



The University of
Nottingham

Corners, Rooms and Pondok: *a study of informal English learning in three Asian countries.*

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Lifelong Education
at Nottingham University.

David Kellaway
March 2021

Ethical statement

David Kellaway attests that the entirety of this work is his own and where that is not the case, due recognition of the author has been given. The research was constructed and performed in accordance with the Ethical Guidelines of the University of Nottingham.

Table of Contents

Ethical statement	2
Table of Contents.....	3
Abstract.....	9
List of Abbreviations	10
Tables.....	10
Figures.....	11
Acknowledgements.....	12
Chapter One – Introduction.....	13
1.1 Background to the Research	13
1.2 Introduction to the Research	15
1.3 Research questions	16
1.4 An unintended afterword	16
Chapter Two – Literature Review	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Defining the English Corner	19
2.3 English as a Global Lingua Franca	20
2.4 Motivation.....	21
2.5 L2 Motivational Self System.....	23
2.5.1 L2 learner anxiety.....	24
2.6 Learner autonomy	25
2.7 Informal Learning.....	28
2.8 Communities of Practice.....	28
2.8.1 Legitimate peripheral participation	30
2.8 Zone of Proximal Development	30
2.9 Learning in Families	31

2.10	Lifelong Learning	33
2.10.1	English Corner as Lifelong Learning	35
2.11	Theories of Second Language Acquisition	37
2.11.1	“Crazy” English	39
2.12	Cultural influences on learning	40
2.12.1	Face	43
2.12.2	The Confucian model – all obedience and passivity?	43
2.12.3	Criticisms of Hofstede’s taxonomy	44
Chapter Three – Methodology		45
3.1	Introduction	45
3.2	Philosophical underpinnings: Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology	46
3.3	Qualitative research	47
3.3.1	Ethnography	48
3.3.2	Action Research	50
3.4	Methods	53
3.4.1	Questionnaire	53
3.4.2	Interview	54
3.4.3	Participant Observation	57
3.4.4	Field Notes	57
3.4.5	Critical Incident Analysis	58
3.5	Data Collection	59
3.6	Analysis	60
3.6.1	China and Japan	60
3.6.2	Malaysia	62
3.7	Ethics	63
3.8	Access to Research Sites and Participants	66
3.9	Research Sample	66

3.10	Location specific data.....	67
3.10.1	China - access to the university.....	67
3.10.2	Japan – access to the university.....	70
3.10.3	Malaysia	72
Chapter Four – Findings in China and Japan.....		75
4.1	Rich description of English Corner in China	75
4.1.1	Attendance patterns	77
4.1.2	Area of the English Corner	78
4.1.3	Participant interviews	80
4.2	English Room at National Institute of Fitness and Sport (NIFS).....	92
4.2.1	Rich description of English Room.....	93
4.2.2	Interview with Dr. Kunishige.....	93
4.2.3	Participant interviews	99
4.3	Thematic analysis of English Corner and English Room.....	114
4.3.1	Frequency of attendance	115
4.3.2	Purpose of attendance.....	116
4.3.3	Strategies for learning English	119
4.3.4	Discussion topics	120
4.4	Lessons from the ethnographic study.....	122
4.4.1	Community of Practice.....	122
4.4.2	Informal learning.....	122
4.4.3	Place and Space.....	123
4.4.4	Sponsorship.....	124
Chapter Five – Findings in Malaysia.....		125
5.1	Introduction	125
5.2	Pondok English – a rich description of the first iteration	125
5.2.1	Reflections from the first iteration	132

5.2.2	Critical incidents from the first iteration	133
5.3	Pondok English – a rich description of the second iteration	134
5.3.1	Discussions with parents.....	147
5.3.2	Reflections on the second iteration.....	149
5.3.3	Critical incidents from the second iteration	149
5.4	Lessons from the Action Research study	150
5.4.1	Informal learning.....	150
5.4.2	Community of Practice.....	152
5.4.3	Make use of libraries and literature.....	152
5.4.4	Places and spaces.....	153
5.4.5	Promotion	154
5.4.6	Sponsorship.....	155
Chapter Six	– Conclusions	157
6.1	Introduction	157
6.2	Research question 1.....	157
6.3	Research question 2.....	160
6.4	Research question 3.....	162
6.4.1	Make content relevant to, and interesting for participants.	162
6.4.2	Facilitate and encourage intergenerational learning.....	163
6.4.3	Learn by singing and playing	164
6.4.4	Be child-centred.	164
6.4.5	Make use of libraries and literature.....	164
6.4.6	Attend to public spaces, places and times.....	164
6.4.7	Be ready for anything!	164
6.4.8	Promote the English Room	165
6.4.9	Be aware of sensitivities to English learning.....	165
6.4.10	Seek sponsorship and attend to ethics	165

6.5	Concluding comments	165
	References	167
	Appendix 1: Interview labeling schema (China).....	181
	Appendix 2: Interview labeling schema (Japan)	183
	Appendix 3: Description labeling schema (China)	185
	Appendix 4: Description labeling schema (Japan)	189
	Appendix 5: Description labeling schema (Malaysia)	193
	Appendix 6: Materials.....	201
	Conversation cards	208
	Appendix 7: Images from English Corner and Pondok English	213

Abstract

This research explores three informal methods of learning English: English Corner, English Room and Pondok English. The first is common in Mainland China where the label English Corner was coined. English Room is a variant of English Corner encountered in Japan. In the first phase, English Corner and English Room were researched using ethnographic methods, principally participant observation, to investigate the motivations of, and perceived benefits for attendees of learning in these informal environments.

The second phase of the study involves action research that built upon the findings of the first phase of the project. The research investigates whether the English Corner and English Room informal learning model could be adapted for use with an audience of parents and schoolchildren in Malaysian Sabah in a subsequent informal learning project that became known as Pondok English.

The findings from the study suggest that the model of informal English learning that underpins English Corner, English Room and Pondok English can be adapted, if not directly exported to different contexts and environments. Both adults and children benefit from it: there is evidence of strong instrumental motivation among adults who perceive the link to education and career options available to English speakers. The motivation among children appears more intrinsic and includes the enjoyment of communal singing in English, of being read stories in English, and the opportunity to capture some of their parents' time in informal and enjoyable short conversations in English that can be replicated at home.

The research highlights the importance of literature, libraries, parks and communal mentoring which were essential to ensuring the project's viability and long term sustainability. The research contributes to knowledge about the value of creating informal, culturally appropriate, cross-generational events and environments to promote the teaching and learning of English as an additional language.

List of Abbreviations

ALT Assistant Language Teacher
BC British Council
BM Bahasa Malaysia (Malaysian language)
BI Bahasa Inggeris (English language)
DEO District Education Office (Kota Belud)
Eiken abbreviation of Jitsuyo **Eigo** Gino **Kentei** (Test in Practical English Proficiency)
ELO English Language Officer (consultant at PPD)
ELTDP English Language Teacher Development Program
GB Guru Besar (School principal)
GTEC Global Test of English Communication (a product of Benesse Corp., and recognised only in Japan)
IELTS International English Language Testing System
MSN Microsoft Network (SNS)
PPD Pejabat Pelajaran Daerah (District Education Office)
QQ Proprietary Chinese messaging software, similar to WhatsApp or LINE
SCNU South China Normal University
SK Sekolah Kebangsaan (State systemic school)
SPM Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Secondary School Certificate)
TOEIC Test of English for International Communication
WEIBO Chinese equivalent of Facebook

Tables

Table 1: List of interviewees at South China Normal University.....	69
Table 2: List of interviewees at Kanoya NIFS	71
Table 3: Attendance pattern at South China Normal University	78

Figures

Figure 1: Look Think Plan Do (British Council 2014, pg 42)	52
Figure 2: Observation / Interview and Phases of Action Research.....	53
Figure 3: Map showing location of English Corner and environs of SCNU	68
Figure 4: Map showing proximity of NIFS to Kanoya City Hall.....	70
Figure 5: Map of Kota Belud and environs showing location of Pondok English	73
Figure 6: Map of Kota Belud district, showing proximity of Kampung Piasau.....	74
Figure 7: Overhead view of English Corner at SCNU	79
Figure 8: Frequency of attendance	115
Figure 9: Length of stay.....	115
Figure 10: Purpose of attendance.....	116
Figure 11: Strategies for learning English	119
Figure 12: Discussion topics.....	120
Figure 13: Conversation card “What part of your body is this?”	202
Figure 14: Reverse side (Bahasa Malaysia) of “What part of your body is this?”	203
Figure 15: Conversation card “Which animal is this?”	204
Figure 16: Reverse side (Bahasa Malaysia) of “Which animal is this?” conversation card	205
Figure 17: Conversation card “What is your favourite colour?”	206
Figure 18: Reverse side (Bahasa Malaysia) of Conversation card “What is your favourite colour?”.	207
Figure 19: “Anger” pair work discussion cards from www.esldiscussions.com	208
Figure 20: Additional vocabulary cards to support “Anger” discussion card	209
Figure 21: Song sheet 1.....	210
Figure 22: Song Sheet 2	211
Figure 23: Song sheet 3.....	212
Figure 24: Cluster of English Corner attendees at South China Normal University, Guangzhou	213
Figure 25: Volunteer teacher using “This is My Body” conversation cards with three children.....	214
Figure 26: Parent uses conversation cards with his two children	215
Figure 27: Parent working with children and conversation cards	216
Figure 28: Parent working with his son on “Occupations” conversation cards	217
Figure 29: Children working in groups with Conversation cards	218
Figure 30: Parents and children singing.....	218
Figure 31: A mother using Discussion cards with her two daughters	219

Figure 32: The author handing conversation cards to attendee children 220
Figure 33: Older children using the Discussion cards as conversation prompts 221

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped me along the path to completion of this thesis. I have been the beneficiary of much patience, wisdom and forbearance from my supervisor Professor Christine Hall, and in the latter stages of the thesis her colleague at the School of Education, Dr. Susan Jones, who very kindly read it and made valuable comments.

I dedicate this work to two women: my mother, who sadly did not live to see its completion; and to my wife Hiroko without whose constant encouragement it would never have seen the light of day.

Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

In early 2002, the economic slowdown that had gripped many of the world's economies exacted its toll on my Information Services job in a Japanese bank, and I was made redundant. In my mid 40's, I was at a crossroads. I pondered whether or not to continue working in the finance industry, or to return to teaching. An early adopter of computers in the classroom in the 1980s, I had gravitated to information technology as a second career, before some years spent as a graphic designer, print shop owner, a software trainer, a computer workshop manager, and a customer service manager for a mobile phone company in Cambodia, followed by moving to Japan in 1999. Not one to make decisions quickly, I bought a car and set off for three months driving around the country, staying in campsites, youth hostels – basically anywhere I could practice my rudimentary language skills.

A colleague at the bank who had left a few months earlier than I was unexpectedly in contact, asking if I was interested in teaching in China. A Japanese national quite fluent in Chinese, he had been offered a job teaching Japanese at a Foreign Languages university in Guangzhou, and he kindly recommended me for another vacant position in the English faculty there.

Curious about China and somewhat jaded after six years in Tokyo, I accepted the offer. For me, as a return to teaching it was like coming full circle, and I looked forward to the challenges of navigating Chinese culture and working with university students and faculty. I had heard of China's rapid industrialization but secretly hoped to see the last of Bicycle China. It was not to be. The industrialization that had started with the 1978 Reform and Opening Up was proceeding apace and I was moving to a city in the heartland of the Pearl River Delta, one of China's three main industrial areas.

Guangdong University of Foreign Studies is a specialist Foreign Language University located eight kilometres north of the city and some distance from the manufacturing areas. The university also borders a national park so the air quality is quite good.

I was appointed to the Faculty of English Language and Culture, joining 30 colleagues who shared a residence at the Foreign Experts Building, teachers of Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Italian and German, which gave the place a rather international flavour. As is usual for teachers and students in Chinese universities, I lived and worked on the campus, taking meals and exercise there and spending quite a

lot of time in the library. China's universities are largely residential institutions and students are accommodated one atop another in rather Spartan bunk-bedded dormitories with little privacy. I became accustomed to seeing my students around the campus on weekends and joined in with their many and varied seasonal activities, such as autumn viewing of the full moon, Chinese New Year celebrations and the like.

The university had a separate department comprising three English-speaking Chinese staff dedicated to handling foreign teachers, whose job was to smooth our paths administratively, help setting up bank accounts, taxation files and the like. However, busy people that they were, dispensing concert, restaurant, shopping other daily life information was not part of their remit.

Guangzhou's weather is not kind to clothing and especially to shoes and I asked a colleague once where I might get some shoes repaired or buy a new coat. His answer was that he didn't know, but that he knew who would. He added that he often asked similar questions to a group of English speakers he met quite regularly and that they were only too happy to help. He called this group the English Corner, adding that they met weekly at Zhongshan University, Guangzhou's most prestigious university. I was initially confused, thinking that an English "corner" might refer to a location in the corner of a building for example. We arranged to visit the following week and, locating the landmark rotunda near the east gate of the university, waited for people to join. We were in the open, in the space between imposing looking buildings, anything but a corner, I mused. Within a few minutes, a small group of about ten students had gathered and, dispensing with introductions, we paired off and started chatting in English.

I was impressed! My conversation partner was very skilled at English. She quizzed me in very fluent English about Australia and my background. My interest was piqued and I soon learned that other English Corners took place in the city on different days and I determined to attend, which I did over the following eight years, before planning to make the English Corner at South China Normal University, Guangzhou's largest regular gathering, the object of an ethnographic study. At the time I believed the English Corner to be under-researched, and wanted to learn more about the people attending it. I had seen nothing of its kind before.

My partner and I were at the time residing in Japan and China respectively and, both being teachers operating on different academic calendars, we were able to visit each other on holidays. On one such visit to the southern Kyushu city of Kanoya, I learned of the "English Room", contacted the organiser and arranged to attend. What I found was roughly analogous to the English Corner in China, but with

some important differences. My interest in these initiated the Japan section of the ethnographic research.

In December 2012, I accepted an appointment from the British Council to work on a three year project in Malaysian Borneo on the English Language Teacher Development Programme (ELTDP) and my partner and I relocated there, she to embark on a Masters Degree in English Education. I was to work primarily with school teachers, but also other stakeholders such as students and parents, in a project whose brief was to re-invigorate English language education.

During this time, in discussions with my supervisor I became interested in applying what I had learned from English Corner to a new project in Sabah, based on action research. I termed this research Pondok English – so named because meetings of English learners took place beneath wooden shelters called “pondoks”, which have a long history in Malaysia of being where Islamic scholars teach their students.

1.2 Introduction to the Research

The research I have undertaken is in two parts. The first was an ethnographic study of the English Corner, as a phenomenon of English learners taking responsibility for their own learning, and allocating time to regularly practice their oral English in informal group settings. The study was situated in two locations: one in the southern metropolis of Guangzhou in China, at South China Normal University, and the second in Kanoya, Japan at the National Institute of Fitness and Sport. The ethnographic study sought to understand how English Corner worked, as well as the motivations of attendees. Findings from the research in China and Japan are reported in Chapter Four.

The second, titled Pondok English, was an action research project, based in the rural town of Kota Belud in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo. Its primary aim was to enhance the linguistic confidence and ability of participant parents and children by facilitating meaningful English interactions between them. There were two iterations; the first conducted in the centre of Kota Belud from July to August of 2014, and the second in an outlying district or “kampong” from May to August of 2015. Findings from the action research are reported in Chapter Five.

I was in Malaysia as a teacher-mentor for the three year English Language Teacher Development (ELTDP) project; the British Council’s response to a tender announced by the Malaysian government in 2010 to address what were perceived to be rapidly falling levels of English competence among the population generally, and the student body in particular. The British Council was charged with

effecting change in English language learning throughout Sabah and Sarawak. Two locally based companies, Brighton English and SMR concurrently operated similar projects in peninsular Malaysia. The study I undertook in Kota Belud was broadly consistent with the British Council's fourth Key Performance Indicator for the project: to enhance community involvement with English language learning.

The study took part in Kota Belud, approximately 70 kilometres northeast of the state capital Kota Kinabalu. While Malays and Chinese tend to live in the larger cities, the dominant ethnicity in rural areas is that of the indigenous tribes, most commonly Kadazan-Dusun and Sama-Bajau. Few schoolchildren have exposure to English outside the classroom, and most have to learn the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, at school as it is also rarely spoken at home.

The research questions I have formulated are as follows. The first two relate to the ethnographic studies in China and Japan. The third draws on the first two in order to inform the action research project in Malaysia.

1.3 Research questions

1. What motivates participants to devote time to attending English Corners in Guangzhou, China and Kanoya, Japan?
2. What differentiates participants' approaches in these two countries and to what extent are these differences informed by cultural influences?
3. Is it possible to use an English Corner approach to establish an informal English learning project involving parents and school-age children in a rural area of Malaysia? What lessons could be learned from the studies, to inform future projects of this kind?

1.4 An unintended afterword

Most of this dissertation was crafted between 2012 and 2019. In 2020 as it was receiving its finishing touches, the world was subjected to the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus pandemic, according to Ashton (2020) unprecedented in scale since the so-called Spanish flu of 1918-19.

At the time of writing, the pandemic has claimed the lives of some two million people worldwide, notably targeting ethnic minorities and the poor (Waller et al, 2020, pg 244). It has caused havoc to lifestyles, economies and cultures. Of more direct relevance to this work, education and educational

delivery systems have been radically impacted. All three projects with which I have engaged have been curtailed, with no indication of when they could, or would resume.

The medical research response has been equally unprecedented. At the time of writing, more than 200 vaccines have been developed, notably in the United States, UK, India, China and Russia. The more effective are being rolled out for emergency treatment in the United States and parts of Europe. But even now there is evidence that wealthy countries are hoarding vaccine supplies (Kohler and Mackey, 2020) and it can only be hoped that UN initiated projects such as COVAX can make supplies available to less wealthy countries sooner rather than later, and bring this pandemic curse to an end worldwide, not just in the wealthy countries.

The pandemic has exacerbated social inequality with respect to education too. With the frantic dash worldwide to online mediated education, it has become clear that access to it is available only to those with the equipment and knowledge to make use of it. According to Waller et al (2020, pg 245) while online learning 'is replete with emancipatory possibilities' nevertheless 'the expectation that we can readily do so, and that our students and potential students will all enjoy access to the necessary resources (including time) to facilitate their full engagement ignores social and economic inequalities arising in part from the application of technology' (ibid pg 244). These issues are additional to government or private provision of physical resources and infrastructure (telecom towers, wi-fi etc.) required to support online education and which again, are lacking in rural and remote areas. The Pondok English project was initiated at least partly as an attempt to address societal inequalities in educational provision, targeting minority students in rural Sabah, Malaysia.

Its curtailment is frustrating indeed.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Having outlined something of the historical background to this research in Chapter One, this chapter attempts firstly to define and disambiguate the English Corner before briefly reviewing the status of English as a Lingua Franca. The chapter then turns to the more prolific literature on learner autonomy, motivation and informal learning. As English Corner is a socially oriented strategy for learning English, literature pertaining to Second Language Acquisition will also be reviewed.

The English Corner is posited as a Community of Practice; accordingly Lave and Wenger's (2001) defining work in this area will be reviewed, as will literature pertaining to cultural differences insofar as they may influence learning styles.

2.2 Defining the English Corner

A teacher, hearing the term English Corner, might immediately imagine a physical location in a classroom where children were encouraged to go to use English language related resources, in the same way as a Reading Corner would house reading materials for children to enjoy, perhaps in their spare time. Such a place would typically be attractive to schoolchildren, located away from entrances and exits so as to minimise disturbance, decorated with posters and cushions; in short a place where they might enjoy spending time.

The subject of this research is also known as the English Corner, however the term is best known in mainland China where it refers to an ad-hoc grouping of people who meet publicly, voluntarily and regularly to practice their oral English. In it is therefore unsurprising that the lion's share of academic literature concerning English Corner emanates from China, written either by Chinese academics or by foreign academics visiting the country.

English Corner is widespread in China. Su and Wu (2009) estimate there are more than 60 spread over China's capital cities, housed often within the grounds of universities, such as Hunan University, Beijing Normal University and the location of this research, South China Normal University in Guangzhou.

English Corner is attended by people who meet voluntarily to practice oral English, as part of an overall strategy of gaining proficiency in the language. According to Gao (2008, pg 60), English Corners have

‘as a defining characteristic, non-native speakers’ strategic efforts to interact with each other in English’. Moreover that ‘traditional English corners in public squares or university campuses are attended by hundreds of enthusiastic English learners from all walks of life’ (ibid, pg 61). Jin and Cortazzi (2002, pg 60) report ‘a series of encounters ... there are genuine exchanges of information on such topics as how to learn English, traveling abroad, using the Internet and making money’.

Chinese researchers seem generally agreed on the benefits of the English Corner and there is among the literature some justification of its purposes though there seems to be little research into motivation, specifically why English Corner participants believe it to be worth attending, nor into what actually happens in the course of an English Corner session. These are questions this research hopes to shed light on.

However, it is worth briefly examining why English seems to be so important in the lives of increasing numbers of non-native English speakers.

2.3 English as a Global Lingua Franca

English is now the world’s dominant second language.

British linguist David Graddol (2000, pg 7) asserts that English generally and American English in particular ‘is dominant as an international language because of its global economic power’. However, he contends that in the post-colonial age, the ownership of English is changing. There are now more speakers using English as an additional or second language, than those using it as their native language. Not only are non-native speakers greater in number but English is also used increasingly in multilingual contexts both inside and outside the traditional English-speaking countries (eg. United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia). According to Graddol (2000, pg 58) native speakers lost their majority in the 1970s, and he projects that by the year 2050 native speakers of English would number 433 million compared to those who have nativised the language at 668 million. Linguists from non-native English speaking cultural backgrounds (Canagarajah, 2012; Gao, 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 2003) argue that in future, English will be predominantly used in multilingual contexts as a second language and for communication between non-native speakers. David Crystal (1997) adds that the English language has some form of official status in 17 countries while the results of a British Council survey administered to 1,398 respondents in 1995 (in Bamgboe, 2001) showed that 96.3% of respondents agreed that English would remain the world's dominant language (pg 357); in short there is overwhelming acceptance of the global dominance of English. Additionally, Crystal (1997, pg 106)

reports that in the academic, scientific and technological sectors ‘over 80% of all information is stored in electronic retrieval systems in English’.

With English, and especially L2 English, firmly entrenched as the dominant world lingua franca, we turn to an examination of the role motivation plays in the lives of L2 learners.

2.4 Motivation

The Latin root for motivation is *movere* to *move* and thus to motivate means to provide a person with a motive, or inner drive, impulse or goal that impels them to do something or to act in a certain way.

According to Ushioda (2011), research into motivation was initially positivist and cognitively oriented, focusing on Individual Differences (ID) which included aptitude, personality, anxiety and cognitive style.

Oxford (2003) traces the beginning of formal research into L2 motivation in the 1970s with the work of Gardner and Lambert, continuing with Gardner’s (1988) social-psychological model which distinguished between instrumental and integrative reasons for learning an L2; in the 1990s expanding to include a wider variety of L2 learning orientations and models.

According to Nikolov (1999), motivation to learn is at least as important as a learner’s competence or aptitude. *Integrative* (or intrinsic) motivation refers to the learner’s willingness to adopt the culture and values of members of the target language community (pg 271), while *instrumental* (or extrinsic) motivation refers to more practical benefits of acquiring a language such as work-related issues like promotion or salary.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985, pg 158), when people are intrinsically motivated, they do an activity for its own sake in order to experience pleasure or satisfaction, rather than because of external pressure or promise of reward. In education, intrinsic motivation is felt to be more desirable as it is believed to lead to more effective learning. Dörnyei and Csizer (2002, pg 53) point out that ‘the core aspect of the integrative disposition is some sort of psychological and emotional identification’ with speakers of the L2 and their culture. Kramsch (2001, cited in Lamb 2004, pg 4) emphasises the all-encompassing nature of integrative motivation. ‘Learning another language is not like learning math or word processing. Especially in adolescence, it is likely to involve not only the linguistic and cultural capacities of the learner as an individual, but her social, historical, emotional, cultural and moral sense of self as a subject.’

Dickinson (1995, pg 168) suggested a strong link between intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy, because the former is promoted in ‘circumstances in which the learner has a measure of self-determination and where the locus of control is clearly with the learner’. She defines autonomy as both ‘an attitude toward learning and a capacity for independent learning’, contrasting the intrinsic and instrumental motivational theories of Deci and Ryan with Attribution Theory, in which motivation is related to ‘the reasons the learner believes are responsible for their success or failure’ (pg 166). However, as Katz and Assor (2006, pg 429) point out, offering choice to students is motivating only when ‘options are relevant to the student’s interests and goals, are not too numerous or complex, and are congruent with the values of the student’s culture’.

Littlewood (1999) finds that instrumental motives tend to appear around puberty, though Nikolov (1999) suggests it may be earlier. He outlines four major reasons why young learners are motivated to learn English: classroom experience, admiration of the teacher, family pressure and utilitarian reasons such as wanting to be the ‘best’ student. According to Nikolov, integrative motives are largely missing among young learners who are unable to link the language to its target community through lack of exposure to native speakers and a consequent lack of role models.

Fukuda (2019) in intensive surveys spanning 26 weeks of Japanese university students’ motivational beliefs about English, English learning and its management, and the value of examinations (pg 102) found that instrumental and integrative motives do not appear to be exclusive but in many cases complementary to each other.

Moreover, Clement and Kruidenier (1983) assert that there is no clear distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation. They report difficulties (pg 275) in differentiating them, for example, a learner might wish ‘to integrate with members of the other group in order to exploit, control, and manipulate them or because of dissatisfaction with one’s own cultural community’. As a result, almost any reason could be interpreted as reflecting an integrative orientation ‘as long as it implied a rapprochement with the target group’ (pg 275).

Li Yang’s *Crazy English* (section 2.11.1) appears to be an example. Yang’s exhortations to learn English appeal to Chinese nationalism in that ‘his ideology is blatantly racist and chauvinistic; he is anti-American, anti-European and especially anti-Japanese. He hopes the Chinese will use English to ‘defeat their enemies’ and elevate China to its former position as a leading world power’ (Woodward, 2008, pg 6; Gao, 2012, pg 352).

2.5 L2 Motivational Self System

Dörnyei (2009) modified and extended Gardner's socio-educational model by redefining *integrativeness* – the learner's identification with the desired ethno-linguistic group – as internal self-identification which he called the L2 Motivational Self System. Itself a psychological approach, it draws on Higgins' *self-discrepancy theory* and the concept of *possible selves* (Markus and Nurius, 1986).

The L2 Motivational Self System comprises three influences: an Ideal L2 self, an Ought-to L2 self and L2 Learning Experience, where the Ideal L2 Self describes the learner's future idealised version of themselves. Motivation to master an L2 stems, according to this theory, from the desire to minimise the gap between the learner's perceived actual and ideal selves. Many studies have lent support to this concept, and it has been shown to substantially predict motivation (e.g., Ryan, 1991; Ryan and Deci (2000); Taguchi, Magid and Papi, 2009). However, like Nikolov, Lamb (2012) found that a robust Ideal L2 self takes time to develop and requires a level of maturity.

The Ought-to L2 Self represents a learner's perceived pressure to meet the expectations of others, though studies – including one conducted by Dörnyei himself - have indicated a tenuous relationship between Ought-to L2 self and motivated behaviour (Csizér and Kormos, 2009; Dörnyei, Csizér, and Németh, 2006). Lamb (2012 pg 1014) suggested this might be either a weakness in the concept or in the way it was currently being measured. Taguchi et al (2009) found strong correlation between Ought-to L2 Self with instrumental motives among Japanese high school students, such as studying English to qualify for a job or for university entrance.

L2 Learning Experience reflects the impact of the learner's current learning environment on their motivation. As Dörnyei (2009) suggested, initial motivation often derives from engagement with the learning process or a significant influence (eg. a respected teacher) rather than from psychological constructs, which one would expect to be the case with young learners. Dörnyei (2019) noted the extensive reference to possible selves (ie. Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self) in motivation research but found L2 Learning Experience to be undertheorized. He attributed this to the historical roots of the L2 Learning Experience being qualitatively different to those of the self-guides, 'as a result of which this component represents a conceptual tradition which cannot be easily harmonized with the well-established theoretical basis of the possible future selves' (Dörnyei, 2019, pg 20). Yet the L2 Learning Experience was found to be a more accurate predictor of L2 learning success than either of the future

self-guides. Initially hardly more than a ‘broad, place-holding umbrella term that would need to be fine-tuned as some point’. The concept’s operationalization has also suffered from what might be called a splintering of terminology, it being referred to variously as Attitudes to learning English, L2 learning attitude, L2 learning experience and English learning experience (You et al, 2016 pp 96-97, cited in Dörnyei 2019, pg 23).

Nevertheless, while the future self-guides are based on imagined experience, The L2 Learning Experience is ‘rooted in actual experience’ (Dörnyei, 2014, pg. 9 cited in Dörnyei, 2019, pg 23). The concept is in practical terms, the way a learner engages with their learning environment is a powerful indicator of their self-concept as a learner. He proposes a definition of the L2 Learning Experience as ‘the perceived quality of the learner’s engagement with various aspects of the language learning process’ (ibid, pg 26) incorporating aspects such as school context, syllabus and teaching materials, learning tasks, peers and – perhaps most importantly – the teacher. Every practicing teacher is aware that students with a diminished self-concept will typically be late for class, slow at submitting assignments and reluctant to participate in activities.

Nikolov alluded to the importance of a respected teacher as part of L2 Learning Experience in the playful title of his 1999 article ‘Why do I want to learn English? Because my teacher is short’. Previous studies (Csizér and Kormos, 2009; Taguchi, 2013; Taguchi et al, 2009) have shown a close link between L2 Learning Experience and motivation, though Taguchi et al (2009) noted that student attitudes towards learning English played a less important role in China than Japan, which he attributed to a greater focus on their ‘ultimate goal, a high level of proficiency in English’ (pg 87). Even so, Papi (2010) and Taguchi (2013, pg 184) found that a positive L2 Learning Experience did not ‘necessarily lead to strong motivation or learning that was personally relevant’ unless it was coupled with a strong learner’s Ideal L2 Self.

2.5.1 L2 learner anxiety

Language learning viewed from this qualitative perspective of self ‘can also provide insights into the sources of L2 anxiety, a major impediment to learning another language’ (Papi 2010, pg 4). Spielberger (2010) differentiated what he termed *state vs trait* anxiety – the former referring to a temporary feeling of anxiety which fluctuates over time, whereas trait anxiety is more closely related to personality and more stable across different situations.

Horwitz (1986, cited in MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991, pp 252-3) explained three aspects of debilitating foreign language anxiety; communication apprehension, in which the learner has ‘mature thoughts and ideas but an immature second language vocabulary with which to express them’; fear of negative social evaluation; and test anxiety, or apprehension over academic evaluation.

In an attempt to validate the measure of anxiety relevant to Second Language learning, Horwitz (1986) developed a 33-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which was tested on students of French, Spanish and English. The FLCAS measured ‘the degree of anxiety, as evidenced by negative performance expectancies and social comparisons, psychophysiological symptoms and avoidance behaviours’. He found that students of English exhibited the greatest degrees of anxiety, though the reasons for this are unclear.

Papi (2010, pg 4) suggests that emotions are also important to the study of learners’ selves because conflicts within the self-concept lead to emotional states too. To the degree that learners cannot achieve their desired self-conception they will feel negatively about themselves (Markus and Nurius, 1986, pg 958). Such ‘L2 self-discrepancies, can lead to the arousal of emotional states like L2 Anxiety in language learners’.

Anxious students exhibit ‘avoidance behaviours such as missing class and postponing homework, reluctance to participate in oral activities, moreover they take more time to learn and recall items and vocabulary’ (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989, pg 284).

2.6 Learner autonomy

In an educational sense, the term autonomy – from the Latin *autonomia* – carries with it the nuance of ‘freedom to determine one’s own actions and behaviour’ (Collins English Dictionary, 1998).

Benson (2011, pg 16) defines three central tenets of autonomy; that ‘language learners naturally take control of their learning’, those lacking autonomy ‘are capable of developing it’ and that ‘autonomous language learning is more effective than non-autonomous language learning’.

According to Reinders (2016, pg 143) learner autonomy ‘has become an assumed goal of language education in many parts of the world’ and with developments in the last twenty years especially in computer assisted language learning (CALL), learners potentially enjoy greater independence through ‘access to resources and the possibility of working at times and in locations of their own choosing’.

Learner autonomy was first discussed in the modern era by John Dewey in a paper published in 1923 titled 'Education and Democracy' which drew inspiration from Descartes and Rousseau. It advocated freedom of choice for students, while at the same time ensuring that they understood the consequences of such freedoms.

It was not always so. Gremmo and Riley (1995) suggest that autonomy was considered at one time as 'a cranky affront to educational common sense', but is now often seen as a thoughtful and efficient alternative to traditional teaching (pg 152). Historically they associate the rise of autonomy and self-direction with the wave of minority rights movements in the 1960s, as well as a reaction against behaviourism. There was, they suggest, a convergence on the notion of learner centeredness. Paulo Friere, Ivan Illich, Carl Rogers and Henri Holec 'all emphasised the importance of the learners' role and participation in the educational process' (ibid, pg 152).

Holec (1979) stated that in order to be considered autonomous, learners must understand that they are responsible for their own learning and are in charge of planning, implementing and evaluating it.

Ryan (1991, pg 210) defines autonomy as a process of self-determination. 'In autonomy one experiences the self to be an agent, the 'locus of causality' of one's behaviour'. He sees autonomy as one of the most fundamental needs and purposes of human beings, on the same level as *relatedness*: 'contact, support and community with others'.

Viewing learner autonomy as a social construct, Cooker (2013, pg 30) identifies six different modes of autonomy, based on a Q-methodology sort and interviews with thirty language learners in the UK and Asia. She theorises the modes as 'manifestations of individuality' as opposed to 'psychological traits reminiscent of Individual Differences (ID) research'. Language learners variously identified as 'Lovers of Languages' (LOL) interested in languages for their own sake. 'A strong aspect of the LOL mode of autonomy is the motivating force of communicating with others and identification with target language speakers' (ibid, pg 38). Oozing Confidence (OC) learners had a 'strong sense of confidence in themselves as learners and their ability to master the target language' (ibid, pg 38), while Socially Oriented and Enthusiastic (SOE) learners were people-centred and 'willing to learn with other people.' Love of Language Learning (LLL) learners were dedicated to learning and appeared to enjoy the practice, which they found relaxing. Teacher Focused (TF) learners, while at first glance an odd category for autonomous learners, viewed teachers as valuable sources of support and encouragement, though not necessarily as directors of their learning. The sixth mode, Competitively

Driven (CD) finding ‘strong motivation in being better than others’ (ibid, pg 44) underscores the range of motivations for achieving autonomy in learning.

Informal and autonomous learning are seen as crucial underpinnings to lifelong learning, and more broadly for economic and social cohesion. With the widening accessibility of educational opportunities afforded by the internet, coupled with pressure on educational budgets worldwide, learner autonomy has become a major goal of education, especially in tertiary and adult education.

Lakoff (1990) views autonomy or Self Directed Learning (SDL) as ideologically from the Western liberal tradition, where individuals have the right to make their own choices and not be limited to institutional offerings. Pennycook (1997), Holliday (2003) and Dickinson (1995) all regard autonomy as emancipatory practice, contributing to the *social good*.

While all learners possess cognitive control over their learning efforts, Du (2013) asserts that Self-Directed Learning is relevant in all but a few cases to postsecondary and adult education ‘ranging from being one subsidiary component of a traditional teacher-directed learning regime to being the dominant principle of curriculum’. Autonomous learners should possess requisite competencies such as ‘ability to assess learning gaps, self-evaluation, reflection, information management, critical thinking and appraisal and emotional maturity to engage successfully in the process of SDL’ (pg 2).

However, according to Little (1991, pg 3) autonomy is ‘not a steady state achieved by learners once and for all’. Learners’ willingness to independently engage with educational tasks fluctuates from day to day, task to task and mood to mood. Learners may be autonomous in one learning situation, but not in another. He concludes that human inconsistency significantly complicates the study of learner autonomy. Fukuda (2019, pg 95) suggests that it is now generally understood that learner beliefs with respect to autonomy and Self-Directed Learning are ‘complicated and formed by interconnections between personalities, social context and learning experiences’.

Whilst the quantitative research tradition has been well-utilised in studies of autonomy and provides a close picture of the people and processes involved in L2 learning and teaching, it typically does not offer generalisability or comparability across sites or groups.

The extent to which a learner ‘takes charge of their own learning’ (Holec, 1981, pg 3, cited in Benson and Voller, 1997, pg 1) and acts upon it, forms the basis of informal learning, to which I now turn.

2.7 Informal Learning

In 1974 Coombs and Ahmed (cited in Tuijnman and Bostrom, 2004, pp 96-97) proposed the classic distinction between formal, non-formal and informal education. Where formal education is a highly systematised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured system typically comprising mandatory primary and secondary education of children followed by non-compulsory but state-supported tertiary education of young adults, non-formal education is any organised, systematic activity carried on outside the formal system for the benefit of adults or children. Informal education is a lifelong process in which adults obtain knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences. Also called lifelong education, it is characterised by being ‘unorganised, unsystematic and even unintentional at times, yet it accounts for the great bulk of any person’s total lifetime learning – including that of a ‘highly schooled’ person’.

Paradise and Rogoff (2009) and Feuer (2009) agree that informal learning typically takes place outside of formal educational establishments and does not follow a specified curriculum, though the learner employing it may have a very clear idea of their objectives and goals. It ‘takes place experientially and often through social interaction ... a fun atmosphere, group activities, an absence of formal teachers, curriculum or grading scale’ (ibid, pg 652).

Informal learning emphasises learning by participation or learning via knowledge creation, by contrast to the traditional formal view of teacher-centered learning and often includes activities such as reading self-selected books, participating in self-study programs, coaching or mentoring, seeking advice from peers, participation in communities of practice. Importantly, informal learning occurs in community, where individuals have opportunities to observe and participate in social activities and, in the case of communities of practice, to make changes to them.

2.8 Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger's concepts of Communities of Practice were first predicated on adults in workplace situations, functioning as groups of people who, according to Wenger (2011, pg. 1) ‘share a concern or passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’.

There are three characteristics of Communities of Practice; firstly a domain – an identity defined by a shared interest. Secondly a community – in which members of the domain ‘engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other and share information’ (ibid, pg 2). The third component is the

practice – in which the members of the community share a practice and a ‘repertoire of resources’ (ibid, pg 2). According to Quoc (2005, pg 43) they can be applied in educational communities as well. Informal learning in the workplace and in educational contexts is a process inherently linked to identity, membership and interpersonal relations.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginnet (cited in Davies, 2005, pg 558) define a Community of Practice as a collection of like-minded people who come together around mutual engagement in a project or undertaking. ‘Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short practices emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour.’ Davies (2005, pg 560) explains that Communities of Practice have three constitutive features, which are mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire. Geographical proximity in itself is not sufficient to define a Community of Practice and, in order to exist it must have members engaging in regular interaction with each other.

Communities of Practice consist of (more experienced/skillful/older) old-hands and (inexperienced/less skilled/younger) novices. It is the inculcation of novices into the practices of the Community of Practice that form Legitimate Peripheral Participation.

Communities of Practice exist in co-operative environments as diverse as sporting clubs, symphony orchestras and chess clubs, to name but a few with which I have had direct experience. They are ideally suited to Second Language Acquisition, as learning is ‘naturally a collaborative endeavor situated in a specific context where individuals in a community strive to negotiate meaning’ (Grazioli, 2019, pg 104).

I will later cast English Corner and English Room as Communities of Practice with long-term attendees as the ‘old hands’ and new joiners as ‘novices’. Pondok English had the elements of a Community of Practice, with myself and (later) Linda cast as the ‘old hands’, with children and especially their parents cast as the ‘novices’ though the flow of knowledge was certainly bi-directional and I learned much of cultural value from so-called ‘novices’.

Lave and Wenger’s framework has been applied to SLA research since the 1990s and, according to Grazioli (2019) it has been instrumental in understanding how language acquisition works, in that it ‘places greater emphasis on the social situatedness of learning’ (pg 104). Learners must consider themselves, and be regarded as participating legitimately in those communities, in order to fully access the resources of the communities.

2.8.1 Legitimate peripheral participation

The concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation is central to Communities of Practice.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation recognises learning as a contextual social phenomenon, achieved through gradual inculcation into a Community of Practice. A novice is considered a *tabula rasa*, as simply a person who lacks skills, but as a newcomer who negotiates their involvement in the Community of Practice. Learning relationships are situated within the broader relationships of community life; while learning processes entail both the development of the individual's membership of the community, as well as shaping of their identity. Over time, the progression from novice to old hand involves development of identity in tandem with skills (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

The progression is spiral, and involves the replacement of old-timers with the developing novices, over time, as well as changes in the practices in the community itself. The spiral character of changes also occurs in the newcomers' level of personal development as they engage in existing practices that have developed over time, at the same time contributing to the development of community practice 'as they begin to establish their own identity in its future' (ibid, pg 15).

Communities of Practice share much in common with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, not least in the sense of situated learning between more expert (usually older) and less expert (usually younger) learners. Where Communities of Practice were originally conceived as relating to adults, the ZPD focused on the development of children. It is to the ZPD that we now turn.

2.8 Zone of Proximal Development

The influential Russian educator Lev Vygotsky maintained that social interaction was critical to cognitive development and learning in children. He claimed that with support from an adult or more knowledgeable peer, the performance of a child could exceed what could be achieved alone. This highlighted the importance of interaction, as learners could benefit and learn from more knowledgeable others. Rather than considering a child's potential in terms of a static measure such as an IQ score, he felt that a developmental measure was needed to better assess children's educative potential. In 1978, Vygotsky defined the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as 'the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through the problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (1980, pg 86). He also claimed (Lantolf and Aljaafreh, 1995)

that development and performance in mental systems ‘was not a smooth linear process, but simultaneously entailed forward movement and regression (pg 619)’. Ohta (2005), reported in a longitudinal study of Japanese learners that ‘peers, working together, not only built upon each other’s grammatical and lexical knowledge, but also were able to perform beyond the level that each was able to attain individually’.

Strategies such as modelling, feedback, questioning and instructing help to structure or scaffold student learning from assistance by more knowledgeable others, to self-learning, to the goal of internalization. Such assistance in the ZPD is termed *scaffolding* and the accomplishments made termed *assisted performance*. Both are best employed when tailored to the learner and eventually withdrawn in response to learner development.

Vygotskian sociocultural theory informs Oxford’s (2003) ‘sociocultural perspective’ of learner autonomy in which context specifies learning, and consists of interactions and social relationships comprising mediated learning. This perspective – in contrast with the more quantitative methods of psychological research – looks in detail at the interpersonal mediating relationships between teachers and learners. Mediated learning is predicated on ‘a more capable, knowledgeable person, possibly an expert, [who] assists students’ learning in a given setting.’ As a result of this interaction, learners develop greater self-regulation and autonomy. Mediated learning is a ‘central tenet of various socio-cultural approaches to L2 learning’ (pg 276). Likewise, situated learning refers to the perception that ‘any learning is situated in a certain social and cultural setting, at a particular time, and with specific individuals interacting as participants’. A learner’s ability to make decisions and act purposefully (ie. their agency) advances alongside their cognitive development and self-regulation. According to Rogoff and Lave (1984) this is developed through contact with and assistance from more capable others.

As the prime source of childrens’ early learning and socialization, the family is increasingly being targeted as a partner in education.

2.9 Learning in Families

The family is the prime educative and socializing influence on children. According to Wainwright and Marandet (2017, pg 216) this has ‘implications for parents place and role in society, especially for mothers’ who are most often the main contributor to family learning. ‘Moreover, though open to all, family learning is a targeted form of policy, deployed in more deprived areas and focusing on families constructed as outside-the-mainstream’. This is how the project in Malaysia was conceptualized.

Since the 1970s, many countries have initiated government initiatives aimed at equipping parents with the skills to assist their children in education. In the UK, projects such as Every Parent Matters (Department for Education and Skills, 2007) have been replicated in Australia by the Parent Engagement Project (PEP) and, especially among indigenous families in the Northern Territory, the Families as First Teachers (FAFT) project (<https://education.nt.gov.au/support-for-teachers/faft>).

According to Evans et al (2000, pg 65), 'parents and the literacy environments they create in their homes are widely believed to play an important role in the development of children's reading and language skills.' Evidence for this is based on the time parents spend reading to their children at home. According to Senechal et al (1998), three categories of literary experience are available to children in the home: interaction with parents in reading and writing situations; experiences where children explore print on their own; and experiences 'in which children observe adults modeling literate behaviours, for example reading the newspaper' (pg 96).

'There is evidence that parent involvement in children's reading is positively related to reading achievement in the early grades.' In one intervention where 7 and 8 year old children read to their parents on a regular basis there was large positive effect on reading test scores that 'persisted up to three years beyond the end of intervention' (ibid, pg 99). Other studies revealed that up to 95% of the parents of very capable readers reported 'having identified letter sounds for their young children' (ibid, pg 99).

Outside of the home environment, parents also have a valued place as volunteers in schools, assisting teachers or helping with administration. Such involvement provides children with an excellent behavioural model. Epstein (1987) terms parental involvement in schools 'spheres of overlapping influence' (pg 701). She argues that developing school, family and community partnerships 'can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support.' The main beneficiaries of these improvements are children. 'With frequent interactions between schools, families and communities, more students are likely to receive common messages from various people about the importance of school, of working hard, of thinking creatively, of helping one another, and of staying in school.'

Coddington et al (2014, pg. 118) studied the extent to which family characteristics and parental education level predicted school outcomes, and more recent research has highlighted the relationship between the literacy activities developed in the home and the literacy learning of children in primary education.

While governments continue to exert strong control over the formal education of children, the same cannot be said of lifelong learning, which exists outside of traditional state-sponsored education. I now turn to this modern, but at the same time historical and increasingly important source of learning.

2.10 Lifelong Learning

In 1972, Edgar Faure, chairing UNESCO's report into education entitled *Learning To Be* foresaw that the school as traditionally envisaged would in future be 'less and less in a position to claim the education functions in society as its special prerogative. All sectors—public administration, industry, communications, transport – must take part in promoting education' (pg 162). The report went on to outline the changing relationship between society and education: the *learning society* conceived as a 'process of close interweaving between education and the social, political and economic fabric' implying that 'every citizen should have the means of learning, training and cultivating himself freely available to him'. He concluded that 'responsibility will replace obligation' (ibid, pg 163) leading to the concept of lifelong learning as 'the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries' (ibid, pg 180).

Political leaders have echoed this sentiment. In a 2011 speech, former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd urged Australia to be a 'a centre of intellectual freedom, creativity, innovation and connectivity, a *clever country* of entrepreneurial people capable of generating global branding and global brands beyond the minerals and resources sector' (my italics). Phrases such as *clever country*, *learning society*, combined with exhortations to *work smarter, not harder* underline the socio-political requirement that participants in this new paradigm of work must be independent lifelong learners, able to specify and measure their own learning and learning goals, be adaptable to change, with the social skills to be team players.

UNESCO, the OECD, EU and World Bank have vigorously promoted Informal Education and Lifelong Learning. They posit that the nature of work is changing from primary, extractive industries and manufacturing to a greater tertiary and service orientation. The DeLors (1996) report called into question the relationship between education and work. 'Given the present and foreseeable advances in science and technology, and the growing importance of knowledge and other intangibles in the production of goods and services, we need to rethink the place of work and its changing status in tomorrow's society' (pg 18). The report identified what it termed four pillars of education – Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Be and perhaps most importantly Learning to Live Together, in the face of increasing sectarian violence worldwide. The report is critical of current educational

methods which, it claims, do not at present pay sufficient attention to equipping workers with the ‘competence that enables people to deal with a variety of situations, often unforeseeable, and to work in teams’ (pg 21). The World Bank (2003) concurs. Problem solving skills, interpersonal skills, methodological skills such as the ability to learn independently and attitudinal skills such as the willingness to cope with risk and change are not addressed in traditional state-funded education with its emphases on curricula and testing. Knowledge workers must not only possess advanced technical and theoretical knowledge, but also know that it will soon be out of date – that its useful life is constantly shortening (pg 20).

Gremmo and Riley (1995) attribute the rise of multinational corporations such as IBM, Unilever, Renault combined with easier travel and tourism as an internationalism that has favored learning of a non-scholastic type, ‘partly because the constraints on adult learners are different from those on children’ (pg 154). Attempts to circumvent those constraints have inevitably led to the adoption of more flexible learning programs with varying degrees of learner-centredness and self-direction.

The World Bank (2003) specifies three meta-competencies that learners in the ‘Knowledge Economy’ require: firstly the ability to act autonomously and be able to see the bigger picture; secondly the ability to use linguistic tools interactively as well as combining language, text, symbols, knowledge and technology interactively; thirdly to co-operate in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic groups, to create social capital and to manage and resolve conflict (pg 25).

Griffin (1999) suggests the emphasis on lifelong learning is a result of ‘the crisis within welfare states brought about by massive unemployment’. ‘By promoting individual agency in determining the learning agenda, the welfare state tries to abdicate its responsibility to provide economic opportunities’ (pg 4).

Not all, however are comfortable with defining lifelong learning as purely an economic imperative. A dissenting voice on the role of lifelong learning authored by Medel-Añonuevo et al was published by the UNESCO Institute for Education in its 2001 report entitled *Revisiting Lifelong Education*, in which they expressed reservations at what they saw as a predominantly economic redefinition of lifelong learning since the 1990s. They asserted that learning throughout life was not a new concept, but that the ‘loud voices’ of the EU, OECD and the World Bank had framed it in economic and political terms, advocating the need to learn throughout life even though countries in Asia through their own Confucian and Buddhist traditional philosophies had ‘for centuries promoted continuous learning’. In the opinion of the authors, the predominantly *economic* interpretation of lifelong learning had

‘become problematic for many educators and practitioners who have come forward with such terms as *Lifelong (L)Earning* and *Learning to Earn* and as their succinct criticism of the way the term is being promoted’.

The authors also express concern at lifelong learning’s orientation towards the individual in place of the community. ‘The emphasis of lifelong learning on the learner could also be interpreted as assigning more agency to individuals in contrast to lifelong education’s thrust on structures and institutions’.

Individual agency, the role of learning in life, and one’s life story, are themes taken up by Duncan (2015) in a paper which thematically analyses interviewees of eight participants of the EU-funded Benefits of Lifelong Learning (BeLL) project. She finds a surprising ‘breadth of benefits’ (pg 6) being reported, such as improved mental health, community participation, making close friends, relaxation, skill development and broader awareness of other cultures.

In that many of the same benefits reported in the BeLL study accrue to participants of English Corner, I posit it as a freely available source of informal and lifelong learning and turn attention to the work of Dr. Xuesong Gao and his research into English Corners in China.

2.10.1 English Corner as Lifelong Learning

Gao (2007, pg 260) views the English Corner as informal education, with Chinese characteristics, categorising it as an appropriate response to ‘contextual constraints on learning English’ such as the lack of speaking practice in formal classrooms. ‘English learners on the mainland ingeniously create a unique sociocultural phenomenon called English Corners.’

He notes that the English Corner has also become a social community where the participants are able to find supportive peers and opportunities for self-assertion, arguing that the attendees’ participation in the community ‘enhances their autonomous learning as well as fostering subtle changes in their self-identities’ (pg 268). The study invites language teachers to consider how such out-of-class learning activities could be integrated into their pedagogic practices.

Recounting comments posted to a blog by former attendees of an urban English Corner located within a coffee shop called the Blue Rain Café, Gao (2007) explains that the majority are from members recounting happy times and their progress made in learning English, and ‘despite its fluid membership, there was a group of central figures’ who, in his assessment, provided the backbone of the group. He

notes that learners attended for social reasons as well as for learning English and that in the Blue Rain Café, the English Corner had become an example of a Community of Practice. He noted (pp 269-270) that there were 'low social boundaries' and that the attendees were 'not elite learners'. The emphasis was on communication and members were thus not strictly tied to speaking English. Where for example an interlocutor did not possess the English vocabulary to communicate a complex point, both conversants might resort to their mother tongue (Chinese) without any feeling of embarrassment or failure, much less concern about censure from an authority figure.

Other contributors to the blog spoke of the difficulty for new joiners in choosing topics, that they were exposed always to the same questions about their age, family and occupation. This has been an ongoing criticism of English Corner generally.

Gao (ibid, pg 272) identifies a collectivist orientation among the attendees. 'Such learners' collaborative learning efforts are also related to the Chinese cultural traditions, which cultivate a strong collectivist orientation among individual Chinese learners.'

Attendees at English Corners 'by coming together to practice English in an English club or corner, learners create supportive learning communities, which may give them a sense of belonging and sustain their learning efforts'. Yang (2014, pg 72) concurs: she finds that students who attend the English Corner, do so for the same purpose 'of practicing oral English and thus identify with each other to a great extent. They help each other and make every effort to cooperate so as to achieve the goal of talking to each other'. She claims such cooperative learning is consistent with traditional Chinese values which, according to Ho et al (2012, pg 41) are rooted in Confucian teachings such as filial piety, an emphasis on learning and achievement, hierarchy and discipline, identification with mutually supportive groups and great pride in Chinese cultural achievements.

With respect to the siting of English Corners, there is also a rather uniquely Chinese willingness to make use of public space for private cultural and social performances taking place typically in areas outside shopping centres and within the confines of public parks and gardens and. While it is true that utilisation of public spaces is by no means unique to the Chinese, perhaps the range of activities and the boldness of the public expression is, with full-blooded singing of historical anthems, immaculately dressed and highly skilled ballroom dancers, fully made-up and passionate performances of Cantonese Opera as examples. English Corner, in that it gathers people together for a common purpose in a public place, is another expression of this willingness to utilise public space.

Cresswell (2008, pg 134) suggests that ‘the definition of place, like any concept, is contested. At its heart, though, lies the notion of a meaningful segment of geographical space.’ Place, he explains, ‘as well as being a location, then, place has a physical landscape’ and a ‘sense of place’ which refers to the ‘meanings, both individual and shared, that are associated with a place.’

There is common agreement that the English Corner has a beneficial impact on learners’ English. Yang, (2014); Guo and Beckett, (2012) liken the English Corner to a second classroom in which students can create a more free and relaxed environment close to the living language, so that students really do learn to use it and can put their knowledge into practice.

I now turn to cognitive overviews of the ways in which second languages are acquired.

2.11 Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Conversational interaction between language learners has been long regarded as serving a purpose in Second Language Acquisition. Gass, Mackey and Pica (1998) state that until the mid-1970’s, it was seen as a tool to help learners to apply grammatical features, structures and rules presented in the classroom, often orchestrated by textbooks and teachers. This focus changed when Wagner-Gough and Hatch (1975) demonstrated how learners’ participation in conversational interaction provided them with opportunities to hear and produce the L2 as a communicative tool, beyond its usual and traditional role as a forum for practice. Learners proved capable of combining and adapting language structures themselves.

Cognitivist theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) primarily focus (Atkinson, 2010; Cook, 1999) on the *interlanguage*: a hybrid of the L1 and target language with its own rules and structure, which evolves as the learner becomes more and more proficient in the target language as a result of time spent immersed in it. According to Cook (pg 190) interlanguage ‘refers to the knowledge of the L2 in the speaker’s mind’ while the term *multicompetence* was coined to describe the ‘total language knowledge of a person who knows more than one language, including both L1 competence and the L2 interlanguage,’ in other words ‘the compound state of a mind with two grammars’. She researches the effect of learning an L2 on the mind of a monolingual, concluding that the addition of an L2 grammar influences the L1 grammar and competence that were already in place. In the process of so doing, she makes the important point that a learner’s competence in the L2 is a function of their competence in their L1.

One of the most influential voices in SLA presently is that of Stephen Krashen who introduced his *Input Hypothesis* concept in 1976, distinguishing between language acquisition as a subconscious process, and language learning which is a conscious one. According to his theory, the L2 acquisition process requires input at $i + 1$, where i represents the current level of the learner's competence in receptive skills. This constitutes understandable and valid input and is essentially the same as for learning an L1, which comes primarily from the learner's mother. Language learning on the other hand is associated with choice and agency, consciously learning and inputting the L2. According to Krashen, $i+1$ input is all that is required for acquisition.

Swain (1985) called this concept into question. Noticing with a group of students of French that they failed to develop native-like competency in the language despite receiving ample comprehensible input, she proposed the *Comprehensible Output Hypothesis* which stressed the importance of having many interactions on top of comprehensible input. Through producing language in conversations (with native speakers), learners are pushed to pay attention to the syntactic structure on their utterances in the light of conversational exchanges which help them to notice and recognise the gap between what they intended to say and what they actually said.

Michael Long (1996) found that conversational interactions between partners of unequal ability produce a greater frequency of conversational meaning-seeking strategies such as confirmation and comprehension check, clarification request, paraphrase and repetition than in dialogues between speakers of the same level, which tends to suggest that free-conversation activities might work best with native speakers as interlocutors. However, he added that interactional adjustments in conversations could give both speakers the opportunity to 'modify and restructure the interaction to arrive at mutual understanding.' His *Interactional Hypothesis* therefore states that such negotiation of meaning, especially where the L1 native speaker adjusts their speech, 'facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particular selective attention, and output in productive ways' (pp 451-2). The same was true for negative feedback in negotiations, which Long suggests may also 'be facilitative of SL development' (ibid, pg 340).

However, Liu (1998) notes that classroom teachers tend to focus on accuracy over communication during classroom interaction, a situation long ago identified by Long and Sato (1983). According to Nunan (1987), a focus on accuracy in speech production is unhelpful for Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), in which the significance of acknowledging a response on the meaning is considered to be a feature. Moreover, as first proposed by Sandra Savignon, that 'genuine communication always

has a non-linguistic goal' (Savignon (1997), cited in Hastings and Clarke, 2019, pg 125) which is the transfer of real information between participants, not just to rehearse or underscore a linguistic point.

As Thornbury (1997) explains, it is essential for learners to have 'feedback in order to respond to the content of what learners are saying rather than commenting solely on the form' (pg 282). He warns that classroom teachers often erroneously assume that what they teach is what students learn, and that corrections in a classroom interaction lead to learning on the part of the student. According to Thornbury, this is a dangerous assumption, and he cites as an example a Portuguese learner who explained that in order to learn from correction, he had to realise he was being corrected. 'Implicit correction techniques such as clarification requests made no impression, whereas hearing the correct version immediately after making an error allowed him to match his present level with the target' (pg 327).

Schmidt (1990) has also pointed to the importance of the role of 'noticing', leading to 'intake' in learning. He proposed that for learners to acquire new forms from language they hear (input) they must firstly notice those forms in the input. Schmidt distinguishes between what the learner hears (input) and what the learner notices, remembers and analyses (intake). Klein and Wolfgang (1986) refers to the second as matching: 'the learner must continually compare his current language variety with the target variety' (pg 62). Richards (2008) states that these strategies will 'lead to a gradual modification of learners' language output which over time takes on more and more target-like features' (pg 37).

2.11.1 "Crazy" English

A learning method enormously popular among high school and university English language learners in China and which seems to fly in the face of most research on Second Language Acquisition, is 'Li Yang's Crazy English'. Predicated mainly on shouting random English phrases aloud, the method aims to improve speech production by 'repetition of phrases, words and syllables, so that the brain becomes accustomed to making new sounds' (Woodward and Mair, 2008 pg 17). While reading aloud in the language classroom is often decried as wasteful of time, Duncan (2015) suggests it 'can be viewed as an educational tool' in that it allows learners to become accustomed to the sounds of English. Aimed solely at fluency skills, the Crazy English method contains no 'grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing or listening comprehension' (ibid pg 16) and Li's three rules for participation in Crazy English are 'Speak Loud, Speak Fast and Speak Clearly' (ibid pg 17).

Rising to national prominence in the 1990's, Yang's foundational myth is that he was a pupil who lacked self-confidence and failed many courses in English at university and faced the grim prospect of not getting his degree. He then decided to read English as loudly as possible in public every day, discovering a few months later that his English skills had improved significantly. 'Following his success in the College English Test, he began to publicly promote his way of learning by shouting English 'crazily' in public lectures nationwide.' (Gao, 2012, pg 352) In one of his television interviews in 2007, he claimed to have delivered more than 700 public lectures describing his method of learning English each year, and that his public lectures had attracted 30 or 40 million participants'. (ibid, pg 352)

While it seems difficult to take Crazy English seriously as a method of Second Language Acquisition, it nevertheless represents a reaction on the part of Chinese students to traditional grammar translation methods by which they are taught English in classrooms, and as a way of overcoming the fear of losing face by making mistakes, a topic which is further explored in section 2.12.1.

Benson and Voller (1997) question whether or not concepts of autonomous and self-directed learning are culturally bound, and if there are any ethnic or social groups whose cultural background predisposes them either for or against such approaches. According to Pierson (1996, cited in Quoc, 2005, pg 52) the popular trope is that non-western learners are 'conditioned by a pattern of cultural forces that are not harmonious to learner autonomy, independence or self-direction'. It is to these cultural forces that I now turn.

2.12 Cultural influences on learning

It appears obvious that cultural influences have an impact on learning.

Hall (1976) identified Asian learners as operating within what he termed *high context culture*, in which societal groups are closely-knit and can be relied upon to support each other. High context cultures 'tend to have a long shared history. Usually they are relationship-oriented societies where networks of connections are passed on from generation to generation' (Meyer, 2016, pg 40). Japan is an island nation with a largely homogenous population (ibid, pg 40) and while China has extensive land borders and has been subject to invasion throughout its history, the most recent four hundred years has seen significant periods when both nations were closed to the rest of the world. Meyer argues that this has brought about a shared consciousness, especially in Japan, where the unsaid but implied part of communication can be as important as, or more important than the words physically spoken. Contrasted with this are the sources of English language, young and immigrant nations such as

America in particular, with its “melting-pot” diversity of ethnicities, is the archetypal low-context culture where oral communications have a strong tendency to be taken at face value.

Littlewood (2001, pp 4-6) outlined three perspectives: Collectivism and Individualism, Attitudes to authority and Motivational orientation as the basis for his cross-cultural study of East Asian and European students’ attitudes to classroom English learning, but even now the most quoted and authoritative taxonomy of cultural influences comes from Geert Hofstede (1991) who, using data from management surveys of 116,000 IBM employees in sixty six countries (McCoy, 2003, pg 1004) proposed four dimensions of culture which he claimed could be used to explain why people from different countries do things differently. These indices he titled Power distance, Individualism – Collectivism, Masculinity - femininity and Uncertainty avoidance.

The first index, Power distance refers to the ‘the extent to which the less powerful members of organisations accept and expect that power is distributed unequally’ (Meyer, 2016, pg 121). Hofstede also extended the concept to families and other social structures, such as communities or tribes. Learners in Asian countries are generally considered to tolerate unequal power distance, and to accept that the teacher is more likely to be an authority figure than a facilitator or partner in learning.

The second; Individualism – Collectivism, indicates the degree to which people are willing to subsume their own needs and wants for the good of the group. Asian learners, who show a strong proclivity to be group oriented, tend to score highly on this index.

Thirdly, the Masculinity - Femininity index refers to the degree to which *masculine* values such as performance, success and assertiveness dominate over *feminine* values like quality of life, warm personal relationships, caring and solidarity. Hofstede found that learners in Asian countries showed a greater respect and favour for masculine values over feminine ones.

The fourth index, Uncertainty avoidance, specifies the degree to which people prefer structured and predictable situations over unstructured and unpredictable ones. Hofstede found that learners in Asian countries are not highly tolerant of risk and strongly tend to avoid uncertainty.

Hofstede’s study was heavily criticised for western bias and in 2005, a fifth index was added: Confucian influence, later renamed Long-term versus short-term orientation (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, pg 30).

Oga-Baldwin et al (2005, pg 168), writing about students in Japan asserts that ‘Confucian ethics considers the concept of benevolent authority and maintaining order and balance. It posits the need for authority figures to act with a view to the benefit of those lower in the social hierarchy’. Therefore, as authority figures, teachers, parents and leaders ‘have an obligation to be authoritative, reasonable, and exert power in the interests of the subordinate’. This perspective may help to better understand the culturally socialised experience of autonomy in Confucian related societies.

According to Huang and Gove (2012), the impact of Confucianism on Asian cultures can be found in all dimensions of Hofstede’s model. According to Quoc (2005, pg 13) it is useful to describe the influence of Confucianism on Asian educational ideology, the roles of teachers and learners and their beliefs and attitudes. Two indices, Power distance and Individualism – Collectivism are especially pertinent to the discussion of cultural differences and their effects on learning.

Confucian Heritage Countries (CHC) generally score high on the Power distance index, which suggests that there is a high degree of inequality in society in these countries (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). In CHC countries, the inequality of power is manifested in the Confucian and Buddhist belief that unequal relationships have to be accepted as a basis of societal stability. According to Quoc (2005, pg 14) these are translated into social dyads, such as teacher - student, old - young, parent - child, ruler – ruled; with the former having more power and receiving respect and obedience from the latter. In China, learners are expected to respect the teacher, who automatically becomes part of their *guanxi* (favoured) group. The teacher is not only a model of correct behaviour but also a subject expert whose knowledge should not be questioned.

Hofstede (1991, pg 51) defines Collectivism as pertaining to societies in which people are integrated into strong, cohesive groups for which they are expected to make sacrifices, in return for which the group will continue to protect them in exchange for their loyalty. CHC countries are again considered generally collectivist in orientation and a famous example of this is the work culture of Japan, in which employees frequently work long hours without claiming overtime and often without taking holidays, as an expression of loyalty to their company.

Individualism is more commonly associated with western societies in which the ties between individuals are looser: people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family. The western work culture, with its increasingly contract-based employment and job-switching is a valid representation.

2.12.1 Face

Central to the ideas of Collectivism and Confucianism is the maintenance of social harmony and avoidance of confrontations and conflicts among people. In this respect, it is important to protect *mianzi* (face) which can be considered as concern for ‘how one is evaluated by others’ (Hinze, 2002, cited in Ramsay, 2005, pg 264). Ramsay contends that face ‘lies at the heart of Confucian teachings on social and interpersonal relationships and, as such, maintains a high degree of salience in social behaviour and practice in Confucian-heritage cultures’ (ibid, pg 264). Face can be given to another, or gained by public praise, face also can be protected, but face can also be lost by public ridicule or criticism. Loss of face is stringently avoided in Collectivist societies.

Ho and Crookall (1995, pg 237) state that the concept of face applies to communication, in that ‘one must protect the other’s self-image and feelings, [in order that] he or she is not confronted directly’. Chinese students have great respect for and wish to maintain their teachers’ *mianzi* and for the same reason, teachers can also be quite reluctant to admit any inadequacies on their part. They suggest it would be very difficult for a Chinese teacher to say they did not know the answer to a question and to invite the student to work out a solution with them.

According to Woodward and Mair (2008, pg 25) the Crazy English method is popular in China not least because it attempts to confront the issue of face. ‘The Crazy in Crazy English signifies Li Yang’s desire for students to have passion in their studies and to fulfill their dreams by giving more than 100 percent of themselves to their personal goals without fear or favour.’ This seems an important message in East Asian countries ‘as one of the major hindrances to ... learning languages is the fear of losing face’.

2.12.2 The Confucian model – all obedience and passivity?

Jin and Cortazzi (2002, pg 757) find more than obedience and passivity in the Confucian model. They suggest that Confucian attitudes include:

placing high value on education; seeing learning as a moral duty; knowing that learning involves reflection and application; defining pedagogical relations; studying hard as a responsibility to the family; believing that effort and hard work can compensate for lack of ability; respecting teachers and understanding that teachers care; seeing the teacher as a model of both knowledge and morality; asking reflective questions; and learning from peers.

Researchers have, however, begun to question the assertion that Asian learners are passive and cooperative at all. Gao (2008) finds that ‘it is an over generalisation to claim the Chinese students are reticent and passive learners, and interpretations based on cultural attributes may not be considered an easy diagnosis for all problems associated with Chinese or Asian learners’. Jin and Cortazzi (2002) suggest that suppositions on the culture of learning in China need to be interpreted against a context of rapid social change, popularity of public media and especially the Internet in a globalising world and with an increasing availability of western-trained ethnic Chinese EFL teachers returning home to teach.

2.12.3 Criticisms of Hofstede’s taxonomy

Kumaravadivelu (2003, pg 710) finds the reference to Asian cultures altogether too broad. ‘It is apparent that there exists a harmful homogenisation of nearly three billion people belonging to cultures as contrasting and conflicting as Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and many others – all thrown into a single cultural basket labelled Asian.’ He further contends that Asians do not have passivity all to themselves: ‘the classroom behavioural profile attributed to Asian students is not confined to them alone; it can be seen among mainstream North American students as well’.

Hofstede’s taxonomy has been subjected to criticism for gender bias in data gathering, as most of the IBM employee respondents were male. A second criticism (McCoy, 2003, pg 1005) was that the kind of highly-educated respondents working at IBM, might not be representative of the ‘culture score of the entire country under investigation’.

Perhaps it is best to view cultural influences on learning as tendencies rather than certainties, as helpful rather than indicative. The truth for specific learners in specific communities is likely to be more nuanced and less deterministic; influenced by physical (climatic, geographic, genetic) factors as much as cultural ones.

With the advent of mass communication technologies in the twentieth century, language learning has been the subject of much multi-faceted research. The next chapter explores and justifies the research methodologies used in this work.

Chapter Three – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline and justify the choice of research methodologies appropriate to the two research endeavours constituting this work, which has been guided by the research questions:

1. What motivates participants to devote time to attending English Corners in Guangzhou, China and Kanoya, Japan?
2. What differentiates participants' approaches in these two countries and to what extent are these differences informed by cultural influences?
3. Is it possible to use an English Corner approach to establish an informal English learning project involving parents and school-age children in a rural area of Malaysia? What lessons could be learned from the studies, to inform future projects of this kind?

The first two questions are addressed as an ethnographic study, which took place in two locations; Guangzhou, China and Kanoya, Japan using participant observation, semi-structured interviews informed by questionnaires, and field notes.

The third question is addressed employing Action Research. The research took place in the rural town of Kota Belud and the adjoining district of Kampung Piasau in Malaysian Borneo. Action Research (AR) is predicated either on solving a problem or investigating a phenomenon with the intention of learning more about it.

The structure of this chapter is

- Introduction to the research
- Philosophical underpinnings guiding this research
- Brief exploration of qualitative research
- Brief exploration of ethnography
- Brief exploration of action research
- Methods appropriate to ethnography and action research
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Ethical considerations

There are many research methodologies available to social scientists, and their choice of methodologies largely reflect their beliefs and attitudes, which in turn are guided by their convictions on the nature of reality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 pg 14). It is to these considerations that I now turn.

3.2 Philosophical underpinnings: Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), ontological questions are concerned with the form and nature of reality, reflecting a world view and determining what can be confidently known (or not known) about it. Epistemology examines the relationship between the knower and what can be known. A researcher's methodology is largely determined by the foregoing ontology and epistemology; *what is to be known* will determine the *way* one attempts to learn about it. Ontology informs epistemology, which in turn informs methodology and the choice of research paradigm.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) outline four co-existing ontologies. These are

1. Positivism,
2. Post-positivism,
3. Critical theory and
4. Naturalism/constructivism.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that positivist and naturalist paradigms are not compatible. However, naturalistic paradigms and their associated methodologies have recently become increasingly popular in the field of educational research. Hsu (2005, pg 106) suggests there is a tendency towards convergence of so-called objective research paradigms 'towards the subjective end of the subjective-objective epistemological continuum', reflecting to some extent societal changes of belief about the nature of truth and whether or not pure objectivity is attainable in a research (or any) context.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) maintain that a researcher's underlying beliefs about the world inevitably determine how they approach both researching and understanding it. My research into the English Corner is predicated on a naturalist/constructivist ontology, which attempts to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (ibid, pg 118). It is an *emic* orientation, aligned to Max Weber's *verstehen* concept of understanding phenomena in their context or natural surroundings. It rejects the positivist stance in which reality is viewed as objective, and knowledge viewed as moral and value-neutral.

For the purposes of ethnographic and action research, it is clear to me that realities are formed locally, socially and by lived experience. Such realities are ‘dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them’ (Guba, 1990, pg 27).

Working at close hand with the subjects of the research, the researcher cannot *but* be part of the findings and must interpret them. Therefore, epistemologically I subscribe to an interpretivist-subjectivist view, where findings derive from the interaction between enquirer and those enquired into.

Whilst research in the field of learner autonomy is open to several approaches; I chose naturalistic methodologies which allow me to look into the social interaction between learners and peers, teachers, parents and others in the process.

Whilst I have defined my position as aligned to a constructivist ontology, an interpretivist epistemology and resultant naturalistic methodologies, it is important nevertheless to admit that alternative methods might also produce useful data. As Donmoyer (2006, pg 23) explains, ‘each perspective might be useful to accomplish different purposes, and at the very least, multiple perspectives can make us aware of different options available to us.’

The two dominant research paradigms of the current era are qualitative and quantitative research. Whilst the relative fortunes of each have waned and waxed over the years reflecting wider societal opinions of how the nature of truth and its achievability is regarded, it appears that the two are merging. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue that *all* social research takes the form of participant observation, in that it entails the researcher’s participation in the social world, followed by reflection on the outcomes of that participation.

I selected qualitative research as the methodology most likely to provide data relevant to the research questions; for its ability to paint rich descriptions of the participants of the English Corner, English Room and Pondok English. The intention is to permit the reader to feel familiar with the sights, sounds and surroundings of the phenomenon under research. I now turn to a brief exploration of qualitative research.

3.3 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a scientific method aimed at learning more about human experience. It refers to ‘meanings, concept definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things’

(Berg, 2017, pg 12) rather than specifically to numerical data, which tends to characterise quantitative research where the focus is frequently on how often a certain phenomenon occurs. Qualitative research tends to be more focused on reasons *why* the phenomenon occurs.

To study human experience, methods that are sensitive to it are required. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), it is 'essential to know how people define their situations' (pg 40). Denzin and Lincoln (1994, pg 2), define qualitative research as 'multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter'.

It comprises methods such as case study, introspection, interview, observation, texts, each of which 'describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives'.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002) conclude that as human behaviour is inherently irregular and unpredictable, it is not consistently governed by general, universal laws or underlying regularities. Thus, the qualitative researcher's role is to understand human events and interpret social reality. The social world can only be understood 'from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated'. According to Beck et al (1979) the social sciences cannot penetrate to what lies behind social reality so 'they must work directly with man's definitions of reality and the rules he devises for coping with it'. Thus social sciences help us to make sense of our world; they offer 'explanation, clarification and demystification of the social forms which man has created around himself' (pg 20).

I chose to construct a qualitative research design, with a primary source of data collection focused on the spoken word (Miles and Huberman, 1994, Silverman, 2015) from semi-formal interviews informed by questionnaire, augmented by observation and field notes containing insights into the lived experience of research participants.

3.3.1 Ethnography

While the number of attendees of English Corner number in the thousands and would therefore constitute a suitable sample for quantitative research, the research questions are suggestive of an ethnographic approach in that they attempt to understand individual attitudes and points of view in their context.

Fetterman (2009, pg 1) defines ethnography as being about ‘telling a credible, rigorous, and authentic story’. Ethnography ‘gives voice to people in their own local context, typically relying on verbatim quotations and a ‘thick’ description of events’.

‘Thick descriptions’ of human behaviour and events, according to Geertz (1994, in Cohen and Manion, 2007, pg 220) include those which explain not just the obvious or prima facie behaviour, but also its context such that the behaviour becomes meaningful to an outsider. Such data includes ‘meanings, participants’ interpretations of situations and unobserved factors’.

Van Manen (1990) valorises ethnography for its sensitivity to culture; as a research approach that ‘aims to explicate meanings specific to particular cultures’ (pg. 11). Thus, the ethnographic approach is suitable for exploration of meanings internal to a specific community through the interpretation of the stories told by its members. The aspect of ethnography which gives voice to participants is congruent with my research questions since the experiences of English Corner attendees in both China and Japan, as well as Pondok English participants in Malaysia can be described based on their own stories.

In China and Japan

My participation in the English Corner started in January 2004, with recorded observation and semi-structured in-context interviews between December 2011 and December 2012. Participation and observation of the ‘English Room’ in Kanoya commenced in September 2013 and a further ten interviews were conducted following my relocation to Japan, from September to October 2015.

The average duration of the interviews was 15 minutes, with length ranging between 10 and 30 minutes. The semi-structured approach helped to create a sense of reciprocity between myself and respondents (Mills, Bonner and Francis, 2006) with further detail gained through probing and follow-up questions. Data collection and analysis proceeded concurrently. Attendance patterns were observed over many weeks and quantitative data describing this was sampled during one meeting. Analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data was conducted by coding and thematising.

Selection of participants was based on convenience or opportunity sampling which as Dörnyei (2007, pp 98-99) explains is ‘the most common sample type in L2 research’. The most important criterion is the convenience of the researcher; participants are chosen ‘if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility or the willingness to volunteer’.

3.3.2 Action Research

Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist and educator devised Action Research (AR) in the 1940s as an approach to using research in a natural setting to change the way the researcher interacts with that setting. He coined the term to describe ‘work that did not separate the investigation from the action needed to solve the problem’ (Ferrance, 2000, pg 7).

Action Research was attacked as an unscientific methodology in the 1950s as quantitative research gained in popularity. However, since the 1970s it has once again become popular among educators who question the applicability of quantitative research designs and methodologies to solving educational problems.

Ferrance (2000, pg 8) attributes Stephen Corey as being among the first to ‘use Action Research in the field of education’. Corey believed that its value was in the change that occurs in everyday practice, rather than generalization to a broader audience or that results should be replicable and it is for this reason that Ferrance suggests AR has been labeled as being unscientific: as research for amateurs.

But this is a fundamental misreading of the purpose of AR which, according to Fraenkel et al (2011, pg 589) is conducted to solve a problem or to obtain further information ‘in order to inform local practice’. Stringer (2013, pg 1), adds that it is ‘a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives’. He contrasts it from experimental or quantitative research, which are better suited to ‘generalizable explanations related to a small number of variables’ in that AR ‘seeks to engage the complex dynamics involved in any social context’.

He argues that in modern society, “one size fits all” solutions to problems such as drug abuse, crime, violence and school absenteeism are unsatisfactory, that we are increasingly in need of nuanced and local solutions, rather than administrative ones, and ‘therefore need to change our vision of service professionals and administrators from mechanic or technician to facilitator and creative investigator’ (pg 3). This concept ‘rejects the mindless application of standardised practices across all settings and contexts and instead advocates the use of contextually relevant procedures formulated by enquiring and resourceful practitioners’. AR is characterised by ‘a focus on a problem or issue to be investigated, a systematic process of enquiry, and the development of explanations that lead to increased understanding’ (pg 5).

There are many variants of AR but all share the same problem-solving orientation and cyclical nature. Rather than dealing with theoretical issues, it ‘allows practitioners to address those concerns that are closer to them, ones over which they can exhibit some influence and make change’ (Ferrance, 2000, pg 1).

The number and status of stakeholders will vary according to the extent or severity of the problem being researched, but could potentially consist of one individual classroom teacher, up to an entire school or district office.

According to Ferrance (2000), *Individual Teacher Research* normally focuses on a specific aspect of classroom behaviour. *Collaborative Action Research* involves a single classroom or departmental issue shared between two or more classrooms. *School-wide Action Research*, as the name suggests addresses issues pertaining to a school or an area of collective interest, such as how to best reach parents and engage them in the life of the school in meaningful ways, or to identify and address school-wide weaknesses in certain test results. *District-wide Action Research* deals with broader issues and might address organizational, community-based, performance-based issues (pg 5).

Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) identify two types of Action Research. These are *Practical Action Research*, intended to address a specific problem within a classroom, school or other community; and *Participatory Action Research*, whose purpose is to ‘empower individuals and groups to improve their lives and bring about social change at some level – school, community or society’. According to Fraenkel et al (2011, pg 591) the intent is to have ‘intensive involvement of stakeholders, who function as equal partners’. The research conducted in Kota Belud and Kampung Piasau addressed issues of empowerment. Parents and their school-age children were the key stakeholders.

The implicit ‘problem statement’ – and what prompted the Malaysian government to commission the British Council’s three year ELTDP (English Language Teacher Development Program) intervention in the first place – was the perceived diminishing proficiency in communicative English among the population at large, and school-age children in particular. Teacher-mentors on the British Council project also encouraged their (usually ten) mentee teachers to engage in what Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) termed Practical Action Research in their own classrooms based on the cyclical process of Think, Plan, Do, Look/Review (Stringer, 2013) as a means of developing reflective practice and making their teaching more evidence-based.

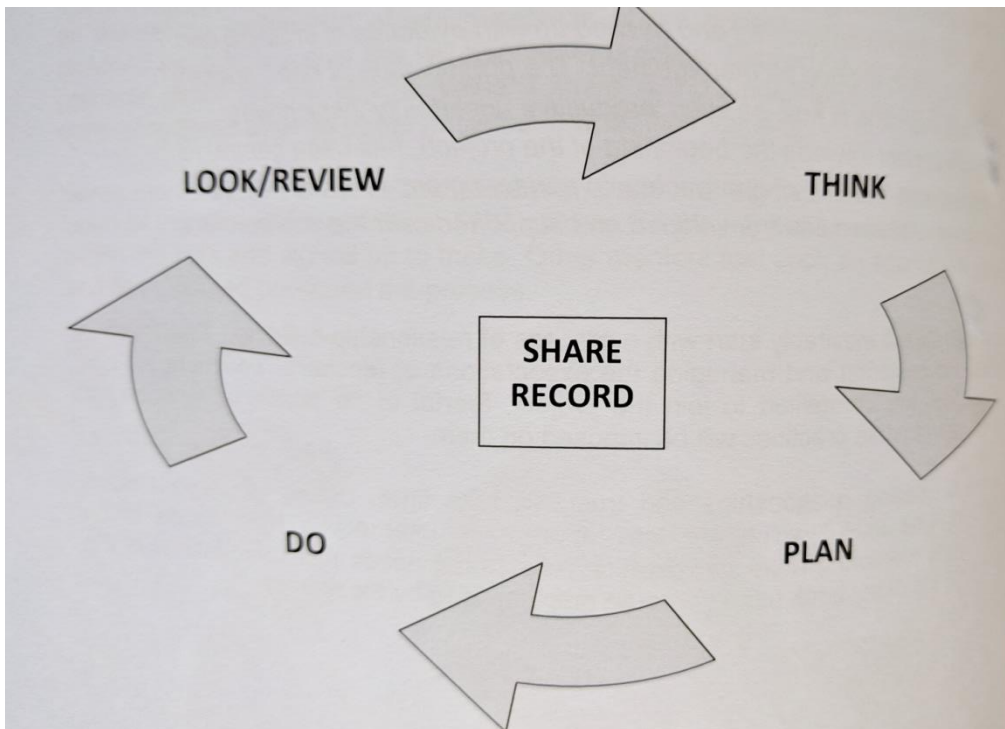


Figure 1: Look Think Plan Do (British Council 2014, pg 42)

While there is broad agreement on the cyclical and problem-based nature of Action Research, there are a number of representations of the steps involved. Stringer's Look/Review part is variously interpreted as two steps according to Bassey's eight stage model (1998, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2019, pg 449), of 'Stage 6: Monitoring the change' and 'Stage 7: Analysing evaluative data about the change'. Cohen, Manion and Morrison propose a similar eight stage model in which Stringer's 'Think' part is subdivided into three stages; 'Stage 1: Decide and agree one common problem', followed by 'Stage 2: Identify some causes of the problem' and 'Stage 3: Brainstorm a number of possible practical solutions to the problem' before stage 4 requires the researcher to choose one solution and to plan how to put the solution into practice.

In Malaysia

Two phases of Action Research were carried out in Kota Belud and Kampung Piasau. Both are located in rural Sabah; both involved parents and children from local primary schools in which I was working as part of the British Council's ELTDP project from January 2013 until September 2015.

The two phases of Action Research were conducted over a period of 10 consecutive Sundays each in Kota Belud between July and September 2014 and in Kampung Piasau from May to August 2015.

Figure 3 shows the progression from Observation through Reflection/Planning to Phase 1 of the Action Research, with further Reflection/Planning prior to Phase 2 of Action Research.

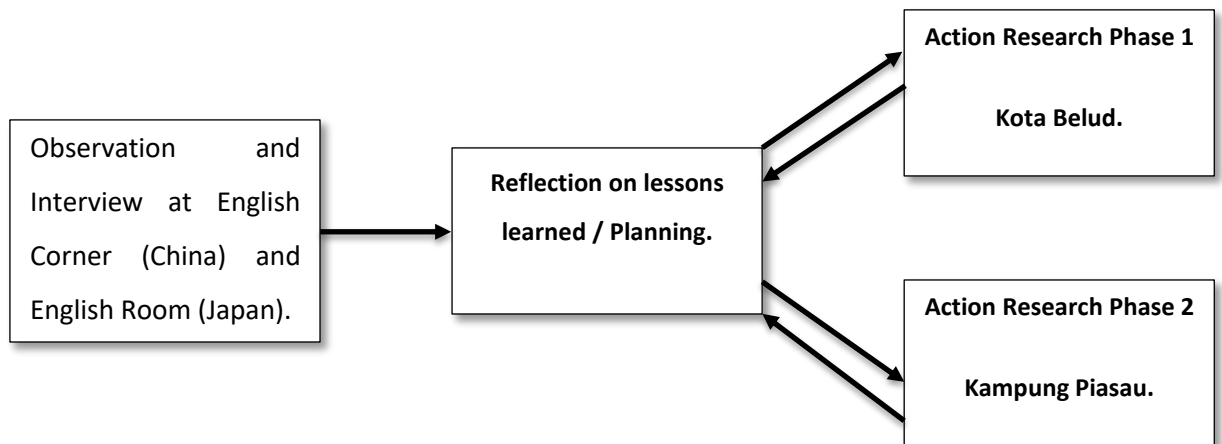


Figure 2: Observation / Interview and Phases of Action Research

3.4 Methods

As Ethnography and Action Research are both Qualitative Research methodologies, it is unsurprising that they would share many methods: questionnaire, interview, observation and field notes among them. It is to these that I now turn.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

Used as a self-contained instrument and distributed widely and/or anonymously, the questionnaire is typically an instrument of quantitative research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2007) explain that questionnaires can also act as an adjunct to interviews and this is how they were used in this study.

While questionnaires ‘paint a broad though possibly superficial picture’, interviews ‘can provide depth of explanation within a particular context’ (ibid, pg 11).

Ackroyd (1992) specifies three types of questionnaire: factual surveys used to collect descriptive information such as a census; attitude surveys to collect and measure people's attitudes and opinions, such as an opinion poll; and explanatory surveys which are intended to test theories and hypotheses or to produce new theory.

Oppenheim (2000, pg 10) describes the research questionnaire as a measurement tool; not simply a list of questions or a form to be filled in, but ‘an instrument for the collection of particular kinds of

data'. Each question must be there for a specific reason and researchers must specify the variables they are investigating. 'Instrument building and questionnaire composition cannot proceed until we have a complete specification of the variables that need to be measured' (ibid, pg 101).

The researcher must decide the balance between open-ended and closed questions. Closed questions offer predetermined alternatives from which the respondent must choose; these may be as simple as Yes or No. Open-ended questions have no such predetermined responses; respondents may choose their own answer.

According to Oppenheim (2000), open-ended questions are typically easy to ask, difficult to answer, and difficult to analyse, though they allow room for expressiveness on the part of the respondent and may lead to follow-up questions which may uncover unexpected data. Closed questions are quicker to answer and easy to quantify. However, closed questions tend to lack nuance and possibly constrain respondents by forcing them to choose options which do not accurately represent their view.

Question wording is especially important when dealing with non-native speaker respondents. Oppenheim (2000, pp. 124-125) warns researchers not to assume that whatever words mean to us, they will be understood the same way by everyone else.

I initially devised thirteen open-ended questions and piloted them with my colleague teachers in the Faculty of English Language and Culture, before combining and narrowing these down to ten questions, in order to keep interview length at a maximum 15 minutes.

3.4.2 Interview

A research interview is a purposeful conversation between researcher and a respondent; a professional conversation with structure and purpose; defined, guided and controlled by the researcher (Kvale, 2006). It is especially suited to obtaining and understanding first-hand, people's perceptions and understanding of the meanings of their world, allowing them the opportunity to describe their experiences.

According to Cohen and Manion (1994, pp 272-273) interviews serve three main purposes: to gather information about what people think; test hypotheses or suggest new ones and to explore the motivations of respondents. Guba (1981) adds a further role: a means of triangulation of data, which adds to the study's credibility.

Interviews are located in a specific culture, space and time (Wengraf, 2001; Kahn and Cannell, 1968) and based on two-person conversations initiated by the interviewer in order to gain pertinent information on content specified by the research objectives.

Interviewing is uniquely sensitive and a powerful method for obtaining and capturing knowledge about peoples' experiences and behaviours (Kvale, 2006) and particularly the lived meanings of their everyday world. According to Bailey (2008, pg 405) the interview is more reliable than the questionnaire, in that only the respondent can answer. They cannot be prompted by others, or 'have others complete the questionnaire for him, as so often happens in mailed studies'.

A number of interview approaches can be employed, including:

1. formal interviews, where questions are devised by the researcher beforehand and answers recorded on a pro-forma;
2. semi-formal interviews where they can modify the wording or sequence of questions, or add additional ones depending on the respondent;
3. informal interview where key issues are raised in a conversational style;

The interviews conducted in China and Japan were semi-formal and while I had prepared questions for the interviews beforehand, I took the opportunity to explore additional topics with respondents who were willing to or capable of doing so, and where the topic was pertinent to the study.

There are limitations and pitfalls of relying on interviews as a research method (Cicourel, 1964, cited in Cohen and Manion, 1994, pg 275) in that:

1. It is not always possible to build trust with respondents, and this will differ from interview to interview.
2. Respondents may avoid answering questions if they are uncomfortable or feel the interviewer is probing too deeply.
3. Meanings that are clear to one participant will not be clear to the other. This is especially an issue where L1 and L2 speakers interact.
4. Interviewers cannot control every aspect of interview.

According to Bailey (2008) the interview/survey method itself 'biases the data or can even manufacture data, so that the data gathered are not so much a reflection of what actually exists in the population as they are artefacts of the method' (pg 410).

There is also the issue of bias in the way researchers conduct interviews. Cohen and Manion (1994) warn that interviewers must avoid asking leading questions and take care that the respondent fully understands what is being asked, moreover that the interviewer has correctly understood the answer. It is sometimes the case that respondents will attempt to please the interviewer with what they perceive to be the “correct” answer.

Goodson and Sikes (2001) argue that all researchers and respondents are subject to what Bourdieu (1977, in Edgerton and Roberts, 2014) terms their *habitus*; the social, historical, geographical, political and religious contexts that contribute to their particular frame of reference and which will filter their experiences and reactions. Consequently, unintentional bias is a concern for those engaged in qualitative research. I have sought to recognise and acknowledge the existence of bias and to view data through the eyes of the participants.

Triangulation is one way of minimizing bias, and my engagement with the field through sharing the ongoing findings of the study through discussions with participants and colleagues in the British Council, as well as British Council conference presentations, helped to triangulate the findings.

In China and Japan

Interviews were conducted with ten participants of the English Corner. As the interviews were semi-formal in nature, I did not adhere strictly to questions, but asked supplementary or clarifying questions where appropriate in order to make interviewees’ voices heard as clearly as possible, and while transcriptions of interviews can mask facial expressions, body gestures and other non-verbal communication, I have adopted certain conventions in an attempt to include aspects of these, as in the following examples:

Where an excerpt of dialogue between the interviewer and the researcher has been quoted, the letters I (Interviewee) and R (Researcher) are used to indicate the speaker.

I I think is ok for me because my home is very near, and I think I meet friends which I am similar to, and we talk a little bit and I think that is fine. Because you keep doing this and I think it is already long enough.

R Why do you spend so much time on oral English?

I We use English to communicate with each other; it's just a communication tool.

Pauses in speech are indicated by an ellipsis (...) and other utterances by bracketed nouns, eg (laughter). Interviewee’s speech is quoted verbatim, but where I considered the meaning may be

unclear, supplementary words enclosed in square brackets [] have been inserted as in the following example:

I If [all attendees are] Chinese maybe we can understand.

3.4.3 Participant Observation

The technique of participant-observation is probably best known in the work of anthropologist Margaret Mead, who famously studied the sexual mores of Samoans over a period of years and published her work in 1925. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, pg 305), observations provide researchers with the opportunity to ‘gather live data from live situations’.

Fraenkel et al (2011, pg 446) distinguish between the covert *complete participant* role, in which the researcher’s identity is not known, and the *participant-as-observer* role, in which they participate fully in the activities of the group being studied, but make it clear they are doing research. The former role is considered to be suspect on ethical grounds and I chose the latter, wearing University of Nottingham identification at all times.

Observation is a relatively unobtrusive research tool, but participant-observation is not. As a participant-observer, I was able to engage in activity and gain access to participants in an informal environment, even though it must be acknowledged that my presence altered the dynamics of the groups, a condition identified as the Hawthorne Effect (McCambridge et al, 2014, pp 266-267). Even so, the opportunities provided for a deeper contextual understanding of the experiences of older learners attending the English Corner variants in China and Japan, and the younger ones attending Pondok English in Malaysian Sabah. The extended research time period meant that I was able to obtain more detailed information about the participants under study.

Informal discussions with students and parents (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000) provided an additional chance to ask questions that emerged from the immediate context. These informal discussions were an additional method of triangulating the results from the semi-formal interviews.

3.4.4 Field Notes

Fraenkel et al (2011, pg 513) state that field notes consist of two kinds of materials – descriptive and reflective. Descriptive field notes ‘attempt to describe the setting, the people, and what they do according to what the researcher observes’. These are the basis of thick descriptions; in which physical appearances, settings, events, reconstructions of dialogues, depictions of activities are recorded.

Reflective field notes ‘present more of what the researcher himself or herself is thinking *about* as he or she observes’. [author’s italics] (ibid, pg 514) These journals contain reflections on analysis, methods, ethical dilemmas, observer’s frame of mind and points of clarification.

In Malaysia

I kept a descriptive journal, written in Microsoft Word within hours and always on the same day as a Pondok English session. These were transcribed to computer from raw voice files recorded onto a hands-free voice-activated recording device which I spoke to while driving the approximately one hour journey home to Kota Kinabalu from Kota Belud each Sunday. This afforded me the opportunity to reflect on what had happened that day and to ponder what could be improved or changed.

3.4.5 Critical Incident Analysis

The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was promulgated in 1954 by US Army Air Force instructor John Flanagan, as a structured method of analysing pilot errors. Since then it has evolved and been applied across diverse disciplines, including nursing and safety In administering anaesthesia (Crisp et al, 2005, pg 6), communications, counselling and education (Butterfield et al, 2005, pg 475). The first educational use of Critical Incident Analysis is attributed to David Tripp in 1993.

Critical incidents are events characterized by being unplanned and unanticipated; and vividly remembered (Brookfield, 1990, pg 84). They are not always considered as error, or necessarily as negative or undesired. Critical incidents ‘also allow for the consideration of positive encounters as well as negative events’ (Green Lister and Crisp, 2007, pg. 48). ‘The vast majority of critical incidents, however, are not at all dramatic or obvious: they are straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice’ (Crisp et al, 2005, pg 6). The incidents ‘may appear to be typical rather than critical at first sight, but are rendered critical by analysis.’ (Green Lister and Crisp, 2007, pg 48).

According to Cresswell (1998, pg 16, cited in Butterfield et al, 2005, pg 482) research ‘takes place in a natural setting. The researcher is the key instrument of data collection; data are collected as words through interviewing, participant observation, and/or qualitative open-ended questions; data analysis is done inductively; and the focus is on participants’ perspectives.’

Critical Incidents are usually produced as a written account in the form of a structured narrative. Most commonly, they consist of a description of an event, reflections based on an analysis of practice,

followed by critical re-examination of existing and developing knowledge, skills and values. (Green Lister and Crisp, 2007, pg. 48).

Raj Joshi (2018) claims that the analysis of Critical Incidents creates a greater level of self-awareness, and that as teachers analyse those that occur in their classroom, they ‘become more aware of what they are doing’ (pg 84). Moreover, it can prompt the re-evaluation of existing routines and procedures, encourage teachers to pose critical questions about teaching, and create further opportunities for action research (ibid, pg 85). As Stephen Brookfield (2002, pg 31) explains, teachers can use the four lenses of critically reflective teaching; seeing through their students’ eyes, making use of the colleagues’ perceptions, consulting relevant literature and their own autobiographical experiences of being a student.

In Malaysia, I employed Critical Incident analysis to assist my understanding of the first and second iterations of Pondok English.

3.5 Data Collection

Fraenkel et al (2011, pg 458) highlight three aspects central to the quality of data: validity, reliability and credibility. Interview data must accurately represent the opinions of the participants, taking into account the possibility of bias within the study by the researcher and participants.

Internal validity checks that ‘seek to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provided can actually be sustained by the data’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, pg 107) were achieved through the use of a range of data collection methods. Internal validity was supported through the use of alternative sources, including fieldwork notes, observation notes, photographs and voice recordings.

Reliability depends upon the appropriate conduct of research techniques and methods. Silverman (2015) argues that authenticity is more of a concern than sample size in qualitative research and that authentic understanding of participants’ experiences are best obtained through open ended questions. In the ethnographic research, I made maximal use of in-situ, face to face interview data based on open ended questions, reported verbatim.

Credibility, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is addressed by the researcher having a ‘prolonged engagement in the field’ (pg 219) and undertaking persistent observation, in the words of Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2018, pg 254) staying ‘in the situation for such a long time that their presence

goes unnoticed'. Both the ethnographic and action research were conducted over a period of years, involving multiple visits to research sites and involvement with multiple participants.

3.6 Analysis

A qualitative approach to analysis involves a process of 'noticing, collecting and thinking' (Seidel, 1998).

Noticing includes observation, recording and coding, which informs further investigation. Collecting and grouping the coded information in turn enables examination of what has been collected. This, according to Fraenkel et al (2011, pg 516) enables the researcher to make sense of the data; to distinguish relationships and patterns both within and across sub-groups in order to compare and contrast the data, and identify similarities and differences, sequences and patterns, and key events.

There are many techniques involved in analysing ethnographic data. These include 'triangulation, searching for patterns, identifying key events, preparing visual representations, using statistics, and crystallization' (ibid, pg 516).

Triangulation establishes validity of an ethnographer's observations and fundamentally consists of 'checking what one hears and sees by comparing one's sources of information' to ascertain whether or not they agree. Patterns help to establish reliability when they 'reveal consistencies in what people say and what they do' (ibid, pg 517). Key events in the life of a social group provide data that ethnographic researchers can use to describe and analyse an entire culture and are useful as they help the researcher to understand the group they are studying, but also help them explain the culture of the group to others. Visual representations such as maps, flowcharts, organization charts and matrices often assist them to crystallise their understanding of 'an area, a system, a location, or even an interaction' (ibid, pg 518).

3.6.1 China and Japan

The primary source of data in the ethnographic study was the transcripts of interviews. In total these ran to some thousands of words and I employed content analysis in order to reduce these to categories that would be easy to understand (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, pg 668).

For the ethnographic study in Guangzhou and Kanoya, I deductively thematised (pre-ordinate categorization) the ten interview questions to four themes pertinent to the first research question. These themes are briefly described below.

Frequency of attendance.

The frequency of attendance theme reported Interviewees' average duration of attendance (in hours), regularity of attendance (times per month) and future expectations of attendance at English Corner. This was found to be a good predictor of motivation.

Purpose for attendance

This theme explored reasons why attendees chose to attend English Corner, and what they felt were the benefits. Attendees typically cited multiple reasons.

Strategies for learning English

The strategies theme explored the range of formal and informal strategies employed by interviewees outside of English Corner, in their journey of learning English. Attendees typically cited more than one strategy.

Discussion topics

This theme explored the range of topics discussed at the English Corner, and which were the most common (if not the most welcome!) topics. Censorship of topics was also explored.

The same set of questions formed the basis of interviews in Guangzhou, China and Kanoya, Japan.

I then read and re-read the data, inductively marking keywords and phrases with descriptive labels (responsive categorization), which Flick (2009, pg 310, cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, pg 671) argues demarcate the fundamentals of 'who, why, what, when and where' in the research.

I identified 62 labels from initial readings of the Chinese data which I grouped to 19 sub-themes, each containing between 1 and 5 labels. The labels were abbreviations of glossed descriptions; for example ETHMUS (ethnic music) which I assigned to the following excerpt from Wing's response to question 8 about interesting people who could help her in her work or study:

*The other day I met a teacher actually, she's just starting to write a book on local ethnic music. I think it's very interesting, because I didn't know anything about ethnic music in Guangdong province. **ETHMUS***

Reading and re-reading the data I collated labels such as ETHMUS (with the labels SEASON, HOBBIES, TRAVEL and SPORTS) into the sub theme INTERESTS, which in turn was collated under the theme DISCUSSION TOPICS and reported in section 4.3.4.

Similar labeling, sub theme and thematic derivation was conducted on the interview data from Japan with, as expected, widely differing labels reflecting widely differing experiences and opinions of the respondents there. For the purposes of comparison, these were collated into the same sub-themes and themes as for the China research.

A full description of labels, sub-themes and themes is presented in Appendix 1 (China) and Appendix 2 (Japan).

Appendices 1 and 2 shed light on the similarities and differences in the motivations of attendees at English Corner and English Room. These are summarized graphically and in text in section 4.3.

Likewise I labeled and thematised my observations in China and Japan; the latter including my interview with Dr. Kunishige. In total the research in China yielded 62 labels and 19 sub-themes, the research in Japan 48 labels and 18 sub themes. While there was some commonality between labels and themes for both countries, there were many differences notably in the theme of sponsorship which in Japan contained 7 subthemes whereas in China only one; largely reflecting the role of Dr. Kunishige. A full account of these labels, sub-themes and themes is contained in Appendices 3 and 4.

Appendices 3 and 4 inform the lessons learned from the ethnographic studies in China and Japan which helped inform the Action Research in Malaysia. These are summarized in text in section 4.4.

3.6.2 Malaysia

In Malaysia, my role changed from that of a participant observer to that of an action researcher. This meant that I was much more involved in the weekly planning and execution of the Pondok English sessions. As a result, I was unable to carry out formal interviews with participants although I had informal discussions which are reported on in section 5.7.1.

The main method of analysis for the Action Research was Critical Incident Technique (CIT) informed by my reflective notes, which have been transcribed in abbreviated form in Chapter 6.

An example of a critical incident comes from the very first Pondok English, section 5.2 in which Teacher Magdalen is able to identify and introduce me to attendee parents who I could not even locate. The

incident taught me about my own relative powerlessness in the situation, and underscored my need for sponsorship. I identified five critical incidents in the course of the first iteration and four in the course of the second. These are summarized in table form in sections 5.2.2 and 5.3.3 respectively.

My observations and reflective notes in both iterations were also labeled and thematised. There were 181 labels which were collated to 27 subthemes which inform the discussion in section 6.5 about my recommendations for researchers involving themselves in future community-based projects of this kind.

3.7 Ethics

The primary consideration of ethics in research is ‘to ensure that participants in a research study are protected from physical or psychological harm, discomfort or danger that may arise due to research procedures’ (Fraenkel et al, 2011, pg 63).

The construction of this research was on ethical guidelines as published by the University of Nottingham’s Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics, which in turn are based on the Nolan Principles of ‘selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership’ (2016, pg 3).

Permission to interview was sought by the interviewer and participants were orally assured that their involvement was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time, and that their identity would remain confidential to the study. These assurances were recorded as a frontispiece to all interviews. None chose to withdraw.

I wore a lanyard around my neck with “University of Nottingham – Researcher” clearly labelled in English on one side, and in Putonghua (Chinese), Japanese or Bahasa Malaysia on the reverse as appropriate to the location.

Anderson (1998, pg 127) suggests that research relies on participants feeling comfortable with the research process and all that attends it. Accordingly, in China I determined not to ask interviewees to sign consent forms, having noted a general reluctance of Chinese people to sign unfamiliar documents, especially one coming from a source outside of their trusted “guanxi” social sphere. I believed this was reasonable given China’s relatively recent history of social upheaval and the possibility, however remote that in the event of difficulties with the authorities, consent forms might potentially be confiscated and participants identified.

In Japan I did not ask participants to sign consent forms and I had express permission from Dr. Kunishige to conduct research there. Whenever I attended English Room sessions, he introduced me to the attendees as a researcher. All but three of the interviewees were adults; two of the minors were daughters of a teacher at NIFS who was present in the same room, the third minor was driven by car to the English Room by her mother, who also stayed in the room and was present at the time of interview.

In Sabah however, there were a larger proportion of children and I asked parents to sign consent forms, which have been retained. I was meticulous in this, and parents were co-operative though most expressed their surprise that it was necessary at all. However, Pondok English was a public event, and in the second iteration there were instances of children joining the activities of their own volition or as a result of being invited by Linda, which presented me with an ethical dilemma.

Parental consent was an ethical requirement for their children to join Pondok English, but if the parents were not present, what to do? It would have been antithetical to the spirit of the project to prohibit children from joining, as it would have irreparably compromised its open and public access nature. Moreover, as a westerner I would be demonstrating an inappropriate colonialist stance by attempting to enforce my value system on interactions between local people (West-McGruer, 2020; Parker-Jenkins, 2016). I therefore decided to go ahead and accept the children into the group but with appropriate checks. We made sure that we maintained weekly attendance lists, and I was able to check at the end of each session which children had, and which did not have parental permission. I then asked Linda to prioritise ensuring that the relevant parents were consulted and informed that their child had taken part in Pondok English, and to obtain their written approval for the same. In all cases, the parents were aware that their child had attended Pondok English and were supportive of it. This ability to communicate directly with local parents further underscored the importance of Linda's sponsorship, as a responsible and respected adult in the community.

It is important to note that whilst engaged in the research in Malaysia I was employed by the British Council which itself has strict ethical policies and guidelines with respect to Child Protection. All employees working in the vicinity of children are required to undertake Child Protection training as a prerequisite to employment with the British Council. The training emphasizes the importance of BC employees taking the utmost care in the vicinity of children; in particular with respect to proximity. I was careful throughout to ensure that any involvement with interviewees and attendees in China, Japan and Malaysia was conducted

- in the open and
- in plain view of other adults

It was important for the success of the study that all research participants were comfortable and relaxed, as their contributions were integral to the study's completion. I was careful to adhere to dress codes that would not be offensive, especially given the rather conservative Malaysian attitudes to clothing. I wore long sleeves and long trousers at all times.

All participants were advised that their identity would remain confidential to the study. Pseudonyms were used for all participants in allocations. The only exception was a fellow academic, Dr. Kunishige of Kanoya NIFS, who was interviewed as part of this research and had given written permission for his name to be used.

According to Kaiser (2009, pg 4), 'researchers must collect, analyze and report data without compromising the identities of their respondents'. Confidentiality is 'addressed during data cleaning,' in which identifiers are removed. 'For example, the names of respondents can be replaced with pseudonyms' (ibid, pg 5).

As it would redact all other aspects of identifiability, such as race, religious orientation and family relations (Saunders et al, 2015) I was tempted to 'attribute verbatim quotations by gender and age-group, shown in brackets at the end of the quotations (eg. female, mid 20s)' (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006, pg 102) but abandoned the approach when I found it negatively affected the readability of the transcripts.

Participants in China were given English first name pseudonyms to reflect the fact that they all had an English given name, and used it in conversation with each other. Participants in Japan were given Japanese surname pseudonyms as it is typical for Japanese people to refer to each other by their surname, with a status modifier such as *-san* (common respectful form), *-kun* (younger male), *-chan* (younger female) and *-sensei* (teacher). Participants in Malaysia were given Malay pseudonyms where they identified themselves with a Malay name and an English pseudonym where they identified themselves with an English one.

Interviews conducted with research participants were all recorded and transcribed. I felt it inappropriate to bring along to the interviews any additional technological aids, such as video

recorders as these may have acted to make participants uncomfortable, and possibly compromise interactions.

3.8 Access to Research Sites and Participants

I obtained access to an appropriate sample of research participants (students, parents and teachers) in Guangzhou, China; Kanoya, Japan, Kota Belud and Kampung Piasau in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo.

There was no difficulty gaining access to research sites. All were publicly accessible and no specific permissions needed to be sought. The site in the centre of Kota Belud was a small and somewhat delapidated grandstand, which I chose for its proximity to the town, adequate parking areas and availability of shelter. As a courtesy, I obtained permission to use the grandstand over consecutive Sundays from 1pm until approximately 4pm from the local Town Council, though this proved not to be exclusive – on two occasions, a local soccer team arrived and proceeded to use the grandstand as a changing room and strategy planning area, rejecting out of hand my invitation for them to do so in English. On another occasion, a noisy commercial display for a locally-produced motor car competed for the attention of attendees; later turning into loud outdoor karaoke in the vicinity of which any kind of conversation was impossible.

There was no such competition in Kampung Piasau, where meetings were held under the verandah of the local delicatessen which served in any case as a local public meeting place. My assistant Linda sought permission to use the area from the shop owner Mrs. Dumi, who took a regular interest in the gatherings.

3.9 Research Sample

The aim of this study was to ‘reveal shared patterns of experience or interpretation within a group of people who have some characteristics, attributes or experiences in common’ (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, pg 23).

Sample selection was not random, but ‘necessarily focused on a specific social situation, requiring informants to have appropriate knowledge and experience’ (ibid, pg 23).

The ethnographic study was conducted in two public locations in Guangzhou, China and Kanoya, Japan. Though both were located in universities, people from all walks of life attended. In total, twenty

interviews were held with these people, for which convenience sampling was employed. I nevertheless tried to interview a mix of frequent and infrequent attenders of the English Corner.

In Sabah, participants were invited to attend and made aware of the research by

- a. A written invitation from me, forwarded to parents by ten mentee schoolteachers participating in the ELTDP project.
- b. Oral invitation by my assistant Linda in Kampung Piasau, who as a parent in the area had an interest in building English language proficiency among the villagers.

All research participants were made aware that attendance was optional and that they could, at any time, choose to withdraw from the study. As stated earlier, I wore clear University of Nottingham Researcher identification at all times.

In each of Phase 1 and 2 of the Action Research, fieldwork ceased when ten sessions had been organised and run. Morse (1994) suggests that ‘a sample is adequate when sufficient data has been collected and any variation is accounted for and understood. In qualitative research, the investigator samples until repetition from multiple sources is obtained’ (pg 230).

3.10 Location specific data

The following section contains data specific to the three research locations.

3.10.1 China - access to the university

English Corner was held at South China Normal University (SCNU), located approximately five kilometres east of the city centre, on the north side of the busy East-West arterial road, Zhongshan dadao (main road).

South China Normal University is publicly accessible although there are security guards 24/7 on each of its gates, whose function appears to be to keep unauthorised vehicles out of the campus. The nearest entrance to the English Corner is from Wushan lu (street), close to the exit of Huashi Metro station on Guangzhou Metro Line Three. The university is surrounded by a historic residential area which is developing a thriving upmarket retail sector with the demolition of older buildings and their replacement by high-rise buildings and shops.

Attendees from outside the university typically enter from the West Gate of the university, outside of which is an area of inexpensive noodle and dumpling restaurants which are well attended by students, as is a neighboring small supermarket and fruit shop.

Walking distance from the West Gate of the University to the English Corner is approximately 600 metres. The area is well lit and there is ample foot traffic. The West gate, being closest to transport services and restaurants bordering Wushan lu, is the busiest access gate in the university and there is movement at least until midnight, even later on weekends.

The university is in a heavily populated part of the city, adjacent to the Huashi (South China Normal University) Metro stop which in turn is 3 stops from the centre of the city Ti Yu Xi Lu (Sports Centre West Road). The cost of the trip between them is RMB2 (about 20 pence), and RMB3 (30 pence) from the fastest growing population area of the city in Zhujiang Xincheng (Pearl River New Town). The Guangzhou Metro operates services approximately every four minutes on Line 3, with the last service at 11:17pm.

Many bus routes bypass South China Normal University, approximately half along Wushan lu and half along Zhongshan dadao. Buses cease operations between 9.15 and 10.15pm, depending on their destination.

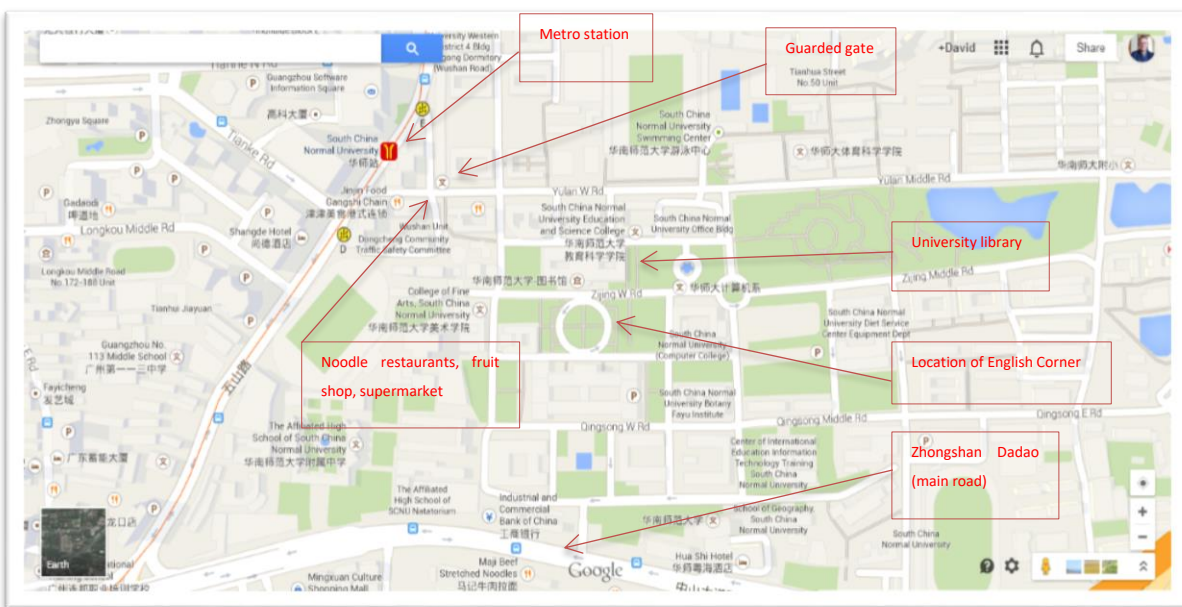


Figure 3: Map showing location of English Corner and environs of SCNU

Though the rate of car ownership in China has rapidly increased since 2000, the road congestion and sprawl of the city means that private vehicles are rarely more efficient than public transport in getting from place to place. Moreover, there is little parking near SCNU, as on-street parking is prohibited in China.

The norm for university students is to live on campus usually in crowded dormitories, but it takes only a few minutes to walk or cycle to the English Corner. Many attendees from outside the university travel much greater distances and journeys of up to 90 minutes are not uncommon.

Following is a list of interview participants.

Interview participants

Name	Gender	Occupation	Age	Ethnicity
Marvin	Male	Engineer	40	Chinese
Maria	Female	Customer service representative	26	Hong Kong Chinese
Arthur	Male	Trainee pharmacist	24	Chinese
Anna	Female	High School student	17	Taiwanese Chinese
Wing	Female	University student	22	Chinese
Gavin	Male	Software engineer	28	Chinese
Angus	Male	University student	24	Chinese
Maureen	Female	University student	24	Chinese
John	Male	Software engineer	24	Chinese
Tina	Female	University student	25	Taiwanese Chinese

Table 1: List of interviewees at South China Normal University

Interview participants

Name	Gender	Occupation	Age	Nationality
Uehara-san	Female	Student at NIFS	23	Japanese
Ueno-san	Male	Student at NIFS	22	Japanese
Ishikawa-san	Male	Student at NIFS	22	Japanese
Sakamoto-sensei	Male	Teacher at NIFS	45	Japanese
Sakamoto-san	Female	Student Junior High School	14	Japanese
Sakamoto-chan	Female	Student at Elementary School	12	Japanese
Yamashita-san	Female	Student at NIFS	23	Japanese
Mochihara-san	Female	Retired	72	Japanese
Imatamari-san	Female	Student at Middle School	15	Japanese
Susan	Female	Project worker at NIFS	25	Taiwanese Chinese

Table 2: List of interviewees at Kanoya NIFS

3.10.3 Malaysia

In March 2014, I outlined the Pondok English proposal to my ten mentee teachers at a regular monthly dinner meeting. They listened attentively but were initially skeptical. One said ‘you could do it, just like you could try to climb Mount Kinabalu. Both would be about as difficult’ (private interview, 2014). However, they agreed to support it and, at a later meeting I was able to distribute leaflets to them advertising Pondok English, asking them to promote it among their students.

First iteration

I proceeded to develop a range of materials, whose primary purpose was to facilitate short conversations between parents and children. I assessed that attendees would need a framework to establish dialogues, which could be expanded with auxiliary questions.

The materials had to be simple enough to be easily usable. I believed this important to children but even more so their parents who might not have positive memories of English language learning during their own childhoods.

The dialogue sets were based on topics and vocabulary from the new Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR) Year 1 and Year 2 English textbooks, which was undergoing a phased implementation from Year 1 of primary school (sekolah rendah) by the Ministry of Education starting in 2011. Year 2 materials were implemented in 2012, Year 3 in 2013 and so on.

I planned to encourage parents to use English for basic repetitive questions and responses, though as communication was vitally important, and there is research evidence to suggest that proficiency in one’s L2 is a function of one’s proficiency in their L1, (Hdstijn and Bossers, 1992) I expected to be tolerant of interaction which incorporated Bahasa Malaysia, Dusun or Bajau, at the same time encouraging as much interaction in the L2 as possible.

The materials contained question and response prompts in full sentence form, for example

Q: What is in your classroom?

A: There is a (noun) in my classroom.

Nouns were printed on four separate cards, which could each be inserted into the sentence to make a meaningful utterance. For example, the “What is in your classroom?” set was accompanied by four nouns: whiteboard, bag, table, window.

I tried to ensure a substantial recycling of key vocabulary between dialogue sets, so that commonly-used words such as “roof, “window” and “door” appeared frequently in the materials.

I intended for parents to hold both the question card and the nouns, and hand each noun card to their child as they asked the question. Each noun card had a picture of the object and the word in English on the front, with a Bahasa Malaysia translation on the back. The child’s task was to recite the sentence containing the word.

I encouraged parents to ask additional clarifying questions, in English or Bahasa Malaysia (or a combination of the two), such as “How many doors are there in your classroom?” “What does a window look like?” “Do you like your bag?” I wanted them to be encouraging of childrens’ efforts, and tolerant of mistakes. I believed the primary purpose of the project was to create enjoyable and meaningful dialogue between parents and children, which could be rehearsed at home and which in turn could foster more positive educational attitudes towards English and language learning generally.

The map below shows the location of the first iteration of Pondok English and its proximity to the library and centre of the town of Kota Belud.

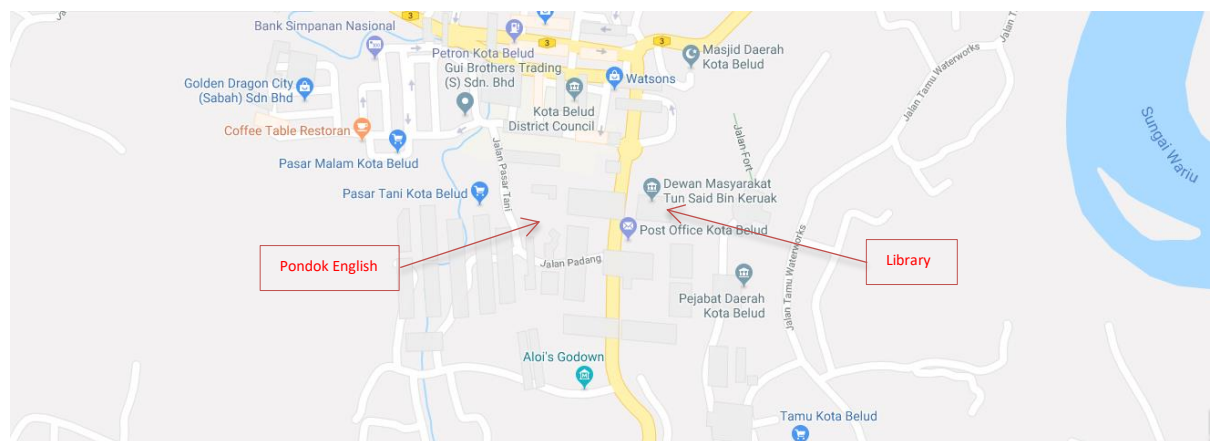


Figure 5: Map of Kota Belud and environs showing location of Pondok English

Second iteration

The second iteration of Pondok English took place in Kampung Piasau, approximately 6 kilometres southeast of the town of Kota Belud. In 2010, Kota Belud had a population estimated at 8,392 of which 5,983 were classified as indigenous (bumiputera). Two thirds of these (4,047) were Bajau, with a much smaller number of Dusun (729) who tended to live south east of Kota Belud in the vicinity of Kampung Piasau and Taginambur further to the south.

Kampung Piasau's population is estimated at 2,500, of whom more than 90% aged above 12 years old can read and write (www.kgpiasaukb.com). The local primary school, Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Piasau has a population of about 350 students, with equal percentages of Bajau and Dusun students. Dusun are predominantly Christian and many of the older residents remember an Australian missionary who evidently did much to help develop the area's education and medical services.

The map below shows the location of the second iteration of the Pondok English in relation to the town of Kota Belud.



Figure 6: Map of Kota Belud district, showing proximity of Kampung Piasau

Chapter Four – Findings in China and Japan

Having in the previous chapter discussed its theoretical underpinnings and methodology, this chapter reports the findings from the ethnographic research conducted in China and Japan. The following chapter will report findings from Malaysia. Findings are split over two chapters, because the methodologies employed and findings obtained were quite different.

Data in the China section is presented in the forms of observation and interview transcripts, following the interview schedule presented in the previous chapter. The Japan section follows a similar outline, again following the questions of the interview schedule, and is preceded by an interview with the convenor of the English Room, Dr. Kunishige.

The structure of this chapter is

- Rich description of the English Corner environs
- Observations of attendees and attendance patterns of English Corner
- Interviews with English Corner attendees
- Rich description of the English Room environs
- Interview with English Room convenor
- Observations of attendees and attendance patterns of English Room
- Interviews with English Room attendees

4.1 Rich description of English Corner in China

No bell or chime announces the commencement of an English Corner, only the gathering of people whose intention is to attend it. Neither is the public English Corner advertised on billboards or in any public media from what I can observe. Attendees report finding out about it by word of mouth, either from friends or from recommendations from their teachers. There is no organiser, and no fees are charged for attendance, in contrast to similar offerings in the plethora of commercial language schools such as English First or ECC. These however, are only available to fee-paying customers.

English Corners seem to be held outside, in publicly accessible areas. This is not atypical of communal activities in China where people gather in plazas outside shopping centres regularly for ballroom, sword and fan dancing as well as tai-chi and communal singing, while teenagers seem to mimic

western culture and clothing with activities such as skateboarding and daring public performances of rap dancing accompanied by loud music.

What is most arresting is the lack of apparent inhibition to the public performances, the dancing especially executed with gusto and verve. Guangzhou has many spacious parks and gardens remaining from feudal times and now freely open to the public. They are used extensively in the mornings and evenings to host communal gatherings. English Corner is only another expression of this willingness to utilise public space; though universities and plazas near libraries seem to be the most popular venues.

From observation of the English Corner over a number of months, the mean age of attendees appears to be early to mid-20s. The student cohort ranges from 18 to 24 years of age. Approximately 25% of the students appeared to be majoring in English, with the balance studying in a wide assortment of disciplines; engineering, mathematics, town planning. Students in China typically enter university at the age of 18 and degree programs are typically of four-year duration, with about 20% of students progressing to Masters and Doctoral programs. At the time of writing, there was considerable graduate unemployment in China, which tends to inflate the number of students in post-graduate courses.

Gender composition appears to be approximately even, slightly fewer females than males.

Approximately 40% of attendees are from outside the university and appeared to consist of professionals attending to enhance their English skills for their workplace. Guangzhou is China's third largest city and the centre of one of China's two largest export-oriented manufacturing areas, the Pearl River Delta. Many foreign companies have offices in the city, Proctor and Gamble (P&G) are based there, and HSBC Bank has its Asia-Pacific Back Office processing facilities in a multi-storey building about two kilometres away. Employees from both of these multinational companies attended the English Corner. Moreover, there are many trading companies in the city and some attendees were workers from these firms, who contacted international clients on a regular basis.

A small number of children attend, accompanied by their parents who either join in or sit away from the proceedings at a "safe" distance. A small number of retirees, often former English teachers themselves, are among the English Corner's most enthusiastic contributors.

People joining the English Corner do not seem to be greeted or acknowledged by existing attendees, except in the case of foreigners, who always seem to generate interest. New joiners tend to walk

around existing clusters and sample conversations until they find and join one which is of interest to them. Cluster participants tend to stand in approximate circles which are quite fluid, and circles open to allow new attendees to join and close when they leave.

Leave-taking appears similarly unremarkable. Participants who leave a cluster do so without comment or apology to other members. The only participants who seem to feel the need for leave-taking formalities tend to be foreigners, who tend to be the focus of attention of any cluster they join.

Participants typically stand for the duration of their stay as, in the plaza where English Corner is held is bordered by four monolithic, marble uncomfortable-looking seats which could accommodate 20 at most. Standing makes it easier for people to move between clusters.

Most, though not all, attendees engage in conversation. Approximately 10% of attendees seem to attend in order simply to listen. The conversations that take place appear animated and participants generally appear eager to speak when they have the opportunity. There is an observance of turn-taking and it is rare to hear voices raised. The occasional participant who does so, or who in other ways demonstrates the intention to dominate conversations typically find themselves in shrinking groups as other participants quietly move away to seek other clusters where contributions are more even.

4.1.1 Attendance patterns

I observed attendance patterns over a period of consecutive weeks and found that at its peak, around 9pm, there are up to 16 clusters each comprising between 5 and 12 participants. Males and females appear to be evenly intermingled.

On Friday 6th December 2012, I was joined by a former student who was interested in my research and agreed to assist me in recording statistics. She and I counted attendee numbers at 30 minute intervals from 7pm to 10.30pm. Attendee numbers include myself and my assistant.

Time (pm)	Number of Clusters	Number of Attendees
7.00	2	5
7.30	2	8

8.00	8	48 (3 foreigners)
8.30	13	72 (3 foreigners)
9.00	16	82 (2 foreigners)
9.30	13	55
10.00	4	12
10.30	2	6

Table 3: Attendance pattern at South China Normal University

Attendees appear to stay for two hours on average. Attendance is fluid and people come and go as they wish, though practical considerations such as catching the last bus or subway, the need to attend work or school the following day, as well as the usual dormitory lights-out for university students at 11pm also impact length of stay.

Attendees tend to arrive and depart in pairs or threes. Students appear to start arriving after 8pm and typically leave between 9.30 and 10pm. Attendees from outside the university are often the first to arrive, as early as 7.00pm. They are also typically the last to leave, as most have a day off the following day.

Older attendees seem to arrive singly or with a family member. They also arrive later and leave earlier than other attendees. Children who take part in the English Corner are ushered out by their parents at the latest by 9.30.

4.1.2 Area of the English Corner

The English Corner is held in a large, well-lit but relatively unsheltered plaza approximately 20 metres by 20 metres, bounded by four uncompromisingly hard marble seats and several leafy banyan trees. The library is approximately 100 metres to the east of the English Corner, Teaching Building Four approximately 100 metres to the west. Both are accessible by concrete paths.

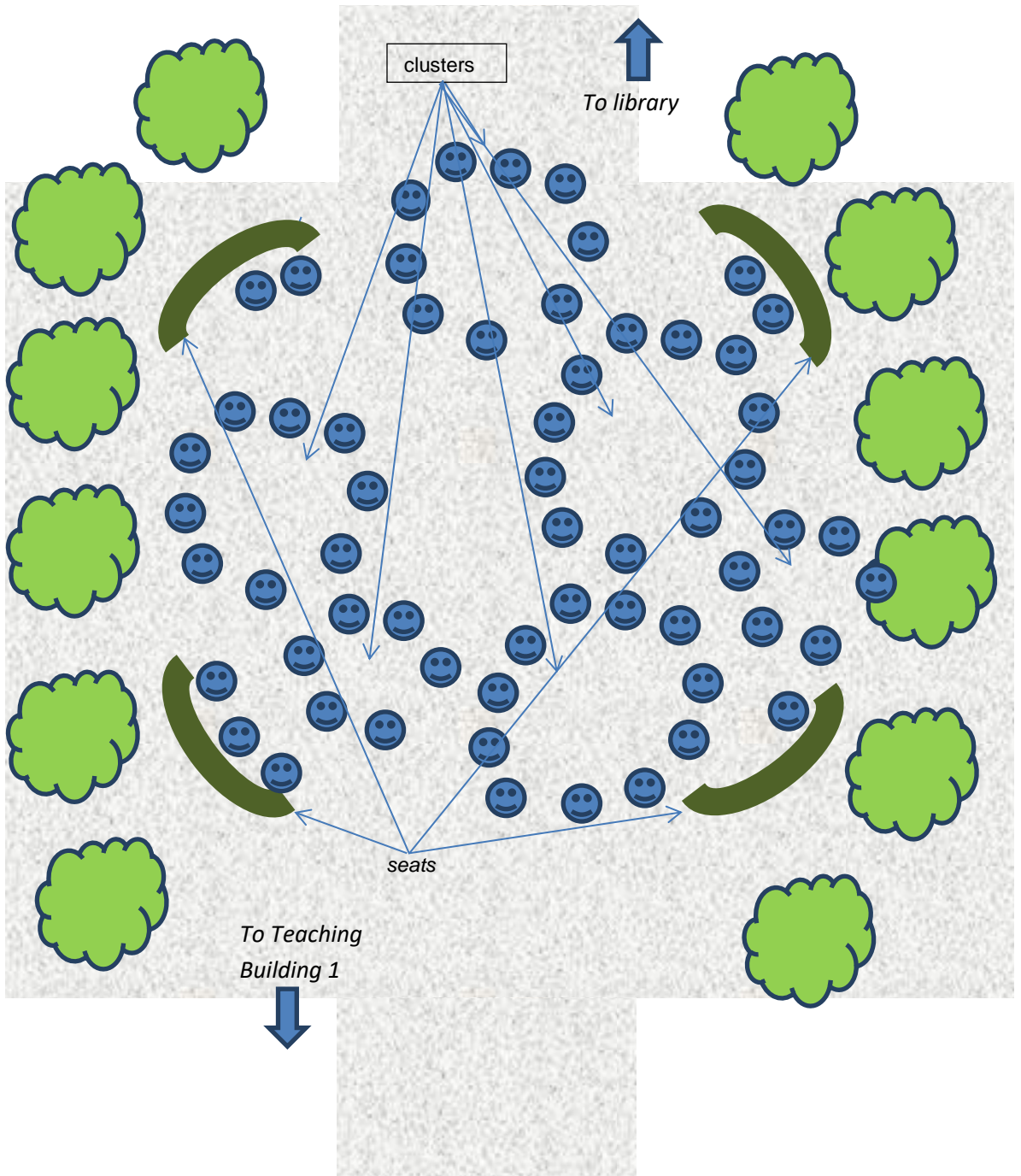


Figure 7: Overhead view of English Corner at SCNU

4.1.3 Participant interviews

Several English Corners take place in Guangzhou each week. Another at Zhongshan University (the one I first attended in 2004) takes place in a gazebo near the library on Tuesday evenings, starting at approximately 7pm and ending shortly before dormitory lights out at 10:30. Attendee numbers vary from six at the beginning through to a peak of about fifty by 9:30pm, steadily decreasing thereafter. Zhongshan (also known as Sun Yat-Sen University) is the premier university in Guangzhou, ranked eighth nationally, and located in spacious grounds near the commercial and upmarket residential centre of Guangzhou. There is little commerce nearby and attendees are almost all students.

Some members of the group say they have met in the same location at South China Normal University for more than ten years. Meetings are held outdoors and there is little protection from the weather, prompting one participant (Maria) to comment that

in summer it's really humid and hot and in winter it's freezing cold, but actually I will keep coming here because I like this activity myself, but if it could be held in the library...

Four of the interviewees were first-time attendees, and did not intend joining the English Corner at all. They reported that on the way to or from the library, they had noticed a gathering of people and were simply curious as to what was happening. Three of the four expressed their intention to continue attending English Corner.

1. *How often do you attend? How long do you stay?*

Tina says she attends 'fairly often but not every week'.

She attended more regularly two years ago but has been lacking motivation lately. Most Sundays she spends from about 1.30pm to 6pm at the English Corner.

Similarly, John says he attends each week for two or three hours, though the time he spends 'depends on the weather'. John tends to arrive at about 2pm and stay until 4pm. He says he has been attending regularly for about 3 years.

Gavin has been working in Risk Control at HSBC for five years and, because it is an international bank headquartered in the UK, he regularly used English at work. He attends English Corner approximately once a month, on the way to or from the library. His primary purpose is to go to the library but

you know I'm interested in English, and my work environment is English so when I see those guys practicing here of course I come to join the English Corner.

He stays for about an hour, often moving between several groups.

Anna is a student from Taiwan and has been in Guangzhou only for a few months. This is her first visit to the English Corner and she is finding it 'boring, because I am used to talking to foreigners'. Anna finds foreigners more interesting to talk to than Chinese. She finds 'their minds are more interesting, especially the people who travel a lot. I admire them'.

She has been there for three hours and will probably stay another hour 'until it starts to get colder'. She heard about the English Corner through friends in an IELTS study group at university.

Maria is working on the English customer hotline in Hong Kong for HSBC and talks to customers from countries in Asia which share Hong Kong's time zone. She mostly uses English at work and reports herself a regular attender.

Usually speaking, I come to this English Corner nearly every week for almost three years. I live nearby. I will arrive about 3pm, stay here from three to five hours.

Arthur is working as a technician and studying Traditional Chinese Medicine part-time. He uses English infrequently at work but studied it as a non-English language major at college. Arthur has been attending each week for about three months, from 2pm to 6pm. He also attends the English Corner weekly in front of Sun Yat Sen University library, where foreigners attend frequently. His stated goal is to pass the College English Test (CET) Band 4, which is the written English proficiency test used in Chinese universities for non-English majors.

I take the CET-4 test four times but I fail and I'm so upset and I want to find the reason.

By comparison, English major students are required to pass the more difficult CET Band 6 test.

Wing speaks with something of a southern English accent, and reports that she has been studying English for many years. She attends English Corner on average every two weeks

when I come here to borrow books from the library. I stay for one or two hours, but it depends on whether I can find anyone to talk with. I never have trouble finding someone to talk to but sometimes you will take a little searching 'til you find someone to talk about the subject you are interested in.

Marvin works as an industrial engineer in a foreign-owned company, and needs to converse in English with overseas managers, with whom he is in daily contact. He attends

every week for three to four hours with almost no exception. I have done that for four and a half years.

2. *Is that amount of time sufficient for you?*

Marvin appears to have very clear learning goals.

It's just right. I would like to maintain a minimum of twenty hours of English talking within a month. I cannot do it too much during the week, so I'd better do it Fridays and Sundays. I have made a commitment to spending twenty hours a month on spoken English, and this is how I do it.

John's reply was thought-provoking in that he suggested that the presence of foreigners decreased the amount of time he needed to spend at the English Corner.

If there's a foreigner, then 30 minutes is enough, but if there are no foreigner, then two to three hours is about right.

He suggests that the presence of foreigners 'tends to even out the chances of speaking'.

He believes the presence of foreigners is also important for listening skills, especially learning to cope with different accents and speech rhythms.

Sometimes foreigners are hard to understand. If [all attendees are] Chinese maybe we can understand, foreigners talk in different way, it's harder for us to understand.

Tina thinks that she gains 'sufficient practice in the time I spend at English Corner'.

Maria supplements her English practice by attending another English Corner in Guangzhou for three hours per week. Totally she commits six hours per week to speaking practice.

I I think is ok for me because my home is very near, and I think I meet friends which I am similar to, and we talk a little bit and I think that is fine. Because you keep doing this and I think it is already long enough.

R Why do you spend so much time on oral English?

I We use English to communicate with each other; it's just a communication tool, but actually when we need some promotion for example, you would like to go to the management and you are representing your department, your team, even your company.

It's a huge company, international company, to give a presentation which will require you to have no mistake, or even a minor mistake which will change things a lot, so this require you to have higher level than others. Your level of English has to be higher than others.

Wing explains that she mainly relies on reading for learning English.

I have been learning English for quite some years, and my English is ... I mostly learn English by reading, so I think I spend about the right time.

3. How do you benefit from the English Corner?

Gavin is unsure how much his English proficiency benefits specifically from the English Corner as

I use English at work a lot and also my company buys hours of English training anyway, not just technical but conversation practice.

Marvin appears to attribute his English fluency entirely to English Corner, stating that his formal education in English had no significant oral component.

Before coming here, I learned English in primary school, high school and university, but oral English is all here.

4. What other out-of-classroom activities do you do?

Tina reports that she supplements her attendance at English Corner by watching movies in English, DVDs which are amply and inexpensively available throughout the country.

Sometimes I will watch some kind of movie. Try to just listen, I focus on listening. If you carry on for a long time, it works.

John said he watched English TV, available free-to-air via the government-provided television network CCTV 9 throughout China.

Anna supplements her English learning by attending speeches at university given in English

on philosophy, psychology, art and literature, it's really interesting, especially for students wishing to study overseas.

This week however, they were cancelled and this is why she is attending the English Corner.

Maria reports that she likes the British accent and keeps New Concept English textbooks at home.

Now I don't have class, I treat English Corner as my class so afterwards on the subway I will read New Concept English 3 and try to memorise all of them. It's really useful to try to use some of the words to express yourself, especially some of the adjectives.

Angus attends the US Embassy each week for their public lectures in English.

Every week they have two lectures, I always enjoy what they say about culture and technology, they also have some PPT (PowerPoint) on the big screen and they talk for one hour and then one hour face to face discuss.

Wing involves herself in group activities such as amateur drama.

Group activities? We and some friends would get together and maybe act out some scenes from books we all enjoy, classics or a play, we just do it for fun. And then sometimes, I teach my family English. Does that count? My father is learning English so I'm teaching him. He used to learn Russian and German, and he now wanted to learn English because it's an international language.

Marvin says the English Corner is his only oral English language input, apart from work.

5. *What do people generally talk about in the English Corner? Are there any topics that are avoided?*

Tina responds that conversational topics are decided 'without any pressure and you can just feel free to talk'.

John suggests that

because we all care about our lives, the economy is the most popular topic. With foreigners, political questions tend to be avoided because we are different country, so if we ask, how you say, political questions, some people get very noisy. So we try to avoid these questions. With Chinese people, personal questions tend to be avoided.

Gavin believes the topics are neither deep nor interesting and that he moves between groups frequently in search of interesting conversations.

I I didn't so strong interesting here, because I joined this several times and, actually I find why I move between several groups is because I, when I introduce myself and then talk about some interests and words, we find, Oh! We don't have any interests in common.

R Do you ever prepare topics for the English Corner?

I I just come to see what people are talking about. I never prepare topics.

R *Have any topics surprised you?*

I *One time the topic was about Japan and China relations, and I just walked away. I don't have any interest in politics.*

He could recall this subject arising once before, but that with the frequent disputes between the two countries it was in the news at the time. The most interesting topics were to do with

the interest and the hobbies, we share something in common. I feel that is the most interesting.

Anna speaks of a troubled student who joined her group.

a joiner, who just came up, and said 'I just dropped out of my school and I hate Chinese education system' and then we will talk about the Chinese education system, and then we will talk about... a boyfriend, and do you want a boyfriend, and what kind of boyfriend do you want.

Maria says she goes along with other people's topics

if they are talking something, I will go along, to respect others

but when she gets the chance she will steer the conversation to

for example, the Christmas is coming, Easter is coming, Halloween is coming, so we will talk about what activity we can plan as an English Corner activity. We also held a barbecue ourselves in Xiaogang Park last year in November, yeah it was really amazing, I came up with the idea that it was maybe a good way to do an activity and I was really happy. Movies, Chinese movies or whatever, it is my favourite and you can share with your experience and next time I can go to watch it... your sharing of your daily life, your work, your hobbies and your maybe family issues... always, I mean, of course if you have a good friend you can share some private issues but it's not recommended for a big group.

She notes that conversations become quite personal at times and that some of her conversation partners share

a project which is helping a boy get rid of his single life and we hope that he will succeed but we are talking about his girlfriend and when they are going to get married.

Discussion of personal topics is not so frequent though, Maria estimates

about 10 minutes in three hours. If there are students present then we better talk about school life and studies, what you may do, what sport do you like.

University student Angus never prepares topics, but affirms the frequency of politics and current-affairs in discussions he takes part in.

Free topics, something, current news – what happened in China, the Diaoyu islands; today the 18th National Congress now, these are the formal topics.

The atmosphere is not always so serious. ‘Sometimes they talk about fashionable things (laughter) gossip, or sexy thing.’

Trainee pharmacist and regular attendee Arthur expresses his discomfort with aggressive people, reporting on one individual who confronted a visiting foreigner at the English Corner

some aggressive people here, Chinese people also, they just talk-talk-talk-talk-talk – don’t let other people to talk. One day, a Chinese guy kept asking a foreigner – I think he was from British – why are you here? Do you have teaching qualification in China? Are you here to make money? So maybe a little sensitive.

Wing explains that common topics include how to build up your vocabulary and how to acquire an accent.

And then some very, very ordinary things, such as what is your job, and where were you born, and what do you enjoy. Exchange personal information.

I hope there would be more specific topics, such as what books are you enjoying, or current affairs.

Like Anna, she finds English speakers to be more open-minded.

I I think most people who speak English are quite open-minded. Not really worrying about government taboos or something. Of course there are some people who are more nationalistic than others, generally speaking we’re comfortable talking about anything.

R Do you find anyone dominates conversations?

I Foreigners! I never participated in the group but whenever there’s a foreigner, twenty or thirty people gather around them and ask very basic questions such as how to learn English, how to improve their vocabulary, everything you can get from a book actually.

Marvin explains that no specific topics are included or excluded.

That’s a difficult question to answer, we don’t have specific topics, but I could summarise a couple that are common here. Typically the first – number one - would be about learning

English, and number two would be about jobs of each other. They would be the main categories. Is there any topics to avoid? I guess the answer is no.

6. *What do you hope to gain from your attendance?*

Tina hopes to make ‘improvements in English, make friends’.

She explains that she has contacted some people during the week by email and continued practicing English in this way.

John links English ability to the likelihood of finding a good job.

China is now in the opening-up period, so if I have good English then I have the chance for a good job.

Anna expresses a more intrinsic motivation for attending the English Corner. She ‘loves English very much, and I want to go to America some day’.

Angus ponders

I’m here to practice my English, but I think it’s not too useful. If I just come here, if I don’t prepare, I just listen. Some difficult word they say, I can’t understand. I ask them to explain, but you know so many people here sometimes you just listen, you don’t have a chance to talk, you have to wait.

Arthur talks about foreigners who attend English Corner in order to promote an English school or another business.

I I see some American, they come here to talk to us, they give the card, introduce his job, talk about if you have any English question he give you his email, something like that.

R How do you feel about that?

I I think it’s common, it’s normal. It’s depend on us. I don’t want to learn English from this portion. American come here, very friendly, talk with us, I think it’s ok.

Wing enjoys sharing ideas and hopes to meet attendees outside the English Corner in order to discuss literature.

I spend a lot of time reading and writing in English, and I’m hoping to pick up some book buddies.

Marvin’s purpose of improving his English fluency is clear. His intention is

I to be able to speak English faster and be able to understand English better, that is the purpose I am here.

R Is it important to understand different accents?

I No, that's not my expectation. I would like to use some words I haven't had a chance to use before, to use them more. I think that's the purpose, because people here, they typically have one accent, which is the Chinese accent. It's not an international learning spot, we're not going to hear Indian, or Australian accents often. It's really about fluency.

7. Do you think you are benefiting from your attendance at English Corner?

Tina admits to having been nervous about speaking in public. 'Before I [was] scared, but now I get used to it.'

Anna is ambivalent, believing that the greatest benefit is from talking with native speakers. She believes she is benefiting from her attendance, 'but not very much, because they are all local people here'.

Arthur worries that the level of English competence among attendees is low. He is concerned that his vocabulary is too limited to make valuable contributions to discussions and that there is a lack of correction for his grammatical and pronunciation errors.

It doesn't work. It's not efficiency. This is what I believe because I just come here one day. Here, it's English Corner. So I have few chance to talk, nobody can teach me, it's just free talk I don't know – if I have new things I want to talk about, I don't know how to talk, how to introduce these new things, in English. Vocabulary. Actually if I have somebody help me to express, to correct my mistakes, then I can improve. The people don't tell me, stop small mistake become big mistake. And so I'm afraid that, all the people here, their English is not good. The pronunciation is wrong. I'm not sure, I'm just a learner here. We're just self-taught.

Marvin seems more satisfied with his progress.

Yeah, from my experience of the past four and a half years, I see myself already can speak English from, like zero four years ago and then now I can speak English and I can understand, and I can talk to anybody here, and that's, and I would continue. Actually I remember my first time here, I was standing behind people and trying to get in a word, but not successfully. At the time, even though I didn't speak much, I was good at the

examinations – we learn ten years of the grammar, the vocabulary, everything except the oral English.

8. *Have you met any people who could help you in your work or study?*

Tina feels that the English Corner is not the appropriate place for advancing her career.

Normally I won't ask them. Even I ask them 'what do you do?' and 'can you help me?', I won't do that. We here just to talk. This is the English Corner.

Gavin admits that the search for a partner attracts him to English Corner.

I When I see a beautiful lady standing there, I will move over.

R Is this one of your reasons for coming to English Corner?

I You can say so. (laughter)

Anna seeks an avenue to escape from her school life

School is boring, I need some fresh air, meet new people and my life become different.

Schools kill creativity, I can't find myself – all of the time and especially recently I can't even find what I love. I love singing, and recently I can't.

She reveals a curiosity for life overseas and a perception that people overseas are not as obliged to conform to cultural norms as Chinese are.

In China, you can't be different, but overseas you have to be different.

Maria prefers not to talk about her work at the English Corner

I prefer not talking about my job at the English Corner. If you're fed up with your job, and then you talk about it... but some of the girls, they are really confused and they are in trouble about the communication with their colleagues or their management and we'll talk about it, because we have different people from different industry and can solve the problem, but I prefer not talking about job in English Corner. For example, I am very confused between the communication between my mother and me and I like to consult someone experienced, a father – not my father, but someone who can help me with this.

Wing expresses the opinion that she did not expect the English Corner to be of much assistance to her career

Career? I don't think so. I don't imagine you'll find too many high-powered managers here.

Even so, she enthuses over one friend she had made through English Corner – an expert in ethnic music.

The other day I met a teacher actually, she's just starting to write a book on local ethnic music. I think it's very interesting, because I didn't know anything about ethnic music in Guangdong province.

Marvin has found no-one of particular help to his career or study.

Not really. I see three different kinds of people, some very dedicated, others that just come in and out. Apart from that, I don't see anyone really impressive, at least not from my learning English.

9. Do you think this is a good use of your time? What would you be doing if you were not here?

Tina explains

I have been coming here a long time... If I were not here, I'd be out with friends or something.

Tina's journey to the English Corner is a lengthy one; it takes her more than an hour by the Guangzhou Metro subway.

John is adamant that he must attend. 'This is something important. I have to do.'

Gavin believes he can make good use of his time

I think I can make good use of my time here, that's why I stay here for one or two hours. If I don't come here, after I leave the library, I just go home and cook for myself.

Anna would be attending the weekly English speeches in the library. 'There are philosophy speeches every week.'

Maria believes it is a good use of her time

I think that learning English and meet some friends, I think somehow they will improve my English and also broaden my horizons.

Wing feels comfortable at the English Corner but is aware that others are not making the progress they would probably like to

Being here is not a sacrifice for me. The other day I met a girl from Foshan who spends three hours getting here each week. Her English is not very good, and I doubt that she's really learning very much. I think she should take another course of action.

10. Do you use an electronic communication tools like Skype, QQ, Weibo to practice English?

In her line of work, Tina uses MSN and Skype to talk with international customers.

Gavin uses QQ and Weibo to converse with other people interested in English, but feels it is of limited benefit.

I don't know, many people in different level so, I join one or two groups and I feel that I cannot improve myself here so I just leave.

He goes on to explain that computer network issues often seem to sabotage attempts to communicate online.

It's basically the network, the network is not stable. The performance is terrible, I cannot stand this quality.

John says he prefers face to face contact over online communication, in which 'sometimes people wear masks'.

Tina uses QQ to communicate via text messaging, which has until recently been limited to users in China. She notes that an international version has just become available. She finds that online conversations can be conducted 'without any pressure and you can just feel free to talk'.

Anna has a foreign friend in QQ but uses email more than chat software.

Maria doesn't use internet technology much.

I seldom use them for English. I have a job and I'm too busy... I really think they will have an influence on face to face communication.

She expresses strong negative attitudes on the burgeoning use of cellphones, and their effect on interpersonal communications.

Most of teenagers, they use their cellphone too much and actually they set a border with each other. They always put their headsets on their ear and they pretend not to see each other, actually they refuse to communicate with each other. Maybe they don't mean to do

that, but step by step it will become the truth that we will refuse to communicate with others by doing this.

Arthur uses QQ, but does not appear to value it as a way to enhance his vocabulary.

It's not a valuable way to communicate. Maybe I write simple things, if I see new vocabulary I have to search. I'm seldom log in to QQ.

Vocabulary is essential to passing examinations in English. Angus continues

China is becoming more and more open, more and more foreigners are living here, so we have to know English. In China, company also have this requirement, if you pass CET-6, CET-4 they have the condition to hire you. But Chinese, oral speaking is not good. But CET-4, CET-6 focus on the writing, reading – they don't focus on the speaking. They have listening, but not speaking.

Wing uses QQ to talk to friends, but in Chinese rather than in English. She finds these technologies

trivial. I think my time is better spent on other things, not being distracted by trivial things.

Marvin does not use online tools to assist his learning.

I'm an old type of English learner. I am not too much an internet fan. It's personal, I never feel comfortable learning English that's not face to face. The way I have been learning has been very effective and very easy. I don't see any benefit in those websites, I've tried two or three times.

4.2 English Room at National Institute of Fitness and Sport (NIFS)

Both the English Corner and English Room permit participants to move around and conduct real and unrehearsed conversations with their own choice of partners. However I have observed the English Room is a rarity in Japanese universities, where informal English club meetings often referred to as English Speaking Societies (ESS) tend to focus on watching English movies or function as extensions to normal grammar-translation based classroom lessons.

I learned of its existence from a poster on display at the Kanoya International Exchange Association (KIEA), co-located on the same floor as the Kanoya City government offices and contacted the organiser Dr. Toru (Tom) Kunishige, briefing him on my research in China. He was welcoming and invited me to attend the meeting to be held the following Wednesday evening. He explained to me that English Room was scheduled twice a year for 8 consecutive weeks in the autumn and spring semesters. I arranged to visit over three consecutive weeks in June 2016.

He also agreed to be interviewed, as well as inviting me to interview participants of the English Room. In all I attended eight sessions over two years of the English Room and interviewed ten participants.

4.2.1 Rich description of English Room

Arriving a little early, I find Dr. Kunishige at work in the NIFS Gallery moving chairs to the edge of the room, facing inwards. Measuring about 9 metres by 9 metres, the room is comfortably furnished and has an adjacent kitchen. Light pours in through floor to ceiling windows along one wall, offering an inviting view of the sea and part of the large expanse of sporting fields, mostly deserted at this time of the evening. The English Room will start in a few minutes, and Dr. Kunishige is placing bottles of Japanese tea in a corner of the room with a supply of paper cups. On a table near the entrance are sticky paper labels; all attendees are expected to write their name on a label and wear it, then return it at the end of the session. This is a convenient and unobtrusive way of keeping attendance statistics. People wander in from shortly after 5:45 and groups start to form; younger students tending to talk together, older people with older people. There is not as much fluid movement between groups as is noticeable in the English Corner in China, even though the chairs have been removed to encourage movement.

There's a perceptible hum to the room; voices are softer than at the English Corner; the Japanese tend to speak more softly than the Chinese in public; moreover the meeting is being held inside.

At 6:45pm, Dr. Kunishige raises his voice to announce finishing time, before reminding everyone of a festival being held the following day, despite which classes will go ahead as usual.

Attendance is 35 people, of whom five are teaching staff from the university and another five are residents who have driven from the nearby city of Kanoya. One is a retired teacher in her 70's, two are Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in local high schools recruited from Canada and America. There is a junior high school English teacher and the manager of the local government-funded KIEA (Kanoya International Exchange Association) headquartered in the Rina City shopping complex in the centre of the city, which is where I first noticed the poster advertising English Room. Most of the participants are students, two of whom are exchange students from Taiwan and mainland China.

4.2.2 Interview with Dr. Kunishige

I interviewed Dr. Kunishige to learn the reasons why he was running the English Room and what factors influenced his decision making. The questions were designed to elicit:

- The history of English Room and foundational influences upon it.
- Who benefits from the English Room and in what ways?
- The reasons why the English Room is structured in the way it is.
- The nature of Dr. Kunishige's sponsorship of the English Room.
- The reasons for, and extent of, links into the community outside of the university.
- Factors influencing the choice of place and location.

1. *Tell me something of the history of the English Corner.*

It started at NIFS in 2014 when I arrived to take up a teaching post. At the time there were seven consecutive meetings, from June to August and then from October to January. I structured it this way as meetings every week through the semester would be difficult for students to attend regularly, as certain periods of the semester such as examination weeks are extremely busy.

I started English Room in February 2004, when I was teaching at the College of Technology in Shonan city, Yamaguchi-ken. I believed that Japanese students needed practice at speaking and contact with a wider variety of people than were available in the university, where the group tended to be quite homogeneous.

As it happened the city council of Shonan invited us to a facility that it rented near the train station in the centre of town, in order to help revitalise the centre of the city by encouraging people to spend time there.

Our school also had two semesters but we didn't care about that, we held it more frequently, maybe 35 times a year. We held it on Friday, because on weekends we feel more relaxed. From 5.30 to 6.30. There was a bigger age gap, many high school students, but they would not go out together afterwards. Some of the staff made friends with the local citizens and went to drinking parties with them.

Dr. Kunishige was first exposed to the English Room concept when he was a visiting scholar at the University of Hawaii, where English Room was held on Friday nights in one corner of the English Department building.

We brought soft drink and beer and basically gathered to talk about the week and release our stress. When I moved to Yamaguchi, I wanted to adopt the concept of what I had seen in Hawaii. In Hawaii, it was organised by Graduate School students, whose English was very good.

2. *What inspired you to do this? What need do you think you are fulfilling?*

The first idea is giving students as much exposure as possible to a range of different voices and experiences. To encourage students to speak out.

Dr. Kunishige believes it is important to have native speakers in attendance, as he believes many Japanese speakers want the chance to speak with them.

It can motivate Japanese students to speak. Sometimes though it is difficult for native English speakers to attend, so on those occasions we will ask questions. I would ask them "what's new?" or for some bad news or good news. I know most of them by name, and I can ask them more concrete questions about their studies. But when a first time visitor attends, I ask them to write down their name, and introduce themselves to me. The name tags help everyone to see each other's names and helps the conversations.

He views English Room as an adjunct to classroom-based conversational activities.

Of course in class, we do some conversational activities but it's not enough. I thought they need to have more opportunities to use what they have learned, that's why I want to provide some opportunities.

Ongoing personal contact with students appears to have a positive influence on attendance.

In the first semester this year, there were some very basic level students, who brought dictionaries with them, while in the second semester some higher level students attended. The only difference is that in the first semester, I taught the lower grade students and encouraged them to participate. The higher level students attended and stayed but the lower level students dropped away. I've never asked them why they don't come, but when I see them I always encourage them to come.

3. *Who is the target audience?*

Dr. Kunishige's priority is to involve students and other teachers of English. Local citizens are also encouraged to attend.

In Yamaguchi a number of citizens attended, mostly these were housewives who were not full time employed and who enjoyed practicing English for travel purposes.

If it's only students then the range of conversation is limited, the older people can talk about more topics.

He notes a tendency for students to talk with other students their own age, but

the more outgoing and sociable students attempt to talk with the local citizens.

Dr. Kunishige reports that about 50% of attendees in Yamaguchi were students, but that this fluctuated with the season.

When exams were finished the proportion of students would increase as they had more free time. At the end of the year, the number of housewives would decrease as they were generally very busy. In Yamaguchi, the times were different. There it was from 5.30 to 6.30pm, so that both students and workers could attend.

4. *What factors guide the choice of location?*

The English Corner appears to attract attention from local authorities and, according to Dr. Kunishige the location in Yamaguchi was initially at the university where he taught, but the City Council requested that they hold the English Room in the centre of town.

The meeting was held in a satellite office of the school, which was rented for us by the City Council on the understanding that we would hold some activities there. Then for example, after the English Room activities, on their way back to their home, the participants would go shopping. This required us to travel 20 minutes each way from the campus, and I would carry students in my car as would other teachers at the College

There doesn't seem to be the same co-operation with local government in Kanoya, which employs its own ALT to conduct semi-formal English language classes at its offices.

We had some discussions with International officers of the Kanoya government, but at the moment we are doing different things separately. One of the ALTs is holding a similar activity at the City Office, but it's more formal, with textbooks and homework.

The university is about 10 minutes from the centre of town, and so we enjoy the company of usually three or four citizens who also attend. This is less than in Yamaguchi.

In Kanoya, the English Room is held in the NIFS Gallery; a comfortable space usually used as a meeting room. It is located close to the university cafeteria and has its own food preparation area.

[Before English Room meetings] we put the chairs aside, against the walls and we only use the tables, and provide soft drinks. We move the chairs, because if you leave the chairs there, people will sit down and I really wanted people to mingle.

At the beginning, we used to sit down and I would ask every attendee to give a self-introduction, so everyone else was listening quietly, but when they finished no conversation occurred. I thought if we keep this situation maybe no-one will come next

time and then I remembered what the situation was like back in Hawaii where there were no chairs, and everyone was just standing and walking around.

Dr. Kunishige reports that prior to using the gallery, the English Room was held in a classroom but that

it wasn't comfortable, and someone suggested that we use the NIFS Gallery area. We had to get the permission from the university. It is air-conditioned and lit every day until 5.30pm.

5. Which factors guide the choice of time and length of meetings?

Dr. Kunishige explains that the time and length of meetings are determined by what he feels is most suitable for students.

English Room was originally set to start at 4:15 pm, as classes at the university finish at 3:50 and it gave students enough time to prepare for the meetings without having such a long wait that they would be tempted to go home. We later altered the starting time to 4:30 in order for ALTs to be able to join before it finished, as their school workday finishes at around 4pm.

We're fortunate here because if the ALTs can't attend, we have some exchange students from Taiwan, Korea and China who do attend. Their English level is better than the Japanese students, though one Chinese student whose English level is quite low attended for a while but quit because he said it was too difficult. He was there again this week, so I was pleased.

Attendees value the presence of ALTs as otherwise they rarely have a chance to talk to foreigners.

We've found that one hour seems to be best length for these meetings, as people need to go home for dinner.

6. What do you see as your role in the English Room?

Dr. Kunishige sees his role as that of a facilitator; an organiser of resources.

In a word, my role is a facilitator, so that everybody can enjoy their English conversations.

Prof Kunishige appears to additionally take a pastoral role, explaining that when attendees arrive alone, he introduces them to conversation partners or talks to them himself. He also decides the schedule for the meetings and sends out reminder emails a day ahead of meetings.

I advise people when the English Room is on, and make sure there are refreshments available. When a new person from outside joins the group, they are often very nervous and so I will make a point of welcoming them and introducing myself to them, and explain the system to them.

The English Room is available to the public, at least those with the resources to be able to travel to NIFS from Kanoya. This commitment to public access came at a cost however in Yamaguchi where the English Room was held in the city centre and an unwelcome person decided to join the meetings for reasons apparently unrelated to learning English.

One problem we had in Yamaguchi was a man with mental problems, who had been arrested before he came to our group. He would drink the soft drink directly from the bottle so that after that no one else would drink it, and make a nuisance of himself. Eventually I had to call upon the police to keep him away, and then the problem was solved. English Room was held on the second floor and on the first floor of the same building you could use the Internet for free so many people gathered there before the English Room. The person in charge of the internet station would call the police when he would appear, and the police stopped him.

We have never had the same problem in Kanoya although it could happen because the English Room is open to everyone.

We advertise the English Corner with a brochure at the City Hall, and the City Government also include it in their magazine which is published every month. Most of the outside attendees came because they saw that notice. There was also an article published in the local newspaper, written by one of our regular attendees.

It is clear the English Room would not exist without Dr Kunishige's sponsorship and the pastoral role he adopts, most notably in dealing with negative elements such as the anti-social man who invaded the English Room when it was located in Yamaguchi.

Also noteworthy are the links he seeks into the local Kanoya community, especially for the benefit of the student attendees engendering as it does a greater range of discussion topics and broader experiences which can help to enrich conversations and interactions.

4.2.3 Participant interviews

Attendees varied in age from 12 year old middle school students to a retired woman in her 70s. In contrast to South China Normal University in Guangzhou, NIFS is some distance out of town – there is no convenient public transport and attendees from outside the university must have their own transport. As a result, the bulk of participants were students at NIFS and the average age appears to be about 25.

1. *How often do you attend the English Room? How long do you stay?*

Uehara-san attends English Room ‘every week, whenever possible’ and is an enthusiastic participant. She adds that she enjoys meeting new attendees at the meetings and welcomes them, introducing herself and initiating conversations with them.

Ueno-san responds that he attends almost every week ‘whenever I can’.

The Sakamoto sisters are here for the third time and attend whenever they can, though both depend on their father to bring them, which he cannot always do if he has meetings that conflict with the English Room times. Both appear to think that speaking with native English speakers is important to their learning. The elder sister attends

I because I want to keep to speak, because if I don't come to this... I can't keep to speak to native... Kanoya is countryside and it is difficult to have the opportunity to speak to native English speakers...

R It's your decision to come?

I My father recommends... then he took my sister and my brother. My brother is not good at speaking because he was in normal school and there was so many Chinese students... he knows a little Chinese skill but he doesn't know... Ah! He knows some English words but he doesn't know the grammar.

Yamashita-san is attending for the first time and evidently values the experience.

Today is first time. I want to come next week.

Sakamoto-sensei is of the opinion that learning English is a privilege afforded him by his university. He feels an obligation to mentor younger English learners. He attends

I as often as I can and I think this event is held perhaps 10 times a semester, I think I attend more than 80%.

R *Why is that?*

I *Why? Mmmm. Before I go to Australia I thought I need to practice my English and I thought this is a good opportunity to use language, and after I returned from Australia, I think to participate this event is one of my duties.*

R *A duty?*

I *Because I went there by... job... The university give me a chance... To go abroad, so I learned a lot in Australia. And now I come back here so I think I need to... widespread my experience to children and adults.*

Being retired and with few constraints on her time, Mochihara-san drives from Kanoya to attend English Room every week.

Whenever they have English room, I come up.

Imatamari-san is a middle-school student and attends English Room every week. Her mother picks her up from school and brings her to NIFS each week by car

because she knows I enjoy [attending English room].

Susan attends English Room two or three times a month. An exchange student, but with additional responsibilities at the school, like Sakamoto-sensei if she has meetings or hasn't finished her work she will not attend.

2. *Is that amount of time sufficient for you?*

Uehara-san believes it is enough for her needs; in addition to English Room, she also enjoys her weekly English lessons on Mondays which are often conversational, in addition to the hour of conversation practice scheduled each Friday with Dr. Kunishige, with whom she always speaks in English.

Uehara-san is aware of variants of English and clearly prefers native speaker English, to which she refers as 'natural' English. She eagerly joins events to which foreigners are invited.

Kanoya city holds events for foreigners, when I can I attend the event as a volunteer.

At first I used to think that the hour spent in practice with Kunishige-sensei was the most valuable use of my time, but now, English have many type, for example American English, Australian English and I can speak Japanese English very easily with Kunishige-sensei, but it's much harder to speak with an ALT from Africa. Natural English is sometimes very difficult for Japanese speakers. His English is very easy to understand and he knows about

Japanese English but ALTs don't know about Japanese English, so when I go overseas I should know more about natural English.

Ueno-san thinks that the time is adequate for his needs, provided foreigners are there

because some foreigners so... talking with me, it is my practice, so... I'm very enough.

He enjoys speaking with foreigners. Conversing with them

is cool, I want to speak to everyone... everywhere.

However, speaking with Japanese people is easier for him because of his perceived lack of vocabulary,

my English vocabulary is a lack... very low level, so... I... ahhh not confident to speak... foreigners.

Sakamoto-chan believes that by attending she can at best maintain her present level of English ability, but not develop it. She also believes she needs to supplement the English Room with reading.

I It is good to keep [the level], but it is not enough to improve.

R So what do you do to improve your English?

I I read books and get more hard vocabulary

R I see. So you can find books in your school library?

I No, I bought some books in Australia.

R I see. And you brought them back with you to Japan? Really? How many books?

I Eight.

R Have you finished them?

I (laughing) Not yet.

Imatamari-san believes the amount of time is insufficient for her needs, but lacks the English to say it.

Motto benkyou shitai (I'd like to study more.)

Susan is a mature learner of English and is able to set up opportunities for practice in her own country, by arranging conversations with native speakers. Time limited to one hour per week, she believes English Room on its own is not sufficient for her needs

I because if both the people are interesting, it's a pity... too short. When I was in Taiwan and sometimes I meet internship students from United States or Europe or some native speakers of English, we try to use the English Corner in Starbucks and meet for two hours.

R And did you go there just by yourself?

I Yes, well I say hey I want to improve my English skills, so will you help come for the English Corner, we just bought a coffee and we sit there talking on anything we can think or something we can discuss.

3. How do you benefit from the English Room?

According to Uehara-san,

I think I am speaking better, English Room is a good chance for me, and I can meet new friends to speak English with. I keep in touch with ALTs, and I message him in English.

She explained that many Japanese are afraid of speaking in English, and for herself the first time she attended,

At first I really shivered, but now I join English Room many times. Now I don't feel scary speaking English. It's a very good chance for me.

Ueno-san added that friendships were important to him.

Yes, I are making friends... friends? Not students, students is there.

Sakamoto-san is excited about the opportunity to talk with Susan from Taiwan.

I met the Thai... the Chinese girl. If I didn't come to here, I couldn't meet to her. Then I could make... new friends?

Sakamoto-chan says

I I can learn new vocabulary and I can practice my pronunciation.

R And when you learn new vocabulary like for example if you hear a new word, what do you do? Do you write that word down?

I No, I ask the meaning.

R Ok, so you ask the meaning. How do you remember that word?

I I just remember.

R You don't have to write things down? That's cool.

I (laughter) But sometimes I forgot them.

Imatamari-san enjoys the opportunity to speak with foreigners.

I talk foreign country ... foreigner. I speak foreign every week. I think it is tanoshii (enjoyable)

Susan is concerned that an extended period in Japan will have a negative effect on her English.

I I just don't want my English skill be low.

R To decrease?

I Yeah, everybody told me you stay in Japan a long time your English skill will decrease and I don't want that to happen. So I always do some opportunity to speak English.

4. What other out of class activities do you do to support your English learning?

Uehara-san reports that she reads English books occasionally, and watches English movies

about one a month, but I watch the movie with Japanese letters (subtitles) ... it's very hard but it's very fast, and it's very difficult so very few times.

She also reads from the extensive reading collection of simple English books kept in a rack outside Dr. Kunishige's office, and which students are free to borrow at any time.

This is homework for Kunishige-sensei's (Dr. Kunishige's) class.

Ueno-san also makes use of the extensive reading collection.

I borrow the books and I read... so it is very useful the extensive reading. Is ahh very low level is for foreigners' children, very low level. I'm very enjoy.

Ueno-san and Yamashita-san enjoy listening to English songs. Ueno-san also enjoys listening to Justin Beiber and knows the lyrics to one of his songs, which he sings at karaoke.

If foreigners are singing, I follow him.

Ishikawa-san talks face to face with ALT friends who live and work in Kanoya. He also watches movies to help improve English.

I I have seen "Walking Dead", "Black List" and "Criminal Mind."

R What do you do? Do you listen to them in English?

I Yeah, yeah.

R With... Jimaku supa? Subtitles?

I Listening... English.

Sakamoto-san continues to study textbooks she obtained in Australia.

In Australia, some textbooks was given to me. Then I brought back to Japan. Then I use the textbooks. There are so many words I don't understand, don't know, I can't write. I use dictionary. I do everything I can.

Ishikawa-san also supplements his English Room practice with weekly conversations with Dr. Kunishige.

Sakamoto-san makes the most of her opportunities to speak with ALTs at her junior high school.

I I speak to English teacher every day.

R Is this the Japanese teacher?

I No, the ALT.

Sakamoto-sensei believes the speaking practice is valuable but needs to be supplemented by professional reading.

This is just one hour. It's a very good (indistinct) it's not enough. For example, we... I think I am very poor at the vocabulary, very poor, so to learn more vocabulary you can read, another way, another study. I think I need to read more articles.

He supplements his listening skills with English radio and downloading English as a Second Language podcasts.

I I listen to some podcasts, English drama.

R What sort of podcasts are they?

I ESL podcasts. Once a week

Sakamoto-sensei's family watches movies with English subtitles every week and his elder daughter believes this is helpful for differentiating formal from informal English:

You know, speaking English and reading English are really different, using different words? I can know... I can know... how to use, how to handle. You know, we don't like [using] 'Oh my God' on writing, but we say [it].

Mochihara-san feels no need to supplement her English learning. Her priority is

just looking after my garden, pulling weeds, just looking after my section.

Imatamari-san watches English movies with her father.

I My father likes English movies. So every day but

R Every day but?

I Hotondo (Almost)

Susan has well-developed networks of information. She

I sometimes watch movie, or listen to the BBC, CNN news

R On radio or TV?

I On smartphone. I just do it to train my listening skills.

R Do you watch movies?

I Sometimes, watch movies.

R On DVD?

I Youtube.

5. What do people generally talk about in the English Room? Are there any topics that are avoided?

Mochihara-san is frustrated by the paucity of depth in conversations with students.

I I've been here for three or four years now, honestly, you know, no setting, no topics. University student, they're studying hard for their, you know, program, and when they coming here for, just to mix up people, but in my case, no it wasn't enough conversation.

R When you say not enough conversation, you mean not enough range of conversation?

I That's right

R So the topics are too similar?

I Yes well I'm just creating, offering, please say your name and are you a university student and whether your home town is here or whether you and came from the other side, and so on. So just describing, a little more easy to speak for them. Because it's my practice as well, carry on my English.

R So why is it important to you? You're now living in Japan, you're dealing with Japanese people...

I David when you live overseas... I don't know... English is not a special language for me. It's natural. I never thought English is a special language for me, it's just carry on my language from New Zealand.

R But you feel comfortable speaking English?

I Tonight, I really enjoy!

R Why?

I Because I spoke with David... another professor. We had a good talking for, what you call, sport. I've been to Canada, I've been to the United States, we talked about the Grand Canyon, how did I like, how to get there, how did I stay, what did I see?

There appear to be no topics that must be avoided for political reasons.

6. What do you hope to gain from your attendance at English Room?

Uehara-san expresses a desire somewhat different to what she perceives among other students; the opportunity to express her ideas efficiently in English.

Many students will join the English Room to have a fun, they will tell about English Room to their friends. I want to learn new words. It is different between writing and speaking; the time spent speaking English is very important. When I join English Room I can speak English many time, it is such an opportunity to express my ideas. I think English Room is a practice to explain myself.

She believes Japanese learners want to speak English, but that, despite the presence of ALTs in secondary schools, they are not well taught.

ALTs are native speakers, so they can teach natural English to their students, but now many students cannot know about natural English by ALTs, so I think one causes of this problem is that they don't have the licence to teach Japanese students. They can't teach alone.

Uehara-san reports that in high school, her English scores were not high but nevertheless she enjoyed talking with foreigners. She suggests Japanese people are shy about speaking English to each other.

Many Japanese think English is very difficult and very expensive to learn. Everyone knows that Japanese English ability is very low, so I think every Japanese feel ashamed to speak English but in English Room every student and local citizens can speak English well, so English room is... many participants and no-one feels nervous to speak English in English Room. That kind of atmosphere is very good for studying English. It's very different to high school classes, or Nova...

However, she does not appear to be shy about communicating in English.

But I don't. When I meet Kunishige-sensei I always talk in English. I think that I should not, do not feel strange.

She appears intrinsically motivated to learn English as a communication tool and not certain that it will prominently feature in her working life.

I'm not sure if I will use my English in my work. Now, I talk to many foreigners, I really enjoy that thing. I want to communicate with foreigners, so I study English. I want to enjoy travelling abroad. If I can get work in other countries, I want to do. But I don't want to become English teacher!

Imatamari-san is in her senior year of middle school and enjoys attending English room. She is interested in cultural aspects of English. She is able to negotiate being driven to the English Room each week by her mother, who waits for her in an adjoining room. Her English is halting.

R Why do you like studying English?

I I want... I want to go... I want to go to foreign country. I speak English more.

R Why do you want to go to foreign countries?

I I like foreign... I like foreign country... country (pause) English songs

R Have you been overseas? Have you been to a foreign country?

I No.

R Where would you like to go?

I I want to go to ... the USA.

R Why the USA?

I I want to go to California.

R Why? Is California special?

I I like Disney.

Ishikawa-san and Ueno-san are students at NIFS and play tennis at a high level. Ishikawa-san is facing a TOEFL English examination, which he needs to pass in order to graduate. Ueno-san appears quite a self-directed learner. He is aware that his speaking ability level is not where he wants it to be. He attends English Room specifically for speaking and listening practice and feels that his listening skills are benefiting more. He also supplements English Room with weekly visits to Dr. Kunishige's office for the hour of English conversation and seeks out Taiwanese exchange student Susan, whose English is known to be very good. He also makes use of the extended reading library of books that Dr. Kunishige keeps outside his office. He describes his listening and speaking skills as 'not comfortable'.

Ishikawa-san expresses the desire to speak English fluently, for the purpose of being able to communicate fluently with people overseas.

I I hope to speak English... well.

R Do you prefer to speak with foreigners or Japanese people?

I I think... prefer foreigner... foreigner people.

R Why is that?

I Native?

R Native speakers?

I Yeah, native speakers, so... easy to study... for me... I think.

R Is that because native speakers are easier to understand?

I Is difficult to understand but if I go abroad...

Sakamoto-san is accustomed to hearing English spoken slowly and with a Japanese accent at school.

I come to hear, to see native people. At school, the teachers speak in English but the Japanese English teachers speak very slowly for the students, so it's not good practice for me.

She lived in Brisbane for a year in 2015 while her father Sakamoto-sensei, who also works at NIFS, was on a year exchange in Australia on research relating to IT. For that period, she attended a private International School with her younger sister Sakamoto-chan. Before she left Japan, she could read a little English but could not speak at all.

First, I couldn't understand anything but there some Japanese friends, so they taught me some useful words to understand what the teacher saying.

Even though her father speaks English quite well, their mother doesn't and they don't communicate in English at home.

We are Japanese. Speak Japanese is much... I can be relax.

Sakamoto-san's mother speaks no English at all. She accompanied the family to Brisbane but was wary of mixing with locals and did not acquire English communication skills.

She didn't have any works. She has house... house work.

Sakamoto-sensei reports that his English ability improved while in Australia but not as much as he expected. He is disappointed that he did not receive correction from his hosts, which he believed was because he was not a student.

One reason is I'm not young and I'm not a student. I talked a lot of faculty staff and a lot of students, but they usually to try to... understand what I'm talking... not to correct my English, so one reason is I didn't go to participate to any language school or language class, so I think my ability has not improved too much and I think I need to continue to studying.

Sakamoto-sensei focuses on the motivation

I'm... to give... I think I need to continue, and I hope this is a good chance for me to remind that kind of motivation.

Sakamoto-chan also enjoyed her year of schooling in Australia in 2015. She was completing the final year of elementary school and was excited at the prospect of going to junior high school next year. Like her sister, she attended an international school in Brisbane, which grouped Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Singaporean and Indian students together in classes where teachers used what Sakamoto-chan terms 'easy English.'

R Do you think that your English improved while you were in Australia?

I Yes

R Were you happy that it was improving?

I Yes.

R How did you feel about your English?

I When I speak to our friends who is Canadian, they say to me that my English is improving, and I am and I am like... happy

R Why did you feel happy?

I I worked really hard on it and...(laughs)

R How did you study?

I I read books, learn grammar and vocabulary and speak to many people

R How did you feel? Speaking English.

I Yes it felt strange and I was really nervous...

R Why were you nervous?

I Because I can't speak English so well...

R You were worried that people might laugh at you? That you might make a mistake?

I Yes (laughs)

Sakamoto-chan exhibits a great deal of maturity in her approach to learning English. She has a wide range of learning resources, including Harry Potter novels which she enjoys reading. She appears able to differentiate the quality of, and express preferences for, sources of English.

R Have you seen the [Harry Potter] movies?

I But I prefer the books.

R Why?

I The movie is... the story is a little bit different and I like the book better.

7. *Do you think you are benefiting from your attendance at English Room?*

Yamashita-san is slightly older than other students and is studying for a Master's degree at NIFS. She also studying English with a Canadian English teacher at the school. She is a pole-vaulter, currently ranked sixth in Japan and is planning to study sports *smooth mechanics* in New Zealand for one year, where her course will be in English. She believes all her communication skills need improvement. She wants to coach beginner athletes and wants perspectives not only from Japanese experts but also from overseas. She is focused on an upcoming trip to New Zealand.

I Mmmm, I want to speak English. So, skill up, speaking skill up.

R Why?

I I will go to New Zealand. I can speak English, so good communication... toritai kara (I want to communicate well)

Yamashita-san is attending English Room in the company of the ALT from her high school, who attends whenever she can. Yamashita-san estimates English practice twice a week would be sufficient for her needs,

I twenty ... two times a week ...

R would be ok?

I would be ok.

Mochihara-san is retired. She previously lived in New Zealand for 30 years and her voice still carries a hint of New Zealand accent. She first went to New Zealand in 1970 when 'not many Japanese were travelling overseas'. Her first job was in Osaka with a trading company that did business with department store Myers New Zealand, and she was sponsored to live in New Zealand by one of her clients.

I Everybody helped out. Everybody put me in the right direction, that's the way I did it.

R For 30 years you were speaking to people...

I New Zealander, yes. Just daily conversation, just that my English is not quite good, just daily conversation. When you're asking for academic English, I don't speak academic English. On Monday I'm going to the supermarket, I want to buy this I want to buy that.

Susan is an exchange student working part time at the university. In May 2016 she met Prof. Kawana who was in Taiwan for a conference. She was his interpreter there and he subsequently invited her to work at NIFS for a year, on a joint project between China and Japan aimed at promoting activities for elderly people. Susan is well-travelled, and her English is quite proficient as she studied in an international school in Taiwan where

80% of the classes are in English, no Chinese in the class. Also, sometimes we have exchange student from Germany, so we must to speak English. Also, we have the qualified requirement to graduate.

8. *Have you met any interesting people who could help you in your work or study?*

Uehara-san reports having found a part-time teaching job through contact with another attendee at the English Room.

One woman talk about the part-time job with me one day during English Room, she is a Japanese teacher and she gave me the job.

Ueno-san finds conversing with Susan helpful for improving his speaking ability.

I talking with her is very skill up for me.

Ishikawa-san speaks with doctors who will teach him if he gets into a course he wishes to qualify for

I Sometimes the doctors coming... come here... So I speak... I tell... doctor.

R Ah! Medical doctors?

I Medical doctors, yeah. And so I tell him... and for my studying... and about the school (indistinct)

R So that's helpful for your career, right? Talking to the doctors?

I Yeah

R Do they come very often?

I Yes, but today he's... don't come.

R He didn't come?

I Comes often. But not here today.

Sakamoto-san enjoys talking to Mochihara-san very much.

Yes, she's a woman who was in New Zealand for 20 years. And she told me about New Zealand culture and... habits? It was so interesting.

Sakamoto-sensei has met

I some other person, especially from overseas, I like to talk with them about local topics

R Such as?

I Food and sightseeing, sports

Mochihara-san finds talking with Dr. Kunishige interesting.

Tom is such an interesting guy, he's so easygoing, he's very easy to talk. Sometimes funny, yeah I don't know why. And David, the Canadian ... teacher.

Sakamoto-chan is interested in making friends

R Do you keep in touch with those friends outside of the English Room?

I No, I just meet them here.

Imatamari-san's ALT teacher also attends. She enjoys meeting her outside of the school environment.

I My English teacher is here. Samantha.

R In here?

I Yes.

9. *Do you think this is a good use of your time? What would you be doing if you were not at English Room?*

Uehara-san admits she might simply return home, watch TV, or go shopping. In short, nothing specifically linked to learning English.

Maybe I back to my house and watch TV, maybe I go shopping. Maybe I can't study about English, so I'm happy I can join this English Corner and improve my English.

Ueno-san, Ishikawa-san, Imatamari-san, the Sakamoto sisters and Yamashita-san agree they would certainly be doing homework or assignments. Imatamari-san says she would be doing homework.

I I study many subjects, I have homework. Nikki (diary)

R [Do you write your diary] in English or in Japanese?

I Japanese.

Sakamoto-sensei says he would continue working.

I I would be working.

R After this do you go back to work?

I Yes (laughter)

R You work too hard!

Mochihara-san says she would be on her computer typing emails to friends in New Zealand.

Communicating with my New Zealand friends. But I do not open every day, but look I'm a senior – my age, everyday I feel different feeling, shall I do gardening? Not today. Shall I go to Kagoshima, driving? Why not, go for it! So every schedule, I will choice, it depend on how I feel today.

10. Do you use electronic communication tools like Skype, Facebook or Line to practice English?

Uehara-san says that she communicates with ALTs using Social Networking Services (SNS) such as Facebook Messenger, and previously used Twitter to communicate with friends overseas.

Now I didn't, but I used Twitter to talk English with other country's friends. But now I didn't – I don't use now.

Uehara-san explains that her friends appear have moved away from Twitter, and she has been unable to reconnect with them. She is unsure why.

Ueno-san uses Facebook, Line and Twitter, and sometimes reads posts from foreign friends, but doesn't write to these sites in English himself.

Ishikawa-san uses a variety of SNS to communicate with ALTs.

I I use Line and I talk with some ALT in English.

R Oh? Messaging?

I Yes

R Skype? Facebook?

I Yes I have it. I use it

R Do you use it in English sometimes?

I Ahhh. Sometimes. Occasionally.

Sakamoto-san does not have a mobile telephone, so is limited to SNS on computer.

I use Facebook. I have a hundred friends on Facebook and only ten friends are Chinese or Japanese, the others are Australian. When I talk to Chinese friends, I use English.

Yamashita-san uses no SNS in English but has typed emails in English to her New Zealand coaches.

Sakamoto-sensei is an occasional user of Facebook and uses it in Japanese and English.

On Facebook I try to use it in Japanese and English, as much as I can. I'm not active user for the Facebook, so maybe once every three months or so.

Mochihara-san uses only email, for the purpose of communicating with her friends in New Zealand.

I have only communication with my New Zealand... Jason, just a sort of my old friend, that's it. Oh but when I'm typing, what, how to spell? My Japanese English dictionary, oh well not today, tomorrow.

Sakamoto-chan uses no electronic communication tools as she has access to neither a mobile phone nor a computer.

Imatamari-san uses Line.

R Do you ever talk or write in English?

I [To Mr.] Tanaka and my mother's friend.

R Your mother's friend is a foreigner?

I Not her. She is married to a foreigner.

Susan uses a range of SNS such as WhatsApp, Line, WeChat, Facebook Messenger and Skype in English, to maintain contact with people in other countries she has visited.

4.3 Thematic analysis of English Corner and English Room

This section compares the responses of participants in China and Japan according to four themes: Frequency of attendance, Purpose of attendance, Strategies for learning English and Discussion topics, which were outlined in section 3.6.1. The labels, sub-themes and themes which inform this analysis are contained in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. While themes and subthemes have been aggregated, the labels were not consistent between the target groups, as expected.

4.3.1 Frequency of attendance

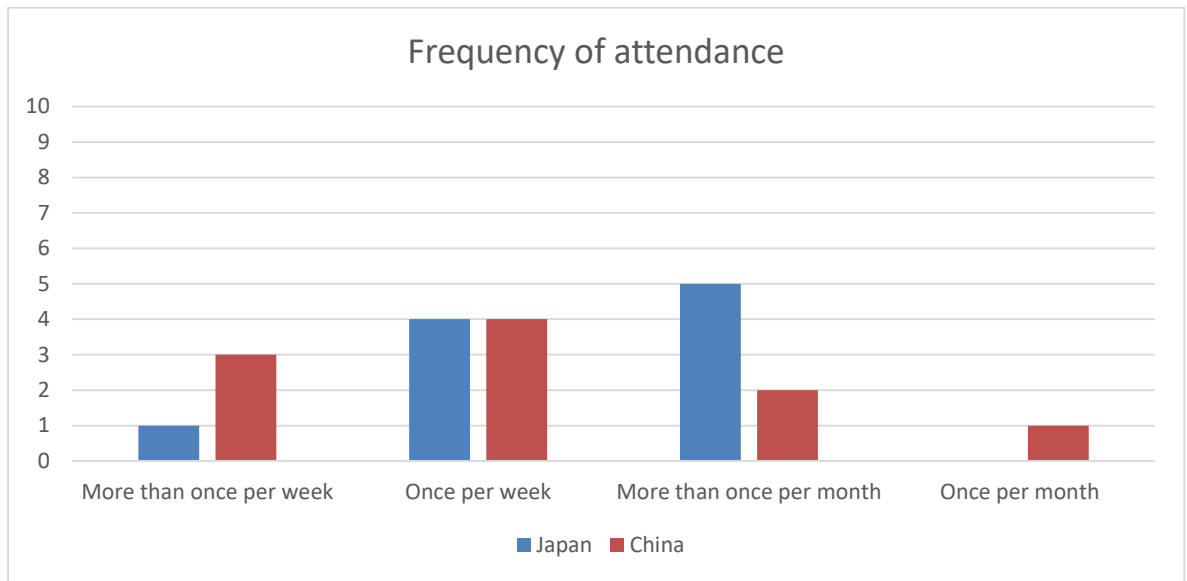


Figure 8: Frequency of attendance

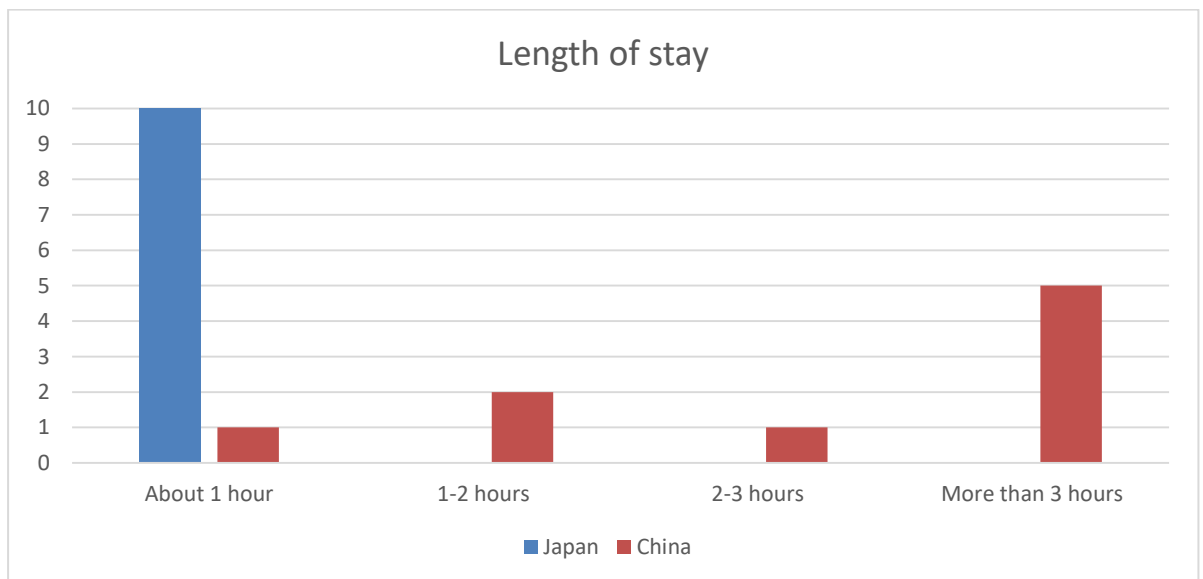


Figure 9: Length of stay

The Chinese cohort seems to be marginally more frequent attenders of the English Corner. Seven of the ten interviewees reported attendance (or intentions of attendance) at least once per week. Nine of the ten Japanese respondents reported attending weekly or less. Direct comparison is misleading however, because there are multiple English Corner offerings in Guangzhou every week whereas there is only one in Kanoya.

Four of the Chinese cohort reported between three and ten years of attendance at the English Corner. All were mature learners. None of the Japanese cohort reported attendance for longer than a year, but once again direct comparison is misleading in that many students of the university were not residents of Kanoya and were only there for the period of their studies.

All Japanese respondents reported staying for about one hour whereas five of the Chinese respondents reported staying for three hours or more and only one reported staying for about an hour. It was again difficult to compare length of stay between the Japanese and Chinese cohorts, given that the English Corner had no definite starting or ending time and ran for up to 4 hours, whereas the English Room was limited to one hour. Moreover, a number of Chinese respondents reported from 45 up to 90 minute journeys to get to the English Corner which would suggest they planned to stay for longer periods to justify the journey.

It appeared that given the choice, participants liked to spend 3 or more hours at English Corner. Certainly the Japanese respondents Sakamoto-sensei, Imatamari-san and Susan felt that the English Room was ‘too short’ or ‘not enough’ and needed to be supplemented with other activities.

4.3.2 Purpose of attendance

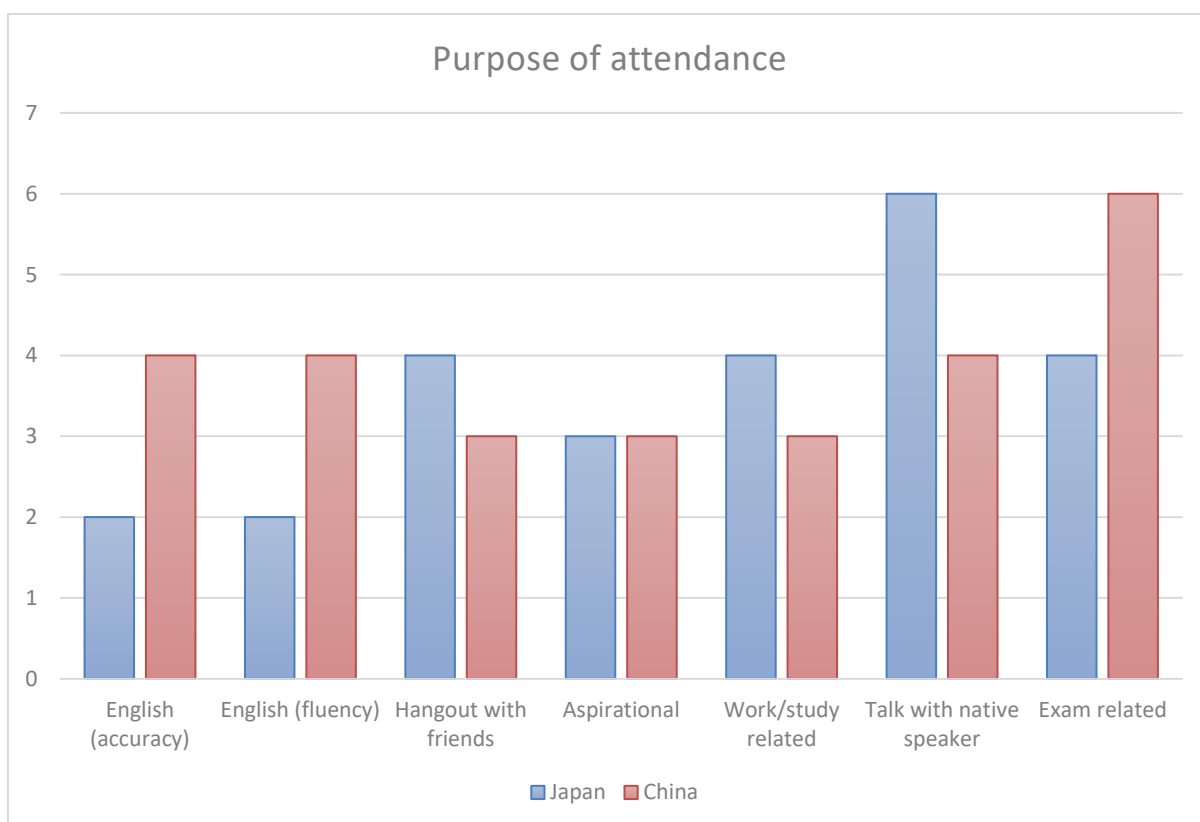


Figure 10: Purpose of attendance

Some respondents identified more than one reason for attendance, hence cumulative totals are greater than 10. The most commonly cited reason for attending among Chinese participants was examination related; fluency and accuracy were also significant. Seven of the ten respondents also mentioned hanging out with friends and aspirational aspects such as travel and living overseas.

Responses in the hangout subtheme were broadly to hang out with, or to find new friends. One Chinese respondent reporting a pressing need for what she termed “fresh air”; she felt stifled by her studies and sought release in talking with people other than those she met day to day.

More than half of the Japanese respondents cited the importance of speaking with English native speakers such as ALTs, which reflects Dr. Kunishige’s interview comments on the importance of access to native English speakers for the Japanese participants to ‘speak out’. This may also have been informed by Dr. Kunishige’s practice of making himself available for weekly 15 minute conversations with his students, as well as the presence in Japanese middle and high schools of Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) who are usually recent university graduates from the United States, Australia, Canada and Britain who sign yearly contracts to work in Japanese schools assisting Japanese teachers with aspects of pronunciation and grammar. They are often young and enjoy great popularity among Japanese high school students.

Some attendees expressed a preference for speaking with native speakers, suggesting that their ideas were interesting or that they had a broader ranges of experiences than local people.

Anna and Wing found foreigners ‘interesting’ and ‘open-minded’, while Susan expressed admiration for their ‘open mindedness’ and lack of conformity to Chinese customs. Mochihara-san looked forward to her conversations with the apparently wise and well-travelled teachers at the English Room. Ueno-san called foreigners ‘cool’. John reported that the presence of foreigners made the English Corner ‘more efficient’ and noted that conversing with foreigners was useful practice at listening skills, accents and speech rhythms and that it ‘evened out the chances of speaking’. Anna believed the greatest benefit was from speaking with native speakers. The Sakamoto sisters believed English Room was the only place where they would get the chance to speak with native speakers ‘if I don’t come to this ... I can’t keep to speak to native [speakers]’. Arthur commented on aggressive people targeting foreigners and asking pointed questions about their salaries, teaching qualifications and reason for being there. An Australian colleague of mine who taught physics and mathematics in a university preparation college, said he attended occasionally because he enjoyed talking with the engineering students.

English fluency and accuracy seemed significantly less important to the Japanese respondents than for the Chinese respondents. That the Chinese respondents were so interested in speaking skills per se may reflect the status of the high-stakes IELTS test which has a lengthy speaking component. At the time of writing it is the most common test in China for students hoping to study overseas, while its penetration into the Japanese market is relatively shallow. The common tests of English proficiency test reading comprehension, writing and listening. The home-grown speaking tests that do exist, viz. Eiken and GTEC, rely on rather formulaic interactions between examinee and examiner and cannot really be considered conversational. However, in 2019, the Japanese education department mandated oral English testing as part of university entrance requirements, but the incidence of the coronavirus in March of 2020 has temporarily halted those plans.

There were some difficulties. Three Chinese respondents reported limited opportunities to speak, while Wing related the situation of a low-level attendee who traveled a long distance to attend English Corner, who she felt was not getting value for her efforts.

There seemed to be an undercurrent of angst among attendees who felt their needs were not being met. Angas and Arthur expressed a need for assistance with their pronunciation and grammar and the expectation this might come from native speaker attendees. Arthur said he needed help in expression, to correct his mistakes and stop ‘small mistake become big mistake’. He was also frustrated at the lack of opportunity to test out new vocabulary and get feedback on whether it was used correctly. He was surprised and disappointed when such feedback was not forthcoming, a sentiment Sakamoto-sensei mirrored with his efforts to learn English while on assignment in Australia.

A number of labels point to social issues and the desire to explore different horizons among attendees. Anna saw an escape from her normal student life in the English Corner; she reported finding school boring, that it ‘kills creativity’ and that she needed ‘some fresh air.’ She felt restrained; ‘in China you can’t be different’ but overseas ‘you have to be different’. Maria discussed dealing with family issues; she was confused about ‘communication with my mother.’ She reported counselling a boy having relationship problems.

There was also some evidence of the attendees extending their social contacts outside of the English Corner and English Room, of keeping in touch with each other by email, of meeting participants socially or for activities such as singing and drama practice. In this way the English Corner and English Room both evidenced aspects of social cohesion.

Few reported attending for the purpose of advancing their careers. According to Wing, there were few ‘high-powered managers’ at English Corner. Ishikawa-san and Ueno-san were students at NIFS and expected to pursue careers as professional tennis players. Both said that it was now expected for international athletes to speak English when competing outside their home country and this was a major reason why they attended.

Others unreported in these statistics – such as myself – attended in order to learn more about the city and its offerings. As a new arrival in Guangzhou in 2003, I found the public English Corner an ideal place to garner information about the city. Internet provision at the time was limited and the Chinese presence on it quite minor. Questions like “where can I get my shoes repaired?” and “where is a good place to buy DVDs?” were cheerfully answered by other attendees and sometimes became topics of discussion in themselves.

4.3.3 Strategies for learning English

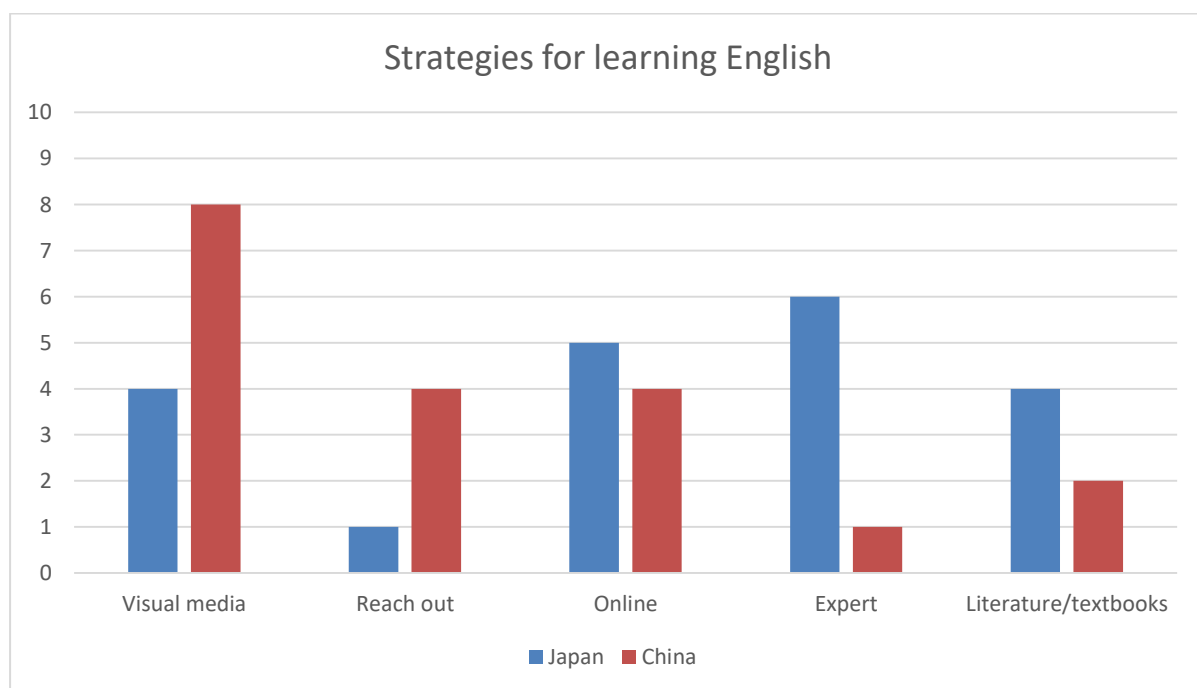


Figure 11: Strategies for learning English

Respondents usually identified multiple strategies for learning English (aside from attendance at English Corner), hence cumulative totals are greater than 10.

Chinese respondents chose visual media as the most common method for learning English outside of English Corner. The two labels in that subtheme relate to the availability of English TV through state media’s CCTV 9 which broadcasts 24 hours a day in English. Moreover, at the time of writing English movie DVDs were abundantly and cheaply – if illegally – available.

Marvin, Wing and Maria expressed reservations about internet technology as a vehicle for learning English. Maria linked the prevalence of mobile phones with what she felt was people’s increasing inability to participate in real conversations. Marvin expressed a strong preference for face-to-face communication which he found ‘effective and easy’. Wing found the technologies ‘trivial’ though the COVID-19 coronavirus which originated in Wuhan and quickly spread to Guangzhou in February of 2020 temporarily curtailed all public gatherings in China including English Corner, which has shifted to online communications software capable of hosting multi-party meetings such as Zoom.

4.3.4 Discussion topics

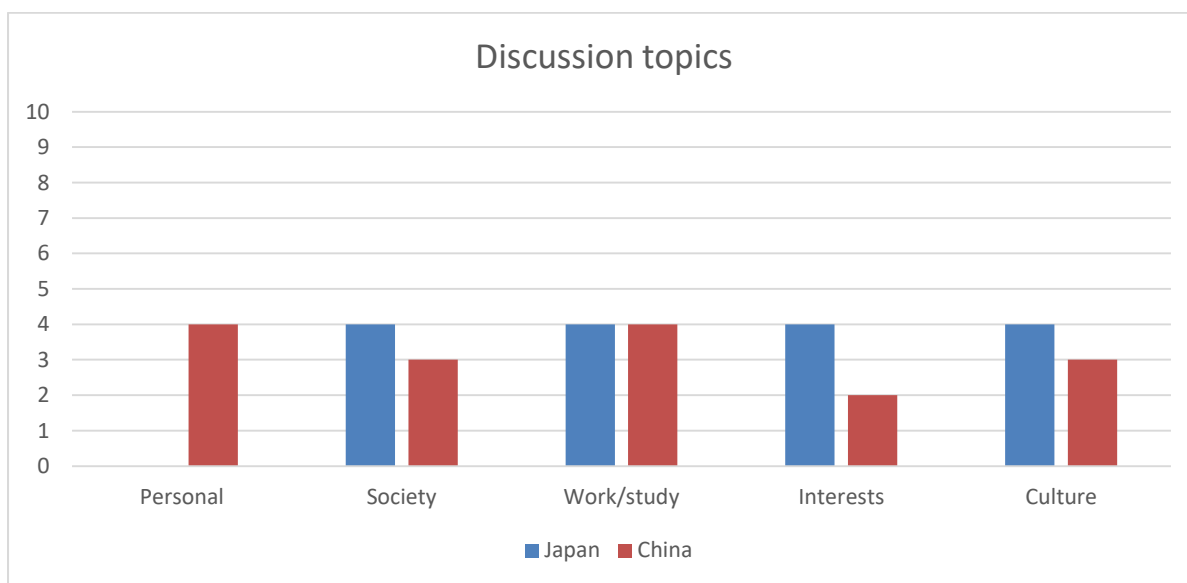


Figure 12: Discussion topics

Respondents identified more than one discussion topic, hence cumulative totals are greater than 10.

Respondents in China appeared interested in discussing work and study, culture and society. Respondents in Japan were evenly interested in discussion topics to do with society, work and study, interests and culture. Four of the ten respondents in China mentioned the personal sub-theme, in which topics such as relationship problems, family problems came to the fore. This may have been indicative of the Chinese cohort on average longer term commitment to English Corner, in addition to the life experience of the attendees being somewhat broader. A personal observation would also be

that Chinese people seem far less restrained than their Japanese counterparts in asking personal questions!

Politics and economics appeared to be popular discussion choices in both countries. Interestingly, respondents from neither group reported any censorship of topics or topics which were considered taboo. Tina reported that topics were decided without any pressure' and that she felt free to talk.

Somewhat surprisingly, respondents such as Gavin reported that they did not prepare topics before attending, though doing so may have been a good strategy, especially in his case where he said the opportunity to try out new vocabulary was important to him.

Some frustration was expressed by attendees of English Corner such as Gavin who complained that topics were 'neither deep nor interesting' and lacked depth. Mochihara-san echoed the sentiment at English Room, that attendees tended to talk about the same thing and that she enjoyed conversing with people closer to her age.

Wing alluded to 'nationalistic' attendees and Gavin mentioned 'aggressive' speakers who appeared to want to score points against foreign attendees.

Gavin talked about the difficulty of hearing words he didn't understand and the lack of opportunity to hear explanations of them. He felt that the large number of attendees meant that conversations proceeded quickly and 'sometimes you don't have a chance to talk, you just listen'.

The opportunity to speak with one's own choice of partner and to pursue topics of one's own choice through meetings like English Room at NIFS appeared quite rare in Japan. In my observation, similar groups in other Japanese universities, often badged as English Speaking Society (ESS) appeared to be anything but *speaking* societies, tending instead to focus on viewing foreign movies in Japanese or in English with Japanese subtitles, or to act as extensions to formal classes in which the focus was on analysing and answering test questions from the common English tests.

Mochihara-san (Japan) and Susan (China) confided that they tired of "same old" conversations with attendees of limited speaking skill. Sakamoto-sensei's opinion was different; he felt it a duty to mentor and assist attendees as a result of having been given the opportunity by his university to study in Australia.

4.4 Lessons from the ethnographic study

The following analysis derives from Appendices 3 and 4, which are based on text analyses of the rich descriptions and observations of English Corner and English Room respectively; in the case of Appendix 4 including analysis of the interview with Dr. Kunishige. Lessons learned from this analysis went on to inform the Pondok English informal learning project, which took place in Sabah, Malaysia. I have categorised these lessons as Community of Practice, Informal learning, Place and space, and Sponsorship.

4.4.1 Community of Practice

The COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE theme was described by two sub-themes, LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION and OLD HAND, to describe the interaction between relatively inexperienced attendees and more senior attendees respectively.

LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION described the activities of new joiners and how they acculturated to the English Corner and English Room. In both cases, new attendees tended to be nervous and challenged by their limited vocabulary. Some old hands such as Mochihara-san commented that their conversations were at times boring and stilted (OAS, CBOR). Some new joiners attended simply to listen (NJNE, LIST), awaiting the right opportunity to make their first contribution. As they gained experience in the Community of Practice they were encouraged to mingle (MING) and to speak out (MOTV).

The sub-theme OLD HAND was represented by long term attenders such as Marvin, who had a history of more than 10 years attendance (AMY, AGES) of the English Corner. In Japan, old hands included teachers, graduate students (OGS, NSI) and exchange students (EXEG) of the university, as well as locally employed ALTs. There was a strong current of opinion that they were there to supplement and support the undergraduate attendees, as typified by the comments of Sakamoto-sensei. They appeared to be leaders and role models for new joiners.

4.4.2 Informal learning

Informal learning was described by the sub-themes of CONDUCT, and WHO IS THERE. The presence of like-minded individuals with similar learning goals, the absence of formality, curricula, lessons or grading systems all contributed to the English Corner and English Room as informal learning spaces.

Labels within the Conduct sub-theme referred to freedom of movement (MOVE) in both the English Room and English Corner, especially between clusters, which was assisted by the inadequacy and discomfort of the stone benches in the former, and the physical removal of chairs and tables from the environment in the latter.

Labels in the sub-theme of WHO IS THERE pointed to some differences in the attendees between the English Corner and English Room. English Corner was attended by many IT and sales professional (TCE, PROF) workers whose need was to rehearse their spoken English for work purposes, as well as retirees (RET) and former English teachers (FOET) who were there for the social contact and to maintain their conversational ability. University students appeared to come from a wide variety of faculties, Engineering (ENG), Civil engineering (TPS) Mathematics (MATH) among them. There was a relatively wide cross-section of society (CHN, PNT), leading to a rich educational experience for attendees. The English Room was attended mostly by people with some connection to NIFS (YHH, EXCH, WALT) and was not as broad a cross-section of society.

4.4.3 Place and Space

Place and Space was described by the sub-themes ACCESS, GATHERING and WHAT ELSE HAPPENS.

English Corner was located outside (OUT) and labels in the GATHERING and ACCESS sub-themes described its proximity to a library (NLIB), the presence of shady trees (PAR) and the university grounds. Labels also described the tendency of attendees to arrive and depart in groups of 2 or 3 (AD23), as well as the considerable sacrifice some made in undertaking journeys of up to 90 minutes (90TRN) in order to attend.

English Room was held indoors, and labels described the availability of free internet (FINT), air-conditioning (ACEL), and a food preparation (FOOD) area. Kanoya being a much smaller city than Guangzhou, attendees from outside the university commonly described car journeys of 10 (10CAR) minutes to reach the English Room.

The WHAT ELSE HAPPENS sub-theme described usage of public places in China, connected with the free exercise of communal events such as ballroom dancing (DANC), fan dancing (FAND), singing and exercise routines such as tai-chi (TAI). In Japan, the sub-theme described relationships between attendees, especially old hands who went for shopping (SHOP) or dinner (MTEX, TGIF) together after English Room.

4.4.4 Sponsorship

The Sponsorship subtheme shows the greatest contrast between English Corner and English Room.

There are two subthemes and four themes for China, four subthemes and twenty themes for Japan.

These reflect weak sponsorship in China, and moderate sponsorship in Japan.

Meetings of the English Corner were arranged by mutual consent of the attendees. Teachers (RECT) and friends (RECF) recommended it to new joiners, word of mouth (WOM) advised people of alternate locations. Indirect FACILITIES sponsorship came from the university administration (NOR), which permitted the use of its grounds for meetings.

ADVERTISING was used to publicise meetings of the English Room (KADV, OEAD). Dr. Kunishige placed pamphlets in public locations within Kanoya, sent reminder email (KEMA) to participants a few days ahead of meetings, and made informative announcements (KANN) at their conclusion. This was direct and premeditated promotion of its activities. Facilities sponsorship was provided to the English Room by its host institution (NIFS) for the venue, lighting and air-conditioning (PRM) in addition to funding refreshments (SDOT).

The SCHEDULING sub-theme referred to decisions made by Dr. Kunishige with respect to when students would be best able to cope (SACF, N2L) with the time demands, and this determined both its starting times, ending times and duration, as well as the avoidance of examination periods (EBFL).

The PASTORAL ROLE sub-theme pointed to Dr. Kunishige's role ostensibly as the organizer of the event, but in his actions betraying a sense of responsibility not only for the progress of the students, but also for their convenience and, in an extraordinary situation involving a quite possibly dangerous attendee, their physical safety. and the resources deployed in order to dealing with new joiners (KES), making name cards available and collating them afterwards (KNAME). This pastoral role took on an unexpected protective element in the identification and removal, with the assistance of local police (POL), of an antisocial attendee (ASHL) whose presence negatively impacted the smooth functioning of the group.

Chapter Five, which follows, describes the action research project in Malaysia and the ways in which it was informed by the themes of Place, Informal Learning, Community of Practice and Sponsorship.

Chapter Five – Findings in Malaysia

5.1 Introduction

The public English Corner in Guangzhou and English Room in Japan first caught my attention, but the opportunity to use lessons learned from them to attempt an educational project in Malaysia gave this research a practical and real-life purpose. I found it surprising that the public English Corner, so prevalent in mainland China, appeared to have no equivalent in Malaysia, despite the presence of ethnic Chinese Malaysians with their apparent interest in English and willingness to invest in English education for their children. I found that many Chinese Malaysians speak, read and write English competently, often preferring it to their native dialects when communicating with each other.

This chapter describes two instances of research styled on the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) undertaken in Malaysian Borneo, located in and around the rural centre of Kota Belud, approximately 60 kilometres north of the state capital Kota Kinabalu.

The structure of this chapter is:

- Rich descriptions of the two iterations
- Reflections on the research

5.2 Pondok English – a rich description of the first iteration

Kota Belud is a small town near the coast and famous for its local wildlife tours. The heavy rainfall and persistent humidity ensure that most concrete buildings have unpleasant looking dark mould over their roofs and walls, which makes it look somewhat down-at-heel. The town has a small commercial district with mostly Muslim restaurants and coffee shops and one large Chinese restaurant. There are large sporting fields in the centre of the town which often flood during the rainy season.

Alongside are the police station, a large town hall and the new and attractive library building, constructed in 2011 but by 2014 still not being used due to contractual disputes over plumbing and electricity. Its gates are locked, there is no access. It's a shame, because it would have been an ideal location.

The location for Pondok English had to satisfy a number of criteria.

- It had to be publicly accessible and well known.

- It had to offer protection from sunshine and rain which might fall at any time even during the dry season; the one constant being heat and humidity.
- It had to be in a relatively quiet area, free of noisy competition.
- There was need for a parking area given the lack of local public transport in Kota Belud and the fact that attendees would normally arrive by car.
- It had to be in reasonable proximity to usable public conveniences.

Even so, a small grandstand (Astana Kecil) to the south of the town's main recreation area seemed to fulfill requirements. Located approximately 150m from the main grandstand, it measured 15 by 15 metres, with five wooden-planked seating areas. The planking was somewhat dusty but in quite usable condition apart from the western end of the grandstand where water had seeped in and there was evidence of rotting. A solid roof provided adequate protection from all but the most driven rain.

As Pondok English did not coincide with any weekly markets or other commercial activity in the vicinity, there was little difficulty parking. The Astaka Kecil received little use during the week, and so was quite clean. I availed myself of a broom and swept the bench area prior to each meeting. Being closer to the weekly vegetable markets, the large grandstand (Astaka Besar) was preferable in terms of access to conveniences, but was strewn with cigarette butts, empty beer bottles and other rubbish. A stale unpleasant odour lingered. I chose the Astaka Kecil.

The first Pondok English session took place on Sunday July 6, the second week of Ramadan. I deliberately chose to avoid the first week of Ramadan when Muslim attendees would be fatigued by the adjustment to fasting.

Week 1 Sunday July 6

The weather fine and sunny, at about 30 degrees hot enough to want to avoid standing in the sun for any length of time. I arrive hoping teachers have invited 5 parents and children to attend and, if so, I will have a maximum of 50 participants. That's about the number I have prepared for, but am extremely nervous as I really have no idea how many people will attend.

I arrive at the Astaka Kecil at 1:30pm, 30 minutes before the advertised starting time, to find a collection of fifteen teenage children sitting in the grandstand, all dressed in identical orange t-shirts which, upon closer inspection, reveal they attend the same church. They are there for Pondok English.

All children, no parents! This is not what I want. Even so, I unpack the gear and give the floorboards a quick sweep, prepared to work with the more advanced dialogue sets as the children appear capable of quite fluent speech. At about 2:45pm, Teacher Magdalen from SK Kinasaraban arrives and is ready to help. I confess to her my frustration that no parents appear to have come. She turns and indicates a group of trees about 30 metres away, under which are sitting a group of adults taking an apparently keen interest in what is going on. “There are your parents,” she says. “Would you like me to go and get them?” I thank her and ask her to do so. Away she walks, and calmly invites them to join us. I’m reminded of the Pied Piper of Hamelin as she leads them to the Astaka. I could not have done it, I’m sure that if I had walked towards them, they would likely have risen and walked further away.

I sense nervousness from the parents as we sit down and I distribute the dialogue sets, explaining through Magdalen that they should choose those they like and, when finished just return them and choose another set.

I walk around, observing and chatting, while parents and children appear to settle in to the activity. It is heartening to see. The orange (more difficult) sets are most used today, but some participants are unsure of vocabulary and I resolve to simplify them.

All dialogue sets have English on one side and Bahasa Malaysia on the other. Although Bahasa Malaysia is not the native language for the majority of the participants, it is a compulsory subject in school and it seems reasonable to expect it to act as a kind of lingua franca.

I encourage parents to take the role of questioner and ask their children to fit each noun into the structure as they are handed to them. I encourage parents to ask extension questions such as:

“How do you say that in BM?”

“What sound does that animal make?”

At the conclusion, I thank everyone for attending, invite them to return the following week, and invite participants to take whatever materials they like home with them. Almost all do.

There are 25 attendees in all: 18 children, 5 parents and 2 teachers (myself and Magdalen.)

Reflections

- Some of the vocab in the conversation sets is too difficult, must simplify.
- Teacher Magdalen is able to earn trust and co-operation from parents.

- Materials appear appropriate and were well-received by participants.
- Need a song sheet so we can finish sessions with singing.

Week 2 Sunday July 13

By the second week, Sunday July 13, I feel much more assured as participants appeared to have enjoyed themselves and I have some feel for how many participants might join. I plan to finish the next session with some songs with actions and I have developed a sheet with songs that can be sung without accompaniment.

I arrive at the Astaka at about 2pm once again, and am greeted by the same group of children, but disappointingly fewer parents. I have brought materials for 35 people and developed a wider range of the simpler green dialogue sets: four topics focusing on “My Body”, “My Head”, “In the Ocean” and “Animals”. I have also developed three of the more difficult orange dialogue sets: “Oceans”, “Farming” and “Animals”.

Totally there are 21 attendees; 15 children mostly from Kampung Piasau, three parents, myself, my daughter and her friend visiting from Australia.

Each green dialogue set has four vocabulary cards. The one for “My Body” (head, shoulders, knees, toes) and “My Head” (eyes, ears, mouth nose), lead naturally to an energetic song – “Heads and Shoulders Knees and Toes” which we spend the last 15 minutes of the session singing.

Reflections

- The dialogue sets need augmenting so there is less turnover. I increase the number of green vocabulary cards from four to sixteen for three dialogue sets: “Animals”, “Jobs” and “Oceans”, to encourage participants to spend more time on each one, exploring them in greater depth.

Week 3 Sunday July 20

The weather is fine and a little warmer. I arrive shortly after 2pm to find no children in orange t-shirts. Participants arrive shortly after me; we use the dialogue sets once again and spend the last 15 minutes singing. 20 attendees are present; 11 children mostly from Kampung Piasau, six parents and the same three adults, myself, my daughter and her boyfriend.

This week is the first where all children are present with at least one of their parents. The children are comparatively younger than in previous weeks, and we use the simpler green dialogue sets.

Reflections

- The decision to build more vocabulary into each of the sets appears vindicated. There is less movement and swapping topics, parents and children seem to now be spending on average ten minutes working on each set.

Week 4 Sunday July 27

This is the last day of Ramadan, which precedes the month long Eid feast. The end of Ramadan is celebrated in Malaysia by a week of school holidays and many Muslims have started preparing for this important feasting period some days prior, so I am expecting fewer attendees. It is nevertheless important to abide by arrangements and the Pondok English goes ahead. During the week I develop one new green topic “In Your Kitchen” and additional vocabulary cards for “In Your House” and “In Your Classroom”. Eight people attend; five children and one parent from Kampung Piasau; two teachers - myself and a friend visiting from Japan. We follow the established routine of conversation sets and singing to finish brightly.

Reflections

- Fewer attendees which is explained by the end of Ramadan fasting period and preparations for the Eid festival, which requires the involvement of the entire family. An exciting time!

Week 5 Sunday August 3

This is the last day of the week long Hari Raya holidays and I am once again expecting few participants. Consequently I develop no new dialogue sets. To my surprise, attendance is much higher with 18 attendees: 12 children and three parents from Kampung Piasau, myself and two of my mentees making their first appearance. Many attendees have been before and I am embarrassed not to have developed new material for them. Fortunately, I have the previous week developed a third songsheet with “He’s Got the Whole World”, “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”, “London Bridge” and “My Love” which we teach and sing with actions.

Reflections

- Embarrassed at having insufficient new materials this week, I develop four new green dialogue sets “In Your Kampung”, “In the Sky”, “On the Beach”, “In the Jungle” each with 16 vocabulary cards.

Week 6 Sunday August 10

Now clear of Ramadan and the Eid celebrations, I am expecting higher attendances as families will now typically have more free time. Surprisingly there are fewer, not more attendees: 12 people including eight children, two parents one each from Kampung Piasau and Kampung Mandap, and two teachers.

We use the conversation cards and play counting games with each of the parents leading a group of four children. We finish the session with singing from the first and second song sheets, which are starting to look rather creased.

Reflections

- Surprised by smaller attendance.
- Print more copies of songsheets and investigate ways of making them more resilient. Plastic folders?

Week 7 Sunday August 17

This week is marked by very heavy rain and low attendance. During Sabah's wet season, rain typically falls in the late afternoon lasting for between 30 minutes to one hour before clearing once again to reveal bright blue skies. On this day, northern Sabah has come under the influence of tropical typhoon Hainan which has formed a hundred or so kilometres to the north and caused much devastation in the Philippines. Sabah has caught the tail-end of Tropical Hainan and there have been widespread heavy rains over the preceding two days, making many roads impassable, especially in rural kampung areas.

A noisy motor car promotion is taking place under colourful tents about 100 metres away and the sound emanating from this is such that it is difficult to hear anything. We abandon any speaking activities and conduct a shortened session of robust singing. I develop no new sets for this week, but supplement the vocabulary cards for the green dialogue sets "In the Oceans", "Animals", "My Body" and "My Head". This week there are 9 attendees: 5 children and two parents, one each from Kampung Mandap and Kampung Jawi-Jawi, myself and one of my mentee teachers.

Reflections

- Pondok English does not have exclusive use of the Astaka Kecil and I must investigate ways of dealing with inevitable interruptions.

Week 8 Sunday August 24

This session is cancelled as I am required as part of my job with the British Council to accompany two mentee teachers who are giving presentations at a Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA) conference in Kuching.

I am loath to cancel a Pondok English session but to this point, no parent or teacher has attended regularly enough for me to approach them about conducting a session in my place. I have asked my mentee teachers to inform their classes that this week's Pondok English session will be cancelled, but have no way of knowing whether or not the message has been received.

Reflections

- I am frustrated at my lack of sponsorship for Pondok English. I cannot avoid my responsibilities to my employer with respect to attending the conference, but am unable to hand over responsibility for the session to a local person.

Week 9 Sunday August 31

This week is also marked by considerable rainfall which again makes transport difficult. Moreover, a football tournament taking place in the adjacent playing fields means that there is competition for space in the Astaka for the first time. The players and coaches are using the grandstand as a combination change-room and briefing room, though with some friendly negotiation we are able to continue Pondok English. Sadly I am unable to recruit any footballers or coaches to the session. I develop no new dialogue sets or vocabulary this week and there are 5 attendees: three young children and one older boy from the same kampong, and myself. No parents have attended and this is disappointing. I worry they may have come the previous week, found no-one there and thought Pondok English was over.

The older boy, who is quite a regular attender, works with the three younger children using the conversation cards. We play some counting games and finish the session with singing. We stay the whole session as the older boy's mother will be coming to pick them up at 4pm.

Reflections

- All attendees are from two families who live in Kampung Piasau.

Week 10 Sunday September 7

On this final week, there are no attendees but the footballers are there in large and enthusiastic numbers. I lay out the materials and wait for attendees until 3:30pm, before packing it up and driving back to Kota Kinabalu.

Reflections

- The ten week Pondok English action research is ended with
 - declining attendee numbers,
 - competition for space from a football team and
 - absence of local sponsorship
- I think it is inappropriate for me to reserve a large section of the Astaka Kecil for an activity which doesn't appear to warrant it.

5.2.1 Reflections from the first iteration

Though attendees appeared to enjoy Pondok English, attendances waned until there were none by the last week.

I don't believe I was successful in finding anyone to whom I could pass responsibility for Pondok English, and this was an over-riding aim.

Pondok English stands or falls on its ability to interest and motivate parents and children and I have no structural authority to ask anyone to do anything. I can only persuade. Weekends are family time and so it is critically important to maintain variety and interest. I wonder if I have done enough of this. Perhaps I need a wider range of activities and games to make it as interesting for parents, and encourage them to attend more reliably. I can't hand this to teachers. Even if they would run with it, they might be transferred out of the area.

Heartening is that there is evidence that the dialogue sets are being used and appreciated. Many of them have been taken away to people's homes and are looking dog-eared as a result. I have encouraged attendees to do this. I hope they will continue to be used.

A turning point

A few weeks later on Wednesday October 8, I was on a scheduled work trip to Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Piasau, I met one of the parents who attended Pondok English more frequently than most, in the

schoolyard. Her English name is Linda, and she speaks unusually good English. In a discussion with her, I apologised that Pondok English had not met expectations. She explained that even though I had tried to hold the meetings in a central and accessible part of Kota Belud, for those living in neighboring kampungs, it was not central at all.

She suggested that Pondok English would be better held locally, in the kampungs. My immediate reaction must have been shock as I mentally calculated how many meetings a week that might mean, and how to manage my involvement with them. However, I had noted that participants had mainly come from two kampungs, Kampung Piasau and Kampung Kinasaraban, both of which had school principals who were highly supportive of English education.

I reflected on Linda's suggestion of relocating Pondok English to a local kampung and decided to try again. I resolved to more directly seek local people to hand the project over to.

5.2.2 Critical incidents from the first iteration

The following table lists Critical Incidents identified during the course of the first iteration of Pondok English and in the weeks following.

The incidents are identified for what they taught me about the conduct of the Pondok English project and my role within it. These led to rethinking of my approach.

Date	Critical Incident	What I learned
July 6	Teacher Magdalen locates and brings parents to Pondok English	I am not trusted and need to build relationships with parents
August 17	Noise competition from adjacent car promotion	Need to investigate ways of dealing with interruptions, or find an alternative location
August 24	I can't approach anyone to run Pondok English in my absence	Need to identify local sponsorship

September 10	No attendees	Pondok English failing to meet needs of attendees. A new approach needed?
October 8	Many would-be attendees cannot get to Pondok English	Relocate Pondok English to a kampong. Make greater use of local sponsorship

5.3 Pondok English – a rich description of the second iteration

Gently undulating farmland greets the eye on approach to Kampung Piasau from Kota Belud. Crossing a narrow river and passing two large shady trees covering the sealed road, a large herd of cows stand staring sullenly at approaching motorists, in no hurry to get out of anyone’s way. They seem a good metaphor for life in the kampungs.

Houses are made of mud brick and wood, with metal sheeting rooves. They line the windy paths of the kampung, jostling with each other at odd angles. The only sealed road leads from the highway to SK Piasau, and it is in poor condition. Potholes are the rule and not the exception; the combination of searing heat and heavy rain having caused it to crumble and disintegrate over time. Villagers have helped themselves to orphan chunks of tarmac to construct walking paths to their own houses. Driving is slow; chickens, cats and dogs randomly dart across the road without warning. Many villagers own sturdy 4WDs, as heavy tropical rains frequently render these paths impassable in ordinary two-wheel drive vehicles.

There is a local delicatessen run by cheerful Mrs. Dumi. The building is part shop, part residence for her family. As is common here, three generations live under the same roof. Mrs. Dumi is ethnically Chinese; a rarity in Kota Belud and environs where comparatively few Chinese live. The store has the usual supplies of instant cup noodles, bottled soft drinks, bread, sachets of instant coffee and Milo in all its drinkable and edible forms. Shops such as this are common in kampungs where many people operate a small shop from a spare room in their house, but Mrs. Dumi’s is larger than most and has refrigeration. Moreover, it serves as a meeting place of sorts; it has a covered concrete verandah approximately 10 metres in length by three metres in width. A friendly dog belonging to her family

also lives here and he makes a point of greeting everyone, which discomfits Muslim visitors for whom dogs are considered unclean and untouchable.

Small rice farms are frequent, many with local fruit trees bearing durian, papaya and mango. Coconut trees line roads. Tropical flowers abound in their ridiculously bright shades of reds, oranges and yellows. Outside of the rainy season, buildings and cars are covered with layers of fine dust. Kampung Piasau is low density; most parcels of property are a hectare at least and most residents grow something on their small farms, which they will sell at the local farmers market (tamu) each Thursday afternoon or Sunday morning. Families are large; five children in a family is not uncommon, sprawling houses often accommodate three generations under one roof.

There is no evidence of hunger or homelessness in Kampung Piasau, though there is chronic underemployment. One of the government's policies named BR1M is a stipend paid to unemployed families but only if they are Muslim, and which serves as a de facto unemployment benefit. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest this policy has encouraged some former Christians to convert to Islam.

There is also a military base (Fort Courage) dating back to British colonial times, where many local men serve in the Army reserve on weekends, earning some extra cash.

Ruddy, sun-bronzed faces, big toothy smiles, youngsters in colourful casual clothing with gaudy English motifs strewn across them. Some – privileging fashion over comfort – wear hoodies bought from the weekly farmers' markets, much of it donated clothing parcelled and sent from the United States.

A mosque sits 200 metres north of Mrs. Dumi's shop, its amplified calls to prayer broadcast throughout the kampong five times a day. Two churches, the Roman Catholic Saint Munster, and an SIB (protestant) church stand nearby.

[Week 1 Thursday May 21](#)

By arrangement Linda and I meet at the gate to SK Piasau. I had asked her to find a suitable place for Pondok English. The weather is hot and very humid, there having been a slight shower of rain an hour or so before, which made conditions more unpleasant. Moreover, I am wearing my customary Thursday batik shirt which, with its multiple layers of fabric, efficiently seals body heat in. I am consequently not well disposed for this meeting, having come from two gatherings already that day with mentees who had told me I looked tired.

Linda and I drive a hundred metres from the school and pull up outside Mrs. Dumi's shop, with its large covered verandah. Alighting from our cars, Linda informs me she is expecting a group of parents and children to join us. I am surprised but conceal it, expecting only to meet with her. I quickly check my car to find two excellent children's books I have borrowed from the local library, so I'm not completely without resources. Linda introduces me to Mrs. Dumi, who very kindly brings me a refreshing can of strawberry soft drink. Linda says Mrs. Dumi has agreed we could use the verandah area for our meetings. It is clear that Linda is held in high regard in the kampung.

By 2.30 we have 16 attendees.

Linda and I discuss starting dates for the meetings, and settle on the first Sunday after the upcoming holidays. Increasingly weary of the daily 60km drive from my home in Kota Kinabalu to Kota Belud I had hoped to be able to host it mid-week, given that I needed to drive to Kota Belud during the week for meetings with mentees. However, with Ramadan approaching, it is clear Linda would be unable to commit to anything finishing later than 5pm, as she has evening meals to prepare to accompany the sunset and feasting. As Sunday afternoons had proven suitable for both Muslims and Christians during the first Pondok English, we agree to meet on Sundays starting at 2pm and ending at 4pm.

Linda and I share a number of convictions about the aims of Pondok English; that sessions should target interaction between parents and children in English and emphasise speaking and listening over other skills. However, in the intervening months, Kota Belud's new library has finally opened and is staffed by professional people. It has quite a respectable collection of children's literature. Options to be explored included games, a wider variety of songs, story-reading, perhaps even taking the group to the local library for story-telling sessions.

The Pondok English location is ideal; under shelter, near conveniences and with a very clean tiled floor. The floor-space measures about 20 metres by 5 metres, there's quite a lot of room to spread out. There is little incidental noise, and little through traffic.

Similar to the previous Pondok English, I expect to use the dialogue sets frequently, as they have proven useful in initiating conversations between parents and children. I explain this to Linda that ideally they should be springboards to richer conversations using follow up questions.

Our meeting concluded, we sit the children down and do some storytelling with two excellent books; "Tom and the Tinfal of Trouble" and "My Many Coloured Days", both of which are large and visually appealing with bright colours, not too text heavy. Initially the children are reluctant to sit in front of

me and I wonder if this was a cultural thing, or because they felt the floor was unclean? It doesn't seem to be, but I resolve to buy some of the straw mats that Malaysians often take on outings, for the children to sit on.

The children are responsive to the stories, and four parents eventually join us. They watch with interest but sit on the periphery, not joining in. I muse that it is this shyness we need to overcome, focusing on activities that will involve parents and resources they can easily take home and try there. I thought to include as much storytelling as possible, with the revelation of the library's excellent collection of (mostly untouched) English children's literature. It would be no bad thing to encourage families to experience and join the library; at least *that* was sustainable.

Having finished the stories, Linda and I sit the children in a circle and play counting games after which Linda invites them to read out loud from the books, with expression.

We finish this impromptu Pondok English meeting at 4pm and Linda introduces me to the parents who have joined us. These include the village head and oldest woman in the kampung, whose presence gives a kind of imprimatur to our meeting. I am honoured to meet her and wish we had more time to talk.

What pleases me is seeing some of the children voluntarily looking through the books while Linda and I are talking with the parents. They have heard the stories and know the gist at least, without necessarily knowing every word. There seem to be strong arguments for a literature-based approach.

Reflections

- Attendees are taking an interest in the literature from the library!

Week 2 Sunday May 31

The first scheduled Pondok English meeting commences ten days later at 2pm, under the verandah outside Mrs. Dumi's shop. Four people are waiting when I arrive and the number of attendees gradually increases, mostly as a result of being hailed by Linda as they walk past Mrs. Dumi's shop.

I talk with Mrs. Noah, who has brought her grandchildren, both of whom are students at SK Piasau. Mrs. Noah speaks English well, and muses that this is because she went to school in the days of the church-run schools when, in her words, 'English was taught properly.' Linda arrives at 2:15pm, by which time eight children and two parents are there. Mrs. Dumi ignores the mats I have taken from the car and brings chairs out from the shop, motioning for the children to sit. Simply because it

received such an enthusiastic reception on Thursday, I decide to read “Tom and the Tinfoil of Trouble” again, as only one attendee had heard me read it on the Thursday afternoon. There are some older children present; the eldest in Form 4 of secondary school. I get about half way through the story and ask him if he would be happy to continue reading it. He does, with skill and theatricality.

By 3pm, there are four parents and 14 children, four of whom are secondary students. It is a perfect opportunity to cast the older children in the roles of teacher for the younger ones and we ask two younger children to join each older one, I demonstrate the simpler green dialogue cards and explain how they are used. The older children have enough English resource to be able to ask extension questions and on the whole they do well, mimicking their teachers. After a few minutes I suggest they ask more questions; such as “what colour is that?”, “what’s the BM word for that?”, “where have you seen a lion before?” Just after 3pm, I invite one of the parents to take over from a secondary student who has to leave. She agrees, and perhaps the sight of secondary students acting in the role of teachers was encouraging to her.

Both Linda and I are monitoring and moving around between groups, making suggestions and helping where needed. This is precisely the kind of background role I want for myself, so to see it working so smoothly is very heartening.

At about 3:30, Linda and I gather the children to the seats and we sing songs whose lyrics are printed on last year’s song sheets and which still happen to still be in the car. “Row Row Row Your Boat”, “He’s Got The Whole World”, “London Bridge”, all done acapella. There’s no need for instruments, the children enjoy singing and the lighter I can travel the better.

Linda takes over after 15 minutes with a more grammatical focus to talk about nouns. She holds up a fork, a spoon and a plate and elicits the English words for them, as well as the Malay words. She gives example sentences and asks the children to repeat them.

In total 14 children and four parents have attended Pondok English today. I’m encouraged by the active presence of so many parents and I am keen to think of ways of including them other than as conversation partners.

One book stands out. “Tom and the Tinfoil of Trouble” is excellent for its visual humour but also for its listing for items around the home. This feeds directly into one of the dialogue sets “What’s around the Home.” I ponder making more sets based on books available in the local library.

Linda invites older children to read aloud to the group, emphasizing reading with expression. She seems to prefer working with the older children; perhaps this is because her three sons are all teenagers. My focus perhaps because of my work with the British Council, is younger children.

As we are saying farewell to the children, Linda announces that I will not be there the following Sunday due to the upcoming MELTA conference in Kuala Lumpur. She is about to tell the students not to come on Sunday, when I suggest to her that she could run the meeting herself. Making the suggestion was a rush of blood to the head, but to my surprise she agrees. I promise to produce more dialogue sets and borrow a new set of books from the library, where the generous librarians know what I am doing and have allowed me up to twenty books at a time.

We discuss involving older children as mini-teachers to the younger children and to encourage parental involvement wherever possible. In this, she is likely to be more successful than I, given that she is well-known and respected in the community, whereas I am an outsider. We arrange to meet again during the week to exchange some resources.

I am thrilled to have found an “owner” for Pondok English, who will be present beyond my rapidly approaching departure from Sabah. At last a local person appears to have volunteered and my drive back to Kota Kinabalu is a relieved one. I’m thinking about what I can do to support Linda and how this might continue beyond the end of September when I need to leave the country. Linda has access to the social networking service WhatsApp and I undertake to be sure we swap contact details.

That literature was so well received by the attendees is a good sign. I brought four books with me and would like to have brought many more. Large, colourful and attractive, I chose and intended using them for storytelling, but with the now vastly increased availability of good children’s literature, I envisage books lying around on mats that early arrivers can just pick up out of curiosity. None are text-heavy. Among them are Dr Seuss “The Cat in the Hat,” the Mr. Men series by Roger Hargreaves. As a primary school teacher in Australia, I often read the Mr. Men series to my students, though looking at them now through the eyes of an ESL teacher, I am a little worried that the simplicity of the illustrations belies language which appears more difficult than I remembered.

Reflections

- A Form 4 secondary student is able to take over reading a story to the group.
- Linda is prepared to take responsibility for Pondok English!

Week 3 Sunday June 7

Linda runs this session on her own, but does not keep attendance records. She does not use the conversation cards but has children reading the library books I have passed to her in groups. She later tells me she visited the library and borrowed additional books ahead of this meeting.

Reflections

- Literature is making an increasing contribution to Pondok English.

Week 4 Sunday June 14

This is the first Sunday after the school holidays, the weather cool and cloudy. During the week there has been a magnitude 5.5 earthquake at South East Asia's largest peak Mount Kinabalu, by road 30 kilometres south of Kota Belud. The quake has been felt clearly throughout northern Sabah and landslides on the mountain have claimed the lives of eighteen climbers in addition to stripping thousands of trees from the mountainside and dumping them in the river below, a river on which Kampung Piasau and Kota Belud depend for drinking water. The now heavily disturbed river water has become undrinkable due to a dramatic increase in suspended soil and minerals now washing down stream.

A charity in Kota Kinabalu has arranged the donation of hundreds of 20 litre plastic containers of drinking water, and these are piled high in a small unoccupied field adjacent to Mrs. Dumi's shop, awaiting distribution.

My partner, a secondary-school English teacher on study leave from her job in Japan, accompanies me on this trip and we arrive at Mrs. Dumi's shop on time at 2pm. Many more people than usual are coming in and out of the shop. Three children join us at about 2:15 and Linda arrives shortly after with her three sons. We use the chairs and sit the children on them, starting with a counting game that latecomers can easily join, counting from 1 to 40 in a circle, before attempting counting by twos and then backwards from 30. This is a challenge for two of the boys but we get there with a lot of drawing in the air, gesturing and whispering by their friends.

We follow this with reading aloud a story about a disappearing elephant, as more children arrive. There's visual humour in this story as its characters attempt various ways to hide an elephant from their parents. The children seem to enjoy it.

By 2:30, we have 12 children though with the events of the preceding week, no parents. I ask Linda to match the four eldest children with two younger children each to read stories with. The floor is dusty

and I deploy three grass mats from the car for the children to sit on, while one group uses the bench and chairs. This works well, and the children are engaged in reading. The books seem to be at about the right level and the children are reading chorally together, making best-guesses at words they don't know. My partner is helping one of the groups with some of the difficult words while Linda is sitting inside the shop talking with villagers. There is much discussion about what is to be done about establishing a viable supply of water for the kampung.

The following week, I arrive with my partner once again at 2pm and chat with Mrs. Noah. Linda arrives shortly after at around 2:15, by which time we have eight children and two parents. Mrs. Dumi once again brings out some chairs from the shop and motions for the children to sit down. I find that furniture often creates a barrier to dramatic effect and I would prefer the children to sit on the floor for storytelling, but to ignore the chairs or refuse to use them would be a slight to Mrs. Dumi, whose co-operation I appreciate.

By 3pm, there are 14 children and four parents. Four of the children are in secondary school and I perceive an opportunity for them once again to work with younger ones. I demonstrate the dialogue cards and set them going. The older children do a good job; they know their "students" by name and they mimic their teachers effectively. I suggest they ask extension questions such as "what colour is that?", "what's the BM word for that?", "where have you seen a lion before?" as all cards have the Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) words on the back. Just after 3pm, a mother and her young daughter join and, when one of the secondary students has to leave, I invite her to take over, which she does.

Reflections

- Earthquake on Mount Kinabalu prevents most parents attending, but older children are able to work with younger children.
- Less reliance on dialogue cards so far in this iteration, greater literature focus.

Week 5 Sunday June 21

The following week, June 21, my partner and I are a little late. Two children and two adults are waiting, but Linda is not here. A little apologetically I carry the mats from my car and lay them out, ready for parents and children I hope will come. A few chairs squat randomly. My partner starts with a rhythmic counting game she apparently often plays with her students in Japan "Lets Go 1-2." The game rehearses counting and we keep it very simple as our attendees appear to be below ten years old, including one girl who apparently can't stop crying. She appears to have come from Mrs. Dumi's house.

We practice reciting the alphabet, with children sitting along a bench, my partner and I in chairs facing them. I'm surprised that we are able to go from a to z three times and I suggest trying to go backwards before quickly changing my mind, though one older girl was up for it!

We sit the children down for storytelling using Dr Seuss "My Many Coloured Days," a large format book with large and beautiful illustrations of animals linked to colours and moods, energetic pink flamingos leap out of one page, a brown dreary bear slinks his way through another. The children enjoy identifying the colours and the animals, making sound effects for them.

More children have arrived; we ask older children to choose a book and read to the younger ones. Three do; one chooses a book for herself and reads it quietly.

The ease with which the children seem to pick up and look at English books really calls into question an opinion I have often heard from teachers, that local children will not read English books. On the contrary, children of all ages appear to relate well to quality literature, provided it is at an appropriate level for them. My partner confides later that the older children are imitating my narrative style.

Linda is still not here. We gather the children again for some dialogue sets; "What is this animal?" and "The Sea". We hand over to the older children and observe. Linda arrives shortly after and practices reading with expression with the older children.

We invite two parents to join us for some singing, "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" which is always a favourite for its animal impressions. We followed this with "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," finishing with "My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean". The children appear to know this song very well and I must find out why.

Both parents are closely involved today. My partner shrewdly observes that the more their parents watch, the more enthusiastically the children try to read.

I am delighted when one of the secondary school students checks the meanings of words from "Tom and the Tinfal of Trouble" with me. I am viewed as a resource.

I wonder if there is a way of securely storing some books during the week and asking Mrs. Dumitru to deploy them on Sundays so that early arrivers can access them before we arrive. I'll discuss this with Linda; I don't want to impose further on Mrs. Dumitru, moreover I am concerned at the security of the

books not least because I am responsible for them. The librarians in Kota Belud have been generous with me so far, and I don't want to abuse their trust.

Reflections

- Enthusiastic involvement from attendee parents, possibility they might be interested in an organising role for Pondok English.
- Thinking about ways to deploy literature before the Pondok English sessions commence.

Week 6 Sunday June 28

My partner and I arrive a little early to find two children and a parent already waiting for us. One of the children is the little girl who cried incessantly the previous week. My partner goes to comfort her. During the week, we have received the British Council ELTDP's parting gift to Sabah, two large format books of Dusun folk tales translated to English and published with bright and compelling illustrations by a talented local Dusun artist. "I am Itut Itut" is a humorous tale about a villager who cannot remember his own name long enough to recite it when asking his fiance's parents for permission to marry. "Yada to the Rescue" is the story of Yada, a villager who frets about a lack of rice, in the midst of the abundance of fruits and vegetables in the verdant Sabah forests. There are 5 copies of both books, one set for each of the schools in my cluster, so we have 10 copies in all. I decide to give them a test run at Pondok English.

We sit the children down and start reading "I am Itut Itut" as other children gradually arrive. The children appreciate the humour of the story, even if the ending is somewhat weak. Two parents I haven't seen before attend today, one an older gentleman and the other a younger lady with a notebook computer perched on her lap. I later learn that she works at the local District Education Office and has two children attending SK Piasau. She says she has been intending to join for some weeks and is excited about Pondok English. Her own English expression is very clear and I wonder if she would like to become involved in Pondok English in an organisational sense. I will raise this later with Linda.

By 2:30, there are 11 or 12 children and again I invite older ones to select a book and read it to younger ones. The chairs nowhere to be seen, happily there are just enough mats! The children settle into this activity well and appear to be enjoying "I am Itut Itut" and "Yada to the Rescue", which are both designed for young readers and are not text heavy. Linda arrives as the children are in their groups and moves among them.

After about 30 minutes we ask the children to return the books and sit in a circle for a counting game I know by the name of Fizz Buzz. Children count upwards from one and need to say “fizz” on multiples of 3 and “buzz” on multiples of 5. Again the older children are cast in the role of teachers and help the younger ones who generally come to understand the idea of the game. We stop at 30, which is exactly twice around the circle counting my partner, Linda, myself and the younger parent. Linda follows this with an interesting word game also played in a circle, where children have to say a word starting with a letter of the alphabet in either English or Bahasa Malaysia ascending from a to z. We reach Z, which is one and a half times around the circle, then we ask the children to think of a word that begins with the last letter of the previous word (eg. think – king – goat – table) and to toss a ball to each other to indicate whose turn it was. This doesn’t work well; some children repeatedly throw the ball to their friends which excluded others who become impatient and boisterous.

A meeting of the local Disaster Committee takes place from 3pm in the carpark adjacent to Mrs. Dumi’s shop. Tremors are continuing to be felt, with consequent denuding of the mountain’s forests as logs tumble down the mountain leaving nasty scars on the mountainside visible from where we are 30 kilometres away. It’s heartbreaking to see this and know it will be decades before the forests regenerate. Worse is that it is exacerbating the problem with drinking water. There is a lot of noise and activity as water containers are shunted around and loaded into the backs of noisy diesel 4WDs, pollution from which is making concentration difficult. We finish early.

Reflections

- Water situation getting worse, disruption from people collecting water bottles
- 4WD vehicle pollution becoming a problem.
- Kota Belud DEO staff member taking an interest in Pondok English.

Week 7 Sunday July 5

The water situation in the town is becoming acute, with the failure of the water filtration plant at the Kota Belud reservoir due to unprecedented levels of suspended matter in the river water. Not knowing what will be happening in and around Mrs. Dumi’s shop today, I have borrowed and brought a new collection of children’s literature from the library. Linda and I ask children to choose a book and read it with a partner. This appears to work better than the previous week, when all was disruption.

At 3:30, we stop the paired reading activity and group the children on chairs to finish with some singing – a particularly spirited version of “Old MacDonald Had a Farm,” with suggestions from the children of different animals and sounds – we do a cat, a wolf (the howls are superb) but most impressive are

the monkeys. Living in close proximity to a variety of these primates, the local children do compelling impressions!

We have enough participants to attempt singing in rounds, and we try “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” in two parts. The children appear to enjoy the challenge of concentrating carefully on what their group is singing and not being distracted by the singing of the other group. We finish with “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean,” which the children sing twice with gusto. This song is a real favourite and they appear to have known it before I introduced it to them. I wonder why. We finish shortly after 4pm when Linda distributes dialogue sets to the children, asking in Malay if they are using them at home. More than half reply that they do. Their dog-eared appearance is testament to this, there being no laminator available to make them more durable. Linda reminds children to please bring them back and change them over, as the collection of materials is depleting. This is no bad thing however, I have no objection to them staying in people’s houses and it’s easy enough to print and cut out more at home.

I’m slightly disturbed though by something Linda says a little later. Apparently, the children are afraid of me! This comes as a complete surprise and I wonder how this could be. I do everything I can to project friendliness. I suppose at worst, my time here is growing short and if there’s really a problem, it won’t be a problem for much longer.

Reflections

- Evidence that conversation sets are being used at home.
- Need to think about why children might be frightened of me.

Week 8 Sunday July 26

The celebration of Hari Raya necessitates a two week break and we convene again on July 26 at Mrs. Dumi’s shop. Again there are many fewer attendees and I worry that Kampung Piasau’s Pondok English is headed for the same fate as the previous one. I am left on my own for most of the session; Linda arrives late and has to leave shortly afterwards. I am disappointed to find I have almost no authority among the children, and the language barrier today seems a chasm. One boy aimlessly walks around as he wishes, listening to no-one. I want to talk more formally with parents but time is running out, especially with the impending end of the British Council ELTDP project, with the reports and gathering of statistics that entails.

With five children, I use the “What’s in my classroom?” pack for about 20 minutes while waiting for other children to join. There is continued interference from people driving noisy 4WDs to collect water.

There have been more tremors during the week and the mountainside is even more scarred. Babies are crying.

I roll out the mats and put out some books from the library, but with so few participants all under 10 years old, I simply invite them to choose whichever book they like. They're pretty good at choosing a book and sitting down with it, even if some of the treatment is rough.

We finish a little early with "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" but mostly it seems to be me singing. The atmosphere is elevated somewhat by singing "Hokey Kokey" which involves getting up, dancing and moving around. Even so, there is tension in the air and I wonder how much of this has to do with the water situation. Everyone appears stressed. Would it be appropriate to cancel Pondok English until the water situation is resolved? But this might take months! Linda is clearly busy and much less available, and her presence is important to the smooth functioning of the group.

No doubt busy greeting the people milling around the shop, at least the dog isn't a problem for us today. I'm able to talk casually with parents.

Reflections

- There are fewer attendees, and Linda appears to be less available.
- I find difficulty relating to the children, in absence of Linda.

Week 9 Sunday August 2

The last session of Pondok English with which I can be involved is held on August 2. There are eighteen attendees, including three parents, with whom I am later able to converse casually. Linda brings her three boys and another friend in her car. We start with a storytelling session with two visually arresting stories, again borrowed from the local library. The first is about a group of animals who dress up in ill-fitting and rather loud clothes. The children enjoy the visual humour of this story, which is again not text heavy. The other is about a caterpillar who meets a variety of winged creatures before himself becoming a butterfly. Both stories appear to retain the children's interest.

Linda announces that this will be my last visit and I feel awkward but relieved at the same time. I mumble something about us all meeting again and I suggest, mostly for the parents' benefit, that Linda will be running Pondok English from now on.

Reflections

- I need to make time to deliver my computer and printer to Linda and make sure they are up to speed on how to use it.
- Pondok English proves to be sustainable!

5.3.1 Discussions with parents

There are few opportunities to talk with attendee parents during Pondok English, but I am able to speak with four people toward the end of the second iteration in Kg. Piasau. My questions relate to their reasons for attending, their perceptions of the importance of English and the challenges facing their children in learning it. Names have been changed in accordance with ethical guidelines.

Claudia has two children, aged ten and seven at Pondok English and this is her first time to attend. She is aged about 30. She thinks English is an important subject at school, as ‘it’s used as an international language.’ She speaks English at her work as a therapist in Kota Belud, where some of her clients are foreigners on tours through the forests, waterfalls and ape colonies around Kota Belud. Claudia likes to speak English at home to help her children value and improve their English. She believes English is important for her children’s future, so that ‘they can communicate with other people’. She is not sure whether or not she expects her children to go on to further education. Claudia believes pronunciation and spelling are the biggest obstacles to learning English, especially the lack of uniform pronunciation and spelling rules, compared with Bahasa Malaysia which is phonetic in its romanised spelling.

Claudia’s parents spoke Dusun and Malay at home, and could speak English well. They told her that English was an important subject at school and are now critical of the way English is taught. Claudia believes that knowledge of English will give her children access to jobs such as ‘a teacher, doctor, lawyer, musician; every job needs English’ she says. Claudia says her children attend Pondok English because ‘they want to improve their English’ and observation confirms their eager involvement in activities. She says she also enjoys attending the English Club on Sundays, it is ‘my free time to improve my broken English’.

Ani Khairuddin is another Dusun, with an Arabic name denoting her conversion to Islam. She is aged in her mid-twenties with a daughter aged six attending Pondok English for the first time. A busy woman, she is nursing a highly active one year old son who has just learned to walk, and it is difficult to keep her attention. Ani’s spoken English appears more restricted than Claudia’s, but she also believes English to be an important subject at school, in order to ‘speak with foreigners, learn a wider

range of things'. Ani is a housewife with few chances to practice her English; she does not speak English at home, as 'my husband does not speak [English].' Ani is convinced that 'everybody has to learn it [English]' and that it is 'a required subject at school'. She believes English is important for her children's future, 'more important for children to learn' but is unable to suggest why. She agrees that English is not easy to learn, '[it's] hard at the beginning'. Her parents also told her that English was an important subject at school, and had spoken to her 'a little' in English at home. Ani says she is trying her best to learn English by 'reading English books' and we discussed the opening of the Kota Belud which has an extensive collection of English books.

Sabeng binti Sakida is in her sixties, retired and attending with her three grandchildren, one of whom attends SK Piasau. She has come from Kampong Tenghilan, approximately 20 kilometres away. Sabeng has been a regular attender of Pondok English, although she tends to sit at some distance from the proceedings, talking to shopkeeper Mrs. Dumi who is about the same age.

She is Dusun and was educated in an English-speaking school in the 1960s, around the time the Malaysian government was establishing Bahasa Malaysia as the national language. Her English is hesitant. Sabeng agrees that English is an important subject at school, but she herself has few opportunities for practice as she is a housewife. However, she likes to speak English at home with her grandchildren who she sees frequently, and believes English is important for their future.

Sabeng agrees that it is not easy to learn English, and said her parents had told her English was an important subject in school; they 'spoke to me in English or Dusun' regularly and did not speak Bahasa Malaysia. Sabeng says she is doing her best to learn English, and agrees that if her grandchildren learn English, 'they could have a good job'.

She says she enjoys attending Pondok English on Sundays, though she rarely joins in the activities.

Linda is in her early fifties, a Malay married to a Dusun who has converted to Islam. She has three school-age boys who attend the nearest high school approximately ten kilometres away. All three are attending Pondok English. She believes English to be a very important subject at school. She is now a housewife but prior to moving to Sabah in 1999, she worked as a logistics clerk in a pharmaceutical company Selangor, near Kuala Lumpur. She used English in her job. She says 'the company was worldwide and I still have friends in Australia'.

5.3.2 Reflections on the second iteration

It is encouraging that the second iteration at Kampung Piasau has proven more successful than the first in Kota Belud and shows potential for long term sustainability. I attribute this to

1. the presence of Linda who, fluent in both English and Malay and a resident of the district, which commands respect from local residents. I am thrilled that she will continue running it,
2. the location of Pondok English in a central part of Kampung Piasau,
3. a wider range of activities, including more games, singing and reading, and
4. the long-awaited opening of the Kota Belud library with its excellent English children's literature section. The availability of books has helped take the focus off me in particular and has allowed both Linda and I to act in more facilitating than directing roles.

Even so, I am not convinced that I have succeeded in involving parents. In all but a few isolated instances, I have not enmeshed parents enough in either the planning or execution of Pondok English, and have not provided alternatives to the dialogue sets with which they can continue to work with their children on English.

Moreover, I am not convinced that Pondok English has attracted the people I believe to need it most, who may have been too shy to attend, or may have had misgivings over my presence. Over time, Linda may be more effective at reaching them.

The Pondok English project in Sabah has confirmed for me Hofstede's theories of social cohesion among Asian people. This closeness of communities is a noticeable phenomenon in Malaysia and particularly so at the village level.

5.3.3 Critical incidents from the second iteration

The following table lists Critical Incidents identified during the course of the second iteration of Pondok English.

The incidents are identified for what they taught me about the long-term viability of the project and how it should be managed going forward.

Date	Critical Incident	What I learned
May 21	Village head attends Week 1	Pondok English receives the imprimatur of the village head, indicating acceptance
May 31	Attendees showing interest in literature and reading the books independently	Evidence for literature-based approach
May 31	Linda accepts my invitation to host next week's Pondok English	An ongoing local sponsor is identified!
June 14	Disruption to Pondok English from earthquake on Mount Kinabalu	Need to adapt/modify Pondok English to cope with changing community priorities

5.4 Lessons from the Action Research study

The following analysis derives from Appendix 5, which is based on text analyses of the rich descriptions, observations and critical incidents of Pondok English. Lessons learned from this analysis will help to inform future projects of this kind. I have categorised these lessons under the themes of Informal Learning, Community of Practice, Libraries and Literature, Informal learning, Place and Space, Promotion and Sponsorship.

5.4.1 Informal learning

The Make Content Relevant subtheme contained labels describing the importance of developing relevant materials (MATL) that were interesting and approachable (SEPC) to the attendees. These included dialogue sets (DSET), but also songs, games and in the second iteration supplemented with a greater focus on literature.

The dialogue sets were made more relevant to attendees by being based on vocabulary contained in the new curriculum (KSSR). The dialogue sets had English printed on one side and Bahasa Malaysia on the other (E1B2), to assist ease of use.

There were some frustrations, where learning was inhibited by factors such as language barrier (LBAR) between myself and the attendees, the children being fearful (CAFM) of me, parents' initial reluctance to join (SASD). On reflection, I perhaps should have known more of the local language.

The Intergenerational Learning subtheme included labels testifying that families were relatively large by European standards (LFAM) and that often there were three generations (3GEN) under one roof; moreover that materials such as dialogue sets were being taken home (DRAM, TKMA) to practice there. Children frequently learn from parents by imitating them. Parents in turn can (PWWI) understand more of their child's progress by observing their interactions with other children and adults.

Labels related to learning in families described the interaction between parents and children with respect to the dialogue cards (SEPC, CPUS) following the scripts on the cards. That the materials were taken home is evidenced by their becoming dog-eared (DOGE).

Labels grouped under Pedagogical Approach described Linda's and my approach to teaching, which was child-centred and not teacher-centred as still remains the case in many classrooms. There was no attempt to recreate the classroom environment, but to emphasize and treasure the interaction between parents and their children. Parents were encouraged to elicit vocabulary (VELI) using basic repetitive and clarifying questions (BREQ, PACQ). Parents encouraged to be tolerant of mistakes (TOLM) and supportive, not critical of errors (ENCE). The use of Dusun or Bahasa Malaysia (BMOK) was also encouraged where it would support communication.

Playfulness and laughter were part of Pondok English, and unaccompanied acapella singing (ACAP) became increasingly important (SONA, SSWA, SING). This was notable especially when the groups sang "Old MacDonald Had a Farm", the proper performance of which requires farmyard animal impressions. Our local version included varieties of monkeys (MONK) which, while rarely found on farms, featured some remarkably lifelike vocal impressions (MSE) that reduced attendees to helpless laughter. Attendees clearly enjoyed singing together, and for the organisers it was a refuge when things sometimes went wrong.

We also played games to emphasise counting (PGCM, JPNG) and vocabulary, and children enjoyed these (EAGR). There were problems with a ball-throwing game (GANG) where children favoured their friends.

5.4.2 Community of Practice

There were two subthemes of Community of Practice. The subtheme Legitimate Peripheral Participation described new joiner parents and children and their initially nervous reactions (PSIP, NERV), their growing interest (PWWI) and eventual participation as proto-old hands (PTTO). Older (secondary school) participants also accepted responsibility for working with younger children (OTY, OCYC, KBN) which led to attitudinal changes as they began to cast themselves as teachers (OCAT).

The Old Hand subtheme addressed issues such as sustainability of the project (SUST) through motivational activities (PMOV) and the encouragement of parents to be involved (ERPT), both at Pondok English sessions and at home. Outside events such as the earthquake required adaptability (ADPT) in the way the sessions were run.

5.4.3 Make use of libraries and literature

The quality of the literature was central to the increasingly literature-based approach, germane to the second iteration.

Labels grouped under the Books subtheme described large and colourful (LCOL) literature, visually appealing (VAPP) and not too text heavy (LTX); material that children and adults could easily approach and use. The literature made available to participants was constantly refreshed with new material. Children showed an interest in the literature (PICU), both reading to each other and exploring literature on their own.

Labels describing the Library subtheme referred to the newly opened Kota Belud (KBLB) public library, which opened just prior to the commencement of the second iteration of Pondok English and brought into the district some trained library professionals (LIBP) and excellent children's literature resources (CLLB) which were there to be exploited.

Interesting and appropriate literature enabled group activities between older and younger learners. The importance of ready access to literature and the support of librarians recommending literature cannot be overstated in the creation of a society of critical thinkers.

Labels associated with the Malay Culture subtheme referred to Dusun folk tales (DUFT) which were introduced late in the second iteration. The literature was especially relevant to the attendees, many of whom were themselves Dusun. That the books were written on themes relating to the abundance of food in Sabah, and a humorous tale about a nervous young warrior hoping to find a bride, caused them to resonate with young and old attendees alike; their watercolour illustrations (ILLA) by a local Dusun artist also lent credibility and interest.

5.4.4 Places and spaces

The Attendees subtheme described the social milieu from which attendees originated. There was a high level of literacy (HILIT) in the L1 and with many families of 5 children or more, the population was young (YPOP), in contrast to many western societies. People wore casual clothing (CACL) and there was a tendency among teenagers to wear American fashion clothing such as hoodies (HOOD) – in temperatures consistently above 32 degrees Celsius with high humidity, clearly privileging fashion over comfort.

The Social Environment subtheme described low density living area of Kota Belud (LDEN), the preponderance of natural vegetation (FLOW, DPM), the farmland (FMLD) but also the poor infrastructure (PINF) and bad roads (BROA). It also described the historical and culturally significant weekly produce markets (TAMU) which is where many villagers earned their living, in many cases making use of donated clothing (CLPA).

Labels grouped under the Times subtheme, referred to the care required to avoid holding Pondok English on days and times which would conflict with Muslim and Christian religious observances, such as the Ramadan fasting period (RAMD, RAMF), the Eid festival at the end of Ramadan, Christmas and Easter; and on a weekly basis Fridays (holy day for Muslims), Saturdays (holy day for Seventh Day Adventists) and Sunday mornings (church attendance for Catholic and Protestant Christians). Religion is very much a part of the Malaysian social fabric but, even so there were instances where attendances surprised me (MOAT, LEAT).

The Public Place subtheme indicated the very practical requirements which needed to be met in choosing a location for Pondok English, such as being close to usable public (TOIL) toilets, in a relatively quiet (QUIE) and uninterrupted area protected from both rain and bright sunlight. It had to be publicly (PUBA) accessible and well known (WELK). Weather and protection from it (SHEL), the day of week,

privacy or semi-privacy (ASTK), whether or not the space was boundaried, whether or not one needed an invitation to join, were all related to place and perceptions of it.

In the second iteration, Pondok English was held in a local kampong (LOCL) on a covered verandah (CVER) in front of Mrs. Dumi's shop, which was donated for the purpose.

The What Else Happens subtheme described events and occurrences which competed with Pondok English for the attention and time of attendees. These included the car promotion (CARP), the preparations for soccer matches (FBTM) and the major earthquake (QUAK) on Mount Kinabalu.

The earthquake and landslide (FLS) on Mount Kinabalu caused the deaths of eighteen climbers (DEAT) and the consequent pollution of district water (WATR, H2OB) supplies impacted villagers' lives. In turn this led to a massive pooling of resources (CWAT) near Mrs Dumi's shop from which people constantly came and went (IFTR) during Pondok English, picking up and dropping off water containers. It was a stressful period (TENS, STRS) for the community and a major interruption to Pondok English but it also presented opportunities to make Pondok English relevant to the daily lives of the participants.

5.4.5 Promotion

Labels related to the Anticipation subtheme described how parents and children anticipated (EXPE), prepared for and made efforts (LNDI, INJN) to attend Pondok English. They were initially made aware of Pondok English through leaflets distributed at schools (LEAF) though word of mouth (WOM) attracted more participants.

Both Linda and I thanked parents and children for attending (THAT) and informed them of plans for the following week, encouraging (INVT) them to attend.

The Benefits subtheme highlighted the understanding among parents of the link between English and access to education (EAIL), mobility and high paying jobs for their children (EFUT). It was clear from the labels that there was a strong instrumental orientation to their attendance at Pondok English. Informal discussions with parents indicated that they felt English was highly relevant to their children's lives, and in the case of the massage therapist, to own (THRP, SPFO). Moreover they appeared interested in supporting their children's English education by attending Pondok English in person and being prepared to take the conversation materials I supplied home with them.

Frustrations mainly involved mismatch between my expectations and the realities of attendances. The Overcoming Difficulties subtheme describes difficulties faced by attendees in attending Pondok English, in some cases as a result of their own difficulties in English learning (NMEL) as children. It also pointed to the difficulties (PRSD, HATB) encountered by Malay speakers of the less-than-consistent pronunciation and spelling of English words, and complexity of its grammar, compared to Bahasa Malaysia.

5.4.6 Sponsorship

The Respect subtheme describes the communal respect shown towards Linda (LRHK) as one of the main sponsors of Pondok English. She grew to become the primary organiser and interface between the local community (TVIL), myself and the project.

Also appreciated was the respect and consideration shown by Mrs Dumi (NOFF), and in return to the villagers and the village head (VLHD) for her support and encouragement.

The Responsibilities subtheme described the roles of stakeholders, in my case a very practical one sweeping the grandstand (BROO) before the meetings, monitoring and moving around (MOMO) during the meetings while seeking a background role (BKGR). It described the sponsoring role of Teacher Magdalen (PIED) and her introduction of a group of parents at the commencement of the first iteration, because she spoke the language and was known to at least some of the people. She was able to bring them from their “safe” place thirty or so metres from the Astaka Kecil and explain the importance of their involvement, as well as their children.

The Support subtheme described assistance from mentee teachers and principals who lent their assistance (MENT, PRSP), by Mrs. Dumi who provided the premises (DELI) and welcome drinks (DRIN) in the hot weather. Beyond my direct involvement in the project, labels described my intention to donate my computer and printer to Linda (GCOM, REPR) and continue support by Social Networking Services (RSUPP).

There is no doubt that the second iteration of Pondok English was able to achieve sustainability by virtue of local support and sponsorship. Linda was a charismatic person within her community who could make things happen, arranging as she did a suitable venue, and mediate relationships between myself and participants. When she wasn’t present, it showed: everything seemed to take longer, there was a general lack of smoothness. The respect Linda had earned by virtue of being a member of the

community was not there in my case; an outsider who didn't speak the language, who looked and acted different.

Linda's sponsorship role in many ways resembled that of Dr. Kunishige, in that

- both organized facilities,
- both worked up and down the chain of command: in Linda's case the village head and in Dr. Kunishige's case the administration of the university,
- both knew the relevant people to contact for support and how to address them,
- both organized schedules and made announcements to attendees,
- both welcomed new joiners and "chewed the fat" with their peers.

This was the kind of sponsorship that I as an outsider was ill-equipped to give. Networks of trust take time to develop and a foreigner "parachuting" into the area on a time-limited basis is not well placed to build them.

Sponsorship came also from the District Council of Kota Belud in allowing us to use communal facilities free of charge, from Mrs. Dumi for allowing us to use the forecourt of her shop (and the occasional and welcome can of soft drink), from teachers involved in the ELTDP project, the Guru Besar (Principal) of SK Piasau, the ELO who gave useful advice and attended once, and the PPD (District Education Office) which offered me facilities in which to discuss the project with my teachers.

Sponsorship also came from another and very welcome source. The librarians in Kota Belud's newly-opened public library supported Pondok English in allowing me access to resources of literature I would not otherwise have had access to, and in quantities I would not normally have been able to avail myself of. Availability of quality literature is essential to the development of language and, as Bailey, Hall and Gamble (2007, pg. 78) assert, 'books can help develop relationships with children'.

Sustainability was key to the Pondok English, which I hoped would continue beyond the life of the British Council ELTDP project and my involvement. The willingness of others to take on sponsor roles was an essential part of building that sustainability.

Chapter Six will present conclusions and recommendations, with respect to the research questions, English Corner, English Room and Pondok English.

Chapter Six – Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter brings together the research projects in Chapters Four and Five and investigates the links between them.

It examines the roles of motivation and learner autonomy in the task of learning English, with regard to informal learning situations outside the classroom. It reflects on cultural differences in so far as they impact learning. It reflects on lessons learned from the ethnographic studies in Japan and China that might be pertinent to using the English Corner/Room as a *method of teaching and learning English* in a context outside China, outside universities, outside of institutional support mechanisms. These include the role of the family in learning, especially the willingness of parents to learn new skills in order to help their children learn English.

It reflects on the concepts of place and space, and the importance of sponsorship, validation and local ownership to the long-term sustainability of community-based projects such as this. What came to be known as Pondok English was initiated on a time and resource-limited basis while I was working as a British Council teacher-mentor.

The conclusions are presented according to the three research questions. The structure of this chapter is:

- Research question 1 – conclusions related to motivation, autonomy and informal learning
- Research question 2 – conclusions related to approach and cultural differences between China and Japan
- Research question 3 – lessons learned from the studies to inform future projects and contribution to knowledge
- Concluding comments

6.2 Research question 1

1. What motivates participants to devote time to attending English Corners in Guangzhou, China and Kanoya, Japan?

The participants of English Corner and English Room in China and Japan respectively were mostly university-aged or higher. This was particularly the case in Japan. They were mature enough to be able to make learning decisions for themselves.

Interviewing at English Corner and English Room, I found approximately equal numbers of respondents expressed integrative and instrumental motivation, though the data is somewhat skewed by the presence in Guangzhou of many attendees for whom English was a necessary part of their working life in their employment at trading companies and international firms such as HSBC, Procter and Gamble. For example, in Japan, both Uehara-san and Imatamari-san reported wanting to travel to foreign countries. Imatamari-san expressed an interest in cultural aspects of English as well as her desire to communicate with foreigners.

Instrumental motivation in both China and Japan appeared to be examination related and it was clear in conversations and interviews with attendees who stated their purpose for attending the English Corner was to refine their speaking skills and gain advice from more experienced attendees on how to prepare for high-stakes English tests such as IELTS and TOEFL. This seemed a more common attitude in China than in Japan, which might possibly reflect the quite different economic fortunes of the two countries in recent years. In China, overseas study is a goal for the children of aspirational parents and speaking practice is at a premium as the educational system with its focus on text translation and reading comprehension does not do a good job of preparing students for passing high-stakes tests such as IELTS.

Japanese university students Ishikawa-san and Ueno-san each echoed an instrumental orientation for learning English; that international athletes had to speak English when competing outside their home country. Ishikawa-san was also facing a TOEFL English examination. Junior high school student Imatamari-san displayed considerable maturity and learner independence in being able to negotiate being driven to the English Room each week by her mother. Taiwanese university exchange student Susan proved herself a mature learner of English, able to set up opportunities for English practice in her own country by arranging impromptu conversations over coffee with native speakers.

Motivation with respect to the project in Malaysian Sabah focused on parents of the participants. I found it illuminating that a number of parents, aware of the greater opportunities for skilled English speakers, were prepared to sacrifice their time to learn English with and on behalf of their children. This ran counter to anecdotal evidence from some teachers that parents were generally ill-educated and uninterested in their children's education.

Informal learning takes place experientially and outside of formal educational establishments (Feuer, 2009). Both English Corner and English Room involved informal learning to a greater or lesser extent. The English Corner in China was perhaps closer to informal learning in that it ran itself without the guidance or oversight of teachers (though teachers certainly attended) and encounters between attendees were unstructured and consensual.

Pondok English on the other hand, was initiated with the expectation that it would be turned over to local people. Cast in the role of facilitator, I tried to encourage parents to interact with children rather than myself. The location was likewise relatively unbounded in that there were no walls and no control over entry and exit. I did not keep an attendance register. I tried to encourage attendees to relate to each other in groups and tried to arrange vertical alignments between older and younger children.

Both the English Corner and Pondok English shared aspects of a Community of Practice in that

- participants were mutually engaged in activities with similar goals,
- meeting regularly and sharing an interlanguage of English, which Cook (1999) defines as a developing hybrid of the L1 and target language,
- learning from each other,
- older or more skilled participants (old hands) mentoring younger or less skilled participants.

While the English Corner and English Room were characterised by freedom of movement between conversational partners, the rather more guided conversations of Pondok English were typically between older and younger participants, especially parents and children, or older and younger children. They took place on the steps of the grandstand in the first iteration and on the verandah of Mrs. Dumi's shop in the second. While Mrs. Dumi made a conscious effort to provide chairs for all to sit on, I often felt (but did not say) these were in the way and inhibited interactions.

Moreover, we sang in English almost every week. The children were enthusiastic singers and it gave parents another activity to try with their children at home. Singing is rhythmical, repetitive and brings people together. It refreshes and interests everyone. Linguistically, singing helps to augment pronunciation and pacing. Moreover, it is always available as a recourse when things become a little difficult.

6.3 Research question 2

2. What differentiates participants' approaches in these two countries and to what extent are these differences informed by cultural influences?

English Room in Japan functions in many ways similarly to the English Corner in China, not least because it is located in a university but is also open to public participation, as evidenced by the invitational notice at the government offices. I visited a number of English Corners in China, but only one English Room in Japan. The main differences between the English Corner and the English Room appear to be organisational. In China, the public English Corner appears to have no organiser, whereas in Japan there is a low-key sponsorship which appears expected by both the sponsor and participants.

The English Room is organised and hosted by Dr. Kunishige. It owes its existence to him and indirectly to his experience as a visiting lecturer in Hawaii. As a principled and professional educator, he urges students to attend, following up with them when they do not do so. He advertises on brochures displayed at the city hall and in the corridors of the university itself. He also sends emails to attendees reminding them of upcoming meetings.

He appears to know all attendees by name and makes a point of personally welcoming new people, who are required like everyone else to wear a name tag, which Dr. Kunishige collects at the end of each session to inform attendance data.

The involvement of native English speakers, such as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) working in the district is actively encouraged. ALTs in turn seem to be instrumental in encouraging their students to attend the English Room, which helps to account for the unusual number of junior and senior high school students attending at a location which is nevertheless some distance away from the town. In interviews, Sakamoto-sensei and his daughters, Uehara-san and Ueno-san all expressed the belief that the participation of English native speakers was important, as it encouraged participants to *speak out*, which they might not be so inclined to do if conversing with other Japanese people.

Japanese attendees appear to value the involvement of foreigners more highly than Chinese attendees. Among a generally older set of attendees such as professional workers, I observed English Corner conversations to be generally more in-depth than their Japanese counterparts, which seemed more limited and formulaic.

There is strict observance of English Room starting and ending times. English Room runs for exactly one hour. It finishes when the organiser makes the announcement, often followed by reminders of upcoming events or alterations to schedule. While everyone finishes at the same time, there is flexibility as to when people arrive though again there is a strong tendency in Japanese culture to be on time. English Corner typically starts later, finishes later and runs for longer. Attendees arrive and leave as they wish.

The English Room is located indoors within the bounds of a public university, in a comfortable and air conditioned coffee/lounge room. English Corner in my experience were located outdoors, in a publicly accessible plaza, usually with trees for protection from the weather. An exception to this was the Blue Rain café in Changsha, Hunan province.

English Room is held in periods of 8 consecutive weeks in each of two semesters. Scheduling of these periods is the responsibility of Dr. Kunishige, who takes into consideration the academic schedule of the university in order to avoid overloading students in busy periods such as exam week. By contrast, English Corner appears to be held every week and in some cases more frequently than once a week.

Japan and China are both Asian countries with long histories and significant shared culture. Each have experienced de-facto leadership within the region by military or cultural means.

Uncertainty avoidance would suggest that students are reluctant to make mistakes in front of others and, again, I have found this to be the case, although age and maturity also play a part. It may also help explain why many non-native English teachers in Asia appear unwilling to communicate in English with their students beyond reading prepared texts and the like. It appears many feel safer teaching using grammar-translation methods, where the opportunities for interaction in English are minimised.

High tolerance of power distance would tend to suggest that students would be more likely to view their teachers as authority figures and not so much as colleagues in learning, whereas the educational model which has become popular in western so-called individualist societies, frames teachers as facilitators of learning.

Both China and Japan share a common written language which originated in China and was imported by Japanese scholars in the 8th century. The written form of the language is based on ideographs (called kanji in Japan, hanzi in China) which is fundamentally different to English written expression, based as it is (more or less) on phonetic characters.

Both countries share the experience of English as the language of a colonizing power; in China during the late Qing dynasty when Hong Kong was ceded to Britain, in Japan following the Second World War and occupation by mostly American troops from 1945 to 1953, with substantial and ongoing American influence on its culture, political and educational systems. The country is still subject to a foreign-imposed Constitution.

I detected an affective filter in both countries, which appears culturally based. Uehara-san reported a common feeling among Japanese speakers and mirrored in my experience by Chinese learners that they feel uncomfortable communicating with each other in English.

Among Chinese and Japanese students, attitudes of co-operation for mutual benefit appeared strong. I was surprised to hear my Chinese high school students report that it felt un-natural for them to converse with their peers in English, but the attitude was reflected by Sakamoto-chan in Japan who reported similar feelings speaking English in Australia.

The attitude indicated a culturally derived affective barrier and impacted what Dörnyei would term their L2 Willingness to Communicate (WTC). This might help explain the preference shown among many Chinese attendees of English Corner for native English speakers as interlocutors.

6.4 Research question 3

3. Is it possible to use an English Corner approach to establish an informal English learning project involving parents and school-age children in a rural area of Malaysia? ***What lessons could be learned from the studies***, to inform future projects of this kind?

I believe there were several lessons learned that assisted the adaptation of English Corner *as a method for learning English* in Malaysian Sabah. The lessons draw from labels, subthemes and themes in Appendix 5 which were analysed in Section 5.4.

6.4.1 Make content relevant to, and interesting for participants.

The success or failure of projects such as Pondok English depends to a large extent on its being attractive and relevant to participants. Learning materials and literature brought into the project should be locally sourced and where possible relevant to the culture.

6.4.2 Facilitate and encourage intergenerational learning.

There are benefits for younger and older people alike in projects such as Pondok English, and the link between them is important for both. Much of any child's learning comes from imitating their parents, who are their children's primary educators. It is from parents that children derive their attitudes to language and learning (Butler, 2015; Shilova et al, 2019). While teachers motivate their students at school, according to Shilova (pg 1476) parents render 'the maximum investment to make the learning process easier for their children', both in provision of essential materials, a comfortable learning environment at home; and moral support such as encouragement, advice and simply 'spending time with [their] child' (ibid pp 1476-77).

Parental support has a direct positive benefit on intrinsic motivation and capacity of younger students, especially where parents perceive their child is competent in the language and have high expectations of them (Butler, 2015).

Moreover, involving the community and learning across generations builds cohesion. One of Pondok English's affordances is that of providing a meeting place for communities, where cooperation is an important aspect. Countries such as Malaysia are multi-ethnic and multi-religious, and tensions between ethnic and religious groups occur from time to time, often stirred up in the media. By working and playing together, adults and children can help improve dialogue and break down differences between them.

Moreover, recent studies have demonstrated benefits for older participants in learning a second language, which include the increase of Grey Matter Volume (GMV) in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patients (Ehling et al, 2019, pg 2) and delays of up to four to five years of the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's Disease as evidenced by Prof. Ellen Bialystok of York University (Strauss, 2015) citing 73 studies that have replicated and shown the effect.

A commonly reported problem in western societies is that of loneliness among old people, which can be addressed by the opportunity to mix with and to mentor younger children. In an age where people are living longer thanks to advances in medicine, better diet and standards of cleanliness, it is important that old age be accompanied by an appropriate quality of life.

6.4.3 Learn by singing and playing

There is evidence that singing in English promotes acquisition of the language, especially a learner's word recall and pronunciation (Good, Russo and Sullivan, 2015; Wallace, 1994). Comparing recall of spoken and sung renditions of a text passage, Wallace (1994) found that the sung participants used structural characteristics pertaining to rhythm to support recall, moreover that they tended to produce the right number of syllables on recalled vocabulary.

Some songs appeared to have staying power. We didn't have to teach "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean" in either the first or second iterations of Pondok English; participants seemed to know it and it appears well known generally, though the reasons for this are not clear.

6.4.4 Be child-centred.

A project such as Pondok English is informal learning. It should not attempt to reproduce the power relationships or conditions in the classroom.

6.4.5 Make use of libraries and literature.

Where possible, make the acquaintance and seek the assistance of local libraries and librarians.

Inform them of what you are doing and how literature can assist you in your project. Reflect the culture in literature.

6.4.6 Attend to public spaces, places and times

Weather (and protection from it), the day of week, privacy or semi-privacy, whether or not the space was bounded, whether or not attendees need an invitation to join, were all related to place and perceptions of it.

Be aware of cultural and religious influences on times and dates.

6.4.7 Be ready for anything!

The subtheme What Else Happens highlighted the fact that interruptions ranging from a noisy karaoke to an earthquake are part of a project. Build flexibility into dates and arrangements. Try to develop resilient communication systems with your attendees.

6.4.8 Promote the English Room

Make people aware of it and promote its benefits.

Parents need no convincing that the best jobs are available to people with English skills and this same attitude was reflected by parents at the Pondok English. I would recommend projects of this kind to be promoted informally through schools and community leaders, emphasizing the real and potential benefits of competence in English.

6.4.9 Be aware of sensitivities to English learning

The subtheme describes difficulties faced by attendees in attending Pondok English, in some cases as a result of their own difficulties in English learning as children. It also pointed to the difficulties encountered by Malay speakers of the less-than-consistent pronunciation and spelling of English words, and complexity of its grammar, compared to Bahasa Malaysia.

6.4.10 Seek sponsorship and attend to ethics

Be aware of the time limitations on your project. You need sponsors and help from other people in the community in order to make it sustainable over the long term.

Where underage children are involved, be sure parents are informed as to what you are doing. Informed consent is a prerequisite to any project involving children.

Conduct all activities in plain view. Be open and honest about your intentions.

6.5 Concluding comments

This research project reflects the increasing use of mixed methods in that it employed ethnography and action research. The research in China and Japan into English Corner and English Room was conducted ethnographically, using observation and interview as the prime data-gathering techniques. In contrast, the research into Pondok English was conducted using Action Research, in which I was cast in the role of a change agent.

The ethnographic research proceeded at a relatively leisurely pace over a period of years, mirroring my movements through China and Japan and the unique opportunities I had to spend extended time in both countries.

The action research project was conducted to a much tighter time frame, limited by my contract with the British Council which had a specific finishing date after which I was obliged to leave the country. A consequent weakness of this research is therefore that the sample was limited to one town and one kampung in a nation of many thousands of towns and kampungs, sharing comparable communal hierarchies and educational aspirations for their children. Given more time and resources I would have attempted to build more expertise, better materials and better methodologies. This I must leave to other researchers, but I believe the research is generalisable and reproducible.

Another weakness of the action research, due to time limitations, was its inability to demonstrate any clear benefits for its participants and stakeholders. I think there is scope for a longitudinal study over a period of years that measures improvements in

- linguistic ability, and
- attitudes to English

resulting from such a project.

With respect to issues of lifelong learning and ageing, I believe that as the world emerges from the COVID crisis there is also scope for a project of similar nature to be launched bringing elderly people and children together with the former cast as old hands (in terms of language learning) encouraging and mentoring children to teach English to each other as legitimate peripheral participants. Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that – in Malaysia at least – older people are quite skilled in English, and it would have the added benefit of helping to address issues of loneliness in old age.

The study has also demonstrated that rural parents in Sabah are as interested in their children's education as any in the country; moreover that they are willing to make sacrifices in support of their children's progress. I believe the research has shown that more work can and needs to be done in empowering parents, especially in educationally disadvantaged areas, to assist their children informally with English. A better quality of dialogue is needed between teachers and parents, two groups that have been known to show antipathy towards each other.

I trust this research will have contributed to enhancing parental involvement in children's education in Malaysia and beyond, as well as understanding the power and adaptability of informal learning, local ownership and sponsorship.

References

- Ackroyd, S. (1992). *Data collection in context*: Longman Group United Kingdom.
- Andaya, B. W., and Andaya, L. Y. (2016). *A history of Malaysia*: Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Anderson, J. F. (1998). Transcribing with voice recognition software: a new tool for qualitative researchers. *Qualitative Health Research*, 8(5), 718-723.
- Ashton, J. (2020). COVID-19 and the 'Spanish' flu. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 113(5), 197-198.
- Atkinson, D. (2010). Extended, Embodied Cognition and Second Language Acquisition. *Applied Linguistics* 31(5), 599-622.
- Aubrey, S. (2014). Development of the L2 motivational self system: English at a university in Japan. *JALT journal*, 36(2), 153-174.
- Bailey, K. (2008). *Methods of social research*: Simon and Schuster.
- Bailey, M., Hall, C., and Gamble, N. (2007). Promoting school libraries and schools library services: problems and partnerships. *English in Education*, 41(2), 71-85.
- Bamgboe, A. (2001). World Englishes and globalization. *World englishes*, 20(3), 357-363.
- Barr, M. D. (2000). Lee Kuan Yew and the "Asian values" debate. *Asian Studies Review*, 24(3), 309-334.
- Bax, S. (2003). The end of CLT: a context approach to language teaching. *ELT Journal* 57(3), 278-287.
- Beck, J., Jenks, C., Keddie, N., and Young, M. (1979). *Worlds apart: readings for a sociology of education*.
- Benson, P., and Voller, P. A. (1997). *Independence in Language Learning*. London: Longman.
- Benson, P. (2011). What's new in autonomy? *The Language Teacher* 35(4). 15-18
- Berg, B. L., and Lune, H. (2012). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* p. 408. Harlow, Essex, England: Pearson.
- Berns, M., Barrett, J., Chan, C., Chikuma, Y., Friedrich, P., Hadjidimos, O. M., Shook, A. R. (1998). (Re)experiencing hegemony: the linguistic imperialism of Robert Phillipson. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 8(2), 271-282.
- Bolton, K. (2002). Chinese Englishes: from Canton jargon to global English. *World Englishes* 21(2), 181-200.

- Bolton, K. (2013). World Englishes and international call centres. *World Englishes* 32(4), 495-502.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., and Nice, R. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Vol. 16): Cambridge university press Cambridge.
- Brandt, D. (1998). Sponsors of literacy. *College Composition and Communication*, 49(2), 165-185.
- Brookfield, S. (1990). *The skillful teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Butler, S. (1997). Corpus of English in Southeast Asia: Implications for a regional dictionary. *English is an Asian language: The Philippine context*, 103-124.
- Butler, Y. (2015). Parental factors in children's motivation for learning English: a case in China. *Research papers in Education*, 30(2), 164-191
- Canagarajah, S. (1999). On EFL Teachers, awareness, and agency. *ELT Journal* 53(3), 207-214.
- Canagarajah, S. (2012). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*: Routledge.
- Cheng, X. (2000). Asian students' reticence revisited. *System* 28(3), 435-446.
- Clément, R., and Kruidenier, B. G. (1983). Orientations in Second language Learning: I. The effects of Ethnicity, milieu, and target language on their emergence. *Language Learning* 33(3), 273-291.
- Coddington, C. H., Mistry, R. S., and Bailey, A. L. (2014). Socioeconomic status and receptive vocabulary development: Replication of the parental investment model with Chilean preschoolers and their families. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 538-549.
- Cohen, L., and Manion, L. (1994). *Research methods in education*. London: Croom Helm.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2000). Action research. *Research methods in education*, 5, 226-244.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education (8th edition)*: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2007). Quantitative data analysis, *Research methods in education*, pp 501-508: New York.
- Cook, V. (1999). Going Beyond the Native Speaker in Language Teaching. *Tesol Quarterly* 33(2), 185-209.
- Cook, V. J. (1992). Evidence for Multicompetence. *Language Learning* 42(4), 557-591.

- Cooker, L. (2013). "When I got a person to communicate with I got a purpose to learn": evidence for social "Modes of autonomy". *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics* 36(1), 29-49.
- Corden, A. and Sainsbury, R. (2006). Exploring 'Quality': Research Participants' Perspectives on Verbatim Quotations. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 9(2), 97-110.
- Cresswell, T. (2008). Place: encountering geography as philosophy. *Geography*, 93(3), 132-139.
- Crisp, B. Green Lister, P and Dutton, K. (2005). Integrated Assessment: New Assessment Methods. Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education.
- Crystal, D. (1994). What is standard English? *Concorde (English speaking union)*, 24–26.
- Crystal, D. (1997). English as a global language. *UK: Cambridge University Press. Print.*
- Csizér, K., and Kormos, J. (2009). Learning experiences, selves and motivated learning behaviour: A comparative analysis of structural models for Hungarian secondary and university learners of English. *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, 98-119.
- Davies, B. (2005). Communities of practice: Legitimacy not choice. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5(4), 558-581.
- Deci, E., and Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*: Springer Science and Business Media.
- Delors, J. (1996). *Learning, the Treasure Within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century: Highlights*: Unesco Pub.
- Denzin, N. K., and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*: Sage publications, Inc.
- Denzin, N. K., and Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*: Sage.
- Department for Education and Skills. (2007). Every parent matters.
- Dewey, J. (1923). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*: Macmillan.
- Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy and motivation a literature review. *System* 23(2), 165-174.
- Donmoyer, R. (2006). Take my paradigm... please! The legacy of Kuhn's construct in educational research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(1), 11-34.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2019). Towards a better understanding of the L2 Learning Experience, the Cinderella of the L2 Motivational Self System: *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 9(1), 19-30.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*: Oxford University Press Oxford.

Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self system. *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, 36(3), 9-11.

Dörnyei, Z., and Csizér, K. (2002). Some dynamics of language attitudes and motivation: Results of a longitudinal nationwide survey. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(4), 421-462.

Dörnyei, Z., Csizér, K., and Németh, N. (2006). *Motivation, language attitudes and globalisation: A Hungarian perspective: Multilingual Matters*.

Du, F. (2013). Student perspectives of self-directed language learning: Implications for teaching and research. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 7(2), 24.

Duncan, S. (2015). Biographical learning and non-formal education: Questing, threads and choosing how to be older. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 47(1), 35-48.

Duncan, S. (2015). Reading aloud in Lewisham: an exploration of adult reading-aloud practices. *Literacy*, 49(2), 84-90.

Edgerton, J. D., and Roberts, L. W. (2014). Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality. *School Field*, 12(2), 193-220.

Ehling, R., Amprosi, M., Kremmel, B., Bsteh, G., Eberharter, K., Zehentner, M., Steiger, R., Tuovinen, N., Gizewski, E., Benke, T., Berger, T., Spöttl, C., Brenneis, C., & Scherfler, C. (2019). Second language learning induces grey matter volume increase in people with multiple sclerosis. *PLoS ONE*, 14(12).

Epstein, J. L. (1987). Toward a theory of family-school connections. *Social intervention: Potential and constraints*, 121-136.

Evans, M. A., Shaw, D., and Bell, M. (2000). Home literacy activities and their influence on early literacy skills. *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology/Revue canadienne de psychologie expérimentale*, 54(2), 65.

Faure, E. (1972). *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow*: Unesco.

Ferrance, E. (2000). *Action research*: LAB, Northeast and Island Regional Education Laboratory at Brown University.

Fetterman, D. M. (2009). *Ethnography: Step-by-step* (Vol. 17): Sage Publications.

Feuer, A. (2009). School's out for the summer: A cross-cultural comparison of second language learning in informal settings. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 12(6), 651-665. doi:10.1080/13670050802549672

Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., and Hyun, H. H. (2011). *How to design and evaluate research in education*: New York: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages.

- Fukuda, A. (2019). Exploring learner beliefs in Self-Regulated Learning: A Case Investigation of an English Self Study. *JACET Selected Papers* 7(2020), pp 91-120
- Gao, X. (2007). A tale of Blue Rain Café: A study on the online narrative construction about a community of English learners on the Chinese mainland. *System* 35(2), 259-270.
- Gao, X. (2008). The 'English corner' as an out-of-class learning activity. *ELT journal*, 63(1), 60-67.
- Gao, X. (2012). The Study of English in China as a patriotic enterprise. *World Englishes* 31(3), 351-365.
- Gardner, R. C. (1983). Learning another language: A true social psychological experiment. *Journal of language and social psychology*, 2(2-3-4), 219-239.
- Gardner, R. C. (1988). Attitudes and motivation. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 9, 135-148.
- Gass, S. M., Mackey, A., and Pica, T. (1998). The role of input and interaction in second language acquisition introduction to the special issue. *The modern language journal*, 82(3), 299-307.
- Geertz, C. (1994). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. *Readings in the philosophy of social science*, 21.
- Good, A., Russo, F., & Sullivan, J. (2015). The efficacy of singing in foreign-language learning. *Psychology of Music*, 43(5), 627-640.
- Goodson, I., and Sikes, P. (2001). *Life history research in educational settings: Learning from lives (Doing qualitative research in educational settings)*: Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Graddol, D. (2000). *The Future of English?* London: The British Council
- Grazioli, B. (2019). Social Activism Italian Style. *Project-based learning in Second Language Acquisition: Building Communities of Practice in Higher Education*, edited Adrian Gras-Velasquez, Taylor and Francis, 101-116.
- Green Lister, P. and Crisp, B. (2007). Critical incident analyses: A practice learning tool for students and practitioners, *Practice*, 19:1, pp 47-60.
- Gremmo, M.-J., and Riley, P. (1995). Autonomy, self-direction and self access in language teaching and learning: The history of an idea. *System* 23(2), 151-164.
- Griffin, C. (1999). Lifelong learning and social democracy. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 18(5), 329-342.
- Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *ECTJ*, 29(2), 75.
- Guba, E. G. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Paper presented at the Alternative Paradigms Conference, Mar, 1989, Indiana U, School of Education, San Francisco, CA, US.

Guba, E. G., and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(163-194), 105.

Guo, Y., and Beckett, G. (2012). A critical analysis of English language teaching in today's market economy in China *Critical ELT practices in Asia* (pp. 55-70): Brill Sense.

Gutiérrez, K. D., and Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires of practice. *Educational researcher*, 32(5), 19-25.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. Garden City, Nueva York: Anchor Press, Doubleday.

Hammersley, M., and Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: principles in practice*. London: Tavistock.

Hastings, C., and Clarke, S. (2019). Re-examining CLT: What does it mean to be communicative? *JACET Selected Papers* 7(2020), pp 121-137

Hdstijn, J. H., and Bossers, B. (1992). Individual differences in L2 proficiency as a function of L1 proficiency. *European Journal of Cognitive Psychology*, 4(4), 341-353.

Heller, M. (2010). The Commodification of Language. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39, 101-114.

Ho, D. Y., Xie, W., Liang, X., and Zeng, L. (2012). Filial piety and traditional Chinese values: A study of high and mass cultures. *PsyCh journal*, 1(1), 40-55.

Ho, J., and Crookall, D. (1995). Breaking with Chinese cultural traditions: Learner autonomy in English language teaching. *System* 23(2), 235-243.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., and Minkov, M. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (Vol. 2): Citeseer.

Holec, H. (1979). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*: ERIC.

Holliday, A. (1994). *Appropriate methodology and social context*: Cambridge University Press.

Holliday, A. (2003). Social autonomy: Addressing the dangers of culturism in TESOL *Learner autonomy across cultures* (pp. 110-126): Springer.

Horwitz, E. K. (1986). Preliminary Evidence for the Reliability and Validity of a Foreign Language Anxiety Scale. *Tesol Quarterly* 20(3), 559-562.

Hsu, T. C. (2005). Research methods and data analysis procedures used by educational researchers. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 28(2), 109-133.

Huang, G. H.-C., and Gove, M. (2015). Confucianism, Chinese families, and academic achievement: exploring how confucianism and Asian descendant parenting practices influence children's academic achievement *Science Education in East Asia* (pp. 41-66): Springer.

- Jin, L., and Cortazzi, M. (2002). English language teaching in China: A bridge to the future. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 22(2), 53-64. doi:10.1080/0218879020220206
- Johari, Z. K. (2016). Education – Ever the political victim. *Penang Monthly*, 01(16), 34-40.
- Kachru, B. B. (1985). *Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle*: na.
- Kachru, B. B. (1992). *The other tongue: English across cultures*: University of Illinois Press.
- Kachru, B. B. (1996). The paradigms of marginality. *World Englishes* \$V 15(3), 241-255.
- Kahn, R. L., and Cannell, C. F. (1968). Interviewing: social research. *International encyclopedia of the social sciences*, 8, 149-161.
- Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting Respondent Confidentiality in Qualitative Research. *Qual Health Res.* 19(11), 1632–1641.
- Katz, I., and Assor, A. (2007). When Choice Motivates and When It Does Not. *Educational Psychology Review* \$V 19(4), 429-442.
- Klein, W., and Wolfgang, K. (1986). *Second language acquisition*: Cambridge University Press.
- Kohler, J., & Mackey, T. (2020). Why the COVID-19 pandemic should be a call for action to advance equitable access to medicines. *BMC Medicine*, 18(1).
- Krashen, S. (1998). Comprehensible output? *SYSTEM-OXFORD-*, 26, 175-182.
- Krashen, S. D. (1976). Formal and informal linguistic environments in language acquisition and language learning. *Tesol Quarterly*, 157-168.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The Postmethod Condition: (E)merging Strategies for Second/Foreign Language Teaching. *Tesol Quarterly* \$V 28(1), 27-48.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). Problematizing cultural stereotypes in TESOL. *Tesol Quarterly*, 37(4), 709-719.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). TESOL Methods: Changing Tracks, Challenging Trends. *Tesol Quarterly* \$V 40(1), 59-81.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2016). The decolonial option in English teaching: Can the subaltern act? *Tesol Quarterly*, 50(1), 66-85.
- Kvale, S. (2006). Dominance through interviews and dialogues. *Qualitative inquiry*, 12(3), 480-500.
- Lakoff, S. (1990). Autonomy and liberal democracy. *The Review of politics*, 52(3), 378-396.

- Lamb, M. (2004). Integrative motivation in a globalizing world. *System* 32(1), 3-19.
- Lamb, M. (2012). A self system perspective on young adolescents' motivation to learn English in urban and rural settings. *Language learning*, 62(4), 997-1023.
- Lantolf, J. P., and Aljaafreh, A. (1995). Second language learning in the zone of proximal development: A revolutionary experience. *International Journal of Educational Research* 23(7), 619-632.
- Lave, J., and Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*: Cambridge university press.
- Lawy, R., and Tedder, M. (2012). Beyond compliance: teacher education practice in a performative framework. *Research Papers in Education*, 27(3), 303-318.
- Le Ha, P. (2009). English as an international language: International student and identity formation. *Language and intercultural communication*, 9(3), 201-214.
- Lincoln, Y. S., and Denzin, N. K. (2003). *Turning points in qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief*: Rowman Altamira.
- Lincoln, Y. S., and Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75): Sage.
- Little, D. G. (1991). *Learner autonomy: Definitions, issues and problems*: Authentik Language Learning Resources.
- Littlewood, W. (1999). Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts. *Applied Linguistics* 20(1), 71-94.
- Littlewood, W. (2000). Do Asian students really want to listen and obey?
- Littlewood, W. (2001). Students' attitudes to classroom English learning: a cross-cultural study. *Language teaching research*, 5(1), 3-28.
- Liu, D. (1998). Ethnocentrism in TESOL: Teacher education and the neglected needs of international TESOL students.
- Liu, P.-H. E., and Tannacito, D. J. (2013). Resistance by L2 writers: The role of racial and language ideology in imagined community and identity investment. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 22(4), 355-373.
- Long, M. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. *Handbook of second language acquisition*.
- Long, M. H., and Sato, C. J. (1983). Classroom foreigner talk discourse: Forms and functions of teachers' questions. *Classroom oriented research in second language acquisition*, 268-285.

- Lowenberg, P. H. (1986). Sociolinguistic context and second-language acquisition: acculturation and creativity in Malaysian English. *World Englishes* 5(1), 71-83.
- Macalister, J. (2014). Challenges in language teacher education. *Recent issues in language education: Challenges and directions*, 99-116.
- MacIntyre, P. D., and Gardner, R. C. (1989). Anxiety and second-language learning: Toward a theoretical clarification. *Language learning*, 39(2), 251-275.
- MacIntyre, P. D., and Gardner, R. C. (1991). Methods and Results in the Study of Anxiety and Language Learning: A Review of the Literature *. *Language Learning* 41(1), 86-117.
- Markus, H., and Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American psychologist*, 41(9), 954.
- Marshall, C., and Rossman, G. B. (1995). Data collection methods. *Designing qualitative research*, 2(8).
- Matsuda, A. (2003). Incorporating World Englishes in Teaching English as an International Language. *Tesol Quarterly* 37(4), 719-729.
- McCambridge, J., Witton, J., and Elbourne, D. R. (2014). Systematic review of the Hawthorne effect: new concepts are needed to study research participation effects. *Journal of clinical epidemiology*, 67(3), 267-277.
- McCoy, S. (2003). Integrating national culture into individual IS adoption research: The need for individual level measures. *AMCIS 2003 Proceedings*, 124.
- Medel-Añonuevo, C., Ohsako, T., and Mauch, W. (2001). Revisiting Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century.
- Meyer, E. (2016). *The Culture Map (INTL ED): Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done Across Cultures*: PublicAffairs.
- Miles, M. B., and Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*: sage.
- Mills, J., Bonner, A., and Francis, K. (2006). Adopting a constructivist approach to grounded theory: Implications for research design. *International journal of nursing practice*, 12(1), 8-13.
- Morse, J. M. (1994). *Critical issues in qualitative research methods*: Sage.
- Motha, S. (2006). Racializing ESOL Teacher Identities in US K-2 Public Schools. *Tesol Quarterly*, 40(3), 495-518.
- Nair-Venugopal, S. (2000). English, identity and the Malaysian workplace. *World Englishes* 19(2), 205-213.
- Nikolov, M. (1999). 'Why do you learn English?' 'Because the teacher is short.' A study of Hungarian children's foreign language learning motivation. *Language teaching research*, 3(1), 33-56.

Nor, S. J. M., and Neo, W. B. (2001). Involving parents in children's education: what teachers say in Malaysia. *A Bridge to the Future*, 167.

Nunan, D. (1987). Communicative language teaching: Making it work. *ELT journal*, 41(2), 136-145.

Oga-Baldwin, W. Q., Nakata, Y., Parker, P., and Ryan, R. M. (2017). Motivating young language learners: A longitudinal model of self-determined motivation in elementary school foreign language classes. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 49, 140-150.

Ohta, A. S. (2005). Interlanguage pragmatics in the zone of proximal development. *System* 33(3), 503-517.

Onysko, A. (2016). Modeling world Englishes from the perspective of language contact. *World Englishes* 35(2), 196-220.

Oppenheim, A. N. (2000). *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement*: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Outcalt, C. (2002). Using the lenses of critically reflective teaching in the community college classroom. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2002(118), 31-38.

Oxford, R. L. (2003). Language learning styles and strategies: Concepts and relationships. *Iral*, 41(4), 271-278.

Ozóg, C. K. (1990). 17 The English language in Malaysia and its relationship with the National Language. *Language planning and education in Australasia and the South Pacific*, 55, 305.

Palfreyman D.M., Benson P. (2019). Autonomy and Its Role in English Language Learning: Practice and Research. In: Gao X. (eds) *Second Handbook of English Language Teaching*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham. https://doi-org.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/10.1007/978-3-319-58542-0_38-1

Papi, M. (2010). The L2 motivational self system, L2 anxiety, and motivated behavior: A structural equation modeling approach. *System* 38(3), 467-479.

Paradise, R., and Rogoff, B. (2009). Side by side: Learning by observing and pitching in. *Ethos*, 37(1), 102-138.

Parker-Jenkins, M. (2018). Problematising ethnography and case study: reflections on using ethnographic techniques and researcher positioning. *Ethnography and Education* 13(1), 18-33

Pennycook, A. (1997). Cultural alternatives and autonomy. *Autonomy and independence in language learning*, 35-53.

Pennycook, A. (2017). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*: Routledge.

- Phillipson, R. (1996). Linguistic imperialism: African perspectives. *ELT journal*, 50(2), 160-167.
- Phillipson, R. (2008). Lingua franca or lingua frankensteinia ? English in European integration and globalisation. *World Englishes* 27(2), 250-267.
- Pillai, S., Mohd. Don, Z., Knowles, G., and Tang, J. (2010). Malaysian English: an instrumental analysis of vowel contrasts. *World Englishes* 29(2), 159-172.
- Piller, I., and Takahashi, K. (2006). A passion for English: Desire and the language market. *Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 56, 59.
- Prabhu, N. S. (1990). There is no best method—why? *Tesol Quarterly*, 24(2), 161-176.
- Qi, X. (2013). Guanxi, social capital theory and beyond: Toward a globalized social science. *The British journal of sociology*, 64(2), 308-324.
- Quoc Lap, T. (2005). *Stimulating learner autonomy in English language education: A curriculum innovation study in a Vietnamese context*: Amsterdam, unpublished thesis 90780870139789078087014.
- Raj Joshi, K. (2018). Critical Incidents for Teachers' Professional Development. *Journal of NELTA Surkhet*, Vol 5, Jan 2018, pp 82-88
- Rajagopalan, K. (1999). Of EFL teachers, conscience, and cowardice. *ELT Journal* 53(3), 200-206.
- Ramsay, G. (2005). Computer-mediated communication and culture: A comparison of 'Confucian-heritage' and 'Western' learner attitudes to asynchronous e-discussions undertaken in an Australian higher educational setting. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 2(3), 263-275.
- Reinders, H. (2016). 20 Years of autonomy and technology: how far have we come and where to next. *Language Learning and Technology*, 20(2), 143-154.
- Ricento, T. (2000). Historical and theoretical perspectives in language policy and planning. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4(2), 196-213.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). Second language teacher education today. *RELC journal*, 39(2), 158-177.
- Rogoff, B. E., and Lave, J. E. (1984). *Everyday cognition: Its development in social context*: Harvard University Press.
- Ryan, R. M. (1991). The nature of the self in autonomy and relatedness *The self: Interdisciplinary approaches* (pp. 208-238): Springer.
- Ryan, R. M., and Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American psychologist*, 55(1), 68.

Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J., & Kitzinger, C. (2015). Anonymising interview data: challenges and compromise in practice. *Qualitative Research*, 15(5), 616-632.

Savignon, S. (1997). Communicative competence theory and classroom practice: Texts and contexts in second language learning (2nd edition). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Schmidt, R. W. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning¹. *Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 129-158.

Seidel, J. (1998). Qualitative data analysis: Ethnograph 5.0. *Qualis Research, Colorado Springs*.

Sénéchal, M., Lefevre, J. A., Thomas, E. M., and Daley, K. E. (1998). Differential effects of home literacy experiences on the development of oral and written language. *Reading research quarterly*, 33(1), 96-116.

Shilova, L., Masterskikh, S., Mensh, E., & Zemlyanova, M. (2019). Learning English language in primary school. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(9), 1475-1489.

Silverman, D. (2015). *Interpreting qualitative data*: Sage.

Spielberger, C. D. (2010). State-Trait anxiety inventory. *The Corsini encyclopedia of psychology*, 1-1.

Strauss, S. (2015). Does bilingualism delay dementia? *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 187(7), 209-210

Stringer, E. T. (2013). *Action research*: Sage Publications.

Su, T., and Wu, J. (2009). A Tentative Exploration into the Features of the English Corner at Renmin University of China. *International Education Studies*, 2(4), 99-105.

Sulzby, S., and Teal, W. (1986). The importance of reading aloud: Encouraging literacy development from an early age. *Journal of Early Childhood Development*, 4(3), 45-47.

Swan, M. (1985). A critical look at the communicative approach (2). *ELT journal*, 39(2), 76-87.

Taguchi, T. (2013). Motivation, Attitudes and Selves in the Japanese Context: A Mixed Methods Approach. *Language learning motivation in Japan*, 71, 169.

Taguchi, T., Magid, M., and Papi, M. (2009). The L2 motivational self system among Japanese, Chinese and Iranian learners of English: A comparative study. *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, 36.

Thornbury, S. (1997). Reformulation and reconstruction: tasks that promote 'noticing'. *ELT Journal* 51(4), 326-335.

Torikai, K. (2011). *Kokusai kyoutsuugo toshite no eigo [English as a global language]*: Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha.

- Tuijnman, A., and Boström, A.-K. (2004). Changing Notions of Lifelong Education and Lifelong Learning. *International Review of Education* 51(2), 93-110.
- Ushioda, E. (2009). A person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation, self and identity. *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, 215-228.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience. *New York: State Univ New York*.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1980). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*: Harvard university press.
- Wagner-Gough, J., and Hatch, E. (1975). The importance of input data in second language acquisition studies. *Language learning*, 25(2), 297-308.
- Wainwright, E., and Marandet, E. (2017). Education, parenting and family: The social geographies of family learning. *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(2), 213-229.
- Wallace, W. (1994). Memory for music: Effect of melody on recall of text. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition*, 20(6), 1471-1485.
- Waller, R., Hodge, S., Holford, J., Milana, M., Webb, S. (2020). Lifelong education, social inequality and the COVID-19 health pandemic, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 39:3, 243-246, DOI: [10.1080/02601370.2020.1790267](https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2020.1790267)
- Wenger, E. (2011). Communities of practice: A brief introduction.
- Wenger, E., and Lave, J. (2001). Legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice *Supporting lifelong learning* (pp. 121-136): Routledge.
- Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*: Sage.
- West-McGruer, K. (2020). There's 'consent' and then there's consent: Mobilising Maori and Indigenous research ethics to problematise the western biomedical model. *Journal of Sociology* 56(2), 184-196
- Widdowson, H. G. (1997). EIL, ESL, EFL: Global issues and local interests. *World Englishes*, 16(1), 135-146.
- Wiemann, J. M., and Backlund, P. (1980). Current theory and research in communicative competence. *Review of Educational Research*, 50(1), 185-199.
- Williams, J. (2014). English Language Teacher Development Project Mentor Handbook: Unpublished mentor handbook; London, England: British Council.
- Wong, I. F. (1981). English in Malaysia. *English for cross-cultural communication* (pp. 94-107): Springer.

Woodward, A. R., and Mair, V. H. (2008). A Survey of Li Yang Crazy English.

World Bank, (2003). *Lifelong learning in the global knowledge economy: challenges for developing countries: a World Bank report*: World Bank, Washington, District of Columbia.

Yang, N. (2014). Principles and Strategies for English Corner Construction at Universities. *Canadian Social Science* 10(4), 71-81

Yano, Y. (2001). World Englishes in 2000 and beyond. *World Englishes*, 20(2), 119-132.

Appendix 1: Interview labeling schema (China)

Label	Sub-theme	Theme
WEEKLY Attends weekly	HOWOFTEN	FREQUENCY
GRMONTH Attends more than once per month, less than weekly		
MONTH Attends monthly		
>3HR Stays more than 3 hours	HOWLONG	
2-3HR Stays between 2 and 3 hours		
1-2HR Stays between 1 and 2 hours		
HOURL Stays for about an hour		
PRON Pronunciation correction	ENGLISH ACCURACY	PURPOSE
GRAMCOR Grammar correction		
ELNSTRAT English learning strategies		
VOCAB Widen vocabulary		
MEMVOCAB Memorise vocabulary		
FLUENCY Improve fluency of speech	ENGLISH FLUENCY	
FREETALK Discuss topics freely		
CONFID Build confidence by taking active part in conversations		
MEETFRIEND Meet with friends	HANGOUT	
MAKEFRIEND Find new friends		
FRESHAIR Escape from day-to-day life/studies		
TRAVOS Plans to travel overseas	ASPIRE	
LIVEOS Plans to live overseas		
WESCUL Interested in Western culture		
LOE Lover of English		
DISCWORK Discuss work issues	WORK/STUDY RELATED	
PROFDEVT Professional development		
STUD Studies		
BUSN Business		
NATSPKR Enjoys speaking with native speakers	NATIVESPEAKER	
EFFICIENCY It is time-efficient speaking with native speakers		
FREETHINK Native speakers are free thinkers		

IELTS Prepare for IELTS	EXAMS	PURPOSE
CET46 Prepare for College English Test 4 or 6		
ENGLRNSTRAT Strategies to prepare for exams		
WCHENMOV Watching English movies	MEDIA	STRATEGIES
WCHENTV Watching English TV		
SPEECHES Listen and participate English speeches	REACHOUT	
MEETEXEC Meet participants outside of EC		
FAMLEARN Learning and teaching in family		
MSN	ONLINE	
SKYPE		
QQ		
WEIBO		
TALKTCHR Talking with English teachers	EXPERT	
READING Reading for recreation	LITERATURE/TEXTBOOKS	
DISCFAMPROB Discuss problems within families	PERSONAL	
COUNSEL Counselling of participants		
BYF/GF Discuss relationship problems		
DISCPOL Discuss politics	SOCIETY	
DISCECO Discuss economics		
DISCEVT Discuss environmental issues		
CURRAFF Discuss current affairs		
DISCWORK Discuss work issues	WORK/STUDY RELATED	
DISCMGR Discuss issues concerning management		
DISCWKCOMM Discuss communication issues at work		
ETHMUS Ethnic music	INTERESTS	
SEASON Seasonal celebrations		
HOBBS Hobbies		
TRAV Travel		
SPOR Sports		
DISCCULT Discuss culture	CULTURE	
DISCLIT Discuss literature		
DISCDRAMA Discuss drama		
DISCMOVIE Discuss movies		

Appendix 2: Interview labeling schema (Japan)

Label	Sub-theme	Theme
WEEKLY Attends weekly	HOWOFTEN	FREQUENCY
GRMONTH Attends more than once per month, less than weekly		
HOUR Stays for about an hour		
PRON Pronunciation correction	ENGLISH ACCURACY	PURPOSE
GRAMCOR Grammar correction		
VOCAB Widen vocabulary		
MEMVOcab Memorise vocabulary		
FLUENCY Improve fluency of speech	ENGLISH FLUENCY	
MEETFRIEND Meet with friends	HANGOUT	
MAINTCONT Maintain contact with old friends		
TRAVEL Plans to travel overseas	ASPIRE	
LIVEOS Plans to live overseas		
CULTURE Interested in English culture		
GETJOB Get a job involving English	WORK/STUDY RELATED	
PREPSTUD Prepare for future study		
ENGINSPO Use English in sport		
STUDY Study English effectively		
NATSPKR Enjoys speaking with native speakers	NATIVESPEAKER	
ALT Likes talking with ALTs		
ADMTCHR Admires teachers wide ranging experiences		
FREETHINK Native speakers are free thinkers		
TOEFL Prepare for TOEFL test	EXAMS	
WCHENMOV Watching English movies	MEDIA	STRATEGIES
LISTRADIO Listening to English radio		
OUTEVT Attends events for English speakers organised by city government	REACHOUT	
MEETEXEC Meet participants outside of EC		
KARAOKE Sings foreign songs at Karaoke		

LINE		STRATEGIES
SKYPE	ONLINE	
TWITTER		
FACEBOOK		
MESSENGER		
PODCAST		
TALKALT Talking with ALTs at school		
TALKPROF Weekly speaking with Dr. K		
NOVEL Reading novels	LITERATURE/TEXTBOOKS	
EXTREAD Extended reading library at NIFS		
FORTEXT Studying textbooks acquired overseas		
EDUPOL Discuss education policy/issues	SOCIETY	DISCUSSION TOPICS
DISCECO Discuss economics		
CURRAFF Discuss current affairs		
PROFSPORT Discuss professional sport	WORK/STUDY RELATED	
COMMF5 Need to communicate with English speakers as part of my job		
HOBBIES Discuss hobbies	INTERESTS	
CONVFOOD Discuss food and recipes		
SPORTS Discuss sports		
DISCCULT Discuss western culture		
DISNEY Discuss Disney animations		

Appendix 3: Description labeling schema (China)

Label	Sub-theme	Theme
LIN Lack inhibition	LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION	COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
NJ New joiner		
CURI Curious about what happens at EC		
CSR Chinese speakers reluctant to speak English with each other		
FORI Foreigners greeted with interest		
WA New joiners walk around to sample conversations		
CLCI Clusters form in circles		
CLFL Clusters are fluid, participants move around		
LTU Leave-taking is unremarkable		
STAND Participants stand throughout		
MOVE Participants move between clusters		
LIST Attending to listen		
ANIM Conversations are animated		
OTT Observance of turn taking		
VSNR Voices are soft, not raised		
AMY All my English learned here	OLD HAND	
AGES Been coming for 10 years		
GA Gathering of various people	CONDUCT	INFORMAL LEARNING
CCON Common (mutual) consent		

EMJ English majors	WHO IS THERE	INFORMAL LEARNING
ENG Engineering students		
MATH Mathematics students		
TPS Town planning students		
PGS Postgraduate students		
PROF Professional workers		
TCE Trading companies doing business in English		
CHN Children		
PNT Parents		
RET Retirees		
FOET Former English teachers		
GEN Gender		
90TRN 90 minute train ride to get here	ACCESS	PLACE AND SPACE
INSITU Living on the campus		
WNBY Working nearby		
MEET Meeting place in university	GATHERING	
NLIB Near the library		
AFDI After dinner		
PAR Publicly accessible area		
PLA Held in a plaza		
OUT Held outside		
AD23 Arrive and depart in groups of 2 or 3		

DANC Ballroom dancing	WHAT ELSE HAPPENS	PLACE AND SPACE
SGV Sing with gusto and verve		
TAI Taichi		
SING Singing Mao-era anthems		
FAND Fan dancing		
YSKA Youths roller skating		
YRAP Youths rapdancing		
WOM Word of mouth	ADVERTISING	SPONSORSHIP
REF Recommended by friends		
RECT Recommended by teachers		
NOR No organiser of EC	FACILITIES	

Appendix 4: Description labeling schema (Japan)

Label	Sub-theme	Theme
FASA Students fell away and stopped attending	LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION	COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
OAS Outgoing and sociable students talk with other attendees		
MING Attendees encouraged to mingle		
CLLQ Chinese low level student quit		
CLLR Chinese low level student resumed		
CBOR Conversations are boring and stilted		
ANIM Conversations are animated		
SESO Students encouraged to speak out		
MOTV Students are motivated to speak		
NESP Students need more speaking practice		
FTWN First time attendee writes name on name tag		
FTIN First time attendee introduces themselves to organiser		
LIST Attending to listen		
NJNE New joiners are often nervous		
KBIC Dr.Kunishige breaks the ice for nervous participants		
EXEG Exchange students are fluent English speakers	OLD HAND	
CFAT Chewing the fat		
OGS Organised by graduate students		
NSI Native speakers important to ER		
CWVP Students need contact with a wide variety of people		
KICP Dr.Kunishige introduces newcomers to conversation partners		

MOVE Participants move between clusters	CONDUCT	INFORMAL LEARNING	
OTT Observance of turn taking			
VSNR Voices are soft, not raised			
USLN Give students opportunity to use what they have learned in class			
DICT Lower level students brought dictionaries with them			
TRAV Practicing English for travel purposes			
YHH Half attendees are students, half are citizens (Yamaguchi)	WHO IS THERE	PLACE AND SPACE	
EXCH Exchange students attend			
WALT ALTs finish work before ER starts			
BYCA Attendees driven there by car	ACCESS		PLACE AND SPACE
INSITU Living on the campus			
10CAR About a 10 minute drive			
REVI Revitalise centre of the city (by holding ER in city)	GATHERING	PLACE AND SPACE	
PUB Held in a public place			
R4US Premises rented for us by city council			
CLNC Classrooms are not comfortable			
ACEL The room is lit and airconditioned			
FOOD Food preparation area in ER			
FINT Free internet available	WHAT ELSE HAPPENS	PLACE AND SPACE	
SHOP Attendees went shopping after ER			
TGIF Feeling relaxed on Fridays			
MTEX Meet other attendees outside of ER			
YHW Attendees were housewives (Yamaguchi)			

KANN Dr.Kunishige makes announcements to participants	ADVERTISING	SPONSORSHIP
KEMA Dr.Kunishige sends reminders before meetings		
KADV Dr.Kunishige arranges advertising pamphlets at City Hall		
OEAD Outside attendees coming because of advertising		
WOM Word of mouth		
PRM Permission from the university to use the room	FACILITIES	
PCA Put chairs aside to promote movement		
SDDN If the students sit down they wont talk		
SDOT Soft drinks on tables		
KFAC Dr.Kunishige is facilitator	ORGANISER	
KORG Dr.Kunishige is organiser of resources		
ASHL Antisocial person attended	PASTORAL ROLE	
POL Police called to remove person		
KNAME Names of attendees known to Dr.Kunishige		
KES Dr.Kunishige explains system to new joiners		
EBFL ER structured to ebb and flow of academic calendar	SCHEDULING	
KSCH Dr.Kunishige decides the schedule		
SACF Starts after classes finish		
N2L Not too late or students will go home		
B4DN Students have dinner afterwards		

Appendix 5: Description labeling schema (Malaysia)

Label	Sub-theme	Theme
MATL Developed a range of materials	MAKE CONTENT RELEVANT	INFORMAL LEARNING
SCON Intention to facilitate short conversations		
FRAM Needed a framework to supplement dialogues		
AUX Auxiliary questions		
DSET Dialogue sets		
KSSR Based on the Kurikulum Sekolah Rendah		
REKV Recycling of key vocabulary		
EMED Enjoyable and meaningful dialogue		
V2DF Vocab too difficult		
E1B2 English one side, Bahasa Malaysia on the other		
MOVO More vocabulary on the vocab sets		
MRQU Ask more questions		
CICA Children identify colours and animals		
SETT Participants more settled as a result of lengthier vocab sets		
CRYG Little girl who can't stop crying	FRUSTRATIONS	
CAFM Children are afraid of me		
LBAR Language barrier		
SCMT Students check meanings of words from Tom and Tiful of Trouble	INTER GENERATIONAL LEARNING	
DRAH Dialogues to be rehearsed at home		
TKMA Participants invited to take materials home with them		
3GEN Three generations under one roof		
LFAM 5 children in families		
SEWG Speaks English with grandchildren		

SEPC Simple enough to be used by L2 parents and children	LEARN IN FAMILIES	INFORMAL LEARNING
YOPA Younger participants		
DOGE Dialog sets are dog-eared		
MBLO Children seem to know My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean		
CEPW Children read enthusiastically when their parents are watching		
CPUS Children and parents using the materials		
DMAH Parents speak Dusun and Malay at home		
SASD Sits at some distance from proceedings		
RJA Rarely joins activities		
LRWE Linda asks children to read with expression	PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH	
VELI Elicit vocabulary		
LFON Linda focuses on nouns		
BREQ Basic repetitive questions		
PQN Parents use question cards and nouns		
CRSW Child reads the sentence aloud and incorporates the noun		
PACQ Parents ask clarifying questions		
ENCE Parents to be encouraging of childrens' efforts		
TOLM Parents to be tolerant of mistakes		
BMOK Use of Bahasa Malaysia is ok	SINGING AND PLAYING	
SONA Finish sessions with songs		
SSWA Distribute song sheets		
SING Communal singing with actions		
GAMES Emphasize games		
NERV Children reluctant to sit in front of me		
SHY Shyness of children and parents		
PCGM Play counting games		
ACAP Singing is done acapella		
JPNG Japanese number game		
MSE Making sound effects for animals		

GANG Game not good as children favour their friends	SINGING AND PLAYING	INFORMAL LEARNING
MONK Participants do compelling monkey impressions		
EAGR Children are eager participants		
NERV Parents appear nervous	LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION	COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
OTY Older children teach younger children		
OCAT Older children see themselves as teachers		
OCYC Old children reading to younger children		
PSIP Parents sit on periphery		
PWWI Parents watch with interest		
SKIL Older student reads a story with skill		
COWH Cooperation and whispering to help boys count backwards		
KBN Older students know the younger ones by name		
PTTO Parent takes over		
RIYS Run it yourself		
IMNA Imitating my narrative style		
PMOV Pondok English must motivate attendees		
ERPT Enhance the role of parents		
SUST Sustainable project		
ADPT Have to adapt the meeting to the circumstances		
VAPP Visually appealing childrens literature	BOOKS	LIBRARIES / LITERATURE
LTXT Not text heavy		
LTCR Children are picking up books, curious about the literature		
LCOL Large colourful and attractive		
PICU Attendees pick up books and are curious		
RB Learning English by reading books		
DEPL Can we deploy the books differently – Mrs Dumi to spread them out?		

KBLB Kota Belud library has opened	KOTA BELUD LIBRARY	LIBRARIES / LITERATURE
CLLB Library has a good childrens' literature collection		
LIBP Professional librarians		
GOLB Go to library and join		
DUFT Book of Dusun folk tales	MALAY CULTURE	
ILLA Itut Itut illustrated by Dusun artist		
CACL Casual clothing	ATTENDEES	PLACE / SPACE
HOOD Teenagers wearing hoodies		
YPOP Young population		
HILIT 90% of pop can read and write		
RICE Rice farms	SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT	
DPM Durian, mango and papaya trees		
FLOW Tropical flowers		
LDEN Low density living area		
AR\$ Earning spare cash from Army Reserve		
TAMU Weekly fruit and produce market		
MILB Military base		
CLPA Clothing donated and parcelled from USA		
BROA Bad impassable roads		
FMLD Farmland		
PINF Poor lighting, telephones, internet		
RAMD Ramadan diet will inhibit participants		
MOAT Surprise attendance on Hari Raya holidays		
LEAT Less attendees when expecting more		
RAMF Fit in with Ramadan, cannot be available after 5pm		

PUBA Publicly accessible place	PUBLIC PLACE	PLACE / SPACE
WELK Well known place		
SHEL Sheltered place		
QUIE Quiet, free of interruptions		
PARK Needs to be parking available		
TOIL Near to a toilet		
PRLB Proximity to a library		
ASTK Astaka Kecil grandstand is available		
TOD Tyranny of distance		
LOCL Hold Pondok English in a local kampong (Piasau)		
CVER Covered verandah		
CARP Car promotion in same area	WHAT ELSE HAPPENS	
FBTM Football tournament		
QUAK Earthquake		
DEAT Eighteen deaths of climbers		
FLS Forest landslide		
WATR Water becoming undrinkable		
CWAT 20 litre containers of water stored by delicatessen		
POLL Pollution from 4WD vehicles is making it difficult to work		
UNCT Uncertain whats happening (with water situation)		
IFTR Increased foot traffic		
H2OB Water not drinkable		
BCRY Babies are crying		
TENS Tension in the air		
STRS Villagers appear stressed		

THAT Thank people or attending	ANTICIPATION	PROMOTION
WOM Word of mouth		
INVR Invite participants to return next week		
INJN Participant has heard about PE and wanted to join for some weeks		
EXPE Excited about Pondok English		
LNDI Comes from 20 kilometres away with grandchildren		
LEAF Teachers distributed leaflets to students		
EAIL English as International Language	BENEFITS	
THRP Works as a therapist, some clients are foreigners		
EFUT Give her children access to jobs like teacher, doctor, lawyer		
SPFO English in order to speak with foreigners		
FRUNP Frustrated as no parents are present	FRUSTRATIONS	
LCON Lost contact with attendees		
NOAT No attendees		
ENTP "when English was taught properly"		
NMEL Negative memories of English learning	OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES	
DIFF Difficult to do this project		
FPAH Foster positive attitudes to English		
ROTF Reach out to families who need help		
PRSD Pronunciation and spelling difficult		
HATB English is hard at the beginning		

LHRK Linda is held in high regard in the kampung	RESPECT	SPONSORSHIP
VLHD Village head in attendance		
TVIL Linda is talking with the villagers		
NOFF I use the chairs in order not to offend Mrs Dum	RESPONSIBILITIES	
PIED Teacher Magdalen introduces parents		
BROO Swept the Astaka Kecil prior to meetings		
MOMO Monitoring and moving around		
BKGR Background role	SUPPORT	
MENT 2 mentee teachers assist Pondok English		
PRSP Principals supportive of English		
DELI Delicatessen run by Mrs Dum		
DRIN Mrs Dum brings me a drink		
CHGD Change of the guard, Linda takes over responsibility		
SUPP I will support her with dialogue sets		
RSUPP Remote support by WhatsApp		
GCOM Give computer and printer to Linda when I leave		
REPR Easy to reprint more copies of resources		

Appendix 6: Materials

The three types of paper resources shown were designed and printed using Microsoft Publisher.

Task cards were printed double sided on 120gsm plain white card, with English words on one side and the Malay equivalents on the reverse. The task cards were approximately A6 size and the vocabulary cards a little larger than a business card. The documents are displayed in the Appendix back to back, showing crop marks to assist cutting on simple and widely available paper trimmers. They were in A4 format for reproduction on the easiest available paper and card. Each topic had up to 24 items of vocabulary, with Malay translation on the reverse side. They were designed to be produced on commonly available inkjet printers, printing double-sided manually using work-and-turn printing. Crop marks were kept deliberately small so that if the printer printed out of sync by more than a millimeter, the cards would not be disfigured by the presence of unwanted lines.

Task cards were produced on topics including:

- Your classroom
- Your home
- The jungle
- In the sky
- Your kampong
- The beach
- Your head
- Your kitchen
- Jobs
- The ocean

The guided conversations were aimed at students of CEFR level A2 or above, and downloaded from www.esldiscussions.com. I had previously tried them with some success on my students in China, who were junior and senior high school age. They were designed to be used between two older children or a parent and an older child.

The song sheets contained songs which could be sung acapella and which encouraged movement or dancing.

head



What part of your body is this?

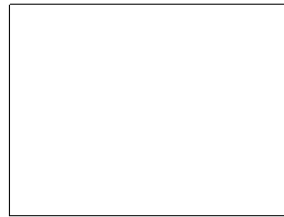
shoulder



knee



This is my



toe



Figure 13: Conversation card "What part of your body is this?"

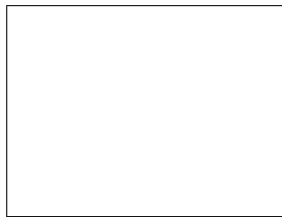
kepala

Apa yang sebahagian daripada badan anda ini?

bahu

lutut

Ini adalah



saya.

jari kaki

Figure 14: Reverse side (Bahasa Malaysia) of “What part of your body is this?”

cow



sheep



horse



dog



Which animal is this?

This is a



Figure 15: Conversation card "Which animal is this?"

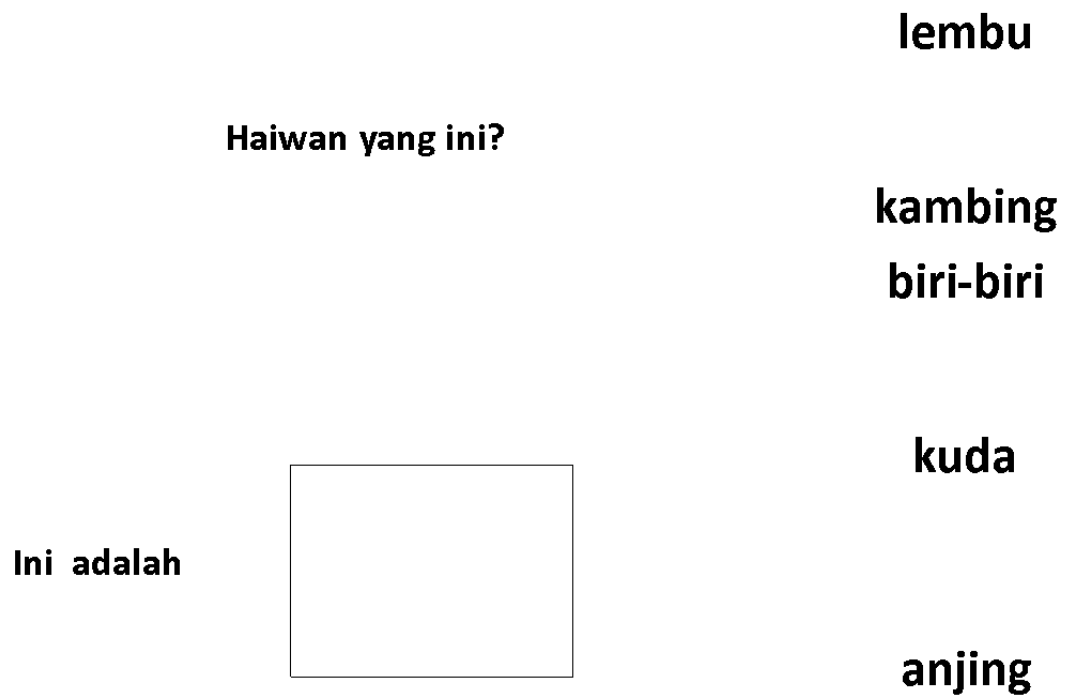


Figure 16: Reverse side (Bahasa Malaysia) of “Which animal is this?” conversation card

yellow

What is your favourite colour?

red

blue

My favourite colour is

green

Figure 17: Conversation card "What is your favourite colour?"

Apa warna kegemaran anda?

kuning —

merah —

biru —

hijau —


Warna kegemaran saya adalah 

Figure 18: Reverse side (Bahasa Malaysia) of Conversation card “What is your favourite colour?”

Conversation cards

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- 1) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'anger'?
- 2) Are you an angry person?
- 3) What are you like when you are angry?
- 4) What's the angriest you've ever been?
- 5) When you get angry, do you stay angry for a long time?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- 1) Why do we have the emotion of anger?
- 2) Is there anything positive about getting angry?
- 3) Who is the angriest person you know?
- 4) Is anger a bad thing?
- 5) What happens when you bottle up your anger?

Figure 19: "Anger" pair work discussion cards from www.esldiscussions.com

moody

recover

irritated

good mood

impatient

mad

bad mood

fuming

bad habits

careless

selfish

greedy

tease

mock

over-react

forgive

Figure 20: Additional vocabulary cards to support "Anger" discussion card

Let's sing ! (mari kita menyanyi)

Head and shoulders, knees and toes
(Kepala dan bahu, lutut dan jari kaki)

*Head and shoulders, knees and
toes, knees and toes*

*Head and shoulders, knees and
toes, knees and toes*

Eyes and ears and mouth and nose

Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes



My bonnie lies over the ocean
(Sayang saya terletak di atas lautan)

My bonnie lies over the ocean

My bonnie lies over the sea

My bonnie lies over the ocean

Oh bring back my bonnie to me.

Bring back! Bring back!

Oh bring back my bonnie to me, to me

Bring back! Bring back!

Oh bring back my bonnie to me.



Old MacDonald had a farm
(Pak Mamat ada kebun)

Old MacDonald had a farm
E-I-E-I-O



And on his farm he had a cow

E-I-E-I-O

With a moo moo here

And a moo moo there

Here a moo, there a moo

Everywhere a moo moo

Old MacDonald had a farm

E-I-E-I-O

duck - quack quack

horse - neigh neigh

dog - woof woof

sheep - baa baa

chicken - cluck cluck

Twinkle, twinkle little star
(Bintang kecil berkelip)

Twinkle, twinkle little star,

How I wonder what you are.

Up above the world so high,

Like a diamond in the sky,

Twinkle, twinkle little star,

How I wonder what you

are.



Take me home with you!
Bawa saya ke rumah anda!

Let's sing! (mari kita menyanyi)

Row, row, row your boat

*Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream*



*Row, row, row your
boat
Gently up the creek
If you see a little mouse
Don't forget to squeak!*

*Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
If you see a crocodile
Don't forget to scream!*

*Row, row, row your boat
Gently to the shore
If you see a lion
Don't forget to roar!*

London Bridge

*London Bridge is falling down
Falling down, falling down
London Bridge is falling
down
My fair lady*

*Build it up with iron bars
Iron bars, iron bars
Build it up with iron bars
My fair lady*

*Iron bars will bend and break
Bend and break, bend and break
Iron bars will bend and break
My fair lady*

*London Bridge is falling down
Falling down, falling down
London Bridge is falling down
M-y-y f-a-i-r l-a-d-y*



He's Got The Whole World In His Hands

*He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands*

*He's got the little bitty baby in his hands
He's got the little bitty baby in his hands
He's got the little bitty baby in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands*

*He's got you and me brother in his hands
He's got you and me sister in his hands
He's got you and me brother in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands*

*He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands
He's got the whole world in his hands*



My Love

*My love is warmer than the warmest sunshine, softer
than a sigh*

*My love is deeper than the deepest ocean, wider than
the sky*

*My love is brighter than the brightest star that shines
every night above*

*And there is nothing in this world that can ever change
my love.*



Let's sing! (mari kita menyanyi)

Hokey Pokey

You put your **right foot** in,
You put your **right foot** out;
You put your **right foot** in,
And you shake it all about.
You do the Hokey-Pokey,
And you turn around.
And that's what it's all about!

left foot
right hand
left hand
nose
whole self



He's got the whole world in his hands

*He's got the whole world in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.*

*He's got my brothers and my sisters in His hands,
He's got my brothers and my sisters in His hands,
He's got my brothers and my sisters in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.*

*He's got the sun and the rain in His hands,
He's got the moon and the stars in His hands,
He's got the wind and the clouds in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.*

*He's got the rivers and the mountains in His hands,
He's got the oceans and the seas in His hands,
He's got you and he's got me in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.*

If you're happy and you know it



*If you're happy and you know it
Clap your hands
If you're happy and you know it
Clap your hands
If you're happy and you know it
Then you really ought to show it
If you're happy and you know it
Clap your hands*

Stamp your feet
Nod your head
Do all 3!

Baa Baa Black Sheep

Baa, baa, black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full.

One for the master,
One for the dame,
And one for the little boy
Who lives down the lane.



Baa, baa, black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full.

Take me home with you!
Membawa saya ke rumah anda!

Appendix 7: Images from English Corner and Pondok English

The following are images from English Corner in China and from the first iteration of Pondok English in Kota Belud, Malaysian Sabah. They have been digitally anonymised to conceal identities.



Figure 24: Cluster of English Corner attendees at South China Normal University, Guangzhou



Figure 25: Volunteer teacher using "This is My Body" conversation cards with three children



Figure 26: Parent uses conversation cards with his two children



Figure 27: Parent working with children and conversation cards



Figure 28: Parent working with his son on “Occupations” conversation cards



Figure 29: Children working in groups with Conversation cards



Figure 30: Parents and children singing



Figure 31: A mother using Discussion cards with her two daughters



Figure 32: The author handing conversation cards to attendee children



Figure 33: Older children using the Discussion cards as conversation prompts