

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)
LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:
A SOCIAL VIEW**

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education in April 2012**

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Abstract

Learner participation in language learning opportunities has been configured differently by different learning theories. In the domain of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), the cognitive view of learning has been dominant in explaining learner participation. It has been widely accepted that it should be in the form of participation in oral activities which leads to gains in linguistic competence. The aim of this thesis is to understand the issue of learner participation from the social perspective, where a broader understanding of learning will be employed informed by the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and others. To do so, this study investigates the forms of participation of six ESL learners in suburban Malaysia in two contexts: in-class and out-of-class.

In order to understand the issue of learner participation from a social view point, data were collected using classroom observations, learners' interviews, learner diaries, and photographs taken by them. All the data were transcribed and analysed qualitatively. In order to handle the large amount of data, the Nvivo software package was used for organisation and retrieval purposes.

The findings reveal several insights about learner participation. First, learners are active agents where they constantly make decisions on what to engage with and how, and act on the norms and expectations that are imposed on them in a particular sociocultural context. Second, the six learners are members of or aspired to become members of several communities: academically successful learners; successful ESL learners; proficient speakers of the target language; the classroom; and youth. Thus, they aligned their forms of participation with these various communities. Third, learners in this study tended to distinguish between learning and other kinds of engagement. They tended to equate certain forms of participation as actions that one needed to take to learn the language; thus other forms of participation accorded less value.

In this study, some insights from Communities of Practice (CoP) theory- learning as a process of gaining membership in a particular community and that learners move from peripheral to core membership- were used to understand the issue of learner participation. However, upon understanding and interpreting the data, it was found that CoP theory is limited in several ways. First, CoP focuses only on one type of community (e.g. the classroom) in one temporal dimension. Yet, findings indicate that there are several other communities that exist in the classroom at one time. Due to this shortcoming, this study has turned to the concept of 'figured worlds' (Holland et al, 2001). Secondly, CoP theory argues for a group dynamic. Less recognition is given to the fact that individual learners are also dynamic and agentive. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) suggest dialogical views on identity; in which a framework is provided that acknowledges the multiple, discontinuous and social nature of identity (a postmodern view), while at the same time assumes identity as being unitary, continuous and individual (a modern view). Thirdly, CoP tends to focus on a singular "identity-in-practice (Tan and Barton (2008). Tan and Barton (ibid: 50) argue for the plurality of identities-in-practice (IdPs); rather than a singular "identity-in-practice (IdP) as suggested by Lave and Wenger (1991).

The view of learning as boundary crossing seems to better describe the kinds of participation and learning that have been suggested by the findings generated in the study. Instead of looking at learning as participation in a particular community, learning as boundary crossing better captures the dynamic of learner participation in language learning opportunities, of learners as whole persons (rather than fragmented identities), and of learners as agentive beings.

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Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introductory Overview

In this study, I am interested in interrogating some basic assumptions about English as a Second Language (ESL) learner participation in language learning opportunities. The dominant view held regarding ESL learner participation (that stems from the cognitive view of learning, as well as some lineages of the sociocultural theory of learning) is that it has to be in the form of oral engagement, it results in gains in linguistic competence such as knowledge of the formal system of lexis, morphology, syntax, and phonology (Poltizer and McGroarty, 1985), and it occurs mostly in the classroom. The aim of this thesis; which I shall elaborate below is to understand the issue of learner participation from the social perspective; where a broader understanding of learning will be employed informed by the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and others. To do so, this study investigates the forms of participation of six ESL learners in sub-urban Malaysia in two contexts: in-class and out-of-class.

In the present inquiry, learner participation refers to participation in social activities. To illustrate, a learner might participate in classroom learning activities (in class) or participate in an advertising activity (out of class). In this sense, learner participation might take place when they are with others (such as in a classroom) or even alone (as when a learner reads information on a billboard). In order to understand learner participation, I will look at learners' forms of engagement. Forms of engagement are what learners do when they encounter English-medium resources. These forms of engagement include oral, non-oral, observable and non-observable (such as thinking). In this study, the focus is on learners' engagement with English-medium resources. Basically, artefacts (see 3.1.3) such as books in English or the use of the language in oral communication could be seen as examples of English-medium resources. In the context where this study is conducted (Malaysia), these English-medium resources could be found almost everywhere, (see 2.1.3 and 2.2). These resources provide learners with language learning opportunities.

Different learning theories afford different views of what learning is and what learner participation entails. This has led to different understanding and configurations of learner participation. Behaviourism purports that learning is all about the conditioning of behaviour. In the domain of second language acquisition (SLA), this learning theory is translated into practice by having learners going through a series of drills and oral practices that will lead to habit formation. On the contrary, cognitivism views learning as solely an internal process, such as proposed by Chomsky in his theory of Universal Grammar (Lightbown and Spada, 1999). Other SLA theorists suggest that learners acquire language through participating in oral communication activities. The Input-Interaction-Output (IIO) model (Gass and Selinker, 1994; Long, 1996) is very prominent in explaining this sociocognitive view of learning (a more detailed discussion of this model is in Chapter 3). In this theoretical model the focus is on individual learners and the internal process that takes place during the language acquisition process.

In contrast, insights from broader educational theories argue that the acquisition of knowledge does not happen in a mechanical way (Resnick, 1987; Sfard, 1998). They also highlight the importance of context in understanding learning and practices, points that have led to some in the field of teaching English as a second and foreign language to come to see the dominant view of SLA as inadequate for failing to take into consideration the context and the social factors that might impinge upon the learning process. Thus, for example, Block (2003) has called for a “social turn” for SLA. This is an expansion of the idea forwarded by Firth and Wagner (1997) that critiques the dominant view within SLA domain which to them is,

“individualistic and mechanistic, and that it fails to account in a satisfactory way for interactional and sociolinguistic dimensions of language” (ibid: 285).

In response for the call for a more socially informed framework, of late, social parameters have been increasingly used to understand important concepts in

SLA such as motivation and learner autonomy (Palfreyman, 2006). Mitchell and Myers in their description of the social view of language learning remark:

“Learning is also seen as socially mediated; it is dependent on face to face interaction and shared processes such as joint problem solving and discussion”(1998: 195).

This shows that the field has moved to acknowledge the social more. Yet, while this shift has placed increasing emphasis on participation in social settings in descriptions of learning, it is seen by many in the field to serve as a conduit to help bridge the transmission of knowledge and it is for these reasons that oral engagement has been prioritised and emphasised (Lantolf & Thorne (2006); Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994). Hence, language learning is seen as primarily a process of acquisition rather than participation.

From the broader social view of learning as theorised by Lave and Wenger (1991), learning is defined as *“a process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice”* (pg 29). This learning theory offers a radical critique of the cognitivism that focuses on abstract knowledge and overlooks the largely tacit dimension of knowledge. An individual learns a second language not necessarily to master linguistic items. She might choose to learn it to be accepted in a certain community that is meaningful to her; in this case, learning a second language relates to the formation of one’s identity. In this sense, participation needs to be approached from a broader perspective as it is not merely *“a physical action or event”* (Handley et.al, 2006: 643); instead, Wenger (1998) sees it as both action and connection. Thus, focusing only on oral engagement and the event that leads to learning of abstract knowledge is no longer sufficient. Due to this, there is a need to highlight the use of the term SLA as I believe there are certain assumptions and traditions embedded in the use of this term. Block (2003) views SLA as a description of *“how language is processed, stored, and ultimately acquired”* (p. 93); which he contends is closely related to the IIO model of learning. Theorists such as Doughty and Long (2005) suggest that SLA is a “branch of cognitive science” (p. 3). In this thesis, learning is used rather than acquisition as the former term implies a broader understanding of language learning that is learning to become members of a particular community.

Since learning is understood as generated from participation, there is a need to address the fact that it does take place beyond the classroom. A learner will be able to learn a second language through her engagement with the resources that are available not only in class, but also outside. In SLA, research tends to focus on classroom learning. This somehow reflects the idea that classroom learning is more significant than what learners gain from their engagement with outside resources. However, those researching into children's literacy practices (Heath, 1983; Hymes, 1974; Street, 1993; as cited in Schultz, 2002) have investigated contexts outside the classroom, i.e. the communities and homes. In the context of second language learning, the forms of engagement with resources in English that are available outside the classroom might be more varied as learners make their own decisions on how they wish to engage with the resources, and this engagement might be more meaningful for them as individuals, as well as members of communities.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

As an English teacher and teacher educator, I have always been concerned with learner participation in the classroom. By participation, I mean learners using the language orally during classroom activities and responding to the questions posed by the teacher. I felt something was not right when the class was too quiet and I would often wonder whether acquisition had taken place when the learners hardly uttered a word. Tsou (2005: 46) makes the same observation and points out that among the four language skills, participation in oral activities is the most observable behaviour and for that reason, the lack of it becomes a major concern for ESL practitioners. For me, apparent learner passivity was a serious problem and it was the teacher's responsibility to make sure the learners would participate in the classroom discourse. However, I started to question my own belief about this as I pondered deeply upon the whole notion of participation in second language learning. Below, I provide a sketch of my personal experiences as both a language learner and an ESL practitioner that have influenced my thinking.

My concern about learner participation began when I did my Bachelor's degree in TESL. Among the courses that I took were Principles and Practice in TESL, TESL Methodology, and Teaching of Language Skills; where I learned about the theories of learning and the different approaches in language teaching. All of them suggested that the primary way to learn a second language is by using it orally. After 4 years, I finally graduated and became a fully-fledged teacher. Being new in the profession, I was very motivated to try out the different teaching techniques that I had learned at the university. I designed activities such as role plays, games, and many other tasks that required the learners to talk in class. I also employed questions as my primary teaching technique. To my disappointment, only a handful of students would take part in the activities or voluntarily responded to my questions, and most of the time they were the same ones. Others chose to remain silent. This problem persisted in both my good and weak classes; student reticence is an issue in all my classes. Kelly and Keaten (2000) define it as a communication problem that relates to cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions, and also to the belief that it is better to keep quiet than taking the risk of appearing foolish in front of others.

After 3 years of teaching at school, I became a teacher trainer at a teacher education university. One of my duties was to supervise students who were undergoing their teaching practicum. I would sit at the back of the class observing a trainee and her students and my focus was, among others, to look at how the students participated in the classroom activities. It was obvious that the class was quiet- a phenomenon, according to Donald (2010), that occurs in all second language classrooms, regardless of setting. The students would only respond when their names were called out by the teacher. Their oral participation was minimal. Being an observer, I had the opportunity to look at each student and how they behaved in class while the lesson was in progress. I noticed something interesting about the students' overt responses to the learning situation. Though they were quiet, they seemed to be engaged in the lesson in their own ways. Some listened attentively, eyes fixed on the teacher. There were others who appeared to be taking down notes every now and then.

There were also some gestures like nodding and shaking head. When the teacher told a joke or two, there was laughter in the class. I wondered whether saying that these students were not learning, based on an assessment of the level of their oral participation was a fair comment. However, I brushed this question aside and focused on what I believed to be more important: to discuss with the teacher trainee the possible ways to make her students more active in class.

Then I began my journey as a doctoral student. I approached my supervisors with a proposal for my project. In it, I wrote about the sorry state of English proficiency among Malaysian school leavers and graduates that had been a national issue for almost 20 years. I also wrote about the government's efforts to improve the situation by addressing the issue at the policy, curriculum and teaching levels and how these had all been futile. My assumption was that the problem stemmed from learners who were not participating in the classroom discourse and this hindered their learning of the language. My supervisors asked about my understanding of participation. We had a lengthy discussion on it and I left the room with some important questions about the whole concept of participation. I began my exploration of the issue by reflecting on my own experience as a second language learner as I shall detail below.

I was brought up in a small town. It could be said that English was a foreign language there, as it was hardly used. My primary source to learn the language was in the classroom. In school, I learned English through a lot of drills. In terms of oral participation, I must have seemed to be a passive learner to the teacher (though based on my results in the national examination, I was considered highly successful). I would only respond to the teacher's questions when I was nominated, as I was relatively quiet and shy in class. However, I was still engaged in lessons for example I remember scribbling the pronunciation of difficult words by spelling them in my own language. Moreover, at home, while I did not use English with my parents because they could not speak the language, I spoke a bit of English with my siblings, especially with my eldest sister who lived with us at that time and who had a certain command of the

language as she went to an English medium school. My brother who was studying in America would buy me English novels and helped me with my English homework when he was back at home for holidays. I also remember spending a lot of time watching English television programmes and listening to English broadcasts on the radio.

It could be said that the theories that I had learned during my teacher training years have led me to the belief that learners need to acquire the linguistic structures and that oral participation is the primary way for one to learn a second language. However, upon reflecting on my own journey of learning the language, I have come to realise that I did not learn the language by only participating in oral activities neither did I acquire only the abstract knowledge. With this new insight about learning, I feel there is a need for me to identify a different theory of learning, one that views learning as a process of participation rather than acquisition.

In the context of the present study I feel that the six participants involved and I, to a certain extent, shared similar backgrounds. First, at home, though there were others in the family who had certain command of English, we spoke the language very minimally. Nevertheless, there were other resources available for us to engage with the language such as through watching English programmes on TV and reading English books. In school, we were regarded as successful students due to our excellent achievements in the national examination. Yet, in class (especially in English class) we were normally seen as passive learners due to our lack of participation in oral activities.

Bakhtin (1975/1981 as cited in Heron, 2003) states that an individual might choose to engage in a practice that is valuable to her and reject or resist others. In the field of second language learning, there is a tendency to position learners as particular kinds of language learners, with particular kinds of participation trajectories. Learners who do not participate in oral activities in class are labelled as passive, and are consequently regarded as unsuccessful. This type

of hasty generalisation devalues learners as individuals who are capable of making their own decisions and acting on the social norms and expectations as they operate in a particular context.

Reflecting on my own path as a language learner has led me to form these questions:

- i. what are the reasons for second language learners' lack of oral engagement in the classroom?
- ii. if the learners are not participating orally in class, are there other forms of participation that they are engaged in?
- iii. as English is also accessible outside the classroom, do they take the opportunity to learn it out there?
- iv. how do they engage with the available outside opportunities?

I am interested in these four questions because I feel they are very relevant to the learning of English in Malaysia. First, it is very common to have learners who are quiet in class. Ghanaguru et.al (2006) label learners who do not ask questions about the content, purpose, and ideas that are presented to them as "disengaged learners". Some studies point to the learners' cultural disposition as the reason for what is believed to be a detrimental behaviour in language learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Flowerdew and Miller, 1995). Liu (2001) have contested this large culture assumption (Holliday, 1999) and suggested that there are a number of possible reasons why learners, with reference to Asian learners, chose to be quiet in class like *"the relevance of the topic under discussion, the instructor's presentation of the material, the students' familiarity with the subject, the students' motivation to participate, the students' anxiety and tolerance of risk-taking, and their speaking abilities and communicative competence"* (Liu, *ibid.*: 49). In a similar vein, I feel there is a need for further investigation of learners' nonparticipation in oral activities so that in-depth insights into these behaviours could be gained rather than labelling them; which can bring negative consequences (Spack in Clark and Gieve, 2006).

Secondly, there is also a need to further investigate the idea of participation. As it is now, participation in a language classroom primarily means learners' engagement in oral interaction. Based on my own experience as a learner and my observation of learners in the classroom, I realise there are other forms of engagement. It is not my intention to argue that the best way to learn a language is by using it orally as espoused in the theories of SLA and has been proven by numerous empirical studies. However, I am interested to find out the value of other forms of engagement from the point of view of the learners themselves.

Thirdly, in a country like Malaysia, where English has an important social role (a discussion of this is provided in 2.1.3), there is the whole gamut of language learning opportunities available outside the confines of the classroom. It will be interesting to know whether learners use these opportunities only to acquire the language, or are there any other goals that they want to achieve through their engagement with the available linguistic and other resources in society.

Fourthly, there are a growing number of studies looking at learning in the Malaysian classroom with particular focus on the teaching methods (Pillay, 1998) that are believed to promote oral engagement. However, to my knowledge, studies on non-formal learning mainly focus on matters related to the use of the internet in language learning (Marlia, 2002; Rajaretnam, 2004). This could be the result of two situations. First, it reflects the belief held by these researchers that learning takes place mainly in the classroom. Second, the problems that a researcher might face in collecting data outside school might have inhibited them to carry out a study of this nature. Nonetheless, what learners do outside to learn the language is equally important. This is because learners spend more time outside than they do in class. Furthermore what they do outside which is normally of their own choices will be more meaningful for them. For these reasons, non-formal learning should be the heart of research agenda for language learning (Benson, 2011; Gao, 2009).

In the wider TESOL context, the dominant trend has been to investigate in-class learning. Chaudron (2001 as cited in Ellis, 2008) conducted a survey on second language classroom research and found that this type of research had begun as early as 1916, with much of the focus on oral engagement. Research on out-of-class learning has been rather scanty as compared to in-class, and mostly done to investigate how it supports in-class learning (Freeman, 1999; Gao, 2008; Hyland, 2004; Inozu, et al, 2010). I feel there is a need for research in TESOL and SLA to move away from the long-standing trend that has dominated the field for more than four decades. This trend tends to endorse a certain kind of engagement and learning, and to devalue others. There is a need to consider the research development from other fields such as the learning of science and mathematics (Carter, 2005: 575) that has begun to embrace the wider view of learning and learner participation. Due to these reasons, a study such as the present one that looks at other forms of engagement in a broader context, is called for.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore the nature of learner participation in language learning opportunities in two contexts: out-of-class and in-class. Six learners from a sub-urban school in Malaysia will participate in the inquiry. This is a qualitative study. In particular, this study has three main aims:

- i. to identify the English-medium resources that are available to the learners in two settings: outside and inside the classroom;
- ii. to investigate how learners engage with these English-medium resources that are available to them;
- iii. to identify the factors that affect their nature of engagement in both contexts.

The overall goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of what learners do when they encounter resources in English and their reasoning for

participating in second language learning opportunities in their preferred ways. This insight could better inform ESL teachers about the choices and decisions that learners make about their learning. It could also provide a clearer picture of what learners do outside the classroom with regard to learning English.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Many studies on ESL classrooms focus on how learners learn the language by participating in oral activities. This reflects the belief that learning a second or foreign language takes place primarily through this form of participation leading to linguistic attainments. It is a belief that is well supported by empirical studies in SLA. However, one should not overlook the fact that not all learners participate in the classroom oral discourse. The main goal of this study is to investigate other forms of engagement as learners encounter resources in English that are available not only in the classroom, but also outside. It is important to note that this study does not attempt to make a direct link between these other forms of engagement and learning and neither will it identify the language gains from any particular form of engagement. However, it is hoped that this study can provide a clearer picture of ESL learner participation in two contexts: in and out of class, from the social view (Lave and Wenger, 1991) that embraces the broader perspective of learning.

This study hopes to provide insights for ESL practitioners. First, this study might provide insights on classroom pedagogy, which could be a potential significant contribution. Secondly, it will help them to better understand the notion of learner participation from the learners' own point of view and not from some kind of conclusions made by an outsider. Thirdly, it is hoped that this study will raise awareness of the availability of out-of-class learning opportunities. Also, this study can serve as a platform for ESL practitioners to discuss on matters related to learner participation and language learning opportunities that are founded upon real life events and not based on abstract conceptions or generalisations.

It is also hoped that this study will make a significant contribution to the general TESOL domain. First, it addresses the concept of learner participation in language learning. SLA theories that originate from western thinking place utmost importance on participation in oral activities as the main way to learn. This study attempts to explore whether the notion of participation as conceived in the SLA literature is adequate to capture its complexity. It could provide insights on learner participation in language learning that are more relevant in a second or foreign language classroom context where oral interaction is usually minimal.

Secondly, this study could also make contributions in terms of the data collection technique employed and the scope of research. This study uses cameras as an innovative way to collect data. This type of data collection technique has been used in research on literacy (eg. Moss, 2001). However, to date, in the area of SLA I have not found any studies that use digital photography to investigate out-of-class learning opportunities. Therefore, this study could be the first study that uses digital cameras as a means to collect data for investigation of such nature. As for the scope of research, this study is particularly unique because it looks at two contexts: in-class and out-of-class. Studies on language learning commonly focus on either one of the contexts. So far, to the best of my knowledge, Norton's study (2000) on identity and language learning among immigrants in Canada is the only known study that looks at both contexts. As this study is unique in terms of the data collection technique used and its scope, it could be an example for other researchers in the field of TESOL who are interested to investigate language learning in a more novel way.

1.5 Outline of the Study

This chapter discusses the dominant view of learning in SLA, and how this affects understanding of learner participation and what learning entails. Other

than that, the rationale and purpose of carrying out this inquiry, as well as the significance of the study have also been detailed. In addition to this Introductory Chapter, this thesis consists of further eight chapters.

Chapter Two is the background to the study. In this chapter, I provide some contextual background information by providing details about Malaysia, the history of English both in the country and the education system, and some current issues regarding the standard of English in Malaysia.

Chapter Three is the review of literature. Here, I explain three orientations to second language learning: behaviourism, cognitivism, and social. I also present the conceptual framework that I use to understand learner participation.

Chapter Four discusses the research methodology where I discuss my philosophical stance and how it affects the research process. In this chapter, I also provide the research procedure and the framework for my data analysis.

Chapter Five is the analysis of findings of out-of-class engagement, where five categories have been identified: resources, forms of participation, gain from participation, perceptions, and family supports.

Chapter Six is the analysis of findings of in-class engagement, here, six categories have been developed. They are: resources, forms of participation, gain from participation, English learning experiences, views about learning English, and use.

Chapter Seven is the discussion of the findings that have been generated from this inquiry. I organize my discussion based on the three research questions that guide the present study. For Research Question 1, which is about the kinds

of resources learners encounter in and out-of class, findings show that learners in this study mostly encountered resources that required the receptive skills (listening/watching and reading). I have combined Research Questions 2 and 3, which are about how learners engage with the resources and the reasons for such engagement. Findings indicate that in both contexts, most of the time, learners engaged in the manner that they felt benefitted them the most.

In Chapter Eight, I provide discussion and interpretation of some emerging themes generated from the findings. I also review the four principles of understanding learner participation which I have advanced in my conceptual framework (Chapter 3) and my understanding of in and out-of-class learning.

In the final chapter, Chapter Nine, I provide some implications and recommendations of the study. Included in this chapter is my personal reflection of the research process.

1.6 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the rationale, the purpose, and the significance of the study. The structure of the whole thesis from Chapter Two until Chapter Nine has also been outlined. In the following chapter, I will provide background information of the study that includes information on the geography, social, history, and education in Malaysia. This information will help to contextualise this study which is about ESL learner participation in language learning opportunities.

Chapter 2 Background to the Study

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will provide some background information that would help to contextualise the present inquiry into ESL learner participation in language learning opportunities in Malaysia. The chapter is divided into 3 sections. In the first section I will provide background information that will help establish the kinds of opportunities of participation that exist in the country. In the second section, I will provide discussion of the situation in Malaysian classrooms focusing on the sorts of opportunities available and the forms of participation favoured. In the third section, I will identify factors which potentially affect learner participation in classrooms.

SECTION 1

2.1 Background Information

In this section, I will provide some general information about Malaysia, discuss the status and use of English in the country, and present some issues regarding the standard of the language.

2.1.1 Malaysia: Some General Information

Malaysia, situated in the South East of Asia, consists of Peninsular Malaysia, and the states of Sabah and Sarawak which are located on the island of Borneo. Peninsular Malaysia shares its border with Thailand in the north, and Singapore to the south (refer to Figure 1.1). Malaysia is a multiracial country with a population of about 28 million (www.statistics.gov.my). The Malays

(60.3%) are the largest ethnic group; this is followed by the Chinese (22.9%), and the Indians (6.8%) (www.statistics.gov.my). There are also other indigenous groups such as the Iban and Kadazan. Islam is the main religion of the country; however, members of other religions are free to practise their own religious beliefs such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Bahasa Melayu is the national and official language of the country, while English is the second official language. Economically, Malaysia is facing sluggish growth compared to other countries in the Asian region such as Taiwan and Korea (www.kppk.gov.my). Hence, there is a strong need for the country to achieve and sustain competitive advantage through efforts such as investing in infrastructure and human capital (www.kppk.gov.my) to attract foreign investors. In accommodating the needs of foreign investments, it is imperative that Malaysia provides manpower with sufficient language skills (especially English as an international language), apart from management and technical capabilities.



Figure 1.1 A Map of Malaysia

2.1.2 The Status of English in Malaysia

Even though English is the second official language in Malaysia, the reality is that it has the features of first, second, and foreign languages; depending on individuals' use of the language in the country (Razianna, 2003). There are several reasons contributing to this situation. First is the fact that the different ethnic groups in Malaysia have their own 'mother tongues' or 'native languages'. While the majority of Malays speak Bahasa Malaysia, the Chinese use dialects such as Cantonese, Mandarin and Hokkien. Indians converse in Tamil, Malayalam, and Telegu among others. The indigenous people of Sarawak speak Iban and Melanau among others and those in Sabah converse in Kadazan and Bajau among others. Based on this, it could be said that technically Bahasa Malaysia, the national language, is a second language for the Chinese, Indians, and the indigenous people of Sarawak and Sabah. The second issue concerns the area where the individuals reside. In the major cities in Malaysia, English is widely used as the language of communication in businesses and other daily transactions. There are discrepancies in the status of English between the urban and the rural areas. As mentioned earlier, English has the status of the first or second language in the urban areas. However, in the rural areas, it is normally regarded as a foreign language (Mustafa, 2009) due to the minimal quantity of exposure and usage of the language in such areas.

The influence of English in Malaysia can be traced back to early in the nineteenth century, when the British empire started to expand its missions of searching for natural wealth and propagating Christianity to South East Asia. It could be said that during the colonial period, English was the language of power where it was used as the language of administration, education, and commerce (Subramaniam, 2007). However, after independence (in 1957), English lost its position and was relegated to a second language. The transition period (after 1957) that took about 10 years saw Bahasa Melayu replacing English in almost all official matters, especially in administration and education.

English is known as a global language due to its “special role that is recognized in every country” (Crystal, 1992: 3). In Malaysia factors such as economic growth, globalization and the age of the internet have reasserted the significance of English in the country in recent years. The government’s vision to make Malaysia a fully developed nation by the year 2020 through its “Vision 2020” plan, and the creation of Multimedia Super Corridor to accelerate Malaysia into the information and knowledge age have made English important again. In what follows, I shall discuss how the historical and current status of English in the country is reflected in the use of English in Malaysia and its place in the education system.

2.1.3 The Use of English in Malaysia

In Malaysia, English is viewed as an asset (Asmah, 1993:8); where for many Malaysians knowing the language is seen as a means through which they could enhance their economic and social status. In certain parts of the country such as the urban areas of Kuala Lumpur and Penang (on the west coast of the peninsula) and the states of Sabah and Sarawak (see Figure 1.1); where economic activities are high (Lowenberg, 1991), English has been recognised as one of the main languages of interaction, as described by Asmah (1987)

“at the unofficial level, English is spoken in almost every aspect of Malaysian life, particularly in the urban areas. In private and multinational firms, it seems to be the language for the management group. English is spoken widely in the shopping centres...” (as cited in Pennycook 1994: 210).

For those who do not use English at home (like the six students in this study), the language is easily accessible through the media such as the print media and the television. In 1983, the daily circulation of English language newspapers was at

813, 000 (Pennycook, 1994). A recent survey by the Star newspaper reveals that from July 2009 to June 2010 (thestar.com.my), as many as 1 144 135 copies of the English dailies: ‘The Stars’, ‘The New Straits Times’, ‘The Sun’,

and 'The Edge' have been circulated. The increase in circulation shows that more Malaysians are now engaged in reading the English newspapers. Malaysian television also allocates a considerable amount of airtime for English programmes. There are 5 terrestrial television networks (RTM 2, TV3, ntv7, TV9, 8TV) that air various English programmes. Other than these, ASTRO (satellite television) offers several English-only channels. There are also several radio stations which transmit English music and talk shows. The number of English periodicals, journals, and literary works published is increasing as well. The internet is another means where one can access a multitude of resources in English. A survey on the household use of internet in Malaysia in the year 2010 (Koay, 2010) shows that there are 2 271 500 internet users of whom 27% are between 15 to 19 years old (upper levels of school aged children). The survey also finds that getting information, leisure, and social networking are among the activities that users engaged in when they use the internet. Although this does not reflect the use of English among internet users, the fact is that a substantial amount of resources available on the internet is in English. Thus, it could be said that to a certain extent, there is an active use of English among these internet users. From the description given, in Malaysia the opportunities for one to engage in English are abundant, especially through the media.

Another interesting scenario in Malaysia is the excessive availability of tuition classes. It is a "multi-million ringgit industry" in the country (Lovrenciar, 2012). Tuition classes are run by private centres. They provide tuition classes for all subjects that are taught in school and students who go there have to pay fees, which are normally charged per subject. The organization of the tuition classes is similar to classes in school, where a teacher is assigned to a class. However, the number of students is normally small, about twenty in a class. There are several reasons why parents send their children to tuition classes, such as the competitive school environment and crowded classrooms (Rozanna, 2012). Secondary school students in Malaysia are required to sit for the national examination twice. Once when they are in Form 3 – UPSR (aged 15) and another one is in Form 5- SPM (aged 17). This puts pressure on them to perform well, especially in the SPM where the results will determine whether they will be able to qualify for higher education, thus results in a competitive school environment. From my observation as an educator, tuition classes used

to be for weak students, to help them cope with subjects in school. However, nowadays, in Malaysia even the brightest students attend tuition classes. In terms of learning English, tuition classes provide an alternative formal learning for many students in Malaysia. The small number of students in a class is a pulling factor especially for ESL learners as this will give them a better opportunity to learn and practise the language.

Based on this, it can be said that one could engage (and possibly learn the language) outside school. As a result, presumably many people would be able to master the language. Yet, one of the major issues faced in the country is the low standard of English among the youth. In the following sub-section, I will discuss some issues on the standard of English in the country. Before doing this, a sketch of the history of education in Malaysia will be helpful in order to grasp a better understanding of the current problem.

2.1.4 The History of English Education in Malaysia

Under the 'divide and rule' policy that was practised by the British empire, Malaysia, (or known as Malaya at that time) was divided into different regions and races. In essence, the main agenda of this policy was to strengthen their political position in the country (Tan & Raman, 2009). This resulted in the Malays mostly residing in the villages and worked as *paddy* planters, the Chinese living in urban areas and involved in business and trade, while the Indians lived in the rural rubber estate. In terms of education, schools were set along the different ethnic groups and were conducted in English, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil. The British had their own English-medium schools. Below is a historical sketch of the English education in Malaysia.

2.1.4.1 Pre-world War (1939-1945)

Two types of English medium schools were established: missionary schools and government schools. Success in these schools would enable one to secure a job in the government; this was often preferred to manual labour (Koh, 1967 as cited in Goudart, 1987). The first missionary schools were called 'free' schools as they were open to all races. However, since these schools were located in the major urban areas, where mainly the Chinese resided, it was mostly they who went to these schools. The Malays who went to these schools mainly came from the affluent families from urban areas. The missionaries were not allowed by the colonial government to open their schools in the more rural areas of the Peninsular Malaysia as these areas were dominated by the Muslim Malays.

2.1.4.2 Post-world War

Some Malay nationalists began to voice their discontentment with the standard of education among Malays. The British responded by setting up the Barnes Committee (1951) to look into the problem. This committee did not only look at the problem raised by the nationalists; it also took into consideration the fact that Malaysia was a plural society. Thus among the suggestions made was the formation of a national education system that was bilingual: English and Malay.

As a plural nation that was on the brink of achieving its independence, building unity among the races was crucial. One of the main ways of achieving this was through the use of a common language that would help to create a common culture and a new national identity. Hence, the Malay language was gradually and progressively made the medium of instruction (Report of the Education Committee, 1956). Malaysia achieved its independence in 1957. In May 13th, 1969, Malaysia experienced a bloody race riot between the Chinese and Malays. This catalysed a major reform in the education system: the phasing out of all English medium schools. In 1970, the National Language Policy was

implemented and as a result, English was formally accorded the status of a second language in Malaysia. In the Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980), it was stated that Bahasa Malaysia (Melayu) would be used as the basis for national integration; English was to be taught as a strong second language: *“this is important if Malaysia is to keep abreast of scientific and technological developments in the world and participate meaningfully in international trade and commerce”* (Third Malaysian Plan, 1976: 386).

2.1.5 Issues Regarding the Standard of English in Malaysia

English has had an important impact on the advancement and development of Malaysia. Due to this, the achievement of students in the examination and their overall proficiency of the language have been of public interests. Of late, there has been growing public concern regarding the standard of English among Malaysian school leavers and fresh graduates which has caused them employment difficulties in the private sector. A survey done by jobstreet.com, (2005) an online employment company, found that 55.8% of the 3 800 hiring managers who took part in the survey stated that poor command of English among fresh graduates as the primary reason for them not being hired. In this case, even learners who performed well in the public examination did not have the language skills that are required for success in the job market.

It is understandable that when these problems arise, many tend to blame the government and its education policies. The phasing out of English medium schools is seen as the root of the problem which some refer to as ‘a political mistake’ or ‘a mistake in history’ (thestar.com.my, 2000; as cited in Razianna, 2003). The examination-oriented education system is also seen as a factor contributing to this problem. Due to the pressure to excel in the public examinations, teachers are burdened to complete the syllabus, and learners turn to rote learning. This has resulted in children not learning appropriate language skills. There is also a perception that many English teachers lack the proficiency in the language. Commenting on the performance of new English teachers, a senior English teacher wrote to the press: *“How can a new English*

teacher, himself still struggling to be proficient, teach the language to others?”
(Rajoo, 2010, April 5th).

In the next section, I will provide description of the kinds of second language learning opportunities available in Malaysian classrooms through efforts made by the government in its attempt to improve the standard of English in the country.

SECTION II

2.2 Government’s Efforts and Policies on English Education

The betterment of the English education in Malaysia falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MOE). The MOE has made continual efforts to improve the standard of English in the country. Some are detailed below:

- (i) The strengthening of the Literature component in the curriculum,
- (ii) English for the Teaching of Mathematics and Science (ETeMS),
- (iii) ‘Upholding Bahasa Melayu, Strengthening English’ policy.

The introduction of ETeMS in 2003 could be said to be the most drastic and controversial step taken by the government. Its main objective is to enhance English language proficiency among school students. Through the teaching of these two subjects (mathematics and science) in English, it is hoped that students would be more linguistically competent and consequently will be ready to spearhead development and progress in the country. The participants in this study were among the many students who were involved in this policy. As they were from the science stream, they had to take two subjects for mathematics: general and additional, and three subjects for science: biology, chemistry, and physics. All these were taught in English by the subject teachers. Each subject was allocated 35 minutes per lesson. There were three lessons for each

subject; altogether learners had 525 minutes of lesson on mathematics and science conducted in English. The implementation was carried out in stages. In the first year, 2003, it involved only primary Year 1, Form 1, and secondary Lower 6 classes, and the full implementation was expected to take place in 2008. However, after 5 years of its implementation it was found that (Parmjit, et.al, 2009):

- (i) only a handful of teachers used English; while the others taught the subjects in both Bahasa Melayu and English,
- (ii) English was used only for about 50% of the total contact hours in Mathematics and Science lessons;
- (iii) only half of the Mathematics and Science teachers who sat for the proficiency test that was conducted in 2008 met the required proficiency level,
- (iv) there was a decrease in the number of students who obtained A,B, and C for the two subjects (in both urban and rural areas).
- (v) students did not improve much in English, and those in the rural areas were still weak in the language, and thus interfered with the learning in the two subjects.

Implicit in the introduction of ETeMS was the intention to create more opportunities for learners to be involved in oral activities using the target language. However, this has failed to materialise and the teachers' inability to conduct their lessons in the target language could be viewed as the main contributor to the problem (reasons i, ii, and iii).

Due to the above shortcomings, in 2009 the government announced another policy replacing ETeMS- , 'Upholding Bahasa Melayu, Strengthening English'. In essence the main objective of this policy is to uphold the national language (Bahasa Melayu), and at the same time to strengthen the mastery of English among Malaysian citizens). The following steps will be taken to ensure the mastery of English among school children:

- (i) there will be an additional of 80 minutes of contact time in English for secondary level. Thus there will be 280 minutes of English lessons per week;
- (ii) more English teachers will be employed, this includes rehiring retired teachers and employing native language teachers from overseas,
- (iii) preparing reading materials in English,
- (iv) introducing language arts (e.g. story telling, drama, debate) in the teaching and learning process,
- (v) existing computer laboratories in all schools will also function as language laboratories with added facilities such as English language software, headphones, speakers and microphones.

Other than these major events, the MOE also instructed schools to carry out support activities to create a conducive environment for the use of English among the school children. For example, one day a week is now designated as 'English Day'. On this day, teachers and the school staff are encouraged to use English when they interact with learners.

Two observations can be made about the learning of English in Malaysia. First, implicit in the different educational policies and strategies is that learners learn the language only in the classroom and school. There is not much effort to link learners' engagement with out-of-class English-medium resources to their in class learning. The second observation is that although various strategies were made to improve the teaching and learning situation, little has been done to change an education system that is examination oriented, or to make improvements to the syllabus specifications so that they will be harmonious with the examination constructs. The focus on examinations has strongly influenced classroom practices in the country. This will be addressed in the following section.

SECTION III

2.3 The English Language Curriculum, the Syllabus, and the Examination

In line with its role as the second official language, English is taught as a compulsory subject at all levels in both the primary and the secondary schools in Malaysia. The general aim is to help learners to develop the appropriate skills that will enable them to use the language in their daily transactions, and also for academic and work purposes. The curriculum for the preschool, primary and secondary schools is developed by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC). For secondary education, the English curriculum has the following objectives:

- i. To form and maintain relationships through conversation and correspondence; take part in social interactions, and obtain goods and services;
- ii. To obtain, process and use information from various audio-visual and print sources and present the information in spoken and written form;
- iii. To listen to, view, read and respond to different texts, and express ideas, opinions, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively in spoken and written form; and
- iv. To show an awareness and appreciation of moral values and love towards the nation.

(Curriculum Specifications, 2003: 1)

The syllabus specifications provide detailed explanation for each level of secondary education (Form 1 to Form 5). This provides teachers with a form of reference in terms of the skills that need to be achieved, the topics and themes to be covered, and the grammar items and vocabulary that learners need to learn.

Maizatulliza (2008) in her doctoral study has investigated the specifications of Malaysian ESL syllabus and its implementation in the classrooms. Her analysis

of the syllabus document and in particular, the aforementioned specifications suggests the following:

- i. it reflects a functional view of language; where the main purpose is to provide opportunities for students to use the target language both orally and in written form in different contexts;
- ii. the target language should be presented in an analytic manner, in the sense that the English language classroom should be viewed as a discourse; where students will be exposed to its use in different contexts (as stated in the first objective)
- iii. the focus should be on use, not usage (Widdowson, 1978). The former focuses on using the language in different contexts, while the latter is on producing accurate forms of the language (Widdowson, *ibid.*)

Other than listing the objectives and the learning outcomes and specifications, the syllabus also provides teachers with a specification of the language content that students need to learn. It is divided into 4 sections; 3 of them are: 'grammar', 'word list', and 'sound system' as presented in Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

| |
|--|
| <p>Nouns</p> <p>i. Concrete nouns</p> <p>a. Common nouns – e.g. <i>book, house, school</i></p> <p>b. Proper nouns – e.g. <i>Ahmad, Malaysia</i></p> <p>ii. Abstract nouns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• names of qualities, states, activities e.g. <i>health, poverty; laughter, arrival</i> <p>iii. Countable nouns e.g. <i>girls, beakers, air conditioners</i></p> <p>iv. Uncountable nouns e.g. <i>sand, sugar</i></p> |
|--|

Table 2.1 Language Content: Grammatical Items

| | |
|-------------|-----------|
| absolutely | bound |
| actual | boundary |
| advance | brass |
| advantage | breadth |
| amuse | calculate |
| annoy | canal |
| anxious | cape |
| applaud | carriage |
| appoint | cause |
| approve | caution |
| arise | chance |
| arrest | character |
| artificial | charge |
| aside | charm |
| association | chemical |
| astonish | cheque |
| | |

Table 2.2 Language Content: Word List

Curriculum Specifications for English
Form 4

(c) The Sound System

The Sound System forms part of the language contents in the Form 4 Curriculum Specifications. The items listed below are to be taught in Form 4. In each item, examples of sounds to be taught are provided and teachers should provide further examples of these sounds. Armed with the knowledge of how letters and combination of letters are to be sounded, students should then make an attempt to apply the knowledge of these sounds in speech.

1.0 Consonants

| | | |
|-----|----------|----------------------|
| 1.1 | w / w / | - wall; forward |
| 1.2 | v / v / | - veil; event |
| 1.3 | q / k / | - Queen; frequent |
| 1.4 | x / ks / | - x-ray; waxing |
| 1.5 | x / z / | - xylophone; anxiety |
| 1.6 | rr / r / | - sorrow; terrible |

2.0 Vowels

| | | |
|-----|---------|-------------------|
| 2.1 | i / i / | - it; fit; city |
| 2.2 | l / l / | - eat; meal; plea |
| 2.3 | e / e / | - elders; bed |
| 2.4 | u / u / | - umbrella; fun |

Table 2.3 Language Content: The Sound System

Maizatulliza (ibid.) highlights that the language content is presented separate from the objectives. She suggests this reflects “a tendency towards the

'structural view' of language". To her, this implies that English language teaching in the country puts priority on accuracy above the ability to use the language in a manner that is socially appropriate (as specified in the objectives). From her analysis, Maizatulliza (ibid.: 43) suggests there may be a mismatch between what is documented in the syllabus and what is being implemented by teachers in the classroom. She illustrates her idea as in the following:

"One of the suggested activities is to get students talk about their interests in music and clothes. This might seem harmonious with the stated objective. However, the question that arises is whether the teacher would focus on the exchange of ideas or the students' use of the language forms".

In terms of participation in oral activities, it could be suggested that the teacher's focus on the accuracy of forms would somehow restrict learner participation. Tsui (1996) in her study on reticence among Asian ESL learners finds that the participants in her study are afraid of making mistakes and being negatively judged by the teacher. Thus, she advances that a teacher who constantly corrects the learners' errors and sets high expectations might hinder her learners' participation in oral activities.

There is this evidence of the lack of relationship between the syllabus and the construct of the examination. In the context of the present study, the English Language paper for the SPM (a national examination that learners in this study will take in the following year) consists of two parts: Paper 1 and Paper 2. Paper 1 is made up of 3 sections on reading comprehension questions and 2 sections on grammar. Paper 2 is on essay writing; where students are required to write 2 short essays of 100 words each and one long essay of about 300-400 words. The marking scheme for Paper 2 shows more marks are given for correct grammar (15 marks) compared with the content itself (10 marks). Rea-Dickins & Scott (2007) state that examinations may have effects on the content of teaching and methodology, hence if teachers view passing or doing well in the examination as crucial, they may be influenced by the examination specifications in their teaching of a particular subject. In terms of classroom

practices, there is a tendency for teachers to prepare their students for the national examination that focuses only on students' mastery of the reading and writing skills, and their knowledge of the linguistic items. It is therefore quite common to find an English classroom in Malaysia where the learners are engaged in activities that require reading and writing skills, rather than in oral activities.

2.3.1 Classroom Context Factors

As discussed above, Malaysian ESL learners' lack of engagement in oral activities could be due to the expectations that have been documented in the curriculum and syllabus as well as the education system that focuses on reading and writing skills, and values knowledge of grammar. Another possible reason is the classroom context.

Safinas (2006) in her study on Malaysian ESL classroom discourse claims that the focal students in her study reported that they chose to be quiet due to reasons such as waiting for others to respond, feeling afraid that their answers were wrong and thus they might be laughed at by their classmates, and giving the chance for other less capable peers to answer. Safinas (*ibid.*) suggests that learners are very aware of and sensitive to the norms and expectations that prevail in a particular classroom, and that most of the time their participation is geared towards accommodating these classroom norms and expectations.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the contextual background of the study. This includes the status of English in Malaysia, where I argue that English is important for the development of the country, and this is further supported by the details of how much English is used here. I then continue with the history of English in the country, as what has happened in the past has significantly

influenced the present scenario where there is a public concern over the standard of English in the country. Then, there is a discussion on some of government's efforts and policies to overcome the national problem, and their effects in classroom learning, in particular learner participation. Implicit in all this is a need to address the issue of learning and learner participation from a different perspective; one that embraces a broader understanding of learning. In the following chapter I will discuss the review of literature and the theoretical framework that informs this study.

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conceptual understanding of participation informing the study reported in this thesis; one informed by a social theory of learning with particular implications for the way I view participation. Figure 3.1 below provides an overview of how this chapter is structured. Section 1 discusses a number of learning theories. I will consider the different views of what learning a second language entails and how the role and nature of learner participation is configured in each one. Particular attention will be given to different conceptualizations of participation underpinning a social view of learning and the implications of this for a need to look at both in and out of class settings and the role of individual agency in these settings in describing their participation. Then, I will outline my conceptual understanding of participation drawing from the social view in Section 2. Section 3 will provide discussion of past studies on learner participation and in class and out-of-class learning, and a critical review of these studies based on the conceptual framework developed is presented in Section 4.

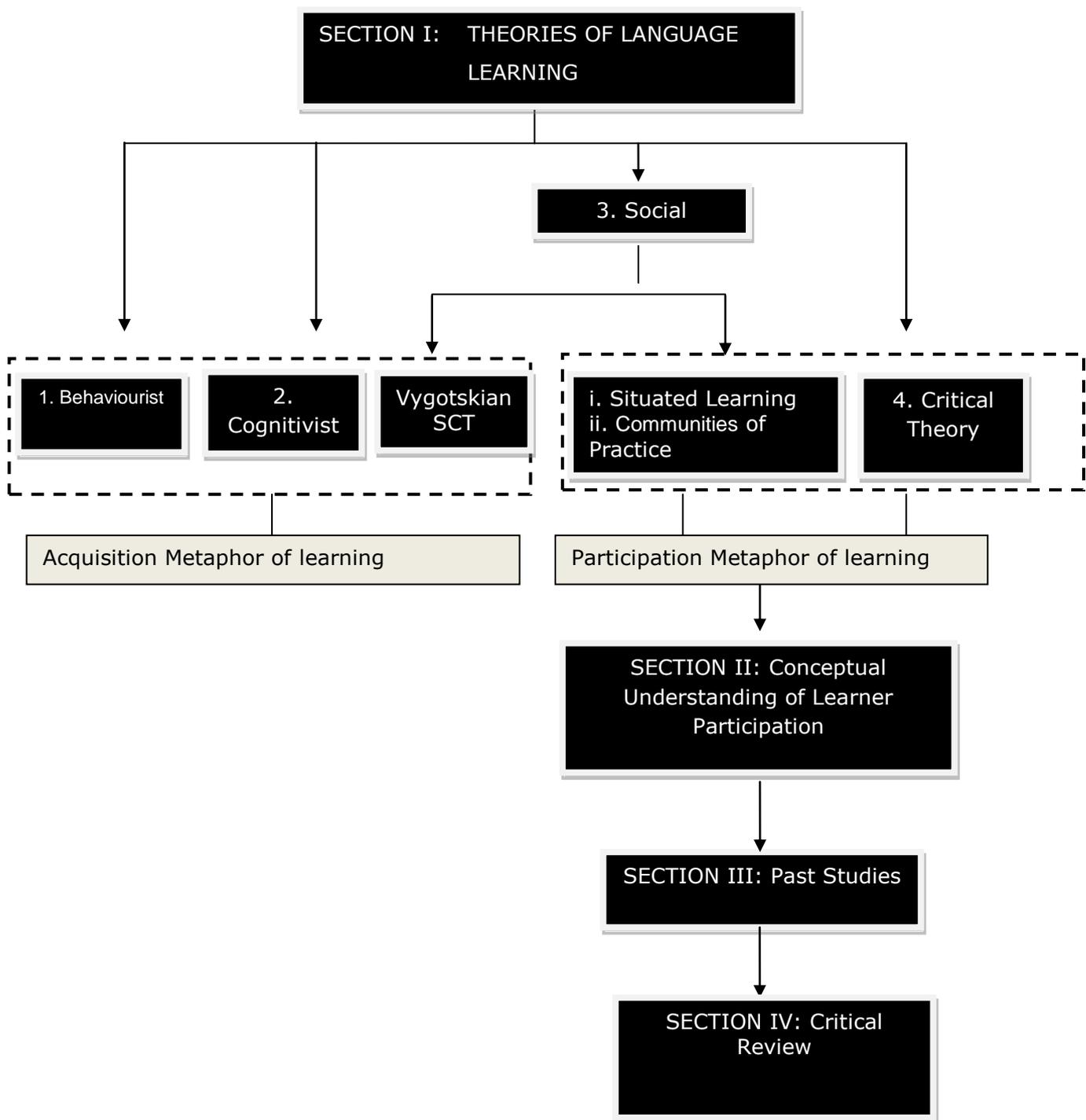


Figure 3.1 Structure of Chapter 3

SECTION I

3.1 Theories of Language Learning and Conceptions of Participation

There are many different theoretical perspectives on human learning discernible in the literature. Some view it as primarily a mental process, while others argue that it is a socially constituted phenomenon. Sfarid's (1998) widely cited adoption of two metaphors to distinguish ways of describing the relationship between the learner and the world which she calls the acquisition metaphor (AM) and participation metaphor (PM) are helpful in distinguishing the broad thrust of different theoretical perspectives and the place and role of participation in these. For those which can be seen as falling within the AM metaphor, she argues knowledge is regarded as a commodity that can be acquired, transferred, and shared; similar to other material possessions. She maintains that terms like *'knowledge acquisition'* and *'conceptual development'* have the connotation that the mind is like a *'container'* and that it needs to be filled with some "goods" which are transferred from the world to the individual. The learners will then become the "owners" of these special goods. Theories that focus on how internal mechanisms work during the learning processes and learners' attainments fit the AM. In these theories, participation, as a mechanism for learning, classically involves oral participation. In the PM, learning is seen as an enterprise of becoming a participant in a social milieu. Those theories that can be described as subscribing to a participatory view of learning focus on a view of learning as an unstable and on-going process of engagement in a social setting, where participation is seen as generating a learning opportunity rather than a means through which learners acquire information to be internally processed. From this perspective, learning is situated in participation which can take many different forms, oral but also non-oral.

In what follows I will elaborate on the different treatments of participation in different learning theories by focusing on the four most prevalent ones employed to examine second language learning. Namely, behaviourism,

cognitivism, Vygotskian social view of learning (and its lineages), and critical language learning theory. First, I will put forward my argument on how participation is configured in theories that fit with Sfarid's (1998) AM; namely behaviourism, cognitivism, and some lineages in Vygotskian social learning theory. Then, I will bring to light my own understanding of participation and learning drawing from the broader domain of Vygotskian sociocultural learning theory: situated learning theory, Communities of Practice and critical language learning theories; which are located within Sfarid's participation metaphor to describe learning.

3.1.1 Behaviourism

Behaviourism works on the premise that learning is the formation of habit. According to Thorndike (1913), habits that are formed can be strengthened or weakened based on the frequency of use. Application of this idea of learning in SLA means that in order for learners to learn a new language, they need to experience a series of practices that include pattern drills, memorisation of dialogues, choral repetition of the grammar rules (Richards, 2001), and these are followed by feedback by the teacher (Pica, 2005). In addition learners are not allowed to produce unstructured language because this might be detrimental to the formation of new habits (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Therefore, in behaviourism, learner participation is controlled by external factors i.e. the input from the teacher and is in the form of controlled oral engagement with the target language.

3.1.2 Cognitivism

My discussion of cognitivism in SLA is informed by work on psycholinguistics. Segalowitz and Lightbown state that psycholinguistics is a "science of mind, language, and learning" (1999: 43). In SLA, its concern is with the mental processes that underlie the acquisition of the linguistic structures of a second language (Segalowitz and Lightbown, *ibid.*). Cognitivism in SLA has its major

roots in the work of Chomsky (Pica, 2005). Chomsky, whose interest is in the knowledge of the language –competence, and not the use- performance (Brown, 1996), suggests that all humans are born with an innate ability to learn the language that resides in a language acquisition device or a ‘black box’. This ‘black box’ contains basic linguistic structures that are universal for all languages (Universal Grammar) (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Taking this view, minimal learner participation in the social world is required in order for learning to take place as the social world serves merely as a trigger for the innate human capacity for language learning (Gass & Selinker, 1994). As a psycholinguist, Chomsky has not attempted to theorise SLA (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Nevertheless, his work is influential in the development of cognitivist theories in SLA. The Input-Interaction-Output (IIO) model of learning (Gass, 1988, 1987) is one such example. Block (2003) sees the IIO model as the predominant model of SLA as it seeks to synthesis a number of insights into language learning made over the past few decades.

IIO is a cognitive model of learning but also seeks to incorporate those theories which have sought to address what Lightbown and Spada (1999) call interactionist models of SLA; primarily those put forwarded by Krashen (1982, 1985), Long (1985), and Swain (1985). Theories foregrounding this model of learning explain how interaction through negotiation of meaning, modified comprehension input, and opportunities for learners to produce language and test new output hypotheses may all lead to language learning (Krashen, 1982, 1985; Gass, 1997; Long, 1981; and Swain and Lapkin, 1995). Atkinson (2010) states that in this view of learning interaction assists the cognitive processes. Therefore he asserts that this view of learning belongs to cognitivism (ibid: 617); which relates to the acquisition metaphor of learning (see 3.1).

The IIO model provides a detailed explanation of the internal processes that lead to the acquisition of the linguistic structures of the language. These will not be discussed in detail here as my study embraces the social perspectives of learning. In this section, however, I will focus on the ‘surface phenomena’ (Block 2003), i.e. the input, the interaction, and the output, and provide an explanation

on how they configure learner participation. I will then provide my critique of this model of learning.

3.1.1.2.1 The IIO Model

In the IIO model, participation in oral activities is regarded as the primary form of engagement; where the aim is to acquire the linguistic systems of the target knowledge. This participation is first initiated by the input that is provided by the teacher. Krashen's (1982, 1985) input hypothesis suggests the formula $i+1$ (i) to describe that the input should be above the learners' current ability in difficulty. The input hypothesis is an attempt to encourage learners to participate in oral activities that resemble real meaningful communication as opposed to meaningless drills. This input will enable the learners to participate in interaction. Long (1985) asserts that during this interaction, learners participate in a process of negotiation of meaning. Learners, whose proficiency is characterised as deficient (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Block, 2003), will experience situations where the conversation is hampered due to their inability to express themselves in the target language, which requires them and their interlocutors (usually native speakers of the language) to be involved in negotiation of meaning. Swain (1995) suggests that learners who face problems while attempting to communicate in the second language will be forced to produce output that is clearer and more precise. This type of 'pushed output' as she terms it, is significant in this conception of language acquisition. In essence, this model reflects a way of understanding language learning that is based on the following assumptions; some of which are shared with behaviourism (i, ii, and iii) while others are insights from cognitivism (iv, v, and vi):

- i. The best way to learn is through oral participation.

In the traditional psycholinguistic orientation, The IIO model is used to describe the transmission of knowledge from the social world to the individual mind. In this model, there is a need for a medium that bridges the two separate dimensions: the social and the mental. Active participation in oral activities is

regarded as the primary means for the transmission of knowledge. Ellis (2008) suggests that the various kinds of interaction that take place in the classroom foster acquisition in two ways. First, it supplies learners with the linguistic data of the target language. Second, learners participating in oral interaction can also experiment using the language and receive the necessary feedback and correction (presumably from a teacher). Without oral participation, the learning process will be seriously affected. Behaviourism also regards active engagement in oral participation promoting a form of learning that is essentially habit formation.

ii. It depends on input.

In the IIO model, language learning begins with meaningful input from others not the learners themselves. As all theories of SLA have tended to delimit their focus to classroom learning settings, it is usually assumed that the others are the teachers. This input will be further explored and manipulated when learners produce utterances as they engage in oral activities (Long, 1981, 1985). Internally, this initial input will go through a series of transformations before it is eventually stored in the mind. It is assumed that the stages of processing the input are similar to all learners (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Similarly, behaviourism also construes learning as dependent on the language input provided by the teacher.

iii. It is concerned with the acquisition of linguistic system.

For those who are working within the information-processing model of learning (e.g. McLaughlin, 1987; Johnson, 1996), language learning is about the accumulation of the linguistic knowledge mainly through oral practice. Gass (1998:84), one of the leading names in cognitivism, maintains that her work essentially focuses on how the language system of the '*nonprimary language*' is acquired. She further adds that matters about the *use* of the second language are beyond the scope of her research. Equally, behaviourism focuses on the mastery of the structures of the target language where the objective is for learners to achieve fluency and accuracy.

iv. It is an individual undertaking.

Even though learners are required to participate in oral activities, the learning process itself takes place in the mind of an individual learner. To understand learning is to understand how this internal mechanism works. Mitchell and Myles (1998) list 4 main issues that are the concern of SLA researchers in the late 1970's, among them is the role of internal mechanism, as described in the IIO model. They state that for these researchers, the process of learning a language that includes processing, storing and retrieving the linguistic structures occurs in the individual mind of the learner (2001:12).

v. It is influenced by some deterministic variables.

In cognitivism, learning is said to be influenced by factors that are internal and stable. Variables like age, intelligence, personality, language aptitude, and motivation are seen to affect an individual's learning development and achievement (Mitchell & Myles, 1998: xi). Gardner and McIntyre (1992, 1993) refer to these variables as cognitive traits (intelligence, language aptitude, and learner strategies) and affective traits (motivation, attitude, and anxiety).

vi. The learner has a fixed identity.

In the IIO model of learning, the second language learners are seen to have only one identity: that is a struggling learner whose sole objective to learn the language, which is to achieve native -like proficiency. Firth and Wagner (1997) point out that those working within the IIO model of learning characterise non-native learners as having the identity of "defective communicators" (1997: 288), and that other identities that the learners have are seen as unimportant. Gass, et.al (2007) agree with the idea that these learners have other identities in their life, but they contend that not all of these identities surface at the same time. For them, some identities surface more in certain contexts and due to their preoccupation with in class and formal learning; they argue that these are irrelevant in SLA.

Firth and Wagner (1997) urge a reconceptualisation of SLA; which they maintain requires three main transformations: “(a) significantly enhanced awareness of the contextual and interactional dimensions of language use, (b) an increased emic sensitivity towards fundamental concepts, (c) broadening of the traditional SLA data base” (pg 268). Lafford (2007: 735-36) contends the 3 changes are needed for the following reasons:

- i. cognitivism tends to segregate language acquisition and language use, whereas in actual life, we learn a language by using it in various contexts and for various reasons;
- ii. cognitivists see second language learners as defective communicators as they tend to make conclusions by looking from outside (the etic approach); they do not take into consideration what the learners themselves have to say about their own learning (an emic approach);
- iii. cognitivism tends to focus on data gathered from the classroom. This is due to the view they believe that learning second language learning takes place primarily in the classroom.

Firth and Wagner’s proposition has generated a huge debate in the SLA domain, dividing scholars into those who are in total agreement with their view, some in partial agreement, and others in disagreement (Larsen-Freeman, 2007). Nonetheless, their intervention has stimulated SLA studies to incorporate a more diverse range of methodology and theoretical views (Swain & Deters, 2007). Specifically, this has led to much more emphasis on the social world in descriptions of second language learning.

3.1.3 Social View of Learning

This section begins with a discussion of the social view of learning as advocated by Vygotsky (in Werstch, 1985, 1991, 1998); where the foci are on the three tenets: the genetic law, the mediated mind and the social nature of learning. There is also a discussion of Vygotsky’s concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and how its different interpretations have led to the

emergence of different lineages of his social theory of learning, as well as different configurations of learner participation.

Vygotsky's work is particularly interesting because of his focus on the social nature of human development and learning, which is in contrast with individualistic theories of learning like behaviourism and cognitive psychology. In his theory of learning, Vygotsky puts forward 3 propositions with regard to understanding human mental development: the need for a holistic unit of analysis (the Genetic law), the view of the human mind as mediated by cultural artefacts (the Mediated Mind), and learning as an essentially social endeavour (Werstch, 1991). The three main tenets are discussed below:

i. The Genetic Law

Vygotsky believes that we can better comprehend the process of learning and higher mental functions by approaching them from a holistic unit of analysis that incorporates the cultural, institutional, and historical context (Werstch 1998). For Vygotsky, the most appropriate way to understand human mental development is by studying the process; not the product of development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). There are four different time frames or genetic domains; which are: phylogenetic, sociocultural, ontogenetic, and microgenetic. Phylogenetic is the most general level of development as it is about how humans adapt to the evolution that takes place. Sociocultural development looks at how symbolic artefacts change in line with cultural changes throughout history- how this development influences the kind of mediation used by a particular society, and how it influences their thinking. Ontogenetic development is a more encompassing one as it involves our development throughout the courses of lives. To illustrate, when a researcher decides to investigate how a child learns language over a period of several years she could be said to be studying development at the ontogenic level. Microgenetic development on the other hand is concerned with the moment-to-moment changes that we go through as we are engaged in an activity. Accordingly, the present study is carried out at the microgenetic domain as it attempts to understand various forms of

participation that take place throughout the informants' daily routines. Instead of focusing on the learning outcomes resulting from the various forms of participation, this study investigates the practices that take place in different social settings.

ii. The mediated mind

According to Vygotsky, our participation in a social activity is mediated by physical and symbolic artefacts (Lantolf and Johnson, 2007). Some examples of physical artefacts are newspapers, computers, and books, while symbolic artefacts include language, numbers, and symbols. He sees these artefacts as social in nature because they are created by our ancestors and are passed down to us. In other words these are “the products of sociocultural evolution” and are constantly changing (Wertsch, 1985: 30). Vygotsky postulates language as the most significant artefact in learning and puts precedence on the oral interaction as the medium through which learning takes place.

iii. The social nature of learning

Vygotsky regards the basic foundation of learning is that it is social in nature. Learning does not occur in the mind of the individual. He asserts that:

Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First, it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition...Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationship (1978: 57).

Wertsch (1985) cautions against seeing the interpsychological-intrapsychological relationship as a transfer model of learning where information that is accumulated from the external is copied into the mind. Instead, it is “a process

wherein an internal plane of consciousness is formed” (Wertsch 1985: 66). He further explains that the internal plane itself is “quasi-social” because it derives from the external plane i.e. the social interaction.

The interpersonal/ intrapersonal relationship is an important concept that separates Vygotsky’s theory of learning from other cognitive perspectives on learning. This important relationship places the interpersonal process as where learning takes place. It is learner participation in the social and cultural (the interpersonal) context that determines the whole learning process. Packer and Goicoechea (2000) refer this as the “nondualist ontology”, where the two entities- the social world and the learners- are not separated. The mental process (the intrapersonal) is seen as secondary in the development of human mental functioning. This is best elucidated by Vygotsky (1979) when he argues that *“The social dimension of consciousness (i.e., all mental processes) is primary in time and fact. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary”* (in Zuengler & Miller, 2006: 38). Unlike the cognitive perspective that views interaction as supporting mental development, Vygotsky’s social view of learning espouses that learning takes place in the interaction itself.

Based on Vygotsky’s social view of learning, two observations can be made about participation. First, participation requires resources. This is in line with Vygotsky’s idea of the mediated mind, where he asserts that humans learn through the use of physical and symbolic cultural artefacts. I see these cultural artefacts as resources that are available to the learners. The primary learning resource, as emphasised by Vygotsky, is language. Besides language, there are other forms of resources such as people from whom learners can learn or by whom are inspired to learn the target language; or resources ranging from television programmes and internet resources to books and leaflets in the second language. It is through the learners’ engagements with these resources that learning occurs. Second is Vygotsky’s assertion that learning takes place in social relations. These social relations happen in everyday activity, as aptly described by Zuengler and Miller (2006: 37): *“Participation in these activities*

(everyday life activities) *is both the product and the process of learning*". These social relations also occur everywhere, and are not constrained to any one specific location. Thus, learning does not happen only in the classroom. Even when the learner works alone at home, the particular resource that she is engaged with has been socially constructed. Therefore, she is still in a way, participating in a social activity.

Vygotsky's focus on language as the most potent artefact in learning has given rise to the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It refers to the distance between what a learner can accomplish when asked to work alone and upon receiving assistance from more proficient and knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). As a well recognized concept, the ZPD has been interpreted in different ways (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Kinginger, 2002). These different interpretations reflect researchers' different understanding of learning and different research interests.

3.1.3.1 ZPD and its interpretations

Although Vygotsky suggests embracing learning as an embodied endeavour; where there is no separation between body and mind, it is his concept of ZPD that is most accepted and has been used in various fields like developmental and educational psychology, general psychology, and mostly in educational research (Chaiklin, 2003: 39). In the following section, I will discuss the different interpretations of ZPD and how these have contributed to the emergence of the different lineages of Vygostky's social view of learning.

In SLA, the ZPD has been understood by many practitioners as a pedagogical tool (Kinging, 2002). Some associate it with Krashen's input hypothesis, while there are others who construe structured classroom interaction- the Initiation-Response-Feedback and the Initiation-Response-Evaluation- as the application of ZPD (Kinging, *ibid.*). There are also some who advocate the use of ZPD as

“dialogic interaction” (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994; Donato 1994 in Lantolf and Thorne, 2006); where ESL learners progress from other-regulation (with guidance) to self-regulation (without guidance). Based on the applications of ZPD in SLA, it could be said that this has been used to reinforce the acquisition metaphor (see 3.1) to describe second language learning and to help perpetuate a focus on cognitivist models of learning such as IIO. That is, ZPD is seen to complement the IIO model of SLA from two angles.

- i. A regard for oral participation as the primary form of engagement in a learning context

Hall and Verplaetse state that participation in oral interaction is an important concept in SLA (2000:1). As I have discussed earlier, in the cognitive approach to SLA, failure to participate in oral activities is seen as detrimental to the whole learning process. Likewise, the same orientation is also held by those working in the Vygotskian sociocultural theory framework. Vygotsky’s assertion that language is the most important artefact in learning through his conception of ZPD has spurred interest among SLA researchers to investigate how participation in oral interaction shapes the learning process. Active oral participation is championed especially in the area of language learning due to the nature of what is being learned; i.e. language. It is therefore regarded as logical to assume that the best way to learn a language is through oral practices.

- ii. An acknowledgement of the social-individual relationship in learning

Both perspectives see that learning involves, to a certain degree, the movement of knowledge from the social to the individual. Those who embrace a Vygotskian sociocultural theory of learning (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne (2006); Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994; Donato, 1994 in Lantolf and Thorne, 2006) do not go into the details of the internal mechanism like the cognitivists, but ultimately, their concern is still on human mental development i.e. an individual’s learning. In recent years

there has been a growing move towards acknowledging more socio-cognitivist models among second language learning theorists (see for example Atkinson, 2010 and Hill, 2006). It needs to be acknowledged that the Vygotskian sociocultural theory of learning is at variance with the cognitive approaches, as described below:

SCT (sociocultural theory) is a theory of mediated mental development, it is most compatible with theories of language that focus on communication, cognition, and meaning rather than on formalist positions that privilege structure (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006 : 4).

In other words, those who employ the SCT as their theoretical framework to understand learning in SLA concern with the kind of language used that mediate thinking (Lantolf & Thorne, *ibid.*: 4), not merely the structure of the language acquired by the second language learners as is the case of the cognitive approaches.

ZPD has also served as an inspiration for those favouring a more participatory model of learning. Lave and Wenger (1991) provide three interpretations of ZPD. The “scaffolding” interpretation refers to the pedagogical approach that focuses on providing guided assistance to learners. In the “cultural” interpretation, ZPD is seen to be the distance between the knowledge that is taught and knowledge that is gained from everyday experience. In the “collectivist” or “societal” perspective of ZPD, the focus is on the processes of social transformation (Lave and Wenger, *ibid.*).

They argue that the “scaffolding” and “cultural” interpretations of ZPD concern “individualistic acquisition” of conceptual knowledge, and that *“the social character of learning mostly consists in a small ‘aura’ of socialness”* (pg 48). In contrast, Lave and Wenger (1991) position their work in the societal perspective of ZPD where they state that their research interest is in the changing relation between newcomers and “old-timers” in a social practice (pg 49). Their work

attempts to understand the forms of social engagement that afford the context for learning to occur.

The present study, with its focus on how learners participate in learning opportunities, is parallel with Lave and Wenger's domain of research. It attempts to argue for a richer conceptualisation of learner participation; thus, a focus on ZPD and an individual's linguistic gains (e.g. Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) are not the foci of research. Rather, it is aligned more with the work of those like Lave and Wenger who promote a more socially constituted and situated understanding of learning.

3.1.3.2 Situated Learning

Lave and Wenger (1991) define learning as the *“process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice”* (pg 29). In their concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation, learning is a process whereby newcomers progress towards full participation in becoming knowledgeable and skilled members of a community. In this sense, a broader definition of participation is required because engagement in oral participation per se clearly is not sufficient if one wishes to become a part of a community. Wenger describes participation as *“a complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging, and social relations.”*(1998: 56). In sum, each little thing one does- both personal and social- with the intention of becoming a member of a particular community could be recognised as a form of participation.

By advocating that learning is a process of progressing from being a newcomer to a more skilled and knowledgeable member of a community, Lave and Wenger (1991) have reconceptualised the role of learners in learning. In their theory, learners play active roles; they take initiatives to learn through active participation in the social world. Through their engagements with others and the available resources in the community, learners move from being novices to more skilled members.

In this theory, there is a strong link between learning and identity. As learners learn the proper way of “doing things” in the particular community, they will develop their identities. These identities will generate membership. Wenger (1998) provides a model to understand the different ways of belonging, which appears in Figure 3.2.

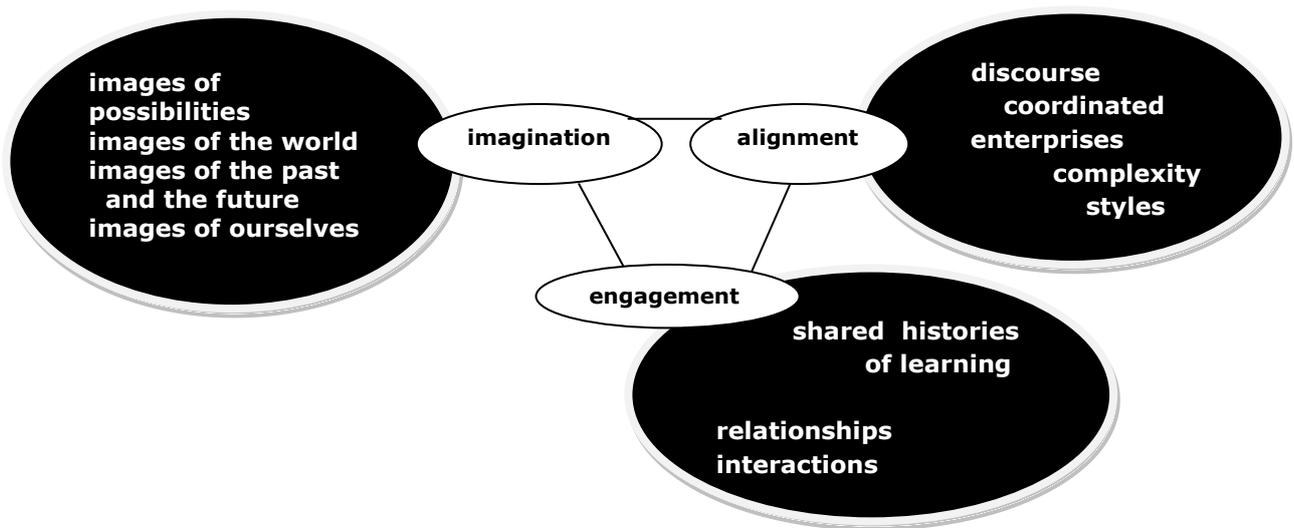


Figure 3.2 Modes of Belonging (Wenger 1998: 174)

There are 3 modes of belonging. The first is through our engagement. Learners form their identities as they actively participate in a social practice through their interaction with other participants in the community and also access to enable the use of available resources.. The second mode of belonging is through imagination. This refers to seeing oneself belonging to a community beyond the present one. In this mode of belonging, learners in a sense create their identities in relation with their membership of the imagined community (Norton, 2001). The third mode of belonging is alignment, where learners align themselves with the larger community. In this mode of belonging, learners coordinate their actions with what is being practised by the larger community and through participation, they create their identities. In relation to the three modes of belonging, it could be said that in a particular classroom community, learners develop their identities through different forms of engagement with the

available resources in English. The realm of their community also extends to the imagined one where they see themselves using the language in larger contexts. ESL learners in one classroom community also coordinate their forms of engagement with the larger ESL classroom community. These three modes of belonging might require different forms of learner participation. Wenger (1998) also highlights the idea of non-participation. According to Wenger (ibid.), we form our identities “*not only by what we are but also by what we are not*” (p. 164). In other words, not conforming to the standard practice is also a way of forming our identity in a community, such as when an ESL learner chooses not to participate orally, where she might be creating an identity to be a member of an imagined community.

Fundamentally, situated learning theory and Communities of Practice (CoP) propose a broader understanding of participation. First, its concept of legitimate peripheral participation implies that broader and more varied participation is required in order for learners to become successful members of the ESL community. Through the various forms of participation, learners will learn not only the core knowledge but also the more nuanced ones the “*the learning of knowledgeable skills*” (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 29). To illustrate, in an ESL Malaysian classroom it could be assumed that the main intention is to learn aspects of the target language such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and others. Learners are expected to participate in a certain manner that is believed to be facilitative of learning. This is normally active oral participation. However, while the teacher is trying to get the learners to engage in a lesson, there are other kinds of learning that are taking place in the classroom. Learners are also learning about the trade of becoming better learners, they learn how to negotiate their way in the classroom. Pope (1999, as cited in Boaler, 1999), reveals that students spend a considerable amount of time learning how to function in the classroom community. This kind of learning, though it might appear trivial, augments the “core learning” of the subject. Various forms of participation are needed in order for learners to learn these “*knowledgeable skills*”, which include both oral and non-oral.

Secondly, it can be inferred that certain types of participation are more favoured in certain communities. This could be due to the resources that are available in a particular setting. In most ESL classrooms the most favoured form of participation is oral. Hence, the teacher would tend to create opportunities that are believed to encourage learners to speak, such as by asking questions (Cullen, 2002) or assigning learners to work collaboratively (Storch, 2002; Watanabe and Swain, 2007).

Haneda (2006) after reviewing two SLA studies that employ the CoP framework (Toohey, 1998, 2000; Morita, 2004) states that the concept of legitimate peripheral participation has two limitations. First, Haneda stipulates that there is a tendency of the term 'participation' to become a 'black box' (ibid.: 812); where all types of learning are assumed to occur. She argues that there is a need to identify the form of participation and the type of learning that arises from it. The present study addresses this issue by investigating and categorising the various forms of participation that might serve as platforms for the acquisition of the target language. However, identification of the type of learning in relation to the participation is beyond its scope.

Second, the concept of community is not well interrogated. It is assumed that all members in a community have equal opportunities to participate. This is not always true as Toohey (1998), in her study, shows that the children whom she observes are not given an equal participatory opportunity through the physical arrangement of the classroom. Lave and Wenger (1991: 42) admit that the issue of unequal power relations has not been critically analysed in their learning theory.

Due to the shortcomings in Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (1998) work, in what follows I will turn to critical language learning theories (Block, 2007; Norton, 2000; Norton and Toohey, 2004; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Peirce, 1995; Pennycook, 2001) to develop a more nuanced understanding of individuals in relation to learning contexts, and also what a learning setting is,

as different settings afford different sorts of opportunities and forms of participation.

3.1.4 The Significance of Setting and Individual Agency to Understand Learning as Participation

Pennycook (2001) declares that *“a crucial component of critical work is always turning a sceptical eye towards assumptions, ideas that have become ‘naturalised’, notions that are no longer questioned”* (p. 7). To illustrate, the issue of identities in language learning that has been conceived as unimportant in the cognitive approaches to SLA is being critically investigated by researchers working in the critical theory framework. Norton and Toohey (2004) state that researchers who work with critical approaches are interested in investigating the link between language and social change. For them language is not only a medium of communication; it is a social practice that is formed by how language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their future (p.1). In a similar vein, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) construe identity as a product of both local and global relations of power. In the context of the present study, the issue of learner participation that has long been taken for granted in cognitive approaches to SLA is being questioned and will be further interrogated.

Norton (2000) has critically interrogated the relationship between ESL learners and the community. Her study shows that oral participation in the target language community is not necessarily a straightforward endeavour, as expounded in cognitive SLA. This is because the community in which these learners live is complicated by the issues of power, and this has deeply affected the learners in her study, who are immigrants, opportunities to practise the language with native speakers.

Norton employs the conception of subjectivity (Weedon, in Peirce 1995) in her work, where it is defined as *“the conscious and unconscious thoughts and*

emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 15). In other words, subjectivity is about how a person sees herself in relation to the social world. Subjectivity has three characteristics: it has a multiple nature, as a site of struggle, and it can change over time (Norton, *ibid.*). To illustrate, a woman in her study has multiple identities: as an immigrant, a language learner, a worker, and a wife. Her identity as an immigrant has affected her self confidence to speak the language because she sees herself as "stupid" and "inferior" (Norton, 1995: 21). However, assuming the identity as a wife and the primary caregiver in the family, she is able to have a long telephone conversation with her Canadian landlord to protect her family from being evacuated. It is also in this context that subjectivity is a site of struggle since it can change over time. Another woman in her study chooses to remain silent due to her lack of ability to speak "proper" English as she does not want to be marginalised as an immigrant. In her study, Norton has successfully shown that learners' identity is an important factor in learning a language and also that it is not a fixed and stable construct.

Norton (2000) also introduces the concept of *investment* in second language learning. She uses this term to replace the notion of motivation used by Gardner and Lambert (1972). They suggest that motivation in second language learning can be divided into two types: instrumental (for utilitarian purposes, such as employment) and integrative (to integrate with the target community). Norton (*ibid.*) feels that this does not capture the complexity of second language learning that is influenced by factors like power and identity. Norton describes how her notion of investment embraces the learner's social history and desires in life. She further proposes that "*an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity*" (p. 11). Learners invest in language learning to gain symbolic (status) and material resources, which will positively affect their identity in the target language community.

Critical language learning theories are also helpful in explaining learners' various forms of participation in certain situations. In Norton's (2000) study, the women exercise their subjectivity either to claim the right to speak with the

native speakers or to reject being positioned as immigrants. While subjectivity concerns how one positions oneself in the social world, agency (Ahern 2001) is seen as a product of a sociocultural practice. In other words, Norton views it as an internal construct, while Ahern suggests that it is one's response towards the external factors that present in a particular context that she is in. Ahern (ibid.) in her discussion of agency, defines it as "*the socioculturally mediated capacity to act*"...where "*all action is socioculturally mediated, both in its production and its interpretation*" (p. 121). Lantolf and Thorne (2006) caution that agency is not to be mistaken with free will, independent thinking, or an inborn trait. It is also not something that is developed autonomously, free from the influence of other social beings. Agency is formed as one participates in any practice that is rich with historical, cultural, and social elements. What one does and how others construe the act are embedded in the sociocultural context.

In critical language learning theories, learner participation is addressed in a complex way. The issue of asymmetrical power relations, that exist both in the classroom setting and outside impinges on learner participation. So, when learners participate, it is a way of them exercising their agency in a particular social practice. The various forms of participation- oral and non-oral- are all significant in their process of learning a second language.

In the context of the present study, I see the learners as having agency. By embracing the importance of agency, it also means that the traditional view of learners as passive recipients of knowledge is also rejected. Learner agency is a significant factor that has to be acknowledged in an attempt to gain an understanding of learner inclination towards participation of different types. Lantolf and Pavlenko state that "*learners actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning*" (2001: 145). In their view, when learners decide to participate in a learning activity, their actions have significance. According to them "*It is agency that links motivation...to action and defines a myriad of paths taken by the learners*" (ibid.). This is an important insight in my attempt to understand learner participation. Their participation cannot be seen as a routine that is linked to various internal factors like

language aptitude, motivation, personality, and anxiety (Ellis, 2008). Learner participation and agency are intertwined. This important relationship shapes the way learners participate as they encounter learning opportunities.

3.1.5 The Role of Setting in Learning: in and out-of-class learning

By employing a more complex understanding of participation, where there are various forms of participation and that these are ways for learners to exercise their agency, it means that this study also argues for a broader conception of learning environment than is typically explored in research into second language learning. This is one which aims to emphasize more what it provides to the learners, and the different ways that learners might participate in it. This section provides a discussion of the different environments learners may engage in and the sorts of opportunities these provide. This is done by considering the very relevant argument regarding in-class and out-of-class learning.

In the cognitive approach, it is assumed that there is a correlation between in-class learning with formal (educational) setting, and out-of-class learning with an informal (natural) setting. Krashen (1985), in his acquisition-learning hypothesis, posits that learners learn a language in a formal setting and they acquire it in a non-formal one. Learning requires conscious effort, while acquisition occurs subconsciously. In this hypothesis, Krashen (ibid.) stresses that there will be no interface between the two ways of learning, and that acquisition is superior to learning. The learning-acquisition dichotomy (Krashen, ibid.) implies that in both situations, learners need to only participate in oral interaction in order to learn the target language (as I have discussed in Section 1 of this chapter).

Colley et.al.(2003) investigate the concept of non-formal learning by making an exhaustive analysis of the available literature on lifelong learning, adult education, workplace learning, and mentoring. They find that there are no clear

cut characteristics of formal and non-formal learning. Instead, they conclude that “*formal and informal dimensions are always, or almost always present in any learning situation, no matter how small*” (p 37). Participation in any complex social practice has dimensions of both formal and non-formal learning. Some attributes of formality and non-formality can be present in either setting as learning is a “*social practice in the lived-in world*” (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 5). Edward and Miller (2007: 265) state that “*Practices and learning are not bounded by context but emerge relationally and are polycontextual*”. Thus, we cannot have a dichotomy of forms of participation; all types of participation can occur at any one setting. However, as I have argued earlier, in SLA, oral participation is essentialised over other types of participation. In the classroom, learning activities are shaped to afford oral participation. This has led to the view that other types of participation are insignificant, or even detrimental to learning (in particular, non-oral participation). It is the intention of the present study to explore whether this is necessarily true, especially from the point of view of the learners themselves.

The present study embraces a social view of learning; where learning is seen as an embodied endeavour. Learning does not take place in the mind of an individual. It occurs as one participates in a particular community. This perspective of learning also alters my understanding of learner participation, which I will discuss in the next section.

SECTION II

3.2 Towards a Broader Definition of Participation in Second Language Learning

This study argues for a richer and a more complex understanding of participation in second language learning, and it acknowledges the learners in a more holistic sense. By focusing on participation and employing a broader definition of it, a more in-depth understanding can be gained about learners and their learning, as this inquiry involves studying the whole person as they participate in a particular activity that is situated in a sociocultural context. What follows are my principles for understanding and researching participation.

3.2.1 Participation is not only oral.

Learner participation during the learning process has long been considered a prerequisite for successful acquisition. In the earlier sections of this chapter I have explained how the different theories of second language learning i.e. behaviourist, cognitivist, and Vygotskian sociocultural theory espouse differing interpretations of what language learning entails. Nevertheless, all these theories seem to share common ground in what seems to be the most desirable way to learn a language- through participation in oral activities. Oral participation is considered as a means of enhancing input, that is thus transferred to the learners. This is validated by numerous studies that focus exclusively on how, through participation in oral activities, learners gain linguistic knowledge and other aspects of the target language that are necessary to develop their abilities. The emphasis that is given on oral participation is so great that being quiet in class is seen as detrimental to the learning process. However, in Situated Learning Theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), a much broader view of learning is provided; it is viewed as participation in becoming a member of a community.

With this definition, focusing only on the oral engagement seems to be a narrow view of understanding what participation entails as there is more involved in becoming a member of a community than oral participation. Subscribing to this view of participation leads to a narrow approach to the learning process itself. In an ESL classroom, learners are sometimes forced to speak under circumstances that might cause them uneasiness as teachers believe that learning can best be achieved through participation in oral activities. As a result, such learners sometimes resort to silence when they feel that they could lose face (Kim & Yang, 2010).

ESL learners might also choose to become non-participants due to the unequal power relation that exists in a particular context. Non-participation, which is usually interpreted as not participating in interactional activities is often seen as harmful in the L2 domain. The present study suggests that non-oral participation is not viewed as detrimental to their learning process. Instead, it is seen as another form of participation that is chosen by the learners themselves and might be meaningful to them in their process of learning the language.

3.2.2 Participation occurs in different places.

In the SLA domain, the focus is primarily on participation that occurs in the classroom. Hence, the research interest is to investigate the kinds of resources that are available within the four walls of the classroom. If learning is viewed as a cognitive process (as in the IIO model) that involves transfer, then it would seem to imply a need to focus on formal instruction, or instructed SLA (Ellis, 2005). However, there is a need to acknowledge learners' engagement with resources that are available in their lived experience outside the classroom because learners only spend a limited time in school. In Malaysia, there are five English lessons a week, with each period running between 35 and 40 minutes. With the introduction of the new policy ("Upholding Bahasa Melayu, Strengthening English), the number of hours dedicated to English should have been increased (as already noted in 2.6). Learners are most of the time outside the school. They spend time at home and in the community. As English is an

important language in Malaysia, it is widely available in these natural settings and due to this learners encounter various resources in English in their everyday life (see 2.4). These various resources afford different kinds of engagement. This engagement, which is not necessarily oral, could be significant to the individual learner. Unlike resources in the classroom that are limited and designed specifically for learning, the resources outside available serve myriad purposes. Learners choose to engage with the resources according to their individual needs and interests. This is more meaningful compared with engagement with resources that are predetermined and selected by others (teachers and policy makers) for the explicit purposes of school learning and which reflect the needs and interests of others.

3.2.3 Participation plays a number of purposes

When a learner participates, it is not always for learning as is straightforwardly assumed by both SLA researchers and practitioners. Within the social view of learning, participation serves other important roles such as becoming a member of a current or future community (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Lave, 1998) and exercising one's agency (Block, 2007; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Pennycook, 2001).

In their Situated Learning Theory, Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), define learning as a process of gaining entry to the community. In terms of learning English, learners not only need to learn how to speak according to the correct grammar, they also need to learn how to be in an ESL classroom community. Duff (2007: 309) postulates that when one learns a second language, he or she does not only acquire the language system and learn how to use the language according to contexts; learning is holistic and entails adopting the *“appropriate identities, ideologies, and behaviours”* related to the ESL classroom community as well as the larger Malaysian ESL community that they belong to or aspire to gain membership of. ESL learners also participate to gain entry in the imagined community (Norton, 2001). The teacher is not able to know this imagined community. Therefore, what she offers in class might not be

of the learners' interests. This might eventually result in the learners resorting to non-oral participation.

The second role of participation is to exercise agency. Learners are not mere receivers of knowledge. They respond to the context in ways that are at times unpredictable. Sometimes, one might observe two opposing characteristics of a learner. In the classroom, she is very quiet and 'passive'. However, the same learner is found to be lively and chatty outside the classroom. In the cognitive approach to SLA, this learner will be categorised as unmotivated and introvert in nature. However, if she is understood as a person who has human agency, it is possible to understand her decision to be quiet in a more positive manner.

3.2.4 Participation is conditional on the resources, the circumstances and the orientation of learners.

An in-depth understanding of participation can be gained by acknowledging that it happens in relation to the resources, the circumstances, and the orientation of the learners. English-medium resources are available either in-class or out-of-class settings. These resources afford certain kinds of participation. A circumstance is a particular situation that a learner is in. There could be some issues that are inherent in a particular circumstance such as power relationships. An asymmetrical power relationship might influence the way a learner participate in a particular resource. Orientation is the manner of engagement or how learners choose to act when they encounter English-medium resources. These three factors have to be taken together to gain a broader conception of participation.

Based on this richer and more complex understanding of participation, in the following section I will analyse how learner participation has been previously investigated in SLA.

SECTION III

3.3 Empirical Studies into Second Language Learner Participation

This section is divided into three sub-sections. In this first sub-section I will discuss previous studies that have looked into the issue of learner participation, where the focus is mostly on in-class learning. As the present study also looks at out-of-class learning, the second sub-section looks at studies that have been done on out-of-class learning. This will then be followed by the third sub-section where I provide my critique of the studies based on the 4 principles that I have outlined in 3.2

3.3.1 Previous Studies into ESL Learner Participation

In what follows I will examine some past studies that have looked into the issue of learner participation. The purpose is twofold: first is to draw attention to some major trends in the research on learner participation, (mostly) in-class and out-of-class learning and second to highlight the different ways learner participation has been understood reflecting different research interests.

For more than 30 years learner participation has been the focus of many ESL classroom studies. Studies have been mainly carried out to find out how participation in oral activities enhances the learning process. This stems from the cognitive orientation to learning that has long dominated ESL theory and practice. The first strand of research is as summarised by Ellis (2008) (see Table 3.1). Day (1984) defines classroom participation as “*responses to teachers’ general solicits and self-initiated turns*” (p. 70). His work is drawn upon work by Seliger (1977; in Day, *ibid.*) that examines the role of oral interaction in second language learning. Studies in this first strand of research have been conducted to find out the relationship between learners’ oral and other overt types of participation such as hand raising, with their performance in the target language. These studies have used quantitative data as evidence of learners’

attainments of the grammatical, lexical, vocabulary, pronunciation, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competence. Overall, these studies reflect the assumption that learners depend on the teacher's input in order to learn the target language. The focus of these studies is on the teacher's use of the language and learners' responses to the questions and other linguistic clues provided by the teacher.

| Study | Subjects | Measures of participation | Measures of learning | Results |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Seliger 1977 | 6 adults learning English | Amount of oral interaction; any speech act counted as interaction; initiation and responses scored separately | Cloze test; structure test; aural comprehension test | Total interaction scores correlated significantly with structure and aural comprehension tests; proportion of initiations correlated significantly with aural comprehension test. |
| Naiman <i>et al.</i> 1978 | Learners of L2 French in Grades 8, 10, and 12 in schools in Canada | Various measures of classroom behaviour (e.g. student hand-raising, student complete/partial responses; student correct /incorrect responses | Comprehension test; imitation test | Hand-raising, complete responses, correct responses, and number of responses over 10 significantly related to both criterion measures. Negative correlations for incorrect/partially correct responses found. |
| Strong 1983, 1984 | 13 kindergarten pupils in bilingual classrooms | Responses to utterances produced by others | Various measures of linguistic correctness, vocabulary and pronunciation based on classroom speech | Children's responsiveness correlated significantly with proficiency measures. |
| Day 1984 | 26 adult learners of L2 | Responses to teacher general solicits; English self-initiated turns | Oral proficiency assessment of grammatical, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competence; cloze test | No significantly relationships between measures of participation and criterion measures reported. |
| Ely 1986b | 72 first year adult learners of L2 Spanish; half in first and half in second quarter | Number of self-initiated utterances in Spanish; i.e. volunteering a question or a response | Oral fluency in a story-reproduction task; oral correctness (based on error count); written correctness | Weak relationship between participation and oral correctness found for first quarter students; no other significant relationships found. |

Table 3.1 Classroom-based studies of learner participation (Ellis, 2008: 810)

The second strand of research focuses on investigating the kind of teacher talk that would create opportunities for learners to participate in oral activities (Boyd

and Maloof, 2000; Cullen, 2002; Consola, 2000; Jarvis and Robinson, 1997; Lee and Ng, 2010). To illustrate, Boyd and Maloof (2000) study teacher talk in a 10-week course on American language and culture attended by 9 Asian ESL learners. Their study shows that the teacher, through her talk, had successfully orchestrated and provided support that encouraged learner oral participation, with an increase in overall student talk although these learners were reportedly not used to participating in oral interaction in class. These studies show that teacher talk can encourage learners to engage in meaningful oral participation. These studies and the studies highlighted by Ellis were conducted to understand how teachers could employ appropriate strategies through their language use to promote learner oral participation.

The third strand of research has used the Vygotskian SCT framework to study learner participation in the learning process. These studies focus on the mediation process (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994; McCormick and Donato, 2000; Swain and Lapkin, 1995; Ohta, 2000; De Guerrero and Villamil, 2000). Some of these studies look at the oral interaction between the expert and the novice; and how the expert assists the novice to work in their ZPD (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994; McCormick and Donato, 2000). A study by McCormick and Donato (2000) show that a teacher's use of questions can provide scaffolded assistance to the learners and thus create more oral participation opportunities in the classroom. Other studies investigate how ESL learners, when asked to work together, could assist each other to learn the language (Swain and Lapkin, 1995, Ohta, 2000; De Guerrero and Villamil, 2000). Ohta (2000) conducted a longitudinal study on peer mediation among Japanese college students. She found that learners benefited from interacting with both their more and less proficient peers.

It is worth noting how these three research strands have adopted a configuration of learner participation that is in line with the cognitivist models of learning, mainly with the focus on oral participation and the extent of teacher input, control and manipulation. These reflect the prevalence of the acquisition metaphor for understanding participation.

The fourth strand of research investigates learner participation through two theoretical lenses: critical theory and CoP. Studies that employed critical theory usually investigate the link between identity and language learning (Atay and Ece, 2009; Harklau, 2000; Ibrahim, 1999; Lee, 2003; Liang, 2006; MacKay and Wong, 1996). To illustrate, some studies investigate ESL learners' oral participation using their first language (Lee, 2005; Liang, 2006; MacKay and Wong, 1996). In the cognitive approach of SLA, the use of first language is not encouraged. This stems from '*monolingual bias*' (Kachru, 1994: 798) that views acquiring a second language requiring learners to be able to use as proficiently as native speakers. Looking at this issue through the lens of identity has provided a better understanding of why learners choose to participate in oral interaction using their first language. Liang's (2006) research participants were a group of Chinese immigrant students in an American ESL classroom. She has found that the students in her study are concerned that using English with their Chinese friends might jeopardise their friendship or they might even be alienated from the group. Their constant instances of code switching reflect this confusion and their multiple investments in language and identity. A similar dilemma is also faced by adults in a postcolonial country Malaysia. A study is done to investigate the relationship between the use of English as a second language and the construction of identities in a multicultural postcolonial Islamic society (Lee, 2003). The findings reveal that these ESL adult learners deliberately switch their identities (through their choice of language) according to the contexts that they are in.

Also drawing on critical theory, a study by Harklau (2000) shows that learners exercise their agency through different forms of participation. Harklau's study (ibid.) looks at how shifting from the secondary to college level affects a group of ESOL learners in America. At the secondary level, these learners were seen as having good language learner identities: hardworking and courageous. When these students entered college, they were placed together with other newcomers to ESOL. Here, the teachers viewed all immigrant learners as novices and in need of full support. As a result, the longer term ESOL learners

were imagined to be in the same situation, and thus their previous linguistic knowledge was ignored. The longer term ESOL learners exercised agency by not paying attention in class. There were learners who intentionally engaged themselves in other tasks during the lesson or made rather rude remarks to the teacher. There were also those who went to the extreme by deciding not to attend the class. As a result, the teachers in college regarded them as uncooperative and lazy. In this study, the learners felt that the teacher's tendency to generalise them to be of lower proficiency- almost like new ESOL learners in the class, the teaching approaches used and the resources that the teacher provided were not in line with their actual potential in the second language. Because of this, even though they were exposed to different kinds of learning opportunities in the classroom the learners chose not participate in them. These learners exercised their agency by engaging in non-participatory ways.

Other studies have used Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning (1991) and Wenger's CoP as theoretical perspectives (Morita, 2004; Wiltse, 2006; Toohey, 1998). Toohey (ibid.) observed a group of children for 3 years (from kindergarten to Grade 2). Using the CoP, she investigated how these children learned the target language through their participation in classroom social life. Her study reveals that some of the classroom rules set by the teachers, such as arranging the seating positions according to the children's language abilities, deprived some learners from participating in certain opportunities like interacting with more proficient peers. In another study, Morita (2004) investigated six postgraduate female students in Canada and their participation in open-ended discussion. She finds that the students faced two major challenges: to gain access to participate in the academic discourse, and to be recognised as legitimate members of the community. Wiltse (ibid.) studied a group of ESL learners in a Language Arts class also in Canada. She argues that by employing the CoP as the theoretical framework, she is able to understand why certain events happen in a particular situation. For example, in the classroom that she studied, she was perplexed by the teacher's reluctance to initiate discussions. Further investigations revealed that the teacher had difficulties getting the learners to participate in oral activities.

In general, previous studies on ESL learner participation could be divided into two main orientations: cognitive and social. Studies done within the cognitive orientation are mainly interested in finding out how teachers could promote learners' oral participation through teachers' own use of the language and the kinds of interaction that could enhance learners' acquisition of the target language. Another strand of research investigates learner participation by drawing on work on critical theory and CoP. Studies investigate both learner oral participation and the lack of it. This type of research usually employs identity as the central research construct and highlights the complexity of identity in language learning and how it could affect learner participation in various ways.

Although these studies are significant in helping us gain better understanding of learner participation, they are rather limited in several ways. First, there is a tendency for researchers to focus on just one community i.e. the classroom. As a matter of fact, we know that learners at any one time belong to various communities of practice. Next, in these studies, learner participation is often examined while the learners are working with others in a particular community. In reality, there are times when learners are alone, such as when they are in the confines of their room at home. As I have mentioned earlier, being alone is still a way of participating as the English-medium resources the learners engage with are socially constructed. Hence, the learners could be said to be participating in a social activity. Addressing learner participation even when they are in their room reflects an understanding of the importance of out-of-class learning too. In short, learner participation still takes place in this situation but as yet there is no known study that looks into such participation.

3.3.2 Previous Studies on Out-of-Class Learning

Most research on ESL out-of-class learning has been mainly carried out to investigate learner autonomy: the capacity to take charge of, responsibility for,

or control over one's learning (Benson, 2001). Some studies examine ESL learners' experiences during study abroad stints and how these affect their learning of the target language (Kemp, 2010; Tanaka and Ellis, 2003). Kemp (ibid.) studies the use of a listening log by a group of study abroad students. The students were asked to keep a reflective journal of their listening experiences in out-of-class settings such as going out with friends, watching a television programme, or making a call to their landlord. The tutor viewed the logs at regular intervals and provided the students with individual feedback and guidance. Kemp concluded that through the use of the logs, the learners were more motivated to try out various strategies to improve their listening skills and consequently developed their proficiency in this skill.

Another line of studies examines learners' use of technology such as their engagement with English-medium resources provided in self-access centres and the effects on their learning (Lee, 1998; McDonough and Sunitham, 2009). McDonough and Sunitham (ibid.) carried out a qualitative study on Thai learners' collaborative dialogue while engaging with a multimedia software programme that was available at the university resource centre. Findings showed that these learners talked about the forms of the target language while they were working on the tasks available in the software.

Some studies on out-of-class learning focus on the various learning strategies that learners employ in out-of-class settings (Freeman, 1999; Gao, 2008; Hyland, 2004; Inozu, et al, 2010; Marefat and Barbari, 2009; Pearson, 2003; Pickard, 1996;). Pickard (ibid.) studied a group of German speaking students learning English at a university. He used questionnaires to find out the learners' activities and strategies to learn the language outside class. He also interviewed some of the learners. Findings from the study indicate that the learners mainly focused on receptive skills; they reported reading the newspapers and novels, listening to the radio, and watching English television programmes. (Gao, ibid.) studied the experiences of a group of adult learners in mainland China participating in an English Corner. These English Corners were meeting hubs for learners to practise speaking the language with others. They also had

special functions such as English speech or singing contests. Many participants felt that the clubs provided a supportive environment for them to engage in oral practice of the target language.

Learners' engagement with the internet, online games, blogging, and e-mailing, and how these benefit their learning (e.g. Bhattacharya and Chauhan, 2010; Hwang and Piazza; Tan, et al, 2010) have also been the focus of some studies on out-of-class learning. Tan (et al. *ibid*) investigates the online activities and writing practices of urban Malaysian adolescents. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. The learners' short messages were also analysed. Findings reveal that the learners most actively engaged in writing messages on *Friendster*, an international social networking site. Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010) conducted a study on blogging among a group of advanced ESL learners at a university in India. As part of their course requirement, these learners were asked to produce their own blogs. Findings show that these learners developed autonomy over time as they were able to make their own decisions of what is best for their project (i.e. developing blogs), and that their English language proficiency developed after working on this project.

It could be said that research into out-of-class learning mainly follows certain trends. The first trend is to focus on examining learning in a less structured environment, where there is still a strong link with what the learners do in class. This is to investigate the extent to which learners can learn independently outside the class and how further support could be provided through their in-class learning. Another focus is on learners' engagements with various technological resources that are available in formal institutions (schools or universities) to enhance their learning of the target language. The second trend is of studies that are mainly surveys on what learners do outside the classroom. In this type of study, both quantitative and qualitative data are used to find out the kinds of activities ESL learners engage in and the strategies employed to learn the language. The third trend tends to focus on learners' engagement with English medium resources and their specific linguistic attainments from the

engagement. There is, however, no known study that specifically looks at learner engagement with English-medium resources that are available outside class as part of their daily routine.

SECTION IV

3.4 Critical Review of Previous Studies

In this section I will provide my critique of the above mentioned studies based on the 4 principles of a broader understanding of learner participation that I have suggested earlier. There is also a critique of the research methodology used in these studies.

3.4.1 The Four Principles

i. Participation is not only oral

It is interesting to note that the above studies of learner participation have mainly looked into their oral participation. Studies on in-class learning have tended to either quantify teacher talk, or investigate the nature of teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction. Implicit in these studies is an assumption that oral participation is the primary, and perhaps the only way, to learn a second language. The teacher, as the manager of the lesson, is responsible for orchestrating the lesson so that maximum opportunities for oral participation are available to the learners. The opportunities might be made available by teacher talk, (for example, explanations) the type of questions that she asks, or the corrective feedback that is given to learners. These studies also reveal how learners benefit from working in pairs and small groups. Through interaction with peers, learners are able to enhance their proficiency and gain appropriate knowledge of the target language. Although studies on out-of-class learning acknowledge other forms of participation such as surfing the internet, watching English television programmes and listening to English

songs, the cognitive lens was used where the focus was on the strategies that would enable learners to learn certain aspects of the target language.

Canagarajah (2006) in a discussion on issues in TESOL states; “The combined forces of technology, globalisation, and World Englishes raise new questions for our profession.” He lists four questions, one of them concerns the meaning of “being competent” in the language (ibid.: 26). A related question could be “Does one’s competence in the target language have to always be measured by one’s ability to speak the language?” This seems to be the concern of the studies referred to above. Alternative questions are suggested: Is it possible that competence could also be reflected in one’s ability to engage with the language through other forms of participation? Do the outcomes necessarily have to feature linguistic gains?

ii. Participation occurs in different places

In SLA, there is a wealth of studies on in-class learning (some of which have been discussed above). This reflects a cognitive perspective on learning; it is believed that learning mostly happens in the classroom. Yet, from the social perspective Wenger (1998: 5) suggests that “It is life itself that is the main learning event...” Hence, drawing on the participatory framework such as one adopted in this inquiry, learning happens as one takes part in *any* social activity; not only restricted to in-class activity. As a whole person, a learner takes part in various social events; depending on her sociocultural background, some of these events will require engagement with English. To illustrate, Meurant (2010) states that computer-mediated use of English is increasing at an exponential rate, such as through engagement with video games, the Internet, instant messaging, and social networking sites. All of these engagements primarily take place outside the classroom and are pervasive in ESL learners’ lives.

iii. Participation plays a number of purposes

There is a tendency for the studies mentioned above to look at learner participation solely in relation to academic endeavour. However, it is also possible that learners engage in the linguistic resources available for reasons other than academic gain. In the social view of learning, practice is always social (Wenger, 1998), thus achieving academic gains, albeit important for a learner, is just one of the purposes of participation. There are many other possible purposes of participation that will enable an individual, who is both unique and social, to function in the world. Studies that identify participation as primarily for learning will construct the learners as having just one identity and ignore other identities that are equally meaningful and important for the learners as whole persons.

iv. Participation is conditional on the resources, the circumstances, and the orientation of people

I have suggested earlier that a broader conception of participation could be gained when the three elements: resources, circumstances, and the orientation of people are taken together.. In what follows, I will review the studies above and highlight how these three elements have been approached.

First, I will go over the studies that I have discussed in 3.3.1 and divided into 4 categories. Those that fall into categories 1, 2 and 3 mainly focus on resources, in the form of different types of talk (teacher talk, teacher-learner talk, learner-learner talk). For this reason, in such studies, participation is often configured as learners' involvement in oral activities. Learners are attributed only one identity: "successful learners" (those who are willing to participate in oral activities and show linguistic improvement) or "unsuccessful ones" (those who refuse to take part in the oral activities and sometimes, do not show linguistic improvement). Studies that fall into strand 4 have used Situated Learning Theory and critical theory as the framework. Lee (2005) for example, has investigated ESL learners' language preference (linguistic resources), their orientation, and the

circumstances that they are in. Even though the three elements are taken into consideration, the focus is still on participation in oral activities.

Next, for studies on out-of-class learning (see 3.3.2), the focus is mainly on the use of English-medium resources and how this helps the acquisition of the target language. The other two elements: the learner's orientation and circumstances are not looked into. This is similar to the 3 research trends discussed in 3.3.1, where the focus was also on the acquisition of English.

3.4.2 Critique of the Methodology

The studies discussed above mainly used interviews, observations, and learners' diaries as techniques for data collection. This shows there has been a shift towards more qualitative studies of participation (compared with earlier studies that tended to use quantitative data). Harklau (2011) has conducted a survey on the qualitative research trends in SLA since 2003 where studies published in major international journals such as 'Applied Linguistics', 'Language Learning', and 'TESOL Quarterly' are referred to. She points out that in these studies, the most frequently used methods of data collection are interviews, observations, audio-video recordings, and collection of print artefacts (such as learners' diary entries). This shift also reflects the view that learner participation is an issue that needs to be investigated and can be better understood by addressing the actors' point of view, or from an emic perspective (Morris et al, 1999). A study that adopts the emic perspective aims at understanding a phenomenon as experienced, understood, and stated by the participants.

Methodologically, the present study is in line with other qualitative studies that have investigated learner participation. First, it employs qualitative data i.e. interviews, observations, and learner diaries to understand the issue of learner participation. Second, it employs an emic approach where accounts of participation described by the learner themselves are used to gain an in-depth

understanding of the phenomenon under study. However, it differs from other qualitative studies that have investigated learner participation in four ways.

- i. In order to gain a better understanding of the issue, it does not specifically employ critical or Situated Learning theories as the theoretical framework. However, some important insights from both theories, such as learning as a process of gaining membership and identity formation, and learners' agency are drawn upon.
- ii. It needs to be highlighted that the present inquiry is grounded in the concept that learners are social beings, who either alone or in a group, are constantly acting upon the external factors that influence their particular sociocultural contexts.
- iii. Unlike previous studies that focus either in-class or out-of-class learning, the present study seeks to understand learner participation in both contexts.
- iv. In the present inquiry, photographs are used as means of data collection. It is worthy of note that none of the studies that I have looked into and the ones surveyed by Harklau (2011) have used photographs taken by the research participants as data for their studies. Though this kind of data collection method has been widely used in studies on literacy, it has not to date been employed in studies on SLA. The present study has used photographs taken by the research participants as one data source in order to find out about their encounters and engagements with out-of-class resources in English (further discussion on the benefits and how it is being employed is provided in 4.2.3).

3.5 Summary

This chapter began by looking at different learning theories and their configuration of learner participation. I then argued for a social view of learning,

where a broader understanding of learning has been employed, to understand ESL learner participation. Through this understanding, I hoped to explore the issue from a different perspective. I have suggested four principles for understanding and researching learner participation. In the next chapter, I will present the research design, methodology, and data analysis of the present study.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I will provide my research stance and the method of inquiry that I used to explore and understand ESL learner participation in language learning opportunities. I will begin this part with a brief discussion of my philosophical stance in educational research. I will then locate the present study in the interpretive paradigm. Having done this, I will go into a more detailed explanation of the interpretive paradigm and how my understanding of it affects my methodological choices. In the second section, I will discuss my research procedure. Included in this are details about my selection of participants, data collection strategies, and my data analysis techniques. In the third section, will discuss issues on ethics and trustworthiness that are often associated with interpretive research

Through this study, I try to understand the forms of participation that learners choose to engage in as they participate in their every day social practices which in turn afford various learning opportunities. It is guided by 3 main research questions:

1. What are the language learning opportunities that are available to the 6 ESL learners?
 - a. What are the language learning opportunities that are available to them outside the classroom?
 - b. What are the language learning opportunities available to them inside the classroom?
2. How do the 6 ESL learners participate in the language learning opportunities that are available to them both outside and inside the classroom?

3. What are the factors that impinge upon the way they participate in the language learning opportunities?

SECTION I

4.1 The Philosophical Stance

Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 5) describe a paradigm as a 'belief system' that one holds. They see a research paradigm as consisting of 3 important elements: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. They note that ontology deals with assumptions about reality, epistemology is about the relationship between the researcher and those being researched, and methodology is concerned with the research process itself.

Easterby-Smith et.al (in Gray, 2006: 17) state that it is important for a researcher to be clear about her epistemological perspective because it helps to clarify her own philosophical position or '*self-knowledge*' (Brew in Dunne et.al, 2005: 11) regarding methodological issues like the kind of data collected, the source of the data, and how the data will be interpreted; and most importantly, according to Crotty (1998) it guides the overall research approach.

Based on the researcher's belief system, a research study can generally be approached either from the positivist paradigm or the interpretive paradigm. These two research traditions draw on contrasting philosophical assumptions about the nature of social reality and social meaning (Hesse-Bier and Leavy, 2006). Crotty (1998) suggests there are 3 epistemological positions and he maintains that issues of ontology and epistemology usually surface together. The three positions are positivism, constructionism, and subjectivism. Positivism sees there is an objective truth that stands separately from one's consciousness. The task of a researcher working in this paradigm is to discover this 'reality'. Researchers working in this paradigm believe that the social world

is made up of patterns and regularities; causes and consequences which can be studied using scientific methods. They look for 'objectivity' in research and believe that relationships between social phenomena can be established (Grix, 2004: 81). This seems inappropriate for my understanding of learner participation because learners choose to engage in certain forms of participation for a myriad of reasons. Thus, it is impossible to establish a direct relationship between the learners and their forms of participation.

The other two epistemological positions: constructionism and subjectivism belong to the interpretive paradigm. Constructionism holds that meaningful truth does not exist independently from the consciousness. It is constructed through one's interactions with the social world. Therefore, there is no one 'reality'; each one of us is capable to construct our own meaning of the social world. Subjectivism, however, views meaning as being constructed by the researcher and those being researched. Similar to constructionism, subjects also construct meaning, but not through their interaction with the world, rather through their unconscious through, for example, their personal and religious beliefs (Crotty, 1998: 9).

The nature of my study is at variance with the positivist paradigm. I do not believe that every human shares a single reality and constructs meanings in a similar way. Neither do I believe that there are general causes that influence the way ESL learners participate in the learning opportunities that they encounter. Instead, each form of participation is a product of their engagement in a particular social world. Therefore, my intention is not to make generalisable conclusions on matters about learner participation. What I intend to achieve is a deeper and better understanding of learner participation as being reported by the learners themselves.

Based on the above argument, I see the present study located in the interpretive paradigm and adopt the constructionist epistemological position which views learner participation as being constructed through learners' active

interaction, which could be oral and non-oral, within their communities. Working in the interpretive paradigm, my intention is to understand the phenomenon being studied (Grix, 2004); which is primarily how learners participate and the various forms of participation.

With an interpretive inquiry, I hope to:

- i. investigate learner participation in language learning opportunities,
- ii. explore the factors that impinge upon the learners' forms of participation.

4.1.1 Interpretivism and Its Role in Methodological Decision Making in this Study

In this part, I will discuss the interpretive paradigm and how it affects the methodological choices that I shall make in the present study. Those who work within the interpretive paradigm conceive reality as multiple and that an inquiry conducted in this paradigm often raises more questions than generates specific answers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Nevertheless, it is able to illuminate an understanding (*verstehen*, Max Weber) of a certain phenomenon (Lincoln and Guba, *ibid.*).

As I have mentioned earlier, in this paradigm, the purpose of conducting research is not to generate findings that can be generalized to a wider context. Some see this as a weakness (Carr and Kemmis 1986), and further argue that this type of research is therefore not worthwhile. My view is that research in the interpretive paradigm is carried out with the intention of illuminating or better understanding a specific phenomenon. Generalisations of findings are not the objective of an interpretive inquiry as it embraces the fact that each individual is different and people might act differently in different circumstances. However, interpretive research can generate findings that can suggest pedagogic alternatives. For example, some pedagogical implications could be made based

on the findings of this study. These ideas could be tested on other larger groups through some teaching interventions.

In an interpretive inquiry, the main purpose is to understand the meaning of human action that occurs in a particular social world (Gaskin, et al, 1992). Humans construct their own reality or meaning as they actively interact with the world that they are trying to make sense of. Crotty explains,

“All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality, as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.”
(1998, p42).

In the context of my study, I believe that learner participation is dynamic rather than static. These learners are active agents who are responsible for the choices of actions that they make. I see their participation as a result of their active interactions in a particular community: either in the classroom or their individual community. My intention is to gain a better understanding of these learners' various forms of participation from the way they see the world- their own constructed 'reality'.

As there are multiple realities, each individual has no clear window into the world. It is hard for an individual to provide an exact explanation of her experience as it is being filtered through many lenses of the individual's own social, cultural, and historical world. In relation to the present study, as a researcher working in the interpretive paradigm, I can only depend on each learner's accounts of their participation in each learning resource. Therefore, as a researcher, my primary task is to make sense of each phenomenon that is presented to me (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). I need to respect each learner's interpretation of their 'reality' and understand it in relation to the particular social world they are in. In my attempts to do this, it is important to embrace the fact

that as a person, I also construct my own 'reality' of the learners' experiences as I interact with them. Denzin and Lincoln (ibid.) in their discussion of a researcher as an interpretive 'bricoleur' suggest that research is an '*interactive process*' that is influenced by a host of factors like the researcher's '*personal, history, biography, gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting*' (p. 6). These factors might 'colour' my own interpretations of the learners' 'reality' (see my discussion of trustworthiness in this study in 4.5).

As a researcher, I believe that there are multiple realities, and these realities are complex and are socially constructed. Methodologically, my philosophical assumptions about reality lead me to study the topic in its natural context (Creswell, 2007). Next, I will discuss how my philosophical stance affects the way I generate knowledge about ESL learner participation.

- Generating knowledge about learner participation

As an interpretive inquirer, my focus is on the socially constructed nature of reality. In order for me to gain an understanding of learner participation I need to be present in the learners' social world and to establish a close relationship with the learners who are directly involved in the project as well as others who might indirectly contribute to the study.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) state that a researcher can only investigate a social world by becoming a part of it. This means that the researcher needs to spend some considerable time being with the subjects to understand the practices of their social world and also to establish a good relationship with the members of that particular world. In this study, I was only able to be a part of one social world i.e. the classroom world, as it was impossible for me to observe the six learners in their home.

In this study, I was involved in 'naturalistic observation' (Angrosino, 2005), or field work, where I observed the learners for a period of time during their English lessons. However, being an observer did not help me to build a good rapport with them. Thus, I made the effort by participating in their social world. For example, these learners sometimes had to stay back for their co-curricular activities in the evening, where they were involved with activities in clubs such as The Red Crescent or English Language club, or sports activities such as football and badminton. While waiting, they would have lunch at the school canteen. I took this opportunity to get to know them better. However, I realised that there was still a gap between us. The fact that I was there as a researcher, together with my professional background as a teacher had some effects on the way the learners interacted with me. Likewise, at times, I also unintentionally acted like a teacher. This I realised was unavoidable but I tried to minimise it by constantly reflecting on my own actions and words.

Other than that, I also felt that it was important for me to have a good relationship with the other students as I would spend a considerable time in the class. Therefore it would be helpful if my presence was to be accepted by them. In doing so, I volunteered to substitute for teachers who were absent or could not enter the class due to some reasons such as attending meetings. While in class, I spent time talking to the students and offering help with their English homework.

In other words, I tried as much as possible to be a part of my research participants' social world and to create a less hierarchical relationship (Kanno, 1997). It was not a straightforward matter as it took quite some time for me to gain the trust and confidence from my research participants. Even though I managed to minimise the gap between us; as I have explained earlier, my identity as a teacher, and therefore seen as a knowledge transmitter by the participants, still pervaded and at times influenced our nature of interaction.

As a researcher, being in the field helped me to be immersed in the lives of my research participants as I interacted with them within the 'small cultures' (Holliday, 1999) that existed in the classroom. Nevertheless due to our very similar background and also my experiences as both an ESL teacher and a teacher educator (which I have described in Chapter 1), there was a tendency for me to view what happened in the classroom as too common and mundane. To illustrate, I was too familiar with quiet classrooms and learners not participating in class and even the classroom activities might appear like rituals that I have experienced and observed repeatedly. In this case, the challenge for me as a qualitative researcher, according to Holliday (2002: 13) is '*making the familiar strange*'. In order to do that, I had to exercise some self-discipline on the way that I observed the classroom activities, especially learner participation (see my discussion on Reflexivity in 4.1.1.2)

- Methodological implications

As stated earlier, a researcher's ontological and epistemological positions will influence her approaches to the study. The present study is conducted within the interpretive paradigm; which will be described below.

- a. By employing an 'emic' research stance (Creswell, 2007). In order for me to understand learner participation, I captured each learner's point of view. This helped me to see the phenomenon and construct meaning from how these learners viewed their world. I achieved this by carrying out detailed interviews and observations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).
- b. By employing the hermeneutic process. I do not consider this study to be a hermeneutic study following the philosophy of Dilthey (Crotty, 1998), but I am referring to the hermeneutic process as described by Guba and Lincoln (1989). The hermeneutic process requires the researcher to go back and forth from the whole to the part of the data and vice versa in order to gain deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. Guba and Lincoln (ibid.) term this as a hermeneutic dialectic process. They explain that it is hermeneutic because of its interpretive nature and

dialectic because it involves comparing and contrasting the constructions held to reach a well informed one. In the context of this study, each participant's construction was elicited and refined through interaction between the participant and the researcher.

- c. By using an inductive approach to data analysis. In this study, I used a series of steps that involved building my own coding frames and categories from the data. Through continuous revision of my coding frames and re-coding of the interview transcripts, patterns were identified; which helped me to understand learner participation.

- d. By using multiple sources, which can help to answer different but complementary research questions (Robson, 2002). For example, in this study I observed the learners during the English lessons to investigate learner participation and the learning opportunities that are available within the classroom setting. Since I am also interested in the same issues outside the classroom, I decided to ask these learners to take photographs of the learning resources that are available at home as well as in the community. In this way, I was able to explore their participation outside the classroom; where observation would be hard to conduct.

- e. By adopting a case study approach. Barbour (2008) suggests that the possibilities to compare and analyse data in an interpretive inquiry can be increased by using case studies. By comparing and analysing data, it is hoped that the issue that is being investigated will be better understood. In my study, I focused only on 6 ESL learners whose proficiency and encounters in learning opportunities in English were quite diverse so that I could make comparisons as much as possible. Stake (1995) divides a case study into two types: intrinsic and instrumental. The former refers to investigating only one phenomenon and the latter is about studying more general phenomena. My study was an intrinsic case study where my

focus was to study one specific issue: ESL learner participation in language learning opportunities.

4.1.1.1 Case Study

As mentioned earlier, the current study adopts a case study approach; primarily because it seeks to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth (Yin, 2009: 18). As this study concerns investigating learner participation in various learning opportunities, employing this approach will allow the researcher to develop a nuanced view of reality (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 223).

Yin (1994) states this approach can be used when a study seeks to answer “how” and “why” questions and the contextual conditions are considered important. This study of ESL learner participation seeks to explore the types of participation and the factors that influence the participation, seeking answers to the “how” and “why” questions (which are the research questions of this study). More importantly, learner participation could not be considered without the context, in this study, the in-class and the out-of-class settings.

There are two types of case study designs: single-case and multiple-case (Yin, 1994; 2009). In a single-case design, the researcher focuses on capturing the circumstances and conditions that take place in a particular situation (Yin, 2009). A multiple-case design contains more than a single case, and is used to compare data across and within each case. This study used a multiple-case design, where the focus was on the manner of engagement of six participants when they encountered English-medium resources in two contexts- in and out of class. The main aim of this study was to explore the types of learner participation and the factors that might affect their manner of participation in different situations- inside and outside class. Data were compared across and within each case in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue of learner

participation, focusing on the 6 participants during their in-class learning and daily routines.

Yin (2009) suggests a case study can draw from six sources of evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artefacts. He highlights the use of the interview as one of the most important sources for information in a case study approach. Similarly, in this study interview was the main data collection technique. Two types of interview were used: semi-structured life world interviews and photo elicitation interviews. Details of each type will be explained later. Other sources used in this study were observations, photographs and diaries.

Flyvbjerg (2006) lists five common misconceptions about case study research. The one that will be highlighted here is that it contains a bias towards verification, as there is a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions. He rejects this misconception by citing researchers like Campbell (1975) and Geertz (1995) (as cited in Flyvbjerg, *ibid.*: 235) who have conducted intensive in-depth case studies and reported that their preconceived ideas were wrong and the findings from their studies have compelled them to revise their hypotheses. He also adds that this problem applies to all methods; not only to case study.

4.1.1.2 Reflexivity

The researcher, throughout the research process, plays an active role in the production of knowledge by constructing the collection, selection and interpretation of data, and interpretation is at the heart of the research practice (Koch and Harrington, 1998). Thus, it is crucial for the researcher to be critically conscious of any potential biases that she might have (Underwood, et al., 2010). This is done through the process of reflexivity. The aim of reflexivity is to improve the quality of research (Barry et al., 1999 as cited in Underwood, *ibid.*: 2).

According to Schwandt (1997), reflexivity involves two important elements: (i) the process of critical self-reflection of one's own biases, theoretical predispositions, and preferences; (ii) an acknowledgement of the inquirer's place in the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand, and a means for critical examination of the entire research process (p. 260).

In relation to the first element, I am aware that I am a product of the cognitive orientation to learning. As an ESL learner and an ESL teacher in Malaysia, I went through formal learning experiences that were very cognitively oriented (which I have detailed in Chapter 1). Even though my perspectives of what learning constitutes have subsequently changed, at times, I realise that some of my views seem to reflect my previous theoretical predispositions and preferences. Frank (1997) notes that the challenge is not to eliminate bias, but to use it as a focus for more intense insight (as cited in Underwood, et al, 2010: 2). I feel that by being critically aware of my own theoretical dispositions, I was able to understand the issue of learner participation better. I was able to relate to both the classroom events and the manner in which the learners engaged with the available learning opportunities, and their engagement with outside resources because I had experience of working in the same way.

As a researcher, I am also aware that my presence in the classroom might change the way things are. This concerns the second element of reflexivity as suggested by Schwandt (1997). Learners and even the teacher, in my presence, might act in ways that they feel appropriate in front of a stranger, in this case a researcher, who in the eye of the teacher, is an expert in the field and to the learners, an observer who wanted to see how they did things. This is illustrated by Danby: "*At the same time that the researcher is making sense of the work of the participants, they are working to make sense of us*" (1997: 3). Thus, in the process of making sense, the participants might change their

behaviour to what they deem suitable to impress the researcher or to fulfil what they think the researcher requires of them.

Other than these two situations, I also practised reflexivity throughout the whole research process which includes in my dealing with ethical issues (which I shall explain later), and my writing up of the thesis. This echoes with the suggestions made by Kleinsasser (2000) where he sees reflexivity as enabling the researcher to explore ethical entanglement and re-examine personal and theoretical commitments through her writing.

SECTION II

4.2 The Research Procedure

The research procedure that I recount in this section is to a certain extent based on the insights gained from the pilot study that I carried out three months before I went into the field. In brief, the study involved a 15-year old female participant (pseudonym Amal) who resided in an urban area in Malaysia. It took place for the duration of four weeks. Though I was interested in her engagement with English resources in both contexts (in class and outside), I was not able to observe her in-class learning due to the distance (as I was in the UK). For her out-of-class engagement, Amal took pictures of the resources that she encountered. She also wrote diary entries about her engagement. We communicated via email. Amal sent the photos that she took as well as the diary entries that she wrote four times a week. I interviewed her six times via Skype (Internet communication). During the interviews, questions that were related to the kinds of resources that she chose to engage with, her forms of participation, and the factors that impinged upon her participation were asked. I also asked Amal to talk about her diary entries. Other than collecting data from Amal, I also distributed questionnaires to twenty students at her school.

I gained some insights from my experience conducting the pilot study. First, I realised that the project can be quite demanding for the participant. The fact that the participant had to take photos, write diary entries, and then interviewed

meant that a strong sense of commitment was needed. Therefore, in the main study, I looked for volunteers who were interested in taking part after a detailed explanation was given regarding the nature of the project. Another important insight was the importance of establishing a good rapport with the research participant. It was crucial that the participant felt able to trust me. This is because in order to know what the participant did at home and with friends in relation to learning English, there was a possibility of touching on matters that were rather personal. Hence, a certain level of trust needs to be built between the participants and the researcher.

Below I provide a summary of the details of the main study.

| January | February | March |
|--|---|---|
| Week 1 Getting Access: school level and Participant Selection (11-15 Jan 2010) Monday- meeting with principal Tuesday- 1 st meeting with learners & distribution of Questionnaires Thursday- 2 nd meeting with learners | Week 4 (1-5 Feb 2010) Mon- CO1a Tues- Int (CO1a) Wednesday- CO1b Thursday- Int (CO1b) | Week 8 (1-5 March 2010) Monday- CO 3a Thursday- CO 3b Friday- Interviews on In-class learning 3 |
| Week 2 Trial observations (18-22 Jan 2010) Monday Tuesday Wednesday | Week 5 (8-12 Feb 2010) Thursday } Interviews on Out-of-class learning 2 Friday } | Week 9 (8-12 March 2010) Thursday } Interviews on Out-of-class Learning 4 Friday } |
| Week 3 (25-29 Jan 2010) Thursday } Interviews on Out-of-class learning 1 Friday } | Week 6 (15-19 Feb 2010) Wednesday- CO 2a Thursday- Int (CO 2a) | |
| | Week 7 (22-26 Feb 2010) Monday- CO 2b Tues- Int (CO2b) Thursday } Interviews on Out-of-class learning 3 Friday } | |

Table 4.1 Summary of the data collection activities

I was at the research site for nine weeks. The first two weeks were spent on getting access, selecting the research participants, and getting to know them as well as the school staff and environment, and conducting three classroom observation trials. The other seven weeks were spent on collecting data primarily through classroom observations and interviews, and also from the photographs and diary entries (which were used to stimulate interviews on out-of-class learning). All together there were 300 minutes of classroom observation data, 720 minutes of interview data, 137 photos, and 69 diary entries.

4.2.1 Research Site

The school was chosen as it satisfied the criteria I was working with. The two criteria were: it was a co-ed school located in a sub-urban area and it had students of different socio-economic background. The school was situated about 7 km from the city with total enrolment about 1200. The school had two sessions: morning and afternoon. It was a big school, enough to be equipped with facilities such as computer and science labs. The school was also one of the selected schools in the state. The selection was made based on the school's high performance in the national examination. Due to its status as a "selected school", it was given extra perks by the State Education Department. One of them was it had two extra streams: religious and vocational. The school had a mix of Malay, Chinese, and Indian students; with Malays making the largest number, followed by the Chinese and Indians respectively. The students came from various socio-economic backgrounds. Some had parents who were government employees. There were others who worked for various private companies in the city, while some ran their own businesses and were self-employed. In my experience this is a fairly typical situation in most sub-urban areas in Malaysia. I would like to highlight that even though English-medium science and mathematics classes were available and these provided English-medium learning opportunities for the learners, I decided to focus only on an English class in order to keep the study manageable.

4.2.2 Research Participants

In this study, my research participants were selected using convenience sampling, where it did not have a clear strategy and participants were chosen based on ease of access (Patton, 2002). Initially, I designed my study to employ purposeful sampling. I began my data collection phase by doing the following:

- i. I distributed questionnaires to the whole class to locate a sampling pool of possible participants (Barbour, 2008).
- ii. Based on their responses, I went through the questionnaires looking for learners who met the criteria that I had set out.
- iii. I chose 8 learners (3 males and 5 females).
- iv. I explained to the 8 learners the nature of the project and what they were expected to do, and that participation was not obligatory. 4 learners decided not to take part. This could be due to my data collection techniques that might have been seen as a burden by some of the learners.

Because of an unexpected turn of event, I had to change my sampling strategy to convenience sampling. Lewis (in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) regards a good research design for a qualitative study as one that is “realistic, conceived with due regard both for practical constraints of time and money and for the reality of research context and setting” (p. 47). In my case, I had to abandon my initial plan of using purposeful sampling because I could not rely on participation from all the learners. Thus, I had to exercise flexibility by inviting those who were interested to join the project.

I ended with having 6 research participants in my study: two Malays and 4 Indians. There were 2 male participants and 4 female participants. They were all about 16 years old. Their pseudonyms were Azran, Nisya, Trikia, Thunnis, Hemmah, and Shankra. In this thesis, I used abbreviations of their pseudonyms: AZR (Azran), NS (Nisya), TRK (Trikia), THN (Thunnis), HM (Hemmah), and SKR (Shankra). AZR came from a medium income family. His father worked as a lecturer at a college while his mother was an assistant pharmacist at a government hospital. NS was from a lower income family. Her

father was a wet goods peddler and her mother was a clerk. TRK came from a lower income family where her father was a storekeeper and her mother was a housewife. THN was from a medium income family as her father was a former army officer and her mother, who had a Master's degree in TESL, was a tuition teacher. Hemmah came from a medium income family; her father owned a small construction company and mother was a housewife. SKR came from a lower income family; his father was a van driver while his mother was a housewife. I would like to note that the Indian learners were proficient speakers and writers of Bahasa Melayu as it is used in schools as the language of instruction. All four of them achieved A for their Bahasa Melayu paper in the national examination. A summary of my research participants' background information is presented in the table below.

| Pseudonyms/ Abbreviations | Gender | Age | Home Language | Socio- economic status | PMR English results |
|------------------------------|--------|------------|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Azran (AZR) | Male | 16 yrs old | Bahasa Melayu | Middle income | C |
| NISYA (NS) | Female | 16 yrs old | Bahasa Melayu | Lower income | B |
| TRIKIA (TRK) | Female | 16 yrs old | Tamil | Middle income | A |
| THUNNIS (THN) | Female | 16 yrs old | Tamil | Lower income | A |
| HEMMAH (HM) | Female | 16 yrs old | Tamil | Middle income | B |
| SHANKRA (SKR) | Male | 16 yrs old | Tamil | Lower income | B |

Table 4.2 Home language and English results of the participants

4.2.3 Data Collection Strategies

Robson (2002) suggests that the decision to choose the kinds of data collection techniques that will be employed in a study is based on three aspects:

- i. the type of information that the researcher seeks. The kind of information that I needed included the different ways of participation, the types of learning opportunities available to the learners, and the factors that affected their participation. To obtain this kind of information, I had to talk to these learners as well as observe them.
- ii. from whom the information will be obtained. As I was interested in understanding learner participation, I obtained the information from the learners themselves. This gave me the opportunity to capture the emic or insiders', point of view of their participation in their social practices.
- iii. the circumstances under which the study is conducted. The circumstances did not permit me to observe learner participation in out-of-class learning. I therefore used photographs as one of my data collection techniques. The photographs taken were then used to provide evidence of the English medium resources available outside and to stimulate interviews with them on the learners' out-of-class learning.

This section begins with a discussion of interviewing; which was my main method of data collection. Through the interviews, I was engaged in a dialectical interchange with the research participants about their participation in the language learning opportunities that were available in their lived in world. This is followed by a discussion of the observational study that aimed at capturing the various forms of participation in in-class learning. Since this study also investigated out-of-class learning, and observation is impossible; I thus utilised photographs as the data collection technique. I will discuss this following my account of the observational study. Finally, I will explain the use of learners' diaries in this study. Figure 4.1 below provides an overview of the research strategies employed in this study.

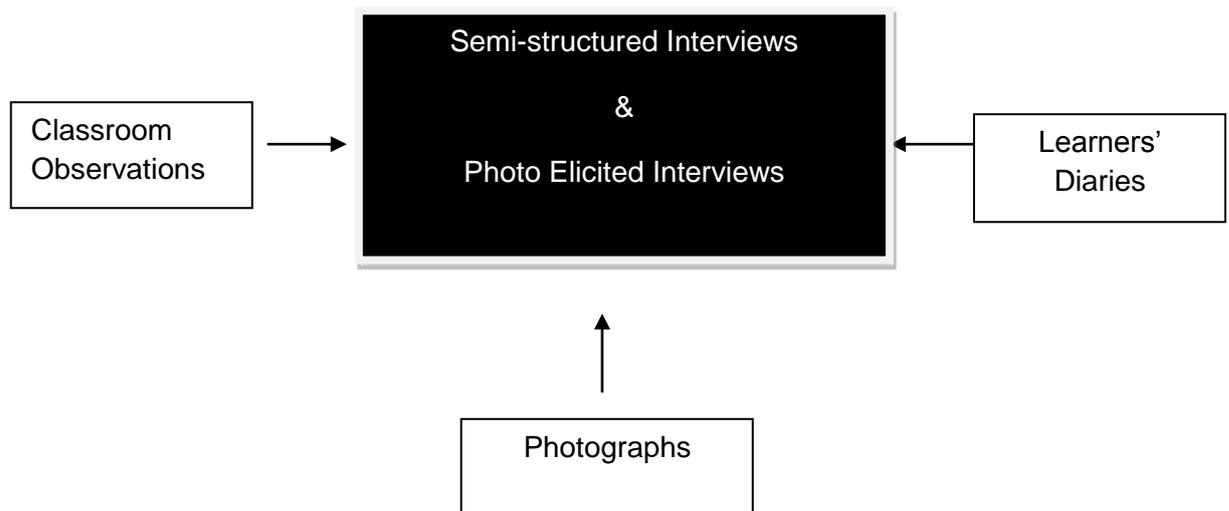


Figure 4.1 An overview of the data collection strategies

- Interview

I used interview as my primary data collection strategy. Patton (2002: 341) explains that a researcher interviews her participants because one cannot observe past behaviours and there are situations where the observer cannot be present.

In the present study, I was interested in understanding learner participation. While it was possible for me to observe their overt participation, the factors that influenced their participation could only be understood by asking the learners themselves. Furthermore, as I was also interested in their out-of class learning; where it would be impossible for me to observe, I considered the interview as the best way for me to gain data on it.

The interviews in this study were conducted for two purposes. First was to gain understanding of the research participants' engagement in classroom activities. The interviews were conducted a day after each classroom observation (Table 4.1). The second purpose of the interviews was to investigate the participants'

engagement in out-of-class language learning opportunities. These were done every alternate week (Table 4.1) and the participants were randomly divided into two groups. This was due to time constraints as they had other personal activities to attend (like tuition classes and other co-curricular activities). Each interview took about thirty minutes. The interviews were recorded using digital audio recording. Notes were also taken when necessary. However, most of the time I tried to focus on what the learners had to say instead of taking down notes. Each participant was interviewed individually to avoid influence on each other.

In this study I used two types of interviews: semi-structured life world interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) and photo elicitation interviews (PEI) (Bignante, 2010; Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Epstein et al, 2006; Harper, 2002; Meo, 2010). A semi-structured life world interview is *“a planned and flexible interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena”* (Kvale and Brinkmann, *ibid.*:327). This type of interview is similar to everyday conversation, but it has a specific aim and is guided by some predetermined themes. Most importantly, the knowledge construction through this type of interview is both intersubjective and social; where the researcher and the research participants both co-construct knowledge. I used this approach as I believed that there were ‘stories’ behind their forms of participation. Thus, I encouraged the participants to engage in telling me these stories. By encouraging them to tell more, instead of just responding in short answers, the participants often shared with me their experiences in more detail. I adopted the metaphoric role of an interviewer as a ‘traveller’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, *ibid.*: 48). I found myself ‘travelling’ with these learners in their narration of their everyday life activities and participation in the learning resources. However, not all of the participants were able to talk eloquently about their participation in language learning opportunities. Some needed to be asked more questions than the others. With these participants, I posed more questions and encouraged them to tell me about their experiences. An interview of this nature requires a good relationship between the researcher and the participants. In my study, all this was not achieved instantly. Overtime, I

managed to develop a positive relationship with my research participants and they slowly built trust and confidence in me.

This study also employed Photo Elicited Interview (PEI); where photographs were used to “invoke comments, memory and discussion in the course of a semi-structured interview” (Banks, 2001:87). Clark-Ibanez (2004) maintains that PEI is helpful in capturing certain tacit qualities that might not emerge in “words-alone” interviews. This is because photographs are able to provide “a degree of tangible detail and a sense of being there” (Prosser and Schwartz, 1998: 116). In this study, the research participants were asked to take photos of their out-of-class language learning opportunities. During interviews, I asked them some general questions about all the photos that they took. The participants usually took between five to ten photos for each interview session. However, due to other commitments, there were some who snapped only a few photos. Then I asked the participants to pick the photos that they wanted to talk about. I did this because of two factors. First was due to time constraints. I usually had only thirty minutes to interview each participant because they had to attend tuition classes or co-curricular activities in the afternoon. Hence, I did not have ample time to get the participants to talk about all the photos that they took. Second, I believed, by asking the participants to choose what they wanted to talk about, this would help the participants to be more open and enable me to understand the phenomena from their own social world (Willis, 1980 in Meo, 2010). It also helped to give them a sense of control of the interview process (Meo, 2010). As explained earlier, my use of the life world interview approach had enabled me to engage the participants in a conversation that was almost similar to natural conversation. By just talking about one photo, the participants sometimes reflected on their participation in similar language learning opportunities that had taken place a few years before. This is mentioned by Harper (2002) when he claims that images are capable of evoking one’s memory. By getting the participants to tell me about their current and past experiences, I was able to get a more detailed explanation especially of factors that impinged upon their participation.

Gillham (2000) cautions that people might not be able to describe their complex experiences in an organised manner. Corson (1990) points out that young people might be lacking the ability to organise their thought into sentences. Due to this, I acknowledged that there could be an issue about to what extent these participants were speaking sincerely about themselves and their experiences. However, since they were talking about their own experiences, it is assumed that they knew themselves well and therefore their responses were valid accounts of their feelings and behaviours (Gillham, *ibid.*). As a researcher, I bore this in mind when making inferences from what the participants said. There might also be possibilities that the learners chose not to talk about matters that were personal. I respected their privacy and considered it would be unethical to force them to talk about such personal matters as it might cause them emotional harm. This echoes Simons and Usher's claim about situated ethics; where it is local and specific to particular practices (2000:2).

The table below provides the themes for the interview sessions. These were used as a guide, however other questions were also asked according to new issues that emerged during each interview.

| Types of Questions | Session 1 | Sessions 2-8 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Part A - Warm ups | √ (3 questions) | √ (3 questions) |
| Part B - Background/ demographic information | √ (6 questions) | |
| Part C - Classroom Engagement | √ (3 questions) | √ (3 questions) |
| Part D - Photos and Diaries | | √ (3 questions) |
| Part E - Closing | √ (2 questions) | √ (2 questions) |

Table 4.3 Themes for Interviews

| Parts | Samples of Interview Questions |
|--|--|
| Part A- Warm-ups | <p>The purpose of asking these questions is to help the participants feel comfortable</p> <p>Session 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Questions on feelings e.g. How are you feeling today? <p>Session 2-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Questions on feelings e.g. How are you feeling today? ii. Other general questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you had something to eat? - How is school today? |
| Part B- Background/ Demographic information | <p>Session 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. What do your parents do for a living? ii. Do you use English at home? iii. Do you watch English television programmes at home? |
| Part C- Classroom Engagement | <p>Sessions 2-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Can you tell me what happened in class today? ii. What did you do in class today? iii. Why did you decide to do that? |
| Part D- Photos and Diaries | <p>Sessions 2-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Can you tell me what the (first) picture is about? ii. How did you engage with the resource? iii. Why did you choose to do that? |
| Part E- Closing | <p>Session 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Do you have any question regarding the project? <p>Sessions 2-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Is there anything else that you want to tell me regarding what happened in class just now? ii. Is there anything you want to add? |

Table 4.4 Sample Interview Questions

- Observation

Merriam (1988) states that the advantages of employing observations as data collection techniques are that they can yield data that pertain directly to the typical behavioural situations, and further enable the researcher to record the behaviour as it is happening. As described by Mason (2002: 89), data that is accumulated from a good observation is 'rich, rounded, local, and specific'. However, the presence of the researcher might also change the normal practice (as I have discussed earlier in the section on Reflexivity see 4.1.1.2)

Robson (2002) lists four different roles of an observer: complete participant, participant as observer, marginal participant, and observer-as-participant. In this study, my role was as participant observer. This role was suitable for this study because it enabled me to not only observe the phenomenon, but also to listen and interact with the research participants.

In this study, unstructured observations were carried out. Though unstructured, the research questions were used to guide the observation. Mason (2002) suggests that the researcher needs to have a sense of selectivity and perspective when carrying out an observation. In the current study, the aim of my observations was to investigate learner participation in their classroom lives. Hence, I did not restrict my observations to predefined categories.

Data from the observations were recorded in two ways. First, it was video-recorded for two reasons. First I observed three participants in each observation. Hence it was difficult for me to look at all three of them at the same time. With the recording, I was able to gather data from all three participants. Second, there might be events that I missed during the observation, recording the observations and viewing them later helped me to capture these events. It is important to note here that the camera was placed not too near the research participants as this could have made them feel uncomfortable. It was placed at

a suitable distance that would not intrude on them. Figure 4.2 shows the classroom layout and the position of the camera.

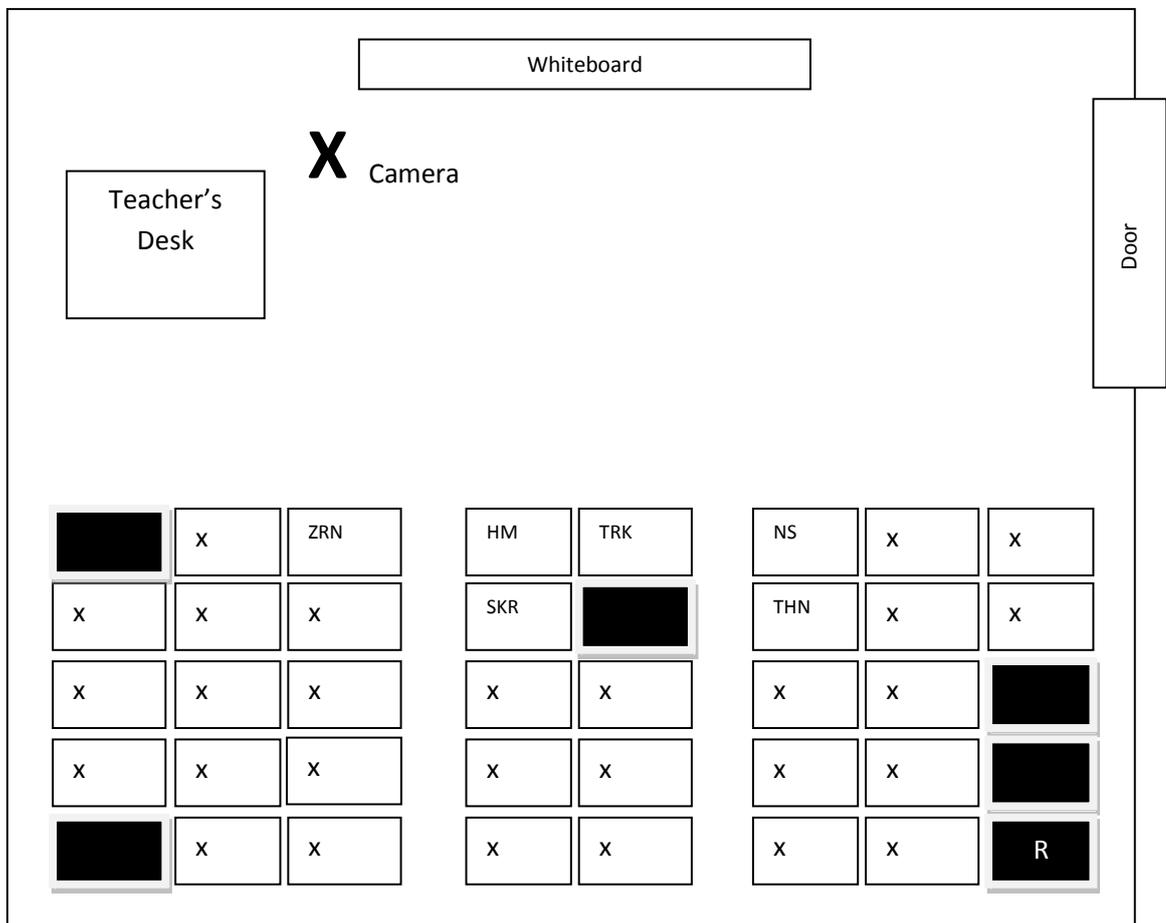


Figure 4.2 The classroom layout

R= Researcher

The second means was making observation notes. During the observations, I first made rough notes, then, the observation notes were made as soon as each observation ended to make sure that the observed phenomenon was still fresh in my mind and I could recall as many details as possible. Gray (2006) suggests that it is important to have a notation system that distinguishes between the actual verbatim and the paraphrased one. In this study, paraphrased verbatim and researcher's interpretations of events were marked by using brackets or parentheses.

Initially, I planned to observe every alternate week. For example, Week 3 was to collect data for their out-of-class learning and Week 4 for their in-class learning (i.e. classroom observation). However, I was unable to do this as there were public holidays: celebration of the Chinese New Year (for 3 days) and Thaipusam, religious celebration for the Hindus, (1 day). Due to this, classroom observations were conducted on Week 3, and consecutively from Weeks 5 to 7 (refer to Table 4.1). All together there were six observations. The class had 2 double-period lessons (Monday and Wednesday) and 1 single-period lesson (Thursday). I chose to observe the double period lessons as to get ample data. However, due to the school' activities, on Week 7, class on Monday was only for 30 minutes and there was no class on Wednesday. Therefore, I had to observe the single period class on Thursday. Since there were 6 participants, I decided to focus only on 3 for each observation. I let the participants decide on the day they were to be observed because each observation was followed by an interview; which was conducted after school. Some of them had other commitments (e.g. attending tuition classes or participating in co-curricular activities). Hence, I felt it was best that the participants themselves decided on this matter. The table below shows the observations and the participants involved.

| Classroom Observations (CO) | Participants |
|--|--------------------------|
| CO 1a | AZR, THN, TRK |
| CO 1b | HM, NS, SKR |
| CO 2a | HM, NS (TRK was absent.) |
| CO 2b | AZR, SKR, THN TRK |
| CO 3a | AZR, NS, SKR |
| CO 3b | HM, THN, TRK |

Table 4.5 Classroom observations and participants involved

- Photographs

The current study also hopes to explore the language learning opportunities that were available to the learners outside the classroom. Since it was not possible to observe the participants at all time, this study employed photographs as one of the methods to collect data; whereby I had provided each participant with a digital camera. Photographs are used in a study for three reasons: to illustrate the research findings, to help researcher become more familiar with the research context and to help generate conversation and stimulate discussion (Banks, 2001).

According to Banks (2001), there are three types of images: images taken by the researcher, images taken by the subjects, and images taken collaboratively by the researcher and the subjects. In this study, photos were taken by the research participants. As this study is about their participation in learning opportunities, the most appropriate way to investigate it was by asking the participants themselves to take photos of the various learning opportunities that they encountered in their everyday activities. Furthermore, the act of taking the still pictures could be fun for the participants and thus encouraged them to be more involved in the research. It could also help the participants to be in control.

I took the following steps in asking the participants to take photos:

- i. Showing the participants how to use the digital camera. I asked the participants whether they were familiar with using a digital camera. Four learners said they knew how to use it well, while two learners did not know how to use it. I showed them how to take pictures, how to view and delete pictures, and also to video-record. Since the cameras were provided two weeks before the actual data collection stage, all of the learners had ample time in which to familiarise themselves with the features available on the camera.
- ii. Explaining the research task. I explained to the participants what the research task was. They were asked to take photographs of incidents

or any resources that they felt as opportunities for them to learn English when they were outside the school environment. I did not provide a detailed description of the kind of resources so as to avoid them taking pictures of those listed only. Since the participants were given the cameras earlier, I told them that there would be a trial session where they would take some pictures and later share their pictures with the others. The purpose of having the trial session was to make sure that the participants understand the research task.

- Learner Diaries

Diary study was also employed in order to collect data (details of the learners' diary entries are provided in the next chapter). Nunan (1994) asserts that learners' diaries can be an important source of data in research that concerns language learning. Bailey (1990) identifies the diary study as the participants' written experiences of their language learning journey; which will then be systematically analysed by the researcher. Bailey and Nunan (1996) state three reasons for using a learner's diary as a data collection technique: to gain insight into their feelings, to identify their learning strategies, and to explore their opinions on certain issues.

In the present study, the participants were asked to write about their daily experiences of learning English. These daily experiences were divided into two types: in-class experience and out-of-class experience. Nevertheless, asking the participants to write in their diaries could pose some problems. Jarvis (1992) outlines two problems in the participants' diaries. First, instead of writing in full details, the participants might just list down or give general summaries of their ideas. As a result, this is not sufficient to be used as data. Second, the participants might write to impress the researcher. He also cautions that some learners might not like the idea of writing; especially in a language that they are not proficient in. To avoid this problem, the participants in this study were allowed to write either in English or in Bahasa Melayu. However, I found that the participants wrote minimally in their diaries. Sometimes, they just wrote one or

two sentences in an entry. This resulted in some of the entries not being sufficient enough to be used as data.

4.2.4 Data Analysis

In this section, I will provide detailed description of how I analysed the data. This section is divided into three subsections. The first sub-section deals with the description of how I analysed the interviews, which were the primary source of data. In the second sub-section, I detailed out how I analysed the photographs taken by the 6 informants as well as their diary entries. Finally, in the third sub-section, I described how the observational data (the videos of the lessons) were analysed.

4.2.4.1 Analysing Interview Data

Phase 1 Transcribing and participant validation

After each interview session, the interview data were in the first instance transcribed. I used a free transcription software, Express Scribe, that I downloaded from the internet. This software had two important features that helped me with the transcribing process: variable speed playback and file management. With the variable speed playback, I could adjust the speed while I was transcribing the interview data. This enabled me to type while listening to the interviews. The file management feature helped me to sort out each interview session. Interview data were transcribed verbatim during the fieldwork. After that, these transcripts were returned to the participants for validation (Radnor, 2002). Due to time constraints, I was unable to transcribe all the interviews in Malaysia. Three interviews that were done on the last day of my field work were transcribed on my return to the UK. These were sent to back to the participants by e-mail. We then communicated through the social networking site, Facebook, where the learners told me that they were happy with the interview transcripts.

Phase 2 Coding

Analysis of the interview data was done in two ways: manually and electronically. As a novice researcher, I took the suggestion made by Saldana (2009) that I needed to learn and develop the skills of doing qualitative coding first by beginning with manually coding on hard-copy printouts. This was because trying to develop the arts of coding and learning to use the software at the same time could be overwhelming.

I decided to work on data sets from two learners first: AZR and TRK. I chose these two learners for two reasons. The first reason was based on my observations and interviews with them, I found that these two learners differed in the ways they participated in the language learning opportunities. Second, was their results in the national examinations. AZR got C for English (he obtained As for other subjects); while TRK got A for English (she also obtained As for other subjects). Working on two sets of contrasting data helped me to get a general sense of generating codes for the rest of the data. In the following, I will explain in detail how I analysed the data at this stage.

I began with two learners: AZR and TRK for reasons that I have explained earlier. I began with reading the interview transcripts thoroughly, line by line. Before I started analysing the data, I wrote the date that I did the analysis. This helped me to keep track of the various versions that I had as I went through the process of analysing each interview transcript. After that, using a highlighter, I marked each meaningful word, phrase, and utterance. Sometimes, there were two highlighted utterances in a single line. I separated each with a slash (/) to indicate that it would have a different label. In assigning names to these labels, I sometimes used original words or short phrases from the interviews as to retain their meanings. I also wrote short notes on the transcripts about some ideas and questions that I had pertaining to the labels. For instance, I noticed that both learners claimed that they read their reading materials in two different ways: TRK said she read it very slowly; while AZR stated that he read his

quickly. Samples of my initial labelling and short notes are provided below. I followed similar steps with other interview transcripts of these two learners.

1/5/2010

| | | |
|-----|---|--|
| R | In your first entry you wrote about this book- 'How to Write and Speak Better English'. Can you tell me about the book? | |
| TRK | The book...my father/is a member of the Reader's Digest.. so I think.. two years ago, he got the book/and he gave the book to me...and for a long time I didn't even touch the book...because I only see the book so thick...Oh my goodness, it's so thick...so I didn't touch the book. Then after I finished my PMR..it was boring./I did not know what to do...so I was looking what to do...I was cleaning my rack...it was so mess...then I saw the book...I didn't see it so long...the book, my father gave me as a present...then I started to read the book...like one page...a day or a week... | <p>Book / Father / Reader's Digest</p> <p>Father / Present</p> <p>Did not read</p> <p>Thick / worried - why?</p> <p>Reason : not reading</p> <p>Bored / looked for something to do</p> <p>read book / one page</p> <p>why only one page?</p> |

Figure 4.3 Sample of manual coding (TRK INT OUT/1)

- Manual Coding

Data coding was a cyclical process. In the first cycle, the data were coded based on units of meaning (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). These units of meaning were in various forms, such as single words, phrases, sentences, and even a full paragraph. In this study, I read the data line by line and divided them into meaningful analytical units. I coded the data using the same words used by the participants and also words that I thought appropriately described the meaning of the utterances. The first cycle of coding was done on hard-copy printouts. As I stated earlier, for this initial stage, I focused on data from two participants: AZR and TRK and my interviews with them on their out-of-class learning. I further analysed the data. Some of my initial codes were subsumed

by other codes, I also relabelled or dropped some codes all together, or sometimes further broke down the analytical units. I then proceeded with the rest of the interview data of the two participants. As I coded these data, I found there were repeated codes. According to Saldana (2009), this is natural because in human affairs there are bound to be repetitive patterns of actions and consistencies.

Having analysed all eight transcripts (four from each learner), I began with the second cycle of analysis where I revisited the data and began assigning codes to these labels. To illustrate, for the sample above I created four codes:

- i. printed reading material
- ii. family
- iii. did not read
- iv. reading

| Labels | Codes |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. book/ Reader's Digest | 1. Printed reading material |
| 2. father/present | 2. Family |
| 3. <i>"and for a long time I didn't even touch the book...because I only see the book so thick...Oh my goodness, it's so thick..so I didn't touch the book."</i> | 3. Did not read |
| 4. <i>"then I started to read the book...like one page...a day or a week..."</i> | 4. Reading |

Figure 4.4 Sample of Labels and Codes

This time, I also decided to divide each meaningful utterance into separate lines as I felt this would help me to further check the data and to assign more accurate codes. In other words, all meaningful utterances that were initially divided by using this symbol (/) were split into separate lines. To illustrate, below I provided a part of the transcript that I have divided into separate lines.

| | | |
|-----|---|----------------------|
| R | How about the parts that you didn't understand? | |
| AZR | I just ignored them. | ignored |
| | It is a long article, | long |
| | I just read quickly, | read quickly |
| | just to get the information. | — reason for reading |
| | | skimmed & scanned |

Figure 4.5 Sample of utterances split into lines

After I had finished with the second cycle of analysis, I started to develop my catalogue of categories and codes. Following Maykut and Morehouse (1994), I provided a rule of inclusion for each category. This rule was in the form of a propositional statement together with sample data. All together, I developed 10 categories based on my analysis on the two sets of data. For illustrative purposes, I will provide details on how I worked on one category only. I would like to highlight that the process of analysis for the other categories were also made in a similar manner.

| Category/ Code/ Sub code | Definition/ Explanation/Example |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Category 1.Resources | These are resources in English that the learners engaged in, outside the classroom. These resources are documented by the learners in photos and diaries prior to the interview sessions. However, there are also resources that are not captured earlier, but are mentioned during the interviews. |
| Codes | |
| -TV programmes | -Examples: series, documentaries, movies, cartoons, news, talk show, cooking show and kid show. |
| -Internet | -Examples: reading articles, videos, games, social networking sites and online dictionary. |
| -Printed reading materials | -Examples: magazines, fact book and newspapers. |
| -People | -Examples: family members, relatives, friends, and neighbours. |
| -Frames and posters | -Examples: inspirational posters, informational posters, and picture frames. |
| -Signage | -Examples: advertising billboards, signboards, and banners. |
| -Stationery | -Examples: exercise book, pencil case, wrapping paper, business cards and book marks. |
| -Suggestion box | -Example: customer suggestion box at a shopping complex. |
| -Printed reference materials | -Examples: text books, dictionary and reference books. |
| -Electronic and communication devices | -Examples: mp3, radio and hand phone. |
| -Car accessory | -Example: sun shade. |

Table 4.6 Coding Catalogue

- Electronic Coding

The second cycle coding was done using Nvivo software package. The software did not actually code the data. However, it was useful as it enabled me to store, manage, and organize the data for further analytic reflection. Using this software, I was also able to retrieve the data and searched for specific words and phrases easily. Below I provided the details of my second cycle analysis.

First, the transcriptions were imported into the software in the form of a word file. The transcriptions were filed into two different projects: in-class learning project and out-of-class learning project. All together, there were 24 sources under the in-class learning project and another 24 sources under the out-of-class learning project. Second, I keyed in the categories and the codes into the tree nodes function. Coding was a process of iteration and reiteration. As I worked on the two data sets, I decided to combine the code 'Printed Reference Materials' with 'Printed reading materials'. I also added 2 new sub-codes: 'Social Activity' and 'T-shirt'. An example of a tree node can be seen in Figure 4.6.

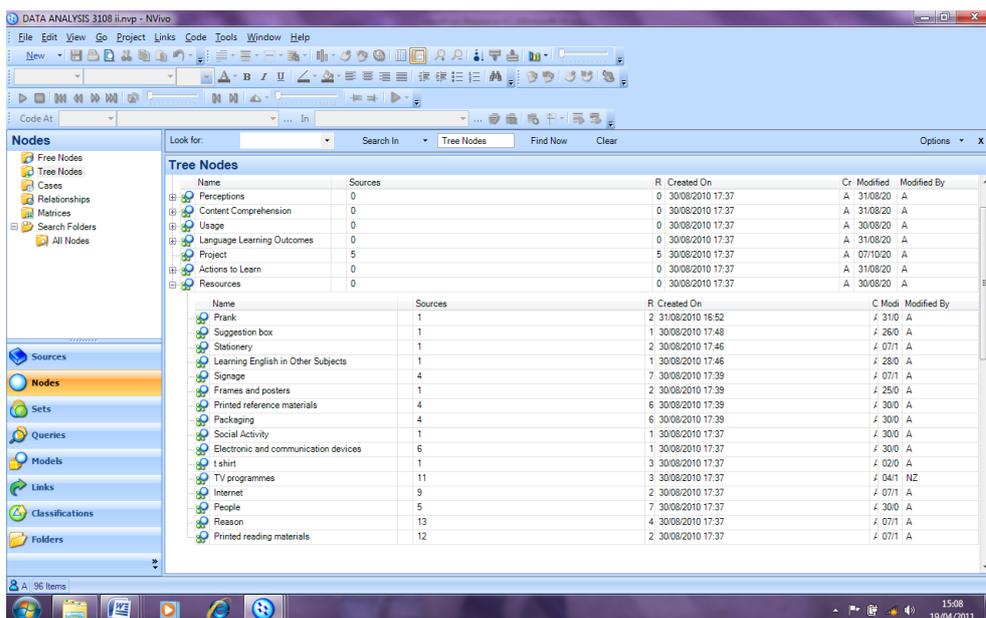


Figure 4.6 Tree nodes

Third, I started to assign utterances to their codes. The transcription of a particular interview was browsed and the process of coding began. Using the mouse, I dragged the chosen utterance and assigned it to a particular code in the tree node. I started with the interview data that I coded manually. To confirm the appropriateness of the current coding with the previous one that I did manually, I used the coding stripes function to view my work. Nonetheless, these codes were not fixed because coding was a process of iteration and reiteration; where some codes were subsequently modified during the process (Miles and Huberman, 1994, as cited in Cohen et al., 2000). I went through the same process with other categories, codes, and sub-codes. After I finished with the two data sets, there were 9 categories, with changes with the codes and sub-codes (Figure 4.7).

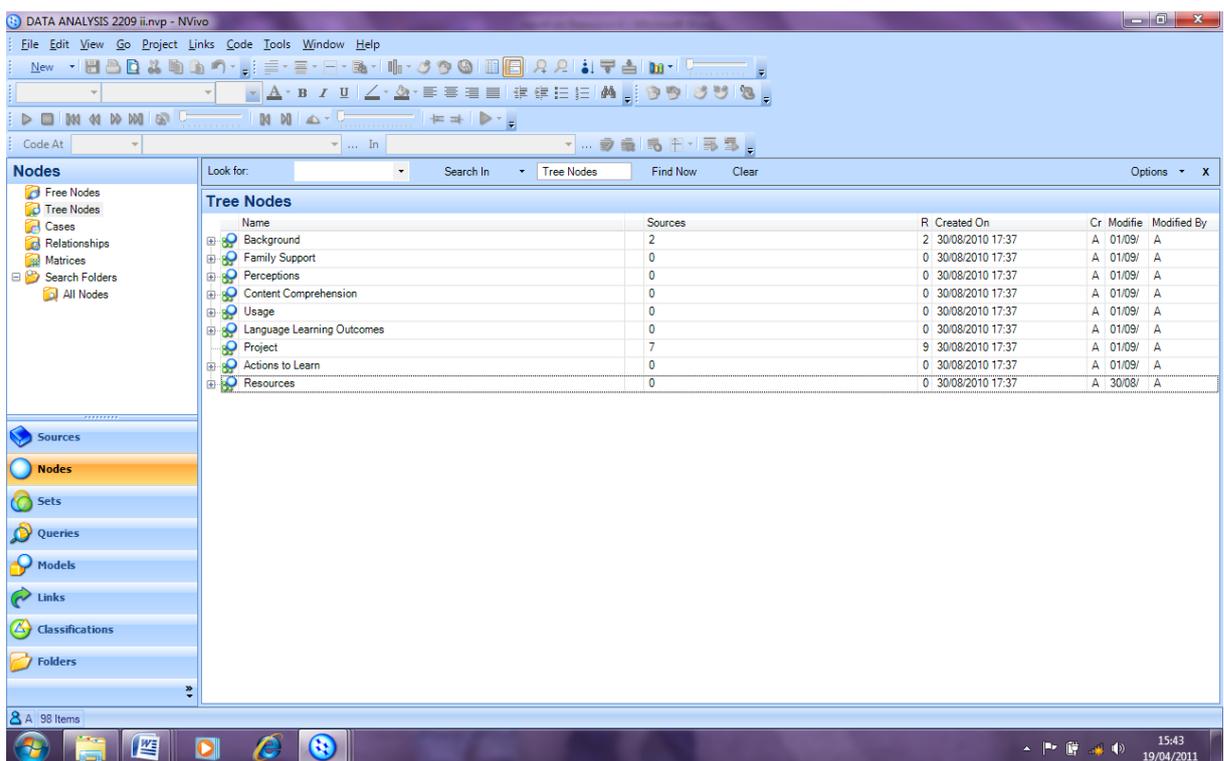


Figure 4.7 Categories

Having done this with the data sets from the two participants: AZR and TRK; I continued with data sets from the other four learners. Before all the coding was

finalised, I checked the data set more than once to ensure consistency, modification, and exhaustiveness of coding (Cohen et.al, 2000). Using the search nodes function in the Nvivo program, these coded transcripts could be retrieved easily. This helped me with the comparison of data within and between categories. Furthermore, in some cases, the data belonged to more than one category. This process helped to categorise the data in more than one place.

Throughout this process, the data were constantly compared across individuals. This was done in order to work towards finding relationships and patterns. The next step was then to integrate the data to yield an understanding of learner participation in language learning opportunities through matching the data with data from the participants' diaries, the classroom observations, the photos, and my own notes. There were 5 categories in the final coding catalogue (Refer to Appendix 3)

4.2.4.2 Analysing Classroom Observation Data

There were two sources of observation data: videos of the recorded lessons and observational notes. To begin with, I will describe my preliminary analysis (Phase 1) of the videos of the recorded lessons as well as my observation notes.

Phase 1

All together there were 6 recorded lessons, which equalled 300 minutes (refer to Table 4.5 for details of learners observed in each lesson). I first transferred all files into my computer. I labelled each video as follows:

| Observation | Label |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Classroom Observation 1a | CO 1a |
| Classroom Observation 1b | CO 1b |
| Classroom Observation 2a | CO 2a |
| Classroom Observation 2b | CO 2b |
| Classroom Observation 3a | CO 3a |
| Classroom Observation 3b | CO 3b |

Table 4.7 Classroom Observation: Labels

Then, I watched each video. As I focused on only three participants in each recorded lesson, for CO 1a, for example, I watched closely and took down notes of the overt behaviours of AZR, THN, and TRK. As the teacher was an important figure in the classroom, I also took down notes of the teacher's behaviour and what she said. I did not transcribe the whole lesson as my focus was on the participants' manner of engagement. Apart from the teacher, I also took notes on the overt behaviours of other learners in the class that I felt had relevance to how the six participants engaged in the lesson. I watched each video more than three times, where during each, I often used the replay function to really understand and capture what happened.

Next, I will describe how I analysed my observation notes. Soon after each observation, I wrote up my observation notes. During each observation, I took scratch notes of the lesson and the teacher's activities, the learner's activities, and also other learners' contributions to the lesson that I felt relevant. As I was writing up the descriptive account of the lesson, I was doing a preliminary analysis of the observational data where I was involved in self-reflection to better understand what had happened in the class. Below is a sample of my observation notes.

The teacher stands in front of the class. TRK, HM, SKR, and AZR are sitting in their usual seats. Except for SKR who only has his exercise book on the desk, the other three learners have their exercise books as well as their dictionaries ready in front of them. The teacher begins by asking several questions about being teenagers and falling in love. Learners appear to be a bit shy when the teacher asks them whether they have been in love before. Some smile sheepishly, a few look down. TRK and HM answer some of the teacher's questions; maybe because they are seating in front. AZR and SKR just keep quiet. AZR is holding a pen and seems to be taking down notes every now and then. The teacher asks whether they know their friends who are in love. Several learners, including HM, say "No". After answering, HM looks at TRK who is sitting next to her, they both smile. The teacher continues by advising them not to fall in love yet, and to focus on their studies. SKR so far has not answered any of the teacher's questions. AZR joins giving answers in chorus several times.

Figure 4.8 Sample of Observation Notes

Phase 2

Having done the preliminary analysis, I then began with the second phase, where I did 3 types of analysis. The first type focused on the teacher's activities. Here, I listed the teacher's activities during each lesson. I did this by referring to my observational notes and my notes of the actual lesson from the videos. A sample of this is provided below.

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Classroom Observation | : 2(b) |
| Date | : 3 rd February 2010 |
| Topic | : Poem- 'He had such quiet eyes' |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. T asked questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Are you in love? b. Have you been in love? c. Do you know people who are in love? 2. T asked a learner to read. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. T correcting the learner's pronunciation. 3. T asked: Do you understand the first stanza? 4. T asked for the meaning of "quiet eyes". <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. T responding to a learner's answer ('buta'/blind). b. T explaining the meaning of the phrase. 5. T explained the poem. 6. T asking for the meaning of the word 'imploring' and telling the class to use the dictionary. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. T asking a learner to read out the meaning in the dictionary. | |

Figure 4.9 Details of the lesson (Teacher's activities)

The second type is where I focused on each participant's manner of engagement. I depended primarily on the recorded lesson as my observational notes did not have enough details on each learner, as I had to observe 3 to 4 of them at one time. I coded each engagement into:

- Oral English/OE
- Oral First Language/OT (Tamil), OM (Bahasa Melayu)
- Non-oral/N-O
- Correct Answer/CA
- Incorrect Answer/IC

The third type is where I compared the teacher's activities with each learner's manner of engagement. I drew a table with two columns: Column 1 contained details of the teacher's activities, while Column 2 was the detailed engagement of the learner. By having these two side by side, I could identify the learner's nature of engagement with regard to the teacher's activities (which were regarded as the main resources for learners in this study). A sample is provided

below. I would like to highlight that these engagements were provided from my point of view. Each learner’s description of their engagement was gained from the interview conducted on each lesson. The analysis of the observational data and the responses made by learners during the interviews were compared and matched.

| Teacher-Learner Engagement *Teacher (T) | Nature of Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral English/OE, ■ Oral Tamil/OT, ■ Non-oral/NO ■ CORRECT ANSWER/C ■ INCORRECT ANSWER/IC |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. T asked questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Are you in love? b. Have you been in love? c. Do you know people who are in love? 2. T asked the learner to read. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. T correcting the learner’s pronunciation. 3. T asked: Do you understand the first stanza? 4. T asked for the meaning of “quiet eyes”. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. T responding to a learner’s answer (‘buta’/blind). b. T explaining the meaning of the phrase. 5. T explained the poem. 6. T asking for the meaning of the word ‘imploring’ and telling the class to use the dictionary. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. T asking a learner to read out the meaning in the dictionary. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TRK responded <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Shaking head, looking at T, smiling-N-O b. Shaking head, answering ‘no’, giggling, looking at T-OE, N-O c. Shaking head, answering ‘no’, giggling, looking at friend-OE, N-O 2. Reading-OE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Repeating after the T-OE 3. Answered ‘no’-OE 4. Smiling, looking at T-N-O <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Smiling, looking at T-N-O b. Listening, looking at T-N-O 5. Listening to the T, looking at T-N-O 6. Using the dictionary, looking for the word, reading the meaning to her friend-N-O, OE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Looking at friend’s dictionary, reading own dictionary-N-O |

Figure 4.10 Teacher-Learner Engagement and TRK’s Nature of Engagement (Researcher’s View)

4.2.4.3 Analysing Photographs

During the interviews, I used the photographs taken by the learners for two purposes: for information and as a stimulus. I used the photos to elicit information on the learners' engagements with the resources. Since the photographs were used as a stimulus, the analysis of what the learners said was part of my analysis of the interview data.

The photos taken by the learners were analysed in four stages. The first stage was done immediately after the learners had returned the digital cameras to me, a day before every interview on their out-of-class engagement with English-medium resources. When I received the cameras, the first step I took was to download all pictures onto my laptop. I kept the pictures each learner took in different folders, each folder was labelled according to their abbreviations (such as AZR, TRK, NS). I viewed all photos taken as a preparation for the interview with them (normally with each of the three learners in one interview session) on the following day. I considered this as the first stage of analysis. Below are samples of photos taken by the learners which were used during the interview sessions.

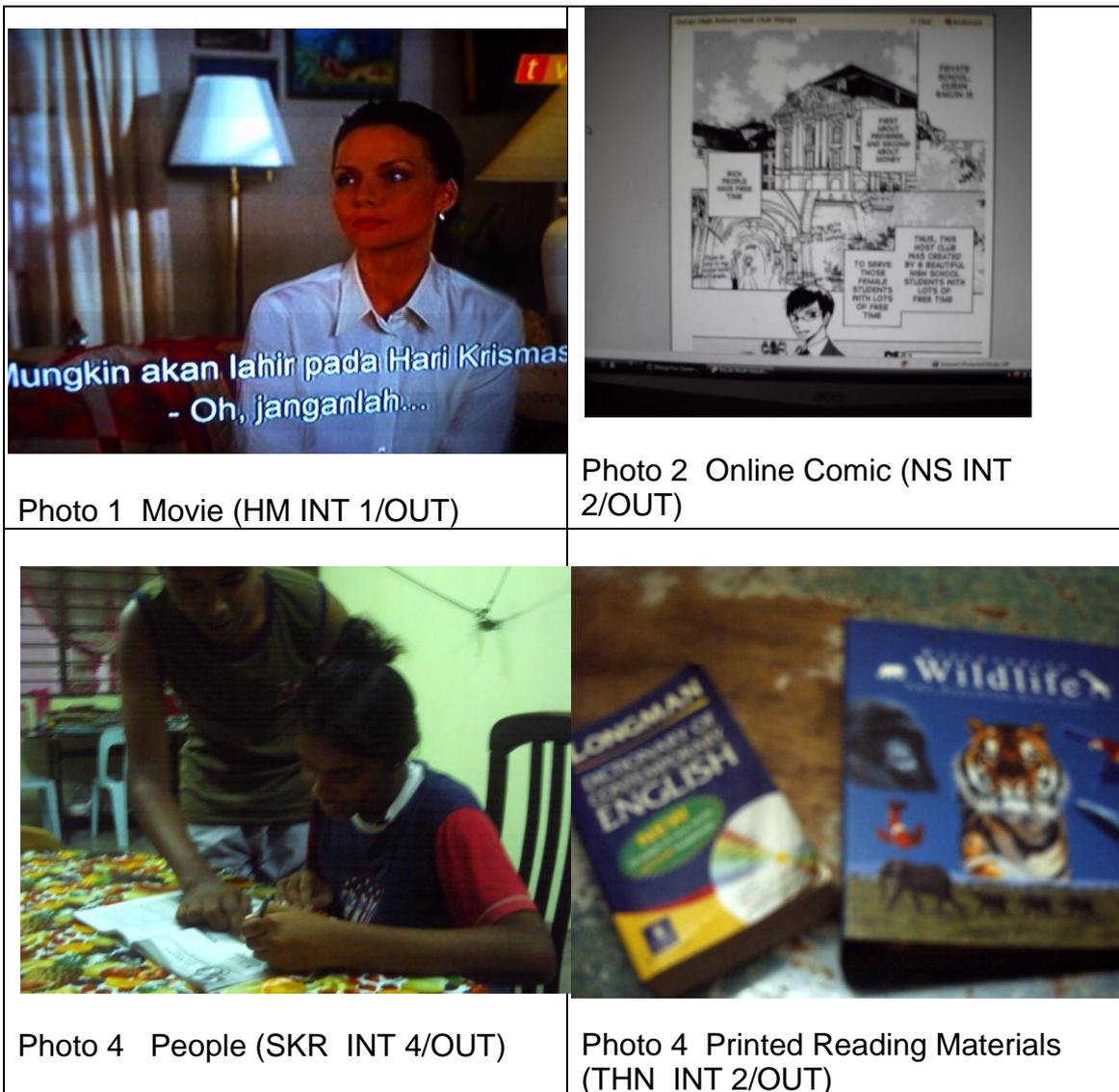


Photo 1 Movie (HM INT 1/OUT)

Photo 2 Online Comic (NS INT 2/OUT)

Photo 4 People (SKR INT 4/OUT)

Photo 4 Printed Reading Materials (THN INT 2/OUT)

Figure 4.11 Samples of Photos

The second stage was done after all interviews on out-of-class engagement had been done. I went through all folders containing files of photos taken by the learners. The table below provides the number of photos taken by each learner.

| Learner | AZR | HM | NS | SKR | THN | TRK |
|--------------------|-------------------|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| No of photos | 25 | 28 | 18 | 23 | 13 | 30 |
| Total no of photos | 137 photos | | | | | |

Table 4.8 Number of Photos Taken by Each Participant

Altogether there were 137 photos. However, some of the photos were of poor quality, and many others that were about the same resource, for example, TRK took 5 photos of the same movie (Mr Bean) that she watched. Therefore, in this second stage of analysis, I viewed each photo and selected those I felt significant in helping me to understand the issue of learner participation. I would like to note that all photos that learners talked about during the interviews (they normally talked about 3 photos in each interview) were selected. THN had the least number of photos because due to technical problems, many of the photos that she took were lost. The table below provides the number of photos that I selected from each learner (refer to Appendix 5 for a CD-ROM that contains selected photos).

| Learner | AZR | HM | NS | SKR | THN | TRK |
|--------------------|------------------|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| No of photos | 13 | 23 | 12 | 11 | 5 | 19 |
| Total no of photos | 83 photos | | | | | |

Table 4.9....Number of Selected Photos from Each Participant

In the third stage of analysis, I divided the photos in two folders. The first folder (Folder A) contained separate files of photos taken by each learner; there were 6 files in this folder. The second folder (Folder B) contained all photos (not separated in different files). The reason for having these two folders was so that analysis within and across cases could be made.

Finally, in the fourth stage, based on the analysis done within and across cases, I divided the photos into separate categories. There were six categories: Broadcast Media, Internet Media, Printed Reading Materials, Environmental Print, People, and Portable Media. I would like to highlight that categories for the photos were developed concurrently with other categories from the data. Thus, similar categories were used in my final coding.

4.2.4.4 Analysing Diary Entries

I asked learners to write diary entries on their experiences of learning the language in both contexts: in and out-of-class. However, most of their entries were about their out-of-class learning. I found that some of their entries did not provide as much information as I hoped. Most of them just stated the different types of photographs that they took. Figure 4.12 is a sample of this type of entry. In several occasions, two learners wrote about their encounters with the language that were not captured in photographs (see Figure 4.13 for an example). In this case, I referred to their entries and probed further about their experiences and the responses were coded as the rest of the interview transcripts.

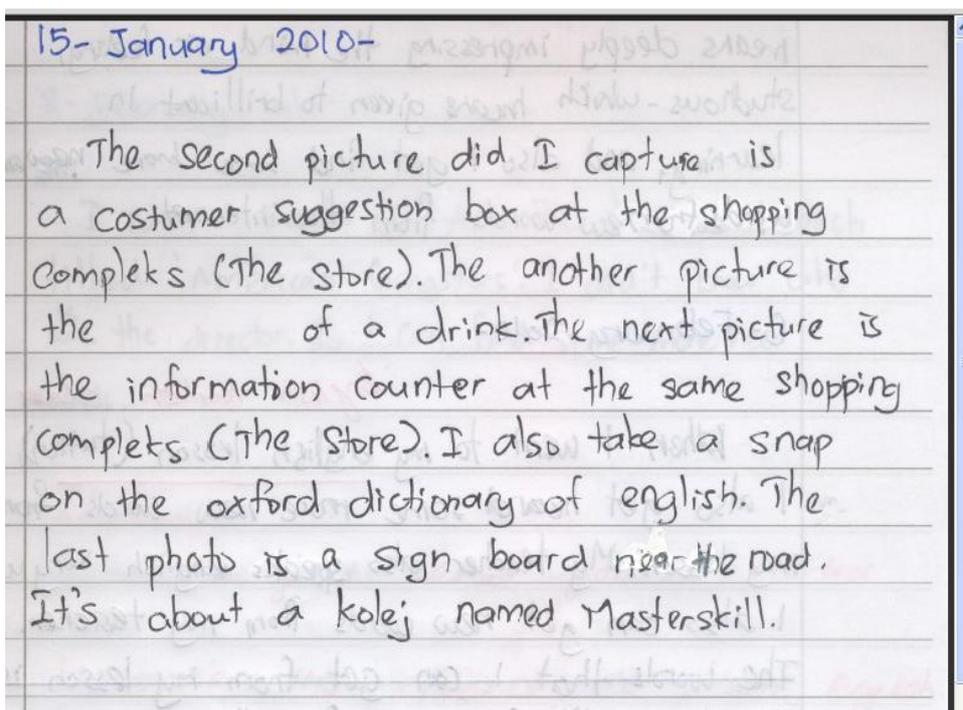


Figure 4.12 Diary Entry 1

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
| | |
| | Today I was see an interesting |
| | incident near my house. A old Punjabi |
| | man which is my neighbour was fighting |
| | with Chinese man. They was used |
| | English language to fight. The Punjabi |
| | man was talk more better than the |
| | opposite man. |
| | after the incident I learn |
| | that English is one of medium |
| | language for all kind of people |
| | for everything. |
| | |

Figure 4.13 Diary Entry 2

SECTION III

4.3 Ethical Issues

Researchers working in the qualitative paradigm, who primarily seek to understand people's lives, need to make sure that their work will not pose any harm to those they investigate. As highlighted by Fontana and Frey (1998), the researcher needs to exercise utmost care to ensure that the participants will not be harmed through their involvement in the study. Barrett (1996 as cited in de Laine, 2000) state that fieldworkers need to make their research goals known, gain access, and respect the privacy of the research participants. In the present study, the following ethical issues were observed:

- Getting access

Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 62) list several ways in which getting access to a particular research site can be aided. First is to be sensitive to the organisational structure by getting clearance from the gatekeepers. In this study, the first level of gatekeepers was the Economic Planning Unit (EPU at the Prime Minister's Office) and the Education Planning and Research Unit at

the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. This is because I am a student in the United Kingdom, and therefore they regard me as a foreign student. Hence, I was required to follow a procedure for foreign students who want to carry out their studies in Malaysia. The second level was the State Education Office. With approval from this government body, I contacted the key person at the state education office and discussed with him my intention to conduct a study at one of the secondary schools in his area. The third level was the school authorities that included the principal and the head of academic affairs.

Secondly it is helpful to provide clear information about the study and why a particular site has been chosen. I provided my research proposal when I applied for access approval from the related government body. In the proposal, among others, I detailed the research objectives and purposes, the data collection techniques, the length and the activities of my data collection phase. I also explained to the principal the reasons for choosing the school.

Thirdly we must be clear about the use of the findings, anonymity, and confidentiality. Other than addressing these issues in the research proposal, I also talked about them with the principal. The principal showed concern over the issues of confidentiality and anonymity. He related to me an experience that he had had in his previous school, where a researcher conducted a study then wrote about his findings in one of the national newspapers, revealing the identity of the school. I assured him that confidentiality and anonymity were also my concerns and explained to him how these issues were dealt with in my study as described below.

- Informed consent

Diener and Crandel (1978 in Cohen et.al, 2007) define informed consent as the formal procedure whereby the individuals are informed about the nature of a study and these individuals will make decisions about whether to participate or not, based on the facts provided to them. In my study, the research participants

were about 16 years old. They are regarded as children in Malaysia (Morrow and Richards, 1996) and therefore, according to the law, they could not give the consent to participate in a study (Sieber, 1992). Hence, in this study, permission was granted by the authoritative bodies: the state education office and the school (Sieber, *ibid*). I also asked the participants to consult their parents before making decisions regarding their participation in the project.

A growing body of literature discusses the importance of careful consideration when conducting research involving children and young people (Fargas-Malet, et al. 2010, Lewis, et al. 2004; Meo, 2010, and Morrows and Richards, 1996). Following the work of Christensen & Prout (cited in Meo, 2010: 153), I believe there exists an ethical symmetry between adults and children, where similar ethical issues are present in a study that involves adults and children, such as making decisions to participate in a study. Thus in the present study, I assumed similar ethical considerations when working with the children. Sieber (1992) maintains that these children should be given the choice whether to participate in the research or not. In this study, the learners were given the choice either to take part in the study or not. Before asking them this, I explained the nature of the research to them. This was to make sure that they were clear about what the study intended to explore and their roles in it. I then told them that they had a choice whether to participate or not. I then gave them each a participant-consent agreement. I went through the agreement with the learners, where I also explained in Bahasa Melayu where necessary.

In addition, I asked for their consent to use the photographs that they took for interviews and future publications. The consent form that I used for this study was adapted from Meo (2010). A sample of the consent form is in Appendix 2. It was divided into two sections: the first section was on the length of time that I required for the participants to take the photos. The second section concerned authorization for the researcher to use the photos in different publications and situations. I asked the participants to sign the first section of the form after their trial sessions using the digital cameras. They signed the second section on our last interview session on out-of-class learning.

- Anonymity and confidentiality

Issues of anonymity are crucial in any study as this ensure that the participants' and the institution's true identity will be not be revealed. In doing so, I used only pseudonyms to protect the rights of those who will be involved in this study. For easier reference, throughout this thesis I chose to use the abbreviations of their pseudonyms.

Closely connected to the issue of anonymity is confidentiality. It refers to not revealing or discussing the data gathered with any party. In this study, the data gathered from the learners were not discussed with their teachers or any relevant authorities. Morrow and Richards (1996) suggest that ethical issues should be addressed continuously throughout the study. In my study, I constantly assured my research participants of confidentiality and anonymity in person. I also used these pseudonyms throughout my writing of the thesis. Furthermore, I have isolated the key that tells me which pseudonym applies to which participant.

Moss (2001) highlights the intrusive quality of photography. She cautions that one of the setbacks of asking children to take photos in their homes and in the community is that they might provide pictures that were private. I felt that the participants, even though still young, were aware of the boundaries, and would not take photos that were too private and personal.

4.4 Trustworthiness

The primary concern of any research is its trustworthiness, credibility and confirmability (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In the interpretive paradigm, there are multiple realities which are socially constructed. Thus, the concepts of validity and reliability need to be approached differently from those of the

positivist paradigm that sees reality as single and stable (Shenton, 2004). Flick (1998) argues that in an interpretive inquiry, the concern is to what extent the construction made by the researcher is grounded in the constructions made by those being studied. In this study, the following actions were observed in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and findings:

- i. prolonged engagement in the field. In this study, I spent 2 and a half months in the field. I allocated the first two weeks to get to know my research participants, their classmates, the English teacher, and the other teachers in the school. Even though my focus was only on the six learners, I felt that it was important for me to get to know the others since they made up the learners' social world and therefore had bearings on the learners' practices. Furthermore, I sat in the class during the English lessons even prior to my actual data collection stage because I wanted the learners to get used to my presence and the video recordings. I also needed time to get myself acquainted with the classroom environment. Though as an ESL practitioner I had a lot of experience of being in the classroom, this was my first experience being there as a researcher. I therefore, needed some time to get used to this new role. My presence in the field had enabled me to learn the social practices of these learners and thus helped me to gain an in-depth understanding as I attempted to explain the phenomenon under study.
- ii. the use of multiple sources. In this study, multiple sources were used not to triangulate the data. This is because the idea of triangulation is not appropriate in interpretive research because it seems to imply "checking up" in order to get the right truth or one reality (Flick, 1998). The use of multiple sources in this study such as classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, diary entries, and photographs taken by the research participants, however, is to gain a fuller picture of the issue being investigated.
- iii. iterative questioning (Shenton, 2004). As my research participants were learners, I was aware of the possibility of them giving responses

that were designed to please me. I acknowledged this as human fallibility and tried to deal with this issue by employing iterative questioning, which also included using probes to ask for more details. For example, using rephrased questions, and I sometimes returned to matters that my research participants had previously talked about to obtain related data.

- iv. member checking. This refers to presenting the research participants with the interview transcripts and the interpretations that the researcher has made for confirmation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this study, the participants were given the opportunity to verify their responses in the verbatim transcriptions of the interviews that I had with them.
- v. the process of coding and re-coding of data. I coded and re-coded the data several times and this helped me towards an understanding of learner participation in their respective sociocultural contexts.

In the conventional tradition, the truthfulness of a study lies in the possibility of the findings being transferred and replicated in other contexts. Merriam (1988 in Creswell, 1994: 159) states that the purpose of a qualitative study is to develop an in-depth and unique understanding of a certain phenomenon, and not to generalise its findings. In this manner, it is impossible to exactly replicate an interpretive study because each study is bound up with the peculiarities of the participants, the context, the circumstances, as well as the researcher. Nevertheless, Guba (1981) maintains that there is a possibility for an interpretive study to be transferred to another context that shares some essential similarities. Mason (2002) talks about this explicitly; she states: "*I do not think qualitative researchers should be satisfied with producing explanations which are idiosyncratic or particular to the limited empirical parameters of their study...Qualitative researchers should produce explanations which are generalizable in some way, or which have a wider resonance.*" (p.6). In this

study, recommendations for teaching practices and further research were made based on the findings.

4.5 Limitations of the Study

In the present study, only six participants were involved and they were all children (aged about 16 years old). These could be considered as a limitation and therefore needs to be acknowledged and addressed. In what follows, I shall discuss two limitations of this study.

i. small number of participants

Only 6 ESL learners were involved in the project. This might be viewed as a limitation since generalisation cannot be made from a study that involves such a small number of participants. Such a view stems from the positivist stance. In an interpretive study such as the present one, the concern is on meaning-making, rather than making generalisations. Hence, Ritchie et.al (2003) contend that more data (from bigger number of participants) does not necessarily lead to more information. Nevertheless, Mason (2002) reminds qualitative researchers that the samples must be large enough to ensure that the opinions of those who matter in the particular issue being investigated are uncovered. In the present study, although the number of participants is small, the six ESL learners vary in terms of their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. In this respect, the issue of learner participation in a particular context in Malaysia could be understood in some depth despite the small number of participants, although generalisation is not possible.

ii. problems accessing what people are saying

As the present study involves young people, I am aware of some potential problems in interviewing such group of people. Courtesy bias (Jones, 1993) is one of the problems that might arise whereby the research participants feel that they need to provide responses that they consider are favourable to the

researcher. I tried to avoid this from happening by creating a positive environment and an appropriate relationship with them. During the interview sessions, I avoided reacting to their responses in a manner that might be misinterpreted by the participants. To illustrate, I avoided giving a note of surprise or disbelief to some of their responses. I also tried to minimise the unequal power relations that existed between the participants and I.

4.6 Summary

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part I have provided my philosophical stance that has framed the basis of my research design. I have chosen an interpretive mode of inquiry because I believe it is most appropriate to investigate learner participation in language learning opportunities that are available in their social world. In the second part I have detailed my research procedure and also the framework for data analysis. In the next chapter, I will present the analysis on out-of-class engagement.

Chapter 5 Analysis of Findings: Out-of-Class Participation

5.0 Introduction

In this thesis, there are two chapters that report the research findings. The first chapter (Chapter 5) is on out-of-class participation; while the second chapter (Chapter 6) discusses in-class. participation.

In this chapter, I will present all data gathered on the learners' out-of-class engagement. Data on out-of-class engagement is presented first as I believe that the out-of-class setting provides ESL learners with a richer environment to engage with the resources and that the in-class setting is one of the avenues where learners can engage with English-medium resources.

5.1 Presentation of Analysis

In this part, I will present the findings of this study. Based on my analysis, I have identified five categories in my attempt to better understand ESL learner participation: Resources, Forms of Participation, Gains from Participation, Perceptions, and Family Support. I will present the findings for each category respectively.

5.1.1 Resources

The learners engaged in seven different types of resources: 'broadcast media', 'internet media', 'printed reading materials', 'environmental print', 'people', 'portable media', and 'learner initiated'. Most of the resources were captured in the photographs taken by the learners and they talked about these photos during the interviews. There were also some resources that emerged during the interviews or written in their diaries. Table 5.1 provides the different types of resources that the learners encountered and also whether these resources

were mentioned in the interviews, captured in photographs, or written in diaries
(see Appendix 6 for a summary of the resources and participants)

| | Interviews | Diaries | Photographs |
|----------------------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| Category: Resources | | | |
| Code: | | | |
| I. Broadcast media | | | |
| Sub-codes: | | | |
| a. Television | / | / | / |
| - TV series | / | / | / |
| - Cartoon program | / | / | / |
| - Documentary | / | / | / |
| - Movie | / | | / |
| - News | / | | / |
| - Paranormal show | / | / | / |
| - Kids talk show | / | | / |
| - Cooking show | / | | |
| b. Radio | / | | |
| - songs | / | / | / |
| II. Internet Media | / | | / |
| - Article on current issue | / | | / |
| - Video clip and movie | / | | / |
| - Game | / | / | / |
| - Comic | / | | / |
| - Dictionary | / | | / |
| - Song | / | | / |
| - Technical information | / | | / |
| - Factual information | | | |
| - Social networking | | | |

| | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|---|---|
| II. | Printed reading materials | | | |
| - | Educational magazine | / | / | / |
| - | General-interest magazine | / | / | / |
| - | Storybook | / | / | / |
| - | Biography | / | / | / |
| - | Fact book | / | | / |
| - | Text book | / | | / |
| - | Dictionary | / | | / |
| - | Newspapers | / | | / |
| - | Informational poster | / | / | / |
| IV. | Environmental Print | | | |
| - | Banner | / | | / |
| - | Billboard | / | | / |
| - | Book mark | / | | / |
| - | Box | / | | / |
| - | Business card | / | | / |
| - | Calendar | / | | / |
| - | Car accessory | / | | / |
| - | Carrier bag | / | | / |
| - | Food container | / | | / |
| - | inspirational frame | / | | / |
| - | Label | / | | / |
| - | Notebook | / | | / |
| - | Pencil case | / | | / |
| - | Suggestion box | / | | / |
| - | T-shirt | / | | / |
| - | Wrapping paper | / | | / |

| | Interviews | Diaries | Photographs |
|-----------------------------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| V. People | | | |
| - family members | / | | |
| - relatives | / | | |
| - Friends | / | | |
| - English tuition teacher | / | | |
| - music/ religious/vocal teachers | / | | |
| - neighbour | / | / | |
| VI. Portable Media | | | |
| - Mobile phone | / | / | / |
| - Dvd player | / | / | / |
| - Mp3 | / | / | / |
| VII. 'Learner-Initiated' | | | |
| - Scrapbooks | / | | |
| - Note books | / | | |
| - Pranks | / | | |
| - Short stories | / | | |

Table 5.1 Category 1 Resources

Broadcast Media

Broadcast media refers to English-medium resources that the six learners encountered while watching television programmes or listening to radio broadcasts. The television programmes most often watched by them were television series, cartoon shows, documentaries, movies, paranormal shows, kids talk shows, and cooking shows. Most of the programmes were supplied with subtitles in Bahasa Melayu. One cartoon program was aired twice a week and watched in two different languages: the first show was in Bahasa Melayu; while the second show was in English. Most of these resources were American television programmes such as 'The Bones', 'National Geographic', and 'Sponge Bob'. Two programmes were produced in Singapore: the sit-com 'Phua Chu Kang' and a paranormal activity show called 'The Incredible Tales'. Only the kids talk show was produced in Malaysia. The cooking shows, cartoon

programmes, and kids talk shows were aired during the day. The TV series and movies were aired during prime time that was between 8 to 10 pm. The news programmes that two learners reported watching were aired twice at night: one at 8 pm while the other one was at midnight. Only one learner, AZR, talked about listening to English radio broadcasts while he was on a family trip. Although the radio provided both information and entertainment, AZR said that he only listened to English songs

Internet Media

Learners also reported that they engaged with resources available on the internet. AZR reported that he read online articles on current issues. NS said she surfed the internet to work on her homework for two science subjects: Biology and Chemistry. AZR and SKR used online dictionary that were available on some websites such as 'dictionary.com' and 'freedictionary'. These websites provided meaning of words and pronunciation. Online games were another type of internet resources that AZR, NS, and SKR reported engaging with. There were two ways of playing these games. The first one was played individually, while the second type of online game could be played by several players such as when playing online chess. While playing the second type of game, NS said that she also chatted online with other players in English. Other types of resources were the online comic 'Manga', and a social networking website 'MySpace'. For the social networking website, users are given the choice to register according to the language that they wanted to communicate in. To illustrate, NS said she registered under the UK domain because she wanted to communicate in English. From the internet, AZR, SKR, and NS said they listened to English songs that they liked. SKR stated that he watched clips of movies and songs on You Tube. NS also recounted her experience of reading technical information from the internet to fix her computer that was infected by a virus.

Printed Reading Materials

These learners also engaged in reading printed materials like newspapers, magazines, storybooks, biographies of famous people, fact books, and text books. AZR, HM, THN, and TRK reported that they read English newspapers but only THN claimed reading it daily. AZR and HM said they liked to read news on crimes and sports. TRK said that she only read the comic section. The magazines that these learners read can be divided into two types: educational and general-interest. The educational magazines provided materials that focused on learning English. According to AZR, 'The Gateway to Better English' that he read had one section on short articles on famous people, a section on short stories, and a vocabulary game. Another magazine 'Kuntum' provided their subscribers with a file where they could learn about animals all around the world and write their own entries about the animals that they read about. 'Readers Digest' is an example of a general-interest magazine that NS reported reading. She also mentioned about reading a fact book called 'I Wonder Why'. She described the book as using simple English and containing many colourful pictures. TRK talked about reading both fictional and non-fictional storybooks. The fictional ones were thriller and horror stories, while the non-fictional books were about ancient empires. There were also biographies of famous people like Princess Diana and Leonardo DiCaprio. NS took photographs of her Biology, Chemistry, and Physics text and reference books in English. These books had a glossary of terms in Bahasa Melayu; which NS said she referred to when she had difficulties with the scientific words and phrases that she found in the books. HM said she read an informational poster about cigarette smoking and its effects on health on the day she went to the hospital.

Environmental Print

Environmental print refers to graphic print that the six learners encountered in their daily life. Learners talked about the print that they found on their stationery such as on a note book, a pencil case, or a book mark. AZR talked about the print on a t-shirt that his friend gave to him as a present. There were also photos of graphic print that were found at home such as from inspirational frames, a calendar, a packaging box and food packaging. Environmental print

that was found outside their home included print on a billboard, a banner, and a suggestion box. HM and SKR said they encountered these resources at places that they went to either with friends or with their family members. Examples of these places were shopping malls, a hospital or along the road as they travelled with their families. This print ranged from a word (such as on a label), a phrase (e.g. on a book mark) to a complete sentence (e.g. on a frame).

People

This refers to the six learners' encounters with spoken English in their daily life. Some learners reported being involved as interlocutors in the oral interaction. HM, NS, THN, TRK and SKR recounted occasions when they talked in English with family members, relatives, and friends. There were also some who described their enrolment in classes that were taught in English. Some examples of the classes were English tuition classes, a vocal training class, and a classical music class. This category also refers to the individuals whom these learners consulted when they had questions about English. In the case of the six learners, these individuals were normally their family members such as their parents and elder siblings.

Portable Media

This refers to the English resources that were available through the use of mobile phones, Mp3 and DVD players. Two learners: AZR and SKR reported watching movies on VCDs. AZR said that he watched documentaries on CDs. Some learners also talked about listening to English songs on their mobile phones and MP3 players. TRK said she sent texts to her friend using her mobile phone.

'Learner-Initiated'

This refers to resources that learners said they 'created' to provide opportunities for them to learn or use the language. AZR and HM said they had been keeping

note books, where they copied the meaning of difficult words, even before they were involved in the study. HM (INT1/OUT) said she already had about 100 words in her note book. Other than keeping a note book, HM (INT 2/IN) reported that she also kept a scrapbook; where she said she kept newspaper cuttings of articles that she read. However, HM said she had stopped doing it recently because she had to give extra attention to the new subjects that she was learning at school. TRK spoke about the ways how she created opportunities to use the language. She (TRK INT 1/OUT) talked about writing short stories based on the story books that she read. In the next interview, TRK (INT 3/OUT) reported about 'talking alone'. She said, sometimes, after she had finished reading a book she would imagine talking about the book to someone. Since she was an only child, TRK said she would record her voice using the mobile phone and listen to herself. TRK also talked about playing pranks on her friend in English. She said she wrote several letters and sent texts from her mobile phone to her neighbour, in which she pretended to be an Australian on a student exchange program in Malaysia.

To sum up, most of the outside resources that these learners engaged with were available at home. They explained that this was because they stayed at home most of the time. Based on my observations and communication with them, I believe there are three reasons for this. First, this study was conducted at the beginning of a new academic year. HM explained that they were introduced to three new science subjects: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. Since all of them were considered high achievers, I feel it is quite typical that they spent more time studying than going out. Second, four out of the six participants were female learners. Details about their everyday activities that they shared with me show that they would only go out on weekends with their family members or to attend tuition and other extra classes. Third, AZR said that he had just moved to the town, therefore he did not go out much. Only SKR talked about his encounters with resources in town such as when he went out for a movie with his friends or visited the public library with his sister. Even though most of their resources were found at home, these resources were varied and provided them with the opportunities to engage with English in different ways. These are different from in-class resources where these

learners' main resources in English were from the language teacher, and the materials that she designed for classroom activities. In the following section, I will present my findings on the different forms of participation as these learners engaged in the different kinds of resources.

5.1.2 Forms of Participation

This category refers to the different manner of engagement that learners described as they encountered the various types of resources available outside the classroom.

Using a Dictionary

All six learners reported looking for meanings of difficult words that they came across in the resources that they encountered. AZR said that he encountered many difficult words when he read the English newspapers. He detailed that he noted the words down in his note book and later used the online dictionary to look for their meanings. SKR, TRK, and HM reported taking the same action as they found difficult words while reading English materials and watching English programmes on television. HM (INT 3/OUT) also said she used the dictionary to look for the meaning of a word that she saw on a tissue box. While these 4 learners described what seems to be a series of purposeful actions, NS's engagement was less purposeful. In one occasion, NS reported engaging in the same action with her mother. She noted: *"Both of us will look for the meaning in the dictionary...my mom won't stop till she gets the answer...she's like that"* (NS INT 1/OUT). She talked about looking for the meanings of the difficult words but did not mention about copying down in her note book like her other friends.

THN reported a slightly different experience. She talked about the time when some children asked her about the meaning of a word. According to THN, she did not know the meaning herself and so she asked her parents. THN said they both gave her different meanings. She was confused and decided to use the dictionary. When she found the meaning, her father told her to copy it in her note book. THN refused doing this and explained: *"I don't like to write the*

meaning because in the dictionary already got the meaning, so why should I write...but if they tell me to write the sentence, I will try because in the dictionary they don't give any sentence." (THN INT 1/OUT)

Reading

All six learners talked about their experiences of reading different types of English material. Data show that they chose to read on subjects that interest them. AZR (INT 1/OUT) said he enjoyed reading articles on Islamic matters. This stemmed from his previous experience at a religious school where there were many talks held on this matter. HM (INT 3/OUT) said that on the day that she went to the hospital, she read an informational poster on smoking and its effects to health. She claimed that she always read about this subject and shared it with her father whom she described as a heavy smoker. NS (INT 1/OUT) spoke about reading an article on an inactive volcano in Bandung, Indonesia because her mother had visited the place; so she said she wanted to know more about it. SKR (INT 3/OUT), whose ambition was to be an astronaut, said he read books on planets on the day that he had spent time at the public library. THN said she did not like to read English textbooks. Instead, she talked about reading books on animals and that she claimed that *"We can learn knowledge and English"* (INT 1/OUT) from this kind of book, unlike textbooks and workbooks which she described as *"mainly they write what is important for our exam"* (INT 1/OUT). In all four interviews on her out-of-class learning, TRK talked about the fiction and non-fiction books that she read. She explained; *"I like this type of story...like ghost stories, detective stories...and about famous people"* (INT 4/OUT). She said she read almost ten books in one particular weekend.

Other than talking about the materials that they read, four learners also described how they read them. AZR said the article on the war between Palestine and Israel was a long one. Instead of reading everything, he said he just read some parts that he could understand. He claimed to *"ignore"* (INT 1/OUT) other parts that he found difficult. NS, detailing her experience fixing her computer, claimed that she read in detail all the information that she got on the

internet. She explained; *“...sometimes there are pop-ups that require us to press ‘yes’ or ‘no’...so I read everything first before I do anything....my friends laugh at me...they were like...”* You read all that...you just press.” (NS INT 2/OUT). HM reported that to assist understanding when reading the newspapers, she would first find the meaning of each difficult word and write the meaning above the word. After that she would read the news again, she found it laborious and complained; *“very tiring...because I have to find the meaning of so many words. That’s why I don’t always do it”* (HM INT 3/ OUT). TRK said she read the book that her father gave *“... one page...a day or a week...”* (INT 1/OUT) as she felt that the book was too difficult for her to understand.

Reading Subtitles

5 learners reported reading subtitles that were available in most of the television programmes that they watched as one of their main forms of participation. These subtitles were in Bahasa Melayu. AZR said he read the subtitles to understand the English television programmes that he watched. He did not use this form of engagement specifically to learn the language. AZR said that he did not pay attention to the language; instead he just focused on the subtitles to understand his favourite television series. In contrast to AZR’s engagement, SKR and TRK stated that they learned some new words from reading the subtitles. TRK said that while watching a paranormal show, she came across a word that she did not know. TRK said she read the subtitle and claimed that she found the meaning of the word there. TRK said that she learned a new word from this engagement.

In one of her diary entries, TRK wrote about her experience of watching a documentary. She wrote: *“When I’m writing this journal I realise that I learn English through listening”*. (TRK/ Diary: 16th Feb 2010). When being asked about her engagement, TRK said on that particular day, she decided not to read the Bahasa Melayu subtitles. TRK said that she used this opportunity to test her own ability to understand the program that was in English. She explained: *“I just want to test myself...if no subtitle, whether I can understand or not...like before I watch, I told myself...ok, today no subtitle...just like that”* (TRK INT 3/OUT). 2 other learners: HM and SKR, also reported that they tried first to understand the

English programmes. They said they would resort to reading the subtitles when they had difficulties understanding what they watched. These 2 learners used the subtitles as an aid for their comprehension. NS reported a different kind of engagement with the subtitles. In her diary, she mentioned about watching Korean drama series. I asked how this was related to her engagement with English resources. NS explained that the subtitles provided were in English, thus she read them to understand what she was watching.

Seeking Help

4 learners: AZR, HM, NS, and THN talked about seeking help from family members such as their fathers, mothers, and elder sisters when they encountered difficulties with English-medium resources. HM was a bit cautious about whom she asked help from. HM admitted that her younger sister was more proficient in English than she; however she said she would not seek help from her as she did not want to be ridiculed by her. She said; *“I would ask my mom or my sister...but not her because she’ll laugh at me”* (HM INT 3/OUT). While AZR, HM, and NS talked about asking help for with meaning and pronunciation of words, THN was the only one who talked about asking for help to use the words that she learned from the English news that she watched with her father and elder brother. THN stated: *“I learned some new words...but when I wanted to use the words to write sentences...I couldn’t, so I ask my mother to help me.”* (THN INT 1/OUT)

Communicating in English

NS, THN, and TRK talked about their experiences of communicating in the language. They talked about using the language orally with others. NS said she sometimes talked in English with a good friend. NS admitted that she enjoyed this experience as the two of them would just use the language without thinking about the grammar. Unlike NS, TRK described an uncomfortable experience when she tried to speak in English with a group of girls at her tuition centre. According to TRK, these girls were from two established schools and students from these schools were normally good in English. As she was about to join in

their conversation, TRK explained, she was aware of her inadequacy in the language. *“Just when I want to talk to them or I want to ask them something...something was stopping me...like...I don’t know what...but something was stopping me...because I feel like I am not as good.”* (TRK INT 3/OUT)

THN talked about the time when her aunt and her two children who resided in Australia stayed with her during their two-week vacation. THN said that she had to use English with her cousins because they could not speak Tamil or Bahasa Melayu. Through this experience, THN said that she learned some Australian English; which she observed was a bit different from the kind of English that she knew. NS and THN also spoke about using the language in the extra classes that they were both enrolled in. NS described the opportunities that she had to use the language during her English tuition classes. According to NS, her English tuition teacher insisted that she and her friends conversed in English. The teacher also created activities that encouraged the learners to speak in English. THN said that she enrolled in classes on vocal training, Indian classical music, and Hinduism; which were all taught in English. THN reported that she was also expected to use English during group discussion and other activities during these classes.

While most of the above participation could be described as active- where learners talked about taking action when they faced some kind of difficulties with the English-medium resources that they encountered, there were other instances where learners described a less purposeful kind of engagement or not doing anything. For instance HM talked about watching a cartoon show on television. She said the show used simple English and therefore she said she did not learn any new words. Her engagement this time was less active where she said; *“I just listen how they talk...how they pronounce the word”* (HM INT 3/OUT). NS said she found some difficult words when she read some articles in the Readers Digest, but she did not do anything because she said she could still understand what she was reading. TRK spoke about reading a story book and how she noticed about the importance of having cohesion in writing.

Nonetheless, she said she did not take any further action. In another interview, NS talked about listening to the songs by her favourite UK band. She said she did not know the lyrics and intended to look for them on the internet; she stated: *“I wanted to look for the lyrics on the Internet...but when I’m in front of the computer, I end up doing something else”* (NS INT 1/OUT). In these instances, all 3 learners: HM, NS and TRK seemed to focus on enjoying the English-medium resources that they engaged in. AZR said that there were times when he had difficulties in understanding the English-medium resources that he encountered. However, he did not take any action because for him it was difficult to learn the language. He explained; *“English is too difficult to learn...it’s not that I don’t like it...I like it a bit...but it’s just too difficult...”* (AZR INT 1/OUT). In another interview, AZR said laziness was the reason for him not doing anything. SKR also gave a similar answer when I asked him this question. For AZR and SKR, their lack of engagement seems to stem from more personal reasons.

Non-participation

In this study most of the time the learners talked about their engagement with the English-medium resources. However, one learner, TRK, talked about her non-participation with a particular resource that she encountered a few years ago. TRK said she did not read the English book that her father gave to her. She explained; *“because I only see the book so thick...Oh my goodness, it’s so thick...so I didn’t touch the book”* (INT 1/OUT). In this example, TRK, who said that she enjoyed reading, chose not to read a book that she assumed was too difficult.

It could be said that these learners’ forms of participation were varied and served different purposes. In most of the above cases, learners made their own choices on their manner of participation. Some forms of participation seemed purposeful and were aimed at learning certain aspects of the target language. However, there were many occasions when learners talked about engaging with the resources as part of their daily activities.

5.1.3 Gains from Engagement

In this section, I will detail findings on what learners claimed they had gained from their engagement with the different types of resources available outside the classroom.

Linguistic Gain

One of the main questions that I asked to all learners was what they have learned from their engagement with a particular resource. Most of the time, these learners responded by describing the specific language aspects that they acquired, which is mostly incidental. They talked about learning new or difficult words, the pronunciation of words, grammar items, constructing sentences, and using sentences in context. All six learners spoke about acquiring new words or learning the pronunciation of words, some of which I have presented in the previous category on Forms of Participation. HM said she learned new words and the pronunciation of these words from the song that she practised in her choir group. Similarly, THN talked about acquiring vocabulary from reading the lyrics of the English songs that her brother found in the internet and shared with her. TRK, who was an avid reader, spoke about learning new words from the books that she read. SKR talked about a photo (People SKR INT 4/OUT) of him helping his younger sister with her Mathematics homework (this subject was taught in English). SKR explained that he learned some new words when he tried to understand the question. AZR said he learned names of food in English when he went to his father's reunion gathering. NS showed pictures of her Science reference books that she used at home (Printed Reading Materials NS INT 2/OUT). She talked about referring to the glossary of terms and learning some new words from this engagement.

As mentioned earlier, other than talking about learning words and the pronunciation, some learners also mentioned learning other aspects of the target language. TRK talked about her concerns about her English grammar, which she described as "very poor" (TRK INT 2/OUT). She reported doing a lot

of grammar exercises at home to improve it. SKR spoke about the time when he learned how to use the preposition 'above' (SKR INT 4/OUT) when he helped his younger sister with her English homework. NS showed a photo of the cover of her note book (Environmental Print NS INT 3/OUT) where there was quite a long. NS was confused because the grammar used in the sentence violated the rules that she had learned in her English tuition class. In this incident, NS became aware of varieties in the use of English grammar, where sometimes it does not necessarily follow the rules. Other than grammar, TRK talked about the varied use of English in different contexts. She talked about watching a movie and observed that "*I learned how they using English...like if in the court..the formal English...like if we are in a formal occasion, how we need to talk*" (TRK INT 1/OUT). In this particular interview, TRK talked about learning something about the pragmatics of English language. In another interview, TRK claimed that she had learned about the importance of having a structure in writing; she explained: "*The sentence structure...when we write we need the structure, only then we can have the flow and how to arrange the sentence*" (TRK INT 3/OUT). In these instances, the two learners, NS and TRK, talked about learning English in use. THN stated that she had learned a Malay proverb that was translated into English. She also talked about the meaning of a poem that was written on the bookmark that she had got during prayers said for her late grandmother. Instead of learning a specific aspect of the language, THN said that the poem on the bookmark reminded her to not to forget her late grandmother who had done many good deeds for the family.

Knowledge: general, current affairs, and technical

Other than detailing their linguistic gains, all six learners also talked about gaining general knowledge, knowledge of current affairs, and technical knowledge from their engagements with the out-of-class resources. AZR talked about his fishing trips with his father. He said that it was a routine where both of them would watch documentaries on fishing before each trip. AZR talked about what he learned from watching the documentaries; "*...there is one about a man who is a world champion...and there is another about fishing in America...it's like National Geographic...there is also one about fishing very rare fish*" (AZR INT 3/OUT). THN reported that she learned about different types of animals

from reading the supplementary issues of the educational magazine that she subscribed to monthly. She narrated about her experience of going to India and snapping photos of elephants at the temples that she visited. She said that she kept the photos in her file and later wrote in English and Bahasa Melayu about the elephants that she saw. TRK reported she heard her cousin's English tuition teacher talking about road accidents while she was waiting to pick her up. TRK said she got some ideas on the topic by listening to the teacher.

AZR and THN stated that they got to know about current affairs. AZR said he read online articles on the conflict between Palestine and Israel, and about Islam in general. He stated that he read this type of article because it was a current issue and he wanted to know about it. THN talked about reading the newspapers every day as one of the rules that her father set. She talked about reading an article on the passing of the Sultan of Johor (ruler of a southern state in Malaysia) and also an article about two jet engines that were stolen from the Royal Malaysian Air Force. NS spoke about the time when her computer was infected by a virus. From this engagement, NS did not make any claims about learning the language; instead, she was engaged in the resources to gain the necessary technical information.

Enjoyment

On several occasions, instead of talking about gaining linguistic knowledge or other types of knowledge, learners spoke about gaining enjoyment from their engagements with the resources. AZR, HM, TRK, and SKR talked about enjoying the songs that they listened to even without being able to understand the lyrics. HM spoke about her engagement with a song in English: "*I just want to enjoy the music...no need to understand the lyrics*" (HM INT 1/OUT). NS was able to talk about the lyrics of her favourite song but claimed that her understanding was hampered due to the singer's heavy American accent which she found difficult to understand. SKR, TRK, and NS spoke about the materials that they read. SKR talked about a book that he borrowed from his friend. He gave the gist of the story and stated that he read it out of interest. SKR said the book used simple language; therefore he did not learn anything new from his engagement. Another learner, TRK, talked at length about a book that she read.

She seemed to enjoy the story that she read and it left an impact on her; TRK said; “...I keep on thinking about it...because it doesn't have a proper ending” (TRK INT 4/OUT). Two learners reported that they watched some of the television programmes for entertainment. AZR talked about his favourite television series and stated that he watched it for enjoyment. AZR said; “I just want to enjoy what I watch...I don't think about learning” (AZR INT 1/OUT). HM talked about watching her mother's favourite television program. She stated that she enjoyed watching the cooking show because she liked the presenter whom she described as “funny” and that “she speaks very clearly” (HM INT 2/OUT). AZR talked about playing games on the Internet. He said that he needed to understand the instructions that were given in English in order to play the games. AZR lamented that sometimes the language was too difficult for him; when this happened, AZR said he would just resort to “trial and error” (AZR INT 3/OUT). He explained; “if I got it wrong, I'd play again...I could play it without understanding the instruction hundred percent” (AZR INT 3/OUT). From this example, it could be said that AZR gained enjoyment from his engagements with the online games.

To conclude, learners' gains from their participation with out-of-class resources were varied. However, when being asked what they learned, all six participants seemed to be concerned with learning new words. They did not regard other kinds of gain as learning. I feel this is quite common among ESL learners as they felt that they needed to acquire an extensive vocabulary before they could function successfully in the target language. More interestingly, other than linguistic gains, the findings showed that from their engagements with out-of-class resources learners also gained other types of knowledge that mattered to them. Yet, the learners themselves did not recognise these as learning.

5.1.4 Perceptions about Learning English

This category refers to learners' perceptions on matters that were related to learning English. Some of the issues raised during out-of-class learning interviews were also mentioned during the in-class interviews. For this reason, some data from the in-class learning interviews is referred to here.

Proficiency

This refers to learners' statements about theirs as well as others' proficiency in the target language. All six learners stated that they had low proficiency of English. Three learners: AZR, HM, and TRK spoke about this in relation to their low reading proficiency. AZR claimed that he preferred listening to reading because he explained that while listening he could use the context to help him understand. However, he said; *"when I read, if I don't understand, there is nothing to help me...I feel bored easily when I read and I don't understand"* (AZR INT 1/OUT). HM (INT 1/OUT) recounted the time when she read some story books. She said she read books for primary school students that her younger sister borrowed from the library. She described these books as *"simple"* with *"big writing"*, and she added *"because my English is not good, I can understand that kind of book"*. TRK said she could not understand the book that her father gave to her as a present because *"the book uses standard English; not common English like we using"* (INT 1/OUT). Thus, she said there were many words that she did not know due to her low proficiency. NS and SKR felt that their speaking proficiency was low. NS voiced her concerns. She said she could understand well when people talked to her in English. However, she stated her weaknesses; *"...I can't speak and write well"* (INT 2/IN). She felt this was due to her poor command of grammar; which she said had affected her confidence to communicate in the language. THN, commenting about the teacher's focus on vocabulary, said she liked it when the teacher asked the class to find the meanings of words because she could learn new words as she felt *"my English is not that good"* (INT 1/IN).

During the interviews, these learners gave their thoughts on other people's proficiency of English as well. Their opinions were based on the persons' abilities to read and speak in the language. HM (INT 3/OUT) felt that her younger sister was more proficient in English than her even though she went to a Tamil medium primary school. She explained that her sister always tried to speak in English at home and that she liked to read English story books. Similarly, SKR (INT 2/IN) felt that his friend was good in English because he read a lot of English books and he spoke the language with his family. NS said she always consulted her mother when she had questions regarding English

because her mother was good in the language and that “*she reads thick English novels*” (INT 1/OUT). THN narrated her account of the fight between her neighbours. She described her Punjabi neighbour who was a lawyer spoke good English. TRK (INT 3/OUT) stated that she had a high regard for non-native of English who could speak the language well. She talked about a Japanese and a Chinese actresses who were proficient in the language, and how she aspired to be like them one day. She also mentioned a Chinese television host whom she said spoke fluent English. AZR, when describing his experience working in a group during an English lesson, said that some of his friends in the group had good command of the language thus restricting his participation in the task (INT 2/IN).

Significance of English

In the interviews, learners were asked to give their opinions on the significance of learning English. Most of their responses were on their current need for the language. AZR, HM, and TRK explained that they had to be good in English because they were in the science stream and all the science subjects; namely Chemistry, Biology, and Physics were taught in the language. When being asked whether English was important, AZR answered; “*Yes...the science subjects are all taught in English...I sometimes find it hard to understand what the teachers are saying...I need to improve my English*” (INT 1/IN). Several learners said they needed the language to achieve their ambitions. To illustrate, NS (INT 1/IN) whose ambition was to become a biochemist, stated English was important for her in order to achieve it. Likewise, SKR (INT 4/OUT) said English was important for him to be an astronaut. With regard to achieving their ambitions, TRK (INT 3/OUT and INT 1/IN) said she needed the language if she had the chance to further her studies overseas. SKR (INT 2/IN) and TRK (INT 3/OUT) also mentioned “*talking to friends*” as the reason why English is important to them. SKR, who was an avid internet surfer, was of the opinion that English was instrumental in helping him to understand the English texts that he engaged with while surfing the different websites.

Out-of-class learning

Apart from the above, learners' perceptions of their out-of-class learning were also elicited. Learners gave differing opinions about this matter. Initially, three of the learners seemed to have negative views on out-of-class learning. They claimed that they did not make use of the English-medium resources available outside the classroom and that they did not benefit much from these resources. For example, to the question whether he learned English from watching a movie, AZR's answer was "...how can I learn anything, when I don't understand it" (INT 1/OUT). NS (INT 2/OUT) said she did not benefit from out-of-class learning because she did not go out much and she only encountered English-medium resources available at home. TRK (INT 2/OUT) provided an affirmative "No" to the same question and stated that she "...learns English in class" and did not have the time to learn English outside. However, during the subsequent interviews, learners' views on out-of-class learning seemed to alter a bit. AZR (INT 2/OUT) said he had become "*more aware*" of the availability of English resources around him and felt this somehow helped him in learning the language. NS (INT 4/OUT) said she became more '*alert*' to the availability of English-medium resources outside home. She explained; "*There are (sic) a lot of English outside...like when I'm travelling on the highway...I can see billboards in English*". TRK was less adamant in the final interview. She said she might be able to learn from the English resources outside. She clarified this by saying "*English is outside, everywhere...I must get to know it...I think English outside can help me*" (TRK INT 4/OUT). SKR said he started to notice the availability of English-medium resources around him that he could learn from. THN reflected that she used to think that she could only learn English from the materials that she read. However, she now realised that she could also learn "*from our surrounding*" (THN INT 2/OUT) and that when she sent text messages from her mobile phone to her friends, she was also learning English.

In sum, the six learners in this study gave their views on the proficiency of English, the significance of learning the language, and out-of-class learning. Some of these views, especially pertaining to theirs as well as others' proficiency, were raised by the learners themselves. Others like the significance

of learning English and out-of-class learning were prompted through questions asked during the interviews. Nevertheless, all these issues were important in understanding the varied ways that learners engaged with the resources.

5.1.5 Family Support

This is the final category for data on the six learners' out-of-class learning. It refers to the different kinds of support the six learners claimed they received from their family members pertaining to their learning of English. The most common type of support that these learners said they received was in the form of reading material in English. AZR, HM, THN, and TRK said their fathers bought English newspapers. It appears that only THN's father bought English newspapers on a daily basis. According to HM and TRK, their fathers bought English newspapers only at weekends. AZR said his father had just recently started to buy English newspapers. Other than the newspapers, there were also parents who subscribed to the Readers' Digest, as reported by NS and TRK. NS also talked about a fact book that her mother had bought, and TRK and HM talked about the dictionaries that they had received from their father and elder sister respectively. Parents also provided opportunities for their children to learn English. HM, SKR, and TRK said they went to English tuition classes every week. THN said she was taught by her mother as she had a Masters in English and gave tuition lessons for primary and secondary school children at home. THN also said a few years ago, her father sent her to an English camp for 21 days. These learners talked about receiving advice as well. NS said her mother always reminded her to learn English because the language was important for her (NS). THN and TRK said their fathers constantly advised them learn English. THN stated that her father not only advised her, but also set a rule in the family where everyone would have to speak in English all the time.

The different types of support provided by the family members reflected how each family valued English as a language that was important for these learners to succeed in their academic endeavours. From what the learners said in the

interviews, it could be implied that they were aware of their family members' efforts to help them learn the language.

5.2 Summary

In this chapter, I have provided an analysis of learners' out-of-class engagement. All together, 5 categories have been developed and findings from each category had been presented in detail. The findings revealed that the six learners' out-of-class learning resources were mostly available at home. They chose to engage with resources that required the following skills: listening/watching and reading. Learners seemed to find their engagement with out-of-class English-medium resources less valuable compared with their in-class engagement. Learners also tended to separate the forms of participation which they considered would lead to learning from other forms of engagement. In the following chapter, Chapter 6, an analysis of the learners' in-class participation will be presented.

Chapter 6 Analysis of Findings: In-Class Participation

6.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have provided my analysis of findings on out-of-class participation. In this chapter, I will present my analysis of the data on the six learners' in-class participation.

6.1 Presentation of Analysis

In this part, I will present my findings regarding learners' in-class engagement. All together, there were 6 categories: Resources, Forms of Participation, Gains from Participation, English Learning Experiences, Views about Learning English, and Use. I would like to point out that for the last two categories (Views about Learning English and Use), comments included were not only referring to in-class learning. This is for two reasons. First, as learners talked about their in-class learning, they also made reference to their out-of class learning. Second, comments about views of learning and using English were more apparent during interviews on in-class learning. Thus, I feel it is more suitable to present these two categories here. In what follows, I will present each of the categories.

6.1.1 Resources

This category refers to the resources that the six learners encountered during their English lessons. The learners talked about these resources during the interview sessions on their in-class learning. There are 5 types of in-class resources: Teacher Talk, Peers, Teaching Materials, Pronunciation Practice, and Homework.

Teacher Talk

In this study, teacher talk could be divided into 6 types: instruction, explanation, elaboration, correction, feedback, and questions. These were all in English. The first type of teacher talk is instructions. Throughout the six lessons observed, the teacher most frequently instructed learners to look up for meaning of difficult words in their dictionaries. This was also noted by all six learners when they were asked to describe the lessons during the interviews. In many occasions, the teacher also instructed certain learners to answer or read aloud. Observation Notes/2(a): *“The teacher distributed worksheets that contained graphic and stimuli. She waited for a few minutes to make sure all learners got the materials. Then, she began by appointing a male student sitting at the back to read the first excerpt.”* The teacher also gave instructions for classroom management. During one lesson (Classroom Observation 1a), the teacher began the class by asking the learners to submit their homework. This was then followed by her telling them to take out their literature text books. During group work, she would normally begin by telling learners to form small groups. When learners were already seated in their groups, she would give further instructions on how to do the tasks.

The second type of teacher talk is the various kinds of explanation that the teacher gave during the lessons. The teacher explained words or phrases that learners did not understand. Observation Notes/2(b): *“Mrs D asked for the meaning of ‘quiet eyes’. A girl answered in Bahasa Melayu: ‘buta’. Mrs D acknowledged the answer but said it was not the correct one. She then explained the meaning of the phrase.”* Other than explaining words and phrases, the teacher spent a considerable time explaining the content of the lessons. For example, the teacher taught poems in two lessons (20th January 2010 and 3rd February 2010). In both lessons, the teacher’s explanation of the poem could be divided into two stages. The first stage was when she explained it stanza by stanza, and the second stage was when she provided a synopsis of the poems. NS (INT 3/IN) described this: *“There were 3 stanzas...the teacher asked 3 students to read..she explained after each person read...The teacher pasted a mah-jong paper on the board...it’s the synopsis of the poem...then she*

explained some more.” In another two lessons (25th January 2010 and 1st March 2010) the teacher explained the formats for writing a speech and a report.

The third type of teacher talk is the teacher’s elaboration of learners’ responses and discussion of answers. Observation Notes/3(a): *“Mrs D asked how to end a report. Several learners sitting in front answered ‘sign’. Mrs D nodded and said ‘Yes, signature, but before that...’ A boy in the middle said ‘write name’. Mrs D responded, ‘Yes, write your name and your post- secretary’.”*

The teacher also discussed answers for the worksheets that learners worked on during the lessons. Observation Notes /1(b): *“Each representative read their answers for the first question. 3 groups gave wrong answers. The teacher explained why their answers were wrong and discussed the correct answer.”* On several occasions, the teacher had to minimise the time spent discussing the learners’ answers because of lack of time.

The fourth type is the teacher’s corrections. In this study, it refers only to the teacher correcting the learners’ pronunciation. AZR, HM, THN, and TRK talked about the teacher correcting their pronunciation when she nominated them to read aloud. AZR said the teacher corrected him three times while he was reading a stanza of a poem. THN and TRK said the teacher corrected the words that were not new to them. TRK said *“...till the teacher explained and corrected me, I didn’t realize I pronounced the word wrongly. But when she corrected me, I know...like this is how to pronounce the word”* (TRK INT 2/IN). THN and TRK said they benefited from the teacher correcting their friends’ pronunciation. THN explained, *“...when the teacher corrected TRK, she corrected me also”* (THN INT 2/IN). Both learners said they repeated the words when the teacher corrected their friends.

The fifth type is the teacher’s feedback. This was short feedback that she provided when learners answered her questions. The teacher’s feedback were

in two forms: oral and non-oral. The teacher sometimes repeated the answers given by the learners. To illustrate, AZR said when he whispered an answer, the teacher picked it up and repeated it more loudly to the whole class, indicating that the answer was correct. On another occasion, instead of repeating the answer the teacher provided an affirmative statement. HM said, “*teacher heard my answer and she said it was correct.*” (HM INT 3/IN). THN said during a group work, the teacher checked their work and told them that two of their answers were incorrect. THN said she and her friends took the opportunity to correct their work. There was also an occasion when the teacher gave non-oral feedback. HM reported that she gave her answer when the teacher asked the class for examples of risks that the society faced. HM said the teacher wrote her answer on the whiteboard, which she said indicating that it was correct.

The sixth type of teacher talk is the questions asked by the teacher. In this study, the teacher asked questions mainly to elicit responses and to check understanding. In all six observations, the teacher asked questions at the beginning of the lessons. During the lesson on a poem, the teacher began by asking learners for the meaning of words that she pasted on the board. These words were taken from the poem. In two observations, the teacher asked questions to gauge learners’ knowledge of the topics of the lessons. To illustrate, on the topic ‘Society at Risk’, the teacher started the lesson by asking questions on the risks that the Malaysian society faced (Observation Notes/2a). The teacher also asked questions to find out learners’ understanding of the passages or poems that they read, where she often asked closed questions that required ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses from the learners.

Peers

The second concerns peers as a learning resource. HM described several occasions when she learned from her friends. HM talked about helping each other. On one occasion she worked on a grammar cloze passage with her friend TRK (HM INT 2/IN). HM said they first looked up for the meanings of difficult words and later explained the meanings to each other. In another interview (HM INT 1/IN), HM spoke about working on a comprehension exercise

alone as told by the teacher. HM said after she had finished her work, she compared her answers with her friend's. HM also talked about the time when she asked for help from her friend, TRK. HM said she did not know the difference between "*psychology*" and "*psychiatrist*" (HM INT 2/IN). She said she asked TRK to explain the meaning of the two words to her. HM (INT 3/IN) (HM INT 3/IN) also stated that she enjoyed group discussion as she said she could get different answers from her friends. NS talked about the time when she failed to find the meaning of a word that the teacher asked them to look up in her dictionary. NS said she got the meaning when the teacher asked her friend to read it out from her dictionary (INT 3/IN). THN talked about her being the resource for her friend to learn English. In an interview, she said she helped her friend to answer the teacher's question (INT 3/IN).

Teaching Materials

These refer to the materials that the teacher used in class for teaching and learning purposes. The materials that the teacher used for her lessons included word cards, posters and worksheets. The teacher used cards that contained words that she took from two poems. She pasted these cards on the board and taught learners the pronunciation and meanings of the words. The teacher also pasted posters that contained a synopsis of the poems and notes on the board. On the day that she taught speech writing, the teacher put up an A0 paper that contained notes on how to write a speech. In it, there were also phrases that learners could use to write speeches. In all six lessons, the teacher gave learners worksheets to work on. In the 2 lessons that she taught poems, she gave learners worksheets that contained vocabulary and comprehension questions. There were also worksheets that tested learners' understanding of graphic information, short reading passages, and grammar. Included in the teacher's teaching materials were handouts containing tasks that learners were required to do in small groups. During the lesson on speech writing, the teacher provided learners with strips of paper that contained different parts of a speech. Learners were asked to identify the different parts of the speech and organise them to form a coherent speech.

Pronunciation Practice

This refers to a teacher-led pronunciation practice. In one lesson (Classroom Observation 1a) the teacher began the class by practicing the pronunciation of words that she took from the poem that the learners would learn on that day. She pronounced each word loudly and all learners repeated after her, with some words repeated twice and others three times.

Homework

This refers to work that the teacher assigned learners to do at home. The findings show three types of homework. The first type is in-class tasks that learners could not finish during the lesson. As an example, in Lesson 1b, the teacher asked learners to look for the meaning of words. However, they could not finish this on time before the class ended. Thus, the teacher asked them to finish the task at home. The second type is follow-up exercises of the lesson. To illustrate, in the same lesson, the teacher told the learners to copy a sample speech provided in the text book, as homework. The third type is work assigned as preparation for the coming class. For example, THN reported that she read a poem the night before the class because it was assigned by the teacher.

6.1.2 Forms of Participation

This category refers to the different ways of engaging with English-medium resources that were available during English lessons in school.

Using the Dictionary

All six learners talked about looking up for meaning of words in the dictionary. HM and SKR said they used the dictionary after being told to by the teacher.

Classroom Observation 1(a)

Right after TRK finished reading, Mrs D asked whether the class understood the meaning of the first stanza, “no”, some answered. Mrs D began her explanation by asking for the meaning of the word “dawn”. The learners just looked at her, as though asking for help. “Ok, use your dictionary”, Mrs D instructed her learners. TRK, HM, and SKR smiled and grabbed the dictionaries on their desks.

During a group work activity, HM said the teacher read out ten words from a passage. They were told to underline these words and look for their meanings in the dictionary. On many occasions, the teacher told learners to look for the meanings of words while she was explaining the content of the lessons. Observation Notes/1a: *“The teacher explained the first stanza of the poem. She asked for the meaning of ‘soaky’. There was no answer. She told the learners to use the dictionary.”* Sometimes learners used the dictionary on their own initiative. To illustrate, HM described what she and her partner did while answering a worksheet: *“First I read the passage, then we underlined the difficult words...there were 4...she looked for the meaning of two words and I another two words”* (HM INT 2/IN).

Reading

Learners talked about their participation in reading activities as one of their forms of engagement during in-class learning. All six learners spoke about engaging in silent reading. Most of the time, they read silently without being instructed by the teacher. To illustrate, AZR said he read the synopsis of a poem written on a poster soon after the teacher pasted it on the whiteboard. Some of these learners said they read silently, following their friends who were asked by the teacher to read aloud to the whole class.

Classroom Observation 1(a)

Mrs D asked for a volunteer to read the first stanza. HM, NS, and several others seemed to be reading silently. HM seemed to be practising on her own. Mrs D asked again. TRK smiled, looked around and slowly raised her hand. Mrs D nodded at her. TRK stood up and read. She couldn’t pronounce the word “midst”, she looked at her. Mrs D understood her gesture and helped her. The others were quiet and appeared to be reading along with TRK.

NS's engagement is quite different. Instead of following her friends, she said she used this opportunity to read other parts of the passages as she was trying to answer the comprehension questions. NS explained, "*Because the teacher gave only 10 minutes to read the whole passages...I didn't have enough time...I'm a bit slow to understand...that's why I read the passages again while the others were reading*" (NS INT 2/IN). In this instance, the learner engaged in silent reading to further understand the material. Other than silent reading, the learners reported engaging in reading aloud too. Several times, they read aloud when they were nominated by the teacher. Throughout the six lessons, the teacher asked them to read out meaning of words from the dictionary, short excerpts, and stanzas from poems. Only one learner, HM, reported that she volunteered to read out a stanza when the teacher asked for volunteers.

Listening

Classroom Observation 1(b)

The teacher took a manila card from her table. She asked TRK (who was sitting in front) to help her paste the card on the white board. The others waited, some girls and boys at the back started talking to each other. Right after pasting, Mrs D explained about the notes that she had prepared on the manila card. It was about writing a speech. THN, TRK, and AZR seemed to be listening attentively. Their eyes were fixed on the board. While explaining, every now and then Mrs D asked questions. There were some answers heard from the boys at the back. TRK, THN and AZR remained quite. AZR listened while fiddling with his pen.

Though the six learners appear to be listening all the time, during interviews, they claimed to also engage in another activity at the same time, and that they listened for different purposes. To exemplify, on the day the class had a lesson on report writing, AZR said he listened to the teacher's explanation while thinking about the previous lessons that he had experienced on the same topic. TRK explained that while listening to the teacher's explanation of speech writing, she imagined herself giving a speech and what she would say. She went on, "*I was in my mind thinking...by the time she was explaining how to*

begin and how to introduce yourself, I was thinking if I am the one who giving the speech, how I want to do the beginning, how to introduce” (TRK INT 1/IN). THN (INT 2/IN) reported she listened attentively while the teacher explained a poem because she had difficulties understanding it when she read it on her own at home. Out of the six learners, only AZR and THN talked about taking down notes while listening. AZR (INT 1/IN) said he took down notes of meanings of difficult words. THN said she took down notes of parts that she found difficult when the teacher taught them a poem. She explained: *“The parts that I didn’t understand: the words, the stanzas that I never understand, the sentence”*. SKR stated he just listened to the teacher’s explanation when she was teaching report writing because the teacher had given them the notes in the handouts that she distributed earlier.

Responding Orally

In this study, learners talked about providing oral responses either individually or in chorus. Individual oral responses were given when the learners volunteered or they were nominated by the teacher to answer. AZR said when the teacher asked the class for the reasons for bullying, he *“just whispered”* (INT 1/IN). AZR gave two reasons why he did not answer loudly. First, he was afraid that his answer might be wrong. Second, he admitted feeling shy as he was a new student in the class. HM, NS, and THN said they volunteered to answer the teacher’s questions. All three of them expressed feeling pleased when the teacher acknowledged their answers.

Classroom Observation 1(b)

Mrs D started discussing answers for Section B by calling a male learner to read the question and give his answer. The learner’s answer seemed to be wrong, “Do you agree with his answer or not?” asked Mrs D to the whole class. “No”, they answered in chorus. “Agree or disagree” she asked again. There were mixed answers from the learners. Mrs D repeated her question, again mixed answers were given. Learners seemed confused, some smiled. Mrs D explained a bit and asked a question to TRK. TRK answered, the teacher elaborated on her answer and asked for her opinion. TRK responded, she seemed to be giving the correct answer. The teacher acknowledged her answer. TRK smiled.

Most of the time, these learners would respond when they were being called upon by the teacher. These learners also reported providing oral responses in chorus. This happened when the teacher posed questions to the whole class. AZR stated that he preferred to answer individually than in chorus. He explained, “...if I answer in group...there’ll be many other answers...the teacher couldn’t hear my answer” (INT 2/IN).

Working on Tasks

In the six lessons observed, the learners engaged in working on tasks, in which they were instructed to work in small groups, in pairs, and also individually. Out of six lessons that I observed, group activities were held in five lessons. From my observations and personal communication with the teacher, I concluded that her main objective for having learners to work in pairs and in small groups was to create the opportunities for them to interact in the target language. However, my interviews with the learners show that they hardly used English during these activities. To illustrate, when being asked about the language that he and his friends used during a group work, AZR answered, “A bit of English...lot of Bahasa Melayu” (AZR INT 1/IN). TRK confessed that she and her friends were “acting like good students” (TRK INT/3) because she said they used Tamil during the group work and would only use English when the teacher came near them.

Classroom Observation 3(a)

Mrs D distributed worksheets to the learners. “Work in small groups”, she instructed them. THN, TRK and HM worked together. Mrs D told the class to discuss with their friends and warned them not to refer to their notes. She walked around the class, monitoring the learners. TRK appeared to be asking something from THN. THN said something, followed with a hand gesture. TRK laughed while covering her mouth. The teacher was at the back, THN talked to her friends while pointing at the worksheet, again there was laughter. Mrs D walked to the front of the class and passed by TRK, THN and HM, The three girls turned their attention to their work and appeared to be discussing.

On several occasions, some learners said they worked individually even though the teacher told them to work in pairs. NS explained that she chose to work alone because the questions were relatively simple and thus she could answer them on her own.

Non-participation

In this study, non-participation refers to learners not answering the teacher's questions or taking part in whole-class discussion, not volunteering, and not participating in group work activities. Below is an example of learners not answering the teacher's question taken from my observation notes.

Classroom Observation 2(a)

Mrs D wrote the phrase "Society at risk" on the board. She asked for the meaning of "society". The class was silent. Mrs D asked a male student to answer. He just smiled and seemed reluctant to answer. Mrs D encouraged him to answer. "No harm in trying" she said, but the learner just remained silent. At the same time HM while holding a dictionary seemed to be explaining something to TRK who was sitting next to her. NS was quiet the whole time. Every now and then she looked at her book instead of the teacher.

Findings from the interviews with the six learners show that there are different reasons for them not to participate in class. When being asked why they kept quiet and did not answer questions that were posed by the teacher while she was explaining some words or content of the lessons, several responses were given. AZR said he could not understand the questions and that he *"had to listen carefully to understand the teacher"* (INT 1/IN). Similarly, THN said she was quiet and did not attempt to answer the teacher's questions on bullying because the topic was new to her. She compared this to when they had a lesson on the topic 'Teachers' where she said she was more active because she had knowledge on it. She recounted, *"Last week, the lesson was about 'Teachers'...something that I know well, but yesterday was about bully...when we discussed about bully, it was the first time for me, so it was quite difficult for me"* (THN INT 1/IN). TRK had the same experience when the teacher taught

them a poem. She stated, *"I do not know what the thing is all about... how can I participate when I do not know what it is all about"* (INT 2/IN).

Four learners: HM, THN, TRK, and NS claimed that the teacher's pedagogic strategies were the reasons for their lack of participation. TRK said when the teacher discussed answers for the tasks that they worked on, she wanted to volunteer and give the answer. Yet, she said the teacher nominated another learner to respond, TRK explained: *"...when I want to volunteer my group and myself...but at that time teacher was speaking...she called people to answer...so I did not volunteer"* (INT 1/IN). Another learner, THN, gave a different cause for being quiet. She said the teacher did not give ample time for her to think of the answer to the question posed. She clarified, *"I tried to find the answer, but teacher talked too fast. I still looking for the answer, teacher already gave the answer"* (INT 3/IN). NS said she did not participate because the teacher was looking for a specific answer. She continued: *"Because the teacher wanted to get the answer 'snatch' from us...she said the answer started with 's'...even if I gave my answer, there was no point for it because it was not the answer that the teacher was looking for"* (NS INT 2/IN). HM reported her limited English proficiency as the reason for her non-participation. HM (INT 2/IN) recounted that when the teacher asked for the meaning of 'Society at Risk', she did not answer the question even though she understood the phrase because she could not explain it in English. Some learners also spoke about not participating during group work. AZR and NS said this happened because they did not know their group members well. AZR who just moved to the school said that he was feeling shy being around with his new friends. NS described her group members as *"not my friends"* because she said she had only been with them for 3 weeks and that she did not know them well. The presence of a dominant peer also caused learners not to participate during group work. AZR claimed he experienced this when he worked with several boys. He said the others in the group were good in English and that *"they answered most of the questions"* (INT 2/IN) and that one boy in particular dominated the discussion. AZR described, *"He read the question...then he straight away gave the answer...most of the time, we just accepted his answers"* (INT 2/IN). In relation to this, AZR said when the teacher held an open discussion he did not volunteer

to give answers for the tasks that they worked in group because the other boys *“...normally talk in class, so it’s better that they give the answers”* (INT 3/IN).

Several learners said they did not take part in choral responses. NS said she did not give her answer. She explained that, *“Because the others already answered...so I just let them answer”* (INT 2/IN). NS also claimed that her answer was similar to the answer given by her friends; thus she felt she did not have to participate. Somewhat similar to NS’s answer, TRK (INT 2/IN) said she did not provide an answer in chorus because she said her classmates had already given the answer, thus she questioned, *“Why should I?”*

Two learners, AZR and NS, reported that they did not participate in the class activities because they were newcomers to the classroom community. AZR was concerned about observing and learning how things were done in the class. He explained his lack of participation: *“I didn’t know whether they are the quiet type...like serious or playful...because this is a good class...so I need to know all that first before I could join the class.”* (INT 2/IN) NS admitted that she chose not to participate in a group discussion because she was not used to working with others who were from different ethnic groups and religions.

Classroom Observation 2(a)

Learners were instructed to work in groups. NS, TRK, THN and HM worked together. They were told to find meanings of words in the worksheets. HM opened her dictionary. TRK looked at NS’s worksheet while THN and NS were busy writing. TRK said something to HM. HM pushed her dictionary slightly towards TRK. The two girls worked together. Mrs D stood next to THN who was using her dictionary. Mrs D looked at NS who was not using a dictionary. “Where is yours?” Mrs D asked. NS stood up, went to her seat and took her dictionary out from her bag. Facing each other, HM, TRK, THN seemed to engage in a discussion. NS worked alone, she looked at her dictionary and started writing.

During the interview, NS explained: *“I just kept quiet because they were not my friends...I just did my work...since form 1 till form 3, I was in the religious stream...I’m not used to working with the boys or non muslims....all this while, my classmates have been all Malays...my new classmates...I’ve only known them for less than a month...just 3 weeks...I don’t know them yet.”* (INT 1/IN)

There are also other reasons that learners gave for their non-participation. NS, for example, said she was quiet only during English lessons. Nevertheless, she described herself as “attentive” (NS INT 1/IN) and that she said she was active during Mathematics lessons because it was her favourite subject. SKR said he was quiet in class because it was his character. He explained that he was also quiet at home and that being the only son in the family, he said, *“I just do my own things. I only talk to them (his four sisters and parents) when it is necessary”* (INT 2/IN).

6.1.3 Gains from Engagement

This refers to learners’ statements about what they gained from their engagement with the in-class resources.

Vocabulary

When being asked what they learned the most from the English lessons that they had, the responses that were given were quite similar with the responses for their out-of-class learning. All of them mainly talked about learning new words. Most of the words were found in the textual materials that they read such as the poems and the short reading passages. All learners seemed to be pleased that they had learned meanings of English words in every lesson that they had. Some learners, for example AZR (INT 2/IN) stated that the fact that he was able to learn a lot of new words was what he liked most about the English class. They mainly learned the words from using the dictionary and from the teacher’s use of English during the lessons. As I have detailed in my

findings on learners' forms of in-class participation, they used the dictionary either as instructed by the teacher or of their own accord. NS described how she learned words in class: *"I learned a lot of words because every time the teacher asked us the meaning of words, we didn't know, she would say "Open the dictionary", "Open the dictionary"...many times"* (INT 2/ IN). Similarly, SKR (INT 1/IN) felt that using the dictionary was the most helpful in-class activity because he could learn many words from it. HM (INT 3/IN) indicated that she learned a lot of new words because the teacher only used English in class. AZR shared a similar view and pointed out that he had difficulties understanding the teacher, but felt that he learned new words when the teacher only used English in class.

Pronunciation

In relation to learning vocabulary, these learners also talked about learning the pronunciation of words. Mainly, they learned the pronunciation from the teacher. To illustrate, NS explained, *"...even when I use the dictionary, I still don't know how to pronounce a word...so it's good that the teacher taught me how to pronounce the words"* (INT 1/IN). Other than learning the pronunciation of new words in lessons, these learners also learned the pronunciation of words that they already knew. To illustrate, TRK said, *"When the teacher corrected [THN's] pronunciation...I learn...I know the word before, but I not sure how to pronounce it"* (INT 3/IN). It seemed that these learners learned the pronunciation either when the teacher corrected their own mistakes or when she corrected their friends' mistakes. In both cases, they said they learned the pronunciation by repeating to themselves.

Sentences

Only two learners, AZR and SKR, talked about learning about the construction of sentences. They learned this on the day that they had a lesson on report writing. In the group task, they were required to reorganize jumbled up phrases to form logical sentences. According to AZR, *"I learned how to combine*

sentences...like we have one incomplete sentence...and we must find the other half to make it complete...so we must understand everything “ (INT 3/IN).

Appreciation of Poems

HM, THN, and TRK talked about their understanding of the implied messages in the two poems that the teacher taught. HM (INT 1/IN) explained the moral value that she learned from the poem “In the midst of hardship”, which was about perseverance. THN (INT 2/IN) said she was reminded about the consequences of falling in love at a young age when she learned the poem “He Had Such Quiet Eyes“. THN said it was hard for her to understand the poem, but the teacher’s explanation had helped her a lot. TRK (INT 2/IN) said she learned to appreciate the poem when the teacher taught them how to interpret the words and their deeper meanings.

The format of a speech and a report

Two learners: AZR and THN talked about the formats for writing a speech and a report. THN stated that she had learned about this previously, but stressed that the recent lessons had taught her about the correct way of writing it. She explained, “...*the proper way to write the introduction...and how to end...I did it the wrong way last time*” (INT 1/IN).

General knowledge

Only THN talked about gaining general knowledge from the lessons that she had. She said that on the day they had a lesson on ‘Bullying’ she learned about the issue which was quite new for her. In addition, THN said she also learned about how to prevent herself from being bullied.

Unstated

This refers to occasions when learners did not state what they learned from the lessons. AZR (INT 1/IN) claimed that he did not learn much on the first day that he worked in a small group. AZR said he was not involved much in the group work that lasted for about 30 minutes. HM and THN said they did not learn anything new on the day they had revision to prepare them for the coming test. HM stated, *“Nothing new...no new words...we just did revision on the poems that we had already learned”* (INT 3/IN). NS felt that she did not learn anything from working on the task that the teacher assigned. She explained, *“I just guessed...like if the sentence ended with ‘on’...it can’t be that the next sentence would start with ‘member’...so I just guessed”* (INT 3/IN).

Similar with their gains from their engagement with out-of-class resources, where the 6 learners felt that learning new words as the focus of learning the target language, these learners expressed the same view when they described about what they learned from the in-class resources. In both environments, the learners talked about learning new words and the pronunciation of English words. Due to this, some learners felt that they were not gaining anything from their engagements with the resources when they did not learn new words or the pronunciation of words. It seems that for these learners, other types of knowledge that they gained such as sentence construction and general knowledge were of secondary importance to learning vocabulary and the pronunciation.

6.1.4 English Learning Experiences

This refers to learners’ statements about their experiences learning the target language. I have further divided these experiences into current in-class learning and previous in-class learning

Current in-class learning

All six learners made reference to the teacher (her pedagogic style and personality) when they talked about their present in-class learning experience. AZR (INT 2/IN) stated that in class, he only learned English from the teacher. NS (INT 1/IN) felt that she had to put in more effort in class because she had to refer to the dictionary continuously. She compared this to her out-of class learning where she would normally depend on her mother to tell her the meaning of words. She explained, *"I have to be diligent...I have to always use the dictionary...but when at home...like when I was watching the Korean TV series and I didn't understand the subtitles because they were in English, I would ask my mother."* Some learners talked about the problems that they had with the in-class learning. NS felt that she was not able to finish the tasks given by the teacher within the stipulated time. NS (INT 2/IN) explained, *"The time is too short...I'm not satisfied when I don't know the meaning of a word...there are so many words that I don't know...so I can't finish the tasks on time."* In addition, NS felt that she would be able to learn more words if there were fewer students in the class. The others felt uneasy with the teacher whom they described as very strict. THN gave her opinion about this, *"Mrs D is sometimes very strict. I think English is something that we need to enjoy to learn"* (INT 3/IN). She compared her experience learning in-class to the language camp that she attended a year before. She felt that learning English could have been more enjoyable if they had had games and other communicative activities as in the language camp. HM (INT 4/IN) admitted that she was afraid of the teacher whom she said would scold the class for small matters such as turning in their homework late. TRK (INT 2/IN) believed that the teacher had high expectations on them, *"I feel scared..every time I look at her...she's so strict. Her level of English is high and she expects us to be like her."* Even though the teacher had never said this directly, TRK said she could feel it from the way the teacher talked and behaved in class. TRK said the teacher always corrected her mistakes and due to this she became very conscious every time she tried to use the language, *"Like when she asks me to read a passage..last time I just read and I was not really concerned about the pronunciation...but now, every word I must...like..I ..go..to..school"* (TRK INT 2/IN). Not all learners held negative

perceptions on the teacher. AZR (INT 2/IN) liked the fact that she used only English in class because it helped him to learn new words. THN (INT 1/IN) said that the fact that the teacher assigned them to work individually and in groups showed that she was aware of her students' needs. She also found the teacher's style of beginning each lesson by asking questions as interesting. She explained, "... she wanted us to answer. Some other teachers would just write, write only...when she starts the class, it's interesting for us....Because she asked questions. Whenever we are wrong, she'll immediately correct it" (THN INT 1/IN). In addition, THN felt that the teacher's constant use of dictionary in class was good for her. Similarly, NS expressed her liking with the way the teacher approached them in class. She took her teacher's strictness in class positively and stated that she now paid more attention in class and always finished her homework on time.

Previous in-class learning

There were instances when some learners reflected on their previous in-class learning experiences. AZR (INT 2/IN) said that at his former school, English was taught in Bahasa Melayu. He explained (INT 2/IN) that the teacher would ask the class to answer questions in the workbook individually. Then, they would together discuss the answers. HM and TRK described their former English teacher, Mrs L, as a kind and friendly woman. They were both at ease with her. TRK said, "*Even though I sat at the front, I wasn't scared to look at her. Every time I waited for English*" (INT 2/IN). HM (INT 3/IN) compared the two teacher's approaches to teaching. She said her former teacher would give the meaning of words in Bahasa Melayu, while the current teacher only used English. HM said she preferred her former teacher's style more.

The six learners who appeared obliging in the classroom were aware of the teacher's teaching style and how it affected them as second language learners. This could be a contributing factor to how they participated in class. Learners who felt comfortable with the teacher's style would be most likely to benefit from

the lessons, while those who felt otherwise would have to deal with the situation.

6.1.5 Views about Learning English

Learners were also asked to give their views on their learning of English. AZR (INT 1/IN) stated that the best way for him to learn was by identifying the difficult words and looking up for their meanings. AZR felt that in-class he would only learn English from the teacher. NS (INT 2/IN) disclosed that learning English was like learning a foreign language for her, despite its official status as a second language. This, she explained, stemmed from the fact that she only used the language when she was in class. According to NS she did not read or speak the language in any other context. SKR (INT 1/IN) said that he learned English by working on the exercises in the workbook. He felt that he managed to get a fairly good result for his English from learning this way. TRK described a different way of learning English. She felt that she learned the language best through talking, she explained, *“I talk...I talk to myself, to teachers, to friends”* (INT 1/IN). TRK said she was not afraid of making mistakes and believed that she could improve her English further by learning from the mistakes that she made. THN (INT 1/OUT) said she learned English from reading education-based magazines that her father subscribed to monthly. THN said she did not learn from the English textbooks, which she felt focused only on the examination. She preferred to read magazines because she could learn both general knowledge and the language. HM (INT 2/IN) felt the best way for her to learn English was by learning the vocabulary. She explained that she already had more than 100 words in her notebook, which she planned to memorise.

The six learners in this study had differing views on what worked for them as second language learners. These views arose from their past learning experiences, which contributed to the varied way that they chose to engage in the learning resources that they encountered both in and out-of-class.

6.1.6 Use

The learners were asked about the use of the words that they learned either in-class or out-of-class. All of them talked about using the new words in their writing. AZR (INT 1/IN) said even though he had memorised the words, he had trouble using them, he explained: *"...but the problem is that, sometimes I remember the word...but I do not know how to use them in a sentence...I also sometimes forget the spelling."* He also said that he would use the words in his writing because he rarely spoke the language. HM (INT 1/IN), who also planned to use the words in her writing, said she still did not have the opportunity in the current English class. HM explained that so far, her current English teacher had only asked them to copy sample essays and that she had not asked them to write their own essays yet. HM claimed that she had used several words previously when she was taught by another English teacher. Rather than depending on in-class opportunities to use the words, some learners created their own opportunities. For example, SKR (INT 3/IN) claimed that at home, he wrote several sentences using the new words that he learned. However, he admitted that this was not a common practice and that he would do it whenever he felt like it. THN (INT 1/IN) said she once used the word that she learned from reading a magazine at home when she wrote about herself on one of the social network websites. Similarly, NS (INT 2/IN) said she used a word that she had learned in-class when she engaged in online chatting with an international friend.

6.2 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the analysis of findings for the in-class engagement. There were six categories: In-Class Resources, Forms of Participation, Gains from Participation, English Learning Experiences, Views about Learning English, and Usage. The findings showed that the resources available in-class were very much dependent on the teacher's pedagogic strategies. The six learners most of the time engaged in receptive skills. Findings reveal that learners did not necessarily engage in manner that was expected by the teacher. This could be seen when they worked in pairs and

small groups, where learners participated in ways that they felt most appropriate at that particular point of time. Findings also show that some forms of engagement i.e. jotting down difficult English words, looking up for the meanings in the dictionary, and copying the meanings are being practised by the learners in both contexts: in and out-of-class. In the following chapter I will provide discussion of the findings, where I will discuss the similarities and differences between the learners' forms of participation in and out-of class.

Chapter 7 Discussion of Findings

7.0 Introduction

In this thesis, the discussion chapters are divided into two. This is because I feel there is a need to first discuss the findings in relation to the research questions that have guided the study. This is done in the present chapter. In the following chapter (Chapter 8), some emergent themes that have been identified from the findings will be described. I will also provide a critique of my own understanding of several issues.

7.1 Discussion of Findings

My discussion of the findings that have been presented in Chapters 5 and 6 will be organised based on the 3 research questions that have guided the present study, namely:

Research Question 1

What are the language learning opportunities available to the six ESL learners, out and in class?

Research Question 2

How do they participate in the language learning opportunities, both out and in-class?

Research Question 3

What are the factors that impinge upon the way they participate in the language learning opportunities?

7.1.1 Discussion of Research Question 1

Research Question:

What are the Resources in English available to the six ESL learners, out and in class?

Findings indicate that the Resources in English that the 6 learners encountered in both contexts (outside and in class) could be divided into 3 categories: material, social, and other forms of resources (refer to the table below). The following is the discussion of each category.

| Category | Out-of-class | In-class |
|-------------|--|--|
| Material | Broadcast media, Internet media, printed reading materials, environmental print, portable media. | Teaching materials- word cards, posters, worksheets. |
| Social | Parents, siblings, relatives, friends. | Teacher, other learners. |
| Other forms | Tuition classes, advice, rules | |

Table 7.1 A Summary of English-medium resources

- Material resources

The out-of-class material resources that these learners chose to engage with mainly provided them with opportunities for entertainment. Most of the time, the learners would engage with these resources in English as part of their leisure activities. Pearson (2003) made the same observation about a group of Chinese ESL learners in New Zealand whom he found engaging with the resources in English as a way to spend their leisure time. Unlike Pearson's (ibid.) study that looks at learners' learning activities, this study is interested to find out what learners did as they encountered the resources, which was not necessarily to learn the target language. However, the in-class resources were chosen by the teacher and were primarily for the purpose of preparing the learners for the coming national examination that mainly tested reading and writing skills. It could be said that the teacher carried out a predictive evaluation (Ellis, 1997), where she used the materials that she felt best suited her purposes (see 6.2.1 Resources: Teaching Materials)

Out-of-class, these learners chose to engage with resources of varying issues mainly from English television programmes, Internet, and books. Out-of-class findings show that these learners seemed to be more inclined to watch TV programmes or surf for Internet resources that contained elements of thrill and fun, and that involved conflicts and challenges, not necessarily revolving around teens issues. Findings indicate there are also occasions when these learners engaged with online reading materials that were on world issues and current affairs. In this sense, these young people are not as naive as many adults might normally think. With the advancement of the information technology, they are more exposed and had access to world news and real life events. In contrast, the English material resources available in the classroom mostly revolved around issues in teenagers' life. To illustrate, throughout the six lessons observed, the learners had lessons on topics that were about teenage love and its consequences, courage and diligence, bullying, and school activities. These topics were assumed to appeal to young people. This could be true as these are issues that teenagers normally face in their life. However, as explained earlier, out-of-class, these learners chose to engage with resources on diverse

topics. This echoes with the findings from a study conducted by Schultz (2002). In her study that investigates teenagers' out-of-class writing practices, she has found that most of the students who admitted not to like writing in school, actively wrote essays of their preferred genres at home, which were not 'everyday literacy' (pg 358). She argues that this shows the resources chosen by the teacher which were based on the national curriculum tended to be less significant in teenagers' lives (Schultz, *ibid.*). These kinds of topics Schultz (*ibid.*: 382) maintains, are sometimes "*removed from students' interests*".

There are also material resources that learners created themselves. Some learners took the initiative to create their own resources either for the purpose of learning the language or just to 'play around'. Some resources, such as a scrap book and a note book where lists of words were kept were created to learn the language. However, there are others such as writing a prank letter or talking to stuffed animals and dolls in English. Learners engaged with these resources with the intention to have fun and at times to be playful. Recent work by scholars such as Crystal (1998) and Cook (2000) have argued for the value of play in second language learning. To illustrate, TRK, who from my observation was the most proficient in English among the 6 learners, said she lacked the opportunities to speak and write the language at home. However, being innovative, she created her own speaking and writing opportunities at home. A study by Yang (1992, cited in Suh et al, 1999) indicates that ESL learners who actively seek opportunities to use the language both in and out of the classroom become more proficient speakers of the language.

- Social resources

Findings show that both contexts lack the social resources that would provide the learners with the opportunities to use the target language orally. Out-of-class, most of the people whom these learners interacted and mingled with did not use English. At home, all of them mainly used their mother tongues since most of the parents and other family members could not speak English.

In-class, the teacher and their peers constituted the social resources, with the former being the primary one. This is concluded as teacher talk is high in this classroom. However, I am in agreement with Cullen (1995) that it is not necessarily detrimental to the learning process. Within the context of this study, the teacher was the most proficient and skilled user of the language. Thus, it was expected that she acted as the “provider” of the target language for these learners.

Findings show that there are occasions when the teacher tried to encourage the learners to participate in oral communication by asking questions. Cullen (1995) argues that opportunities for learner interaction are mostly influenced by the kind of questions that the teacher asks in a lesson. In this classroom context, the teacher normally asked two types of questions: referential and display. The former refers to questions that the teacher does not know the answer, while the latter are questions to which the teacher has the answers. She would begin the lessons by asking referential questions, which had genuine communicative purposes. However, she used display questions during other stages of the lesson, these questions were meant to check learners’ knowledge and understanding of the lessons. This reflects the claim made by Markee and Kasper (2004) that most questions posed in the classroom are owned by teachers and they are the ones who allocate the turns. Though questions were asked to encourage oral participation, not all learners took up the opportunities provided for reasons that I will explain later.

The findings have revealed that all explanation is teacher fronted. There are two interesting observations about her explanations. First, the teacher used English all the time. She would rephrase, ask further questions, and sometimes sketch on the board when she felt that the learners still could not understand her explanation. She never resorted to Bahasa Melayu. This helps maximise the six learners’ exposure to the target language, as they lack access to this type of resource outside. Secondly, the teacher spent a considerable amount of time explaining the meaning of difficult words in every lesson. She would first ask the learners the meanings of words. When they could not provide her with the

answers or when they gave the wrong answers, she would instruct them to use the dictionary. She would normally ask a learner to read out the meaning and explain the word further. The teacher did not show the learners how to guess the meaning from the context provided, instead she encouraged them to use the dictionary most of the time. A reason for this could be using the dictionary would save her time.

The teacher corrected the learners' pronunciation, immediately after they had made the errors. The teacher normally corrected the learners while they were reading out aloud. Sometimes, as a learner read aloud a short passage of about 150 words, his pronunciation was corrected three times. There are also occasions when the teacher corrected the learners' pronunciation while they were responding to her questions. The teacher used recast techniques where she reformulated learners' contribution into new words. Sometimes, she reported back learners' original ideas to the whole class in order to get their agreement or disagreement. The teacher also used non-corrective feedback as she sometimes repeated the learners' answers. Findings reveal that not all learners saw these as resources for them to learn the language. There are learners who viewed these as hindrances for them to participate orally in class (more detailed explanation on this in the following section).

Peers constitute the second type of in-class social resources. Findings from this study seem to indicate that the six learners learned from their peers most when they were asked to work in pairs. Although they did not use English when they worked together, these learners said they learned new words and some aspects of grammar when they helped each other while answering questions on worksheets. Learners seem to benefit most during pair work, maybe because they were working with their close friends who normally sat next to them. However, learners expressed mixed feelings about working in small groups. AZR and NS said they did not benefit much from the group that the teacher assigned them to. This could be due to the fact that they were new students in the class and therefore they did not know their classmates well yet. However, later when the teacher gave them the freedom to choose whom to work with,

these learners were quite positive with their experience working in the new groups. In the same way as when working in pairs, the six learners did not use English while working in small groups. It seems that their aim was to complete the tasks, which they were able to do by using their first language. Findings also indicate that there are also occasions when learners talked about learning how things were done in the classroom from their peers. AZR and NS who just joined the class said they learned about the ways of doing things in the class by observing the behaviours of their peers while the lessons were taking place.

- Other forms of resource

This section refers to resources provided typically by their parents, as a way for the learners to use and learn the target language. Some examples are enrolling the children in tuition classes and setting up rules. For instance, THN's father encouraged her to use English by setting the rule that she could only speak the language at home. Yet, she admitted that she would only obey the rule when her father was around. The fact that he was away most of the time led her to use her mother tongue more often than English.

To conclude, out-of-class, these learners had access to different kinds of material resources. Some were already available in the environment, while there were others that learners created themselves. Most importantly, they chose which resources to engage with. The resources that they engaged with had meaning in their everyday lives. Yet, in-class, the material resources came mostly from those designed by the teacher. The teacher provided the resources that helped them to prepare for the national examination. These resources required certain forms of learner participation (a discussion on this will be provided later in this chapter). Brilliant-Mills (1994) shows how a group of mathematics students constructed the meaning of mathematics, the mathematical actions involved, and their identity as mathematicians through their language and the sequence of events that were constructed by those in the classroom. Similarly, in the present study, the resources provided by the teacher formed a range of learning opportunities that warranted certain forms of

participation which reflects what it means to learn English, the expected actions involved in learning English, and their identity as English language learners (a detailed discussion on this will be provided in the following chapters).

7.1.2 Discussion of Research Question 2

Research Question:

How do they participate in the language learning opportunities, both out and in-class?

By employing a participatory framework, this study argues that participation, whether it is oral, non-oral, or other forms, generates learning. In this study, a broader understanding of learning is employed, where it does not necessarily lead to linguistic attainment. Instead, it is learning to become members of a community of practice, and this requires different forms of participation. Thus, there is a need to gain a deeper understanding of the learners' manner of participation. This is achieved by considering the factors that has led the six learners to different forms of participation. Due to this, Research Question 2 will be discussed together with Research Question 3.

On the face of it, there seems to be a link between the six ESL learners' manner of engagement with the kinds of resources that they encountered both out-of and in class. As I have discussed in Research Question 1 (7.1.1), the learners mostly engaged with resources that required receptive skills. This has an impact on their manner of participation, which most often involves listening/watching and reading English materials (I have presented their different forms of participation in Chapter 5). However, closer analysis reveals that the kinds of resources that they encountered are not always the factor influencing their forms of participation. Findings indicate that learner participation is a way for them acting on the particular situation they were in. To illustrate, even though the six learners in this study encountered opportunities to speak in English in the classroom, they did not necessarily take up these opportunities. They sometimes chose to be quiet due to the circumstances that they found

themselves in such as the presence of a more dominant peer. This might have been a reason for learners not to participate in oral activities.

Findings indicate that most of the time, these learners decided on how they would engage with the resources in English that they encountered outside the classroom. They participated in ways that they felt suited their needs at the particular time of engagement. This is in contrast with their manner of participation in the classroom which was most of the time controlled by the teacher and was directed towards learning certain aspects of the target language. In the following section, I will bring together the learners' forms of participation in both contexts by highlighting the differences and the similarities. In doing so, I have categorised their forms of participation (out-of-class and in-class) into 6 types, which are: the 3-step action, help solicitation, oral participation, reading, listening/watching, and writing (a summary is provided below).

| Manner of Engagement | Out-of-class | In-class |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| i. The 3-step action | Jotting down the difficult words, looking up for the meanings in the dictionary, and copying the meanings. | Jotting down the difficult words, looking up for the meanings in the dictionary, and copying the meanings. |
| ii. Soliciting help | Asking for help from parents and siblings. | Asking for help from peers. |
| iii. Oral participation | Only one learner (THN) reported speaking in English with her immediate family members and relatives. | Most of the time learners did not participate in oral activities. |
| iv. Reading | Learners talked about skimming and scanning the reading texts. | Learners talked about having to understand the reading texts in detail. |
| v. Listening/watching | Most often engaged in this manner when they watched English TV programmes. | Most often engaged in this manner during lessons. |
| vi. Writing | Learners hardly wrote in English. | Learners hardly wrote in English. For essay writing, they were only required to copy sample essays. |

Table 7.2 A Summary of Participants' Forms of Participation: out and in class

i. The 3-step action

In both environments, these learners used the dictionary as the primary way to learn new words. At home, they talked about referring to the dictionary after their engagement with the resources in English, as a way of learning the language. Their engagement is purposeful and could be described in three stages: first, they would jot down the difficult words in their note books, then they would look up for the meaning in the dictionary (either online or hard copy), and finally they would copy down the meanings (I refer to these as the 3-step action). Findings seem to indicate there is a link between the learners' views on learning a second language and their engagement with the dictionary. These learners felt there was a need for them to acquire a range of vocabulary in order for them to be proficient in the target language. Out of the six learners, AZR and HM repeatedly expressed the need to understand every word before they could understand the resources in English that they engaged with. AZR felt that he could not learn English unless he understood every single word. Similarly, HM felt that she did not know a lot of words in English, which she claimed resulted in her low proficiency. Consequently, both of them talked about engaging in the 3-step action the most. They said that they would memorise the words that they had accumulated in their note books. Learners who were less concerned about their vocabulary engaged in a slightly different manner. NS who was more worried about mastering the English grammar, seemed to use the dictionary to assist her understanding of the resources. For instance, she talked about using an online dictionary while she was reading a comic on the internet. THN referred to the dictionary while she was reading a book with several other children. In both cases, these learners did not engage in the 3-step action described earlier.

In class, findings show that that the six learners used the dictionary throughout all stages of the lesson, and they were also engaged in the 3-step action. Most of the time, the teacher would ask the class to find the meaning in the dictionary when there were words that they did not know. They would then copy the meaning of the words. It could be said that they were engaged in what is

referred to as 'dictionary lookup' (Oxford and Crookall, 1990), a decontextualised vocabulary learning technique which works on the assumption that learners do not have any other way of knowing the meaning of the words and that the physical action of looking up the word would help them to remember the meaning. Continuous reference to the dictionary also reflects both the teacher's and the learners' preoccupation with vocabulary. This is not surprising because many would think that in order to be able to function successfully in a second language they would need to acquire a wide range of vocabulary first. This is even more the case for these six learners whose main purpose of learning English is to succeed in their academic endeavour which primarily requires them to read texts in English. Related to this, it is interesting to note that these learners only used the dictionary to look for the meanings of difficult words. Even though there are other aspects of the language that they could learn from this engagement such as the pronunciation of words, parts of speech and how to use the words in context, these learners only used the dictionary as a way to enrich their vocabulary. A reason for this could be that they were not taught proper dictionary usage skills. Therefore, they only used the dictionary as a reference for the meaning of words. Another possible reason is that these learners used a simple or bilingual dictionary that provided only meanings of words. Using a dictionary in class is a new experience to all six learners. According to all of them their current English teacher was the first one to ask them to bring and use dictionary in class. All six learners stated that they were excited by this new experience. It is as though they had found a solution to their problem of not knowing the meaning of words in English.

I will like to highlight that as I have explained in 3.1.3.2 it is not the intention of the present study to identify the kinds of learning that learners gain from their different forms of participation. Yet, findings indicate there are recurring patterns of forms of participation (the 3-step action) and learners' claims about what they learned from these forms of participation (vocabulary). Hence, what could be interpreted is that learners feel that the 3-step action leads to the learning of vocabulary. Therefore, this form of participation is most valued by the 6 learners.

ii. Soliciting Help

In both contexts, there were occasions when learners would ask other learners to help them understand and sometimes learn the language. These learners normally asked help with the meaning of words. At home, findings show that four learners had family members whom they would consult regarding the language. These family members were normally their parents or elder siblings. Learners seemed to be reluctant to ask help from those younger than them as they were concerned that they might be laughed at. This is quite common since these learners do not want to appear less successful as language learners compared with their younger siblings. In class, I noticed that they rarely asked help from their teacher even though she was the most proficient and knowledgeable in the classroom community. Even though they had high regard for her, these learners, especially HM and TRK, constantly mentioned the fact that they were afraid of their English teacher. They described the teacher as someone who was very strict and would scold them for small mistakes that they made. It appears that for them, they would rather ask their friends than asking her for help.

iii. Oral Participation

Based on the findings, in both environments, it could be said that these learners do not encounter resources that require them to speak the language (I have discussed this under the heading 'Social Resources'). At home, AZR, HM, NS, SKR and TRK almost had no resources at all that required them to speak in English, only THN reported using the language with her family due to the rule set by her father. In class they were able to complete tasks without having to speak in English. Instances where the six learners participated orally were few. When they did, most of the time it was in chorus. This was apparent when the teacher posed questions to the whole class and a particular learner was not nominated. The six learners seemed to be at ease answering the questions in chorus, but they appeared to be reluctant when being put in the spot light. Their oral participation in small group discussion was also minimal due to reasons such as the presence of dominant group members and their not being used to

in the company of new friends. The learners rarely used English when they worked in groups. TRK said she and her friends only used English in the presence of the teacher, for example, when the teacher monitored them while they were working in a group. In this situation, it could be implied that they used English just to show respect for the teacher and to portray themselves as obedient learners.

Despite the lack of available resources in their immediate surroundings, some learners made the effort to seek the opportunities to speak the language elsewhere. To illustrate, out-of-class, HM and SKR spent time with their friends who used English as their home language. Both of them visited their friends at home and spoke in English with the others in the families. From their earlier responses on the reasons for learning English, HM stated she needed good spoken skills because her ambition was to be a lawyer, while SKR said he needed the language to speak with his friends. These two learners seemed to be motivated to improve their speaking skills and looked for the opportunities that would enable them to practise the language. NS who felt that she needed to master her grammar before she would participate in oral communication felt uncomfortable to use the language. However, she would use the language with her good friend. Although her engagement was not intentionally to improve her language, the fact that she played around with it showed that there was some kind of engagement in the target language. Similarly, TRK would use the language with her group of friends at school. She seemed not to be bothered by other girls at school who made negative remarks at her attempt to use the language. She was aware that using the language was a way for her to learn, and that she needed to be persistent. Nonetheless, she was uncomfortable using the language with others whom she felt were good at English. This implies that how the learners judged themselves against others is an important factor influencing their decisions to engage in speaking opportunities. It is not surprising because the ability to speak seems to be an important defining criterion that determines whether the learners felt good about themselves. This seems to concur with the findings obtained by Tse (2000) on the perceptions of university students on foreign language study. These students believe that it is

their abilities to speak in the language that reflect their success, and not their results in the examination.

Interestingly, three learners (THN, TRK, and HM) who talked the most about participating in oral communication in their out-of-class environment were also the ones who participated actively in oral activities in class. For instance, from my observations, these three learners were the ones who would volunteer answers when the teacher posed questions to the whole class. They would also volunteer to read aloud and seemed to be most active during group discussion. These three learners were actively seeking opportunities to participate in oral activities. A reason for this could be the community of which they were members used the target language as a means of communication. Therefore, there was a need for them to be able to speak the language well. In the classroom, they saw the opportunities provided by the teacher to speak English as a means for them to practise and develop their speaking skills, and decided to take up these opportunities.

iv. Reading

The research has shown that some learners tended to engage with the reading materials in different ways depending on whether they were outside or inside the class. Out-of-class, they seemed to be less concerned with their inability to understand the English words that they found in the English reading resources that they encountered. To illustrate, AZR and SKR talked about skimming and scanning the texts that they read. They also talked about guessing the meaning of words from the contextual clues provided in the texts. They read the texts quickly to get the particular information that they needed to satisfy their curiosity. Yet, in class, these learners were not taught to engage in proper reading skills that did not necessarily require understanding of every difficult word that they encountered. Instead, they were instructed to use the dictionary every time they found a difficult word. This different manner of engagement might be due to the purpose of engaging in the materials. Out-of-class, it is for leisure and more personal purposes. Hence, the learners might feel that for

these purposes, they would only need to know the gist of the text. In class, the purpose of reading is most of the time to answer comprehension questions. Hence, the learners might feel they needed to understand the reading texts in depth before they could answer the questions. Furthermore, the reading activities were directed by the teacher. She decided on what might be the best way for the learners to engage with the materials. In this particular class, it seems that the teacher felt that the best way to tackle a reading material was by first understanding the words.

v. Listening/Watching

The data show that the six learners were most of the time engaged in listening and/or watching as they encountered resources in English regardless whether they were outside or in class. Data show that out-of class, they spent a considerable amount of time watching English television programmes. All six learners, to varying degrees, reported their dependence on Malay subtitles while they were watching English television programmes. It could be argued that watching programmes with subtitles would not help them to learn the target language. This is not necessarily the case. Programmes that are subtitled are different from those that are dubbed. For the former, the subtitles are available intermittently, while for the latter all speech is translated to the Malay language by voice-over talents. Since the six learners watched subtitled English programmes, they would still listen to dialogue in English every now and then. For example, AZR and HM said while watching the documentaries, they would listen to the English narration when there were parts that were not subtitled. Other than for understanding, these learners also learned the pronunciation of some English words when they listened to the English narration and dialogues. Instead of just focusing at word-level, TRK, a more proficient learner compared to AZR and HM (based on her English result), said she learned how English was used differently in various contexts when she watched Malay subtitled English movies. It is worth noting that when these learners watched English programmes, their engagement is often beyond learning the language itself. Without being able to fully understand the language, their participation led them

to appreciate the subtle messages that were instilled in the movies. For example, AZR in one of the interviews, talked at length about the English movie that he watched. He said the movie was not subtitled yet he could understand almost everything. AZR said that his understanding was mainly assisted by the contextual information. He was able to explain the plot and the moral values that he learned from it. One might argue that this participation did not result in much linguistic attainment. However, it is important to consider the fact that the learners' appreciation is the result of their engagement with the resources that are in the target language i.e. English.

The learners sometimes talked about 'not doing anything' when they encountered the resources in English. Several reasons were given for this. First, some learners felt that activities like listening to pronunciation were less significant than other kinds of engagement such as looking for the meanings of words. This might be due to their view that active engagement should exhibit some actions that could be related to acquiring the language. Secondly, some learners engaged with the resources for entertainment. Hence, minimal understanding of the language is required. For instance, when these learners listened to English songs, they could enjoy the songs by just appreciating the music, and not the lyrics. Thirdly, they seemed strongly to hold the view that the only way to learn the language was by taking a series of purposeful actions. Thus, they sometimes described themselves as lazy when they were not engaged in these activities i.e. the 3 step action.

Similarly, in class, most of the time the six learners and their classmates were quiet and appeared to be listening. This is considered as a common phenomenon among Asian learners. However, McDermott (1993) cautions that *"When language is systematically unavailable to some, it is important that we do not limit our explanation to the traits of the persons involved"* (as cited in Wiltse, 2006: 212). Learners are quiet for myriad reasons. At one level, it is due to their past learning experiences, which they bring along into the class (Rich, 2011). For the six learners, this was how they had been behaving in the classroom throughout their schooling experiences. They were in the environment where the teacher was seen as the main knowledge provider and they were expected to learn mostly by listening to the teacher rather than discovering by

themselves. It is also due to their limited language proficiency. Some learners said they chose to be quiet because even though they had the ideas or the answers to the teacher's questions, they simply did not have the words to express themselves in English. There is also the 'shyness syndrome' (Malcolm, 1987 as cited in Safinas, 2006) which is often associated with ESL learners, where ESL learners (especially Asian) are generally shy in character. On another level there are other reasons that are context specific, contributing to their silence and apparent passivity among the six learners.

First, there was no real need for them to speak in the target language. Other than providing single-word answers to the teacher's display questions, there was no real reason for them to talk in English. This is due to the kind of classroom activities that were designed by the teacher. Mostly, they were required to read and answer comprehension questions. When they were asked to work in small groups, with the purpose of getting them to discuss, most of the comprehension questions that tested low level knowledge were easy enough to be answered individually. The rest of the lessons were mostly dominated by the teacher explaining the content of the lesson or meaning of difficult words and learners were expected to listen.

Second, some of the learners were quiet because they had difficulties understanding the content of the lessons. For example, some of the topics were new to the learners. The learners were quiet because they did not have sufficient knowledge of the topic. For example, when the class had a lesson on 'Bullying', THN said she did not participate much or volunteer to answer the teacher's questions because it was a new topic for her. Other than having difficulties with issues that were new to them, these learners were also quiet when the teacher taught them poems. TRK and THN said even though they had read the poem the night before, they still could not understand it. In this situation, they were quiet because they needed to concentrate and understand the message in the poem. Another related reason is incomprehensible input (Tsui, 1996), where learners face difficulties understanding the teachers' questions or explanation. In this study, AZR said he was quiet because he could not understand the teacher's question and therefore he had to listen attentively.

Third, they were hard-pressed for the need to think and speak quickly. These learners had to struggle to do two things at a time. Not only did they have to think of the answers to the teacher's questions, but also they had to do this quickly. The fact that they were also struggling to understand and speak the language made it hard for the learners to participate in the class discussion. For some learners, for example THN and HM, this put them off and thus they resorted to being quiet. Similarly, Chen (2003) in her study on ESL undergraduate students has found that some of them are involved in "*thinking deeply before talking*", which minimises their oral participation in classroom discussion. Related to this is the teacher's intolerance of silence (Tsui, 1996), where some teachers feel uneasy when the class is quiet. Thus they would allocate shorter wait time and take one of the following actions: ask another student, provide the answer themselves, or repeat or modify the question. Data shows that the teacher in this study took similar actions when the learners did not respond to her.

Fifth, some learners did not volunteer to answer because they depended on others to do it for them. This is quite common in a large classroom. Some learners feel they are not obliged to answer questions that the teacher has posed to the whole class because they know somebody in the class would answer it for them. For instance, NS admitted that she did not respond to the teacher's questions because she felt that her English was not good enough and that there were more proficient learners in the class who would answer the questions. Another learner, TRK, felt that her classmates had already given the answer that she had in mind, so there was no point for her to give hers.

Finally, the teacher's insistence on the learners using only English in the classroom might also be the reason why they did not participate much orally. Though all six learners were positive with the fact that the teacher wanted them to use English all the time, from my personal observation, they might have participated more orally, had the teacher allowed them to respond in a language

such as Bahasa Melayu. Auerbach (1993) argues for expanding the range of options and uses for native languages in initial literacy and ESL instruction. As in the case of the present study, allowing the learners to use another language might help make them feel at ease and less threatened. Furthermore, in real life communication in Malaysia, speakers often code switch between different languages to help get their message across. Therefore, these learners should be allowed to practise the language as how it is being used in the real world.

vi. Writing

These learners also hardly wrote in English both out-of class and in-class. Out of class, of the six learners, only TRK reported engaged in writing in English. She talked about writing short stories based on the novels that she read, something that she did to fill up her time. In-class, most of the time, these learners only engaged in writing short answers to comprehension questions. On two occasions, these learners had writing lessons in which they learned how to write a speech and a report. It is interesting that based on my observation even though the teacher's focus was to prepare the learners for the SPM, in both lessons she seemed to be keener to help them with learning the format rather than coming up with appropriate content. The content was tackled using a form of drill. Instead of asking them to produce their own writing, for the speech the teacher told them to copy a sample speech, and for the report they were instructed to copy a sample report and make amendments to some details such as the name and the date. It could be said that these learners did not actually write in both contexts because they did not seem to have the need for it. Out-of class, they mainly engaged with resources in English for entertainment, which most of the time required listening and watching. In class, the teacher decided what they were required to do. In this case, the teacher chose not to deal with the content yet. A possible reason was that the observations were done on the first two months of the class, when the teacher was still gauging the learners' level of proficiency. She probably intended to deal with writing in subsequent lessons.

It could be said that learner participation is not so much determined by the kinds of resources that learners encounter, be it out or in class. Often, participation is about engaging in the manner that learners think is the best and most benefitting in a particular time and setting. This means that participation requires active decision making by the learners themselves. The form of engagement that learners choose might be viewed as “passive” by others (e.g. the teacher), such as when learners decide to keep quiet in class. However, this is actually the result of the interplay between the learners’ acting as active decision makers and the norms and expectations in a particular community that they are in.

Other than discussing the similarities and differences between the forms of participation and the learners’ reasons for these as I have done above, I would also like to highlight their capacity to take agency that is illustrated by their decision to remain autonomous, where data show that there are occasions when some of the learners engaged in a manner that reflects their need to function as individuals, not members of a particular community they were in. I shall present my discussion of this in the following section.

7.1.2.1 Learners as Autonomous Individuals

Data provide examples of learner participation with them acting as autonomous individuals, or taking responsibility for their own learning (Little, 2007, Oxford, 2008). In the present study, autonomy refers to the interplay between ESL learners as agentive decision makers and the expectations and norms that are prevalent in a particular community they are in. Learner autonomy is reflected in the learners’ manner of engagement, where rather than engaging in a way that will enable them to be accepted as members in a particular community, these learners choose to engage in a way that benefits them as individuals. For illustrative purposes, I will provide two examples which are taken from the data.

- (i) Talking about her in-class participation, NS (INT 2/IN) said that she decided to read other parts of a given text rather than following her peer during a reading aloud session as she needed to use the time to

answer the comprehension questions. This shows that instead of acting on the norm of the classroom community (where everyone was expected to read quietly while a learner was reading aloud), NS chose to engage in the way that she personally felt most beneficial for her at that point of time.

- (ii) TRK (INT 3/OUT) talked about the time when she was watching National Geographic aired on the television and chose not to read the Bahasa Melayu subtitle provided. She explained that she decided to ignore the subtitle because she used Bahasa Melayu all the time and therefore she wanted to use the opportunity to focus on the use of English.

From what can be seen from the above examples, NS and TRK decided to engage in the manner that benefitted them as individuals. In both cases, the learners acted more as individuals than members of a community, which Akkerman and Eijck describe as “self that belongs to and is separate from a social unit” (2011: 4). As social beings, at all time, learners are members of a particular community. However, as agentive beings who are capable of making their own decisions, these learners will sometimes engage in the manner that is not in tune with what is expected in the community. Nevertheless, this form of engagement is seen as important for the learners as individuals who are capable of deciding what is beneficial for them as second language learners.

7.2 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the findings based on the three research questions that have guided the study. For Research Question 1 I discussed the resources that were available to the six learners in two environments: out-of-class and in-class. Learners in this study seemed to encounter resources in English that required the use of their receptive skills more than their productive skills. Findings indicate that out-of-class learners chose which resources to engage with. However, this was not the case in-class as the resources were

mostly chosen and provided by the teacher. Next, I have combined my discussion for Research Question 2 with Research Question 3. This enabled a better understanding of why the learners chose to engage in a certain manner. I highlighted three interesting issues about these learners' manner of engagement. First, in class they tended to engage differently in different learning activities. Second, these learners seemed to place different value on their out-of-class and in-class learning, where they felt that what they did in-class was more meaningful and significant than out-of-class. Third, their manner of engagement sometimes reflected their autonomy rather than them acting as members of a particular community. Further discussion as well as theorization of these issues will be provided in the following chapter.

Chapter 8 Discussion of Emergent Themes, Revisiting Some Principles of Understanding ESL Learner Participation in Language Learning Opportunities and Revisiting the Relationship between in and out-of-class Learning

8.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first part, I will identify and describe five emergent themes about learner participation. These emergent themes were drawn from the findings as described in the previous chapter. In the second section, based on the insights gained from the current study I will review the four principles to understand learner participation: participation is not only oral. It occurs in different places. It plays a number of roles and it is conditional on the resources, the circumstances and the orientation of the people. In relation to this, from a participatory framework I will argue for a more nuanced understanding of 'Resources' and 'Circumstances' than those provided by the cognitive view. Finally, in the third section I will review my stand on in-class and out of-class learning.

8.1 Emergent Themes

There are 5 emergent themes: learners as active agents, their membership of various communities, a separation between learning and other forms of participation, their views of selves as second language learners and the value of English. Under each emergent theme in this discussion, I will illustrate my interpretation by providing description of the learners' engagements with the resources and what they said about these. I will review and extend the findings that have already been discussed in the previous chapter.

8.1.1 Learners as Active Agents

From the sociocultural view of learning, learners are not seen as passive individuals. Instead, they are viewed as active agents, who are capable of making decisions, for example either to participate or not in a social activity. In the context of the present study, by analysing the types of resources that learners engaged with and their manner of participation, findings indicate that the six learners are active agents, where they constantly made decisions on what to engage with and how, acted on the norms and expectations that were imposed on them in a particular socialcultural context, and acted on their own initiative to create opportunities for engagement with the target language.

Out-of class, they engaged with resources in English that were available at home and outside. They chose to engage with these resources in ways that would enable them to gain entertainment and be a part of the community (the community of youth) that they chose to be affiliated with. Other than this, they also engaged with certain resources that they sought, with the intention of improving their proficiency in the target language. To illustrate, at home AZR decided to engage with an online dictionary as an attempt to learn some new words. Related to this is engagement with 'created' resources. These resources were created by the learners themselves for two purposes, either to learn the target language or just to have fun. Two learners: AZR and HM created the resources to learn English vocabulary by compiling notebooks where they kept the lists of words they encountered in class and outside. HM also had a scrap book where she kept English newspaper cuttings. TRK created resources in English which she could 'fool around' with. She wrote prank letters to her neighbour and recorded her English narration of the books that she read on her mother's mobile phone.

In-class, they mainly engaged with resources that were imposed on them that came from two sources: those designed by the teacher, and also the ones that emerged from other classroom routines. They were 'imposed' because learners, to a certain extent, were expected to engage with them. Participation in this

sense is obligatory as the teacher sometimes used her authority to ensure that learners engaged with these resources. Some examples of the 'imposed' learning resources are planned activities like group work, pair work, games, and the teaching materials that the teacher prepared for them. Other classroom activities that might require learner participation are situations like when a learner was asked to answer a question, to write her answer on the board, or any other unplanned resources. Even when a learner decided to voluntarily take part, it was often because the teacher had somehow imposed it on her for example when the teacher repeatedly asked for a volunteer to read a passage aloud to the whole class.

Learners' choices on the types of resources that they would engage in and their various manner of participation are manifestations of them exercising their agency. In the context of the present study, at one level, the learners seemed to exercise their agency more when they were out of class, as they made more decisions on the choices of resources and ways of engaging with these resources. They seemed to display less agency in the classroom as they often appeared to be passive and obedient in class. However, by listening to what they had to say about their manner of participation, one could conclude that they were actually exercising their agency in class. Classroom for them is the place where formal learning takes place, and it is ruled by the teacher. Within the allocated time, these learners strived to make the best of it. Similarly, a study by Razianna (2003) on successful ESL learners in several Malaysian boarding schools highlights how these students see classroom learning as the context where the main agenda is to prepare them for the examination. I would like to note that in any classroom, neither the students nor the teacher acts independently of a school's routines and expectations. In the classroom investigated, the learners' main purpose to learn English is to do well in the examination and the teacher's focus on preparing them for the examination seems to suit their needs well. For them, learning the language is not so much about engaging in oral activities, as has been espoused in cognitive SLA. It is about doing well in the examination that focuses on two skills: reading and writing. Thus, by examining their participation from the participatory framework,

it could be concluded that their silence is a display of their agency in the pursuits of attaining their academic goals.

Learners also do not act independently of the immediate social context. They are conscious of their surrounding and the consequences of their actions as members of the classroom community. For newcomers: AZR and NS, their decisions were made based on their concern to be accepted in the classroom community. At times, they chose not to participate in order to observe the classroom culture. Other than concerns about situating oneself in a new environment, learners also made decisions whether to participate overtly in the learning activities or not based on their relationship with the teacher. The teacher's personality and her teaching style were among the factors that determined how they participated in class. Two learners: HM and TRK chose not to participate as a way for them to exercise their agency. To illustrate, TRK who actively sought for opportunities to speak English and confessed to not feeling embarrassed to make mistakes, chose not to participate in oral activities in class because she felt that the teacher was always trying to find fault and correct her mistakes. Heron (2003) in her study concludes that teachers need to build supportive relationships with their learners as she points out learners are not only concerned about how the teacher helps them to learn the subject matter, but they are also sensitive towards how the teacher makes them feel as human beings. Other than that, these learners also made decisions about their participation based on their peers' responses in class. Being in a large class, some learners decided not to participate as they felt they could depend on others.

As active agents, findings from the study show there are differences in the kinds of initiative the six learners took outside and inside their classes. The learners seemed to make more effort to gain access to resources in English when they were out-of-class. Even though resources in English were abundant outside, the six learners had most access to those available at home because they did not go out much. For some learners: TRK, SKR, and HM, the availability of resources in English at home was rather limited and the fact that they rarely

went out had further restricted their encounters with these resources. Despite these limitations, they took the initiative to gain access to the resources elsewhere. TRK, who loved reading, borrowed books from the library and her friends. SKR and HM went to the homes of their friends who used English as their home language, and SKR bought some English-medium DVD movies using his own pocket money. They also made other efforts to engage with other resources in English. To illustrate, TRK, THN, and HM spoke in English with their good friends at school, NS downloaded her favourite English-medium songs from the internet and THN listened to songs in English and read the lyrics that her brother downloaded from the internet. It seems that these learners had some interests in engaging with resources in English and were willing to spend their time and money on these resources. I shall speculate about reasons for this later.

In-class, these learners seemed to take less initiative. All of them depended on the teacher to provide them with the resources in English. This was common, since in the classroom, provision of learning opportunities (including permission to participate) was seen as the responsibility of the teacher. The learners rarely volunteered during lessons. The main initiatives they took involved using the dictionary for meaning of words.

Little (1994) argues that an autonomous language learner is the one who is able to take the initiative as well as to respond to initiatives made by others in oral interaction. Similarly, Norton and Toohey (2001), who have reconceptualised the notion of Good Language Learner from the perspective of the Critical Theory, argue that a successful language learner should be judged in terms of successfully accessing various oral communication opportunities that they encounter in their life. As these arguments are made based on oral participation, it could be said that the six language learners in this study did not exhibit autonomy as they did not take the initiative to speak the language. Nevertheless, as I have discussed in my review of literature, participation is not only oral. In the context of the study, the six learners' initiative seems to centre on accessing the English materials for entertainment, and not to learn the

grammar or vocabulary. Viewing learning from the broader perspective espoused by Lave and Wenger (1991), which has been employed in this study, the fact that these learners took the initiative to gain access to the resources and engaged with them show that some kind of participation in English learning opportunities did take place. This participation might not lead to the learning of the intricacies of the grammar and the lexicon, but it is the kind of participation that would enable learners to learn to become members of the various communities, another emergent theme that I will now discuss.

8.1.2 ESL Learners and their Membership of their Various Communities

As I have argued in Chapter 3, this study adopts a social perspective as its framework for understanding learning which is viewed as a process of becoming a competent member of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This community of practice could be *“as broad as a society or culture, or as narrow as a particular language classroom”* (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001: 148). It could be a ‘real’ community or an ‘imagined’ one: *“groups of people not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination”* (Kanno and Norton, 2003: 241). Learners are seen as progressing from peripheral to full membership in various communities of practice. Due to this, then I argued, learning requires a broader and more varied kinds of engagement, as oral engagement only will not be sufficient for learners to gain membership in the communities that they aspire to become members of. Learners craft their identities as they negotiate their membership in a community of practice. Findings indicate that the six learners are members or aspired to become members of several communities. The first one is the community of academically successful learners. In this community, learners needed English to enable them to perform well in subjects that were taught in English i.e. Physics, Biology, Chemistry, General Mathematics, and Additional Mathematics. Next is the community of successful ESL learners. In the context of the present study, this refers to the abilities to read and write well in English with the intention to succeed in the SPM. The third one is to become members of the community of proficient speakers of English. In Malaysia, members of this

community are normally well educated and come from upper class family background. The fourth one is members of the community of the classroom. This is the classroom community where their in-class learning takes place. Lastly, the community of youth, this refers to both Malaysian and the international communities of youth.

Members of the community of academically successful learners

Based on their overall PMR results, these learners are considered academically successful. Findings from the interviews indicate that they are all aware of the importance of English to also excel in the SPM that they would take in the coming year. This is due to the fact that several core subjects that they took: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, General and Additional Mathematics were taught in English. So, they needed to have a certain level of mastery in the language to be able to learn the subjects and do well in the examination. To illustrate, NS who disclosed that she did not read much in English, spent a considerable time almost every night reading English books on the subjects that she learned in English at school. In this sense, the learners' investment in ESL learning is mainly to gain material resources as these learners are aware that doing well in the examination will ensure them a better future. They are aware that English is important for their future success in society. From this perspective, the findings in this study resonate with the findings in Lin's (2001) study in which ESL learners in Hong Kong realise the importance of English for their future success due the country's economic and social concerns. Similar to the Hong Kong learners, the six ESL Malaysian learners also felt that English had great value. These learners further believed that it was the acquisition of a wide range of vocabulary that would enable them to understand the different scientific texts and mathematical concepts that they encountered in the classroom during the teaching and learning process of these subjects and the texts that they read at home.

Members of the community of successful ESL learners

Findings indicate that informants view successful ESL learners in terms of what they felt themselves lacked as ESL learners. To illustrate, they talked about having a wide range of vocabulary and oral proficiency as the criteria of successful ESL learners because they viewed themselves as lacking in these two aspects. At the same time, they also talked about obtaining Grade A for English in the coming SPM as marking success as learners of the language. As I have explained before, in the examination, the foci were on two areas: reading and writing. Thus, there seemed to be a mismatch between their desire to be able to speak in the language and the desire to do well in the examination. The six learners seemed to opt for the latter, since this would create the pathway for them to achieve better social and economic status.

School has “its own particular brand of learning” (Schultz and Hull, 2002: 12), the kind of learning which, if mastered, will lead to success in one’s academic endeavour, which in turn can lead to social and material gains. In parallel with their aspiration to become members of the community of successful ESL learners, they coordinated their engagements towards this. In the case of the six learners, they focused on preparing for the examination. For example, these learners talked about doing exercises in the work books at home which followed the format of the examination questions. Even in the classroom, the teacher also seems to place success in the examination as the determining factor for one to be recognised as a successful second language learner. Her practice of familiarising the learners with the examination questions reflect her concern for them to do well (as detailed in Chapters 6 and 7). A survey by Normah (2009) on Malaysian ESL teachers’ writing assessment practice shows that teachers tend to train and prepare their students for the examination since they are instructed to by the school administrators as an attempt to ensure that their students get Grade A for English in the SPM. In such a situation, the learners do not have a real need to master oral skills. They could do fairly well in the examination by focusing on reading and writing skills. Even though School-based Oral English has been implemented (Omar & Sinnasamy, 2009), learners in this study indicated that they were told by the teacher that one of the ways for

them to do well was by memorising the text that they would use during the test. To illustrate, NS talked about how she asked her good friend to help her memorize the text that she chose for the oral test. Due to this situation it is not surprising that from the perspectives of the learners, English learning primarily entails memorisation of the vocabulary followed by mastery of the grammar as these are the aspects that would help them to do well in the examination.

Members of the community of proficient speakers of the target language

One learner, TRK, seems to be inspired to become a member of the community of proficient speakers of the language. Since she lacked the opportunity to have direct contact with this group of people, TRK idealised several characters that she saw in the television programmes that she watched such as the Singaporean host of a talk show and a Chinese actress in an American movie. She was especially drawn to the fact that they were not native speakers, but they were able to speak fluently in English. She talked about being inspired to be a proficient speaker and thus engaged herself in oral opportunities. Some of the resources within these oral opportunities were readily available, while there were a couple of resources that she created herself. There were also instances when she pretended to be an English girl and wrote prank letters to her neighbour. TRK, a multilingual adolescent, was proficient in three languages: Tamil, Bahasa Melayu, and English. The neighbour to whom she wrote was also well versed in these three languages, but the fact that she chose to use English in her letters to him seems to reflect her strong desire to become a member of this particular community. Kramsch, with her metaphor of the “third place”, discusses how multilingual adolescents use the language to pretend to be someone else. She postulates: *“Seduced by the foreign sounds and rhythms and meanings, and by the coolness of native speakers, many adolescent learners strive to enter new, exotic worlds where they can be, or at least pretend to be, someone else, where they too can become ‘cool’...”* (2006: 102). In TRK’s case, she chose to be an English girl due to the exposure that she had to the life and culture of the British and American people that she picked up through her readings and the English-medium television programmes that she watched. Rather than her own Indian culture or the Malay culture that she was

familiar with, pretending to be an English girl allowed her to be a part of the unknown and to show affiliation with the community of practice that she aspired to become a member of through her use of the target language.

It is interesting to note that all six learners are aware of the importance of English for their present and future needs. However, some learners such as AZR and NS did not place importance on oral skills while others felt the need to be able to speak in English. A reason for this could be the social norms and values that the learners experienced in their respective communities (Murphy and Ivinson, 2003). AZR and NS came from a social background where English was hardly spoken. Neither of them used the language with their immediate family members, relatives, or friends. The other learners: HM, TRK, THN, and SKR sometimes spoke in English either with their family members (like THN) or their relatives and friends. It could be said that AZR and NS had no real need to improve their speaking skills as they hardly ever used the language for oral communication either in daily life or in the English class. However, for the other four learners, they to a certain extent needed oral skills, as English was used in the social circles that they were members of.

Members of the classroom community

Two learners who had recently joined the class, AZR and NS, were concerned about adapting to their new environment. Unlike the others in class who had been together for the past three years, AZR and NS had only been there for a couple of weeks when the research was carried out. AZR had pointed out that one of the reasons he did not participate in the classroom activities was because he wanted to learn how things were done in the class. NS admitted that she did not participate in the group work because she did not know the other group members well, and thus she felt the best thing for her to do was to resort to non-participation. In this sense, it could be said that these two learners are more concerned about their identities as new members of the classroom community than their roles as learners in the classroom. This is in line with the three types of desire as suggested by West (as cited in Norton, 1997): the

desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety. AZR and NS were drawn to be accepted in their new classroom community (the desire for affiliation), and this seems to be one of their main agendas in the classroom.

In a large class, participation in oral activities is usually limited. This is even so for those who feel that they are inferior to others in terms of their language proficiency. To exemplify, AZR and NS commented on the fact that they chose not to participate in oral activities since there were better learners in the class who were proficient in the language. In this sense, these two learners were struggling to gain legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in the English language classroom community due to their inability to speak the language well. The presence of more proficient learners and their feeling of inadequacy led them to remain silent in the classroom. By contrast, NS reported about the oral activities that she participated at her tuition classes. The small number of students, coupled with the tuition teacher's efforts in making sure they spoke English had created the opportunities for NS to engage orally. In addition, the fact that NS felt that all of them were at the same proficiency level had enabled her to learn from the others. It seems that the shared identity as 'less proficient learners' has enabled her to experience legitimate peripheral participation.

Members of the Community of Youth

Findings from this study indicate that many of the learners' choices of out-of-class resources reflect their inclination to be participants in the life of young people in Malaysia doing activities such as watching English movies, listening to English songs, and playing pranks in English. All of them show great interest in western popular culture (see Appendix 6). The learners seem to be more inclined to engage with songs and movies that were from the United States of America. This is not surprising since in Malaysia, there are many American programmes aired on television evident in the details of the resources presented (see 5.2.1). Some learners talked about listening to English songs

that their friends downloaded from the internet. For example, SKR said he borrowed his friend's pen drive that contained English songs and downloaded them to his computer. In another occasion, SKR also talked about going to English movies with his group of friends. He even expressed the need to learn English to enable him to speak with some of his friends who used the language at home. This reflects his desire to become a member of the community of young Malaysians whose members enjoy western entertainment and some of them even speak the language. Another learner, NS, talked about her engagement with online magazines and social websites. NS talked about her experience using English on *Friendster* and reading *Manga* online, and how other young people in her social circle also engaged with these virtual resources in English. In both cases, the two learners appear to engage in activities using the target language as a way to show affiliation in the community of youth in Malaysia. A study by Wong et al. (2011) shows that social networks such as Facebook and MySpace are popular among Malaysian youth where they build relationships, communicate and share ideas.

The above discussion shows that a person inhabits multiple worlds and is involved in diverse communities. Wenger (1998) asserts that we can normally distinguish between the communities of which we are core members of and those of which we are only peripheral members. In the context of the study, the desire to be members of the communities of academically successful learners and successful ESL learners seem to be dominant among all six of them. This has led them to engage in vocabulary learning as they believe this would enable them to perform well in the examination that mainly require reading and writing skills. At the same time, they are also engaged with the English-medium resources to become members of other communities that are meaningful to them, namely their immediate classroom community at school and more broadly the community of Malaysian youth. There is also a learner who is aspired to become a peripheral member of proficient English speaker community. For the six learners in this study, their aspiration to become members of these respective communities seems to influence their choices of resources and manner of engagement in the various resources in English.

8.1.3 A Separation between Engagement to Learn and Other Forms of Engagement

Findings indicate that learners in this study tend to distinguish between learning and other kinds of engagement (see 7.1.2: The 3-step action). This was often highlighted when they talked about their engagement with out-of-class resources in English. For them, engagement that led to learning normally focused on vocabulary and pronunciation. They referred to actions such as looking up for words in the dictionary, copying the meaning of words, and repeating the pronunciation of words as learning. Interestingly, these are also the actions that they engaged in when they were learning the language in class. Their tendency to separate learning from other types of engagement might be due to the kind of participation that is dominant in the classroom. In class, these learners were most often engaged in the same actions. Thus, they might see these actions as the actions for learning as they (the actions) had been endorsed by the teacher through her own pedagogic style (as I have detailed in the previous chapter). As they tend to separate learning from other types of engagement, five of the learners often brought up the issue of time constraints as the reason for them not being able to learn from their engagement with the out-of-class resources. Though they spent a considerable amount of time engaging with resources in English as one of their leisure activities, these learners felt that they did not have time to learn the language. This is most probably due to their view that learning the language entails engaging in certain actions that lead to learning vocabulary.

English seems to have two separate roles in the learners' life: academic and social, and this, to a certain extent, has affected the learners' manner of participation. Academically, they need English to perform well in the examination, the good results would enable them to pursue their studies at higher institutions, and ultimately to achieve their life ambitions. These learners believed that the most effective way to learn the target language was through the accumulation of a wide range of vocabulary. Their seemingly cognitive

approach to learning could be interpreted as a reflection of their in-class learning experience which was heavily influenced by Malaysia's examination oriented education system. For these learners, learning is a separate practice from other forms of engagement and most often entails a sequence of actions (as described above). English has a wide range of social functions. Nevertheless, for the six learners, the language is the medium through which they get their entertainment. The learners spent their time at home watching television, surfing the internet, reading books, all this was done in the medium of English. Findings indicate that learners appear, however, to place less value on their engagement with the out-of-class resources. They felt that they were not actually learning the language as they did not learn any new words from their engagement. Their restricted view of learning had resulted in them not valuing their other gains from the engagement such as better general knowledge and awareness of current affairs, and technical knowledge. It appears that for these learners their engagement in the resources was merely part of their daily routine. It is something that they had been doing throughout their life and they felt had little significance in their learning of the target language.

8.1.4 Learners' Views of Selves as Second Language Learners

Regardless of their achievement in the public examination, all six learners regarded themselves as poor learners of the language. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, their sense of accomplishment in English is mostly related to the extent to which they could speak the language. Two learners who obtained Grade A in English, THN and TRK, felt that their English was not good. There was a tendency for both of them to compare their speaking abilities with those who were proficient speakers of the language such as their peers who used English as their home language and other Malaysian, Singaporean, and Chinese speakers of English who they saw in various television programmes. Similarly, other learners who obtained Grades B and C felt that their English, especially their speaking skills, was poor as well. These learners seem to indicate that this is the result of their not having a wide range of vocabulary. They did not appear to realise that other factors such as not having the

opportunities to use the language orally in daily life or their reluctance to engage in oral activities in daily life as possible reasons for their inability to converse well in English.

Learners also measured their success in terms of the grades that they obtained in the SPM and the marks that they got in the tests that they took. Learners who obtained Grades B and C in English, AZR, HM, and NS, referred to their friends in class who obtained Grade A as better learners. HM even took the advice given by TRK (who had obtained Grade A in English) on how to improve her English. However, TRK and THN, who both obtained Grade A, felt that their English was not good, based on their marks for the writing tests that they took in their tuition classes. Both of them revealed that in these writing tests they lost marks for faulty grammar. Due to this, the two learners felt their English was weak compared to those who had fared better in the tests.

In class, their inability to answer the teacher's questions appeared to be a contributing factor in feeling that their English was poor. As I have explained in Chapter 7 (7.1.1 Social Resources), the teacher tended to focus on vocabulary more than any other aspects of the language. She often asked for the meaning of words, and these learners could not provide her with the correct answers most of the time. As they were not encouraged to guess from the context, learners tended to perceive their inability to provide an exact meaning as in the dictionary as a failure for them as language learners.

All these learners seem to have a poor self-image as second language learners. Findings indicate that they constructed these images based on their experience using the language in different contexts, their performance in the examination and in-class learning activities. It seems that their judgement is based on their own assessment of their spoken and written skills. They do not seem to value their abilities to understand the resources in English that they engaged with out-of-class. This implies that the learners viewed the quality of their out-of-class engagement inferior to their in-class engagement in terms of learning.

8.1.5 The Value of English

Findings indicate that the learners' different family backgrounds and home environments placed different values on English and this, to a certain extent, influenced their overall attitudes to learning. Some parents were more involved in their children's learning compared with others. For example, THN had a very strict father who would monitor her learning. Her mother, who had a Masters degree in English, gave her private tutorials, and her brothers, who worked in the shipping industry and travelled overseas, constantly advised her on the importance of English. Consequently, THN appeared to be more concerned about improving her English. She always made sure that she did all the homework given by the English teacher and there were also occasions when she did more than the teacher asked her to do such as answering comprehension questions when the teacher only assigned them to read the reading text at home. SKR came from a different background. He did not receive support either in the form of materials (his parents did not buy reading materials in English for him) or advice like his other friends. He had never talked about his parents' involvement in his learning English. Once, SKR said he forgot about an English oral test that he was supposed to sit and did not prepare for it over the weekend. The other learners- AZR, HM, TRK and NS received some kind of support from their families. HM's mother, even though she could not speak English, was very supportive of her daughter's learning and seems to be interested with learning the language herself. HM also said she sometimes borrowed English story books from the library for her mother. Even though it is not a dominant factor, there seems to be a link between the support that learners received from the family and the effort that learners put in to improve their English.

8.2 Revisiting Some Principles of Understanding ESL Learner Participation in Language Learning Opportunities

In this study, I have taken a social view of learning and proposed for a broader understanding of learner participation in language learning opportunities. I have suggested that learner participation in language learning opportunities will be better understood by taking into account the sociocultural contexts in which the learners are in and their agency in terms of making decisions about their participation in language learning opportunities and their own learning of the language. By employing a participatory framework, where participation is viewed as generating learning, and learning is an embodied endeavour not just the accumulation of abstract knowledge, I have proposed four principles to guide a better understanding of learner participation. In light of my understanding gained from the data gathered, below I will revisit these principles as well as some important concepts i.e. 'Resources', 'Circumstance'.

8.2.1 Revisiting the Four Principles

Below I will revisit the four principles that I have suggested in Chapter 3.

i. Participation is not only oral

I shall begin by briefly reviewing the dominant view of learning in the SLA domain. SLA has been dominated by the cognitive orientation with the view that learning should primarily be in the form of oral participation, with linguistic gain as the end product. This has led many ESL policy makers, practitioners, and researchers alike to associate learner participation with oral participation and to believe that language learning entails the acquisition of certain aspects of the target language. This idea of learning has been so prevalent to the extent that oral participation has been promoted across the globe, even in certain contexts like Malaysia where learners are not used to (actively) taking part in oral activities such as group discussion.

The present study argues that non-oral engagement, such as silence is a form of participation. Findings in this study seem to support this. In class, findings reveal that the circumstances under which the teaching/learning process is enacted are likely to have a significant influence upon learner participation. The ESL learners in this study exercised their agency by making choices on how they should participate according to the specific circumstances they were in. For example, TRK who wished to improve her speaking skills and seemed to be actively seeking opportunities to engage in oral activities in and out of class had chosen to keep quiet in class over time. She showed her growing feeling of discomfort towards the teacher's personality by resorting to silence and nonparticipation. Nonetheless, this type of resistance might not be apparent in this particular classroom context since everyone was generally quiet and therefore her 'silence' would probably be left unnoticed and taken for granted as a common characteristic of an Asian learner.

There are other forms of participation that are considered less valuable by ESL practitioners, but are meaningful for the individual learners. The six ESL learners in this study would generally be labelled as 'passive learners' (Jones et al., 1993; Braddock, 1995; and Cortazzi & Jin, 1996 as cited in Chen, 2003), as they rarely took part in oral interaction. Outside, they had few opportunities to use the language orally. Nonetheless, these learners engaged with resources in English in other ways. For example, engagement such as watching TV programmes in English is routine. For many ESL learners who share similar sociocultural backgrounds with the participants in this study, oral engagement is but one of the several forms of participation with resources in English, and it is also often the least. These other forms of participation such as watching TV programmes in English and reading online comic in English are often unnoticed and taken for granted despite the fact that they are meaningful to the learners. Through these other forms of participation, learners are able to gain general knowledge, develop some moral values, and entertain themselves.

ii. Participation occurs in different places

In SLA, the focus is mostly on in-class participation, while out-of-class participation is typically investigated in terms of how it helps support in-class learning (Kemp, 2010; Tanaka and Ellis, 2003). However, insights from the present study show that the participants engaged with resources in English most often outside the classroom. As I have argued above, engagement with resources in English is part of their normal life. These learners encountered resources in English when they were at home and in the wider community outside the home. The extent of the available resources and their participation might vary depending on their sociocultural backgrounds. For instance learners who come from a background where English is spoken will have more engagement in oral opportunities compared with those who come from a background where people do not use the target language. Nevertheless, engagement with other English-medium resources still takes place in many of these settings.

iii. Participation plays a number of roles

In the present inquiry, findings reveal that learner participation plays a number of roles as the six learners engage with English-medium resources for many reasons. One undeniably important role of English is for academic gain. This is expected as the participants were in their schooling years and they needed English for academic achievement. Participation is a display of the learners actively acting on the sociocultural elements that are imposed on them in a particular context. The different forms of participation are manifestations of humans as active agents who are capable of making decisions and acting on norms and expectations in their surroundings. As shown in the findings, the six learners did not always conform to the norms. They decided what was best for them; this could mean behaving in a way that was not favoured by others (e.g. the teacher) such as keeping quiet.

Findings show that learners participated not only to learn English. They also participated to seek membership in particular communities. The six learners

were members of, or desired to be members of various communities, and they coordinated their manner of engagement with the resources in English in order to be accepted in these communities. Findings in this study show that the learners were members of more than one community at one time. To illustrate, during a group work in an English lesson, a learner was both a member of a classroom community, of the community of academically successful learners in general, and successful Malaysian ESL learners in particular. Members of these various communities have their own sets of rules and norms which govern their conduct. As an active agent, the learner acts upon these rules and norms, and makes decisions about which community that he desires to be affiliated with the most. It is a dynamic relationship in which, after having made the choice, the learner would coordinate his manner of engagement in relation to the particular community. A case in point, two learners in this study, AZR and NS, decided that at that particular time during the research period, their affiliation with the classroom community was more important than their affiliation with the communities of academically successful learners and successful Malaysian ESL learners. Thus, instead of participating in the group activities, they prioritised observation and learning about the norms of the group. In other words, participation can be “targeted” and “directed”, and learners can make conscious decisions about when, with whom and how to participate.

Other than this, participation also has personal roles for the learners. Findings indicate that there are occasions when learners seem to engage in the manner that did not reflect them acting on the expectations and norms of the communities they were in. Rather, it was more about them acting on their individual needs (such as when a learner decided to engage in reading other parts of a text, rather than reading along with her peer) - the kinds of participation that they feel benefit them personally and fulfil the individual nature of a human self.

iv. Participation is conditional on the resources, the circumstances, and the orientation of the people

In my earlier argument (see 3.3), I have argued for participation to be understood in relation to three aspects: the resources, the circumstances, and the orientation of people. Implicit in this idea is that these three elements are equally important in the enactment of a particular form of participation. However, insights gained from the present study have revealed otherwise. The norms and expectations that are prevalent in a particular sociocultural circumstance and how learners act on them (learner orientation) by exercising their agency are two important factors that determine their manner of participation. The kinds of resources available are not the primary factor that determines the forms of participation, as I had initially understood. This helps in my understanding of learners' oral participation (or the lack of it in the classroom). Findings in the present study show that in class, the learners encountered both material and social resources. The teacher posed questions (an example of a social resource) as a way to prompt them to speak. However, not all learners grasped the opportunity to participate in the oral activity orchestrated by the teacher. A range of factors (see 7.1.2) impinges upon their participation. In this sense, even though a resource requires oral participation, the circumstances and learner orientation play primary roles in the kind of participation that these learners chose.

Other than the three elements, findings from the study indicate that the six learners seem to align their manner of engagement with the various communities that they were members of or aspired to become members of. As discussed previously, Wenger (1998) suggests there are three modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment. The focus here is on the third mode of belonging- alignment- where learners coordinate their manner of participation with the norms of the communities. Findings from this study indicate that there are two broad communities: academic and non-academic. The academic communities include academically successful learners, successful ESL learners, and the classroom, while non-academic communities are proficient speakers of the target language and Malaysian youth.

In this study, it appears that the various manner of participation is a reflection of how learners make sense of and act on the norms of the communities that they wish to become members of. Most of them were drawn to be members of the academic communities. As I have discussed in detail earlier, the larger context i.e. Malaysia as a developing nation which puts precedence on the mastery of English as a means for enhancing its economic and social status, and one of the ways to achieve this is through formal education. At school level, learners' mastery of the language is tested in SPM that mainly focuses on reading and writing skills. In a smaller context - the English classroom in this study- instead of helping the learners to develop the required skills that would enable them to function successfully in the target language (especially in spoken English), the focus was on helping them to perform well in the examination. Thus in this particular classroom the teacher helped the learners with reading and writing (especially reading, as shown in data) by focusing on the learning of vocabulary. These are the norms of this classroom. The six learners made sense of these norms and acted on them through the manner of participation that they feel would enable them to learn the language successfully, i.e. by focusing on learning vocabulary which is believed to help them with reading and writing.

The five themes emerging from the findings imply the significance of identity and agency in shaping one's action. Holland and her colleagues (2001) claim that there is a link between identity and agency. A sense of agency would empower learners to imagine, take up and assume new identities and to carry out concrete actions in pursuit of their goals. It could be said that the learners in this study have a repertoire of identities. They seek membership in different communities, and these identities are valued and positioned differently by others in each particular community. Thus, the formation of a new identity depends on negotiation between potentially differing and opposing identities. For illustrative purposes, the following explanation focuses on one learner, TRK. TRK, who was very much interested to develop her speaking skills, was drawn to be a member of the community of proficient speakers of the target language.

During an English lesson, she was a member of the classroom community, where the teacher was a dominant figure. Being someone who wanted to improve her speaking skills, TRK sought opportunities to participate in oral activities that were made available by the teacher. At the same time, the teacher, whose main concern was to help her learners in learning English, constantly provided corrective feedback whenever they made mistakes. Thus, the teacher often corrected TRK when she mispronounced words while participating in oral activities (such as answering questions). A negotiation of identities took place here: between TRK's identity as a peripheral member of the community of proficient speakers of English and her identity as an ESL learner in the classroom community. Holland et.al (2001: 63) refers to this as "space of authoring". They suggest that an individual learner's agency emerges from this "space of authoring". Learners display their agency through their engagement with the material and social resources that are available in various communities. A case in point is TRK. TRK displayed her agency by resorting to non-participation and decided to be quiet as she felt uncomfortable about the teacher's continuous effort to correct her mistakes. This shows that in an ESL classroom, being quiet in class is not always due to one's low proficiency in the target language. Even a learner who is quite proficient in the language might not want to participate in oral activities if she chooses so, as a way of displaying her agency.

8.2.2 Revisiting 'Resources' and 'Circumstances'

In the following section, I will provide a more nuanced understanding of resources and circumstances which are made based on the findings of the study.

8.2.2.1 Revisiting 'Resources'

According to Vygotsky's social view of learning, learners learn through their engagements with artefacts, which are either physical or symbolic. In this theory

of learning, language, which is an example of a symbolic artefact, is the most significant resource with which a learner can learn. Physical artefacts are other varied forms of English-medium resources that learners encounter both in and out of class. As I have stated earlier (see 3.1.3), in the present inquiry these artefacts are the resources that learners encounter and which provide potential learning opportunities. The term 'resources' has often been used as an all-purpose cover term by SLA researchers who are either mainly concerned with cognitive processes of learning or who employ a sociocultural view of learning. Generally, resources are available in the environment and which learners are often expected to engage with to learn the language. A critical definition of in-class resources has been forwarded by Wright (2006) as "*what teachers and learners bring to classroom life, materially and cognitively*" (p.74) and "*Anything that creates a learning opportunity*" (p.78). The examples of in-class resources that he provides include the teaching materials that the teacher brings to class, the learners' life experiences, the social relationships and the emotional dimension that present in the classroom. This is in line with the kinds of resources found in the present study. Data show that the six learners engaged with English-medium resources of various types, some of which they encountered in the classroom, while many others were from their daily activities as young people in Malaysia. In out-of-class contexts, under the rubric 'learner autonomy', "resources" has been used as an umbrella term for all resources that learners engaged with to learn the language (Gao, 2009, Hyland, 2004, Inozu et al, 2010) such as English TV programmes, English newspapers and novels.

By employing the participatory framework, findings in this study indicate that resources, both in and out-of-class, could be interrogated and further understood in relation to the extent to which learners are capable of deciding on what to engage in and the manner of participation. This is an encompassing way of categorising the different kinds of resources that learners engaged with. Through a participatory lens, I have presented 3 kinds of resources (see 8.1.1): those available in learners' daily life, those 'created' by the learners, and those imposed by the teacher.

For resources that are available in their daily life, findings indicate that most of the time, learners decide on the kinds of resources that they would want to engage with and how they would participate. From the cognitive perspective, the kinds of engagement here would be considered the least significant since they rarely yield any specific linguistic attainment. Yet, from a social perspective as one adopted in this study, these engagements are meaningful for learners because the “*noncommodified forms of knowledge*” (Carter, 2005: 575) that they gain would enable them to function more successfully in their communities. To illustrate, NS was an avid internet user, as she claimed to be surfing the internet every day. It could be said that she was a member of the community of Malaysian youth, many of whom are active users of the internet. She talked about playing online chess and chatting with other players online using English. She did not specify the linguistic aspects of English that she learned from this engagement, but the fact that she often participated in such activity shows that it is meaningful for her.

For resources that are ‘created’ by the learners, there are primarily means for them to craft their identities. Similar to the first category (English-medium resources that are available in their daily life), in this category of resources, the learners decide on what they want to engage with and the forms of participation to employ. ‘Imposed’ resources such as questions that the teacher asked and the worksheets that learners worked on are mainly available in the classroom. They are created by the teacher for the overt purpose of learning the target language. Learners were expected to engage with the resources. However, being active agents, this does not always happen, as when learners resort to silence or other forms of participation (such as reading silently or taking down notes) that they feel more befitting in a particular time and context.

The 3 categories of resources are not discreet; they might be overlapping at times. To illustrate, in some situations, an ‘everyday’ resource might turn into an ‘imposed’ one- for example, THN’s father made a rule at home that his children

must read the English newspapers that he bought. It is also important to highlight that even though it is possible to categorise resources, learner participation cannot easily be sorted out according to the three categories; in other words, there is no direct relationship between participation and resources.

By understanding resources according to how and why they are used by learners, a more nuanced understanding is gained highlighting the fact that learners engage with English-medium resources for many reasons. This provides a useful insight to the fields of SLA and TESOL since in much of the literature (Freeman, 1999; Gao, 2008; Hyland, 2004; Inozu, et al, 2010; Marefat and Barbari, 2009; Pearson, 2003; Pickard, 1996), there is a tendency to generalise resources as primarily being used to learn the target language. While participants in this study did talk about learning certain aspects of the language from their engagement with the resources, they mentioned many other gains as well which indicate that resources in English are used as tools for them to live their daily lives as teenagers. Thus by considering categories of resources (see the table below) it has been possible to see which resources learners consider useful for their learning of the target language and which ones they consider as tools from them to participate in the immediate and larger communities. The categories of resources also underscore the fact that learners are agentive beings who are capable of making choices about their learning and other social issues in relation to their engagement with the target language.

| Category | Example |
|------------|---|
| “Everyday” | TV programmes, internet, songs, environment print, novels, neighbours speaking in English |
| “Created” | letters in English, short stories, opportunities to speak in English |
| “Imposed” | Questions posed by a teacher, worksheets, reading materials |

Table 8.1 Categories of English-medium resources

8.2.2.2 Revisiting ‘Circumstances’

In this study, circumstances refer to both general and more local instances. I shall illustrate my argument with in-class learning. It could be said that the classroom is an example of a general circumstance. It is constructed by the teacher and all learners in the classroom. The teacher plays a significant role in this general circumstance as she determines what happens here. Other than this general circumstance, there also exist other more local ones (see Figure 8.1 on next page). In the present study, local circumstances refer to the specific social, cultural, and contextual circumstances in which engagement with the resources in English takes place. These local circumstances could be seen when learners are instructed to work in pairs or small groups. In terms of learner participation, during an English lesson the teacher might instruct all learners to form small groups and work on a task. The teacher will expect learners to engage in certain ways, depending on the task that she has assigned. This is an example of a general circumstance. The learners will then form small groups- an example of local circumstances. How learners situate themselves in the small groups, their relationship with their peers within the groups, how they interpret the tasks given, their past learning experiences, and their aspirations are among the factors that influence their participation in these local circumstances. Due to these reasons, learner participation varies, and it is not surprising when learners do not engage in the manner that is expected by the teacher (as findings in this study show). By looking at the varying nature of circumstances that could take place in a classroom, the issue of learner participation can be better understood. This provides insights into why learners sometimes do not participate in the manner that is expected by the teacher, especially when they are required to work in different class activities.

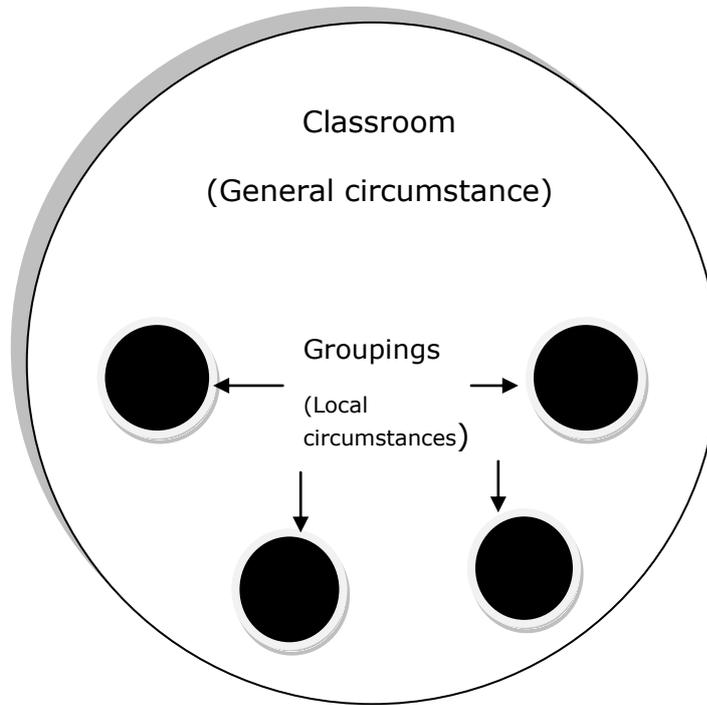


Figure 8.1 General and Local Circumstances

Drawing from the concept of “figured worlds” (Holland et.al, 2001), an individual is seen as authoring a new identity as she enters a particular community of practice. With regards to my argument on general and more local circumstances, it could be said that these local circumstances could be thought of as figured worlds,

“socially and culturally constructed realm[s] of interpretation in which a particular set of characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts and particular outcomes are valued over others (Holland et al, ibid: 52).

Each figured world is made up of the actors, their practices, and the resources. In a particular classroom community (general circumstance), there exist a number of figured worlds (Tan and Barton, 2008), such as a figured world of pair work, a figured world of group work, and a figured world of whole class discussion. In each of the figured worlds, learners work to position themselves in relation to other members, while at the same time they are also being figured by others. I believe the concept of figured world provides a better lens through which to understand learner participation than community of practice. Figured

world sees learners as having a repertoire of identities-in practice, while community of practice tends to see learners as having only one identity at any particular point of time. By understanding learner participation through the concept of “figured world”, we can have a better sense of why learners participate differently in different learning activities. To illustrate, learners in the current study talked about how they participated differently during group discussion and whole class discussion. Some of them reported participating more actively when they were asked to discuss in small groups, while the same learners talked about being quiet when they were asked to participate in whole class discussion. How learners position themselves in a particular figured world has significance impact on their participation. Learners enter a particular figured world with a repertoire of identities and author a new identity, from which their agency emerges, and the way they choose to engage with the available resources is the manifestation of this agency. For example, AZR talked about how much he enjoyed working with a peer during pair work, and also how he did not participate much during whole class activity. This opposing manner of participation could be better understood from the concept of “figured world”. From the findings, it could be said that AZR assumed the identities of a newcomer to the classroom community, an academically successful student, a mediocre ESL learner, and a member of the community of youth. During pair work, AZR worked with a peer with whom he was familiar as they sat next to each other. Here, his identities as a mediocre ESL learner and a member of the youth community were prevalent. As a mediocre ESL learner, AZR asked his peer for help when he did not understand some words, and as members of the community of youth, they even shared jokes every now and then. From this interplay of identities, AZR authored a new identity: the identity of an active ESL learner, where he participated actively during the pair work (in terms of oral and other forms of participation). It could be said, in the figured world of pair work, AZR was an active learner. However, in the figured world of whole class participation, AZR authored an identity of a ‘passive’ learner (in terms of oral participation) since his identity as a newcomer in the classroom community was dominant.

8.3 Revisiting my understanding of the relationship between in and out-of- class learning

In this section, based on the insights gained from the present inquiry, I will review my stand on in-class and out-of-class learning that has been presented in Chapter 3 (see 3.2). Drawing on the idea forwarded by Edward and Miller (2007), I have argued that there is no dichotomy between in and out-of-class participation, and that all forms of participation can take place at any one setting, be it in-class or out-of-class. Findings in this study have revealed otherwise. Data collected show that in-class participation is very much controlled by the teacher. Predominant activity comprises learners being instructed to look for meaning of words in the dictionary. There are other forms of participation as well, and all of them are directed towards preparing the learners for the SPM. This is in contrast with their out-of-class participation, where learners most of the time decide on their manner of engagement. Their engagement with the outside resources is part of their daily activities, and requires various different forms of participation.

I have also argued that learning needs to be viewed as an “embodied endeavour, where there is no separation between the body and mind”. However, findings have revealed that learners seem to distinguish between what they learned in class and what they gained outside, and that they tended to subscribe unconsciously to a cognitive view of learning. As one of the emergent themes in this study, I have discussed how learners tended to separate their engagement to learn English from other forms of engagement in the English-medium resources, and more importantly these learners seem not to value what they have learned from their participation with outside resources. This echoes the findings of the study conducted by Roth and Roychoudhury (1994), where the learners claim that what they have learned in their personal life does not count as learning.

Insights from CoP theory and critical learning theory that see learners as having agency, and therefore as capable of making decisions on what benefits them best, have helped me to understand learners' different forms of participation in particular communities. However, they do not provide an understanding of why learners place different values on what they gain in class and out-of class. To do this, I shall turn to the concept of learning as boundary crossing (Akkerman and Eijck, 2011).

To begin with, implicit in the insights drawn from CoP is that learners are progressing towards becoming members of what appears to be a stable kind of community. Akkerman and Eijck (2011) describe this kind of learning as a 'vertical process within a single system' (p. 3). In this view of learning (Akkerman and Van Eijck, *ibid.*), there is a tendency of focusing on one community only and ignoring the others, hence they argue that it overlooks the fact that learners are members of 'multiple system' (p. 3) or communities and this influences their view of learning, their forms of participation, and their identities. For example, when CoP theory is employed to understand ESL learner participation, as in this study, the focus is on how learners participate within one community only (i.e. the classroom). It lacks an account of their participation in other communities. This I feel leads to a fragmented view of learners, their forms of participation, and their identities.

Insights from this study that look at learner participation in two contexts, inside and outside the classroom, indicate that learners belong to multiple communities (8.1.2), and that their forms of participation cross the boundaries of the various multiple communities. Akkerman and Eijck proceed to suggest a view of learning as a 'horizontal process between multiple social systems' (2011: 10), where learning is viewed as boundary crossing. In relation to the concept of boundary crossing, they (*ibid.*: 10) argue that when boundaries are approached at system level (between the school where learners learn and everyday life where they have their personal life), there will be boundaries at individual level for the learners as well. In the context of the present study, the learners' forms of participation in class are very much different from their

participation outside. In school, learning is defined by certain types of participation that will lead to the learning of certain aspects of the target language (in this study the learning of vocabulary). There is no clear attempt by the teacher to acknowledge other types of participation and potential gains from the learners' engagement with outside resources. Hence, at the individual level of the learners there is a tendency for them to hold a fragmented view of learning, where learning in-class (with its forms of participation and potential gains) is different from learning out-of-class (with its own forms of participation and potential gains). Due to this, learners tend to place more values on the former than the latter. For this, Akkerman and Eijck suggest that different forms of practices (and learning) that are marked by the locations (such as in-class and out-of-class), need to be redefined since *“learning space no longer with firm boundaries and identity, but a ground within which the multidimensionality of students' identities come into play”* (2011: 10). I shall reflect on this in the following chapter.

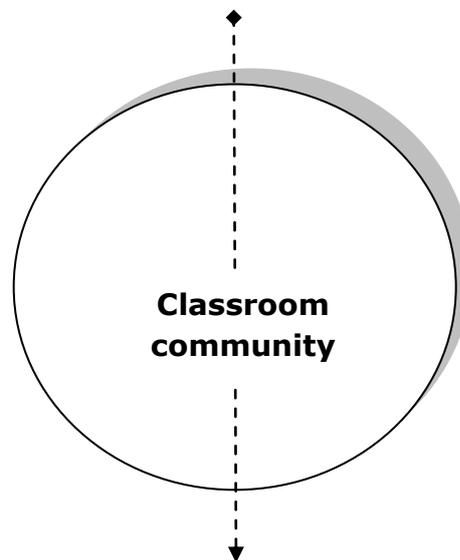


Figure 8.2 “Learning as a vertical process in a single system” (Akkerman and Eijck, 2011)

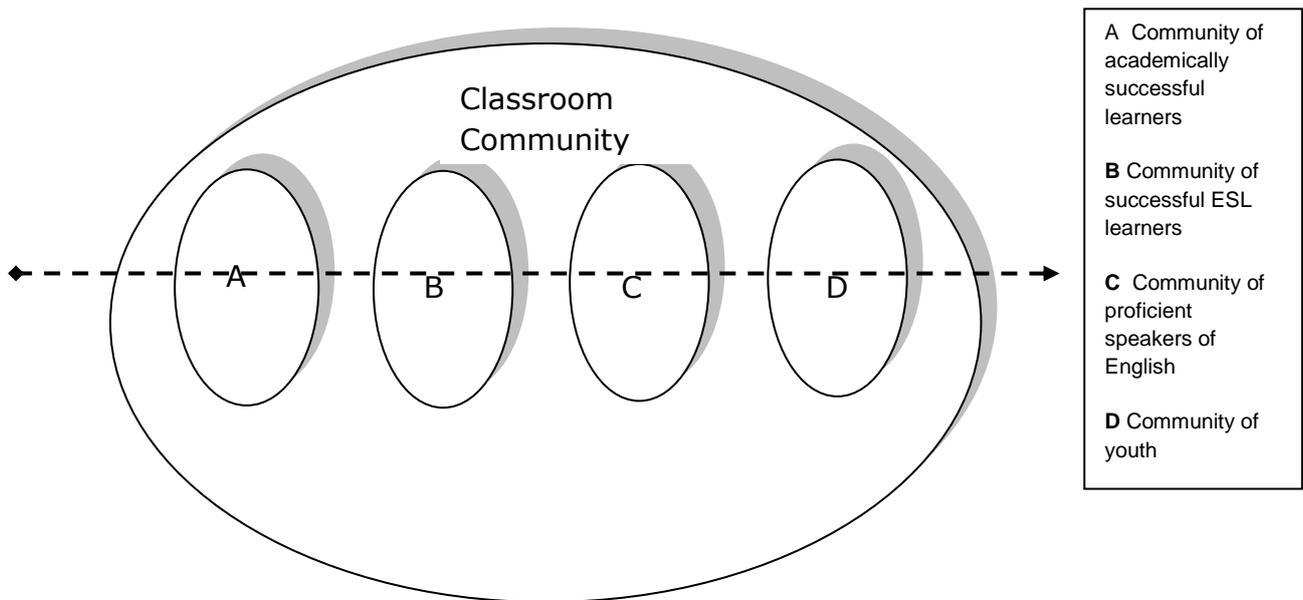


Figure 8.3 "Learning as a horizontal process between multiple social systems" (Akkerman and Eijck, 2011)

8.4 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the five emergent themes of the study, which are learners as active agents; their membership of various communities; a separation between engagement to learn and other forms of engagement; their views of selves as second language learners; and the value of English. I have also reviewed the four principles of learner participation. Basically, I argue that silence is also a form of participation and that other forms of participation that are often afforded less value in SLA are significant to individual learners. I have presented an argument for a more nuanced conceptualisation of 'resources' and 'circumstances', where they could be better understood through a participatory lens. I have also introduced the concept of "figured worlds" (Holland et.al, 2001) to understand learners' various forms of participation in different classroom activities. I have also revisited the relationship between in and out-of-class learning. Here, I have argued that CoP theory is insufficient in providing an understanding of why learners place different values between what they gain in and out of class. I have suggested that the concept of "learning as boundary crossing" (Akkerman and Eijck, 2011) would provide a better

explanation of the issue. All these are made based on the findings generated in the study. In the next chapter (Chapter 9) I will present the theoretical and pedagogical contributions, comments on some methodological issues, and the impact of the research. I end the chapter (and this thesis) with a personal reflection.

Chapter 9 Contributions and Recommendations

9.0 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis has been to critically understand the issue of ESL learner participation that has often been taken for granted. My intention (as I have presented in Chapter 1) is to interrogate some general assumptions about learner participation in second language learning. These assumptions mainly originate from a cognitive view of learning, in which learner participation is seen as primarily oral. The outcome of the participation should be the acquisition of linguistic knowledge, and participation takes place mostly in the classroom. I have argued this is a narrow view of learner participation, and proposed a broader understanding of learner participation from a social perspective (as discussed in Chapter 3). In conducting this study, I have employed some insights drawn from three learning theories: Situated Learning Theory, Communities of Practice (CoP) and critical learning theory. A broader definition of learning has been adopted from CoP, where it is conceptualised as participation in a community. The notion of agency has been adopted from critical learning theory to recognise learners as active beings who are capable of making decisions and acting on the norms and expectations in a particular community. By employing this broader understanding of learning, I have used a participatory framework to understand the issue. I have investigated learners' forms of participation in language learning opportunities in two contexts: in-class and out-of-class. From my analysis of the data generated, I have discovered various features of the learners' in-class and out-of-class participation. Some are similar to those in the existing literature, but some new insights into ESL learner participation have also been generated.

In this chapter, I will discuss the theoretical contributions based on the relevant findings from the research questions that are used to guide the study. I will also discuss the pedagogical implications of these findings. Next, I will reflect on the methodology used to investigate learner participation, and the impact it had on learners, and also make some recommendations for future research. This is

followed by a discussion of some implications and recommendations for English language learning and teaching practices specifically in Malaysia and other similar contexts. I will end this chapter with a reflective account of my experience conducting this study.

9.1 Contributions of the Study

The starting point of this inquiry was my concern with ESL learners' lack of oral participation in the classroom. I began my exploration of this issue by thinking that since learners are reluctant to participate orally, they might participate in other ways. In addition if they do not participate in class, I was interested to find out whether they would participate out of class. Since my main concern is with classroom practices and learning, I have stated the following as the purpose of this study:

“The overall goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of what learners do when they encounter English-medium resources and their reasoning for participating in the language learning opportunities in their preferred ways. This insight could better inform ESL teachers about the choices and decisions that learners make about their learning. It could also provide a clearer picture of what learners do outside the classroom in relation to learning English.”

In other words, I originally speculated that this study would make contributions to thinking about ESL pedagogy. As I delved further into the issue I found that the data have yielded some important findings on learner participation. However, I found that insights from CoP are only able to provide a partial view of the issue. In order to make better sense of learner participation, I have resorted to other frameworks such as “figured worlds” (Holland et al, 1998); learning as a “horizontal process between multiple social systems”; and “boundary crossing” (Akkerman and Eijck, 2011). By employing insights from these frameworks, I have been able to gain a more nuanced understanding of some concepts that are often taken for granted in SLA (discussion on this is presented in 8.3, 8.4, and 8.5). Due to this, I feel that the main contribution of this study is theoretical, not strictly pedagogical as I had initially anticipated. There are, however, pedagogical implications which I discuss in 9.1.2.

9.1.1 Theoretical Contributions

In my attempt to gain a deeper understanding of learner participation in language learning opportunities, I have employed some insights from CoP and Situated Learning theories- learning as a process of gaining membership in a particular community and that learners move from peripheral to core membership. I believed this would be an appropriate framework to understand ESL learner engagement with the resources for two reasons. First, since my focus is on the forms of practice (what learners do), they would provide me with the lens through which I would be able to analyse other forms of participation (not only oral). Secondly, I see the ESL learners as members of a community of practice, where in the classroom community there are new-timers and old-timers, and that they share common practices in their participation in this community. However, as I analysed my data, I found that insights from CoP were limited in several ways. Before I explain in more detail, I would like to echo Edwards (2005) who says that by listing the limitations, I am not criticising the work. Instead this suggests that there are many possible interpretations of the concept of CoP. Other than that, I also do not intend to make a full critique of the work, instead I will simply focus on my use of some insights from CoP to make sense of data generated in this study.

First, CoP theory allows us to focus only on one layer of community (e.g. the classroom community) at one temporal dimension. Yet, findings indicate that there are several other communities that exist in the classroom community at any one time. Findings show that within the same classroom community, learner participation varies when they work with different kinds of grouping (such as when working in pairs and in small groups) albeit encountering similar kinds of resources. The concept of figured worlds (Holland et al, 2001) has provided the framework for me to gain a better understanding of the issue (see 8.3.2). By employing the concept of figured worlds, a more nuanced understanding of a classroom community is made. The classroom which has often been viewed as one community in both the TESOL and SLA literature, is

in actuality made up of other smaller communities (figured worlds), and that learners' forms of participation may vary as they engage with the various resources available in these figured worlds.

Secondly, CoP argues for a group dynamic, less recognition is given to the fact that individual learners are also dynamic and agentic. Akkerman and Eijck (2011: 4) have asked the following question:

'How can people be conceptualised as learning participants of both one system and another, and simultaneously as autonomous individual beings, part of neither one system nor another?'

I think this is an important question in my attempt to understand learner participation for two reasons. To begin with, it provides an explanation of why learners at times seem to participate in a manner that reflects them as autonomous individuals (7.1.2.1), not necessarily as members of a community. To illustrate, when participants in this study were asked to talk about their forms of participation, their responses reflected the notion that they were acting as members of the classroom community who shared common practices (such as when they talked about answering the teacher's questions in chorus). Yet, there were also indications of them acting as autonomous individuals such as when a learner (NS) talked about not participating in reading together with her peers; instead she chose to read other parts of the text in order to answer the comprehension questions. As a framework, CoP helps me to understand learner participation as a group dynamic. However, it does not provide an account of their participation as individuals. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) suggest dialogical views on identity, in which a framework is provided that acknowledges a multiple, discontinuous and social nature of identity (a postmodern view), while at the same time assuming identity as unitary, continuous and individual (a modern view). By combining the modern and postmodern views of identity, a better understanding of this issue is achieved, where learners act as both members in a particular community and at the same time they are also autonomous individuals. Next, findings show that some forms of participation are maintained across sites (in and out-of class). For example,

learners were engaged in the 3-step action (7.1.2) when they encountered English-medium resources in both settings (inside and outside class). By employing a dialogical view of identity, a more fully developed concept of learning as boundary crossing can be formed. In relation to learner participation, it provides an explanation for both the discontinuity as well as the maintaining of some forms of participation across sites (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011).

Third, CoP theory tends to focus on a singular “identity-in-practice (Tan and Barton, 2008). Tan and Barton (ibid: 50) argue for the plurality of identities-in-practice (IdPs), rather than a singular “identity-in-practice (IdP) as proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991). In IdPs, learners are seen to have a repertoire of identities at any point of time, not only one identity. In the context of the present study, it could be said that a learner enters a particular community with more than one identity. When he or she engages with a resource, these identities (such as identity as an ESL learner, identity as a new member of the classroom community, and identity as a member of young Malaysians) all come into play. Research in the field of TESOL that investigates identity and agency (McKay and Wong, 1996, Morita, 2004) tends to view learners as having only one identity as they engage in a particular community of practice. In their studies on the intersection of agency and identity (McKay and Wong, ibid.), the focal ESL students were seen to assume only one identity (e.g. “a nerd”, or “a model student”) as they participated in learning activities. To illustrate, McKay and Wong (ibid.) argue that “Michael” (one of their informants) who was active in sports was able to contradict the “nerd” identity that was often associated with American Chinese learners. In terms of learning English, he chose to participate in resources that would enable him to improve his aural/oral skills. I see this as an incomplete view of learners’ identities. I believe that as learners participate in a learning opportunity, they do not adopt one identity and abandon others. Instead, at any given space and time, learners operate through a range of identities. They may even develop a new repertoire of identities-in-practice as they participate in a community of practice. To illustrate, findings indicate that TRK desired to be a member of the community of proficient speakers of English. She also wanted to be a member of the community of successful ESL learners. Thus, TRK entered the classroom with the identity of a member of the

community of proficient speakers of English and also the identity of a member of the community of successful ESL learners. In the classroom community, she often participated in oral activities by volunteering to answer the teacher's questions as she believed this could help her improve her speaking skills and better learn the language. Thus, in the community of the classroom, TRK's identity was of an active learner. She functioned in the classroom via these repertoires of identities. Nevertheless, as she continued participating in the in-class oral activities, she gradually developed a feeling of unease towards her teacher's constant correction of her speaking errors. To show her resentment, she opted not to answer the teacher's questions and become more playful during group work. It could be said that TRK had developed a new repertoire of identities-in-practice. She assumed the identity of a 'passive' learner as she encountered oral activities in the classroom, as well as the identity of a playful student when she chose to joke about the meaning of a word in English and also joked about the teacher's insistence that they used English during group work.

Other than that, I feel that viewing learners as peripheral members of a particular community implies their inadequacy in terms of knowledge and other related skills. This positions learners as less able than others in the community. This, to a certain extent, is similar to labelling learners as deficient users (Firth & Wagner, 1997, Block, 2003) of the target language as often happens in cognitive SLA. This also implies that all learners desire to become core members of certain communities. In the present study, findings reveal that learners engaged with the out-of-class resources as part of their daily activities. In this sense, they were not always concerned about becoming core members. It could be said that participation in English resources was just one of the activities to fill up their free time.

Based on the above arguments, I believe that the view of learning as boundary crossing seems to better describe the kinds of participation and learning that have been concluded from the findings generated in the study. Instead of looking at learning as participation in a particular community as I did initially,

learning as boundary crossing better captures the dynamic of learner participation, of learners as whole person (rather than fragmented identities) and, and of learners as agentive beings.

Taking into consideration the findings of the study, in the next section, I will discuss some implications of the study for ESL teaching and learning practices in Malaysia. Some recommendations will also be made.

9.1.2 Pedagogical Contributions

Investigating learner participation in both in-class and out-of-class contexts through their own accounts, has provided some new insights into the process of learning a second language. Below are some implications and recommendations for ESL teaching and learning in Malaysia, and other similar contexts.

The findings from this study have shown that the teacher seemed to focus on preparing the learners for the coming national examination. While an examination is inevitable in a formal system, teachers need to break away from thinking that their sole responsibility is to prepare learners for the examination (Gieve and Miller, 2006). They need to perceive teaching as helping learners to learn: to help them expand and enhance their existing knowledge, understanding and skills. Related to the teacher's focus on the examination, is the tendency to place primacy on teaching point (Allwright, 2005), or teaching objective as the unit for lesson planning and evaluation. The findings reveal that the teacher sometimes had to rush the lesson so that she could cover the teaching points that she had earlier set. Instead of using teaching point, Allwright (*ibid*) suggests the use of learning opportunity as a unit of analysis. In advancing this idea, he (*ibid.*) argues that he is not suggesting that planning should be abandoned, but he is wary of the kind of planning that involves specific learning outcomes at the expense of the rich learning opportunities that might emerge from a lesson. This might sound too idealistic for many ESL

teachers in Malaysia as the reality of the situation is that these teachers are largely bounded by a nationally prescribed curriculum. Therefore, instead of abandoning planning according to teaching points, the teacher can try to be more sensitive towards learners' contributions in a lesson. Goodwin (2007, as cited in Waring, 2009) talks about "occasioned" knowledge exploration where children seem to learn best when their curiosity is being answered in situ. To illustrate, a learner might have given a wrong answer to the teacher's question. Instead of just telling her that it is wrong, what the teacher can do is to use the response as a learning opportunity, by encouraging contributions from others, and expanding on these contributions. Hawkins (2007) describes a successful ESL class as the one that the teacher will first "*bend[ed] towards the students*" to grasp their understanding before getting the students to "*converge[d] towards her own expert understanding*" (as cited in Waring, 2009:816).

Teachers should realise that they, themselves, constitute learning resources. Findings from this study reveal that the learners lacked encounter with oral resources. For these learners, the classroom is the main avenue where they had the opportunity to have contact with a proficient speaker of English, i.e. the teacher. In this context, the teacher is not only transmitting knowledge, she is also a model of language use. Therefore, the teacher needs to create an environment where the learners would feel comfortable enough to participate in oral activities as they lacked this type of opportunity in their everyday lives. Increasing wait time could be one of the ways as findings from this study showed that one of the factors why learners resorted to silence was they did not have enough time to think of an answer to the teacher's question and then construct it in the target language. Teachers need to be more sensitive towards the factors that might impinge on learner participation in classroom activities, especially those that involve speaking skills. Although some teachers are well aware of the above mentioned factor and this finding is not something new in the Malaysian context, there is a need for them to address this matter and even try to work together with learners to deal and hopefully overcome this problem.

Findings from this study also show that learners engaged in various kinds of English-medium resources outside the classroom context. These engagements mattered to them because they often chose the resources that matched and realised their personal interests. Teachers should take the initiative to acknowledge these various out-of-class engagements in the classroom. Instead of allocating time on it, teachers can include these during class activities such as a whole-class discussion. Teachers can encourage learners to talk about the knowledge that they gained from their engagement with the English resources outside school and share it with the whole class. This hopefully will help improve learners' views of themselves, as findings from the study indicate that the primary focus on vocabulary and grammar has made the learners feel that other kinds of gains from their engagement with English as less valuable.

One of the emergent themes in this study is that learners are members of or desire to become members of various communities and that they “coordinate their participation according to these communities”. It is important that teachers take this into consideration when dealing with issues about learner participation. Teachers need to avoid making generalisations and judging their learners without trying to understand the issues from learners' stand point. Talking to them could be a good way to cope with this overriding problem.

The findings from this study unveil learners' frequent use of their mother tongues i.e. Malay language and Tamil language during pair and group discussion activities despite the teacher's insistence on their only using English. This is the form of participation that is preferred by the learners themselves. Even though there seems to be a disjuncture between the learners' learning strategy and the strategy preferred by the teacher, it needs to be highlighted that this is the option that learners feel will help them best in learning the language. Therefore it would be better if teachers were more tolerant of the use of mother tongues and adopted a more nuanced approach to “English only” in the classroom.

9.2 Methodological Issues and Future Research

The present study employs an interpretive approach and seeks to understand ESL learner participation with learning resources. To date, in Malaysia, there is a tendency for quantitative studies to be favoured over a qualitative approach. This is quite common for a developing country, as explained by Shaffer (1986):

“In much of the developing world, educational research is largely empirical and quantitative, characterized by the development of standardized tests and questionnaires, the production of data from large samples of schools and individuals, and the analysis of these data by a variety of statistical methods (cited in Vulliamy, et.al, 1990:16)”.

With an interpretive mode of inquiry, this study can be seen as an attempt to broaden the scope of educational research in Malaysia where positivist enquiry has been dominating the research scene. An interpretive inquiry such as the present study is able to provide a deeper understanding of the issue of ESL learner participation in language learning opportunities. By understanding the issue from learners' everyday realities, the extent to which educational policies or innovations in English language teaching and learning are successful or otherwise could be better grasped.

This interpretive study focuses on six ESL learners with different sociocultural backgrounds and different levels of achievement in English. To my knowledge, to date there are three interpretive studies conducted in Malaysia that focus on the learners (Lee, 2003, Rajadurai, 2010, Raziana, 2003). The studies carried out by Lee (ibid.) and Rajadurai (ibid.) look at ESL learners at tertiary level while Raziana (ibid.) focuses on ESL learners at three secondary level boarding schools. All these learners were proficient speakers of the target language and used it in their daily life. The six learners in this study were academically successful in other subjects, but were not proficient speakers of English and they hardly used it in their social life. Thus, the present study appears to be the first to focus on this type of learner. Findings from this study show that these

learners, given the chance to articulate their engagement with the learning resources, are able to describe and provide 'stories' behind their various types of engagement. Future research with different target groups is worth considering as this will help enlighten stakeholders with different insights into learners' communities of in-class and out-of-class learning.

In the present study, digital cameras are used as one of its data collection techniques. While this is quite common for studies done in other fields, such as literacy studies (Mui and Anderson, 2008, Yamada-Rice, 2010), this is quite a new data collection strategy in the TESOL domain itself. Studies that have looked into ESL learners' out-of-class learning normally use questionnaires and learners' diaries to find out about the resources that they engaged with and their out-of class learning activities.

As this study concerns learner participation, it might also be fruitful to investigate the issue of participation during other lessons where Bahasa Melayu is used. In this way, insights about whether learner participation goes beyond issues that are normally associated with second language classroom, such as the issue of language proficiency, could be gained.

One of the major themes that emerge from this study is learners' affiliations with various communities, and how these impinge on their participation in language learning opportunities. Further studies can be carried out to explore how their membership of different communities affects their construction of identities and their participation in various language learning opportunities. This raises three questions: How do learners construct their identities in relation to their communities? How do social cultural factors affect the construction of these identities? How does it affect their participation in language learning opportunities?

9.3 The Impact of the Research on the Participants

While I was trying to understand the learners' various ways of participation in the learning opportunities in their sociocultural contexts by asking them to take photos of the English-medium resources that they encountered outside the class and later talk about their engagements with these resources during the interviews, this research exercise appears to have raised these learners' awareness of out-of-class learning. At the initial stage of the study, some learners seemed to have negative views and were not aware of the potential of learning from their engagement with out-of-class resources. To illustrate, when being asked whether she could learn from the out-of-class resources, TRK's (INT 2/OUT) answer was, "*No...because I don't have the time. I learn English in class.*" On the same question, AZR's answer was "*...how can I learn something when I don't understand it*" (INT 1/OUT). However, in subsequent interviews, these learners' perceptions of their out-of-class learning have somehow changed. Commenting on the task of taking pictures and his engagement with various resources, AZR said, "*and now you gave me the camera...I'm more aware of the English around me...when I saw something in English, I read it and then I snapped the picture*" (INT 2/OUT). TRK, during the final interview on her out-of-class learning commented that, "*...many people use English outside. Like last two weeks, I went to the shopping complex with my parents, I hear a group of boys speaking English. English is outside, everywhere...I must get to know it...I think English outside can help me*" (INT 4/OUT). Other learners also talked positively about their out-of-class learning. SKR said he was beginning to realize that he could learn from the available out-of-class resources, while THN talked about the possibilities of learning English from her surroundings. AZR and SKR who were both avid users of the internet admitted that they were not aware of online dictionaries. During the interviews, we talked about this, and in the next interviews, both learners provided pictures of the online dictionaries that they used and talked about their engagement. Since then, they have started to use an online dictionary.

Some learners used the interview sessions as opportunities for them to practise the language. Three learners: HM, TRK, and THN chose to use English

throughout the interviews as they told me they wanted to practise their English. THN once asked me about the different pronunciation of the word 'flour'. We ended up talking about the phonetic symbols in the dictionary and the difference between American and British English. During an interview with NS, she asked me about the syntactic structure of a print on a carrier bag.

9.4 Personal Reflection

As a novice qualitative researcher, the whole process of conducting this project was a learning experience that affected me both as an academic and a person. In this section, I will reflect on my experience conducting the study, and how through learning from this experience I might approach this project differently were I to repeat it.

First and foremost was my experience of conducting interviews. As a novice qualitative researcher, I found interviewing the research participants challenging. This was mainly due to my lack of interviewing skills. Though I had interviewed people before, for student selection and classroom assessment, it was nothing compared to conducting interviews for data collection. As I was aware of my weakness, I prepared myself by conducting a pilot study and reading books on interviews before I embarked on my field work. Through my readings, I was theoretically prepared for it. However, when I faced the real task, I was haunted by fears and worries. I knew that the success or failure of my data collection depended on my ability to ask good questions: questions that would bring to light important insights to my study.

During the first interview session, I found myself talking too much during the interviews. I was so worried about not getting enough data that I did not give the learners sufficient time to think before answering my questions. I was too occupied with getting them to talk, that when they did talk, I missed some important ideas that I could have interrogated further. I also sometimes made

comments that were laden with my own belief about learning. As someone who shared a similar background with the learners, I had the advantage of having 'insider' knowledge. However, during the interviews, this caused repercussions. On several occasions I made assumptions based on this knowledge. The fact that I transcribed the interview data immediately after the session helped me become aware of the aforementioned problems in my interviews. As a result, in the subsequent interview sessions, I tried not to repeat similar mistakes. This did not mean that my interviewing skills improved overnight, but the fact that I became more aware of my own weaknesses helped me to be more sensitive to what the learners had to say.

Another issue was the use of learner diaries as my data collection technique. I decided to use this technique as it generated good data when I piloted my study. The participant was able to express her ideas well. She diligently wrote her diary entries, and each entry was about a page long, detailing her engagement with the out-of-class learning resources. Unfortunately, I did not get the same kind of data from my research participants. They hardly wrote (even though they were told they could write in their first language i.e. Tamil or Bahasa Melayu), and when they did most of their entries were statements about the resources, there was nothing that described their manner of engagement. I tried to encourage them to write more, but these learners told me they did not have the time to write. When I reflected on this, two things came to my mind. First, I was aware that my pilot study was done during the school break; thus the participant might have more time to write the diary entries. Secondly, writing was not for everyone. From personal communication, I knew that the participant in my pilot study loved to write and I assumed that it was a similar case with the six learners. In my future research undertaking, I will be more wary with the use of learner diary as a data collection tool. I would at least ask the participants' view about writing the entries. I would only use it if the participants were ready for it.

I valued the experiences that I gained from carrying out this study. Through my weaknesses as a novice researcher, I was able to learn more. Instead of

looking at it as a shortcoming, I take it as a blessing as I believe by learning from this experience I will become a better researcher in the future.

Appendices

Appendix 1

My name is Noraini Binti Zulkepli. I am a PhD student at the Graduate School of education, Exeter University, UK. The title of my research is 'An Investigation into English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners' Engagement In Language Learning Opportunities: A Malaysian Context'. I would be grateful if you could answer the questions below.

Mykad No: _____

1. Age: _____

2. Gender: _____

3. First Home Language: _____

4. Father's Occupation: _____

5. Mother's Occupation: _____

6. English Result (PMR): _____

7. Rank your abilities in the four skills listed below. Please tick (/) your answers.

| | Excellent | Good | Moderate | Weak |
|-----------|-----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Listening | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Speaking | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Reading | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Writing | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Below are statements on the use of English. Kindly state your frequency of use of English by putting a tick (/) in the appropriate boxes.

| Statements on Use of English | Frequency of Use | | |
|---|------------------|-----------|-------|
| | Often | Sometimes | Never |
| 1. I use English: | | | |
| during English lessons. | | | |
| during other lessons. | | | |
| with my classmates. | | | |
| with my schoolmates. | | | |
| with my teachers at school. | | | |
| with my parents. | | | |
| with my siblings. | | | |
| with my relatives. | | | |
| 2. I read books and other materials in English. | | | |
| 3. I listen to English songs. | | | |
| 4. I watch English television programmes. | | | |
| 5. I watch English movies. | | | |
| 6. I use English when I surf the internet. | | | |
| 7. I use English when socialising with friends. | | | |
| 8. I use English when I shop. | | | |
| 9. I use English when I run errands. | | | |

In the space provided, please state other occasions when you use English.

The statements below are on the importance of English to your life. Please tick (/) in the appropriate boxes.

| Statement | Agree | Disagree | Not Sure |
|--|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| English is important to me because: | | | |
| 1. it is a world language. | | | |
| 2. it is a symbol of social status. | | | |
| 3. I want to impress my friends. | | | |
| 4. I want to read stuff on the internet. | | | |
| 5. I want to read English materials. | | | |
| 6. I want to do well in the examination. | | | |
| 7. I need it for my future career. | | | |
| 8. I want to watch English programmes on the television. | | | |
| 9. I want to watch English movies. | | | |
| 10. I want to listen to English songs. | | | |

In the space provided, please state other reasons why you think English is important to you.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Photo-elicitation guidelines and consent form

I am interested to know about your language learning opportunities at home, or anywhere in the community. Please take photos of these learning opportunities and you can talk about them during the interview sessions.

Section 1

1. Please take photographs during the next two months; from _____ to _____. I will collect the cameras on every alternate Monday.
2. On the day of the interview (dates as stated in the interview timetable), I will return the cameras to you and we will meet to talk about the photographs that you have taken.

Agreement between Noraini Binti Zulkepli and

_____ **for**

the taking of photographs

1. _____(name of the student) agrees to take photos using a digital camera (provided by Noraini) during the two months.
2. Noraini Binti Zulkepli recognises the ownership of _____ (name of the student) for the photographs taken in the context of this research.

Section 2

3. In the following, _____ (name of the student) expresses if he/she authorises Noraini to use their photos in different publications and situations.

| Use of the photos | Types of Authorization | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | I authorize Noraini to use any of my photos | I authorize Noraini to use only the following photos | I do not authorize Noraini to use any of my photos |
| In Noraini's PhD thesis | | | |
| In papers presented in national conferences | | | |
| In papers presented in international conferences | | | |
| In articles in national specialist journals | | | |
| In articles in national specialist journals | | | |
| In articles in international specialist journals | | | |
| In books dedicated to education | | | |
| In websites of academic content | | | |

4. The work of Noraini Zulkepli is strictly confidential and anonymous.

Name of student:

Name of Researcher:

Noraini Zulkepli

Signature:

Signature:

Date:

Date:

Appendix 3

Final Categories

| Category/ Code/ Sub code | Definitions/Example |
|---|---|
| <p>Category 2 Forms of Participation: Outside</p> <p>Codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Using dictionary b. Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub codes - Selected parts - In detail - Focus on difficult words c. Reading subtitles d. Seeking for help e. Not doing anything f. Non-participation <p>Category 3 Gains from Participation</p> <p>Codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Vocabulary b. Grammar c. Pragmatic d. Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub codes - General knowledge - Current affairs - Technical knowledge - Enjoyment | <p>2. This refers to the different manner of engagements that participants described as they encountered different resources outside the classroom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Participants using dictionaries (online and hard copies). b. Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants skimmed and scanned the reading materials. - Participants read in detail. - Participants tried to understand difficult words first before reading the materials. c. Participants reading subtitles that were available in the TV programmes they watched. d. Participants asking help normally for meaning of difficult English words. e. Participants reported not looking for meaning of words, this happened while they were watching TV. f. Participants reported choosing not to engage with resources available. <p>3. The gains that participants claimed from their engagement with outside resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Learning new words or the pronunciation of words. b. Learning grammar c. Learning how sentences are used in different contexts. d. Gaining knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Example: about fishes and fishing - Example: about wars, sports - Example: about how to fix the computer - Examples: enjoying English songs, English stories |
| <p>Category 4 Perceptions</p> <p>Codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub codes - Own proficiency - Other's proficiency | <p>4. Participants' perceptions on matters that were related to their learning of English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants talked about their own proficiency in English. - Participants talked about others' proficiency in English. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>b. Significance of English Sub codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current needs - Future needs <p>c. Out-of-class learning Sub codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive statements - Negative statements <p>Category 5 Family support</p> <p>Codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reading materials b. Opportunities c. Advice d. Rule | <p>b. Participants talked about the importance of English to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants talked about the current importance of English to them. - Participants talked about the future importance of English to them. <p>c. Participants talked about how they could learn English outside the class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants gave positive reactions. - Participants give negative reactions. <p>5. The different kinds of supports that participants claimed they received from their family members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Examples: books, newspapers, magazines. b. Examples: English tuition classes, English language camp c. Example: on the importance of mastering English. d. Example: have to speak in English at home. |
|---|--|

Appendix 4:

Final Categories: Inside

| Category/ Code/ Sub code | Definitions/Example |
|--|---|
| <p>Category 1 Resources: In-class</p> <p>Codes</p> <p>a. Teacher Talk</p> <p>Sub codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instruction - - Explanation - Elaboration - Correction - Feedback - Question <p>b. Peers</p> <p>c. Teaching materials</p> <p>Sub codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word card - Poster - Worksheet <p>d. Pronunciation practice</p> <p>e. Homework</p> | <p>1. These are English resources that participants encountered during their English lessons.</p> <p>a. Teacher Talk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instruction: Teacher telling the learners to what to do, e.g. to look for words in the dictionary, to take out books to be used in class. - Explanation: teacher explaining meaning of words, content of the lesson. - Elaboration: teacher expanding learners' responses. - Correction: teacher correcting learners' pronunciation. - Feedback: oral feedback- repeating learners' answers, non-oral feedback: writing learners' answers on the board - Question: to check understanding. <p>b. Peers- participants talked about learning English from their friends in the class.</p> <p>c. Teaching materials: the materials that teacher used in class for teaching and learning purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word cards: that contained words taken from poems - Posters: A0 papers tat contained notes - Worksheet: materials given to learners for them to work on. <p>d. Pronunciation practice: teacher led pronunciation drills</p> <p>e. Homework: Work that the teacher assigned learners to work at home.</p> |

| Category/ Code/ Sub code | Definitions/Example |
|---|--|
| <p>Category 2 Forms of Participation</p> <p>Codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Using dictionary b. Reading c. Listening d. Responding orally e. Working on task f. Non-participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub codes - Not answering teacher's questions - Not taking part in whole class discussion - Not volunteering - Not participating in group work activities | <p>2. The different manner of engagements that the participants reported in relation to their in-class learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Using dictionary: participants looked up for meaning of words in their dictionaries. b. Reading: participants engaged in silent reading and reading aloud. c. Listening: participants engaged in listening to the teacher explanation, etc. d. Responding orally: participants providing oral responses in English. e. Working on tasks: participants engaged in activities assigned by the teacher. f. Non-participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not answering teacher's questions: participants talked about the time when they did not answer the teacher's questions - Not taking part in whole class discussion: participants talked about the time when they did not take part in whole class discussion. - Not volunteering: participants talked about when they did not response when the teacher asked for volunteers, normally to answer questions. - Not participating in group work activities: participants talked about the time when they did not take part in group work. |
| <p>Category 3</p> <p>Gains from Participation</p> <p>Codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Vocabulary b. Pronunciation c. Sentences d. Appreciation of poems e. Format of a speech and report f. General knowledge g. unstated | <p>3. Participants talked about what they gained from their engagement with the in-class resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Learning meaning of words b. Learning the pronunciation of words c. Learning how to form sentences d. learning the moral values instilled in the poems (e.g. perseverance) e. Learning the format of speech and report f. learning about an issue (bullying) g. did not learn much (did not learn new words) |

| Category/ Code/ Sub code | Definitions/Example |
|--|--|
| <p>Category 4 English Learning Experience</p> <p>Code</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Current in-class learning b. Previous in-class learning <p>Category 5 Views about learning English</p> <p>Category 6 Use</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Participants talked about their experiences learning English in class. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Current in-class learning: participants talked about their current in-class learning b. Previous in-class learning: participants talked about their previous in-class learning 5. Participants gave their views on their English learning (the best way to learn, or how they learned English) 6. Participants talked about their use of the words that they learned. |

Appendix 5

CD-ROM

Appendix 6

| | AZR | NS | TRK | THN | HM | SKR |
|----------------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Category: Resources | | | | | | |
| Code: | | | | | | |
| III. Broadcast media | | | | | | |
| Sub-codes: | | | | | | |
| c. Television | | | | | | |
| - TV series | / | | / | | / | |
| - Cartoon program | / | | / | | / | |
| - Documentary | / | | / | | / | |
| - Movie | / | | / | | / | |
| - News | / | | | / | | |
| - Paranormal show | | | / | | / | |
| - Kids talk show | | | / | | | |
| - Cooking show | | | | | / | |
| d. Radio | | | | | | |
| - songs | / | | | | | |
| II. Internet Media | | | | | | |
| - Article on current issue | / | | | | | / |
| - Video clip and movie | | | | | | / |
| - Game | / | / | | | | |
| - Comic | | / | | | | |
| - Dictionary | / | | | | | / |
| - Song | / | / | | | | |
| - Technical information | | / | | | | |
| - Factual information | | | | | | |
| - Social networking | | / | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IV. Printed reading materials | | | | | | |
| - Educational magazine | / | | | / | | |
| - General-interest magazine | / | / | | | | |
| - Storybook | | | / | | / | / |
| - Biography | | | / | | | |
| - Fact book | | / | | | | / |
| - Text book | | / | | | | |
| - Dictionary | / | | | / | / | / |
| - Newspapers | / | | | / | / | |
| - Informational poster | | | | | / | |
| IV. Environmental Print | | | | | | |
| - Banner | | / | | | | |
| - Billboard | | | | | | / |
| - Book mark | | | | / | | |
| - Box | | | | / | / | |
| - Business card | | | | / | / | |
| - Calendar | | | | | | |
| - Car accessory | | / | | | | |
| - Carrier bag | | | | | / | |
| - Food container | | | | | | |
| - inspirational frame | | | | / | | |
| - Label | | | | | / | |
| - Notebook | | / | | | | |
| - Pencil case | | | | | | |
| - Suggestion box | | | | | | / |
| - T-shirt | / | | | | | |
| - Wrapping paper | | / | | | | |

| | AZR | NS | TRK | THN | HM | SKR |
|-----------------------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| V. People | | | | | | |
| - family members | / | / | | / | / | |
| - relatives | | | | / | | |
| - Friends | | / | / | / | / | / |
| - English tuition teacher | | / | | / | | |
| - music/ religious/vocal teachers | | | | / | | |
| - neighbour | | | | / | | |
| VI. Portable Media | | | | | | |
| - Hand phone | / | | | / | | / |
| - Dvd player | / | | | | | / |
| - Mp3 | | | | / | | |
| VII. 'Learner-Initiated' | | | | | | |
| - Scrapbooks | | | | | / | |
| - Note books | / | | | | / | |
| - Pranks | | | / | | | |
| - Short stories | | | / | | | |

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