

While rich empirical studies have dedicated to learner belief, most of them were conducted quantitatively with questionnaires. Although questionnaires can help collect data from a representative number of participants with relative low cost (Parajuuli, 2008), they have some limitations. First, framing possible answers with pre-designed items, questionnaires do not permit learners to articulate their beliefs in their own words (Barcelo, 2003; Block, 1997; Kalaja, 1995; Pajares, 1992). Additionally, pre-established items may not incorporate some critical beliefs of the participants. Benson and Lor (1999) also pointed out that questionnaire data fail to provide an integral picture of the complex belief system.

Aside from the restrictions of questionnaires, a considerable number of quantitative studies on learner belief have attempted to make broad generalizations and thus overlooked individual differences of the participants (Benson and Nunan, 2005). With different backgrounds, personalities, experiences, and learning styles,

learners will always have disparate beliefs about language learning. As Freeman (2008) stated, "Each individual thus acts as a unique learning context, bring a different set of systems to a learning event, responding differently to it, and therefore, learning differently as participating in it" (p.205). To take learners' individual differences and their contexts into account, qualitative methods including interviews, ethnographies, diaries, narratives, autobiographies, metaphor analysis and classroom observations all serve as great tools for investigating learner beliefs. Freeman (2001) also drew attention to the need for "more holistic research that links integrated individual difference research from emic and etic perspectives to the processes, mechanisms and conditions of learning within different contexts over time" (p.24).

Kalaja and Barcelos (2003) pointed out that another problem of current research about SLA is that the researchers view beliefs as "stable mental representations that are fixed a-priori constructs" (p.2). Dufva (2003) also stated that the classic cognitive approach regards beliefs as representations or schema stored in the mind and thus contextual factors are of secondary importance. From this standpoint, learner belief may be less susceptible to the change of contextual influences; therefore, belief is considered more static and stable by nature. In addition, a number of interdisciplinary studies indicate that learner belief is closely connected with self-concept, identity, personality, and other individual differences, which makes them harder to change (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Epstein, 1990). However, the view that learner belief is stable and static has been criticized by numerous researchers (Amuzie & Winke 2009; Durfa, 2003; Gabillon, 2005; Hosenfeld, 2003; Kalaja & Barcelo, 2003; Manchón, 2009; Mercer, 2011; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003).

From the experience of analyzing learner belief as a cognitive phenomenon, Kalaja and Barcelo (2003) contend that belief is dynamic for two reasons. First,

learner belief derives from learners' interaction with others during their life. Since the interaction is continuous, learner belief is by nature unstable and subject to change. The other reason is that belief is susceptible to contextual influences; therefore, learner belief may be modified or changed when there is a shift in context. While the dynamic nature of learner belief has been increasingly discussed (Amuzie & Winke 2009; Durfa, 2003; Gabillon, 2005; Hosenfeld, 2003; Kalaja & Barcelo, 2003; Manchón, 2009; Mercer 2011; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003.), few studies explore its changing nature across different periods of one's life. Hence, there is a need to explore the dynamic nature of learner belief across various stages of learners' language learning process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamic nature of learner belief through investigating two Taiwanese TESOL MA students' beliefs about language learning at different stages of their lives, including elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, university, and postgraduate stages. The study mainly triangulates the data with narratives and semi-structured interviews to obtain a more intact picture of learner belief and to explore its changing nature.

Research Questions

1. What learner beliefs did the two Taiwanese MA-TESOL students hold at different stages of their lives, including elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, university, and postgraduate stages?

2. How did their L2 learner beliefs change over time?

3. What are their most vital beliefs across all the stages?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The literature reviewed in the present study includes three main sections. The first section introduces the conception of learner belief in different approaches. In the second section, the formation of learner belief is discussed. The last section focuses on the dynamic nature of learner belief.

Learner Belief

As a complicated and multi-faced construct (Amuzie & Winke, 2009), learner belief is difficult to define. A profusion of studies have explored learner belief from various approaches, which could be divided into three categories: normative, metacognitive, and contextual (Barcelo, 2003). The three approaches hold distinctive perspectives on learner belief and therefore possess divergent definitions of belief.

In the normative approach, belief is viewed as a perceived idea or a misconception (Horwitz, 1987), which contains an underlying presumption that learner belief is incorrect or inefficient. Furthermore, this approach considers that learner belief can indicate if students will demonstrate autonomous or good learning behaviors in the future. Therefore, the studies in this approach mainly aim to categorize learner belief by using Lickert-scale questionnaires, such as the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz, 1985, 1987), modified BALLI questionnaires (Mantle-Bromley, 1995), or other self-developed questionnaires (Cotterall, 1999; Mori, 1997; Sakui & Gaies, 1999). As the most common tool used in the normative approach, questionnaires make it easier for researchers to collect data at different time periods and is less intimidating compared to observation (Barcelo, 2003). However, questionnaires fail to allow learners to

express their beliefs in their own words (Wenden, 1987). Moreover, the beliefs listed in questionnaires are only those predetermined by researchers instead of the beliefs held by learners. There is also a possibility of misinterpretation of questionnaire items (Bernat, 2005).

The second approach is the metacognitive approach. It defines belief as metacognitive knowledge, which comprises learners' "theories in action" that assist learners to reflect on their own learning and to develop autonomous learning behaviors (Wenden, 1987). While belief is used interchangeably with metacognitive knowledge, Wenden (1999) made a distinction between the two terms by pointing out that knowledge is factual and objective whereas belief is value-related, subjective, and liable to be held more tenaciously (Wenden, 1999). Another comment made by Kalaja (1995) also differentiates the two terms by pointing out that belief can be measured by Lickert-scale, which indicates the degree or the intensity of the belief, whereas knowledge cannot be gauged by degrees.

To further specify the term "metacognitve knowledge", Flavell (1979) distinguished three aspects of the knowledge: Knowledge of person variables, task variables, and strategy variables. The first deals with knowledge about how learners as individuals learn; the second is knowledge about the nature of a task and the required skills to fulfill the task; the third is the knowledge pertaining to the use of strategies. Applying Flavell's (1979) categorization, Goh (1997) investigated 40 ESL listeners' metacognitive knowledge with listening diaries. Results of the study are that language learners were aware of their metacognitive knowledge and could observe as well as express their listening beliefs. With the assumption that learners are able to enunciate their learning beliefs, learners' beliefs are often explored by content analysis of learner self-report and semi-structured interviews. Some studies

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(Cotterall, 1999; Mori, 1997; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Yang 1999) adopt self-designed questionnaires to probe into particular aspects of the metacognitive knowledge.

While the metacognitve approach contributes to an understanding of what learners think about their own learning, it has been criticized by some researchers (Barcelos, 2003; Durfa, 2003). Durfa (2003) maintains that the metacognitive approach focuses on individuality and ignores the importance of contextual factors. In the same vein, Barcelos (2003) also contends that this approach disregards how context influences learner beliefs and does not interpret beliefs from actions, but from accounts of one's intention. Due to the insufficiency of the metacognitive approach, the contextual approach is proposed to further explore the nature of learner belief and to take a clearer picture of them with contextual considerations.

Different from the first two approaches, the contextual approach does not attempt to make generalizations of learner belief; instead, it probes into learner belief in a specific context with diverse methods of data collection and data analysis. Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) compiled the data collection and data analysis methods within the contextual approach: ethnographic classroom observation, informal discussions, stimulated recalls, diaries, discourse analysis, naturalistic interviews, ranking exercises, scenario and discourse analysis. In addition, metaphor analysis is incorporated by Ellis (2002) in the approach to explore learner belief.

To explore the dynamic nature of L2 learners' writing beliefs as well as the impact on the writing instruction, Manchón (2009) investigated 15 university EFL learners' writing beliefs in an eight-month English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. Data were collected from a retrospective narrative written by the teacher who taught the course, an interview to the same teacher, and a retrospective questionnaire

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filled by participants at two time points during the course. Results revealed that the instruction influenced learner beliefs on the writing teacher's role, the nature of writing beliefs, and most significantly, their self-efficacy beliefs. Kim and Yang (2010) also conducted a study to look into learner belief. They explored the situated belief systems of two Korean college students in study-abroad contexts. The data were gathered through autobiographies, semi-structured interviews, and stimulated recall tasks by using photos uploaded to the participants' blogs. The findings indicated that changes in L2 learning beliefs correlate with the degree of legitimate peripheral participation in study-abroad contexts. Both studies showed that the nature of learner belief is dynamic and is subject to contextual and other external influences.

While researchers started to regard learner belief as a dynamic and complex construct (Amuzie & Paula, 2009; Barcelo, 2003; Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Manchón, 2009; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003), few studies investigate how learners' language learning beliefs change over time and how these beliefs interact with the contextual factors. Barcelo (2003) suggested that future research on belief should involve learners' experiences, the learners' interpretation of the experiences, and the social context in which learners' experiences are molded. Due to the paucity of studies probing into those aspects, there is a need for conducting this study to explore those dimensions of learner belief.

The Formation of Learner Belief

A number of studies have investigated what shapes learner belief and diversified factors have been identified: family and home background, cultural background, classroom or social peers, interpretations of prior repetitive experiences, level and

language instruction, the type of language institution, and individual differences, such as gender and personality (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005).

Apart from the factors that shape learner belief, Gabillon (2005) proposed a hierarchical classification of second Language (L2) learner belief formation, which can be categorized into three phases: social/cultural context, the general education context, and the L2 learning contexts. The first phase consists of cultural representations or cultural beliefs, like values, prejudice, attitude, and stereotypes. Reflecting the perspective of the society and working as learners' base of belief construction, those cultural beliefs are often formed before learners have language learning experiences. The second phase comprises beliefs about learning, which are constructed or reconstructed based on learners' daily learning experiences mostly in formal educational contexts, in classrooms. Possessing some experiences of learning other subjects before L2 learning, learners often equate L2 learning with learning other subjects. Hence, identifying learners' conception about learning in general together with learners' perspective on L2 learning may help understand learners' choices and behaviors when learners carry out language learning tasks.

The third phase is composed of the language learning context(s), learners' cultural beliefs, and learners' past as well as present learning experiences in general and L2 learning experiences in specific. In this phase, learners began to hold well-established beliefs about L2 learning self-efficacy, L2 learners' roles, L2 language teachers' roles, and appropriate ways of learning the second language. In his framework, Gabillon (2005) contends that L2 learner belief is (co)constructed, reconstructed, and appropriated through experiences in different phases and internalized into a fraction of the learner's belief system. While this framework takes different contexts (cultural social context, general educational context, and L2

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learning context) into consideration, the hierarchical and progressive perspectives on belief formation may be questionable, since context is not viewed as a background, but as a complicated system itself, linked to and interacted with other complex systems (Freeman, 2008). Therefore, Gabillon's framework may oversimplify the connections between different contexts.

To obtain a more contextualized and individualized perception of learner belief development, Mercer (2011) investigated two expert EFL learners' language learning beliefs from their personal history with retrospective interviews and the participants' autobiographical retrospective narrations. Results revealed that the learners' belief systems are considerably complicated; the interrelated webworks of beliefs are responsive to diverse contexts and individual experiences. Additionally, this study challenges the conception of "negative" or "dysfunctional" beliefs. One of the participants held some beliefs that are conventionally regarded as negative or detrimental to learning. These beliefs, however, did not impede her development of proficiency. This research suggested that studies on learner belief should look into learners' belief systems with regard to suitability in their personal history, affordances, contexts and purposes instead of making generalized judgement on specific beliefs.

The Dynamic Nature of Learner Belief

The traditional conception that the nature of learner belief is stable and static has been challenged. Recent studies have argued that learner belief is dynamic and variable (Amuzie & Winke 2009; Durfa, 2003; Gabillon, 2005; Hosenfeld, 2003; Kalaja & Barcelo, 2003; Manchón, 2009; Mercer 2011 Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). Attempts were made to capture belief development and to depict the changing nature of learner belief. Amuzie and Winke (2009) conducted a research on seventy L2

language learners to explore beliefs and time factor on beliefs. Questionnaires administered at two time points and one-on-one interviews were used to collect the data. Results indicated that learners had undergone belief change on learner autonomy as well as the teacher's role, and the length of contextual exposure also had an impact on the shift of learner belief.

To examine the changing nature of learner belief qualitatively as well as explore the impact of belief on motivated L2 behaviors from the lens of socio-cultural theory, Yang and Kim (2011) investigated two ESL learners' belief change during their study abroad period, which lasted from five to nine months. Research data were collected from language learning autobiographies, journal entries, interviews, and stimulated recall tasks. Then the data were further analyzed based on Strauss and Corbi's (1998) grounded theory. The finding indicated that L2 learner belief is constantly evolving according to the participants' learning goals and experiences of studying abroad. In addition, the shift of learner belief depicts a remediation process which gives rise to qualitatively distinctive language learning action. The study argues against the popular belief that studying abroad is the best way to enhance L2 proficiency. The data revealed that only when learners aligned their beliefs with their L2-rich environment could the environment exert positive influences on language learning.

Tanaka and Ellis (2003) also investigated changes of learner belief. The researchers looked into changes of Japanese college students' beliefs about language learning and their English proficiency during a 15-week study-abroad program. Their learner beliefs were investigated through questionnaires and their English proficiency was measured by the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The results of the study indicated statistically significant changes in the learner beliefs relevant to analytic language learning, experiential language learning and self-efficacy. The

participants' proficiency also increased significantly. Nevertheless, Pearson product moment correlations between the reported learner beliefs and the TOFEL scores both before and after the study-abroad session were weak.

While most studies on belief change center on diverse learner beliefs before and after the study abroad period, Peng (2011) explored learner belief change from senior high school to college study. The research investigated one first-year college student's belief about English teaching and learning over a duration of seven months since his enrollment. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and learning journals. Then, the data collected were analyzed using the qualitative content analysis with the assistance of the software NVivo8. The findings demonstrated a considerable change in learner belief about English learning and teaching during a transition to tertiary education. Furthermore, the findings suggested that classroom affordances led to the emergence of language learning beliefs.

To further explore the nature of learner belief, Li (2007) probed into the dynamic relationship among culture, identity, and beliefs about writing. The study adopted case study methodology to investigate the change of learner beliefs and the reconstruction of writer identity in an ESL context. There are two cases in the study: Data for Case A mainly consists of written documents by and interviews with a first-year ESL learner; data for Case B was collected through class observation of and interviews with learners and their instructor in an ESL writing class. The results of the study indicated that learners altered their beliefs to adapt to new learning contexts. Furthermore, the findings revealed that culture, identity, and beliefs are interconnected; they work together to reconstruct writing beliefs and writer identity.

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The studies reviewed mainly aim to investigate learners' dynamic belief systems with only a certain period of time and thus may not be able to demonstrate the change of beliefs across different stages. Moreover, while the studies attempted to capture the dynamic nature of learner belief, less attention was paid to how learners perceive and interpret their learning contexts as well as their experiences. Although contextual factors were mentioned in those studies, few of them explored deeply how learners interact with the context and how this interaction connects to the construction of learner belief. Furthermore, most studies seeking to illustrate the shift of learner belief still strive to compare learners' different beliefs before and after a certain time point. This linear way of investigating learners' belief systems may be inappropriate and insufficient to explain the nonlinear and complex language learning reality. As Lemke (2002) stated, "certain events widely separated in linear time may not be more relevant to meaningful behavior now than other events which are closer in linear time" (p.80). Hence, exploring learner belief change over time is needed in researching beliefs in the current SLA field.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamic nature of two Taiwanese MA-TESOL learner beliefs at different stages of their schooling. To probe into the research topic qualitatively with rich descriptions about the participants, the study adopts case study methods. With rich descriptions about the participants, case studies may increase the depth of analysis, raise the level of readability, and help researchers better understand the nature of language learning (Duff, 2008). By using case study methods, it is expected that the present study can explore the nature of learner beliefs in-depth and to obtain detailed accounts of the participants' learning experiences as well their perceptions toward language learning.

The data used in the study consist of two semi-structured interviews, a news excerpt, a supplementary note, and existing narrative data, completed by the participants while taking a course in a graduate school. Further descriptions about the participants, contexts, data collection, and data analysis are as follows.

Participants

The participants in this study are two MA-TESOL students, under the pseudonym of Brian and Lily, aged 24 and 30. They are currently pursuing their master's degrees at a university in northern Taiwan. During their academic pursuit in this university, they took a course that invited them to tell their English learning experiences. Their English learning stories later became one of the initial data for the present study. The participants started learning or having some contact with English in the elementary school stages in informal educational settings, such as home and after-school classes. In high school, they began to receive English education at school.

Both participants were English majors in college and had some teaching

experiences. After graduation from college, Lily taught English in a public junior

high school in her hometown for four years and then took an unpaid leave from her

teaching job to pursue her graduate studies. Different form Lily, Brian went straight

to graduate school after college degree. Though he did not possess a formal teaching

job, he took a service learning class in college and was required to teach an on-line

English course in an elementary school for one year. Table 1 is a summary of the

participants' background.

Table 1

Background of the Participants

Participants	Current Year of Study	Teaching Experiences
Brian	Second-year MA TESOL	One-year on-line teaching experience in an elementary school
Lily	Third-year MA TESOL	Four-year teaching experience in a junior high school

Data Collection

To explore the two Taiwanese MA-TESOL students' learner belief at different

stages of their schooling, narratives of their language learning experiences, two semi-

structured interviews, a news report about Brian, and a supplementary note from Lily

are used in the study.

Existing narrative data. The study probes into two Taiwanese MA-TESOL

students' learner belief at different stages of their language learning process. Defined

as "any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials"(Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, &

Zilber, 1998), narratives allow learners the opportunities to voice themselves. To

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explore learner belief in depth as well as have a better understanding of the participants' contexts, the present study first used existing narratives that were created in fall 2009 to further explore the two participants' language learning beliefs.

During the course, the participants were asked to give an account of their English learning experiences in written form and uploaded their first drafts to Moodle, an online course management platform. They then discussed all the narratives with their peers. During the process of sharing language learning histories, they were inspired by others' stories as well as reflected upon their own. Afterwards, they reconstructed their stories and uploaded their second drafts to the previous online platform. The next time in class, they would discuss the modified versions and made further addition or revision. The interactive and reflective process went on till the end of the semester and the final versions of their language learning histories were uploaded to Moodle. Both English and Chinese versions of the narratives were added afterwards so that the participants could express their experiences more freely and thoroughly in their mother tongue. Therefore, there are multiple versions of the narrative data, which made a trustworthy basis for the current study.

Semi-structured interviews. In order to address the research focus of this study, in addition to the existing narrative data, two one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the two participants were conducted respectively. Defined as "A schedule for interviews which has a partially planned framework" (Swetnam, 2007, p.129), semi-structured interviews allow researchers to use pre-designed but flexibly-phrased questions to probe into the research issue in depth. With the relatively flexible framework, semi-structured-interviews offer the possibilities for new themes and

issues to emerge in the process of data collection and enable researchers to clarify interviewees' responses with follow-up questions.

The framework of the questions inquired in the first interview is similar to that of the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) developed by Horwitz (1987). In this study, it is the conceptual frame that is used, not the inventory, to design interview questions and use as initial codes. The BALLI has been widely used to investigate learner belief in relation to second or foreign language aptitude (Bernat 2007; Howritz 1988, 1989; Kern 1995; Nikitina, 2006; Siebert 2003; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Tumposky 1991; Yang 1999). It comprises thirty-four items, measured by a five-point Licker scale. The items are classified into five categories: (1) Foreign language aptitude, (2) the difficulty of language learning, (3) the nature of language learning, (4) learning and communication strategies, and (5) motivations. The first category is concerned with conceptions about special ability for language learning and beliefs about the characteristics of successful learners. The second one deals with the difficulty level of learning a foreign or a second language and with the relative difficulty of different language skills. The third one is mainly about learners' beliefs on the importance of different language skills. As for the aspect of learning and communication strategies, it concerns how to learn English and how to communicate in English. The last one, motivation, relates to learners' integrative as well as instrumental motivations.

While the BALLI is a well-established and widely-used questionnaire for researching language learning beliefs, participants' responses are quite limited, for they can only express their degree of agreement to pre-determined items. To improve this problem, this study adapts the original items to open-ended questions to allow the

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participants to voice their beliefs more freely. Additionally, the adapted questions

mainly investigate learners' second language learning beliefs instead of foreign

language learning in general; thus the term "foreign language" in the BALLI is

replaced with the word "English", which is the second language learned by the two

participants. Furthermore, the critical beliefs subjectively determined by the

participants were also explored with the intention to find out some significant beliefs

that exist outside of the Horwitz's framework. The adapted questions of language

learning beliefs are attached in Appendix A.

Since the study aims to investigate the participants' learner beliefs at different

stages of their schooling with Horwitz's framework of language learning belief

inventory, each participant was asked the same set of questions at different stages,

including elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, university, and

postgraduate school stages. For example, one of the participants was asked about

questions on the beliefs held in the elementary school stage and then the same set of

questions would be asked again, but this time the beliefs concerned are those held in

junior high school. Similar process went on until the fifth round of questions focusing

on learner beliefs at postgraduate stage.

The two semi-structured interviews were captured on a recorder. The first

interview lasted from three to five hours and mainly focused on the language learning

beliefs held by the participants and how those beliefs changed over time. The second

interview was conducted several weeks after the first interview and lasted from one to

three hours. The interval is intended to be a time for the participants to reflect upon

their language learning beliefs, while the researcher can also endeavor to find some

possible links between the participants' narratives and the data obtained through the

first interview (Please see Appendix B for questions designed for one of the

participants in the second interview). Between the first and the second interview, the

researcher and a coder tentatively analyzed the narratives using Horwitz's framework.

Then, they looked into the connection between the initial analysis to generate a

number of open-ended questions for the second semi-structured interview. Thus, the

second interview aims to clarify, verify, and go deeper with the issues discovered

after the first interview.

    A news report about Brian. The researcher found a news report about Brian on

the internet. Since Brain won the championship at a nation-wide speech contest, he

was interviewed by a News reporter about his English learning suggestions as well as

his English learning story. Brian was interviewed around March, 2011, three months

before he received the first interview of the present study.

    A supplementary note from Lily. Around three months after the second

interview, Lily emailed the researcher a supplementary note to clarify part of her

narrative data and to add more information regarding the questions asked in the

second interview. The length of the note is around 533 words and mainly covers

three issues: The first issue is the impact of her learning experience on her teaching

method; the second one is the learning context in her junior high school days in

comparison to that of junior high schools nowadays; the last one is to clarify her

narration about how western culture influenced her. Lily's supplementary note is

attached in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

    The two semi-structured interviews were transcribed and further analyzed using

content analysis with Hortwitz's framework of language learning beliefs. Narratives

were coded with the same framework. To guard the trustworthiness of the study, a

graduate student with TESOL background was invited to code the raw data with the researcher and coder check was applied. During the coding process, emerging themes outside of the existing framework were discussed. Additionally, the transcriptions of the raw data were examined by the participants, which member checking process can reinforce the trustworthiness of the research.

  Initial coding: Categorical-Content approach. In this study, the narratives and the transcriptions of the two semi-structured interviews were initially analyzed using content analysis, a categorical-content approach for narrative analysis. In this approach, the themes or the categories of the research topic have to be defined, and separate pieces of information will be selected out, and then classified into various categories (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). The narratives and the transcriptions of the interviews were coded using Horwitz's classification of language learning beliefs, which falls into five subcategories: foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation. After the initial coding, however, the researcher had difficulty analyzing the data with the categorical-content approach, since part of the data could be classified into different categories and thus resulted in overlapping. In addition, the framework was stiff and could not go well with the participants' beliefs. To better analyze the data in a more flexible way, the research adopted holistic-content approach instead (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).

  Coding: Holistic-Content approach. Holistic-content Approach allows the researcher to read the data as a whole and explore the data in-depth without being confined by distinctive categories. According to Lieblich *et al*. (1998, p.62), the steps of analyzing data from a holistic perspective can be summarized as follows:

1. Read the material several times until a pattern emerges;

2. Put the initial and global impression of the case into writing;

3. Decide on special foci of content or themes in the story;

4. Read the themes separately and repeatedly;

5. Follow each theme through out the story and note your conclusions.

Following the Holistic-content Approach, the researcher found several themes, which are related to context, self, identity, and test. The relationship between these themes and learner beliefs is presented in the fourth and fifth chapters.
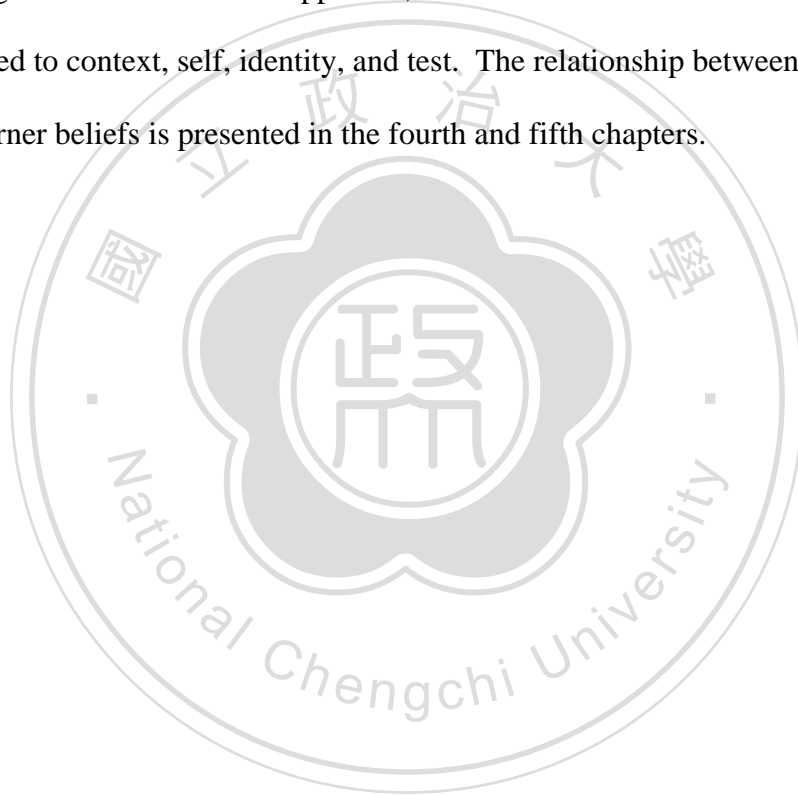
CHAPTER 4

Findings

This study aims to investigate two MA TESOL students' language learning beliefs across different stages of their lives. The participants' language learning stories are presented in this chapter to provide a big picture of their backgrounds as well as their critical learning experiences. Then, important beliefs held by the participants are advanced for further analysis. The last section discusses what English means to Brian at different phases of his life, for the researcher found that how Brian perceived English is closely related to his language learning beliefs.

Brian

This section presents Brian's language learning story and his critical language learning experiences.

Brian's language learning story.

Elementary school. Brian had his first contact with English when he was a third grader in elementary school. His father bought him a set of video cassette tapes which taught kids conversational English. For Brian, using this English material was more like entertainment than learning. At that time, he did not take English learning seriously. When he became a fifth grader, he was sent to an after-school class by his father to study school subjects, which mainly focused on math and science. Once in a while, his teacher in the cram would teach his students English. Though Brian began his English education at this stage, he did not have much exposure to English.

Junior high school. At thirteen, Brian entered a so-called "aristocratic" junior high school, which was expensive and stringent. Brian's junior high school life was the synonym of endless tests. Fighting for his scores seemed to be his major task at school. What came along with those tests was keen competition among peers:

> My peers were for the most part competing with one another, trying to perform better [than others] in grades. I did not have too much interaction with them except comparing grades with them. (Interview 062311)

Some of Brian's classmates were sent to English cram schools when little to have a headstart and thus were expected to perform better in English. Although feeling unfair, Brian did not feel inferior to his peers. Comparing learning English to saving money, Brian remarks,

> If one starts to save money earlier than I do, of course he has more money. And I can save money afterwards to keep up with him. He just starts to save money earlier than I do, but saving money earlier does not mean that he has a better chance than I do to become a millionaire. (Interview 062311)

In junior high school, as an obedient student, Brian learned whatever his teacher taught him by heart. To him, English learning was memorization. He says,

> I did not ponder on the most effective way of English learning. I just memorized what my teacher taught me. At that time, I thought memorization was more practical for me, and my teacher also asked us to learn by heart. (Interview 062311)

Though most of the time Brian only attempted to remember what was taught by his English teacher, he also explored the rules of English, but he ended up feeling frustrated.

> To me, English was more about memorization [than analysis]. I seldom investigated why this sentence was put this way or what the connotation of this sentence was. In terms of math, I would try to figure out how formulas were derived and I also tried to explore rules of English. But I found that the harder I tried to figure them out, the more frustrated I felt, because sometimes I could not use logic to explain a certain structure. (Interview 062311)

In junior high school, Brian had regular English classes taught by a Taiwanese English teacher, and once a week he also had a conversation class instructed by a native English-speaking teacher.

From the learning experiences in the conversation class, Brian started to perceive that what was taught in his regular English classes was not sufficient.

> I thought that learning in the classroom was not enough. After I had conversation classes, which were taught by a native English-speaking teacher, I found that real language use required more English competence and what was taught in our textbook was not sufficient for real communication. (Interview 062311)

At this stage, Brian took the basic level of General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), a criterion-referenced test which measures examinees' listening, reading, writing, and speaking abilities. The experience of taking the GEPT also made Brian aware that his English ability still left much to be desired:

The test results of [the GEPT basic test] was awful. I failed the listening test. My scores of the writing test were low since I had not trained my writing skills. I passed the reading test. At that time, I found that my English was worse than I had expected. […] From then on, I started to use my GEPT test scores as one of the criteria to weigh my English proficiency level. (Interview 062311)

Perceiving the insufficiency of his English ability, he, however, did not seek other extracurricular English materials during junior high school days since he was too busy dealing with other school subjects.

I did not look for other extracurricular English materials because I had to study many subjects, not just English. I had to take care of other subjects, too. I would not spend extra time on learning English except for memorizing vocabulary and preparing for tests. As for dealing with the conversation class, I just consulted my dictionary for unknown words. That's it. (Interview 062311)

Senior high school. The summer before entering senior high school, Brian started to study *Let's Talk in English*, an English learning magazine borrowed from his elder brother. In addition to reading the magazine, he also began to build a habit of listening to the English broadcast of the magazine. At this stage, he became more aware of the importance of multisensory input of English:

I was motivated to learn the topics in the magazine because they were very interesting and I no longer relied on reading English only. I began to notice that learning English should involve multi-sensory processes to increase the amount of exposure in context. (Brian's English Narrative in 2009)

Apart from English learning magazines, Brain would listen to English songs, for he considered that effective English learning was fun and enjoyable:

At that time, I also listened to English songs. Most of time, I listened to classic songs in the sixties or seventies. I think that the most effective learning methods are [ways that make learners feel] happy. And listening to songs is very relaxing. (Interview 062311)

To advance his English, he absorbed other successful English learners' experiences from so-called "How to learn English well" books. From perusing those books, he observed several features of those successful learners:

I noted that successful language learners shared some common traits: The first trait is that they devoted much effort to learning [English]; the second one is that they have interest in English; the third one is that they learn English continuously. Life-long learning. (Interview 062311)

To measure his English proficiency, Brian took the basic, intermediate, and high-intermediate levels of the GEPT. At this stage, he also participated in speech contests and won the second prize in a regional speech contest. Moreover, he was the only student who received a certificate of merit in every listening test at school. He also obtained high scores in other academic exams. With his excellent academic achievement, his self-confidence toward English also escalated.

Contrary to his excellent performance in English, Brian did terribly on his science subjects. He reported in his English narrative 2009:

When my English seemed to soar like a skyscraper, my emphasis on other subject matters decreased to a degree that I almost abandoned studying other

subjects because I did not enjoy learning [them] and I saw no purpose for studying physics, math, and science and so on.

Having more enjoyment and sense of achievement in English than science subjects in senior high school, Brian invested most of his time and energy in English rather than other subjects.

The summer vacation before the third year of senior high school, Brian joined Toastmasters' Youth Leadership Program. In the final presentation of the program, he was appointed as the chairperson, which was a big encouragement for him. With his gleeful English learning experience in senior high school, Brian decided to choose English as his major in university.

University. In university, Brian keenly took courses in the training of four skills, literature, linguistics, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). From his experiences of taking courses, Brian developed a deeper understanding of English and began to think that English Learning did not consist of memorization only:

> I found that English is not just, as most people think, memorization, because learning English may involves many skills or abilities. For example, one can use English to read literary works, which also counts as a kind of learning. When one reads those works, he has to read their figurative meaning, not just the surface meaning. The ability to read the figurative meaning or the connotation cannot be trained through mere memorization. It may require some imagination or other abilities. (Interview 062311)

Receiving academic English training in university, Brian started to reconceptualize four skills. What he meant by reconceptualizing four skills was to broaden his knowledge of language learning and to learn more advanced language skills, such as making a summary and reading critically. He explains,

> To me, it's actually a brand new way of learning. I would reconceptualize four skills. In terms of listening, as I mentioned before, one should learn how to capture the key information. As for reading, I would read critically. For example, maybe my opinion is different from that of the author or there may be flaws in the author's reasoning. I found that the training in university is more academic. (Interview, 062311)

In his freshman year, from the experiences of taking literature courses, Brian changed his reading strategy and began to place more emphasis on the comprehension of literary works than new words or grammatical structures of the text. He states,

> I still remember that when I was a freshman, I took Introduction to Literature and some other courses. At that time, I was still a good student and attempted to check the meaning of each new vocabulary and analyzed the grammar of literary works. However, afterwards I found that I could answer my teachers' questions without knowing every word and closely examining its grammar. Later I realized that comprehension of the text is more important [than digging into the lexical and grammatical details]. (Interview 062311)

Apart from the change of his reading strategy, Brian also reported that his conception about writing altered after receiving his teacher's feedback on his composition in the freshman writing class.

When I was a freshman, I preferred to use difficult words [in my composition], at that time, my teacher told me that [the use of words would vary] according to the purpose of my writing. Originally, I thought difficult vocabulary and patterns mean good English. However, later I found that hard words would hinder communication. If my writing purpose is to help readers understand [the message I want to convey], I do not need to use highly difficult words. (Interview 062311)

In the sophomore year, Brian started to take courses in Linguistics and TESOL. At this stage, he reported that he had difficulty understanding the content instead of getting stuck by the language. He says,

I began to learn some theories about language since I was a sophomore. What would hinder my comprehension was not the language per se but the content per se. (Interview 062311)

In addition to the regular courses, he participated in a variety of English contests, including English speech contests, English debates, English recitation contests, jeopardy, and spelling bee competitions. He perceived English contests as a way to enhance his English competence. In addition to various English contests, Brian took part in activities that involved more social interactions with international visitors and students, for he would like to apply what he learned to his real life.

The summer before the last year of college, the Office of International Affairs in my school started a student ambassador program. I applied for the position and luckily was selected as one of the student ambassadors. At that time, I had many opportunities to receive international visitors. For example, I would bring them to visit the National Palace Museum. Then I could chat with them about

some culture issues. […] I think my learning motivation shifted from language learning to activities that require using English. I wanted to apply what I learned [into real life] and connected what I learned with my life, not just to study or to say the things in the textbook. (Interview 062311)

From observing his peers, Brian found that being extrovert but meticulous are important to language learning. He explains why he considered these two features critical to learning English:

In my freshman year, I saw many examples of good language learners. First of all, one has to be very extrovert. He cannot be introvert. It will be hard for him to foster his communication ability if he does not communicate with other people at all. Second, one has to be very meticulous. He cannot be careless. Take French for example, when one uses French, he has to be attentive to the consistency of Gender. He has to take language learning seriously. If one wants to learn a language, then learn it well. (Interview 062311)

Brian perceived being extrovert so critical in developing communicative competence that he was willing to change his originally introvert disposition. When asked if he was an extrovert, Brian gave the following response:

I think I am an introvert, but when I need to act more outgoing, the proportion of [introversion and extroversion in my personality] will change. Initially I think my personality consisted of 20% extroversion and 80% introversion. I can be introvert when I learn grammar and vocabulary, but when I need to communicate with others, I have to interact with them. (Interview062311)

The experience of taking the GEPT advanced test also reinforced his belief that being extrovert is vital, for the test required test takers to have a conversation with two to fou interlocutors during the test. After taking the GEPT advanced test, he found that he needed to strengthen his communicative ability. To hone his English speaking, he actively sought opportunities to interact with native and non-native English speakers.

When I was a sophomore, I found that I had a bottleneck due to the experience of taking the advanced level of the GEPT. [During the GEPT test,] I need to discuss with people. I need to do a summary of what you [other examinees] just said. Those abilities require cooperation with others. It is also fine if one just completely depends on himself, like reading and translating an article by himself, but then he will not be able to get feedback from others. This kind of practice may lack a sense of authenticity, so I think I need to make some improvement. […] To have real communication, I think that one needs to chat with foreigners or to join [English-learning] clubs, [English] bible study, and other [English speaking] activities. (Interview 062311)

Postgraduate stage. In the second semester of the senior year in college, Brian took the entrance exam of a graduate school in Northern Taiwan. He passed the exam and became a graduate student. In graduate school, students had to give presentations of research papers. From observing his peers in graduate school, he found that one should be risk-taking in terms of speaking.

My observation is that one cannot be too shy; one must dare to try and be risk-taking. If one is too shy, he or she will encounter obstacles in communication.

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I found that some classmates were really anxious. I think that they did not have

to feel that way. Just try your best to speak up. (Interview 062311)

Brian considered that the focus of graduate school is research. In comparison to

reading and writing research papers, English learning was perceived as an

entertainment to him.

I think graduate school is for doing research. It involves more reading and

writing skills. As for listening and speaking, things like listening to CNN news

had become an entertainment, compared to the serious academic stuffs. In

terms of reading and writing, I will pay attention to how researchers present

ideas or how they justify their research motivations. I will also notice the logic

of texts. […] I think doing research involves logical thinking, which already

goes beyond language level. (Interview 062311)

Although Brian reported that graduate school centers on research, he still spent

much time on English learning, for he already made English learning part of his

everyday life. When he was interviewed by a news reporter in 2011, he stated,

I grasp every opportunity to learn English. When I take the bus, I translate other

passengers' conversation into English. I remember once when my parents had a

quarrel, I also interpreted their argument into English.

Recognizing the importance of English, Brian is willing to devoted himself to

English learning and actively creates English learning opportunities in his daily life.

Brian's learner beliefs.

Elementary school: No clear idea about English learning yet. In elementary school, Brian had little knowledge of how English should be learned. As a beginner, he had little conception about English, not to mention how to learn this foreign language effectively. In addition, he could not perceive the importance or usefulness of English because he saw no link between English and his life, and English was not yet a subject to him in formal school.

Junior high school: a. Effort is the key to the success of language learning. Brian thought the source of this belief might come from Confucianism, though the influence seemed subtle. He states,

> This [belief] might be related to the education I received. Maybe I am
> unconsciously influenced by what I frequently hears and sees. It probably has
> to do with Confucianism, [which places emphasis on] effort and teachings like
> " Constant dropping wears away a stone." Gradually I accepted them as part of
> my value system (Interview 070311)

Junior high school: b. English learning is memorization. In junior high school, as an obedient student, Brian just learned whatever his teacher taught him by heart. To him, English learning is memorization. Though most of time Brian just remembered what was taught by his English teacher, he did attempt to explore the rules of English, but ended up feeling frustrated.

Junior high school: c. I studied English mainly to cope with tests. In junior high school, Brian was in an exam-oriented context. At this stage, he did not enjoy English learning and would not spend much time on English. Except for textbooks,

he did not use any other English learning materials and he studied English mostly when exams were approaching. To Brian, English was just a school subject and he studied English mainly to cope with tests.

Senior High School: a. Language learning is fun.

b. Language learning should be holistic.

c. Continuous effort is vital to the success of language learning.

d. My goal is to make daily progress in English. In senior high school, from reading numerous successful learners' English learning stories, Brian learned that language learning requires fun element, holistic learning methods, and continuous effort. At this stage, he gained access to multisensory English exposure, including English magazines, English songs, English movies, and English broadcasts. From these English resources, he found enjoyment in English learning and was willing to devote more time and energy into it. What's more, as mentioned in Brian's story, he used the results of the GEPT as a criterion of his English progress. Since the GEPT tested all four skills, he was aware that holistic development of language skills was vital. On top of that, from those English learning stories, he learned that English learning requires continuous effort since there is no end to learning the language. Realizing the importance of continuous effort, his learning goal was to make daily progress in English.

University: a. Learning English involves more than memorization. While in high school Brian considered English learning as memorization, this belief changed when he entered university, which provided various courses in literature and

linguistics. From his experiences of taking those courses, Brian gained a deeper understanding of English and began to think that English Learning did not consist of memorization only. At this stage, Brian reported that he started to reconceptualize four skills. What he meant by reconceptualizing four skills was to broaden his knowledge of language learning and to learn more advanced language skills, such as making a summary and reading critically.

University: b. Language learning should be connected to one's life. During the last two years in college, Brian wanted to move beyond language skills and apply what he learned into his life. He thought English did not merely exist in the textbook; instead, language should be linked to everyday life. With this belief, Brian voluntarily participated in various activities that required using the language, such as the student ambassador program and English camps.

University: c. Being extrovert but meticulous are important in English learning. From observing his peers, Brian found that being extrovert and meticulous are critical to develop English communicative competence. Brian perceived that being extrovert was so critical in developing communicative competence that he was willing to change his originally introvert disposition. The experience of taking the advanced level of the GEPT also reinforced his belief that being extrovert is vital. After taking the test, he found that he needed to seek opportunities to chat with native as well as non-native English speakers to strengthen his communicative competence.

Postgraduate stage: a. The focus in graduate school is doing research instead of learning English. Brian considered that graduate education aims to develop abilities of doing research. He reported that doing research requires one to read

journal papers and to make compelling arguments when writing thesis, which abilities are beyond language learning level.

Postgraduate stage: b. English learning is ubiquitous. As aforementioned Brian made English learning part of his life in graduate school. Possessing this belief, he could turn trivial things in daily life into English learning opportunities. To him, language learning opportunities are/can be created everywhere.

What English means to Brian.

Elementary school: English is something that my peers pursue. In elementary school, Brian did not take English learning seriously. Although he only had a very vague idea about English learning, he did notice that his classmates studied this language when he was not.

> " When you are with your peers, when you see everyone is pursuing a certain thing, it is very strange if you don't pursue it; […] If everybody is doing the same thing and you do not do it, you will become an outcast, and you want to be part of the group. (Interview 062311)

Junior high school: English is a subject. Different from the previous stage, English started to become a required school subject at Brian's junior high school stage, which was packed with countless quizzes and tests. Though Brian was an obedient student who strived to achieve good academic performance, he felt perplexed about the purpose of studying English, for he could not see the connection between English and his life.

Senior high school: "English is a sky where I can further develop myself." In senior high school, from reading English learning magazines, he began to enjoy

learning English. On top of that, he also gained a great sense of achievement from his excellent performances in English exams as well as contests. Gradually Brian found that English was something that he was good at and interested in. In his eyes, English was a sky, a space where he could develop himself.

University: English is my major, my expertise, and my future profession. Choosing English as his major, Brian was aware that his future career would be closely related to English, though he was not sure what his future job would be. Furthermore, as an English major, he knew his English must be excellent to match this identity and therefore he was dedicated to English learning and took the initiative to search for a variety of English learning opportunities.

Postgraduate stage: a. English is entertainment. Brian considered that the focus of graduate school is doing research. Compared to the relatively dry and serious process of doing research, English learning was more like an entertainment to Brian.

Postgraduate stage: b. English is part of me. As aforementioned, Brian attempted to merge English learning into his life. His English learning had become ubiquitous and he could convert almost anything into an English opportunity. Just like what he said in the first interview, " English has become every fiber of me. I cannot separate it from myself." English had become part of Brian, part of his identity.

In graduate school, he merged English into his life and his English learning was ubiquitous. When he was interviewed by a news reporter in 2011, he even said "Learning English is like breathing. It is very natural," which demonstrates that

learning English was something almost intuitive to him and was an indispensible part in his life.

English really means a lot to Brian. In his Chinese narrative 2009, he described how he perceived English:

> Pursuing graduate studies was the goal I set when I was a freshman; I want to explore language in depth and make it become my expertise, because it is the indispensible nutrition in my life. Without it, I would not be who I am now; without it, I would not have my current achievement. Without it, I would not feel so confident in myself. Hence, language is extremely important to me. (Brian's Chinese narrative, 2009)

Summary of Brian's Case

In elementary school, Brian did not have a clear conception of language learning but he was aware that English was something that his peers pursued. After Brian enrolled in a private junior high school, English became one of the school subjects. In an examination-oriented school context, Brian just memorized whatever his English teacher taught to fulfill exam requirements. To him, English was nothing more than a school subject. The summer before he entered senior high school, he had access to English magazines and English broadcast, from which he began to find pleasure in learning English. As he spent more time on English, his English academic achievement increased. At this stage, from his experiences of taking the GEPT, the stories of successful English learners' stories, and the participation of English speech contests as well as Youth Toastmaster, he gradually constructed the belief that English learning should be continuous, enjoyable, and holistic. In Brian's mind, English was not merely a school subject—It was a space where he could further

develop himself. Therefore, he chose English as his major in university. Having taken courses in literature, linguistics, and TESOL, he gained a deeper understanding of English and no longer considered English learning as mere memorization. Furthermore, he would like to connect English to his daily life and participated in various English activities. At postgraduate stage, he was aware that graduate school education centers on research. However, apart from doing research, he still spent much time on English learning. To him, English learning is ubiquitous, for he could transform things he observed in his life into language learning opportunities. Therefore, he considered that he was learning English all the time and English had become part of him.

Table 2

Summary of Brian's Learner Beliefs and His Relationship with English

Stage	Learner Beliefs	What English Means	Critical Transitions
Elementary School	No Clear Idea about English Learning Yet	Something that my peers pursue	Starting to learn English
Junior High School	a. Effort is the key to language learning. b. English learning is memorization. c. I studies English mainly to cope with tests.	A subject	English became a school subject and Brian studied English mainly to satisfy exam requirements.
Senior High School	a. Continuous effort is vital to the success of language learning. b. Language learning is fun. c. Language learning should be holistic. d. My goal is to make daily progress in English.	A sky where I can further develop myself	a. Starting to enjoy English learning and to get a sense of achievement from his English academic performance b. Starting to seek English learning materials actively c. Test became a means to measure his progress instead of his learning goal.

Table 2 (continued)

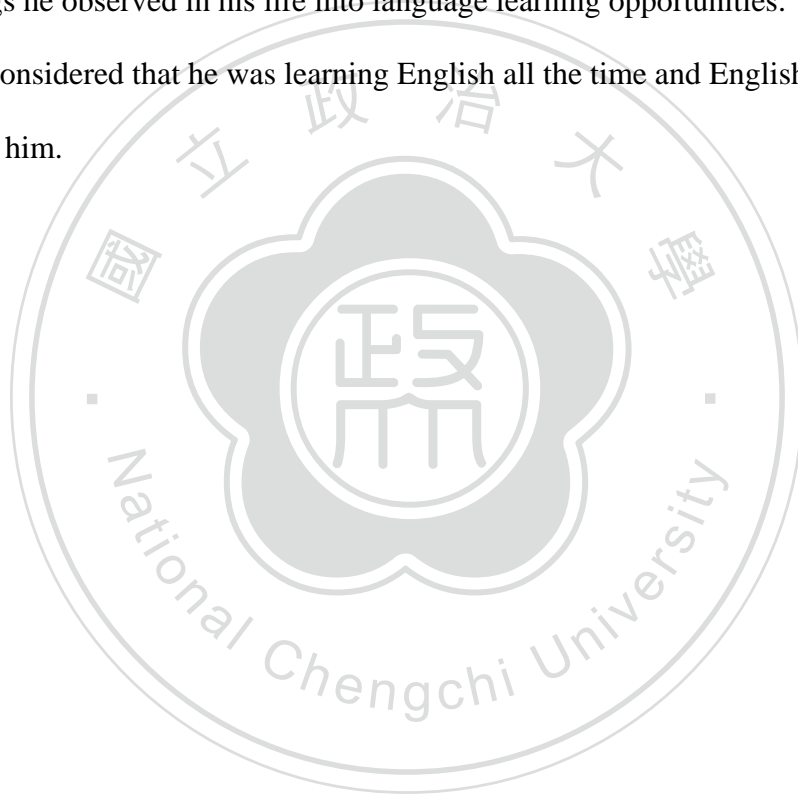*Summary of Brian's Learner Beliefs and His Relationship with English*

Stage	Learner Beliefs	What English Means	Critical Transitions
University	a. Learning English involves more than memorization b. Language learning should be connected to one's life. c. Being extrovert but meticulous are important in English learning.	My major, expertise, and future profession	a. Reconceptualizing English learning b. Aware of the importance of communication and changing his originally introvert disposition to interact with other English speakers c. Participating in a variety of English activities
Postgraduate Stage	a. The focus in graduate school is doing research instead of learning English. b. English Learning is ubiquitous.	a. Entertainment b. Part of Me	Perceiving English as part of himself and merging English learning into his everyday life

Lily

This section discusses Lily's languages learning story and her critical language learning experiences. After that, her important learner beliefs as well as what language means to her at different phases of her life are put forward for further discussion.

Lily's language learning story.

Elementary school. Lily started to learn English at nine. At that time, she attended an English course for kids. The course was offered by her father's company and it lasted for one or two semesters. When she turned eleven, she was sent to an English tutoring class for children, aged from ten to twelve years old. The teacher of the English tutoring class adopted miscellaneous English materials and teaching methods:

> Our teacher was Ms. Wu. She integrated a variety of activities into the class. In addition to the reference [test-preparation] book of junior high school English textbook, Ms. Wu herself created interesting dialogues. She would ask her students to memorize them to do role play [*sic*]. She taught us English songs and dramas as well. (Lily's English Narrative, 2009)

In the English tutoring class, Lily gradually became aware that her performances outshined her peers, including those who were older than her. She reported to experience a great sense of achievement from her superior performance in English tests and competitive games. She delightfully delineates,

> Soon I found that I was more capable than other classmates. Though some of my classmates were a year older than me, I could always get the highest grades on quizzes. One of our assignments was to read aloud an article within a certain limit of time, say, 60 seconds. I liked this assignment a lot and each time I

would practice and practice until I was sure that no one would read faster than me. (Lily's English narrative, 2009)

Lily attributed her superior performance in English to the efforts made into learning English. What she meant by "efforts" refers to " Completing the homework assigned by her teacher." As an obedient student, Lily always followed her teacher's instruction and considered it important to finish the assignment.

 At that time, my English was not bad. And my feature was that I would finish
 the homework assigned by my teacher. I remembered that once almost no
 student did the assignment and my teacher was very angry. [...] I was the only
 student that completed the assignment, so I would think that as long as one
 made an effort to learn English, one could learn it well. (Interview 062511)

Lily stayed in the English tutoring class for five years, from the fifth grade in elementary school to the third year in junior high school. Lily states,

 I was in Miss Wu's class till I graduated from junior high school. Her class
 provided a foundation for my English education. Compared to my formal
 school, the faster pace [of Miss Wu's class helped me obtain high scores in
 school's English exams with ease." (Lily's Chinese Narrative, 2009)

Junior high school. When Lily entered junior high school, English was a required school subject. At this phase, she viewed English as a subject.

 At that time I regarded English as a subject, so I did not think about how long it
 would take to learn it well. I just learned the content of every lesson. (Interview
 062511)

Since Lily viewed English as a subject, she used her test performance as a criterion to see if she learned it well. When she was asked how she weighed her learning outcome, her reply was " Exams, the results of my exams." To obtained high

scores in exams, Lily's way of learning English was closely related to test preparation:

My way of studying English was doing the exercises in the test-preparation books. I felt much relieved after finishing those exercises. I would feel that I could do well in the exam the next day. (Interview 062511)

Lily also reported that she liked English because she could learn it with ease. To Lily, English was a subject that she was good at since she could get high marks in English exams easily. When asked about the critical beliefs that she held at this stage, she gave the following response:

I did not seem to have special beliefs [about English learning in junior high school]. I just felt that I could learn English better than others. (Interview 062511)

Senior high school. After graduation from junior high school, Lily entered a prestigious senior high school. Like junior high school, she still considered English as a school subject and her aim was gaining high scores in exams. Nevertheless, Lily perceived that the number of vocabulary in her textbook notably increased. She, however, was able to manage her English studies by following her teacher's instruction. She narrates,

There was a big gap between junior and senior high school English, especially the amount of vocabulary. However, following what the school teacher asked us to do, such as memorizing vocabulary, doing translation exercises, studying the grammar book and each lesson in the textbook thoroughly, I gradually improved my English proficiency. It seemed not hard for me to understand those complex grammar rules and applied them to exercises and exams. (Lily's English Narrative, 2009)

In addition, in senior high school, Lily began to use some extracurricular

English materials, such as *The China Post* and English-learning magazines. From reading the magazines, she found that if she saw a new word appeared in different English materials, she would retain the word longer. When asked what important English learning concepts that she held in senior high school, she replied as follows:

I found that outside reading was useful. After I saw a word in the text and the vocabulary entry of my textbook, I would keep doing exercises [in which the word would repeatedly show up]; then I would remember the word. That is how I memorize vocabulary. I usually did not memorize new words in example sentences in the textbook but if those words appeared again and again in magazines or other texts, I would remember them, so I would think that encountering the same word repeatedly in different context was another way to learn vocabulary. (Interview 062511)

University. After graduation from senior high school, Lily passed the Joint Entrance Examination of Universities with flying colors. Then she mulled over what to choose as her major in university:

First, I ruled out math, which I was not very good at. Then, given my aptitude and strengths, I would not enjoy studying law and commerce. Thus I turned to social sciences: English, Japanese, History, and Library and Information were all possible choices. Since I obtained high marks in the entrance exam, I chose Foreign Languages and Literatures, the department that requires the highest scores among those options. (Lily's Chinese Narrative, 2009)

While Lily sailed through high school, she encountered her first setback in English learning in the first year of university:

Being an English major was not as wonderful as I had thought. The biggest problem was that I could hardly understand the professors' lecture in English.

In addition, I had difficulty understanding what was said in the literature

textbook even though I had already looked up every unknown word. I struggled

through those literature courses. (Lily's English Narrative, 2009)

Not long after she entered university, she observed that some of her peers

had experiences of studying abroad and their English levels were much higher than

hers. Hence, she began to think that environment was more critical than effort in

developing one's English competence. However, she claimed that there was "a

turning point" in one of her composition classes in the sophomore year:

An important turning point happened in my composition class. When our

teacher asked us how much time we spent on writing our assignments, I found

that even for the classmate whose parents are diplomats, it was still not easy for

him to write a good article. His composition was better than mine because he

pondered on how to write his composition every day and I just thought about

my piece of writing the night before the composition class, not to mention the

time that he spent on English before university was a hundred times more than I

did. To catch up with his English level, I had to spend even more time [on

English]. (Lily's Chinese Narrative, 2009)

During the summer before the third year in university, Lily went on a study trip

to New York with the hope that her English proficiency would boost significantly.

After the trip, her English competence, however, was not enhanced since most of time

she still hung out with her Taiwanese classmate. She states,

When I was in university, I had the myth that studying abroad can incredibly

boost one's English level. Thus, when I saved enough money, I went on a study

trip with one of my classmates to New York for a month. […] In New York, we

had classes in a language center, and we had Spanish, Mandarin Chinese,

Korean, Japanese and other Taiwanese classmates. Most of the time, I still hung

out with Taiwanese classmates, for I did not have the courage to make friends

with international classmates. I ended up learning almost nothing [from the

study trip.] There was a big gap between my expectation [of studying abroad

and my experience. Maybe that is why I do not look forward to living

in English speaking countries afterwards. (Lily's Chinese Narrative, 2009)

Lily's experiences of learning Japanese made her realize that English learning

will be more effective if one really uses the language. Her language learning

experiences at school and at The Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC)

also help her to compare the distinct learning effects of different teaching methods.

The following are two excerpts from Lily's first interview: The first excerpt was

about her Japanese learning experience at school in the sophomore year of university;

the second one was about the experience in LTTC during the summer vacation before

the fourth year in university.

My university offered second foreign language courses and I chose Japanese

and Spanish. My Japanese teacher was very famous, and everyone said that she

taught Japanese very well. But her class was a big one, around sixty to seventy

students. Her teaching style was quite traditional and placed more emphasis on

grammar. I did not spend much time learning Japanese so I did not learn it well.

Originally I thought [that my Japanese was not very good because] I did not

study hard enough but my classmate told me that it was the teacher's fault.

(Interview 062511)

I also went to LTTC to learn Japanese. The class size there was smaller, around

ten to fifteen students, and you would have the chance to use the language. For

instance, when I learned a sentence pattern, I needed to make a sentence and

keep practicing it in a dialogue with my classmate. I think this way of learning is more effective. It may not take less time but it is more effective and lasting. If I just memorize a grammar rule today and do not review it, I will forget it. But if I do practice the grammar rule and use it, say, have a dialogue or something like that, then I will remember it longer. (Interview 062511)

While LTTC provided many opportunities for Lily to hone her Japanese skills, she thought what was taught in LTTC was not enough and thus actively sought more extracurricular Japanese learning resources:

When I first came to LTTC, I thought what I learned in LTTC could not satisfy my needs because I had taken some Japanese courses at school. I wanted to learn Japanese faster, so I would buy some Japanese learning books. In addition, the courses in LTTC focused less on grammar, so I would seek books on Japanese grammar. I also purchased books on listening and did the listening exercises in them. On top of that, I took a Japanese proficiency test. (Interview 073111)

Lily's active attitude toward Japanese learning resources and proficiency test formed a stark contrast with her attitude toward English materials.

At high school stage I did not particularly seek English learning resources but after I entered university, I would bought some English stories and novels, though I seldom finished reading them. […] I was in the English department, I should more or less read some English materials. (Interview 073111)

In my sophomore year, I took the TOEIC test because I wanted to apply for a minor in economics, which required the certificate of TOEIC. (Interview 073111)

Postgraduate stage. After receiving her college degree, Lily chose to become an English teacher in a public junior high school in her hometown. From her English

learning experience and Japanese learning experiences in university, she realized the importance of "using the target language". Therefore, compared with other teachers in her school, she would provide more opportunities for students to train all four language skills:

> In comparison with other teachers in my school, I would cover practices in listening, speaking, reading, and writing [while some of them would not cover all four skills]. When I did substitute teaching for my colleagues, I found some of them would ignore the pronunciation or the activity sections, because the content of those sections would not be included in the exams. […] But I think that if learners want to learn English well, they have to train all four skills. In terms of four skills, I focus more on the skills that would be tested but I tried my best not to take away listening, speaking, and writing practices. (Lily's note, October 2011)

As a novice junior high school teacher, Lily was exhausted from her work. On Saturdays, she would take Japanese courses as a rest. Japanese, to her, was more like an entertainment.

Working as a junior high school teacher, she found that the English proficiency required for a junior high school teacher was not high, but the identity as an English teacher pressured her to keep on sharpening her English. After teaching English for four years, Lily decided to take an unpaid leave of absence from her teaching job to pursue graduate studies.

After leaving her teaching job, Lily entered a graduate school in Northern Taiwan. As a graduate student, she was aware that the focus in graduate school was doing research instead of honing language abilities. To Lily, English became a tool for conducting research. She states,

In graduate school, English is still my expertise. It is also a tool, because the language used in the academic community is English and the papers we read are written in English. (Interview 073111)

Lily's learner beliefs. In this section, Lily's beliefs on English learning are introduced. Apart from her English learning beliefs, other factors that influenced her English learning are also stated, including her perception on English, her environment, and critical experiences in her English learning process.

Elementary school: I have to finish the homework assigned by my teacher.

"Completing my assignment is critical" has been an important belief held by Lily since her elementary school stage. She thought it was vital to finish the assignment and even attributed her superior English performance to "completing the homework assigned by her teacher."

High school: a. Whatever is tested in exams is important. In high school, English was a subject to Lily and her goal in English learning was gaining high scores in tests. Therefore, she spent more time on what would be tested in exams, such as doing grammar drills and memorizing English vocabulary.

High school: b. Doing the exercises in test-preparation books can help me achieve high grades. Lily reported that her way of preparing for exams is doing the exercises in test-preparation books, for she found that the exercises in those books would also appear in the school's exams.

High school: c. Speaking and listening are less important. During Lily's high school days, the significance of speaking and listening were downplayed, for those skills were not the foci of exams. In addition, the attitude of Lily's teachers toward listening and speaking also had an impact on her perception of those skills.

[In junior high school] My teacher in the tutoring class guided us to read an

article from Let's Talk in English and she said that we could listen to the

magazine's broadcast at home, but the teacher did not assign this (listening to

the broadcast) as a homework. I listened to the broadcast for a week and could

hardly understand its content so I gave up afterwards. I did not try hard to

understand the content because I thought it was not an assignment. It felt like

whether I did it or not did not really matter. (Interview 062511)

We had conversation class in our second year of senior high school, […] but

because we only had a conversation a week and our teacher also taught

halfheartedly, I would feel that it was not important. The performance in the

conversation class would not influence our scores much. At that time, the

school asked us to listened to English broadcast. We had three choices

(magazines with English broadcasts) and I chose the easiest one, the one with

the most Chinese explanations. [...] Our teacher would give us English quizzes

on magazines, but it did not make much difference whether you listened to the

broadcast; you just needed to memorize the vocabulary in the magazines [and

memorizing the words was enough for the quizzes]. (Interview 062511)

High school: d. My English level cannot be too low because I am the English

teacher's assistant. In senior high school, Lily reported that she could obtain high

grades in English in her class. If her test scores dropped, she would lose her face. On

top of that, she was her English teacher's assistant for two semesters and she thought

that her English level cannot be too low because of her identity as the teacher's

assistant*.*

University: a. From "Environment is more critical than effort to English

learning." to "Effort is more critical than environment to English learning." From

observing her peers at tertiary stage and ascribing their high English level to their

experiences of staying abroad, Lily thought environment is more important to one's success in language learning. She, however, changed this belief to "Effort is more critical than environment" during one of her writing classes when she found that her peers made enormous effort to English writing.

Lily reported that she mistakenly believed that studying abroad can boost one's English proficiency to a huge extent. This belief, however, changed when she found that her English competence was not enhanced after the study tour to New York.

University: b. One needs to "use" English to be able to learn it well. Lily's Japanese learning experiences at school and those at The Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) helped her compare the distinct learning effects of different teaching methods. Lily found that she could grasp Japanese better since she had much more opportunities to use Japanese in LTTC than at school.

University: c. My Shyness hinders my speaking ability. Before college, Lily had never talked to any foreigners in English. At tertiary stage, she reported that she would avoid talking to foreigners due to her personality, which would block the improvement of her oral competence. She states,

I do not like to talk to others. I seldom take the initiative to open up a

conversation. I think it is a obstacle [to improving my speaking ability].

(Interview 073111)

University: d. My English should be good because I am an English major.
When asked about her learning motivation at university, Lily stated, " I am an English major, my English competence should be good enough to match this identity" (Interview 062511). Furthermore, Lily's learning goal is also related to her identity as an English major. When inquired about her goal, Lily thought that she had to reach the English level that an English major should achieve. That is, she could reach a

high English level in speaking, listening, reading, and writing and could use English fluently at work.

Postgraduate stage: a. The focus in graduate school is doing research instead of learning English. After entering the graduate school, Lily stated that what she learned in gradate school was doing research instead of English learning. Therefore, she spent more time and energy on studying research papers instead of English learning materials.

Postgraduate stage: b. Once one stops learning English, his/her English competence will regress. Prior to the graduate school, Lily worked as a junior high school teacher and had less exposure to advanced English. Currently, she is under temporary suspension of schooling [in graduate school]. From her experiences during these two periods, she claimed that her English level declined due to less English exposure.

Postgraduate stage: c. My English should be excellent because I am an English teacher. When inquired about the English level she would like to reach at postgraduate stage, Lily responded,

"The higher the better, because I am an English teacher and English is my

 expertise. It will be beneficial to my career if I improve my English"

(Interview 062511).

Though she thought that her English had to be excellent as an English teacher, after having some teaching experiences in a junior high school, she found that working as a junior high school teacher did not require high English proficiency since she just taught her students basic English. For Lily, there is a gap between the English proficiency which she actually needed for work and the proficiency that she thought she ought to have to match the identity as an English teacher.

What English means to Lily.

Elementary school: English is a skill that I am good at. When Lily was an elementary school student, English had not become a subject yet. Hence, Lily just viewed English as a kind of skill that she was good at.

High school: English is a subject that I am good at. English became a required school subject when Lily entered junior high school. Obtaining high marks in English exams during her high school days, she was aware that her English was good.

University: English is my major, my expertise, and my future profession. At tertiary stage, Lily chose English as her major. Though she suffered much frustration in English at this stage, she still thought that her English had to be good enough to match her identity as an English major. In addition, at this stage, she started to think about becoming an English teacher after graduation.

> In university, English was my major. It was a language that I had to be well-
> versed at. Moreover, I was pondering over working as a teacher after
> graduation, so it might become my future profession. (Interview 062511)

Postgraduate stage: English is my expertise and a tool for doing research. At postgraduate, Lily had the identity of English teacher and English major, and she was aware that English was her expertise. As a graduate school student, she perceived the focus in graduate school was research and English was viewed as a tool for conducting research.

Summary of Lily's Case

In elementary school, Lily did not form specific ideas about how language should be learned. She just followed her teacher's instruction and completed her English assignments. In high school, since English became a school subject at this stage, she viewed English as a subject and her goal was to obtain high marks in exams.

Therefore, her language learning beliefs in high school were mostly circulated around exams. She would focus more on language components and skills that would be tested and paid less attention to speaking and listening, which were not the foci of tests. In addition, she was the English teacher's assistant in high school and thus considered her English level could not be too low. At tertiary stage, from observing her peers, Lily began to recognize the importance of the environment. However, her emphasis on the environment changed after a study tour to New York, since she found little improvement after the tour. In addition, from her experiences of learning Japanese in LTTC, she found that it was important to use the target language. Thus, the focus of her beliefs shifted from exams to real language use. On top of that, as an English major at university, she thought her English proficiency must be high. After graduation, she worked as a junior high school teacher and was aware that English was her expertise. Possessing the identity of an English teacher, she thought that her English had to be excellent. After teaching in the junior high school for four years, she decided to take a leave from her teaching job and pursued further studies in a graduate school. From the training she received in graduate school, she considered that the focus here was doing research instead of learning English. At postgraduate stage, with the identity of a teacher as well as a graduate student, Lily regarded English as her expertise as well as a tool for conducting academic studies.

Table 3

Summary of Lily's Learner Beliefs and Her Relationship with English

Stage	Learner Beliefs	What English Means	Critical Transitions
Elementary School	I have to finish the homework assigned by my teacher.	A skill that I am good at	Starting to learn English
High School	a. Whatever is tested in exams is vital b. Doing the exercises in test-preparation books can help me achieve high grades. c. Speaking and listening are less important. d. My English level cannot be too low because I am the English teacher's assistant.	A subject that I am good at	English became a school subject and Lily studied English mainly to satisfy exam requirements.
University	a. From "Environment is more critical than effort." to "Effort is more critical than Environment." b. One needs to use English to be able to learn it well.	My major, expertise, and future profession	a. Starting to encounter difficulty in English b. Taking a study trip to New York (Lily's first study abroad experience)

Table 3 (continued)

Summary of Lily's Learner Beliefs and Her Relationship with English

Stage	Learner Beliefs	What English Means	Critical Transitions
University	c. My shyness hinders my speaking ability.		c. Learning focus shifted from test to language use.
	d. My English should be good because I am an English major.		
Postgraduate Stage	a. The focus in graduate school is doing research instead of learning English.	My expertise and a tool for research	a. Focusing on research
	b. Once one stops learning English, his/her English competence will regress.		b. Possessing the identity as a teacher
	c. My English should be excellent because I am an English teacher.		

CHAPTER 5

Cross-Case Analysis and Discussion

Research Question One and Two

Question 1: What L2 learner beliefs did two Taiwanese MA-TESOL students hold at different stages in the life?

Question 2: How did the L2 learner beliefs change over time?

Brian's and Lily's learner beliefs at different stages are demonstrated respectively in the previous chapter. While they held diverse beliefs about English learning, both cases suggest that learner beliefs are dynamic and contextual. Take Brian for instance, at junior high school stage, as a beginner of English in an exam-oriented private school, Brian just memorized whatever was taught by his teacher to satisfy exam requirements. At that time, he viewed English learning as mere memorization. However, as he gained more knowledge about English learning and had courses in TESOL, linguistics, and literature at tertiary stage, he began to realize that English learning was more than memorization: To learn English well, one needs to develop more advanced skills, such as making a summary or reading an article critically. On top of that, he actively participated in a variety of English activities to better develop his communicative competence and to apply what he learned to his life. As he made a greater effort to improving his English, he attempted to convert whatever he observed into English learning chances. With enormous exposure to English, in postgraduate stage, Brian regarded English part of him. In Brian's case, his beliefs about language learning methods changed from memorization to more than memorization and later shifted to merging English learning into his life. Finally, English was so vital to him that it turned into part of his identity.

As for Lily's case, in high school, her ways of learning English were mostly associated with obtaining high scores in English exams, such as doing the exercises in test-preparation books. After she enrolled in university, from her English and Japanese learning experiences at this stage, she began to place more emphasis on "using" the language instead of achieving high scores. That is, the focus of Lily's language learning beliefs varied from exams to real language use. As illustrated above, both cases show that learner beliefs fluctuate across different stages.

The study reveals that learner belief is dynamic and changes in relation to various factors. The following sections discuss the relationships among belief, context, self, and identity to provide a clearer picture of how learner belief changes over time.

Context. As described above, learner belief is dynamic and shifts according to different contexts. However, it is important to note that belief development is not a mere reflection of contextual influences. Rather, belief is constructed by the learner in relation to how he or she perceives and interacts with the context. This is consistent with Ushioda's (2009) call for " a focus on 'person in context', rather than on context as independent variable, to capture the mutuality constitutive relationship between persons and the contexts in which they act – a relationship that is dynamic, complex and non linear"(p.218). In a similar vein, Barcelo (2003) also contends that context is not fixed but socially constructed as learners interact with the environment. From this perspective, she interprets context as "learners' constructions of their experiences" (p.20). With this interpretation of context, how learners perceive and explain the context is of pivotal importance. The participants' language learning beliefs in university may exemplify this concept. Lily reported that she possessed the myth that her English would enormously improve if she went abroad. Nevertheless, she claimed that this myth was dashed after she went on a study tour to the U.S. " I

thought I would have to use English when I was in [an English speaking] environment but after I arrived there, I found that I still did not need to use it, because I hung out with my Taiwanese classmates most of the time," said Lily. Interestingly, while Lily claimed that she did not have to use much English in an English speaking country, Brian reported that he perceived abundant language learning opportunities in Taiwan, an EFL environment. He stated," [In university] I was in an English learning environment. […] I think I was exposed to English all the time." (Interview 062311) The sharp contrast between Lily's and Brain's perception on their contexts indicates that belief does not simply mirror the context but that it is constructed by the learner in connection to how he or she perceives and interprets the context.

Brian's and Lily's distinctive perspectives on their contexts can be linked to the concept of "affordances", defined by Gibson (1979) as "what it [the environment] *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good" (p.127).   Inspired by Gibson, van Lier (2004) further interprets affordances as "relationships of possibility, the result of perceiving an object while co-perceiving oneself" (p.248). That is, affordances are what agents perceive the environment offer them. Turner (2001) also points out, context perceived advantageous to L2 learners transform into affordances. As aforementioned, Brain could see ample language learning affordances in an EFL setting whereas Lily observed little language learning affordances even in an English-speaking environment. The stark contrast of their perceptions on the contexts may shed light on the opportunities and constraints of the EFL environment in Taiwan, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

In addition, the findings of the study suggest that affordances are created by learners in relation to the context instead of being directly provided by the environment. This argument is different from the assertion of other studies on the

relationship between beliefs and affordances. Peng (2011) conducted a research on how classroom affordances mediate language learning beliefs. The study suggests affordances provided in the classroom could empower learners to adjust their action and thus leads the focus to how the context can offer sufficient affordances instead of how the learner generates affordances in connection to the context. While this study is in accordance with Peng's view that "learner beliefs as responsive to classroom affordances," the finding points out that affordances are not simply given by the context but are created by the learner through the perception toward the context.

As aforementioned, learner belief is not a mere reflection of the context but is constructed by learners in interaction with the context. This concept can also be demonstrated by Brian and Lily's different beliefs about test. In senior high school, although both Brian and Lily were in a context that stressed academic achievement, Brian underscored the importance of four skills whereas Lily laid stress on the skills that would be tested, which were reading and writing. The stark contrast between the two cases may be related to their diverse perceptions on test and types of tests they took along the way.

At high school stage, Lily considered exam results as "an end"; therefore in her mind, a good English learning method meant strategies that could help her gain high scores. Furthermore, before college, the tests she took were quizzes, monthly exams, and entrance exams for senior high school and college, which mainly test vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing skills. In contrast, during high school days, except for the aforementioned test types, Brian took the basic, the intermediate, and the high-intermediate levels of the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), which test all four skills. For Brian, the scores of the GEPT was a reference point, not a representation, of the progress that he made in English. He dispelled the popular

belief that test scores denote one's language level; hence he did not view exam results as a final end but as a means to better his English.

In addition, how the participants perceive the relationship among different language skills and test is also critical to their learner beliefs. Take the two participants' beliefs about the significance of listening for example, in senior high school, Brian placed much more emphasis on listening than Lily did, for Brian perceived that all language skills are interconnected; that is, training one of the four skills can also improve other language skills. Therefore he considered that listening training would enhance his competence in reading and writing and thus boosted his test performance. By contrast, Lily claimed that listening was less important than reading and writing since it was not included in exams. Failing to see how listening could benefit her other language skills and increase exam scores, Lily was less willing to devote her energy to develop listening. The distinct perceptions of the two cases on the importance of listening skill may shed light on the recent debate over the inclusion of listening and speaking skills in Joint College Entrance Exams in Taiwan. Further implications derived from the participants' beliefs about test in an exam-oriented context are addressed in the next chapter.

Self. By investigating learner beliefs held by the two participants, the researcher identifies an important theme which is closely related to their L2 learning beliefs—the relationship between the participants' L2 selves and their language learning beliefs. Dörnyei's (2005) proposes the concepts of "the ideal L2 self" and "the ought-to self." The ideal L2 self is more geared toward the aspiration to have a better command in L2. On the other hand, the ought-to self is connected to the belief that one should measure up social expectations to avoid unfavorable consequences. The change of L2 selves may be linked to learners' motivational language learning beliefs. As

illustrated in the data, Brain's L2 self shifts from the ought-to L2 self to the ideal L2 self during the transition from junior high school to senior high school. In junior high school, most of the time he studied English to satisfy exam requirements or to meet his teachers' and parents' expectations. However, in senior high school, he began to enjoy English learning as well as to consider himself a competent learner. Interestingly, although he had a high expectation toward his English proficiency -- "I want to be even better than educated native speakers of English," said Brian, he does not have a clear picture of his ideal self, for his goal is extremely high and he does not want to limit himself to a specific goal.

Different from Brian, Lily's L2 self is more prone to "the ought-to self" across all stages: Most of Lily's motivational beliefs were voiced alongside a sense of obligation, which are revealed from her expressions like " I should finish my assignment otherwise I would feel fearful or anxious," " I was my English teacher's assistant in senior high school; my English level could not be too low," and " I am an English major; I should more or less read some English novels." Furthermore, Lily would set diverse standards when she took on different identities. That is, she would think that one *ought to* reach a certain English level in order to match a specific identity. She claimed that there is a gap between the language proficiency which she needs as a junior high school English teacher and the proficiency which she *ought to* possess in order to meet others' expectation of an English teacher. She explained, "Because I taught in a junior high school, I did not have to teach advanced English but if I tell others that I am an English teacher, they will expect that my English must be excellent." Moreover, she also made a distinction between the English proficiency level required for the identity of learner and that of teacher. Lily stated, "When I teach others, my spelling needs to be totally correct, but if I just learn English by

myself, my spelling does not have to be that accurate." While Lily considered that different identities required diverse levels of English proficiency, Brian expected himself to be well-versed at English no matter what identities he took on. The contrast between the two cases may demonstrate the relationship between their L2 selves and learner beliefs, especially beliefs related to their learning motivations and learning goals.

    Identity. Drawing from Dewey's (1938) notion on the interconnection between beliefs and identity, Barcelo (2003) points out that our identities are structured in interaction with our perception on others as well as others' perception on us. In this discussion section, I touch on the issues of relationships between "belief and self" as well as between "belief and identity." Hence, there may be a need to distinguish between self and identity, though the differences between the two is subtle. van Lier (2007) states that identities are how agents relate themselves to the world. He elaborates:

> ideally the self is in harmony with the environment (including the physical, the
> social, and the symbolic environment) through well-fitting and satisfactory
> identities that are shaped by both self-perceptions and other perceptions. […]
> When our lives change significantly, as is the case when learning a second
> language, new identities (way of liking the self to new worlds and words) need
> to be forged that bridge the gaps between the known and the new (p.58).

The above differentiation may shed light on the relationship among self, identity, and learner belief. From this perspective, a learner can be seen as a person constructing beliefs in interaction with the context while he or she constantly reconstructs new identities that connects the personal self. This notion may be demonstrated by Lily's case: She perceives herself as an English major in the

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university context and reported the belief that my English "ought to" be good because " I am an English major." After graduation, she passed the teachers' screening exam and started to possess the identity of an English teacher. Responsive to the context and the new identity, she formed the belief that her English proficiency "ought to" be excellent because of her teacher identity.

In addition, the conception of "core identity" and "situated identity" may further illuminate the relationship between learner belief and identity. Gee (1999, p218) makes a distinction between core identity and situated identity:

> I use the term "identity" (or, to be specific, "socially situated identity") for the multiple identities we take on in different practices and contexts and would use the term "core identity" for whatever continuous and relatively (but only relatively) "fixed" sense of self underlies our contextually shifting multiple identities.

Adopting the metaphors of clothing and body, I compare situated identity to "clothing," which a person can put on and take off as the situation shifts whereas core identity is more like part of one's "body," which is always with the person no matter how contexts change.

Brian's change of identities from a junior high school student to a graduate school student may exemplify the notions of core and situated identity. During junior high school days, Brian's identity as an English learner was situated, for he only studied English in class or when English exams were approaching. In other words, he only took on the identity of an English learner in specific contexts. However, in graduate school, he devoted himself fully to English learning to the extent that English had become part of him. He describes his English learning as "ubiquitous": No matter what situation he is in, he is always seeking or even creating language

learning opportunities. For instance, when he was with his parents, he had the situated identity as a son, but when his parents had a talk or even a fight, he said he would utilize this chance to practice English interpretation, since he had a core identity as an avid English learner. Possessing this core identity, he constructed beliefs like "English learning is ubiquitous" and " English is every fiber of me."

As for Lily's case, her identity as an English teacher and as an English learner were situated across all stages of her life. As Lily stated, "English plays an important role in my profession, but not in other parts of my life. […] I use English mainly for my school assignment. Outside the classroom, I have no one and no need to talk in English (Lily's English narrative, 2009). " The narrative reveals that when Lily left the classroom context, her identity as an English teacher and as a learner were downplayed or even temporarily removed from the particular context.

Research Question Three

Research Question 3: What are the participants' most vital beliefs across all the stages?

Brian and Lily: "Effort is vital to language learning." There are some similarities and differences between Brian's and Lily's critical beliefs. Both Brian and Lily claimed that "Effort is important to language learning." In Brian's English learning journey, he had been making increasing effort to learning English, especially since senior high school. Compared to Brian, Lily did not make as much effort to learning English. What's more, what Lily meant by "making an effort" mostly refers to completing the homework assignment given by her teachers. As shown in the previous chapter, although both of them recognized the importance of effort, the degree of effort that they were willing to make also varies. The differences is closely linked to "what the target language means" to themselves. That is, how the learners relate themselves to English.

The stark contrast between the two participants' relationship to English at different stages may explain their varying degrees of effort made into learning English. For example, in senior high school, to Brian, English was "a sky", a space that he could further develop himself. At that time, he found a great sense of enjoyment as well as achievement in English and was seriously considering to choose English as his major in college. Hence, he actively sought more English learning resources and was willing to invest most of his time and energy on English. In contrast, as a senior high school student, Lily only perceived English as one of the school subjects and English was just one of her possible options when she pondered over her major in university. Therefore, in senior high school, she was willing to make just enough effort to gain high scores in English and allotted much of her time to other school subjects.

At postgraduate stage, from Brian's perspective, English really meant a lot to him. English was his expertise, entertainment, and even part of him. As aforementioned, English was so important to him that he was willing to change his original introvert personality and become more extrovert to practice spoken English with international students. By contrast, while Lily also perceived English as her expertise, English was more like a responsibility to her. As stated previously, if she did not need to fulfill her responsibility as an English teacher and a TESOL graduate student, she would perceive little connection between English and her life. How the two participants relate themselves to English distinctively may help illuminate the underlying difference between their shared critical belief that "Effort is vital to English learning."

Aside from the relationship between learner belief and the target language, the values embedded in the Taiwanese context may also be connected to the participants'

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perceptions on "effort." Brian claimed that his belief about effort might come from Confucianism, though the influence was subtle. Teachings like "There is no end to learning." and " Constant dropping wears away a stone." were stressed and valued among Taiwanese people. Furthermore, Taiwanese media constantly report stories of successful learners, entrepreneurs, and experts in various fields and attribute their success to effort. Peter Lai, founder of an English learning magazine as well as a well-known English instructor in Taiwan, often stresses how hard he studied English when he was a student. He would offer to do chores for English speakers in order to chat with them in English or he would even wake up during midnight to study English till daybreak. With such stories and Confucius's teachings, the idea that effort is vital may be embedded in the Taiwanese context and accepted as part of the common social values either consciously or subconsciously.

Brian: "Language learning is fun." Although both cases admitted the importance of effort, only Brian reported the "fun" element in his learner beliefs, such as "Language learning is fun" or "Having interest in English is critical." He considered that having fun in English learning could help keep his learning motivation. He would adopt enjoyable ways to learn English, such as singing English songs and reading English learning magazines like *Let's Talk to English* and *Studio Classroom*. van Lier (1996) also points out the importance of intrinsic motivators, such as enjoyment and inner curiosity toward the target language. Though the fun element is vital, what is perceived as "fun" to each individual learner may be of greater difference. For instance, Lily regarded English learning magazines as mere test-preparation materials whereas Brian viewed them as interesting materials that could help him know more about the world.

This study shows that relationship between the learner and the target language plays a pivotal role in how much effort that he or she is willing to put into language learning. Furthermore, it also reveals that the same participant may build varied relationships with different languages. In addition to English, Lily also had the experiences of learning Japanese. When learning Japanese, Lily would take the initiative to seek Japanese extracurricular materials as well as taking language proficiency tests without being required. She even considered learning Japanese as an entertainment that could help relax herself in her busy teaching career. In contrast, Lily only took English proficiency tests when there was a practical need or when being asked to provide certificates of the tests. For Lily, English was seen as an obligation while Japanese was perceived as an enjoyment. Though the present study focuses on learner beliefs about English, how the same learner relate to various languages differently is also worthy to be noted. At the very least, it is clear that learning English is not as fun as learning Japanese.

Table 4 compares Brian's and Lily's learner beliefs in relation to context, self, identity, and English. An important transition period worth noting is senior high school stage, when Brian's L2 self transformed from ought-to self to ideal self whereas Lily's L2 self remained as ought-to self. Their different language selves played a vital role in their learner beliefs. On top of that, though Brian and Lily were in similar contexts or possessed similar identities during some periods of their lives, they perceived and interpreted language learning differently, for they connected themselves distinctively with English.

Table 4

Comparisons of Brian's and Lily's Learner Beliefs in Relation to Context, Self,

Identity, and English

Junior High School	Brian	Lily
Learner Beliefs	a. Viewing English learning as mere memorization	a. Centering on tests
	b. Centering on coping with tests	b. Ignoring language skills that would not be tested
Context	Exam-oriented context	Exam-oriented context
Self	Ought-to self	Ought-to self
Identity	An English learner (Situated)	An English learner (Situated)
English	A subject	A subject

Table 4 (continued)

Comparisons of Brian's and Lily's Learner Beliefs in Relation to Context, Self,

Identity, and English

Senior High School	Brian	Lily
Learner Beliefs	Considering that English learning should be fun, continuous, and holistic.	a. Centering on tests b. Ignoring language skills that would not be tested
Context	Exam-oriented context	Exam-oriented context
Self	Ideal self	Ought-to self
Identity	An English learner (Situated)	An English learner/ English teacher's assistant (Situated)
English	A sky where I can further develop myself	A subject

Table 4 (continued)

Comparisons of Brian's and Lily's Learner Beliefs in Relation to Context, Self,

Identity, and English

University	Brian	Lily
Learner Beliefs	a. Reconceptualizing English learning	a. Downplaying the importance of the English-speaking context
	b. Connecting English learning to his life	b. Focusing on using the language instead of tests
	c. Recognizing the importance of extroversion and meticulousness	c. Perceiving her shyness as a barrier to her speaking ability
Context	Taiwan (EFL context) →many English learning chances	a. Taiwan b. New York (English context) → few English learning chances
Self	Ideal self	Ought-to self
Identity	An English major (Situated); An English learner (Situated→Core)	An English major/ learner (Situated)
English	My major, expertise, future profession	My major, expertise, future profession

Table 4 (continued)

Comparisons of Brian's and Lily's Learner Beliefs at Postgraduate Stage in Relation to Context, Self, Identity, and English

Postgraduate Stage	Brian	Lily
Learner Beliefs	a. Focusing on research	a. Focusing on research
	b. Considering English learning ubiquitous	b. Stressing the importance of learning English continuously
Context	Focusing on research	Focusing on research
Self	Ideal self	Ought-to self
Identity	An English major (Situated)	An English learner/ major/ teacher (Situated)
	An English learner (Core)	
English	a. Entertainment	a. My expertise
	b. Part of me	b. A tool for research

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The two participants' language learning beliefs explored in this study reveal that learner beliefs are dynamic and relational. The study suggests that learner belief change is closely connected with how learners perceive the context as well as how they relate themselves to the target language. In this chapter, a summary of the study is first presented. Then, pedagogical implications, suggestions for future research, and limitations of the study are put forward.

Summary of the Study

The study aims to explore the dynamic nature of learner beliefs through exploring two Taiwanese TESOL MA students' beliefs at different stages of their lives, from elementary school to postgraduate stages. The study adopts a qualitative research method. The participants, under the pseudonyms of Brian and Lily, are two TESOL MA students in a graduate school in northern Taiwan. Data collection methods mainly include written narratives and semi-structured interviews. The data collected is further analyzed using a holistic-content approach. Furthermore, member checking is applied to guard the trustworthiness of the study. The data demonstrate that the participants' beliefs shifted in interaction with the context and thus reveal that the nature of learner belief is dynamic. In Brian's case, his learner beliefs varied from English learning is memorization to more than memorization and later shifted to English learning is ubiquitous. As for Lily, the focus of her learner beliefs fluctuated from exams to real language use. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the construction of learner beliefs is connected with the context, self, and identity. It is noted that what really matters is not the context itself but how learners perceive the

context. Then, the conceptions of ideal self vs. ought-to self and core identity vs. situated identity are introduced to shed light on their relationship with learner belief. The findings also show that while both participants claimed that effort is critical to language learning across all stages, it is how they relate themselves to the target language that determine how much effort that they are willing to made into language learning.

Pedagogical Implications

Based on the results of the study, learner belief is dynamic and may shift in relation to various factors. Due to the changing nature of learner belief, educators cannot view students' beliefs as static entities and regard students as mere receivers of beliefs. Instead, educators need to be aware that learners are constantly interacting with their contexts and reconstruct their beliefs accordingly. Therefore, instead of using one-shot method to investigate students' beliefs, instructors need to adopt multiple methods to explore their beliefs at different time points. For example, in the beginning of the semester, a questionnaire is distributed to survey students' beliefs; during the middle of the semester, a group interview can be conducted to better understand their beliefs, and at the end of the semester, an individual reflection may be used to capture their belief change.

Furthermore, although a number of researchers have suggested to implement belief intervention methods in the classroom (Bernat, 2005; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Peacock, 2001), the present study suggests that it may be inappropriate to regard learner beliefs as fixed concepts and apply intervention methods to change them without taking learners' relationship with the language into consideration.

As revealed by the study, learner belief changes in interaction with the context. However, how learners perceives and interprets the context is more critical than the context itself. In a similar vein, while a number of studies have reported constraints of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment (Yang & Kim, 2011; Zhang, 2001), learners are not confined by the EFL context but by their perceptions toward the context. With this understanding, teachers can facilitate learners to perceive or even create learning opportunities in the EFL context. With the advancement of the internet and technology, teachers can assist learners to gain access to abundant on-line English learning resources as well as encourage learners to discuss and share their views on how to generate English learning opportunities in the environment.

In addition to the contextual factors, the study shows that how learners connect their selves and identities to English are critical to their language learning. Therefore, approaches that assist learners to reflect on the relationships among English, their selves, and identities are of pivotal importance. Teachers may conduct activities, such as individual written reflections and group discussions, to help learners think over how they connect themselves to English.

Last but not least, the participants' distinctive learner beliefs about test and language skills may illuminate the recent debate over the incorporation of listening in Joint College Entrance Exams. In the study, both cases needed to satisfy exam requirements at senior high school stage. However, their different perceptions toward test resulted in their distinctive attitudes toward listening. Regarding exams as a tool, Brian did not study for the purpose of exams only. Although listening was not incorporated in entrance exams, he was still willing to spend time on listening. By contrast, Lily had little intention to hone her listening skills, for she viewed exams as a goal, and thus she ignored skills that would not be tested. The sharp contrast

between Brian and Lily suggests that learners' perception toward test is more important than test itself. If learners do not perceive test as the major goal of studying English, they are likely to practice important language skills that are not included in exams.

While educators in Taiwan suggest the inclusion of listening test in the Joint College Entrance Exam, the Ministry of Education still has concerns over the implementation of listening test, for students from economically disadvantaged families may not have sufficient access to listening resources compared to those from well-off backgrounds (Wang, 2009). Nevertheless, if learners do not view exam results as the only end, they may still want to train their listening ability even though listening is not incorporated in entrance exams. In other words, what really matters is not whether to include listening in test but how learners perceive the importance of listening and the meaning of exams.

Limitations of the Study

The study has several constraints. First, while the study attempts to explore learner belief across different stages in learners' lives, the researcher did not adopt observation to collect data due to limited time. In addition, the contexts in the study are various, including home, after school classes, schools, language learning centers, and abroad context. The researcher cannot observe the cases in a plethora of contexts owing to limited time, budget, and human power. The present study mainly used interviews and narratives to collect data, which might suffer from memory distortion. The memory of the participants' past events might be affected by their interpretations at the present time.

Second, as aforementioned, the research method did not incorporate observation and therefore the researcher could not firmly comment on the relationship between the learners' action and beliefs. While the researcher found that different levels of agency between the two participants may be an theme of interest, it is hard to discuss their agencies with little observation of their actual behaviors.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings of the present study, some suggestions for further research are proposed. First, while the current study mainly centers on English learning beliefs, the data show that a person can have diverse relationships with different languages. How a learner perceives different languages and how the perception relates to learner beliefs about diverse languages may be an issue worthy of further exploration. Second, longitudinal studies on beliefs can incorporate more data collection methods, such as observation and learner diaries, to capture a more intact picture of learner beliefs as well as to better triangulate the data.

Third, teachers are also learners. It may be a topic of interest to investigate how teachers' learner beliefs influence or interact with their teaching beliefs. Fourth, in terms of research method, the researcher found that design of BALLI can be modified to better illicit learner beliefs within the Taiwanese context. For example, the first category of BALLI consists of questions about language aptitude. Though Taiwanese students do not deny the importance of aptitude but they may place more emphasis on effort over aptitude when it comes to language learning. Thus, questions asked should not center on aptitude only.

Moreover, the questions of BALLI are mostly related to linguistic components, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation; less attention is paid to skills, like

reading or writing. Advanced skills, like making a summary or critical thinking are also ignored. Since BALLI are often applied to measure college students' learner beliefs, the inclusion of advanced skills is needed. Future researchers may contemplate on the adaptation of BALLI. Last, as mentioned previously, important themes like the relationship between belief and agency or belief and autonomy can be further explored to help researchers better understand the relationship between learner beliefs and other factors.

Conclusion

The study explores two Taiwanese MA-TESOL students' learner beliefs across various stages in their English learning journey. The study reveals that their learner beliefs did undergo changes in different contexts. The results of the study lend support to the perspective of the contextual approach that "beliefs are not stable entities within the individual, but situated in social contexts and formed through specific instances of social interaction and, as a result are constantly evolving" (Woods, 2006, p202). On top of that, the study noted that what really matters is not the context itself but how learners perceive and interpret the specific context. Moreover, the study also demonstrates how learners constructed their language learning beliefs in relation to self and identity. How learners relate themselves to the language is a complex but critical issue worthy of further exploration. As described by Mercer (2011), belief is a complex, dynamic, and nonlinear system; this study does not aim to make a causal relationship between learner beliefs and any specific factors. Rather, the study would like to provide a contextually-grounded relational analysis of two L2 learners' beliefs to help teachers as well as researchers in TESOL to better understand the dynamic nature of learner belief.

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Appendix A

The Protocol and Questions for the First Semi-structured Interview

Protocol

Let's focus on elementary school stage first. Tell me, how was it like to learn English at the time? Was there any important event at the time? What was your attitude toward English learning at the time?

Note: The participant is expected to provide answers based on their thoughts at different stages of their schooling. All interviews were conducted in Chinese.

Interview Questions

A. Second Language Aptitude

1. To what extent did you think that some people were better than others in learning English when you were at this stage of schooling? What kind of people did you think were better at learning English?

2. To what extent and in what aspect(s) did you think that you were particularly good at learning English?

B. The Difficulty of Language Learning

1. How difficult was it to learn English when you were at this stage of schooling? What made you think so? How long would it take to learn English well?

2. To what extent did you think that you would learn English well? What made did you think so?

3. Which aspect(s) of English learning was more difficult for you? How did you find that?

4. Which aspect(s) of English learning was easier for you? How did you find that?

C. The Nature of Language Learning

1. What was the best or the most effective way to learn English when you were at this stage of schooling? What made you think so?

2. What was the most important part of learning English? What made you think so?

3. Which aspect(s) of English did you spend most time and energy on ?

4. To what extent and in what aspects did you think that learning English was different from learning other academic subjects?

D. Learning and Communication Strategies

1. How important was pronunciation in learning English when you were at this stage of schooling? What made you think so?

2. When you did not know a word in English, what would you do?

3. How important was it for you to repeat and practice a lot in learning English? Could you give an example to show how important it was/ is to you? Why did you think so?

4. Did you have experiences of speaking English to foreigners at the time? What was it like? How did you like practicing or simply speaking English with the foreigners you met?

5. How important was accuracy at this stage? Could you tell me a story to show the importance at the time? To what extent and in what way would making errors influence your English learning?

6. How important was fluency at this stage? Could you tell me a story to show the importance at the time? What strategies did you use to increase your fluency?

7. What learning aids, such as a tape recorder or English magazines, did you use at this stage? How did you get to use these aids? Who told you about them? Why or what happened? To what extent and in what way were the learning aids beneficial to you?

E. Motivation

1. How strong was your motivation toward learning English at this stage? Could you tell me the reasons?

2. What motivated or demotivated you to learn English? To what extent and in what way did these motivators or demotivators influence you?

F. Critical beliefs

In the process of learning English, what would you say to be some of the critical beliefs that had influenced you greatly? What led to those critical beliefs? To what extent and in what way did those beliefs influence you?

Protocol: OK, now let's move on to the next stage of your English learning experiences. (The same questions will be asked again, focusing on the next stage.)

Appendix B

Interview Questions for the Second Semi-structured Interview

Sample Questions for Lily

<u>Identity</u>

1. In the first interview, you mentioned that your English must be good because you are an English major, why did you think so? Is there any experience or factor that led to this thought?

2. What is the image of an English major in your mind?

<u>Learning Materials</u>

1. Did you seek other extracurricular English learning resources in college? What kind of English books would you buy?

2. Did you seek other extracurricular English learning resources in high school?

<u>English Exams</u>

1. What kind of English Proficiency Tests have you taken? When and why did you take those tests?

2. What Japanese English proficiency Tests have you taken? When and why did you take those tests?

<u>Being a Teacher</u>

1. You mentioned that the experience of being a teacher had some influence on your conceptions about learning English. After you became a teacher, did you find any special features of good language learners?

2. After you became a teacher, what do you think how language should be learned? Do you develop any learning or communication strategies? What are the strategies that you often adopt in learning English?

3. As a teacher, is there any factor that motivates or demotivates you in language learning?

Experiences of Learning Other Languages

1. When did you go to The Language Training and Testing center?

2. How your learning experiences influence your English learning?

Personal Features

1. How personal features influence your language learning?

2. You said that your shyness would hinder your oral ability. Did you try any method to improve your speaking competence?

Learning Method

In college, you felt that your English was not good enough, did you do anything to enhance your language ability

Perception on Teachers

You just said that the suggestions provided by your teacher were very useful, but [in your narrative] you put that the advice given by one of your senior high school teacher was of little use. This experience was different from your previous experiences. How did this experience affect your learning?

Appendix C

A Supplementary Note from Lily

上次訪談後我有再想到一些想補充的，你參考看看嚕^^

1. 我的學習經驗有沒有影響我的教學方法?

　　我想到和同校有些老師比起來，我比較希望學生聽說讀寫的練習都要有。像有時去代課時會發現有的老師會跳過課本上發音或是活動的部分，因為"考試不考"。升國三以後有老師小考考卷會只考選擇題。學校段考也是全選擇題，依基測題型 。但是我覺得英文要學好，聽說讀寫都要盡量顧到，比例上難免要向考試妥協，不過我盡量做到不排除聽說和寫的部分。

2. 我在訪談中提到現在小孩的英語學習環境和我那時差很多，例如英文相關的比賽或補習等。我想到一點對比更加明顯，因為我任教的國中就是我以前的母校。我當學生時學校是完全沒什麼英文相關的比賽的，當老師時，學生有英語歌唱，英文朗讀，拼字等等，每學期還要設計英文相關的全學年參與活動；每週學生固定一個早自習看英文教學影片。我知道台北市很多國中是每天早自習時間用來聽英文廣播雜誌的，因為規定早自習不能考試。

3. 我的 narrative 中有提到一句說我覺得西方文化對我影響不大之類的，後來想想我那時想表達的應該是我不會特別喜愛或崇拜西方文化，可是說完全沒影響是不可能。畢業後有一次和系上學妹聚餐，不知道聊什麼話題，他接了一句說我還蠻女性主義的。其實在她說之前我也從沒意識到我受西方文化影響還蠻深的呢。

Appendix D

A Sample of the Written Narratives: English Version

An Excerpt of Lily's Story

I am an English major. I teach English. And I'm pursuing my MA degree in the TESOL program. However, that's all what English means to me. In other words, English plays an important role in my profession, but not in other parts of my life. I enjoy Japanese TV programs, not American TV series. I listen to Chinese and Taiwanese songs but not English ones. I use English mainly for my school assignment. Outside the classroom, I have no one and no need to talk in English. Frankly speaking, I earn my living by English, which is the main reason that pushes me to improve my English proficiency, without an end to stop.

My English has been being "good" compared with my peers since I started to learn it. As a result, it has become something I am good at and even something I can have to excel others.

At about age 9, I learned English for the first time. It was a course offered by my father's company, lasting for only one or two semesters. Once the teacher put all the words on the whiteboard and we had to hit the word when she said it. The faster one would be the winner. I beat everyone else in the class. Perhaps this was my earliest successful experience in learning English.

On my fifth grade, age 11, I formally started to learn English and got my English name, Mandy. I liked this name very much and thought it was really suitable for me. The pupils of the class ranged from age 10-12, gathered by enthusiastic mothers in our neighborhood. Our teacher was Ms. Wu. She integrated a variety of activities into

the class. In addition to the reference book of junior high school English textbook, Ms. Wu herself created funny dialogues and asked us to memorize them to do role play. She taught us English songs and dramas as well. Soon I found I was more capable than other classmates. Though some of my classmates were a year older than me, I could always get the highest grades on quizzes. One of our assignments was to read aloud an article within a certain limits of time, say, 60 seconds. I liked this assignment a lot and each time I practiced and practiced until I was sure that no one would read faster than me. I learned English there until I graduated from junior high school and developed my elementary English proficiency. Ms. Wu even asked me to be her assistant in a lower-level class, a class that started a year later than ours. And she did give me a good pay. Learning English was fun and gave me a great sense of achievement. For me, English was not just a subject at school. It could make me different from others. What's more, I could make money with it!

Then I moved to my senior high school life. There was a big gap between junior and senior high school English, especially the amount of vocabulary. However, following what the school teacher asked us to do, such as memorizing vocabulary, doing translation exercises, studying the grammar book and each lesson in the textbook thoroughly, I gradually improved my English proficiency. It seemed not hard for me to understand those complex grammar rules and applied them to exercises and exams.

An Excerpt of Brian's Story

My First Encounter with English

When I was a third grader in elementary school, I was exposed to English learning materials that centered on conversational English through video cassette tapes. I enjoyed learning with the authentic materials because it was the only source that I could tap into the world of English. Although I did not spend too much time learning English, this wonderful experience awakened my hibernated interest in future studies of English. I learned English just for fun. I did not have a specific goal of learning English. However, I was aware that English was considered important because all of my classmates were studying English in cram schools.

Ups and Downs of Learning English in Secondary School

Before entering junior high school, I did not expect that a pre-semester course would be conducted in the entire summer. I learned three major subjects, including math, Chinese and English. To bridge the academic gap between elementary and junior high school, the school I attended arranged lessons that aimed to prepare students to get used to the new environment and more difficult content in advance. I still remember how my English teacher taught me—memorizing the 26 letters and the phonetic symbols (via KK) in the English language sound system. I memorized fabricated dialogues and needed to reduplicate exactly the same one on the written exams in each lesson. The dull process of learning English continued in the entire 3 years of study in junior high. I did not, in fact, find joy in learning English. There were not so many resources like nowadays. I did not learn how to plan, monitor and evaluate my own learning by setting a clear goal for myself. I tended to follow teacher's guidance and finished my job as a student.

Most of the time, I did OK in school. I passed the tests, either daily, weekly or monthly tests. However, I wondered why I learned English. I did not know what I could do with English in my real life. I did not have the environment and pressing communication needs to interact with others. My peers were for the most part competing with one another, trying to perform better in grades. I did not have too much interaction with them except comparing grades with them. But I did not feel any motivation at all to bring my own life experience and created connection with what I studied. I was at a loss then as to what I could do after learning. The knowledge I learned seemed useless and someday it would be forgotten! Why did I waste my time to do things that were meaningless? I did not get it!

Although I did not find joy in studying, I tried my best to measure up my parents' and teachers' expectations to be the so-called "a good student". I think I needed to do well in order to survive in the hierarchy of society because everyone might become the greatest potential enemy. The only purpose for studying seemed to become an obedient good student listening attentively in class.

Appendix E

A Sample of the Written Narratives: The Chinese Version

Lily 英語學習故事摘錄

　　進入外文系是我英文學習的一個重要里程碑。高中階段我的英文可以在考試中得到不錯的分數，但進入外文系才發現自己的英文程度還真是遠遠不足。讀文學作品要查一堆單字，查完還不知道它在表達什麼；聽老師用英文上課，能知道老師現在講到哪一段就很不錯了；口說一直是安靜的我最弱的一環，我連用中文表達都不知道要說什麼了，更遑論用英文說。我的單字量嚴重不足，有一次聽不懂老師問我的問題，因為我不知道〞petroleum〞是什麼意思。加上週遭同學有外交官的小孩英文幾乎算是母語的，有出國好幾次口語超溜的，第一次，我在英語學習過程中，感到不如人的自卑感，也懷疑自己選擇外文系的決定是不是錯了。然而我還是磨過了那段期間。一個重要的轉折是在作文課上，老師問起我們做作業的時間時，我發現即使是外交官的小孩，也不是隨便就能寫出一篇好文章的。我的同學英文作文寫得比我好是因為他每天都要花時間想他的作文，而我只在要上作文課的前一晚想我的作文。更別說他在上大學前花在英文的時間不知是我的好幾十倍幾百倍了。要趕上他的程度，我現在得花更多時間，這是很合理的。於是我比較能夠去接受我還不夠好的英文程度，並且設法去加強它了。只是我還是不喜歡告訴別人我是外文系的，感覺許多人覺得外文系的同學就會認得所有的英文字，知道所有英語的相關問題解答，那個壓力對我來說，太過沉重了。

念大學時，也有到國外學英語就能突飛猛進的迷思。於是在升大三的暑假，存夠了錢，我和系上一個同學到紐約遊學一個月。因為想"遊""學"兼顧，當時是去位於距紐約搭地鐵快一個小時，某所不知名大學附設的語言中心上課。同學中剛好有一群西班牙人和一些大陸、韓國、日本人。當然也少不了台灣同學。結果不是很有勇氣和動力跟外國同學交朋友的我，大部分時間還是和台灣同學在一起。最後學也沒學到什麼，玩也因為交通時間太長無法盡興。感想是：紐約的地鐵真是髒亂；musical 真是太讚了；要上英文課的話在台灣上還比較省錢 & 西班牙文好像還蠻有用的。也許是當時的經驗和預期落差太大吧！

Brian 英語學習故事摘錄

我學習的經驗是累積漸進的，我小時候的學習方式就是背多分，數學、國語、社會、自然和健康與公民都是背課本中的知識，老師教書的方式也是叫學生念課文，然後背課本的知識，老師比較不會用引導、思辨的方式啟發學生主動探索新知，我並沒有太深刻的學習體驗，有的只是制式化的學習與反覆練習。

國中的教育更是難以忘記，斯巴達教育相當貫徹，每天的生活就是與考試搏鬥，直到有一方倒下，但倒下的總是我，還記得有一次成績掉到全班第三十一名，相當難過，那次之後奮發向上，總算挽回面子。國中的生涯雖然和考試測驗劃上等號，但也是有直得回憶的學習往事。

例如國一時，學校聘外籍美語師資，每週上一節生活會話課，那時的我英文很菜，菜到無法用英文做簡單的自我介紹，可是我卻很珍惜那段因為英文不

好每天努力查字典，背單字，努力了解課本的意思，我覺得是很辛苦卻收穫很大的學習經驗。

國中小我沒有參加任何校內外比賽，我只有國三當過老師臨時指派的風紀股長，並沒有很多豐富的課外學習經驗。我學習的對象主要是老師和同學，父親說他已經無法給我深入的教導，期許我自力自強，養成有問題就問的習慣。

我最喜歡的高中學習經驗是升高中時的暑假接觸美語雜誌，第一本是閱讀哥哥高一看的大家說英語雜誌，從剛開始的聽不懂到後來能閱讀中級以上的雜誌，例如活用空中美語和空中英語教室，學習非常愉快，學到很多實用的道地美式俚語與片語，我的單字量也不斷擴張。高二通過全民英檢中級，並第一次參加校內外演講比賽獲得屏東區第二名，校內也舉辦英語雜誌聽力測驗，我總是唯一拿到獎狀的學生。另外，校內期中定期舉辦專業科目考試，我在英語科的表現總是拔得頭籌，我對自己的能力也更有信心。

升高三的暑假參加老師推薦的 Youth Leadership Toastmasters 演講營，認識校外和自己學校其他班級的學生，那時候是我最享受學習的時間，我也很感謝父親為了孩子的學習，載我往返家中與演講培訓所，讓我一向口語表達不好的我，有機會使用學到的單字和片語，跟同校學生和校外學生和老師交流！營隊「期末成發」我被老師選為主席，對當時的我來說，是最大的鼓勵，我很感謝當時老師給予我表現的機會，讓我擁有一個快樂充實的暑假生活！

Appendix F

A Sample of the First Interview

Brian 062311訪談逐字稿

Note: E stands for the interviewer; B for Brian

E：我等下會問一些問題，每一組問題會針對一個階段，然後我會先問關於小學階段的事，問完後，再問國中階段，高中階段，大學階段，一直到研究所階段。那我現在會先問你一些小學階段對語言學習的一些想法。

B：恩，好

E：你小學時有沒有注意到哪些人好像在英語學習方面特別突出，譬如說某些人好像有哪些特質就比較容易在英語學習方面表現的比較好？

B：不知道，那時後沒有感覺，因為小學那時後英文不是必修嘛，我以前也沒有去兒童美語班，不過的確那時候班上有去兒童美語班的同學，那時候覺得他們好像會講幾句話就很了不起，好像會說幾句就很酷阿，就覺得他們英文好像很厲害，那時候會有這種想法，可能那時候也還沒有開始學英文吧，所以也搞不清楚學語言到底是怎麼一回事，那時英文對我來說，不是跟生活這麼有關係，感覺距離上比較是遠的，我在想可能是因為我沒有去兒童美語班，也沒有真正接觸到學語言學英文這件事。

B: 我最早知道有英文著個語言這件事，好像是國小三年級，那時有個推銷員到我們家來推銷美語教材，那時我爸想說可能想培養小孩的英文吧，那時候也不懂吧，只是知道好像電視上會有大姐姐帶小朋友學英文阿，就覺得好像蠻不錯的，其實那時候好像也沒有仔細想說要學英文阿，只是想說看個電視這樣，我不知道這樣算不算是學英文，但就是我跟英文的第一次接觸，那後來在學校和

英文接觸是上電腦課，鍵盤上有一些英文按鍵，那時候一開始接觸電腦的 computer literacy 就是打字嘛，去認識鍵盤上有哪些字，然後你要怎麼把鍵盤上的字打出來，然後去學那個輸入法，我不知道那算不算是學英文，但是至少是了解有ABCD這種概念，然後是從A到Z這樣，可是其實那時候其實也沒記起來，到小五小六的話，我覺得還好耶，我沒有了解到哪樣學習類型的人學英文會比較好，那時是去上課後輔導班，老師主要是教主科像是自然和數學，文科的話就叫我們自己念，老師那時有教我們一些額外的英文，有點像是國一先修班那種，學課本上的課文，然後老師上課就教我們背單字，練習課本的對話，講解一些課本的文法還有叫我們做一些課堂的練習，然後老師沒有用一些特別的教學方法或技巧，我只記得老師叫我們回去的時候錄自己念課本上的 dialogue，大概就這樣，國小就僅止於這樣的學習，我沒有從幼稚園就開始學，我是小三知道有英文這件事情，到小四上電腦課開始知道英文有ABCD這種順序，然後小五小六比較像是偶然額外地在課後輔導班，在時間和份量上都沒有這麼的密集。_

E: 那大概是一個禮拜上多久

B: 我不知道耶，好像偶而會上一下，可能還沒段考之前，可能開學阿，開始上幾堂課之前，大概上半小時到一個小時，不見得每個禮拜都上，以前的事我也沒記得那麼清楚，但是主要就是上學校的科目，英文算是額外的，那時在國小時英文並沒有那麼重要，因為學校並沒有要考那一科，所以老師主要是強調數學和自然這兩科，文科就叫我們回家自己念。

Appendix G

A Sample of the Second Interview

Brian 訪談逐字稿 (Interview, 070311)

E: 你國中的階段有提到你那時覺得外在環境因素比內在環境因素，那你當時說

的外在環境因素就是他們可以接收到資源，那你所謂的內在環境因素是什麼？

B: 內在指的就是就是他個人的天賦吧，就像我們常說的多元智能嘛，比如說有

些人語文能力比較好，有些人數理能力，有些人空間能力如何如何的，那剛剛

的外在環境就是比如說有人經濟條件社經條件比較高，有父母親可以給他們去

補習班阿，可以去做額外的學習，這是我說的外在環境，當然還有很多額外

的，譬如說你可以買參考書阿甚至你買一些學習輔助工具阿，這都是我說的外

在環境，那內在環境主要是個人的因素啦，那個人的因素當然也包含了動機什

麼的啦，不過那時候我講的內在環境應該是指個人的資質吧。

E: 上次我訪問完你有提到說努力是比較重要的，就是會強調努力大過於

talent，那這個想法你是從什麼時候開始有的或是有什麼因素造成你這個想法?

B: 就很久以前，我也忘記是什麼時候開始有這個想法，可是那時候就覺得說應

該努力還是最重要的吧，因為學任何一件事情，當然天分很重要，但是最後能

夠勝出的關鍵，我覺得還是你要花時間投注在那個地方。

E: 那你有這個想法是因為有什麼樣的經驗，來源或是別人跟你說的嗎？

B: 我覺得是跟我受的教育有關係吧，我也忘記是誰跟我說的，反正也是耳濡目

染吧，可能是儒家文化，就是努力阿，鐵杵磨成繡花針這種東西，慢慢的就想

說對啊對啊，就慢慢的接受這樣的價值系統了吧。窩猜是這樣啦，那我也覺得

這樣子其實也蠻公平的，即便我天賦不好，可是我憑後天努力我一樣可以達到

目標，我覺得這樣也沒什麼不好，我覺得就有點像龜兔賽跑那樣，就也許我跑的不是那麼快，可是我慢慢跑，還是可以到終點阿。我沒有必要跟人家爭，好你現在跑得比我快，那我跑慢一點也沒關係，那我就慢慢跑就好了阿，也沒有關係，反正只要可以達到目標到最後的終點，其實也 OK 啦。但我沒有覺得有所謂終點，就拿這個來做比喻，反正大家到某個階段，也許他可能提早背了嘛，在國小或是在補習班他已經學了那一百個單字，那我只是比較晚學那一百個單字，那我還是可以學到那一百個單字，當我學到後，我再往前挪，我那時的意思應該是這樣吧。

E:那你國中的時候你有嘗試去探索說為什麼英文要這樣子講，但是你發現越探索的話你的挫折感就越大，因為有時候沒辦法用邏輯推理去判斷為什麼會這樣，但是你後來你會去想學深一點，知道更多為什麼英文會這樣，甚至你文法比較好就是因為你去想它的道理。這樣感覺好像有個不一樣的地方，你國中的時候會…

B: 不用管那麼多

E: 但是到高中大學你反而就越想去探索它

B:我覺得是每個階段對語言的想法可能會不太一樣，那時候就覺得說拿來考試就好了啦，不要想那麼多，因為你發現到你被一個小東西卡住沒辦法往前的時候，當然挫折感很大，就小東西你沒辦法跨過去，你還有其他東西要考耶，不是只有這個東西耶，所以就好吧，先暫時先過去，可是後來發現不行耶，這個東西還在那邊耶，可是之後通了你會懂，或是你看了某個文法解釋，你就會發現喔原來就是這樣子。

Lily 訪談逐字稿 (Interview, 073111)

E: 你在第二頁有說你是一個 English major，還有妳在 45 行的時候有說 English was just a language....it was my major, 那是有怎樣的因素或是經驗讓你覺得說身為一個 English major，英文就必須很好。

L: 因為我有聽過老師講說，有系上學姊畢業去貿易公司工作，然後連一封信都寫不好。這樣好像很丟系上的臉的感覺，對啊就覺得這是自己的主修，然後如果人家有問什麼英文的問題，然後自己達不出來就會覺得好像自己沒有學好。

E: 你有沒有去找一些課外的資源或是去做一些老師交代以外的事情？

L: 我不知道單字書算不算，可是我可能買了很多單字書可是都沒有好好的用它，我可能翻個兩頁就放在那裡

E: 妳是從什麼時候開始買單字書？

L: 上大學以後

E: 所以你在國高中也額外去找老師跟妳講的以外的學習資源嗎？

L: 國高中...我印象中沒有耶，因為老師交代的東西...我覺得我能力範圍已經差不多了，沒有辦法再負荷更多東西了。

尤其想高中我們有訂雜誌，那個東西我就已經沒有很...我會想說把它像課本那樣的學，我會想說光那個雜誌我都沒有辦法好好地把它讀好了，

所以不會想說要去看什麼其他的

E: 那妳國中小，老師給你的還算可以應付？

L: 國中小其實學校給的都 OK 嘛，就是補習班給的東西

E: 所以是補習班給的東西，你已經學的夠多了就不想再額外找？

L: 還有就是當時我還要去讀其他科目，譬如說理化數學什麼東西的

E: 那你國中小感興趣的科目是只有英文嗎？還是說英文是其中一個？

L: 我覺得英文是其中一個，像歷史國文我都蠻喜歡的？

E: 那妳在這些科目花的時間和表現是怎樣？譬如說你英文和歷史花的時間是差不多嗎？

L: 我花的時間基本是以我考試的準備時間為主，所以如果我覺得這一科...其實我每一科都差不多，就是課本念熟再念參考書，大概是這樣子，英文上課的時數比較多嘛，

所以應該也是會花比較多時間，...國高中階段我沒有特別去找學習英文的資源，但是上大學以後有買過一些故事書或小說，但是很少看完

E: 那妳有參加過什麼樣的語言測驗？什麼時候參加的？

L: 有阿，應該是那時候要考教師甄試它會要求說要過中高級，它會是一個不錯的證明

E: 所以你是大學畢業去考？

L: 對，大學畢業後，現在大學都會要求你畢業前要去考英檢，但是我那屆還沒開始，我大二的時候有考多益，因為想要去申請商學院的輔系，

它有要求要那個證明，所以有去考多益。然後就是研究所有要求你要通過，所以又去考了一次多益。