

國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班碩士論文

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透過自然發音及主題式課程的英語工作坊發展英語學習者的自主動能：四位國

中生的個案研究

Learner Agency in a Phonics Training and Theme-Based English Workshop – A Case

Study of Four Junior High School Students

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– A Case Study of Four Junior High School Students

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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班

碩士論文提要

論文名稱：透過自然發音及主題式課程的英語工作坊發展英語學習者的自主動

能：四位國中生的個案研究

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論文提要內容:

本研究旨在探討短期英語密集營和四位台灣國中生之學習者自主行為。本文採用 Larsen- Freeman 對於學習者自主的架構, 進行了質性個案研究以深入了解學習者自主。研究對象為四位雲林縣一所國中生進行為期四周的短期英文密集營, 主要資料是透過與四位學生及其學校老師的訪談, 其他資料收集像是會議記錄, 研究者日誌, 學習單及學生學習歷程檔案則是用來進行三角驗證。研究結果顯示, 學習者自主不單單是由單一原因而造成的, 而是依其所在不同的環境和狀態改變, 包含學習者的家庭背景、學習背景、個人特質以及各自對學習的觀點都和學習者自主的變化息息相關。這更彰顯了學習者自主並非固定不變, 而是由各種因素互動、變動而產生的。在教學上, 本研究希望能為教師或教育工作者提供一個新的視角瞭解學習者自主的動態性質。除了提供合適的訓

練及教材之外，更全方位的了解和關心學生是提升學生的學習動機以及進一步提高學生之學習者自主性中不可或缺的。

關鍵字：學習者自主、學習動機、個案研究



ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the interplays between the four Taiwanese junior high school learners' agency and the intensive English remedial workshop. Drawing on the framework of learner agency from Larsen Freeman, a qualitative case study was conducted to attain an in-depth understanding of the interactions between the learner agency and different learning contexts. The participants of this study were four students in a Taiwanese junior high school: Johnny, Kevin, Dora and Pam. Major data was collected through the interviews with the participants and their school teachers. Collection instruments such as meetings notes, researcher's logs and students' worksheets, portfolios were also included in order to triangulate the data. The result of the study pointed out that learner agency shifts in interaction with distinct contexts, more specifically, it is actually connected with one's family background, learning context, personality and their own point of view toward learning. Consequently, this shows that learner agency is an interaction of many factors and the nature of learner agency is therefore dynamic. Pedagogically, this study is expected to provide a new perspective for teachers or educators about the dynamic nature of learner agency. Other than giving appropriate trainings and choosing suitable materials, it is also indispensable to spur students' learning motivations and help them becomes agentic by providing them with a more holistic concern throughout their learning.

Keywords: learner agency, motivation, case study

Chapter 1 Introduction

Background and Motivation of the Study

Nowadays children are sent to cram schools at a very young age by their parents. However, not all of them could develop themselves into successful English learners. There are a variety of reasons that may lead to failure in language learning. Chamberlin & Senyshyn (2012) pointed out that age, experience, family background, cultural background, attitudes, expectations, motivations and so on are all very important. In some contexts, students would hold negative attitudes toward learning English or are never engaged in their English class (Ryan & Deci, 2000). From the perspectives of those who show little autonomy and a very low level of motivation, showing up in each class by itself may be taken as means that they are entitled to passing the course. Researchers proposed that although these students demonstrate agency by either refusing to learn the language or setting their own goals, they actually have a very low degree of investment in English learning (Midgley, Kaplan & Middleton, 2001).

This study follows the Larsen-Freeman's recent framework (2019) – The Complex Dynamic System Theory (CDST). In the CDST, it characterizes that “agency is spatially–temporally situated. It can be achieved and changed through iteration and co-adaptation. It is also multidimensional and heterarchical” (p. 61).

Indeed, research has shown that learner agency is closely related to one's identity, motivation, and metacognition (Martin, 2004; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Gao (2010) also proposed that while agency is one's capability to act, one's physical, cognitive, affective and motivational capability to act under the sociocultural terms should be put into considerations as well. Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) proposed that agency is a relationship that will be constantly constructed and formulated by the environment around the individual. What's more, van Lier (2008) proposed that agency is interdependent and that it is the result of social interaction, the sociocultural context and "the heart of the matter". Norton and Toohey (2001) emphasized that "a focus on the learning context must be complemented with a focus on the identity and human agency of the language learner" (p.312). Since agency plays an important role during the learning process, it is necessary that students and teachers pay attention to it.

Agency is not just the learner's own business; the kind of social context that the learner is situated in is of great importance. In fact, research has shown that instruction could play a role in the development of learner agency. In Brown's (2009) study of French university students, it was found that one of the reasons why students would have a passive attitude toward learning was the teaching style that the students were exposed to. The students reported that since they started to learn English, most of the language trainings that they received had asked them to be passive: Rather than

giving them chances to practice their speaking or listening skills, the teachers most often asked the students to passively listen to the explanations on the vocabulary, grammar or conversations from the textbooks. The researcher suggests that teaching methods could lead the learners to develop an important attitude toward learning. It is important that teaching encourages active participation, not a passive attitude.

The purpose of this study is to understand how low-level learners' agency might interact with a researcher-designed workshop. The instruction implemented in this study can be considered as a remedial support for low-level English learners. Remedial support informed by Vygotsky's (2006) social development theory has received great attention among language teachers aiming to help low level learners with their performance and achievement according to their zone of proximal developments. Sower's study (1996) further demonstrated that an appropriate material designed specifically for the learner could facilitate their cognitive, emotional development as well as their language acquisition, and the researcher recommended that the special needs of learners must be taken into consideration. It is therefore crucial that low-level students receiving remedial teaching be provided with critically-needed support and appropriate materials that meet their needs.

Based on the foregoing discussions, this study aims to understand how low-level junior high students' learner agency interact with a one-month intensive English

workshop that provides them with phonics trainings and themed-based instructions.

For this purpose, the study will be guided by the following research questions:

- (1) Why did the participants need to attend the remedial workshop?
- (2) What were some of the critical events that happened to the participants during the workshop?
- (3) How does the changes of the four participants' learner agency before, during and after the remedial workshop correlate to Larsen- Freeman's framework?

Significance of the Study

This study explores learner agency through a qualitative case study that aims to provide comprehensive and in-depth understandings of the process that four selected learners experienced in the remedial workshop that provided phonics trainings and theme-based instruction. It is expected that the results will show how the workshop might or might not be useful or not useful to the participants as well as some reasons as to how and why these students become willing or unwilling to learn English. With phonics training and some theme-based materials that are closer to the participants' language proficiency and lives, the study also expects to see how the participants develop a sense of accomplishment in the workshop. Although this study does not intend to provide a generalizable explanation, it hopes to illustrate the possible

developing process of learner agency. The results of the study can bring insightful suggestions to teachers who would be teaching low-level students or other remedial programs such as this workshop.





Chapter 2 Literature Review

The literature reviewed in this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section goes deeper into the conception of learner agency including its various definitions from different scholars, the formation of learner agency, the importance of learner agency during one's learning process and more importantly, the theoretical framework that is used to analyze the data will be introduced as well. For the second section, how a remedial workshop facilitates one's agency will be the focus of the discussion.

Learner Agency

Agency is a fundamental construct to understand one's learning process; however, it is also a complicated concept that has a variety of definitions and interpretations (Huang& Benson, 2013). It is closely related to several different concepts in the field of language learning such as autonomy, identity and motivation (Norton& Toohey, 2011; Duff, 2015). Moreover, research has shown that agency and motivation are two concepts that are closely connected to each other and it's hard to define one without mentioning the other one (Niemic, 2009).

With the multifaceted relations between different concepts, it is often hard to give agency a certain or a precise definition (Block, 2009). For instance, agency is

described as one's capacity of making decision and their ability to deal with changes and to take responsibility for the actions in a broad sense (Carson, 2012). In Miller's (2010) study, he proposed that agency is a basic construct to understand one's learning process and their learner identity. Morgan & Martin (2014) put a focus on one's intentional behavior during the process and proposed that learner agency is one's ability to make their own decisions and to make their lives different through pursuing the decisions that they made. While in Duff (2012), agency is one's ability to make choices, to regulate and self-control and to pursue the goals that each of them has set.

It has also been discussed by scholars that human actions are always mediated socioculturally (Ahearn, 2001; Fuchs, 2001; Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015; Mercer, 2011). Realizing the important of sociocultural factors, O'Byrne's (2011) proposed that agency refers to the forms and degrees of capacity that the doer did socially while Jones and Norris (2005) highlighted that agency is not just about the agent and that one's action is not merely related to one's individual agency, it is actually mediated by various factors according to one's living environment.

As agency is the capability of a student to initiate the opportunities to learn in the classroom (Claxton & Carr, 2004), when it comes to agency in the learning context, many agree that it plays an important role in one's language learning.

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) proposed that learner agency is influential to one's second language learning because how the learning outcome will be is deeply affected by learners' attitudes and how they chose to deal with the problems they faced during the learning process. While learner agency can exist as an aid to help develop one's language learning through devoting oneself into the learning or trying to figure out ways to conquer the problems, Flowerdew and Miller (2008) asserted that it can also be a blocking stone that gives rise to resistance to specific practices or learnings. For instance, Siegal's study (1996) showed that western female learners of Japanese resist to use a particular speech pattern during their learning. These studies show that one's agency and their beliefs are closely related to how successful their learning process can be.

Moreover, since agency is mediated by the sociocultural factors as well, one's agentic behavior in the classroom is also shifting and changing constantly through the social participation. Tan and Calabrese Barton (2008) further proposed that learners are not confined to a single agency but is always rebuilt by themselves with regards to the distinct situations and environments.

To capture the multifaceted dimension of agency from a more holistic way, the present study follows Larsen-Freeman's (2019) recent study of agency which contains

seven features Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) as the theoretical framework.

The Complex Dynamic Systems Theory displays the importance of understanding the dynamic relationship between the sociocultural structure and agency. It includes “*Agency Is Relational*”, “*Agency Is Emergent*”, “*Agency Is Spatially and Temporally Situated*”, “*Agency Can Be Achieved*”, “*Agency Changes Through Iteration and Co-Adaptation*”, “*Agency Is Multidimensional*” and “*Agency Is Heterarchical*.”

First of all, *Agency Is Relational*, Larsen-Freeman (2019) claimed that one’s agency is neither inhered in a person nor a property that is rooted in one’s brain, it is instead the relational interaction that is derived from the way how we form and reform it between the surrounding environments and ourselves.

To explain the second feature *Agency Is Emergent*, Larsen-Freeman used the example of an infant which Kelso (2016) provided in his study. It shows that the emergence of human agency started at a very young age and demonstrated that when a child’s action is considered as meaningful by others, it is more likely that the child would continue on doing it. Kelso further asserted that the awareness of making the world change is the origin of the agency. That is to say agency arises when one’s

action is successfully connected to the world and is developed through the relationship with others and the environment one is in (Miller 2014).

Furthermore, *Agency Is Spatially and Temporally Situated* pointed out that agency is affected by the engagement from the past, the present orientation and the anticipation to the future. Mercer (2012) proposed that agency can be considered as a temporarily situation that connects one's life story in the past, present experiences as well as their future goals and expectations. As a result, it is critical to have a thorough understanding of the relationships and factors when associated one to their agency.

As for the fourth feature-- *Agency Can Be Achieved*, Larsen-Freeman emphasized that agency is not something that merely depends on the structure, it is actually also fluctuates as the agentive status changes over time. Biesta and Teddy (2007) defined that agency is not a power that one possesses but indeed something that one accomplishes through the efforts that individuals made, available resources and the contextual or structural factors that one particularly experience.

From the fifth characteristic of agency, it shows that the complex dynamic system theory is a theory of change which consists of two elements, and it is *Iteration and Co-adaptation*. As claimed by Larsen-Freeman, iteration produces instability to a developing system as what gives rise to one iteration is always used as the starting point of the next and with the reactivations of the past patterns, it also produces

stability. As for the concept co-adaptation, it is a repetitive process of adjusting to each other over and over again. For instance, co-adaptation can occur during the interactions between a baby and the babysitter, which is when the language resources of two people are changed while each of them trying to adapt to other.

The next feature- *Agency Is Multidimensional*, can also be seen from several studies. Mercer's study (2012) indicated that agency is linked with a variety of factors such as one's personality, emotions, motivations and their beliefs and attitude toward language learning. This concept demonstrated that these intrapersonal connections and factors can affect the decisions of how people make the arrangement and usage of the available resources.

Lastly, Larsen- Freeman claimed that *Agency Is Heterarchical* and pointed out that a relational complex system does not form a hierarchy as each component in the system has its own power. Moreover, the feature that agency is heterarchical also highlighted that each of the feature mentioned above including relational, emergent, dynamic and co-adaptational can be linked with any other component in the system.

As a multidimensional concept which forms a complicated system and is continuously affected and constructed by one's experiences and the environments that one is in, agency plays a significant role in one's learning process and is therefore worth to be investigated more comprehensively and multidimensionally.

What instruction facilitates agency?

Being impacted by various elements in one's surrounding environments, agency is a fluid, dynamic and changeable construct that the different positions each individual encounters should all be taken into accounts. Moreover, since many lower-level students in urban districts face challenges such as poverty, high rate of teacher turn-over and low standardized test scores (Noguera, 2003), it is crucial to investigate on how these students perceived the learning experiences that they had so as to provide a more appropriate instruction and guidance.

Two empirical studies from Sower (1996) and Mukundan (2012) have shown that a short-term intensive English program is indeed an applicable and productive method in teaching both young learners and lower-level learners English. In Sower's study, students were provided with an intensive English summer course that implemented theme-based instruction. Even though it was designed for learners aged 4~5, the study aimed to develop an intensive English program that meets the needs of young learners and to see how it helps learners on their learning. By analyzing the teacher journals, students' pre- and post- tests, and students' expressive language during these six months, the result of this study indicates that a short-term intensive English workshop can be a helpful method in teaching young learners English. Furthermore, at the end of the study, the researcher specified that future teaching practice should focus on the use

of theme-based instruction and interactive approach and that the special needs according to different kinds of learners should be taken into consideration when preparing the materials.

Another study conducted by Mukundan (2012) also showed that intensive English courses that provided students with opportunities to practice language in real situations could be a great help in enhancing low-level learners' language proficiency. In the study, a group of Malaysian secondary school students who is in the list of the thirty of the lowest scores in English participated in this intensive English program that lasted for one month. During the program, classes were held from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm through Mondays to Thursdays and from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm on Fridays. Through the comparison of the pre- and post-test scores, the result indicated that intensive English programs have an effective role in improving both elementary and intermediate level learners' language competencies in a shorter period of time than the regular courses.

As previous studies show that an intensive English program which contains theme-based instruction or some basic training is helpful. This current study aims to figure out whether the combination of these two can be more beneficial to students' learner agency development.

For theme-based instruction, among all the different teaching approaches, it has actually received great attention in both ESL and EFL contexts as it facilitates students'

cognitive and linguistic development at the same time (Gaffield, 1996; Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Stoller, 2004). In a language classroom that adopts theme-based instruction, it seeks to combine the four skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing into the teaching with a series of selected themes or topic (Crandall, 1994; Dupuy, 2000). According to Osman (2009), “themes are the major ideas around which the units are organized and are determined by taking learners’ interests, needs and likes, relevance and institutional appropriateness into account” while “topics are the subunits of themes” (p. 141).

Moreover, with the social and academic contexts that the learners considered interesting, the material itself may help to offer a motivational and cognitive support for language acquisition. Learners would start to figure out the meaning by linking the new knowledge to what they have already learned as the target language has become a medium for them to learn relevant content. What’s more, rather than providing the traditional language teaching approach that focuses only on students’ language development and neglects their conceptual development, it is crucial for the teachers to integrate learning contents, different skills with themes. As a result, it is always important to take into considerations what type of topics students will possibly encounter in their daily life and will be interested in when preparing the teaching materials.

Another teaching element that is included in this current workshop is phonics training. Phonic training teaches students about the relationship between spelling and sounding based on the alphabetic principle (Adam, 1990; Blevins, 2006), it is often considered an indispensable teaching method that builds the foundation of one's ability to read and the main teaching focus of the remedial workshop for lower-level junior high school students in this study. Also, as the foundation for one's ability to read, it is an important teaching method that can never be neglected (Adam 1990, Blevins 2006).

With the basic phonics knowledge and awareness, students could have a better understanding on how to convert and combine letters into words and it may also help to enhance students' ability to identify words that have similarities with what they have learnt before. In addition, Aram's study (2006) showed that spelling activities have become one of the most commonly seen practices. With the practice of phonological awareness in one's childhood, it benefits learner's further reading and writing development, especially when the practice is combined with exercises that examine students' correspondence skill of the phonemes (Schneider, Roth, & Ennemoser, 2000).

In conclusion, most of the studies related to phonics training and theme-based instruction show that it is an effective teaching approach which enables students to be familiar with both content and language (Dupuy, 2000); in addition, they have also suggested that learners' confidence can be increased through theme-based instruction

integrated with cooperative learning.

However, whether the combinations of both phonics training and theme-based instruction could interact with the development of learner agency is still to be investigated. This study therefore aims to address this gap and to study whether the remedial workshop that includes both phonics training and theme-based instruction can promote learners' agency development.





Chapter 3 Methodology

Research Design

The present study is a case study that explores how low-level learners' agency might interact with a one-month English workshop that included phonics training and theme-based instruction designed by the researcher. According to Mackey and Gass (2005, p. 171-172), "case studies can provide rich description of individual learners, teachers or classes and at the same time reveal the complexity of second language learning and teaching context". Since this study aims to discover how phonics trainings and theme-based instructions can help to develop junior high school low-level student learner agency, a case study approach is considered as an appropriate method for this study.

This chapter presents the methodology for the study, including a brief introduction of the context, participants, data collection and the data analysis. The methods and procedures of data collection including the junior high school where the workshop was held, descriptions of participants, and lastly the data analysis would be presented sequentially.

Context

The context of this study is a one-month workshop which took place in a junior high school in Taiwan which was sponsored by Global Education Association in Taiwan (GEAT). The private organization held this English intensive workshop for students in rural areas who are entering or are in junior high school annually for the past five years (2015-2020). The main goal was to provide the students with more educational resources so that they would be able to compete with others in the future. Furthermore, it also aims to build up students' positive attitude and proper learning habit during their learning process. As a result, to rebuild students' learning motivation in learning English and to train them to become autonomous rather than only relying on the teachers, lesson plans and all the classroom activities in this workshop were particularly designed to be more student-centered during the one-month workshop. Thus, the workshop was an intensive English program which aimed to cultivate students' language learning autonomy and to enhance their language proficiency. Students who participated in the workshop had the opportunity to be immersed in an English learning environment that they had never experienced.

During these four weeks, students followed the same schedule. They had classes both in the morning and afternoon. The main content of the classes in the morning was the basic phonics training scheduled by the organization. While in the afternoon,

to provide students with a more customized training, they were divided into four groups according to their language proficiency levels and were taken care of by four different teaching assistants who designed appropriate review activities for the phonics training in the morning. The afternoon classes were conducted by the researcher who served as the participants' assistant teacher in the workshop and thus are the main context of this study.

Even though the main purpose of the workshop was to enhance students' language proficiency, the researcher felt it is important to first enhance students' interests and to spur their learning motivation first instead of putting much stress on the students and herself with scores. With the previous teaching experience in another school in a rural area, the researcher realized that it was impossible for students to have great improvements on their academic performance before their learning motivation was successfully raised. Therefore, other than following the original reviewing plans that were set, the researcher adopted some theme-based instructions in the afternoon in order to link what students learned to their daily life. By providing materials that were closer to the students' lives, it was expected to be easier for them to develop the language and acquire the linguistic knowledge that the researcher provided. As Widdowson (1990) argues that second language learning can be

hindered if the linguistic knowledge that the learners were learning was not related to their schematic knowledge which is their experiences in reality.

In order to put a link between the materials and students' lives, the researcher picked some simple topics such as jobs, numbers, colors, animals as themes that students were mostly familiar with and were commonly used in their daily lives. Moreover, she also designed worksheets for each of them and came up with some sentence patterns that could be used when teaching each topic so as to increase the students' use of the languages. By providing students with the materials that are closer to them, the researcher aimed to increase students' learning motivation through the sense of accomplishment that they could receive during the learning process.

Other than the basic course in phonics training and the theme-based instructions, some games and activities were also included during the class in the afternoon to maintain students' attention and to stimulate their learning.

Participants

The participants of the workshop were chosen and decided by their school teachers according to students' pre-workshop test and their language proficiency levels. There was a total of twenty-four junior high students that took part in the English workshop when this study was conducted; however, only four participants were invited to the present study— Johnny, Kevin, Dora and Jane (pseudonyms).

These students belonged to one intact group in class. Among the six students from the same group, these four were selected due to their perfect attendance during the workshop and they seemed to show some traces of transformative attitude toward learning English during the class. The followings are the introductions of the four participants.

Johnny, a 12-year-old boy, was born in a family that highly values English and therefore he is also the only one in the class that goes to the cram school after class. Nonetheless, as he did not reach the threshold score that the school set for the students, he was advised to join the English intensive workshop by the teacher.

During the workshop, Johnny was always the first one to finish the work and tasks in the group; his language proficiency was apparently more advanced than the other students in the group and had no problem with the basic phonics and the sound of each alphabet. However, even though Johnny's attitude became passive and negative as he had problems getting along with his classmates. Almost none of his classmates were willing to sit close or partner with him.

The second participant, Kevin, is also a 12-year-old boy. His English proficiency was not as high as Johnny's and had low motivation on learning English. Although his family has tried so hard to help him on English learning, Kevin's attitude toward learning English remained negative. Kevin left the researcher with a

strong impression when he came directly to the researcher on the first day of the workshop, before the researcher even started the class. He said “Teacher, why do we need to be here...my English is poor... and I don’t like English at all. I don’t need to be here.”

The third participant Dora is also 12 years old. According to the school teachers, she is a hard-working kid that would always finish what she is assigned to do nicely and quietly. Nevertheless, their school teacher, Bunny, pointed out that she had a problem specifically on spelling and that her greatest goal during the workshop was to learn some easier ways to spell and memorize vocabulary. Dora also mentioned that she had a strong fear for memorizing vocabulary since no matter how hard she tried, she would always forget the words that she had memorized right after she finished the quiz.

The last participant Jane is a 12-year-old girl as well. Jane is a smart and outgoing girl, who always understood what the teacher was talking about quickly. Nevertheless, according to her school teacher, Jane does not like thinking hard and lacks motivation and confidence in learning English. This can be shown through her daily behavior in class. Jane would always be the one talking loudly and having fun with her classmates before class, but whenever it was time for class, even though she would still finish her assignments, she transformed into a different person that would

only sit quietly in her seat showing little reaction to the teacher's teaching and the activities in the class.

Data Collection

Interviews are the major method of this study as Barkhuizen (2014) proposed that interviews are the most proper method to collect one's personal perspective on his or her language learning. Interviews with each of the student and their school teacher were both conducted twice and were further transcribed. Other types of data such as meetings between teaching assistants and teachers, lesson plans and students' learning portfolios during the workshop were also collected to triangulate and enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Information regarding all the data sets is presented below.

Interviews with the students

Interviews with the students were conducted two times after the workshop in 2020. During the first interview which lasted for approximately an hour, students were asked to narrate their English learning journey. Then the researcher went deeper into their story to seek more information about the reasons that led to their low motivation on learning English and what made them join the workshop. For the follow-up interview, the students were asked to discuss their perceptions toward learning English which might have changed from the beginning of the workshop to

the end of it. Since the interviews were conducted to get their perception and attitude, it was important to be conducted in a way that did not make the students feel anxious. During the interview, the researcher listened to the student's story quietly and allowed the students to speak as much as they wanted. (See Appendix B interview questions)

Interviews with the school teacher

As the participants' school teacher had been teaching them for the past two years, the interview with the participants' school teacher was also conducted in order to collect more information about these students from the teacher's perspective. Furthermore, since the teacher was also the Director of Counseling in the school and had really close relationships with these students, they were thus willing to share their true feelings with her. Interviews with the teacher were expected to derive more information about the students and their learning.

During the first interview, the teacher was asked to share about her experience of teaching these four participants and the differences between teaching them during the workshop and in the formal class. For the follow-up interview, the teacher shared about her observation of the participants including the participants' changes before and after the workshop. (See Appendix C interview questions.)

Meetings between school teachers and teachers from different universities

Before the workshop began, a meeting was held to provide all the assistant

teachers from different universities, including the researcher, with a basic understanding of the school and the students. During the meeting, the school teachers talked about the main objectives of the workshop and the characteristics of students who were participating the workshop. Furthermore, to keep all the assistant teachers on track and to facilitate solving the problems that the assistant teachers face during their teaching, the meetings were held daily during the first two weeks and weekly in the last two weeks. Data collected in these meetings are useful for a further understanding of the school, the context and the students' experience.

Researcher's log

A researcher's log was kept weekly so as to record students' learning conditions and their changes from the beginning of the workshop till the end of it. Specific events or breakthroughs that each student encountered during the workshop were also noted in the researcher's log.

Lesson plans

The daily lesson plans made during the workshop were also part of the important data of the study as it included not only the teaching material and learning objectives of the days, but it also reported each student's current learning status individually. (See Appendix A lesson plans.)

Worksheets & The Learning portfolios

Worksheets that were designed by the researcher during the workshop were also collected and made into a learning portfolio that provided a glimpse on how students became used to the classroom routine and gave insight into whether or not the students would further develop into autonomous learners.

Data Analysis

Following the procedure detailed by Richard (2003), for the analysis of the data, the researcher first read the transcriptions several times and then came up with a set of categories to do the initial coding. With this initial coding, the researcher developed a profile for each of the four participants according to the reoccurring topics or themes. The researcher then identified some critical events from the participants' stories so as to further interpret their significance of these events in the workshop to their agency. In other words, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these four cases, the researcher will first provide a profile for each of the participants, including discussing the participants' learning backgrounds and their attitudes toward learning English in Chapter 4 before addressing the research questions in Chapter 5 through a cross-case analysis.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study resorts to triangulation using multiple data collected at multiple time frames. As discussed earlier, data included multiple interviews with the four participants and their school teacher as well as their learning

portfolios, worksheets and lesson plans that were used during the workshop together with the researchers' observational notes taken during the workshop. In addition, member checking was conducted with the participants as they were asked to check the transcriptions after each interview to make sure that there were no mistakes and misunderstandings. (Appendix D is a tentative timeline for this study.)





Chapter 4 Results

This chapter presents data from the four participants by putting the focuses on four dimensions: (1) family background, (2) learning experience before the workshop (3) learning experience during the workshop and (4) English learning after the workshop. The results of the research questions one and two are discussed by a chronological display of the four participants' learning experience before, during and after the remedial English workshop and the critical events during the workshop. Finally, the findings will be utilized to answer the last research question in the discussion part, that is a further discussion of how the participants' agency interacted with all the different factors.

- (1) Why did the participants need to attend the remedial workshop?
- (2) What were some of the critical events that happened to the participants during the workshop?
- (3) How does the changes of the four participants' learner agency before, during and after the remedial workshop correlate to Larsen- Freeman's framework?

Although these four students were all in the intensive English summer workshop, they have different English learning backgrounds and proficiency levels. In order to understand more about their feelings toward the workshop, how these four students perceive themselves as an English learner and how their attitudes and beliefs are toward learning English are taken into consideration as these could affect their learning. The presentation below follows the order from Johnny, Kevin, Dora and finally Jane.

Johnny

Johnny's Family Background

Johnny comes from a family of four, including his parents, his younger brother and himself. Johnny's dad used to work as a baker and is now a cook in a kindergarten, while his mom is a yoga coach that runs a company with Johnny's grandmother. Although both of Johnny's parents have to work, Johnny described that his parents put emphasis on his study and that he had a colorful memory of his childhood under the care of his parents

My mom is always at her company... She has to teach yoga...there is a room for me in her company so that I can study and do my own stuff inside...

They are busy... But they are also strict with my study...

Under the arrangements from his parents, Johnny's childhood was full of different kinds of talent classes. Johnny's words revealed that his confidence came from the different trainings during that time. He also mentioned that one of his favorite class was about English storytelling that he and his brother were sent to when they were really young.

I think I can do many different things... I had lot of talent classes when I was still a little boy, such as jazz drum, painting, piano and martial art...I still like to play jazz drum now... The English storytelling class can be the foundation for my English learning... It was not like a class... just really fun...I think I learned naturally at that time...

When it comes to Johnny's study, he said that his parents are both permissive and authoritative. His parents reminded him that he had to study hard but would not force him to do anything. Johnny therefore had space to arrange his schedule. Johnny also mentioned that his mom is the one that cares more about his academic performance, while his dad considered attitude the most important.

They seldom made me study...they wanted me to be a good student... my mom puts more pressure on me about my study...my dad cares more about my attitude...they gave both rewards and punishment... I could not have my

cellphone if my grades were too bad...but I think it was just his way to make me study...He still owed me a Switch...I got third place in elementary school.

Johnny's English Learning Experience

Johnny's first impression of a formal English class was the one that he had in the second grade of elementary school. However, Johnny mentioned that the first time he experienced the language was when he was four years old. During that time, Johnny's mom sent both Johnny and his brother to a library that provided an English story-telling class per week. Johnny described that it was the first opportunity for him to know about English and he actually enjoyed that time a lot.

Listening to stories helps me to know that the existence of "English" earlier than many of my friends ...we would play games after the teacher finished reading us the story... sometimes we would make something related to the story after the game...I enjoyed the story time very much

Other than listening to stories, another key point that made Johnny motivated in learning English occurred when he was only seven.

I would never forget this experience in my life... One day, when I was sitting alone in the front desk of my mom's company, some foreigners came in and asked for the information about the yoga class... I thought I knew what he was asking and I tried to help, but we failed to communicate because I couldn't come up with any complete or an understandable sentence...my mom came and helped me at the end...

Although Johnny felt frustrated for not being able to communicate with the foreign guests, this special experience gave rise to a great difference to Johnny's attitude toward learning English.

I was really sad at that time...it was also the moment when the strong will to improve my English proficiency arose... I wished to become able to communicate with foreigners the next time... I was more eager to learn English...I even wanted my mom to take me to her English class in the community center with her ...

Despite the fact that Johnny did not have any English class in kindergarten, the story-telling time each week and the special experience of meeting foreign guest in his mom's company seemed to play an important role in his English learning as it kept Johnny's interest and motivation toward learning English and

allowed him to be exposed to English regularly. However, as Johnny's mom thought that he needed some formal English training so as to get prepared for the English class starting from the third year in elementary school, the times that Johnny joined the story-telling class decreased after he became an elementary school student.

Johnny's mom asked the teacher that she had in the community center before and asked her to offer a class for Johnny and three of his classmates. They (Johnny and his classmates) then started to have classes twice a week taught by Ms. Wu, the teacher that his mom met since Johnny was in the second grade in elementary school. Johnny seemed to get along well with Ms. Wu and enjoy the classes that she taught, as he described:

My mom met Ms. Wu at the community center...She came to teach me and my friends since I was a second grader...I was nervous because we were allowed to only speak English during the class... She is a nice and patient teacher...She guided us to speak English... She cared about how we felt...We would do some crafts when... like moon festival... I really had lots of fun in her class.

Johnny's English class at school started one year after he had been regularly attending Ms. Wu's English class. With the training given by Ms. Wu, English

class at school was just a piece of cake for Johnny. Other than having a sense of achievement during the English class, Johnny also described that with the tool that the teacher used, the English class became really novel and cool, as he said:

School English was easy...I had already learned everything...It was fantastic to have English class using the electronic whiteboard...we played games or some activities using it... it was one of the reasons why I loved the English class in elementary school so much...

Having classes by Ms. Wu every week, Johnny's English performance was able to remain above average during his elementary school life. As Johnny became a fourth grader, he said that they (Johnny and his classmates in Ms. Wu's class) were asked to take a language proficiency test. His experience and the results of the proficiency tests were all really positive and therefore brought him more confidence and eagerness to learning English.

Ms. Wu wanted us to take some proficiency test to see how well we were learning when we were in the fourth grade... There are eight levels in this proficiency test, including basic, level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and the highest one is level AB... I was actually really good...I took this test several times and

passed level 6 last year... I did not take AB... you have to write an essay
and I was not ready for it yet...

With the help from Ms. Wu, Johnny's English learning seemed to be smooth
before he entered junior high school. Nevertheless, Johnny mentioned that the
first and the greatest disappointment came after he became a junior high school
student. Ms. Wu was again the significant person that stopped Johnny from
giving up English.

Learning English was fun for me when I was a little boy...I could not believe
that English class would become so boring after I got into junior high
school...All we did was to take note and copy what the teacher wrote on the
whiteboard...Ms. Wu encouraged me and wanted me to enjoy the time in
her class...

Other than not being able to get used to the different way of teaching
between English classes in elementary school and junior high school, Johnny also
revealed that he was upset because his grade went down:

What made me even more frustrated was that my score went down badly...

The class was so boring... I could not pay attention in class ...The content

was a bit harder than the English class in elementary school...It even became a vicious circle...My English grades kept falling and I did not want to listen in class anymore...

Even though Johnny was discouraged in learning English during his junior high school life, the strong motivation from the experience of talking to the foreign guests gave him the power to persist. And Johnny mentioned that this power arose whenever he had the thought of giving up.

I did not like the English class at school... I was not that eager to learn anymore...I could still remember that I almost wanted to give up learning English when we were learning about past tense...But I kept in mind my goal to speak with the foreigners... I knew I should keep working hard...

Despite the strong willpower, Johnny admitted that he did not really make any big changes to improve his academic performance. All he had done was only to reach his goal of learning English, which is to engage in fluent communications with foreigners in the future. Johnny therefore kept the thoughts of enhancing his listening and speaking ability first.

I did not know why; even though I knew I have to study; I just did not have the motivation to study..... oh but I started to pay more attention on the recording homework that Ms. Wu assigned...I wanted to improve my oral ability...

Having the clear objective for learning English, Johnny put his emphasis on listening and speaking ability in the first place from the beginning. He was also confident that his abilities on these two skills had improved a lot.

My focus had been listening and speaking skills... I am able to talk to and communicate without fear with the foreigners now...I always talked to Teacher Alice (An Australian teacher in Johnny's school) in English whenever I saw her at school...

Although Johnny had the thoughts of working hard, it seemed that he did not really have the determination to study. With the same negative attitude toward the English class in school, Johnny's grade in school remained not so good and he found that his attitude in Ms. Wu's class had become passive as well since there were not as many activities as it used to be.

Recently, I was not that interested in Ms. Wu's class anymore...I did not have a sense of accomplishment in learning...and the times that we had activities decreased as the content became harder and more complicated...

Being Johnny's teacher for two years, Bunny also told the researcher that Johnny is a smart boy who understands and learns really fast. However, Johnny never pays attention in class. He was always doing his own things and not following the teacher's instruction in class.

Johnny is super clever... He never pays attention, never takes notes in class... the only one that is doing his own thing in my class...He is a real aural... He learns by listening...He would look like he was busy with his own stuff, but actually he was listening to you...(teacher interview)

Not reaching the target that the teacher set for him, Johnny was required by the teacher to join the intensive English workshop in the summer vacation before he became a ninth grader.

Although Johnny has a positive attitude toward learning English, it was still unacceptable for him when he knew that he had to spend his summer vacation in an intensive English workshop. Therefore, Johnny was really repulsive to the

workshop at the beginning.

I was actually really unhappy when my teacher announced that I was also on the list of the intensive English workshop... I thought I did a great job on the exam so I could not understand why I still had to join the workshop...I just wanted to enjoy my last summer vacation in junior high school...

As Johnny found out the reason why he was asked to take part in the training soon after the workshop began, he gradually changed.

Although I thought I did a good job on the test...It turned out that my score was horrible...And as the workshop started... I knew there was indeed a need for me to join the workshop...I had already forgotten all the grammar that I learned before...

Nonetheless, even after Johnny understood how the workshop could help him on his English learning, his attitude during the workshop was still frivolous.

I enjoyed the class a lot... But I did not really try my best on finishing all the homework you [the researcher] assigned...Especially the writing assignments that you gave us...Those grammatical concepts were too easy...

I thought I understood them thoroughly when you explained again in class...and I did not need extra practices after school...

It was actually after Johnny had the first mock test after the workshop, he realized that he had to suspend his own listening and speaking goals and started to work on writing and reading so as to prepare for the Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students in the coming June.

But I truly realized that I was way behind than I had thought after we had the first mock test...Maybe I will stop focusing so much on the listening and speaking skills now...I should put the emphasis on the upcoming test first...

Johnny's Learning Experience During the Workshop

Johnny also described that the workshop was exactly a different experience from the learning in school.

I realized that there were still lots of things that I could learn on the second or third day of the workshop... It was not as bad as what we (Johnny and his classmates) thought in the beginning...[We were really] Afraid that it was going to be the same English class as those in school, but it was actually really different...

Since Johnny found out that the workshop was different from the regular classes he used to have in school and realized the reason why he had to be there, Johnny started to accept and enjoyed the learning during the workshop.

I did not know that learning English in junior high school could still be so fun before this workshop... I enjoyed the class two days after it started...

Johnny's teacher, Bunny, pointed out that Johnny actually has the best performance in English when comparing and contrasting these four students. Even though Johnny is not the most hard-working one, he has the best foundation of the basic English.

Johnny's English is actually the best of these four...he has after school English classes since he was just an elementary school student... basic phonics or grammars are not a big deal for him... It is his handwriting and his attitude that need to be improved...

Bunny also described Johnny as a special kid that brought happiness and both anger to his teacher and said that he could be a "good" boy but also an "annoying" one. Since Bunny is also the counselor at school, she got more

chances to speak to and get along with Johnny whenever he has the emotional issues.

Johnny can be a headache...He is cool when he is good...but really troublesome when he has problems...Johnny is also my regular visitor at the counseling room... I always have to deal with his quarrels with his classmates... He had some emotional disorders and would therefore have arguments with his classmates really often...

Despite of the poor relationship with his classmates, such as having quarrels with his teammates during the class or even during the games, Johnny was still glad that he joined the workshop as he was finally able to have a fun in an English class again after he became a junior high school student.

I had arguments with my teammates all the time... When I did not answer the question correctly, they laughed at me...And this made me so mad...I was trying to win points for my team... But they were just waiting to laugh and make fun of me...Also, when playing games, they worked together to fight against me...Every time when I was almost winning...They started to become a team...All they wanted was to beat me... It was really awful...They liked to tease me and make me angry without reasons...But in

general...I still enjoyed the workshop really much...I learned a lot...I did not know that the English class in junior high school could still be so fun without this workshop...

Furthermore, while talking about the story-telling part of the workshop, it recalled Johnny's memory of another English camp which was held by a church that he participated in when he was in elementary school.

He said that "one of my best memories of English is the camp that I had in church. We listened to stories in the bible and sang English songs.

Even though I knew nothing about the bible...[It was] nice to learn English through activities... rather than just reading and memorizing the textbook, I enjoyed learning a lot more if it is not boring."

The joyful memory that Johnny had from the story-telling time when he was still a little boy seemed to hold an important place toward his English learning as he mentioned,

I love the story-telling time... whenever the teacher finished teaching phonics in the morning...we played games...It was interesting... I paid full attention to it... but this was something that we never had in school...

In addition, even though Johnny's reaction to the training during the one-month workshop was positive, Johnny did not believe that the workshop was going to bring any help to his study before the workshop. Being able to recognize the alphabets with the sounds already, Johnny's attitude toward phonics training was reckless.

I don't think I need this training... I knew ABC since I was still a little boy...

It is way too easy for me...

However, Johnny described that the most impressive training during the workshop were the theme-based worksheets in the afternoon. It was through theme-based instruction, Johnny realized that he had already forgotten all the basic grammatical concepts. Moreover, with the realization of how poor his grammatical concepts were, Johnny reconsidered and decided that he should stop putting the emphasis only on his oral ability.

I think the training in the afternoon is so important for me... Because phonics training was just too easy for me.

Johnny also mentioned that the moment that he knew there was going to be a show time on the last day, he was really excited and volunteered to be the main

character of the stage show.

I enjoyed the workshop overall...The most helpful part was that I got all the memories of the old grammars back through the practice and worksheets in the afternoon... We practiced about different sentence patterns and vocabulary through using various topics such as time, animal, color, verbs and adjectives...this was one of the greatest gains for me...

Another thing was the stage show...I was so happy that I get to perform an English stage show... I remembered that everyone was waiting for that time...

Johnny regained some confidence during the workshop and his attitude toward learning English slowly turned positive. Johnny said that his short-term goal in English learning was to reach the level A in his Comprehensive Assessment Program in June and he hopes to further enhance his speaking ability in the future after the test.

I felt much better about learning English after the workshop... kind of understand what I need and how I should study...Now, I might stop putting the focus on my oral and to work hard on my writing skill...and start again later after the test...

After the workshop, Johnny mentioned that he had finally found his motivation toward learning English and realized that it was time for him to work hard on English again.

I regained some confidence and kind of understood that I have to get back to study after the English workshop...

Critical Events

During the second week of the workshop, as most students had slowly gotten used to the routines of the training and finished learning the vowels, the researcher decided to let the students do a review worksheet that they might need twenty minutes to finish.

However, in less than five minutes, Johnny looked at his teammates and shouted loudly,

I am done... You guys are so slow... Oh, man... Is it really that hard...? Why are they so slow...?

Not feeling comfortable being shouted and laughed at, his teammates were unhappy and started to relate.

So what? ...You are not better...You are just in the same class with us!...

And your writing is so horrible that no one understands...

Although Johnny was upset being attacked by his teammates, what made Johnny even angrier were always Kevin's, one of Johnny's teammates, behaviors and his mean words as he would laugh loudly at Johnny repeatedly and jokingly teased him just to fight back.

Kevin: hahaha... Yeah Johnny, it is okay... You are actually just like us...there is nothing for you to be proud of at all...

Although Johnny and Kevin were friends, Johnny was easily pissed off by Kevin. Constantly showing such an arrogant attitude during class, Johnny had similar arguments with his team again and again during the entire workshop.

I did not know why they were being so mean...I just knew everything already...and they were so slow that I had to wait for them...I did not want to lose...they were not nice to me...

Bunny, their regular teacher, pointed out that Johnny is a kid who is super confident of himself. Johnny believes that he can do everything well. But his

over-confidence often led to some problems in getting along with his classmates.

Most of the kids that participated in this workshop lacks confidence...Johnny is a special one; he is way too confident...he would think you are laughing at him or talking [something bad] about him [behind his back] with just an accidental glimpse...

There was also a time when the whole team was trying to embarrass Johnny, and that was when they were working together to come up with a story for their final presentation. During the discussion, Johnny showed his confidence again and insisted that he wanted to be the main character of the stage show as he was the best of the team. Even though his teammates strongly disagreed at the beginning, the whole team finally accepted his idea reluctantly. Upon one member's suggestion to make fun of Johnny, they decided to make Johnny's lines the hardest and his character the strangest. Below is a discussion in class.

Johnny: I can be the main character...I think I can do a better job than any of you... It will be too hard for you to memorize too many lines...I will do it...

Johnny's teammates: Why? No... Teacher... He cannot be the main character...he is going to ruin our show...

Johnny: I can!... I want to be the main one...

Johnny's teammates: Ok! It is fine, let him do it... You will have to do whatever the script says then!

Johnny: Yes, I can!... Not a big deal at all...

Johnny ended up acting as a silly patient who kept misunderstanding the doctor and took the wrong medicine all the time. He had to do push-ups no matter how many times the doctor said. No matter how weird Johnny's character was, he was still willing to cooperate and spend lots of time practicing his own lines. Even though Johnny had the longest and the highest number of lines, he was actually the first one that finished memorizing everything in his group. Johnny's positive attitude during the preparation and toward the show astonished the researcher and teacher Bunny. Johnny explained his thoughts in the interview:

I knew they wanted to make fun of me...I was actually really angry at the beginning...Whenever I finished doing the five push-ups, the doctor would say he did not see what I had done and asked me to do it again...They teased me as if I were a baby... but I just wanted to try my best...so I decided to ignore them...I learned a lot during this month...I wanted to become better and better... It was not hard for me to do this... because I always wanted to improve my speaking ability...

Although Johnny's problems with his classmates remained, his motivation toward learning English was spurred by the sense of accomplishment developed throughout the training and from the successful stage show at the end of the workshop. Johnny said,

I was touched when we finished the show...It was amazing...Although we complained a lot during the practice...we made it and it was an amazing feeling...I should keep on learning English...I thought English became boring after junior high...but I want to improve my oral skills more after the test in June...

Kevin

Kevin's Family Background

Kevin was born in a small family of three. Being the only child at home, he received abundant love and care from his family since he was a little boy. Kevin grew up under a comfortable and loving environment. He revealed that he could get whatever he wanted and was seldom blamed by any of his family member.

I am really thankful to all of my family...My mom loves me the most and she always gives me the best she has... My dad is my best friend that gives

supports and takes me out to trips... My grandparents take good care of me while my mom and dad are busy working...

Although Kevin has a lovely and wonderful childhood memory, with the busy schedule at work, Kevin's parents do not have too much time to accompany him and to help him with his study. Therefore, Kevin's grandfather, who is a retired bank manager, takes over this responsibility.

My mom and dad both work in a chain restaurant in Taipei...so busy that they are seldom at home... I was sent to Yunlin to stay with my grandpa since I was five years old...My grandpa wanted me to become more independent...I was sent to an elementary school that all the students were required to board in school during weekdays... At the beginning, I was homesick and cried every night... All I wanted was to go home and stay with my family...

Hoping that Kevin would become successful in the future, his grandfather put much effort on helping Kevin with his study. However, the way Kevin's grandfather tried to help him on the study seemed to lead to an opposite effect. Kevin's academic performance did not improve at all and had even deteriorated

Even though Kevin knew that his grandfather was trying to help him, he and his grandfather became more and more against each other's thoughts.

Oh my goodness...my grandpa always asked me to study whenever I came back from school...I was really sick of this...He never listens to me and only holding on to his own thoughts... He is just so traditional... This is his own way of study... It doesn't work for me and even makes me feel tired of studying...

Feeling irritated by his grandfather's way of caring, Kevin's words showed that he did not really enjoy the time staying with his grandfather especially when Kevin was forced to do things that he was not willing to.

I would definitely prefer living with my mom and dad if I could...they are easier to communicate with and they listen to my thoughts. My grandpa gets angry easily when I try to communicate with him... He never believes me when I say I have finished studying...I think he would be happy just to see me sitting in front of the desk whole day...

He always wants me to study hard... But for him, I guess studying hard just means to sit in front of my desk all day long memorizing all the

words in the textbooks... This stupid method of studying really drives me crazy...

As Kevin slowly grew up, his grandfather decided to give him some freedom to arrange his own schedule and life. Having the opportunity to become freer, Kevin moved back to Taipei to stay with his parents.

I hated study...and hated my grandpa when he asked me to study... after I graduated from elementary school, I got chances to move back to Taipei to stay with my parents...I was so happy that I could do whatever I wanted...

Nonetheless, Kevin was asked to go back and stay with his grandparents again after he finished the first year of junior high school in Taipei because he had caused too many troubles during this year.

I was mean to the teacher and made some bad friends during the year in Taipei...my grandpa wanted my parents to send me back to Yunlin...he thought that I was better behaved when I was with him...

When he knew that he had to move back to stay with his grandfather, Kevin thought that his nightmare was coming back again. But, it turned out that Kevin's

grandfather had changed his way and did not force Kevin to study anymore.

Kevin's relationship with his grandfather gradually improved.

After Kevin returned to Yunlin, he was sent to a junior high school in a rural area with dorm rooms for students to stay in school during weekdays.

After I moved back to Yunlin, I was surprised that my grandpa did not do what he used to do...Even though he would still remind me to study, I got to arrange my schedule by myself... I was actually really thankful to my grandpa... although he could be annoying sometimes...I knew it was because he wanted me to be a good student...

Kevin's English Learning Experience

Although Kevin's English learning started when he entered kindergarten, he did not have deep impression during that time. He explained that "I could not really remember what happened in the English class when I was so small, but I knew we were learning ABC all the time and the teachers taught us with songs and games. It was pretty fun and I just followed the teacher's commands."

Even though Kevin seemed to have a happy memory of learning English in kindergarten, Kevin paused his learning for two years after kindergarten as the English class in elementary school started from the third grade. By the time

Kevin started the English class again, he mentioned that he had forgotten almost everything that he had learned before. Kevin described that there was nothing special about the English class in elementary school that he could remember.

I did not have English class during the first two years of elementary school...I forgot everything I had learned in kindergarten... I had no specific feeling toward English when I was in elementary school... At that time... I did not hate English but I did not like it very much either...

Kevin also revealed that he had a severe fear of learning English because he was not able to understand what people were talking about. Having such a great struggle toward learning English, Kevin described his academic performance in junior high school poor since he was never paying attention in class and he did not understand what the teacher was talking about.

The class in elementary school was fine...but when people spoke English to me... I just could not understand... I think it is more like having fear toward English. I feel so strange and nervous whenever I see or hear English... It was a torture for me whenever there was an English class, I could not understand anything at all...

Although Kevin's father had been telling him that it was important to study English as it is the international language nowadays, his strong resistance to learning English came from the frustration of his performance, which had become the biggest blocking stone in his learning experience.

My dad told me that if I want to travel abroad, I have to know how to speak English because it is the international language...but now...I hate English the most...no matter how hard I try; my grade is still so bad...

Kevin mentioned that he had a nice English teacher that provided extra teaching and that the teacher's material was more suitable for him. With the encouragement from this teacher, Kevin had conquered the fear to learn English and was willing to try hard on English again...Nevertheless, it seemed like it was not bringing any changes to Kevin's score at all.

When I was a freshman in junior high, my teacher was actually pretty good... I was encouraged and started to try again on learning English...but I just could not get a good grade on English...and I was always so angry at myself when I saw the horrible scores...

Kevin had a new English teacher when he became an eighth grader as he

moved back from Taipei. But the new school Kevin went to did not have the differentiated class that he used to have in his old school. Without the solid foundation and not being able to understand what the teacher was talking about in class, Kevin did his own things during the class and decided to give up learning English.

There was no extra class for me there...The regular one was too hard for me...I could not even understand anything...I just hated English and I gave up...

When it comes to academic performance, Bunny, his regular English teacher, said that although Kevin would always sit in his seat quietly, he was never listening to the teacher. Bunny, his regular English teacher, also pointed out that Kevin was raised by his grandparents. Even though his grandpa had been trying hard to keep Kevin's attention in his study, it did not show any significant effect on Kevin.

Kevin never listens to me in class... he would not be noisy but is always sitting there in a daze...Kevin told me that he does not like to memorize things...his grandpa used to ask him to study a lot...he then feels irritated to learning...

Even though Kevin was not interested in learning English, Bunny said that Kevin is actually fond of doing the recording homework that he was assigned.

Kevin loves the recording homework... This is the only thing that he would want to do and will do it well... He always says...Teacher, I'm done with this one, can I do more? ...

During Kevin's second year in junior high school, his performance on English and his attitude toward learning this subject got even worse. Since then, Kevin never studied for English tests anymore. At the end of the semester, when Kevin's teacher told him that he was on the roll to attend the intensive English workshop during the summer vacation due to the bad grade, Kevin was really unhappy and refused to come. Kevin said to his teacher,

I do not need this at all... It is not going to help... The more I tried, the worse grade I would get...I just do not want to study English...

Despite the negative attitude and strong resistance, Kevin was persuaded by his teacher, and in the end, he reluctantly participated in the workshop.

Kevin's Learning Experience During the Workshop

Kevin remembered that he came into the classroom on the first day of the workshop with a frown on his face and asked “Why do I need to be here? I do not even want to learn English.” Refusing to participate in the workshop, Kevin had millions of question marks in his brain about whether or not the workshop was going to bring any changes to his study.

I did not know why my teacher wanted me to come... I did not believe that it was going to bring any changes to me... and English class is so boring (kept sighing) ...

In the meeting right before the workshop, Bunny kept telling the researcher that Kevin is not a hard-working student but an adorable 12-year-old boy who is always living in his own world. Bunny said that Kevin has confidence that seems to come from nowhere.

Kevin is a funny and innocent kid... though he makes trouble sometimes...He is also a regular visitor of the counselor office...He would not accept anyone saying that he could not do anything even if he really cannot...

Although Kevin's academic performance is always poor, Bunny described that Kevin is just like a baby that does his own stuff at his own pace. His kindness and tenderness made him a popular boy in the class and to all the teachers. He is also the only one that is willing to be friend with Johnny.

Kevin is the only friend of Johnny in class...Kevin likes to play with Johnny a lot, they also fight and quarrel really often too...

Although Kevin had fun with his classmates, during the first few days of the workshop, he kept drifting off in class. It was until teacher Bunny made a special deal with him that he started to pay more attention in class.

Teacher Bunny said if I paid attention in class, she would give me an ice bar...I tried to listen ...

Though Kevin's attitude slowly became better, he admitted that he started to play with Johnny whenever he felt bored in class.

I just could not stand sitting there quietly the whole class and started to play with Johnny... we are friends, we play but also argue and fight a lot....

Throughout the workshop, Kevin had a great breakthrough after two weeks

of training. Even though Kevin had no interest in English at all and was not able to write down the complete alphabets in correct order during the first quiz; as Kevin noticed his improvement on the second quiz, his motivation and desire to become better was spurred. Kevin never knew that he could have improved that much through the training. With the visible progress, Kevin's agentic behavior turned positive and further provided him with more motives to keep on enhancing his ability.

I think my listening improved the most... I was not able to recognize the sound of the letter before... but now, if you say, p p p (sound), I know it is p... and I can write down the 26 letters really fluently now...

In regard to the classes in the afternoon, Kevin admitted that he did not really pay much attention to them even though he enjoyed the games and the activities a lot. He told the researcher,

To be honest, I do not have much memory about the afternoon class...I remembered that we had so many worksheets...and I found them helpful in daily life...but it was too hard for me to learn all the vocabs and sentence patterns... and I really enjoyed the game you designed for us after reviewing the phonics...

Other than the improvement in phonics, Kevin pointed out that there was another event that really impressed him, and that was the presentation on the last day of the workshop. All the students that took the workshop course sang an English song together; then each group presented their individual group show. In Kevin's group, they had a short stage show from a story that they made up. Although the numbers of lines that Kevin had was the least in the group, he was still trying to escape from the practice.

The preparation for the presentation was really a torture for me... I just could not speak English in front of people...I did not want to practice at all...I did not think I can do it...

After Kevin knew that his grandpa was going to be present on the show day, he started to try to learn his lines one by one. Although Kevin still felt embarrassed when he first started to practice, he became more comfortable afterwards and started to shout out his lines whenever he saw his friends, teacher or the teaching assistants.

I felt embarrassed when I first read the lines...but I did not want to disappoint my grandpa... After you [the researcher] helped me and practiced a lot with me, I became more familiar with the lines...I thought it was fun to

say my lines out loud to anyone because this was the only time that I could shout at them without reasons...

Even though Kevin improved a lot and was ready before the show day, he mentioned that he was nervous and was afraid that he would forget the lines when he was on stage. But right after Kevin finished the stage show, he burst into tears. It was obviously a breakthrough to his English learning process.

I was so so so nervous before the show started...it was really the first time that I spoke English in front of people...and I did it...It was really unbelievable...

Looking at the feedbacks of the workshop from the students, Bunny said that she was surprised that Kevin would cry so hard on the last day of the workshop. Bunny also mentioned that she did not expect Kevin to improve too much at the beginning since she knew that Kevin was not really happy about joining the workshop.

I could still remember Kevin strongly refused to come to the workshop when I told him...All I wanted from him was to behave well and not to make

trouble... but his performance on the show day was amazing... His grandpa was really proud of him as well... I was so shocked when I heard him sobbing while watching the review video... He was the one that said no for a thousand times before the workshop...

During the interview three months after the workshop, Kevin mentioned that he discovered his classmates who participated in the workshop changed their attitude toward learning English as well.

Everyone seemed to grow up a bit after the workshop... I had never seen them being so focused in the English class before... but now, it seemed like everyone knows it is time to study hard... The times of quarrels has decreased and we study hard without the push from teachers...

Kevin also described that the intensive English workshop was out of his expectation. He first thought that it would be a stressful training which everyone sat in the classroom looking up the dictionaries and writing the test papers together; however, the multiple activities and the schedule that made the class joyful and relaxing seemed to surprise Kevin.

I did not know that the workshop included so many activities such as

morning exercises, result presentation, and the games during classes... I

really love this kind of learning... I think it helps to learn when we are

learning somethings through activities...

Kevin's words after the workshop could still reveal his dislike for English,

however, as he pointed out,

Actually, I still hate English...but as I found that I could use what I have

learned in my daily life, the degree that I dislike English has decreased a

bit... and also because my listening has improved

Critical events

At the beginning of the workshop, even though Kevin had an extreme strong

negative attitude toward learning English, he was actually pretty talkative and

was willing to share his true feelings and thoughts with the researcher. However,

since Kevin was never paying attention in class and he would not finish the

worksheets without help and pressure, Kevin was asked to have a talk with the

researcher at the end of the first week. In this talk, he mentioned that the pressure

from his grandfather has brought a great impact to his learning, as he said,

I was not like this before...Although I have never had an excellent academic

performance since I became a student... Studying was not a torture for me

when I was a little boy...I was still a bit interested in English and the class was fun sometimes...But things became different after my grandfather started forcing me to study...

As the talk with Kevin went deeper, Kevin even imitated how he was forced to study by his grandfather and how the argument between Kevin and his grandfather occurred.

Grandfather: Hey boy, go study...You need to work hard from now...You are not a baby anymore...Go sit at your table and prepare for your test...

Kevin: Oh...Grandpa...Can I have a short break?... I just came from school...I have classes at school all day and it is really tiring...

Grandfather: No...No...No... Go study now...No excuse...You can take a break when dinner is ready...Go back to your seat now!

Kevin: Stop!!!! I just need a short break before I start to study again... Leave me alone!

Being forced to study by his grandfather, Kevin mentioned that he became sick of studying,

I did not want to study anymore...I felt like studying was just sitting there after my grandfather started to take care of my study...And I think I learn

more when I am having fun...So, I just do not like studying quietly...especially when all I can do is only sit quietly and look at the book...It really bores me...

Although Kevin's attitude toward learning English was still not positive, during the second week of the workshop, Kevin's behavior and performance started to show that he had gotten used to the way that the teachers taught and realized that he actually enjoyed having fun in the class. He said in the interview with the researcher

I think around the second week... I realized I was enjoying the English class way more than I ever did before ... It was really fun...You taught interestingly and let us play games to practice...

Even though Kevin said that he enjoyed the class, his excitement was not apparent to the researcher. It was until the pop quiz on the last day of the second week that Kevin realized his improvement during the two weeks.

I learned ABC since I was so young... thought I could do a good job from the beginning... but it turned out that I was not able to write down even some of the alphabets in correct order when I had the first quiz... It was a miracle

that I wrote down a lot more alphabets during the second pop quiz [in the workshop] ... I did not even know how I learned them...The letters just came up to my mind automatically while I was taking the quiz...I was surprised and excited...All I knew was that I love the review classes in the afternoon...

Dora

Dora's Family Background

Dora was born in a family of four, including her parents, her elder sister and herself. Dora's mom is a beautician that runs her own business, while her dad is a retired farmer who still plays an important role in an agricultural association. In fact, as the chairman of the association, he was involved in many activities hosted by the organization. Since both of Dora's parents were busy on their business, Dora mentioned that her parents wanted her and her sister to be responsible for their own learning and gave them lot of space to arrange their schedules.

Since I started school, my parents barely asked me to go study...I arrange everything by myself... they never set any goals or target scores for me...

Having the chance to arrange the schedule for herself, Dora said that she had built up the habit of being responsible for her own study and life. She knew that her parents would always support her when she needs them but it is her own job to work hard and pursue her dream.

They actually gave us lots of freedom and space to make our own decisions...they said we can try whatever we want as long as we are trying our best...

Although Dora and her sister were allowed to decide their own ways of studying, Dora revealed that there was actually an invisible pressure in her parents' words and felt that her parents cared more about the results from study and discipline.

Sounds like they do not mean to give me any pressure... but actually, the stress was always hidden in their words... they would say: No worries, you do not need to be one of the top students...just try to get into a good public high school...

My parents care more about our attitudes and our behaviors...like we should not fight, smoke, drink or do something bad...they care a lot more about

this...

In addition, Dora described that her parent's different personalities and different types of work had brought impacts to her as well. Dora's father, has a lot of business engagements. Since he would always bring the whole family with him, Dora had the opportunity to attend some important events and to meet some important people from different associations.

My dad is always eating with someone from other associations...

Sometimes, I even got to see some government officials...I saw how they discussed and came up with the final decision to specific issues...I learned how to express our own opinions...how to get along with people through joining this kind of business engagements with him...

As for Dora's mom, Dora depicted her mom as an optimistic and outgoing person who is able to have a chitchat with anyone she meets.

My mom is always happy...She chats with her guests all the time... I am really not as confidence and outgoing as she is...

Although Dora said that she was not able to be like her parents, her words

revealed that she enjoyed being with her family, who actually plays an important role in her life.

I stayed with them whenever I do not need to be at school...I just cannot be like my mom... It is not something you can learn...She is really optimist... I do not have that confidence...She can chat so happily with whoever she meets...but it is good to be with them...I learn from them and they give encouragements that is suitable for me...

Dora's English Learning Experience

Recalling her learning experience, Dora said that the first English class that she had was in kindergarten. Although Dora did not even know what she was learning about, she still remembered the joyful memory of the English class back in those days.

The first English class was...in kindergarten...We sang lots of songs and played lots of games and activities...The teacher always did some funny tricks and taught in a relaxing way...It was really fun that I didn't even realize that English was a subject just like Chinese and Math until I entered the elementary school...

With such a joyful and happy impression of learning English, Dora had a calm attitude toward learning English when she entered the elementary school. Dora mentioned that she started the English class from the third year and her scores were held between eighty and ninety. She thought the teacher taught in a similar way to how she learned in kindergarten.

When I started English class again... I was in third grade... English was not too hard for me... The teacher taught vocabulary by showing pictures and some activities... The words were also not too long... only four letters... It was easy at that time... but I still never scored a hundred...

Another memorable memory for Dora in her third grade was the opportunity of representing the school to enter an English singing contest. Dora had a hard time memorizing all the lyrics and the pronunciation at the beginning, but she did not give up and was eager to learn. She chose to go to her teacher during every break time to practice the song.

At the beginning... it was so hard...how could it be possible... I could not memorize the lyrics...but I wanted to sing well...I would be really down if I did not.... I wanted to do my best...

Dora said that “Although my team did not win a prize at the end, we were happy to be able to sing in front of others.” Even though Dora’s attitude was still quite positive and confident, everything changed when the transfer students came to her class the following semester.

We were excited that we did not need to be in the classroom even though we did not win anything... I felt wonderful when we were singing on stage...

The transfer students surprised me when they said they started their English class in the first grade...But, I started from the third grade... If there was no English in kindergarten, I would have known nothing....

Despite Dora was astonished by the new students, Dora did not give up, and she decided to try her best to make up for what she had missed. When Dora became a sixth grader, she took a course on weekends free for the students that lived in the community. At first Dora was really excited that she finally got to learn more than others; however, the course did not meet Dora’s expectation. In fact, it made her frustrated again.

I went to that class... The teacher taught KK phonics and said that it would be an important tool as you entered junior high school...Everyone was doubtful to what the teacher said and started to make noise and cause trouble

in class...The teacher continued on teaching KK...What was worse was that my score after the class went down like a slide...It was below sixty!!!...I was shocked and started thinking if I was suitable for any extra classes after school...

Other than the extra course, Dora had an opportunity to travel abroad to the United States for almost three weeks with her schoolmates in the summer before junior high school. They first went to two junior high schools and were separated into groups to join classes with the students there for one week. For the last few days, they traveled around the state of Utah and got to experience what it was like as a docent that guided the tourists in a national park.

We had classes with the students there... Math is already hard enough, how could I understand math when it was taught in English...We also went to some famous tourist spots before we came back... and we had a task to give the tourists a guide around the national park.

Having no experience of travelling abroad, Dora was excited and had a great time to the United States. Even though Dora admitted that she was afraid to speak English when she first arrived, she finally had the courage to try as she got

more comfortable to the environment.

It was fun... though I could not speak English...At first, I always needed my friends to translate for me... But as I found my partner from the USA was also learning Chinese, I slowly opened my heart and tried to speak English... and then we started to communicate using both languages and body language...The thought of enhancing my English proficiency even came up of my mind several times during the trip...

Even though the trip to the USA had inspired Dora to continue her learning in English, this thought disappeared soon after she came back to Taiwan. With the memory of being behind, Dora still had strong anxiety toward learning English when she became a junior high school student and her condition went even more when she noticed there was a greater disparity between her language proficiency and some of her classmates'.

I wanted to improve my English at the moment I tried to talk to my partner...but it was always just a sudden thought...and at the moment I thought I was able to talk, we were already coming back...

It was awful when I realized how poor my English was! Really! ... some of my classmates were awesome... it was really a helpless and horrible

moment...it was all because I did not study hard during the last year in elementary school (sighing)...

Dora put so much pressure on herself; nevertheless, what made Dora even more disappointed was that her hard work did not turn into good scores. She further explained that she never had a score higher than sixty after that.

I studied and I listened to the teacher in class but my score...poor! It never went up ever since I became a junior high school student...I failed in English all the time... got twentyish for listening and twentyish for writing...and that was all...

While talking about her English learning in junior high, Dora described that she had a hard time and it was a nightmare for her to memorize the vocabulary. Whenever she finished taking the quiz or test, Dora would always forget the words that she had memorized gradually. And since there were more and more new words, Dora found that it was impossible for her to know all the words and started her new way of preparing for the quiz, which was to write all the words as many times as she could until she was able to recite them.

I tried to pronounce the words... But there were too many...So how I

memorized new words was by rote learning...I wrote as many times as I could, but forgot totally the next day...

All I knew was the starting letter of each word...like if I heard s s s(sound), I knew it begins with S...m m m, and it is m...at the beginning, this way was enough to get good grade on listening... But as the content got harder...My listening was as bad as my writing...

In terms of the learning attitudes, Dora is the only student that Bunny gave a positive comment on among the four. Although Dora is hard-working, Bunny mentioned that Dora severely lacks confidence in herself.

Dora works really hard... She pays full attention in class...You can see that she really studies hard...But her grade seemed to disappoint her and blew her confidence badly really often...To build up her confidence, I have a tea time with her regularly...

Bunny said that Dora would always go to her office during break time right after class to figure out what she did not understand in class. Dora's hard work and diligent attitude could always be shown on her scores in the other subjects, but not in English. Another point that Bunny pointed out when talking about Dora

was her great fear of learning and memorizing new vocabulary.

I knew she studies and she has a very positive attitude of solving the problem she is facing... I see her in my office all the time... but her scores made her frustrated... She even thought it was because she was stupid...

Dora has problems memorizing any new words that are longer than four letters...She said that she does not know how to pronounce the words most of the time...She said she forgot the words right after she finished the test every time...It was all by rote...

Although Dora was disheartened when seeing her score, the thought of not to give up easily kept her motivated. Dora would always take a short break to calm herself down when she felt frustrated. And after that, Dora would pay full attention in class again and try her best to learn what she possessed.

During the seventh grade, we had a teacher that loved to write on blackboard...We had to write down everything that was on the board...just to get extra points...Although my classmates were noisy because they did not like the teacher...I think taking notes helped me to stay focus in class...

In the eighth grade, a new teacher came and taught in a different way... We had worksheets and online practices to do...and we can even exchange gifts with her by collecting the stamps from her...I learned lot more grammar through the extra exercises she gave us... though my grammatical concepts were still weak...

Dora's Learning Experience During the Workshop

Apart from her classmates, Dora was the only one that took part in the workshop without any complaint and with eagerness to learn and to improve her English proficiency. When Dora's teacher told her that she was on the roll of the workshop and it was a chance to rebuild the basic concepts and foundation of English, Dora knew she definitely needed to put more effort on English and therefore agreed without hesitations.

I got a C on the test ...I knew I had to come...Teacher Bunny said we would learn phonics and something really basic... I had problems memorizing vocabulary because my phonics was poor...Though none of my classmates were happy about the workshop...I knew I wanted to go...

Since Dora was highly willing to join the workshop, Bunny set up the goal for

Dora to relearn the phonics during the workshop so as to help Dora conquer the resistance toward learning vocabulary. Even though Bunny did not teach Dora during the workshop, Bunny still kept her tea time with Dora. With hard work and the consistence guidance during the phonic trainings, Dora slowly started to be able to sound out the pronunciations of the word by herself. The dwindled fear toward memorizing vocabulary and the expanded confidence toward learning could be one of the greatest achievements for Dora during the one-month workshop.,

The biggest objective for Dora is to conquer her fear toward learning new words...She needs the phonics training to make her future learning easier...Dora wanted to leave the workshop several times at the beginning...she felt it was not helpful...At the end... she came to me excitedly and said she knew how to separate words into syllables and even wanted me to give her a quiz right away ...

Dora confessed that there were several times that she had the thought of leaving the workshop during that one month. The first time occurred when Dora knew that Johnny was in the same group with her. Pam and her discussed about it and came up with the thought of quitting. They seemed to have problems getting along well with Johnny and were afraid that they would have even more

arguments with him during the workshop. Luckily, after a few days, as Dora became familiar with other classmates and the teaching assistants, she found that she was able to stay in the workshop. Nevertheless, not too long after that moment, Johnny had quarrels with his team again and it ruined Dora's determination to learn again.

When I knew we (Dora& Johnny) were in the same group, we (Dora& Pam) did not want to go... We did not want to fight with him again...After several days, we became closer to you and the other assistants...so it was fine...but he went nut again few days after... I was thinking again if I should just stop coming from the next week...

In addition, Dora was also frustrated to the workshop at the beginning as she said, "I did not feel it would be helpful at the beginning...and neither did my friend, we were planning to go home but we made a deal staying for a week to see how it was going." Other than the problem between Dora and Johnny and her feelings, Dora mentioned that knowing that there would be a show day and they had to perform on stage also disturbed her once again.

Oh...that was really a bad new...I was almost giving up when you told us we were going to do a short stage show... It was really annoying and I went to

Teacher Bunny for a talk... I found that I wanted to give up every week, but I was still there, and it was already the last week...so I decided to insist till the end...

Other than all the disturbance that gave Dora the thought of giving up, Dora was glad that she made a wise decision not to leave the workshop. Although Dora had fear toward spelling out the vocabulary, after she had the phonics class with abundant practices to strengthen her phonological concepts, Dora became much confident in her spelling and was even willing to try longer words.

You [the researcher] taught and reviewed the phonics that we learned in the morning...and let us practice through the game you designed...I did not find the workshop helpful at the beginning...but as it came to the end, I noticed that I had learned how to read, separate and spell the new words...I did not need to memorize the words anymore...This might be the greatest improvement for me...

Another breakthrough for Dora was the performance on the show day. Dora mentioned that she was “super nervous” seeing the other groups performing on stage. She was afraid that she would forget her lines when it was her turn. But

Dora turned out doing a great job and she was proud that she finally finished the show and did not forget anything.

I was super nervous and was afraid that I would forget what I should say...

but after the show... it was... finally...wow...I was so happy and proud of ourselves...We made it and did not miss any of our line...

I felt wonderful...I overcame the fear of speaking English...I sang and performed...in front of so many people... I really had never thought of this day...

With the experience of a successful stage show, Dora did not have that strong resistance toward giving a show in front of people anymore. Furthermore, Dora's words showed changes on her learning attitude and her motivation to become a better in English.

After that show...Bunny asked if I wanted to join the drama contest...I

hesitated but I accepted her offer...I had already had one experience...I can do it...

After the workshop, I still remember some of the phonics... I am now more comfortable to learn and to speak English...not as afraid as I used to be...

Critical events

During the first two weeks of the workshop, Dora was still not confident in her spelling ability. Whenever the teacher was teaching new words, Dora tried to avoid having an eye contact with the teacher in order not to be asked to answer the question. Dora also mentioned that she could not feel the benefits of joining the workshop during the first two weeks.

Although the class was really about basic phonics training... I still did not know why teacher Bunny said the workshop would be super helpful for me...I paid attention in class and did whatever the teacher wanted us to practice... But I could only spell out the word with the help from the teacher Bunny or you [the researcher] I just could not do it by myself...even though I know the sound of each letter...I just could not do it...

Even though Dora was not confident in herself or was not considered a fast learner, she was always the one that had the best performance with the positive and consistence attitude toward learning. Dora was therefore assigned as the “little teacher” on the group that would help the slower teammates during the afternoon classes. With the encouragement and the sense of accomplishment that Dora received from helping her classmates, Dora was willing to try and spell out

the words by herself gradually.

During the afternoon classes, I always finished my worksheets quickly because I did not want to be the last one... At first, I was surprised that you [the researcher] wanted me to teach my teammates...Because their English were actually better than mine... But I found that I became more familiar with phonics and slowly became able to spell out the word by myself, even though I still felt awkward sounding out the sounds without your help sometimes...

With the continuous practices during the following two weeks, Dora's fear toward spelling decreased significantly. On the day before the workshop ended, Dora even came to me and Teacher Bunny excitedly and said, "Teacher, give me a test! Quickly! Quickly! Test how good my phonics is, I can spell the word out without your help now, I want to show you!"

Bunny: Wow! Really? I am really proud of you, Dora!

Researcher: Yea, Dora, I can see you are really hard-working...

Dora: Hahaha...quickly Teacher, I cannot wait to be tested...

Bunny: Okay...How do you say this word [computer]?

Dora: Okay, let me try [C-O-M, com;P-U, pu; T-E-R, ter]...

Researcher: Wow! You really have improved so much, Dora!... Always remember this feeling when you are trying to memorize new words in the future...

Dora: I am going to tell my dad when I go home. He will be super happy because I always have problems on spelling.

Pam

Pam's Family Background

Pam has a small family including her parents, her younger brother and herself. Her parents have been running a restaurant together since she graduated from the elementary school. She would study in the restaurant after school. However, Pam's words exposed that she did not always enjoy the time staying in the restaurant.

My mom and dad have a restaurant... We (Pam and her brother) would stay in the restaurant either to help out or to study...I wish I could have a better place to study...My mom wants me to bring my text books to the restaurant all the time...The books are really heavy... and I did not study all of them every time...

In order to take care of their business and the kids, Pam's parents decided to

get tutors for Pam and her brother instead of sending them to cram schools.

Although Pam's parents did not really put too much stress on Pam and her brother about their study, the way Pam's parents set up the standard and the request for P seemed to lead to her resistance toward learning.

I had a tutor since I was seven because my parents have no time to send us to the cram school... They would only ask me to study...tell me how much points I have to get...My parents just never care about how I feel...

Pam admitted that she disliked her parents' attitude toward her study. She said that it was just stress at the beginning; however, the stress from Pam's parents turned into a huge resistance toward learning and gradually became the extreme attitude. With Pam's parents' opinions to her academic performance, Pam started to have an antagonistic attitude toward learning since she was really little.

The more they asked me to study, the less I would do it... I do not like to be treated as a robot...I could do it way better without their push...I think they have totally ruined my interest to learning...

Pam's English Learning Experience

Pam had her first English class when she was in the last year of kindergarten. She remembered that it was a class that all the students would be jumping and

dancing around singing the ABCs song. As soon as Pam entered elementary school, her tutor class started in order to help her on her English learning.

However, it seemed like something redundant for Pam at that time.

My English class started in kindergarten... We sang songs and played games about ABCs in the classroom...I had fun and it was easy for me...My mom got me a tutor when I became an elementary school student...It was so stupid... I did not think I need it...the class was still easy...

Pam got a new tutor as she became a third grader. Pam described that her new tutor is the best teacher that she has ever had and because of the new teacher, Pam has been willing to learn English up to this moment.

When I became a third grader, I got a new tutor, Amber... She is so amazing...My favorite teacher so far...The new tutor knows exactly what I want and what I need...She cares about my feelings as well...she is not only my teacher but also my friend now... She will explain whatever I do not understand patiently no matter how many times I ask...She gives me some advice when I am making decision or having a hard time...unlike my teacher at school...

Having a totally different feeling from the new tutor, Pam disliked her English teacher in elementary school. Pam said that she was discouraged from her school teacher since the teacher was just like her parents that kept asking her to memorize the words. Nevertheless, Pam mentioned that she was not that kind of person that likes to be told what to do. As she seldom did the homework or prepared for the tests that her school teacher asked her to, Pam's comment from the teacher was not too positive and it disheartened Pam to learn English once again.

I just don't want people to tell me to do this and do that...I could definitely have a better grade if my teacher was not her...but I would rather get a lower grade on purpose...she compared a lot...and I really hate comparison ... I did not want my teacher to compare me with others...

Although Pam did not enjoy her English class in elementary school and she normally got bad grades on English intentionally, her tutor was the only person that understood that her real language proficiency was actually better than what her scores were. Pam knew that her tutor would always be on Pam's side and was therefore willing to follow the tutor's step. Despite the fact that Pam had a boring time during the English class in her first year of high school. She mentioned that

her English teacher asked the class to take notes in class. The boring class disappointed Pam and she started not to pay that much attention in class anymore. However, since Pam continued her English learning with the help from her favorite tutor, Amber, English was still a subject that could brought her confidence when she got into the junior high school.

She knew why I had bad scores... she knew about my real English proficiency level... I think attitude is more important than scores...I understood how well I could do if I tried my best...Amber kept encouraging me instead of blaming me...I like to have her English class...she taught me patiently and clearly...My English was good at the beginning of my junior high school life...even though I was not paying full attention in class...It was just writing, writing and writing...It was not too hard...

Pam was still able to get good grades on English before she became an eighth grader; nevertheless, she mentioned that her grades slowly got worse since she was not listening to the teacher in class and missed all the key points that Teacher Bunny said.

I remembered my scores got worse when I had Teacher Bunny last year... but I just did not like the English class at school...I did not want to listen in

class...I think it was enough to have Amber's class... so my grades got worse and worse...even though teacher Bunny was still nice to me... she said she was sad and disappointed to see my grade falling...But the talk with Teacher Bunny did not really bring any help to my English score...

Even though Pam's academic performance was not perfect, she seemed to know that English was not a hard subject for her. Pam knew that she was still interested in learning English whenever she had Amber's class.

Although my grade was not good...I knew it was because of my laziness...I just do not like to memorize...I have gotten used to the way how Amber taught and explained the grammatical concepts to me...just sometimes I mixed them up accidentally...I think I am a lazy and playful learner...I wanted to learn while having fun...just like in the workshop...

According to Teacher, Bunny, Pam has been the "little teacher" since Bunny became her English teacher. Bunny would always make arrangement to position Pam's seat next to a student that is a bit behind so that Pam could help her classmates and that Pam would not just be sitting around doing nothing.

However, Pam's performance dissatisfied Bunny.

She is my "little teacher". She did not listen in class...so I make her sit with

someone who needs help...She gives excuses all the time... She would always say she forgot to tell the class that they are going to have a quiz... but I found out that it was all because she did not study...She wants to escape from the quizzes...also, she did not really help her classmates, was always talking to people around her when I am explaining the key points...

Pam hoped that Teacher Bunny would change her teaching style to the one that is close to Pam's experience in the workshop. However, due to pressure from the upcoming examination in June, Pam did not get what she wanted.

I like the way how we had English class during that one month... I thought our English class would be different after the workshop... Teacher Bunny said she wished that she could let us learn happily too... but the examination is coming...(sigh) I felt tired of studying English... If the class was just like before... It is really so boring...

Without motivation, even with the help from her favorite tutor, Amber, Pam's English learning outcome did not show any significant changes. In addition, Pam does not even have the awareness that the assessment is something that will be related to her future school.

I do not think I want to study...Although English is not hard... I don't know...I just cannot find any motivation now...

Learning Experience During the Workshop

Right before the workshop, Pam was still thinking whether or not she should join the workshop. Pam had problems getting along with Johnny; therefore, when she knew that they were going to be in the same team again, it made Pam hesitated.

I wanted to have my vacation...Why do I need to join the English camp?!... I did not want to come to the workshop when I saw Johnny's name...He argues and has problems getting along with everyone...

Pam ended up participating the workshop because of a talk with Teacher Bunny. Even though Pam was persuaded by Teacher Bunny, she was still very reluctant. Pam remembered that she and one of her friends were even planning to join the workshop just because they were told that all assignments would be exempted if they chose to attend the workshop.

I decided to join the workshop because we would not have homework...not because I wanted to learn... our teacher said it was a rare opportunity...it was totally free for four weeks...

Although Pam's reaction to the trainings seems like there was no specific notes other than her negative and reluctant learning attitude at the beginning, her attitude slowly changed after the workshop started. After Pam answered a question in class correctly and accidentally won a game for her team, she was amazed by the sudden sense of accomplishment and was more willing to pay attention in class and even participate in classroom activities.

I started to enjoy the class when I accidentally found that I could answer the questions...It gave me confidence and power to move on...I could still remember that when the teacher asked us about the sound of each word in a game...I raised my hand quickly as I saw the word on the blackboard... I was astonished that I answered the pronunciation of the word "raincoat" correctly without hesitation and helped my team won that game...

Being able to gain confidence, Pam was engaged in the workshop for the first two weeks. However, she became tired of the regular daily routine and started to get lazy for the latter two weeks.

I was tired of doing the worksheet everyday...I learned some grammars... just lazy to write... I did not want to memorize any of the new words at the end... it took too much time...

Things went even worse when she knew that there would be a show time on the last day. Pam kept murmuring that she did not want to speak on stage and she could not memorize any of her lines.

I remembered we made the story together first... it was fun until I knew there was a show time...but I hated to speak English in front of people and I could not remember the lines...Memorizing all the lines took a long time...I felt annoyed...

Furthermore, Bunny said that she could see everyone's improvement after the workshop. However, with Pam's negative attitude toward learning, Bunny mentioned that Pam was the only one that had no progress.

I just do not understand what Pam is thinking about...It might also be resulted from the lack of confidence...She is not confident in herself...She could really be better...if she works hard...

Even though Pam used to be the one that helped her classmates, Bunny said that Pam was not working even a little bit for her own future and that Pam was used to say no before giving anything a try.

Pam is just too nice to herself...She said no to everything before she even tried it...I do not know what happen to her...She could be really smart if she is willing to try...

Although Pam continued complaining until the last day before the show, she did not forget that the workshop offered some prizes for the well-behaved and most improved students. Pam then put some efforts on memorizing her lines and even started to be the one that could lead the whole team during the practice.

I wanted to win the prize though I thought I could not... because I did not want to study...The practice was really tiring and time-consuming... when we knew that it was going to be a big presentation show that all of our parents were invited...we were even stressed out...but you encouraged us and practiced with us in a fun way...

Pam ended up receiving the biggest prize for the most improved score on the final exam of the workshop and her positive attitude toward the preparation of the show. Pam said that she was shocked when she heard her name and could not believe that it was her.

I did not know how I got the prize...It was a surprise... really... I was still lazy...I told my mom it was impossible for me to be the one...my mom was super happy when I was still in shock...

When talking about the winner of the prizes, Bunny mentioned that she was surprised that Pam was the winner of the biggest prize since Pam was never the most hard-working nor a top student.

Despite the fact that Pam got the most improved prize...I did not think she was the best person to receive the award...Pam's learning attitude was not the best in the workshop...She was better at the beginning...as she felt she improved and gained confidence...She became lazy and tried to escape from all the work and study again ...

Winning the biggest prize from the workshop, Pam was greatly encouraged and wanted to enhance her English proficiency more in the future. However, Pam's strong ambition toward learning English did not last too long, she was defeated by the mock test right after the workshop.

I wanted to study hard on English after the workshop... I could not wait to see the improvement...but my scores showed that I was not that good and it

really disappointed me...I thought I would have an excellent grade since I improved the most during the workshop...now, I am just letting it go again...

Critical events

It was the second week of the workshop when Pam slowly became engaged in the class. With the resistance toward learning, Pam was troublesome for the researcher at the beginning. Although Pam was able to recognize and to match the sounds with the letters correctly, she rejected to join any activities in class and even refused to answer any questions. Whenever the class was trying to practice with the teacher, Pam would just ignore the teacher's instruction and remain quiet.

Researcher: Repeat after me, P P... p p p (sound) and circle the word that has p p p sound... "pig", "big" ... [Pam sat there doing nothing]. Pam, how do you say the letter B?

Pam: [Remain silent, with the word "pig" circled]

After a week of phonics trainings, Pam seemed to realize that phonics was not that difficult for her after she answered a question correctly and won a game for her team.

It was my turn to answer the question...If I did not raise my hand and answer it... our team was going to lose...But I was surprised that I could say the word correctly without paying attention the whole class...To be honest, I did not even know that we were playing a game in class...

Impressed by her own performance, Pam said that she could still remember the complete conversation between her, her teammates and Teacher Alice during the game.

Alice: Alright Pam, it is your turn now... Can you tell me how do you say the word “raincoat” [Point at the word on the blackboard]?

Pam’s teammates: Hey... Quickly!!! We are almost winning...You have to answer this one correctly...

Pam: [Raise her head with a confuse face] ...r...r-ai-n, rain; c-oa-t, coat, raincoat...

Alice: Well done!! You got it, Pam! Great job, your team is the winner and here is the stamp for you guys!![Pam’s team cheering loudly]

Although Pam regained her confidence through the games during class and therefore had a better attitude, her learning motivation did not last too long. Pam

became lazy again soon after her learning attitude had just improved. All she would do is only sit in her seat without paying attention or following the teacher's instruction in class. Pam was not even participating in any classroom activities again! It was not until the moment that Pam realized that there would be prizes at the end the workshop, did she start to pay attention again and put effort on her parts of the final presentation. Even though Pam's attitude in class was still negative, she knew that it was going to be full of teachers and parents on the show day and the performance on stage could be influential to whom the winner of the prize was, Pam was therefore more willing to prepare for the show. Pam showed her strong motivation and confidence during the talk about the prizes with the researcher.

Pam: I want to win the biggest prize...It has to be mine... I can work hard for the prize...

Researcher: It can be yours...But you should try your best and show the teachers that you are working hard...Did you finish memorizing all your lines?

Pam: Not yet...But I will be done before the practice tonight... Don't worry!

Similarities and Differences Between the Participants

Indicated by several scholars that learning a second language is a long-term cognitive process that involves planning, goal-setting, implementation and evaluation (Hickey, 1997; Dornyei, 2000), it is important for teachers and parents to be aware that warm and supportive family can be critical and influential to student's language learning (Gardner, 1985; Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998; Tam & Frank, 2009).

We can see that although the four participants' families tried their best to provide their children with education or assistance on their learning, how each family or parent guided their children on their children's study with different means or habits could give rise to a total distinct result. For instance, although Johnny and Pam had tutors since elementary school, without the guidance and companion from their parents, they seemed to lack motivation or even did not understand the reason of being asked to study by their parents. While in Dora's family, what Dora's parent told her was only to be responsible for herself, including her study and her life. Even though Dora has therefore built up a positive learning attitude toward her study under the influence from her parents, without any extra training and aids to her English learning, her grades on English are not as good as her performances on other subjects. This slowly made Dora lack of confidence in learning English. Furthermore, in

Kevin's case, it is clearly presented that Kevin's grandfather put much pressure on Kevin's study and the stress greatly influenced his interest toward learning.

The above discussion indicates that all of the participants' family put efforts on their study, however, no matter by finding a tutor or giving them freedom on arranging the learning schedule, without the companion and appropriate guidance from their parents, one's family could still function deficiently and resulted to negative effects on children's study.

Other than family backgrounds and the parenting styles, classroom environments and teachers also play a critical role in the students' learning development (Dane, Lochman & Wells, 2004; Chang, 2004). Furthermore, peers are also found to serve as powerful models and reinforcers in one's learning process (Osborne, 2004). It is said that peer influence is specifically strong in a language learning process because peer interaction is a tool that one uses to express their individuality and group identity (Ellis, 1992).

The story from each participant further verifies that learning environments play critical roles throughout their learning process. In Johnny's case, his initial motivation toward learning English came from the favorable story-telling time that he had since he was just a little boy. In Johnny's mind, the English story-telling class contained no anxiety and stress with a wide variety of activities or games during the English story-

telling class. Furthermore, the influence from Mrs. Wu, Johnny's tutor, cannot be ignored as well as she chose to continue teaching in the way that Johnny is familiar with and fond of. The language basic foundation has brought Johnny so much confidence and interest in English learning in elementary and junior high school. Moreover, novel experiences during English class in school, such as using an electronic whiteboard as a teaching tool seemed to reinforce Johnny's positive attitude toward learning English. However, other than the teachers and the relaxing learning environment, there was also something that could be regarded as a blocking stone in Johnny's English process: his relationships with his classmates. Johnny had conflicts and argued with his classmates a lot due to his over-confidence and the arrogant attitude toward learning. And because of the unhappy events with his classmates, Johnny's learning performance became unstable and changeable.

While in Kevin case, although he did not have any unforgettable memories about his English learning experience in kindergartens, Kevin met some teachers that were willing to help and accompany him when he was almost going to give up learning English. Instead of ignoring Kevin, the teacher prepared materials and provided extra classes that were more suitable for Kevin so as to keep Kevin's willingness to learn. With the help from the teacher, Kevin was encouraged and willing to start again on his English learning during his freshman year in junior high school. However, without

this kind of aid and extra training in his new school in Yunlin, English once again became a subject that Kevin gave up to work hard on as he could not understand what the teacher was talking about again.

As for Dora, even though she worked hard and had a positive attitude toward learning, her performance on English still disappointed her a lot. The free KK phonics class that she had when she was in sixth grade could be considered as a turning point in her English learning process. However, Dora was not able to apply the content taught in that class to her learning and her scores even became worse. On the other hand, the singing contest that she joined during elementary school and the trip to the United States seemed to be significant on building her self-confidence toward learning. Through the singing contest, Dora realized that she was able to accomplish the task of memorizing all the lyrics with the help from her teacher and her hard work. While from the trip to the United States, Dora was able to conquer her fear of speaking English as she slowly understood that her partner from the United States was also trying to communicate in a foreign language that she was not familiar with.

Although Dora's performance on English did not become better even though she became more motivated after the trip to the USA, luckily, Dora met Teacher Bunny by the time she was going to give up learning English as she became a second grader

in junior high school. With Bunny's patience and guidance, Dora was slowly able to find her own path of learning English again.

Pam's case can also be an example that shows the influence that a learning environment can bring. Even though Pam's English learning continued ever since she had her first English class in kindergarten, her disagreement with how her elementary school teacher taught her has led to an immense impact to her learning attitude. Being compared with her other classmates and receiving negative comments from the school English teacher, Pam was irritated and frustrated that she was even trying to get bad grades on English intentionally. Fortunately, Pam's second tutor, Amber, appeared and turned out to be the one that is the most supportive and considerate accompany throughout her learning process. With the instruction and assistance from Amber, Pam was able to maintain her motivation toward learning despite her dissatisfaction with her school teacher.

The above points accessed from the participants' story reaffirm the indication from previous studies which proposed that one's learning environment, including teachers and peers that one met and the distinct experiences that one encountered in school, can contribute to either a positive or negative effect to one's learning. For teachers and parents who responded to students' mistakes or behaviors in a supportive way, it could promote the quality of students' learning outcome (Santagata, 2005;

Tulis, 2013; Kreutzmann, 2014), while students' learning motivation can also be hindered by negative feelings during their learning process such as making too many mistakes, not being able to get along with their peers or reach their original goals (Oser & Spychiger 2005; Tulis & Fulmer 2013).

To sum up, the chapter provides the stories of the four participants including their backgrounds, previous learning experiences and critical events during the workshop.

Although students in Taiwan received English education at a very young age nowadays, there are different kinds of learning outcomes that could be given rise from various factors. Even though the participants in current study were considered “low-level students”, the distinct agentic performances of each participant at each stage are led to by various factors. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to be aware that the detailed differences between and among students should be taken into consideration when assigning grouping and arranging the schedule for a remedial workshop.

Summary

The above stories from the four students, Johnny, Kevin, Dora and Pam, demonstrate that there are diverse reasons that leads to the low motivation toward learning English, including the influence from their family, teachers or their own personality. The current study also indicates that trainings during the intensive

workshop works as a stepping stone for those who had a clear goal to overcome a specific problem or to those who shows a great improvement on their English learning. The sense of accomplishment that they gained during the workshop enables the students to keep their agentic level high. However, it could also be a humbling block for those who considered the materials too easy or too boring due to the superior language proficiency level. Therefore, basic trainings can be imperative to build up one's fundamental ability in language learning, student's individual condition and language proficiency level should always be taken into consideration when providing this kind of basic training.

In conclusion, even though the remedial workshop aims to increase these students' confidence and learning motivations through rebuilding foundations, with various language proficiency levels and distinct resistance toward learning English, each of them experienced the workshop differently and therefore had unique goals and breakthroughs throughout the one-month training.

In the next chapter, further discussion of how these participants' individual learner agency had interacted with the training throughout the workshop will be presented.

Chapter 5 Discussion

After presenting the interview data and derive findings in the previous chapter, this chapter will address research question three. It proposes a further discussion to demonstrate how dynamic agency can be by adopting the seven features from Larsen-Freeman's framework.

Agency is relational

The relational feature of agency explained that agency is composed through the constant interactions according to the situations or the surrounding environments one is in. This means, there is not a single reason or explanation that could be fully responsible for one's observed behaviors.

In Kevin's case, even though he started learning English with no animosity, Kevin's learning motivation and attitude turned into negative with the unpleasant memory and pressure given by his grandfather during elementary school. Kevin got more desperate in learning English as he noticed that he could not understand what others were talking about in English. However, even though the low-level agency remained until Kevin became a junior high school student, Kevin was fortunate to meet a teacher that provided extra training for him. With the help and patient guidance from the teacher, Kevin overcame the fear and further rebuilt the positive

attitude toward English gradually. In addition, the relational aspect of agency is also showed by Pam's antagonistic attitude toward learning which is resulted from her previous learning experience. Both examples of how Kevin started to become resistant to learning and rebuilt the willingness to learn and how Pam's dissatisfaction to her teachers and parents led to her unwillingness have testified that agency is the relation with the world that derives from the interactions between one and the environment one is in (Buhrman & Di Paolo, 2017, p.216).

Agency is emergent

The special experience of meeting the foreigners at the front desk in Johnny's case clearly indicates the second feature of agency proposed by Larsen-Freeman, *Agency is emergent*. It was through the opportunity of using the language in Johnny's real-life situation that Johnny changes his attitude toward learning. The example of Johnny's changes not only demonstrates that agency arises when spontaneous event is connected to the world (Kelso, 2016), his ambition to enhance his oral ability after realizing his improvement also indicates that one's agency depends on his or her action and its effect (Haggard & Tsakiris, 2009).

Agency is spatially and temporally situated

The spatial and temporal situatedness aspect of agency corresponds to Emirbayer and Mische's proposal (1998) which indicates that agency is influenced by one's experience in the past, present orientation and their expectation to the future. This feature can be further explained by the participant's story. In Johnny's case, the changing level between Johnny's agentic behavior shows that the situatedness of agency depends on the specific surrounding environment that one is in. For example, with the joyful and enjoyable memory, English story-telling time was what Johnny liked the most when he was a little boy. It slowly cultivated Johnny's interest toward learning this foreign language. With an interesting teaching style that contained diversified activities, Mrs. Wu's tutor class was also a critical point that kept Johnny's agentic level high. However, being over-confident to himself, Johnny was not able to work in team and even had troubles getting along with his classmates. The non-stopped arguments with his classmates had led to negative influence to Johnny's learning attitude and outcome as well. Even though Johnny's agency was comparatively lower whenever he experienced frustrations or difficulties due to his poor relationship with his classmates during the learning process, the joyful learning environments created by the teachers that Johnny met helped to keep his motivation and willingness to continue on his learning.

Dora's changes after the trip to the USA also proved that agency is being transformed and reconstructed by the surrounding environments again. Instead of seizing the opportunity to practice English through the trip, Dora decided to rely on her classmates and not to speak English. However, by being in an environment that English is used as a native language and with the assignments of being the guide of a park after two weeks, Dora had no choice but to try speaking English. It was with the encouragement and companion from her partner that Dora became more open-minded and gradually overcame her fear of speaking English before the trip ended. Both examples show that the temporal environment could possibly bring to a breakthrough to one's learning and further exemplifies that agency is a combination of transformation and reproduction that responds to the problems caused by the changing situations.

Agency can be achieved

Johnny's improvement on his oral ability, which came from his strong determination and assistance from the school teacher not only demonstrates the feature of spatial and temporal situatedness but also explains that agency is achievable.

Furthermore, with the stress from the assignment and being immersed in an English environment, Dora's change after the trip to the USA also demonstrates that one's agency can be accomplished. Even though in both cases, it took the participants a certain period of time to get accustomed to the challenge or the environment, these transformation from them implied that agency is achievable through one's effort and resource in the specific environment.

Agency changes through iteration and co-adaptation

Iteration and co-adaptation are two features that accounts for the changes of agency. These two features demonstrate how each learner's agency interacts with the obstacles or the encounters and how they made the choices or decisions differently to deal with it. In Dora's case, even though she did not completely follow what the teacher assigned, the adjustments that Dora tried to make herself better can be viewed as the co-adaptational behavior in terms of the CDST framework (Larsen-Freeman, 2019). Moreover, in Johnny and Pam's case, rather than following their school teacher's instruction and paying attention in class, they chose to rely on and put more focus on their tutor classes. From the perspective of how their learning attitude shifted between the English class at school and their tutor classes, it can also be an example

of such feature. More specifically, from how Johnny's learning focus shifted from his oral ability to his written one,

Agency is multidimensional

From the stories of all the four participants, it once again proves that rather than being controlled by a single reason, one's agency is interfered by several factors. In Johnny's story, the bad emotions during the learning process had led to his low motivation from time to time. From how Kevin started to dislike English and became willing to try hard again and how Dora kept herself in a high agentic condition despite the frustrations during the learning process, it demonstrates that one's emotional conditions are important to the changes of the attitudes throughout their learning. While in Pam's case, even though her dissatisfaction with her parents had given rise to Pam's negative attitude, better attitude and a higher agentic behavior appeared as she met her favorite tutor, Amber. The above instances accord to Joana's case in Mercer (2012) that the multidimensionality is linked with a range of intrapersonal factors such as emotions, beliefs about language learning, self-beliefs, personality and motivation. These examples from current study reveal that other than the various teaching styles and arrangements in a classroom, learner's emotional condition should also be taken care of concerning learner's agentic performance.

Agency is heterarchical

Rather than being hierarchical, the last feature proposed by Larsen-Freeman implies that agency is a heterarchical construct that each element in one's environment can be influential and actually play a critical role. From the stories of the four participants, it clearly illustrates how dynamic one's agency can be and how one's agency shifts from time to time according to the distinct situations that one encountered. We could see that learner's agency is one's capacity of making decision and their ability to deal with changes and to take responsibility for the actions in a broad sense (Carson, 2012) and it indeed is a complicated and multifaceted construct that is closely affected by and related to the sociocultural structure one is in.

The finding of the study seems to extend the result found by Sower (1996). It indicates that a short-term intensive English workshop can be an applicable and productive method not only in teaching young learners but also low-level high school learners English. Moreover, through the practice from the materials that are closer to students' real-life situations, these students got more chances to apply the language and further brought them a sense of accomplishment and motivation to learn. And this corresponds to Mukundan's proposal (2012) which says that providing students with

opportunities to practice language in real-life situations is indispensable in enhancing low-level learners' language proficiency.

Last but not least, even though the positive effectiveness and students' reactions to the workshop fit the previous results. There are also some findings that contradict and differ from the previous studies. Studies demonstrate that parents' educational background and the socioeconomic background of families can be closely related to student's achievement (Park, Lawson & Williams, 2012; Shih & Change, 2018), which is to say that parents with higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to provide educational support for their children (Parcel & Dufur, 2001), while students from families with lower socioeconomic backgrounds may have less opportunity to receive quality education and therefore may lead to a lower academic performance. However, none of the four cases in this study really come from a poor family. In fact, all of the participants' parents have busy work schedules and are able to give their children a happy life without financial worries. This demonstrates that overlooking children's English education is not the only reason that may lead to low learning outcomes, but how one's parents or teachers guide them and how one's relationship with their peers are also critical to one's agentic behavior. The above discussion has showed that one's agency is dynamic and is not caused by one reason but it is actually an interaction of many factors.

In the next chapter, limitations of the current research as well as the theoretical and pedagogical implications will be presented to provide more practical suggestions based on the results of this study.





Chapter 6 Conclusion

The present study investigated the impact of an intensive English workshop on four lower-level junior high school students' learning and how their learner agency changes throughout the workshop. The four participants' learning experiences and their changes before, during and after the workshop are analyzed and presented in the previous chapters. In this chapter, the summary of the current study will be first presented, followed by theoretical and pedagogical implications, limitations and suggestions for further studies

Summary of the Study

This case study investigated on how the agency of the four 9th grade junior high school students interplays with the one-month intensive English workshop which contained basic phonic trainings and theme-based instructions for lower-level junior high school student. Research methods such as interviews and observations were adopted in the present study for investigation. From the answer of the three research questions, it shows that one's learner agency exercises with all the multi-facets in the surrounding environments such as their family backgrounds, schooling backgrounds and their own beliefs, attitude and motivations to learning, which is to say, agency is complicated and is changeable according to the sociocultural structure one is in.

Concerning How does the changes of the four participants' learner agency before, during and after the remedial workshop correlate to Larsen- Freeman's framework?

the last research question, how the participants' learner agency interacts with the phonic training and theme-based instruction, it is found that by providing phonic training and theme-based instruction, lower-level students are more likely to felt motivated and engaged in learning. Moreover, by preparing materials that are closer to students' daily lives and with the combinations of supplementary activities that aids to lower students' anxiety during the learning process, it helps students to become agentic and to spur their learning motivations.

Theoretical implications

Drawing on the theoretical framework of learner agency from Larsen- Freeman (2019), the Complex Dynamic System Theory (CDST), this study found that one's agency is formed through all kinds of elements rather than being dominated by any single one. For instance, the relatedness of agency is closely connected to the spatial and temporal situatedness feature of agency in terms of the influences from the environment one is in and one's family or learning backgrounds, including their parents, teachers and peers. While the achievability of agency is also interrelated to the relational, spatial and temporal nature of identity, the multidimensional aspect of

agency cannot be overlooked as one's motivation and emotion are considered critical to one's agentic behavior. In other word, the formation of agency is not a hierarchical system that each component would straightly influence others. Instead, it is heterarchical and multidimensional that all kinds of possibilities could occur between every element.

Pedagogical Implications

The current study also offers several pedagogical implications. First of all, since both previous and the current studies show that the short-term intensive English workshop can be an applicable and helpful way to help students with lower academic performance, more of this kind of intensive workshop should be provided for lower-level learners so as to rebuild the students' confidence and to enhance their agentic behaviors. Secondly, from the participants' reactions to the training, it indicates that one's motivation is also important during the learning process. By providing an enjoyable and comfortable learning environment and keeping track of students' emotional conditions, it helps to enhance one's willingness to learn and their agentic performance during the learning process.

Moreover, in the current study, feedback from the parents brings influence on students' learning and it seems to be a significant element that affects one's learning

attitude and motivation. However, it also clearly displays that parents' involvements can be both positive and negative to the child's learning. Therefore, it is vital that appropriate and suitable assistance from the parents or family is provided for each student.

Finally, even though these students were all considered "lower-level", recalling the period of time that the four participants had a comparative higher level of agency. It all happened either when they received a sense of accomplishment or when they realized their goals. Johnny, being super confident to his English proficiency level, did not start to work hard until he realized that he needed more practices on his grammar after the theme-based instructions in the afternoon. Kevin, being frustrated and irritated at his study, became motivated as he noticed that he was able to learn and further use the language in his daily life. Dora, who severely lacks confidence to herself and has great fear toward spelling, gradually become willing to challenge herself on spelling longer vocabulary as she found that her phonic has improved. Pam, who had no specific feelings on either training, was motivated only during the games in class and when she knew that there were prizes for the best-behaved student. These above examples remind the importance of the interactions with the teachers. With more interactive activities and opportunities provided, learners would receive a

greater sense of fulfilment through making use of the language in the classroom or in their daily lives.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present study aimed to provide in-depth understandings to learner agency of the four learners; however, there are still several limitations that need to be noticed. First of all, even though the participants have good rapports with the researcher and feel comfortable sharing their stories, they seemed to have a tendency to go over the details too quickly during the individual interviews, especially when they were sharing about unhappy or negative experiences. Although this problem could have been solved if the researcher gathered the four participants together in an interview to lower their anxiety and embarrassments, due to the time limitation and distinct schedules between each other, group interview was conducted only once and in a very short time. Secondly, since this current study puts emphasis only on the exploration of the four participants' learner agency, it could be difficult to generalize the findings into all learning contexts.

Based on the current study, the followings are some suggestions for further research. First, to increase the participants' sense of security and to build up a more relaxing interview environment, the inclusion of group interviews in future study can help the participants express themselves comprehensively to have a more thorough

understanding about the participants. Secondly, with learners of diverse language proficiency levels and greater attentions to the quality of English learning environments, research related to the intensive workshop is undoubtedly needed to be broaden in the future. In addition, since many participants were not very interested in the workshop before it started, in the future workshop, the students who participates in this kind of workshops can make a recall video which talks about their experiences to encourage those who have similar backgrounds and have the potential to join the workshop. Finally, further studies are recommended to investigate and compare both teachers' and students' perceptions particularly on the learning in the remedial workshop. In this way, it may discover some unique perceptions and further provide better suggestions to improve the design of the trainings and instructions.

Conclusion

By exploring how these four participants' learner agency interacts with the intensive remedial workshop, this qualitative study serves as a fundamental understanding of how one's agency changes according to the divergent elements in the surrounding environments. Moreover, it is expected that the findings of the study offer a new perspective for teachers to strike a balance between their beliefs and the practical teaching under particular contexts. It is important to take learners' different

learning backgrounds and abilities into considerations rather than focusing only on the inputs in class or the expectations to students.



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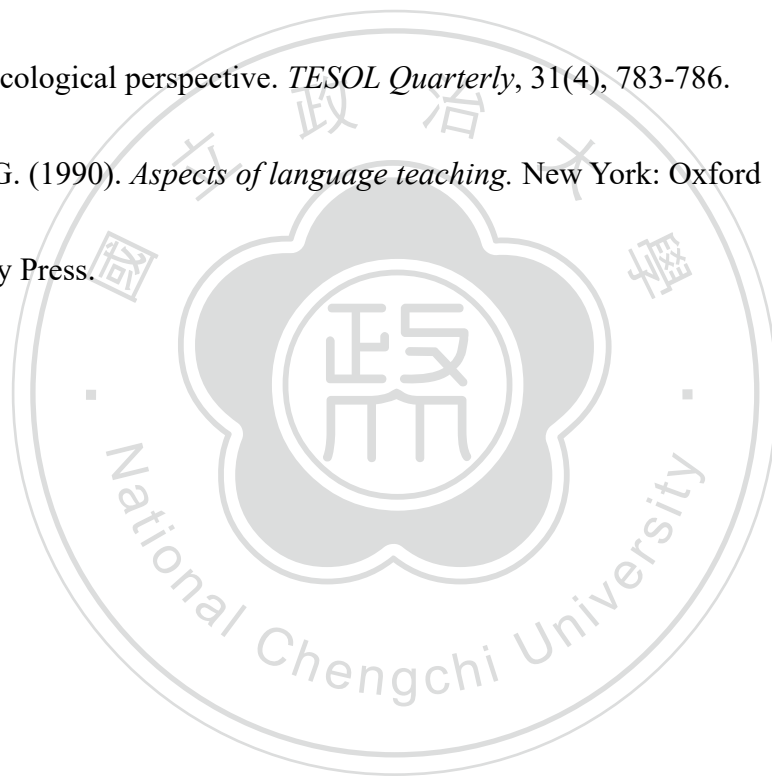
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Appendix A

Lesson plan

Week		Phonics training	Themes-based instruction
Week 1	Day 1	Vowel: a	Jobs
	Day 2	Consonants: b, c, d, f, g	What is your dream? My dream is to become a _____.
	Day 3	Vowel: e	Colors
	Day 4	Consonants: h, j, k, l	What is your favorite color? My favorite animal is _____.
	Day 5	Review & Quiz	
Week 2	Day 6	Vowel: i	Numbers
	Day 7	Consonants: m, n, p, q	What time is it? It is _____.
	Day 8	Vowel: o	Feelings
	Day 9	Consonants: r, s, t, v,	How do you feel? I feel _____.
	Day 10	Review & Quiz	

Week 3	Day 11	Vowel: u	Animals
	Day 12	Consonants: x, y, z	What is this/ that? This/That is a _____.
	Day 13	Review	Animals
	Day 14	Comprehensive phonics practice	What are these/ those? These/ Those are _____.
	Day 15	Review & Quiz	
Week 4	Day 16	Comprehensive	Adjectives
	Day 17	phonics practice &	I am _____. He/She/It is _____. You/ We/They are _____.
	Day 18	Phonics activities	Action verbs Are you _____ ?
	Day 19	Final Quiz	Yes, I am _____ . No, I am not. I am _____ .
	Day 20	Final presentation	

Appendix B

Interview Questions with the Students

A. First interview with the four students: (immediately after the workshop)

1. 分享一下你的英語學習歷程故事吧！你從什麼時候開始學習英文的呢？

(Please share about your English learning journey/ When did you start to learn English?))

2. 你還記得你的老師們怎麼教你的嗎？有特別喜歡的老師或是教學風格嗎？

(Do you still remember how your teachers teach you? Is there any specific teacher or teaching method that you like?)

3. 你喜歡學英文嗎？是什麼原因讓你喜歡/不喜歡英文呢？

(Do you enjoy learning English? /What makes you like/dislike English?)

4. 你覺得英文在你的生活重要嗎？是什麼讓你有這種感覺呢？

(Do you think English is important in your life? / What makes you have this kind of feeling?)

5. 你覺得英文帶給你的生活什麼改變呢？

(What changes do you think English has brought to your life?)

6. 除了課堂外，你有其他機會使用英文嗎？

(Do you have any opportunities of using English other than in the English classes?)

7. 你在學習的過程中遇到了哪些困難或挫折呢？

(What difficulties did you encounter during the learning process?)

8. 你覺從幼稚園到小學到國中，學習英文有什麼樣的轉變、學習狀況或是你的態度上有什麼差別嗎？

(Do you think there is any difference between your English learning condition, learning attitudes throughout your learning process since kindergarten?)

9. 因為這些差異，你做了哪些英語學習上的調整呢？

(Did you make any changes because of the differences?)

10. 看到那些程度比你好的同學，你是做了什麼來改變或調整自己的目標？

(What did you do to adjust yourself when you see those who has a higher level of language proficiency?)

11. 你為什麼會來參加英語工作坊呢？

(Why did you decide to join the workshop?)

12. 當初老師要求你們來參加工作坊的時候有什麼反應呢？

(What was your reaction when your teacher asked you to join the workshop)

13. 工作坊結束了，你覺得這一個月值得嗎？

(The workshop is finished now. Do you think it's worthy to spend a month here?)

B. Follow-up interview with the four students: (three months after the workshop)

1. 工作坊結束三個月了，分享一下結束後到目前為止你的英語學習狀況吧！

(It's been three months since the workshop ended. Share about your current learning condition.)

2. 你覺得英語工作坊跟學校的英文課有什麼不同呢？

(What do you think are differences between the teaching in the workshop and your formal school life?)

3. 你覺得哪一部分的訓練或是哪一個活動對你來說最有幫助？

(Which activity or which part of the trainings do you think is the most useful?)

4. 你覺得工作坊為什麼可以讓你再次喜歡英文或覺得你是可以學會英文的呢？

(Why do you think the workshop makes you motivated and think that you are able to learn English again?)

5. 你覺得工作坊期間讓你印象最深刻的是什麼？為什麼呢？

(What was the most impressive thing during the workshop? Why?)

6. 工作坊期間有沒有讓你很挫折的時候呢？發生了什麼事情？

(Was there any moment that you felt frustrated during the workshop? What happened?)

7. 工作坊期間，看到那些程度比你好的同學，你是做了什麼來改變或調整自己的目標？

(What did you do to adjust yourself when you see those who has a higher level of language proficiency during the workshop?)

8. 現在的你，怎麼看待英語學習呢？你覺得你是怎麼樣的學習者呀？

(How do you perceive yourself as an English learner now?)

9. 在工作坊期間你做了哪些英語學習上的調整？

(What did you do to adjust your English learning during the workshop?)



Appendix C

Interview Questions with the Teacher

A. First interview with the school teacher: (immediately after the workshop)

1. 請老師分享一下這四位學生的背景及特性

(Please share about the backgrounds and characteristics of these four students)

2. 請老師分享一下在學校教他們的經驗

(Please share about the experience of teaching them at school)

3. 請老師說明一下這四位學生目前的學習狀況

(Please talk about the current learning conditions of these four students)

4. 當初和學生提到要參加工作坊的反應是如何呢？

(How were students' reactions when you tell them about the workshop?)

5. 在工作坊期間和學生聊天的過程，學生都提到了哪些東西呢？

(What did the students share with you when you chatted with them during the workshop?)

6. 工作坊後有從學生那邊聽到什麼相關回饋嗎？

(What feedbacks did you receive from the students after the workshop?)

B. Follow-up questions with the school teacher: (three months after the workshop)

1. 在工作坊後有發現學生有什麼不同嗎？

(Have you discovered any differences between these four students before and after the workshop?)

2. 這些孩子子在學習態度上有什麼樣的轉變嗎？

(How have these students' attitudes changed after the workshop?)

