Perceptions of the value and uses of English among university English majors in Taiwan

Dissertation

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Abstract

In this research, I employed qualitative methods to understand the role of English in the lives of 50 university English majors and recent graduates in Taiwan. I especially drew upon ethnographic interviews to learn about the life histories of English learning for these individuals, supplementing this data with ethnographic observations and participant observations as an English teacher at two universities in southern Taiwan. The ways in which participants made meaning of experiences with English, established goals, and enacted choices related to English provided insights into the role of the individual within the social, political, ideological, and pedagogical terrain in which English is situated. This especially highlights language ideology and language power.

This research documents the uses to which participants put English in the past and present as well as their goals for English use in the future. The foremost use of English for these participants was within contexts of formal education in which they derived a number of tangible benefits from their English competency. Outside of such settings and for those having already graduated from university, English appeared to be much less useful. Despite this, individuals in this study – especially those not having yet entered the workforce – evidenced an inflated sense of the value of English both in the world of work and in Taiwan society more broadly.

Virtually all participants expressed criticism of English teaching as implemented
in their day schools. They found these classes to be inadequate and even oppressive in nature due to the combination of heavy reliance on traditional teaching approaches and the focus on preparing for high-stakes high school and college entrance exams. They especially criticized the focus on declarative grammatical knowledge, rote vocabulary memorization, and formal literacy skills, viewing these as necessary but insufficient for the well-rounded language user. They perceived their own personal language deficits as rooted in these educational experiences. Although all had taken measures to supplement their formal day schooling, they still felt themselves to be weaker in oral language competencies and, especially, language use in less formal socially-situated negotiation of meaning.

The sense among participants of the ideologies and regimes of power underwriting English do not parallel the critical stance of scholars who have questioned widely-held assumptions about the value and innocence of English as well as the central position of the native speaker as language model and as preferred language teacher. Instead, constructing the foreigner in specific phenotypic terms, participants viewed themselves against a foreigner standard with foreigner contact being seen both as a measure of self worth and as a means of remediation. While such beliefs reflect a utilitarian sensibility given the benefits accruing from alignment with the institutions and linguistic norms associated with the traditional English-speaking countries, they also underwrite the ongoing hegemony of the native speaker and these countries and
institutions. Instilling a sense of the legitimacy of Taiwan English could disrupt the hegemony of native-speaker Englishes, empowering students and teachers and enhancing their well-being. Reducing the reliance upon high-stakes assessments would also yield important benefits.
Dedication

Dedicated to the students who have taught me so much
Acknowledgements

A project of this scope does not represent the work of a single individual. In my case, I have enjoyed the support of many people, too numerous to thank individually. I would, however, like to acknowledge those who were especially instrumental in helping me to bring this work to fruition. First, I would like to acknowledge the deep pool of support provided by my family. The understanding and stability that they provided were truly foundational in this project. I would also like to offer my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Antoinette Errante, for her guidance and, especially, for her patience in supporting my writing process. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Jan Nespor and Dr. Richard Voithofer for their guidance on this project.

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Educational Policy and Leadership
Table of Contents

Abstract...........................................................................................................................................ii
Dedication.......................................................................................................................................v
Acknowledgements.......................................................................................................................vi
Vita...................................................................................................................................................vii

Chapter 1: Study background, rationale, and implementation......................................................1
  1.0 Introduction..............................................................................................................................1
  1.1 High-stakes testing and washback..........................................................................................4
  1.2 English pedagogy....................................................................................................................5
  1.3 Role of the native speaker and local varieties of English.....................................................6
  1.4 Early English education.........................................................................................................7
  1.5 English outside of class.........................................................................................................8
  1.6 Individual resources and English learning............................................................................9
  1.7 Statement of problem.............................................................................................................10
  1.8 Research questions................................................................................................................12
  1.9 Methodology........................................................................................................................12
  1.10 Significance of the study......................................................................................................15
  1.11 Limitations of chosen research methods..............................................................................16
  1.12 Research sites......................................................................................................................17
  1.13 Organization of the dissertation...........................................................................................19

Chapter 2: Research pertaining to English in Taiwan.................................................................20
  2.1 Introduction..............................................................................................................................20
  2.2 The sociolinguistic context of Taiwan....................................................................................21
  2.3 English and English education in Taiwan.............................................................................23
  2.4 High-stakes testing and washback..........................................................................................29
  2.5 Early English education.........................................................................................................34
  2.6 English teaching methodology: Communicative language teaching and traditional pedagogy.........................................................................................................................36
  2.7 The content of English teaching............................................................................................43
    2.7.1 Language text inauthenticity and the authentic materials/corpus movement...............43
    2.7.2 The “native speaker fallacy” and ideologies of race and language use.........................45
    2.7.3 Exonormative standards, the world Englishes movement, and local English varieties....49
  2.8 ESL/EFL and out-of-class learning.........................................................................................51
Chapter 3: Project planning and implementation

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Participant recruitment and selection
3.3 Life histories of English learning and use
3.4 The research sites
3.5 Selection of qualitative research methods
3.6 Interview procedures
3.7 Ethnographic observations
  3.7.1 Ethnographic observation: Participant observation as a teacher and tutor
  3.7.2 Ethnographic observation: Observations of the broader society
3.8 Data Analysis
3.9 Reflexivity
3.10 Limitations
3.11 Summary

Chapter 4: Experience and Beliefs about English and English Learning among 50 University English Language Learners in Taiwan

4.1 Research Question #1: In what ways was English manifest in participants' lives prior to college?
  4.1.1 Individuals in this study experienced long-term exposure to English learning
  4.1.2 Individuals in this study had extensive experience with formal English learning within traditional classrooms in Taiwan
  4.1.3 Families deployed a variety of resources for participants' English educations
  4.1.4 Participants received positive feedback on their English
4.2 Research Question #2: What are participants' perceptions about English?
  4.2.1 You will be kicked out of the world: The perceived importance of English
  4.2.2 Beating the competitors: English grade competition
  4.2.3 Southern discomfort: Perceptions of regional inequity in Taiwan English education
4.2.4 The computer made me do it:
The power of English, the power of tests, and feelings of self-determination in Taiwan’s English learner life histories.................................................................127

4.2.5 Why can’t we prepare for daily life?:
Feelings about English pedagogy in Taiwan.................................131

4.2.6 How can he be our English teacher when he doesn’t even look Canadian?: Perceptions of race, nationality, language, and English teaching in Taiwan........................................................................137

4.2.7 Running away:
Perceptions of personal English competency...............................151

4.3 Research Question #3: Where do these participants use and wish to use English and why?.......................................................................................................................156

4.3.1 English in the university...............................................................156

4.3.2 Studying English out of class.......................................................158

4.3.3 Only with foreigners: Cultural norms and English usage.............160

4.3.4 English in part-time employment.................................................162

4.3.5 English in media...........................................................................163

4.4 Research Question #4: What is the relationship between English learned in formal – and potentially informal – educational contexts and that used by participants in these various contexts?.................................165

4.4.1 Troubling the learning/use dichotomy..........................................166

4.4.2 Perceiving and compensating for weakness..................................167

4.5 Research Question #5: What are participants’ intentions for English use in the future and why have they chosen these?........................................................................170

4.5.1 English in employment within Taiwan.........................................170

4.5.2 English in advanced study within Taiwan....................................175

4.5.3 English in study abroad.................................................................176

4.5.4 English in employment abroad.....................................................178

4.6 Future English: It’s hard even to be a teacher..................................179

4.7 Summary..............................................................................................181

Chapter 5: The Personal Significance of English among 50 English Learners in Taiwan..............................................................................................................................185

5.1 Introduction and overview.................................................................................................................................185

5.2 Discussion: Summary of Chapter 4 results.................................................................188

5.2.1 Early English educational experiences.........................................189

5.2.2 Perceptions about English..............................................................191

5.2.3 Race and English: constructing the foreigner............................192
CHAPTER 1
STUDY BACKGROUND, RATIONALE, AND IMPLEMENTATION

1.0 Introduction

English in Taiwan now represents an important part of the curriculum from elementary school through college. Taiwanese students spend many hours per week studying English in class, in cram school, and at home. Those who major in English at the university level engage in many further hours of English study. Some also use English outside of class or go on to use it professionally. In addition to being competent in English, virtually all are also fluent in Mandarin as the school language and have some level of competence in either Taiwanese\(^1\) or Hakkanese\(^2\) as languages often used less formally. Furthermore, English majors in Taiwan also study one or more languages in addition to English at the university level. It is sometimes said that 10,000 hours of engagement in any activity represents the threshold for achieving expertise in that field. Whether or not this is true, it is clear that English majors in Taiwan have a fair claim to the title of expert language learners. For myself as a language teacher and researcher, this level of expertise with language represents a tantalizing repository of useful insights into the lived experiences associated with English. To tap into these insights, in this project I focus on the life histories of English learning and use as recalled by 50 present and former Taiwanese

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1 The term “Taiwanese” refers to the Hokkien variety of the Min-Nan Chinese language. I employ the term “Taiwanese” in this study as a reflection of the widespread use of this term in Taiwan and its universal use among study participants.

2 A language spoken by the Hakka people of Mainland China and Taiwan
university English majors. This provides a window into the perceptions that they have for the significance of English in their lives, shedding light on how they construct English, how they construct their relationship with English, and how they construct themselves as English learners and users.

These life histories of English learning represent an important area of inquiry because English study and use in an EFL context like Taiwan are situated at the nexus of a number of areas of contention. At the broadest socio-political level, widespread discourses about the importance, neutrality, and inevitability of English as a language of international communication and modernization have undergirded its popularity while also sparking a critical theory backlash among scholars. These scholars warn of the connection between English and the power of those places, institutions, and people who control it, promote it, and are advantaged by its spread. Considering the many such critical responses to the power of English, Pennycook (2004) notes that “what [such responses lack] is a view of how English is taken up, resisted, used, or appropriated” (p. 793).

While simply documenting the role of English in the lives of study participants is one important objective of this study, the ways in which participants’ in this project make meaning of experiences with English, establish goals, and enact choices related to English allow me to move beyond this preliminary step and to query the role of the individual as an actor living within and responsive to the social, political, ideological, and pedagogical terrain in which English is situated. This research, therefore, is timely and apt in addressing the gap of which Pennycook speaks. To accomplish this, I seek to
understand individual beliefs about language and language ideology held more broadly in
the society. In particular, I am able to learn in this study about how participants
understand the role of the “traditional” English-speaking societies – referred to by Kachru
(2005) as “Inner Circle” contexts – and those individuals and institutions most strongly
associated with these contexts in their own English learning. I especially investigate how
individuals construct the native and non-native speaker of English in political, racial, and
linguistic terms, the role that they see such individuals as playing in English teaching and
learning, and how this articulates with their construction of themselves as English
learners.

I do not limit this project to these areas of focus, however. English is a required
school subject with other languages meeting the daily needs of most people in Taiwan
society. Most participants in this project are current university students or recent
graduates as well. This implies a robust connection between English and schooling for
participants. Because of this association of English as a subject of study, I also consider a
number of specific issues relating more directly to schooling. These include practices of
high-stakes English testing and competition as well as current practices and debates in
English language pedagogy including the role of explicit grammar teaching and the
implementation of the communicative language teaching approach. I also address
practices of English study outside of formal, state-regulated day school and the role of
individual resources in education. Finally, I consider rationales and practices associated
with early English learning for children. All of the foregoing areas of focus are not
insular; considering the interplay among them represents an especially important
contribution of this project. In the following sections I briefly delineate these areas of scholarship with which this project most strongly articulates.

1.1 High-stakes testing and washback

Such is the importance of high-stakes high school and college exams in Asian contexts that the term “Exam Hell” was long ago coined to characterize the level of stress surrounding them (Foster, 1973). Such high-stakes testing practices impact English students in Taiwan and may shape the uses to which they put English in their lives as well as their feelings about the language. For the students in this study, entry into high school and university was virtually wholly determined by the results of entrance exams prominently featuring English as one tested subject. Even at present, despite efforts to reduce the stress associated with a single high-stakes exam through the adoption of some alternatives, high-stakes tests of some sort are still very important in Taiwan, perhaps even more so. Beyond entrance exams for high school and college, the importance of English tests now also extends into post-graduate and professional life in Taiwan. For example, the government of Taiwan has in recent years developed the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) in order to assess the English of a broad cross section of the population, including many government employees. The attitude of importance and confidence of the Taiwan government toward this test is exuded in the language used to describe it in official literature. A government web site proclaims that “the GEPT has proven a useful indicator of English ability and is fast becoming a standard certification tool” (“Government Information Office,” 2002). Scholars in language education have
considered the influence that such tests may have upon the methods and content of teaching and learning, terming these effects *washback* (Chapelle & Douglas, 1993, p. 16). Thus, the impact of such tests upon English study, and, hence, upon individual feelings about English, represents one aspect of individual experience and feelings about English and is a central theme of this study.

1.2 English pedagogy

In this study I also consider students' experiences and responses to the methods and the content of English teaching. This is important given potential implications of the shift to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the most important change in foreign language teaching over the last few decades. While language teaching methods used prior to the adoption of CLT tended on the whole to be more heavily oriented toward written translation, drills, rote practice, and the explicit study of grammatical form, proponents of the communicative approach view the acquisition of communicative competence as the ultimate goal of language learning. Given this objective, the CLT approach features a greater emphasis on classroom tasks in which students employ the target language in the exchange of meaning. CLT can be traced back at least to the work of Dell Hymes in the early 1970s (Crombie, 1988, p. 283). Starting in the 1990s, CLT came to be adopted in Taiwan (Su, 2006). As with any new methodology, the implementation of CLT opens the door to a number of “growing pains” in its adoption. For one thing, the shift toward CLT has left the role of explicit grammar teaching and of the grammar-translation method in present-day Taiwan as an area that has generated considerable debate (Ellis, 1994; Wei,
The adoption of the CLT stance has also affected the actual epistemology – not simply the methods - of English teaching. Fueled by the disconnect sometimes observed between the language evident in language teaching materials and the language as it is actually used outside of the classroom, this content has come under increased scrutiny in an effort to better align what is taught with the needs of real-world communicative language use. One response has been the “authentic” teaching materials movement. In a reflection of this philosophy, Rogers and Medley (1988) contend that learners must “experience the language as it is used for real communication by native speakers” (p. 467). As one method to achieve this goal, scholars and practitioners have made efforts to base materials on language corpora collected from instances of contextualized, meaning-based language use. For example, McCarthy and Carter (2001) argue that a corpus of spoken language can be a valuable tool in teaching oral skills given the tendency for traditional oral teaching texts actually to inappropriately be based upon written language. Despite such concerns and the accompanying efforts at improving teaching materials, little work has explored the perceptions that students may have regarding the authenticity of teaching materials used in their classes and how these feelings may relate to their attitudes about the use and value of language. This project does so.

1.3 Role of the native speaker and local varieties of English

The role of the native speaker of English in English language education has come under intense scrutiny in recent years. Especially noting the increasing visibility of “World
Englishes,” scholars have challenged the long-standing assumption that the native speaker should be the preferred teacher and that the language variety associated with these individuals should be the target of study (Kachru, 2005). In light of the trend of increasing use of English around the world – and coupled with the linguistic understanding that (perceptions of) the value of language varieties represent a social construct rather than being a reflection of any inherent superiority of such varieties - they assert the value both of non-native speaking local teachers as well as of teaching that acknowledges, or is even based upon, local English varieties (e.g., Samimy & Kobayashi, 2004). Yet, the feelings of students about the value of native versus non-native speaking teachers as well as of local varieties of English is an area in need of further scholarly attention. In addition to the language itself, the appropriateness of the inclusion of Western cultural norms in English teaching methods and content has been questioned on the grounds of their appropriateness for other cultures and, especially, since most interactions now taking place in English are among non-native speakers (McKay & Borkhorst-Heng, 2008). This highlights the complex terrain of language ideology that participants in this study inhabit and represents a further warrant for examining their lived experiences and beliefs about English learning.

1.4 Early English education

Attitudes about the value of early English study also impact English students in Taiwan. The so-called “critical period hypothesis” suggests that language study undertaken during childhood can result in more effective language acquisition, especially in the form of
greater ultimate accuracy in pronunciation as well as the acquisition of “native-like”
grammatical intuition (Penfield & Roberts 1959; Ellis, 1985). Beliefs in the value of early
English education have resulted in the extension of the traditional onset of English
education from the junior high\textsuperscript{3} years into elementary school in Taiwan (Chen, 2002, p.6).
Not only do such policies strive to structure individual experiences of where, when, and
in what manner students may encounter a foreign language, but they impact learners’
acquisition of the target language (Tollefson, 1981). In turn, the manner in which a
language is acquired may bear upon the uses to which individuals will later attempt or be
able to put that language. In this study, I investigate students' experiences with and
feelings about early English education. Their own recalled life histories of English
learning represents an especially potent lens through which to consider this issue given
that many participants in this study began to learn English from elementary school age.

1.5 English outside of class
In addition to formal educational contexts, opportunities for English language learning
and use in contexts outside of the classroom may also have a role to play for learners in
Taiwan, and I consider them in this project as well. The traditional dichotomy between
English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in places
like Taiwan rests, in part, upon the assumption that in EFL contexts target language
exposure and use are largely confined to the classroom (Wakamoto, 2009, p. 38). Given
the realities of globalization and of English as a global language in such contexts,

\textsuperscript{3}Although the term “middle school” is now preferred by many, I use the term “junior high school” in this
study in deference to the universal use of this term among study participants.
however, English is now available – and potentially even very prominent - outside of the EFL classroom as well. For example, online English interactions can be important in developing English language competency for language learners (Lam, 2009). In addition, English often serves as an important component of popular culture in societies traditionally subsumed under the EFL category (Cheshire and Moser, 1994; Moody 2006; Lee & Moody, 2011). For this reason, I explore the relationship between individual experiences with English outside of traditional classroom contexts and perceptions of the use and value of the language.

1.6 Individual resources and English learning

Scholarship suggests that three types of personal resources - economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital – may be deployed by individuals in attaining academic success. In terms of economic capital, in Taiwan whether one resides in a more affluent urban setting or a less affluent, especially rural, one appears to impact the quality of one's English education. Chen (2003, p. 164) notes that affluent urban contexts tend to have the necessary personnel to implement early English education more effectively than in the case of rural schools in less affluent locales. In addition, the popularity of private for-pay forms of education such as cram schools represents another means by which economic resources can be transformed into success with English. Other types of resources besides the economic may also have a role to play. Bourdieu (1977) considers the manner in which the lifeways – the habitus in his terms – of some in a society more closely mirror school culture than those of others and that educational systems allow such individuals to
deploy this “cultural capital” in order to attain greater educational achievement. Coleman (1988) argues that “social capital” - social connections - also can yield important resources for formal educational achievement. Because of the importance of personal resources in education, in this study I consider their role in English learning.

1.7 Statement of problem and research questions

Individual experiences with English in Taiwan are multifaceted and long-term, especially for those majoring in the subject at the university level. These experiences take place over the course of many years, occur potentially in a variety of contexts of learning and use, and are undertaken for many possible reasons. Also, English in Taiwan articulates with a number of areas of contention ranging from the ideological underpinnings relating to why – given the role of English in the world today – English should be studied (or resisted) to numerous debates concerning epistemology and methodology informing English pedagogical practice. In light of this situation, the “problem” prompting this study is that the manner in which Taiwanese students' make meaning regarding the role of English in their lives needs to be better understood.

This is a dual-pronged problem: It entails, first, a more documentary task of detailing English use and goals among participants, and, second, a more analytical undertaking of determining the beliefs associated with these uses and goals. To address this problem, I investigate the significance of English in the lives of former and present university English majors in Taiwan as my primary research question. In my research sub-questions I “operationalize” significance as embedded in English learning.
experience, actual use, and goals for future learning and future use. Focusing on the way that people portray these experiences with English and the reasons for their choices of goals for English provides insights into their personal understanding of English learning and use. My research questions, therefore, successfully advance this dual documentary/analytical objective: They generate an inventory of uses and goals, serving as a springboard to understanding the beliefs associated with English. In this way I am able to foreground and query the role of the individual language learner as a site of lived experience, understanding, appropriation, transformation, contestation, and resistance within the sometimes contentious socio-political-pedagogical terrain of English as foreign language education. My research especially advances scholarship by shedding light on the relationship between the issues I have presented and participants’ experiences with and feelings about English in their own lives. In addition, I consider the interplay among these issues as facets of lived experience. This latter objective is valuable since much research tends to examine such issues in isolation as an intentional methodological choice.
1.8 Research questions

With the goals and perspectives outlined above in mind, this project addresses the following questions.

Primary Research Question

What are the perceptions held by Taiwanese university English majors and recent graduates for the significance of English in their lives?

Underlying Research Questions

1. In what ways was English manifest in participants' lives prior to college?
2. What are participants' perceptions about English?
3. Where do participants currently use and wish to use English and why?
4. What is the relationship between the English learned in formal – and potentially informal – educational settings and that used by participants in these various contexts?
5. What are participants' intentions for English use in the future and why have they chosen these goals?

1.9 Methodology

My goal in this research is to understand the perceptions that participants hold for the significance of English in their own lives. A qualitative research philosophy is appropriate for this work since a qualitative stance fosters a holistic and situated
exploration of lived experience (Glesne, 1992, p.7). Given that I am interested in perceptions pertaining to English, qualitative research is especially applicable due to its facility in enabling the researcher to understand the meaning that individuals themselves place upon experience by fostering an emic perspective (Hoepfl, 1997). Finally, a qualitative approach aligns with my research goals since it allows for the research to respond dynamically to specific situations (Patton, 1990, p. 39). Adopting a qualitative research design, I generate a collection of heavily autobiographically-embedded “hows” and “whys” of English use and goals for use permitting me to query the individual as a site of in-depth expertise, understanding, and complex feelings as well as a potential locus of resistance, contestation, and transformation of experiences and discourses relating to language.

Fostering the kind of understanding of situated lived experience in which I am interested here dictates that I must carve out an empirical space strategically combining breadth and flexibility with sufficient depth of focus. To do this I draw heavily upon semi-structured ethnographic interviews to elicit recalled personal educational life histories of English learning and use. Interviewing 50 individuals in depth situates this study in a methodological middle ground between the extreme focus of the individual case study and the breadth of quantitative efforts involving larger numbers of participants. I also use ethnographic/participant-observation to ground these accounts of experiences and perceptions within the broader societal backdrop in which participants live.

I draw upon emergent design in this study. My inclusion of
ethnographic/participant observation is also part of my own implementation of an emergent design approach: In these ethnographic observations I can pursue unanticipated avenues of interest. These observations can also feed into interviews by prompting additional questions to discuss with participants. Also, later interviews incorporate insights gleaned from earlier ones giving rise to further questions. Indeed, the notion of open-ended questions itself is part of my emergent design as the focus within a single interview dynamically shifts moment by moment as interesting topics of discussion arise.

I conducted these interviews in English. Since this research pertains in part to the use to which participants put their English, it is important to be certain that these individuals are actually proficient English users. A lack of English use on their part cannot, therefore, simply be dismissed as attributable to poor English skills: Any individual able to complete the interviews for this project must be a proficient English user with any limits in their English use being explained by other, likely more interesting, factors than simply low English proficiency. Additionally, since this project involves an intensive examination of these students’ lives, study practices, and attitudes toward (the English) language, this research may be able to offer some explanation as to why participants enjoy this high degree of success in their language learning. This may be especially important in light of the relatively poor performance of Taiwanese on international measures of English performance such as the TOEFL (Bolton, 2008, pp. 10-11).

The social position of the researcher is important in a project such as this one because the methods employed – ethnographic observation, participant-observation, and ethnographic interviewing – are socially-situated events. First, as a white American, I am
perceived as a cultural and racial outsider in Taiwan. Second, I must be sensitive to effects that my position as a native speaker of English may have upon participants' discussions of English teaching and learning given that native speakers are traditionally viewed as preferred language teachers and models. Third, since many participants are present or former students, they perceive me as their teacher. Others who have never been my students nevertheless perceive me as a teacher. In Chinese culture the relationship between teacher and student is respectful, deep, long-term, and imbued with mutual obligations. This works to my advantage in recruiting participants and in establishing the rapport necessary for successful ethnographic interviewing, but it also means that participants might be more reluctant to be candid. Finally, I was formally associated with the two institutions in this study as a teacher. While this allowed me the needed access for participant observation it may also imply limits to the willingness of individuals to speak critically of the institutions in question. In the methodology section, I consider some of the issues associated with my own social position in greater detail.

1.10 Significance of the study
This study is significant for several reasons. Overall, this project provides insight into the individual as a site of experience, understanding, transformation, contestation, and resistance vis-a-vis thought and practice surrounding the English language in Taiwan. It especially articulates with and advances scholarship pertaining to English education in the areas previously outlined: Public/international discourses about English, high-stakes testing and washback, recent issues in English pedagogy, debates about the role of the
native speaker and local varieties of English, attitudes about early English education, out-of-class English study, and the role of personal resources in English learning. It advances these areas of scholarship by providing insights into how such issues and practices are lived and understood at the individual level. Second, this project more broadly addresses the question of the relationship between schools and the society: Ideologies of English and their relationship with schooling as well as how and why individuals engage schooling in the ways that they do are especially noteworthy contributions of this work.

In fostering a view of English education with a sociological bent this project has value for scholars of English education, for policy makers inside and outside of Taiwan, and for practitioners wishing to more fully understand students.

1.11 Limitations of chosen research methods

There are a number of possible limitations to this study. First, the participants are all advanced English students: All were or had been English majors in college. Since all interviews for this project took place almost exclusively in English, the points of view presented here represent those of individuals who are among the most successful English learners in Taiwanese society. In addition, participants from this study were recruited from two higher education settings rather than a greater number of schools. Both of these schools were located in southern Taiwan. Also, this study entailed a single interview with most participants. Finally, in this study I myself conducted all of the data collection including the interviews and ethnographic observations. This is important for several reasons. First, while I myself am an institutional insider having six years of experience
teaching at the university level in Taiwan – I am a cultural outsider. Second, since the findings of this study are strongly concerned with issues of race, national origin, and language, my own race, national origin, and language must be considered. Finally, since, as noted, I myself conducted all of the interviews in this study, the willingness of participants to be candid and honest in these interviews represents an important area of consideration. I will discuss all of these issues in the methodology section of this study, Chapter 3.

1.12 Research sites

I employed two primary means of data collection: interviews with 50 participants and ethnographic and participant observation. I recruited participants for the interviews from two universities in Taiwan. Most came from an English program located on a rural campus of a mid-sized national university in southern Taiwan. In this study, I adopt the pseudonym “National Southern (University)” in referring to this institution. The other context from which I recruited participants is a smaller private university in a major southern city. I refer to this university as “City Tech(anical) (University)” in this work. Students at City Tech. were enrolled in an evening baccalaureate program while the National Southern students were traditional day students. National universities in Taiwan are almost universally considered to be of higher prestige and quality that their private counterparts. In addition, private, evening programs such as the one in this research are of even lower status than many other types of university education in Taiwan. Students enrolled in day university do not take night courses and vice-versa. Because of the
difference in prestige, these sites constitute very different English learning contexts. Additionally, day university students tend to overwhelmingly be traditional college students while evening students are often working adults. Thus, not only the contexts but the students themselves are different in their backgrounds and learning experiences. For this reason “sampling” from both contexts enriches the results of this study. Of the 50 interviewees, two were not students of these two schools. One was a graduate of another university while the other was currently enrolled as an English student at a small, rural technical college.

In addition to interviews with participants, I also conducted ethnographic observations, especially focusing on observing language use and learning about language beliefs in the broader society. To accomplish this, I undertook field observations primarily in public spaces in several urban setting as well as one rural town. I selected these specific sites due to an interest in sampling a variety of contexts along the continuum from urban to rural and north to south. Finally, I adopted a stance as participant-observer by taking part-time positions as a teacher of regular, for-credit courses in both institutions. I also served as a volunteer tutor and conversation class teacher at National Southern University. These positions helped me to gain entry to the contexts, made my presence there a more natural one, and provided me with valuable insights into the research settings.

1.13 Organization of the dissertation

This work is divided into five chapters. In this first chapter I introduce the research, detail
the research problem, the significance of the study, the specific research questions addressed, potential limitations of the study, and provide an overview of the contexts in which I conducted the study as well as a rationale for the choice of these locales. In Chapter Two I situate this work within relevant scholarship. In Chapter Three I provide the details of the research methods employed in this work. In Chapter Four I report the results of this work. In Chapter Five I discuss these results in light of the research questions. I conclude this work with recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH PERTAINING TO ENGLISH IN TAIWAN

2.1 Introduction

My objective in this research is to understand the perceptions that English majors in Taiwan hold for the significance of English in their lives. I focus on their English learning and goals for use in this project as politically and socially situated, considering how their feelings about these experiences shed light on their own negotiation of these political and social realities. Given this objective, my goal in this chapter is two-fold: First, I examine the pertinent social, historical, educational, and linguistic aspects of the Taiwan context. Second, I consider key pedagogical practices of English teaching within this context. In doing this I set the stage for this study as an examination of the relationship between English education and the society, and I specifically demonstrate the connection of this study with a number of important strands of scholarship related to language teaching. These areas of scholarship include research into practices of high-stakes exams in Taiwan English education with a specific focus on high-stakes testing in language study and the washback effect, recent developments and debates concerning English teaching pedagogy, particularly the concerns surrounding the communicative language teaching movement, critiques of teaching materials and the use of authentic language-teaching materials, and debates regarding the role of the native speaker in English teaching. I
follow with a discussion of scholarship regarding equity in education. Since English is not widely employed for communication in Taiwan society and since English is a required school subject for students from elementary school through college, my focus is strongly oriented toward English in formal learning settings. Acknowledging the potential importance of English learning experiences outside of the classroom as well, I do also present literature pertaining to out-of-class learning.

2.2 The sociolinguistic context of Taiwan

In present-day Taiwan, the three languages most commonly used for daily communication are Mandarin, Taiwanese, and Hakkanese. Although the origins of all three can be traced to Mainland China, and are sometimes termed varieties of “Chinese,” from a strictly linguistic perspective these are distinct languages since they are not mutually intelligible; in fact, the differences among Taiwanese, Hakkanese, and Mandarin are greater than the differences between languages such as English and German (Hung, 1992). Taiwan is a diglossic society; that is, people employ two of these languages in parallel with each assuming different – and generally hierarchical - social functions (Ferguson, 1964). Diglossia is not new in Taiwan. As Heylen (2005) notes, by the end of the sixty-year Japanese occupation of Taiwan in 1945, Japanese served as the language of professional advancement, education/literacy, and literature while Taiwanese served as the spoken language of the home, informal contexts, and folk traditions. This was essentially the sociolinguistic terrain in place when the refugee Republic of China Kuomintang (KMT) government fled from Mainland China to Taiwan in 1949 following
the Chinese Communist Revolution. Prior to the retreat of the KMT government to Taiwan, the Mandarin Chinese language was virtually unknown to the Taiwanese people who, depending on social group membership, spoke Taiwanese or Hakkanese with aboriginal languages also being spoken, although to a much lesser extent (Chen, 2003). To this day, many elderly residents of Taiwan speak only the “Taiwanese” languages, especially Taiwanese and Hakkanese.

Upon their retreat to Taiwan, the KMT government quickly initiated a Mandarin-only policy in Taiwan, designed to legitimize the claim of the KMT government that Taiwan represented the “real” China and that the KMT's eventual resumption of Mainland governance was natural (Huang, 2000). Additionally, such a policy served to reinforce the power of the many political refugees from the Mainland because of their monopoly on the Mandarin language. Authorities forbade the use of Japanese in an effort to eradicate the remnants of Japanese imperial rule. Originally, local languages were employed to teach Mandarin but in 1956 Mandarin became the sole language of schooling. Starting in this period Mandarin became increasingly more common with bilingualism being perceived by the authorities as a threat to Mandarin development. In response, the government began a strict policy aimed at solidifying the role of Mandarin as the national language with public use of traditional local languages of Taiwanese, Hakkanese, and aboriginal tongues being forbidden and violators being subject to punishment (Liao, 2010). Chen (2003) notes that at this time parents began to encourage the study of Mandarin as they came to view it as the language of academic success for their children. One result of these events has been that Taiwanese and, especially,
Hakkanese and aboriginal languages began to experience a profound attrition in favor of Mandarin (Young, 1988). For example, as Tsao (2004) notes, as of 1989 five of the ten tribal languages in Taiwan had fewer than 10,000 speakers each. These numbers are undoubtedly even lower today.

As a part of the atmosphere of liberalization and embracing Taiwanese culture in the 1980s, the former policies restricting local languages were rescinded and actually reversed with the “Mother Tongue Language Policy” being created by the government to reconstituted and promote local languages. This ultimately resulted in limited teaching of mother tongues (Taiwanese, Hakkanese, and Taiwanese aboriginal languages) as a school subject by the 1990s (Chen, 2003). Despite this, Mandarin is the dominant language in Taiwan today and most people speak it along with either Taiwanese or Hakkanese.

2.3 English and English education in Taiwan

The current roles and relative power of the various languages of Taiwan are an outgrowth of this history. In present-day Taiwan, Mandarin Chinese has assumed the role of the H language, being spoken in formal contexts and educational institutions at all levels with Taiwanese serving the role of the L language used in informal contexts such as in the homes of many people (Liao, 2010). Hakkanese and aboriginal languages are also used as L languages, but have undergone greater attrition in use among the young than has Taiwanese. The status of Taiwanese over other local languages is nowhere better evidenced than by the fact that it is usually simply termed “Taiwanese” in general usage, although it is mutually intelligible with other branches of Min-Nan Chinese spoken in
Mainland China and elsewhere and although, as noted, other languages are also spoken by people in Taiwan. The linguistic division between Mainlanders and Taiwanese still exists to some extent with relatively less local language use being seen in the traditional Mainlander strongholds of northern Taiwan as well as the largest metropolitan areas of southern Taiwan. In terms of prestige, there now are also two languages termed by Huang (1988) to be languages of “special” status: These are Classical Mandarin and English. Both are important for academic success, especially at the higher or more exclusive levels.

It is within this linguistic, political, and policy context that English education in Taiwan has developed and within which English acquired its current high status. During the era of the Japanese occupation, Taiwanese students had little access to English education with the primary foreign language mission of the schools being an explicitly colonial one: The teaching of Japanese as a foreign language. Following the end of the war, English was listed officially as a required foreign language for junior high schools with English being stipulated as the only required foreign language at the junior high level in 1968. From this time, the term “foreign language study” became a synonym for English study in Taiwan, reflecting the high status that English had attained in Taiwan by this time as a symbol of modernity among Taiwanese (Chen, 2003). Prior to the 1990s, the role of English was limited, however, with English study in Taiwan oriented toward reading and academics (Tse, 1987).

With the lifting of martial law in 1987 and amid the rise of Taiwanese opposition to what were widely viewed as the repressive practices of the KMT, English became
associated with the broader project of internationalization of Taiwan. Chen (2006) sees attitudes about English in Taiwan and accompanying policy as part of a larger switch from the “Chinaisation of Taiwan” to “De-Chinaisation” (p. 322). Rather than being consumed by efforts to legitimize Taiwan as bastion of the rightful China government, the orientation was transformed into an effort to differentiate Taiwan from the Mainland with efforts toward internationalization representing one manifestation of this shift. One linguistic result was a chipping away at the policy-based primacy of Mandarin; Taiwanese, Hakkanese, and aboriginal languages were no longer forbidden in public contexts. In fact they came to be embraced as emblems of Taiwanese-ness. Another result was an increased focus on English. In the case of English there are strong beliefs at play regarding the utilitarian value of learning English (Craig, 1997). Taiwan English education is now rooted in discourses surrounding the value of English as a means to achieve modernization and internationalization (Hsieh, 2010; Lu, 2011). One specific result of this orientation was that English education was broadened to include a heightened emphasis on communication (Chen 2010). English also has acquired a status exceeding that of the local Taiwanese languages. This status is manifest in the fact that the Taiwan government has considered the elevation of English, but not Taiwanese, to semi-official language status in Taiwan (Huang, 2005). This is not simply a top-down policy consideration since public opinion seems to support such a move: As of 2006, one survey of public opinion indicated that 80% of people in Taiwan felt that English should be designated alongside Mandarin as an official language of Taiwan (Graddol, 2006, p. 89). Nonetheless, although important in education, English is officially taught as a
foreign language in Taiwan since the language is still not generally used in the broader society.

The policy and beliefs outlined here pertaining to English situate Taiwan and its English students in the middle of critical debates about English. Despite the perceived role of English in internationalization and modernization described above as one incentive for its increased emphasis in Taiwan, scholars have troubled the notion of English as necessary, empowering, and innocent by considering it from a political perspective and interrogating its relationship with regimes of hegemonic power. Campbell (2009) points out that the choice to focus on English as a foreign language is often cast in pragmatic terms that do not adequately take the political ramifications of language use into account. Phillipson (2008) views English as having a particularly potent imperialistic aspect and especially serving the interests of the traditional English-speaking countries – their governments, corporations, and citizens - most notably the United States and the United Kingdom. Presenting his thesis in no uncertain terms, he views the uncritical embrace of English as especially insidious when couched in the seeming neutrality or progressive rhetoric often associated with globalization.

Throughout the entire post-colonial world, English has been marketed as the language of ‘international communication and understanding’, economic ‘development’, ‘national unity’ and similar positive ascriptions, but these soft-sell terms obscure the reality of North-South links and globalisation, which is that the majority of the world’s population is being impoverished, that natural resources
are being plundered in unsustainable ways, and that speakers of most languages do not have their linguistic human rights respected. (p. 190)

Others echo such concerns. Pennycook (2007) problematizes the ways in which English is discursively constructed as, in particular, neutral, necessary, and inherently beneficial through the claims that it fosters processes such as egalitarianism and international/intercultural communication and understanding. Tollefson (2000) warns of the hegemonic power of English, noting that training programs for English teachers generally do a poor job of emphasizing the social and political aspects inherent within English education, instead focusing heavily on learner variables such as motivation and self-esteem that divert attention from such important considerations. Tsuda (1994, 2010) warns of the process of Americanization implicit in the power of English and the dire impact upon less powerful cultures, nations, people, and languages. In Taiwan, Lu (2011) commenting on Taiwan government policy relating to English states that “[such policy gives English-speaking countries] the role of a gatekeeper for global citizenship and their language is ratified as the language for gaining it. English education is the booth selling the ticket to the English-speaking countries, to internationalization” (p. 155). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) asserts the connection between internationalization, the rise of English, and the ongoing reduction of global linguistic diversity. She concludes that “if you are an ESL teacher and/or if you teach minority children through the medium of a dominant language at the cost of their mother tongue, you are participating in linguistic genocide” (p. 25).

Despite this debate, English, although not broadly used for daily communication,
has become very important in Taiwan in a number of ways having important implications for many people. As indicated, English is important from the perspective of the government because of its perceived ability to foster development, to enhance the prestige of Taiwan, and to differentiate Taiwan from Mainland China. Hsieh (2010) indicates that “[m]any believe the political legitimacy and economic visibility of Taiwan can be tremendously facilitated by [English]” (p. 237). English is also important at the level of the individual in Taiwan. In speaking of schooling and career success, Chen (2008) describes the study of English as “more and more a matter of survival in contemporary Taiwan” (p. 4). Ho (1998) indicates that “success in mastering the language determines one's upward mobility and one's future, in terms of English as a test subject in all kinds of school entrance examinations in Taiwan and as the world language adopted in international business” (p. 174). In 2004 the Taiwan government began to consider English proficiency as part of the formula for promotions in government positions (Chang, 2006). Parents see English as having a positive role in the life chances of their children and invest in private for-pay early English education (Shang, Ingebritson, & Tseng, 2007). Students themselves view English as crucial in employment (Huang, 2005). In researching managers and human resource personnel from 18 of the top 50 companies in Taiwan, all indicated that English language testing was one part of their recruitment/interview process (Hsieh, 2010). The perceived importance of English in professional contexts has resulted in an increased interest in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in Taiwan (Huang, 1997). Such ESP courses teach language associated with specific fields such as journalism, business, medicine,
science/technology, and tourism.

It is against this backdrop of linguistics, politics, history, ideology, and government policy that English education is situated in Taiwan. Spolsky (2004) contends that an examination of language policy facilitates a better understanding of the dynamic among forces from the international to the local. Educational policy in Taiwan vis-a-vis the perceived importance of English represents one such response. Van de Branden (2009), stressing the dynamic between broader beliefs and policy and the site of the individual classroom and the individual learner, notes that the manner in which curriculum is mediated at the classroom level by teachers and students is crucial in learning about the relationship between policy and practice. With this in mind and having situated English education in Taiwan within broad attitudes about the language as well as within the specific historical and linguistic setting of Taiwan, I turn now to considering the set of specific concerns relating to pedagogy. These pedagogical issues are important since they articulate with the individual lived experience of English learning and use explored in this study given that formal education represents such an important site of exposure to English for these students.

2.4 High-Stakes testing and washback

As indicated, the importance of English in Taiwan, although it is not broadly used in daily communication, hinges at least at the state level on its perceived value for internationalization and modernization. One policy result has been the inclusion of English as a tested subject on high-stakes entrance exams. Such high-stakes exams have
traditionally represented a feature of the educational systems of most East Asian
countries. This is especially true at the transition from junior high to high school and
from high school to college (Bray, 2003). In fact, these exams are deeply rooted in the
Chinese scholarly tradition, dating to civil service exams used in ancient China (Zeng,
1999). These exams were important since they played a key role in meting out social
status in ancient China. As Suen and Yu (2006) note the Chinese high-stakes exam system
predates its American counterparts, such as the SAT, by more than 1200 years.

In Taiwan, exceptional performance on high-school and college entrance exams
has traditionally been the primary criterion involved in acceptance to more prestigious
high schools and colleges. Thus, the social benefits and life chances eventually accruing
from success in high school and higher education matriculation have been contingent
upon successful exam preparation. Despite efforts to dislodge the “one-shot” high-stakes
entrance exam as the sole means of gaining entry to high-school and college, high-stakes
exams of some sort still figure prominently in admissions decisions (Li, et. al., 2011). The
heavy competition to enter schools viewed as the most prestigious supports the continued
reliance upon these exams in the allocation of matriculation despite the fact that virtually
all students who wish to do so are now able to gain admission to high school and college,
and despite efforts to provide admission alternatives (Chen, 2002).

English is important on these high school and college entrance exams as well as
other types of high-stakes exams in Taiwan. English is one of the subjects included in
such exams along with Chinese, mathematics, several branches of science, history,
geography, and civics (Cheng, 2011). In addition to being employed to allocate
matriculation into high school as well as college, high-stakes exams, especially including English, have also more recently gained additional prominence in Taiwan as a graduation requirement for colleges and universities (Hsu, 2009; Pan & Newfields, 2012). Additionally, as indicated in Chapter 1, the Taiwan GEPT English test has become important both for securing employment as well as for career advancement within many jobs. These exams potentially have an impact in individual experiences and feelings about English in part because of the washback effect. This term refers to the efforts on the part of teachers to more closely align their instruction to the specifics of externally-imposed student assessments (Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, & Ferman, 1996).

Scholars have debated the beneficial as well as deleterious effects of washback. Those who view washback as desirable acknowledge the impact of high-stakes exams upon teaching and learning and believe that this effect can be harnessed as a mechanism for the attainment of desirable educational outcomes. An example of this orientation toward high-stakes testing is provided in the following quotation from Eisemon (1990) in a discussion of testing in Burundi and Kenya.

> Manipulation of examinations policies may influence the kind of instruction students receive, and what they learn and may retain from schooling. Examinations can be a powerful and positive instrument of educational policy if their impact on instruction and learning is better understood. (p. 69)

The optimistic tone underlying the positive washback potential of tests in this excerpt is
echoed by some in the field of language education such as Morrow (1991, p. 112) who suggests that one role of language tests is the encouragement of desirable pedagogy through testing. Thus, Morrow sees a function of testing as the dissemination of teaching methods. Pearson (1988) argues that properly constructed language tests can be employed as a means to foster the transition from a form-focused grammar style of teaching to one that is more communicative in nature. In an overall review of the literature pertaining to washback in language education, Bailey (1996) concludes that there are four factors promoting washback as a positive force. These are “the incorporation of 1) language learning goals; 2) authenticity; 3) learner autonomy and self-assessment; and 4) detailed score reporting.” (p. 268).

Other scholars view washback in a far less positive light. Chapman and Snyder (2000), in an examination of the results of testing in a number of countries conclude that positive washback effects are often not attained because of mis-applications of tests on the part of policy makers. The potential narrowing of curriculum associated with high-stakes exams is one negative impact associated with such tests (Raimes, 1990; Smith, 1991). For example, Taylor (2005) notes that the danger of washback for language teaching is that “a test’s content or format is based on a narrow definition of language ability, and so constrains the teaching/learning context.” (p. 154). This is manifest in Taiwan where the importance of the national college entrance exam combined with its traditional focus on reading and writing give rise to a focus on these skills with “senior high school teachers and students [not having] time for conversational exchanges in English” (Babcock, 1993, p. 17). Cheng (2011, p. 27) sees a cumulative multi-stage
narrowing of content taking place in the Taiwanese classroom as textbooks represent one step in this process and then teachers selecting content from within these texts for test preparation leave students with omissions of important skills.

While the idea of washback refers to more direct test effects upon teaching and learning, scholars have also used the term *impact* to describe the broader effects of high-stakes exams beyond the classroom. Bachman and Palmer (1996) consider washback to represent a special case of the broader impact of such tests on societies. One example of impact would be the thriving cram school and materials publishing industries catering specifically to these tests. Another would be the potential for such tests to reproduce social inequality due to the costs of the coaching programs associated with them (Dawson, 2010; Raimes, 1990). Dore (1976) sees such tests as part of an educational system in which qualifications, rather than real competency, are a focus with one implicit goal being the restriction of qualifications to a small number of individuals.

Another example of the impact of such exams is the psychological pressure that they exert upon test takers. The importance of the exams is such that East Asian students often turn to the gods for assistance (Zeng, 1996). For example, he notes the use of “brilliance lamps” as a form of prayer for exam success in Taiwan.

A Taiwanese parallel to the Japanese ema is the guangming deng, or "brilliance lamp," which I observed at the Longshan Monastery in the capital of Taipei (…). Individuals taking exams or seeking money have long turned to brilliance lamps, and those appealing to the god of scholarship apply for a lamp 1 year before their
exams. After a minimum fee of 600 New Taiwan dollars (US$23) is paid, 24 monastery administrators attach computer labels with the applicant's name, address, and prayer text to the lamp's glass door. (p. 270)

In addition, exam pressure is sometimes cited as a factor contributing to adolescent suicide in East Asian countries. Zeng and le Tendre (1998) seek to debunk this notion of the role of entrance exams in suicide in Japanese society, suggesting that statistics do not back up any such connection. Nonetheless, the mere presence of such discourses pertaining to the pressure of these exams seems to reflect the aura that surrounds them. How individuals view exams and any pressure surrounding them and the details regarding the role of such exams in their lives is an open question.

Given this discussion, it seems clear that all of the issues surrounding high-stakes exams – pressure, curricular impact, their possible role as a mechanism in the reproduction of social inequality, their possible effect in stressing credentials rather than ability – have the potential to impact the lives of EFL students in Taiwan in a multitude of ways. A project such as this one in which I seek to hear the voices of participants as they reveal their own perceptions of the use and value of English in their lives stands to provide important insights into the role of these high-stakes exams as one aspect of lived academic experience.

2.5 Early English education
According to Nunan (2003), the perceived role of English has resulted in a number of
policy changes in Asian countries aimed at increasing the English proficiency through increased emphasis on the language. In particular, the age at which English education begins has been progressively lowered from its traditional start in the junior high school years to being taught in elementary school in some form. This describes the situation in Taiwan where one response to the perceived importance of English has been the extension of English education into the earlier grades. Traditionally, the onset of English education in Taiwan has taken place in the first year of junior high school (this is the equivalent of the seventh grade in most American schools). However, beginning in 2001 the Ministry of Education implemented policy shifting the start of English progressively earlier into the elementary school years, mainly in response to the demands of parents (Chen, 2008, p. 5). Many parents in Taiwan feel that their children's success in English will be enhanced if English study is undertaken from an early age. Such a belief has part of its genesis in the so-called “critical period hypothesis” of language acquisition which suggests that when language study is undertaken prior to adolescence, greater ultimate accuracy in pronunciation as well as the acquisition of “native-like” grammatical intuition will result (Penfield & Roberts 1959; Ellis, 1985). Because of this belief, the number of children in Taiwan who are enrolled in some form of early English study has increased dramatically. Oladejo (2006) notes the drastic increase in the number of preschools and the connection to the teaching of English.

According to the Ministry of Education documents, in 2001, there were 3,234 registered preschools (and probably almost as many unregistered) with 243,303
children as compared to only 28 such schools, attended by 17,111 children, in 1950. Almost all of these preschools and cram schools attract children with the golden promise to teach solely in English. Parents send their children to such schools in the hope that doing so will give these children the edge in a very competitive educational environment. (p. 150)

In the case of these schools, contact with English can take many forms up to full immersion. In many cases, native-speakers of English are recruited to teach in these schools. The Taiwan government, however, has actually recommended that such schools not teach English in order to allow young students to concentrate on their home languages (Her, 2007, p. 11). Despite this, the popularity of these schools with parents continues unabated.

2.6 English teaching methodology: Communicative language teaching and traditional pedagogy

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was adopted in Taiwan starting in the 1990s (Su, 2006). CLT represents the most significant change in language teaching over the last several decades. Prior to the emergence and adoption of CLT starting in the 1970s, the most prominent language teaching methods were the grammar-translation method (GTM) and the Audiolingual Method (ALM). Although these methods developed at different times, methodologies developed later did not necessarily supplant these earlier ones, at least not entirely. In many ways all continue to be used in some form to the present day.
Grammar-translation is a language teaching approach heavily oriented toward reading and writing (Griffiths & Parr, 2001). The primary technique in GTM was the direct translation of language – typically texts – back and forth between the students' first language and the target. This approach featured the direct teaching of grammatical forms and lexicon. The method was the dominant teaching approach to foreign languages from the mid-nineteenth century until the Second World War. It was rooted in approaches to the teaching of the classical languages of Greek and Latin with the approach being extended to modern languages such as English, French, German, or Italian (Tetzner, 2004). As Larsen-Freeman (2000) notes, GTM advocates also did not even believe that students would necessarily ever use the language being studied, but that the mental exercise of language study was in itself inherently beneficial to intellectual development. In Taiwan, GTM was the preferred teaching approach prior to 1968 (Shih, 1998).

The Audio-lingual Method came to prominence in the 1940s and 1950s. Based upon Skinnerian notions of behaviorism, ALM employs drills, repetition, and teacher correction in an effort to foster “good” language habits in learners (Griffiths & Parr, 2001). Arguably, ALM developed when it did due to the confluence of several factors. First, this period marked the era in which Skinner's work became prominent (Rutherford, 2003). Second, during and after the Second World War there was a push in the United States and among its allies to train foreign language experts as a part of the war and later Cold War political climate. Indicative of this type of motivation for foreign language (FL) study is the direct role of the American military in the development of ALM (Diekhoff, 1945). He describes the method as one in which the student “learns to speak by imitating
the sounds” of the language and though “mimicry of the speech of a native speaker.” (p 610). Finally, the technology needed to facilitate such an approach especially in the form of magnetic tape recorders became available at this time as manufacturers began intensive development of magnetic tape technology in the late 1940s (Daniel, Mee & Clark, 1999). Such recorders, for example, spurred the creation of “language labs” in which teachers and students could replay individual language performances for comparison against a native speaker model.

Easily, the most important change in the methodology of foreign and second language teaching in recent years has been the development of communicative language teaching (CLT). Although emerging from a number of strands of scholarship, the initial impetus for CLT is closely aligned with the work of Dell Hymes and Stephen Krashen. Hymes offered a response to the language learning model implicit in the work of Noam Chomsky. Chomsky (1966) essentially argued that human beings are “pre-wired” for language acquisition through the presence of a “language acquisition device” in the brain that transforms underlying universal grammatical patterns into specific languages as language acquisition progresses. Hymes countered that the linguistic competence posited by Chomsky was not sufficient, putting forth the notion of “communicative competence,” a model incorporating the social aspect of language learning and use seen as lacking in Chomskian theory (Hall, 2001).

The work of Stephen Krashen especially bolstered CLT. Krashen seeks to explain the failure of GTM to foster communicative language ability by focusing on and accounting for cases in which learners appear to have understood and can explain a
grammar rule or perform well on formal tests of such rules, but nonetheless persist in making errors in situations of actual language use in which these rules are called for. Krashen attributes this phenomenon to what he posits as the difference between the explicit, conscious “learning” of grammar rules and their “acquisition” for use in actual instances of language production (Krashen, 1976; 1981). According this theory, the connection between the explicit learning of rules of language form and real language performance is tenuous at best. While this learning can impact language production in cases where the individual is very carefully monitoring her/his language production, such rules may have not been “acquired” and, if so, this explicit knowledge does not impact more spontaneous non-monitored language. Conversely, Krashen also notes that many language users can successfully use language without being able to explicitly state the formal rules that they are following, rather having an “intuition” about correct language. In light of such phenomena, Krashen (1982) indicates that

> [w]hile learning may often precede acquisition, it need not, and in fact may not even help directly. Rather, we acquire along a fairly predictable natural order, and this occurs when we receive comprehensible input. Occasionally, we learn certain rules before we acquire them, and this gives us the illusion that the learning actually caused the acquisition. (p. 86-87)

According to Krashen, then, the role of the teacher is to create opportunities for “comprehensible input” which represents language at the appropriate level of complexity.
for learners to successfully process, thus fostering language acquisition.

Other scholars view the relationship between classroom language teaching – in particular the issue of attention to the explicit teaching of language form - and actual learning in other ways. Ellis (1992) advocates basing language teaching upon the exchange of meaning with the judicious diversion away from meaning-based activities to brief attention to form as teachable moments present themselves. In such an approach, the primary role of the teacher is to create meaning-based activities in order to foster an environment in which these salient language issues are embedded and can be brought to the attention of the learners. Johnson (1996) considers the relationship between what he terms “declarative” and “procedural” knowledge. The first involves being able to describe how to do a thing, in this case using a language in a certain way. The second entails actually being able to do something. In the case of language learning, Johnson sees the declarative as potentially leading to the procedural if the teacher creates the proper conditions for this transfer to take place, especially by providing chances for meaningful language use.

In light of these various ways of understanding how languages are learned – as well as other factors such as differences in resources from classroom to classroom - the implementation of CLT varies considerably. In particular, explicit attention to aspects of language form vary tremendously from essentially no focus on form at all up to a considerable focus. No matter the amount and manner of form focus, however, the orientation is toward actual language use by employing the target language in the exchange of meaning. Also, in the typical CLT classroom use of the L1 is often eschewed
in favor of immersion in the target language as a means to exchange meaning instead of
the target language simply representing a *topic* of study (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Most
CLT teachers strive for as much active, meaning-based language use as possible among
the students. Additionally, in contrast with the audio-lingual method, many CLT teachers
stress the successful goal-oriented negotiation of meaning over absolute accuracy in
language use (Willems, 1987).

In Taiwan, CLT has been adopted as a part of the previously-discussed initiatives
to foster “internationalization” starting in the late 1980s. Besides the shift in the age of
onset of English education from junior high school to the elementary school years, the
other major policy change in recent Taiwan English education pertains to a move toward
a greater emphasis on oral communicative skills and away from the traditional focus on
reading and translation (Chen, 2002, p. 7). Despite the ostensibly broad acceptance of
CLT, there have been objections raised that it does not fit with the realities of the East
Asian classroom (Butler, 2011). Wei (2004) contrasting the traditional teacher-centered
approach with CLT, sees a potential for cultural conflict, arguing that “CLT, on the
contrary, was developed in a Western educational context in which students are most of
the time encouraged to express their autonomy in a student-centred situation, but this is
not taken for granted in an educational context within the Chinese cultural background”
(p. 4). He concludes that some aspects of a GTM approach can beneficial for students in
the Chinese academic tradition, especially an enhanced sensitivity to linguistic accuracy.
Hu (2002) points out that important aspects of Confucian learning are the importance and
authority of written texts, the idea of respect for the teacher, and the notion that
knowledge is inherently beneficial to individual development irrespective of immediate utilitarian value.

Each of these aspects of Confucianism could conflict with CLT. First, in CLT the textbook is sometimes done away with in favor of materials considered to be more authentic such as movie clips or activities such as discussion or student presentations. Also, the relationship between the teacher and students can be different with students being more active and autonomous in the classroom and the teacher often taking on a less central role than as the traditional repository and deliverer of knowledge. Indeed, Wang (2008) notes that while students and teachers embrace some aspects of language learning strongly associated with CLT such as negotiation of meaning and fluency, they also feel that explicit grammar study, translation, and teacher correction – aspects strongly associated with GTM and ALM are also important. Finally, Wang (2002) sees a struggle between ideals such as communicative teaching and classroom realities in which there is a strong inertia supporting the continuance of GTM-style pedagogy.

Given the variations in CLT, problems standing in the way of its implementation, or the potential that (aspects of) it may simply be rejected for various reasons, how the pedagogy of English is experienced and understood at the individual level is worthy of empirical investigation. Thus, individual experiences with CLT are important in this project. In addition, the relationship between these experiences and perceptions of the use and value of English are crucial to understand. There are, indeed, many questions implicit in this work such as how learners in Taiwan experience, perceive, and react to efforts to implement CLT as well as how they experience, perceive, and react to any tensions
among GTM, ALM, CLT, and other teaching philosophies.

2.7 The content of English teaching

In the previous section I presented a brief overview of the potentially contentious terrain associated with methods of teaching English and, in particular, the adoption of CLT. Understanding these issues is important due to their potential articulation with individual experiences with and perceptions of English in this project. Next, I discuss a related issue, the content of English teaching, another area of considerable recent debate and change in the field. I begin this discussion by examining the issue of authenticity in language teaching materials and the response of teaching content based upon empirical sources of real language use. This leads to the second aspect of this discussion, the question of what these sources of language should be. This is a question related to the issue of English and hegemony, a debate surrounding local English varieties vs. the more traditional exonormative models historically associated with the dominant English-speaking countries and the individuals who inhabit them.

2.7.1 Language text inauthenticity, and the authentic materials/corpus movement

One criticism leveled at many commercially-produced language teaching materials such as textbooks and recordings is that they are contrived and do not actually reflect authentic language use. For example, research has indicated that telephone dialogs in English learning texts diverge significantly from real language use (Wong, 2002). Carter and McCarthy (1995) have found that textbook dialogs actually tend to reflect written, rather
than spoken, language norms. The work of Gilmore (2004) echoes this contention in revealing substantial deviations between dialogs in English texts and authentic dialogs. For example turn-taking patterns, backchanneling, and use of hesitation sounds in the textbook dialogs diverged from those seen in samples of real exchanges. In an analysis of English texts for young learners in Taiwan, Wang (2007) sees them as both inauthentic and, moreover, as unsuccessful as models of interesting pieces of writing.

There is very little in this textbook that is likely to be of any genuine interest to 9-year old Taiwanese children. The mini-dialogues are dull, non-communicative vehicles for language points, the interactions are formulaic and stereotypical, and there is no thematic development. (p. 56)

Despite such problems, commercial texts are widely used in language teaching. Richards (1993) notes the power of textbook and the attraction of their convenience for teachers. He argues that teachers even often tend to reify the authority of the text uncritically.

Despite this body of work and the concern voiced over textbook inauthenticity, some scholars do not dismiss such “inauthentic” language out of hand. Widdowson (1998) argues that situations created for language learning need not necessarily mirror “normal” language use. Cook (2001) echoes this sentiment, arguing that invented sentences used to demonstrate specific grammar points – while they might never actually occur outside of the instructional context – can have value in teaching language.

Yet, a widespread response of language education scholars has been to seek
remedies to the perceived inauthenticities of commercial language teaching texts. One of the leading schools of thought for the remediation of inauthentic texts has been the use of language corpora. These are empirically-collected bodies of naturally-occurring language actually employed for non-instructional purposes. For example, Thompson & Tribble (2001) employed corpus data to reveal academic writing norms. St. John (2001) presents a case study of the use of a German/English parallel corpus and concordancing for a beginning learner of German. Römer (2008) argues that corpora can be used in syllabus design because a focus can be made on the aspects of language most likely to be encountered by learners. O'Keefe and Farr (2003) view corpora as useful in pre-service teacher training. Liu (2003) touts the value of corpus data in the teaching of American English idioms.

2.7.2 The “native speaker fallacy” and ideologies of race and language use

If one accepts that commercial English teaching materials are problematic due to their inauthenticity, this leads to the question of where to find appropriate materials. Corpus work is one response, but whether or not one sees corpus work as a remedy to this issue, the language used to teach - whether from an empirical corpus or not - must represent the language use of some group of individuals. Traditionally, the unquestioned model of language use has been the native speaker. Given the nature of English as an international language, along with increasing sensitivity to the political aspects of language teaching, the role of the native speaker has been called into question among applied linguists. In this section, I consider this issue.
One reason to question the centrality of the native speaker in English language teaching is simply the fact that there is currently a greater number of non-native than native speakers of English (Alatis & Straehle, 1997; Dewey, 2007). Despite this, Phillipson (1992) argues that non-native speakers of English often are victimized by what he refers to as the “native speaker fallacy” or the belief that native speakers of English are the rightful owners of the language and should be viewed as the preferred language models and teachers. These beliefs are related both to the prestige of the varieties of English associated with these individuals as well as to the belief that such individuals possess a better grasp of the subtleties of the language.

This notion has arguably been traditionally inscribed within professional scholarship in the field of linguistics and applied linguistics for many years and from the most respected positions. In particular, such beliefs have arguably been an outgrowth of the scholarship of Noam Chomsky since this work and other like it privileges the native-speaker as the ideal linguistic informant (Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999). In addition, Selinker's (Selinker, Swain & Dumas, 1975) influential concept of the interlanguage continuum places the native speaker as the model toward which it is assumed all language learners aspire. In the following excerpt, dealing with error analysis, errors are seen as any deviations from a native speaker model.

Anecdotal observation suggests that few adults master a second language to the point where they are indistinguishable from native speakers of the target language (TL). Many error analyses have revealed linguistic differences between the
sentences produced in a second language by second-language learners and corresponding sentences produced by native speakers. Moreover, anecdotal observation suggests that these differences, or errors, often remain over time. (p. 139)

Those failing to reach this standard are, according to this theory, considered to be suffering from the linguistic malady of “fossilization” (Selinker, 1972).

This native-speaker-centric thinking impacts materials creation. In addressing the previously-mentioned issue of inauthentic texts, Rogers and Medley (1988) suggest the use of authentic materials which they define as “language samples – both oral and written – that reflect a naturalness of form, and an appropriateness of cultural and situational context that would be found in the language as used by native speakers [emphasis added].” (p. 468).

Non-native speaking teachers are strongly impacted by NS-centric thinking. Such beliefs, as Kubota (2002) notes, entail viewing native speakers of a language as having “perfect” knowledge of the language and culture and, therefore, being natural teachers of the language in question. Phillipson (1996) argues that non-native speaking teachers can acquire the language skills possessed by their native-speaking counterparts and that they, in fact, possess certain advantages most notably a keen understanding of the needs of language learners that native-speaking teachers often lack. In addition, in the present world of global English, the need to be versed in the culture of the traditional English-speaking countries may represent a tenuous assertion given that the place-association of
English is weaker than ever.

There are many consequences to beliefs about the native speaker as repository and source of language. For example, native speakers of English are often hired as EFL teachers despite lacking teaching qualifications (Amin, 1997). Such a practice places qualified non-native speakers at a disadvantage in hiring (Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman & Hartford, 2004). In addition, learners often perceive teachers having a non-native accent as being less well-qualified than their native-speaking peers which represents an additional challenge for non-native speaking teachers (Lippi-Green, 1997).

The issue of the native speaker fallacy points up the broader issue of the manner in which notions of race and language use may articulate. In Taiwan, Chang (2004) analyzed want ads, websites, and school flyers associated with English cram schools. He found that those individuals depicted as and recruited as English teachers were overwhelmingly Caucasian – which those doing the recruiting associated with “looking Western” - and he posits a strong association in Taiwan between English and being Caucasian based upon this analysis of such artifacts. Yeh (2002) documenting hiring practices at cram schools in Taiwan notes that since parents feel that white teachers can teach English to their children better such teachers are intentionally recruited, receiving around double the pay of their Taiwanese counterparts despite the fact that the Taiwanese teachers have the teacher training. Such research underscores the tantalizing possibilities for the exploration of links among notions of race, perceptions about English and the English-learning self, and issues of power in the lives of participants in this project.
2.7.3 Exonormative standards, the World Englishes movement, and local English varieties

If not a direct response to the native speaker fallacy, the World Englishes “movement” at least represents another form of recognition of the current nature of English internationally and, especially, of the rights of non-native speakers of the language. The concept of world Englishes has its genesis in the 1980s and is especially associated with the work of the socio-linguist Braj Kachru. According to Kachru's model, the English language is currently used in three distinct types of areas around the world. These areas are defined by the historical and social role that the language has played in each. The so-called “Inner Circle” contexts are those in which English has been the traditional language of the majority or of those in power. These contexts include the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. The “Outer Circle” contexts Kachru defines as those in which English has had a colonial role, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Tanzania, and India. The final group of contexts, the so-called “Expanding Circle” are those countries in which English has had no traditional role, but in which English has come to be important, at least in certain areas of society, such as academics or international trade. Notably, English use in the Outer Circle contexts is growing with great speed. In these contexts, which include Taiwan, English is typically learned as a foreign language in an academic setting (Kachru, 2005).

Kachru (2006) notes that the types of English used in these various contexts exhibit the natural linguistic differences that occur when peoples who are members of different cultures and who are also physically separated adopt a particular language.
Because of this, the varieties of English used in these contexts differ in a number of ways such as pronunciation, written orthography, and lexicon. This aspect of the notion of World Englishes is fairly common sense for anyone who has ever used English to communicate with individuals from other countries: Accent and even use of certain words vary from place to place.

Scholarship in applied linguistics has recently increasingly emphasized the existence of these relatively new local varieties of English in many parts of the world in which English has traditionally been studied as a foreign language (Bolton, 2008). Although these “Englishes” are, indeed, language varieties having their own sets of rules and are used by certain groups of individuals to meet their own communicative and social needs, such language varieties are often viewed as inferior, even by those who employ them. In some ways this is similar to feelings that are sometimes voiced about English varieties such as African American Vernacular English (e.g., DeBose, 2007; Shuy & Williams, 1973) or Appalachian English (e.g., Hazen & Fluharty, 2001; Herrin, 1991) in the United States. The English variety often used by Taiwanese, so-called “China English,” is one such case. It is often viewed as inferior – both by speakers and non-speakers of the variety - to the more prestigious varieties spoken in the core English-speaking nations (He & Li, 2009).

Since English is not a widely used language in Taiwan, students there must acquire it through formal means. Kirkpatrick (2007) notes that, besides issues relating to prestige, an exonormative standard of English from one of Kachru's Inner Circle contexts may be chosen as an educational target for more pragmatic reasons as well. These include the fact
that such a standard is codified in dictionaries and grammars as well as that a large body
of teaching materials are widely available for such varieties.

The question, then, is how individual English learners may view these issues. How do students perceive this situation as fitting in with their own lives? And how may
students and their teachers understand, interact with, resist, or transform formal teaching
materials that are likely based upon native-speaker models of English? How does all of
this relate to individual perceptions of the use and value of the language?

2.8 ESL/EFL and out-of-class learning

The factors discussed thus far in this review of the literature such as government
mandates for English education, high-stakes testing, and classroom pedagogy articulate
most directly and strongly with formal, in-class, education. However, scholars recognize
that formal classroom contexts are not the only places in which learning – be it language
learning or other types – can take place: Important learning may occur in many contexts
outside of the classroom as well. The issue is important for this research since the places
in which learners encounter English and the manner in which they choose to employ
these encounters for language learning stand to impact - and to be impacted by -
individual perceptions of the use and value of the language.

An important distinction in education and one that is well known among
researchers is the dichotomy between formal and informal education. For example,
Chazan (1991) analyzes a variety of activities associated with informal Jewish education
in order both to determine the characteristics of informal education in this context as well
as the broader relationship between formal and informal education. He concludes that such informal education is characterized by a number of characteristics. First, it is voluntary. Second, although there are often some type of evaluations associated with these activities, there is no grading per se. Third, they are marked by intrinsic rather than instrumental motivation. Fourth, informal Jewish educational activities tend to have a strong social component with a high degree of participation and interaction. Although such examples of informal education do have a plan, they are also typically enjoyable with a teaching style that is more interactive and participatory than that associated with the traditional formal classroom. He also emphasizes that formal and informal education have typically maintained a rigid separation which he views as harmful and argues for a more holistic conceptualization of education in which the values of formal and informal education are recognized.

Some scholars suggest a continuum of education types in which a third type of education, non-formal education, is included (Dib, 1988). In this model, formal education is characterized by traditional teaching approaches strongly driven by administrative concerns, especially those deemed important in certifying that requirements for credentialing have been met. Overall, formal education exhibits a high degree of rigidity in its potential for matching instruction to the specific needs of learners. Non-formal models, on the other hand, although they are characterized by essentially the same ultimate goals as the formal variety, exhibit a greater degree of flexibility in attaining these objectives. For example, in non-formal education students may have the option of learning at their own pace, but with the final outcome still being a course grade, course
credit, or a certification or degree. Informal education represents those activities at the least formally structured end of the continuum with participation being driven by the interests of learners. Neither is credentialing a necessary characteristic. Although informal education lacks many of the attributes commonly associated with the formal and non-formal varieties, the kinds of activities included in informal education such as watching educational television or reading science texts are, nevertheless, still created with an explicit educative goal in mind.

Eshach (2007) also adopts a formal, non-formal, and informal distinction. The suggested difference here is that non-formal education entails planned educational opportunities - such as museum visits - that take place outside of the classroom. Informal education is marked by its spontaneous nature with such learning being self-guided in the absence of a mediator and also being characterized by intrinsic motivation. The author bases his research upon science education, and in this case non-formal learning contexts such as museums are seen as important for their potential in motivating learners and building science concepts through careful structuring of experience. The careful structuring of informal science learning through enhanced links between the school and the home can be beneficial. The author notes that learners actually spend a relatively small percentage of their time in school and, thus, that out of school learning events may hold a key to rectifying the shortcomings of science education in fostering adequate science literacy.

As the usage of these three types of learning – formal, non-formal, and informal – indicates they all appear to share the attribute that the resources or materials upon which
the learning is based have been created with an educative purpose in mind. For example, a science magazine is written with the goal of educating the reader whether the magazine is used as a part of a formal class lesson, as a non-formal resource in a science course, or if it is read informally by an individual who is simply interested in science. Likewise, an educational television or radio program is created with the same goals, no matter the context in which it is ultimately used.

So-called “incidental learning,” represents yet another type of learning recognized in the literature. Kerka (2000) notes that incidental learning, as the name implies, is that taking place incidentally as an outcome of engagement in other activities. A lack of planning or of intentionality in learning are hallmarks of this learning mode as well as the fact that it can and does take place at any time and in any context. Examples include the learning associated with using a computer. Notably, this type of learning can also take place during more formal learning activities as well (Preston & Aikman, 2005).

Given the potential for learning to take place outside of the classroom, scholars have considered implications for language learning. Feuer (2009) has investigated the effectiveness of informal ESL learning contexts by considering the language learning taking place in camps for learning Jewish culture and Chinese culture, mostly for heritage learners. Although including a variety of activities, these camps also included some language teaching as an explicit goal. The language learning was facilitated by contextualized, often task-based, learning events that varied so as to articulate with the differing intelligences of the participants. Nonetheless, what is referred to as “informal” learning here is nevertheless imbued with a high degree of formal structure: There are
planned activities conducted by teachers with learning as an explicit goal.

The potential for out-of-class language learning is especially important given what is known about successful foreign language students. Scholars recognize that “good” language learners seek out opportunities to practice their language skills outside of class (Rubin, 1975; Oxford & Ehram, 1995). Additionally, such learners are less inhibited than their less-successful counterparts (Oxford, 1989). In fact, such learners work to maximize both their in- and out-of-class language learning opportunities (Griffiths, 2008). Benson (2001) notes the importance of out of class learning for language learners but indicates that there is a lack of research in this field.

The issue of learning outside of formal day school has important implications for English study in Taiwan. First of all, In addition to government-regulated schools and private pre-schools, there is also a very large private English school industry in Taiwan. The institutions that are a part of this industry take a number of forms with the most popular being English cram schools, or bushiban. Over 5,000 cram schools are in operation in Taiwan with instruction taking place after the public school day and being oriented toward increasing performance on high-stakes entrance exams (Tsai, 2008). Language learning programs for adults are also prominent. Operated by private corporations, these classes tend to be oriented toward preparation for standardized tests such as the TOEFL (Tian, 2000). In addition, these companies also provide classes for those simply wishing to build fluency for business or personal uses.

Beyond private learning contexts, English learning opportunities may be less obvious. Traditionally, as I have noted, Taiwan has been considered an English as a
Foreign Language (EFL) context. Being set in societies where English is restricted to the classroom is a defining characteristic of EFL settings that set them apart from English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts (Granger, 1996). Wakamoto (2009) echoes this position, noting that in EFL contexts “there are few opportunities for using the target language outside the classroom” (p. 38). Rose (1999) does note that there are limitations to such a dichotomy since in some contexts a local variety of English may exist in the society or English may possess a special status such as in the case of post-colonial contexts like Hong Kong.

Yet in present-day Taiwan, there do seem to be a variety of potential avenues of exposure to English out of class, even though Taiwan is neither a post-colonial context like Hong Kong, nor is there a widely-used local English. One potential venue for out-of-class English is the Internet. Recent research indicates that Internet adoption among young Taiwanese is especially high with 95.6% of 16- to 20-year-olds in Taiwan engaging in Internet use as of 2008 (Lin & Yu, 2008). Scholars have researched the potential value of the Internet for language learning for quite some time. For example, the Internet has value when emails are employed for language and culture exchange between learners (Brammerts, 1996). Researchers have also noted the potential of Internet videoconferencing as a language learning tool since it provides the kind of real-world interaction important for language learning (Wang, 2004). Lam (2009) researches the role of online chat in the development of language learning, noting the ways in which language learners can benefit from membership in and movement among the diverse language communities available online. The present ubiquity of smartphones may also
have implications for access to English.

Television and movies also represent a potential avenue of language learning. Huang and van Naerson (1987) noted that successful English learners in China employed English television programs and movies for language learning. Similarly, another study notes that English-language television programs and radio broadcasts were employed by language learners in Germany (Pickard, 1996). In Taiwan liberalization of the press following the lifting of martial law in 1987 has resulted in a wider variety of media options, one relevant example being the liberalization of the English-language radio broadcaster, ICRT, a former United States Armed Forces Network operation, spun off into an independent entity at the cessation of US diplomatic recognition of Taipei in 1978 (Rampal, 1994). All of these instances of English at least represent TL exposure and, thus, potentially also could provide learning opportunities for students.

Also, given the international status of English, it tends to appear quite often “on the streets” within societies in which it is not necessarily more broadly used for communication. Cheshire and Moser (1994) note the prevalence of English in advertisements in Switzerland. Moody (2006) has examined the phenomenon of English loan words in the Japanese language, noting, for example that 2/3 of Japanese pop songs contain at least some English words. Lee (2004) has investigated the popularity of English words in Korean pop music lyrics and attributes some of the popularity of the use of English lexicon to the role of English in establishing such songs as sites of identity assertion and resistance.

In Taiwan, English is often seen in the role as one important component of
popular culture. For example, Hsu (2008) notes the heavy use of English mixed with Chinese in advertisements because of connotations of modernity and sophisticated taste associated with the language. Referring to the practice of including English in the pop songs of East Asia, Wang (2006) has noted the prevalence of English words in popular songs in Taiwan and has investigated their linguistic functions. He found that these words served a number of important purposes that complemented the primarily Mandarin corpus of the songs.

Given the importance of out-of-class learning contexts, especially to language learners, as well as the potential prevalence of English in the environment in Taiwan, perceptions held by individuals about the role of out-of-class English in their English learning are important to consider. There are, actually, many kinds of English evident in the surroundings in a place like Taiwan, but how they may serve an educative function depends upon the individual. This especially depends upon beliefs about language held by such individuals. Beliefs such as those pertaining to the value of local Englishes stand to impact how learners may or may not put various types of English resources to use. Thus, important questions include the ways participants may accept or resist English outside the classroom as educative in nature, how they may exploit the educational potential of this language, and how this learning fits as a component within learners' larger life history narratives of English learning. The exact places in which individuals choose to learn and use the language have a potential to reveal important beliefs about English and language learning.
2.9 Individual resources and success in English education

Given the previous discussion regarding the system of English education in Taiwan – in both its formal and out-of-class aspects – it is clear that the relationship between individual resources and educational success may be a complex one. Because much research in education has been directed to considering the role of individual resources in impacting educational success, there is a body of scholarship upon which this project can build through the examination of individual life histories of English learning. In this section, I review research regarding the impact of individual resources on students.

Traditionally, education has been regarded as the “great leveler” because it is seen as rewarding personal merit. Significant research indicates, however, that formal education may actually serve to reproduce social inequality as students draw upon various forms of personal resources to maximize the benefits that they derive from schooling. Scholarship suggests that this is not a straightforward process, however, and that there are three different types of resources related to the potential for formal education to impact social inequality: These are economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital.

While the role of economic capital is fairly obvious with money providing learning resources such as learning materials, private tutors and better schools, there are other important factors at play here besides money. Bourdieu (1992) considers implications about the manner in which the lifeways – the *habitus* in his terms – of some in a society more closely mirror school culture than those of others. Through this mechanism, he argues that educational systems allow such individuals to deploy this
“cultural capital” in order to attain greater educational achievement while those whose 
home culture is more divergent from that of school have more difficulty attaining such 
success. An example would be the struggles that speakers of non-privileged dialects of 
English such as Ebonics have in school. In formal education settings such language 
varieties have historically been under-valued since they diverge from the high status 
language used in educational contexts. The prestige English dialect is the one normalized 
within academic practice. The situation thus compromises the academic success of 
Ebonics-speaking students (DeBose, 2007).

Other resources useful in attaining educational success are not necessarily 
contingent upon social status. Coleman (1988) argues that social connections also can 
yield important resources available to individuals in various aspects of life with 
especially important implications for formal educational achievement. These resources or 
“social capital,” have been found to be potentially instrumental in education, but their 
presence is not necessarily contingent upon a high SES. For example, Zhou and Kim 
(2006) found that social connections were one important resource contributing to the 

In Taiwan, variations in these types of personal resources may be important as 
well. For example, as previously mentioned, a recent critical development in the teaching 
of English in Taiwan has been the extension of English teaching into the elementary 
school level. This is largely in response to a broad public demand for more and earlier 
English since the public in Taiwan views English as crucial for educational success (Tsao, 
1999). Currently, the actual implementation of English teaching in Taiwan at the
Elementary school level is, however, quite uneven, depending mostly upon the availability of school resources, in particular the presence of qualified teachers. Chen (2003) notes the current reality of English teaching at the elementary school level.

[T]he decision of the Ministry of Education is only taken as a baseline...which sets a minimal standard [for English study], and any local government can choose to implement English classes for students in earlier grades. The unequal opportunity for quality English education has not been resolved, and the inequalities are even wider than before. For example, Taipei City Mayor Ma has decided to implement English education for children starting from the first grade. Children in most of the other cities or counties do not have access to such early English instruction. (p. 164)

This policy means that in wealthier urban areas students may experience a full 13 years of English study in school. Additionally, many of those parents who are able to do so also send their children to private English cram schools and private English immersion kindergartens (Tsao, 2004). Hsieh (2010) notes that “since the age for beginning to learn English has been lowered, parents have started sending their children to cram schools even earlier, so that their children will not 'lose at the beginning of the race,' and will eventually have better performance records for the different levels of entrance exams.” (p. 238). Such practices reflect both the belief in early English learning as well as the intensely competitive nature of EFL studies in Taiwan. Su (2006) documents the
observations of teachers in Taiwan that working-class parents have less ability to help their children with English and that these parents express a lower level of comfort and skill in finding appropriate educational resources.

Yet this discussion simply represents a fairly narrow interpretation of the question of the potential articulation of personal resources and English learning. Much remains to be explored. For example, given what is known about the propensity of “good” language learners to find and exploit out-of-class resources, how may this phenomenon relate to this issue? Do these “good” language learners find ways to compensate for possible lacks in resources? Or do they tend to be the ones with the resources? Finally, how might participants in this project perceive the role of personal resources in English educational success? Do they understand this issue in the way that these scholars do, or do they experience and perceive it in some other manner?

2.10 Summary

In this chapter I have addressed two goals important in contextualizing the lived experience of English learning and use in Taiwan. First, I have sought to delineate the role of English within the socio-linguistic history of Taiwan. Second, I have presented a variety of strands of scholarship relating to English education in Taiwan. I have chosen these issues for several reasons. First, previous research has established their connection or potential connection to English education in Taiwan. Second, these areas of research are amenable to the approach chosen for this project – an examination of personal narratives regarding English learning. Finally, these areas of scholarship are important;
each has broad potential implications for English policy and pedagogy. In the next chapter, I will present the methodology employed in this research.
3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to understand the perceptions that university English majors and recent graduates have for the significance of English in their lives. I consider “significance” as entailing the relationships among experience with English, personal beliefs about English, and individual goals for English use. In this project I am especially interested in exploring how these experiences, beliefs, and goals are socially, politically, ideologically, and pedagogically situated. To accomplish my goals, I selected 50 present and former Taiwanese university English majors as project participants. Since my goals in this project center on understanding individuals' own feelings about situated, lived experience, I employed a qualitative research approach to generate the kinds of rich and think description needed for this work. The main method that I employed was semi-structured interviewing in which I explored individuals' recalled life histories of English learning and use. This method allowed me to tap into the propensity of individuals to organize their own experiences in narrative format. I used ethnographic observation/participant observation to ground, supplement, and prompt these interviews. For my data analysis, I also employed qualitative research methods, drawing heavily upon a general inductive approach. Overall, my methods resulted in accounts of Taiwan English that are highly situated, holistic, and that strongly reflect an emic perspective. In
3.2 Participant recruitment and selection

I recruited participants for this study from two universities in southern Taiwan. I chose these two universities because of my own association with these schools as a teacher and because I was interested in centering this project on advanced English students in Taiwan. I recruited participants based upon several considerations: First, all participants in this project were fluent in English. Since the goal was to understand the use and value of English for these individuals, it was important to select a population having English skills at a level such that the lack of skills itself did not represent an impediment to the potential use of the language. Second, since I was interested in English learning and use in Taiwan, I chose participants who had spent most of their educational careers in Taiwan. Although all participants did self-identify as Taiwanese, this was not a necessary criterion for selection in the research.

I recruited participants in several ways. First, I recruited participants from among the students I was teaching at the time that I conducted my fieldwork. I explained this research to my students and asked for volunteers. In addition, I also recruited participants from other teachers' classes. Since I taught undergraduate students only, in this way I was able to recruit a number of graduate students. Also, since I was interested in including recent graduates in this study in order to see how they might be using English after graduating I recruited participants from among my former students. To do this, I contacted my former students via email and Facebook. These efforts yielded a group of 75 volunteers for this project.
I selected 48 individuals from among these volunteers, including two other individuals because they specifically approached me with an interest in this project. Since these two were from other universities I felt that including them might provide additional insights for this study. In selecting participants from the larger pool of volunteers I was able to “stratify” participants along several lines, diversifying the participants through the inclusion of important sub-populations in Taiwan. This is beneficial: As Becker (1998) suggests

Random sampling is designed to equalize the chance of every case, including the odd ones, turning up. The general method for sampling to avoid the effects of conventional thinking is quite different: it consists of maximizing the chance of the odd case turning up. (p. 86)

This “maximization” of the “odd case” was important here. Given the data analysis approach of analytic induction to be discussed later, such an approach was crucial in the process of theory refinement since part of my data analysis was to actively seek cases not covered by my emerging understanding of the data. Diversity of participants took several forms. First, I selected both present and former university English students for this study. Such an approach yields insights into the perceptions of use and value of English across a significant portion of the lifespan in lieu of a longitudinal study tracking individual lives over a period of many years. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 36 years old, representing a good cross section of young adults. In addition, among currently-enrolled students I included both graduate and undergraduate students in order to allow for the
emergence of potential differences in these learning experiences as well as because these
groups may represent students with important differences in attitudes, abilities, and goals.
Second, the two focus institutions included both a public university and a private one.
This is an important dimension of exploration because public schools in Taiwan enjoy a
much higher status with a more selective admission process than their private
counterparts. Beyond this, the public school students were enrolled in a day program
while the private school students took part in an evening program. Day programs are
more prestigious and overwhelmingly involve traditional college students while night
programs are of lower status and involve a great number of non-traditional working
adults. Finally, I made a conscious effort to facilitate equity by gender in this project: I
strove to recruit enough male students given that the number of female university English
majors in the two universities was far greater.

Finally, since this work involved human subjects, I took steps to protect the rights
and safety of these individuals. First, this project involved no procedures increasing the
risk to participants beyond those associated with normal day-to-day life. Second,
participation in this project was strictly on a voluntary basis with no remuneration offered
for volunteering. Third, participants had the right to opt out of the research or any part of
it at any time. Finally, I protected the identities and privacy of individuals involved in this
project by employing pseudonyms in this text. I limited access to any raw data collected
to myself and my dissertation committee members. I informed participants in this project
of these rights as well as the purpose of and procedures involved in this research in
writing both in Chinese and English (See Appendix A and B). Each participant signed a
permission sheet outlining these rights. Participants received their own copy of this
information for their reference including my contact information, that of my dissertation advisor, and that of an institutional review board member not associated with the project as avenues for potential questions and concerns. Since none of the participants in this project was under the age of 18, I did not need to seek the permission of guardians or to take other special considerations necessary for working with minors.

3.3 Life histories of English learning and use

Given the extensive experiences of English learning shared by participants, I draw substantially upon a life histories or life stories approach in learning about the circumstances in which individuals may study, acquire, and use English. Atkinson (1998) characterizes a life story as

the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another (p. 8).

Qualitative research approaches using interview-based biographical data have an established tradition in sociology, dating to the Chicago School era in the 1920s (Antikainen, 1998). The value of the life history method lies in its holistic nature, the individual perspective that it provides, and the potential depth of information regarding phenomena of interest. Such an approach – with modifications - is appropriate for the research undertaken here given both the objective of learning about individual feelings
pertaining to English and, especially, in light of the goal of understanding how such feelings relate to what is going on with English and English education in the broader society.

In obtaining life histories for this project, I employed semi-structured interviews as a means to collect data about lived experience with English. I was especially interested in collecting narratives of lived experience with English learning and use. Narratives as an organizer of human experience are central to a life histories approach. One reason narratives are so valuable lies in the propensity of humans to organize their own lives in the kind of episodic manner that such accounts represent (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). Underlining the importance of narratives Bruner (e.g., 2004) feels that they actually represent a distinct type of knowledge, *narrative knowledge* which, he contends, stands in contrast to *paradigmatic knowledge*. Paradigmatic knowledge tends to involve decontextualized abstraction (Peterson, 2009). Asking individuals to define something would tend to elicit paradigmatic knowledge. Narratives, on the other hand, involve stories or accounts of connected events. Narratives have been found to be an especially appropriate method in research seeking to discover individual perceptions about society since they are useful in learning about assumptions underlying the way in which individuals make sense of their (social) worlds (Duff, 2002). Canagarajah (1996) points out that narratives provide an opportunity for holistic accounts representing local knowledges to emerge and that such accounts can also serve to overcome restrictions associated with artificially imposed research frames.

The methodology employed in this research capitalizes upon individual narratives as a means to derive life histories but does diverge from a traditional life histories
approach in several important ways. First, unlike a typical life histories approach, this work is not limited to an investigation of a single individual. This project draws upon the wider pool of experiences represented by the 50 participants in order to add breadth to the findings. In this respect, the work here is somewhat like a phenomenological approach in the sense that, as Creswell (1997, p. 51) notes, a phenomenological approach extends to multiple individuals in such a manner. Unlike phenomenological work, however, the project here does not involve an exploration of the psychological orientation toward a single phenomenon. A second way in which this work diverges from a typical life histories approach is in the primary focus upon experiences and attitudes relating to English, whereas most life histories involve an effort to capture an account of as many aspects of life as possible. Of course, this work does consider other aspects of lived experience, but only for their connection to perceptions of the English language, English learning, and English use.

3.4 The research sites

I conducted this research at several sites. As a teacher at two universities during the data collection phase of this work, I recruited participants from these two schools as well as engaging in participant observation as a teacher at these two schools. Being a teacher in both institutions also meant that I could take advantage of relationships with the other faculty and was at least a quasi-member of both professional communities. Selecting a site with which I was already familiar and in which I had a previously established role helped me to avoid the time lag and initial period of stress as the researcher gains comfort with the context (Walford, 2001). Finally, entry into a setting and access to the setting are
different issues: One can physically be allowed into a context, but unless acceptance and cooperation also accompany such access, little of worth can be accomplished (Ball, 1990). This limitation was largely obviated given my role as a teacher at both schools.

The final site selected for this work was the larger society itself, especially focusing on observing language use and instantiations of ideologies of language (especially the visual culture of English learning) in the broader society. I undertook field observations primarily in public spaces within the following five locales.

1. Taipei City, the capital of Taiwan and a large city in the north.
2. Taichung City, a rapidly modernizing city in the middle area of the west coast with a vigorous seaport for international commercial shipping.
3. Tainan City, a major city in the south. Tainan has a great deal of historical significance, is famous for its cuisine, and is a popular tourist destination.
4. Chiayi City, a mid-sized city in the south central area of the west. The economy of Chiayi City is heavily service oriented with some tourism.
5. Minhsiung Town, a small, rural town in a farming area a few kilometers north of Chiayi City. Rice and pineapples are prominent crops. A substantial industrial park is located between Chiayi City and Minhsiung Town.

I selected these specific cities as a combination of convenience and due to an interest in sampling a variety of contexts along the continuum from urban to rural and north to south. While undertaking this fieldwork, I myself resided in Minhsiung Town. In these five settings, I was especially attuned to observing language use, educational practices, the visual culture of English education, and the racial/ethnic makeup in these locales.
3.5 Selection of qualitative research methods

I have outlined my reasons for selecting a qualitative research approach in the introduction. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define qualitative methods simply as research not using statistics or other forms or quantification to achieve its results. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) emphasize that qualitative researcher will “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (p. 3). Glesne (1992) indicates that qualitative methods are “generally supported by the interpretivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing” (p. 6). I considered a qualitative approach as appropriate for this project since this work represents an attempt to explicate the way that people understand their social worlds. In this case this understanding pertains to how people in Taiwan view English and the role of English and of English education both in their own lives and in the society a whole.

Beyond this general fit, qualitative work is appropriate here for several additional reasons. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest three particular strengths of the qualitative approach: First, they feel that such an approach serves to best capture the point of view of the individual. Second, it is more effective than quantitative research in examining the social forces that impact daily life. Finally, such studies place an emphasis on rich descriptions of the social world. Each of these properties parallel the goals and resources of this project. First, the research questions outlined here explicitly seek to foster an understanding of the point of view of individual English learners in Taiwan. Second, this work involves an effort to not only learn of individual experiences with English and perceptions of it, but also to query the manner in which these experiences and perceptions
are related to the larger social reality of the context in which these individuals live. Third, rich descriptions of the social world of participants are critical in order to foster these goals and to create the conditions for potentially unexpected findings to emerge inductively. I use qualitative research tools in both the data collection and data analysis phases of this project. In data collection, I used semi-structured interviews with the 50 participants as well as participant observation as a teacher in the two universities and general ethnographic observations of the broader society. In the next sections I describe these forms of data collection in greater detail before turning to a description of my data analysis methods.

3.6 Interview procedures

Eliciting the kinds of recalled life histories of English learning and use desired in this project involved a combination of asking the appropriate questions and also creating the optimal environment for such life histories to emerge. Mischler (1986) stresses the value of working to better balance the power between interviewer and respondent that in traditional interviews tends to be strongly skewed toward the researcher. He suggests that when this power differential is mitigated, narratives rooted in how participants make meaning of their worlds can emerge. One method of creating such conditions is to employ open-ended interviews. As Brenner (2006) notes, such interviews represent an effort to understand informants on their own terms and how they make meaning of their own lives, experiences, and cognitive processes (p. 357). Patton (1987) makes a distinction among three types of interviews depending on the degree of structure from informal conversation-type interviews with a loose structure to interviews that follow a
pre-determined series of questions. In the middle of this continuum are interviews employing a guide of topics to be discussed, but with no set series of questions to be strictly adhered to. Such an approach combines structure with flexibility, and I adopted this approach. Seidman (1998) stresses that interview guides can be useful in fostering coverage of important areas of the research, but that in-depth interviews should make judicious use of them. In the case of this project I created a set of questions (See Appendix C), but the sequencing, wording, and question selection were responsive to the dynamics of each interview. Such an approach allowed me to further probe interesting topics as they came up and to explore unanticipated responses.

I used several steps in setting up and conducting interviews. For current students, I conducted most interviews on university premises, either in an empty classroom or in a lounge area of the library. Working with former students presented greater logistical challenges. First, I traveled to meet the participant which often involved rail journeys of up to several hours to other parts of Taiwan. Second, finding an appropriate setting in which to conduct the interview was often problematic with a restaurant or coffee shop often being settled upon, despite the lack of privacy and high ambient noise often encountered in such venues. Prior to the onset of the actual interview, the interviewee and I chatted briefly to break the ice. I outlined the research and interview procedures. I obtained the participant’s signature on the informed consent form, answering any questions about the research. The interview then began, being digitally recorded. Interviews averaged around one hour in length, but varied from around 40 to 90 minutes.

I carefully sequenced the interview flow with several concerns in mind. First, most interviews began with an initial question either about the location and
characteristics of the interviewee's hometown or, if the individual was using a non-Chinese name, the interview might begin with questions about how they got the name and in what situations they use it. The goal of such questions was to begin the interview with a non-threatening warm-up that could also serve potentially as a window into further topics. Questions about home contexts provided useful insights into the role that physical setting in Taiwan may play in English use and learning. Questions about the participants' names had the potential to lead into useful exchanges pertaining to beliefs about language as well as often segueing directly into an account of early English learning.

Following these initial questions, I turned to the life history of English learning and use by asking the interviewee to recollect how they began to learn English. Such a question sequence in some ways represents the kind of “grand tour question” advocated by Spradley (1980) in which respondents can respond in broad terms that can be further probed by the interviewer. This part of the interviews capitalized heavily upon narrative knowledge as participants recounted their English learning and use experiences from the earliest to the present, with me prompting them for further information about specific experiences as well as moving the interview along to the next step of the learning process by asking a question such as, “So, that was your junior high English experience. What was the next step in your English learning?”

Other questions did elicit knowledge of the paradigmatic type. Although Seidman (1998) advises that interviews should stick with the concrete so as to ensure that the meaning of responses can be unambiguous, I saw questions eliciting paradigmatic knowledge as legitimate because they did elicit feelings, admittedly sometimes expressed abstractly, that were usually linked to specific lived experiences. These often took the
form of “What do you think about x?” questions, sometimes embedded within the
exploration of the narrative accounts and at other times apart from them. For example,
embedded within the narratives, follow-up questions often elicited knowledge such as
beliefs about the usefulness of specific forms of teaching. One frequent follow-up was
simply to ask whether the individual felt that a specific type of teaching was a good way
to learn English. Implicit in the answers to such a question was often a discussion about
the purpose to which English would be put. In addition, I sometimes asked follow-up
questions based upon previous ethnographic observations. One such question pertained to
perceptions about the extensive use of English code mixing in printed materials, pop
songs, and television ads in Taiwan. Another question of this type was the question,
“Why do people in Taiwan study English?” In both cases, when responses seemed too
general, I asked for specifics or for related experiences to more fully understand
responses, sometimes simply replying with the phrase, What do you mean? was sufficient
to elicit such details. Such questions served to foster a stronger link between individual
situated experience and beliefs and occurrences in the broader society.

Finally, I reserved simple demographic questions pertaining to age, parents'
education, parents' employment, travel abroad, and the language(s) used in the home for
the end of the interviews. This was done in the belief that asking such simple questions of
fact in the initial phase of an interview may condition participants to reply with short
answers to subsequent questions (Patton, 1987). I included these demographic questions
mainly in order to gain some sense of individual background that might be critical in
understanding experiences with and feelings about English. For example, parents with a
university education would themselves have substantial English learning experiences
while those whose educations were terminated at the elementary school level would generally not.

Overall, Patton (1987) offers a set of guidelines that ethnographic interviewers should strive to follow, and I drew upon these in the interviews. These guidelines include asking truly open-ended questions, asking clear questions, asking singular questions, using probes and follow-up questions, maintaining neutrality and rapport, being sensitive the the impact of questions on the interviewee, avoiding leading questions, taking notes, and making a recording. The question, “Could you tell me about how you first started to learn English?” is open-ended, clear, and singular in the sense that it asks about one concrete event. I used probes and follow-ups extensively in this work. In some cases, these simply took the form of asking for more details about a particular statement. In fact, simply repeating a statement made by the interviewee was often sufficient to elicit greater detail regarding specific statements in an open way. I employed several means to maintain neutrality and rapport. Body language was important; I made an effort to maintain appropriate eye contact, to lean forward, and to nod as interviewees spoke. I maintained neutrality primarily by being careful about verbal and non-verbal feedback, being especially careful about the type of backchannelling offered. Backchannelling usually took the form of utterances such as “mm” and “okay” rather than utterances such as “interesting” or “really?” since the former might steer the interviewee to subsequently respond in certain ways while the latter might convey incredulity. Likewise I sought to avoid leading questions by keeping questions more neutral. I made notes during and after the interviews, and digitally sound-recorded the interviews. I chose not to use video due to its intrusiveness, its expense, the inconvenience of carrying video equipment, the
increased data processing burden associated with video transcription, and because I felt the benefits of video over audio to be negligible for a project oriented to capturing recalled life histories through one-on-one interviews.

I adopted the following transcription conventions. Inaudible portions of the interviews are marked with empty parentheses. Parentheses with words enclosed represent my best guess regarding what was said in cases of marginal audibility. For languages other than English, I have rendered the utterances phonetically and in italics. In cases where the utterances are important and the meaning is not evident from the context, I have also included a translation in parentheses. I transcribed words receiving emphasis in upper case. I have also transcribed hesitation sounds such as *um*. False starts are transcribed with a dash (w-, *what I think it this*). I included any clarifications in brackets [], especially notes pertaining to the style of delivery such as a sarcastic delivery or words uttered while chuckling. Where individuals used Western names for themselves, I have substituted Western pseudonyms; where they used Chinese names, I created Chinese pseudonyms written in Pinyin Romanization.

3.7 Ethnographic observations

As Agar (1980) notes, one hallmark of life histories work lies in the potential to elucidate links between individual perceptions and the contexts in which individuals live. To accomplish this, a life history approach typically involves the collection of data not only from the participants themselves, but also from the broader social context. For example, Cole and Knowles (2001) stress the importance of context in life history work, outlining an approach in which the researcher may employ methods such as “shadowing”
participants in their daily lives in order to collect rich data about context. In researching the experiences of her mother as a first-generation Japanese-American, Kikumura (1986) supplemented her mother's recollections with data garnered from interviews with other relatives including those gathered during a trip back to Japan. Although in this research I did not conduct such intensive and invasive measures as shadowing and visits to participants' homes, my data collection methodology does foster links between the individual and the society by tapping into sources of information beyond the accounts gathered from individual participants, specifically from participant observation as a teacher and broader ethnographic observation.

I engaged in ethnographic observation in the two universities by becoming a participant-observer in these contexts. I selected ethnographic tools for a number of reasons. Patton (1990) argues for “methodological appropriateness” through “situational responsiveness” in which the situated goals and realities of the research situation dictate the choice of approaches from among many possibilities (p. 72). Overall, one of the most important considerations for this project to succeed in achieving this methodological appropriateness was the use of methods enabling the me to attain an understanding of the richness of the social worlds inhabited by participants. These ethnographic tools allow for the researcher to better approximate the understandings of culture held by insiders. Most relevant to the work here is the distinction that ethnographic researchers make between an outsider's or, etic, understanding of culture and an insider's, of emic, view of the same cultural phenomena (Pike, 1967; Saville-Troike, 2003, p. 104). Ethnographers make the argument that their approach allows the researcher to move beyond the point of view of the outsider in order to attain this emic understanding of a context. This is accomplished
through the use of participant observation in which the researcher becomes a member of the community in question, engaging in the same activities as members themselves in order to gain a fuller appreciation of their experiences and perspectives.

I employed two main types of ethnographic observation – detailed below – in this project. In both of the following types of ethnographic observation I carefully considered how to obtain quality data. Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995, p. 68) stress the importance of creating rich descriptions of events that are free from personal evaluation. I sought to create rich descriptions of events with a balance of breadth with focus in light of the goals of the research. At the same time, the work here did represent an effort to focus on English in the society. Thus, the philosophy followed was to look broadly at social events that were related to English and to describe these in the richest possible ways. Another means of enhancing data quality was to write up the observations as soon as possible in order to facilitate better recollection of details. With few exceptions, I wrote up notes either during observations or no later than at the end of the day during which I made the observations.

3.7.1 Ethnographic observation: Participant observation as a teacher and tutor

While conducting the fieldwork for this project I served as a classroom teacher in both institutions. In addition, I held office hours both at the university language center and the department of foreign languages in order to work with walk-in students who wished to obtain extra English practice. Both functions provided access to students, other teachers, and immersion in the formal educational venues represented by these two institutions. While one goal was simply to enable more contact with students in order to foster better
relationships, another purpose was to better facilitate the participant-observer role. By taking on the position of a teacher, it was possible to more fully appreciate the nuances of teachers' roles in this university. This served to foster a better understanding of the things that a teacher is called upon to do and why, thus revealing many details about English learning. Serving as a teacher also helped me to be accepted, especially by students, since the role of teacher is more natural and less ambiguous than that of researcher. I did not conceal my role as a researcher, but being viewed as a “teacher-researcher” was more productive and had a more natural feel than being perceived simply as an outsider visiting in order to collect data. Finally, my willingness to help out around the department beyond my paid teaching duties was beneficial in several ways. First, it facilitated my acceptance by the other teachers. Second, it provided an opportunity to pay the institution back for the cooperation and good will that the members demonstrated toward the project. Finally, it is simply that case that more contact is better, and in this instance the contact was not simply greater in quantity, but of different types since I was taking part in a wider range of activities than those associated solely with the teacher role.

3.7.2 Ethnographic observation: Observations of the broader society

The primary goal of the observations of the society was to learn as much as possible about the general position and role of English in Taiwan. To accomplish this, I also employed general ethnographic observation methods with a focus on the use of English in the environment in the five sites mentioned previously. I was especially interested in where English was being used, by whom, and for what purposes. Observations took two primary forms. The first type involved walking, riding a bicycle, riding the train, or
sitting in one spot with the specific goal of conducting focused ethnographic observations for a set period of time. I was especially sensitive to the fortuitous experience of encountering salient events as a part of normal experience of daily life. For example, while riding the train one day two high school students asked to interview me because their English teacher wanted them to seek out “foreigners” with whom to speak English. Such events have great sociolinguistic import. In the case of general more passive observation or because of such “special” events, I made notes either as events transpired when possible or at least as soon after their occurrence as was feasible.

3.8 Data analysis

I based the data analysis in this project upon an inductive approach. Charmaz (2001) describes the inductive approach as a method in which “you start with individual cases, incidents, or experiences and develop progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain and to understand your data and to identify patterned relationships within it” (p. 335). In particular, I drew upon the philosophy of *analytic induction*. Analytic induction involves the creation of tentative, emerging theoretical explanations of phenomena in which dis-confirming instances in the data are continually actively sought in a process of incremental refinement in creating explanations to describe social reality (Erickson, 1985; Becker, 1998, p. 198-212). Rather than being confined to a series of sequential steps, my analysis involved a movement among the various sub-processes of data analysis with overall progress toward the final written account taking place incrementally in what Creswell (1987) refers to as the “data analysis spiral.”
This research generated the following types of “raw” data for analysis: Audio recordings of interviews, ethnographic field notes and journals, and photographs of samples of the visual culture of English and English education in Taiwan. Yet, in order for any analysis to be undertaken, all raw data must be converted to a textual form. While ethnographic notes were already in such a form, other types of data were not. Audio recordings required transcription prior to analysis. I transcribed these recordings in plain language (not phonetic/phonemic) form with third party professional transcription being eschewed to maintain data security as well as since the process of transcription was seen as a means to achieve a greater intimacy with the data. In addition, taking advantage of the intensive immersion in the data that transcription implies, I made preliminary analytical notes about the interviews at the same time that I was undertaking transcription. At this stage, these notes for the most part simply represented impressionistic reactions to what I was encountering in the interviews at the time and represent what Creswell (1997) terms as the “sketching ideas” phase of analysis.

In working through and with these recalled life histories, it was crucial to bear in mind the understanding that such forms of data do not simply represent a factual sequence of events; rather, they are socially situated and constructed, conforming to cultural norms of creating discourse that may or may not parallel the expectations of the researcher for the genre of narrative (Pavlenko, 2002). They also represent a “performance” enacted within a regime of power in which the dynamic of the research/participants dyad is prominent. Given this, I also made notes at this early stage regarding the relationship of myself to the interviewee and possible implications. I also created cover sheets, including demographic data, for each transcription. Following the
completion of the transcriptions, I printed and bound all data to facilitate easier physical manipulation.

Visual artifacts received a special analytical treatment. The visual culture in Taiwan related to English and English education especially takes the form of advertisements such as billboards, signs, posters, advertising trucks, magazine covers and magazine ads representing the many goods and services associated with the English language learning industry. Because of this, I sought to collect this type of data, photographing examples of these various forms of visual culture. To make the most of this data source, I drew upon the tools of semiology. At its heart is the notion that elements seen in visual culture serve as “signs” to represent other things (Rose, 2007, p. 75). Related to this notion is the concept of the distinction between denotation and connotation which Dyer (1982, p. 128) describes as the “first” and “second” levels of meaning of a sign. For example, an advertiser may rely upon connotations of safety and prestige when portraying a luxury automobile. Advertisers deploy such signs, relying upon connotation, in the hope of establishing transfer from the qualities represented by the sign onto the products which they desire to sell. Williamson (1978) refers to this overall process as “currency,” and it explains, for example, the use of celebrities to hock a wide variety of goods: The qualities associated with the celebrity such as attractiveness, glamor, success, youth, and prestige are expected to transfer to whatever product is the subject of the advertisement. In considering instances of the visual culture of English education, I sought to understand reasons why certain images were chosen. I was interested in thinking about the social meanings implicit in these images and their connections to ideologies of (English) education. I especially considered the role of race,
images of modernity, and icons associated with the Inner Circle English contexts in these advertisements since these were strongly manifest in many of my samples.

Once I had all data from interviews and ethnographic observations in textual form, I could apply my analytical scheme to the resulting data set. Again, noting that this is not a strictly linear process, I employed the following steps in a general way. First, I created a “census” of the data. This simply was an inventory of the entire corpus of data indicating the nature and location of the various pieces of data. Naturally, at this point all data were in digital format so that the 'location' of specific pieces of data took the form of specifying the the names of computer folders and files. Following the census, I 'indexed' the data. For this project, indexing involved creating a description for sections of data in which one bounded event was taking place or in which there was one cohesive 'chunk' of meaning. For example, in the transcriptions, this process involved reading the transcriptions line by line while looking for the meaning of each section and creating shorthand descriptors for the sections. Examples of such descriptors might be: used English to tease sister, saw teacher as threat, or felt proud of winning speech contest.

Following the indexing step, I turned to the creation of higher levels of explanatory abstraction. Memoing, or seeking patterns within the data was the first step in this process. Working back and forth among memos, the data census, and in some cases the raw data, I created a set of important themes. Such a process allows the researcher to build the levels of abstraction from raw data that are crucial in fostering overall research insights (Glesne, 2006). Birks, Chapman, and Francis (2008) contend that
It is through memoing that the researcher is able to articulate, explore, contemplate and challenge their interpretations when examining data. Similarities and differences are identified, relationships are explored and hypotheses spawned. The result is the generation of theoretical assertions that are grounded in raw data, yet possess the quality of conceptual abstraction. (p. 71)

Thus, memoing articulates well with the analytic induction approach. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that an effective approach is to create three types of memos in the data analysis process: Operational memos, coding memos and theoretical memos.

My memos tended to naturally fall into such categories. Operational memos involved a record of overall considerations in the directions of the research, in this sense a sort of meta-research record. While I did not use “coding” in the classical sense of grounded theory, I did use memos pertaining to the choices involved in organizing the data into themes. Theoretical memos involved the details in the organization of data into higher levels of abstraction. I took these notes in a digital format with the themes listed along with relevant locations within the data indexes or the raw data.

I turned to the explicit building of theory to account for the data next. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that finding themes and patterns in the data and clustering cases are among a number of “tactics for generating meaning” for qualitative researchers. With this in mind, I first sorted the resulting themes into meaningful units. It was during this process of building general statements about the data that I heavily invoked analytic induction. Bloor (1978) speaks of examining “deviant cases” as a tool to refine hypotheses. Others speak of seeking “negative cases” in the data (Lincoln & Guba,
1985). The suggestion is that, given such cases, emerging hypotheses should be refined so as to account for them in a honing process. In this project, as provisional theory was built, I continually revisited the data to seek out anything that would require some modification of the accounts being created. This process continued until I had accounted for all of the data.

3.9 Reflexivity

Reflexivity on the part of the researcher is an important part of qualitative inquiry such as this one in which one becomes an active participant-observer of the context in which the work is conducted. For this project, I worked to actively reflect upon the manner in which my personality, social position, background, and beliefs could impact this work. First, it was important to consciously be aware of the presence of ethnocentrism or personal biases that may impact the research. Such reflexivity was accomplished through a continuous cycle of self-reflection as well as member checking of emerging understandings with individuals in this setting. Second, given that all people are socially situated, it was also important to consider the view that participants had of the researcher and how these feelings could impact their views of the nature of the research and how they responded to it. For example, one area of inquiry in the project involves what the role, if any, of the native speaker in Taiwan English education should be. If, during interviews, individuals tout the benefits of the native speaker, it is important to consider that interviewees may be supplying one of two types of answers: What they actually do believe or what they want the researcher to think they believe. In this case, the first step of reflexivity is simply the awareness of this possibility. The researcher can then consider
how to proceed. In this case, asking follow up questions about the reasons why an individual has responded in this way as well as considering how the rest of the interview “hangs together” with such an assertion of the value of the native speaker would likely serve to clarify the participant's underlying feelings and to complexify general assertions such as this one.

Thus, while there is no way to eliminate ‘bias’ in research such as this, it is important to recognize that all of the interactions and work that go on in this project are socially situated and that participants respond to this by constructing themselves, the researcher, and their role within the project in specific ways. By more fully understanding these, the situation can actually be transformed into an advantageous one in which the social reality in place can be more fully understood by an increased awareness of what it is that participants are actually attempting to accomplish socially. I consider these issues in greater detail in the next section from the perspective of limitations in the research.

3.10 Limitations and my efforts to address them

In the introductory chapter of this study, I briefly outlined a number of limitations inherent in the chosen research approach. First, all individuals interviewed for this study were advanced English students with the interviews being conducted in English. This actually represents a choice in the focus of the project rather than a limitation per se. Since this research is concerned with perceptions of the use and value of English in the lives of English students in Taiwan, conducting interviews in English means that limitations in actual English use in the lives of participants do not simply represent the result of low language proficiency, but must be related to other – more interesting -
factors. This becomes important in the conclusion of this study where a number of participants indicate a lack of confidence in their ability to engage especially in spontaneous oral interaction in English and express a perceived need for remediation particularly by more closely emulating native-speaker linguistic norms. Despite such concerns with English ability, all participants were able to successfully complete the interview, a task requiring a very high level of communicative competency in speaking and listening. I conclude that these individuals actually have no problem communicating despite such concerns and that their feelings of linguistic insecurity relate to notions of language prestige rather than actually reflecting competency itself. The fact that I did conduct this research with this group of high-proficiency English learners does, however, represent a limitation of this study. It means that the stories of those in Taiwan having lower English proficiency remain untold, representing an area ripe for future research.

This work was also limited in that I recruited participants primarily from only two university contexts. Issues of access and limitations of resources dictated this focus. In ethnographic observations I did, however, seek opportunities to learn about the English use and beliefs of a number of additional individuals outside of the two institutions. These included people such as other teachers, acquaintances, and individuals met in service encounters. I was able to interact with them in order to learn more about their feelings about English, although I did not conduct formal interviews with them. Also of note is the fact that both focus institutions were located in southern Taiwan. Given attitudes manifest in this study about the perceived advantages in English learning resources of those living in the northern part of Taiwan, especially Taipei, further work in the North would represent a logical extension of the work conducted here.
One limitation of this project is that I relied upon data collected during only a single interview sitting in order to capture what I have termed recalled life histories of English learning and use. Research that goes by the title of “life history” work typically does involve more extensive forms of data collection than those used in this study. In particular, such work often entails a considerably more involved interview regimen with the researcher conducting many interviews, potentially taking place over the course of months or even longer. Such a seeming limitation may not represent a major drawback, though, since typical life histories researchers seek to foster an understanding of numerous aspects of individual lives while the work here is focused only on English learning and use. Thus, one interview will serve for this narrower purpose, likely even yielding richer detail about this single issue than that seen in the many issues representing aspects of typical life histories work. Also, unlike the case of life history work in which a single individual is usually the focus of the research, this project involved 50 participants, each telling a personal story. Thus, I was successful in creating a rich corpus of data overall with the interview transcripts themselves entailing around 1500 single-spaced pages of over 380,000 words, all pertaining to English and closely-related issues spread among these 50 participants.

This research was also limited by my inability to conduct longitudinal work. Ideally, following participants through the long term as they finished their formal educations and possibly put their English to use would have been ideal. Exploring actual experiences and changes in perceptions of English use and value thought these phases of life would have been extremely valuable. Unfortunately, the time investment required in such an approach rendered it impractical. A compromise was to mentally juxtapose
interviews of presently-enrolled students and those having already graduated as a proxy for this type of longitudinal approach. I was especially able to consider intended uses of English voiced by university undergraduates with the actual uses of English among those already in the workforce. Also, I structured the interviews themselves so as to capture the story of each individuals’ English learning from the earliest experiences to the present. Naturally, these stories represent recollected experiences – some having taken place years earlier - and actual long-term observation would have yielded additional insights. Nonetheless, participants managed to recall these English learning experiences in great detail which itself is indicative of their own seriousness with as well as keen perceptions and savviness about language learning. Additionally, the fact that certain experiences were recalled over others and the manner of this recollection also provides a window into what these individuals feel to be important and how they understand their own pasts. This demonstrates that a “limitation” of the recalled past can actually be considered a benefit.

There were several other potential limitations to this work. First, while I am an institutional insider having six years of experience teaching at the university level in Taiwan – I am a cultural outsider. The debate about the value of the outsider versus insider in social science – and especially anthropological - research has a long history with each position having a set of advantages and disadvantages (e.g., Fahim, 1977; Hodkinson, 2005; Li, 2008). Being an outsider can imply limits to the research since an outsider may not be privy to the cultural knowledge and sensibilities of those who have grown up in the society. On the other hand, participants may be more inclined to make implicit aspects of culture explicit to such a person, potentially offering more detailed explanations and tolerating questioning to a greater extent than would be the case if they
were interacting with a perceived cultural peer. In addition, there can also be an advantage to being an outsider in conducting ethnographic observations: One may perceive aspects of the setting unnoticed by insiders. Although being an outsider can be beneficial because participants may be more explicit in their responses, it is still possible for one lacking familiarity with the context to miss important points. In particular, despite the fact that I have spent many years in Taiwan as an adult/university EFL teacher, I did lack experience in K-12 contexts in Taiwan, an important component of the life experiences of participants. This dictated asking more detailed questions of interviewees and relying upon colleagues and other cultural insiders who could answer questions and provide member checks of conclusions.

Finally, a more global concern regards the extent to which participants in this study were “frank” or “honest” in these interviews or whether they simply provided socially acceptable responses. In particular, when a white, native-speaker of English from an Inner Circle context conducts interviews in which respondents are invited to trouble the role of a native-speaker, exonormative language standard, it is natural to ask whether his very presence impacts the results in important ways. This question is especially apt considering that the results of this study indicate that participants did place great value in the native speaker as language standard and teacher and that they held Inner Circle people and learning institutions in high esteem. I believe that the question of individuals “telling the researcher what he wants to hear” does not significantly compromise this research for several reasons.

To bolster the strength of the results and to address such concerns, I made an effort to diversify the participants in important ways. One area of concern was in what
ways the relationships between myself and the participants might impact results. For example, would my current students be willing to display the necessary candor? On the other hand, given that I had an established relationship with these current students, I did not want to simply dismiss them from participating in the project: I hoped to take advantage of this familiarity in fostering productive, highly-grounded, interviews. In light of such concerns, though, I split the participants chosen for the interviews from among my present students, my former students from several years prior to the interviews, and individuals who had never been in any of my own classes. Because of this, I could consider whether attitudes expressed in the interviews varied among these groups, and, if so, what such variations might signify. Importantly, while the notion of “triangulation” is more often associated with quantitative sampling methods, my approach can be likened to this technique in that in this research I did attempt to diversify both the participants as well as the types of data used to reach conclusions.

In light of such concerns, I turn to two examples from this project to demonstrate the manner in which I employed the suite of data collected to foster quality results. In particular, two findings serve as a sort of “litmus test” for assessing whether the research design employed here can serve to avert the risk of participants providing “socially acceptable” responses in interviews. In the case of findings pertaining to the broad preference for the native speaker, I found this preference manifest in three types of data. First, fieldwork supported similar conclusions about English to those emerging from interviews. For example, the visual culture associated with English teaching and learning in Taiwan – in particular advertisements for English schools - consistently portrayed a link between youthful white people and English use and teaching. Second, there was a
high degree of consistency *among* responses from the various (groups of) individuals in this research. Also, data in this study demonstrates a high consistency *within* individual responses: Individuals repeated the same ideas - perhaps in different forms – throughout the interview. Individuals routinely provided very specific, tangible examples lending credence to their statements as well. Indeed, a cornerstone of my methodology was a concerted effort to avoid generalizations in interviews and to elicit the concrete. For example, many participants not only indicated that they felt contact with foreigners to be important in learning English, but also described the steps that they had taken to meet such individuals.

Additionally, notions about the native speaker were often manifest spontaneously in the interviews, as were many issues in this research. This also reflects a methodological choice: I consciously sought to avoid framing responses of participants to the greatest extent possible. Instead, I elicited responses using more general prompts. In the case of the preference for native speakers, prompts such as asking individuals to simply talk about an early learning experience and how they felt about it or to talk about teachers that they felt to be especially effective or ineffective often initiated responses along these lines.

An additional indication of the strength of the data was the fact that participants were quite willing to be highly critical when they felt such criticism to be warranted, and they did not withhold this criticism from native-speaking teachers. For example, one was highly critical of untrained native-speaking teachers while another criticized the practice of passing non-native speaking white people as native-speaking English teachers to unsuspecting parents. All of this taken together bolsters the feeling that findings such as
this one simply “ring true.”

I did find one area in which some participants did seem to provide “socially acceptable” responses to a line of questioning and in which there was some variation in the answers, depending upon membership in a particular sub-population. When I asked individuals to comment on how they thought they would use English in the future, a number of the participants provided what I saw as rather clichéd answers. As I discuss in the results, these answers appeared unrealistic given the apparent employment market for university English majors. Specifically, those indicating that they hoped to gain employment in situations such as working for “international companies,” were generally unable to provide specifics of what such positions might entail or what companies might be involved. In addition, these responses differed among the respondents. Those who were in graduate school or who were already working tended not to provide such responses. Also, a few individuals offered very candid responses in which they expressed doubt over their own futures. These more clichéd responses - an artifact of the compulsion that interviewees felt to provide some answer to my direct questions – I interpreted as indicating that these students lacked detailed plans for their use of English in the future and noted the strong parallels between their beliefs about the value of English and those manifest in the society more broadly as part of the overall language ideology of English. In lieu of specific ideas regarding their own future English use, they defaulted to responding with “common sense” answers, a useful datum in itself. This instance of “socially acceptable” response is indicative of the robustness of the research approach used here since such responses were not only “detected” but actually transformed into valuable data and, ultimately, into research findings.
Finally, one conclusion that I draw in this study is that participants felt that specific weaknesses in their English could be attributed largely to their formal day schooling and, further, that work with Inner Circle people represented a preferred form of remediation. This lack of confidence that many in this study voiced regarding specific aspects of their English skills should not, I believe, simply be attributed to what is sometimes termed “Asian modesty.” A persistent narrative suggests a dichotomy between what are sometimes termed “Western” societies and “Asian” ones with the argument that one manifestation of this dichotomy is that Asians tend to adopt a more “interdependent” orientation in contrast to the more “independent” one of their Western counterparts (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Some have felt that this “interdependent” or “collective” orientation might skew the responses that individuals give when taking part in research such as this one to responses that are more modest (Uskul, Oyserman & Schwartz, 2010). Ignoring the problematic of generalizing a dichotomy between “Asians” and “Westerners,” I believe that this is not a factor for several reasons. First, the same reasons for trust in these responses noted above also apply here: Fieldwork support, consistency within and among responses, narrative specifics, and well-considered criticality from participants bolstered these results. Additionally, in the case of possible modesty, individuals also did freely discuss events in which they felt proud of their English such as obtaining high grades and being selected for participation in speech contests and being the “number one” student in the class. Many also indicated that they felt their literacy skills to be quite good.
3.11 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the details of the research methodology for this project. I began the chapter with a description of considerations in the recruitment and selection of participants. Following this, I presented an overview of the life histories approach. Next, I discussed the physical research sites in this project. I also presented my rationale for the choice of a qualitative research approach. I next presented the procedures used in interviews and ethnographic observations in detail. I moved to a discussion of my data analysis methods next followed by a consideration of the role of reflexivity in this work. I concluded the chapter with a discussion of the limitations in my chosen research approach. In the following chapter I present the results of this research.
4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I present the results of this research, considering each research sub-question in order. Each represents aspects of the larger research question for this project: *What are the perceptions held by Taiwanese university English majors and recent graduates for the significance of English in their lives?* The answers to the research sub-questions set the stage for answering this larger overall question by serving as the basis for an exploration of connections among experiences with English, perceptions of English, use of English, and future personal goals for English. In this chapter, I detail the findings pertaining to these sub-questions, taking up this overall question and exploring broader implications of these findings in Chapter 5.

4.1 Research Question #1

*In what ways was English manifest in participants' lives prior to college?*

This research indicates several overarching aspects of English learning with high salience for the study participants in their childhoods. First, all of these individuals experienced English learning on a long-term basis overall with many undertaking English study from...
the early elementary school years. Second, much of this learning occurred in traditional classroom settings in Taiwan. Third, many families deployed a variety of personal resources to facilitate participants' English learning with the learning taking place in a variety of settings. Fourth, participants received explicit feedback and rewards based on their English. In the following discussion, I will consider each of these points in detail. These pre-university experiences with English convey a sense of its scope in the lives of these students: English for most was much more than simply a typical short-term school class, instead it permeated these lives more extensively, although English was also important as a school subject. Additionally, these experiences are important because, as I demonstrate later in this work, many feelings that participants held about English education and their own strengths and weaknesses as English learners and users were rooted in/represent responses to these early experiences.

4.1.1 Individuals in this study experienced long-term exposure to English learning. All participants in this study pointed out that they had engaged in English learning for many years, eventually majoring in English and becoming fluent in the language. Of the 46 individuals for whom data regarding the age of initial onset of English learning was available, the mean onset was at an age of nine years. Once they had begun their English studies, no participants indicated that they abandoned these formal studies at least until the completion of their higher educations. Given this, the mean duration of English study for this group of individuals was 13 years. Continuous English study in some form thus represented about 60% of the lifespans of these young adults, on average.

In addition to this duration, English study was intensive as well. Given the
popularity of cram schools and other forms of study in addition to day school, students spent long hours in their classes and in completing the homework associated with them. Participants describe a daily class schedule that often saw them returning home as late as 8:00-10:00 p.m. to complete their homework and get some sleep before beginning the cycle again the next morning when day school began before 8:00. My fieldwork confirmed these accounts: I observed many junior high and high school students returning home from cram school on the late evening trains. Many studied their English texts as they sat – or stood – on these trains (See Appendix D). I also observed crowds of parents – many astride scooters - waiting in front of the cram schools for their children in the evenings.

Finally, participants noted that they encountered relatively little English outside of contexts specifically established for English learning. With a few exceptions, virtually all indicated that their family members used little or no English in the home. Also, when asked about the use of English in public places near their homes, virtually all responded that English was almost never used in these locales. There were exceptions, however. For example, Carla, a National Southern graduate, indicated that she lived near a science park with many international people and that she would sometimes encounter them on the train (personal communication, October 25, 2011). Such an instance of English outside of some study context was, however, rare among study participants.

4.1.2 Individuals in this study had extensive experience with formal English learning within traditionally-taught day school classrooms in Taiwan.

A substantial amount of experience with English education took part in formal,
government-regulated day-school contexts. As indicated, the Taiwan government historically has sought to provide all students with English classes at the junior high and high school levels. Reflecting this policy, all participants in this study engaged, at minimum, in English study in their formal grade 7-12 classes. Additionally, since participants in this study had or were currently majoring in English at the university level, they all also experienced formal English study in this post-secondary context as well. Moreover, given the age of most participants and the fact that the Taiwan government passed initiatives to extend formal English education into the elementary grades in the 1990s, most participants had studied English in elementary school as well. The result is that all participants in this research had at least 10 years of experience with formal, classroom-based English education in Taiwan. These formal contexts were characterized by several notable features as evidenced both through participants’ accounts as well as my own field observations in this project.

Participants described typical classes as comparatively large and teacher fronted. For example, Laura, a graduate of National Southern, describes her junior high classes as employing a “normal lecture” in which the teacher taught on a “stage” (personal communication, November 19, 2011). The physical layouts of the classrooms themselves reflected, indeed arguably encouraged or even enforced, such methods. In my own field observations of several junior high, high schools, and one junior college, I noted that the focal point of the class was the front of the room. Blackboards were often only installed along the front of the room for the use of the teacher. In front of these blackboards was an elevated platform running their length and raised perhaps 20 cm above floor level. The teacher was equipped with a podium on this platform or directly in front of it as well as a
microphone and amplifier. Thus the physical layout of the classroom itself sanctioned and facilitated a unidirectional information flow: From student to teacher. Some teachers even wore a microphone connected to a small belt-mounted amplifier. The student chairs were virtually always in rows with the sheer number of chairs – typically 30 to 50 - often impeding the implementation of other potential seating arrangements such as placing students into a large circle.

An additional feature of these classes was their heavy reliance on textbooks. Participants described these course texts as most often taking the form of a collection of short, unrelated, readings contrived to incorporate target grammatical forms and vocabulary. Many participants described the teaching approach as one in which the instructor's role was “explaining” the “articles” in the book. Jenny, a freshman at National Southern, indicated that the “teacher just, each class we just go to an article and explain the vocabulary. After the class we just had a, had a exam” (personal communication, January 6, 2012). Virtually all participants described the same pattern in their junior high and high school classes. Also, the teachers in such classes were almost always Taiwanese with these explanations generally taking place in Mandarin. As Jeffrey, an undergraduate at National Southern, indicated, these explanations often took a decidedly grammar/translation slant in which the teacher would “[analyze] the structure and the grammar usage” (personal communication, January 2, 2012).

Teachers in these classes also tended to rely heavily upon traditional forms of assessment, most often written tests and quizzes. Walter, a City Tech. graduate, describes the overall situation as “grammar, grammar, grammar, test, test, test” (personal communication, September 6, 2011). Tests, or at least quizzes, were quite frequent,
according to participant accounts. Numerous individuals indicated that quizzes or tests took place virtually on a daily basis, especially as a part of the high school ramp-up to the university entrance exams. Additionally, students' grades on these assessments were also usually a matter of common knowledge at least within the classroom with teachers announcing or posting scores.

Finally, teachers in these accounts tended to rely on a specific set of classroom management techniques and punishments. One of these was this public announcement of grades. In addition, teachers sometimes punished and shamed students for supplying incorrect answers. Yayoi, a sophomore undergraduate at National Southern, provided the following account in describing one junior high English class.

Yayoi: Because the teacher is very strict and, the lessons are, the, the lessons were boring.

Chuck: Strict?

Yayoi: Yeah.

Chuck: What, what did they do?

Yayoi: Uh, they would if you didn't pass the test, it would be some punishments. Smack, uh, eh, uh, the, um, how to say, physical punishments.

Chuck: So they would hit?

Yayoi: Yeah.

(personal communication, December 20, 2011)

Gloria, another National Southern sophomore, elaborated on such methods. In describing
one of her English teachers, she noted that “if you don't, if you don't get the grades she want you to get, then she will punish you. She will get a stick...Or she will punish you to pay money. One, one [point] for one NT dollars” (personal communication, December 16, 2011). Overall, for many students in this study, English class became an exercise in trying to avoid “mistakes” so as to escape such punishment. Francine, a National Southern graduate, noted that the “correct” answer was always the goal so that some students became fearful of even making an effort to respond to teacher questions so as to avert teacher sanctions (personal communication December 27, 2011).

4.1.3 Families felt English to be important and supported participants' English study in a variety of contexts in addition to the traditional day school.

Many participants noted that their parents considered English to be very important. Jeffrey (personal communication, January 2, 2012) noted that his parents felt English to be important for his future, while Jean, a National Southern undergraduate, felt that the importance placed upon the United States and China in the media gave parents, including her own, the impression that English and Mandarin would be crucial in the future (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Speaking of himself and his siblings, Louis, a City Tech. masters graduate and current English teacher, recalled that his mother “strongly asked us to learn English” (personal communication, September 15, 2011). Ming-Chi, a graduate of National Southern, described a sort of epiphany in which his parents began to feel English to be important once he began to actually encounter it in school. “They didn't think English is important. And after elementary school when I started to learn English they understand wow! English is important too. So it's not math,
not Chinese. English is important too” (personal communication, October 1, 2011).

Acting upon these beliefs, families of study participants deployed personal resources to support English study in settings beyond the day school. These included private schools, cram school, private tutors, and – for some - study in English-speaking contexts abroad. A few children also received additional exposure to English in the home.

**Private Schools**

Some participants had attended high schools, usually private, with a greater emphasis on English. Such schools placed an enhanced focus on the subject and invested in English learning resources, especially by hiring foreign teachers. Betty, a third-year National Southern undergraduate, asserted that “[My] high school is, uh, famous for the ESL. So we also have the teachers from Canada or the US, so we also have the chance to talk to them” (personal communication, December 26, 2011). Several of the other participants attended similar schools. For example, Austin, a graduate student at National Southern, noted that his junior high school, also a private context, provided English classes tracked into five sections based upon an exam taken prior to entry (personal communication, November 20, 2011). This school also had foreign teachers. Importantly, such private schools required a substantially greater outlay of family financial resources than their public counterparts.

**Cram school**

All participants in this study – with the exception of two individuals - took part in English study in private, for-pay cram schools outside of the day school. These classes usually
took place in the evenings with some being held on weekends. While the specifics of
cram schools varied, overall they entailed two types of contexts. For elementary-age
learners these schools most often involved what many participants described as “fun”
activities such as games and songs to teach English. Foreign teachers often conducted
these activities. For those at the junior high and high school levels, these schools had a
stronger “academic” focus as manifest in a closer alignment with school curricula and the
needs of high school and university entrance exam preparation. Taiwanese teachers more
typically taught these courses, generally employing Mandarin to explain the content.
Harold, an undergraduate at National Southern, noted the complementary roles played by
the Taiwanese and foreign teachers in his cram school where both were employed.

Harold: Cram school, okay. Um, they'll have two period of time. The first period
of time is taught by the Chi-, Chinese, Chinese people.

Chuck: Okay.

Harold: Yeah, of course, he, he used Chinese

Chuck: M-huh.

Harold: talk about the grammar, vocabulary, and what’s, what's, uh, and give us a
test. And next period is the, um, foreigner

Chuck: M-huh.

Harold: Yeah, often from Sou-, South Africa.

Chuck: Okay. South Africa?

Harold: Yeah, South Africa. Again, (inaudible) they just played a game with me
and, of, of course using English. So I, I will be, I, I will be great. I've been, mm,
got that he taught not only for conversation, but, mm, more for, for fun. Yeah. I can play a lot of game with, with him. So, I think that learn English will, will probably be a, a better thing for me that way.

(personal communication, December 1, 2011)

In terms of duration, while a couple of participants did not engage in cram school study at all and a few others spent as little as one year in English cram school, the typical duration was considerably longer. In fact, a few participants in this study began their English learning in private bilingual pre-schools and kindergartens, studying English in private contexts for over a decade - from ages as early as three years old - in addition to their formal in-school English studies.

For-pay, private tutors

A few individuals studied with tutors. In these cases the work was almost exclusively one-on-one and took the form of conversation as well as coaching for entrance exams. The teachers were both Taiwanese as well as foreign. Sierra, a National Southern graduate currently completing her teaching practicum, indicated that she had a Taiwanese tutor who had studied English abroad and who, Sierra asserted, had excellent English skills as a result (personal communication, August 26, 2011). Chia-Wen, an undergraduate at National Southern, had worked with a tutor on vocabulary and grammar (personal communication, November 22, 2011). Participants noted that their parents often found out about these tutors via word of mouth or that the tutors themselves were family friends.
Study abroad experiences

An additional setting in which several participants experienced English study was in study abroad contexts. While many participants in this study indicated a desire to engage in such study, only a few had actually done so, the cost being prohibitive for most. As a result only a few actually experienced such study abroad prior to university. One participant lived with relatives abroad while attending high school. Two others lived in the United States while a parent studied in a higher education context. Others experienced study abroad as young adults. Two participants enrolled in university intensive programs, one during summer break during her university years in Taiwan and one after graduating from the university in Taiwan. Two other individuals in this study completed graduate degrees in English-speaking contexts.

English and the family

Although most respondents indicated that the language(s) of the home did not include substantial English, there were some exceptions with a few parents speaking English in the home especially with explicit educational intent. Irene, one of the undergraduate students from National Southern, for example, contended that her own English studies actually began prior to her birth with her mother, an English teacher, playing English recordings on a speaker directed toward her unborn child in the womb (personal communication, December 15, 2011). Indeed, several of the parents in this study turned out to be English teachers. Also, several other parents had themselves engaged in study abroad in English-speaking contexts so that they did possess substantial English proficiency. At the other end of the educational spectrum, a few parents in this study had
finished school only at the completion of elementary school, a number of others possessed no education beyond junior high.

Mothers played an especially pivotal role in English education in the lives of many participants, whether or not they could speak English themselves. This role in English learning was manifest in several ways. First, participants often cited their mother as the ones making decisions regarding education and arranging for the financial support for such studies. For example, Louis indicated that it was his mother who decided that it would be a good idea for him to attend English cram school from a young age (personal communication September 15, 2011). Many participants said essentially the same thing: That their involvement in English education, especially in the earliest stages, was based upon the decisions of their mothers. A number of mothers also leveraged their own social networks to meet the educational needs of their children, locating acquaintances or the friends of acquaintances as private English teachers or finding out about cram schools in this way. For example, in Carla's case, both the owner of the cram school in which she studied English as well as her teacher within this school were good friends of her mother (personal communication, October 15, 2011).

Finally, a few mothers themselves practiced English with participants with mother-daughter dyads being especially manifest in these accounts. For example, Jessie, a second-year undergraduate at National Southern, noted that her mother found a church-operated English class for the two of them to attend together (personal communication, December 29, 2011). Leticia, another National Southern second-year undergraduate indicated that she and her mother sang Abba and Bee Gees songs together (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Finally, Wilma, a National Southern graduate now
employed away from her hometown, noted that her mother had a special role in her
English learning. The following excerpt was a response to my line of questioning about
the different situations in which Wilma used English.

Wilma: Oh, my mom, with my mom.
Chuck: With your mom?
Wilma: Yes, with my mom. My mom just called me last night and then said, Hi,
Wilma, what are you doing [laughs]?
Chuck: So your mother is an English speaker?
Wilma: She can speak simple English, but in her generation I would say that her
English is, is okay, is good. And she might not know how to have a REAL
c Conversation, real English conversation with foreigners, but sometimes she speaks
simple English to me. Like, Hi Wilma, how are you doing? And stuff like that.
Chuck: Where did she learn her English?
Wilma: At school, I believe.
Chuck: Did she teach you English?
Wilma: Yes, in the very beginning when I just started to learn English, she still
can handle that so she teach, she taught me some simple English.
(personal communication, October 15, 2011)

On the other hand, there were extremely few instances of individuals in this study citing
fathers as having the same role in English education as these mothers. Perhaps this is
simply related to the fact that most of the participants in this study were women, with
English practice simply representing one aspect of the stronger relationship that women in the study may have enjoyed with their mothers generally.

4.1.4 Participants consistently received feedback and rewards based on their English performance.

Throughout their English education, many of these students received explicit feedback about their English performance in the institutional contexts in which they learned the language. The most common form of such feedback was grades in classes. As noted, teachers often made grades public and were especially prone to publicly lauding the “top” student in the class. A number of participants in this research received this distinction. For example, Austin noted that in high school “[My] English ability is, uh, the, is the best one in our class.” As a result the teacher selected him for special one-on-one English study (personal communication, November 20, 2011). Jenny, speaking of her English study, noted that “when, when I was in junior high school, I always got the, the first prize or second prize. I just do well in every test, every exam” (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Beyond grades, more tangible rewards also accrued to some based upon English performance. Some schools tracked students into special classes based upon their grades. In the case of English, these special classes included enriched preparation for high-stakes high school and university entrance exams, increased opportunities for practice in speaking and listening/conversation, and classes with foreign teachers of English. In many cases, these classes had a lower ratio of students to teachers. For example, Bennie, a National Southern student, indicated that she was selected to take part in an English
class in which the “average score is higher than other classes. And, uh, we, uh, our teacher gave us some articles or some information about English more than other classes” (personal communication, December 1, 2011). In addition, some students in this project were selected for – and won – English speech contests. These contests took place at the level of the school, city, region, or all of Taiwan and were, therefore, highly competitive.

Finally, entrance exams themselves served as a critical metric of English ability: High school and university entrance exams represented a pivotal feature of English education for these participants and another venue of important feedback regarding their English performance. These exams were important to participants since the scores were the prime, or more often the only, determinant of which schools they could attend. Because of this, these exams represent a strong impetus for supplemental English study with cram schools representing the most common form.

In addition, scores on entrance exams were used to place students into majors within institutions. As a result, an individual might have the choice of attending a more prestigious institution in an area of study in which they scored higher or selecting an area of study in which they scored lower (perhaps because they were more interested in the field) and settling for a less-prestigious school. Because of this, the fact that their English scores were high or the highest among the tested subjects was cited by many as a reason for their choice of English as their area of major study at the university level. Thus, individuals received essentially two types of feedback about their English from these tests. First, in the case of those attending the national university, they knew that their English scores placed them in a relatively high position amongst other students across Taiwan. Second, for virtually all students in this study, English represented the subject in
which their individual exam scores were highest amongst all other tested subjects on the exam for them personally.

The importance of these exams and the tendency for public disclosure of performance are manifest in public displays of score results created by high schools and cram schools. In front of many high schools, banners, some perhaps 100 meters long, list student names and the higher education institutions to which they have been accepted. Cram schools also publicity tout high-performing students. In front of one local cram school, large posters with the pictures of several students, their names, and the universities to which they had been accepted appeared with the phrase “You are the winner” printed in English at the top of each [See Appendix D for these examples].

4.2 Research Question #2

What are these participants’ perceptions about English?

This research indicates that individuals had a number of strong perceptions about English. The most salient of these included attitudes about the importance of English, connections between English and competition, perceptions about inequities in English education, perceptions relating to self-determination in English studies, feelings about English pedagogy in Taiwan, perceptions about the relationship between language and race, and perceptions about participants’ own English abilities. In the following section I outline these beliefs and consider how they relate to the experiences with English learning discussed in Question #1.
4.2.1 You will be kicked out of the world: The perceived importance of English

Participants viewed English as important and potentially empowering personally, but also made a connection to the broader socio-political milieu of Taiwan. Participants often cited the perceived status of Taiwan as highly dependent upon international trade in discussing the importance of English. For example, Leticia indicated that English is important so that people in Taiwan can “trade with foreigners” and “make money” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Jerry elaborated on this perception.

Taiwan is an island. Then, no matter the business or a lot of things they have, we have to trade with others abroad. So we have a, we need a, a language to communicate with others. And then, uh, a lot of Taiwanese will like to do some business with, um, the people in United States or Europe or Australia. Then maybe they, they NEED to understand the ch-, English. (personal communication, October 7, 2011)

Indeed, many participants felt that studying English in some form was a personal necessity for modern life. As Walter, an MA holder in English teaching and current teacher noted when I asked him why people in Taiwan study English: “Because everyone learns English. If you don't learn English, you will be, you will be kicked out of the [slight snicker], of the world” (personal communication, September 6, 2011). Walter viewed English as a given, a necessary skill for obtaining decent employment in the future. These perceptions of the importance of English articulate strongly with the life histories outlined in question #1 since families and the learners themselves acted upon
these beliefs in tangible ways, calling upon substantial resources for English learning in
the form of time, money, and social connections.

Although there was little sign in this study that these beliefs in the overall
importance of English were being widely disrupted, there was slight evidence of this. The
challenges to the power of English that were manifest took two forms. First, a few of the
participants perceived that an increasing importance of Mandarin as a world language
could negatively impact the value of English and reduce the need for people in Taiwan to
study it in the longer term. Yu-Yen, a graduate of the English teaching program at the
national university told a story about a friend trying to convince her boyfriend of the
importance of English after having taken a vacation in Europe.

She, she told her boyfriend that she would like to learn English since we back to
Taiwan. And her boyfriend asked why. She say because once you speak English,
like Yu-Yen, like me, you get more chances to, to meet people around the world.
But her boyfriend said well, why English? You should (use) the Chinese because
it's Chinese century nowadays [Yu-Yen laughs] it's not US or European century.
(personal communication, November 25, 2011)

In addition to these feelings about the increasing value of Mandarin, some participants
questioned the increasingly common practice of sending very young children to study
English primarily on the grounds that they should study Mandarin first. In discussing this
issue, many participants responded that Mandarin is “our” language or that it is the
“mother tongue” and should be afforded precedence over English in Taiwanese society.
For example, Stan, a graduate student at the national university, discussing the teaching of English to young children in Taiwan, felt that “we should let them develop their mother tongue first” (personal communication, September 27, 2011). Several also indicated that such early study robbed children of their childhoods. For example, Marlene, an undergraduate at City Tech., felt that her nephew's English study at the age of three was lamentable on the grounds that he could not “have a happy childhood” (personal communication, December 17, 2011).

These types of resistance to English were of relatively minor importance among individuals in this study, however. As I will demonstrate in the coming sections, participants’ experiences with English led them to challenge, not so much the emphasis placed upon English and English education in Taiwan per se, but, the manner in which they often experienced it being taught in Taiwan. One area in which this is manifest is in participants' concerns over the pressure that they saw as accompanying the role of English in Taiwanese education.

4.2.2 Beating the competitors: English grade competition and pressure

In the life histories in Question #1, I noted the importance of entrance exams, the tendency for parents, especially mothers, to be highly involved in the decision for their children to learn early English, and the practice of publicly announcing test scores and admission decisions on the part of individual teachers as well as schools and cram schools. All of these aspects of the educational life histories of participants related to their perception that the degree of competition associated with English education was excessive.
Individuals in this study especially associated competition in English learning with the high-stakes entrance exams required for high school and university admission. With English representing a key subject on these exams, participants recalled a great deal of pressure associated with their English learning, especially at the junior high and high school levels. Participants spoke of long hours of studying to prepare for these exams. Indeed, as noted, I frequently observed young students on the evening trains studying their English textbooks (See Appendix D). Several individuals lamented that schools even routinely canceled courses in subjects not appearing on the exam such as music and physical education in favor of additional test-preparation for exam subjects such as English, Chinese, science, and math. Wilma noted that some courses in non-tested subjects existed at her school only on paper in order to feign compliance with government curriculum mandates. In fact, those times were actually devoted to preparation in test subjects.

"Actually we are taking Chinese classes or math, mathematic classes in order to, you know, to, to let us study more so that we can, we can get higher score when we are having examinations. Or P.E. class. Actually, it's P.E. class but actually the teacher is not a P.E. teacher, it's a Chinese teacher, it's an English teacher. But, you know, the government they, they're not allow you to, to teach English in the P.E. class so they will still show as a P.E. class, but actually we're not having the P.E. class, we're having the English class." (personal communication, October 15, 2011)

The competition surrounding these exams was manifest in many other ways. Several
participants simply spoke of their education in English as a “competition.” For example, Crystal, an undergraduate at National Southern, stated that in “the education in T-, Taiwan we have to have to, uh, we, we always, uh, to, we always compete with each others, um, um. Sometimes they, uh, other people performs better, uh, I, I will, I will be nervous” (personal communication, December 19, 2011). Other participants couched their recollections of English education in terms strongly evocative of competition. In the following excerpt, Yu-Yen characterizes her college English in terms of a competitive, stressful, zero-sum endeavor:

Yes. Yeah. Like I think I learned, well, maybe also because I, uh, during the, the last two years of the junior college because I decide to switch the major to English. So I have to spend also more effort because I knew the competitors were major in English maybe most of them. So, I knew I gotta spend maybe more time to catch up with those students. So that was the time when I really study hard. I studied like more than ten hours of English every day. (personal communication, November 25, 2011)

This intense competition is manifest in the life histories of English learning with families mustering a variety of resources in an effort to give their children a better outcome. The private tutors and study abroad experiences mentioned in Question #1 represent such activities, especially noteworthy because of their potentially high cost. Families also viewed cram schools as a means to get a “leg up” on the “competition” or at least as a means to keep up. Participant accounts reflect the value of such schools with individuals
indicating that they felt “confident” in class and had a better chance to “beat” the others since they had already previewed the same course material in cram school. For example, Denise, a National Southern graduate student engaged in her teaching practicum, noted, in response to my question about her junior high English, that “that's quite easy for me, actually because I've learned in Sesame Street [the name of a cram school chain in Taiwan] before. So, um, when the, when the teacher in junior high started to taught me some, like, alphabets, I've learned that already before, uh, several years ago. So, uh, that's quite easy for me” (personal communication, October 16, 2011). A couple of participants stated that they felt “superior” to many classmates because of their command of course material already covered in cram school.

Most saw these for-pay contexts as a necessity rather than a luxury. Irene explained to me that “all parents have to send their children to cram schools [emphasis is hers]” (personal communication, December 15, 2011). Sierra concurred, asserting that “Everyone goes to cram school” (personal communication, September 26, 2011). Marlene had this to say. “Yes, I don't like cram school but in Taiwan if you don't enter the cram school, your grade will become very poor. Because the day school and teacher they, they don't care about one person. They care everybody so they teach very fast” (personal communication, December 17, 2011). This situation may represent a “chicken and egg” scenario, in fact, since participants also noted that day school teachers covered material very quickly on the assumption that students had already studied the content in cram school, thus ironically stoking the need for attending such schools.

The result of all of this is, according to participants, a feeling of extreme pressure with many participants explicitly using the term “pressure” to characterize their junior
high and high school English learning. The long hours spent in study that I portrayed as part of life histories of English learning in Question #1 are indicative of this. The interest of parents in English education, another salient aspect of these life histories, is also connected to this pressure: Numerous individuals implicated not only the system of schools and entrance exams in creating pressure, but also their own parents. Jerry, a graduate student at National Southern, noted that his mom decided that he should go to cram school because of “some competition between parents.” He goes on to note that “parents will like, uh, want their children become better than others. So they will send them to cram school” (personal communication, October 7, 2011). In discussing her own family, Yayoi also felt that competition was imposed by parents.

I think, uh, learning other languages at the very young age is good. But the problem is the, the pressure the parents give the children. And, uh, I know that some of the relatives of my family, they will put much, uh, (he) will look at the, this issue very seriously. They push their children to learn, rather than they, uh, feel happy to learn. Yeah, but they will, uh, uh, have, uh, how do you say, the, the parents will push their children to learn. And, uh, mm, the children might not understand, uh, why the reason why, why you are so serious about, uh, pushing me to learn.

(personal communication, December 20, 2011)

Given that young people in the Chinese culture tend to go out of their way to exhibit respect for their parents, for example by mentioning parents in job interviews, this
finding is especially surprising. I believe that it reflects the strength of these feelings of pressure – an issue that arose spontaneously from participants in virtually every interview - and the intense dissatisfaction and frustration that these students associate with these aspects of English education in Taiwan.

4.2.3 Southern discomfort: Perceptions of personal advantage in Taiwan English education

In addition to English education simply being highly competitive, many participants felt disparities in access to English (education) with the sense of disadvantage being most acutely felt in association with the rural south of Taiwan. First, a number of participants perceived a gap of access to quality English education in Taiwan between rural and urban dwellers. For example, Walter felt that, although his own English was good, since he was from a rural context he could not compare with his urban counterparts and that he struggled to compete. When I asked him why, he indicated that he felt urban dwellers to have more “resources” and, in particular, greater chances to talk to foreigners (personal communication, September 6, 2011). This gap between urban and rural English learning resources was evidenced in my own fieldwork: I took part as a teacher in a special summer English camp for elementary school students at a small, rural, mountain school. Lacking in resources, the school had no full-time English teacher for the students. Responding to this perceived lack of English resources, the National Southern University foreign language department organized the camp in which students came to school every day for a little over a week to focus on English intensively.

In addition to the issues of difference in English learning resources between urban
and rural contexts, many felt that those in northern Taiwan especially enjoyed advantages to learning English. Shan-Lu, a student at National Southern, felt that in Taipei “they can speak English well” because “they have better resources for them to learn English. Yeah. Especially in north Taiwan, like Taipei” (personal communication, December 3, 2011). Jean, an undergraduate pre-service teacher at National Southern, echoed this feeling. Discussing a field teaching experience in an elementary school in southern Taiwan she concluded that those in the South “don't have enough resources in teaching English.” She notes that the school had only one English teacher (personal communication, January 1, 2012). Indeed, some participants in this study felt that the overall socio-economic and linguistic environment of Taipei was so different that they perceived a virtual dichotomy between Taipei and the rest of Taiwan, referring to Taipei as Taipei (台北國), a Mandarin word coinage, meaning, literally, the nation of Taipei. As Austin noted “when I, when I, when I'm in Taipei I, I, I've just that I feel like that I, I'm in foreign country. Yeah, many people speak English and or other languages” (personal communication, November 20, 2011).

I found evidence of inequality in English learning chances explicitly related to family resources. As indicated, families leveraged a variety of forms of financial, educational, and social capital to facilitate the English learning of participants. This is not surprising given the perceptions of the importance of English as well as the perceptions of the zero-sum competitive nature often surrounding it combined with the perceived inadequacy of sole reliance upon day school studies. There were many variations in family resources among study participants potentially impacting English learning. Parental educational attainment was one. While some parents had completed college and
a few had even earned advanced degrees in English-speaking countries, others' educations had concluded with elementary school or junior high school. These latter individuals would have had little or no exposure to formal English education. Also, variations in financial resources were evident: As the educational attainment implies, some parents were engaged in careers as professionals while others had working-class occupations.

As a result, there is a strong potential for wide variations in access to English education. For example, Alice, a graduate from National Southern and currently a cram school teacher, was one of the two participants having no cram school experience. When I asked her about this, she simply stated that her family did not have the money to pay (personal communication, September 24, 2011). Carlene, another National Southern graduate, tells a similar story: She attended cram school for one year, but, sensitive to the high cost, she asked her parents to allow her to stop (personal communication, December 30, 2011). Todd, as part of his practicum, took part in a special program to provide remediation for low-achieving English students at the junior high level. He had this to say about the program.

They are low achievement in English or, os-, or means they are poor; they have, their h-, their family have no money to send them into the cram school. So they learn slow, they learn English slowly and because teacher has to teach one or two lesson at one, one c-, class, but they have no time to answer their question and, uh, the question will be more and more. So, nn, at, at the final step they have no motivation for them because they did not understand what teacher, what the
Prewitt, a National Southern student, provided a different example of perceptions of unequal access to English education due to family resources. In this case, he related how his mother, a cram school owner and teacher, provided tuition-free instruction to a select group of students who could not otherwise afford to enroll. Prewitt noted that of the approximately 250 students in their school, around 15 were not being charged (personal communication, December 29, 2011).

Overall, however, the notion of English education somehow being *unfair* and, especially, deterministic, due to the issues of unequal access related to family resources was not highly salient in the learner accounts in this research. In particular, the idea that family SES, specifically, impacted self-determination in English studies – either enhancing or compromising it – was not strongly evident in these accounts with a single exception. Irene, an undergraduate from National Southern, keenly perceived herself as having experienced unfairness in English education connected to her family resources. She related how she initially attended an elite English cram school, her feelings about the other students, and how she was later deemed ineligible for this school because of her citizenship. In discussing this experience, she draws a connection between her own chances for (English) education and her SES.

Irene: Mm, all the other children they were rich and you can feel that my the things they use.

Chuck: W-, what do you mean?
Irene: Mm, like they, they wear clothes that has brands.

Chuck: Oh, okay.

Irene: Mm, but I get along well. (But I) still feel different from them.

Chuck: W-, w-, w-, different?

Irene: Nn, because they lived in America and they have those green cards. What that called, lu, lu ka. You know what's that?

Chuck: Green card, yeah. They, they, the other children had green cards?

Irene: Mm, because they're all really rich and their parents gave birth the them in the United States.

Chuck: Oh, okay.

Irene: Yeah, and their English are also very fluent.

Chuck: Okay.

Irene: So, I have to work harder to get catch up with them.

Chuck: Mm. So what happened?

Irene: I have to study after that class. So, actually, it's like after nine o'clock and after I get home my parents practice with me.

Chuck: Uh-huh.

Irene: And help me review the homeworks and stuff.

Chuck: Mm. And how did you feel?

Irene: Tired because I still have my schoolwork.

Chuck: Okay and for how long did you study there?

Irene: About three to four years. And later on, un, because there are too many children entering that s-, that s-, cram school. So, uh, they had a stricter rule. So
you have to have the green card to enter that school. So, I was kicked out. And my mother found me a foreigner to tutor me.

(personal communication, December 15, 2011)

Irene draws a connection among SES (“they were rich”), English proficiency, her own need to work hard to catch up, and, eventually, even her loss of the chance to attend the school. This excerpt as well other parts of the interview were imbued with a strong sense of bitterness and sarcasm, especially conveyed by tone of voice. This strong expression of bitterness and sarcasm was highly uncharacteristic among participants.

Yet, Irene herself actually seemed to possess a number of advantages held by very few project participants: Despite her proclamations that her parents were working-class people, they did have the means to pay for this expensive school. Her father was a university engineering professor with a doctorate from an American university and her mother was a school teacher who also held degrees from both Taiwanese and American schools. Both were able to use English and, as she notes in this excerpt, to help her with her homework. In addition, throughout the interview Irene relates the many English learning opportunities found by her evidently resourceful and well-connected mother for her to take part in. It seems that it was Irene's exposure to a select group of higher-SES and advantaged students rather than her own inherent advantages that she was keying on in her feelings about English education. Thus she concludes that she suffers from the unfairness of the situation. Although living in the North, in Taipei, and in urban contexts in general were cited by participants as impacting chances to learn English and this may often be a manifestation of SES, others in this study did not express a connection between
these individual circumstances and the kind of explicit link between SES and life chances related to English felt by Irene.

4.2.4 The computer made me do it: The power of English, the power of tests, and feelings of self-determination in Taiwan’s English learner life histories

Feelings pertaining to self-determination represent another important theme manifest in the accounts of English learning provided by participants. A number of factors impacted these feelings. First, many individuals felt that their English studies, especially in the earliest stages, were determined by their parents, in particular by their mothers, with little input on their own part. Second, a number of participants indicated that university choice and, indeed, even choice of major was largely out of their own hands, instead being seemingly determined via the entrance exam system. Finally, while the feeling of their own SES explicitly impacting their access to English learning and success was not a highly salient theme among these accounts, there was a strong indication that participants viewed growing up in southern Taiwan and in rural settings as obstacles to English learning to be overcome as they struggled to compete with their northern and urban peers.

Parents felt that English was very important with a resulting strong feeling among many interviewees being that they were not personally responsible for the initiation of their own English study. Participants often described their parents as responsible for their involvement in English learning, particularly at the earliest stages. As the life histories indicate, a large percentage of individuals in this study began English study at very early age in private contexts such as private English-intensive preschools and kindergartens as well as cram schools. Many describe how the choice to attend these schools was made by
their parents, especially their mothers. For example, when I asked Jean why she began to study English in cram school, she chuckled, replying “Well, my mom sent me to the cram school learning English” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Likewise, Jenny tells a similar story of her own cram school studies. When I asked her why she began to study in cram school, the following exchange ensued.

Jenny: My mom did [chuckling] took me there.
Chuck: She took you there?
Jenny: Yeah.
Chuck: Did you want to go?
Jenny: I'm not sure about that.

(personal communication, January 6, 2012)

Jenny goes on to say that her mother wanted her to have a competitive advantage over the other children – a “head start” essentially - since English study in the day school was to begin the following year.

The very language in which participants couched their recollections of their initial English study often reflected both an external locus of control as well as some initial ambivalence, if not actual resistance, to studying English. Edison, a non-traditional learner from City Tech., described his own cram school studies.

Chuck: Why did you attend [cram school]?
Edison: Because my parents [laughs]. And they think, uh, they will push me to
higher grade [laughs].

Chuck: Okay. What, what did you feel?

Edison: I feel boring and, it’s wa-, waste my time.

(personal communication, December 17, 2011)

Edison, when asked to discuss his attending cram school replies with two sentences in which his parents, not he himself, are actually the subjects. A number of participants used similar language with the the verb “push” being especially common. Bennie indicated that her mom “pushed” her to work hard in a conversation school (personal communication, December 1, 2011). Ching-Wen, a National Southern undergraduate, discussed how her mother “pushed” her to cram school (personal communication, December 9, 2011).

In addition to these narratives pertaining primarily to early English study, compromised self-determination was also manifest in participants’ discussions of the importance of the high-stakes entrance exams, especially in terms of impacting their choice of university as well as, in some cases, their very choice of English as a major. In this case individuals explained how these tests sometimes seemed to become actors on their own, usurping their own power to select school and major. Specifically, when high school students took the university entrance exams their scores placed them in a competition against all other applicants. The most highly regarded schools in Taiwan, therefore, could set higher exam score requirements with students waiting to find out where their scores placed them on the continuum from the “best” to the “worst” schools. Thus, Walter, in discussing his choice of university attributes the selection of schools not
to his own choice, but to “the computer.”

Chuck: But can you tell me about that decision? Why did you choose City Tech?
Walter: It's by my score just rank, nn, I need to sign my vol-, volunteer which one is my first, first choice and this is, this school is the two or third choice I, I made.
Chuck: Okay.
Walter: So, I just according to the computer, yes, I come, came here.

(personal communication, September 6, 2011)

As a private university, City Tech. is regarded as having lower prestige than a national university. This partially explains this response and, in particular, the tone of resignation with which it was delivered. Additionally, individual departments within schools could also stipulate their own standards. In the case of National Southern, the two tracks – English teaching and Applied English – had different admission standards with the Applied English track being higher. As a result, several of the pre-service English teachers indicated that they actually had little or no interest in English teaching, but that they simply enrolled in the most prestigious program that their entrance exam scores allowed.

As with the early English contexts, parents also often played a role in the choice of English as a university major. For example, Prewitt (personal communication, December 29, 2011), discussed how he came to major in English by virtue of his parents wanting him to later take the reigns of the family business, an English cram school. He indicated that he was not really interested in studying English, preferring to have majored
in architecture instead. His parents, however, had other wishes. A few other parents also steered their children away from certain majors into English, seeing it as more marketable. For example Leticia had wished to major in art, but her mother, herself an artist, opposed this, pressuring her to abandon art as a career due to her perceptions of its unprofitability. “My mother won't allow it,” Leticia stated in our interview, “because, uh, it will, art makes people poor” (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Not all parents were able to dictate their children's choice of university major, however. For example, when I asked Jessie about her parents' reaction to her major choice, she indicated that there was some conflict because of her resistance to their wishes (personal communication, December 29, 2011). She noted that her parents did not agree with her choice primarily because she forfeited a spot in a more prestigious university majoring in business in order to study English. Jessie's parents felt that the business degree would have made her more marketable in the future. As a third-year undergraduate, she confided that she had come to agree with her parents. She had come to feel that English was less marketable than business and, although she loved English, she felt that she could have studied it on her own and majored in business instead. Jessie was one of the few individuals who both defied her parents and chose to attend a less prestigious school because she could study her choice of major. Virtually all participants took as a given that one should fully capitalize upon the exam scores in choice of major.

4.2.5 Why can't we prepare for daily life?: Feelings about English pedagogy in Taiwan

Participants expressed strong and often critical reactions regarding English teaching
practices in Taiwan. They complained that these “traditional” classes were boring and stressful and that they placed undue emphasis especially on written grammatical form at the expense of work with listening and speaking. With disdain, participants cited rote memorization and drills as prominent methods. For example, a number of participants spoke of the irony of memorizing extensive vocabulary lists but of having no chance to practice using these words to communicate. Indeed, they noted the further irony of seemingly gaining a vast vocabulary knowledge, but of being unable to use even simple English when eventually being called upon by circumstances to do so in conversations. Edison (personal communication, December 17, 2011) complained about his teachers that “they PUSH you to: remember the vocabulary and the grammar an, uh, but the teacher didn't teach, teach us speaking or more chance to conversation.”

Participants felt that high-stakes exams skewed the teaching toward tested competencies, indicating that those aspects of language not on the test were given less emphasis. Jerry, in discussing why teachers in high school are unable to broaden the types of teaching methods employed noted that teachers feel that students “have entrance exam for university. So they have a lot of things to do. They have to memorize a, a lot of new words, the sentence pattern, and they have to have a lot of tests.” (personal communication, October 7, 2011). Irene indicated that the focus on “rules” and difficult vocabulary was due to entrance exams (personal communication, December 15, 2011). Ching-Fen noted that “English learning in junior high school is very boring because we are preparing for the high school entrance exam and the teacher just, uh, reading the textbook and teaching us grammar” (personal communication, December 9, 2011). While a few did acknowledge that teachers themselves felt considerable pressure to deliver
higher student scores, many participants overall were critical both of “the system” of exams and of the teachers within it. In a telling excerpt, Leticia, when asked to provide one example of an ineffective teacher, offered the following response.

Oh. Oh, one my, Oh! [laughs]. That, too, too many teachers [laughs]. Okay, one of my teachers, uh, she was like a usual teacher. And, uh, before, before the class she would say, ah, open the book, ah, let's start chapter one and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, of this vocabulary is pronounced like blah blah blah and okay, n, uh, we ha, we will have a test in next, next Monday so prepare or you will get [makes slapping sound, laughs] punched. Uh, punched? Yes. (personal communication, January 5, 2012)

The tone of such a response is indicative of the responses offered by many participants about numerous teachers. Not only did they see the teaching methods as boring and uninspired but many noted that they felt that the English that they were learning in school, while it did prepare them for high-stakes entrance exams, failed to prepare them for broader contexts of English use.

One strong theme among participants was a desire to be able to use English in “daily life” situations. Many used this exact term in describing the type of English that they wanted to learn and that they felt to consistently be lacking in their formal – especially day school – educational experiences. Teresa, an undergraduate at National Southern, noted that “in Taiwan we focus on grammar and the letters, nn, ’cause we focus on grammar and we cannot, nn, have learn really more about our... related to our daily
“life” (personal communication, December 24, 2011). Francine felt that this focus resulted in her own inability to sometimes use English out of the classroom. She laments that “I learn English in the end I find, I find if I want to talk you in daily life some, sometimes I can't find the words or sentence, uh, normally, eh, formal, informal [laughs]” (personal communication, December 27, 2011). Thus, participants appeared to be highly conscious of a “disconnect” between school English and that outside of formal learning contexts in Taiwan. They especially spoke of the lack of practice in oral communication in school.

In fact, in addition to simply characterizing this “daily life” English as entailing more informal, oral practice, participants provided specific examples. Leticia complained that the language learned in school was often prescriptive and even anachronistic in nature. She provided the example of being taught to use the phrase “in sum,” feeling that it was a kind of “old English” that is no longer in actual use (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Yayoi provides an example of the word “awesome” as representing the kind of “daily life” English not on the entrance exams, and, therefore, not studied in class, but in common actual use. She noted that “in the United States the teenagers are (inaudible), uh, use the work “awesome” very often. Yeah, so that's what I want to, uh, learn is the, their, uh, the usage of their daily life. How they use English in their daily life” (personal communication, December 20, 2011).

An additional manifestation of common teaching practice was participants’ portrayal of English learning as a convergent endeavor, as a situation in which there was a single answer viewed as correct. This was often implicitly manifest in the way that they framed formal English learning experiences. Participants described many of their experiences with formal English learning and use as an effort to avoid “mistakes” and to
produce “correct” language. Jean, in discussing her high school English teacher relates how she felt “really scared. ’Cause the teacher was really strict and if she found any errors or mistakes she would scold scold us she would scold scold” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Jean is here responding negatively to the means of providing correction. In such a case, language class simply becomes an exercise in avoiding mistakes rather than, say, an exercise in creativity, language play, linguistic risk-taking, or attempts at self-expression.

The difference between a teaching approach employing convergent and divergent activities became salient for Denise by virtue of a study abroad experience. Reflecting on an experience studying abroad in an intensive program, she noted that the experience was one in which the teacher created more divergent activities. Students in the program took up these activities in way that surprised her. She had the following to say about this issue.

I think in Taiwan, um, teacher is always, um, um, like teacher is always teaching you something and we are not discussing because we just, as for students we just learn something, we just listen to our teacher and learn something from our teachers. And most of the time we, we stay quiet and there's not room for us to express our thoughts...But, um, when I stayed in the UK and we have classes with other students from different countries, I think it's quite different because the teacher is not teaching us something. Perhaps, uh, he's just have a, have an issue like, oh, if you won the lottery what would you want to allocate the money you got... [W]hat surprised me is that the students from other countries, they, they can have very distinguished, um, viewpoints...[T]he answer is not cliché. I think in
Taiwan, um, most of the time because, um, in Taiwanese education we emphasize on a standard. Like for the test we have, uh, you have a standard answer...I think, um, for Taiwanese students, we are not trained to brainstorm most of the time. But for my classmates in UK, they are quite different. They have different viewpoints and they can brainstorm together and the teacher's just guide us, guide us to discuss, to express our thoughts. But he's not telling us which one's more correct, which one is not so good. He's not going to say that. And I think that's very different.

(personal communication, October 16, 2011)

Notably, Denise identifies formal education with convergent thought to such an extent that the very term “teaching” is equated with such an approach. Although she is not being critical of the teaching approach experienced in the UK, she does convey her underlying orientation to teaching: An approach aligned with divergent tasks such as this one, although worthwhile, even laudable, represents to her a situation in which the teacher is “not really teaching us something.” Other individuals shared this orientation as evidenced in the way that they discussed teaching and learning.

This is important because out of class language use took on many attributes of a convergent endeavor for participants. In particular, individuals described anxiety associated with a fear of using English incorrectly. Many described incidents in their language use in which the effort to avoid mistakes led almost to a paralysis of language use. Several, in fact, indicated that they were carefully monitoring their own grammar during the actual interviews. Indeed, interview transcripts do reveal much attention to
grammatical accuracy in the form of – sometimes multiple - restarts to utterances as participants appear to grope for the desired grammatical form. This is in spite of the fact that their original utterance would have virtually always served to convey their intention adequately.

4.2.6 How can he be our English teacher when he doesn't even look Canadian?: Perceptions of race, nationality, language, and English teaching in Taiwan

The literature in applied linguistics draws a distinction between the native speaker (NS) and the non-native speaker (NNS) as a pivotal dichotomy. In particular, Chomsky (1965) famously defined the native speaker as an “ideal speaker-listener” thus both bolstering the native speaker construct as well as elevating the native speaker as language authority. In Chapter Two, I discussed the more recent corpus of work (e.g., Phillipson, 1992) that consistently troubles the traditional preference for the NS as language model and teacher especially on the grounds that this preference is linguistically-misinformed, being historically rooted in and reproducing regimes of social power rather than representing any inherent value in the native speaker English variety. (Although there may be important utilitarian benefits to NS-like language given the prestige of such varieties, an issue to which I turn at a later point.)

The present research speaks to the issue of the role of the native speaker in English education in important ways. Findings indicate that “foreignness” rather than the NS/NNS dichotomy represents a salient feature of thought about English in Taiwan. Furthermore, this research provides evidence that the notion of the foreigner is socially constructed as being aligned with a specific set of racial characteristics - typically
manifest in those having western and northern European ancestry – with this “phenotype” representing the core semantic field of the term “foreigner” in Taiwan English. Thus, the foreigner/Taiwanese dichotomy can dislodge the linguistic NS/NNS dichotomy in English teaching, supplanting it with a strong association of proximity to this phenotype - rather than native speaker status per se - with English language proficiency, worthiness for teaching, and as a target of linguistic emulation. Indeed, the perceived language ability of those approximating this phenotype did result in an overall preference for such individuals as language teachers. This overall preference, however, did not simply represent a blanket endorsement of these individuals as preferred teachers in absolutely all situations. Instead, a number of participants viewed their “foreign” teachers as more appropriate in teaching oral skills and culture, and their Taiwanese teachers as preferable for the more restricted scope of grammar teaching.

The idea of the “foreigner” in relation to English learning and use represented a salient concept among the participants in this study with the term “foreigner” itself appearing 161 times in the transcripts. Participants employed the term 127 times and I used it 34 times, virtually always in my follow-up questions in which participants had initiated the use of the term. On the other hand, the term “native speaker” appears only 67 times among interviewees with many of these instances representing responses to questions in which I myself initiated the term. Also, in several instances, when I employed the term “native speaker” interviewees actually employed the term “foreigner” in their responses. In a couple of other instances when I asked about the use of native speakers in English teaching, individuals initially employed the term “foreigner” in their responses, but then quickly corrected this to the term “native speaker.” Thus, the term
“foreigner” seemed to be common and even preferred in discussing English teaching and learning.

Data collected in this study supports the notion that the term “foreigner” as used by participants as well as more broadly in Taiwan neither simply indicated an individual from another country nor was it simply used as a synonym for a native speaker of English. Instead, the term was indicative of a specific set of physical characteristics. There are several types of evidence for this in this study. First, many individuals in this study spoke of seeking out (or avoiding) foreigners on the streets with whom to speak (or avoid speaking) English. In such instances, native speaker status is not known and appearance is the only criterion by which individuals infer such language competency. Indeed, as noted previously, I myself encountered two high school students on a train in southern Taiwan who struck up a conversation with me in order to complete a homework assignment from their English teacher who asked them to “speak English with foreigners” encountered in public places.

Furthermore, this research provides evidence that this notion of the “foreigner” does not simply entail individuals who – because of their race – seem most likely to not be Taiwanese. Rather, a specific phenotype was important in English teaching and learning among participants, representing the “core” semantic field of this term. For example, in discussing language teaching, Bennie elaborates on the term, “foreigner.”

Bennie: Foreigner face like it's very different with an Asian face, you know. You can see on the street oh, you know, uh, I , I know it's not in, not come from Taiwan local.
Chuck: Can you describe a foreigner face, what you mean by that. What do they look like?

Bennie: Uh, maybe hook nose or, uh, yes a color eyes or white skin, I think.

Chuck: Colored eyes?

Bennie: Uh, brown, brown eyes or green.

(personal communication, December 1, 2011)

Bennie was able to readily and fairly unequivocally describe the “foreign face” and to differentiate it from her notions of the “local” or “Asian” face with “foreigner” being strongly associated with light skin, light-colored eyes, and a “hook” nose which in this description means something different than the term “hook nose” in Inner Circle Englishes: My experience suggests that it is simply code for a more prominent “European” nose, differentiating it from a less prominent “Asian” nose. Additionally, with the term “foreigner” being thus strongly associated with this phenotype, fieldwork indicated other terms being commonly used to describe individuals not fitting this description in a semantics of race in Taiwan. Dark-skinned individuals are often simply referred to as “black.” For example, a popular toothpaste in Taiwan goes by the Mandarin brand name 黑人, literally “black person” toothpaste. The tube depicts a dark-skinned man wearing a top hat and smiling with white, shining teeth. Other non-Taiwanese individuals were termed differently. For example, Americans of Chinese ancestry were widely referred to as “ABC” meaning American-Born Chinese, rather than simply being called “Americans” or “foreigners.” An example of this usage can be found in section 4.3.3 with Alice's discussion of English use among young Taiwanese men.
Notably, by virtue of this strong association with this phenotype, the term “foreigner” does not seem to possess the sorts of pejorative implications that it holds in mainstream English. Indeed, if anything it is endowed with some prestige and is commonly and openly used. For example, conversation classes with native-speaking teachers held at one of the schools in this study were advertised on posters as “Foreign Teachers Time” as a way to attract students. Also, emails addressed to these teachers from the program coordinator, a woman with considerable language teaching experience and holding a doctorate in the field, were headed with the salutation “Dear Foreign Teachers.”

This specific notion of the foreigner has important implications for attitudes about English teaching and learning. The prestige associated with this English phenotype, in addition to appropriating the term “foreigner,” was also manifest in English teaching and learning with these individuals, rather than simply native speakers, being generally viewed as the preferred interlocutors and teachers. For example, Joan, an undergraduate student, when asked to elaborate on her out-of-class English study methods, replied that “I listen to English music, go to book store, read some English books and talk to white people” (personal communication, September 9, 2011). The association of this phenotype with English teaching was also strongly manifest in the visual culture surrounding English teaching and learning: Most teachers of English in the ads for cram schools and learning materials were light-skinned and possessed features commonly associated with those of a northern and western European ancestry. For example, in one poster outside of a language school, a photograph taken from a camera in a low position depicts three non-Asian, light-skinned people silhouetted, seemingly giants proudly towering into a blue sky. In another instance an English school ad shows Taiwanese students posing with their
young, white language school teachers. In a final example, a young white man looms from a billboard high above street level and points directly at the viewer, imploring the viewer to enroll in TOEFL and TOEIC classes [See Appendix D for these illustrations]. My own field experiences in this project also seem to confirm the preference for such teachers, or at least no overall disruption of it: All 13 native-speaking teachers with whom I came to be associated on this project fit the phenotype described here. None overtly appeared to be of anything other than of northern/western European ancestry.

This phenotype was also associated with nationality. In a number of interviews and conversations, individuals commented on people who did or did not, for example, “look American” or “look British.” Students at one of the schools at which I conducted fieldwork, in an informal teachers’ room chat one day, noted that one of the native-speaking teachers, a Canadian, did not “look Canadian” because of his dark eyes and dark, curly hair. They felt that he “looked Spanish” instead and expressed initial surprise and some resistance to his role as an English teacher. This association of a particular set of racial features with nationality is important since nationality was also strongly associated with language. For example, Ming-Chi stated “It impossible to, to speak Chinese to American, right? It's speak English to American” (personal communication, October 1, 2011). This reflects a widely-held association of America and American citizens(hip) with the English language in the society and among participants.

Thus, in terms of language, there was a strong preference for people from the traditional English-speaking countries as teachers with the phenotype detailed here being associated with those nationalities. Indeed, the visual culture associated with English education in Taiwan also reflected this attention to nationality, not just race. Cram school
operators frequently employed motifs and iconography associated with English-speaking
countries such as the Union Jack or the Statue of Liberty in their advertisements and even
in the decorations of their schools. For example, an English school in Chiayi City, Taiwan
featured a red, white, and blue motif (See Appendix D). Names of cram schools in the
area included “Lincoln” and “Victoria,” names evoking potent Inner Circle associations.

Attitudes linking race, nationality, and language were so strong that individuals
closer to the phenotype described here who were not even native speakers of English
sometimes “passed” as native speakers to teach English in cram schools. I spoke with one
informant – a cram school teacher - who indicated that she knew several individuals who
were native speakers of German or French, but who were employed in cram schools in
Taiwan under the pretense of being native speakers of English simply based on their
racial appearance. In another instance in this research where an interview turned to a
participant defining the meaning of the term “foreigner,” Carla, a cram school teacher
herself, noted an instance in which individuals who fit the phenotype described here, but
who were not native speakers of English, were passed off as native speakers of English to
unsuspecting parents.

Carla: But, you know, they got a face [chuckles]. So it's easy to convince the
parents to put their kids into our cram school because we have two foreign
teachers.

Chuck: They got a face.

Carla: Yeah, they got that, they got that foreigner face.

Chuck: Wh-, what do you mean?
Carla: Uh, mm, because they look, they way they look is foreigner. So themselves
Chuck: What does that mean?
Carla: Uh,
Chuck: [laughs]
Carla: I, I don't know how to put that. Mm, usually the parents when they come to
the cram school,
Chuck: Uh-huh.
Carla: they are looking for foreign teachers.
Chuck: Okay.
Carla: Sometimes they will care where they from, where they are from.
Chuck: Okay.
Carla: I think they are looking for a faces looking like Canadian or American
because we cannot really tell the difference.
Chuck: But what does an American face look like?
Carla: I don't know, like you [laughs].
Chuck: Describe it.
Carla: [continues laughing] Like you, pale, uh, blue, eyes are blue and
Chuck: Should have blue eyes to get a cram school job?
Carla: [laughing] I don't know. Maybe grey, (green) whatever [laughs] not black.
Something like that, yeah. I, I don't know, but sounds crazy but that's how they
did that.
Chuck: M-huh. Okay.
Carla: Yeah, and sometimes they will convince the parents that, oh, our teachers
are from Canada or our teachers are from, uh, America. But, basically they are from Russia.

(personal communication, October 25, 2011)

Again, in this excerpt, Carla echoes the notion of a “foreign face” as code for a specific narrow phenotype: She readily describes them as having “pale skin” and, if not blue eyes, at least eyes of a light color. She notes that they look like me (light-skinned, blue eyes, light hair, of primarily northern/western European ancestry). This excerpt also aptly demonstrates the manner in which English teaching in Taiwan lies at the confluence of ideologies linking language race, national origin, language ability, and feelings regarding appropriateness for language teaching: In many cases the phenotype that I have detailed was equated with foreignness was equated with Americanism/Anglicism was equated with being a native speaker which, finally, was equated with being qualified and even preferred to teach English. This excerpt supports this conclusion that this “English phenotype” has potency in Taiwan since it was deployed by a cram school as a marketing ploy to attract parents. Finally, this excerpt also demonstrates that Carla is grappling with this notion of the “foreigner English phenotype” in Taiwan – and its implications for teaching English - as she seeks to make sense of her own teaching experiences.

The value of the “foreign teacher” in this study possessed a number of specific aspects. There was an especially prevalent feeling among participants that foreign teachers were preferable as teachers of oral language skills. Kristina, an undergraduate at City Tech., had this to say in discussing the practice of hiring foreign teachers in Taiwan, especially to teach young children.
I think it is good idea. 'Cause, um [smacks mouth], actually, um, actually in my opinion I think the, uh, Chinese teacher they teach, uh, English to the, uh, child. But they, they are not still the native, so they can't speak the good English, uh, pronounce and accent. So, um, I think, I think it is not, not good for the child. So I, um, I think that is when they were a child and native to teach them is good way to make them, uh, when they speak English they can, uh, pronounce the such as native.

(personal communication November 11, 2011)

Many others echoed essentially the same belief that a Taiwanese accent represented a cause for remediation and that the “native speaker” accent represented the ideal. Shannon, an undergraduate at National Southern, in discussing the need for foreign teachers felt that they were necessary “[b]ecause, uh, I have a, I have a, because some Taiwanese teacher their pronunciation is not correct” (personal communication, December 23, 2011). Notably, the previously-discussed issue of “correctness” is also manifest here. In discussing the issue of foreign teachers, the role of pronunciation, and the teaching of young children, many participants explicitly cited the “critical period” of language acquisition. They felt that young children could especially benefit from the foreign teacher because of what they saw as the ability of the children to more closely acquire the language to which they were exposed. In the case of oral language, they often noted that this implied an ability to approximate the accent of the foreign teacher and,
thus, to minimize their Taiwanese accent.

In the discussions with participants, culture was cited as an additional important aspect of the language and one that was strongly associated with the foreign teacher. Overall, a very general notion of culture emerged in which participants spoke of the importance of learning about “American” culture, “Western” culture or even “foreign” culture with the foreign teaching serving as a token and repository of these corpora of knowledge.

More specifically, a homogeneous, mono-cultural view in which teachers normalized white, Christian, mainstream culture of the traditional English-speaking countries emerged. Many individuals spoke, for example, of learning about and celebrating Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Halloween as important parts of American culture or even as part of a construct of “foreign” culture in general. However, none spoke of Kwanzaa or Hanukkah. In a response indicative of this feeling, Marlene, while discussing an especially well-liked teacher responded that “[The] best part. I think in high school, in my first year my English teacher teach us to carve a jack-o-lantern in the Halloween. I think it's fun because she teach us to learn the American culture. I know what is Halloween or what is Christmas mean” (personal communication, December 17, 2011). Teaching materials mirrored this narrow interpretation of “foreign” culture: For example, English learning magazines used in the language center at National Southern featured images of Christmas on their covers with the stories within depicting Christmas in the English-speaking world. Other holidays or religious celebrations such as Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, or Ramadan, again, received no such coverage in these materials.

Despite the preference for foreign teachers, participants did not view these
teachers as entirely linguistically omnipotent, however: A number of participants felt that their Taiwanese teachers, rather than the foreign teacher, were best equipped to teach grammar. These individuals indicate that the ability of the Taiwanese teacher to use Mandarin to “explain” the grammar was important. Participants indicated that their foreign teachers mostly did not have the ability to speak Mandarin at the level of complexity needed to discuss grammar or were not willing to do so. Farley, one of the graduate students at National Southern, cited a class discussion on this issue, noting that many foreign teachers were not trained and were unable to teach grammar by virtue of their lack of formal training.

And maybe in other parts, uh, uh, if the native speaker d-, did, uh, does not, uh, receive any training of English teaching, uh, maybe they, uh, like our, uh, uh, Taiwanese, uh, who are asked to [teach] Chinese will feel, w-, we, will feel confused and, uh, will not know how to teach, So, I think only if the native speaker have received, um, Eng-, English teaching training. So, I think, uh, they can teach, uh, the, maybe they, they can know, uh, why the students feel, uh, confused. Uh, like in the grammar part.

(personal communication, December 9, 2011)

These notions of race, language, teaching, culture, and the native speaker also articulate with the life histories of English learning presented in Question #1. First, the school experiences recounted in participants’ life histories aligned with the kinds of ideologies of language and pedagogy that circulate in the society as presented here. In their cram
school, tutoring, and study abroad experiences, participants (or their parents) frequently sought out foreign teachers or went to special day schools in Taiwan where a focus on English meant access to foreign teachers. Personal experience seemed to reinforce the roles of the foreign and Taiwanese teacher: The foreign teacher often taught using games, songs, and other activities with an oral-language focus. In the day school context, the Taiwanese teacher most commonly taught larger classes and was often the one responsible for test-preparation, drills, and explanations in Mandarin. Thus, the Taiwanese teacher was more closely associated with declarative (meta)linguistic knowledge.

There were a few indications of beliefs in the value of the foreign teacher being disrupted; however these critiques mostly related to questionable ground-level recruitment and hiring practices rather than the linguistic value of the foreign teacher per se. First, a couple of participants felt that it was unfair that untrained foreign teachers took teaching jobs away from trained individuals like themselves, and they spoke out against this practice. A couple of participants indicated that they felt many foreign teachers to be not only poorly trained but of dubious quality as employees in general. Irene, in discussing foreign teachers in cram schools, had the following to say.

Irene: And most of them can't find a job in the United States. That's why they're here.

Chuck: M-huh.

Irene: Oh, no offense. I, I mean it's just what my mom told me.

Chuck: Uh-huh.
Irene: Um, those teachers smoke and they drink and, um, they have a bad attitude while teaching. SO, um, and those kids, those kindergarten kids, they can't tell them their mothers or fathers what their teachers are teaching and all those parents sees, oh, foreigner, good! Then they send their kids here.

Chuck: Uh-huh.

Irene: But, actually, their quality aren't that good and they are not trained to teach younger children.

(personal communication, December 15, 2011)

Irene endorses this opinion, held by her mother, a cram school teacher, of the dubious quality of many foreign cram school teachers. In this short excerpt she manages to encapsulate many of the issues previously discussed here and to level several criticisms at foreign teachers beyond their being poorly trained or simply untrained as foreign language teachers. What is perhaps most noteworthy about this excerpt is that it has its source in the experience of a long-term teacher. The few criticisms of the practices of hiring foreign teachers simply on the basis of their native language or even their racial appearance mostly emanated from personal teaching experience and advanced teacher training – experiences not shared by most of the participants in this study. Irene questioned the practice of hiring untrained foreign teachers because of her mother's teaching experience. Carla came to know about the practices of passing non-native speaking Europeans as native speakers because of her own teaching experience. And Farley had begun to question the use of foreign teachers based upon her graduate training and exposure to scholarship in applied linguistics.
In conclusion, the life histories of these individuals shed light on beliefs relating to race, language, and language learning. Participants' accounts of their parents' beliefs and rationales for sending them to cram schools with foreign teachers represented an endorsement and enactment of beliefs placing a premium on the foreigner. Among participants themselves, those who spoke out against the hiring of foreign teachers with no training in the teaching of foreign language were those who themselves possessed more teacher training or teaching experience. Yet, these individuals were decidedly in the minority. In addition, these particular critiques did not represent a direct challenge to the ideology of the inherent linguistic superiority of the native speaker.

4.2.7 Running away: Perceptions of personal English competency

The life histories of English learning in this study indicate that participants especially encountered the language in the highly structured day school classroom context. These encounters involved a heavy reliance upon traditional language teaching methods in teacher-fronted classes in which the teacher's job was often to present vocabulary and grammar points, generally in the L1. There was a heavy emphasis on test preparation, taking the form of a strong orientation toward practicing literacy skills over listening and, especially, over speaking. Finally, these activities were often convergent in nature as students pursued “correct” answers. These aspects of English learning strongly related to individual's perceptions of their own English competency.

Specifically, individuals in this study overwhelmingly viewed their reading and writing skills to be much stronger than their listening, and, especially, their oral and conversational ability. Ching-Fen indicated that her reading and writing were good
enough for her to make online penpals, but that her oral skills were lower. She states that “maybe my writing and reading ability is enough, but I think my speaking ability is not enough” (personal communication, November 22, 2011). Others felt the same way. Ling-Fen, a National Southern graduate, replied that “I felt my speaking, I'm quite poor, I think” (personal communication, December 5, 2011).

Participants attributed this perceived lack of oral fluency to the nature of English pedagogy in Taiwan. For example, Ling-Fen replied in the following manner in discussing her educational experiences, detailing this pedagogy and making a connection to her resulting English abilities.

Ling-Fen: Uh, just grammar, grammar [laughs]. (inaudible) read the, uh, the story, the, the, the textbook, yeah, then learn some grammar.

Chuck: Uh-huh.

Ling-Fen: And those texts al-, also, um, tea-, also taught you that, uh, how to, uh, how to remember those words and help you, uh, help you understand (things) that you should (inaudible).

Chuck: Do you think that's a good way to learn English?

Ling-Fen: Uh, maybe in writing. But [smacks mouth], but oral [smacks mouth] oral is poor [laughs]. For me (inaudible). It's poor.

(personal communication, December 5, 2011)

Ying-Mei concurred, also chalking up her lower oral skills, and the low oral ability that she perceived among Taiwanese English students in general, to choices underlying
English education. “I think they mainly focus on, uh, writing and reading. And they, uh, they don't teach, uh, teach us on oral speaking. So I think most student in Taiwan have, uh, uh, good reading ability, wri-, uh, good writing ability. But they don't have a good oral ability” (personal communication, December 12, 2011). Farley also indicated that the lack of English practice opportunities out of class was also to blame in lower oral proficiency when compared with literacy skills: “And, uh, for, um, speaking part I'm, I, I don't have, uh, other chances to, uh, talk, uh, uh, besides the English classes. Okay, um, so I, I think, uh, besides the English classes I don't have a lot of chance to talk with people in English” (personal communication, December 9, 2011).

The result is that a number of participants felt that, although they could perform on tests or in classroom language tasks, they were unable to put their English to use in spontaneous conversations to an equal extent. In a telling excerpt, Crystal, an undergraduate at National Southern, discusses an encounter with a foreigner in a public place.

Crystal: Nn. Um, I, uh, one times I, I met a foreigners in the street and I tried to talk to him but, but I, I'm so afraid and I run away and my classmates, um, n-, uh, no-, not classmates, my friends, um, not in this, uh, schools, uh they t-, they, they to-, they told me, uh, why, why I, I, I, why I cause I couldn't speak in English to foreigners though I was a, I, I major in English. So, in that time I, I, I'm so sad because, um, though I major in English but I can't speak talk to the foreigners. Chuck: Mm.

Crystal: It's not very good.
Chuck: Uh, w-, what did you answer to your friends?

Crystal: Uh, I, I didn't answer.

Chuck: Um, and you said that you, you, you spoke to this foreigner. You just, you walked up the person and started talking to them?

Crystal: I tried, uh, I, I went near that foreigners and, and just run, run away.

(personal communication, December 19, 2011)

In this excerpt Crystal is unsuccessful in using English to communicate with the foreigner. Her friends then taunt her with what they see as the paradox of an English major who is seemingly unable to use the language. Crystal herself recounts the encounter as a shameful episode and is unable to respond to her friends’ criticism. Such incidents – being unable to talk to foreigners - have arguably almost taken on folkloric proportions in Taiwan. For example, in one conversation, a participant described a Taiwanese reality television program in which foreigners approached various individuals on the street of a university campus to ask directions in English. In some cases those approached simply scampered away.

While Crystal viewed her inability to successfully speak with a foreigner with shame, conversely, other participants viewed the ability to speak English with foreigners as an affirmation of self worth as English users. Indeed, anecdotes about successfully speaking with foreigners represented a common response when I asked interviewees to discuss a time when they felt proud of their English, a question that I did ask in most interviews. Fabia felt proud when she gave directions to a foreigner about how to take the train (personal communication, December 11, 2011). Todd felt proud when he could help
international students with their tuition payments in English (personal communication, September 27, 2011). Mei-Wen felt proud when as a high school student, she encountered a “foreigner” in the bookstore:

Mei-Wen: And then there is a foreigner and stand by me. And I was, uh, looking, uh reading my book and she tell me, uh, she wants to know the time. But [laugh] she asked so many people, they didn't know how to communicate with her.

Chuck: Uh-huh.

Mei-Wen: And she turns to me and I talked to her and she feel very happy because there is someone to, who can help her and also she talks me a lot why she come to Taiwan and for what and now she wants to go the next location and wh-, uh, how can she get there.

Chuck: M-huh.

Mei-Wen: Yeah, so I feel very happy because so many people are looking at, oh, us when we talk. Yeah.

(personal communication, December 12, 2011)

It is notable that Mei-Wen felt even prouder because this event, this successful use of English with a foreigner, was displayed in front of a number of bystanders. Edison simply stated that in general “when I talk, talk to the foreigner he can, he can understand what I'm talking about so I'm proud” (personal communication, December 17, 2011). Interactions with foreigners, therefore, represented a litmus test of English ability and, when successfully enacted, a path to enhanced self-worth as an English user.
Research Questions #3, #4, and #5 Overview

Having discussed in the previous two sections participants' experiences with English learning and their perceptions regarding English, the final three research sub-questions in this study pertain to participants’ present and future use of English. Research Question #3 pertains to participants' present use of English. In answering this question, I will especially focus on the 41 currently enrolled university students in this study. Question #4 pertains to the relationship between English learning in formal educational contexts and use outside of such contexts. Question #5 pertains to participants' intentions for English use in the future. In this question, I will especially focus on the actual uses to which the nine individuals in this study who were no longer enrolled as students were putting and wished to put their English.

4.3 Research Question #3

Where do participants use and wish to use English and why?

Participants' present use of English took place in several overall contexts. These included English used as part of their university studies, autonomous study out of class, English among Taiwanese friends, English among foreign friends, English use associated with current, part-time employment, and English in media. In this section, I will explore each of these uses, discussing the details of each and considering how these uses relate to a number of important factors.
4.3.1 English in the university classroom

Availability of interlocutors and venues in which to use English was an important factor impacting the where and when of current English use among individuals in this study. As discussed previously, participants indicated that in their lives there were few opportunities to use English outside of formal educational contexts or, at least, substantial barriers to such use existed. In the society around them individuals indicated that Mandarin and either Taiwanese or, in some cases, Hakka were the languages most commonly used. In addition, since National Southern University was located in a small town, the possibility of encountering English was even less. Jessie noted that “we do not have many foreigners in our campus. So we, we don’t have many opportunities to listen to foreigners talking English and also talks to them” (personal communication, December 29, 2011). Because of these factors, English use in university courses was a primary context of English use for participants.

Participants indicated that such English use as there was in university courses took place overwhelmingly in the foreign language department classes; there was essentially no English used in university classes outside of English major courses. My own field observations around the universities confirm this, with courses in non-English subjects at both institutions being taught almost exclusively in Mandarin. Indeed, even English use associated with courses within the English major varied tremendously in both the form and the amount. One use of English was listening to teacher lectures. Participants indicated that some teachers preferred to lecture in English while others rarely used the language to deliver content. In addition, some course texts were in English. This was especially the case for English literature courses, but other subjects such as courses in
linguistics and those associated with pre-service teacher training such as educational psychology also often used English texts, although class discussions might be in either English or Mandarin. Teachers also required many English writing assignments and presentations, typically in groups. Finally, class discussions were sometimes in English.

Overall, many participants indicated that they felt the amount of English production associated with their university work was insufficient. In particular, many felt that they had few opportunities to engage in speaking activities. Most English use, they indicated, took the form of reading and listening to teacher lectures. National Southern did provide some opportunities for English conversation practice. Specifically, the “foreign” teachers held office hours for practice with conversation or writing on a walk-in basis. In addition, the Language Center, a facility providing practice for English tests and other language study support services, provided some conversation sessions with foreign teachers as well.

These opportunities did not appear to be sufficient to meet students' demands, however. For example, weekly afternoon sessions that I taught as part of this fieldwork typically attracted only two to six students out of the 400 or so in the department. Another foreign teacher at this university indicated that she had the same experience with only a maximum of half a dozen or so students attending the typical session. When I asked participants who did not attend, but who indicated that they wanted to practice oral skills, why they were not attending most indicated that the classes were not at a convenient time in their schedules. Notably, all of these sessions were held in the daytime rather than in the evening or on weekends when students did not have classes. Additionally, participants in the session that I held also revealed that some conflicts existed among cliques of
students so that if certain individuals routinely attended a particular session, others, knowing about this, would not attend. In conclusion, it seems as if many more of these practice sessions would be needed and that the scheduling and structure of the classes should be more attentive to students' needs.

4.3.2 Studying English out of class

Since the amount and type of English used in lives of participants was generally limited to university English classes, some individuals felt that self-directed study was important in English learning. Thus, another factor important in how these individuals employed English was the attitude toward such autonomous language study. A number of participants asserted the importance of such study and did actually engage in such activities themselves. Several stated, for example, the belief that – especially at the university level - it was largely the students' responsibility to improve their language proficiency given the limitations that they saw as inherent in English study in such formal institutional contexts. They felt that only so much could be attained in the formal classroom. For example, Ella, a second-year National Southern undergraduate, indicated that this autonomy was especially important for college English learners. “I think in college you, you have to learn by yourself. I mean st-, uh, you have to make effort by yourself to maybe to ask somebody to talk to you or to, to seek the chance by yourself. You can't just sit there and, and wait for the opportunity to come” (personal communication, December 23, 2011).

Because of this, a number of participants indicated that they took part in a variety of self-directed English learning activities out of class. These included times specifically
set aside to use only English with friends or roommates. For example, Ming-Chi indicated that during his college days he and his roommates set aside an “English hour” periodically for speaking only English (personal communication, October 1, 2011). Yayoi indicated that she and a classmate sometimes spoke English on the phone for practice: “Uh, sometimes, uh, I will, ah, my friend, uh, Flora, and I will pretend we are a foreigner talking, uh, uh, talking in English on the phone. Yeah. So, it will be like a game. Yeah” (personal communication, December 20, 2011). This study out of class also articulated with other factors beyond feelings about autonomous study. In the case of working with classmates or Taiwanese friends, the availability of like-minded individuals with sufficient English proficiency is naturally one factor. Additionally, however, opportunities for English use were impacted by cultural norms, the topic of the next section.

4.3.3 Only with foreigners: Cultural norms and English usage

Overall, participants indicated that using English with other Taiwanese people outside of class for practice was limited. In addition to factors such as the availability of competent Taiwanese interlocutors in English, individuals in this study navigated a potent and complex set of norms for English use that impacted the contexts in which English was largely. First, many indicated an experience of discomfort in using English with other Taiwanese people. They felt that such use was “strange” or “unnatural” to them. For example, Carlene, a graduate of National Southern, indicated that “when I meet with Taiwanese [people], yeah, it's weird for us to use English in Taiwan” (personal communication, December 30, 2011). Indeed, some potential Taiwanese interlocutors resisted or rejected attempts to use English. For example, when Leticia tried to speak
English with her fellow English majors to practice, they replied that it made them feel “tired” and preferred to speak Mandarin (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

In addition, participants felt that for them to use English in public places, especially with other Taiwanese, would be interpreted in a negative light as “showing off” by others. Participants noted that even reading an English book in public carried the risk of being viewed by others as an attempt to flaunt one’s English ability and status. For example, Yu-Yen, speaking about her practice of reading English books on her own noted that other people “maybe thinking, whoa, does th-, does this guy really know English that well? Oh, maybe half. Half of them will think that you are showing off. And the other half thinks maybe you are really good in English; that's why you can read novels. I'm not sure because I'm not one of those so I don't know what they really think [slight laugh]” (personal communication, November 25, 2011). In her case, she indicated that she was not concerned with what others thought and distanced herself from making such judgments.

Such concerns may have been well founded, at least in certain circumstances. When people did display English ability, such acts could indeed be met with derision, interpreted as an awkward ploy to increase social status. Alice discussed seeing a group of young Taiwanese men adding English words to their Chinese in a bar and concluded that this represented an effort to pass themselves off as Americans in order to impress people.

'Cause that sounds cool. Like, lots of people when they go to clubs, guys, they like to pretend they are ABCs. You know ABCs? American-Born Chinese. Like
Notably, Alice reacted to these efforts with distaste, evidently not being one of the individuals who “thinks it’s cool” to display English ability in such a way. This is indicative of the perils of displaying English inappropriately in a social setting in Taiwan, and it was a pitfall of which participants were conscious.

Such attitudes regarding the appropriateness of using English with other Taiwanese represented an additional impetus for seeking foreign interlocutors. Thus, many sought out foreigners with whom to interact – either in person or online. Jeffrey had spent time in the United States to learn English and, upon his return to Taiwan, enrolled in a high school with a focus on English. He made friends with the foreign teachers, maintaining contact after graduating (personal communication, January 2, 2012). Joan sought international people in public settings, striking up conversations with “foreign-looking” individuals in such settings as the train. She indicated that she had made a number of friends in this way (September 9, 2011). Shannon had a Russian friend who had been a classmate at the National Southern. Although international students were very rare in both university contexts, this friend had attended National Southern for one year before transferring to another institution. Afterward they maintained the friendship by phone and online (personal communication, December 23, 2011). Irene’s mother
joined an English club and took Irene along during club gatherings to “pubs” in a ploy to meet “foreigners” for English conversation.

Irene: Mm, yes I, my mother brought me to this English club.

Chuck: Okay.

Irene: And they were all adults.

Chuck: Okay.

Irene: Mm, and they went to pubs.

Chuck: Okay.

Irene: Yeah, that was really weird. I (didn't) why my mother did that because there were a lot of foreigners and they would chat with me.

Chuck: Okay.

Irene: And she wanted me to have the chance to talk to foreigners.

Chuck: Okay. And how old were you?

Irene: Thirteen or twelve.

Chuck: Twelve or thirteen.

Irene: Around that.

Chuck: And you, and, and, you know, do you think

Irene: I didn't drink.

Chuck: [chuckles].

Irene: [laughs].

Chuck: Do you think that's a good way to learn English?

Irene: (inaudible) to remember this accent. Because every day if you listen to
those Chinese English accent, it does affect you.

Chuck: M-huh.
Irene: Nn.
Chuck: So, you were, um, in these pubs [laughs]
Irene: [laughs].
Chuck: With native speakers of English.
Irene: We also ate at Hooters.
(personal communication, December 19, 2011)

For-pay tutors and cram schools also continued to represent a ready means to practice English for individuals like those in this study. With the exception of Minshiuang Town, the cities in which I conducted field observations all had numerous for-pay English language schools. Indeed, even those residing in Minhsiuung could reach the city of Chiayi by car, scooter, or train within about 15 minutes and at a cost of less than one US Dollar for a train ticket at the time of this project. In Chiayi City several for-pay English schools were situated within a ten-minute walk from the train station. After having completed the college entrance exams, however, participants seemed reluctant to continue such activities, especially in light of the financial resources required. Language schools in Taiwan do, however, seem to target working adults who have graduated college - either individuals needing English to enhance their job prospects or simply those wishing to practice English because of personal interest - as an important clientèle.

Some participants intentionally sought out international friends for English practice by using the Internet. They did this either by using websites specifically intended
for such exchanges such as PenPal World or by appropriating other types of online social resources not explicitly created for language practice. Joan, for example, employed a dating site and a backpacker's site to meet English-speaking friends (personal communication, September 9, 2011). For others English use was more incidental to their online activities such as engaging in multi-player games through Facebook.

I have noted that one strategy to practice English was to seek out “foreigners” with whom to interact. However, individuals in this study tended not to seek out individuals in Taiwan for English interaction who were perceived as more distant from the Inner Circle “foreigner” phenotype previously discussed. In interviews, I asked individuals if they had ever spoken English with individuals from Southeast Asia or from other non-Inner Circle countries since such people represent the majority of immigrants to Taiwan. Virtually none had done so nor was there any indication in interviews - either as a response to these direct questions or in spontaneous talk about their English learning and use - that participants had intentionally sought such people out for English interaction as they did in the case of those foreigners perceived as being connected with the Inner Circle. A couple of individuals had spoken to members of these groups in chance encounters, but had not sought out the interaction. For example, Kristina had spoken English to nurses from the Philippines and Indonesia when a family member was hospitalized. Notably, not only was the interaction not sought out, but Kristina viewed it as almost being forced upon her. “So sometimes I, I, I have to talk with them sometimes” (personal communication, November 11, 2011). Other participants expressed resistance to speaking with such individuals because of perceptions about the accents of members of these groups. When I asked Chia-Wen whether she had spoken to people from Southeast
Asia in English, she cited accent as a barrier. “Uh, no. Because I can't, I can't understand their accident, eh, uh, accent” (personal communication, November, 22, 2011).

4.3.4 English in part-time employment

Some of these individuals currently used English in their part-time employment. While many students in both universities took on part-time jobs, some English majors had positions using English. A number of them worked in cram schools and used English both in their teaching as well as with the English-speaking staff. In addition, some served as private English tutors. For example, Joan served as an English tutor for elementary school students (personal communication, September 15, 2011).

A few also tutored Mandarin to Mandarin learners and spoke English with their students. Finally, individuals occasionally used English in other jobs. For example, those working in service positions such as fast food or tea shops occasionally encountered English speaking customers. Participant accounts as well as my own observations, however, indicated that such encounters were relatively rare. For example, one tea shop employee with whom I spoke in English indicated then she might use English with about one customer per month. A cashier at another tea stand that I frequented indicated that I myself was the only English-speaking customer. This is despite the fact that both shops were located in central Tainan, a major urban center.

4.3.5 English in the media

As previously discussed, study participants employed a variety of means to meet people with whom to interact in English, including the use of social media. In addition, many
indicated that they engaged English via both non-social Internet media as well as more traditional media forms. For example, many enjoyed listening to and learning to sing English songs. Youtube was an especially important source of such materials. Shannon (personal communication, December 23, 2011) indicated that she enjoyed learning songs on Youtube and during our interview enthusiastically delivered her rendition of the humorous “McDonald's Rap” gleaned from that source.

In addition to Youtube, one of the most prevalent sources for listening to English-language songs was on the radio, especially the Taiwanese English-language radio outlet, ICRT. For example, Kristina indicated that “sometimes I will, nn, take, uh, an hour or a half hour to, uh, listen to the ICRT” (personal communication, November 11, 2011). Wilma related that participating in an ICRT call in request show represented one of her early English experiences (personal communication, October 15, 2011).

Other uses of the media included watching English-language television shows and movies, both broadcast and via the Internet. For example, Leticia explained to me that she learned more about English by watching “Mad TV” on YouTube. “It's a parody so some actor will learn it and pretend pretend rude, rude and like redneck,” she explained laughingly (personal communication, January 5, 2012). English-language movies and TV shows are also widely available on broadcast television in Taiwan. Some participants indicated that they went to the trouble of hiding the Chinese subtitles of English-language programs by taping a piece of paper to the lower screen since these subtitles evidently could not be electronically disabled.

Many participants read English newspapers or books. Jeffrey indicated that he actually preferred to read books in English to Mandarin. Having attended high school in
the United States, he felt that his English reading was stronger than his Chinese reading. Both Marlene and Fu-Yen echoed this practice, often reading English-language paperbacks in their free time.

Availability was a key factor in such uses of English. The radio station ICRT was popular in part simply because it was the only English-language broadcast that could be received on a typical radio in southern Taiwan. The prevalence and relatively low cost of Internet access in Taiwan facilitated individuals' engagement with many venues of online use, even those implying high bandwidth consumption such as Youtube videos. Also, at least one or two English language newspapers were often available in the convenience stores while at least some English-language books were available in the university libraries.

4.4 Research Question #4

What is the relationship between the English learned in formal – and potentially informal – educational contexts and that used by participants in these various contexts?

Research Question #4 can be addressed in at least two primary ways. On the one hand it is potentially a strictly linguistic question: How did the experiences with English for learners in this study translate into language acquisition and what were the implications for later use? This type of response is not addressed here since this project involves not language acquisition per se, but social aspects of learning and how individuals make sense of their own language learning. For Research Question #4 this means especially focusing on how individuals feel about and make sense of the relationship between their
own English learning and use. What this research question does reveal about this aspect of the question is first, the questionable nature of this “learning/use” dichotomy given the realities of English learning among this group of individuals and, second, participants' impressions of the relationship between formal classroom English and English outside of these contexts as well as participants' responses to these impressions.

4.4.1. Troubling the learning/use dichotomy

Implicit within Research Question #4 as I have framed it, is a dichotomy between “learning” and “use” of English. In this dichotomy, the term “learning” denotes practicing and building skills with “use” representing the subsequent act of employing the resulting skills with a goal of attaining specific objectives. In fact, this study suggests that such a dichotomy represents a problematic construct when trying to understand the educational life histories of the English learners in this research. As their life histories indicate, individuals were arguably using English virtually every day, even – or especially - within the classroom. They used English to attain recognition in class and to avoid censure and punishment, to beat the competitors in speech contests, they used English to please their parents, and, most importantly from their own perspective, they used English as a means to attain higher scores on high school and university entrance exams therefore increasing their subsequent life chances. Yet, they may never have spoken English with a native speaker or earned a wage from speaking, writing, editing, or translating English. Thus, while one could levy an argument that individuals in this study did not actually use English much at all - they, for the most part, did not speak English out of the classroom on a daily basis - such a position would not take into account the fact that English in these
Not only did “learning” entail “use,” but “use” also entailed learning. Certainly the Mad TV viewer was using English for enjoyment. She chose to watch Mad TV on her own; she understood the skit and thought the skit was funny. While she was enjoying the Mad TV skit, however, this individual was also learning: She was considering the linguistic and socio-linguistic implications of dialect. She was able to discuss her explicit insights thus garnered about language with me at a much later time. So, one answer to the question of the relationship between use and learning is simply that for these sophisticated, long-term English learners and multi-linguals, a great many language related activities entailed a learning aspect beyond whatever language acquisition might occur incidentally with any language exposure.

4.4.2. Perceiving and compensating for weakness

I turn now to participants’ impression of the relationship between class English and English outside of these contexts. As indicated in Research Question #1 and #2, experiences with English among participants were heavily skewed toward preparation for high-stakes exams with this being manifest in a focus on academic literacy skills, declarative grammatical knowledge, and vocabulary memorization with much less focus on oral language practice and language used for the communication of meaning. This resulted in three important and related perceptions among participants regarding their own English proficiency and how this proficiency relates to formal language learning. First, most participants felt their oral English skills to be much weaker than their reading, writing, and explicit grammatical knowledge. Second, individuals felt that they were
lacking in non-academic/social or, as they often termed it, “daily life” language skills. I have previously discussed these first two perceptions. Additionally, many indicated that the grammatical knowledge obtained in their studies, while not sufficient to meet their own goals for English, did represent a necessary “basis” for the subsequent acquisition and use of language. These three perceptions have implications for the manner in which participants sought to subsequently direct their own language learning.

Many study participants indicated that improving their oral English was a priority. As a part of my interviews, I asked participants to discuss their own perceptions of their English ability and what they felt they needed to do to improve. Ying-Mei’s response was typical: “I think I need to improve my oral ability. I need to, um, practice more on, uh, using English to communicate with people” (personal communication, December 12, 2011). Individuals attributed this lack to the type of English teaching to which they had been exposed. For example, Crystal indicated that “Because, uh, the teacher didn't have s-, didn't have some communication to, to, uh, with us, uh. We didn't have much chance to speak English, so we, uh, the students just write and, uh, they didn't have any speak, speak skills” (personal communication, December 19, 2011). This perception relates to some of the English use previously outlined as individuals took steps to address these perceived weaknesses in this language. Setting aside special times to speak English with peers, for example, represented an effort to address this perceived lack in oral skills as did chatting on the phone with friends in English.

One additional link among experiences, perceptions about English (education), feelings about personal language ability, and subsequent compensatory learning strategies was in the case of “daily life” English: Individuals felt that their English appropriate for
contexts outside of academics was limited. Of course, chatting with people in English also addressed this concern, but this especially represented one factor in participants’ use of the kinds of online contexts to learn English previously discussed. One benefit of these contexts was that they were easily available to these individuals. Thus, many made use of these venues for English use/practice. For example, Yayoi indicated that she frequented two sites, Amigo and Chatroulette, in which text-based as well as video chat was possible (personal communication, December 20, 2011).

A final link between learning and use pertains to grammar: Individuals did feel that the grammar skills learned in school represented a necessary basis for English use. For example, Ming-Chi felt that grammar was an important basis for other aspects of language, but that the focus on grammar in his schools had been excessive and resulted in almost a fixation on grammar among students at the expense of fluency. “Just, just because a foreigner you started to nervous. And, uh, and, uh you have grammar. You start to think, mm, maybe, for example, maybe I will say ‘Eh, eh, Chuck, how, how have you been?’ and then start to think, is the grammar right?” (personal communication, October 1, 2011). Jeffrey even confronted a teacher in class regarding this issue of excessive grammar focus. “I was like, well, what. I talked back, I talked back once. I was like, well this is not purpose learning English [laughs] just phrase structure, grammar. That's not a whole deal. Yeah. I just talked back to her. She said, well this is basic. [To which I responded] I know it's basic, but you focus on the basis too much” (personal communication, January 2, 2012). He goes on to say that he gave up the argument for fear that the teacher would retaliate by failing him in the course. Overall, then, the relationship between English learned in school and that used outside entailed a complex
terrain that individuals in this study who sought to use and improve their English consciously contended with on a frequent basis.

4.5 Research Question #5

*What are participants' intentions for English use in the future and why have they chosen these?*

In this section, I conclude this report of research results by considering the question of participants' intended uses of English in the future. Specifically, four types of English use emerged: English in employment within Taiwan, English in advanced study within Taiwan, English in employment abroad, and English in advanced study abroad. I explore not only these contexts of use, but also some of the social forces to which these choices are related, especially the role of parents as well as ideologies of language related to intended future English use.

4.5.1 English in employment within Taiwan

A number of the currently-enrolled students in this study indicated that they hoped to use English in future employment. Not surprisingly, many of those in the English teaching track of the national university cited English teaching as a future career choice. A few indicated that they were actually *not* interested in English teaching, however, despite being English teaching majors. They noted that they enrolled in the English teaching track primarily because the entrance exam scores required for matriculation were lower than those needed for the applied English track, and that by majoring in English teaching
they could still earn an English degree at a more prestigious national university. Ching-Wen explained this to me and also noted that the national university was her choice because of the lower cost compared to a private school where her scores would have been high enough for her to undertake the major of her choice.

Chuck: Uh, you chose the ET group. Can, can you tell me why you chose the ET group instead of AP?
Ching-Wen: It's scores.
Chuck: Okay.
Ching-Wen: Mm, actually I want to [laughs], I want to go to the AP group. But AP group is the score (inaudible) AP group is higher than the ET groups. So I choose ET group. And, besides, I need to go to the public university, not a private university. It's, it's cost less for the, for the [tuition] is less.

(personal communication, December 12, 2011)

Indeed, the requirements for the applied track were higher due to perceptions of the low career potential of English teaching and subsequent lower popularity of the English teaching track. Wilma, a graduate who now works for a manufacturing firm and who chose the applied track candidly described the situation for English teachers in Taiwan. When I asked her why she did not choose the teaching track, she responded that English teachers were like “stray dogs” in Taiwan, unable to find employment because of the low birthrate and subsequent cutbacks in school staffing: “Yeah, English teaching. Um, one main reason is English teaching in Taiwan right now there's a lot of, you know the dogs
on the street we call they stray dogs and we call, and there's a lot of stray teachers in Taiwan right now because a lot of people they have, you know, education degree but they couldn't find a job here” (personal communication, October 15, 2011).

Other individuals indicated that they hoped to use their English in non-English teaching careers in Taiwan, opting instead to attempt to pursue careers in private industry. First, they indicated the importance of English at least for obtaining, if not actually performing, a job in Taiwan. A number of individuals noted the popularity for companies in Taiwan to conduct at least some part of their job interviews in English. Such interviews, however, often seemed only to serve as a gatekeeping device as Sierra notes in the following interview excerpt.

Sierra: Yeah. A lot of company ask you to, um, have a English interview.
Chuck: Yeah?
Sierra: Yeah, so English is a tool.
Chuck: So, in those companies, um, when you get that job, then you have, you have to use English for that job?
Sierra: Not really, but they, they have an English interview.
Chuck: Why?
Sierra: We don't know. They just ask you and you have to pass. For example, like GEPT, TOEIC. Yeah. You have to get that standard.
(personal communication, September 26, 2011)

Others felt that English would be useful on the job. When I asked Jeffrey why people in...
Taiwan study English, he replied that one could get a job “working, like, uh, what do you call it? Foreign company” (personal communication, January 2, 2012). Several other individuals responded in a similar manner, indicating that they hoped to work with “foreigners” in “international trade companies” in Taiwan or as “international secretaries” in Taiwan companies. Yet, when I asked them about the specifics of such positions or whether they knew anyone who was engaged in such work, most were unable to provide such concrete details. For example, Shannon indicated when I asked about her future that “maybe I, mm, want to work in a company or be a translator.” When I followed up to ask what kind of company, Shannon responded that she hadn't thought about it and laughed nervously (personal communication, December 23, 2011).

Thus, faced with such an interview question it seems as if some individuals simply attempted to supply responses that they saw as socially acceptable for English majors. Indeed, such responses echo some of the rhetoric surrounding university English education. For example, the website of the National Southern foreign language department touts “interpreter, translator, international conference host, tour guide, journalist or editor, representative or secretary for international business” as potential careers. The site provides no concrete details of these jobs, specifics regarding tangible links to courses offered, nor testimonials of former students employed in such positions. Indeed, out of all of the individuals interviewed in this study only two were employed in non-teaching positions in which English represented an integral part of the position. This indicates that while such jobs do exist and can be obtained, they are arguably not plentiful.

Others were much more candid about their futures. For example, Jean, when
asked to discuss her future, responded with a nervous laugh, saying simply, that “I just don't like to think about my future. Ah: It's always frustrating just see just always I always feel frustrated when I think about my future” (personal communication, January, 5, 2012). In a telling response to discussing choice of English as a major with Ching-Wen, the role of parents in influencing the child's major choice came up. Ching-Wen indicated that her choice of major was strongly influenced by her parents' feelings about the usefulness of English to obtain employment. She went on to discuss how she came to question this assumption.

It's their j-, it's their hope. But, I think [laughing], nn, maybe I need to have the communicate with, with them to talking, uh, talk about, talk about maybe English, English, if a person with English so well, maybe they, uh, they, nn, it's not so, eh, mm, you cannot absolutely get better job in the future. Maybe you have more chance, but it's, eh, you, you cannot get, get more par-, go-, get higher pay in the future. It's considered the more things like another abilities, not just English. Maybe the social skills or interpersonal skills or something, your critical thinking or, or others. (personal communication, December 9, 2011)

In this excerpt, Ching-Wen essentially concluded that English is useful, but not sufficient, for improved employability in Taiwan and that she intended to debunk the perception evidently held by her parents that an individual can “absolutely get a better job in the future” simply because of knowing English.

Indeed, my fieldwork provides other evidence that the employability of English
majors in Taiwan can be lower than the rhetoric surrounding English education might suggest. For example, at two tea shops that I frequented I came to find that two clerks could speak English. I later learned that they had graduated with four-year degrees in English. Yet, they were working minimum-wage positions in which English was not needed. One of the interviewees for this research, Ming-Chi, was unable to secure employment related to English. Instead, he was working two jobs. One was as a quality control technician in a manufacturing firm. The other position was in food preparation at a fast food restaurant. He strongly wished to secure a position putting his English skills to use, but was unable to do so, indicating that his inability to perform well on the TOEIC exam was the primarily obstacle standing in his way. He complained that the reliance upon such exams in making employment decisions was not fair, arguing that such exams measured only a narrow set of language skills (personal communication, October 1, 2011).

4.5.2 English in advanced study within Taiwan

Another common use of English for individuals in this study was graduate-level work within Taiwan. While a number of the participants in this research were currently graduate students, many of the undergraduates indicated their intention to pursue graduate degrees as well. Many indicated that the competition for employment in Taiwan necessitated this. For these individuals, then, English also served as a means to attain such graduate positions and degrees. Indeed, Flora, an undergraduate English teaching major at National Southern, felt that gaining entry to graduate work was her primary rationale for majoring in English teaching. When I asked her why she chose English
teaching as a major, she, like some others, indicated that her exam scores were not high enough to gain admission to the applied English track and that she actually had no interest in teaching. Her goal, instead, was to earn a masters degree in linguistics; an undergraduate major in foreign languages would set the stage for this (personal communication, December 19, 2011). Indeed, Farley, in a telling exchange, indicated that she was not actually interested in her graduate major of English teaching, but admitted that she simply wanted to earn a masters degree and that her undergraduate work in English made continuation in the same field her only choice.

Mm. Mm. [inhales] Uh, to be honest, I'm not really, uh, interested in teaching children. But, uh, when, when I'm, when I was going to graduate from university I, I just wanted to continue to study English. And at that time I thought that, uh, uh, I don't, I didn't really like literature so I would not choose, uh, graduate school about literature.

(personal communication, December 9, 2011)

Her choice of English teaching, then, represented for her the lesser evil between the two options of English teaching and literature.

4.5.3 English in study abroad

Another option for students was graduate study abroad. During interviews, many of the undergraduate participants indicated that they wished to pursue graduate degrees in English-speaking countries. There were two underlying reasons for this. First, study in
such contexts represented another effort to compensate for the perceived weaknesses inherent in Taiwan's formal English education: Individuals felt that they could improve oral skills and non-academic English. The second, and at least equally important, reason was that degrees from universities in English-speaking countries have great prestige in Taiwan and are highly coveted. Earning such a degree dramatically increases the life chances of the individual in Taiwanese society.

This prestige and popularity of such study is reflected in several ways. First, at the National Southern, although all of the full-time faculty were Taiwanese, most of them had earned doctorates in the United States. When I asked individuals about this they replied that it gave them a chance to improve their English and to get a (better) job teaching at a university in Taiwan. They chose graduate study abroad even though they could have earned the same degrees within Taiwan at a fraction of the cost. Second, in interviews with participants, individuals frequently cited successful graduate study abroad as evidence of excellent English ability. Indeed, one participant, Ming-Chi, felt that the English ability of the president of Taiwan must be good because he had earned a degree at Harvard (personal communication, October 1, 2011).

Finally, evidence for the popularity of graduate study abroad was manifest in the efforts that some foreign schools made to recruit students in Taiwan. These efforts took several forms, including posters at schools as well as online popup ads. In addition, the popularity of study abroad at the graduate level is manifest in an entire industry that has sprung up in Taiwan to facilitate graduate admission abroad for students: For a fee a Taiwanese student can hire a “broker” as a go-between to research graduate schools abroad. The broker completes the necessary application materials for these schools, often
even writing up applicants' statements of purpose for graduate study. Several individuals with whom I spoke in this study indicated that they or their friends had used such services.

Yet the actual number of individuals who could study abroad was relatively small due to the financial resources involved. Most of the individuals in this study were from working class families and study abroad was simply beyond their means. Irene indicated that study abroad was a long-term goal for her and that she felt she would need ten years to save up enough money to realize this goal (personal communication, December 15, 2011).

4.5.4 English in employment abroad

For those without the means to study abroad or simply not interested in doing so, the so-called “working holidays” popular among young Taiwanese represented an alternative means to study English in a foreign country. These working holidays entail visa agreements with specific countries whereby individuals under a certain age can reside abroad on a short-term basis and earn a wage as a temporary worker. Working holidays had the advantage of requiring less financial outlay, or none, and no academic commitments: In fact, the individuals received a salary. Several participants had engaged in such work which took the form of summer employment in amusement parks in the United States. Such businesses took advantage of Taiwanese students' desire to practice English abroad in order to recruit a ready low-wage workforce: Recruitment posters for such work appeared in both universities in this study. Finally, although several indicated a desire to do so, no individuals in this study had resided abroad on a long-term or
permanent basis as adults nor had any been employed abroad on such a basis.

4.6 Future English: *It's hard even to be a teacher*

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing discussion of intended uses of English in the future. The first is that individuals in this study inhabited a moment in their lives in which parents still exerted considerable influence over their educational and career choices. Evidence for this lies in the fact that a number of individuals indicated their parents’ wishes to have been especially pivotal in their own choices of major. Indeed, as part of the fieldwork for this project I took part in interviewing student applicants for the English department at the national university. One interviewee, when asked why he was interested in applying to the program, offered the frank response that it was simply because his mother wanted him to. As mentioned previously, Prewitt majored in English in order to fulfill his parents' wishes to eventually take over the family cram school business.

There are indications that these wishes of parents for children to study English are rooted in widely held societal beliefs about English and that the participants themselves had come to question some of these, navigating a terrain of uncertainty and conflict. The notion that an English degree alone qualifies one for a desirable job is the most notable of these. This is related to working in the seemingly mythical “international company” referred to by some participants as well as the notion that English is important because Taiwan is especially reliant upon trade. Another is the idea that English is useful in employment because of the need to work with foreigners within Taiwan or that it is important for Taiwanese to communicate with foreigners as customers. Some individuals
explicitly noted these beliefs.

Sierra: Uh, maybe just like my mother said. Uh, English is a global language and if you want to have a good job, have a good salary, you have to know English and you can maybe go to the big co-, eh, company and have a good job. Yes.

(personal communication, September 26, 2011)

Yet, my own fieldwork indicates that there are actually relatively few English speakers in most of Taiwan. Non-Asians were rare enough that my own presence was often notable. Indeed, upon encountering me on a train, one young mother felt compelled to seize upon the teachable moment, saying to her child in Mandarin “See, this is a foreigner.” She pulled out her camera and snapped a picture of myself and the young boy to capture this event. My fieldwork also indicates that many foreigners in Taiwan can speak at least some Mandarin, obviating the need for Taiwanese people to speak English with them. Also, the types of jobs of which some individuals in this study spoke and that were touted as rationales for studying English at the university level appeared to actually be relatively scarce with the jobs available to English majors apparently often not living up to the ideal often associated with English study. Some participants noted this. For example, Jenny spoke of her cousin, another English major, who was the victim of a “bait and switch” scenario: The cousin, ostensibly employed as an English/Mandarin translator, found that she was actually required to perform manual labor after being hired. Jenny concludes that finding a good job actually using English skills is difficult. When I asked her about finding English teaching jobs, she responded that “being a teacher is more difficult than,
eh, maybe, uh, ten, ten years ago. Because, uh, there are more and more teachers so it is really competitive. And so I think English teaching, mm, may not be my choice because it is really hard, even to be a, a, a, full-time teacher” (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Perhaps the plight of attempting to secure employment and to attain the type of future that they desire does not differ substantially for English majors than for other college graduates. Yet, the experiences of the individuals in this study do suggest a disconnect between the rhetoric surrounding English and the realities of the careers actually available. The liminal space inhabited by participants relatively close to completing their formal educations or already in the workforce foregrounded the articulation between notions of the inherent value of English and the realities of the labor marketplace.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter I have outlined my findings for each of the sub-questions in this project. In the next chapter, I will synthesize these questions into an overall response to the primary research question, demonstrating the articulation of my findings with current scholarship and proposing the manner in which these findings extend the state of this corpus of work. In particular, I consider the relationships among these findings and posit their role in how individuals in this study constructed themselves as English user/learners.
CHAPTER 5
THE PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ENGLISH
AMONG 50 ENGLISH LEARNERS IN TAIWAN

5.1 Introduction and overview
In this chapter I review the findings and present the conclusions of this study. The purpose of this project was to learn about the significance of English among university English majors in Taiwan. As an initial step in addressing this goal, I detail uses to which participants actually put their English and the ways in which they desired to use their English. Beyond the value of documenting such details of participants' lived experiences with English learning and use, this serves as a step to the most important findings in this study, rooted in participants' feelings about and responses to these lived experiences.
First, feelings that their formal public education suffered from specific shortcomings as a result of the pedagogical preferences and skill sets of their teachers was strongly manifest among participants. Furthermore, attributing problems that they saw with these educational experiences more broadly to the need for high-stakes high school and university entrance exam preparation represents a feeling expressed by virtually all of these participants and contradicted by none. Finally, a strongly manifest theme in this study was participants' efforts to assess their language against an Inner Circle4 standard,

4 As indicated in the Introduction, the term “Inner Circle” refers to the “core” countries associated with English, the English-speaking societies such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA.
to diagnose their perceived personal language deficits through an appeal to these Inner Circle linguistic norms, and subsequently to make efforts to emulate these linguistic models by studying with Inner Circle people, or, when possible, by studying in Inner Circle contexts such as Australia or England. In this final chapter I interpret such actions in light of scholarship in the tradition of critical theory/critical applied linguistics. While these sorts of actions involving the Inner Circle do not necessarily represent personal belief in the ideologies of language supporting the hegemony of the Inner Circle, in the case of participants in this study I conclude that alignment with the ideologies underwriting the status of Inner Circle Englishes was strongly manifest.

In reaching this conclusion, I consider the notion that the sorts of “Inner Circle-philic” efforts indicated in this study do entail utilitarian value as individuals improve their English as a result of such study and enjoy the prestige accompanying the Inner Circle variety of English as well as Inner Circle educational credentials for those able to obtain them. Thus, an individual could potentially partake of such power while maintaining a frank criticality about the hegemony of Inner Circle Englishes, people, and institutions. Of course, whether or not individuals embrace such a critical stance such actions do still serve to underwrite the continuing hegemony of Inner Circle contexts and the people and educational institutions associated with them.

There was, however, little evidence that participants themselves were indeed critical of these prevailing regimes of Inner Circle linguistic power. On the contrary, participants viewed with derision the “China English” language variety often encountered in Taiwan. Such beliefs in the inherent superiority of the English varieties associated with these contexts were broadly evident, in particular vis-a-vis this local variety of English in
Taiwan. Thus, I conclude that their efforts at personal language remediation are heavily based upon and recirculate longstanding attitudes regarding Inner Circle, native speaker English as preferred and local English as inferior. Overall, then, while participants seem to have developed a critical approach in interpreting the *implementation* of English education in their K-12 educations in Taiwan, I found little evidence of the emergence of an equivalent criticality with regards to the *ideologies* of English underwriting the hegemony of Inner Circle Englishes. Rather, participants evidenced a savviness in strategizing their own English learning that provided them with benefits while also supporting current regimes of linguistic hegemonic power, especially centering on Inner Circle settings, institutions, and people.

In addition, participants also exhibited little criticality regarding broader discourses pertaining to the association of English itself with perceived beneficial aspects of modernization and globalization. Participants viewed English as empowering both at the societal and individual level. In terms of the society, they saw English as one aspect in enhancing the modernization, visibility, and competitiveness of Taiwan as a whole. At the individual level, there was generally a strong belief in the value of English in scholarship and employment in Taiwan. The only challenge to these latter beliefs were several participants who had begun to question the usefulness of English as *sufficient* to gain the kinds of white-collar positions often associated with obtaining a university English degree.

In this chapter I detail these findings, their relationship with the data in this project, and their connections to relevant scholarship. I begin with a brief review of the Chapter 4 results. I then turn to a discussion of the significance of English. Next, I
explicitly discuss beliefs about English and the implications of these beliefs with a focus on the issue of the development of a critical approach to English. I conclude by considering avenues for further research and some recommendations for policy and pedagogy based on the findings in this study.

5.2 Discussion: Summary of chapter 4 results

In this section I present an overview of the Chapter 4 results, addressing the research questions in this project. The overall and underlying research questions are as follows.

Primary Research Question

What are the perceptions held by Taiwanese university English majors and recent graduates for the significance of English in their lives?

Underlying Research Questions

1. In what ways was English manifest in participants' lives prior to college?
2. What are participants' perceptions about English?
3. Where do participants currently use and wish to use English and why?
4. What is the relationship between the English learned in formal – and potentially informal – educational settings and that used by participants in these various contexts?
5. What are participants' intentions for English use in the future and why have they chosen these goals?
5.2.1 Early English educational experiences

English did hold high significance for these individuals prior to their enrollment in college. In almost all cases, they had been studying English for most of their lives – many from elementary school age - eventually majoring in the subject at the university level. Indeed, they felt English study to represent a necessary, inescapable, aspect of their lives with many noting the role of their parents in initiating their early English study. All were fluent in the language, exceptional itself in a society in which English fluency is unusual. Participants were highly critical of their formal English experiences, however; they especially felt that much of the teaching was uninspired, confining, and even threatening. In particular, they indicated that their teachers relied heavily on traditional teaching methods with teacher-fronted classes strongly oriented to written, form-focused, discrete-point grammar instruction, rote vocabulary memorization, and translation predominating. Participants often mentioned the boredom associated with a focus on written grammar and vocabulary drills in these large (30-50 student) “traditional” teacher-fronted classes. Many indicated that an especially negative aspect of their formal English learning was that their teachers meted out punishments including verbal shaming and even physical punishments such as slaps as part of the teaching approach.

Participants detailed the role of high school and college entrance exams on teaching and learning, strongly indicating this impact to be a negative one. They were consistently critical of the perceived focus placed on reading, translation, and vocabulary/grammar drills and saw this focus as severely shortchanging oral skills practice and, more generally, English as a social skill. They strongly attributed these curriculum choices to the entrance exam emphasis upon these same aspects of language.
Secondary to the need to prepare for these exams, they also felt this focus to be the result of lack of investment, creativity, and language skills on the part of teachers. Overall, participants felt strongly that their formal English educations did not sufficiently prepare them to use English far beyond their core competency of test-oriented academic situations. For example, they felt weaker in activities such as in chatting with English speakers informally. They also complained of the intense competitive pressure associated with preparing for high-stakes exams in English - and in other subjects as well - with this pressure representing a salient feature of their childhoods.

Virtually all participants had studied English in private cram schools, with private tutors, or in other contexts in addition to the formal, day school setting to supplement their day school English learning. They and their families took such steps both to better position themselves for the high-stakes high school and college entrance exams as well as to compensate for perceived shortcomings in their day school studies. This also reflects the perceived importance of English for these students and their families since the high cost of such methods – sometimes actually surpassing university tuition – was borne by families themselves.

English played a significantly lesser role for these individuals outside of educational settings. Only a few indicated that any English was used in the home at all. Most indicated that their parents understood essentially no English. In those few cases where families did use some English, the use was mostly limited to language play events with mothers or siblings, such as singing songs or exchanging occasional insults in English for fun. There were exceptions. Several participants did indicate that at least one parent was an English teacher or that a parent had studied abroad. With the exception of
one participant who lived near an international research center, participants indicated that they rarely, if ever, encountered people using English in the immediate environs around their homes.

5.2.2 Perceptions about English

Participants held a number of strong perceptions about English. The overall importance of English was one. Echoing prominent globalization discourses, they indicated a feeling that English is necessary both in their own lives and for the development of Taiwan society as a whole. More specifically, participants especially felt in their own lives that English was important for success in academics, particularly entrance exams, to speak to “foreigners” in Taiwan, to *obtain* desirable employment in Taiwan, and as a *part* of work. Obtaining employment in white collar contexts often required a standardized English test score such as the TOEFL or the Taiwan-specific GEPT exam. English was sometimes included as a component of the job interview. Employers also frequently required English/Mandarin bilingual resumes. Participants noted that such English requirements were often the case even for positions requiring little or no actual English use on the job itself.

Participants also noted that their family members often shared feelings about the importance of English. Most indicated that their caretakers held very strong beliefs about the need to learn English and the role of English in fostering future employment and educational prospects. Indeed, these feelings were tangibly translated into these families enrolling the participants in supplemental forms of English education in addition to day school English classes, a practice in which all but a couple of the participants had
engaged. Often these classes entailed the commitment of substantial family financial resources. A number of participants actually felt that families placed too much emphasis on English with the result that children felt pressure and that their own wishes were not taken into account with a sense of powerlessness and lack of self-determination often being expressed as aspects of their life histories of English study. Participants used words like “pressure” and “push(ed)” in describing the role of parents in their children's English studies in the interview transcripts as a result. Participants indicated that it was very often the mother of the family who took charge of the children's English education by locating, arranging for, and allocating family funds for these supplemental classes. Although almost all of the parents in this study had little English proficiency, in a few cases participants indicated that their mothers did coach them in English to the extent that they could; a couple of mothers also enrolled themselves in English classes or tutoring sessions along with their children.

5.2.3 Race and English: Constructing the foreigner

One important aspect of participants' perceptions regarding English was their feelings about those individuals most closely associated with the language. Literature (as noted in the literature review) has been strongly concerned with challenging the “native speaker-ization” of language competency and troubling perceptions of the assumed appropriateness of the native speaker as language model and language teacher. In this project, however, I found evidence that English competency and, consequently, the appropriateness of particular individuals as teachers were more closely associated with race rather than this linguistic native/non-native speaker dichotomy. Specifically, the
social construction of the foreigner as strongly associated with English and the Inner Circle was evidenced here.

Numerous participants especially voiced dual concerns about desiring to use English with “foreigners” and of frustration at perceiving themselves to be unequipped to do so. For example, when I asked individuals about their feelings about the value of English for them or to recount experiences in which they felt proud of or ashamed of their own English, such concerns often emerged: Use of English with “foreigners” was often seen as an important goal and failure or success in doing so recounted as cause for personal embarrassment or pride. Participants recalled these incidents even years after the actual events.

Rather than simply referring to individuals from outside Taiwan, this concept of the foreigner possessed strong racial connotations, being especially associated with a particular phenotype. As a result, those closer to having light skin, light hair, blue eyes, and a narrower and more prominent “European” nose than that most typically associated with Asians were associated with Inner Circle status and English competency. Indeed, fieldwork and interviews evidence strong perceptions of a connection between race and English language proficiency with the expectation that “foreigners” were proficient at English no matter their actual competency let alone whether or not they were native speakers.

These perceptions did vary among individuals in this study. Those with specific first-hand experience in which the nuances among the foreigner (in the standard sense of expatriate), the phenotype presented here, Inner Circle people, and native speakers of English had become salient, grappled with the issue. Isabel, for example, because of her
mother's experience as a teacher, felt strongly that not all foreigners or even native
speakers were equipped to effectively teach English. Carla saw the deception of her
employer – a cram school – in capitalizing upon these widely-held beliefs about race and
language in passing those closer to this “English phenotype” as native speakers of
English to unsuspecting parents. Students in a junior college in which I conducted
observations had their beliefs about race and national origin/language disrupted by
working directly with a native-speaking teacher who, because his appearance diverged
from this core “English phenotype” did not “look Canadian” to them, but, to their
surprise, somehow, really was. Participants in this study, therefore, were at somewhat
different places in terms of these particular ideologies linking race, appearance, national
origin, foreignness, and language. Nonetheless, they also did feel native speakers to
represent the default models and authorities of English. With the exception of a few
individuals who felt explicit grammar instruction to be better handled by Taiwanese
teachers, participants also indicated a preference for native speakers as teachers of the
language. Finally, participants did especially indicate that working with native speakers –
within Taiwan, online, or in work or study abroad - offered a chance to overcome the
perceived shortcomings of their formal English educations.

Those associated with English by virtue of this cluster of physical traits were
othered, essentialized, tokenized, and commodified. In terms of othering, certainly the
centrality of the term “foreigner” itself, the Chinese “out of country person” or
waiguoren (外国人/外国人) rather than more nuanced distinctions is an indication of the
other. Among study participants and in Taiwan society in general, however, while the
other is viewed as separate such individuals are seen not as inferior as in typical
otherings, but instead “foreignness” is perceived both as admirable and powerful. This implies a potent combination of both inherent and utilitarian value to foreigner association/emulation to which I will return in the conclusion. In addition to othering, essentialization and tokenism were also evident as aspects of this relationship between race and perceptions of English competency. Not only was the English-speaking foreigner phenotypically essentialized, but this individual was also commonly essentialized in cultural terms: White, mainstream American culture formed the core of this essentialization with students, for example, studying Christmas to learn more about “foreigners” in their English classes or expressing surprise that “foreigners” could use chopsticks. Individuals of the “English-speaking foreigner phenotype” were also tokenized. They were featured in ads for English cram schools, posters at one of the target schools advertised “foreign teachers time,” and cram schools often included icons associated with these individuals/the Inner Circle such as the US/UK flag, names of American presidents, landmarks such as Big Ben, and red, white, and blue color themes as code for these peoples and contexts by virtue of the potent connotations that they conjure up. At one level, this simply speaks to the commodification of English in Taiwan where the English language – and those who teach it – become a McDonaldized, mass-produced item, bought, sold, packaged, marketed on posters, fliers, billboard, commercials, on television, and radio as a standardized, highly-desirable product, obtainable for a price.

This research articulates with and extends scholarship concerned with perceptions of the relationship between race and language in English teaching. It corroborates notions that attitudes regarding perceptions of the connection between race and language should
be troubled rather than simply focusing on the NS/NNS dichotomy (Kubota and Lin, 2009). Some research does claim perceptions among English learners of a connection between race, in particular whiteness, and English ability. For example, Motha (2006) notes perceptions of a connection among whiteness as associated with mainstream, “legitimate” English. Other research indicates that NNS teachers themselves also may feel that their own students believe that only white people can be native speakers of English (Amin, 1997). In Taiwan, Price (2005) notes perceptions of a connection between race and language ability with a racial hierarchy in place: Interviewing English cram school workers, he found that white teachers were preferred for hiring while Taiwanese teachers were marginal and the hiring of black teachers was met with great resistance. Liu (2010) also sees a hierarchy of races in Taiwan English education with American/whites at the apex followed by Taiwanese, SE Asians, and blacks. He claims that Taiwanese people “worship” white people and culture and that parents want their children to study abroad, especially in contexts such as the United States. Importantly, none of this research specifically considers the phenotypic subset detailed here, although the work cited is consistent with my findings. Indeed, if anything, my research suggests that the sorts of racial hierarchies evidenced in this work may be even more fine-grained than the present corpus of scholarship indicates with the very narrow racial sub-set depicted here being widely perceived as at the pinnacle of English competency and appropriateness as models of English and as English teachers.

The present research is also timely in its implications for addressing scholarship of whiteness. As Painter (2010) notes, the notion of race itself and racial science as having a biological basis was called into question from the 1920s, first by American
anthropologists. Rather than having such a basis in biology, Omi and Wynant (1994) and others view race as an ideological construct only. Despite such questions about the “reality” of race, attention to whiteness has resurfaced as an area of concern in mainstream scholarship in the past 25 years or so, with this present manifestation of attention to the whiteness being rooted in or aligned with a number of different groups or modes of thought. As Giroux noted in the late 1990s, whiteness had, at that time, “bec[o]me increasingly visible as a symbol of racial identity” (1997, p. 268). Roediger (2001) although noting that perceptions of a biological basis to race persist, notes the role of scholarship on whiteness in shedding light on the socially-based malleability of whiteness as an identity. The findings of this study also both inform and are informed by this whiteness scholarship in important ways since both my study and recent scholarship concerned with whiteness more broadly address how and why people construct and understand race. In addition, there is a more direct link between the scholarship on whiteness and my research given the obvious connection between the “English phenotype” described here and common perceptions of whiteness; Indeed, one participant actually stated that she tried to seek out “white people” on the streets with whom to practice English.

Frankenburg (1997, p. 2-3) notes four areas of scholarship on whiteness: These are historical studies, studies of the relation between whiteness and politics/institutions, scholarship into how individuals perform whiteness, and studies concerned with whiteness and efforts aimed at social change. In terms of the historical, work on whiteness has been especially rooted in race relations in the context of the United States, in particular being informed by the African American experience. In an early statement
on the topic, for example, hooks (1990) called for white researchers examining aspects of the black experience to investigate their own whiteness as well. She also troubles this notion that attention to whiteness is new, noting the long history of concern among blacks with whiteness as a survival mechanism as well as the longstanding association of – or even the equation of – experiences with whiteness with/as terror among American blacks (hooks, 1992). Being rooted in individual lived experience and with a concern about ideologies of language, my study does not robustly historicize the construction of the “English phenotype” in the sense of such studies of the relationship between whiteness and the experiences of black Americans. Yet, the notions about race, language, and national origin are consistent with the overall hegemony of the Inner Circle (especially the US/UK), broad perceptions of race and prestige, and established notions about the native speaker, both linguistic and in terms of broader ideologies of language. At the individual level, this study is not positioned to address the genesis of these beliefs for any one particular person, focusing instead upon their specific manifestations. Of course, I can conjecture that such ideologies are related to the way that race, language, culture, and the native speaker are presented in such locations as teaching materials, ads, and entertainment media. The beliefs are consistent with the racial depictions of English teachers in cram school ads and the cultural essentialization discussed earlier. In addition, interactions with friends, family, and teachers surely have a role to play in reinscribing such beliefs. Yet, the specifics of how people in this study came to understand the relationships among phenotype, national origin, language proficiency, and appropriateness for language emulation and teaching evidenced in this study must await further research.
Frankenburg's second area of whiteness scholarship – the relationship between whiteness and policy/institutions - was also evident here. My study indicates a strong connection between the power of the foreigner and numerous institutions in Taiwan. Most notably, English and English education themselves represent institutions in Taiwan with the foreigner playing a pivotal role. In addition, many educational institutions such as cram schools are strongly connected to perceptions of the foreigner and the foreign teacher as detailed in this study. Finally, as I shall discuss in the conclusion, Inner Circle institutions of higher education, as well as other Inner Circle institutions such as the nation state itself were strongly aligned with (and were advantaged by) perceptions of the foreigner among participants. As for the performance of whiteness, individuals in this study were in a number of ways conscious of the performed foreign self or of the performances of others as foreigners. For example, two participants chatted on the phone in English, pretending to be “foreigners” practicing English as a means to engage English rather than simply being themselves. Such instances of willing performance of the “foreign other” as a part of foreign language learning articulate with notions in language acquisition theory of the role of “ego permeability” in fostering language acquisition. Language acquisition researchers consider ego permeability to represent the extent to which the affective boundaries between the self and the target-language speaking other exist (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, p. 18). Essentially, a high ego permeability is understood as resulting in benefits to language learning given the higher “porosity” to the target language self on the part of the learner. This notion forms a central feature of the “Acculturation Model” of language acquisition which claims that acculturation to target language culture is crucial in language acquisition and that relatively high ego
permeability is required for this to occur (Schuman, 1986). Other instances of performance also emerged in this study. Young men in a central Taiwan bar were reported by an informant to make an effort to perform the English-speaking Asian American as a ploy to increase status. Non-native speakers of English “performed” the role of the native-speaker “foreigner” teacher (or at least did not dispute being portrayed as such), thus tapping into the power of race in order to increase their own marketability in a cram school.

Finally, in terms of efforts aimed at social change, one common theme among considerations of whiteness has been the effort to foreground whiteness in order to trouble it and to bring the effects of its normalization into focus. For example, Hollingworth (2009) sees the avoidance of a frank consideration of the association between whiteness and hegemony among teachers in the classroom as normalizing such power, thus reinscribing the status quo. By contrast, the present research indicates that the foreigner in Taiwan is actually almost hypervisible. For example, in the small town in which I resided while conducting fieldwork, I could frequently hear individuals pointing out the presence of a “foreigner” to each other as I walked down the street or rode the trains. As noted, at least one person stopped to take a picture of me as part of teaching her young child what a “foreigner” was. In this case, however, such “hypervisibility” appears to be a result of the rarity and prestige surrounding whiteness in Taiwan. Harris (1993) links whiteness and commodification, or at least value, an issue with which I have dealt here. She sees whiteness as both entailing access to property as well as representing a valuable commodity. In terms of highlighting the effects of the normalization of the “foreigner” as associated with English ability, model, and teaching, the conclusions of
this study will turn to this issue in detail. I pay particular attention to the relationship among a sense of personal language deficit and Inner Circle people, countries, and institutions as the commodities perceived as being imbued with the power to provide a personal remedy for such shortcomings.

5.2.4 Uses of English among university English majors

Most (41 of the 50) of the individuals in this project were currently-enrolled university English majors, either at the undergraduate or graduate levels. Among these students, English use took a number of forms. The most prominent of these was the English associated with their university studies. The language of instruction within classes in the English major itself varied from mostly Mandarin to mostly English, depending on the teacher. Outside of the English major courses, teachers virtually all used Mandarin for instruction. Participants strongly felt that opportunities for English production, especially speaking, were lacking in their courses. Some engaged in various forms of in-person study out of class to improve their English. Such study was limited, however, given the strong norms regarding English use among peers. Participants experienced widespread resistance from other students to English use out of class with other English majors even often exhibiting such resistance. Also, the number of international students and teachers at both universities was very limited. In light of this, many participants indicated that they leveraged various forms of media – including social media – as a means to engage English outside of class as a supplement to their formal studies. Finally, some English use was associated with part-time employment. In particular, some students worked as English cram school teachers or tutors, teaching the language and interacting with foreign
teachers in English. Although some participants had service industry positions such as food-service work, these jobs apparently offered essentially no appreciable opportunities to use English given the paucity of English speakers in the environment, especially those who could not speak enough Mandarin to transact the typical service encounters involved in such settings.

5.2.5 The learning/use distinction

This study indicates that for English as experienced by these individuals, the traditional dichotomy between learning and use is blurred and must be reevaluated. Such a distinction fails to recognize educational contexts themselves as venues in which language skills translate to value, utility, achievement, status as they did among participants in this study. English was strongly associated with these formal learning contexts, whether day school or cram school with very little English being used “on the streets” or in the home. On the other hand, individuals spent many hours per week for years having contact with English in school. Thus, the main “use” of English took place in these “learning” contexts, yielding many tangible and important benefits. For example, English earned participants the praise of teachers (or the avoidance of verbal sanction or physical punishment).

Most notably, English associated with learning contexts provided a means to gain further access to scarce learning resources with past achievement thus recursively laying the groundwork for further success. This was especially evident in the role of high-stakes exams of which English was an important component. Success on these exams translated into entry to more prestigious high schools and higher education institutions. In addition,
superior English performance in school resulted in many instances in which individuals were invited to take part in further enriched English learning opportunities such as enhanced teacher attention, special English clubs or extra classes, coaching for and participation in speech contests, and even selection for exchange programs abroad.

Not only did “learning” thus entail “use,” but the reverse was also evidenced. For example, when individuals used English for fun, this entailed an incidental learning element as well. Participants were able to aptly recount the language used in such events as singing a YouTube rap song or participating in a radio call-in request show in English a decade prior to the interview.

5.2.6 Future use of English

The venues in which present students wished to use English and those already out of school either wished to use or were currently using English took several forms. The first of these was in full-time employment. Given that many of the individuals in the study were or had been trained as English teachers, it came as no surprise that many were teaching English in some context. However, even some who had not been in the teaching track or who had been in this track, but did not wish to become teachers were also teaching, especially in cram schools. Although day school teaching jobs were limited, cram school teaching offered a more ready source of employment for English majors, albeit one that was of lower prestige and lower pay.

Many individuals indicated a wish to obtain non-teaching jobs in which they could use their English. Current students especially expressed this desire, often using the term “international companies” or some variation on this phrase to describe such
contexts. Yet, when further probed in the interviews, most actually exhibited little notion either of specific potential companies, the exact types of jobs that might reasonably be available, or details of the skill set required. Indeed, such jobs actually seem to be scarce for English majors with only one of the participants being employed in such a position at the time of this research. Despite this, the rhetoric surrounding English education aligned with the belief that majoring in English represented a means to obtain such jobs. For example, this was reflected in the web sites of the university English departments themselves where such employment was touted as a rationale for English study at the undergraduate level. Other participants hoped to obtain employment abroad. Such employment appears to be extremely scarce indeed with no individuals in this study either presently or in the past working outside of Taiwan in the kinds of full-time, white-collar positions that they described. A few had engaged in temporary work in the United States as summer amusement park workers, but this was the only instance of employment experience in English-speaking contexts abroad actually manifest in first-hand participant accounts.

Another venue for English use after graduation was in advanced study within Taiwan. As is the case with undergraduate matriculation, high performance on English exams can also serve as a springboard to entry into graduate school since a high-stakes exam was also central to graduate school admission in Taiwan. Indeed, as was the case with undergraduates, evidence suggests that for graduates in this study the very choice of English as a graduate major could be a reflection of English test scores. English scores higher than those of other subjects rather than necessarily a strong interest in English study provided an impetus for undertaking English work at the graduate level. For
example, one participant indicated that, although she was studying English teaching at the graduate level, she was actually interested neither in the coursework nor in becoming a teacher; she simply felt that a graduate degree would be a useful emblem of prestige with her English test scores having facilitated entry into the program.

Participants also indicated an interest in pursuing advanced study abroad in English-speaking contexts. Degrees from English-speaking institutions have an extremely high prestige in Taiwan. In addition, participants also saw study abroad as another chance to practice spoken and “daily life” English in order to remedy their own perceived linguistic shortcomings. Access to such educations is very limited, however. Beyond the entrance requirements, the primary reason is simply the cost, putting such study out of the reach of many middle-class Taiwanese, especially given that the per capita income in Taiwan is less than half that of the United States (International Monetary Fund, 2013). Two participants had taken part in short-term intensive programs abroad. Two others had actually engaged in full-time, degree-granting study. One had earned a masters degree from an institution in Australia, the other from a university in the United States.

5.3 Conclusion I: The significance of English among participants

Despite benefits such as the role in attaining higher entrance exam scores, participants in this study broadly considered their formal English education in Taiwan to be lacking, especially due to attributes associated with a traditional language teaching approach including a focus on a formal language register, grammatical form, rote vocabulary memorization, and an emphasis on the modalities of reading and writing. They strongly attributed this epistemological shift both to the need to prepare for high-stakes exams as
well as to a preference for a traditional, teacher-centered approach in the schools. They consciously felt that weaknesses in their own English competencies were related to these perceived limits to their schooling. Believing that an important objective of English was oral interaction both for employment as well as in less formal settings, individuals in this study felt themselves to be in need of remediation, despite having studied English for many years. They especially indicated that contact with native speakers and learning materials based upon native-speaker linguistic norms represented a means of such remediation for these perceived shortcomings. These beliefs reflect the intersectionalities of a complex set of experiences and ideologies of language. Although the specifics certainly varied with individual circumstances, three sets of related perceptions were broadly held by participants in this study: 1.) Perceptions of the utility or value of English, 2.) Perceptions of school English, 3.) Perceptions of their own English in terms of strengths, weaknesses, and notions of remediation. What each of these entails and the manner in which they articulate with each other inform the current significance of English for individuals in this study by highlighting specific ways that they ultimately construct themselves as English learner/users and respond to this personal construction of the English linguistic self. I explore these in detail in the following sections.

5.3.1 Perceptions of the utility/value of English

The experiences of individuals in this research provide important insights into perceptions of the utility of English in their lives with this value of English within and outside of formal education being quite different. Since English is a subject studied in all schools in Taiwan, all students experience considerable exposure to the language within
these contexts. In terms of value, formal education was an arena within which many of the individuals in this study enjoyed important benefits by virtue of their high performance in English as discussed in the results. There were numerous examples of this, probably the most notable was performance on and advantages accruing from the high-stakes high school and college entrance exams. On the other hand, with the local languages of Mandarin, Taiwanese, and Hakkanese meeting the broader communicative needs of the participants, English use outside of education was much less pronounced.

The question of the value of English outside of formal education was particularly important for the individuals in this study because at the time that I conducted the interviews, these participants were either approaching a sort of liminal space near the end of formal education as university students or they had already finished their formal schooling and had recently entered the workforce. Those who had yet to leave school often spoke of the value of English in gaining employment in what they consistently referred to as “international companies” or some variation of this phrase. Many participants communicated an idealized notion of such employment. They evidenced little notion of the specifics of such positions beyond a vague conviction that such employment existed, was desirable, and was attainable by individuals like themselves with a major in English. Such notions actually appear to be quite naïve when juxtaposed against the apparent track record for those possessing undergraduate degrees in English: Among the nine participants who had already graduated only one individual was employed in such a context. Instead, this research suggests that many English BA graduates actually appear to settle for low-paying positions such as food service workers rather than in mythical “international companies.”
The belief that such jobs are important appears to emanate from several sources. Many in this study linked the economic/political status of Taiwan to the perception that such jobs were common. This narrative held that since Taiwan is small with a tenuous political status, international trade and tourism are crucial, implying the existence of employment in these fields and, further, the value of English within such employment. Of course, firms fitting participants’ notion of “international companies” certainly do exist in Taiwan, although their importance appears inflated among participant accounts as the results previously presented suggest: Such companies simply do not appear to be as prevalent as participants believed.

Also, while high-tech firms involved in export are definitely important to the Taiwan economy, English majors may not actually be qualified in many cases since such positions appear to often place a premium on the possession of a firm technical grounding. This is reflected in the fact that two individuals encountered during fieldwork who were working for such companies and using significant English were not specifically trained in English as university English majors, having studied technical subjects such as engineering instead. They simply indicated that they relied upon English skills acquired in school and in their few required college English courses. They also indicated that they learned much of the English that they needed on the job. For them, having the technical background was more critical than having advanced English qualifications. It was technical expertise that got them the job in the first place. Importantly, majoring in English or majoring in a technical field at university does largely seem to represent an “either/or” scenario since participants as well as others encountered in this study had either majored in English or something else, but never both. In fact, of all 50 study
participants only one was a dual-major, in his case combining education and English.

More broadly, the results also indicated a feeling among participants that English would be useful in speaking with “foreigners” either as a part of employment or in less formal situations with such individuals “on the streets” in Taiwan. Again, however, such notions appear somewhat at odds with the observed situation. Individuals could provide only vague notions of where they might encounter such “foreigners” with many seldom or never having actually used English in person with anyone other than their teachers, both Taiwanese and foreign, in formal educational contexts or with classmates outside of school. In fact, most foreigners in southern Taiwan that I encountered were not English speakers: They were most often from southeast Asian contexts, such as the Philippines and Thailand. As for tourists, again, field observations suggest the number to be relatively small. In fact, my fieldwork indicates a major and apparently increasing group of tourists to be Mainland Chinese.

This set of beliefs about the value of English appears consistent with widespread ideologies of the English language. First, the unquestioned value of English and its perceived connection with being “international” relates to perceptions of the role of English within globalization. As indicated in the literature review, English is commonly viewed as empowering, is strongly associated with modernity and globalization as positive processes, and is viewed as largely politically neutral. Scholar David Crystal writes, for example, that English will serve “a central role in empowering the subjugated and marginalized” (2003, p. 28). Other scholarly commentators strongly disagree that English represents such a benign liberatory force. In fact they contend that English can, and often does, represent a vehicle of cultural, political, economic, and ideological
domination at least in some cases intentionally deployed by neo-imperialistic players such as corporations and governments (e.g., Philipson, 2008). In a related manner, English has been implicated in language/cultural extinction (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). In this project, participants' own narratives strongly aligned with this first view. Participants tended to view English as a “tool” (with some actually using this word), a term connoting a combination of utility and neutrality. For example, Ming-Chi stated “It's a tool. Language is a tool” (personal communication, October 1, 2011). Likewise, Dominic indicated the role of English in his future: “Un, I want to just travel abroad [laughs] everywhere. So, maybe English is a good tool [laughs] for me” (personal communication, October 14, 2011). English was not associated with these negative aspects of power and domination among participants. This mirrors beliefs manifest in the broader society where English is consistently portrayed as a means to internationalization and personal career advancement. For example, the visual culture surrounding English in Taiwan sometimes actually depicts English learners in connection with images of modern cities, international landmarks, or of the globe itself (See Appendix D for examples.). These are deployed as selling points to attract students by drawing upon beliefs equating English with the empowerment and excitement of the global and the modern.

In addition to associations with personal/societal progress and globalization, participants' feelings about English reflected notions regarding those individuals perceived to be the rightful source/standard/arbiters of the language. In participant accounts cited above, the term “foreigner” itself reflects these notions. Individuals in this study strongly associated English with Kachru's (e.g., 1997) “Inner Circle” contexts, those countries – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA - in which
English is and has historically been employed as the primary language. Individuals in this study strongly perceived these countries as the bastions of the English language and those inhabiting them as the most desirable interlocutors and language models. In fact, this study provides evidence of a strong association of a specific set of physical characteristics with those from these contexts and, by extension, with English itself with study participants making sense of these feelings in light of their own experiences with English learning and use.

As previously noted, this “English phenotype” was so powerful that it had also appropriated the term “foreigner” which, at its semantic core in Taiwan English, had a strong racial connotation rather than the traditional political denotation of one who is an expatriate. As indicated in participant accounts, one reason to learn English was to be able to communicate with such individuals. So strong and visceral was this association that people closer to a core ethnicity of light skin, light hair, and blue eyes were said to “look American,” for example. Furthermore, those closer to such an appearance even hailing from non-Inner Circle countries could often find jobs in Taiwan as English teachers even if they had not been trained in foreign language teaching and even if they were themselves not actually native speakers of the language. A tragico-ironic demonstration of this is the sometime practice – documented in this research – of hiring such individuals even at the expense of trained Taiwanese teachers of English.

To sum up, English learners in this study actively constructed an English-using world involving specific participants, traits, and rewards. Ideologies of language linked language with national-state/racial alignment. Discourses on the inherent and benign value of English undergirded this. One specific manifestation seen here, then, was the
view that English is important to be able to speak with “foreigners” and to work in the companies staffed by or frequently dealing with such individuals. Perceptions of the value of English circulated within this milieu, and tapping into this personally constructed linguistic universe meant understanding and attempting to change one's English in very specific ways. I explicate this in the following two sections by considering the relationship among perceptions of school English, the self as English user, and forms of remediation for perceived language deficits.

5.3.2 Perceptions of school English: Traditional education versus “daily life” language

Individuals in this study expressed vociferous dissatisfaction with their formal English educations, especially in day school prior to their university studies. Overall, they felt that their primarily teacher-centered and textbook-based classes were often boring and uninspired, usually involving highly structured routines with teachers presenting textbook content, asking questions, and students supplying answers in a repetitive cycle. Overall, this form of interaction in class represents the traditional IRE (teacher initiate, response, evaluation) format (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006). Reliance on the IRE approach has been critiqued in failing to foster the kinds of learner autonomy and authentic experience needed in real-world language use unless the teacher works to wean students away from this pattern (Hale, 2011).

Participants repeatedly employed term “traditional” in describing their formal English learning. While student-centered approaches advocate active learning, stress deep understanding, a higher degree of learner responsibility and autonomy, among other attributes (Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2003), participant accounts indicate that the
“traditional” teaching methods with which they had experience in many ways represented the antithesis of this approach, i.e., highly teacher centered and teacher directed and involving many drills and traditional assessments, especially paper and pencil convergent tests. Field observations support this: Observed classes were generally teacher fronted and even the layout of classrooms implied a teacher-centered pedagogy with teachers often ensconced in a sort of “pulpit” comprised of an elevated platform for the teacher at the front of the classroom, a podium, and, in many cases, a microphone for the teachers' use. Some teachers wore a battery-powered microphone/amplifier apparatus when teaching so as to better project their own voices. Students were provided with no such equipment and teachers certainly did not wear any type of apparatus to enable them to hear students better. Participants also perceived their primary and secondary teachers as threatening figures in many cases, meting out various forms of verbal reprimands and praise as well as physical punishment. Finally, students also felt that the methods used, if not threatening, were simply inherently boring.

This set of negative associations expressed by participants was not confined to English courses, but paralleled what they had to say about many other academic subjects as well. In fact, this represents an additional complaint: That English was taught just like everything else, with teachers often ignoring the specific needs and possibilities of foreign language instruction. The feeling that reliance upon such teaching methods compromised participants’ language learning was strongly manifest in interviews. These individuals felt that they had few opportunities to actively practice the language and, in particular, to practice productive skills since they were for the most part listening to the teacher. They described an approach in which teachers primarily talked about the target
language, for the most part in the L1 with few opportunities for them to draw upon the target language in communicating meaning.

In fact, participants perceived their classroom experiences with English as fostering only a narrow subset of skills necessary for successful, well-rounded language users. They felt that teaching was skewed toward literacy and away from orality. They also critiqued the rote memorization approach to which they were subjected. Heavy attention to declarative grammatical knowledge in the L1 was another area viewed as problematic by participants. Additionally, they felt that the type of English upon which classes were often based was skewed toward a very narrow subset of formal language and away from that most useful in what they often termed “daily life” situations.

The term “daily life English” is significant. Participants deployed this term – with a number of individuals using this very phrase – as the hoped for antithesis of the English learned in the “traditional” classes that they described as typically associated with formal school. The term “daily life English” encapsulating the shortcomings of these formal Educational contexts as it does for participants is important to deconstruct. Considering the results of this study holistically, the term “daily life English” and other synonymous terms used by participants can be induced as entailing the following characteristics:

1. Daily life English entails extended, holistic language rather than abstracted/contrived snippets of language such as isolated sentences.

2. Daily life English is (more) spontaneous than classroom English which was highly structured/contextualized/situationally-embedded/routinizd.

3. Daily life English is situated in specific events. Participants hoped to employ
English in goal-directed ways to accomplish real tasks such as taking the bus, making purchases, etc. Instead they engaged in activities such as the rote, out-of-context memorization of vocabulary.

4. Daily life English involves the negotiation of meaning. Participants viewed classroom English as typically lacking in both the elements of negotiation and meaning. For the most part, teachers asked questions (orally or in written assessments) and students supplied the answers. Focus was strongly skewed toward form rather than meaning.

5. Daily life English is less formal and broader than classroom English. Participants' accounts indicate that they perceived the register of classroom/textbook English to be skewed to a narrow, formal subset of the language.

6. Daily life English is socially situated. Individuals consistently voiced the desire to use English in talking to people in specific social situations. For example, they wanted to use English to make friends.

7. Daily life English often involves the spoken language whereas “traditional” classes placed a premium upon literacy skills.

8. Daily life English is descriptively rather than prescriptively based. While participants did not use these terms, they did note that they learned English in classes in which the language, in addition to simply being more formal in register, seemed contrived or even antiquated and not to represent the way that they perceived people as typically using English.

9. Daily life English responds to students' own interests and needs. Classroom English was often decontextualized as in the case of form-based grammar drills.

215
When content was involved, in particular in the case of textbook readings, participants often described this content as boring. Articles from the English learning magazine used in the National Southern Language center and in many of the National Southern English courses, for example, seem to include much content with little connection to students' lives. These magazines included explanations of the “meaning” of Christmas (Only a couple of participants were Christian), an explication of the various types of cheese (not a popular food in Taiwan), and the challenges of being a working mother (no participants had children).

10. Daily life English is (more) divergent than classroom English. As indicated, convergent, single answer, activities were normalized as central in language learning and use. Not only were formal learning activities convergent, but errors were universally perceived both by teachers and students as problematic. Second language acquisition theory suggests, on the other hand, that “errors” may indicate progress in acquisition of a target language (Krashen, 1982, p. 14). While participants generally did not directly cite the heavy orientation toward convergent activities as representing a problematic aspect of classroom English, the kinds of activities that they described as desired or enacted uses of English on their own were consistently divergent in nature.

Participants felt that there were two main reasons for the narrowing of the epistemology of English in their formal classes so as to exclude this “daily life” language: The skill sets of their teachers and the need to prepare for high-stakes high school and college entrance
exams. First, they perceived many of their teachers to be lacking in English skills. Some felt that these teachers relied upon literacy training, explicit grammar teaching in the L1, and textbook materials at least in part due to the teachers' own discomfort in speaking English. Rather than using their own voice, for example, some teachers in participants' accounts relied heavily on the CDs and tapes that came with the textbooks as language models. Actually, though, this aversion to speaking English may have represented a well-founded defense mechanism given students' oft-expressed criticisms regarding their teachers' English: Participants voiced strong indictments of teachers' use of the local English variety, often derisively referring to this variety as “Chinglish.”

While it is impossible from the data in this study to precisely tease out which aspects of the overall classroom experience were rooted in the skill sets of teachers and which were a result of the need to prepare for high-stakes exams (as well as what the possible “cross-fertilization” among these two might be), study participants themselves did strongly implicate the need to prepare for high-stakes exams in this perceived narrowing of the epistemology of English education. They indicated that these important tests focused only upon a narrow set of language skills, some suggesting that this was because such skills were simply more easily taught and assessed. Because of the tests, participants felt, teachers found it imperative to invest their resources into fostering high performance on this tested subset of English skills at the expense of a more balanced mix of linguistic competencies. The importance of these tests was noted by participants in many manifestations. For example, Marlene mentioned these tests in discussing her junior high classes. When I asked for a clarification, the following exchange ensued:
Chuck: So they, so you said they focused on English and

Marlene: They focused on English TEST. They want you to get good point about
to doing the test and know how, how to write and reading.

Marlene corrected me emphatically. Her classes did not focus on English, but on English
tests. It is as if these represented two different things, as in her perception they indeed
did. Another potent testament to the power of these tests was Wilma's revelation that her
school faked the curriculum to reflect the inclusion of non-tested subjects so as to
conform to government curriculum mandates. These imaginary “paper” classes -
ostensibly in Art and Physical Education - were actually test-prep sessions in English,
Chinese, Math, and Science.

The complaints regarding the constricted epistemology of English classes mirror
concerns evinced in scholarship regarding the negative washback effects of high-stakes
exams. As indicated in the literature review, scholars have debated washback on several
fronts. Specifically, researchers have struggled with its very existence (e.g., Alderson &
Wall, 1993), what it may or may not entail (e.g., Bailey, 1996), and whether the idea of
high-stakes exams impacting instruction is necessarily deleterious or whether such an
effect can be harnessed to enforce policy decisions (Andrews, Fullilove & Wong, 2002;
Chen, 2002; Cheng, 2003; Shohamy, 1997). In the case of this study, individuals painted
a negative picture of the role of high-stakes exams in two primary aspects. First, they
noted that these exams resulted in feelings of extreme pressure for themselves as
students. In fact, participant transcripts in this study are peppered with the words
“pressure” and “stress” in connection with these exams. Second, as indicated, individuals
strongly blamed what they saw as the epistemological restriction of their English instruction on the presence of such exams. Participants’ criticisms of the epistemology of English education to which they were exposed do seem to parallel scholarly feelings of this issue. This sense among participants that there was more to language than they experienced in their classes mirrors linguistic notions that language involves a broad set of components including – at the most global level - syntax, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics. Within language teaching, the longstanding notion of communicative competence dating to the work of Hymes (1966), emphasizes the necessary breadth of competencies inherent in successful use of language for interpersonal interaction. As indicated in the literature review, various specific definitions of communicative competence have emerged, but they share the notion that actual communicative ability entails skills in numerous aspects of language such as social appropriateness, phonology, discourse conventions, and strategic competence. Individuals in this study seemed to intuit these specifics rather than explicitly enumerating such a list of attributes, but they did strongly feel that the coverage of important language skills in their own educational experiences was very uneven. Overall, the types of teaching and activities described by participants do seem to systematically shortchange aspects of language crucial in the use of language outside of class. Participants were especially critical of the focus on grammar. As noted in the literature review, scholars have questioned the value of focus-on-form (especially grammar), target language as topic rather than means of communication approaches in promoting language acquisition. Participants’ own indictment of this approach was not,
however, because they sensed that it fails to facilitate language acquisition per se, but simply that the competencies taught – and therefore learned - were narrow. The ground-level implementation of the approach was also boring and stressful. Notably, participants felt neither that this approach fails to teach the competencies upon which it actually focuses such as explicit knowledge of (especially grammatical) form nor that what was taught was unnecessary. Indeed, they felt that the skills taught were necessary for language learning, but simply not sufficient. Grammar to them was one the “basics” of learning, but much more was needed. In addition to these concerns, participants felt that the language being taught, presumably also including the “grammar” itself, to be narrowed to that grammar of formal, academic language, sometimes prescriptively contrived. No efforts on the part of teachers to foreground the connection between grammar and the social appropriateness in Hymes’ definition was evidenced from participants’ accounts: Participants did not speak, for example, of exercises in matching or transforming language to meet various socially-embedded situations. They spoke not at all about exercises pertaining to language register.

Participants also wanted to engage in at least some CLT-style learning, wishing for more practice in the “daily life English.” Although scholarship indicates that some learners may resist CLT-style methods because of insensitive or inappropriate implementation and/or because such practices are at odds with established local teaching methods and sensibilities (e.g., McKay & Bokhost-Heng, 2008, pp. 189-195), individuals in this study indicated that they strongly desired more interactive/communicative classes. Importantly, study participants, although desiring more CLT-style classes, also valued the role of the teacher as a repository of expertise and expected explicit teacher
feedback/correction on their language performance as well as instruction in grammar/language form. They also valued grammar explanations and explanations of other aspects of English in the L1; there is no evidence that they perceived teaching approaches including a traditional “grammar” focus and the teaching of language involving communicative practice as mutually exclusive.

A switch to a more student-centered class is sometimes seen as incompatible with the way that “Chinese” students learn as well as with their construction of classroom social roles. Chan (1999), in speaking of students in the Chinese tradition, indicates that “many would feel that ineffective teaching is taking place if they are continually asked in class to express their opinions or to solve a problem by themselves” (p. 301). This would imply a potential backlash against the use of CLT in such contexts. Whether such a statement simply represents an untenable stereotype of the abstracted “Chinese” learner, whether students in this study would object to a class in which they were “continually” engaged in student-centered activities, or whether the students in this study represent a minority diverging from such dispositions because of their high English ability and awareness of language or for some other reason is beside the point: Participants strongly desired more variation in teaching methods and content including less reliance upon teacher-centered, focus on language form pedagogy. Indeed, concern with the prevalence of teacher-centered classes has been voiced among scholars doing research in Taiwan with the adoption of greater student-centered methods being proposed in a number of cases (e.g., Chiang, Chapman & Elder, 2010). Again, this is not to say that participants in this study necessarily would have welcomed an approach in which a focus on grammatical form and/or teacher-centered work was wholly eschewed. What is certain,
though, is that participants strongly craved more varied approaches to teaching and more chances to learn English to meet their own goals.

Finally, it is important to point out that participants viewed the shortcomings in education detailed here to be even more profound in the contexts of southern and rural Taiwan. They felt that those from urban areas – especially the North, and in particular Taipei - enjoyed better teachers and more resources for learning English as a part of the overall enhanced milieu of internationalization perceived as inherent in such contexts. They felt that the need and opportunity to use English outside of formal educational contexts were also greater in these places. Given that this study centered on two southern universities – with most participants hailing from southern (and many from southern, rural) areas - a number of participants viewed their own geographical backgrounds, especially for those from small towns and villages, as additional obstacles to be overcome for successful English learning. Despite perceiving such disparities in learning resources applicable to English, virtually no participants viewed the role of English education in the reproduction of social inequality as a salient issue.

5.3.3 The individual language learner as living critique
A prevalent feeling among participants was that their own English strongly reflected what they viewed as the narrow epistemological/pedagogical choices underlying their experiences with formal education, especially in primary and secondary contexts. Despite generally high performance in English classes and on tests, they constructed themselves as lacking in those competencies given short shrift in school. Specifically, they expressed relative confidence in their English literacy skills and discomfort with their speaking and
listening skills. These feelings about perceived areas of relative strength and weakness in English were broadly manifest in this study among the participants. For example, in most interviews I asked participants to rate their own English from 1 to 10 and to discuss their reasons for giving themselves a specific rating as well as what they felt they would need to do to improve. Most were able to supply these specifics, and most of those who did shared similar feelings about their strong and weak points as well as having definite notions regarding the forms of remediation required. Typical among responses was that of Marlene who replied by giving herself a 3/10 explaining this by saying “I think, nn, my conversation ability is not very well. But I love to read novels, so I feel maybe I can read better” (personal communication, December 11, 2011). They were very few exceptions to this pattern of lower self-ratings in spontaneous oral “daily life” interaction as weak and reading/writing as strong. One of these exceptions was the case of Jeffrey. In this case, the pattern was reversed since Jeffrey felt that his writing represented the point most in need of remediation. Notably, Jeffrey was exceptional in this study in that he had attended high school in the United States as a resident on a long-term basis, making him different from the others since virtually all had spent their school years in Taiwan.

Participants saw this unevenness in skills as symptomatic of a larger problem: As I have discussed, they felt that they were woefully under-prepared to use English in the “daily life” situations. While they felt themselves to be better prepared for academic tasks, they indicated far less comfort in using English in ways that they perceived to be needed outside of the classroom context. They attributed this perceived systematic epistemological shift especially toward the need of formal education to foster high-stakes test oriented competencies, but also to the traditional teaching methods employed in these
settings. In this way, they felt themselves to be suffering from a very specific sense of personal deficit: They were weakest in oral, informal, “daily life English” and stronger in what they had been taught.

In this sense, participants in this study perceived themselves as embodied, living critiques of the system of formal education. They viewed their personal language deficits as having their genesis in their own educational experiences. Researchers have investigated the relationship between ideas of student deficit and pedagogical practices. In such cases, however, pedagogy generally has represented a response on the part of teachers and policy makers to perceived learner deficits rather than being perceived as the cause of such deficits. An example is the oft-criticized practice of tracking, the goal of which is to match student proficiency to level of instruction (e.g., Ginsberg, Shapiro & Brown, 2004). In some cases tracking is viewed as negatively impacting student outcomes: This body of work consistently notes the links among race/language/SES, tracking, and performance with lower tracks intended to “remedy” “shortcomings” serving instead as defacto mechanisms for racial, linguistic, and class segregation and the maintenance, if not the exacerbation, of differential academic performance among the impacted groups (e.g, Donelan, Neal, & Jones, 1994). In an illustrative case, Brannon, et al. (2008) argue that traditional practices among writing teachers can serve such a function, particularly when those teachers feel a need to “teach the basics” to lower-performing students. In that study, the traditional five-paragraph essay – a form of writing arguably with little practical value – served as the focus of ghettoized classes and the students inhabiting them. In the present research, students themselves felt that they suffered from specific deficits in English skills and laid these perceived deficits at the
door of pedagogy, seeing it as the *cause* of these shortcomings. They had, in fact, kept their end of the academic bargain: They had worked very hard and even received much positive feedback in many cases, but the result was to them unsatisfactory.

### 5.4 Conclusion II: Developing a critical view of personal educational experience

Couched within discourses of modernization, meritocracy, and opportunity, the benefits associated with learning English for young people in Taiwan could seem virtually unimpeachable: English is important in the modern world, so it is taught in school. Ultimately, everyone takes the same tests and entrance exams and, therefore, appears to have the same chance. The government of Taiwan itself creates English tests and brags about their value of “standard certification tools.” Yet, the events depicted in this study as surrounding English among participants can also be viewed as a tale permeated by constraint and unfairness.

There were many manifestations of this. Parents enrolled their young children in extra English cram school classes whether the children were interested in English or not. These parents themselves often felt compelled to do this, devoting family resources to supplemental English learning in light of perceptions of its importance and in a scramble to bolster their children's life chances within an atmosphere of competition. School people shamed young students into compliance with classroom objectives through verbal criticism and verbal abuse. Praise in various forms was meted out or withheld depending upon English performance. Students deemed as performing poorly were subjected to what could be described as ritualized – and institutionally-endorsed - forms of physical assault. On the other hand, students deemed as performing well enjoyed access to school
English learning resources reserved for them and their ilk. Students themselves felt acute limitations inherent in the methods and curricula of schooling as well as by the perceived lack in the pedagogical creativity and language abilities of their teachers. As a response, many attended for-pay contexts such as cram schools or they hired tutors. A lucky few had parents who were educated enough to be able to speak English themselves or who possessed the resources to send them to study abroad. Some rural students and some from south Taiwan looked upon their urban, northern counterparts with envy, perceiving them as enjoying richer learning opportunities both within school as well as outside. At the broadest level, all of these students were required to study the English language and to deploy English in high-stakes assessments such as high school and university entrance exams. Other assessments such as job interviews often require English. These events have strong implications in determining future life chances even for those who will not use English beyond these gatekeeping events themselves. Thus, this ground-level, lived reality of English learning evidenced in this study was as much a tale of pressure and competition and unfairness as of opportunity, personal development, and meritocracy.

Indeed, a strong argument can be levied that participants suffered from various forms of oppression related to English education based upon the empirical evidence of this study. Freire offers one definition of oppression that seems especially apt in light of this lived reality of English in Taiwan when he asserts that “any situation in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression” (2008, p. 55). Accepting such a standard, individuals in this study certainly do appear to be oppressed in a number of ways as a result of English (education). Considering the recalled life histories of English learning and use in this
study, it is fairly easy to nominate a number of persons and entities to assume the “A” position in the equation above as oppressor in these lives in different times and places. A persuasive argument can be levied that parents, teachers, schooling, entrance assessments, foreigner privilege, native speakers of English, the state itself, and global institutions such as the TOEFL exam or Inner Circle governments all played this role in different ways in these lives, limiting the self-determination of participants. Most notably, however, was the role of the combination of day school and entrance exams in locking students into what they themselves saw as a system of limited English language competencies.

In considering oppression, Freire himself is most interested in formal education and, especially, in its role as an organ of the state. This oppression is accomplished, he contends, via the pedagogical mechanism of the “banking” method of education. Through this approach, the state achieves control – indeed indoctrination – of students. The hallmarks of this approach include the following:

(a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
(b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
(c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
(d) the teacher talks and the students listen-- meekly;
(e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
(f) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
(g) the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
(h) the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not
consulted) adapt to it;

(i) the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students:

(j) the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, and the students are mere objects.

(Friere, 1970, p. 59)

These aspects of banking highlight the role of formal education in constraining students and in indoctrinating them with selected ideas as if they were a “bank” in which ideas could simply be deposited. Not only does formal English education as described by participants in this study represent such an approach, but, more importantly, participants themselves possessed clear insights into these problems, viewing many aspects of this system in a critical way.

Each of the aspects of banking outlined above is strongly manifest in the results outlined here in the recalled life histories collected for this project: Teachers had the power and represented the conduit of the content. Students accommodated themselves to these content choices, even when they viewed the content choices as problematic. Speaking out invited retribution. Teachers levied disciplinary measures to enforce conformity. Overall, teachers were active; students were passive. Participants in this project had a clear view of all of this. They questioned, resisted, and ultimately sought to compensate for the epistemological hegemony of the teacher-school-state matrix. They saw the content/skills choices in formal English education as limited and limiting, despite the institutional messages indicating that this was what counts in English.
Schooling did appear to prepare students to pass the entrance exams and in that sense it was empowering, except that these exams themselves were strongly aligned with the state as well since the most prestigious universities in Taiwan are the public ones, simply another extension of the state. Participants saw the use of English in the allocation of these resources as not only somewhat arbitrary in terms of epistemology of what skills were included and excluded, but some also viewed it as being of questionable fairness. For example, the feelings pertaining to lack of resources in south Taiwan and in rural contexts represented an additional instance in which participants felt acute limitations – in this case by a reduction in chances to use/practice English and a perceived loss of competitiveness as a result. Participants felt all of these issues to be couched within an overall high-pressure, competitive framework of which high-stakes exams – and the resulting impacts on English study - represented an integral, inescapable component. In most interviews for this project, I asked participants to talk about one teacher who was especially good. When I asked this question of Leticia, she responded flatly in the following way. “Okay. Nn:, uh, basic, basically, I, I always [stay] away from the teacher because, uh, I think they are symbols of oppression. So, I won't, I won't stay close to them” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). While most participants were not as blunt, this response is typical in its bitter criticality and underscores the cogent nature of participants' assessment of the situation.

The critique that participants in this study lay at the doorstep of formal education was strongly manifest in the life histories of English learning collected in this project. It derived its potency from the combination of personal experience and good faith effort implicit in their educational experiences. The critique that they levied against their
formal, state-aligned, educations might best be summarized along these lines: *I kept my part of the bargain. I studied English hard since I was young. I did what the teachers asked. I played the game and was told through a variety of means - such as grades and tests – how well I had been doing. Yet, I still felt that I needed to find other means to learn English in addition to these classes to even function at a basic communicative level. Even now, I still feel that I suffer uneven language competencies rooted in this formal education. Why should this be so?* This was a mature and cogent critique in which they concluded – by reflecting on the nature of their own educational experiences - that English education as they experienced it suffers a malady. This malady is that the formal English education and state-aligned exam matrix could most accurately be described as a state-supported and state mandated gatekeeping device designed foremost with the goal of meting out access to resources rather than being built upon the primary objective of fostering broad real-world language competencies.

5.5 Conclusion III: Participants' beliefs about Inner Circle Englishes

Participants in this study consistently demonstrated a keen awareness of their past English educations. These individuals were able to delve into details of their English learning experiences stretching back over many years, recounting English learning episodes having in many instances taken place even during their elementary school age. Reflecting on these experiences, one prevalent feeling among them was that their formal English educations were insufficient for the development of the full gamut of competencies that they believed to be necessary for the well-rounded language learner. Particularly salient was the belief that what they learned was restricted especially by
virtue of a combination of the focus of classes in preparing students for high-stakes high 
school and college entrance exams, by the traditional forms of pedagogy employed in the 
schools, by the limitations of the teachers language abilities and teaching methods 
themselves, and, more globally, by living in Taiwan, and, in particular, for many hailing 
from/residing in the rural south. Demonstrating their own epistemological sensibility, 
participants in general voiced much disagreement with these choices made in the contexts 
of formal schooling, especially day school, regarding what aspects of English counted. 
Unlike some literature regarding deficit in education as being imposed upon students 
from the outside, these individuals carefully assessed their own strengths and weaknesses 
with English, exhibiting a keen meta-awareness of their own learning. They felt that this 
repertoire of strengths and weaknesses in their English could be largely traced to the 
pedagogical choices underlying their formal educational experiences. Specifically, many 
indicated the overarching belief that their skills in “daily” spoken interaction in English 
were much weaker than their skills in academic reading and writing since formal 
schooling was skewed toward this latter set of competencies as a response to their 
prominent position on the entrance exams.

In light of participants' descriptions of the teaching practices in their formal day 
schools, their interpretations of the limitations of these contexts do appear reasonable 
given what is known regarding best practices in language education. For example the 
overall potential of the washback effect of high-stakes exams – such as those experienced 
by participants in the high school and college application process - to narrow curricula 
has been a concern among scholars. Work concerned with detailing the inventory of 
competencies needed for successful language learning and assessing real-world language
education in light of these needs suggests that the types of teaching described by individuals in this study would be inadequate in failing to foster full communicative language competency. Overall, the heavy reliance upon government-endorsed official course texts in large classes in which explanations of discreet point grammar in the L1 predominate and English is treated overwhelmingly as a topic of study rather than a means of communication explain these limitations in language learning.

In assessing their own English, one central theme was the notion of measurement against an Inner Circle or native speaker standard: First of all, the feeling that a native-speaker/foreigner represented the ideal language model was strongly manifest. For example, when I asked the question about English self-rating mentioned previously, some of the participants in re-framing the question explicitly stated that they felt that “ten” represented a native speaker/foreigner. For example, when Carlene discussed this issue, she indicated that she would rate herself at a “five” on the scale. When I asked her to clarify why, she simply stated that “I think ten is native speaker” (personal communication, December 30, 2011). Alice, in discussing an event that made her proud of her English, related an incident in which she sat for a job interview for a cram school in Taiwan. “And then there was a teacher,” Alice notes. “She was in, he was interviewing me in English. After I finished, he asked me have you every gone abroad? I say no. And he was, like, you speak like a foreigner. I was happy.” (personal communication, September 24, 2011). When Jessie discussed her own English ability, she compared herself to a Taiwanese classmate who had lived abroad and who, according to Jessie, possessed a “native-like” speaking ability. When I asked her to clarify what she meant by “native-like” she replied that the classmate's “speaking [was] like, uh, the intonation like
the, the foreigners” (personal communication, December 29, 2011). As I have detailed elsewhere, the “foreigner” among participants generally represented a complex code for an individual perceived, especially by virtue of proximity to a specific set of racial characteristics, as being aligned with Inner Circle contexts and, hence, with the English language.

In light of this situation, participants sought a number of specific strategies in order to address these perceived shortcomings. One notable aspect of these efforts is that individuals especially assessed themselves against this Inner Circle language standard – with the native speaker being a “ten” - and, aspiring to this goal, sought forms of remediation often involving Inner Circle people and institutions. These actions included seeking out “foreigners” with whom to chat on the streets, attending church-based English classes run by foreign missionaries, using the Internet to practice English through listening to the BBC or VOA or via text or video chat, watching English-language movies, hiring tutors, attending cram school, and for a few taking classes or working temporary summer jobs abroad. Isabel’s mother joined an English conversation club and took Isabel along to “pubs” such as Hooters on a quest to locate willing foreign interlocutors.

Experiences such as Isabel’s also highlight the fact that such actions were not simply responses to the previously discussed limits in the availability of English speakers with whom to interact in Taiwan due to factors such as the rarity of foreigners or the norms limiting English use in Taiwan. Rather, they did actually reflect Inner Circle alignment: In this case, Isabel’s mother sought out foreigners as a way to overcome the Taiwanese accent. Also, as noted in the results, participants tended not to seek out
immigrants to Taiwan, in particular Southeast Asians, who were farther from the core phenotype associated with the Inner Circle foreigner. As I shall discuss shortly, strong beliefs pertaining to the inherent value of the Inner Circle language variety – including accent - represented a potent force in choosing people associated with the Inner Circle in speaking English.

Finally, Inner Circle alignment was evidenced by the wish to actually travel to Inner Circle countries, despite the cost and the availability of language practice locally. Many individuals expressed this desire – with a few having actually having done so – with the goal of improving their English by study abroad. Yet, study in such contexts involves a very high expense, even for short-term language programs. On the other hand, although it may be difficult to engage in spontaneous English conversations on the streets of Taiwan, other options do exist. In particular, as noted in the results, for-pay language schools are plentiful in even mid-sized cities in Taiwan. Thus, English study could be undertaken locally for a fraction of the cost of study abroad.

As noted, at the root of these efforts to improve English are the personal deficits that individuals attributed to shortcomings in their educational experiences in Taiwan, especially when juxtaposed against Inner Circle related criteria of linguistic performance. Perceiving the threat inherent in this kind of deficit thinking, some scholars have proposed ways to unseat the ideologies that accompany and underlie them. Yosso (2005) argues that perceptions of deficit, in this case associated with communities of color fail to recognize the forms of cultural capital associated with those communities. She asserts that narratives of “deficit” ironically fail to acknowledge the additional valuable social/cultural resources possessed by such students. The implication here is that
narratives of “deficit” may be replaced with narratives of “surplus”. Others have proposed additional ways of unseating such ideologies. Motha (2006) documents the role of teacher awareness and resulting teacher practice in challenging hegemonic discourses surrounding language learners as deficient others. Noting the potency of deficit ideologies such as the construction of Latino and Latina students, respectively, as criminals and as highly sexualized, Sleeter (2004, p. 134) proposes that such entrenched narratives must be actively combated with equally potent “counternarratives of achievement in the face of oppression” harvested by means such as ethnography. The idea appears to be to disrupt externally-imposed narratives where difference is presented as deficit in an effort to foster a strengthened sense of pride and self-worth, and a sense of the attainability of learning objectives.

Discourses of deficit described in such work are most typically held by teachers and policy makers about students rather than representing ideas that students hold about themselves (Dudley-Marling, 2013; Ford & Grantham, 2003). Especially, students have sometimes been viewed by school people as lacking by virtue of their backgrounds with “cultural deprivation” serving as a euphemism for perceived shortcomings related to ethnicity and SES (Collins, 1988). In the present study, background was an issue in the sense that participants felt that being from southern Taiwan and/or from rural contexts – and, indeed, even being from Taiwan itself - represented an impediment to learning English. Again, however, these feelings were held by participants about themselves. Some scholarship has noted instances in which individuals do view themselves as suffering from academic deficits. In one example, in an ESOL program, students internalized the prevailing attitudes of other students and came to view their own
language as reflecting deficits and their own positions as ESOL students as imbued with shame (Motha, 2006). Yet, even in cases such as this one the notion of deficit reflects an external narrative that is taken up by learners rather than a more strongly self-constructed one as was evident in this study.

There is actually some evidence of the existence of what initially might appear to be the kinds of “counternarratives of achievement” spoken of by Sleeter among individuals in this study. Participants were readily able to provide examples of individuals representing role models who had successfully taken steps to attain excellent English, many involving travel to Inner Circle settings. As one component of my interviews, I asked participants to talk about a Taiwanese person having excellent English. Some individuals replied with stories of personal acquaintances such as university teachers or classmates, but a few discussed celebrities. One participant provided the example of a woman by the name of Janet Hsieh, a Taiwanese-American celebrity, actress, singer, television personality, and product endorser. A Taiwanese English teacher and fellow researcher in Taiwan indicated that one thing for which Hsieh is noted in Taiwan is that she was successful in America as an MIT student and for this reason she appears to enjoy a thriving career as an endorser of English learning schools and materials such as textbooks and electronic dictionaries. Indeed, later during this fieldwork, I myself actually observed a huge poster of Janet Hsieh towering above street level of a major southern Taiwan city. Young, smartly-dressed, and confident-looking, her countenance gazed down upon the busy street below, endorsing an English study school. Two other participants felt that Ying-Jeou Ma, the president of Taiwan at the time of this research represented a successful English learner. Like Hsieh, Ma also studied in the
United States, in this case at Harvard, and the participants citing him as exemplary felt that such an achievement was a strong barometer of language attainment. Louis, the teacher from City Tech, spoke of another exemplar of good English from Taiwan.

I knew one guy. I knew one person. He's a, he's, his Chinese name is Chang Jie-In. He scored eight point five on IELTS test and he also had the nine-hundred ninety TOEIC score. [H]e was great. She, he studies in Harvard now for PhD. And I think she is probably the guy that really, really good in learning English, the famous guy. Yeah.

(personal communication, September 5, 2011).

Individuals such as Hsieh, Ma, and Chang represented the ideal of travel to the Inner Circle and ensuing success. In that sense, they represented the successful Taiwanese learner of English par excellence.

5.5.1 Actions supporting hegemony from a critical perspective

From the perspective of scholarly thought in the critical vein of applied linguistics as detailed in the literature review of this study, the sorts of actions that I have outlined here as part of a carefully thought out strategy of improving one's English by assessing oneself against a native-speaker standard and working to emulate such a standard though such means as contact with Inner Circle people or travel to Inner Circle contexts could be considered problematic. These sorts of actions can be viewed simply as instances of being victimized by/supporting prevailing regimes of linguistic power centered on the
Inner Circle countries and those institutions and individuals most strongly associated with
them. As noted, Phillipson (1992) has decried the longstanding orientation of language
teaching toward the native speaker construct as language model and preferred language
teacher, referring to such beliefs as a “fallacy.” Such a position – now widely embraced
among scholars in applied linguistics - views the preference for the native speaker as
hinging upon political and historical circumstances rather than any inherent linguistic
superiority of the native speaker variety of language over any other type. Indeed, given
that the number of non-native speakers of English is now far greater than that of native-
speakers it is much more likely for the language learner to encounter such persons rather
than a native speaker. Scholars note that the number of users of localized Englishes – so
called World Englishes – continues to increase and should be acknowledged (Kachru,
2005). McKay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008) argue that the acknowledgement of local
varieties of English and efforts to increase its status would empower both English
learners and teachers from the periphery.

From such a critical perspective, those who seek out Inner Circle people with
whom to study, purchase learning materials based upon Inner Circle linguistic norms, or
travel to the Inner Circle simply represent additional instantiations of the (re)inscription
of prevailing and hegemonic power of the Inner Circle. To attain status, they seek
alignment with the Inner Circle, enacting a symbolic – and in some cases a literal
physical - journey from the periphery to the center, and essentially prostrate themselves
to Inner Circle power. They partake of the power inherent in these sites and incorporate
this power into themselves. In this way, they seemingly represent yet another
manifestation of such power, in this case as consumers – and implicitly – as endorsers,
channels, and conduits of this power while they also re-instantiate attitudes regarding the local as inferior, inadequate. Especially, the celebrities previously discussed can be viewed in this way. For example, Hsieh could be seen simply as a marketing tool of powerful corporations. In such an account they end up as mere poster children (literally, in Hsieh's case) for the recirculation of the hegemony of Inner Circle English (education). In this view, English (education) is seen as an appendage of Western, especially American, domination and is implicated in the subjugation of subaltern peoples (meaning in this case non-English speakers/The South) and their own languages. It is underwritten by ideologies of language bolstering the status of Inner Circle varieties of English and those people associated with these language varieties rather than any inherent linguistic superiority of these language varieties.

5.5.2 A utilitarian interpretation

Despite these potential critical objections, individuals in this study who manifest the sorts of Inner Circle-philic behaviors detailed here can also be seen as taking well-considered actions that are in their personal best interests. The steps to improve English ability outlined thus far arguably represent a common-sense, carefully considered set of strategies in which individuals have cogently identified linguistic power and determined the courses of action available to them to tap into this power. In fact, Inner Circle Englishes do possess prestige and yield power. Kahane (1992) traces the increased power of American English, especially during the 20th century. This is certainly not a new observation: Kloss (1966) also notes that the prestige of a language or dialect can result from the international standing/prestige of its speakers.
In addition to the issue of the status of certain language varieties is the converse phenomenon of the stigma associated with lower prestige varieties. In the case of English varieties, this includes the language of many non-native speakers. One manifestation of this issue is the issue of the “accent” of international GTAs and the widespread presence of “accent reduction” classes and policies regarding language for these individuals in North American universities (Mills, M. & Hyle, A., 2001; Smith, L., Downey, R., Cox, K, 1999; Twale, D., Shannon, D., & Moore, M, 1997). Evidence suggests that prejudice against the non-native speaker may have a role in the perceptions that students hold about such teachers (Bresnahan et al., 2002).

Although somewhat anecdotal, perhaps a more poignant demonstration of the stigma associated with non-native speaker Englishes is evidenced by a recent American television commercial in which the native and non-native speaker of English are juxtaposed. This commercial hinges on widely held impressions regarding the practice of outsourcing customer service to lower-wage countries on the part of many American companies. In the commercial, a “customer” makes a telephone call to the customer support center of his credit card to dispute a service charge. The support person speaks in a stereotypical Russian accent, only able to repeatedly utter one or two formulaic English expressions. In an awkward ploy to “pass” as a cultural insider, he even adopts the name “Peggy” on the phone. This is intended both to serve as humor in the commercial as well as to highlight the lack of cultural/linguistic knowledge on the part of the non-native speakers which the commercial seeks to portray as foisted upon innocent American consumers by greedy companies. Unable to successfully communicate with the customer, the service person finally simply hangs up the phone. The accents in this commercial are
crucial: The non-native accent signals incompetence while the native-speaking accent signifies reasonableness, competency, goodwill, as well as victimization at having the non-native speaking incompetent thrust upon him.

Evidence such as this commercial supports the conclusion that the stigmatization of the non-native speaker – even in a multicultural context like the early 21st century United States – remains strong. Given this situation, the response of participants in this study to align themselves with Inner Circle standards, and, especially, their expressions of distaste when teachers spoke “Chinglish” can be viewed as representing a well-founded strategy. This would support the conclusion that – the rights of non-native speakers and the emergence of the NNS as majority notwithstanding - the participants in this study are not simply acquiescing to regimes of linguistic hegemony mindlessly. Rather, they are acting in a cogent, utilitarian manner so as to advance their own best interests.

5.5.3 Inner Circle English and language ideology

Based upon perceptions of their own shortcomings with English, individuals in this study took a number of actions to improve their language skills with these actions strongly involving Inner Circle places, institutions, learning materials, and people. Certainly, one outcome of such actions is that they support various manifestations of ongoing structures of hegemonic power related to language. One aspect of this is that native speakers of English receive benefits. For example, Yeh (2002) documents a pay structure in which native-speaking English teachers earn as much as three times the remuneration of their Taiwanese counterparts, yet enjoy a reduced set of duties. In addition, as I have demonstrated, even individuals more closely associated with English native-speaker
status simply by virtue of their physical appearance enjoyed benefits in increased status and employment opportunities as English teachers. In this sense, they inhabit a sort of penumbral space in which they are able to bask in the refracted Inner Circle/native speaker “aura” by virtue of their own physical appearance.

These actions also benefit Inner Circle institutions: for example, as documented in the present study, amusement parks in the United States can tap in to a ready pool of highly educated and motivated workers willing to labor at low wages for the opportunity to practice English in an Inner Circle context. Also, institutions of higher education in Inner Circle settings enjoy a steady supply of applicants ready to fork over tuition; many participants in this study also voiced a desire to study abroad, and a few with the resources had actually done so. So potent were the benefits of Inner Circle alignment that they extended not only to “foreigners” based only upon racial appearance but even to English pubs and Hooters franchises in Taiwan, locales where locals felt that such foreigners might be found. Despite this support of the status quo with regards to the power of those associated with English, these “Inner Circle-philic” actions on the part of participants can be understood in light of the utilitarian function that they serve in increasing the life chances of the study participants: Inner Circle English is imbued with prestige as are Inner Circle academic credentials in Taiwan. Thus, as I have noted, the sorts of actions outlined here can be thought of as a savvy utilitarian response of these individuals to the defacto terrain of linguistic prestige currently associated with English globally.

Aside from these strictly utilitarian benefits, however, I would like to conclude this study by considering underlying beliefs about these Inner Circle Englishes
themselves. The root question here is whether participants viewed this situation in a manner paralleling that of scholars in (applied) linguistics. That is to say, did they feel that the status associated with Inner Circle English was – aside from its utility - simply a circumstantial manifestation of its association with the power and prestige of those people most strongly associated with it? For example, do they share the feelings of Bonfligio (2002) who, in speaking of American English, notes that “[t]here is nothing in the particular language in itself that determines its worth: it is the connection of the language in question to the phenomena of power that determines the value of that language.” (p. 23)?

Evidence from this study supports the notion that participants actually did not view the situation in such a way. Instead, they understood Inner Circle varieties of language to be inherently superior in and of themselves – and saw the localized variety as inferior - rather than simply viewing external Englishes to be valuable in terms of the tangible benefits that accrue to those approximating their norms and obtaining related educational credentials. Support for this contention especially takes the form of participants' discussions of their English learning when I asked them to talk about things that made them proud/ashamed of their English, their goals for English, and feelings about particularly excellent (or poor) teachers. In response to such questions, participants sometimes touched upon the contrast between local English and Inner Circle varieties in ways indicative of these underlying feelings. Betty, in discussing her writing indicated that her writing “came out to be weird. It's kind of a Chinglish” (personal communication, December 26, 2011). Alice (personal communication, September 24, 2011) noted that in her own work as an English teacher, that she observed her students
translating Mandarin phrases directly into English and felt that “it just sounds funny.”

Gloria (personal communication December 16, 2011), indicating a benefit of the native-speaking teacher, felt that such individuals had “natural pronunciation,” but that “Chinese will have some accent, accent of English. And the native speaker will not.” Jeffrey (personal communication, January 2, 2012) had a more direct reaction. In discussing the accent of one of his Taiwanese teachers of English, he commented laughingly that “she speaks English but, wow, it’s like abusing my ear!” He also felt that “the speaking, and, well, well it just so weird. It has strong Taiwanese accent.” Carla (personal communication, October 25, 2011), speaking of her cram school students, feared that if they copied the pronunciation of some of the Taiwanese teachers it would be a problem because their pronunciation is “weird.” In contrast, she goes on the suggest that “for, uh, foreigners’ accent, I mean specific foreigner like Canadian or American, they would have more natural speaking skills.” Jean (personal communication January 5, 2012) discussing her efforts to improve her English by listening to the BBC, also comments on the accent of native speakers, in this case the British. She felt that “their accent is really charming and really, uh, beautiful.” Ching-Wen (personal communication December 9, 2011) commented that one of her teachers had “pronunciation [that was] not so well. He have the Taiwanese accent.” Alice (personal communication, September 24, 2011) felt that when her students used “Chinglish” that is was a “stage” that they needed to pass through. Edison (personal communication, December 17, 2011) felt that native-speaking teachers would be especially appropriate for teaching young children “[b]ecause, uh, the native speak-, uh, the native teacher have, uh, uh:, have right accent of pronounce, pronunciation. And, uh, than, than the Chinese teacher.” In this case, the native-speaker
accent is viewed as the “right” one. Flora, in discussing the issue of accent, related the story of her cousin.

“Flora: [L]et's say my cousin, um, she was in third grade and, um, she did, she didn't go to the cram school like I did.
Chuck: Right?
Flora: And, um, her English teachers all Taiwanese and some of them can't really pronounce that, um, certain word not that precisely.
Chuck: Right.
Flora: And she, of course, acquired those accents. So now she speak with a little Taiwanese accents. Yeah.

(personal communication December 19, 2011)

Here Flora equates lack of being “precise” with having a Taiwanese accent and, thus, as a deficit. In another example, Irene (personal communication December 15, 2011) discussed her mother's rationale for sending her to Chicago to study English. “[M]y mother, she really wants me to get this American accent because she doesn't, she understands that students studying in Taiwan, they don't really get that accent because, um, the teachers actually their accents are that local.” In this case, the term “local” is employed in an unmistakably pejorative sense, as something that her mother would go to great lengths to avoid being manifest in her daughter's own English speech.

Finally, when the issue of an instance of being proud of one's English arose, several individuals indicated that having their own pronunciation compared to that of a
native-speaker was cause for such pride. Wilma indicated that she felt proud

whenever I talk to the English speakers, especially Americans, um, many of them
told me that I sound like American. And even some, of course I still have some
Chinese accents, especially when I'm tired I couldn't, of course I, I don't, I, I didn't
live in the United States for a little while, but, uh, even some of them told me that
if I didn't tell them that I'm from Taiwan they would think that I grewed up in the
United States. So, I think it's a big encouragement to me.

(personal communication, October 15, 2011)

This collection of examples is notable for a number of reasons. First of all, they reflect a
gut-level response: These comments about “Chinglish” were delivered in a very natural,
almost offhand manner. In many cases it was as if there was no need to explain or justify
this “common sense” belief. Second, they indicate a feeling that local English is
inherently flawed and that the Inner Circle varieties are inherently superior. In addition, it
is notable that a number of individuals in this study could provide a fairly detailed
analysis of the particular linguistic aspects of Taiwan English in the context of an
interview. They could, for example, mimic the pronunciation of certain teachers. This
indicates that they have spent some thought on this issue. Finally, the data in this study
speaks to the issue of perceptions of the value of Inner Circle Englishes by its silences:
There were no assertions about pride, value, or appropriateness in the local variety of
English. As indicated elsewhere, Farley, a graduate student in English teaching, reflecting
a discussion in one of her classes, felt that the only reason to employ native speaking
teachers for children was because of their accent and that such individuals often lacked
the training and Mandarin ability to explain English concepts (personal communication,
December 9, 2011). Importantly, despite this critique, it is essentially rooted in issues of
teacher training; she does not question the value of the native-speaker as pronunciation
teacher and, by extension, does not trouble the notion of the implicit value on the
language variety associated with these individuals. In fact, alignment with the Inner
Circle variety of English – in this case in the form of accent - is viewed as the single,
unquestionable, redeeming feature of the untrained native-speaking teacher.

Overall, then, individuals in this study consistently saw “Taiwanese English” as
something to be avoided and overcome and not as a legitimate local English variety
divergent from but equal to Inner Circle English. In fact, the very notion of a local
English was met with derision when it came up in individual narratives of English
learning; the term “Taiwanese English” or synonyms such as “Chinese English” or,
especially, “Chinglish” had a uniformly pejorative association among participants and
when employed by participants themselves, such terms were used to denote criticism. To
even note that an individual used “Chinglish” was a critique such as when participants
criticized teachers on the grounds of using “Chinglish” in class. These notions reflect
prevailing regimes of linguistic power, in particular the hegemony of the Inner Circle and
the English users most strongly associated with these geographical contexts. Like those
who have questioned the phenomenon of World Englishes on the grounds that they
simply represent learner language rather than localized language forms (Kilickaya &
Curie-Sklodowska, 2009), individuals in this study also viewed the local variety as
simply representing imperfect language learning, as something to be overcome and
eradicated, or, in Alice's words, as a “stage” in language development. She sees China English as a step on the journey to the better place of full – native-like – language competency.

This sort of stigmatization of language varieties associated with subaltern groups is common. Despite the very different historical circumstances of China English and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and the fact that speakers of AAVE are native speakers of English, there are illustrative parallels to the ideologies of language connected to China English in the present study and prevalent discourses surrounding the issue of AAVE, also known as Ebonics. As with the China English in the present study, one aspect of the very public and often contentious “Ebonics debates” in the United States has been the issue of beliefs about the validity – or lack thereof - of this language variety. American comedian Bill Cosby in speaking of the language employed by African American young people asserted that they “can't speak English” (Hamilton, 2005, p. 34). Cosby is not alone in his thinking, like China English among participants in this study, the language variety is often viewed as inherently inferior and, as a result, is stigmatized rather than being broadly recognized as low in prestige simply by virtue of the history and the status of its users. AAVE has been decried as “slang” and “its speakers as lazy or sloppy” (Murray, 1998). Such responses highlight perceptions of AAVE as simply a deviation from the patterns of “standard English” rooted in ignorance, laziness, or belligerence. On the other hand, linguists have documented both the rules of AAVE as well as its connection to West African languages (Smitherman, 1998). Daniell (1996), for example, details some of the discourse conventions of AAVE. In the case of China English among individuals in this study, when asked to do so an ability to enumerate
some of the characteristics of this language variety was in evidence. Yet, such an ability does not imply a belief in the variety as being rule-governed rather than being seen as a “stage” of English or viewing these characteristics simply as “errors” to be remedied. This also seems to be the case with AAVE where individuals may be able to enumerate some of the characteristics of the language – even if only in a disparaging way as Bill Cosby has done – without making a connection between such examples and the coherent set of linguistic rules that they represent.

Overall, the “Ebonics debate” in the United States – especially prompted by the Oakland School Board resolution about Ebonics in late 1996 - highlights the strong opinions held by the public regarding language variety. An illustration of this is the numerous pieces of legislation introduced by a variety of government bodies in the United States concerned with prohibiting the use of AAVE in the schools and outlawing its recognition on the part of teachers or its use in any form in the schools (Richardson, 1998). In this study, individuals also expressed strong feelings about China English. Wolfram (1998) notes that the emergence of a wide debate about AAVE and the forms that it has taken in public discourse is illustrative of both the strong opinions that people hold as part of language ideology in general as well as the divergence between such beliefs and the expertise of professional linguists. I believe that in the present study, opinions regarding China English held by the participants and the consensus among scholars in linguistics represent an additional manifestation of this phenomenon of divergence in points of view.

It is important to note here that there certainly is such a thing as beginner’s language. Participants in this study, however, are not primarily speaking of beginner
language in using the term “Chinglish.” In criticizing the “Chinglish” of their teachers they provided examples which would not have stood in the way of these teachers’ ability to communicate (mostly, their examples pertained to pronunciation and intonation). Yet, they still complained about these language features. Also, in my own work in Taiwan I have interacted with numerous high school and university teachers as well as six junior college teachers of English. Again, in all cases I experienced no difficulties in communicating. Finally, participants themselves, even those who specifically lamented their own “Chinglish” or their NNS accent were able to successfully complete these interviews. Certainly, in the cases of all of them, with my eyes closed I would have been able to readily discern that I was interacting with a speaker of China English – just as with their eyes closed, they would no doubt have been able to discern that I am a speaker of North American English - yet we communicated with no problem. I conclude that the “Chinglish” of which individuals in this study have spoken pertains to people speaking a local language variety, China English, rather than to low-proficiency learner language. Indeed, participants spoke of individuals “speaking Chinglish” rather than simply not being able to speak English.

While I have drawn some parallels between attitudes toward AAVE and China English, possibly the biggest difference between the situation with AAVE and that in this study is that in this case I have documented the manner in which Taiwanese people themselves decried this local language variety. In the case of the “Ebonics debates” most of the negative rhetoric emanates from outsiders with both high-status African Americans and non-African Americans often uniting “against” Ebonics. Indeed, Wolfram (1998) notes that individuals such as Rush Limbaugh and Jessie Jackson even agreed on the
issue. In the case of this study, opinions regarding China English came from Taiwanese language learners who shared Mandarin as their L1. Whether the individuals were language teachers such as Alice and Carla seeking to eliminate the manifestations of China English in their students' language production, individuals such as Wilma who basked in their friends' compliments about their lack of a Taiwan accent, those who were hoping to overcome their own perceived accent, or others commenting on the China English of acquaintances or teachers, all viewed the exonormative standard language as desirable and the local(ized) variety as inferior.

When individuals themselves view an external system as superior and the local as inferior in such a way, some scholars argue that a “colonization of the mind” or a “colonization of the consciousness” has taken place. This is an adoption of and deep-seated belief in the value of an external “colonizer's” system or way of thinking over its internal equivalent. A robust scholarship on this issue is rooted in the African colonial experience. In outlining the French colonization efforts in African, for example, Tunteng (1974) asserts that the policy of *la mission civiltrice*, while ostensibly representing a more humane colonial approach in offering the benefits of French citizenship to colonial peoples actually fostered division among locals and dependency on the part of local elites. Members of the African elite came to identify with and to defend French interests and to view “being French” as an emblem of prestige. In detailing the characteristics and functioning of “the colonization of the mind,” Ngũgĩ (1986) sees the role of language as paramount in fostering the ideologies of the colonizer upon the colonized. The colonizer, he indicates, achieves this in part by denigrating the language of the oppressed. Others have highlighted the potency of the phenomenon of mental colonization by exploring the
connections between religion – especially missionary work - and mental colonization (Roberts, 2012; Wamue, 2001). Finally, both the potency and the deleterious impacts upon the psychological balance of the individual are highlighted in work focusing upon therapeutic interventions designed to combat the psychological effects of the phenomenon of the colonization of the mind (Pieterse, Howitt & Naidoo, 2011). The case of Taiwan does differ from such instances in that Taiwan was never directly colonized by English-speaking peoples in the traditional sense. Also, this project pertains to the dichotomy between a localized variety of English and an exormative variety of the language rather than a language that has supplanted another primary local language. On the other hand, in the 21st century terrain of globalization and the flows and impacts of various forms of political, financial, and cultural influence across nation-state boundaries and, in particular, from powerful central countries to the periphery, where even one small piece of the overall matrix of English hegemony such as the TOEFL exam wields enormous power, a strong argument can be made that the ideologies of language documented here simply represent one manifestation of a sort of colonization representing the workings of broader neo-colonial processes.

Finally, in a more general sense this situation does appear to represent an instance fitting those more Marxian definitions of oppression including “false consciousness” as an integral component (e.g., Cudd, 2006). When people begin to see as valid those social structures and beliefs that actually serve to reinscribe their own subaltern status, false consciousness is said to have taken place. In such cases, beliefs actually harm their adherents. In this sense, rather than simply being compelled externally by figures of authority or constrained by specific situations to act in certain ways, the construction of
the remedial English self observed in this study hints at something more insidious with individuals being complicit in the forces underlying their own oppression. Their own beliefs about English and their own relationship with the language represent limitations: Participants believed that Inner Circle English was superior English. They felt that learning English in Taiwan resulted in their own English falling short of this language “standard” in very specific ways. As a result, participants felt the preferred means of remediation to rest with Inner Circle contexts, institutions, materials, and people: Study with those from the Inner Circle and even study in Inner Circle contexts was strongly manifest as a way to overcome these perceived weaknesses. They felt Inner Circle English to be inherently superior and supported it, feeding its power. On the other hand, as I have noted, they certainly received tangible benefits from reinscribing such beliefs: Those who had more closely approximated the Inner Circle language model were in a better position to obtain employment especially in teaching, but potentially also in other positions. The point here, though, is that their own beliefs supported these actions.

I have concluded this study by considering the question of personal belief about the inherent value of local language varieties, in this case the local variety of English in Taiwan. I have sought to consider such beliefs separately from the utilitarian benefits surrounding Inner Circle Englishes. At one level, this study provides evidence of beliefs in the superiority of hegemonic English held by participants with the Inner Circle speaker being viewed as the linguistic gold standard for English. So powerful was this ideology in Taiwan more broadly that its benefits even extended to individuals perceived as looking like people commonly associated with these countries and, hence, like native speakers of English. Participants negotiated these beliefs about race, national origin, language ability,
and appropriateness for linguistic emulation, teaching, and worth as interlocutors. They measured their own English against this native-speaker standard and considered interaction with these individuals as a measure of their own success (or failure) with the language. Furthermore, the problems with formal English education in Taiwan were seen not only because of the problems with “banking education” but also because they did not prepare students to meet this perceived language standard. The feeling that Taiwan English is inferior to Englishes of the Inner Circle contexts and the language of those peoples most closely linked to those contexts was broadly manifest.

This research indicates three important findings regarding the relationship between participants and Inner Circle contexts, language norms, and people. First, while it is important to note that instances of apparent overt conformity to inner circle power such as a personal desire to study English in Inner Circle contexts are not necessarily indicative of anything beyond savvy, well-considered utilitarian acts of individuals acting in their own best interests and do not necessarily speak to any particular set of beliefs, the actions noted here do at least represent de facto support for the hegemony of these place and people. For example, no matter what one's beliefs, actions such as attending an American university or purchasing a beer at Hooters empowers that institution; hiring a native-speaking tutor empowers that individual. Second, individuals in this study did appear to believe in the superiority of Inner Circle language norms when compared to local ones: There was no assertion of the value or legitimacy of Taiwan English; Indeed, the term “Chinglish,” when used, was universally pejorative. Finally, I found virtually no evidence of any systematic challenge to Inner Circle linguistic power. The only exceptions were critiques regarding the quality of some foreign teachers from one
participant and another who questioned the value of NS teachers based on a graduate-
level class discussion in a teacher training course.

This study leaves with the question of the extent to which it really matters what
these individuals believe about the inherent value of language varieties, especially when
aligning themselves with Inner Circle language provides these tangible benefits.
Furthermore, to what extent does it matter if there are the sorts of real counternarratives
of achievement discussed previously? Would a mature narrative of surplus achieve
anything important? The stories of Hsieh, Ma, and Chang seem to do little to challenge
the conception of Taiwan English as representing linguistic deficiency or linguistic
corruption. Indeed, they appear to reinscribe a tendency toward dependency where one
must leave the periphery, enacting a symbolic – and in this case in literally physical -
pilgrimage to access the power of the center rather than drawing upon local resources.
These stories make it seem natural and even laudatory to do so just as learning the French
language and “becoming French” possessed positive ascriptions in French colonial
African contexts.

It is worth reiterating that whether the individuals in this study had taken steps
throughout their lives to “eradicate” their “Chinglish” or if they still felt – as many did –
that they had limited oral skills fraught with the pitfalls that they saw in this local variety,
all 50 of the individuals in this study could, in fact, communicate with a researcher in
English for an extended formal interview in which the discussion entailed many complex
topics. Certainly, there is such a thing as limited language proficiency in which one's
language skills are so weak as to render communication difficult or impossible, yet this
was not the case with these individuals. Whether one feels it ironic that their carefully
thought out strategies actually support ongoing hegemonic regimes of linguistic power, it is clear that being able to complete the interviews for this study in English represents a testament to the fact that these 50 individuals have attained their goal of becoming proficient English users, despite any shortcomings that they perceived with their own English. A subsequent step is to replace the feelings of shame of some non-native speakers such as those in this study with the pride of being a flexible multilingual.

To accomplish this implies several steps. Certainly, the propagation of real counternarratives of achievement represents one. Despite feelings about the people in this study admired for their English, these particular instantiations of success still seem to fall short of the sorts of counternarratives of achievement discussed previously. For one thing, a mature narrative of surplus is missing. These stories still do nothing to challenge the conception of Taiwan English as representing linguistic deficiency or linguistic corruption. Instead they embed a narrative of overcoming such language handicaps within them. Until this changes, being a competent Mandarin, Taiwanese, Taiwan English multilingual will not be understood as surplus. It seems that a truly successful counternarrative of achievement must be combined with additional awarenesses emerging from critical applied linguistics. Learners need to understand that the tangible benefits accruing from a particular language or variety over others are simply rooted, not in any inherent worth, logic, correctness, or aesthetic aspects of that language or variety, but simply in the utilitarian value in specific social contexts of use. They need to understand that the local variety of English in Taiwan can just as easily be viewed as creative, novel, accessible, attainable, potentially empowering, and supremely adapted to the socio-cultural context of Taiwan with the present status of such a language variety simply
representing a manifestation of social power rather than any inherent linguistic lack of worth.

The journey to foreign language competency must be seen, not as a never ending progression along an interlanguage continuum from zero competency to an increasing approximation of an unattainable native-speaker model but as the progressive addition of language competencies from a starting point of linguistic richness, competence, and meta-awareness of those who know much about language. If such a shift does come to pass - and is coupled with the sorts of candid assessments of educational experience evidenced among participants in this study - a potent mix of criticality, self-awareness, meta-knowledge, experience, and skills will have been achieved.

5.6 Avenues of further research

This research has centered on learner perceptions, demonstrating a connection between perceptions of formal English education and feelings of personal English, specifically, the notion that the epistemology/skills of school English related to feelings of personal linguistic inadequacy, particularly when measured against a perceived Inner Circle standard. Participants felt that they were being taught a type of English heavily oriented toward the specific needs of passing tests rather than for real English use. Since this research is rooted in learner perceptions, a next step would be to further explore the connections between such perceptions and details of the actual observed practices of – especially K-12 day school – English education. On a related note, a more nuanced exploration of the manner in which individuals like those in this study come to be socialized into the sorts of beliefs about race and language and about the value of certain
language varieties over others would contribute immensely to our understanding of language ideology and, in fact, I would argue that this represents a crucial – and mostly neglected - aspect in the broader field of language acquisition.

One further area for research is a consideration of how the epistemology of formal schooling – for example teaching a specific corpus of vocabulary – might contribute to the development of a local language variety given that the content and skills inherent in formal education – in this case a specific set of lexical items - are ones that everyone who graduates high school has studied. This is interesting because despite strong scholarship regarding World Englishes and the rights of non-native speakers and teachers to their own Englishes, research about how local varieties form has not been plentiful. Selinker (1992) felt that these “varieties” essentially represented learners’ interlanguage. Kachru (1992) speaks more to the manner in which such varieties – presumably once formed – gain traction in a society. Schneider (2007) considers the uptake of language in the wake of colonialism. Others have written about the manner in which aspects of local Englishes conform to local sociolinguistic sensibilities. For example, Bhatt (2005) notes the manner in which tag questions in Indian English reflect local norms of politeness (e.g., Bhatt, 2005). The present project suggests the possibility that the development of local Englishes may be impacted by teaching preferences and policy decisions, in this case especially a shift in content focus. Research into such practices as a potential mechanism with a role in the genesis and promulgation of a local variety appears, therefore, to be highly warranted. Investigating classroom language and learner uptake using linguistic tools could shed light on any potential teaching/language variety connection.
In addition, this project implies a number of other avenues for further research. These include the following:

1. Using additional methods beyond a single interview such as follow-up interviews with participants, interviews with acquaintances, family members, and/or teachers, and techniques such as shadowing of participants to deepen findings

2. Making an effort to specifically investigate the perceptions that aboriginal learners in Taiwan have of English

3. Duplicating this research with low proficiency English students

4. Interviewing younger learners, especially those currently preparing for high-stakes exams or other high-stakes assessments being rolled out in their stead

5. Investigating English majors from universities in other parts of Taiwan

6. Investigating the perceptions that individuals such as those in this study have for foreign languages other than English

7. Investigating the uses of English among professionals in Taiwan who learn/use English on the job, but who did not major in the subject

Finally, examining the possible role of English education in Taiwan in the reproduction of social inequality represents another worthwhile avenue of research. While researchers have long considered the role of education as a whole in reproducing social disparities, the literature on the role of English education in East Asian contexts in producing such effects is strikingly silent, despite the immense popularity of English study. Given the importance of English in academic success as demonstrated here and the benefits
arguably enjoyed by those partaking of for-pay learning resources such as tutors, cram schools, and study abroad, the role of family resources in English success makes such an avenue of research imperative. The central role of high-stakes exams strongly points up the possibility that those with greater resources are best positioned to engage in whatever preparation is required for heightened success on such assessments and later increased life chances.

5.7 Recommendations

Individuals in the study – despite their significant long-term personal investment and stake in developing their English competency - strongly and consistently portrayed the English study associated with formal day school contexts as frequently entailing a joyless, even threatening, academic exercise poorly aligned with real-world communicative needs. Overall, they conveyed a sense of low ownership in much of this learning and, especially, of the language itself. Their experiences and keen awareness of language and pedagogy juxtaposed against powerful ideologies of languages related to these perceptions: They felt that their learning experiences did not prepare them adequately for what they perceived to be “real” English and, more broadly, for what they understood to be the international English world, a world in which they were interested in participating. Far from being well-adjusted, confident users of the language, most constructed themselves as outsiders, aspirants to their own conception of full English competency, a competency demanding specific forms of remediation. As a result, many had made great efforts in leveraging whatever personal resources they could in additional English learning.
English education should be altered so as to address learner concerns such as the ones expressed here. Particularly, assuming that participant accounts regarding the skewing of formal English teaching toward a narrow range of easily testable skills as well as toward more formal, academic language within this narrow skill set to have merit, change is clearly needed to foster a more well-rounded gamut of language competencies including improved oral communication. Kachru (2005) notes the role of English in China as a “gatekeeper and indicator of social status” (p. 169). This project supports this notion, confirming perceptions of this gatekeeping/social status role of English as a source of frustration among participants. Instead of teaching a language variety valuable primarily as such a gatekeeping mechanism, the teaching/assessment system should be broadened to include a more representative set of skills. Participants especially viewed the contrived and artificial nature of high-stakes entrance exams for high school and college as responsible for much of the epistemological narrowing and shift that negatively impacted their real-world language competencies. For example, they complained of the heavy reliance upon the rote memorization of vocabulary lists and working through discreet point grammar drills.

My own experiences support these critiques. For example, the study of vocabulary offers a good case in point. Viewing the rote memorization of vocabulary and being able to translate written words back and forth between the L1 and the target language as a proxy for target language competency seems to be emphasized more because it is easily assessed than because of its value in real-world language use as socially-situated negotiation of meaning. Participants claimed that they often could not use the words that they had “learned” in this manner. Indeed, in the case of vocabulary, “learning” often
simply seemed to mean the translation of denotation – the dictionary definition - from one language to the other or choosing words from a written multiple-choice test. Learning materials that I myself observed being used by students for vocabulary study included flash cards, word lists, and glosses of words in English learning texts. In all of these cases, they usually included a translation into Chinese, sometimes a translation into English, and often a rendering in “kk” phonetics, a phonetic alphabet used in Taiwan to study English. The nuances of the semantics of related words, collocations, issues of register differences among lexicon, and issues of connotation received comparatively less attention – or none - in these materials. In terms of pronunciation, the “kk” renderings often seemed to diverge from how such words would actually be pronounced by the majority of English speakers with adjustments in connected speech being especially ignored. As participants note, there were also few chances to practice using new words communicatively.

In addition, the stress that participants experienced in preparing for high-stakes exams remained a salient aspect of their recollections of childhood even many years later. Furthermore, this study provides evidence that these exams, rather than being meritocratic, can actually be implicated in the reproduction of social inequality: Students with resources to attend cram schools, hire tutors, or study abroad, those with highly educated parents, and those residing in more affluent locales all had advantages over others in these tests. In light of this array of issues, this study represents a strong case for the abandonment of the practice of high-stakes entrance exams and other high-stakes assessments in English education. Indeed, there are some measures afoot to reduce the use of these exams in Taiwan currently. These measures should be fully pursued and care
should be taken that these exams are not simply replaced with other types of gatekeeping assessments yielding similar deleterious effects. In addition to the issue of exams, this project highlights the need for teacher training and classroom resources to foster a more effective and pleasant classroom experience overall. Naturally, such moves as these entail an increased investment of resources.

Other useful changes to English education do not require significant increases in investment. In particular, as an integral part of English classes, students should be invited to take part in a candid and critical examination of English teaching and learning as it applies to their contexts and their own lives. To do this, it is imperative that those responsible for the teaching of English work to raise student consciousness through frank discussions on a whole set of related issues pertaining to the relationship between English education and the society, issues underlying, but seldom addressed within formal English education. Especially, issues of the hidden curriculum and language ideology such as race and language, language and globalization, the role of language in society, and connections between language (varieties) and various forms of power are ripe for exploration and should be made an explicit part of language classes to foster a more informed and liberatory language learning experience.

A good place to start would be to involve teachers, students, and other stakeholders in troubling the practice of hiring untrained, especially light-skinned, foreigners as English teachers. Disrupting these practices would serve to help both trained native-speaking and non-native speaking teachers of English as a foreign language in Taiwan. In the case of native speakers, dislodging the notion that any person who speaks a language is necessarily qualified to teach it would enhance the value of
formal teacher training in foreign language education and would elevate the status and level of professionalism surrounding English education. Non-native speaking teachers would also benefit by not having to compete with untrained native speakers: Their own training as well as their understanding of local culture, the L1, and the personal experience of learning English along with their position as role models of successful English learning would be honored for the value that they hold. Students would enjoy more professional and effective teaching.

While some discussions of the issues of ideology inherent in English learning took place at the university level among English majors in this study, this appeared to be a very “hit and miss” situation. Attention to these issues was only the case for English majors and then only if they were fortunate enough to encounter a faculty member with such areas of interest. I believe that these issues should be explicitly and systematically incorporated as an integral component of English courses and not simply at the university level; learners should engage these issues as soon as is developmentally appropriate with these discussions taking place in the language typically used for instruction. To my knowledge no English language learning textbook – commercial or government-created – does this. Additionally, learning materials should be critically examined for the hidden messages that they convey with English teachers themselves being taught as one aspect of their training to conduct such an analysis on their own in order to choose better materials, to supplement existing materials, and/or at least to point out ideologies inherent within such materials.

Finally, stakeholders could work to establish the kinds of “counternarratives of surplus and achievement” spoken of previously to replace the feelings of deficit observed
in this research. For example, such counternarratives could center on English students in
Taiwan as typically growing up as fluent multilinguals of Mandarin and
Hakkanese/Taiwanese with some also possessing a strong aboriginal linguistic and
cultural heritage and with all, therefore, being gifted with a profound sense of – and
flexibility with - language. These skills and flexible linguistic orientation they bring to
their study and use of English. The local variety of the language should be viewed as
equal to others. I feel that the result of such a change – and of the others proposed here -
will be a stronger sense of ownership of English, a keener knowledge of the role of
language in the world, and, overall, a generation of better informed, better adjusted, and
more successful English language learners and teachers in Taiwan.
References


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Appendix A: Informed consent form in Chinese
题目：台湾大學生對英文使用以及英文價值的看法
研究員：Charles A. (Chuck) Brown (白任遠)
研究單位：俄亥俄州立大學教育政策與領導學系

研究概述：我想邀請你參與我的一個研究。這個研究的目的是要了解台灣大學生對英文使用以及英文價值的看法。

在这个研究中，我將會進行一對一的訪談。訪談時間約一小時，訪談過程將會錄音。在訪談的過程中我會問你一些關於學習英文的心得，還有對於英文的看法，同時也會問你一些其他相關的問題，比如你在哪裡長大，或是以前學校的一些狀況。我會採取聊天模式的訪談因為我對於你的經歷還有你對英文的看法很有興趣。

你的參與完全是自願性的，如果你不願回答某些問題也沒有關係，你也可以隨時退出。將來如有在研討會或期刊發表此研究的成果，你的個人資料將會被保密。我將提供此同意書的影印本給你保留。

參與本次研究不會給你的生活帶來任何風險。

如果你有任何問題可以透過下列方法聯絡到我:
Charles A. (Chuck) Brown
Ohio State University
Collage of Education Policy and Leadership
29 W Woodruff Ave.
Columbus, OH 43210
Email: brown.198@osu.edu

你也可以聯絡我的指導教授 Dr. Antoinette Errante
Errante.1@osu.edu

本人已閱讀並且明瞭以上資訊，並且同意參與這項研究。
簽名處(中文或英文) __________
日期 __________
中文姓名之英文拼音 __________
Email __________________________
Appendix B: Informed consent form in English
Project Title: Taiwanese university students’ perceptions of the value and uses of English

Researcher: Charles A. (Chuck) Brown

Affiliation: Ohio State University, Educational Policy and Leadership

Project Description: I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. This project involves learning about the perceptions of the value and uses of English among university students in Taiwan.

For this project, I will be interviewing you one-on-one. This interview will be recorded and will take approximately one hour to complete. In the interview I will be asking you to talk about your English learning and your feelings about English, as well as some general background information such as where you grew up or what your schools were like. The interview will actually be more like chatting or a conversation since I am interested in your experiences and feelings about English.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you do not want to answer certain questions, that is okay. You may also withdraw from the project at any time.

In any publications or conference presentations resulting from this work I will remove all identifying information from these materials (such as your name or nickname), making you anonymous. You will be provided with a copy of this page for your own reference or if you should have questions at a later date.

Participating in this project exposes you to no risk beyond that involved in daily life.

If you have any questions about this project at any time, you may contact me.
Charles (Chuck) Brown
Ohio State University
College of Education and Human Ecology
School of Educational Policy and Leadership
29 W Woodruff Ave.
Columbus, OH 43210

Email: brown.198@osu.edu
You may prefer to contact my advisor, Dr. Antoinette Errante.
errante.1@osu.edu

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at +1.614.688.4792.

I have read the above information and am willing to participate in this project.

Signature (Chinese or English Alphabet)_________________________________

Date ____________________

Chinese Name in English Alphabet ________________________________

Email Address: ________________________________
Appendix C: Interview guide
Interview Guide: Taiwanese university students' perceptions of the value and uses of English

[Ask open questions before factual ones. Ask general questions prior to questions that are more specific to allow for less “framing” of responses.]

Interview Prompts

Warm-up Questions

If individual has an English or other non-Chinese name, ask how they got it and where/when they use it.

Ask where they are from and if they see/encounter people using English there.

************************************************************************

EFL Educational Life History

- How did you first start to learn English? Why?
- You mentioned that you started to learn English in [kindergarten, e.g.]. What was the next step in your English learning, what happened after that, etc.?
- Did you learn English primarily in school (if this prompts does not lead to a discussion of various learning contexts, query specifics – TV, friends, siblings)?

- Think back on all of your English language teachers. What is the most memorable teacher that you remember and why?
  If above positive, ask if they’ve had any unpleasant experiences and vice versa.
  If you think back on all of the teachers you’ve had and think of the really great ones, what was it that made them so good?
  
  So in your response above you have mentioned learning English in (cite their examples).
  In which of those places do you feel you’ve learned the most English and why?
  Have you ever had any NS teachers? Can you contrast them with your Taiwanese teachers?

Are there other places or situations in which you have learned English?

- How do you feel that your knowledge of English helps you?
- Do you think your English ability gives you any advantages over others?
- From a scale 1-10, how would you describe your English proficiency (and why)?
- How do you feel that your English classes have prepared you to use English?
- How do you feel that your English classes have failed to prepared you to use English?
- Why are you studying English now?
  1. Think back on when you decided to study English in college; what were the circumstances?
  2. What was the reaction of your friends when you told them that you would study English at this university?
  3. How much is tuition here? How about the dorms? Do you feel that is expensive or cheap?
  4. How do you pay for your university education?

292
5. How do you feel about studying English now?
   - Have you always felt this way about studying English?

- If you think back on your entire experience of studying English, what were some of the strongest aspects of your education?
- What were some weaknesses in your English education?

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Perceptions of General Value, Goals, and Usage of English in Taiwan
- Why do you think that Taiwanese people study English?
- How good do you think most people in Taiwan are at English?
- How would you describe the attitude of people in Taiwan toward English?
- What are your feelings about Mandarin? How about Taiwanese?
- If you were trying to convince ME to learn Mandarin, what would you say? How about Taiwanese?
- Do you know anyone who dislikes English? Can you tell me about their feelings?
   If you were trying to convince them that English is important, what would you say?
- When you told your friends that you were going to study English in university, what was their reaction and why?
- Can you think of a time when a student in one of your classes was very poor at English and needed extra help? What did the teacher do? What finally happened to the student?
- Have you ever known a Taiwanese person who was really excellent or at English or whose English was perfect? How were they able to reach such a level?
- Should all students in Taiwan be required to learn English?
- If you were going to give advice to (an elementary-age person, your little sister) about how to become fluent in English, what advice would you give them?
- Why do you think there are so many English kindergartens and cram schools in Taiwan?
- The government of Taiwan has extended English learning to the elementary grades. How do you feel about this?
- The government of Taiwan has recruited native-speakers to work in elementary schools. How do you feel about this?
- The government of Taiwan has required public employees to learn English. How do you feel about this?
- The government of Taiwan requires bilingual signs in public places. What is your reaction to this requirement?
- English is included in high school and college entrance exams. What is your reaction to this?
   - How do you think most Taiwanese use English?

Teaching and Learning Methods
- [If this has not been covered] Describe what a good English teacher should be like?
- [If not covered] There has been a big debate about using native speakers as teachers for foreign languages like French, Japanese, English, or whatever. This is a really a complex issue with people thinking many different things, so I wonder what you think about this?
Some people say that an English teacher in Taiwan should be able to speak Mandarin. How do you feel?

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Personal Value, Goals, and Usage of English in Taiwan
[Explicitly ask the following if these issues have not been covered already.]
- Have you used any English in the last few days?
- Are you on Facebook and, if so, is there any connection to English use?
- Do you use English to find information on the Internet?
- Since you can speak, read, and write English, do you feel as if you have any advantages over other Taiwanese who don’t know English?
- How do you expect to use your English in the future?
- How do you wish that you could use your English in the future?
- Has anyone in your family studied abroad? Have you thought about studying abroad?

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Personal Background
- Can you tell me your age?
- What are you currently studying? At what level?
- Do you currently have a job?
- Where do you live? Who do you live with?

- So can you tell me something about yourself and your background (If answer does not include the following, ask explicitly)
  Can you describe where you are from (city or rural)?
  Can you tell me about your family?
  What are your parents’ jobs?
  Can you tell me about your parents’ educations?
  Do you have any brothers or sisters?
  What kinds of activities do you do with your family? Travel (abroad?/If inside Taiwan, ask what kind of car on the premise that they need a comfortable car.)
  What language(s) are spoken in your home?
  Did your parents try to teach you English?
Appendix D: Images of English education in Taiwan
IMAGES OF ENGLISH EDUCATION IN TAIWAN

Studying English textbook on the evening train
A young person falls asleep on the train while studying English

Banner listing student names and college acceptance in front of high school, Minhsiung, Taiwan
Cram school students having gained acceptance to university – pictures posted in front of cram school, Chiayi City, Taiwan
Cram school students pose with their white teachers for a billboard on the street in Chiayi City, Taiwan
Young, white people tower into the sky on a poster outside of a language school in Chiayi City, Taiwan

A young, white man implores the viewer to enroll in English courses on a billboard outside of Chiayi Train Station, Chiayi City, Taiwan
English education and globalization: Ads for English schools in Chiayi City, Taiwan feature pictures of young English learners and the globe itself
An English school featuring a red, white, and blue motif including the US flag in Chiayi City, Taiwan

Iconography and English education in Taiwan: The Union Jack and US flag on a poster for the IELTS test in a bookstore in Chiayi City, Taiwan