

**Memorization and Improvisation: a Comparison of Two Strategies in  
the Oral Acquisition of English as a Second Language**

**By Wen-chung Liu**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Education**

**School of education  
Faculty of Education**

**Australian Catholic University  
Australia**

2006

## **Statement of Sources**

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethic Committee.

Signature.....

Date.....

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the help and support provided by a number of people in completing my dissertation. First I would like to thank my principal supervisor, Dr. Josephine Ryan, for her scholarly direction and insight in the process. She was always willing to take time out of her busy schedule to give me directions, feedback and encouragement. I also appreciate Dr. Ryan's incredible patience and efforts in editing numerous drafts of my work.

I am also grateful to my co-supervisor, Dr. John Lando, for his experience and knowledge that facilitated the process of writing my dissertation. His macroscopic viewpoint and advice in language teaching provided tremendous insight in the process.

My appreciation goes out to Ms Elizabeth Powell, Ms Pat Hacker, and Dr. Jo Reidy for being generous with their time, insight and helpful comments on my work. Elizabeth even went out her way to help me with my writing from time to time by email when I was not on campus. I really appreciate it.

I want to thank my colleagues: Gary, Alice, Pan, Lina, Betty and Rosa, for their support and assistance in every way during the process. I am also indebted to the participants of the programs who gave their time to speak to me about their experiences. Without their participation, the outcome of this project would not have been realized.

My wife, Flower, has served as my rock throughout each stage of my personal education and professional growth. She always encouraged my pursuit of knowledge and experience. I cannot thank her enough for giving me the emotional backing to complete my degree. She never ceased to show her constant love and support. My son and daughter deserve many thanks for being patient as I managed my roles of dad and student during these years. They also encouraged me to pursue my goal.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of two teaching strategies, memorization and improvisation, on ESL (English as a second language) students' oral proficiency and how they perceived the strategies and the activities used in the classroom. Participants were 16-year-old nursing students in a Taiwan medical college. They had learned English for at least three and a half years before joining the study, but most of their previous learning was focused on reading and writing. They were divided into three groups, experiencing a memorization strategy, an improvisation strategy, and a strategy combining memorization and improvisation respectively.

Data were collected from their oral pre-test and post-test, perception questionnaire, perception interview, college-wide satisfaction survey and in-class observation. Data were analysed in both quantitative and qualitative ways.

The results showed that each of the strategies had significant positive effects on students' oral acquisition, but the improvisation group performed significantly better than the memorization group, and the memorization group did better than the combination group. However, the satisfaction and perception surveys showed that participants preferred the combination strategy to the improvisation strategy, and the improvisation strategy was preferred to the memorization strategy. The finding also showed that participants' initial oral language levels made no difference on the rate of oral improvement. The high-level and intermediate students demonstrated no difference in their preference for the two strategies, but the low-level students showed significant preference for the memorization strategy. In terms of the teaching activities, participants preferred task-based activities to discussion activities, and activities involving multiple people were preferred to monologues such as storytelling and news reports. Nevertheless, preference made no difference on participants' oral improvement.

Based upon the insight gained from this study, pedagogical implications and for teaching oral language were developed and suggestions for future research have been recommended.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>STATEMENT OF SOURCES</b>	i
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	ii
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	iii
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	iv
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	ix
<b>CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
1.1 Background of the Study .....	1
1.2 Statement of Problems .....	5
1.2.1 The Effects of Memorization and Improvisation Strategies .....	5
1.2.2 Students' Perceptions of the Strategies/Activities of Memorization and Improvisation .....	9
1.2.3 Student Levels versus Effects and Perceptions .....	10
1.3 Significance of the Research .....	11
<b>CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	12
2.1 Theoretical Perspectives .....	12
2.2 Memorization as a Teaching Strategy .....	19
2.2.1 Theoretical Background and Features of Memorization .....	19
2.2.2 Memorizational Activities and Related Research .....	27
2.3 Improvisation as a Teaching Strategy .....	27
2.3.1 Theoretical Background and Features of Improvisation .....	27
2.3.2 Improvisational Learning Activities .....	31
2.3.3 Strengths and Limitations of Improvisational Types and Activities ....	33
2.4 Students' Perceptions .....	35
2.5 Principles/Strategies and Procedures in Spoken Language Activities .....	39
2.6 Oral Assessment .....	42

2.6.1 Development of Second Language Speech .....	43
2.6.2 Factors Affecting Oral Performance.....	46
2.6.3 Criteria for Oral Assessment .....	46
2.7 Bridging the Gap between Improvisation and Memorization Activities for Spoken Language .....	49
2.8 Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	52
<b>CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>54</b>
3.1 Setting .....	54
3.2 Participants .....	54
3.3 Research Design .....	54
3.3.1 Pilot Study .....	54
3.3.2 Major Study .....	56
3.4 Instructional Design .....	59
3.4.1 Teaching material .....	59
3.4.2 Principles for content selection .....	59
3.4.3 Teaching procedure .....	60
3.4.4 Selection of presentation activities .....	61
3.4.5 Positive reinforcement .....	63
3.5 Data Collection .....	63
3.5.1 Oral tests .....	63
3.5.2 Questionnaire of Perception .....	64
3.5.3 Student Interview .....	64
3.5.4 In-Class Observation .....	65
3.6 Data Analysis .....	65
3.7 Research limitations .....	68

## **CHAPTER FOUR ORAL TESTS: RESULTS, ANALYSES, AND**

<b>DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>69</b>
4.1 The Progress Each Group Made on Oral Proficiency Skills .....	70
4.1.1 Results .....	70
4.1.2 Analysis and Discussion .....	76
4.2 Comparing the Effects of Strategies on Oral Improvement .....	83
4.2.1 Results .....	83
4.2.2 Analysis and Discussion: the Quantitative Effect of Strategies .....	89
4.2.3 Qualitative Analysis and Discussion .....	95
4.3 The Effect of Language Levels on Oral Improvement .....	103
4.3.1 Within-Level Improvement .....	103
4.3.1.1 Results: the Difference between Pretest and Posttest by Each Language Level .....	103
4.3.1.2 Analysis and Discussion .....	107
4.3.2 Comparing the Between-Level Improvement .....	109
4.3.2.1 Results .....	109
4.3.2.2 Analysis and Discussion .....	112
4.4 The Interactive Effect of Strategies and Levels .....	116
4.4.1 Results .....	116
4.4.2 Simple Main Effect of Level and Strategy with Post Hoc .....	119
4.4.3 Analysis and Discussion .....	120
4.5 Factors Affecting Oral Performance .....	120
4.5.1 Intra-groups .....	121
4.5.2 Inter-group .....	124
4.6 Conclusion .....	126

<b>CHAPTER FIVE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEARNING STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES—RESULTS, ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>127</b>
5.1 Preference for a Learning Strategy .....	128
5.1.1 Participants' Preferences for Improvisation or Memorization .....	128
5.1.2 Preferential Difference for Strategies among Participants of Different Language Levels .....	132
5.1.3 Students' Perception of the Strategy Transition .....	136
5.2 Perceptions of Learning Activities .....	136
5.2.1 Participants' Preference for the Learning Activities .....	137
5.2.2 The Preferential Differences for Learning Activities among Participants of Different Language Levels .....	155
5.3 Reasons of the Preferences .....	159
5.4 Preference and Related Personal Factors .....	167
5.5 Preference and Performance .....	172
5.5.1 Result .....	172
5.5.2 Analysis and Discussion .....	173
<b>CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS .....</b>	<b>176</b>
6.1 Conclusions .....	176
6.1.1 Effects of the Strategies on Oral Performance .....	176
6.1.2 Conclusions about Students' Perceptions .....	177
6.1.3 Conclusions about the Preference and Oral Performance .....	179
6.2 Implications and Suggestions .....	180
6.2.1 Implications and Suggestions on Strategy Effects and Participant Perceptions .....	180

6.2.2 Activities .....	183
6.3 Suggestions for Future Research .....	184
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	185
APPENDIX A Preference Questionnaire .....	198
APPENDIX B Pretest and posttest questions .....	199
APPENDIX C Criteria for oral test .....	200
APPENDIX D Improvisational group lesson plan .....	201
APPENDIX E Memorization group lesson plan .....	207
APPENDIX F Tables .....	216
APPENDIX G Quotes from interviews .....	226
APPENDIX H Information for participants .....	229
APPENDIX I Information for parents/guardians .....	231
APPENDIX J Consent form by participants .....	233
APPENDIX K Consent form by Parents/guardians .....	234
APPENDIX L Consent form by College .....	235
APPENDIX M Liang's Scoring Rubric of Oral Task.....	236
APPENDIX N New York Education Department: Informal speaking rubric..	238

## List of Tables

Table 4-1	The progress of the improvisation group .....	71
Table 4-2	The progress of the memorization group .....	73
Table 4-3	The progress of the combination group .....	75
Table 4-4	The progress of all participants .....	76
Table 4-5	Effects of strategies on fluency (homogeneity tests) .....	84
Table 4-6	Effects of strategies on fluency (Analysis of covariance) .....	84
Table 4-7	Effects of strategies on fluency (Pairwise Comparisons) .....	85
Table 4-8	Effects of strategies on accuracy (homogeneity tests) .....	85
Table 4-9	Effects of strategies on accuracy (Analysis of covariance) .....	86
Table 4-10	Effects of strategies on complexity (homogeneity tests) .....	86
Table 4-11	Effects of strategies on complexity (Analysis of covariance) .....	87
Table 4-12	Effects of strategies on complexity (Pairwise Comparisons) .....	87
Table 4-13	Effects of strategies on general performance (homogeneity tests) .	87
Table 4-14	Effects of strategies on general performance (Analysis of covariance) .....	88
Table 4-15	Effects of strategies on general performance (Pairwise Comparisons) .....	88
Table 4-16	Progress of high-level participants—fluency .....	104
Table 4-17	Progress of high-level participants—accuracy .....	104
Table 4-18	Progress of high-level participants—complexity .....	104
Table 4-19	Progress of high-level participants—general performance .....	104
Table 4-20	Progress of intermediate-level participants—fluency .....	105
Table 4-21	Progress of intermediate-level participants—accuracy .....	105
Table 4-22	Progress of intermediate-level participants—complexity .....	105
Table 4-23	Progress of intermediate-level participants—general performance	106
Table 4-24	Progress of low-level participants—fluency .....	106
Table 4-25	Progress of low-level participants—accuracy .....	106
Table 4-26	Progress of low-level participants—complexity .....	107
Table 4-27	Progress of low-level participants—general performance .....	107
Table 4-28	Between-level improvement rate--fluency (homogeneity tests)	109
Table 4-29	Analysis of covariance of fluency and level .....	109
Table 4-30	Between-level improvement rate--accuracy (homogeneity tests)	110
Table 4-31	Analysis of covariance of accuracy and level .....	110
Table 4-32	Between-level improvement rate--complexity (homogeneity tests) .....	111
Table 4-33	Analysis of covariance of complexity and level .....	111

Table 4-34	Between-level improvement rate—general performance (homogeneity tests) .....	112
Table 4-35	Analysis of covariance of general performance and level .....	112
Table 4-36	Analysis of Covariance (Interactive effect of strategies and levels on fluency) .....	117
Table 4-37	Analysis of Covariance (Interactive effect of strategies and levels on accuracy) .....	117
Table 4-38	Analysis of Covariance (Interactive effect of strategies and levels on complexity) .....	118
Table 4-39	Analysis of Covariance (Interactive effect of strategies and levels on general performance) .....	118
Table 4-40	Effect of different strategies on high-level students: complexity	119
Table 4-41	Intermediate-level in different strategies—fluency .....	119

# Memorization and Improvisation: a comparison of two strategies in the oral acquisition of English as a second language

## Chapter 1 Introduction

One question that often haunts a teacher's mind is: "How can I improve my way of teaching?" As a practising teacher teaching English as a second language (ESL) in Taiwan, I also have this question in mind. With so many teaching methods and approaches to language learning, searching for an appropriate teaching strategy for specific students is not an easy job. Since English is a foreign language in Taiwan and is seldom used outside of the classroom, a strategy for effectively teaching spoken English is critical in current Taiwan.

The purpose of the study is two-fold: the first is to investigate the effects of two different speaking strategies, memorization and improvisation, on Taiwanese college students' oral English proficiency, and the second is to investigate students' perceptions of the strategies and the activities involved in them. It is hoped the results of this study will have implications for ESL teaching strategies and student perceptions.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Speaking is one of the most important skills in language learning. Ur (1996) suggests that of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as a 'speaker' of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing. Wagner (2002) also points out that it is not enough for students to hear the target language spoken; they need to talk themselves to facilitate the learning of a foreign language.

Many language experts now think listening and speaking should start before reading and writing (Bygate, 2001a). The audio-lingual method (Burns & Joyce, 1997) was the first to indicate that language teaching should introduce, in a fixed order, the four macroskills of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing, although in this approach listening and speaking were used for correct grammatical utterances and good pronunciation rather than for communicative purposes.

However, speaking seems to be the weakest skill in learning English as a foreign/second language in Taiwan schools at all levels, despite the importance it holds in the society (Yu, 2002; Thompson, 2003; Tiangco, 2005). Many students can score highly on reading and writing in English, but when it comes to listening and speaking, the result is usually poor compared with the other skills (Liao, 1996; Huang, 2003). Lee (2003) notes that in most junior high schools in Taiwan, even the academically outstanding students have a lot of difficulty in speaking English. And speaking is even more difficult than listening in that, as well as the receiving process in a communicative context, speaking requires more components, such as phonetic knowledge and affective factors, to accomplish it.

There is also extensive research on the difficulty of speaking in language learning, including learning in a second language (eg. Burns and Joyce, 1997; Levelt, 1989; Liao, 1996). Burns and Joyce (1997) believe that learning to speak involves developing a number of complex skills and different types of knowledge about how and when to communicate. For a second language (SL) speaker, it takes even more knowledge and practice to be understood. Levelt (1989) proposes that speech production involves four major processes: conceptualization, formulation, articulation and self-monitoring. Conceptualization is concerned with planning the message content. It draws on background knowledge, knowledge about the topic, about the speech situation and on knowledge of patterns of discourse. After conceptualization, the formulator finds the words and phrases to express the meanings, sequencing them and putting in appropriate grammatical markers (such as inflections, auxiliaries, and articles). The formulator also prepares the sound patterns of the words to be used. The third process is articulation. This involves the motor control of the articulatory organs. Self-monitoring is concerned with language users being able to identify and self-correct errors.

All four processes happen so quickly that, to make successful utterances, people need automation because we cannot consciously control the first three processes in such a short time. For beginning second language (L2) speakers, it will be difficult to manage to speak both fluently and accurately, since they lack automaticity and/or accuracy, and it is difficult for them to pay attention to all these processes

simultaneously under the pressure of time. The oral mastery of the target language as either a second or foreign language takes a long time (Fortune, 2003). Hakuta, Butler and Witt (2000) conducted a research in four school districts in California and Canada that are considered the most successful in teaching English to limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. They found that oral proficiency takes 3 to 5 years to develop and academic English proficiency can take 4 to 7 years. McLaughlin (1992) suggests that to become proficient in another language, students must progress through various overlapping stages spanning several years: pre-production/comprehension stage, early production stage, speech emergence stage, intermediate fluency stage, and advanced stage.

The context of speaking adds extra difficulties. People normally need to respond to each other immediately, and sometimes the participants can be more than two people. The interaction then can vary widely and is quite unpredictable. In addition, since the interlocutors can usually see each other, words mentioning the immediate situation or people around are often omitted or unspecific (Burns and Joyce, 1997).

Further, since no interlocutors will be expected to wait long for the opportunity to speak themselves, time pressure means that the process of conceptualization, formulation and articulation may not be well planned or implemented, and may need pauses, hesitation, and corrections (Bygate, 2001a). The processing conditions result in speakers producing language that could be grammatically more disconnected, using more formulaic phrases, and tolerating the repetition of words and phrases within the same extract of discourse.

In addition to the linguistic difficulty in ESL speaking, teachers in Taiwan are facing an increasing burden from political factors. The advent of globalization era has prompted the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan to stress English teaching/learning even more: spending millions of US dollars on the improvement of teaching facilities and seminars in the past couple of years, requiring colleges and universities to assist increasing numbers of students to pass the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). Many colleges, in turn, require that students pass the GEPT to graduate from college (Yahoo news, 2005).

Improving the spoken language situation, therefore, is a particularly important issue for language teachers in Taiwan as elsewhere. However, researchers have argued that many factors have contributed to the uneven development of language skills: local social culture, educational environment, learners' personalities, teachers' pedagogies, and the language skill itself (Oxford, 1994; Nelson, 1995; Walqui, 2000; Tiangco, 2005; Fortune, 2003). As for Chinese learners of English, Liao (1996) thinks that, besides those mentioned above, the causes could include neglect of education in the target culture and students' instrumental, not integrative, learning motivation. Huang (2002) also indicates that culture, after listening, speaking, reading and writing, is identified as the fifth skill. Among the major components of the curriculum including language, literature and culture, most of the attention is still given to the teaching of grammar and vocabulary aspect of language in Taiwan. Huang claimed that the reason why cultural teaching remains the weakest is due to the unbalanced treatment in textbooks and teachers' lack of cultural knowledge and techniques necessary to teach it. When a learner tries to learn a language for instrumental goals instead of being genuinely interested in the target culture and trying to get involved in it and to communicate with its people, the new language learning tends to stay at the receptive competence level and seldom reaches the productive competence level (Liao, 1996). The implication here is that teachers in Taiwan should involve students in the culture of the target language and try to increase the enjoyment of learning the English language.

As noted above, research has shown that it is difficult for learners of English as a second language to speak fluently within a short time and yet knowledge of English is important in today's world, particularly in Taiwan because of the advent of globalization era (Huang, 2004). The research on how to expedite speaking is relatively insufficient. Bygate (2001) argues that there are three main reasons for this. The first is tradition: grammar-translation approaches to language teaching still have great influence. The second is technology: only since the mid-1970s has tape-recording been sufficiently cheap and practical to enable the widespread study of talk. The third reason is 'exploitation': most approaches to language teaching, other than grammar-translation, have exploited speaking mainly as a special medium for providing language input, memorization practice and habit-formation, instead of as a discourse skill in its own right.

Given the importance of speaking in learning a language, classroom strategies and activities that are used to develop learners' abilities to express themselves through speech have become a very important component in a language course. Yet it is difficult to design and administer such activities; more so than for other language skills because of the complexity of speaking which is "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information" (Florez, 1999, p1), particularly when conducted in a face-to-face situation. How to efficiently promote oral proficiency is indeed an area worthy of more and deeper investigation. Oral proficiency means the ability to adequately express oneself in spoken English. Within the context of Taiwan, it means not only a language skill, but could also be a promise of better career in the future. In my own search for the best teaching approach to teach spoken English, I have encountered some problems, which will be discussed in the next section.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

### **1.2.1 The effects of memorization and improvisation strategies**

In teaching spoken English, I have often encountered the problem: should I provide a printed script for students when students are going to perform a role-play or a drama? Should I require them to memorise the script or would it be more helpful for the development of this oral ability to require them to improvise the content of role plays? In other words, it is a question of memorization or improvisation. Which one is more effective in promoting students' oral proficiency? This is a key problem.

As noted the audio-lingual method was the first to emphasize the importance of memorization in speaking a language (Bygate, 2001). Without habitual responses and learned vocabulary, the method advocates contend, a person will find it very difficult to interact with others in a conversation, and the way to learn a language is to memorize as many dialogues as possible (Lewis, 1999). This method was, however, strongly criticized by subsequent researchers for its theoretical foundations and practices. Its linguistic and learning theories were regarded as unsound. In practice, its rote learning and drills were often thought of as boring by students and their performance also fell short of expectations (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). To acquire a

language, the critics thought, the learners must learn how to use the language in a meaningful context requiring them to improvise according to the demands of a situation, instead of simply imitating a sequence of sounds from the target language.

The communicative approach emphasizes that language use in real or realistic situations is the key to mastering a language. Only when the learner can use the language to achieve some goal, other than the language learning itself, will he/she be able to acquire the target language (Lightbown, 1998). Similarly, Willis and Willis (2001) think that learners should be asked to exchange and carry out instructions, or to solve a problem, or to entertain one another with anecdotes. All of these activities have a goal (a task) which is independent of the language used to achieve that goal. Many task-based activities have thus been designed for students to complete in a communicative situation.

Nevertheless, the importance of audiolingual strategies cannot be neglected. Students can hardly use the words or particular sentence patterns in the target language without having been adequately exposed to them. Even though the required form can be taught ahead of the real performance, many students feel uncomfortable and have difficulty in memorizing and using what they have just learned. It takes time to digest and accommodate the knowledge into the learner's language system. Skehan (1996) argues that unless we encourage a focus on form, learners will develop more effective strategies for achieving communicative goals without an accompanying development of their language system. They will develop a 'classroom dialect', which enables them to exchange meanings in spite of the shortcomings of their language. This has indeed been a very common phenomenon on Taiwanese school campuses where teenagers have used a great deal of interlanguage. For example, "It can eat" = It is edible, and "I'll give you some colours see see" = I'll teach you a lesson, are translated literally from Chinese into English without considering English grammar or sentence patterns. Such utterances are frequently heard and accepted by teenagers in Taiwan who try to converse in English.

In fact, the audio-lingual and communicative method can be integrated into classroom activities. Students can even try to use the language immediately in the first session after they have learned, meaningfully, a language form. The principle is that the

structured instruction takes up precedence in the early stages, and is gradually integrated into more frequent language use (Alexander, 1978; Knop, 2000). They argue that the distribution of the two kinds of activities depends upon the students' language proficiency level. Since every method has its strengths and weaknesses, it seems that a good teacher should adopt and adapt the activities to best suit his/her students' learning needs. This study also tries to investigate the proper proportion between the memorization and improvisation activities on students learning oral English as a second language.

Since the introduction of Hymes' (1971) notion of communicative competence, there has been an awareness of the need to encourage language teachers to provide opportunities for oral language use in the classroom. Many oral teaching activities adopt this teaching principle. Drama is a popular example that embodies language use in second language methodology. However, the difference in effectiveness between a memorized drama and an improvised one, in promoting oral usage and improving speaking, is not clear. Pattison (1987) believes that an improvised role-play enhances students' interest and learning. If learners are given some choice of what to say, and if there is a clear aim to be achieved by what they say in their role-plays, they may participate more willingly and learn more thoroughly than when they are told to simply repeat a given dialogue in pairs. However, Brauer (2002) also points out that one issue currently discussed in drama-based foreign- and second-language methodology is whether a controlled (memorized) or an open (improvised) learning environment is more efficient. Prompted by my professional curiosity and the paucity of answers in the literature a key problem to be addressed in this research is considering the effects of memorization (controlled learning) and improvisation (open learning) on learning oral English as a second language.

To carry out the above-mentioned teaching strategies, many teaching activities can be adopted. There are several ways to categorize the speaking activities in the classroom. Within a systemic functional perspective of language, Burns and Joyce (1997) suggest that there are two types of speaking activities in real life: interactional and transactional. Interactional activities refer to those exchanging pleasantries or social chatting, as in a conversation with a neighbour or a discussion about holidays with colleagues. Transactional activities mean those having a practical purpose, such as

making an appointment with a doctor, asking for directions in an unfamiliar city, or the discussion about promotion. Ur (1996) proposes a categorization in which she uses discussion to refer to transactions. Basically many categorizations of activities in the classroom are based on the improvisational strategy.

However, speaking activities in the classroom could include more than communicative, two-way encounters. There can also be some space in an ESL classroom for one-way activities, such as a monologue or giving a speech, because they do happen in real life. The improvisation activities can also be one-way or two-way. One-way activities may include an impromptu speech, or a description. The guessing game is a good example in which one learner is asked to describe something in the target language, without gestures or any supplementary sound and movement, and the rest of the students take a guess at what it is. Two-way activities include all the task-based practices: interactional and transactional tasks such as discussion of some interesting topics, role plays, or free conversation between teacher and students or among students. Knop (2000) suggests four kinds of improvised activities: interviews, problem-solving, talking your way out of a situation, and role-playing. Though Reynolds (2000) adopts different terms, free conversation and structured communicative activities, to compare the interaction differences, he remains in the two-way communication domain.

Also memorization activities can be either one-way or two-way. One-way activities include giving a speech, telling a joke or a story. On the other hand, the two-way activities require two or more learners to act out a dialogue or a short play. In this way the learners could learn various ways to express their thoughts and feelings in all kinds of situations.

In this research, a comprehensive perspective about ESL speaking activities in the classroom is adopted. All the frequently used speaking activities, such as role-play, discussion, interview, drama, and monologue, are introduced to the participants. These activities can be broadly categorized into two types: mainly memorization activities and mainly improvisation ones. Memorization activities refer to those in which students are supposed to memorize some oral data, either what the instructor has taught or some speaking material the students collect on their own, and give a

presentation in the classroom. Improvisation activities mean those in which students, after receiving teacher input on lexis, sentence, structure and grammatical rules, are called upon to improvise conversational chunks or descriptions in given settings, without previous memorization.

Besides the effect of teaching strategies, teachers in the learner-centered era are also concerned with what students prefer and how they perceive the teaching in order to maximize the teaching effect. Hence the next section will discuss the second problem of this study: students' perceptions.

### **1.2.2 Students' Perceptions of the Strategies/Activities of Memorization and Improvisation**

Another concern of this study is students' perception of the memorisation and improvisation strategies and of the activities used to implement them. It is assumed that a positive and enjoyable experience will contribute to students' acquisition of a second language. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (Lightbown and Spada, 1999) also indicates that factors, such as motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states, affect learners' language acquisition. However, there are few studies exploring students' perceptions of the memorization and improvisation strategies and activities. Nakagawa (2000) noted that the accuracy-oriented approach is rather neglected among the current EFL pedagogues. Bygate (2001) suggests that professional understanding in the learner perceptions of improvisational tasks will only gradually emerge. In other words, there needs to be more professional investigations into language learners' perceptions of both memorized and improvisational tasks.

The experiences of teachers of spoken English have highlighted the interesting phenomenon that some students prefer certain kinds of activities, while some like other kinds better. Shank and Terrill (1995) thus suggest that teachers must provide activities that address learning styles, language skill levels, and specific learning objectives of each individual. In fact, a number of learning style preference models can be found in the research on this subject. Conner (2004) suggests that these models could fall into general categories such as information processing, personality patterns, and social interaction. Understanding these differences allows predicting the way learners react and feel about different situations (Shumin Kang, 1999). Bedford

(2004) also points out that matching or mismatching students' learning styles with instructional techniques affects learning significantly. Kroonenberg (1995) indicates that lessons may be presented both visually and reinforced through various motivating language activities. In this way, students can learn in ways that best suit their styles and develop their modality strengths.

Here emerge some intriguing issues: the link between students' perceptions and the speaking strategies/activities and the extent to which students' learning is influenced by their feeling about the strategies/activities. Many writers discuss the factors influencing second language learning (SLL) (Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Ellis, 2002; Mooney, 1991), and a number of researchers explore ESL speaking activities (eg. Nunan, 2001; Ramos, 2002; Barkhuizen, 1998). There is considerable research on the relationship between learning styles and speaking activities. However, the study of students' preferences for particular ESL speaking activities is insufficient (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). There is even less research done comparing teaching strategies and types of activities in terms of students' perspectives.

Furthermore, for students to prefer certain teaching activities is one thing; to improve the students' English speaking abilities is another. Some students may like a certain activity because it helps them with their English proficiency, but some may like it because it promotes their confidence and interest, while some may like it because they do not have to work hard. Though there are many studies investigating students' oral performance and an increasing number of studies on students' perceptions and preferences, the link between the two aspects is not fully explored. In this case, there is a strong need to find out which strategy/activities can lead to the best oral performance and, at the same time, best suit students' preferences.

### **1.2.3 Student Levels versus Effects and Perceptions**

Since each class in Taiwan's colleges usually has about fifty students and the range of students' English levels is always wide, this study is also concerned with the effectiveness of the teaching strategies/activities on students of different English levels and how they perceive the two main strategies (memorization and improvisation) and the different activities that go with them.

### **1.3 Significance of the research**

This study is significant in several ways. First, studying the effects of speaking activities on ESL students will provide valuable information for curriculum designers. Second, the design of teachers' classes in terms of memorisation and improvisation might have an impact on students' perception and motivation. For example, role-play is a commonly used activity in learning a spoken language, but it could be presented in either improvised or memorized form, with the latter similar to a short drama. Willis (1990) disagrees with the use of memorized role-play because he/she sees it as not using genuine language since the learners are simply reciting and not creating language. The result of this study could provide more insight about these two kinds of strategies. Third, this study will explore the impact of two different strategies and related activities on the learners' speaking proficiency. This will help teachers in this field choose the teaching strategies that are effective for most students.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

This chapter includes the results of recent studies which deal with the promotion of oral proficiency in a second language. The literature review will focus specifically on teaching ESL in a classroom setting because this is the focus of my study. The aspects that are considered are: a theoretical view of oral language; the validity of memorization and improvisation as teaching strategies; studies of students' perceptions of improvisation and memorization in promoting their oral proficiency in English; principles and procedures in spoken language activities; oral assessment of the oral proficiency; bridging the gap between memorization and improvisation strategies and my research questions and hypotheses.

In dealing with improvisation and memorization, this chapter discusses what the researchers have found about the activities that normally accompany these strategies.

### **2.1 Theoretical Perspectives**

Language teaching has been influenced by linguistic theories and by theories of language acquisition and development. When considering current approaches to teaching speaking, it is helpful to understand these theories and how they have given rise to changes in the way second languages have been taught. In this section, the grammar-translation method, the structural approach, transformational-generative linguistics, communicative competence and social views of language teaching will be briefly examined for their implications for teaching oral English. The integration of the audiolingual method (structural approach) and communicative approach are also investigated.

#### **The grammar-translation method**

This method had its origin in the study of classical grammars such as Latin and Greek. The focus in learning was on the knowledge of grammar and on applying this knowledge in the process of translating from one language to another (Richards & Rogers, 2001). One of the central features of the method was the presentation of the new language through individual sentences that exemplified grammatical points. These points were presented one by one in an organized sequence, and sentences were specially constructed to provide understandable examples for the students.

The grammar-translation method placed considerable emphasis on accuracy, although this did not necessarily mean accuracy in oral production, as exercises were generally read and written. The teaching of speaking was neglected and it was rare for the learner to hear the target language being spoken other than for the purposes of translation (Brown, 2000). Basically, natural spoken language was considered inferior to written language, being too formless and unstructured to be the subject of grammatical study (Burns & Joyce, 1997).

Though this method emerged in the nineteenth century and has been criticized on many grounds, it is still influencing many ESL classrooms in Taiwan and many parts of the world (Hwang, 2001; Liao, 1996; Barkhuizen, 1998; Kang, 1997). In these areas English is a required course but reading and writing are the only skills tested in examinations, in spite of more modern teaching materials.

### **The structural approach**

Structural linguists were interested in identifying and describing the basic grammatical forms and patterns of language within the sentence and categorizing them objectively and scientifically (Brown, 1994). In terms of language teaching, these categories were used to select and grade materials that illustrated the grammatical patterns and rules of the language and to provide practice in using them.

Many structuralists were influenced by behaviourism and so they took the view that language learning involved constant practice and good habit formation (Brown, 2000; Altenaichinger, 2002). Learners were trained in correct speech-patterns and expected to practise them. There was a strong emphasis on repetition and on building up of linguistic items through drills and exercises which focused on grammatical structures and patterns. This approach gave a much greater emphasis to speaking than the previous grammar-translation method. Bygate (2001) indicates that audiolingualism, a structural approach, was one of the first to offer a clear perspective on the teaching of oral skills. With this approach to language learning, student activities involved intense practice in aural-oral skills and focused on activities such as drills and substitution exercises taken from a graded syllabus. However, speaking skills focused exclusively on the development of correct grammatical utterances and good

pronunciation. There was little interest in the contexts of speaking and in encouraging oral production of unrehearsed, spontaneous language.

### **Transformational-generative linguistics**

Transformational-generative linguistics proposed that linguistic description should be concerned with the underlying mental systems humans used to generate sentences, rather than with describing fixed grammatical patterns (Burns & Joyce, 1997). These theorists proposed that speakers of a language had mastered and internalized a system of rules and it was this knowledge that enabled them to transform language structures and to generate hypotheses about new language use.

Chomsky (1965) called this knowledge of language use ‘competence’, and contrasted it with ‘performance’ that referred to the way language was actually used in social situations. There was also a growing recognition that learning was controlled by the learner rather than the teacher and that errors were an inevitable part of language learning. The teaching of explicit grammatical rules was seen as necessary (Johnson, 1990), so that the learners could be prepared for practice in using the language creatively and innovatively.

Though the cognitive approach was different from audiolingualism, acquiring spoken language was still seen as a building-block process in which certain structures and grammatical patterns needed to be acquired before others could be learned. Oral proficiency could be promoted through the accumulation of grammatical units and the automisation process in which the attention required to monitor an utterance decreases gradually with drill work (Johnson, 1990).

### **Communicative language teaching**

From the 1970s the work of sociolinguists such as Hymes (1972, 1986) has influenced the development of what is known as the communicative approach to language teaching. This approach considers what it means to use language for communicative purposes instead of focusing mainly on language form. Therefore it contextualizes language within social contexts rather than teaching language as a system of grammatical patterns. It is concerned with not only language form but also with

language function, with all the four macroskills of language, rather than primarily with reading and writing.

To use the language needed in communicative contexts, learners need a common core of language notions and functions that would equip them for learning the more specific language requirements such as in their occupations. Notions refer to semantic-grammatical concepts such as time location, frequency, dimension, quantity and so on. Functions involve the practical uses of language such as making requests, offering suggestions, asking for directions, making enquiries, giving advice and so on (Wilkins, 1976).

In communicative language teaching, three principles are observed (Richards & Rogers, 2001): the communication principle, the task principle, and the meaningfulness principle. The communication principle suggests that activities involving real communication promote learning. The task principle suggests that activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning. The meaningfulness principle suggests that language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. Johnson (1990) believes that the communicative methodology has three characteristics: it places much importance on the role of message in language practice; it uses such techniques as ‘information transfer’ and ‘information gap’ in an attempt to simulate processes of language use; and it is part of a learning model.

Proponents of this teaching approach (Richards & Rogers, 2001) believe that learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error. It could enhance learning both in writing or spoken language as long as learners learn a language through using it to communicate and the communication is authentic and meaningful.

### **Integration of Audiolingualism and Communicative Method**

The audiolingual method was criticized in 1970s for its theories and practice. Chomsky (1966) argues that, with the indefinite number of sentences a person could make in daily life, human language could not be imitative but is created and generated from the learner’s linguistic competence. On the other hand, many educators complained that “the practical results fell short of expectations. Students were often

found to be unable to transfer skills acquired through Audiolingualism to real communication outside the classroom, and many found the experience of studying through audiolingual procedures to be boring and unsatisfying.” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.65) The audiolingual skills were also called into question, such as pattern practice, drill, and memorization. This is because what is taught in the language laboratory does not automatically transfer to real life. Johnson (1990) suggests that teachers should impose ‘minimum conditions’ on drills and practice, demanding of them that they should at least resemble real communication in important ways. Some audiolingualists (Knop, 2000) also admits that the goal of being able to communicate in a second language in the audiolingual approach was rarely reached. These hence led to the emergence of the communicative language teaching.

The communicative approach argues that to be able to transfer the skills acquired in the audiolingual classroom into a real situation, the learners must acquire them in a communicative instead of mechanical context. There are three principles to be followed in a communicative syllabus: information exchange, initiating and responding, meaningfulness and reality (Knop, 2000). In information exchange, the question is often open-ended and the response is not supposed to be fixed or cued by the questioner. In initiating and responding, students must initiate and respond to questions, forming a student-student conversing situation instead of a teacher-student dialogue. In meaningfulness and reality, the communication must be realistic and meaningful to students. Topics for communicative activities must be based on the actual experiences and interests of students.

However, it seems that communication cannot occur without previous structured practice. Knop (2000) also indicates that students must learn and internalize the vocabulary, structures, and pronunciation of a language before they can engage in conversation. Other scholars also think that memorization can be a means by which the new words and structures can be consolidated in the learner’s brain. Brown and Nation (1997) mentioned that language use based on memorization could be the starting point for the creative/improvised use of the language.

It is agreed that drills can be practised in various ways to make them not so boring and repetitive, such as changing the teacher's pace, changing the way to choose who is to repeat or answer, or the content of the sentence (Brown & Nation, 1997). Some flashcards, props and realia, or TPR (totally physical response) activities can also be added to help with students' drilling. Brown and Nation (1997) note that drills play a useful part in a language course in helping the learners use accurate speech and in helping them quickly learn a collection of phrases and sentences so as to use the target language as soon as possible. As their proficiency in language and experience in the target culture increase, most of the phrases and sentences can be re-analyzed and integrated into learners' system of language knowledge and lead to improvisation. Although the audiolingual approach in its purest form has many weaknesses (notably the difficulty of transferring learnt patterns to real communication), to dismiss the audiolingual approach as an outmoded method of the 1960s is to ignore the reality of current classroom practice which is based on more than 2000 years of collective wisdom (Anonymous, 2004). Tiangco (2005) also points out that what audiolingual approach lacks is the final step to use the target language in a meaningful situation.

To make the audiolingual method an effective approach to language teaching, some changes can be made in the preparation stage and the presentation stage in order to achieve this goal. As scholars have argued, the two approaches to language teaching do not exclude each other. Knop (2000) notes that "planning communicative activities does not mean that we have to abandon vocabulary, structures, or topics from our text. Instead, we help students study and review these materials in a different format, (p.19)" and that format is to look on communicative activities as the final learning stage.

Now it seems that the question should not be which method to adopt, but how to integrate both methods into the teaching to cater for specific students. Liao (1996) proposes solutions for Chinese learners' communicative incompetence in learning ESL. The core of the solutions is a five-stage teaching method (review, presentation, drill, practice, consolidation) that corresponds to the stages of information processing. During the practice stage, the learner uses communicative activities. In the

consolidation stage, however, Liao uses many drills for items students have not mastered to produce long-term effects. In this way, it is argued, the drills and memorization become less boring or mechanical since students will know their specific weaknesses and they will be more motivated to overcome their weaknesses. As Knop (2000) notes:

Communicative activities allow students to use memorized vocabulary and memorized structures for realistic, personalized, meaningful exchanges....Students' motivation in memorizing basic structures and vocabulary will increase when they know that later on they will engage in conversation, actively using the language to communicate their own ideas and wishes to each other. (p.20)

During the preparation stage, the main tasks include understanding and drilling (Brown & Nation, 1997). The audiolingual method was strongly criticized for rote-learning, with learners responding to teacher's cues or questions without understanding and thinking about the meaning of their own utterances. In fact, understanding is the basis for future meaningful communication and long-term memory (Tiangco, 2005; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Chang, 1991), and therefore is the fundamental factor for language learning. Teachers must make sure that students understand what is being taught. During the presentation stage, many communicative activities can be adopted to elicit what students have learned (Knop, 2000). It is hoped this will prepare students to use language in real situations where improvisation will become crucial.

In sum, the audiolingual method can build a good foundation for real language use in the communicative stage (Knop, 2000). Johnson (1990), however, claims that in the audiolingual method, the final stage of the 'presentation – practice – production' sequence is missing, and the belief was that there would be transfer from 'class' to 'life'. As a matter of fact, the controlled practice in the audiolingual method often fails to transfer to the actual behaviour (Johnson, 1990; Knop, 2000; Richards & Rogers, 2001). The communicative approach can appropriately complete the procedure needed by language learners. Clancy (2004) suggests that in this learner-centered era, teachers should apply general principles of effective teaching to meet

students' needs. Tinkham (1989) also points out that teachers should not limit their methods and materials to a certain approach which reflects "their own culturally bound strengths and attitudes." (p.698) By combining the audio-lingual with communicative methods in Taiwan's situation, the teachers can respond to students' desire to memorize and also achieve the preferred communicative goal.

Memorization is a main skill in the audiolingual method (Brown, 2000; Clancy, 2004), but it is not synonymous with this method which includes other skills such as pattern practice and drilling. Memorization of chunks of language, like formulae and social routines is used by all students of second language, especially in the early stages. Memorized language may lead learners to be able to improvise, once they have acquired enough vocabulary and sentence structures. Is there a place in the presentation stage for memorization as a teaching strategy? The next section will investigate the theoretical background, related activities and research on memorization.

One feature that is mentioned, or naturally assumed, in discussing oral proficiency in the communicative approach, is the use of spontaneous language, i.e., the ability to improvise, at least partially and gradually, what students are required to say by the developing context of oral activities. The notion of improvisation and the reviews of related studies that have been conducted on it will be discussed after the discussion of memorization.

## **2.2 Memorization as a Teaching Strategy**

### **2.2.1 Theoretical Background and Features of Memorization**

Nowadays popular communicative approaches to language learning claim that learners, to master the target language, need to improvise what they want to say in a spontaneous/communicative situation (Richards & Rogers, 2001). But for language teachers in the field, especially those teaching students below the intermediate level, it is not realistic to ignore the formation of basic language knowledge, such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Knop, 2000). Only when the learners are equipped with the basic language knowledge can they freely and comfortably communicate with others in the target language. Knop (2000) also thinks

“communication cannot occur without previous structured practice. Students must learn and internalize the vocabulary, structures, and pronunciation of a language before they can engage in conversation” (pp. 18-19).

Osburne (1993) points out some clear advantages of memorization in language teaching. Firstly, memorization can give students a sense of success and accomplishment because it is relatively tangible and within students’ control. Secondly, memorization can give some students aesthetic pleasure, especially in poems and songs. Thirdly, some students feel secure and familiar with memorization, especially in countries like Taiwan and China, where traditional approaches like Grammar Translation are still popular (also Liang, 2002; Tiangco, 2005; Huang, 2001), though the students’ opportunities to use English and how their learning is tested could have contributed to the phenomenon. Besides, the use of memorization is by no means absent in modern western educational systems. Finally, in non-language fields, memorization is still recognized as a means of providing students with a body of material to serve as a foundation for understanding.

Ur (1996) indicates that for beginners or the less confident learners, the memorized dialogue is a good way to get learners to practice the target language utterances without hesitation and within a wide variety of contexts; and learning by heart increases the learner’s vocabulary of ready-made combinations of words or ‘formulae’.

Within the study of cognitive skills acquisition in general (Johnson, 1990), the concept of automisation is central. In language learning, learners automate the use of rules and words so that later they can concentrate effort on where it is needed, i.e., in getting meaning across clearly. It is particularly so in conversational exchanges where much store is put on rapid response. Though Johnson believes that automisation is a process in which attention to the form is gradually reduced and attention to meaning is increased, to many, the word automisation means drilling and memorization.

Johnson (1990) claims that there are three ways a teacher can take control of the amount of attention a learner can give to a language form so that

automisation/memorization can develop. Firstly, the teacher can require the learner to produce language at a more or less quick rate (making more or less time, and hence attention, available to do a task). Secondly, the teacher can control the number of tasks to be done at any given time. Thirdly, the teacher has some control on where the learners place their attention, not just by the number of tasks set and the extent of each task, but by the nature of the tasks themselves.

Haley (2000) also points out twelve strategies to help language memorization, such as using visualization to help students focus, focusing on key words and writing them down, and/or taping lessons and then listening to the recording. The strategies try to use all the learners' senses and the peripheral information of the target language to help with memorization. The various strategies put together, somewhat like those used in drama dialogues, can facilitate long-term memory (Chang, 1994).

Certainly there are other ways to improve learners' memorization. The memorized activities in this research refer mainly to those in which the students present what they have learned by heart at the final stage of an oral language activity. Students are supposed to recite a speech, recite a short story or a dialogue with their fellow students. In these presentations, what is memorized needs to be displayed accompanied with appropriate gestures, body movement, and intonation changes to simulate a meaningful and real-life encounter. Maxwell (2004) believes this method can produce excellent effectiveness in second language acquisition for language learners, particularly for the vocabulary of beginning learners. When words are kinesthetically presented through gesture, and contextualized through story and drama, students learn to see and feel the language. Through every aspect of this approach, words are constantly associated with a very strong "emotional hook". This emotional component ensures that vocabulary is deeply embedded. Fluency is built by systematically scaffolding the presentation of new vocabulary, beginning with words of highest frequency and widest scope. Fell (2005) also indicates that drama can introduce emotional content into language while also focusing on body language, gestures and intonation. We start with meaning and then move to language, in other words, our starting point is life not language. This means that the language generated is more realistic.

In fact, children of deaf parents can communicate by using sign language before children of hearing parents communicate by using oral language. Maxwell suggests that one of the reasons for this is that words are arbitrary representations of meaning, whereas in gesture, the action and its meaning have a direct and natural correlation. Acquisition of vocabulary through gestures allows for a concurrent stimulation of both right and left-brain hemispheres, as students internalize meaning extremely rapidly through both production (left brain) and gesture (right brain).

Certainly vocabulary is not the only learning target in the memorization activities. Scripts have long been employed in ESL instruction because they permit students to actively acquire the vocabulary, idioms, grammar and syntax of English speech. Berlinger (2000) claims that all dramatic works, such as dialogues, scenes, or plays, demonstrate both the cognitive principle that information is best assimilated through more than one sensory route, and the behavioral notion that repeated action imprints knowledge upon the mind. Because they involve all aspects of language, scripts that are rehearsed in class can offer students a dynamic encounter with language that comes closest to real communication. Chauhan (2004) also believes that using drama to teach English results in real communication involving ideas, emotions, feelings appropriateness and adaptability; in short it is an opportunity to use language in operation which is absent in a conventional language class. Robinson (2005) even argues that drama provides cultural and language enrichment by revealing insights into the target culture and presenting language contexts that make items memorable by placing them in a realistic social and physical context.

There are two theories which are most directly related to drama and second language learning. These come from the fields of linguistics and psychology respectively: Krashen's hypotheses and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence.

Of Krashen's five hypotheses, the best known and frequently referred to are the "Input" and "Affective filter" hypotheses. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, new, unfamiliar vocabulary is acquired when its significance is made clear to the learner. Meaning is conveyed by providing extralinguistic support such as illustrations, actions, photos, and realia. This in turn results in what Krashen refers to as "comprehensible input" since the linguistic input is made comprehensible to the

second language learner. Krashen further claims that the amount of comprehensible input is proportionate to the amount of vocabulary acquired. Thus, according to Krashen (1989), vocabulary is incidentally acquired through stories because (1) familiar vocabulary and syntax contained in the stories provide meaning to less familiar vocabulary, and (2) picture illustrations clarify the meaning of unfamiliar words. There is evidence that picture illustrations succeed at supporting the reading process by clarifying the meaning of incoming verbal information (Hudson, 1982; Mueller, 1980). In short, meaning is critical to the acquisition of second language vocabulary.

Memorised drama use in the second language classroom is consistent with both of Krashen's hypotheses. Movements, gestures, intonation and facial expressions in drama provide the necessary extralinguistic support which results in language acquisition. Furthermore, because of the positive effects which drama has upon second language learners, the dramatic plots may motivate and captivate the attention of second language learners in ways that oral stories cannot.

Krashen's second hypothesis, the "Affective Filter hypothesis," is also tied to drama use in the second language classroom. According to this hypothesis, the extent to which linguistic input is received from the environment depends largely upon the learner's "affect", that is his inner feelings and attitude. Negative emotions, functioning much like a filter, can prevent the learner from making total use of the linguistic input from his environment. Therefore, if he is anxious, unmotivated, or simply lacks confidence, language acquisition will be limited. It is therefore in the interest of the second language teacher to provide an environment which evokes positive emotions. Drama does precisely that, especially in a scripted drama in which learners can memorize the lines beforehand. With interesting script and appropriate rehearsal, dramas can evoke positive emotions which can lower the "affective filter" and bring about language acquisition.

Memorised drama use in the second language classroom is supported by the work of still another theorist, Howard Gardner (1993). According to this psychologist, there exist eight distinct intelligences; musical, spatial, logical, linguistic (verbal) logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic (movement), interpersonal (understanding others)

and intrapersonal (understanding self) and naturalist (observing and understanding natural and human-made patterns and systems). Brain research supports the notion that these distinct abilities appear to be independent of one another. That is, patients experiencing difficulties in one location in the brain do not generally experience problems in other portions. To him, all humans are born with a propensity to excel in all of these areas, yet their ability to actualize these is largely dependent upon the influences of culture, motivation level and experiences (1998). As a result, most individuals tend to excel in only one or two of these areas.

There are several implications for educators. First, Gardner believes that it is the responsibility of educational institutions to cultivate these intelligences. Also, educators need to be reminded that historically schools have focused on the development of only two of these intelligences: linguistic and logical/mathematical skills. Such a perspective is narrow since humans possess a greater number of intelligences, according to Gardner. Given this, schools need to acknowledge and foster a broader range of intelligences. Therefore, teachers need to instruct in ways that tap a wide variety of intelligences. Although it is impossible to tap all intelligences at all times, teachers need to incorporate a variety of strategies so that they reach and are successful with more students than they have been in the past (Campbell, Campbell & Dickinson, 1996).

Using memorised drama as a vehicle for second language learning is consistent with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Schewe (2002) indicates that a drama-based concept of teaching and learning deserves to be called holistic because six of the intelligences are heavily drawn upon in day-to-day drama work, and even the remaining two—logical-mathematical and naturalist—could be addressed in specifically designed drama projects. Drama can be used in any number of ways to instruct the second language to second language learners (Medina, 2002).

Acting in a drama is an exciting language learning experience in which memorization is involved (Chauhan, 2004). Maley and Duff (1982) and Wessels (1987) argue that drama can help the teacher to achieve 'reality' in several ways. It can overcome the students' resistance to learning the new language by 1) making the learning of the new language an enjoyable experience, 2) setting realistic targets for the students to

aim for, 3) creative ‘slowing down’ of real experience, and 4) linking the language-learning experience with the student’s own experience of life.

The technique employs a multi-sensory approach to language acquisition by involving second language learners physically, emotionally, and cognitively in the language learning process (Gasparro & Falletta, 1994). The use of play scripts in the English as a second language classroom enables the students to explore the linguistic and conceptual aspects of the written text without concentrating on the mechanics of language. Therefore second language acquisition becomes internalized as a direct result of placing the learners in situations that seem real. The students use the target language for the specific purpose of communication. They experiment with non-verbal communicative aspects of language (body language, gestures, and facial expressions), as well as verbal aspects (intonation, rhythm, stress, slang, and idiomatic expressions). The students begin to feel the language and gain the confidence to interact outside the classroom using the target language.

The drama activity can be more effective if it has a strong emotional theme. Via (1980) also notes that dramas expressing strong emotion, feelings, ideas and phrases help more with language acquisition than those with gentle, neutral content. Students become engaged in the connection of sound and gestures in rehearsals as they interact with one another prior to the dramatizations and presentations. The students compare and contrast cultural behaviors and attitudes, analyze and explore the linguistic and conceptual differences between the written and spoken word, and interact cooperatively to orchestrate the dramatizations and presentations.

A relatively recent, cognitively oriented approach also uses gestures, realia, and body language to promote the oral proficiency of true language beginners. Caceres and Obilinovic (2000) propose the script-based approach trying to offer a well-grounded, organized way to initiate language learners or true beginners to early oral production. The basic structure of this new script-based approach involves explicit learning, mainly deductive procedures, and extensive reference to the native language system. The structure is introduced through the use of gradation or graded input and the deductive presentation of rules. They believe that drill work is important for automation to be formed and is extensively used, but it can be designed to be

challenging and stimulating rather than repetitive and boring. They claim that this new methodological approach to language teaching is based on research and extensive classroom observation and experience.

In contrast to drama, public speech is mostly a one-way statement. But it can also be a memorized activity and requires appropriate gestures and tones and intonation changes to convey the meaning persuasively. In this sense, it has presumably the similar effectiveness on students' oral language learning to that of drama. King (2003) emphasizes that speech-style English is not purely rote memorization. Speeches, besides appropriate intonations and pitches, should also involve gestures and movement to make memorization vivid and interesting. This approach also incorporates the four basic elements needed for speaking fluently: pronunciation, intonation, rhythm and word linking.

There is a good deal of research about public speech, but it tends to focus on ways to make a good speech or overcoming the anxiety and fear of public speaking (Kaur, 2005; Webster, 2002; Arnold, 2005). There is very little research on its effectiveness in oral language learning. Though public speech is not the main concern in this study, this kind of training is very useful in many social occasions (Webster, 2002). Therefore it will also be incorporated in the syllabus of this study.

Memorization has a certain importance in speaking a fluent language. Even in many communicative activities, memorization can be seen here and there. Brown and Nation (1997) claim that in a speaking class students must be exposed to three items: (1) form-focused instruction, (2) meaning-focused instruction, and (3) opportunities to improve fluency. The third item is in fact to memorize what has been taught in the form of games such as 4/3/2 and the Headlines activity. In 4/3/2, one learner tries to tell one listener something the former is familiar with in 4 minutes, then tell a second listener the same thing in 3 minutes, and tell the third listener in 2 minutes. In the Headlines activity, one learner raises a story topic as a headline to attract listeners. When one listener comes, the speaker will tell him the story, and then the listener leaves for another interesting story. The speaker needs to wait for another listener to come to listen to the same story again. Apparently both games try to make the learner repeat the same content so as to promote speaking fluency.

### **2.2.2 Memorizational Activities and Related Research**

As for memorization activities, drills, rehearsals and presentation make up the three major parts. Richards and Rodgers (2001) point out that the types of drill activities include repetition, inflection, replacement, restatement, completion, transposition, expansion, contraction, transformation, integration, rejoinder, and restoration.

Rehearsals are usually practised outside of classroom in students' leisure time. At the presentation stage, students have different activity types: giving a speech or telling a story, two or more people acting out a dialogue or a play. Students are supposed to have memorized all the words and sentences before their performance.

Bolton (in Dougill, 1987) notes that drama is a unique tool, vital for language development as it stimulates reality and develops self expression. Chauhan (2004) also claims that the effectiveness of drama in teaching ESL may not be doubted. However, little research has been done during the past decades with purely scripted drama or public speech in terms of improvement in oral proficiency. Nakagawa (2000) also notes that the accuracy-oriented approach is rather neglected among the current ESL pedagogues. One reason might be that both memorization and improvisation strategies are used (eg. Gaudart, 1990). Most research in this area was done either with an integrated teaching strategy or with communicative teaching in a broad sense. Furthermore, in the little research dealing with an integrated teaching strategy, perceptions or preferences for the teaching methodology dominate the focus of the research. (For students' perceptions on memorization, see 2.4)

In sum, memorization as a teaching strategy is important in terms of theoretical foundation and teaching practice in contemporary ESL learning, but when compared with improvisation as a teaching strategy, it is relatively neglected in research area in recent decades (Nakagawa, 2000). The improvisation will be explored in the next section.

## **2.3 Improvisation as a Teaching Strategy**

### **2.3.1 Theoretical Background and Features of Improvisation**

Improvisation refers to the activities in which students do not memorise what they are going to say in class before they come into the classroom. They either do some free

conversation or speak out with the knowledge they have just gained in the classroom, with limited time to learn by heart. Wikipedia (2005), an internet cyclopaedia, defines improvisation as the act of making something up as it is performed. This term is usually used in the context of music, theater or dance. In this research, it is defined as the classroom use of spontaneous, partially unrehearsed language to suit the demands of a given communicative situation or setting.

Many language theorists and researchers now agree that there is no direct relationship between classroom language input and language intake (Willis and Willis, 2001; Yu, 2005). What the teacher presents in the classroom does not necessarily enable the students to use it in their daily lives. What is consciously learned is not necessarily incorporated into spontaneous language production. Krashen (2003) also points out that second language learning is not equal to second language acquisition.

Then what is the mechanism of language production? As language users, human beings have an innate capability to figure out ways to express meanings (Willis and Willis, 2001; Altenaichinger, 2002). Learners do not simply imitate what they have heard and reproduce it. Noam Chomsky (1965), most widely known nativist, claims that a learner's input from the environment is insufficient to account for the speed with which individuals acquire language. As long as they attempt to use language in purposeful communication, they adjust and adapt the input to create new meanings.

It is already widely held that knowledge is constructed by each learner when placed within a social context (Wagner, 2002; Hrehovcik, 2003). When children actively engage in experiencing the world, they are also actively constructing models in their minds to explain what they are undergoing. The way they think, literally speaking, is transformed by their experiences and the attempt to understand these experiences, particularly "by those experiences that call for responses that are just beyond what they can generate on their own" (Wagner, 2002, p.9). Bruner (1986) suggests that all theories in science and humanities are dependent on the human capacity to create. This viewpoint can infer that improvisation has a constructive function in language acquisition.

In task-based learning (TBL) improvisation is strongly promoted (Richards and Rogers, 2001). In TBL, a sequence of improvisational tasks is to be carried out in the target language. But it emphasizes more language *use* with the form playing only the secondary role (Willis and Willis, 2001). One feature of TBL is that participants are free to use any language to achieve the outcome. Some language researchers (Long, 1998; Doughty and Pica, 1986; Swain, 1995) suggest that the interaction of language use in an improvised way could modify and develop their language system even when there is no intervention of instruction.

Some language researchers also suggest that people learn language by being exposed to talking, which often has little regard for grammatical correctness. Dugdale (1996) suggests that people learn language by talking and listening a lot.

In immersion learning situations the person who is new to language is constantly bombarded with sound. In groups people are noisy. They talk, And talk ...They mix participles and metaphors, jump tenses and are generally inconsistent in speech. ...In the chaos of daily life people in immersion situations learn quickly and well, regardless of age, be they children or adults. (p.4)

Total immersion seems to be ideal for language acquisition. However, Widdowson (1990) remarks that natural language acquisition is a “long and rather inefficient business” and that the whole point of language pedagogy is that it is a way of short-circuiting the slow process of natural discovery and can make arrangements for learning to happen more easily and more efficiently than it does in natural surroundings. Many teachers (Scott, 2000) would agree with Widdowson and readily admit that even when they were trying to teach communicatively they were actually just as often teaching traditional grammar, explaining rules and practising them directly with pattern exercise.

Nevertheless, improvisation can provide an appropriate context for learning to take place. Vygotsky (1966) shows that pretend play, especially when using objects in a new fashion, contributes to cognitive development. Piaget (1962) suggests that conceptual thinking develops through activity, spontaneous play, manipulation of

objects, and social collaboration. Wagner (2002) suggests that improvisational drama activities are very powerful in the foreign-language classroom because to learn how to improvise new utterances one has not yet heard, at least one other speaker of the target language is needed. In that case, the repeated pressure the drama puts on participants to respond makes it effective for language learning. He argued that it is not enough for students to hear the target language, such as listening to the tapes or watching TV; they need to talk themselves.

However, Skehan (1996) argues that a focus on language use (improvised) rather than form can result in a “classroom dialect” that enables students to achieve the communicative goals despite the shortcomings of their language. They may eventually fossilize at a relatively low level of language development. Willis and Willis (2001) thus suggest devising a methodology that may afford students freedom to use the target language and, in the mean time, provide them with incentives to improve their language system in terms of language input. Pica et al. (1989) also believe that task-based language learning, to generate more meaningful negotiation, should be a two-way rather than a one-way information flow, close-ended rather than open outcomes, and narrative rather than expository discourse domains.

The communicative methodology is popular in contemporary ESL classroom, and the activities involved in it are mainly improvised (Richards and Rogers, 2001; Altenaichinger, 2002). However, Ryan (2001) argues that, when used in the classroom, the communicative methodology might encounter some problems in practice, especially in Asian cultures. He identified six problematic areas in a Japanese university EFL classroom context and offered suggestions to combat these weaknesses. First, provide enough feedback. In the communicative classroom, students often do not receive feedback due to the emphasis on fluency rather than accuracy. Second, clarify goals. Since this methodology is a collection of principles loosely bundled, it offers the learner little or no direction. Third, have consistency in teaching style. The teacher’s role is a dilemma: sometimes teachers need to be strict about certain aspects such as regular attendance or punctuality; other times teachers need to encourage students to speak without being afraid of making mistakes. Fourth, lessons need a routine or framework. This methodology can either give students too much responsibility to speak freely in class or not enough. Learners need a

framework in which they can feel comfortable in taking the risk to speak out in front of others. Fifth, have cultural awareness. ESL learners could come from a culture totally different from the target language culture. Silence, for one thing, could be interpreted as shyness or lack of interest in different cultures. Sixth, be clear about student-teacher relationship. Communicative methodology encourages the friend-coach relationship, but many students misinterpret this as tacit approval to pursue undesirable behavior such as cutting classes or turning in late homework. It is important for teachers to express clearly the course requirements and the teacher's personal philosophy.

As mentioned above, the improvisational strategy is similar to the more general perspective usually referred to as 'Learning by doing' or 'the experience approach' (Richards & Rogers, 2001). Altenaichinger (2002) indicates that one of the most important aspects of this perspective is pair and group work in which learners try to solve problematic tasks with their available language knowledge. Hence the improvisational tasks and activities are important and will be discussed in the next section.

### **2.3.2 Improvisational Learning Activities**

There are many improvisational tasks or activities in today's ESL classrooms (Nunan, 2004). Prabhu (1987) categorizes the task-based language teaching into three types: information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap. Information gap means the transfer of information from one person or group to another person or group, usually requiring the coding or decoding of information from or into language. One example is pair work, where one person has a part of the whole information and attempts to convey orally to another. Reasoning gap refers to using the given information to, by means of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or perception of the relationships, secure new information. One example of reasoning gap activities is deciding the best course of action (such as the cheapest or the fastest) to achieve a goal within certain constraints. Opinion gap activities involve expressing personal preference, feeling, or attitude toward a given situation, such as completing a story, participating discussion of a social issue.

Pattison (1987) proposes seven types of tasks and activities: questions and answers, dialogues and role-plays, matching activities, communication strategies, pictures and picture stories, puzzles and problems, and discussions and decisions. In Pattison's types, all are overlapping with Prabhu's types except dialogues/role-plays and communication strategies. Dialogues/role-plays can be wholly scripted or wholly improvised, but the improvised are more favoured due to the learning effects and motivation. Communication strategies involve activities such as paraphrasing, borrowing or inventing words, asking for feedback and simplifying.

Richards (2001) proposes five pedagogical tasks: jigsaw tasks, information-gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, decision-making tasks, and opinion-exchange tasks. In these tasks, information-gap tasks and opinion exchange tasks are similar to Prabhu's information gap, and problem-solving and decision-making tasks are similar to Prabhu's reasoning gap. His jigsaw tasks are similar to Pattison's matching activities.

Ur (1996) thinks there are two types of activities in teaching spoken language: discussion activities and interaction activities (See Figure 2.1 below). By discussion activities she means transactional activities, with certain topics for students to talk about or debate, or certain tasks for students to complete, such as describing a picture, finding the differences between two pictures, giving the priority of a good teacher's characteristics, or solving a problem.

Figure 2.1 Types of teaching activities

Discussion	Topic-based	
	Task-based	
Interaction	Interactional talk	
	Long turns	
	Role play	Dialogue
		Play
		Simulation
		Role play

The other type of activities is interaction activities. These activities, including interactional talk, long turns and role plays, are based on non-classroom situations,

emotions and personal relationships. In the role play section, there are four more subdivisions: dialogue, play, simulation, and role play. Ur (1996) indicates that simulation and role play are both activities involving acting in a certain situation, but in simulation, the learners are asked to speak and react as themselves, but the group role, situation and task they are given is an imaginary one. In role play, learners are allotted individual roles, which may be written out on cards.

Burns and Joyce (1997) suggest that all our talking also belongs to two kinds of reasons: interactional and transactional, though they both involving making conversation or making meaning. The transactional reasons, however, are defined differently. In this kind of talking, there is a practical purpose, such as making an appointment or discussing a promotion, while the interactional speaking involves everyday greeting and chatting.

The Education Department of Western Australia (1997) has published a resource booklet with comprehensive content dealing with oral language activities. It talks about three kinds of talk: language and social interaction, language and literacy, and language of thinking. Social interaction includes activity-based sharing, discussion, and social conventions. Literacy subsumes newstelling, narrative, and description. Thinking contains partner work, inquiry, and classification.

The activities I have used in my design are based on this review, involving all the main kinds of activities in order to elicit students' perceptions on them. (For details, see chapter 3.4)

### **2.3.3 Strengths and Limitations of Improvisational Activities**

Ur (1996) compared two types of activities in the classroom: topic-based and task-based activities. Topic-based activities ask participants to talk about a (controversial) subject, the main objective being clearly the discussion process itself; the task-based activities ask them actually to perform something, where the discussion process is a means to an end. Ur found out, in her experiment with teachers, that the task-centred activity scored higher with most participants in many ways: there was more talk in the classroom, more even participation, more motivation and enjoyment. However, there were also some participants who strongly preferred the discussion activities. Ur did

not mention the participants' language levels and the learning context whether it was an ESL environment.

But more talk does not clarify what is learned in the activity. Acton (1997) believes that although information gap activities do generate a great deal of talk and interaction, it is not clear what is learned in the process. Interaction, no matter how active and engaging, may not necessarily teach or practise anything that counts at that particular developmental point. It may be used as a good indirect vehicle for practising what has been taught directly at an earlier stage.

Littlejohn (1996) analyzed the information gap activities in which students ask and answer questions guided by their role cards. Through the task, the students received plenty of practice with question forms and in answering questions. To this extent, the task was very successful. But he argued that the task had limitations, too. Firstly, the main aim of the task is purely a language one: to provide practice in certain forms. If the students are already fairly proficient in using these forms, the task will have little or no value. Secondly, the task is also quite tightly structured and the role cards provide all of the ideas in it. Students might have only practised the grammatical rule without learning anything else. Thirdly, the level of personal involvement is therefore quite low. Littlejohn suggested that the result in different classes, even in different countries, would be identical in each case. The classroom might be "standardized".

But after my twenty-year experience as an ESL teacher, I am inclined to believe that even the artificial effect of the information gap mentioned by Littlejohn is good for Taiwan students who attend English speaking class two hours a week and seldom have the opportunity to practise speaking English outside this classroom.

In sum, though improvisation activities are highly regarded in their effects on oral proficiency acquisition, they are not free of weaknesses. Nation (1989) points out that the most crucial weakness of the fluency-oriented approach is probably fossilization, errors that have become a permanent part in the way a learner speaks. Ironically, fossilized errors prevent the learner from improving fluency, as higher accuracy is required for improving fluency in each level. Another weakness is that communication in a target language is not always the most effective way to develop

speaking skills. In fact, communication can be quite successful even if the speaker's skills are rather limited. If the goal is simply successful communication, what one should do is as easy as to avoid saying what is above his/her speaking skills. Needless to say, this will never bring development in language skills.

Furthermore, some learners do show their preference for memorization activities over improvisation activities. Nunan (1989) describes an Australian study (by Alcorso & Kalantsis) that show that learners favor traditional learning activities over more communicative activity types. Kang (1997) assessed Korean middle school students' language learning strategies and found that most students use noncommunicative, mechanical strategies such as repeating, translation, or rote memorization, especially for the lower graders.

The difference between the effectiveness of improvisational activities and their acceptability to the learners is an issue to be further investigated. The next section will explore students' perceptions of ESL teaching.

## **2.4 Students' Perceptions**

Students' perceptions have received increasing attention in contemporary learner-centered educational environment. More and more research is conducted in this direction (Barkhuizen, 1998). Most people would agree that students' positive perceptions of a teaching/learning activity, such as being interested, motivated or satisfied, would enhance their learning effectiveness, and vice versa (Hsia & Hattersley, 2003). Negative perceptions, on the other hand, would hinder students' learning. Krashen's (1982) 'filter principle' also emphasizes that negative emotions, such as anxiety, fear, and insecurity, inhibit a student's motivation and performance. However, some psychologists (Chang, 1991) also notes that conditions without any pressure do not guarantee the ideal condition for learning. The best performing condition is contingent on the relationship between the difficulty of the task and the pressure: difficult tasks need to be conducted under low pressure to achieve the optimal outcome, while easy tasks result in best performance under higher pressure.

Learners interpret tasks and other classroom events from their own perspectives (Shank & Terrill, 1995). Toth (2004) indicates that a number of studies have

documented difficulties in attaining instructional objectives due to misinterpretations of instructors' intentions. Kumaravadivelu (1991) says that both teachers and learners in a second surrounding bring with them their own perceptions of what constitutes language teaching and learning. And Breen (1989) states that "all learners already critically evaluate the tasks they undertake" (p.205). Therefore teachers should be encouraged to explore and examine the perceptions of the learners in their classes.

Research on students' perceptions can seem to be categorized in terms of three aspects: discrepancy between teacher-student expectations, student perceptions of the learning outcome, and students' attitudes towards the teaching activities. However, the three aspects are not distinctively separate in studies. It is often likely to have more than one aspect investigated in one study.

Over the years, researchers have conducted extensive research on learners' perceptions. Block (1996) found that teachers and learners operate according to quite different systems for describing the purpose of tasks. He concludes that learners do have an awareness of what goes on in class and that teachers should therefore make an attempt to align their task orientation to that of learners. Wright (1987) shows what mismatches could arise between teachers' aims and learners' interpretations. He found learners in a secondary class manipulate the task process in order to make it manageable in their own terms, thus not achieving the expected effect of the task. In a study by Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000), implicit feedback provided as recasted corrections during meaning-oriented tasks was more often than not mistaken by learners for noncorrective repetitions similar to the back-channel cues that characterize natural conversation. Seiba (2001) conducted a study with two groups: a Focus on Form instruction group receiving input flood and input enhancement, and an Explicit Form Focused instruction group receiving the same Focus on Form instruction together with explicit negative evidence/feedback. Seiba indicates that an explicit form-focused instruction group performed significantly better than a focus-on-form group as evidenced by their ability to accurately recognize, as well as to accurately use the simple past tense and the present perfect aspect in various contexts.

Some other studies focused on learners' perceptions of whether or not they have learned anything as a result of participating in the English class. Rossiter (2003)

examined the effects of affective strategy instruction on measures of second language proficiency and of self-efficacy. She used self-report questionnaires and the transcripts of the audio-tapes to analyze students' perceptions of self-efficacy and their second language performance. Leki and Carson (1994) investigated university students' perceptions of what elements of their ESL writing instruction they found useful and available to them as students in content courses. Zimmerman (1997) notes students' views on how best to learn words from reading and interactive vocabulary instruction.

There are also studies examining learners' attitudes toward specific teaching/learning activities or processes they experience in their language classes. Barkhuizen (1998) describes them as "a nonlinguistic outcome" (attitudes developed as a result of formal instruction and learning). This research will explore ESL learners' perceptions, both in terms of linguistic and nonlinguistic outcomes, of the memorization and improvisation activities in the classroom.

Little and Sanders (1990) examined the perceptions of 31 college students in beginning foreign language classes toward various teaching approaches and discovered a discrepancy between the value students and teachers ascribe to communicative language teaching. The study was conducted at the University of South Carolina, in two classes where a variety of teaching techniques were used. At the end of the semester, students were surveyed on their use of language learning strategies, background as learners, and the value and difficulty of the classroom and homework activities. Results showed that the five activities found to be most valuable to students were (1) correction of pronunciation; (2) oral correction of grammar; (3) pronunciation practice in class; (4) oral grammar practice in sentences; and (5) memorizing vocabulary. Dialogue memorization was the least favored activity. Activities having a communicative or process orientation were also not highly valued. As a followup, the questionnaire was administered to beginning and intermediate English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students in South Carolina and California, ESL students at all levels in a binational center in Uruguay, and ESL students in an intensive English program in South Carolina. Results were also similar.

Kang (1997) assessed Korean middle school students' language learning strategies in an input-poor environment. This study investigated the strategies used by middle school students in Korea for learning English as a Second Language in an environment that provides little English language input. Subjects were 60 students in 3 rural public middle schools. Students were selected randomly from advanced and low-level ESL groups in grades 7, 8, and 9. Using a retrospective interview and think-aloud protocol, strategies for vocabulary learning, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing were elicited. Results indicate that overall grade levels, student use of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies increased somewhat. In ninth grade in particular, good students used more effective strategies than did poor students. No difference between male and female students was found. Specific strategy use depended on task type, with students consistently using memory strategies during vocabulary learning, compensation strategies during listening or reading comprehension tasks, and metacognitive strategies in listening and writing tasks. Most students used noncommunicative strategies such as repeating, translation, or rote memorization. In higher grades, advanced students relied less on the mechanical process. Poor students used traditional cognitive strategies across grade levels. Overall, every student was actively involved in the learning process.

Barkhuizen (1998) studied learners' perceptions of ESL classroom teaching/learning activities in a South African context. Using questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations, results found that the learners' perceptions often surprised their teachers, particularly the students' preference for more mechanical learning activities, such as learning about correct spelling and the English tense. Doing orals, like speeches, and reading aloud in class were rated low, slightly better than writing. The activities students rated high were also those they thought they had learned more English from, and vice versa.

Gaudart (1990) used drama, including memorization and improvisation strategies, in a large-scale language teaching program in Malaysia. She found that activities that did not emphasize performance were found more universally acceptable than those that did. Nevertheless, it is concluded that drama activities are useful in motivating students, holding their attention, and stimulating their creativity.

Abe (2000) interviewed six near-native ESL speakers and found that careful imitation of native speaker speech and its continuation are key factors and that it is important to accept input as children do rather than depending on grammatical knowledge or readings. It was also found that guessing plays a very important role in oral communication. The implications here might be that the learners need to be highly motivated and interested in learning ESL and they can tolerate ambiguity in oral communication like children do. Many researchers (eg. Florez, 1999) also indicate the similar characteristics of “a good speaker”.

Ramos (2002) investigated ESL students’ perceptions of role-play activities and found that the participants recognized several benefits such as improving oral proficiency, acquiring vocabulary, and rehearsing for real-life communication. Meanwhile, students also acknowledged some limitations such as artificiality and lack of vocabulary and ideas.

From the studies above, the memorization strategy seems to gain more popularity with some students than others. However, the research on perceptions of classroom memorization activities is not extensive (Nakagawa 2000), particularly on those of speaking activities. Besides, there is little research on the correlation between the rate of oral improvement and students’ preference for a certain strategy or activity. These areas will be investigated in this study. The understanding of students’ perceptions of teaching activities will help teachers better set their principles and procedures for teaching practices.

## **2.5 Principles and Procedures in Spoken Language Activities**

Teaching activities for spoken language are supposed to help students to speak in the target language as much as possible. From the perspective of constructivism, Dugdale (1996) suggests three principles for the speaking class: maximizing exposure, maximizing mimicking, maximizing complexity. The communicative methodology adopts broad principles for language teaching that have been discussed in a previous section. But in the practice, many problems may emerge to decrease the potentially positive effects of the oral ESL teaching. Ur (1996) has pointed out four problems with speaking activities in the classroom, in particular an improvisational one: inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and mother-tongue use.

Inhibition occurs when trying to say something in a second language in the classroom, and students are often worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts. Having nothing to say is another problem when they have no motive to express themselves when they are supposed to. Sometimes in a large group a few talkative participants tend to dominate most of the talking time while others speak very little or not at all. Mother-tongue use is also a problem, especially in communicative situations when all the learners share the same mother tongue, because it is easier, or it feels unnatural to speak to one another in a foreign language.

To solve these problems, some teaching strategies and principles are needed. Ur (1996) also lists five strategies:

1. Use group work
2. Base the activity on easy language
3. Make a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest
4. Give some instruction or training in discussion skills
5. Keep students speaking the target language (pp.121-122)

Based on the above-mentioned and other teaching principles (eg. Knop, 2000) and my teaching experience, this current study also adopts some principles for both the memorization group and the improvisation group. The principles for the memorization group are:

1. Clear explanation and demonstration about the meaning in the scripts. All the activities need to be conducted in meaningful interactions.
2. Make sure everyone can pronounce the words clearly.
3. Words and lines on the script increase gradually. At the beginning, students should get enough confidence and sense of security to be motivated. But they also need to be mentally prepared for the increasing difficulty of the future tasks.
4. From easy to difficult. Topics are chosen from person-centered to community-centered: from personal life, family, friends and neighbors, to social life. In this case, students will be able to use the language they have just learned in their daily life. The number of the words and lines also increase gradually from the beginning to the end of the semester.

5. One week rehearsal period. That means students will clearly understand the meaning of the script and can pronounce all the lines correctly one week before their performance. They have one week to rehearse as many times as they want.
6. All the classroom practice and drill work will start from whole class to groups to individuals. This is to reduce students' anxiety and build up confidence.
7. Volunteer performance. The order of performance groups is decided by students so as to reduce their anxiety. There will always be some groups step out as starters. Designating groups to perform is the last resort.
8. Encouraging students to converse in the target language. But this is not mandatory. Sometimes it may be convenient for them to carry out a task in mother tongue.

The principles for the improvisation group are:

1. As many activity types as possible. Students will get bored with only a few types of activities, but too many activity types will also deprive them of benefiting from learning activities.
2. Handout given afterwards. Students are encouraged to use ear and mouth in the classroom, but the handouts will also be given after class to cater for students of various learning styles.
3. From easy to difficult. For the same reasons as the memorization group.
4. As much talk as possible. Students should have as many opportunities to speak the target language in the classroom to maximize their learning.
5. Teacher-designated pairs. Students tend to speak mother tongue if they stay only with their best friends. Therefore the teacher usually designates the pairs.

There are usually stages to accomplish the speaking activities in the classroom. Ur (1996) divides each activity into three stages:

Stage 1: Preparation. Choose an appropriate task and plan the procedure and foresee any particular problem coming up.

Stage 2: Experience. Do the activity.

Stage 3: Reflection. Discuss or think about students' performance and compare with previous expectation.

Burns and Joyce (1997) also describe procedures, integrating memorization and improvisation, for presenting an activity: preparation work, language understanding

and skills, communicating understanding and skills, interaction activities, and extension activities.

In this study, a three-stage procedure for both memorization and improvisation activities is adopted: introduction/preparation, practice/experience, and presentation/language use. This procedure also reflects many procedures put forward in this field (eg. Calderon, 1999; Florez, 1999), but is different from Ur's procedure in which the third stage is to reflect on and assess the oral activity conducted.

## **2.6 Oral Assessment**

There are many ways of assessing oral proficiency of students. Florez (1999) suggests the forms could be from oral sections of standardized tests such as the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) or the English as a Second Language Oral Assessment (ESLOA) to authentic assessments such as progress checklists, analyses of taped speech samples, or anecdotal records of speech in classroom interactions. We can simply interview them and assess their responses; or use other techniques such as role-plays, group discussions between learners, monologues, picture-descriptions and so on. Choosing an appropriate elicitation technique, however, is only part of the problem; there are many other difficulties associated with oral test scale design, its administration and assessment. Hence, most language exams do not include oral testing or give it a very low weighting in the final grade (Ur, 1996).

There are pros and cons as to whether an oral test should be adopted. Those who are for the test would argue that speaking is an integral part of language, and arguably the most important skill; an oral test will act as an impetus for both teachers and students to spend more time developing this skill; it can help those students who are better at speaking but weak in writing (Ur, 1996).

Those who are against oral tests claim that it is difficult to design tests for learners to improvise speech in a foreign language; it is difficult to judge the utterances the testees answer in real time, while recording is expensive and time-consuming. Furthermore, there are no obvious criteria, or too many, for assessment. Ur (1996) suggests that in teaching practices, the oral tests have immediately noticeable effect

on the “rise in the emphasis on oral work in school classrooms and a corresponding improvement in learners’ speaking skills.” (p135)

However, assessment can involve more than tests. Classroom observation is also an important method for assessing speaking activities. Ur (1996) lists the characteristics of a successful speaking activity which can be used to assess the teaching/learning:

1. Learners talk a lot. As much as possible of the period of time allotted to the activity is in fact occupied by learner talk. This may seem obvious, but often most time is taken up with teacher talk or pauses.
2. Participation is even. Classroom discussion is not dominated by a minority of talkative participants: all get a chance to speak, and contributions are fairly evenly distributed.
3. Motivation is high. Learners are eager to speak: because they are interested in the topic and have something new to say about it, or because they want to contribute to achieving a task objective.
4. Language is of an acceptable level. Learners express themselves in utterances that are relevant, easily comprehensible to each other, and of an acceptable level of language accuracy. (p.120)

In sum, though oral tests are difficult to design and judge, they are important in teaching practices. Based on appropriate criteria, test results describe levels of performance, and provide useful information to teachers, students, parents, and others interested in understanding both the quality of a performance and how, in the future, that performance might be improved (New York State Education Department, 2000). Before discussing the criteria for oral assessment, we need to investigate the development of second language speech.

### **2.6.1 Development of Second Language Speech**

Skehan (1998) suggests that speakers’ fluency, accuracy and complexity of speech all demand capacity, and that there is likely to be a trade-off between these aspects of the skill. Increasing attention to one would limit one’s capacity for the others, with developmental implications (Skehan 1998). Getting learners to focus on accuracy is likely to encourage a less exploratory of fluent use of the language. Pushing them to develop fluency, on the other hand, might encourage greater use of formulaic chunks

of language, discouraging attention to accuracy and reducing speakers' capacity for processing complex language. Leading them to experiment with new expressions or new combinations of words and phrases might jeopardize their accuracy or fluency. Hence, the task focus could affect learners' development.

Skehan and Foster (1997) and Foster and Skehan (1996) show that different task types can differ in their impact: some led to more accurate and fluent but less complex language, others produced more complex and accurate language, while yet others generated more complex but less accurate language. Linguistic complexity seemed affected by the cognitive complexity of the tasks. It remains to be seen (Bygate, 2001a) whether the use of such tasks has long term effects on learners' oral language development. Robinson (2003) also agrees with this perspective. However, the current research (Lindstromberg, 2003) seems to focus on the development of fluency and second language acquisition theorists and researchers seem to have discovered the importance of attending to linguistic form only a decade or so ago. Skehan thinks (in Lindstromberg, 2003) that not enough has been said about tasks which have potential to develop the complexity of interlanguage.

Burrell (2005) introduces computer-activated tasks as a method and means of teaching e-literacy and investigated their efficacy for the ESOL context. She presented several findings about oral improvement. First, the overall level of accuracy and complexity increased in oral and written mode both at elementary and intermediate levels. Second, the language performance in terms of oral complexity was better than of oral accuracy. Third, the rate of improvement of oral complexity was also higher than that in oral accuracy. Fourth, the rate of improvement of oral accuracy at the elementary level was almost the same as at the intermediate. Fifth, the rate of improvement of oral complexity at the elementary level was higher than of accuracy. Sixth, no clear pattern was discovered in the correlation between accuracy and complexity.

Burrell's findings seem to imply that in oral language accuracy develops more slowly than complexity and language levels do not affect the rate of improvement of oral accuracy. On the other hand, language levels do affect the complexity improvement, with the elementary level higher than the intermediate level. In fact, McLaughlin

(1992) claims that students learn a second language at different rates and in different ways. Fortune (2003) also points out that after only 2 or 3 years in an immersion program in the U.S., students demonstrate fluency and confidence when using the immersion language, but the immersion students' second language lacks grammatical accuracy and does not display the variety and complexity produced by native speakers of the language.

How can we help develop language learners in terms of the three aspects? Task repetition or recycling has been shown to have effects on learners' oral performance in all aspects (Helgesen, 2003; Shelton, 2005). A student repeating a task carried out two days earlier without any warning on the second occasion produced significantly more accurate vocabulary, improved a number of collocations and produced more accurate grammar. Bygate (1999) confirms this effect for complexity and fluency, although this time not for accuracy. Students who repeated two tasks, having first performed them ten weeks earlier, completed them more fluently and with greater complexity on the second occasion when compared with their performance of a new task of the same kind on the same day.

Shelton (2005) suggests that allowing planning time before speaking tasks and repeating the task benefits the learner in both developing his or her language system and can also encourage the use of more sophisticated, complex and accurate language. It also encourages practical real world strategies and skills, as planning is something we often do as native speakers. However, it is also clear that to gain full benefit from such an approach to developing speaking and language skills, attention needs to be given to form in the way of feedback and analysis if the learner is to learn from his or her mistakes. Focus on form through noticing activities may prevent fossilization and encourage a move towards improving not only fluency, but accuracy, appropriacy and complexity of language use and interlanguage development.

The implications emerging from these studies are, first, that task selection is likely to affect learners' language and language processing. Second, some form of task repetition can enable learners to shift their attention from the problem of conceptualization towards that of formulation. Task recycling seems to provide the basis for learners to integrate their fluency, accuracy and complexity of formulation

around what becomes a familiar conceptual base. This research is ongoing, but suggests interesting implications for the teaching of oral skills.

### **2.6.2 Factors Affecting Oral Performance**

There are many factors affecting students' oral performance. Robinson (1995) points to the need for understanding task difficulty or complexity and believes that any issue that affects the grading and sequencing of language teaching is inevitably related to the selection, grading, and sequencing of items on the related language tests. He sets out to understand the issues involved in task complexity by examining what he calls: referential complexity, structural complexity and processing complexity.

Other researchers focus on the role of learners. The National Center for Family Literacy (2004) points out that learners play a role in the factors influencing the effectiveness of assessments. The learner factors include educational background (including literacy in the native language), age, experiences with trauma, opportunities to use the language outside of instructional time, and time and ability to attend class. However, Fan (2005) argues that age is not a main factor in learning English, especially in Taiwan. Oya, Manalo, Greenwood, (2004) suggest that students who were more extraverted produced better global impressions during their oral performance, and those who were experiencing higher levels of state anxiety made more errors in their spoken use of clauses.

The oral test can be seen as a task. Nunan (2004) believes that three intersecting sets of factors determine the task difficulty: learner factors, task factors, and text or input factors. The task becomes easier if the learner is confident about the task, is motivated to carry out the task, has necessary prior learning experiences, can learn at pace required, has necessary language skills, and has relevant cultural knowledge. As for the task itself, it is easier if the task has low cognitive complexity, has few steps, has plenty of context provided, has plenty of help available, does not require grammatical accuracy, and has as much time as necessary. The text or the input can make the task easier if it is short and not dense, has clear presentation, has plenty of contextual clues, and has familiar, everyday content.

### **2.6.3 Criteria for Oral Assessment**

Since the introduction of communicative competence, many applied linguists have adopted it in the oral language scales and equated 'proficiency' and 'communicative competence' (Manidis & Prescott, 1994). Liang (2002) also designs a grading chart which, adapted from Weir's (1995) scoring rubric using communicative competence, was based on five criteria: (1) appropriateness, (2) adequacy of vocabulary for purpose, (3) grammatical accuracy, (4) intelligibility, and (5) fluency. (See Appendix M) Each criterion contains four communicative competence aspects: linguistic features, non-verbal features, discourse features, and strategic features. New York State Education Department (2000) takes into account six dimensions in an informal speaking rubric: initiation, response, conversational strategies, vocabulary, structure, and cultural appropriateness. (See Appendix N)

Authors of some scales, such as ISLPR (International Second Language Proficiency Ratings) and ACTFL (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Language), did not use communicative competence as the criteria. Manidis and Prescott (1994) argue that the communicative competence depends on traits other than the ability to use the language, such as intelligence, personality factors like introversion/extraversion and general knowledge, which are probably not appropriate for the language tester to measure.

New York State Education Department. (2000) points out that rubrics for assessing speaking performance come in many forms, and the two most frequently used are (1) holistic, which considers a performance as a whole and (2) analytical, which examines a performance by breaking it into its component parts. However, one of the critiques of rating scales such as ISLPR is that they fail to reflect the multidimensional nature of language proficiency. ISLPR uses global assessment by which the rater is required to match a level description to the testee's performance, neglecting the possibility that the component skills may be differentially developed. Skehan (1991) thus highlights the need to conduct more research into the relationship between developmental stage and proficiency.

A model developed by Skehan (1999) incorporates three dimensions of task performance: accuracy, complexity and fluency. Accuracy is measured by dividing the number of correct clauses by the total number of clauses produced by each subject.

Complexity is measured by dividing the total number of clauses by the total number of C-units produced by each subject. (A C-unit is an utterance containing a unit of referential or pragmatic meaning.) Fluency is measured by the total number of seconds of silence and time spent saying ‘um’ and ‘ah’ by subjects as they complete a task.

Ur (1996) gives a useful scale of oral testing criteria as Figure 3.1. In the test, the candidates are tested on fluency and accuracy, and may get a maximum of five points on each of these two aspects, ten points in all.

Accuracy		Fluency	
Little or no language produced	1	Little or no communication	1
Poor vocabulary, mistakes in basic grammar, may have very strong foreign accent	2	Very hesitant and brief utterances, sometimes difficult to understand	2
Adequate but not rich vocabulary, makes obvious grammar mistakes, slight foreign accent	3	Gets ideas across, but hesitantly and briefly	3
Good range of vocabulary, occasional grammar slips, slight foreign accent	4	Effective communication in short turns	4
Wide vocabulary appropriately used, virtually no grammar mistakes, native-like or slight foreign accent	5	Easy and effective communications, uses long turns	5
Total score out of 10: _____			

Figure 3.1 (Reproduced from Ur, 1996, p.135)

The oral test criteria adopted in this study are based on the above-mentioned suggestions of ISLPR, Ur’s testing scale and Skehan’s task measuring model, to rate students’ oral performance (See Appendix C). I support ISLPR and Manidis and

Prescott's (1994) perspective that the communicative competence includes more than language ability. However, language ability is the main concern of this research. To examine the effects of different strategies on students at different levels, I need to adopt global assessment, as ISLPR suggests, to place students at different levels at the beginning of this research. However, I also agree with Skehan's suggestion that students may differ in the rate of their language skill development; therefore student performance will be examined using three dimensions: fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Ur's scale of oral testing criteria is explicit and makes it easy to rate students' performance. Besides the three oral language aspects in Skehan's model, this study also measures general performance which is a combination of fluency, accuracy and complexity. The criteria and the scale in this research will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies: memorization, improvisation, and the integration of these two.

## **2.7 Bridging the Gap between Improvisation and Memorization Activities for Spoken Language**

Obviously both teaching strategies, improvisation and memorization, have their respective proponents. Those (eg. Johnson, 1990) who promote a memorization strategy believe that learning is a process of information processing. Learning a language, particularly in oral proficiency during the early stages, takes automatization, which in turn takes memorization skills to achieve the goal. Those who approve of the improvisation strategy believe that language is constructed by individuals and using the target language in a meaningful and communicative way is very important. This is still an ongoing issue in the ESL teaching field.

This issue becomes even more complicated when students' perceptions of the different strategies are considered. With some studies showing that students prefer the memorization strategy and other studies claiming that the improvisation strategy is preferred, the findings are inconclusive. Therefore finding an integrated strategy to elicit students' maximum performance and interest is a challenge for ESL teachers. Some researchers have actually proposed intriguing findings in this effort. Task repetition or task recycling is one such example. Helgesen (2003) believes, based on some empirical experiments, that if a task is done two or more times, the student will demonstrate marked improvements in vocabulary selection and use, grammar, and the

ability to self-correct. When learners redo specific activities, they are able to reuse and improve their conceptualization, formulation and articulation. Bygate (2001) suggests giving learners the opportunity to repeat language tasks as a way to make progress in accuracy, fluency and complexity.

There are some researchers attempting to integrate the memorization and improvisation strategies, but they use different terms. Nakagawa (2000) uses accuracy versus fluency; Bialy (2003) uses communication versus rote-memorization; Maxwell (2004) uses the Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM) incorporating gesture approach in it. Most of the proponents of the integrated approach have one thing in common: using the form, script or memorization skills at the early stage of learning and the improvisation skills for later use.

Berlinger (2000) literally merges the two strategies in drama teaching: script-based improvisations. Recognizing the advantages of the memorization and improvisation, he planned an improvisation play which began with a script but evolved into an open-ended, multifaceted confrontation. The results show that this strategy can be a highly successful learning experience for ESL students. Students were motivated to generate imaginative and detailed ideas, greatly expand their vocabulary, actively practise language skills and attain far greater fluency. Participating in this kind of activity also strengthens students' confidence in their academic ability, an essential component of successful language acquisition.

Many researchers have proposed the integration of memorization and improvisation strategies, but the actual research is still little. Gaudart (1990) uses drama techniques in language learning in Malaysia. Students were low-level, intermediate, or advanced learners in rural, urban, or tertiary schools. Class size ranged from 10 to 51 students. Types of drama activities used were language games (including improvisation), pantomime, role playing, and simulations. They emphasized listening and speaking skills. In general, it was found that drama techniques worked for most teachers and that some techniques worked better in certain circumstances than in others. Activities that did not emphasize performance were found more universally acceptable than those that did. It is concluded that drama activities are useful in motivating students, holding their attention, and stimulating their creativity.

Though Gaudart concluded that drama activities were useful in some aspects, the effectiveness of drama was not clear in terms of oral proficiency and the line between improvisation and memorization was ambiguous, too. This study will investigate further in this area.

The Gesture Approach (Maxwell, 2004) stresses an active learning technique as the key to effective acquisition. Through the use of story, dramatized initially through scripted plays, then moving to more student-centered improvisational drama and storytelling activities, students experience work with story in-depth over extended periods of time, thus internalizing the process of storying. They extend their awareness of story through story retelling, and creative storytelling. When this approach was incorporated into the Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM), which has been designed to rapidly accelerate the development of fluency at the beginning stages, it produced astounding effects on students' language learning, especially the beginning language learners. Grade two students who have spent only a few years in this program (200 hours of instruction) have successfully reached levels of fluency that compare favourably with students at the same grade level in immersion programs (up to 1,500 hours of instruction). They are able to read and write stories independently, as well as communicate effectively in spontaneous oral interactions with their peers and teacher in French. Most importantly, the students feel confident and competent in the language, and therefore develop a high degree of motivation to continue to improve their fluency levels.

Maxwell's research results are indeed amazing and her beliefs are convincing, but the cultural differences between East and West might mean different results when drama activities are adopted. In Taiwan, research using drama to explore its effectiveness on students' oral proficiency is little. This study will also use some drama activities to examine the effectiveness of drama in this domain.

This study will also adopt a strategy combining memorization and improvisation to investigate the effectiveness on students' oral proficiency and their perceptions.

In sum, the literature reveals that though many researchers suggest using the memorization strategy at the early stages of language learning and the improvisation strategy later on, there is still no definite conclusion about the effects of memorization and improvisation on students' oral performance, especially with the use of drama. Research on the integration of the two strategies is not abundant in literature, either. Besides, there are some studies investigating students' perceptions of the teaching strategies and the activities, but few studies explore the students' comparisons of the different strategies/activities. In order to contribute research in this area, I have undertaken a research study, with the following research questions and hypotheses.

## **2.8 Research Questions and Hypotheses**

According to the literature review in this study, I propose the following research questions and the corresponding hypotheses as follow:

Research questions:

1. Does improvisation, as a learning strategy, help to improve students' oral proficiency in L2 English?
2. Does memorization, as a learning strategy, help to improve students' oral proficiency in L2 English?
3. Is there any difference between improvisation and memorization, as learning strategies, in terms of students' rate of oral improvement in L2 English?
4. Does the combination of both improvisation and memorization, as learning strategies, help to improve students' oral proficiency in L2 English?
5. What is the relationship between students' language levels and their rate of oral improvement with the use of the various strategies (i.e. memorization, improvisation, and combination of these two)?
6. How do students perceive the adoption of improvisation and memorization as learning strategies?
7. How do students perceive the activities adopted in each of the learning strategies?
8. What is the relationship between students' perception of these strategies and improvement in their oral performance?

My hypotheses are:

1. Improvisation will have a significant positive effect on the participants' oral performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance.
2. Memorization will have a significant positive effect on the participants' oral performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance.
3. There will be a significant difference between improvisation and memorization in terms of students' rate of oral improvement in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance.
4. The combination of improvisation and memorization will have a significant positive effect on the participants' oral performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance.
5. Students of different language levels will show significant variation, irrespective of the strategy they use, in their rate of oral improvement as the result of the experiment.
6. Students in the combination group will show a significant preference for the memorization strategy over the improvisation strategy.
7. Low-level participants will show significant preference for memorization strategy over improvisation strategy, while the high-level students will show preference for improvisation over memorization.
8. There will be no relationship between the preferences for particular strategies and the rate of oral improvement.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

As discussed in the rationale for the present research, the aim of this study is to investigate some issues that have not been fully addressed by researchers in the implementation of memorization and improvisation strategies in oral language teaching. For such a purpose, a quasi-experimental study was designed to answer the research questions in chapter 2.8.

The methodology includes setting, participants, research design, instructional design and procedures, instruments of data collection, and data analysis.

### **3.1 Setting**

This study was conducted in the nursing department of a medical college in southern Taiwan. There are about ten thousand students in this technological college. I work in this department which is also the only department in this college to offer elective ESL speaking classes.

### **3.2 Participants**

The participants in this study were 125 college-level students in my ESL classes. They were 16 to 17-year-old girls in their second semester of their first year nursing course. Mandarin was their first language. They had all studied English as a foreign language for at least three years in junior high school. Their average English level was low intermediate, but the range of proficiency levels was very wide. In addition, since students had to, after graduating from junior high, take the Joint Entrance Examinations (JEE) for further schooling, their knowledge of English was focused on reading, writing, and grammar. Listening and speaking were not considered important and had rarely been practised communicatively. Some of the students found it difficult to use English in speaking tasks at the beginning stage in senior high school or college.

### **3.3 Research Design**

#### **3.3.1 Pilot Study**

To ensure the feasibility of the activities in the major study, I conducted a pilot study to experiment with what memorisation and improvisation tasks would be useful. The pilot student group had similar attributes in terms of age, gender, language level, and

major in college as the group for the major study. The experimental pilot period lasted one semester as the major study did. Students were also divided into three groups, one using the memorization strategy, the second, the improvisation strategy, and the third used a combination of these two strategies. Students also took an oral pretest at the beginning of the semester and posttest at the end. The tests were recorded using a tape recorder but were not analysed.

Students were asked to write a journal each week to reflect on what happened in the classroom. They were also told that it could serve as an excellent link between the teacher and students, and would promote teaching and learning. Most of them wrote seriously during the first two weeks, but gradually became disengaged. Some students complained that it was a meaningless burden on them. Others told me they just did not know what to write, despite the fact that I spent time each week commenting on each student's journal. If I asked someone to clarify a sentence in the journal, there were few responses to my comments. It seemed that most of them did not think the journal could facilitate their learning in a substantial way. Therefore I decided not to ask students to write the journal in the major study.

Some teaching activities were modified after the pilot study to better meet students' needs and promote students' learning. For example, the original guided storytelling was too long and many students could not improvise in the classroom, so I decided to divide the story into three parts in the major study. Some of the dialogues or dramas were also modified because they were too long for most of the students to memorize, especially at the beginning of the semester when the focus was only to familiarize students with spoken English. In the interview activities, students tended to look for their best friends in the class and chat about personal topics in their mother tongue. In the major study, I asked them to interview someone designated by me, such as number one and number six, number two and number seven. The interview time was also shortened in the major study to maximize the learning effects. Other techniques, such as the use of coupons enabling students to earn better grades and/or prizes, worked well in the pilot study and were used again in the formal study.

Though there were no statistical data and formal analyses for the pilot study, from observation, the memorization group looked more disaffected from the teacher than

the other two groups. The improvisation group seemed to perform better than the other groups. The combination group seemed to be the most engaged among the groups, but their performance was not as good as the other groups. These observations will be compared with the results of the major study in the discussion. (See 4.5.2)

### **3.3.2 Major Study**

This is a quasi-experimental study because some variables were beyond my control, such as participants' after-school learning, their other English-class learning, or parents' influence. This study mixed both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method was designed to find out the effects of different teaching strategies, while the qualitative one was to explore students' perceptions of the strategies imposed on them. I adopted the two methods on the ground that I did not think the quantitative would lead me to find out enough to assist me with future teaching because perceptions are important. Three classes in the nursing department were selected at random (drawing from a hat) for the purposes of this study. There were 45 students in Class A, 35 students in class B and 45 in class C. Each class was exposed to the use of a specific speaking strategy: Class A received mainly improvisation activities, Class B mainly memorization activities, while Class C received a combination of improvisation and memorization activities. The effects of the three different teaching approaches on the students were compared at the end of the semester. When excluding the mid-term and final exam weeks, pretest and posttest weeks, and two holidays, the teaching ran for 12 weeks.

The three groups received a similar treatment in relation to teacher input and time allocation for various segments (revision, practice, testing). The main difference was the use of improvised practice in Group A, the memorized practice in Group B, and the combination of memorization and improvisation in Group C. A sample of the procedure is presented in figure 3.1. This was a topic-oriented teaching program aimed at the promotion of students' oral proficiency. Lexis, grammar and sentence structures were not particularly emphasized since the students had all learned English for at least 3.5 years. However, for most of them this was their first English class focusing on spoken English.

Figure 3.1 Sample of teaching procedure

Improvisation group	Memorization Group
<p>1. Learning outcome</p> <p>Self-introduction: name, school name, major, hometown, interests</p> <p>2.Procedure</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> hour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. revision of lexis, sentence structures</li> <li>b. teacher demonstrates self introduction</li> <li>c. practise basic introduction</li> <li>d. practise talking on student interests</li> <li>e. focus on pronunciation</li> <li>f. accentuate on acting out</li> </ul> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> hour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Improvised practice in a variety of situations, e.g. you are a celebrity (notes of famous people) (students acting as celebrities with appropriate attitude or gesture, others trying to guess)</li> <li>b. Teacher's feedback on use of lexis, pronunciation, acting technique</li> </ul>	<p>1. Learning outcome</p> <p>Self-introduction: name, school name, major, hometown, interests</p> <p>2.Procedure</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> hour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. grammar and rules</li> <li>b. teacher demonstrates self introduction</li> <li>c. practise basic introduction</li> <li>d. practise talking on student interests</li> <li>e. focus on pronunciation</li> <li>f. accentuate on acting out</li> </ul> <p>Home practice</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> hour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Memorized practice using a variety tests and situations</li> <li>b. Teacher feedback on pronunciation, use of acting techniques</li> </ul>
1. teaching objective:	1. teaching objective:

introduce family: relatives, how many, how old, jobs, there are, 2. procedure 1 <sup>st</sup> hour a.review and family tree: 25min b.bingo (twice): name and definition c.pair work: introduce family  2 <sup>nd</sup> hour d. introduce partner's family (1/3students ) e. game: owner of the note	introduce family: relatives, how many, how old, jobs, there are, 2. procedure 1 <sup>st</sup> hour a review and family tree: 25min b.bingo (twice): name and definition c.handout: explain and practice Home rehearsal 2 <sup>nd</sup> hour d.acting out in class e. comment and correction
---	--

All three groups experienced the same teaching content during the first hour in each session (2 hours a session), getting acquainted with the words and sentence structures applied in various situations with proper drills and practice. This was to make certain that all the students had experienced some memorization practice and some communicative training before being able to transfer what they have learned in class to other situations. In the second hour, however, the tasks for each class were different. Class A improvised conversations or speeches in a variety of situations. For Class B, the schedule was managed so that the students had enough time to memorize a script between the first and second hour: they acted out the script in the second hour in the form of a speech, a drama or a role-play.

The combination group received the same treatment as the memorization group during the first half of the semester, and the same as the improvisation group during the second half of the semester. Their perceptions of the different strategies and activities contributed to the data needed for the study.

All the students took an English oral pretest (see Appendix B), which was used to divide students into three levels in terms of spoken English proficiency: high, intermediate, and low. At the end of the semester, all the students took a similar oral

post-test. The results from the posttests and pretests in each class were collected and analysed.

At the end of the semester, an open-ended questionnaire was given to the students in the combination group to examine their perceptions of the activities. Thirty out of forty-five students in this group, representing the three language levels, were interviewed in order to collect their in-depth opinion on different speaking activities.

### **3.4 Instructional Design**

#### **3.4.1 Teaching material**

The teaching material in this study was designed by me for its relevance to students' interests and likely practical use. The selection of learning material was based on two aspects: the topics and the learning content.

The topics chosen for the material were based on students' junior high textbooks, some commercial English conversation books and the researcher's experience. Those topics first revolved around students' immediate environment, and gradually expanded to the outer world (see chapter 2 for reference for this pattern). It was assumed this would build up a comfortable and secure context for students, at least at the beginning stage. In the first session, for example, the students were asked to introduce themselves in the target language. Later on the topics were extended to their family, school, and social occasions. (See Appendix D, E)

#### **3.4.2 Principles for content selection**

There were three general principles for the learning content in this teaching experiment: identical content in each group, interest and practicality for students and ascending difficulty.

In principle, the researcher hoped to present identical learning content for all groups. However, my pilot study found that the memorization group would proceed more slowly than its improvisation counterpart, partly because of the performance requirement. Hence I added to the improvisation group a game in which no extra learning content was presented.

Interesting and practical content is supposed to engage students more (Davis, 1993; Brewster & Fager 2000). To achieve these goals, humour was included as part of the content. The creative drama was another means to motivate the students. For example, when the two groups were required to perform a short play, one in memorization form and the other in improvisation form, both groups were allowed to create extra plots to the original one. The final performances were intriguing and many students expressed their delight in the performance afterwards.

Some learning content might not have been interesting for some students, but it was very practical. In this study, interviews (talking about family) and discussions (winning the lottery) were examples. In addition, various visual aids, such as flash cards and realia, were also used to increase the learning effects. (See chapter 5.2)

All the instruction was designed from easy to difficult, as suggested by many writers (eg. Bennett, 2005; Molinsky, 2001; Frankel & Kimbrough, 1998). Nunan (2004) also suggests that if the learner has the necessary prior learning experiences, the task for them will be easier for them. Therefore the topics in this study were chosen from person-centered to community-centered: from personal life, family, friends and neighbours, to social life. In this case, students were able to use the language they had just learned in their daily lives.

The difficulty of the content was also considered. Nunan (2004) suggests that three broad factors should be taken into account to determine the task difficulty: learner factors, task factors and text or input factors. Though the participants' oral level range in each group was wide at the beginning of the experiment, the researcher designed the material from easy to difficult. For the memorization group, a long script was divided into several parts for practice or performance at the beginning. Words were easy, and lines were few. The difficulty increased gradually over time with their oral language development (See Appendix D and E). This principle was also applied to the other groups. In the improvisation group, students had more practice time and more partners to pair with at the beginning. (The specific principles for different groups are shown in 2.1.3)

### **3.4.3 Teaching procedure**

As discussed in the literature review, a three-stage procedure was adopted in this study: introduction/preparation, practice/experience, and presentation/language use. In the introduction stage, I brought up the topic and the related words or phrases to be learned in the session. Props, flash cards, and real life material were used at this stage. Some games or demonstrations were also introduced. For example, when the topic was exchanging a T-shirt in the shop, colors were practised with flash cards, and the teacher also demonstrated how to exchange a T-shirt with a salesperson. The new words were pronounced several times, using class practice and then individuals. This was to reduce students' anxiety and cultivate their confidence.

In the practice stage, students were divided into groups or pairs to prepare for the presentation stage. For the memorization group, a script was first explained clearly and the words were read to the students. Students often needed to make sure their pronunciation was correct, and the teacher always walked around the classroom to tutor individuals. These students also needed to add proper intonation and gestures in order to convey the message more vividly. The sessions were arranged so that the memorization group could have one week's time to rehearse before the actual performance. The improvisation group needed to practice dealing with several situations that could happen in a role-play or an interview.

The three groups in the study all underwent the same introduction stage. The practice stage was different for groups because they needed to prepare for different presentations. In the final stage, the memorization was usually performed in the form of drama or monologue, with memorized lines and appropriate voice and gestures. The improvisation group had various activities to improvise some utterances. In the next section the selection of activities is briefly discussed.

#### **3.4.4 Selection of presentation activities**

After choosing the topics for the study, I needed to choose appropriate activities so that students could demonstrate their learning. Basing my choices on the results of studies that I have reviewed, the speaking activities adopted in this study are (in Ur's terms, 1996): self-introduction (interactional talk), introducing family (dialogue), interview (dialogue), role-play, storytelling (long turns), traffic report (long turns),

self-created play, lottery discussion (topic-based discussion) and guessing game (interactional talk).

When designing the syllabus for my experiment, many factors were considered. As stated above, Nunan (2004) suggests that three broad factors should be taken into account to determine the task difficulty: learner factors, task factors and text or input factors. In addition to the three factors, I also considered the research findings in the literature review, limitation of teaching hours, task sequencing, and activity variety. For example, the topics were firstly centered on the personal life, and then gradually expanded to family, friends, immediate social circle and further on. Self-introduction is interactional talk and usually the first step in meeting a new friend. It also matches students' interest and language levels because most of them would not perceive this task as very challenging. Discussion and guessing game might have been more challenging for many of the participants and were conducted in the latter part of the experiment.

The reasoning or debating activities were excluded from this experiment partly because they might be too difficult for most of the beginning oral language learners in the study, and partly because of the limitation of teaching hours. Discussion activities were not used a great deal for fear of the majority of the participants using their mother tongue instead of the target language. Role-plays were used several times because they are highly regarded by many researchers (Tompkins, 1998) and practitioners. Basically, I tried to adopt as many kinds of activities as possible to guard against boredom on the part of participants, but I also endeavored to limit the number of activities to a manageable range. (For details, see Appendix D)

There might be several ways to demonstrate learning content that students had been taught. However, some types of activities might be more difficult than others. My experiences showed that students liked to present in large groups, even though pair work was likely to elicit the most utterances by each participant. Monologues might be the most difficult for students. Ur (1996) suggests that discussion activities tend to be open-ended and disorienting compared to task-based activities, such as a role play or a game. In addition, many Asian students might be shyer than their Western

counterparts (Liao, 1996), therefore dramas or plays might not be suitable for these students at the beginning.

With these considerations in mind, relevant activities for the topics and the course development were selected and a syllabus was designed. (See Appendix D and E.)

### **3.4.5. Positive Reinforcement**

Students need to be encouraged to speak in class, especially in the ESL classroom. Hence I complimented students frequently in class when they made an utterance in the target language. Some students might not have noticed the compliment when there were too many of them, but the researcher still kept doing it to construct a safe and encouraging climate in the classroom. The use of coupons was another form of encouragement used when some students did an excellent job, either volunteered to answer a question or prepared well for the performance. With adequate coupons, the students would get better grades and/or receive some small gifts such as pencils or key rings.

## **3.5 Data Collection**

Data collected in this study resulted from (1) two oral tests, (2) the questionnaire about perception, (3) the student interview and (4) in-class observation.

### **3.5.1 Oral Tests**

Two oral tests administered as pretest and posttest were designed to test students' oral proficiency regarding three aspects: fluency, accuracy, and complexity. The instruments for these tests were a question sheet (See Appendix B) and some pictures clipped from the newspaper. In pretest, students were asked one question on the questionnaire and then were offered one picture to describe. The posttest repeated the pre-test, but the questions asked and the pictures given to a specific student might be the same or different in the two tests.

On the questionnaire were five open-ended and often-asked questions. Presumably they were all easy to answer for most college students in Taiwan. The pictures were also common and easy to respond to. The questions were revealed to the students ten minutes before the test began in order to give students some time to think or talk

about the answers, but not enough time to write the answers down and memorize them. In this case, the students must try to improvise the appropriate answers to the teacher's questions. The tests looked like an interview, with the teacher and the students interacting in the target language.

A tape recorder was used for audio recording. The recording of the memorization group and the improvisation group was further transcribed verbatim for the qualitative analysis. The transcription was from forty-eight participants, twenty-four from each group. Since time and budget were limited, these students were randomly selected from participants of different oral levels, with eight participants representing each of the three language levels in each group.

### **3.5.2 Questionnaire of Perception**

The perception questionnaire was designed by the researcher to investigate how the students perceived the speaking activities during the semester (See Appendix A). This questionnaire was offered to the combination group only because it was the only group having experienced both the memorization and improvisation strategies and was able to compare the two strategies. There were two questions for students: ranking the ten activities used in the course and explaining the reasons why they ranked the top three and the bottom three activities. It is assumed that, since students had to say something negative and something positive, the results might be more objective than otherwise.

This questionnaire was printed and answered in Chinese so that students were comfortable to express what they really felt and thought about the teaching activities.

### **3.5.3 Student Interview**

The purpose of this interview was to further investigate students' English learning background, experience and reasons for the preferences for the activities. Twenty-six out of forty-five students in the combination group were interviewed. Since time and budget were limited, these students were randomly selected from participants of different oral levels. Thus they represented the participants of different language levels: high, intermediate, and low.

These students came to the language laboratory for interviews at lunch break every day during the last two weeks of the semester. Each person had about twenty minutes chatting with the researcher. To enhance their motivation for the interview and compensate for their time, lunch was provided for each of them. The talking proceeded in Chinese and was later transcribed verbatim for qualitative analysis.

#### **3.5.4 In-Class Observation**

The focus of the observation was on students' verbal expression and non-verbal reaction to the activities undergoing in the classroom. With 20 years of teaching experience and training in group counselling, I could easily perceive students' liking or dislike for an activity and wrote it down immediately after class. These are activities that I might do as teacher but were done systematically in order to meet my research goals. Sometimes the overheard complaints from students could also be meaningful. When a negative reaction appeared, I also found time to talk with the student and addressed the problem as soon as possible. Basically I tried to minimize impacts that interfered with students' learning in the classroom. The notes taken in class and after were also compared with participants' performances in the posttests and their perceptions at the end of the semester. For example, a student (coded C24) liked to chat in class and was often absent-minded, but she claimed she liked the activity (guessing game) which most high-level participants enjoyed. Her performance in the posttest revealed that her language skills might be at the bottom of the class. This finding could explain her disengagement from the class. On the other hand, her interaction with her friends somehow helped her a little in the guessing game.

#### **3.6 Data Analysis**

The data collected to examine the effects of oral language learning in this study included (1) the scores of the two oral tests, (2) the transcription of the audiotape of the oral tests, (3) the results of the perception questionnaire, and (4) the student interview transcription.

The oral tests were first graded by two raters on a scale ranging from 1 to 10 points for a quantitative analysis. The raters involved me and another English teacher who had taught English for more than 20 years. At the beginning of the grading, the other

English rater and I discussed the criteria (see below) and listened to several students' recording in order to reach a consensus on how to grade students' performance. Then the formal grading began. There was a high percentage (about 90%) of agreement between the two raters' grading. When a certain student was given three points higher by one rater than the other rater, the tape was replayed until the gap was narrowed. The inter-rater validity was ensured by these means.

The oral test criteria adopted in this study are based on Ur's testing scale and Skehan's task measuring model to rate students' oral performance. According to Skehan's model, this study also assessed students' oral performance on three major criteria: fluency, complexity, and accuracy. Each criterion has descriptors for various language levels. Students were graded on a scale ranging from one to ten points for one criterion.

Besides the three oral language aspects in Skehan's model, this study also measures the general performance which is the combination of fluency, accuracy and complexity. The criteria and the scale in this research will be used to find out the effectiveness of the strategies: memorization, improvisation, and the integration of these two.

For the measurement of oral proficiency, the scores collected from the two oral tests were computed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.0 for Windows to compare the inter- and intra-group differences. T-test was used to examine the intra-group improvement between pre-test and post-test. ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) was used to examine the inter-group differences on the rate of improvement.

Students' preferences for the two strategies were also quantified according to their rankings. Then one-way ANOVA was also used to compare the two means.

Qualitative strategy was adopted in analyzing the oral test transcription to further explore participants' oral performance in different aspects. The areas I took note of were fluency, complexity, and accuracy, such as subject changes, hesitation, grammar, sentence patterns and the real intentions in their utterances. The perception

questionnaire and interviews were also analysed by qualitative methods. All these data were read several times to examine implications. I took notes and categorised students' comments under headings that emerged from the data, such as topic preference, strategies, challenge, interests, practicality and non-activity (such as partner or personal) factors. Examples were also used to compare with the statistical outcomes. (See 4.1.2 and 4.2.2)

Figure 3.2 Criteria for oral test

#### Fluency

1-2	Utterances halting, fragmentary, incoherent, few words; no communication for unprepared questions
3-4	use more words or phrases, but hesitant utterances even in short turns; use few words for unprepared questions
5-6	Can quickly express prepared answer and get ideas across; hesitant and brief for unprepared questions
7-8	Effective communication in short turns; little pause; fluent on very familiar topics
9-10	Effective communication for ordinary conversation; occasional pauses

#### complexity

1-2	Use only words or none
3-4	Use words or some common phrases; even simple sentences
5-6	Can combine two or more phrases or comprehensible sentences
7-8	Use mainly sentences, sometimes use complex sentences
9-10	Use compound or complex sentences; some native speaker's usage

#### accuracy

1-2	Use only words or none; no grammar at all
3-4	Use some stock phrases; many errors when using sentences; have few grammatical concepts or have very strong accent
5-6	Have some grammatical concepts, but frequent grammatical inaccuracy; slight foreign accent
7-8	Some grammatical errors; basically correct sentence patterns; unstable

	grammatical usage
9-10	Few grammatical errors, but does not interfere with communication; slight foreign accent;

### 3.7 Research limitations

The study has some limitations, which include participants' backgrounds, external variables, and experiment period.

Firstly, since the subjects were selected with the same gender, similar years exposed to learning ESL, same age and major, the results can not be generalised to learners of other categories.

Secondly, this was quasi-experimental research. There were some variables that the researcher could not control. For instance, while these students were in the speaking class, they were also taking other English courses such as reading and listening. Some of them even went to a private language school or listened to English broadcast programs in their free time, while others did nothing at all about the English language.

Thirdly, since the experiment lasted only 12 weeks, pretests and posttests excluded, the short-term effects might differ from long-term effects.

## **Chapter 4 Oral Tests: Results, Analyses, and Discussion**

This chapter is dedicated to answering the research questions 1-5 and testing the related hypotheses. The research questions and related hypotheses are as follows:

### Question 1-5:

1. What are the effects of improvisation, as a learning strategy, on students' oral proficiency in L2 English?
2. What are the effects of memorization, as a learning strategy, on students' oral proficiency in L2 English?
3. Is there any difference between improvisation and memorization, as learning strategies, in terms of students' rate of oral improvement in L2 English?
4. What are the effects of the combination of both improvisation and memorization, as a learning strategy, on students' oral proficiency in L2 English?
5. What is the relationship between students' language levels and their rate of oral improvement with the use of the two strategies?

### Hypotheses 1-5:

1. Improvisation will have a significant positive effect on the participants' oral performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance.
2. Memorization will have a significant positive effect on the participants' oral performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance.
3. There will be a significant difference between improvisation and memorization in terms of students' rate of oral improvement in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance.
4. The combination of improvisation and memorization will have a significant positive effect on the participants' oral performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance.
5. Students of different language levels will show significant variation, irrespective of the strategy they use, in their rate of oral improvement as the result of the experiment.

This chapter presents and discusses all results from oral pretests and posttests. Each section is divided into two main parts: results and discussions. The results are based on the statistical analyses, and the discussions include all the quantitative and qualitative data. This chapter will proceed in the following order:

- 4.1 The progress each group made on oral proficiency skills
- 4.2 Comparing the effects of strategies (mainly-memorization and mainly-improvisation) on oral improvement
- 4.3 The effects of language levels on oral improvement
- 4.4 The interactive effect of teaching strategies and language levels on performance
- 4.5 Factors affecting oral performance

## **4.1 The Progress Each Group Made on Oral Proficiency Skills**

### **4.1.1 Results**

#### **A. The improvisation group**

This study used paired samples t-test to see whether there was a statistically significant difference in oral proficiency between the pretest and posttest scores in the improvisation group. The results showed (see table 4-1) that participants in this group scored higher in the posttest than they did in the pretest in every aspect of speaking ability: fluency, accuracy, complexity, and general performance. The difference between pretest and posttest was statistically significant in every aspect. ( $p < .001$ ) However, the standard deviation of each aspect in the posttest was larger than that in the pretest. This means student levels in the improvisation group showed wider range in the posttest than in the pretest in terms of oral proficiency.

All the tables in this chapter are simplified, presented only with the core statistics. For detailed tables, see Appendix F.

Table 4-1 The progress of the improvisation group (N= 45)

		fluency	accuracy	complexity	General performance
pretest	mean	3.17	3.37	3.32	9.86
	Std.deviation	1.83	1.75	1.67	5.16
posttest	mean	4.52	4.18	4.52	13.22
	Std.deviation	2.05	1.84	1.98	5.76
	t	-6.47***	-4.34***	-6.40***	-6.16***

\*\*\*p<.001

A closer look at the transcribed tests also supported the statistical results that most participants in this group made progress in their oral skills, though there were individual differences in their improvement rates and improving aspects of language, such as fluency, accuracy, and complexity. (The transcription was from forty-eight participants, twenty-four from the memorization group and twenty-four from the improvisation group. They also represented the three language levels in each group. For more detail, see 3.5.1). Following are two examples, one with oral progress and one without. Below each dialogue box, there is a code number for the participant. For example, I 3 stands for the third student in the improvisation group, M12 stands for the twelfth student in the memorization group, and C36 means the thirty-sixth student in the combination group.

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Please describe the picture</p> <p>A: Woman</p> <p>Q: There are many women. What are they doing?</p> <p>A: ....(8 sec) dancing.</p> <p>Q: What country are they in?</p> <p>A: .....(17 sec)</p> <p>Q: What is on the ground?</p> <p>A: Bottles.</p>	<p>Q: Please describe the picture</p> <p>A: People. Many people, house, big fish.</p> <p>Q: What are the people doing?</p> <p>A: Look the fish.</p> <p>Q: Why are they looking at the fish?</p> <p>A: Because it very very big.</p> <p>Q: So?</p> <p>A: So they very interest.</p> <p>Q: Do you like to eat fish?</p>

Q: Ok. Very good.	A: No.
-------------------	--------

I 3

Note: The number in parentheses after the dotted line refers to the seconds the interviewee paused.

pretest	posttest
Q: What is the most unforgettable thing in your life? A: Junior high school life. Q: Please tell me one thing in junior high school. A: Enjoy junior high school life. Q: Tell me one thing. A: Graduation tour. Q: Can you say that in English? A: Friends, shopping....	Q: What is the most unforgettable thing in your life? A: Junior high school...life. Q: Junior high school life. What happened? A: Boyfriend.... Q: What happened? A: .....(No answer).

I 11

The first student showed progress on fluency, complexity and accuracy, but the second one showed no progress in any aspect. For more detail about students' progress/regression, see 4.1.2 analysis and discussion.

## B. The memorization group

This study used a paired samples t-test to determine whether there was a significant difference in oral proficiency between the pretest and posttest scores in the memorization group. The result showed (see table 4-2) that this group as a whole also scored a statistically higher performance in the posttest than they did in the pretest in every aspect of speaking ability: fluency, accuracy, and complexity. The difference between pretest and posttest is also statistically significant in every aspect. ( $p < .01$ ) The standard

deviation in each aspect, in contrast to the improvisation group, was equal to or smaller in the posttest than that in the pretest.

Table 4-2 The progress of the memorization group (N= 35)

		fluency	accuracy	complexity	general performance
pretest	mean	3.56	3.26	3.41	10.23
	Std.deviation	1.82	1.57	1.81	5.09
posttest	mean	4.20	3.77	3.99	11.96
	Std.deviation	1.82	1.50	1.73	4.94
	t	-3.37**	-3.01**	-2.97**	-3.35**

\*\*p<.01

A closer look at the transcribed tests also supported the statistical results that most participants in this group made progress in their oral skills, though there were individual differences in terms of improvement rate and improving aspects of language. Here are some examples:

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: What do you like to do on the weekend?</p> <p>A: Shopping.</p> <p>Q: And?</p> <p>A: Play computer.</p> <p>Q: And?</p> <p>A:....</p> <p>Q: Tell me why you like to go shopping?</p> <p>A: .....(28 sec)</p>	<p>Q: What do you like to do on the weekend?</p> <p>A: Shad under tree (She means “chat under tree”), play computer, so the intest (She means “surf the internet”), and read novel.</p> <p>Q: What novel do you like to read? ..Love stories?</p> <p>A: ....l-i-v-e, 人生的那種 (those about life).</p> <p>Q: Why do you like to chat under tree?</p>

	A: Oh, that campu.... Q: Why? A: No hot. 不會那麼熱. (It's not so hot under the tree.)
--	---

M36

Note: Some students answered in both English and Chinese. The Chinese part was translated into English in the following parenthesis.

pretest	posttest
Q: Please describe the picture. A: This is party. Q: What are they doing? Why only girls, no boys? A: ..... (30 sec) I don't know.	Q: Please describe the picture. A: It's a party. Q: What do you see? A: Many woman. ....不知道 (I don't know).

M40

The first student showed progress on fluency, complexity and accuracy, but the second one showed little progress in any aspect. For more detail about students' progress or regression, see 4.1.2 analysis and discussion.

### C. The combination group

A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in oral proficiency between the pretest and posttest scores in the combination group. The result showed (see table 4-3) that participants in this group also scored a statistically significant improvement in the posttest than they did in the pretest in general performance. But the statistical difference between pretest and posttest shows only in two aspects: fluency and complexity ( $p < .05$ ). Accuracy shows no difference between pretest and posttest. The standard deviation in each aspect, on the other hand, was smaller in the posttest than that in the pretest. This means student levels in the combination group showed narrower range in the posttest than in the pretest in terms of oral proficiency.

Table 4-3 The progress of the combination group(N= 45)

		fluency	accuracy	complexity	general performance
pretest	Std.deviation	2.04	1.89	1.91	5.86
posttest	Std.deviation	1.89	1.68	1.63	5.04
	t	-2.29*	-1.84	-2.71*	-2.39*

\*\*p<.01 \*p<.05

A closer look at the transcribed tests also supported the statistical results that most participants in this group made progress in their oral skills, though there were individual differences in terms of improvement rate and improving aspects of language, such as fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Here are some examples:

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Please tell me your daily routine.</p> <p>A: .....(15 sec) 我忘記那個字怎麼唸了 (I forget how to say that word). ...(8 sec)</p> <p>I take up at 6 o'clock, and take car.</p> <p>Q: And?</p> <p>A: Go to school, then 上課 (attend class).</p>	<p>Q: Please tell me your daily routine.</p> <p>A: I will get up at 6 o'clock, and take school bus at 7:50, and then go home at 5 o'clock.</p> <p>Q: What do you do after you go home?</p> <p>A: Watch TV and play the computer.</p> <p>Then the homework, do the homework.</p> <p>Q: You don't take a bath?</p> <p>A: Before go to bed.</p>

C2

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Please describe this picture.</p> <p>A: He is very happy.</p> <p>Q: What are they doing?</p> <p>A: They are in the kitchen to ...</p>	<p>Q: Please describe this picture.</p> <p>A: A woman. She is crying. And a man, he is talking.</p> <p>Q: He is talking to whom?</p>

Q: Who is she?	A: The woman. His hair is brown, and she is very sad.
A: She is his grandmother. She look very old.	Q: Why?
Q: Who is he?	A: Because his someone die.
A: Hi is grandson.	
Q: Ok. Are they happy?	
A: Yes.	
Q: Why are they so happy?	
A: .. They are.. I don't know. Sorry.	

C 4

#### D. All participants

A paired samples t-test was also conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in oral proficiency between the pretest and posttest scores in the participants as a whole. The result showed (see table 4-4) that participants as a whole scored a statistically significant improvement in the posttest than they did in the pretest in every aspect of speaking ability: fluency, accuracy, and complexity ( $p < .001$ ).

Table 4-4 The progress of all participants (N=125)

		fluency	accuracy	complexity	general performance
pretest	Std.deviation	1.93	1.81	1.81	5.44
posttest	Std.deviation	1.92	1.70	1.79	5.29
	t	-6.63***	-5.06***	-6.72***	-6.52***

\*\*\* $p < .001$

#### 4.1.2 Analysis and Discussion

The results showed that the participants as a whole made significant progress during the experimental period. The research hypotheses 1 and 2 were both confirmed in this case: improvisation and memorization both made a significant positive difference to the participants' oral performance, in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general

performance. Hypothesis 4, the combination of improvisation and memorization will have a significant positive effect on the participants' oral performance, in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance, was not completely confirmed because there is no statistically significant difference in accuracy between pre- and post-test.

A closer look at the fluency, accuracy, and complexity in student's pretest and posttest also reveals progress in each aspect. This indicates that the teaching, no matter what strategy it used, had a positive impact on the participants' speaking ability.

However, despite the statistical significance, all the tables in this section show that the progress in fluency was more than that in complexity and accuracy, and complexity improved more than accuracy. The results suggest that in oral proficiency fluency was the easiest aspect to develop, while accuracy was the most difficult to develop. This finding corresponds with Fortune (2003) who claims that fluency in second language learners develops faster than grammatical accuracy and complexity. This also supports Burrell's (2005) finding that the rate of improvement of complexity is higher than that of oral accuracy.

An in-depth investigation into the transcribed oral test interviews also brought forth several findings as follows.

#### **A. Progress is closely associated with teaching**

The greatest improvement participants recorded between pretest and posttest was in their fluency, especially if the question item was closely related to the teaching content during the experiment period, such as "Monica's daily routine" (See Appendix E). This was a unit in my teaching and students in my class experienced once again the related vocabulary, most of which was learned before the introduction of the unit. "Ideal boyfriend" was not in my teaching unit but participants were supposed to have become familiar with most of the related vocabulary during the past three years of English learning. It turned out that many students performed significantly better with the "daily

routine” question than with the “Ideal boyfriend” question. Here are two examples from students.

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Tell me about your daily routine.</p> <p>A: ..... (24 sec) Morning, six...(10 sec) and twelve eat lunch...(6sec) seven eat dinner...ten go to bed.</p>	<p>Q: Tell me about your daily routine.</p> <p>A: I six-twenty get up. Seven o'clock go to school. Eight o'clock eat breakfast. Twelve o'clock eat lunch. Five o'clock take a break..go home.</p>

Student M 9 (M stands for memorization group)

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Please tell me about your ideal boyfriend?</p> <p>A: I hope he's very tall, and nice for me. He isn't smoking. He can cooking</p> <p>A: Why do you like him to cook?</p> <p>Q: Interest.....I don't know.</p>	<p>Q: Please tell me about your ideal boyfriend?</p> <p>A:I want to he's tall and nice for me. He have to cook well.</p> <p>Q: Why is cooking important?</p> <p>A: I don't know....Have 有家的感覺 (it feels like home.) Home feel.</p>

M43

From the first example above, the number of words uttered was about twice in the post-test, and the pauses were shorter. This participant made obvious progress in fluency. On the other hand, the second participant (M43) seemed to remain approximately at the same level in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Generally speaking, participants showed less progress with the topics I did not teach during the study, though the topics I did not cover during the experiment period were very few.

## **B. Students show different progress rates in language aspects**

Though students showed progress in every aspect, fluency and complexity improved more than grammar, as tables above show. This finding corresponds with many

researchers' perspectives and findings. (e.g. McLaughlin, 1992; Fortune, 2003; Burrell, 2005). The detailed examination of students' oral tests also supports this finding. We can see that the above student (M9) made less progress in terms of structural complexity or accuracy. This student also had a very strong Mandarin accent which showed no change through the experiment. Some students advanced from single words to phrases, or even some simple sentences, but it seemed a majority of the improvement arose from prepared sentences, both in memorization and improvisation groups. Further questioning could reveal if a student has actually made any progress or not. Here are some examples from the participants:

pretest	posttest
Q: Please describe your ideal boyfriend. A: uhh.....(12 sec) Q: Is he tall or short? Handsome, ugly? A: Thin, tall, handsome. Q: Money? A: Have house, car,.....	Q: Please describe your ideal boyfriend. A: He's a tall, thin, handsome. Q: Why handsome boys? A: Very good. Q: Why thin boys? A: .....(13) feel.

I 1 ("I" stands for improvisation group)

pretest	posttest
Q: If you had 30 million dollars, what would you do? A: Buy house, ...car, cell phone. Q: Why do you want to buy a cell phone? A:.....(40) different.	Q: If you had 30 million dollars, what would you do? A: I want to buy house, car, ...cell phone. Q: Why do you want to buy a cell phone? A: ..(7) I want to ...(28)..

I 13

Comparing the two participants, participant I 1 improved in her pause duration. There was little progress in terms of the other aspects. It is clear that her first answer in the posttest was a prepared one because she knew before the test the five potential questions. The following questions were more difficult to predict and prepare for in advance. Nonetheless, her performance in the posttest still showed improvement because she was

in the same condition in the pretest. Participant I 13 improved from a verbal phrase into a complete sentence in the first answer, but a further question, which was probably not anticipated in advance, indicated this participant still remained at the same level in terms of complexity.

Like complexity, participants of all groups did not perform much better in accuracy in their posttest, though there were some improvements. Basically, participants seemed to be thinking about what they wanted to say, expressing their ideas without considering the form. This also corresponds with Skehan's (1998) suggestion that increasing attention to one aspect of skills limits one's capacity for the others. Johnson (1990) believes that in order to concentrate on getting the meaning across clearly, learners need to automate the use of rules and words. The automation system might need more practice to set in.

Nonetheless, some students did show progress in their grammar. Here is an example of grammar improvement:

pretest	Posttest
Q: what do you like to do on the weekend? A: I watch TV and shopping.	Q: what do you like to do on the weekend? A: I like to watch TV and sleeping.
Q: What TV program do you like to watch? A: Japan.	Q: What TV program do you like to watch? A: Japan's.

I 19

Though there is still a grammatical error in this participant's posttest answer (to watch TV and sleeping), she did show her mastery of the infinitive and possessive (I like to watch TV; Japan's). Here is one interesting example using the past tense:

pretest	Posttest
Q: Tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life. A: Last summer I took a trip to Kenting	Q: Tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life. A: Last month I went to the night market

Park and we had a very good time there. We play with water and eat very delicious food and we go to the night market.	with my friend. We ate many delicious food and bought many thing. We have a good time.
---	--

I 24

In the pretest, the participant used two correct past tense verbs and two incorrect ones. In the posttest, however, she used three correct verbs and got one incorrect. Interestingly, the wrong one in the posttest was used correctly in the pretest, and all the incorrect verbs occurred at the latter part of the utterance. One reason for this might be that the past tense does not occur in Chinese grammar and the grammatical ideas have not become part of the spontaneous response of the learner, especially when the speaker gradually directed her attention from the form (at the beginning) to the content (at the end) (Skehan, 1998; Johnson, 1990). It seems that this transfer also affected the singular-plural form, such as “very delicious food—many delicious food”, as there is no difference in Chinese grammar. This finding also supports Bygate (2001) when she indicates that focus on one aspect when speaking ESL often compromises performance on other aspects.

### **C. There is a progressive pattern in complexity**

Generally speaking, however, there seemed to be a pattern of progress in the aspect of complexity. Participants gradually evolved from single word, to multiple words, one phrase, multiple phrases, incorrect or simple sentences, and compound sentences. The incorrect or simple sentences here seemed to follow the sentence structure of Chinese grammar rather than the rules in English grammar.

Overall, most of the participants made only a little progress during the experimental period on the oral proficiency continuum from low to high level. This finding also supports many researchers’ viewpoints (eg. Hakuta, Butler and Witt 2000; Fortune, 2003; McLaughlin, 1992) that the oral mastery of the target language as a second language takes a long time.

Among all the participants, adverbs, relative pronouns, adjective clauses, or participle phrases are rarely used in their utterances. Probably these are the more difficult aspects to acquire and may need to take more time and more practice for these students.

#### **D. Progress in one aspect will facilitate progress in other aspects**

Nevertheless, this study has also found that when the fluency improves significantly, other aspects also tend to improve as well. Here is an example:

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Please describe your daily routine.</p> <p>A: Seven, 起床(get up), and eight o'clock go to school. Five o'clock go home. Six o'clock eat dinner. Seven o'clock watch TV. Eight o'clock study book.</p>	<p>Q: Please describe your daily routine.</p> <p>A: Seven-twenty get up. Seven-thirty-five take a school bus, arrive at school at eight. Class begin at eight-twenty. Six o'clock get home. Six-thirty take a bath. Seven o'clock watch TV and eat dinner, delicious. From eight to ten study because I want to good grades. Eleven o'clock sleep.</p>

M 16

In addition to the apparent increase in word number in this participant's posttest, one sentence 'Class begin at eight-twenty' appeared, though not a complete one. In other words, this student improved significantly in fluency, and less in complexity. This finding also corresponds with Oxford (1996) that teaching students to improve their learning strategies in one skill area can often enhance performance in all language skills. Oxford's suggestions do not contradict Skehan's (1998) perspectives that speakers' fluency, accuracy and complexity of speech demand capacity, and that increasing attention to one aspect would limit one's capacity for the others. Oxford's suggestions refer to a speaker's general language proficiency, but Skehan's perspectives indicate the trade-off between the three language aspects when conversation is taking place. On the other hand, though Burrell (2005) claims that no clear pattern was discovered in the correlation between accuracy and complexity, the results of my study suggest that there might be correlation between fluency and other language aspects.

Though each group made significant progress in every aspect, there are two points that are noteworthy: the differences of standard deviation (diversity of the group's oral proficiency) and the p value (significance of difference) between the memorization and the improvisation groups.

In the improvisation group, the standard deviations in the posttests were all larger than in the pretest, indicating a trend to a greater spread in the students' oral proficiency. This finding also corresponds with some of Burrell's (2005) findings which illustrate a more polarized picture of learner performance on complexity rather than on accuracy. In the memorization group, however, the standard deviations in the posttests were equal to or smaller than those in the pretest, indicating this strategy led to a narrower score range in the students. The gap between high-level students and low-level ones in the memorization group was no wider after the treatment.

The p value, interacting with the standard deviation, posed a more complicated and interesting phenomenon. Though the progress in both groups was significant, that in the improvisation group ( $p < .001$ ) appeared better than that in the memorization group ( $p < .01$ ). The difference in the extent of progress between the groups will be further analyzed in the next section.

In sum, the memorization group made less progress in all aspects than the improvisation group, but the intra-group gap was shortened. This may suggest that the memorization strategy is more conducive to progress in low-level students. On the other hand, the improvisation group made more progress than the other group, but might have achieved it at the expense of some students who were low-level and/or unaccustomed to this kind of teaching approach. This will be further discussed in the next section.

## **4.2 Comparing the Effects of Strategies on Oral Improvement**

### **4.2.1 Results**

In this section, the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to see the effect of different strategies (improvisation and memorization) on participants' oral proficiency. The dependent variables were the posttest speaking abilities: fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance. The pretest speaking abilities were used as the covariate variables (factors to be excluded); and the groups/strategies were used as the fixed factors. In other words, this statistical analysis is to test the effects of the strategies (fixed factor/independent variable) on the rate of speaking improvement, excluding the influence of participants' original speaking abilities.

#### A. Fluency

Table 4-5 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
GROUP	1.376	1	1.376	.858	.357
PREFLU	172.408	1	172.408	107.522	.000
GROUP * PREFLU	.035	1	.035	.022	.882

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-5 shows that the F value between group and preflu (which means fluency in pretest) is statistically non-significant (sig.= 0.882), so the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated. (Before conducting an ANCOVA we need to address the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes: the relationship of the dependent variable to the covariate for each group should be the same) (Woo, 1999). Now I continue to do the analysis of covariance by using the preflu as the covariate variable.

Table 4-6 Analysis of covariance (fluency)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PREFLU	176.179	1	176.179	111.287	.000
GROUP	8.057	1	8.057	5.090	.027

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-6 shows that, when the effect of pretest fluency is excluded, there is still a significant relationship between group and the posttest fluency ( $p < 0.05$ ). This means that there is a significant difference in fluency improvement between the improvisation and memorization strategies. So this finding supports part of the research hypothesis 3: There will be a significant difference between improvisation and memorization in terms of students' rate of oral improvement on fluency performance. From the pairwise comparisons (see Table 4-7), we can see that the improvisation strategy is significantly better than the memorization strategy in terms of fluency improvement ( $p < .05$ ).

Table 4-7 Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable: POSFLU

		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP			
1	2	.643	.285	.027
2	1	-.643	.285	.027

The significance level is at 0.05

## B. Accuracy

Table 4-8 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
GROUP	.101	1	.101	.083	.774
PREGRA	123.089	1	123.089	100.692	.000
GROUP *	.120	1	.120	.098	.755
PREGRA					

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-8 shows that the F value between group and pregra (which means accuracy in pretest) is not significant ( $\text{sig.} = 0.755$ ), so the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated (the relationship of the dependent variable and the covariate for each group

should be the same). Now I continue to do the analysis of covariance by using pregra as the covariate variable.

Table 4-9 Analysis of covariance (accuracy)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PREGRA	132.225	1	132.225	109.448	.000
GROUP	2.029	1	2.029	1.680	.199

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-9 shows that, when the effect of pretest accuracy is excluded, there is no significant difference between group and the posttest accuracy ( $p > 0.05$ ). This means that there is no significant difference in accuracy improvement between the improvisation and memorization strategies. This result did not support the research hypothesis 3 in this aspect: there will be a significant difference between improvisation and memorization in terms of students' rate of oral improvement on accuracy.

### C. Complexity

Table 4-10 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
GROUP	2.052E-02	1	2.052E-02	.015	.904
PRECOM	163.692	1	163.692	116.821	.000
GROUP *	1.510	1	1.510	1.078	.303
PRECOM					

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-10 shows that the F value between group and precom (which means complexity in pretest) is not significant ( $\text{sig.} = 0.303$ ), so the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated (the relationship of the dependent variable and the covariate for each group should be the same). Now I continue to do the analysis of covariance by using precom as the covariate variable.

Table 4-11 Analysis of covariance (complexity)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PRECOM	165.717	1	165.717	118.147	.000
GROUP	7.419	1	7.419	5.289	.024

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-11 shows that, when the effect of pretest complexity is excluded, there is still a statistically significant relationship between group and the posttest complexity ( $p < 0.05$ ). This means that there is a statistically significant difference in complexity improvement between the improvisation and memorization strategies. The research hypothesis 3 was confirmed in this aspect: there will be a significant difference between improvisation and memorization in terms of students' rate of oral improvement on complexity. From the pairwise comparisons (see Table 4-12), we can see that the improvisation strategy is better than the memorization strategy in this aspect.

Table 4-12 Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable: POSCOM

(I)	(J)	Mean	Std. Error	Sig.
GROUP	GROUP	Difference		
1	2	.614	.267	.024
2	1	-.614	.267	.024

#### D. General performance

Table 4-13 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
GROUP	2.279	1	2.279	.203	.653
SUMPRE	1391.510	1	1391.510	124.216	.000
GROUP * SUMPRE	3.333	1	3.333	.298	.587

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-13 shows that the F value between group and sumpre (which means the total performance in pretest) is not significant (sig.= 0.587), so the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated (the relationship of the dependent variable and the covariate for each group should be the same). Now I continue to do the analysis of covariance by using sumpre as the covariate variable.

Table 4-14 Analysis of covariance

Dependent Variable: SUMPOST

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SUMPRE	1439.754	1	1439.754	129.706	.000
GROUP	48.913	1	48.913	4.407	.039

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-14 shows that, when the effect of general performance in the pretest is excluded, there is still a statistically significant relationship between group and the posttest general performance ( $p < 0.05$ ). This means that there is a statistically significant difference in general performance improvement between the improvisation and memorization strategies. This finding supported the research hypothesis 3: there will be a significant difference between improvisation and memorization in terms of students' rate of oral improvement on general performance. From the pairwise comparisons (see Table 4-15), we can see that the improvisation strategy is better than the memorization strategy in overall speaking performance.

Table 4-15 Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable: SUMPOST

(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
1	2	1.577	.751	.039
2	1	-1.577	.751	.039

The significance level is at 0.05

#### **4.2.2 Analysis and Discussion: the Quantitative Effect of Strategies**

The results in this study showed that the improvisation strategy demonstrated statistically significant advantages over the memorization strategy in all aspects of oral proficiency, except accuracy. Three perspectives are discussed here: the relative ineffectiveness of the memorization strategy, the insignificant improvement difference in accuracy between groups, and the differences in standard deviation (diversity of the group's oral proficiency). Finally, though the relatively poor performance of the combination strategy was not analyzed statistically, the section will also discuss its possible causes.

##### **I. The inferiority of the memorization strategy**

Several possible reasons will be discussed for the inferiority of the memorization strategy, despite the fact that it also significantly improved the participants' oral proficiency in every aspect. These reasons include a) monotonous procedure, b) strategy deficit, c) student factors, and d) short experimental period.

##### **a) Monotonous procedure**

The program for the memorization group was designed to be mainly in the form of dramas, which were novel and interesting to these participants. As hoped, most of the participants in the memorization group appeared to be very excited and interested in the dramas and dialogues, at least at the beginning. However, the popularity gradually lost momentum toward the end of the semester due to the monotonous routine: reading the script, memorizing and rehearsing, and performing. Though I repeatedly emphasized gestures and movements in the dramatic performance, it did not help much with students' lost sense of engagement.

The students' impatience was evident in the week immediately after the mid-term exams. When the script was handed out, many students groaned and sighed: "Here it goes again." When the novelty was gone and interest in the drama was lost, their enthusiasm for language learning also declined. In contrast, the activities in the improvisation group were more diversified than those in the memorization group, and students' interest and engagement appeared to last until the end of the semester. No one in the improvisation

group complained in the way the memorization group did. In other words, it seemed that students preferred some variety in their learning activities.

#### b) Strategy deficit

The memorization strategy was basically rote learning, whether it was in the form of speech or role-play or drama. Memorization is important in language learning, but the strategy restricted the use of the language students had previously learned because they simply tried to digest and manipulate the words in the script, without bothering about integrating the words they learned before. The improvisation group, on the other hand, needed some time in each session to think over what they had learned, new or old, in order to improvise the appropriate answers. Learning is reinforced through frequent retrieval of the linguistic information from the long-term memory system (Medin, Ross & Markman, 2001; Tiangco, 2005). The improvisation strategy seemed to actually help their memorization and increased their response speed in an English encounter. The pedagogical implication of this will be explored in chapter 6.2.

#### c) The student factor

Students themselves account for a part of the inadequacy of the memorization strategy. Though many students preferred the memorization strategy in the college where this research took place, still many other students were not highly motivated to spend time and effort on memorizing. One student (I37) expressed her opinion: “I don’t like memorization. It is troublesome. I’m a little lazy. To tell the truth, I’m very lazy.” (For a full analysis of students’ perceptions, see chapter 5.1) In one week when they were asked to recite a short article, very few of them could recite it to the end. And some of them could not recite even the first paragraph, which had only 3 or 4 sentences, when they had had one full week to prepare in advance. (See Appendix E: Monica’s daily routine)

To make matters worse, some students did not even know the meaning of the words or sentences they uttered in the dramas, even though the material was limited and I had explained it clearly in class. These students simply recited the words, without appropriate

intonation, gestures and facial expressions when they were on stage. The advantages of drama (Chauhan, 2004) were nearly eradicated by these students. Toth (2004) indicates that a number of studies have documented difficulties in attaining instructional objectives due to misinterpretations of instructors' intentions. In my observation, the participants using rote-learning knew what they were supposed to do, but perhaps they just found rote-learning was easier for them to handle. Therefore it seemed that this strategy was not suitable for these participants.

Furthermore, this strategy demanded that students practise rehearsing in their leisure time. Some of them obeyed the teacher's instruction, but others did not until several minutes before their actual performance. Their professional subjects, extracurricular activities, and many personal interests might be reasons for not rehearsing. However, the memorization group still spent more, or not less time, on their English speaking than the improvisation group because they were required to rehearse after class, and this further confirmed that the improvisation strategy was better than the memorization strategy during the experimental period.

#### d) Short experimental period

The short experimental period could also be a possible disadvantage for the memorization strategy. From the viewpoint of cognitive psychology (Chang, 1991; Berlinger, 2000), the more time students spend on the language, combining gestures and related situations, the more it can help with long-term memory. But this experiment was conducted for only one semester, and the real teaching barely took 13 weeks. With 26 hours of instruction, the advantages of memorization might require a longer time to become obvious.

## II. The insignificant improvement difference in accuracy between groups

Though the improvisation strategy demonstrated better outcomes in students' speaking fluency, complexity, and general performance, there was no statistically significant difference in the aspect of accuracy improvement between the two strategies. Three reasons might have contributed to the result: a) accuracy was not emphasized in either

group, b) The Krashen effect, c) oral accuracy is more difficult to improve than other aspects in a short time.

a) Accuracy not emphasized in either group

Throughout the whole experimental period, the grammar, pronunciation, and intonation were not specially emphasized in either group. One reason for this was that participants had two more hours each week for an English reading course in which grammar was explicitly taught. Another reason was that for about half of the class time both groups received the same instruction in which some forms were practised. This procedure might have blurred the difference between the two groups in this aspect. Besides this, the improvisation group focused their attention on how to get their meaning across, instead of on the accuracy of grammar, because students were encouraged to talk as much as they could. The memorization group spent most of their time practising the scripts the researcher had handed out. Memorizing and acting seemed to have occupied their remaining learning time and accuracy was a matter little considered.

b) Krashen effect

Krashen's (1982) hypothesis of unconscious learning suggests that language is mainly acquired unconsciously rather than through conscious learning. In other words, the learning should be focused on a task or a game or something other than language itself, though the language is the core of the course in the teacher's mind. Taking the Krashen's effect and teaching objectives into account, I tried to do it this way: in the improvisation group, if students made a grammatical mistake, I often repeated that sentence or phrase in the correct form, but did not deliberately stress it. And the result revealed that this strategy did not work any better than the memorization strategy, at least in this aspect in this experiment. This finding parallels with a study by Mackey, Gass, and McDonough (2000) that implicit feedback provided as recasted corrections during meaning-oriented tasks was more often than not mistaken by learners for noncorrective repetitions similar to the back-channel cues that characterize natural conversation.

c) Oral accuracy is difficult to improve in a short time

Though both groups showed statistically significant progress in accuracy between pretest and posttest, the mean score of improvement for accuracy was less than that for the other aspects. It is no easy job for participants to quickly figure out the words and phrases for an idea and assemble them in unfamiliar structures at the same time (Levelt, 1989; Bygate, 2001a). It is more likely that students will use the grammatical knowledge in reading or writing, when they have more time to think. This finding also supports Burrell's (2005) research findings where both the language performance and the improvement rate of oral complexity was higher than of oral accuracy.

### III. The differences in oral proficiency diversity between the improvisation and memorization groups

The results showed (See table 4-1 and 4-2) that after the treatment, there emerged a bigger spread in students' score range in the improvisation group, while the memorization group's score range remained the same or even smaller on some aspects. In other words, students' oral level range in the improvisation group became wider after the treatment, while the oral level range in the memorization group remained the same or became narrower. This implied that although the improvisation strategy can help enhance the overall students' oral proficiency, it can benefit some participants more than others, especially some of the lower-level students who did not improve as much as the higher-level students. Hence the gap between students of different levels in this group became wider.

Meanwhile, although the memorization strategy failed to maximize the performance of some participants, as illustrated above, it also offered a learning experience which all students were familiar with. In other words, this strategy provided a secure, though somewhat monotonous, environment in which participants proceeded slowly but steadily. Hence the progress might not be huge, but no one was left behind.

On the other hand, according to my observation, some low-level students in the improvisation group did show occasional withdrawal from classroom activities by chatting, playing games or talking on the cell phones. Though other low-level students in

the improvisation group still worked hard and made some progress (See next section), at least some low-level students did not benefit at all from this strategy.

Many reasons for this phenomenon could be attributed: personality, motivation, anticipation, previous ESL learning experience, and so on (Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Ellis, 2002). In Chapter 5: Perceptions and tests, the qualitative analyses will reveal more the background of students' perceptions of the strategies and activities. In the following section I will explore the differences between pretest and posttest in more detail.

#### IV. Poor performance of the combination group

The combination group was less successful in terms of their oral improvement rate than either the improvisation or the memorization group, as the statistics showed in table 4-1 to table 4-3. If the combination strategy consisted of improvisation and memorization strategies, each accounting for fifty percent of the course content, then the performance of the combination group should be in between the performance of the other two groups. But actually the outcome of this study was discouragingly poor. This finding corresponded with my pilot study (see 3.3.1). However, this finding did not support many researchers' (eg. Nakagawa, 2000; Bialy 2003; Maxwell 2004) claims that a combination strategy of memorization and improvisation would result in a better learning effect. There are two possible reasons: 1) this group was the best in the pretest, and 2) the participants were not used to the strategy transition in the middle of the semester.

Though the difference was not statistically significant, the combination group did perform better than the other two groups in the pretest, as the following simple table shows.

	improvisation	memorization	combination	Sig.
Pretest	9.86	10.23	11.91	0.168
posttest	13.22	11.96	13.52	0.394

Their already-high ability might be a factor for their low improvement rate because they were more competent than the other two groups from the beginning of the experiment. A

similar situation also happened to individuals where the low-level students made more progress than the higher-level students, as the next section will show. Besides, I assume that since many of the learning activities were easy for many of the students in this class, they had a good time during the period without struggling to pass. Hence they were more satisfied with this course than the other groups and this showed in their final college-wide satisfaction questionnaire. (See Chart 5-1 in 5.1.1)

The second reason for the poor performance of the combination group might have been the strategy transition in the middle of the semester. To get used to a strategy might not be very difficult, but to profit from it might take a longer time. Those who preferred the improvisation strategy might have lost their interest at the beginning when memorization strategy was adopted, and their interest was not aroused much later on. Those who preferred the memorization strategy might be highly motivated at the beginning, but the latter improvisation activities frustrated them. Though I used “mainly” memorization and “mainly” improvisation strategies, which means there was some overlapping between the two strategies, I suspected the strategy transition had still taken a toll on students’ learning. (For more students’ perception, see Chapter 5.1.3).

#### **4.2.3 Qualitative Analysis and Discussion**

A qualitative examination into the oral test interviews revealed more effects of the strategies on students’ performance. This section is divided into three major points: A. progress between pretest and posttest, B. differences in language aspects between pretest and posttest, C. progress and innovation.

##### **A. Progress between pretest and posttest**

A qualitative examination also shows that the improvisation group showed more progress in general performance than the memorization group in their posttests. Twenty-three students from the memorization group and 23 from the improvisation group were first selected according to their pretest levels. In each level (high, intermediate, or low), there were roughly equal number of students so that the comparison can be appropriately made. Of the 23 participants in the improvisation group, 16 people showed progress in general

oral performance, 6 people remained at the same level, and one person showed regression. Of the 23 participants in the memorization group, on the other hand, 14 people showed progress, 8 people remained at the same level, and one person showed regression. Here is a simple chart displaying the differences in the two groups:

	progress	same	regress
Improvisation 23 people	16 people	6	1
Memorization 23 people	14 people	8	1

The above numbers may not reveal a significant difference between the two groups, but further investigation into the tests show that the improvisation group made even more progress than the memorization group. The score sheets for both groups, which considered the participants' performance in terms of both question-answering and picture-describing items, showed 34-point progress in 37 items for the improvisation group. That is about 0.9 point progress for each item (level range from 1 to 10 points on each item). The memorization group showed 21-point progress in 41 items, about 0.5 point progress for each item. In other words, each participant in the improvisation group made much more progress than each participant in the memorization group.

Though the memorization group did not make as much progress as the improvisation group, it did not regress as much, either. The improvisation group had three people (I 15, I 17, I 27) who regressed either in question-answering or picture-describing items, but two of them made it up by performing better on the other item. Therefore, the total performance for each of the two participants did not show a negative score. The memorization group, on the other hand, had only one person (M30) who regressed, both in question-answering and picture-describing. All the four students who regressed got one point lower in the posttest than in the pretest.

In addition, the greatest progress was made by an improvisation member (I23, as shown below). She could barely say a word in question-answering in the pretest, but could use many phrases in the posttest. Oddly enough, her performance in picture-describing remained the same in both pretest and posttest.

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life.</p> <p>A: ...(30 sec)</p>	<p>Q: Tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life.</p> <p>A: One day, I went to party. There was boy...give me..flower. I was so happy and surprised.</p> <p>Q: Tell me more.</p> <p>A: 聽不懂 (I don't understand).</p> <p>Q: What flower did he give you?</p> <p>A: 不會講花名 (I don't know how to say it). Beautiful.</p> <p>Q: What party?</p> <p>A: At home..no..at school.</p> <p>Q: Do you like him?</p> <p>A: No.</p> <p>Q: Why not?</p> <p>A: He's very ugly.</p> <p>Q: But the flowers are beautiful.</p> <p>A: Flower beautiful, people ugly.</p>

I23

Some of the high-level students (scoring over 7 points in the pretest) in the improvisation group showed some progress, and others did not. The same situation happened to their counterparts in the memorization group. But when it came to how much progress each group had made, the high-level students in the improvisation group did better than those in the memorization group, with one point higher for each item (question-answering or picture-describing) in the high-level improvisation group while there was only a 0.5 point improvement for each item in the other group. In contrast, the low-level students (scoring under 3 points in the pretest) in the improvisation group got 0.8 point for each item, while the low memorization students got only 0.54 for each item. In sum, the

participants in the improvisation group, either high or low level, made more progress than those in the memorization group.

#### B. Differences in language aspects between pretest and posttest

Both the memorization and improvisation groups showed progress mainly in terms of word increase, shortened pause, and better word choice. In contrast, progress in other aspects, such as structural complexity and grammar, was relatively limited. However, the improvisation group had more people (10) showing progress in these limited aspects than the memorization group (2 people).

A closer look into the differences of pretests and posttests between the two groups showed that the low level students in both groups made progress in the same aspects: number of words and pause duration and a little in terms of structural complexity. Here is a comparison of one member from each group:

I 1

pretest	posttest
Q: Please describe your ideal boyfriend. A: uhh.....(12 sec) Q: Is he tall or short? Handsome, ugly? A: Thin, tall, handsome. Q: Money? A: Have house, car,.....	Q: Please describe your ideal boyfriend. A: He's a tall, thin, handsome. Q: Why handsome boys? A: Very good. Q: Why thin boys? A: .....(13) feel.

M29

pretest	posttest
Q: Describe the picture. A: .....(26 sec) Four man is .....(22 sec) washing the house.	Q: Describe the picture. A: The two people use water wash house. Q: What else? A: Car, tree. Q: Why are they doing this? A: Wash house.....

The improvisation student answered the first question faster in the posttest than in the pretest, with an incomplete sentence. Though she also paused for 13 seconds for the last question, it was an unexpected one and difficult for the low-level students to answer, and she came up with a one-word reply “feel”, which stood for “It’s my instinct” in Chinese slang. On the other hand, the memorization student improved a lot in pause duration, with almost no hesitation at all in the posttest. However, neither of them made much progress in structural complexity or accuracy.

The higher-level participants showed a little difference in their progress between the two groups. In the memorization group, most participants showed progress only in better word choice and word increase, and only two middle-level students (M27, M40) improved in their sentence structure. Here is an example.

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life.</p> <p>A: With my friend go to a small island camp.</p> <p>Q: Where is the small island?</p> <p>A: Peng-Hu.</p> <p>Q: When did you go there?</p> <p>A: Last year. ....(17)We are together swimming.</p>	<p>Q: Tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life.</p> <p>A: My 16-year-old birthday.</p> <p>Q: What happened?</p> <p>A: Friend and senior celebrate my birthday, and .....(not clear) a big cake. I’m very happy.</p> <p>Q: Tell me more.</p> <p>A: 就這樣 (That’s it).</p>

M27

In this participant’s first pretest answer, the sentence order was one hundred percent translated from Chinese word by word, and the word “camp” was supposed to be a verb. In the posttest, the answer looked more like English, though there seemed to be only a minor progress. Except for this, little grammatical advancement could be seen for memorization participants through the pretest and posttest.

The improvisation group showed progress in a variety of aspects in terms of accuracy and complexity, as well as fluency. For instance, seven students (I 1, I 3, I 8, I 13, I 22, I 23, I 28) showed progress on the linear structural development from single word to compound sentences, and three (I 10, I 19, I 24, as shown in 4.1.2 and 4.2.3) showed improvement in terms of grammar.

Though pause duration when speaking is one aspect of participants' progress, it is also an aspect which displays some participants' regression. There were three participants in the memorization group (M2, M30, M46) who showed longer pause in the posttest than in the pretest; while the improvisation group had no one showing regression in this aspect. This phenomenon might indicate that the improvisation group, with their practice during the 14-week experiment, tended to think quickly and were able to speak out directly what came to their minds. The memorization group, who had relatively more rote learning from their drama scripts, needed to search for the words or grammatical rules they needed to use in an improvisational situation. This finding suggests that the automatization needed in oral proficiency (Tiangco, 2005) develops better with the improvisation strategy than in the memorization strategy.

### C. Progress and innovation

One of the most interesting phenomena in the participants' oral performance in this experiment is that some students would "create" some English, trying to get their meaning across. This kind of creation occurred in different aspects, such as pronunciation, word, phrases, sentence structure and grammar. Here are three examples of invented pronunciation.

Q: What do you like to do on the weekend?

A: Shad under tree [ It should be: chat under tree ] , play computer, so the intest [ It should be: surf the internet ] , and read novel.

(M36 posttest)

Q: If you had three million dollars, what would you do?

A: .....環遊世界 [ Traveling around the world ] ...play world.

Q: If you go to other countries, which country would you go first?

A: Japan.

Q: Why Japan?

A: Break swing. [ It should be: black sweet or black sugar ]

(I 22 posttest)

Q: If you had thirty million dollars, what would you do?

A: I want to buy a house for my mother and father.

Q: A house. How much money will you spend on the house?

A: Ten million...I want to spend it. Five hundred [ Note: it should be “five million” in English ] I want..to..buy something I want.

Q: What is it?

A: Like..co'mic book and novel. Like last.

Q: Why do you like comic books?

A: Very in'teresting.

(I10 posttest)

In the first case, the participant had three words mispronounced. There is nothing wrong with the student's pronunciation organs because she could utter the consonants clearly in other words. Probably she had only some vague memory about the words she was going to say and she just spoke out.

In the second case, the participant mispronounced two words, and she also invented a phrase, “play world”, to refer to travel around the world. In the third case, the participant was a high-level student and her invention occurred in the stress of words, such as the two words “comic” and “interesting”, where she put the stress on the second syllable instead of the first one. Besides the stress errors, this participant also created some sentence pattern in her pretest, such as “(I want to) go to buy my like things,” which should have been “I want to go to buy things I like.”

This kind of sentence pattern is different from that of Chinese. Some students would try to avoid using these English patterns or just did not know what to do with them, but some would go ahead to say what they wanted to say without hesitation. Here are some other examples:

\*I think I will help other need help people and for charity. (M6 posttest)

\*With my friend go to a small island camp. (M27 pretest, the “s” sound in “island” was omitted)

\*I very like comic book. The people draw very beautiful. (I 28 posttest)

\*There was boy give me flower. (I 23 posttest)

In answering another question (Q: How do you know they are happy? A: Over smile), the last participant above (I 23) also used a self-invented phrase to stand for a sentence “All are smiling.” It would be hard to understand it without her explanation in Chinese.

All the seven inventor-participants showed progress in their posttests, regardless of their language levels or which group they belonged to. Therefore, the attribute of not being afraid of making mistakes could be regarded as a plus in participants’ performance (Gledhill, 2000). Nevertheless, the teaching strategies did demonstrate some impact on participants’ performance. In the pretests, there was only one inventor in each group (I 10, M27), showing the two groups were homogeneous in this aspect at the beginning. In the posttest, however, there were four inventors (I 10, I 22, I 23, I 28) in the improvisation group and only two (M6, M36) in the memorization group, where the participant M27 was no more an inventor. This could indicate that teaching and practice could help students get more assertive and less worried about their oral expression, and the improvisation group benefited more in this aspect.

In addition to the increased number of people who were bold enough to speak out, the improvisation group also showed invention in more aspects for each inventor than those in the memorization group. Three out of four inventors in the improvisation group had

invention in at least two aspects, as exemplified in previous paragraphs. On the other hand, the memorization inventors had invention in only one aspect for each inventor.

In sum, the improvisation strategy can not only help participants learn better in terms of complexity, accuracy, and general performance, but also better encourage participants to speak out than the memorization strategy. The findings seem to suggest that the memorization strategy, whether in the names of drama, speech, or multiple intelligence, has an inferior learning effect to the improvisation strategy.

### **4.3 The Effect of Language Levels on Oral Improvement**

This section is to answer part of research question 5 and test research hypothesis 5.

#### Question 5:

What is the relationship between students' language levels and their rate of oral improvement with the use of the various strategies?

#### Hypothesis 5:

Students of different language levels will show significant variation, irrespective of the strategy they use, in their rate of oral improvement as the result of the experiment.

This section is divided into two parts: the within-level effect of language levels on oral proficiency improvement, and the between-level effect on oral proficiency improvement.

#### **4.3.1 Within-Level Improvement**

A paired samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the oral performance in the pretest and posttest of participants of different speaking levels.

##### **4.3.1.1 Results: the Difference between Pretest and Posttest by Each Language Level**

A. High level participants

Table 4-16 High-level participants--fluency

## Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	PREFLU - POSFLU	-.62	1.098	.215	-2.857	25	.008

Table 4-17 high-level participants--accuracy

## Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	PREGRA - POSGRA	-.288	.9610	.1885	-1.531	25	.138

Table 4-18 high-level participants—complexity

## Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	PRECOM - POSCOM	-.65	1.111	.218	-3.000	25	.006

Table 4-19 high-level participants—general performance

## Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	SUMPRE - SUMPOS T	-1.5577	2.78685	.54655	-2.850	25	.009

Tables 4-16, 4-17, 4-18, 4-19 revealed that the high-level students had a statistically significant improvement in fluency, complexity and general performance in the posttest than in the pretest ( $p < .01$ ). But there was no statistically significant difference in accuracy between pretest and posttest ( $p > .05$ ).

#### B. Intermediate level participants

Table 4-20 intermediate level participants—fluency

##### Paired Samples Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1 PREFLU - POSFLU	-1.36	1.440	.288	-4.723	24	.000

Table 4-21 intermediate level participants--accuracy

##### Paired Samples Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1 PREGRA -- POSGRA	-.680	1.1804	.2361	-2.880	24	.008

Table 4-22 intermediate level participants--complexity

##### Paired Samples Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1 PRECOM - POSCOM	-.96	1.274	.255	-3.767	24	.001

Table 4-23 Intermediate level participants—general performance

Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	SUMPRE -- SUMPOST	-3.0000	3.62572	.72514	-4.137	24	.000

Tables 4-20, 4-21, 4-22, 4-23 revealed that the intermediate-level students had a statistically significant improvement in all aspects: fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance in the posttest than in the pretest ( $p < .01$ ).

C. Low-level students

Table 4-24 Low level participants--fluency

Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	PREFLU - POSFLU	-1.16	1.370	.254	-4.541	28	.000

Table 4-25 Low level participants—accuracy

Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	PREGRA -- POSGRA	-1.034	1.2169	.2260	-4.578	28	.000

Table 4-26 Low level participants—complexity

Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	PRECOM - POSCOM	-1.14	1.315	.244	-4.659	28	.000

Table 4-27 Low level participants—general performance

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error			
Pair 1	SUMPRE -- SUMPOST	-3.3276	3.80384	.70636	-4.711	28	.000

Tables 4-24, 4-25, 4-26, 4-27 revealed that the low-level students had a statistically significant improvement in fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance in the posttest than in the pretest ( $p < .01$ ).

#### 4.3.1.2 Analysis and Discussion

The results suggest that nearly all students made statistically significant progress in all speaking abilities except the high level in accuracy. This finding suggests that the teaching, irrespective of what strategy is used, can improve students' oral proficiency. However, the low-level students seem to have made a little more progress than intermediate and high-level students. Besides, the high-level students' insignificant progress in accuracy reflects the discussion in 4.1.2: fluency and complexity seem to develop faster than accuracy.

An investigation into the oral test interviews also supports the results above.

Another interesting phenomenon is that participants' oral English levels seem to be relevant to the language aspects in which they made progress between the pretest and posttest. This study has found that, if the participants are divided into three levels in their oral English proficiency: high, intermediate, and low, the high level students tended to display progress in grammar, word choice, and number of words. The low level students, on the other hand, showed progress in pause duration and number of words. They made little progress in complexity. Following is an example for one high level student:

pretest	posttest
Q: If you had 30 million dollars, what would you do? A: I want to go to Japan and shopping to the supermarket....go to shopping to buy, to go to my like things.	Q: If you had 30 million dollars, what would you do? A: I want to buy a house for my mother and father...10 million..I want to spend on the house. Five million I want .to. buy something I want.

I 10

This high level student used an adjective clause in the posttest ("something I want"). This is the only adjective clause which occurred in utterances by all the participants. It is also a great leap forward in grammar because this structure is not inherent in Chinese grammar. The following is an example from a low-level student.

pretest	Posttest
Q: Describe your daily routine. A: I..seven...(28 sec) wake up, then go to school...(17 sec) I don't speak..	Q: Describe your daily routine. A: Seven o'clock get up, then eight-twenty go to school. Twelve o'clock eat food, then...then go to school. Five o'clock after school. Go to..go to..go to my room...

M32

As we can see, this student made a lot of progress in number of words and pause duration, but the structure of the language remains the same: phrases only.

### 4.3.2 Comparing the Between-Level Improvement

The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to see the effect of different language levels (high, intermediate, and low) on participants' oral improvement. The dependent variables were the posttest speaking abilities (fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance); the pretest speaking abilities were used as the covariate variables; and the participants' language levels were used as the fixed factor.

#### 4.3.2.1 Results

##### A. Fluency

Table 4-28 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Dependent Variable: POSFLU

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
LEVEL	1.802	2	.901	.545	.582
PREFLU	4.926	1	4.926	2.981	.088
LEVEL * PREFLU	4.529	2	2.265	1.371	.260

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-28 shows that the F value between level and preflu (the fluency in pretest) is not significant (sig.= 0.260), so the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated. Now I continue to do the analysis of covariance by using preflu as the covariate variable, a potential affecting factor to be excluded in order to compare the improvement rate between different levels.

Table 4-29 Analysis of covariance of fluency and level

Dependent Variable: POSFLU

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PREFLU	28.695	1	28.695	17.201	.000
LEVEL	3.172	2	1.586	.951	.391

The significance level is at 0.05

The output in Table 4-29 indicates no main effect ( $p>0.05$ ) for level but a significant relationship between pretest fluency and posttest fluency ( $p<0.05$ ). That means that when pretest fluency impact was excluded, level had no influence on fluency improvement during the experiment.

## 2. Accuracy

Table 4-30 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
LEVEL	2.857	2	1.428	1.162	.318
PREGRA	3.682	1	3.682	2.996	.088
LEVEL * PREGRA	3.920	2	1.960	1.595	.210

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-30 shows that the F value between level and pregra (the accuracy in pretest) is not significant ( $\text{sig.} = 0.210$ ), so the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated. Now I continue to do the analysis of covariance by using pregra as the covariate variable.

Table 4-31 Analysis of covariance of accuracy and level

Dependent Variable: POSGRA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PREGRA	29.877	1	29.877	23.932	.000
LEVEL	.176	2	8.783E-02	.070	.932

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-31 shows that, when the effect of pretest accuracy is excluded, there is no significant relationship between level and the posttest accuracy ( $p>0.05$ ). This means that when pretest accuracy impact was excluded, there was no significant difference in accuracy improvement among different student levels.

### 3. Complexity

Table 4-32 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
LEVEL	3.339	2	1.670	1.116	.333
PRECOM	8.646	1	8.646	5.781	.019
LEVEL * PRECOM	4.168	2	2.084	1.394	.255

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-32 shows that the F value between level and precom (the complexity in pretest) is not significant (sig.= 0.255), so the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated. Now I continue to do the analysis of covariance by using precom as the covariate variable.

Table 4-33 Analysis of covariance of complexity and level

Dependent Variable: POSCOM

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PRECOM	30.037	1	30.037	19.879	.000
LEVEL	.590	2	.295	.195	.823

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-33 shows that, when the effect of pretest complexity was excluded, there was no significant relationship between level and the posttest complexity ( $p > 0.05$ ). This means that there is no significant difference in complexity improvement among different student levels.

### 4. General performance

Table 4-34 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
LEVEL	47.890	2	23.945	2.091	.131
SUMPRE	82.344	1	82.344	7.192	.009
LEVEL * SUMPRE	55.312	2	27.656	2.416	.096

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-34 shows that the F value between level and sumpre (the general performance in the pretest) is not significant (sig.= 0.096), so the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated. Now I continue to do the analysis of covariance by using sumpre as the covariate variable.

Table 4-35 Analysis of covariance of general performance and level

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SUMPRE	282.519	1	282.519	23.790	.000
LEVEL	1.073	2	.536	.045	.956

The significance level is at 0.05

The output in Table 4-35 indicates that there was no main effect ( $p > 0.05$ ) for level but a significant relationship between pretest general performance and posttest general performance ( $p < 0.05$ ). This means that when pretest general performance was excluded, level had no influence on general performance improvement during the experiment period.

#### 4.3.2.2 Analysis and Discussion

From the results above, it can be seen that there was no statistically significant between-level difference in speaking ability improvement. Therefore this finding does not support hypothesis 5: participants of different language levels will show a significant inter-level difference on speaking ability improvement (fluency, accuracy, complexity, and general performance). However, the low-level students were likely to make more progress.

When learners got to the intermediate or higher level, learning seemed to reach the

plateau and the learning growth evens out. This insight is partly supported by Burrell's (2005) study in which low-level students showed higher improvement rate in oral complexity than intermediate-level students. Avila (1997) claims that it is because of the greater "possible growth" along the program/measurement continuum from zero English to the proficiency similar to a native English speaker. If a student begins at zero on a 0-100 scale, possible growth is 100. Conversely a student who begins at 99 can only grow to 100, an improvement of only one point, in sharp contrast to the student who had the possibility of gaining 100 points.

Nonetheless this study found that there was no significant inter-level difference in students' oral improvement. This finding implies that in a speaking class there is no need to divide students into groups according to their levels, though many teachers (e.g. Tsou, 2002; Sue, 2004) in Taiwan complain that it is difficult to cater to most students' needs in a multilevel class. As a matter of fact, in this study the students were often seen to help each other in most classroom activities, in both the improvisation group and the memorization group. In this way, the higher-level students might have strengthened their memory by repetitively teaching the low-level students, and the lower-level students could have received more help with their oral proficiency. Cooperative learning had developed naturally in various classroom activities.

Though the statistics showed no significant inter-level difference in the rate of oral improvement, a qualitative investigation revealed some noteworthy phenomena. 23 students from the memorization group and 23 from the improvisation group were first selected according to their pretest levels (For details, see 3.5.1). In each level (high, intermediate, or low), there were roughly equal numbers of students so that the comparison could be appropriately made.

Of all the 46 examined participants, 30 of them, or nearly two thirds, made some progress in their posttest. The rest showed no progress at all or, even worse, regressed after the experiment. Interesting enough, the participants who made both the most progress or the most regress were low-level students. Here are two examples from the two extremes.

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life.</p> <p>A: ...(30 sec)</p>	<p>Q: Tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life.</p> <p>A: One day, I went to party. There was boy...give me..flower. I was so happy and surprised.</p> <p>Q: Tell me more.</p> <p>A: 聽不懂 (I don't understand).</p> <p>Q: What flower did he give you?</p> <p>A: 不會講花名 (I don't know how to say it). Beautiful.</p> <p>Q: What party?</p> <p>A: At home..no..at school.</p> <p>Q: Do you like him?</p> <p>A: No.</p> <p>Q: Why not?</p> <p>A: He's very ugly.</p> <p>Q: But the flowers are beautiful.</p> <p>A: Flower beautiful, people ugly.</p>

I23

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: What do you like to do on the weekend?</p> <p>A: Listen to music, and watch TV, and play computer.</p> <p>Q: Why do you like to listen to music?</p> <p>A: Interest.</p> <p>Q: Which musician do you like?</p> <p>A: .....(End)</p>	<p>Q: Tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life.</p> <p>A: .....(10) class... 同學會怎麼說? (How to say "class reunion"?)</p> <p>Q: class reunion.</p> <p>A: class reunion. Because we...singer... we go to .....(End)</p>

I27

Though the question for the participant (I27) in the pretest was different from that in the posttest, she was supposed to be prepared for answering each question because all the questions had been revealed to all the participants 10 minutes before the tests began. In the pretest, this participant could answer with three phrases. In the posttest, however, she was not ready for the question and could hardly utter a word.

There were four people who showed regress in questions and/or picture description (I15, I17, I27, M30), though the regress was insignificant. One thing that is noteworthy is that all of these participants were relatively low-level student participants. On the other hand, the participants who have made most progress (I23 and M39) were also low-level students. For the latter, the reason might be that they had more possibilities for progress as discussed above (also see Avila, 1997), and hence the better ones would be limited in their opportunities for progress. For the former, the reason might be that speaking, especially speaking a foreign language in front of others, is a great challenge for self-conscious people. The strategies could help them little and might have deprived them of their interest in English speaking. Among those who regressed, the researcher had observed one participant (M30), who had been busy with student clubs through nearly the whole semester and had been inattentive in class. After class, moreover, she could usually be seen practising aboriginal dancing on campus. The other three also often daydreamed in class and loved to chat in Chinese in class, and often needed to be stopped by the teacher. One student (I15) could answer no more than yes and no at the posttest, which she could have prepared for well in advance. This indicates that she had lost her interest or concern for the class. More discussion about this phenomenon will be in the next section.

Another finding in relation to participants' differences in levels is that most of them advanced, if at all, only one or two points on the scoring chart (point 1 to 10), with few exceptions. This also indicates that it takes time and practice to improve this language skill. To get a better understanding of the few exceptions, the researcher conducted an extra interview with one of them. The participant who made the most progress (I23) noted in the interview that she was somewhat overwhelmed at the pretest and could

hardly say a word. But in the posttest, she was familiar with the teacher and was not afraid any more. The motivation to get a good grade might have also contributed to her hard preparation for the posttest.

On the other hand, though there was no significant difference in the improvement rate between levels, I hypothesized that the strategies might have interacted with language levels. In other words, high-level participants in the improvisation group might perform differently from their counterparts in the memorization group. Therefore a comparison of the interactive effect of strategies and levels will be conducted in the next section.

#### **4.4 The Interactive Effect of Strategies and Levels**

This section is to further investigate research question 5 and test the research hypothesis 5:

##### Question 5:

What's the relationship between students' language levels and their rate of oral improvement with the use of the various strategies?

##### Hypothesis 5:

Students of different language levels will show significant difference, irrespective of the strategy they use, in their rate of oral improvement as the result of the experiment.

The two-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant interaction between language levels and teaching strategies on oral improvement. Fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance in the posttest were used as the dependent variables; fluency, accuracy, complexity and general performance in the pretest were used as the covariate variables; level and group were used as the fixed factors.

##### **4.4.1 Results:**

A. The interactive effect of strategies and levels on fluency

Table 4-36 Analysis of Covariance

Dependent Variable: POSFLU

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PREFLU	33.750	1	33.750	21.467	.000
LEVEL	2.318	2	1.159	.737	.482
GROUP	8.824	1	8.824	5.612	.020
LEVEL * GROUP	3.711	2	1.856	1.180	.313

Table 4-36 shows that when the effect of *preflu* (fluency in the pretest) was excluded, the interaction of level and group was statistically non-significant (sig.= 0.313). This means that there was no statistically significant interaction of language levels and teaching strategies for the fluency aspect. But the F value of the group factor is 5.612 and is statistically significant ( $P < .05$ ), which required further investigation into the main effect. The main effect of the individual factor is shown in 4.4.1.2

#### B. The interactive effect of strategies and levels on accuracy

Table 4-37 Analysis of Covariance

Dependent Variable: POSGRA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PREGRA	25.420	1	25.420	20.254	.000
LEVEL	.350	2	.175	.139	.870
GROUP	2.285	1	2.285	1.820	.181
LEVEL * GROUP	1.111	2	.555	.443	.644

Table 4-37 shows that when the effect of *pregra* (accuracy in the pretest) was excluded, the interaction of level and group was statistically non-significant (sig.= 0.644). This means that there was no statistically significant interaction between language levels and teaching strategies on the accuracy aspect. In addition, the F values of the group and level factors were statistically non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), and no further analysis was required.

### C. The interactive effect of strategies and levels on complexity

Table 4-38 Analysis of Covariance

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PRECOM	28.735	1	28.735	19.973	.000
LEVEL	.670	2	.335	.233	.793
GROUP	8.027	1	8.027	5.579	.021
LEVEL * GROUP	2.027	2	1.013	.704	.498

Table 4-38 shows that when the effect of *precom* (complexity in the pretest) was excluded, the interaction of level and group was statistically non-significant (sig.= 0.498). This means that there was no statistically significant interaction between language levels and teaching strategies for the complexity aspect. But the F value of the group factor is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), which required further investigation into the main effect. The main effect of the group factor is shown in 4.4.1.2, where the high-level students in the improvisation group showed statistically significant improvement rate in complexity over their memorization counterparts, while the intermediate-level students in the improvisation group performed significantly better in fluency than those in the memorization group.

### D. The interactive effect of strategies and levels on general performance

Table 4-39 Analysis of Covariance

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SUMPRE	277.291	1	277.291	24.293	.000
LEVEL	1.046	2	.523	.046	.955
GROUP	52.520	1	52.520	4.601	.035
LEVEL * GROUP	18.921	2	9.460	.829	.441

Table 4-39 shows that when the effect of *sumpre* (general performance in the pretest) was excluded, the interaction of level and group was statistically non-significant (sig.= 0.441). This means that there was no statistically significant interaction between language levels and teaching strategies for the general performance aspect. But the F value of the group

factor on the posttest is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), which required further investigation into the main effect. The main effect of each individual factor is shown in 4.4.2

#### 4.4.2. Simple Main Effect of Level and Strategy with Post Hoc

When the interaction is not statistically significant, the simple main effect is usually not further investigated. But out of curiosity this study still explored the simple main effect and the findings are shown in tables 4-40 and 4-41.

Table 4-40 Effect of different strategies on high-level students: complexity

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: POSCOM

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PRECOM	27.219	1	27.219	26.900	.000
GROUP	5.018	1	5.018	4.959	.036

Though the overall interaction between level and strategy was statistically non-significant for all speaking aspects, the simple main effect in table 4-40 did show that when the complexity pretest was excluded, the strategies made a significant difference to high-level participants ( $F = 4.959$ ,  $\text{sig.} = 0.036$ ) in complexity. The post hoc showed that the high-level students in the improvisation group performed significantly better in complexity than those in the memorization group.

Table 4-41 Intermediate-level in different strategies--fluency

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: POSFLU

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PREFLU	8.652	1	8.652	4.775	.040
GROUP	8.843	1	8.843	4.880	.038

The simple main effect in table 4-41 revealed that when the fluency pretest was excluded, the strategies made a statistically significant difference to intermediate-level participants ( $F = 4.880$ ,  $\text{sig.} = 0.038$ ). The post hoc showed that the intermediate-level students in the improvisation group performed significantly better in fluency than those in the memorization group. All the other simple main effects between levels and strategies showed no significant difference in the language aspects.

#### **4.4.3 Discussion**

Though the results above showed no significant overall interaction between language levels and teaching strategies, it can still be seen that the higher-level participants in the improvisation group performed better than their counterparts in the memorization group for various aspects (See tables 4-39 and 4-40). This finding suggests, though not very obviously, that the higher-level students benefited more from the improvisation strategy. The reason might be that the improvisation strategy works best for students with higher learning abilities, such as analyzing, synthesizing and applying, which are beyond the capability of the low level students, who are still working on comprehending, and memorizing.

On the whole, there was no statistically significant difference between the improvisation strategy and the memorization strategy for the low-level students. Nonetheless, some of the low-level participants in the improvisation group also made significant progress, as shown in the qualitative analysis discussed in 4.2.3. As stated, many factors might interact to bring about their learning and performance, such as motivation, personality, past learning experience, and so on. These different learning outcomes for the low-level students need to be further explored in future research.

#### **4.5 Factors Affecting Oral Performance**

There are many factors affecting oral performance (Robinson, 1995; National Center for Family Literacy, 2004; Oya, Manalo, & Greenwood, 2004). The following are some

factors perceived by me when participants were taking the tests. These findings can be categorized into intra-group and inter-group factors.

#### 4.5.1 Intra-Groups:

This research has found that three major factors might have affected the intra-group students' performance: teacher-student interaction, speaking ability, and question modes.

Teacher-student interaction includes the familiarity between the teacher and the student, how the questions were brought up, and the length the students were allowed to consider how to answer a question. When a student is more familiar with the teacher, he/she might have less of a mental barrier preventing him/her conveying what is on his/her mind (Krashen, 1982). Here is an example from student I 5.

pretest	posttest
<p>Q: Your ideal boyfriend?</p> <p>A: I want him tall and smart, and funny.</p> <p>Q: Funny, tall, and smart, why?</p> <p>A: Funny becau...he can let me happy.</p> <p>Q: Tall?</p> <p>A: .....(end)</p>	<p>Q: Please tell me your most unforgettable thing in your life?</p> <p>A: One day I went to beach with my friend...</p> <p>Q: You went to...?</p> <p>A: Fish, and then, 不小心(by accident), I don't know how to say. 講別的好了 (Let me say something else). About one month ago, I go to the English...</p> <p>Q: Speech contest?</p> <p>A: Right. I'm very nervous and excited. And I'm afraid forget some words, but when I speak it, and I think that very good. I want to join the game again.</p> <p>Q: Very good.</p>

I 5 posttest

In the example above, the student got stuck in the pretest question and could not continue. But in the posttest, she decided to change her thought direction and improvised something else, which most students would prefer not to do because they had prepared in advance for certain questions. That is because during the experiment period, there was an English speech contest going on campus and after class this student had come to the teacher/researcher a dozen times for help. This familiarity might have contributed to her sense of security which, in turn, facilitated her performance. Zofia (1995) also claims that the unfamiliar setting/interlocutor elicits a significant proportion of language transfer errors than the same task performed in a familiar environment.

In the same example, the student got stuck again at the phrase “speech contest”, and the timely reminder from the interviewer might have helped a lot with the flow of utterances, which might otherwise have stopped prematurely. The fact that this cannot happen in the ordinary mass oral tests in which the testees are talking to tape recorders is a drawback of mass testing processes. There is another example when the interviewer’s questioning seemed to encourage the response:

Q: Please describe your ideal boyfriend.

A: uhh.....(12 sec)

Q: Is he tall or short? Handsome, ugly?

A: Thin, tall, handsome.

Q: Money?

A: Have house, car,.....

I 1 pretest

It is often suggested that the questions be given in ‘wh’ questions to induce free speeches. For the low level learners, however, it seems that some yes/no questions and/or even some gestures have better influence on their answers. Besides, a little patience with the interviewees would occasionally pay off in the responses. Nunan (2004) and Shelton (2005) both indicate that enough time for planning is important in an improvisational

activity. Here is one example in which the word “bottles” is not an easy one for most of the participants:

Q: Describe the picture.

A: Woman.

Q: There are many women. What are they doing?

A: .....(8) dancing.

Q: What country are they in?

A: .....(10)

Q: What is on the ground?

A: Bottles.

Q: Very good.

I 3 pretest

The nature of oral tasks, the difficulty levels of the questions or the question modes (oral expression or describing a picture), could also have affected participants' performance. Though all the questions were of the kind often asked in daily life, and the participants had from 10 to more than 30 minutes to prepare before facing the interviewer, some still felt some questions were more difficult than the others. One student (C23) complained it was unfair after the interview, because she thought she had got a difficult one. In fact, participants did seem to make more progress on the “daily routine” question, while the “ideal boyfriend” one produced least progress perhaps because of higher language ability required as well as lack of imagination or experience. This finding supports Nunan's (2004) suggestion that prior learning experiences make the task easier.

Some people (eg. Ur, 1996) might think that describing a picture is easier than answering a question, because there may be a lot to say about a picture. This research, however, has found that most students did better on questions than on describing pictures. Presumably it was because they could prepare for the questions in advance while the pictures they were to describe were more unpredictable

This section examines whether the question modes, interview questions and picture describing, made any difference to students' oral performance. A paired samples T-test was used to compare students' performance in these two modes in the pretest.

Table 4-42 Effect of question modes on oral performance

Paired Samples Test (question vs picture)

		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	SUMPREQ - SUMPREP	.568	77	.572

Table 4-42 shows that the mean difference was statistically non-significant ( $t = .568$ ,  $p > .05$ ). It means that there was no significant difference between participants answering the interview questions or describing a picture.

#### 4.5.2 Inter-Group:

The different strategies administered on the participants, mainly-memorization and mainly-improvisation, seem to have caused different impacts on their performances. The memorization group, which underwent the model “introduction—practice—memorizing —performance”, seemed to be less familiar with the researcher. It was assumed that they needed some private time to practise acting. When one subgroup was performing on the stage, the other students felt they had nothing to do because they already knew the content of what was going on and they lacked interest in others' performing. This unfamiliarity was also reflected on their manner and responses in the posttest. One student (M42) showed a little impatience when answering the question:

Q: Please describe your daily routine.

A: 跟上次一樣 (Same as last one). Seven o'clock I get up and ...好無聊 (How boring!)

Eight o'clock I go to school and ....(18 sec) twelve I eat lunch, and five o'clock...

Q: Go Home.

A: ..... (no response)

Q: What about the picture?

A: Two white people and two red people, they are fly and they are very happy. They are smile, and very happy, happy, happy.

Q: Why are they so happy?

A: Because they are fly.

From the passage above, her impatience can be easily detected in her outspoken response and the triple “happy”. Another student (M2) showed indifference in her lack of preparation:

Q: Please tell me the most unforgettable thing in your life.

A: .....(9) I think nothing.

Q: No. You have to tell me one thing.

A: ....I think about junior school life.

Q: One thing.

A: ....(31) I think about my teacher. Because in the junior high school, she....think...my ..his class is...so...noisy and like talk, and she was very angry. Afterward, she retired.

Q: Because of you?

A: No, no. All the students.

This student could express her thoughts pretty well in English and could use some difficult words, such as “retire” and “afterward”, which are rarely used by students of her age in Taiwan. It can be inferred, therefore, she did not prepare for the questions in advance even though she had more than ten minutes to prepare. When given 30 seconds on the spot, she could cobble together something which was better than those of most well-prepared students. It seems that more students tended to lose interest in the memorization group than the improvisation one.

The improvisation group, on the other hand, underwent a somewhat different class model: introduction—practice—communicating (interaction). Apart from the progress in their speaking (see 4.1.2), the group members also tended to show greater friendliness with the

teacher in and out of the classroom: they asked more questions in class and greeted the teacher politely on campus. In other words, the teacher and students enjoyed a better interaction in this strategy.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In sum, we can reach three conclusions from this chapter. Firstly, the improvisation strategy can help students more than the memorization strategy in terms of oral improvement, and the memorization strategy is better than the combination of the two strategies. Secondly, the strategies did not show much difference in oral improvement on participants of different oral levels, though the intermediate- and high-level students in the improvisation group benefited slightly more than their counterparts in the memorization group. Thirdly, accuracy is the most difficult aspect for students to make progress in oral English, while fluency is the easiest.

Though many students appeared to welcome the improvisation strategy, it also appeared that this method was less congenial to some participants than the memorization one, and some students in the improvisation group resisted it and even did not come to take the posttest (I16, I21, I45). In contrast, though most students were familiar with the traditional memorization strategy, it was not necessarily popular with all the students. How students perceive the teaching strategies and activities is critical for an appropriate teaching methodology, hence this will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5 Student Perceptions of the Learning Strategies and Activities— Results, Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter addresses the research questions 6, 7 and 8 and hypotheses 6, 7 and 8.

### Question 6:

How do students perceive the adoption of improvisation and memorization, as learning strategies?

### Question 7:

How do students perceive the activities adopted in the learning strategies?

### Question 8:

What is the relationship between students' perception of these strategies and their oral improvement?

### Hypothesis 6:

Students in the combination group will show a significant preference for the memorization strategy over the improvisation strategy.

### Hypothesis 7:

Low-level participants will show significant preference for memorization strategy over improvisation strategy, while the high-level students will show preference for improvisation over memorization.

### Hypothesis 8:

There will be no relationship between the preferences for particular strategies and the rate of oral improvement.

The data presented in this chapter were mainly collected from interviews and a preference questionnaire (See Appendix A) by the participants in the combination group, which was the only group having experienced both the improvisation and memorization strategies and was suitable for the comparison of the learning strategies. Because the participants in the improvisation and memorization groups underwent only one particular strategy, they were not asked to describe their perceptions of the strategies. Nonetheless, their opinions and responses in class were observed by the teacher and are reflected in this chapter.

In section 5.1 the preference for each of the two learning strategies is analyzed and discussed. The effects of language levels on the preference and students' perception

of the strategy transition from memorization to improvisation in the combination group are also investigated. Section 5.2 is to explore the perceptions for the learning activities which make up both strategies. Section 5.3 analyzes and categorizes the reasons for the preference for one of the strategies and activities. Section 5.4 will investigate personal factors for the preference for the strategies and activities. Section 5.5 will explore the relation between preference and performance.

## 5.1 Preference for a Learning Strategy

This section will examine: a) participants' preference for one of the two learning strategies: improvisation and memorization, and b) the preferential difference among participants of different language levels.

### 5.1.1 Participants' Preferences for Improvisation or Memorization

This part deals with part of research question 6 and test research hypothesis 6: Participants will show significant differences in their preference for strategies. A paired samples test was used to determine whether there was a significant preferential difference between the strategies.

#### A. Results

Table 5-1 Preferential Difference between Improvisation and Memorization Strategies  
Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	MEMO - IMPRO	.8528	2.77207	1.946	39	.059

Table 5-1 shows that participants on average scored a higher preference for the memorization strategy than the improvisation strategy, but there was no statistically significant difference between the two strategies (sig. =0.059) in terms of preference. This finding did not support hypothesis 6.

#### B. Analysis and Discussion

This finding suggests that participants in this study showed no difference in their preference for either of the two learning strategies: improvisation and memorization

( $p > .05$ ). In other words, the combination of both strategies is likely to be more useful and serve the interests of the class as a whole. However, there are three points that are noteworthy:

### 1. Strong Individual Differences

Many participants in the study expressed their strong preference for one strategy or the other, despite the fact that their preference did not emerge in the statistics. Here are some examples from the interviews and questionnaire. (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-1).

*I like the dramas (memorization) because I have time to practise. We didn't have enough time for other activities. For those who are not good at English conversation, like me, I hope to have time to practice. Besides, acting can demonstrate our creativity in our facial expressions, and this training can get rid of stage fright. I feel the drama activity is more interesting. (C11, C14)*

*I don't like dramas because we need to memorize the words, along with the actions, facial expressions. Memorizing English lines is a lot of trouble. I like improvisation. (C 32, C9)*

In fact, I expected the memorization strategy to be more popular with the students than the improvisation strategy before the experiment began. This was because students were thought to have got used to memorizing from their past experience (Tiangco, 2005), and the dramas were also designed to be short, funny and easy to act out. This study revealed that, on the contrary, some students were tired of reciting, and the acting was also embarrassing for some of them.

On the other hand, I thought, before the experiment, that the improvisation strategy might be more difficult and unfamiliar for the students. The interviews and questionnaire responses from some participants also supported this prediction. But still a number of participants had many other reasons for their continuing engagement in the improvisation strategy. For more details, see 5.3.

In sum, with students distributed evenly across the preference continuum, these preferences have implications for L2 teachers which will be discussed in the conclusion. Nonetheless, there were also many participants who valued aspects other than the strategies in the class, which will be discussed in the following section.

## 2. Aspects Valued other than the Strategies.

When asked about their preference, many students also considered the learning content's interest, difficulty level, or practicality. There was a big difference in terms of the reasons for preference even within the same strategy. With regard to the memorization strategy, though all the activities in this strategy required the students to perform in front of the class, drama 2 (borrowing money, see appendix E for detail) was rated much higher than drama 3 (borrowing stationery, see appendix E for detail) by some students, and vice versa. Here are two contrasting comments.

*I like drama 2 because I can easily relate to the character. It's a piece of cake for me to imagine how to act out the role. I don't like drama 3 because the script is too short and meaningless. You just borrow this and that like a dummy. It's boring.* (C40)

*I don't like drama 2 because I hate drama, especially those requiring acting. I like drama 3 because this has a lot to do with daily life. It's useful. Besides, it is short and I don't need to stay long on the stage.* (C19)

There are also many similar varied opinions related to the improvisation strategy because of its various tasks and activities. These different considerations involved in students' preferences may have contributed to the insignificance of preferential difference. For more detail about reasons for preference, see 5.3.

## 3. The Trend toward the Memorization Strategy

Though there was no statistically significant difference between students' preferences for either the improvisation or the memorization strategy, the overall statistic is close to statistical significance (sig.= 0.059): more participants preferred the memorization strategy than the improvisation strategy. And this phenomenon occurred in

participants of all levels, including the high-level group. (The mean score for the memorization strategy, at each level, was higher than that of the improvisation strategy. For more detail, see 5.1.2). It seems that, to cater to the low-level learners (Ur, 1996; Osburne, 1993; Knop, 2000), the memorization activities should occupy a little more time than the improvisation activities, or as a step toward improvisation activities. The teaching implications of this finding and participants' test results will be comprehensively discussed in chapter 6.

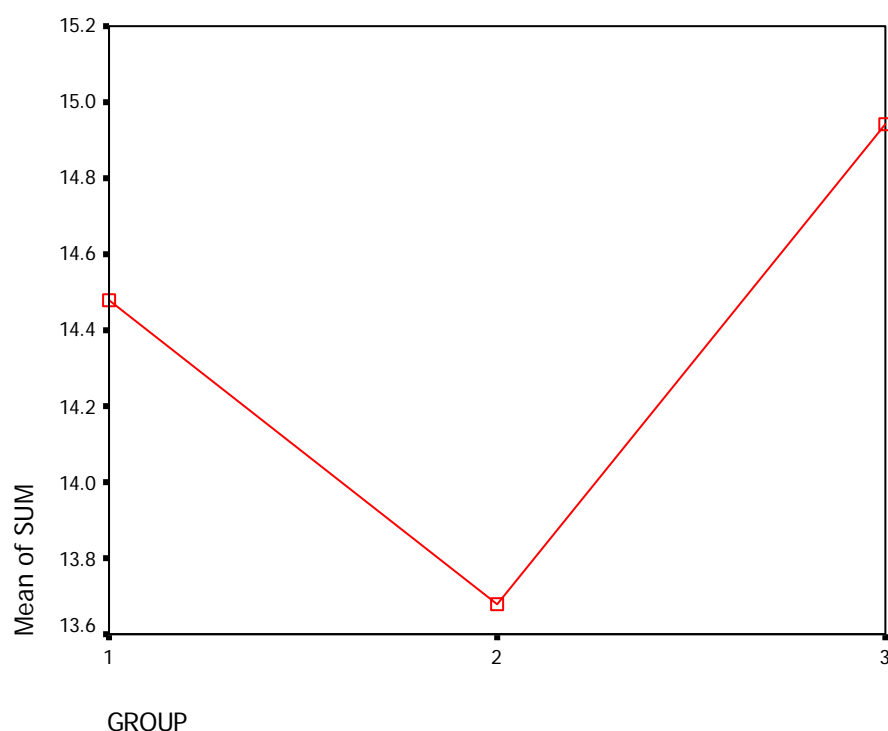
However, the above finding was only based on the reflection of the combination group. According to an annual college-wide satisfaction survey on every class and every subject by the college where this experiment was conducted, the memorization group scored the lowest while the combination group scored the highest (See Chart 5-1 below). In other words, the memorization group received the memorization strategy for a whole semester and rated it lower than the improvisation strategy, while the combination group received the memorization strategy for only half a semester and rated it higher than the improvisation strategy. This implies that the memorization strategy might have lost its appeal more than the improvisation strategy after a period of time. Though the memorization group was not interviewed for their perceptions of the strategy, the reasons for their lower satisfaction could be observed in class and in tests. For details, see chapter 4.5 and next section.

In the combination group, the memorization strategy occupied only fifty percent of the teaching time and students' interest still remained relatively high in the middle of the semester. I speculate that their interest in memorization strategy was likely to decrease if the memorization strategy had been conducted further after the mid-term exams, as the memorization group demonstrated. Though the memorization group was not surveyed or formally interviewed for their perceptions, their impatience with the strategy could be observed, after the mid-term exam, in class and the final exam (See 4.5.2). I hence speculate that the monotony of the strategy might have accounted for its unpopularity and relatively inferior oral improvement rate.

On the other hand, the improvisation strategy provided more diversified activities and was more popular than the memorization strategy, as shown in chart 5.1. In terms of activity diversity, the combination strategy could offer one more kind of activity than

the improvisation group: the memorized dramas. Hence it was the most popular among the three strategies at the end of the semester.

Chart 5-1 Satisfaction Survey for Three Groups (Group 1= improvisation, group 2 = memorization, group 3= combination ; Mean of sum refers to the student rating on the course on a 4-variable (teaching method, teaching contents, time control, teaching material), 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing extremely unsatisfactory and 5 extremely satisfactory. The total scores range from 4 to 20)



All in all, diversity seems to be very important to sustain students' interest, and a combination of strategies might meet the interests of most students, particularly for the multi-level group. From the perspective of student satisfaction, the teaching should allocate more time on improvisation than the memorization strategy. As for the optimal proportion for the two strategies, teachers should take into account more information about reasons for students' preference (See 5.3) and their academic performance (See chapter 4).

### 5.1.2 Preferential Difference for Strategies among Participants of Different Language Levels

## A. Results

Table 5-2 Paired Samples Test: preference of high-level students

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	MEMO - IMPRO	.0131	2.62217	.65554	.020	15	.984

Table 5-3 Paired Samples Test: preference of intermediate-level students

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	MEMO - IMPRO	.9860	3.01822	.95444	1.033	9	.329

Table 5-4 Paired Samples Test: preference of low-level students

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	MEMO - IMPRO	1.7171	2.66963	.71349	2.407	13	.032

A paired samples t-test was used to see whether participants of different language levels showed significant differences in their preferences for the two learning strategies: improvisation and memorization. Tables 5-2, 5-3 and 5-4 revealed that high-level and intermediate-level students showed no significant difference in their preferences ( $p > .05$ ), but the low-level students showed significant difference in their preferences ( $p < .05$ ) for the strategies. The tables show that the low-level students significantly favored the memorization strategy. As for the high-level and intermediate-level students, the preferential difference was not significant. This finding supports hypothesis 7: low-level participants will show significant preference for memorization strategy over improvisation strategy.

## B. Analysis and Discussion

Though the results showed that only the low-level students tended to prefer the memorization strategy, there seemed to be a trend emerging from the statistics in the tables above: the lower the level the participants were in, the more favored the memorization strategy was. This is an important finding, which may explain why the overall preferential difference was only slightly short of significance. This finding also partly confirmed the researcher's prediction and common viewpoint (Ur, 1996; Knop, 2000) that words and sentences should be memorized before they can be used freely in communication, particularly for beginning L2 learners.

*Of course I need to have memorized the words before I can use them at will.  
Otherwise, what should I say on the stage (in the improvisation activities)? (C36)*

The following are a couple of reflections from the lower-level students who preferred the memorization strategy.

*I like dramas (memorization strategy) because I can prepare in advance at home. My English is poor. I cannot memorize instantly what the teacher said in class. I cannot pick up the words immediately. ... In the drama class, teacher can teach us and let us prepare. Then I'd know what to say. Besides, using the words that are learned on the spot is only for the temporary memory. We'd forget it right after using it. (C14)*

*I like dramas (memorization strategy) because acting is a lot of fun, and I can add whatever I like to them. Though we need to memorize the lines, it gives me a great sense of achievement after I have kept the lines in mind. I can practice my English and my acting skills at the same time. This is a precious experience in student life. (C34)*

Though the statistics showed that more low-level students preferred the memorization strategy, still some of them enjoyed the improvisation strategy. In fact, maybe they did not like either of the strategies, but they had to make a choice on the questionnaire. Since both strategies were not very enjoyable for these students, with improvisation being difficult and the memorization strategy requiring acting and reciting, they may have chosen an easier one: the improvisation, in which they did not have to prepare in

advance. Many students also confirmed such an idea in the subsequent interviews (See Chapter 5.3). If they were called upon in an improvisation activity, they needed only to stand up and say nothing. The embarrassment lasted for less than one minute or did not exist at all for some of the low-level students. One student also expressed her opinion about those students:

*I don't like the discussion activity very much because some people would fool around in the small groups. In case they were called upon, they would take it as a bad luck, and they would just hang in there. At any rate, it would take only a minute before they could sit down again. (C4)*

On the basis of my 20-year teaching experience, this mentality might account for at least part of the reason they were low-level language students and they seemed to have got used to such a status. Improvisation is, in a way, good for the less engaged students. I hence assumed that the low-level students who chose the memorization were working harder than the other low-level students who chose the improvisation. Here are two low-level students who had different preferences in terms of the strategies and supported my hypothesis:

*I was very nervous each time I was on the stage, but I'd keep practising the drama tasks. (C16)*

*I don't like dramas because I need to memorize some English, actually a lot of English (referring to Drama 3, see Appendix E). I don't know how to read it and must use Chinese phonetic symbols. My English is really poor. (C24)*

C24 is a typically unengaged student who was usually absent-minded and loved to chat with others in class. She had shown no sign of learning motivation in this English conversation class, though she said she 'was a little envious of other high-level students'. The other student, C16, looked more attentive in class. The following statement expressed frankly some students' preferences in terms of the strategies and something of their learning mentality:

*I preferred the improvisation activities to the memorization ones. But the content (of the improvisation activities) should not be too much, otherwise I can't handle it. If I need to bring it (the script) home, and I have something else to play with, isn't it troublesome? A little lazy, to be frank, I'm lazy. .... We often had no idea how to say what we wanted to say. Though we also realized that "we aren't aware how little we know until we need to use the knowledge (This is a Chinese proverb)," it took only two seconds before the feeling was gone. (C37, C4)*

### **5.1.3 Students' Perception of the Strategy Transition**

In the combination group, students experienced the strategy transition from memorization to improvisation. Though I tried to reduce the transitional impact by overlapping some teaching procedures between the two strategies (see 3.3.2) and most students seemed to have realized the transition, some students still expressed a strong reaction to the change. Here are two examples:

*Though it felt a little troublesome at the first several sessions, I had a good time learning (acting). Perhaps they were all dramas. I had been eagerly looking forward to the subsequent classes, but the anticipation turned into disappointment at last (when I realized there was no more scripted dramas). Learning became very boring at the end. (C34)*

*I like the current activities (improvisation). The previous activities (memorization) were mechanic, dead, and we needed to memorize at home. Now they are activating. We seem to have come alive, reincarnated. (C3)*

However, most students in the group did not react so obviously to the strategy transition, though they expressed their preference for one strategy or the other. Perhaps they shared the similar opinion as the following two participants.

*Either one (strategy) is ok. Whatever. (C39)*

*I like acting (memorization). Though we could not act in some activities, I believe the teacher had a good reason for it. (C8)*

## **5.2 Perceptions of Learning Activities**

This section addresses the research question 7: how do students perceive the activities adopted in each of the learning strategies? In this experiment, the memorization strategy was composed of three dramas/activities with different plots and learning objectives and the improvisation strategy was made up of seven activities/tasks. Students were asked to rank the ten activities at the end of this experiment and give reasons for the top 3 and bottom 3 activities. (See Appendix A: Preference questionnaire)

Like the previous section, this section is also divided into two parts: a) participants' preference for the learning activities and b) the preferential difference among participants of different language levels.

### 5.2.1 Participants' Preference for the Learning Activities

#### A. Results

Table 5-5 Preferential Differences for Learning Activities

#### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Guessing	40	1	10	6.97	3.393
Role-play 2	40	1	10	6.65	2.131
Role-play 1	40	2	10	6.50	2.124
Drama 1	40	1	10	6.07	2.841
Drama 2	40	1	10	6.03	2.824
Interview	40	1	10	5.53	2.846
Drama 3	40	1	10	5.30	2.409
Discussion	40	1	10	4.75	2.799
Storytelling	40	1	9	3.65	2.155
Reporting	40	1	10	3.55	2.873
Valid N (listwise)	40				

Descriptive statistics were used to see the mean score of each activity. The results are presented in table 5-5 in descending order, with guessing game at the top (mean= 6.97) and the traffic report at the bottom (mean score= 3.55). The score ranged from 1 (strongly disliked) to 10 (strongly liked). "Minimum" refers to the lowest score an

activity received from the participants, while “Maximum” refers to the highest score an activity received. Here every activity was strongly liked by some students, except the story-telling activity which got only 9, and every activity was strongly disliked by others, except role-play 1 which got 2.

## B. Analysis and Discussion

Though there is a rank order for all the activities, each activity was both strongly liked and strongly disliked by some students on the scale score ranging from 1 to 10.

Following is the analysis and discussion of each activity in the order of its ranking.

### 1. Guessing game (free speech)

This guessing game (for detail see Appendix D-9 lesson plan) asked each student to come to the front of the classroom and use only English to describe the meanings of three words (which could be a noun or an adjective) for the others to guess. When a word was guessed, the guesser and the describer would get one point respectively. In this way, the describer had to try her best to get the points for herself, and the audience had to be attentive to listen for their own points and for the student on the stage.

Reasons for liking the guessing game (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-2).

*I like this game because it can train our imagination and the ability to appropriately explain a word other people might not know. (C1)*

*I think this activity is quite interesting, whether I was on the stage or in the audience. I like this activity more than any other activity because it's livelier and attracting, and our classmates are more attentive and quiet in class. (C2)*

Reasons for disliking the guessing game

*Because I am timid, I don't like to talk on the stage. Talking on the stage is very stressful for me. (C12)*

*Guessing is the worst of all the activities in this class. Since I am bad even in basic English, I couldn't improvise the answers needed for describing an item or*

*something. This is my greatest worry. Last time I was on the stage, I sweated all over. It was an agony to be on the stage. (C13)*

This was the most popular among all the learning activities in this experiment. However, this was also an activity strongly disliked by many participants, regardless of the language levels. The comments above support this viewpoint. The standard deviation (see table 5-5) also showed that the score range for this activity was much wider than that of other activities. This suggests that this activity should be conducted with caution.

Basically this is an improvised game requiring the use of unprepared language, and is the only activity in which the teacher did not teach a certain set of words, phrases, or functions. The only goal of this activity was for students to speak as much English as possible and get their meaning across. The describer thus could say whatever she liked to get the meaning of the words guessed. For example, when describing “train”, a student said: “It is a very long car” and the correct answer came out immediately from the crowd. However, this is a great challenge for the low-level students and most of them expressed dislike or disgust with this game, as shown above. Yet still some students of low level preferred this game for other reasons. Here is an example from a low-level student.

*I like the guessing game more than any other activities. But I like only to guess in the crowd. I don't like to get on the stage to describe a word because I get scared there. To tell the truth, I hate to speak in public. I have always been like this since I was very young. I feel this game is fun and it could help with my listening comprehension. It is also good to use English to guess a riddle. (C19)*

Though this game was aiming at oral training, listening also played an important role in it. The above student seemed to prefer the listening part of the game, which seemed to have got this shy student involved in the learning environment. Below is another low-level student who also enjoyed this game.

*Though I could hardly say a word on the stage, but my classmates still guessed the right answer when I was on the stage. When I was in the audience and did not*

*know how to say an answer in English, I could ask my classmates, and then I could guess, too. (C24)*

With a little practice, sometimes the listeners in the crowd could figure out the right answers with only two or three key words. This could help with the confidence of describers who could only utter some very basic words. But a high-level student hated it very much:

*I don't like this game because (the grammar used in) describing was very incorrect. You could say whatever you wanted to say as long as others could understand. No one cared about whether the sentences were right or wrong. It was too imprecise. (C45)*

This student was the only high-level student who did not like this guessing game. Ryan (2001) also argues that teachers should provide enough feedback in the communicative classroom. Students often do not receive feedback due to the emphasis on fluency rather than accuracy. Perhaps one way for the teacher to solve her problem is to make the comments and correct the errors at the end of the session. In this way, not only can the students understand their own mistakes, but the progress of the game will not be interrupted. However, in the real classroom, it is difficult for the teacher to supervise the game and record the students' errors simultaneously. To solve this problem, I would suggest that one or two student assistants, such as the class leader, be trained beforehand to host this activity while the teacher could take notes for subsequent comments.

As for the problem that some students spoke softly, there seems to be no way to deal with this problem. There was a microphone in the classroom, and students were free to use it any time they wanted. The shy students were often reminded of the equipment, but they always chose not to use it. Maybe they did not want to be heard by too many people. For these students, just standing in front of the class might be a great challenge, let alone muttering some English words. Therefore I decided to leave it as it was. The soft voice might bother some students who sat in the back of the classroom and refused to come to the front to listen, but the effect of the game remained the same for the describer, regardless of the volume.

Generally speaking, this is a very good activity for oral language practice according to the positive reflections by most participants, especially the intermediate and high-level students. Some students suggested using only the volunteers to describe the words and let the others guess, but it is not the purpose of the activity. Besides, the low-level participants should also be encouraged to train themselves to stand on the stage and practise their oral English. Here is a statement that supports this idea:

*I like this activity because all those who were not good at English or afraid of expressing in English could get a chance to go on the stage. Usually only the high-level students had the opportunity to speak English in this class, and the less capable students could only listen and keep mouths shut. (C26)*

Maybe it would be better for the students to describe three words from a list of 5 words. Or the students could shorten their stay on the stage by describing only one or two words, and the saved time can be given to volunteer describers. After all, the demands for output should be low for the beginning level, and students should not be forced to speak until they feel ready, though they are warmly encouraged to speak (Krashen, 2002). After dealing with a few drawbacks, a modified version should be more appropriate for all the students.

## **2. Role-play<sup>2</sup> (Ordering at McDonald's)**

This is an improvised activity (for detail see Appendix D lesson plan) in which students should first be familiar with the prices and the products in the fast food restaurant, and then practice the real ordering in it.

Reason for liking Role-play 2 (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-3).

*I think ordering at the restaurant is very useful in daily life. Though it's easy, you may not know the words and expressions. (C1)*

*I think the words used in McDonald's are very practical. Maybe we can use them when we go to the US someday in the future. Besides, I felt it quite easy. (C3)*

### Reason for disliking Role-play 2

*I don't like this activity because we needed to order a lot of food, and we needed to count how much money to pay, and the clerk needed to figure out how much was the change. It was a lot of trouble. Besides, the drinks had three options: big, medium, and small, all with different prices. Too complicated. (C33)*

This unit was originally designed for participants to practise some simple numbers; also the prices of the McDonald's food are one of the most familiar and practical situations for young students in Taiwan. The above reflections from the participants also indicated that the majority of students thought this activity easy and very practical for daily life. As a matter of fact, there were very few participants who ranked this activity among the bottom three on the preference list. This suggests that students prefer the topics familiar and useful in their daily lives. Its implications in teaching will be discussed in chapter 6.

Since this is a role-play, there were some shortcomings for this kind of activity, especially in such big classes. The weaknesses and solutions will be discussed in the next section, which is also a role-play activity.

### **3. Role-play1 (Returning a too small T-shirt)**

Reason for liking (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-4).

*I think this activity is very useful in daily life. We could also learn all kinds of colors. We could also enjoy watching our classmates' performance. (C4)*

*I like this activity because there were real concrete clothes for us to choose from. The props were novel and more appealing. They attracted our attention. If some classmates had played picky customers, that would have been more fun. (C33, C46)*

### Reason for disliking

*I don't think this activity interesting. (C36)*

This activity was originally designed for students to review the colors and the functions of purchase and request. Since students were already familiar with most of the colors, they could easily pick up a few more words about colors and pay more attention to the use of the language. This might also be one of the reasons that many participants thought this activity practical and useful. Two of the low-level students in this class, C11 and C23, also expressed the belief that this activity was easy, while all the activities they disliked were too difficult for them. This finding has some implications for language teaching.

The use of actual clothes in the role play could have contributed to the popularity of this activity. With the real things at hand, the performers on the stage seemed more engaged in it, and the audience more involved. Krashen (2002) also pointed out that one of the ways to help make input comprehensible for the beginning level students was to provide context in the form of pictures and realia, and in the use of movement. The realia seemed to work better than the flash cards. But perhaps since this was the first role-play for the students, and students were not very familiar with it, this activity was ranked behind role-play 2.

Basically there were very few participants who disliked role-plays. Most of the students thought this activity practical and useful. As a matter of fact, all the activities were designed with practical content. However, whether an activity was practical or not was also a subjective matter, depending upon how the participants perceived it. Following is an example of a student whose experience contributed to her preference for this activity.

*I used to work part-time at a clothes store and saw all kinds of customers. I'm also very familiar with this kind of scenario. So when we practiced in pairs, I knew many ways to handle it and also used a lot of English in the practice. (C9)*

According to my observation, in the surrounding where this study took place, there were two shortcomings for this role-play which needed to be addressed: this activity was time-consuming and the groups could not concentrate on the performing on the stage. And the two shortcomings resulted from the large number of students in class.

Because this activity was conducted in a big class with 46 students, it was difficult to arrange all the students to come up the stage and practise in front of the class. Besides, the improvisation strategy also played a part in the slow progress of this activity, as was expected. As a way of dealing with it, I asked students to practise in pairs first and then randomly picked several pairs to demonstrate in front of the whole class. Because this was an improvised activity and students were slow in performance, usually only one third to half of the students could perform in front of the whole class. Some students might feel disappointed if they did not perform, and others thought they might as well forget about practising. They did not mind being called upon by the teacher because “it would take only a minute before they could sit down again.” (C4) Besides, after the performing of two or three groups, the viewers tended to lose interest in watching since the contents were similar and most of the participants were not good at acting. Littlejohn (1996) also claims that the result would be almost identical in each case. The task produces a ‘standardised classroom’. This finding has definitely strong implications for teaching and will be further discussed in the next chapter.

When some students were performing on the stage, it was not easy for the rest to concentrate on the performers, especially in the slow-going role-plays. Those who had finished performing had nothing to do except chat. And those who had not performed were busy practicing because they did not know whether they would be the next. Not many people paid attention to the performance going on. This disadvantage of role-play needs to be addressed.

#### **4. Drama 1 (Applying for a job in a black tea shop)**

Reason for liking (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-5).

*I like Drama 1 because the dialogue was short and the words I didn't know were few. (C15)*

*I like it because it was simple, easy to learn and easy to memorize. My English is not good, so I like the activity that is easy but with a little difficulty. That would not be beyond my ability. (C16)*

## Reason for disliking

*I pretty much hate drama, especially the drama that requires acting. (C19)*

*I think that in the drama we should be allowed to say whatever we want. I prefer not to dumbly read from the script, which was very boring. I don't like memorizing the lines, too much trouble. (C31)*

This activity was designed for students to practise what they had learned about introducing personal data. It is believed (Berlinger, 2000; Chauhan, 2004; Maxwell, 2004) that a dramatic plot could better impress the learners and this activity was designed with this concept in mind. There were two similar plots in this activity, one requiring more exaggeration than the other (See Appendix E), for students to choose from. However, it might be a great shock for the shy students at the beginning of the semester. In fact, very few students had the stage experience before this experiment, let alone speaking English on stage. The interviews with the participants also revealed their inexperience in this respect. Even though the students were not shy, this activity was quite unfamiliar to them. Here's a reflection from a student who was not shy:

*I don't like it perhaps because it was the first drama for me. The first time was difficult, but the second was much better. Maybe the subject mattered, too. (C5)*

The insight is that at the beginning of the semester, maybe it is good enough for students to say some English words on the stage. The plot tension of a drama can be increased gradually later on.

Nonetheless, this activity was ranked slightly higher than the second drama. The reason might be that this questionnaire was given at the end of the semester and the stronger plot tension in this activity contributed to the preference for this activity in comparison to the next one, but it was not a strong difference in preference between the two dramas.

## 5. Drama 2 (A snobby friend)

### Reason for liking

*I like Drama 2 because the dialogue was short and the words I didn't know were few. If there were many new words and the dialogue was too long, I wouldn't know how to read them. (C15)*

*I like this activity because I like dramas with a plot. In addition, when we were rehearsing, I found it was very practical and useful in daily life. The content was interesting and we could also use our imagination to add some lines to it. My ability to express in English improved a little bit. (C45)*

### Reason for disliking (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-6).

*Dramas required memorizing some English, and there was a lot of English in the drama. I didn't know how to read and needed to use Chinese phonetic symbols for help. My English is really poor. (C24)*

*Basically the content of this activity would not appear in daily life very often, so I could not relate to it. (C30)*

This activity was designed for students to familiarize themselves with the words about family members. Some students thought this was useful, but some did not; some students thought it was easy, but still some did not think so, as the comments shown above. There might be several new words or phrases students were not very familiar with (See Appendix E), but that was all, and students had one week to memorize them. That meant they need to memorize only ONE new word, or less than a sentence a day for this class! Therefore it should not have been very demanding for the students who had learned English for at least three years.

In addition to the approval for the activity, most of the complaints were related to the memorization strategy. Few students complained about the contents of this drama and the previous one. The acting was the main concern for students who did not like this activity. (For detailed discussion, see 5.1) However, standing in front of the class and speaking English are also a kind of training. Short and easy English might be more acceptable for these students, at least at the beginning stage.

## 6. Interview (Family members)

Reason for liking (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-7).

*Using English to describe classmates' family members and understanding how many people are in their family, their life style, and what their parents do. I feel it's good, and best of all, I didn't have to get on the stage. (C13)*

*It's easy to express (what we need to say) because we know our family very well. (C20)*

Reason for disliking

*It's useless to interview because when I tried to introduce more about my family, I didn't know how to say that in English. For example, how should I say, "my father lost his job" and "my brother is studying at Chung Shan Medical University" in English? In addition, some classmates were not serious. They just copied other people's interview results instead of actually doing the interview. Isn't this activity very corny? (C3, C10)*

*Interviewing is not interesting at all, boring. Everyone's family is very similar, parents, siblings. Repetitively asking the same question is very boring. (C5)*

This is a task-based activity for students to practise talking with others about family members. Since students were already familiar with most of the necessary words, this was not a very difficult task for them. However, there were still some problems which needed to be addressed.

Since students were familiar with some of their classmates, they were asked to interview those whom they did not know well. Some participants followed the teacher's instructions, but some did not. These students felt safe staying in their small group and pretended they did not know each other well. In fact, it was fine for them to stay together and interview each other in the target language. But the truth was that they tended to use their mother tongue to chat.

Besides, as Student C3 mentioned, some students were not serious. With 46 students in one classroom, it was hard to distinguish the serious students from those who were not. The oral report at the end of the session also revealed that some of the participants had not been seriously working at all. What I did was assume that all students were serious and did my best to help them. While the participants were interviewing each other, I also walked around the classroom to supervise their interviews and provide immediate assistance to those who needed help.

The solution to the two problems might be for the teacher to designate the pairs to interview each other and ask them to prepare for an oral report AND also turn in the written interview results in English. In so doing, the teacher may still be unable to control the language they speak, but the students have to write the results of their discussion in English anyway. Though they might still use some native language to discuss the content, they have to use some English for the report. This task could also get all the students engaged. When they are considering what English words to use and how to put the words in proper order, it is also a kind of language learning.

Though I, as their teacher, was as approachable as I could be for students to ask questions through all the sessions, some students would never ask. They would rather ask their peer students or keep the questions to themselves. In fact, in my observation some students tend to be like this in Taiwan's classrooms. Chang (1987) also claims that teachers are highly respected in Chinese culture and are typically regarded as being knowledgeable and authoritative. Out of respect, Chinese students are usually not as ready to argue or to voice opinions in class as Western (including American and Australian) students. It seems that the teachers could do nothing except compliment the students' performance and encourage them to bring forth their questions. Here is what one student had to say when she was interviewed by the researcher:

*If I had questions, I went to cram school. But even in there, if I had questions, I wouldn't ask teachers. Just let it be. I didn't have the guts to get in contact with teachers. I felt teachers were authoritative and not approachable. I was afraid of asking teachers questions. The teachers here (in the college where this study was conducted) were friendlier, but I won't regard teachers as friends. Teachers are*

*teachers, they can dominate you. They can subtract your credits whenever they want to. I feel teachers are like that. I'm also curious why some people have so much to say with teachers. (C33)*

### **7. Drama 3 (Borrowing stationery)**

Reason for liking (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-8).

*I chose "Borrowing stationery" as the number one activity because it was important in our daily life, and I knew more about the words for stationery. I didn't know some of the words, ...but....that's it. (C15)*

*This activity has a lot to do with daily life, so I think it's very useful. Besides, it's short and I don't have to stay long on the stage. (C19)*

Reason for disliking

*I don't like to recite English on the stage because I would forget everything when I was there. (C24)*

*There were only a couple of sentence, but my partner was too afraid on the stage and could hardly say a word. (C10)*

This activity was designed for students to familiarize themselves with stationery items and the function of borrowing and lending, which might happen in a student's life on the daily basis. There was no intriguing plot, but the lines were supposed to be very useful and practical.

Nonetheless, the lack of plot tension might have contributed to this activity's lower popularity than the other two dramas. Some students thought this activity was not fun at all. Here are some more opinions from students:

*I don't like this activity because it is short and meaningless. We just dumbly borrowed this and that. It was boring. (C40)*

*I don't like this activity. It's kind of childish. (C36)*

Dramas should be interesting or with some plot tension to catch students' attention. The length of the play can start with three to five sentences at the beginning and get longer with sessions. For some students, drama is very easy. But for others, simply standing in front of the class can be embarrassing, let alone speaking English and acting. In other words, this kind of activity is necessary, but it is better for it not to last more than three sessions.

## **8. Discussion (Lottery dreams and group member's daily routine)**

Reason for liking

*I think this subject is very easy and interesting. When I heard of this topic, a bunch of dreams came out instantly. Surely in this activity I didn't have to think strenuously, only to come up with nothing. (C5)*

*Though some might think this activity is impractical, I think there is a lot of room for our imagination. It's fun even though it is imaginary. (C44)*

Reason for disliking the discussion (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-9).

*This discussion of lottery winning was fine, but after our discussion (when others were still discussing), we didn't know what to do. I felt the classroom was very noisy at that time. (C2)*

*In a word, I didn't know how to say some of the words I wanted to say. I did discuss seriously. I just couldn't do it. (C4)*

This discussion of lottery dreams was designed for students to practise the "If" sentences in which the subjunctive pattern was needed. However, since some students were unfamiliar with this subject and also lacked imagination, this activity became difficult and ranked low in terms of preference. Krashen (2002) also argues that the topic should link students' life experience. Nonetheless, still some participants felt very comfortable in this discussion.

When students were discussing in their small groups, I kept walking around the classroom for students to ask questions. While some students made the most of the

opportunity by raising questions, others did not. Since there were 46 students in this class, the discussion results could only be reported by the representatives of each group. Some students knew that they did not have to report and this activity provided a good chance for them to fool around. I knew this, too, but the random picking of the spokesperson would not help either. My past experience is: the randomly picked, unprepared students would only slow down the progress of the course, and most of them would not do any better in the next random picking. This condition is somewhat like Ryan's (2001) suggestion that many students would misinterpret the friend-coach relationship in the communicative/improvisational methodology as tacit approval to pursue undesirable behavior. Since failing the course is no threat for these students and is neither a favorite means for me, the way each group chooses its own spokesperson seems a reasonable solution.

Moreover, like the interview activity, discussion in their mother tongue was common and hard to prohibit. When the teacher went to one group, this very group would become very quiet while the other groups would continue using their native language. It was somewhat like a hide-and-seek game and students seemed to enjoy it very much. Ur (1999) suggest that each group choose a monitor to help with this problem, assuming this would have some monitoring effect. Lim (2003) suggests that teachers may make it a rule not to speak the native language in classroom or at school. However, my past experience found that the adoption of peer monitor did not work very well. But on the other hand, the use of all English in discussion is not necessarily beneficial for these students and the use of mixed languages is not necessarily compromising for their learning. Krashen (2002) also points out that when there is a word difficult to express in the target language but easy in the native language, the native language might be a better choice.

My insight is: now that I cannot forbid it, why not accept it. Besides, they have to use some English to talk in order to come up with the final English version for the report. In this case they will still learn something about English.

This activity seems to be suitable only for those who are highly motivated and are at the high level. The results also correspond with Ur's (1996) suggestion that it is probably advisable to base most oral fluency activities on task-based instead of on

topic (discussion)-based activities. Lim (2003) suggests that while adopting the discussion activities, teachers should create a safe learning environment where students can practise their English, expand the discussion groups gradually from small to large ones, and choose topics close to students' immediate interest.

## **9. Storytelling (Monica's daily routine)**

Reason for liking story telling:

*I think Monica's daily routine is very useful in daily life. Though it's easy, you may not know the words and expressions. (C1)*

Reason for disliking story telling: (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-10).

*I felt this activity was quite boring, just imitating the meaning of a statement. Sometimes the sentence was too long and we would skip some words or a small chunk of words. (C2)*

*This is just repeating teacher's words. If I forgot what to say, I just changed it a little. It's still similar. I don't think it's fun at all. (C5)*

This activity was originally designed as guided storytelling. I tried to use a fairy tale, but was afraid that it would be long and impractical for these students. Therefore I used "Monica's daily routine", which described an ordinary student's daily life and was supposed to be very useful. (See Appendix D: Lesson Plan)

To modify the length of the story for students to handle in one turn, Monica's routine was divided into three parts, with three to five sentences in each part. Students could look at the key words on the blackboard and describe Monica's routine. However, some students thought it was too easy (C5) and did not like it; some students thought it was too difficult and did not like it, either.

In addition to the difficulty of the activity, there were two more reasons for students to dislike it. Firstly, students were supposed to catch the general meaning of Monica's routine and restate in their own words. But some of the students tried to mimic what the teacher said, word by word, and made this activity repetitive and difficult.

Secondly, the communicative part of this activity was delayed to the next session. Basically this was a prelude practice to a group discussion, in which students described their own daily routine and then the group got on the stage for other students to ask questions. However, the Q&A part of the activity was delayed to the next session due to the large number of students and therefore the final learning effects were not as desirable as expected. Though the askers and the responders in Q&A would get credits for the communication as long as they could get meaning across, students in the audience the stage tended to avoid asking questions in order not to embarrass their peers on the stage. The students on the stage were also afraid of being asked.

*I don't like the Q&A activity because when we discussed, we might have no conclusion. In case we were on the stage and there came a question which was not discussed in our group, I wouldn't know how to answer. (C33)*

To solve these problems, perhaps the teacher should first spend longer time to familiarize the students with the words or phrases to be used in the activity (Cross, 1999). As for the repetition problem, it should not bother the learners if the teacher does not demand too many students to demonstrate. It might also help if the students are clearly told not to mimic the teacher word by word. Finally, the Q&A part could be eliminated because both the askers and the responders feel reluctant to proceed under this situation. The culture and the students' language levels might account for part of the reasons (Ur, 1996). Perhaps a written report is good enough for the purpose of this activity.

## **10. Report (Traffic)**

Reason for liking traffic report

*I like this activity because TV reporter had always been one of my favorite jobs. (C36)*

*It was novel to me to be an anchorperson. (C3)*

Reason for disliking traffic report (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-11).

*I don't like the job of TV reporter because firstly I won't do this job in the future. I don't need to learn about it. Secondly, a TV reporter must be eloquent, and can react well to contingencies. Thirdly, it requires very good English abilities, including listening, speaking, reading and writing. I'm all right with only one or two language skills, so I'll feel a lot of pressure. I won't do a good job in TV report. (C1)*

*I don't like to speak a lot of English on the stage. I don't know why, but I don't like it anyway. (C19)*

This activity was designed for students to speak in monologue on the stage and familiarize themselves with some traffic words, whose Chinese version are often heard in our daily lives but the English words are strange to most of the participants. The result was: this is the least popular activity with the students. Three reasons might account for the unpopularity: impracticality, lack of interest, and lack of the sense of security.

Though the words might not be unusual in people's daily life, they were rarely talked about in a student's daily life. Instead, they were often heard on television or the radio. Many students were unfamiliar with the words, and the sentences might be longer than those in other activities. For such an activity, the content should have been less and easier, at least for the students in this study.

Lack of interest also played a part in the unpopularity of this activity. Basically this is about describing a condition. Though the intermediate- and high-level students could handle the words and phrases, they did not think they were at all enjoyable. Maybe some other more interesting topics, such as cooking, aerobics, or computer operation could be considered as alternatives.

Since this activity required students to stand in front of the class one at a time, they might have felt lonely and lack of the sense of security. All the other activities

involved two or more students to either act or discuss some subjects together, but in this activity, they did everything alone. This might be difficult, particularly for the low-level students. But this was the purpose of the activity design, trying to train the participants to get familiar with all kinds of speaking situations. Perhaps this activity should be introduced to the students in the second semester when they have made some progress in their speaking ability.

In short, the most popular activity must be interesting, practical and useful, and a little difficult so that students may think they can learn something within their reach.

(Krashen, 1982)

### 5.2.2 The Preferential Differences for Learning Activities among Participants of Different Language Levels

This section aims to test the research hypothesis 7: low-level participants will show significant preference for the memorization strategy over the improvisation strategy, while the high-level students will show a preference for improvisation over memorization. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between activity preference and language levels.

#### A. Results

Table 5-6 Summary of activity preference among participants of different levels

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Drama1	Between Groups	18.438	2	9.219	1.151	.327
Drama2	Between Groups	8.009	2	4.004	.489	.617
Drama3	Between Groups	40.063	2	20.031	3.977	.027
Role-play 1	Between Groups	8.571	2	4.286	.947	.397
Interview	Between Groups	41.268	2	20.634	2.779	.075
Role-play 2	Between Groups	17.750	2	8.875	2.061	.142
Storytelling	Between Groups	20.071	2	10.036	2.306	.114
Discussion	Between Groups	2.948	2	1.474	.180	.836
Guessing	Between Groups	101.446	2	50.723	5.400	.009
Report	Between Groups	34.443	2	17.221	2.217	.123

Table 5-6 shows that different language levels showed significant differences in their preference for Drama 3 ( $p=0.027$ ) and Guessing game ( $p=0.009$ ). However, the two activities were strongly preferred by two different level groups. The other activities posed no significant differences among participants of difference levels.

The post hoc (Table 5-7) shows that Drama 3 was significantly preferred by Level 3 (low-level students) to the high-level students and the preference for it decreased among higher level students. Meanwhile, the Guessing game was significantly preferred by Level 1 (the high-level student) and the preference for it decreased among lower level students.

Table 5-7 Post Hoc of Activity Preference among Participants of Different Levels  
Multiple Comparisons: Scheffe

			Mean	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence	
			Difference			Interval	
			(I-J)				
Dependent(I)	LEVEL(J)	LEVEL				Lower	Upper
Variable						Bound	Bound
DRAMA3	1.00	2.00	-1.21	.90	.416	-3.52	1.09
		3.00	-2.31	.82	.028	-4.41	-.22
	2.00	1.00	1.21	.90	.416	-1.09	3.52
		3.00	-1.10	.93	.503	-3.47	1.27
	3.00	1.00	2.31	.82	.028	.22	4.41
		2.00	1.10	.93	.503	-1.27	3.47
GUESSIN	1.00	2.00	1.95	1.24	.300	-1.20	5.10
		3.00	3.68	1.12	.009	.82	6.54
	2.00	1.00	-1.95	1.24	.300	-5.10	1.20
		3.00	1.73	1.27	.404	-1.51	4.96
	3.00	1.00	-3.68	1.12	.009	-6.54	-.82
		2.00	-1.73	1.27	.404	-4.96	1.51

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

## B. Analysis and Discussion

Of all the ten activities, only two showed significant preferential differences among participants: Drama 3 and Guessing game, favored by the low-level students and the high-level students respectively.

The guessing game is a totally improvised game, which requires adequate speaking ability to properly get the meaning across. Though some low-level students also preferred it, it was predominantly a game for the higher-level students. The statistics above also suggest that the higher level the participants were at, the more they enjoyed it. In fact, nearly all the students who disliked this activity were low-level students. The only high-level student who disliked it (C45) was in fact very active and totally involved in this game. Her remarks (below) seemed to indicate that she thought she did not learn much from it. She failed to perceive the learning in other aspects, such as imagination and teamwork, which many others could perceive (C 1, C30, see 5.2.1).

*I don't like this game because (the grammar used in) describing was very incorrect. You could say whatever you wanted to say as long as others could understand. No one cared about whether the sentences were right or wrong. It was too imprecise. (C45)*

When a participant was describing a word on the stage, there were often many students in the class trying to guess the same answer. I tried to get everyone involved and therefore often skipped the ones who had already guessed. This might have disappointed some high-level students who could actually guess every word. Otherwise the high-level students might have shown even higher satisfaction, and the lower-level ones even lower satisfaction.

The marks might have also played a part in this activity. Since the correct guessing meant a point for both the describer and the guesser, students with better ability to describe and to comprehend could earn better grades. However, this rule was not favorable to the low-level students.

*This activity was good only for the high-level classmates because they could get good marks. For the lower-level students, it was helpless. (C23)*

The marks were important for most of the students in this study. Students, like C23, might think that the grading should be based on the effort they made instead of their current language level. To solve this problem, perhaps the reinforcement could be replaced by some small rewards. When grading for the whole semester, the teacher should take into account both students' performance and their commitment to the activities such as attendance contribution, and attentiveness.

On the other hand, the low-level students liked Drama 3 significantly more than the high-level students did. This result was similar to the trend of the whole-class preference for the memorization strategy (See 5.1.2). And Drama 3 was at the extreme end of the memorization activities: rote learning. Despite its usefulness and practicality, there was little plot and tension to the scenario.

*I don't like this activity because it is short and meaningless. We just dumbly borrowed this and that. It was boring. (C40)*

There was not a single high-level participant who ranked this activity among the top three. On the other hand, some of the low-level students seemed to choose this activity because it was not so demanding as the other activities. My opinion is that this activity was as useful and practical as any other activities in this study. The latter part of the following comment might reveal some of the truth.

*This activity has a lot to do with daily life, so I think it's very useful. Besides, it's short and I don't have to stay long on the stage. (C19)*

#### Summary of this section

From the analyses and discussion of this section, it can be concluded that the most popular activities, the guessing game and role-plays, share some characteristics: they are both two-way activities, somewhat challenging, and intriguing to most participants. Pica et al. (1989) also argue that in order to generate more meaningful negotiation,

language learning should be a two-way rather than a one-way information flow. This study has shown that two-way improvisation activities are also preferred by participants. The slightly challenging and intriguing activities are in line with Krashen's (1982) suggestion that acquisition takes place when the input is only one step beyond the learner's present ability.

On the other hand, the least popular activities, such as lottery winning, storytelling and traffic report, also have something in common: they are either one-way or discussions. This finding also supports some researchers' (Ur, 1996; Pica et al, 1989; Cheng, 2005) assertions that discussions or speeches are anxiety provoking and are more difficult for language learners. Oya, Manalo and Greenwood (2004) also claim that students who are experiencing higher levels of anxiety make more errors in their spoken use of clauses.

Besides, the most popular and the least popular activities are all improvised activities. These findings should be noteworthy for ESL teachers. Beare (2005) suggests that the teacher can begin slowly by providing students with short role plays using cue cards. Once students become comfortable with target structures and representing differing points of view, classes can move onto more elaborated exercises such as debates and group discussion activities. In other words, role plays and discussions can be integrated into the same unit to acquaint students step by step with the language use.

This study also found that the low-level participants significantly preferred the easy drama (memorization) and the high-level students significantly preferred the guessing game (improvisation). There is no significant difference in participants' preference for other activities. A further investigation into the reasons for students' preference for the teaching activities might help ESL teachers refine the syllabus.

### **5.3 Reasons of the Preferences**

Participants in this study had many reasons in favor of, or against, an activity. Although some of the reasons had to do with the learning strategies, most of the

reasons were related to the content and the learning circumstances. This section will categorize and discuss the reasons why the participants liked/disliked the activities.

The reasons for preferred/less preferred activities can be categorized into the following factors: practicality, interest, challenge, strategy, topic, and non-activity factors. However, these factors were not mutually exclusive. They were sometimes intertwined, with a couple of them existing simultaneously in an activity or with one factor leading to another. For example, an activity could be practical and interesting at the same time because it is about daily life and the content is intriguing. Sometimes it was hard to categorize a comment. For example, when a student said: “It was very repetitive,” (C5, C37) it could mean uninteresting or not challenging at all.

### 1. Practicality

Many students preferred the practical and useful activities which could be closely associated to daily life, and they would say things like: “It’s practical/impractical”, “It can improve our ability”, or “It doesn’t help with our grammar”. Being practical was also one of the main principles of the course design. However, students thought some activities were more practical than others. Here are some examples:

*(I like the McDonald activity because) it can train our conversation ability and help us speak English more fluently. It is useful in daily life if we get a chance to live in America.....But, honestly, I really don't like the Lottery one. Errr.. it's a little impractical. Who knows whether or not we would have this opportunity to win the lottery? Just because I had never thought about it, this activity seemed very boring. I really didn't know what to do with the 50 million NT dollars. When we were in discussion, I could only say that I would give all the money to my parents and family. When we reported to the class, I could say only one sentence and that was all. (C9)*

Though the topic was only an inducement to trigger more use of the target language and expressing one’s wishes was very common in daily life, it required more than the speaking ability to achieve the desired goal. And the sum of money in this activity was well beyond students’ experience. Therefore it was considered impractical by, and unpopular with, some of the students.

Besides, there were also individual differences among the participants about the practicality of the activities. In other words, an activity might be practical to one student but impractical to someone else. (For more similar quotes from students, see Appendix G-12).

*Some of the dramas are interesting, but they seem to be useless (in daily life). I won't speak English with friends when borrowing something. (C3)*

*I like this activity (Drama 2) because I like dramas with a plot. In addition, when we were rehearsing, I found it was very practical and useful in daily life. The content was interesting and we could also use our imagination to add some lines to it. My ability to express in English improved a little bit.(C45)*

## 2. Interest

Interest is another important factor in the preferred activities. Students would use the words such as “interesting/boring”, “repetitive/novel”, or “time-wasting/interactive” to express their preference. According to participants’ response in the questionnaire, interest seemed to be concentrated more on the dramas because the plots could be designed in advance by the researcher. However, many students also noted that some of the improvising activities, such as the guessing game and role-plays, were very interesting.

*It was an entertainment to watch my classmates on the stage role-playing, and I could tease them if they didn't do a good job. Just kidding. (C4)*

*It (Guessing game) was lots of fun. In addition, we could interact with our classmates and also guess what they were talking about. (C4)*

On the other hand, lack of interest was also a reason for students disliking an activity (Lim, 2003). Storytelling and interview activities, among others, were thought of as boring by some participants.

*I felt this activity (storytelling) was quite boring, just imitating the meaning of a statement. Sometimes the sentence was too long and we would skip some words or a small chunk of words. (C2)*

*Interviewing is not interesting at all, boring. Everyone's family is very similar, parents, siblings. Repetitively asking the same question is very boring. (C5)*

### 3. Challenge

The activities with a little challenge seemed to be preferred by many students. Little difficulty made the learning meaningless, and too much difficulty would deprive the learners of their sense of achievement. This finding also responded with Krashen's (1982) "i+1" input hypothesis, which postulated that the ideal input was a little beyond the learner's capability.

*I like those activities (Drama 1, Role-play 1, and Role-play 2) because they were easier to learn, easier to memorize. My English is not good, so I like those with only a little difficulty. In that case, they won't be too difficult to learn. (C16)*

However, the challenge was a flexible term, depending on how the participants perceived it. An activity with a little challenge for the intermediate-level students might be too difficult for the low-level ones, but too easy for high-level ones. Therefore it is not easy for one activity to cater for all the participants of various English levels. Take Drama 1 for example, many students thought it was easy, while some thought it was difficult.

*I like it because it was simple, easy to learn and easy to memorize. My English is not good, so I like the activity that is easy but with a little difficulty. That would not be beyond my ability. (C16)*

*(I don't like this activity) because drama requires reciting, and reciting a lot. I don't know how to read and I need Chinese phonetic symbols to help (with pronunciation). My English is really bad. (C24)*

The challenge here referred to was not only the speaking abilities but also the related abilities, such as acting skills. Some students could handle with ease the language used in some activities, but the other requirements, such as acting or even just standing in front of the class, posed some challenges for them and could also give them a sense of achievement in case they could handle them. In this case, they would think it was easy but a little challenging. Therefore in this category were words like “easy/difficult to memorize or play,” “too many/few words,” “simple/big trouble,” “I hate/love to speak on the stage,” “I know too few words/I don’t know how to say the English words,” “introspective”, and so on.

#### 4. Strategy

The strategies adopted in this study, memorization and improvisation, played an important part in the participants’ preferences. As mentioned in Section 5.1, some students preferred the memorization strategy because they had time to prepare in advance, and the scripts gave them a sense of security. In the improvisation activities, however, the handouts were often given after class so as to avoid students’ memorizing the lines beforehand. A student expressed the importance of the handout as follows:

*I hope Teacher can give us the handouts one week before they are really used in the class, or at least right before the class begins. Otherwise I would have no idea at all what Teacher is talking about. (C25)*

*I like scripted dramas because I can see the words. Many English words sound similar and I can’t remember which is which. Like the word “blond”, I heard it and forget it. No impression at all. (C10)*

Besides, some students were also interested in the acting activity and the intriguing plots in the dramas in which they could display their special talents other than the target language.

*Dramas can help us improve not only our English but also acting skills. It is a remarkable experience in student life. I love performance (C34, C8)*

On the other hand, the strengths of the memorization strategy for some students were exactly the weaknesses for other students. These students preferred the improvisation strategy because they did not have to memorize the scripts in advance, and they felt free to express their ideas in the improvisation activities. Some of the improvisation students felt that the acting in the dramas was embarrassing and did not help with their speaking ability.

The comments related to the strategies are “I’m afraid of making mistakes,” “I can freely express my opinions” “I had an opportunity to think,” “It’s noisy in the classroom,” “no need to memorize/have time to memorize” “It’s rote-learning,” “I like/don’t like acting,” and so on.

Interestingly, free expression was not the only favored comment on the improvisation strategy. It was also applied to the memorization strategy. Since students were encouraged to change or add lines in the drama scripts, some students found it a pleasure to revise the scripts as they wished, and this also gave them a feeling of creativity. Here is a comment from a student.

*(I like the dramas) because they were interesting, and we could use our imagination to add some lines. I improved my speaking ability a little further.*  
(C45)

This study showed there were four reasons for students to prefer the memorization strategy: adequate time to prepare, a sense of security, what appeared to be their visual learning style, and preference for acting. This finding supports part of Osburne’s (1993) suggestions that memorization can give students a sense of success and accomplishment, aesthetic pleasure, and a sense of security and familiarity. Tiangco (2005) also points out that Taiwan students tend to have a preference for a visual learning style. Though only one student mentioned this learning style, it might be because many of the young participants did not understand their own learning style yet.

The reasons for preferring the improvisation strategy were: no need to memorize, no need to act (perhaps they took it as a task instead of a drama), free expression. Part of

this finding contradicts Osburne's (1993) argument that students familiar with the memorization strategy might enjoy it. This study also partially supports Gaudart's (1990) findings: activities that do not emphasize performance were found more universally applicable than those that do.

This study has shown that the improvisation strategy demonstrated significantly better results on oral proficiency than the memorization strategy did. In terms of preference, the combination of strategies seems to be a favorable choice for a class of diversified interests and learning styles.

## 5. Topic

During the experimental period of this study, the researcher found that some students preferred a certain learning activity not because of the activity itself, but the topic that was selected to go with it. For instance, a student might like the role-play activity which talked about a job interview, but she might not like the same kind of activity if it was about gay friends. Students at this age were very sensitive to certain topics, though there was no hint of discrimination at all in the script. (See Appendix D)

*In the English script today, though her brother was gay, the gay people are also human beings. Therefore I don't think we should look down on them. The gay people should be treated equally as everyone else. (I 39)*

In addition, the same topic might be liked or disliked at the same time by different participants. Interviews about the family members were good examples. Some students liked to introduce to others their own family members of whom they were proud, while others were not interested and/or refused to reveal their own family.

*Perhaps my family members are very close and get along very well, so I love to share with others about my family. (C36)*

*I don't think it (interviewing family members) fun at all. In so doing we'd know the secrets in other people's homes. (C22)*

*I like the topic about winning the lottery because I have many dreams. I want to buy many things and save a lot of money. I want to live in Japan and play around. I will surely carry out this dream. When I heard this lottery topic, a lot of ideas came to mind at once. I didn't have to take great pains to figure out what to do with the money. (C5)*

*Frankly speaking, I really don't like the lottery one. I felt it was impractical because who knows if we'll have the opportunity to win the lottery. Since I've never thought about this question, I really didn't know what to do with the money. When we were discussing this subject, I could hardly think of any way to deal with the money but give it to my parents. It was boring. (C9)*

## 6. Non-activity Factors

Some of the reasons for the preferred activities were not related to the activities themselves. Instead, they were related to the props, their peers, or personal reasons.

*I like this activity (role-play 1) because there were real concrete clothes for us to choose from. The props were novel and more appealing. They attracted our attention. If some classmates had played picky customers, that would have been more fun. (C33)*

*(In the guessing game) Some people spoke too softly. We could hardly hear the voice even if we got to the front. (C33)*

*Though this activity (guessing game) was good, some people stayed too long on the stage (without saying anything). In this case, we lost our interest in it. (C41)*

*There were only a couple of sentences, but my partner was too afraid on the stage and could hardly say a word. (C10)*

*(In the interview activity) some classmates were not serious. They just copied other people's interview results instead of actually doing the interview. Isn't this activity very corny? (C3, C10)*

*(I don't like story-telling because) I was absent that day. I don't know much about the content. I guess it must be difficult. (C17)*

*It was easy to get the correct answer if you listened carefully and made some associations (in the guessing game). Besides, we got better grades if we made the right guessing. For the grades, I ranked this activity number 2. (C39)*

Though the reasons for preference were categorized into the five headings, each student's interests were not confined to only one of them. Some students preferred an activity with two or more features.

*Anyway, I think the point is that the activities must be interesting, and the topic must be useful in daily life, and we could express the language freely. (C5)*

It is not plausible to try to use an activity to meet all the students' needs in one class in terms of these factors. But these factors are good indicators for the teacher to design the course.

## **5.4 Preference and Related Personal Factors**

In addition to the preference factors for the activities, one of the main purposes of the study is to further investigate the reasons that shaped students' preferences in the first place. Learners might interpret tasks and other classroom activities from perspectives different from the teachers' (Breen, 1989; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Shank & Terrill, 1995; Toth, 2004). Careful examination on the interviews with the participants has shown that these reasons might be relevant to three individual factors: personality, ability, and past experience. Sometimes one of the factors could explain all of a participant's preferential choices. It is more often, however, that two or more factors interacted to bring about a choice. In other words, there was usually some overlapping, consciously or subconsciously, among the factors contributing to the individual's choices.

### **1. Personality and Ability**

Personality was a major factor shaping a student's preferential decision (Shank & Terrill, 1995; Batista, 2005). A person's personality might have many facets, which in turn resulted in her various preferences for the activities. Following are two students whose personality affected their preferences:

*I hate dramas. Maybe it is because I'm an introspective person, I was super nervous each time I was on the stage, and I could hardly breathe. Dramas are a big shock for me. Sometimes I almost pissed in my pants. It was very embarrassing! (C13)*

*As for the dramas, all we need to do is just memorize the scripts and take it easy on the stage. After the memorizing practice, I don't have to think about anything else. I think it's better for me. Though I don't like to memorize the lines, either, I would do it. ... I don't like this activity (Role-play2) because we needed to order a lot of food, and we needed to count how much money to pay, and the clerk needed to figure out how much was the change. It was a lot of trouble. Besides, the drinks had three options: big, medium, and small, all with different prices. Too complicated. (C33)*

Student C33 showed a consistent opinion in different activities. In fact, the dramas demanded the students imagine and act out the facial expressions and movements of the characters, which were also complicated and the process was not easy, especially for the introspective students. But some of them just ignored the acting part and did the pure memorization. In other words, they changed the dramas into rote-learning, perhaps this is a good way for them to handle their task and avoid making mistakes in public. However, this is not the original design purpose for the memorization activity. This finding also supports the study by Wright (1987) that mismatches could arise between teachers' aims and learner's interpretations.

If the drama performer knows only how to utter the lines, ignoring the situations on stage and the corresponding intonation and movement, it would be hard for students to apply the words to similar situation in real lives. Unfortunately, though the low-level students significantly preferred the memorization activities to improvisation ones (See 5.1.2), most of them seemed to prefer the safety of rote learning. This

mentality could also be seen in their performance on the stage. For instance, when they said: “Here you are,” they did not have the gesture of giving something to others. Sometimes when the teacher asked them the meaning of the phrase, most of them shook their heads, despite the fact that every word and phrase was explicitly taught one week ago. Two drama-loving participants said:

*I never used the words in my real life, though they were funny. (C34)*

*Honestly speaking, after class we will return to Teacher (forget) most of the stuff we had memorized. (C 37)*

All in all, dramas (memorization) were not exclusively preferred by the outgoing participants. Many introspective participants who were afraid of making mistakes in public would choose dramas. In fact, many outgoing students do not like dramas at all for fear of memorizing.

*I'm an extrovert. I think if I keep silent for a long time, it would kill me. ... I don't like dramas because I don't like to memorize the lines and I don't like to act as other people. I might like to be a star, but I would just take it as a career. I feel it (describing: traffic report) is great. I can imagine the eye-catching anchorwoman on TV. I'm a Leo and like to be admired by others. Everyone looks at you, the focus of attention. Though I need to speak English, that's ok. I can practice. I like the guessing game because I can test how many words I know. It's fun and I can also compete with others. (C32)*

This study has found that personality goes intimately with ability in terms of preference. Oya, Manalo, and Greenwood (2004) also claim that those who are more extraverted tend to produce better global impressions during their oral performance. The student above preferred some of the activities which most other students tried to avoid, partly because of her personality, partly because of her ability. Since her English level was high, she would like the challenge of more difficult activities. Being afraid of making mistakes in public is one of the characteristics of the introspective. Some introspective students with high speaking ability preferred the dramas, but their low-level counterparts often hated dramas. Here are two such examples.

*I like dramas. I think it (script) is very easy to memorize, just some words. Basically, I don't think it's memorization. You just need to say what you can think of. Just some basic words. I felt there was a lot of interaction on and under the stage. Watching other people performing on the stage, and the next would be me. How nervous! How excited! It's really fun to run around (on the stage) and act as you wish. (C10)*

This above student belonged to the high-level, introspective group, and her personality could be shown from her own words in the interview.

*I dare not say the words I'm not sure of. If I'm not sure of winning, why fight? Maybe I don't have the sense of security. If I lose the fight, I lose face. I'm very face-conscious. ....I'm afraid that other people might laugh at my pronunciation. But on the stage, maybe it's the courage mustered at the moment. (C10)*

Here is an introspective, low-level student who hated dramas because of her personality.

*I don't like to stand on the stage because I'm timid. Since I was little, I have always been like this, even when I was one-on-one with a teacher. I only like the guessing game when I can guess in the crowd. (C19)*

Ability matters a lot in a student's preferences (Kang, 1997; Ur, 1996). It seemed that when a student's language ability was high enough for all the activities in this study, she would choose the relatively more difficult ones, without being afraid of making mistakes. One reason for this might be that if she makes a mistake, she is confident enough she is still better than the others. A Chinese proverb also says: "The more able, the braver." Here is an example from a high-level student.

*I think that speaking English naturally is very easy. English is not like Chinese. Anyway, I think we can just say what we want, piecing the words together. I think it's good enough to speak out. ...I like the traffic report activity because I can just*

*point here and there. If I am wrong, let it be. It would be very funny for everyone.*  
(C5)

## 2. Past Experience

Some of the participants' preferences can be traced back to their past experiences (Wong, 2001; Hsia & Hattersley, 2003). One high-level student, who had been learning English in a private language school for ten years starting when she was four or five years old, preferred improvised activities to memorized ones because of unfavorable experiences before:

*I don't like memorization because I had some English contests before which required reciting. If I didn't do well, my mother scolded me. That's why I don't like to memorize English. Besides, we were given a short story in every session and were asked to recite it the next session. If I didn't do well, I got scolded again.*  
(C31)

*I like English pretty much, but I think that grammar is a lot of trouble. Maybe it was because of the teacher's attitude (in junior high). I hate it.* (C32)

Parents' or teachers' attitude might have influenced the children's learning interest. National Center for Family Literacy (2004) also indicates that experiences with trauma could be a factor influencing oral performance. This above student's mother might have been a little too harsh on the student's performance, but another student, who also went to a private language school during primary school period, didn't show any particularly unfavorable opinion toward the activities in this study and is doing pretty well in all aspects in English. Her parents seemed to have a more permissive attitude toward the child. This attitude could be revealed from the student's statement.

*For example, sometimes when I really want to buy something, my daddy would say: "No need to hurry. You should go take a look first, think it over, and then buy it." No way, I want it now. Sometimes the same thing happens to my mom too when I want my mom to cut my hair. She would say: "What time is it now? Cutting your hair?" See, sometimes I tend to be impatient.* (C5)

The following student admitted that she was weak in grammar, though her speaking ability was high in the class. She attributed her oral proficiency to her experience in a language school:

*I went to 'Sesame Street' when I was in kindergarten (about 5 years old). Maybe that helped my speaking ability because they stressed more on listening and speaking, but that didn't help with my junior high English, which stressed on grammar a lot. Oral language doesn't need grammar. You just piece words together and it's ok. (C31)*

This study found that learning English early seems to help some students with their speaking ability a lot, but does not necessarily help with other aspects of the English language, such as in the example above. Fan (2005) also suggests similarly, though others have different opinions (eg. Gunter, 1996). Another student described her bad experience on her English pronunciation, which in turn affected her preference for some of the activities.

*I started to learn 'Natural Pronunciation' since I was a fourth grader. I think it was lousy and made me lose interest in English. I don't know whether it was because I had no motivation or what, but I didn't learn very well then, and the influence continued. 'Natural Pronunciation' is different from KK phonetic symbols. In junior high, the teacher taught KK symbols, and I mixed them together and got confused. If you had trouble with the pronunciation, it'll be very difficult to memorize the words. I don't like the guessing game because I know very few words. My English is very bad. I'm illiterate. I don't know many words. What could I say on the stage?! (C34)*

## **5.5 Preference and Performance**

### **5.5.1 Result**

In this section, the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to see the effect of different perceptions for the strategies (improvisation and memorization) on participants' oral improvement rate. The dependent variable was the posttest score; the pretest speaking test score was used as the covariate variable; and all participants

of different preference for strategies in the combination group were accordingly divided into two groups, which were used as the fixed factor.

Table 5-8 Covariate of preference and performance (whole group)

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects: Dependent Variable: SUMPOST

Source	Type III	df	Mean	F	Sig.
	Sum of Squares		Square		
Corrected Model	378.629(a)	2	189.315	14.152	.000
Intercept	449.562	1	449.562	33.606	.000
SUMPRE	293.502	1	293.502	21.940	.000
GROUP	41.872	1	41.872	3.130	.085
Error	494.971	37	13.378		
Total	8326.500	40			
Corrected Total	873.600	39			

a R Squared = .433 (Adjusted R Squared = .403)

The result in table 5-8 revealed that when the pretest score (sumpre) was excluded, the participants of different preferences for the learning strategies in the combination group showed no significant difference in terms of the rate of their oral improvement ( $F = 3.130$ ,  $\text{sig.} = 0.085$ ). This finding does not support research hypothesis 8: there would be no significant relationship between the preferences for particular strategies and the rate of oral improvement.

### 5.5.2 Analysis and Discussion

The results show that the participants' preference for a particular strategy had no relation to their oral performance. One of the reasons might have been that students, when filling out the preference questionnaire, considered the individual activities in each strategy instead of the broadly categorized strategies. This made the strategy preference inconspicuous because students took also into account the interest, practicality, difficulty, and topic, as mentioned in 5.3.

Besides, the overall statistical results might not be able to distinguish the strongly preferential participants from the neutral or slightly preferential ones when nearly all the participants were involved. In other words, perhaps only the participants with strong preferences for one strategy or the other might demonstrate difference in the rate of oral improvement. Therefore I selected, by examining the preference questionnaire and the interviews, 20 observably strongly preferential participants (ten for each strategy) to see whether their particular strategy made any difference on their performance. The result shown in table 5-9 still suggested that participants of strong preference for either of the strategies showed no significant difference in terms of the rate of oral improvement.

Table 5-9 Covariate of preference and performance (selected group)  
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects: Dependent Variable: SUMPOST

Source	Type III		Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Sum of Squares	df			
Corrected Model	248.339(b)	2	124.169	7.984	.004
Intercept	181.763	1	181.763	11.687	.003
SUMPRE	222.107	1	222.107	14.281	.001
PREFCODE	17.655	1	17.655	1.135	.302
Error	264.399	17	15.553		
Total	4280.250	20			
Corrected Total	512.737	19			

a. Computed using alpha = .05

Nonetheless, the statistics showed that more participants (25 out of 40) in the combination group preferred the memorization strategy to the improvisation strategy. Though the memorization group made relatively little progress in their oral improvement and the strategy was the least satisfactory among the three approaches in this study, there were still some students who preferred this strategy and this fact should be taken into account by ESL teachers.

## Summary

This chapter has revealed that, in the combination group, participants liked the memorization strategy more than the improvisation one, but the difference was not significant. However, the low-level students showed significant preference for the memorization strategy, while intermediate- and high-level students showed no significant preference between the two strategies. This finding supports some researchers' claim that advanced students relied less on the mechanical process (Kang, 1997). This study has also found that there was no relation between preference and oral improvement rate, probably because the strategy was not the only consideration when students evaluated the learning activities. Practicality, interest, challenge, and topic were also their main concerns.

The most popular and the least popular activities both belonged to the improvised strategy. The most popular activities were guessing games and role plays, which from participants' perspective shared something in common: practical, a little challenging, and two-way communication. The least popular activities were storytelling, speech, and discussion, which also had something in common: monologue, being difficult, and anxiety provoking. However, participants' perceptions also reflected their own personalities, oral proficiency, or past experiences.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusions and Implications**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of two teaching strategies, memorization and improvisation, on ESL students' oral proficiency and how students perceived the strategies and the activities used in the classroom. Participants were 16-year-old nursing students in a Taiwan medical college. They had learned English for at least three and a half years before joining the study, but most of their previous learning was focused on reading and writing. They were divided into three groups, one experiencing a memorization strategy, one an improvisation strategy, and the third a strategy combining memorization and improvisation. The semi-experimental study lasted for thirteen sessions, two hours a session.

Data were collected from their oral pre-test and post-test, perception questionnaire, perception interview, college-wide satisfaction survey and in-class observation. Data were analysed in both quantitative and qualitative ways.

This chapter is dedicated to the research conclusions, their implications, research limitations, and suggested future research.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

In this section, conclusions about the effects of strategies on oral performance, participants' perceptions, and the effects of preference on oral performance will be discussed.

#### **6.1.1 Effects of the Strategies on Oral Performance**

1. All three learning strategies, the improvisation, the memorization, and the combination of these two, made a statistically significant difference to participants' oral performance. Further investigation also showed that all the language aspects, which included fluency, accuracy, complexity, and general performance, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement except accuracy in the combination group. The one exception was that accuracy did not show a statistically significant improvement in the combination group.

2. In terms of the rate of oral proficiency improvement, the improvisation strategy showed a statistically significant advantage over the memorization strategy and the combination strategy. The improvisation group also demonstrated a statistically significant difference over the memorization group in terms of fluency and complexity, but not accuracy. Furthermore, the memorization group also performed better in all language aspects than the combination group.

However, the more progress a group made, the more disparate the students' oral proficiency became. At the end of this study, the improvisation group members showed the greatest disparity in terms of their speaking level, the memorization group the next, and the combination group members showed even fewer differences.

3. The participants in this study have shown that fluency was the easiest aspect to improve, while accuracy was the hardest to improve. Though the improvisation and memorization groups still made significant progress in accuracy, the combination group made no statistically significant progress in this aspect, which was the only language aspect showing no progress between pretest and posttest. Besides, high-level participants in all groups made no significant progress in accuracy.
4. In this study, students of different oral levels showed no statistically significant variation in the rate of their oral improvement. A more detailed investigation indicated that participants of all levels also made statistically significant progress in fluency, accuracy, complexity, and general performance. The only exception to this was the high-level students in accuracy.

### **6.1.2 Conclusions about Students' Perceptions**

At the end of the semester, an open-ended questionnaire was given to the students in the combination group to examine their perceptions of the activities because this was the only group experiencing both memorization and improvisation strategies. Thirty out of forty-five students in this group, representing the three language levels, were interviewed in order to collect their in-depth opinion on different speaking activities.

In addition, a college-wide satisfaction survey on each class/subject was also included to compare the three groups' perception of strategies.

1. Among all the three groups, the combination strategy was the most satisfactory in terms of students' perception, despite the fact that it made the least oral improvement compared with the other two strategies. The memorization strategy was the least satisfactory according to the college-wide survey, but its effects on oral improvement were better than the combination strategy and second to the improvisation strategy. The improvisation strategy had the best effect on students' oral improvement, but was second to the combination strategy in terms of satisfaction.

For participants in the memorization group and improvisation group, the memorization strategy seemed more popular at the beginning, but at the end of the semester, the improvisation strategy was preferred. In other words, this finding shows that popularity seems to have been a dynamic process contingent on how long the strategy lasts, particularly for the memorization group. For some participants in the memorization group, a major change could be seen after seven or eight weeks of treatment. The combination group, which experienced first the memorization strategy and then the improvisation strategy, could be contrasted in terms of the difference in attitude. (See discussion in 4.2.2)

2. In the combination group, there was no significant difference between the preferences for the two strategies. However, the score for the memorization strategy was higher in the final questionnaire than for the improvisation strategy in the combination group. Moreover, low-level students significantly preferred the memorization to the improvisation strategy, but intermediate- and high-level students showed higher but insignificant preference for the memorization strategy.

However, many participants' reasons for valuing the memorization strategy, especially the low-level students', were more related to their fear of making a scene in public in an improvising situation than learning. They even relegated the memorization strategy to pure rote-learning, even without understanding the meaning of the words and sentences that they were saying. Needless to say, these

participants displayed no acting at all in the drama activities. That was not what the researcher expected and was not useful, meaningful learning practice (Richards and Rogers, 2001).

Besides, there were various reasons for the support of a certain learning activity, such as topic, interest, practicality, etc. The strategy features were not the only determiners of participants' preference. (See discussion in 5.1)

3. The most popular activities belonged to the improvisation strategy: the guessing game and role-plays, and the least popular activities also belonged to improvisation strategy: storytelling and one-person speeches. In this study, each strategy had a range of activities. This study has found that the more involving and situation-simulated activities were more popular, such as the guessing game and role-plays. Most students thought these activities were practical and somewhat challenging. However, the guessing game was strongly liked and disliked simultaneously by students of different language levels. The more difficult one-person activities, such as storytelling and the transportation report, were unpopular with most students, though they were also preferred by some participants. (See discussion in 5.2)
4. In this study, high-level students preferred the guessing game, and the preference decreased with lower language levels. On the other hand, the easy drama (drama 3), which required little language proficiency, was preferred by the low-level students, and the preference decreased with higher language levels.

### **6.1.3 Conclusions about the Preference and Oral Performance**

1. Preference had nothing to do with oral improvement

Participants who preferred either the improvisation or the memorization strategy showed no significant difference in their rate of oral improvement, but those who preferred the improvisation strategy did show slightly better rates of oral improvement compared to the participants who favoured the memorization strategy.

## **6.2 Implications and Suggestions**

Implications for ESL teaching based on the literature, the above conclusions, and my observations of the participants follow. The implications will be categorized in terms of strategy effects, participant perceptions and activities.

### **6.2.1 Implications and Suggestions on Strategy Effects and Participant Perceptions**

1. Adoption of integrated strategies including various activities to develop students' oral ability.

With the combination strategy being seen as the most popular with the participants but the lowest in the rate of oral improvement, it seems that it is hard for one strategy to best develop the speaking ability and satisfy the students' preferences at the same time. Many practitioners and academics (eg. Bell, 1991; Shank & Terrill, 1995) also maintain that, because no single approach is suitable for all ESL populations and contexts, multiple approaches may be required to meet the needs of individual learners. The results suggest that teachers use a combination of the two strategies, improvisation and memorization. Firstly, the combination strategy was more satisfactory in students' perception than either the improvisation or the memorization strategy. Secondly, though the improvisation strategy worked better in terms of the rate of oral improvement, and was more satisfactory than the memorization strategy at the end of the experiment, it cannot be ignored that some students consistently felt more secure with the memorization strategy and thought they could learn more with the scripts at hand. Given that the classes in Taiwan are always big and the student language levels are inevitably diversified (Yu, 2005), the integrated strategies should cater to the preferences of the greatest possible number of the students.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the combination group performed worse than either the improvisation group or the memorization group, this shortcoming might be addressed through rearranging the proportion of the two strategies used. (See 4.2.2 discussion)

2. Suggestions for maximizing students' performance and preferences.

How to get the appropriate balance between performance and preference is a critical point. After all, competence is the goal of teaching/learning a language, and interest is the momentum for long-term learning (Krashen, 2002). According to the literature review and the findings of this study, the researcher suggests that it might be a good idea for the improvisation strategy to account for most of the course content, particularly for these participants. This suggestion is somewhat different from some researchers' perspectives (eg. Nakagawa, 2000; Bialy, 2003; Maxwell, 2004; Berlinger, 2000) who suggest that the teaching should gradually evolve from the memorization strategy into the improvisation one. Following are the reasons for my suggestion.

Firstly, the participants in this study had learned English for at least three years before they entered this college. Though most of them did not use the English language in an improvisation situation because their previous learning experiences were mainly focused on reading and writing, they had memorized a good deal of English which can be used in an English encounter. The teacher should provide as many opportunities as possible for them to use the target language (Tiangco, 2005; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Medin, Ross & Markman, 2001; Bygate, 2001a). These researchers believe that learning is reinforced through frequent retrieval of the linguistic information from the long-term memory system. The improvisation strategy in this study seemed to actually help their memorization and increased their response speed in an English encounter. Those who suggest a gradual evolution from memorization into improvisation might refer to the real language beginners instead of the experienced ones.

Secondly, though the statistics showed that 25 out of 40 students preferred the memorization strategy in the combination group and only 15 out of 40 for the other strategy, the difference was not statistically significant because many of the memorization students preferred some memorization activities but not others (See 5.2.1). The students who strongly preferred the memorization strategy accounted for no more than six or seven out of the forty participants, which was about one fifth of that population.

Finally, due to the disadvantages of the memorization strategy in terms of oral improvement rate and satisfaction, plus that some students' preferential reasons for memorization were not related to learning as mentioned in the conclusion, I suggest that the improvisation strategy take most time or to a higher degree from the beginning stage.

The improvisation strategy also needs to be further perfected on account of the growing disparity in terms of participants' speaking abilities. Some activities in this strategy, such as the guessing game, had triggered a strong backlash from certain students and thus need to be appropriately addressed. The implications of the activities will be discussed in the next section.

In addition, the pro-memorization students might have narrower space to perform in the class. They might feel embarrassed in an improvisational situation even if what they are supposed to say has been clearly taught. Hence I suggest the following considerations. First, the teacher should provide the demonstrators on the stage as many clues as possible to build a non-threatening atmosphere. After all, negative emotions can function much like a filter and prevent the learner from making total use of the linguistic input from his environment (Krashen, 1982). Second, the teacher should invite volunteers onto the stage and leave alone those who are loath to perform in front of the whole class. Meanwhile, mid-term and final exams can serve as effective stimulation or goals for students to work hard in pair practice and after-class rehearsal.

3. Based on the results of this experiment, it seems that it is not always necessary to divide students into levels in the speaking class.

This implication might be contradictory to some common perspectives (Mustafa, 2002). But some researchers (eg. Bell, 1991; Shank & Terrill, 1995) believe that heterogeneous groups, such as the groups in this study, allow stronger learners to help others and maximize complementary learner strengths. In this study, participants were already quite familiar with each other in their respective classes, and teacher-assigned grouping would seem unnatural. In fact, the activities or the tasks in both strategies often drove students into naturally-formed groups for discussion or

collaboration. Above all, the results of this experiment suggest that students' language levels had little influence on their rates of oral improvement or preference.

### **6.2.2 Activities**

#### **1. Moderately diverse activities**

By moderately diverse activities the researcher means that the types of the activities should neither be too many or too few. It seems that too many types, such as one type per week, tend to confuse the students. It seems that too few types, on the other hand, will easily bore the teenagers or those who do not enjoy a certain type. Take drama for example, Holden (1981) warns that too much drama will lead to loss of its effectiveness. Gaudart (1990) also argues that in Malaysia activities that do not emphasize performance are found more acceptable than those that do. In my study, I have also found that the guessing game was most interesting to students during the first two weeks, but the students' eagerness abated during the third week. For those who could not get involved, it was very distressing. (For detailed account, see 5.2)

The researcher thus suggests that one type of activity should run for two or three weeks. As for dramas, which would take a longer time to prepare and perform, teachers could allow a longer period for two dramas in a row.

#### **2. Partially student-centered activities**

Student-centered learning is highly emphasized in the contemporary world (Moya & O'Malley, 1994; Weddel & Van Duzer, 1997). Teachers should take into account where students' starting point is and what students need. However, students are different from class to class, from culture to culture. The learning content and teaching method must be contingent on the current class on a daily basis. Besides, what teachers see as students' needs may not be the students' real needs (Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Toth, 2004; Block, 1996). In this study, for instance, the researcher thought the daily routine would introduce to students very useful and practical words and phrases in daily life, but students had a different point of view. Many students thought the topic was boring because it was about everyday life! Therefore this kind of topic should not stand alone but be embedded into some other

interesting topics, such as gender relationships or pop TV programs or fashions. But the insight would not have come up until the teacher had finished the activity. Though it is hard to fully meet the students' needs and expectations, the teacher still needs to have a well-designed lesson plan in advance and follow it through.

This study also found that each learning activity, whether it was more or less valued by the whole class, was strongly liked or disliked simultaneously by some students on account of various factors, such as student abilities, past experience, or personality. In other words, any specific teaching plan will not be able to serve all the students well (Hrehovcik, 2003). Krashen's (1982) "i+1" principle does not work well in the multi-level class. Nonetheless, that does not mean teachers have no room to improve their teaching further. There is always more for teachers to do to meet the needs and preference of more students.

### **6.3 Suggestions for Future Research**

Though some positive findings were identified in this study about the effects of strategies and activities on students' oral performance and preference, more research is recommended to further investigate this area. These include participants' backgrounds, external variables, and experiment period.

Firstly, since the subjects were selected with the same gender, similar years exposed to learning ESL, same age and major, the results can not be generalised to learners of other categories. Future studies involving participants of both sexes, various ages and ESL learning years, and different majors are recommended in order to generate more evidence on the effects of speaking strategies and activities.

Secondly, since the experiment lasted only 12 weeks, pretests and posttests excluded, the short-term effects might differ from long-term effects. Future research, therefore, is suggested to investigate the long-term effects of the different strategies.

Finally, this study was focused on participant's oral performance. An investigation into the effects of improvisation and memorization strategies on participants' reading and writing abilities might have different results. This could be an interesting direction for future studies.

## References

- Abe, K. (2000). *Achieving high oral proficiency levels in English as a Second Language*. Thesis submitted to University of San Francisco.
- Acton, W. (1997). Directed speaking instruction. *The Language Teacher*, 21(9), 7-11, 1997.
- Alexander, L.G. 1978. *Mainline beginners*. London: Longman.
- Alfonzo, M. E. (1995). *A study to identify teacher's perceptions of which barriers impede the teaching of English as a second language at the community college level*. Dissertation presented to Pepperdine University. Retrieved on February 1, 2003, from <http://proquest.umi.com>
- Altenaichinger, A. (2002). Theories of second language acquisition. In Martin Hanak-Hammerl and David Newby (eds) *Second Language Acquisition: the interface between theory and practice*. University of Graz, Austria.
- Anonymous. (2004). What is Audiolingualism? In *Onestop magazine*. Macmillan Publisher. Retrieved on August 20, 2005 from <http://www.onestopenglish.com/News/Magazine/Archive/Audio/htm>
- Arnold, D. (2005). Overcome the fear of public speaking. National Education Association. Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/espcolumns/dv030924.html> in September, 2005.
- Avila, E. D. (1997). Setting expected gains for non and limited English proficient students. *NCBE Resource Collection Series*, No.8. November, 1997. Retrieved from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu>
- Barkhuizen, G. P. (1998). Discovering learners' perceptions of ESL classroom teaching/learning activities in a South African context. *TESOL Quarterly*. V32 n1 p85-108 Spr. 1998.
- Batista, G. M. (2005). *Teaching units to lower language anxiety for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade ESL students in Puerto Rico*. Thesis of University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez campus, 2005.
- Beare, K. (2005). *Teaching conversational skills – tips and strategies*. Retrieved on December 10, 2005 from <http://esl.about.com>
- Bedford, T. A. (2004). *Learning styles: a review of literature* (first draft). Toowoomba, OPACS, The University of Southern Queensland.
- Bell, J. (1991). *Teaching multilevel classes in ESL*. San Diego, CA: Dominie Press

- Bennett, A. E. (2005). *English conversation patterns*. Taipei: Crane.
- Berlinger, M. R. (2000): Encouraging English expression through scripted-based improvisations. *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol. VI, No. 4, April 2000.  
<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Berlinger-ScriptImprov.html>
- Bialy, J. M. (2003). *IELTS speaking test preparation in the People's Republic of China: communicative approaches and rote-memorization compared*. Retrieved from [www.surrey.ac.uk/ALRG/dissertations/Bialy\\_J\\_2003.pdf](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/ALRG/dissertations/Bialy_J_2003.pdf) (10/8/2005)
- Block, D. (1996). A window on the classroom: Classroom events viewed from different angles. In K. M. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom: Qualitative research in second language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brauer, G. (2002). *Body and language*. Westport: Ablex Publishing.
- Braxton, M. A. (1999). *Adult ESL language learning strategies: Case studies of preferred learning styles and perceived cultural influences in academic listening tasks*. Dissertation presented to The Ohio State University. Retrieved February 1, 2003, from <http://proquest.umi.com>
- Breen, M. (1989). The evaluation cycle for language learning tasks. In R. K. Johnson (Ed.), *The second language curriculum* (pp187-206). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brewster, C. & Fager, J. (2000). Increasing Student Engagement and Motivation: From Time-on-Task to Homework. *Northwest regional educational laboratory*.  
<http://www.nwrel.org/request/oct00/textonly.html>
- Brindley, G., Slatyer, H. (2002). Exploring task difficulty in ESL listening assessment. *Language testing*, Volume 19, No. 4, October 2002.
- Brown, H. D. (2002). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. New York: Longman.
- Brown, J. D. (2004). Performance assessment: existing literature and directions for research. *Second Language Studies*, 22(2), Spring 2004, pp. 91-139.
- Brown, R.S.& Nation P. (1997). *Teaching speaking: suggestions for the classroom*. Retrieved in 2003 at Website:  
<http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jalt/pub/tlt/97/jan/speaking.html>
- Bruner, J. S. (1986). Play, thought, and language. *Prospects*, 16, 77-83.
- Burns, A., & Joyce, H. (1997). *Focus on speaking*. Sydney: Macquarie University.

- Burrell, M. (2005). The efficacy of computer-activated tasks (CATs) for teaching e-literacy in the ESOL content. *Journal of eLiteracy*, Vol 2 (2005) 42-62
- Bygate, M. (2001a). Speaking. In Ronald Carter and David Nunan (eds) *Teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bygate, M. (2001b). Effects of task repetition on the structure and control of oral language. In M. Bygate, P. Skehan and M. Swain (Eds.) *Researching pedagogic tasks: Second Language learning, teaching and testing*. Harlow: Longman (Pearson Education)
- Caceres L. I. & Obilinovic K. (2000). The script-based approach: early oral production in language teaching. *Forum*, V.38 No 4, October - December 2000 p. 16
- Calderon, M. E. (1999). *Promoting language proficiency and academic achievement through cooperation*. ERIC Digest. ED436983
- Campbell, Campbell & Dickinson (1996). *Teaching and learning through multiple intelligences*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Center for adult English language acquisition. (2003). *Assessment and Accountability in Programs for Adult English Language Learners: What Do We Know? What Do We Have in Place? What Do We Need?* Retrieved on Sep 30, 2005 from <http://www.cal.org/caela/accountability>
- Chang, C. (1991). *Modern psychology*. Taipei: Psychology Publishing Company.
- Chang, J. (1987). Chinese speakers. In M. Swan and B. Smith (eds) *Learner English: a teacher's guide to interference and other problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chauhan, V. (2004). Drama techniques for teaching English. *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol. X, No. 10, October 2004. Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Chauhan-Drama.html>
- Cheng, J. C. (2005). *The relationship to foreign language anxiety of oral performance achievement, teacher characteristics and in-class activities*. Thesis presented at Ming Chuan University, Taiwan.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Boston: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, N. 1966. Linguistic theory. Reprinted in M.P.B. Allen and P. Van Buren (eds.), *Chomsky: Selected Readings*. London: Oxford University Press.

- Clancy, T. (2004). *An historical examination of the methodological developments in language teaching*. Thesis of University of Nevada, Reno.
- Conner, M. L. *Introduction to learning styles*. Ageless Learner, 1997-2004
- Cross, D. (1999). *Large classes in action*. Singapore: Prentice Hall.
- Davis, B. G. (1993). *Tools for Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Davis, K. M. (1995). *Language and learning: A case study of a Vietnamese unaccompanied minor in a post-secondary setting*. Dissertation presented to Oregon State University. Retrieved February 1, 2003, from <http://proquest.umi.com>
- Doughty, C. & Williams, J. (1998). *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dougill, J. (1987). *Drama activities for language learning*. London: Macmillan.
- Du, Y., Simpson, C. (2002). *Effects of learning styles and Class Participation on students' enjoyment level in distributed learning environments*. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. Ed 463755)
- Dugdale, C. G. (1996). *Wholly verbal*. Retrieved from <http://www.ozemail.com.au/~cdug/homepage/language/wv.html>.
- Education Department of Western Australia. (1997). *Oral Language Resource Book*. Melbourne: Heinemann.
- Ellis, R. (2002). *Second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fan, K. Y. (2005). The earlier the better? *English Education Electronic Monthly*, V19, Sep 2005.
- Fell, C. (2005, May). Drama in the ELT classroom. *British Council ELT information pack*. Issue 13.
- Florez, M.C. (1999). *Improving Adult language learners' speaking skills*. ERIC Digest. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. Ed 435204)
- Fortune, T. W. (2003). What parents want to know about foreign language immersion programs. *Digest*. August 2003.
- Frankel, I. & Kimbrough, V. (1998). *Gateways*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences: The theory in practice*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (1998). Reflections on multiple intelligences: Myths and messages. In A. Woolfolk (Ed.) *Readings in educational psychology*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Gasparro, M. Falletta, B. (1994). *Creating Drama with Poetry: Teaching English as a second language through dramatization and improvisation*. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. ED 368214)
- Gaudart, H. (1990). Using drama techniques in language teaching. In *Readings In Tesl* Vol. 2: Essays in honour of Basil Wijasuriya. MELTA publication. (Malaysian English Language Teaching Association) (ERIC Reproduction Services No. ED 366197)
- Gledhill, R. (2000). *Risk taking: Giving ESL students an edge*. Paper from Australian Indigenous Education Conference. Edith Cowan University, November, 2000.
- Gunter, R. (1996). *Language acquisition: process and strategies*. Retrieved on Aug 10, 2005 from <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/ccvi/>
- Hakuta, K. Butler, Y. G. Witt, D. (2000). *How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency?* The University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute Policy Report 2000-1. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. ED 443275)
- Haley, M.H. (2000). Culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional students refocusing the lens. *ESL Magazine*, November/December 2000.
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Helgesen, M. (2003). Bringing task recycling to the classroom. *KOTESOL*, v7, No. 3, May 2003.
- Holden, S. (1981). *Drama in language teaching*. London: Longman.
- Hrehovcik, T. (2003). *New frameworks and innovations in foreign/second language teaching*. Adobe Acrobat Reader v.4.05. Retrieved from <http://www.pulib.sk/elpub/FF/Hrehovcik1/index.htm>
- Hsia, C. & Hattersley, L. (2003). *Attitude, motivation, transfer and strategies: crucial factors of foreign language learning*. Retrieved on January 15, 2006 from <http://www.chinmin.edu.tw/teach/afl/project/Attitude%20motivation%20transfer%20strategies.pdf>
- Huang, H. (2001). *Current teaching approaches in Taiwanese English classrooms and recommendations for the future (China)*. Dissertation of the Claremont Graduate University. Retrieved from Proquest AAT 3022915

- Huang, H. (2002). *Using on-line newspapers as an enhancement of cultural teaching*. Retrieved from [www.sjsmit.edu.tw/jo/profile/藝D024\\_Hsinchou.doc](http://www.sjsmit.edu.tw/jo/profile/藝D024_Hsinchou.doc) on Sep. 18, 2005.
- Huang, W. J. (2003). Cultivating students' diversified and active language and cultural identification. *Selected papers from the twelfth international symposium on English teaching*. Taipei: Crane.
- Huang, Y. P. (2004). *Language use of beginning students in a Taiwanese English immersion preschool*. Thesis of Tamkang University, Taiwan.
- Hudson, T. (1982). The effects of induced schemata on the "short circuit" in L2 reading: Non-decoding factors in L2 reading performance. *Language Learning*, 32, 1-31.
- Hymes, D., & Gumperz, J.J. (1972). *Directions in sociolinguistics: the ethnography of communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Hymes, D., & Gumperz, J.J. (1986). *Directions in sociolinguistics: the ethnography of communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Jian, H. L. (2005). Improving the communicative competence in spoken English of Taiwanese engineering students: a prosodic approach. *Exploring Innovation in Education and Research*, March 2005.
- Johnson, K. (1990). *RA-1: Communicative language teaching and information processing*. Retrieved on August 15, 2005 from <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/groups/crile/docs/crile25johnson.pdf>
- Kang, D. H. (1997). *Assessing Korean Middle School Students' Language Learning Strategies in Input-Poor Environments*. ERIC Digest. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. Ed 413778)
- Kang, S. (1999). Learning styles: implications for ESL/EFL instruction. *English Teaching Form*. Volume 37, number 4.
- Kaur, S. (2005). Suggestions for teaching public speaking and evaluating speeches. *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol. XI, No. 7, July 2005. <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Kaur-PublicSpeaking.html>
- King, L. (2003). On speech-style English. *Taipei: Industry and Commerce Daily*. Retrieved from <http://www.ep66.idv.tw/indcom%20news.HTM>

- Kinsella, K. (1995). Understanding and empowering diverse learners in ESL classrooms. In J. M. Reid (Ed.), *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom* (pp.170-194). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Kirkland, B. M. (1998). *You've got style: A comparative analysis of third-grade ESL and non-ESL learning style preferences*. Dissertation presented to The University of Alabama. Retrieved February 1, 2003, from <http://proquest.umi.com>
- Knop, C. K. (2000). Directions for change in an audio-lingual approach. *Mosaic*. V7, n2, pp.18-27, Win 2000.
- Krashen, (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Krashen, S. (1989). We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the input hypothesis. *Modern Language Journal*, 73 (4), pp. 440-464.
- Krashen, S. (2002). *Explorations in language acquisition and use: the Taipei lectures*. Taipei: Crane.
- Kroonenberg, N. (1995). Meeting language learners sensory-learning style preference. In *Learning style in the ESL/EFL classroom*. Ed. J. Reid, Boston, MA: Heinle Publishers.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1991). Language-learning tasks: Teacher intention and learner interpretation. *ELT Journal*, 45.
- Lee, Y.C. (2003). *A tentative discussion on the developmental procedures and the learning patterns of English as a second language*. Retrieved from Yahoo Website: (2003/07/09) <http://www.isst.edu.tw/s44/quarterly/47/quarterly-47-2mhtm>
- Leki, I. & Carson, J. G. (1994). Students' perceptions of EAP writing instruction and writing needs across the disciplines. *TESOL Quarterly*, v28, 81-101
- Lewis, M. (1999). *How to study foreign languages*. New York: Palgrave.
- Liang, T. (2002). *Implementing cooperative learning in EFL teaching: process and effects*. Dissertation of Taiwan Normal University.
- Liao, X. (1996). *Chinese learners' communicative Incompetence: causes and solutions*. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. Ed 400687)
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (1999). *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Lim, H. Y. (2003). Successful classroom discussions with adult Korean ESL/EFL learners. *The Internet TESL Journal*, vol. IX, No. 5, May 2003.
- Lindstromberg, S. (2003). Skehan's proposals for task design in task based learning/teaching. *Humanising Language Teaching*, Year 5, issue 4, July 03
- Little, G. D., Sanders, S. L. (1990). *Resistance to Learning? Student Reaction to Communicative Language Teaching*. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. Ed 319232)
- Littlejohn, A. (1996). What's a good task? *English Teaching Professional*, Oct. 1996
- Long, M. H. (1983a). Does second language instruction make a difference? A review of research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17 (3), 359-365
- Maley, A. & Duff, A, 1982 (2nd Edition). *Drama Techniques in Language Learning* CUP
- Manidis, M. & Prescott, P. (1994). *Assessing oral language proficiency*. Macquarie University.
- Maxwell, W. (2004). The Accelerative Integrated Method: A holistic approach to the teaching of French as a second language. *Reflexions* (Journal of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers). <http://www.caslt.org>
- McLaughlin, B. (1992). Myths and misconceptions about second language learning: what every teacher needs to unlearn. From *Educational Practice Report*, 5. National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning.
- Medin, D., Ross, B., & Markman, A. (2001). *Cognitive psychology* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Florida: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Medina, S. L. (2002). Using music to enhance second language acquisition: from theory to practice. In Lalas, J. and Lee, S. *Language, literacy, and academic development for English language learners*. Pearson Educational Publishing.
- Molinsky, S. J. & Bliss, B. (2001). *Side by side*. New York: Longman
- Mooney, P. M. (1991). *Variables affecting oral proficiency among Spanish-speaking adults learning English as a Second Language*. Thesis of State University of New York at Albany.
- Moya, S., O'Malley, M. (1994). A portfolio assessment model for ESL. *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students*, v13, p. 13-36, Spring 1994.

- Mueller, G. (1980). Visual contextual cues and listening comprehension: An experiment. *Modern Language Journal*. 64, 335-340.
- Mustafa, N. (2002). *Grouping in the ESL classroom*. Retrieved on October 20, 2005 from <http://www.melta.org.my/ET/2002/wp03.htm>
- Nakagawa, K. (2000). *Teaching Speaking: From Accuracy vs. Fluency to Accuracy plus Fluency*. Retrieved from [www.geocities.co.jp/CollegeLife/9546/papers/paper2.htm](http://www.geocities.co.jp/CollegeLife/9546/papers/paper2.htm)
- Nassaji, H. (1999). Towards integrating form-focused instruction and communicative interaction in the second language classroom: some pedagogical possibilities. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3, March 1999
- National Center for Family Literacy. (2004). Assessing adult English language learners. In *Practitioner toolkit: working with adult English language learners, part IV: topics in adult ESL education & family literacy*. Retrieved October 1, 2005, from <http://www.famlit.org/Publications/Practitioner-Toolkit-ELL.cfm>
- Nelson, C. (1995). *Language Diversity and Language Arts*. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. Ed 384072)
- New York State Education Department. (2000). *Second language proficiency examination for modern languages: test changes and sampler*.
- Norris, J., Brown, J., Hudson, T., & Yoshioka, J. (1998). *Designing second language performance assessments* (Technical Report #18). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.
- Nunan, D. (1989a) Hidden agendas: The role of the learner in programme implementation. In "R. K. Johnson (Ed.), *The second language curriculum* (pp176-186). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. (1989b). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Osburne, A. G. (1993). *Reexamining Memorization*. Paper presented at the annual Conference of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other languages. (24<sup>th</sup> San Francisco, CA) (ERIC Reproduction Services No. Ed 357636)
- Oxford, R. (1994). *Language learning strategies*. Tokyo: Bonjinsha.

- Oxford, R. (1996). *Integrated skills in the ESL/EFL classroom*. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. Ed 456670)
- Oxford, R. L. (2001). Language learning strategies. In Ronald Carter and David Nunan (eds) *Teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oya, T., Manalo, E., Greenwood, J. (2004). The influence of personality and anxiety on the oral performance of Japanese speakers of English. *Applied cognitive psychology*. Vol. 18, Issue 7, pp. 841-855. Published online: 24 Sep 2004.
- Pattison, P. (1987). *Developing communication skills*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, dreams, and imitation in childhood*. New York: Norton.
- Pica, T., Holliday, L., Lewis, N., & Morgenthaler, L. (1989). Comprehensible output as an outcome of linguistic demands on the learner. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 11 (1), 63-90.
- Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second language pedagogy: a perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ramos, F. B. R. (2002). *ESL students' perceptions of role-play activities*. MA Thesis of West Virginia University. Retrieved from Proquest: (2005/07/25)  
Publication number: AAT 1412152
- Reynolds, M. K.M. (2000). *Comparison of interaction between nonnative speakers in free conversation and structured communicative activities*. Retrieved February 10, 2003, from <http://proquest.umi.com>
- Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Rogers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching: a description and analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, H. (2005, May). Using drama texts in the classroom. *British Council ELT information pack*. Issue 13.
- Robinson, P. (1995). Task complexity and second language narrative discourse. *Language Learning*, 45(1), 99-140.
- Robinson, P. (2003). The cognition hypothesis, task design, and adult task-based language learning. In *Second Language Studies*, 21(2), Spring 2003, pp. 45-105

- Robinson, P., Chi-chien, S., & Urwin, J. (1996). Three dimensions of second language task complexity. *The University of Queensland Working Papers in Language and Linguistics*, 1(1), 15-30.
- Rossiter, M. J. (2003). The effects of affective strategy training in the ESL classroom. *TESL-EJ*, v7, n2, Sep., 2003
- Ryan, S. B. (2001). Overcoming common problems related to communicative methodology. *The Internet TESL Journal*, v7, n11, Nov. 2001. <http://iteslj.org/>
- Schewe, M. L. (2002). Teaching foreign language literature: tapping the students' bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. In Gerd Brauer (ed) *Body and language*. Westport: Ablex Publishing.
- Scott, R. B. (2000). Logical conversation flowcharts for greater learner autonomy. *NYS TESOL*, October, 2000
- Seiba, Z. (2001). *Classroom instruction and second language acquisition: The effect of Explicit Form-Focused Instruction on L2 learners' linguistic competence*. Thesis of The University of Mississippi.
- Shank, C. & Terrill, L. (1995). *Teaching multilevel adult ESL classes*. ERIC Digest ED 383242.
- Shelton, S. (2005). *Promoting fluency and accuracy through planning, telling, transcribing and noticing*. Retrieved from <http://www.developingteachers.com>
- Skehan, P. (1996). Second language acquisition research and task-based instruction. In J. Willis and D. Willis (eds) *Challenge and change in language teaching*. London: Heinemann.
- Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sue, L. W. (2004). *A study of vocational high school students' EFL difficulties and solutions—based on National Tainan Commercial and Vocational Senior High School*. Thesis of National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan.
- Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. In G. Cllk and B. seidlhofer (eds) *Principles and Practice in Applied Linguistics: Papers in honour of H. G. Widdowson*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thompson, G. (2003, September 6). Reform the ministry of education (Letter to the editor). *Taipei Times*, p.8.

- Tiangco, J. A. N. Z. (2005). Using contemporary psychological perspectives in re-understanding Taiwanese EFL development: observations and implications for tertiary education. *Asian EFL Journal*, volume 7, issue 1, article 7.
- Tierney, Robin, & Simon, M. (2004). What's still wrong with rubrics: focusing on the consistency of performance criteria across scale levels. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 9(2). Retrieved March 1, 2004 from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=9&n=2>.
- Tinkham, T. (1989). *Rote learning, attitudes, and abilities: a comparison of Japanese and American students*. TESOL Quarterly, 23, pp.695-698.
- Tompkins, P. K. (1998). Role playing/simulation. *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol. IV, No. 8, August 1998. <http://iteslj.org/>
- Toth, P. (2004). When grammar instruction undermines cohesion in L2 Spanish classroom discourse. *The Modern Language Journal*, 88, i, (2004)
- Tsou, W. (2002). An overview of big class ESL teaching in the primary school. 大班教學面面觀 Taipei: *Caves English Teaching*, 35, Oct., pp.10-12.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Via, R.A. (1980). Language learning via drama. In J.C. Fisher et.al (Eds.). "*Selected paper from the fourteenth annual convention of teachers of English to speakers of other languages. On TESOL '80 Building Bridges: Research and practice in teaching English as second language.*" March 4-9, 1980, San Francisco, CA.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1966). Play and its role in the mental development of the child. *Soviet Psychology*, 12, 62-76.
- Wagner, B. J. (2002). Understanding drama-based education. In Gerd Brauer (ed) *Body and Language: Intercultural learning through drama*. Westport: Ablex Publishing.
- Wagner, B. J. (2002). Understanding drama-based education. In Gerd Brauer (ed) *Body and language*. Westport: Ablex Publishing.
- Walqui, A. (2000). *Contextual factors in second language acquisition*. (ERIC Reproduction Services No. Ed 444381)
- Webster, F. (2002). A genre approach to oral presentations. *The Internet TESL Journal*, V.8, No. 7. July 2002. Retrieved from website: <http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~webster>

- Weddel, K. & Van Duzer, C. (1997). *Needs assessment for adult ESL learners*.  
ERIC Digest. ERIC ID: ED407882
- Wessels, C. (1987). *Drama (Resource Books for Teachers)*. Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wikipedia. (2005). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>
- Wilkins, D.A. (1976). *Notional syllabuses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, D. (1990). *The lexical syllabus*. London: Collins ELT.
- Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2001). Task-based language learning. In Ronald Carter and David Nunan (eds) *Teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wong, L. T. (2001). The needs analysis and characteristics of Chinese-speaking adult ESL learners. *International Journal: Language, Society and Culture*, 2001.
- Woo, M. L. (1999). *SPSS statistics: applied practices*. Taipei: Pine.
- Wright, T. (1987). Instructional task and discoursal outcome in the L2 classroom. In C. N. Candlin & D. F. Murphy (Eds.), *Language learning tasks* (pp.47-68). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall International.
- Yahoo news (2005). *Eighty percent technological students cannot pass GEPT*. Retrieved from <http://tw.news.yahoo.com/050712/15/21y0b.html> on July 5, 2005.
- Yu, K. H. (1994). *Implementing Cooperative Learning Approach to Teach EFL in Class*, a paper presented at the English Teaching Seminar For Kaohsiung City English Teachers at the Municipal Teachers' Training Center, on December 19.
- Yu, K. H. (2005). *Autonomous approach to motivating L2 learners: building up learners' proficiency*. Paper presented at Chung-hwa College of Medical Technology English Teaching Seminar, on May 2, 2005.
- Yu, M. (2002). Developing the fluency of an overlooked dimension in L2: Listening comprehension instruction for the Chinese college students in Taiwan. *Journal of the Korea English Education Society* 1, pp. 27-44.
- Zimmerman, C.B. (1997). Do reading and interactive vocabulary instruction make a difference? An empirical study. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 121-140
- Zofia, C. (1995). Setting/interlocutor-related variation in oral performance of adult ESL learners. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*. v18 n1 p129-46 1995.

## **Appendix A**

### Preference Questionnaire

Class:\_\_\_\_\_ Name:\_\_\_\_\_ Number:\_\_\_\_\_

A. Please rank the following speaking activities according to your personal preference

1. Drama 1: Applying for a job in a black tea shop
2. Drama 2: A snobby friend
3. Drama 3: Borrowing stationery
4. Role-play 1: Returning a too small T-shirt
5. Interview: Family members
6. Role-play 2: Ordering at McDonald's
7. Story-telling: Monica's daily routine
8. Discussion: Lottery
9. Free speech: Guessing game
10. Statement: Weather report

B. Please elaborate your ranking reasons for the top 3 and bottom 3 activities

## **Appendix B**

Pretest and posttest questions:

1. What do you like to do on weekends?
2. Can you introduce your family?
3. Describe your daily routine.
4. Describe your ideal boyfriend.
5. Describe the most unforgettable incident in your life.

(Pretest and Posttest) Potential questions:

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. Can you introduce your family?
3. Do you like sports or not? Why/why not?
4. Describe your favorite singer, movie star or TV Program. Why?
5. What do you like to do on weekends?
6. If you had 30 million dollars, what would you do?
7. Describe your ideal boyfriend.
8. Why do you want to be a nurse?
9. If you could go abroad to study, which country would you like to go? Why?
10. Describe your daily routine.
11. What is your favorite/least favorite subject in school? Why?
12. Describe the most embarrassing/unforgettable incident in your life.
13. What did you do last night/last Sunday?

## Appendix C

### Criteria for oral test

#### Fluency

1-2	Utterances halting, fragmentary, incoherent, few words; no communication for unprepared questions
3-4	use more words or phrases, but hesitant utterances even in short turns; use few words for unprepared questions
5-6	Can quickly express prepared answer and get ideas across; hesitant and brief for unprepared questions
7-8	Effective communication in short turns; little pause; fluent on very familiar topics
9-10	Effective communication for ordinary conversation; occasional pauses

#### complexity

1-2	Use only words or none
3-4	Use words or some common phrases; even simple sentences
5-6	Can combine two or more phrases or comprehensible sentences
7-8	Use mainly sentences, sometimes use complex sentences
9-10	Use compound or complex sentences; some native speaker's usage

#### accuracy

1-2	Use only words or none; no grammar at all
3-4	Use some stock phrases; many errors when using sentences; have few grammatical concepts or have very strong accent
5-6	Have some grammatical concepts, but frequent grammatical inaccuracy; slight foreign accent
7-8	Some grammatical errors; basically correct sentence patterns; unstable grammatical usage
9-10	Few grammatical errors, but does not interfere with communication; slight foreign accent;

## **Appendix D**

### Improvisational group lesson plan

#### **Unit 1 Preparation**

1. Main activities: Pre-test
2. Procedures: Recording, prepare 5 questions and 20 pictures, 2 min per person (1 minute for describing a picture, 1 for answering questions )

Note: speak as much as you can in the one minute

#### **Unit 2 Self-introduction**

1. Main activities: Classroom rules and self-introduction
2. Procedures:

##### 2.1

- a. First greeting (10 min) (T demonstrates: How do you do? Nice to meet you. Then Ss do it to 5 others in her same line)
- b. How to say the reasons for being late. (20 min)
- c. Classroom ritual (TPR modeling, 10 min.)
- d. Pep story (boy and fishing rod, 10 min.)

Classroom rules: Don't be late, quiz each week, coupon, journal.

##### 2.2 Ask and answer name, age, college name, year in college, hometown, major

- a: say college name in 3 seconds
- b: introduce some names of majors (departments). (Flash cards)
- c: pair practice: No.1 and No.50. Individual practice

##### 2.3 language use

###### Role-play 1

A: You are McDonald's manager, wanting somebody who is young and native for a part-time job.

B: you are from other town but you want this job badly

###### Role-play 2

A: You are a black tea shop owner. Now you need a part-time worker of food nutrition major. The wage is 100 NT dollars an hour. Now someone comes to apply for the job.

B: You are a nursing student but you need the job badly.

###### Role-play 3

Student Union wants some new blood. The selecting standards depend on the candidates' majors, years in college and hometown. Please guess what qualifications can get the highest points and get selected.

\* The first one in each line works as the interviewer and the others in the line as interviewees

Early childhood education	Nursing	Food nutrition	Medical technology	Biological science
3	2	5	1	4

First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year
1	3	5	3	1

Taichung and beyond	Yun-Chia	Tainan	Kaohsiung	Pingtong
5	1	4	2	3

### Unit 3 There are four people in my family.

#### 3.1

- Teach the differences between there are, there is, have, has.
- Describe the picture on the blackboard or handout (T family), then Students practice in pairs.
- Describe some posters and pictures on the handouts

#### 3.2

- Read the occupations on the handout, and then test students from group to individuals
- Guessing game: T holds the card with an occupation on it, Ss guess: Are you a ...
- One student stands on stage holding a card, the rest guess.
- The same as above, guessing: Is he a .....a couple of times.
- Charade: five guessing only

#### 3.3 language use

Task: interview with 3 friends (a familiar one, an unfamiliar one, one designated by teacher such as No.1 + No.6). No Chinese allowed.

Guided story-telling:

- Josephine's brother, third year in Department of Medicine in Taiwan University and handsome, like boys, gay
- Margaret's sister is sometimes an actress, sometimes a lawyer, a scientist, a cop or a gangster. Margaret is never sure of her occupation.

1. University (of technology)	(科技)大學	14. policeman (cop)	警察
2. senior high	高中	15. librarian	圖書館員
3. primary school	小學	16. factory worker	工廠工人
4. elementary school	小學	17. stock broker	股票經紀人
5. kindergarten	幼稚園	18. jobless	失業
6. dentist	牙醫	19. retired	退休
7. lawyer	律師	20. accountant	會計
8. engineer	工程師	21. tailor	裁縫
9. chef	廚師	22. fashion designer	時裝設計師
10. housewife	家庭主婦	23. salary man	上班族
11. soldier	軍人	24. scientist	科學家
12. government employee	公務員	25. businessman	生意人
13. nurse	護士	26. bank manager	銀行經理

### Unit 4 Favorite activities

#### 4.1

- a. Get familiar with some activities or interests (see conversation favorite activities)
- b. T reads and student repeat, then group to individuals
- c. Use what, why, who, where, when, how often, how long to find out someone's interests
- d. Class ask the class leader, using the questions on handout, then ask teacher
- e. Find a partner (No.1 and No.6), ask about her interests.

#### 4.2 language use

- a. Four students form a group and write their own scripts according to the play outlines below. ( first hours: scripts written and rehearsed. Second hour: perform on stage )

What do you like to do in your free time?	
Why do you like to _____?	
When do you like to _____?	
Who do you like to _____ with?	
Where do you like to _____?	
How often do you _____?	
play tennis	surf the internet
play badminton	draw pictures
play ma-jong	chat on the phone
go hiking	read novels
go camping	go jogging
listen to music	be a volunteer worker
walk the dog	play volleyball

#### Outline of the scripts

Mr. Jordan is a chef.

He walks his dog every weekend because both he and his dog are too heavy and need exercise. On Saturday afternoon, he usually takes his dog to the park or Cultural Center where his dog can run around. Sometimes his wife and children would join him. They would go jogging or take a walk. After 2 or 3 hours of exercising, they go back home

Mr. Carpenter loved to listen to music. When he heard Beethoven's symphony, he would stop doing anything he was doing, even when he was kissing his girlfriend. One day, Mr. Carpenter was hit by a truck, and was sent to the hospital. The doctor was doing his best to save his life. At this moment, however, someone played Beethoven's music, and the doctor loved Beethoven very much and also stopped what he was doing. As a result, Mr. Carpenter died in the hospital.

## Unit 5 Favorite color and T-shirt return

### 5.1

- Write on the blackboard all the colors in Chinese. Practice reading the colors in English, including dark and light colors.
- Test students: from group to individuals.
- Prelude: Last year I received a Christmas present: a t-shirt. But it was too small and I must go to the store to change it. (use the real t-shirt)
- Demonstrate the words to be used in the store, including colors and sizes.
- Ask one or two students to be the customer, teacher acts as the clerk.
- Ask one or two students to be the clerk, teacher acts as the customer.
- Pair practice for 5 minutes. Randomly choose students, two by two, to act in front of the class.

This T-shirt is too small for me.  
May I change it into a larger one?  
Do you have a receipt?  
Here you are.  
What size do you like?  
What color do you like?  
small, medium, large  
black, green, blue, yellow  
pink, white, gray, purple  
dark brown, light red, orange

這件 T 恤對我是太小了。  
我可以換成大點兒的嗎？  
你有收據嗎？  
你要的在這兒。  
你喜歡什麼尺寸？  
你喜歡什麼顏色？  
小、中、大  
黑、綠、藍、黃  
粉紅、白、灰、紫  
深褐、淺紅、橙

A: May I borrow your eraser?  
I forgot to bring it today.  
B: Sure, here you are  
A: Thanks a lot.  
B: It's my pleasure  
  
A: Can you lend me your knife?  
I forgot to bring it today.  
B: Sorry, I forgot to bring it, too.  
A: Never mind.  
I'll go to someone else.

A: 可以跟你借橡擦嗎？  
我今天忘了帶。  
B: 當然，你要的在這兒。  
A: 多謝啦！  
B: 這是我的榮幸。  
  
可以借我刀子嗎？  
我今天忘了帶。  
抱歉，我也忘了帶。  
沒關係。  
我去找別人（去借）。

liquid paper, scissors, glue,

立可白、剪刀、膠水

## Unit 6 Ordering at a fast-food restaurant

### 6.1

- Numbers practice
- What time is it? (Flash cards)
- Words used at McDonald's (Flash cards)
- Demonstrate, practise, and role play

List of Prices at McDonald's

I'm loving it!

fried chicken (1 piece)	\$50	black tea	15
hamburger	\$35	coffee	20
beef burger	\$45	orange juice	25
pork burger	\$40	cola	15
french fries (L, M, S)	\$15,20,25	soda	15
		milk shake	50

Free ice cream for order over \$200.

Useful phrases:

Here or to go?

Cash or charge?

How do you want your French fries?

Enjoy your food.

Have a nice day

## Unit 7 Daily routine

### 7.1

#### Review

- Get familiar with parts of campus
- Housework in English (mop the floor, do the laundry, take a shower, surf the internet, take out the garbage, wash dishes )

### 7.2 Language use

- Guided storytelling: Monica's daily routine ( three paragraphs. Key words: get up 6:10, brush teeth, wash face, get dressed up, breakfast 7:30, go to school, clean campus, class 8:20. Noon: morning classes end 12:00, campus cafeteria, take a nap, chat, fool around, doze off. Evening: get home 5:55, dinner + TV, study until 9:30, do the laundry, mop the floor, surf the internet go to bed 11:30 )
- Teacher demonstrates, students practice 2 minutes and then describe. Paragraph by paragraph.
- Describing in first person, next in third person.
- A test next week.

### 7.3 Language use

- Group discussion: Self's daily routine. Group report in front of the class.
- Questions : 1In your group, who is the earliest to get up, the latest to go to bed? What time? 2Who makes the most of the lunch break? How? 3Who does the most housework? What ? 4Who is different from others in her daily routine? 5Who is the black sheep of her family? Why?

get dressed up	穿戴整齊	convenience store	便利商店
brush teeth	刷牙	campus	校園
cafeteria	自助餐廳	dormitory	宿舍
library	圖書館	open space	開放空間
housework	家事	do the laundry	洗衣服

mop the floor	拖地	take a nap	午睡
chat	聊天	doze off	打瞌睡
take a bath (shower)	洗澡	surf the internet	上網
do the garbage	倒垃圾	work part-time	打工

## **Unit 8 Winning the lottery**

### 8.1

- Number practice: million, thousand, hundred °
- Ways to spend the lottery money

### 8.2 Language use

- How would you spend the lottery money? Why? Pair discussion.
- Group report

## **Unit 9 Guessing game**

- Ask students to write down three English words, which are not to be seen by their neighbors.
- Try to explain in English the meaning of the words to a neighbor, who tries to guess what it is. Change roles. No Chinese and no gestures allowed.
- Find another classmate and do it again.
- Each student goes to the front to explain three words from teacher's handout. The rest try to guess.
- The guesser and the describer get one point respectively for each correct guessing.

## **Unit 10 Traffic report**

### 10.1

- Introducing directions, freeway terms, and traffic conditions; practice
- Draw the map on blackboard; demonstrate various traffic reports.
- Students imitate, district by district.

### 10.2 language use

Ask a student volunteer to be the anchorperson, describing whatever the traffic condition the teacher assigns to her.

## Appendix E

### Memorization group lesson plan

#### Unit 1 Preparation

1. Main activities: Pretest
  2. Procedures: Recording, prepare 5 questions and 20 pictures, 2 min per person (1 minute for describing a picture, 1 for answering questions )
- Note: speak as much as you can in the one minute

#### Unit 2 Self-introduction

1. Main activities: Classroom rules and self-introduction
  2. Procedures:
    - 2.1
      - a. First greeting (10 min) (T demonstrates: How do you do? Nice to meet you. Then Ss do it to 5 others in her same line)
      - b. How to say the reasons for being late. (20 min)
      - c. Classroom ritual (TPR modeling, 10 min.)
      - d. Pep story (boy and fishing rod, 10 min.)
- Classroom rules: Don't be late, quiz each week, coupon, journal.

#### 2.2 Ask and answer name, age, college name, year in college, hometown, major

- a: say college name in 3 seconds
- b: introduce some names of majors (departments). (Flash cards)
- c: pair practice: No.1 and No.50. Individual practice

All rise. = stand up.	起立	Bow	敬禮
Be seated.= sit down	坐下	Terrific	好極了
Once upon a time	從前	Fishing rod	釣魚竿
I went to the restroom. (toilet, ladies', bathroom)		我去上洗手間	
I overslept.		我睡過頭了	
I went to the campus convenience store.		我去學校便利商店	
There was a traffic jam.		塞車	
I went to a teacher. (my senior)		我去找老師 學姊	
Where are you from? I'm from Tainan.		你是哪裡人 我是台南人	
What's your major (department)?		你是唸什麼的	
What year are you in? I'm in the first year.		你讀幾年級 我讀一年級	
What school are you in?		你讀什麼學校	
Chung Hwa College of medical technology		中華醫事學院	
Biological science and technology		生物科學與技術	
Early childhood education	幼保	Nursing	護理
Food nutrition	食品營養	Medical technology	醫事技術

#### 2.3 Language use

This is a black tea shop. They want to hire a part-time worker and Jennifer, a nursing student, comes to apply for the job.

After asking about Jennifer's basic information, including her name, age, hometown, college, year in college, and major, the boss has something to say.

Boss: Oh, I'm sorry. We need to hire someone majoring in Food Nutrition.  
 Jennifer: But I have worked in a black tea shop before. I'm sure I can do it.  
 Boss: Sorry, but I prefer a food nutrition major. Besides, you are too young.  
 Jennifer: Well, if you insist. Oh, it's very hot here. (taking off her coat) Oh, it's much better now. Are you sure you like a food nutrition major?  
 Boss: Wow. Well, Er.....Maybe you are right. (swallow down some mouth water).  
 Anyway, the major is not so important.  
 Jennifer: Do you think I can come to work here?  
 Boss: Of course. Anytime time you want. 300 dollars an hour, OK?  
 Jennifer: That's ok. I'll tell you my decision tomorrow. See you.

Boss: Oh, I'm sorry. We need to hire someone from other cities.  
 Jennifer: Why? Your shop is in Tainan. Why do you...  
 Boss: Well, if the workers don't have too many friends here, maybe they will work harder.  
 Jennifer: (Take out a knife and play with it) Maybe you are right. I have many friends here. They always help me if I have trouble.  
 Boss: Of course. Friends are important. You have a very good idea here. When do you like to start working?

### Unit 3 There are four people in my family.

#### 3.1

- A. Teach the differences between there are, there is, have, has.  
 B. Describe the picture on the blackboard or handout (T family), then Students practice in pairs.  
 C. Describe some posters and pictures on the handouts

1. University (of technology)	(科技)大學	14. policeman (cop)	警察
2. senior high	高中	15. librarian	圖書館員
3. primary school	小學	16. factory worker	工廠工人
4. elementary school	小學	17. stock broker	股票經紀人
5. kindergarten	幼稚園	18. jobless	失業
6. dentist	牙醫	19. retired	退休
7. lawyer	律師	20. accountant	會計
8. engineer	工程師	21. tailor	裁縫
9. chef	廚師	22. fashion designer	時裝設計師
10. housewife	家庭主婦	23. salary man	上班族
11. soldier	軍人	24. scientist	科學家
12. government employee	公務員	25. businessman	生意人
13. nurse	護士	26. bank manager	銀行經理

#### 3.2

- D. Read the occupations on the handout, and then test students from group to individuals  
 E. Guessing game: T holds the card with an occupation on it, Ss guess: Are you a ...  
 F. One student stands on stage holding a card, the rest guess.  
 G. The same as above, guessing: Is he a ..... for a couple of times.

H. Charade: five guessing only

3.3 Language use: Introducing family

Josephine: Hi, Alice, what does your father do?

Alice: As a matter of fact, I'm not sure what he is today.

Josephine: I beg your pardon?

Alice: Well, my father changes his jobs very often. That's why.

Josephine: What do you mean?

Alice: Sometimes he is a lawyer, sometimes a soldier, sometimes a cop, and sometimes a gangster.

Josephine: Get out of here, Alice. I don't believe you. What do you take me for? An idiot?

Alice: I'm serious, Josephine! He is an actor.

Rosa: Hi, Nicole, can you lend me 20 dollars? I'd like to buy a sandwich.

Nicole: (feel the pocket) Oh, I'm sorry, Rosa. I forgot to bring my pocket money today. Sorry about that.

Rosa: Never mind. It's all my brother's fault.

Nicole: Oh, I didn't know you have a brother. How old is he? What does he do?

Rosa: Well, he's 21. And he's a medical student in Taiwan University.

Nicole: Really? Wait a minute. I think I have 20 dollars in my pencil box. Oh, by the way, does your brother have a girlfriend?

Rosa: No, I think he likes boys more than girls. I guess he's gay.

Nicole: I'm sorry. The money in the pencil box is gone.

Borrowing stationery

A: Hi, Margaret, can you lend me your scissors? I forgot to bring it today.

B: Sure, here you are.

A: Thanks. Oh, by the way, can you also lend me your knife?

B: No problem. Here it is.

A: Thanks a lot. It's very kind of you. Oh, by the way, may I borrow your eraser?

B: Of course! It's my pleasure. Oh! By the way, can you lend me your liquid paper?

A: Oh, sorry. I forgot to bring it, too.

B: Never mind. I'll ask someone else.

## Unit 4 Favorite color and T-shirt return

### 4.1

- Write on the blackboard all the colors in Chinese. Practice reading the colors in English, including dark and light colors.
- Test students: from group to individuals.
- Prelude: Last year I received a Christmas present: a t-shirt. But it was too small and I must go to the store to change it. (use the real t-shirt)
- Demonstrate the words to be used in the store, including colors and sizes.
- Ask one or two students to be the customer, teacher acts as the clerk.
- Ask one or two students to be the clerk, teacher acts as the customer.
- Pair practice for 5 minutes. Randomly choose students, two by two, to act in front of the class.

This T-shirt is too small for me.  
May I change it into a larger one?  
Do you have a receipt?  
Here you are.  
What size do you like?  
What color do you like?  
small, medium, large  
black, green, blue, yellow  
pink, white, gray, purple  
dark brown, light red, orange

這件 T 恤對我是太小了。  
我可以換成大點兒的嗎？  
你有收據嗎？  
你要的在這兒。  
你喜歡什麼尺寸？  
你喜歡什麼顏色？  
小、中、大  
黑、綠、藍、黃  
粉紅、白、灰、紫  
深褐、淺紅、橙

A: May I borrow your eraser?  
I forgot to bring it today.  
B: Sure, here you are  
A: Thanks a lot.  
B: It's my pleasure  
  
A: Can you lend me your knife?  
I forgot to bring it today.  
B: Sorry, I forgot to bring it, too.  
A: Never mind.  
I'll go to someone else.

A: 可以跟你借橡皮擦嗎？  
我今天忘了帶。  
B: 當然，你要的在這兒。  
A: 多謝啦！  
B: 這是我的榮幸。  
  
可以借我刀子嗎？  
我今天忘了帶。  
抱歉，我也忘了帶。  
沒關係。  
我去找別人（去借）。

liquid paper, scissors, glue,

立可白、剪刀、膠水

## Unit 5 Favorite activities

### 5.1

- Get familiar with some activities or interests (see conversation favorite activities)
- T reads and student repeat, then group to individuals
- Use what, why, who, where, when, how often, how long to find out someone's interests
- Class ask the class leader, using the questions on handout, then ask teacher
- Find a partner (No.1 and No.6), ask about her interests.

### 5.2 language use

a. Four students form a group and write their own scripts according to the play outlines below. ( first hours: scripts written and rehearsed. Second hour: perform on stage )

What do you like to do in your free time?	
Why do you like to _____?	
When do you like to _____?	
Who do you like to _____ with?	
Where do you like to _____?	
How often do you _____?	
play tennis	surf the internet
play badminton	draw pictures
play ma-jong	chat on the phone
go hiking	read novels
go camping	go jogging
listen to music	be a volunteer worker
walk the dog	play volleyball

Mr. Jordan is a chef.

He walks his dog every weekend because both he and his dog are too heavy and need exercise. On Saturday afternoon, he usually takes his dog to the park or Cultural Center where his dog can run around. Sometimes his wife and children would join him. They would go jogging or take a walk. After 2 or 3 hours of exercising, they go back home

Mr. Carpenter loved to listen to music. When he heard Beethoven's symphony, he would stop doing anything he was doing, even when he was kissing his girlfriend. One day, Mr. Carpenter was hit by a truck, and was sent to the hospital. The doctor was doing his best to save his life. At this moment, however, someone played Beethoven's music, and the doctor loved Beethoven very much and also stopped what he was doing. As a result, Mr. Carpenter died in the hospital.

Introducing family

Margaret and Elizabeth are classmates. They are talking about their family members after final exams.

M: How many people are there in your family, Lisa?

E: Four. My father, mother, and one older brother. What about yours?

M: Well, there are 6 people in my family: my parents, one brother and two sisters. What does your father do?

E: My father is a cop. He has caught many robbers. He is my hero and I'm very proud of him. How about your father?

M: My dad is an army general. He has killed many communists. He's a national hero.

E: Well, er... what does your brother do?

M: My brother is a student. How about yours?

E: Hmm... my brother is a student, too. He is very smart and he goes to Taiwan University.

M: Really? My brother studies in Taiwan University, too. He majors in medicine. What's your brother's major?

E: Errr... archeology. But he has a pretty girlfriend.

M: No big deal! My brother has three.

E: Well, er...oh, I have to go now. By the way, don't forget you have 2 required courses to retake in the summer. See you.

M: See you, # \* ✖ ◎.

## Unit 6 At McDonald's

### 6.1

1. numbers practice
2. What time is it? (Flash cards)
3. McDonald's words (Flash cards)
4. Demonstrate, practice, and role play

I'm loving it!

fried chicken (1 piece)	\$50	black tea	15
hamburger	\$35	coffee	20
beef burger	\$45	orange juice	25
pork burger	\$40	cola	15
french fries (L, M, S)	\$15,20,25	soda	15
		milk shake	50

Free ice cream for order over \$200.

Clerk: Hi, how are you doing?

Customer: Good. Thank you. I'd like two pieces of fried chicken, French fries, and a cup of milk shake.

Clerk: anything else?

Customer: I think that's it. Thank you.

Clerk: How would you like your French fries? Large, medium, or small?

Customer: medium, please.

Clerk: Ok. Here or to go?

Customer: To go. Can you give me some more ketchup?

Clerk: Sure thing. It's 170 altogether. Cash or charge?

Customer: Do you take Master Card?

Clerk: Yes, we do.

Customer: Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot to bring it with me today. Damn it. Why am I so forgetful?

Clerk: Never mind. It happens all the time.

## Unit 7 Daily routine

### 7.1

a. Review

b. Get familiar with parts of campus

c. Housework in English(mop the floor, do the laundry, take a shower, surf the internet, take out the garbage, wash dishes )

Speech: Monica's daily routine

get dressed up	穿戴整齊	convenience store	便利商店
brush teeth	刷牙	campus	校園
cafeteria	自助餐廳	dormitory	宿舍
library	圖書館	open space	開放空間
housework	家事	do the laundry	洗衣服
mop the floor	拖地	take a nap	午睡
chat	聊天	doze off	打瞌睡
take a bath (shower)	洗澡	surf the internet	上網
do the garbage	倒垃圾	work part-time	打工

### 7.2 Language use: Speech

Monica's daily routine

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,

My topic today is "Monica's daily routine"

Monica is a junior college student. She usually gets up at 6:30 in the morning. She eats breakfast at 7 o'clock. Then she takes the school bus at 7:35. She arrives at school at 8:05. Class begins at 8:20. Before class, however, she and her classmates need to help clean the campus. It takes about 10 to 15 minutes.

At noon, she goes to school restaurant, *Gourmet's Street*, to eat lunch. It's cheap and convenient, but not very delicious. After lunch, she usually takes a nap in the classroom. But some of her friends like to chat under trees. Some like to fool around on campus. They will doze off later in class.

Monica gets home at 5:30 and eats dinner with her family. They usually eat and watch TV together, and talk about what has happened in the day. From 7 to 9, she stays in her study to do homework or prepare for classes the next day.

After studying, she takes a bath, and helps her mother with some housework, such as doing the laundry or mopping the floor. Sometimes she would play video games or watch TV until 10:30. Then she goes to bed.

Monica is a good student. She usually gets good grades in every subject. But she knows that she still has a lot to learn. She is also popular with her classmates because she likes to help others, and she always wears a smile on her face. Everyone likes Monica.

Thank you for your listening.

## Unit 8 Winning the lottery

### 8.1

- a. Number practice: million, ten million, thousand, hundred.
- b. Ways to spend the lottery money

## 8.2 Language use

Tom and Paul are roommates. Tom is going out to buy the lottery ticket.

Tom: I'm going to buy a lottery ticket. I'll be right back.

Paul: You are daydreaming again. You'll never win the big prize. It's a waste of money.

Tom: Who knows? Maybe I'll win this time. If I won, I wouldn't forget you. We could travel around the world together, buddy.

Paul: Thanks a lot, Tom. I'd like to spend the money on charity if I had so much money. A thousand million NT dollars. Whew!

Tom: Why wouldn't you travel and have fun? Life is short. We should make the most of it.

Paul: Nay. I wouldn't think that way. You see, everyday in TV news, there are so many starving people who are waiting for our help, and I could do nothing about it. I really wish I could do something for them.

Tom: Is there any possible way for you to achieve that goal?

Paul: Well, I don't think so for now. Well..., maybe I can go out with you for a lottery ticket. Anyway, it's only fifty NT dollars. Let's go.

## Unit 9 Traffic report

### 9.1

- a. Introducing directions, freeway terms, and traffic conditions; practice
- b. Draw the map on blackboard; demonstrate various traffic reports.
- c. Students imitate, district by district.

north-east	東北	south-east	東南
north-west	西北	south-west	西南
island	島	expressway	高速（快速）道路
toll station	收費站	interchange	交流道
stretch	路段	south-bound lanes	南向車道
smooth	平順	sluggish	遲緩的
accident	事故，意外事件	roadwork	道路施工
watch out	小心	central part of the island	台灣中部
traffic	交通	Take a look at...=Check out.	瞧一瞧

## 9.2 Language use

Hi, this is so-and so. Let's check out the traffic now.

In northern part of the island, northbound lanes in the stretch near 泰山 toll station, there is an accident blocking the roadway because too many people in 桃園新竹 are going to Taipei to see CoCo's concert tonight. Please proceed with care.

In southern part of the island, both north- and southbound lanes in the stretch near 仁德 interchange, the traffic is sluggish because many fans are going to see F4 and May Day at Chung Hwa College of Medical Technology. Please watch out.

In central part of the island, in the stretch near Taichung interchange, the traffic is smooth. No, sorry there is no traffic at all because all the people have left Taichung, and there was not any car on the expressway. There are only many stray dogs from the neighborhood running and chatting on the freeway.

## Appendix F

### Tables

Table 4-1 The progress of the improvisation group

		fluency	accuracy	complexity	General performance
pretest	mean	3.17	3.37	3.32	9.86
	Std.deviation	1.83	1.75	1.67	5.16
	N=45				
posttest	mean	4.52	4.18	4.52	13.22
	Std.deviation	2.05	1.84	1.98	5.76
	N=45				
	t	-6.47***	-4.34***	-6.40***	-6.16***

\*\*\*p<.001

Table 4-2 The progress of the memorization group

		fluency	accuracy	complexity	general performance
pretest	mean	3.56	3.26	3.41	10.23
	Std.deviation	1.82	1.57	1.81	5.09
	N=35				
posttest	mean	4.20	3.77	3.99	11.96
	Std.deviation	1.82	1.50	1.73	4.94
	N=35				
	t	-3.37**	-3.01**	-2.97**	-3.35**

\*\*p<.01

Table 4-3 The progress of the combination group

		fluency	accuracy	complexity	general performance
pretest	mean	4.00	3.97	3.93	11.91
	Std.deviation	2.04	1.89	1.91	5.86
	N=45				
posttest	mean	4.57	4.38	4.56	13.52
	Std.deviation	1.89	1.68	1.63	5.04
	N=45				
	t	-2.29*	-1.84	-2.71*	-2.39*

\*\*p<.01    \*p<.05

Table 4-4 The progress of all participants

		fluency	accuracy	complexity	general performance
pretest	mean	3.58	3.55	3.57	10.70
	Std.deviation	1.93	1.81	1.81	5.44
	N=125				
posttest	mean	4.45	4.14	4.38	12.98
	Std.deviation	1.92	1.70	1.79	5.29
	N=125				
	t	-6.63***	-5.06***	-6.72***	-6.52***

\*\*\*p<.001

Table 4-5 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	178.259	3	59.420	37.057	.000
Intercept	44.537	1	44.537	27.776	.000
GROUP	1.376	1	1.376	.858	.357
PREFLU	172.408	1	172.408	107.522	.000
GROUP * PREFLU	.035	1	.035	.022	.882
Error	121.863	76	1.603		
Total	1835.750	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-6 Analysis of covariance

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	178.223	2	89.112	56.289	.000
Intercept	45.386	1	45.386	28.669	.000
PREFLU	176.179	1	176.179	111.287	.000
GROUP	8.057	1	8.057	5.090	.027
Error	121.899	77	1.583		
Total	1835.750	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-7 Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable: POSFLU

		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	.643	.285	.027	7.551E-02	1.211
2	1	-.643	.285	.027	-1.211	-7.551E-02

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-8 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	135.595	3	45.198	36.974	.000
Intercept	30.765	1	30.765	25.167	.000
GROUP	.101	1	.101	.083	.774

PREGRA	123.089	1	123.089	100.692	.000
GROUP * PREGRA	.120	1	.120	.098	.755
Error	92.905	76	1.222		
Total	1508.500	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-9 Analysis of covariance

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	135.476	2	67.738	56.069	.000
Intercept	31.228	1	31.228	25.848	.000
PREGRA	132.225	1	132.225	109.448	.000
GROUP	2.029	1	2.029	1.680	.199
Error	93.024	77	1.208		
Total	1508.500	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-10 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	172.894	3	57.631	41.129	.000
Intercept	33.366	1	33.366	23.812	.000
GROUP	2.052E-02	1	2.052E-02	.015	.904
PRECOM	163.692	1	163.692	116.821	.000
GROUP * PRECOM	1.510	1	1.510	1.078	.303
Error	106.493	76	1.401		
Total	1750.000	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-11 Analysis of covariance

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	171.384	2	85.692	61.093	.000
Intercept	32.665	1	32.665	23.288	.000
PRECOM	165.717	1	165.717	118.147	.000
GROUP	7.419	1	7.419	5.289	.024
Error	108.003	77	1.403		
Total	1750.000	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-12 Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable: POSCOM

95% Confidence Interval for Difference						
(I)	(J)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
GROUP	GROUP					

1	2	.614	.267	.024	8.240E-02	1.146
2	1	-.614	.267	.024	-1.146	-8.240E-02

Table 4-13 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1474.595	3	491.532	43.878	.000
Intercept	286.596	1	286.596	25.584	.000
GROUP	2.279	1	2.279	.203	.653
SUMPRE	1391.510	1	1391.510	124.216	.000
GROUP * SUMPRE	3.333	1	3.333	.298	.587
Error	851.377	76	11.202		
Total	15165.750	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-14 Analysis of covariance

Dependent Variable: SUMPOST

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1471.262	2	735.631	66.272	.000
Intercept	283.619	1	283.619	25.551	.000
SUMPRE	1439.754	1	1439.754	129.706	.000
GROUP	48.913	1	48.913	4.407	.039
Error	854.710	77	11.100		
Total	15165.750	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-15 Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable: SUMPOST

		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	1.577	.751	.039	8.108E-02	3.073
2	1	-1.577	.751	.039	-3.073	-8.108E-02

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-16 High-level participants--fluency

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Pair 1	PREFLU - POSFLU	-.62	1.098	.215	-2.857	.008

Table 4-17 high-level participants--accuracy  
Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	PREGRA - POSGRA	-.288	.9610	.1885	-1.531	25	.138

Table 4-18 high-level participants—complexity  
Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	PRECOM - POSCOM	-.65	1.111	.218	-3.000	25	.006

Table 4-19 high-level participants—general performance  
Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	SUMPRE - SUMPOST	-1.5577	2.78685	.54655	-2.850	25	.009

Table 4-20 intermediate level participants—fluency  
Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	PREFLU - POSFLU	-1.36	1.440	.288	-4.723	24	.000

Table 4-21 intermediate level participants--accuracy  
Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Pair 1	PREGRA - POSGRA	-.680	1.1804	.2361	-2.880	.008

Table 4-22 intermediate level participants--complexity

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Pair 1	PRECOM - POSCOM	-.96	1.274	.255	-3.767	.001

Table 4-23 Intermediate level participants—general performance

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Pair 1	SUMPRE - SUMPOST	-3.0000	3.62572	.72514	-4.137	.000

Table 4-24 Low level participants--fluency

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Pair 1	PREFLU - POSFLU	-1.16	1.370	.254	-4.541	.000

Table 4-25 Low level participants—accuracy

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
--	--	--------------------	--	---	----	-----------------

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Pair 1	PREGRA -	-1.034	1.2169	.2260	-4.578	28
	POSGRA					.000

Table 4-26 Low level participants—complexity  
Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	PRECOM -	-1.14	1.315	.244	-4.659	28	.000
	POSCOM						

Table 4-27 Low level participants—general performance  
Paired Samples Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pair 1	SUMPRE -	-3.3276	3.80384	.70636	-4.711	28	.000
	SUMPOS T						

Table 4-28 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)  
Dependent Variable: POSFLU

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	177.867	5	35.573	21.532	.000
Intercept	24.410	1	24.410	14.775	.000
LEVEL	1.802	2	.901	.545	.582
PREFLU	4.926	1	4.926	2.981	.088
LEVEL * PREFLU	4.529	2	2.265	1.371	.260
Error	122.255	74	1.652		
Total	1835.750	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-29 Analysis of covariance of fluency and level  
Dependent Variable: POSFLU

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	173.338	3	57.779	34.635	.000
Intercept	21.308	1	21.308	12.773	.001
PREFLU	28.695	1	28.695	17.201	.000
LEVEL	3.172	2	1.586	.951	.391
Error	126.784	76	1.668		

Total	1835.750	80
-------	----------	----

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-30 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	137.542	5	27.508	22.380	.000
Intercept	9.917	1	9.917	8.068	.006
LEVEL	2.857	2	1.428	1.162	.318
PREGRA	3.682	1	3.682	2.996	.088
LEVEL * PREGRA	3.920	2	1.960	1.595	.210
Error	90.958	74	1.229		
Total	1508.500	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-31 Analysis of covariance of accuracy and level

Dependent Variable: POSGRA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	133.622	3	44.541	35.678	.000
Intercept	9.656	1	9.656	7.735	.007
PREGRA	29.877	1	29.877	23.932	.000
LEVEL	.176	2	8.783E-02	.070	.932
Error	94.878	76	1.248		
Total	1508.500	80			
Corrected Total	228.500	79			

Table 4-32 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	168.724	5	33.745	22.565	.000
Intercept	6.370	1	6.370	4.259	.043
LEVEL	3.339	2	1.670	1.116	.333
PRECOM	8.646	1	8.646	5.781	.019
LEVEL * PRECOM	4.168	2	2.084	1.394	.255
Error	110.664	74	1.495		
Total	1750.000	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-33 Analysis of covariance of complexity and level

Dependent Variable: POSCOM

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	164.555	3	54.852	36.303	.000
Intercept	13.871	1	13.871	9.180	.003
PRECOM	30.037	1	30.037	19.879	.000
LEVEL	.590	2	.295	.195	.823
Error	114.832	76	1.511		
Total	1750.000	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

#### 4. General performance

Table 4-34 Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (homogeneity tests)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1478.734	5	295.747	25.831	.000
Intercept	22.594	1	22.594	1.973	.164
LEVEL	47.890	2	23.945	2.091	.131
SUMPRE	82.344	1	82.344	7.192	.009
LEVEL * SUMPRE	55.312	2	27.656	2.416	.096
Error	847.238	74	11.449		
Total	15165.750	80			

Table 4-35 Analysis of covariance of general performance and level

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1423.422	3	474.474	39.954	.000
Intercept	72.796	1	72.796	6.130	.016
SUMPRE	282.519	1	282.519	23.790	.000
LEVEL	1.073	2	.536	.045	.956
Error	902.550	76	11.876		
Total	15165.750	80			

The significance level is at 0.05

Table 4-36 Analysis of Covariance

Dependent Variable: POSFLU

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	185.349	6	30.892	19.648	.000
Intercept	15.931	1	15.931	10.133	.002
PREFLU	33.750	1	33.750	21.467	.000
LEVEL	2.318	2	1.159	.737	.482
GROUP	8.824	1	8.824	5.612	.020
LEVEL * GROUP	3.711	2	1.856	1.180	.313
Error	114.772	73	1.572		
Total	1835.750	80			

Table 4-37 Analysis of Covariance

Dependent Variable: POSGRA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	136.879	6	22.813	18.177	.000
Intercept	11.176	1	11.176	8.904	.004
PREGRA	25.420	1	25.420	20.254	.000
LEVEL	.350	2	.175	.139	.870
GROUP	2.285	1	2.285	1.820	.181
LEVEL * GROUP	1.111	2	.555	.443	.644
Error	91.621	73	1.255		
Total	1508.500	80			

Table 4-38 Analysis of Covariance

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	174.364	6	29.061	20.200	.000
Intercept	14.093	1	14.093	9.796	.003
PRECOM	28.735	1	28.735	19.973	.000
LEVEL	.670	2	.335	.233	.793

GROUP	8.027	1	8.027	5.579	.021
LEVEL * GROUP	2.027	2	1.013	.704	.498
Error	105.023	73	1.439		
Total	1750.000	80			

D. The interactive effect of strategies and levels on general performance

Table 4-39 Analysis of Covariance

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1492.712	6	248.785	21.796	.000
Intercept	73.225	1	73.225	6.415	.013
SUMPRE	277.291	1	277.291	24.293	.000
LEVEL	1.046	2	.523	.046	.955
GROUP	52.520	1	52.520	4.601	.035
LEVEL * GROUP	18.921	2	9.460	.829	.441
Error	833.259	73	11.415		
Total	15165.750	80			

Table 4-40 Effect of different strategies on high-level students: complexity

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: POSCOM

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	31.391(b)	2	15.695	15.512	.000
Intercept	4.971	1	4.971	4.913	.037
PRECOM	27.219	1	27.219	26.900	.000
GROUP	5.018	1	5.018	4.959	.036
Error	23.273	23	1.012		
Total	1008.750	26			
Corrected Total	54.663	25			

Table 4-41 Intermediate-level in different strategies--fluency

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: POSFLU

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	14.193(b)	2	7.096	3.916	.035
Intercept	3.104	1	3.104	1.713	.204
PREFLU	8.652	1	8.652	4.775	.040
GROUP	8.843	1	8.843	4.880	.038
Error	39.867	22	1.812		
Total	503.500	25			
Corrected Total	54.060	24			

## Appendix G

### Quotes from interviews

G-1

*Dramas are more fun, and easy to memorize. They are better than other activities. In addition, we can add something funny to it. Because I'm interested (I love performance), I don't think memorization is a trouble. Most of all, that's teacher's requirement. (C34)*

I like to learn things, such as English words, but kids' English (in language school) only teaches you how to speak, not how to read or spell. I don't like it. I think it's more comprehensive to get spelling involved, otherwise you won't be able to spell out a word when you are required to do so. In addition, some words are pronounced alike and hard to distinguish from one another. I often get confused, and then I would leave them alone. Forget it. Skip it. That's why I like dramas with scripts. I can see the words, not the sounds only. I dare not say the words I'm not sure of. If I'm not sure of winning, why fight? Maybe I lack the sense of security. (C10)

I hate dramas. Maybe it is because I'm an introspective person, I was super nervous each time I was on the stage, and I could hardly breathe. Dramas are a big shock for me. Sometimes I almost pissed in my pants. It was very embarrassing! (C13)

*Some of the dramas are interesting, but they seem to be useless (in daily life). I won't speak English with friends when borrowing something. (C3)* (This student thinks the language used in the improvisation activities is for daily use, while the language in the dramas is for drama only.)

G-2

*This activity was novel to me and I could interact with my classmates. (C20)*

*It's great to use our brain to think and speak English. I was only afraid that I might not know how to say some of the words. (C25)*

*I felt my ability to express in English improved a lot and I interacted more with my classmates. It seemed that everyone was involved in this activity. (C30)*

*This activity was super fun, like a TV game. It was a test of classmates' familiarity. Besides, I think what our classmates said was very funny. (C46)*

*I like this activity because there are many ways to express the meaning of a word. For example, if you don't know how to describe 'fruit', you can ask 'what a lemon is.' (C4)*

*I don't like the guessing game because I know very few words. My English is very bad. I'm illiterate. I don't know many words. What could I say on the stage? (C34)*

*I don't like this activity because I didn't know how to say some of the words. I can only say them in Chinese. In addition, I'm actually afraid of getting on the stage. I'd feel very uncomfortable. (C15)*

*This activity was too difficult. We needed to understand what the person on the stage said, but I couldn't. It was difficult. (C16)*

*Some people spoke too softly. We could hardly hear the voice even we went to the front. Besides, why did we need to guess in English? It would be good enough to understand other people's English. It was not fair for people who could understand but could not say the word in English. If we could not think of the English words on the spot, Teacher could teach or remind us the words afterwards. (C33)*

G-3

*I liked this activity because I was called onto the stage that day. That gave me confidence. Though I was a little nervous, a little messed up, I gained a lot of confidence. I learned happily. (C26)*

*Maybe it was because I was working part-time as a server. This activity could help a lot with my work, so I'd like to learn more in this activity. (C30)*

G-4

*I like acting, but not the kind with a fixed script. It would be very boring. (C31)*

*This activity was very practical. If I bought an unsuitable shirt, I could change it in English. I feel it was easy and I really learned something from it. (C23)*

*This activity was easy and useful in daily life. It's easy to learn. (C11)*

G-5

*I feel the plot was funny and practical. Ha Ha Ha. (C20 )*

*I like this activity because the plot was interesting and we could express ourselves the way we wanted. My partner and I really worked as a good team. (C35)*

G-6

*I think this scenario is pretty good, very funny, but I still don't like rote learning. We were nervous on the stage, reciting the lines and gesturing at the same time. The acting was definitely bad. (C9)*

G-7

*I can talk more about my family, and in so doing I can improve my speaking ability. (C21)*

*I feel it's not a bad idea to know more about our classmates' family members. Besides, it's quite easy. (C25)*

*We could understand each other's families. It makes us feel closer. (C33)*

*I didn't like this activity because there was no way for acting, and I love acting very much. (C8)*

G-8

*This is the most common thing in daily life. Learning English should start from daily life. This way I would gradually begin to like English, step by step. (C25)*

G-9

*Frankly speaking, I really don't like the lottery one. I felt it was impractical because who knows if we'll have the opportunity to win the lottery. Since I've never thought about this question, I really didn't know what to do with the money. When we were discussing this subject, I could hardly think of any way to deal with the money but give it to my parents. It was boring. (C9)*

*I don't think we had enough time to prepare for the result report, and we didn't quite understand the subject. (C47)*

G-10

*I don't quite remember the content in the activity. But in my impression, it took me a long time to learn to repeat the story. (C20)*

*Teacher spoke too fast in this activity, and there was too much to learn. It was bad for digestion. It was complicated, so to speak, so confusing. (C26, C6)*

G-11

*This activity was fatal. My English was very bad. Going on stage was only embarrassing me. My self-esteem got hurt easily. (C23)*

*I think this activity was a little monotonous. Though the road conditions changed from time to time, we seemed to only speak to the teacher instead of our fellow students. Besides, we didn't introduce a lot (about traffic). (C37)*

G-12

*I like the McDonald activity perhaps because I'm currently working part-time as a waitress. It is very helpful in my job, so I'd like to learn more about it. (C30)*

*(Talking about McDonald activity) I can only imagine the food but cannot eat it, so I don't like it. (C46)*

## **Appendix H**

### **INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS**

TITLE OF PROJECT: Memorization and Improvisation: a comparison of two strategies in the oral acquisition of English as a second language

NAMES OF SUPERVISORS: **DR. JOSOPHINE RYAN**

DR. JOHN LANDO

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: **MR. WEN-CHUNG LIU**

To participants,

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions and performances when exposed to different strategies for teaching spoken English as a second language. The study will be part of your normal conversation class. In that course you will experience various approaches to teaching oral language. I am interested in your perceptions of these approaches.

There will be a short interview with each participant who will be identified in the investigator's notes by a number. The interview will be audiotaped. No personal details will be required or shown. It is estimated that the interview will last for approximately 30 minutes.

The information provided by the participants will give valuable insights into the needs of students who are beginning their oral English learning and will be particularly useful in helping teachers of English as a second language to meet these needs more effectively.

As a participant in the study, you are free to withdraw your consent to be interviewed and to discontinue participation at any time without giving a reason. It is important to note that any withdrawal from the research will not prejudice your academic progress at all.

Any questions regarding this project can be directed to Wen-chung Liu on 886 (+6) 2671214 in the Nursing Department, Chung-Hwa College of Medical Technology, 89, Wen-Hwa First Street, Jen-Te Hsiang, Tainan County, Taiwan, 717 and/or Dr. Josephine Ryan on 61 (+3) 9953 3475 in the Faculty of Education, St. Patrick's Campus, Australian Catholic University, 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, Victoria, 3065.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint about the way you have been treated during the study, or a query that the investigator has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Ethics Committee at the following address:

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee  
C/o Research Services, Australian Catholic University  
Melbourne Campus, Locked Bag 4115  
FITZROY VIC 3065  
Tel: 03 9953 3157, Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint will be treated in confidence, investigated fully and the participant informed of the outcome. If you agree to participate in this study, you need to sign both copies of the Informed Consent form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the investigator.

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

DATE:

## **Appendix I**

### **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

TITLE OF PROJECT: Memorization and Improvisation: a comparison of two strategies in the oral acquisition of English as a second language

NAMES OF SUPERVISORS: **DR. JOSOPHINE RYAN**  
**DR. JOHN LANDO**

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: **MR. WEN-CHUNG LIU**

To parents/guardians,

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions and performances when exposed to different strategies for teaching spoken English as a second language. The study will be part of the normal conversation class. In that course your child will experience various approaches to teaching oral language. I am interested in students' perceptions of these approaches.

There will be a short interview with each participant who will be identified in the investigator's notes by a number. The interview will be audiotaped. No personal details will be required or shown. It is estimated that the interview will last for approximately 30 minutes.

The information provided by the participants will give valuable insights into the needs of students who are beginning their oral English learning and will be particularly useful in helping teachers of English as a second language to meet these needs more effectively.

The participants in the study are free to withdraw their consent to be interviewed and to discontinue participation at any time without giving a reason. It is important to note that any withdrawal from the research will not prejudice the students' academic progress at all.

Any questions regarding this project can be directed to Wen-chung Liu on 886 (+6) 2671214 in the Nursing Department, Chung-Hwa College of Medical Technology, 89, Wen-Hwa First Street, Jen-Te Hsiang, Tainan County, Taiwan, 717 and/or Dr. Josephine Ryan on 61 (+3) 9953 3475 in the Faculty of Education, St. Patrick's Campus, Australian Catholic University, 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, Victoria, 3065.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint about the way your child has been treated during the study, or a query that the investigator has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Ethics Committee at the following address:

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee  
C/o Research Services, Australian Catholic University  
Melbourne Campus, Locked Bag 4115  
FITZROY VIC 3065  
Tel: 03 9953 3157, Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint will be treated in confidence, investigated fully and the participant informed of the outcome. If you agree to let your child participate in this study, you need to sign both copies of the Informed Consent form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the investigator.

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

DATE:

## Appendix J

## Consent form by participants

## ASSENT FORM

## PARTICIPANT'S COPY

TITLE OF PROJECT: Memorization and Improvisation: a comparison of two strategies in the oral acquisition of English as a second language

NAMES OF SUPERVISORS: **DR. JOSEPHINE RYAN**  
DR. JOHN LANDO

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: **MR. WEN-CHUNG LIU**

I ..... (the participant) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research which includes an audiotaped interview, realizing that I can withdraw at any time. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:

DATE:

**SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:**

DATE:

## **Appendix K**

Consent form by Parent

### **CONSENT FORM**

#### **PARENT/GUARDIAN'S COPY**

TITLE OF PROJECT: Memorization and Improvisation: a comparison of two strategies in the oral acquisition of English as a second language

NAMES OF SUPERVISORS: **DR. JOSEPHINE RYAN**  
DR. JOHN LANDO

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: **MR. WEN-CHUNG LIU**

I ..... (the parent) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. I agree to allow my child to participate in this research which includes an audiotaped interview, realizing that my child can withdraw at any time. I am aware that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

DATE:

## **Appendix L**

Consent form by College

### **Consent Form**

I have agreed that Mr. Wen-chung Liu can choose the students of this College as participants in his research, Memorization and Improvisation: a comparison of two strategies in the oral acquisition of English as a second language.

Sou-Hong Lin

---

President  
Chung-Hwa College of Medical Technology

---

date

## Appendix M

### **Liang's Scoring Rubric and Actual Scoring sheet of Oral Task**

Scores Total:100	Items and percentage
<b>Appropriateness 20%</b>	
0-5	Unable to function in the spoken language.
6-10	Able to operate only in a very limited capacity: responses characterized by sociocultural inappropriateness.
11-15	Signs of developing attempts at response to role, setting, etc., but misunderstandings may occasionally arise through inappropriateness, particularly of sociocultural convention.
16-20	Almost no errors in the sociocultural conventions of language; errors not significant enough to be likely to cause social misunderstandings.
<b>Adequacy of vocabulary for purpose 20%</b>	
0-5	Vocabulary inadequate even for the most basic parts of the intended communication.
6-10	Vocabulary limited to that necessary to express simple elementary needs; inadequacy of vocabulary restricts topics of interaction to the most basic; perhaps frequent lexical inaccuracies and/ or excessive repetition.
11-15	Some misunderstandings may arise through lexical inadequacy or inaccuracy; hesitation and circumlocution are frequent, though there are signs of a developing active vocabulary.
16-20	Almost no inadequacy or inaccuracies in vocabulary for the task. Only rare circumlocution.
<b>Grammatical accuracy 20%</b>	
0-5	Unable to function in the spoken language; almost all grammatical patterns inaccurate, except for a few stock phrases.
6-10	Syntax is fragmented and there are frequent grammatical inaccuracies; some patterns may be mastered but speech may be characterized by a telegraphic style and/ or confusion of structural elements.
11-15	Some grammatical inaccuracies; developing a control of major patterns, but sometimes unable to sustain coherence in longer utterances.
16-20	Almost no grammatical inaccuracies; occasional imperfect control of a few patterns.
<b>Intelligibility 20%</b>	
0-5	Severe and constant rhythm, intonation and pronunciation problems cause almost complete unintelligibility.
6-10	Strong interference from L1 rhythm, intonation and pronunciation; understanding is difficult, and achieved often only after frequent repetition.
11-15	Rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation require concentrated listening, but only occasional misunderstanding is caused or repetition required.
16-20	Articulation is reasonably comprehensible to native speakers; there may be a marked 'foreign accent' but almost no misunderstanding is caused and repetition required only infrequently.
<b>Fluency 20%</b>	
0-5	Utterances halting, fragmentary, and incoherent.

6-10	Utterances hesitant and often incomplete except in a few stock remarks and responses. Sentences are, for the most part, disjointed and restricted in length.
11-15	Signs of developing attempts at using cohesive devices, especially conjunctions. Utterances may still be hesitant, but are gaining in coherence, speed, and length.
16-20	Utterances, whilst occasionally hesitant, are characterized by evenness and flow hindered, very occasionally, by grouping, rephrasing, and circumlocutions; inter-sentential connectors are used effectively as filters.

## Appendix N

New York Education Department: Informal speaking rubric

Dimension	4	3	2	1
Initiation	Eagerly initiates speech, utilizing appropriate attention-getting devices. Easily asks questions and speaks spontaneously.	Is willing to initiate speech, utilizing appropriate attention-getting devices. Asks questions and speaks evenly.	Sometimes initiates speech, using attention-getting devices. Sometimes asks questions and speaks hesitantly.	Is reluctant to initiate speech and struggles to ask questions. Speech is halting.
Response	Almost always responds appropriately to questions or statements.	Frequently responds appropriately to questions or statements.	Sometimes responds appropriately to questions or statements.	Rarely responds appropriately to questions or statements.
Conversation-al Strategies	Clarifies and continues conversation, using all or some of the following strategies: * Circumlocution * Survival strategies * Intonation * Self-correction * Verbal cues	Uses all or some strategies, but may need occasional prompting.	Uses some strategies and needs frequent prompting to further the conversation.	Uses few strategies. Relies heavily on conversation partner to sustain conversation. Rarely responds even with frequent prompting.
Vocabulary	* incorporates a variety of old and new vocabulary. * Uses idiomatic expressions appropriate to topic. * Speaks clearly and imitates accurate pronunciation.	* Utilizes a variety of old and limited new vocabulary. * Attempts to use idiomatic expressions appropriate to topic. * Speaks clearly and attempts accurate pronunciation.	* Relies on basic vocabulary. * Speech is comprehensible in spite of mispronunciations.	* Uses limited vocabulary * Mispronunciations impede comprehensibility
Structure	Makes few errors in the following areas:	Makes several errors in structure which	Makes several errors which may interfere	Makes utterances which are so

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Verbs in utterances when necessary with appropriate subject or verb agreement</li> <li>* Noun and adjective agreement</li> <li>* Correct word order and article adjectives</li> </ul> <p>Errors do not hinder comprehensibility.</p>	do not affect overall comprehensibility.	with comprehensibility.	brief that there is little evidence of structure and comprehensibility is impeded.
Cultural Appropriateness	Almost always uses or interprets cultural manifestations when appropriate to the task (e.g., greeting, leave taking, gestures, proximity, etc.)	Frequently uses or interprets cultural manifestations when appropriate to the task.	Sometimes uses or interprets cultural manifestations when appropriate to the task.	Rarely uses or interprets cultural manifestations when appropriate to the task.