

FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT LANGUAGE
INSTITUTES IN THE UNITED STATES

A DISSERTATION

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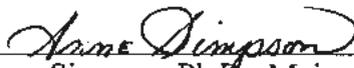
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To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou entitled, "Factors Affecting Language Proficiency of English Language Learners at Language Institutes in the United States." I have examined this dissertation for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Reading Education.



Anne Simpson, Ph.D., Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:







Department Chair

Accepted:



Dean of the Graduate School

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Dr. Wen Shen Chou and Sue Lin,
thank you for your guidance, love, and encouragement.

To my husband, Kai Kyle Lin,
thank you for your continuous support, patience, and love.

To my two little children, Kristine and Stephen,
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ABSTRACT

CHIN-TING EMILY CHOU

FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT LANGUAGE INSTITUTES IN THE UNITED STATES

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives of English language learners (ELLs) about the importance of the five factors, learning environment, learning strategies, motivation, beliefs, and linguistic distance related to learning English and to determine the relationship between these factors with ELLs' language learning and their language proficiency. Two questions guided this study: (1) What do ELLs perceive to be the important factors contributing to their language learning? (2) What are the relationships between these factors and ELLs' language proficiency?

A total of 606 ELLs who studied at English language institutes in the United States constituted the final sample. The 43 item survey was used to explore ELLs' perspectives about English language learning. Employing a series of statistical techniques, descriptive analyses, confirmatory factor analyses, and multiple regression, this study investigated the important factor contributing to language learning from ELLs' perspectives.

Findings revealed that ELLs' perceive that their beliefs about language learning were the important factor contributing to their language learning, followed by the

learning environment, learning strategies, motivation, and linguistic distance. The linguistic distance subscale had the less importance ratings. In addition, the relationship between five factors and ELLs' language proficiency, the results showed that two of the five factors (learning strategies and linguistic distance) contributed significantly to the prediction of ELLs' language proficiency, and motivation is marginally significantly to the prediction of ELLs' language proficiency. That is, learning strategies was the most important effect on ELLs' language proficiency, followed by linguistic distance, and motivation.

Learning a language is a complex process. In order to broaden students' desire to learn in school, teachers may need to consider the activities carefully to increase ELLs' interest to learn more and provide the opportunities for them to express their opinion in the classroom. This learning process involves teachers, the learning environment in the classroom and outside the classroom as well as the learners' cooperation. This research has implications for further study of relationship among factors that ELLs perceive to be important to language learning and to instruction in language institutes.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Since 1998 the number of international students who are non-English native speakers choosing to study in the United States has declined (Institute of International Education, 2004). This decline in enrollment is significant because, in the past, international students have brought in over \$13 billion dollars to the American economy through money spent on tuition, living expenses, and related cost. According to a survey by the Institute of International Education in 2004, nearly 75% of all international students reported that the money they spent in the United States was from personal and family sources or other sources outside of the United States. With statistics like these, educators and policymakers are seeking to find the best ways to reach international students and recruit more of them to study in the United States. In order to find the best ways to reach these international students and recruit them, it is important to ascertain their needs as a means for finding ways to help them meet language proficiency requirements in the United States.

Most post-high school international students who are English language learners (ELLs) come to the United States primarily to continue their academic studies at a college, university or technical institute. Some students may specifically focus on improving their English communication skills. Regardless of the reason these ELLs

come to the United States, one main obstacle they face is that of language proficiency. To meet the need for acquiring language proficiency, English language institutes have been established in association with many universities and colleges. These institutes, often the first phase of the academic experience for these international students in the United States, provide short (typically ten weeks) intensive courses designed for the international students to develop English proficiency and to prepare them for their stay in the United States (Freidenberg, 2002).

As necessary as these institutes are, programs within the institutes may present certain challenges to international students. One challenge is that the institutes offer only one type of intensive English program and may lack a sufficient variety of curricula. An English language institute may offer several specialized programs to adequately meet international students' needs. For example, an English language institute can offer a program in English for academic purposes to those students who want to enter a university or college to obtain a degree. Also an English language institute may offer a program in English for general communications is helpful for the students who simply want to improve their English communication skills. Rather than offer a variety of programs for students to choose from though, most language institutes attempt to meet all the varied international students' needs with one generalized course (Friedenberg, 2002). Many instructors in an intensive English program lack content knowledge about the specific disciplines that university-bound students want to study. This lack of content

knowledge limits the applications that international students need to accelerate academic their achievement (Friedenberg, 2002).

Another challenge presented by language institutes is that the learning environment is isolated from the native English speakers; typically students who attend the institute may not have contact with native English speakers in the classroom (except with the teacher) or outside the classroom (Friedenberg, 2002). In the intensive English program, students usually have at least 20 hours per week in the classroom speaking English with their teacher and classmates, while the rest of the time they are at home or with their friends, speaking their native language; that is, students may spend 5 hours a day using English in the classroom, but 7 to 8 hours a day using their native language conversing with their friends at home or outside the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Since language proficiency is such a key factor for these international students' adjustment to life in the United States, a question arises about how institutes and their instructors might help ELLs improve their English skills. One way to answer this question is to investigate ELLs' perspectives in order to help these international students improve their English skills. Gaining these international students' perspectives about learning English would add insight to the current understanding of the needs of English language learners, since they are the ones subjectively experiencing the learning process. By focusing on students' perspectives, this study attempts to discover how ELLs think and feel about their experience of language learning. Through analyzing factors that

contribute to language learning experience, the director and the instructors in the language institutes will better understand the needs of ELLs and be better equipped to ensure that all these international students learn English effectively.

The research literature related to language learning has focused on a variety of factors affecting English language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Horwitz, 1988; Oxford, 1990). A number of studies have identified the important role that motivation plays in learning a second language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Clement & Kruidenier, 1985; Dornyei, 1990; Ely, 1986; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Motivated learners learn more because they seek input, interaction, and instruction. When motivated learners encounter the target language input, they may pay attention to it and actively process it.

A second area of research has targeted the beliefs that the language learners hold about learning a second language (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Second language learners may believe that one's aptitude or the difficulty of the language contributes or hampers their learning of the language (Horwitz, 1987).

A third area of research has examined the learning strategies that the language learners use while learning a second language. Successful language learners use more learning strategies than poor language learners (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; and Oxford, 1990).

A fourth area of research has suggested that learning environment both at home and in school plays a significant role for children's literacy development (Diamond & Moore, 1990; Teale, 1986; Heath, 1983; Rasinski & Padak, 1996). This same view has

been applied to adult English language learners. The role of the home learning environment, the classroom learning environment, and even the social setting outside the classroom learning environment have been found to be a contributing factor to ELLs' language learning progress.

A fifth area of research has shown that language acquisition occurs more easily when the linguistic distance between the first language and the target language is less (Chomsky, 1986; Corder, 1981; Flynn & Martohardjono, 1995; White, 1986). Linguistic distance refers to the differences in the meaning, the structure, and the use of words between the first language and the target language. For instance, English is linguistically closer to Western European languages, such as French and German, than it is to East Asian languages, such as Korean and Japanese. It would be expected that Western European students have less learning burden than students from East Asia.

Collectively, research related to English language learning suggests a variety of factors may contribute to language learning. For instance, a learner's motivation and beliefs about language learning may affect his/her choice of learning strategies and ultimately affect his/her language proficiency. The fact that existing research has attempted to isolate factors, such as motivation, beliefs, or learning strategies, ignores the complexity of the language learning process. While much is known about how each factor contributes individually to the students' language learning, little is known about the relationships among the factors. Thus studies that explore the relationship among factors are needed in order to identify how ELLs can learn effectively.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to survey the importance of various factors related to language learning from the perspective of ELLs and to determine the relationships among these factors which affect ELLs' language learning and their language proficiency.

Research Questions

This study served to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: What do English language learners perceive to be the most important factors contributing to their language learning?

Research Question 2: What are the relationships between the factors affecting English language learners' language learning and their language proficiency?

Significance of the Study

In order to create a learning environment that will better meet the needs of English language learners, and address English language institutes' recruiting endeavors, it is necessary to use ELLs as a source of information. English language learners have a vast amount of language learning experience, by collecting ELLs' perspectives, language instructors may better understand, appreciate, and respond to ELLs' unique needs. Moreover, this study will directly contribute to the body of research about ELLs' perceptions regarding their language learning. Furthermore, by exploring ELLs' perspectives related to multiple factors, the research related to language learning will better reflect the complexity of language learning process.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this research study, key terminology is defined as follows:

English language learners (ELLs): ELLs refer to people who are in the process of acquiring English and whose first language is not English.

English Language Institute (ELI): An institution where English is the only language taught to the students who want to learn English.

Intensive English Program (IEP): IEP is a program offered by an English Language Institute. It provides academic preparatory English language training for international students seeking to learn English or to gain admission to an American institution of higher education (Friedenberg, 2002).

Assumptions

For the purposes of the study, the following assumptions were made:

1. The participants would respond to the questionnaire thoughtfully and honestly.
2. The statements on the questionnaire were written to request accurate and honest responses, and would not lead or bias the participants in their answer selections.
3. The questionnaire was designed to reveal the participants' personal perceptions about the various factors that would influence their language learning.
4. Participants would clearly understand the language and terminology used on the questionnaire.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE, CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, HYPOTHESES

In order to understand existing research related to English language learners' (ELLs) perceptions of factor that contribute to language learning, this chapter reviews the literature pertinent to the study's purpose. This chapter provides a review of the literature by first presenting the historical of English language institutes in the United States. Second, a brief discussion of theoretical background that is used to explain adults' language learning is presented. The third part explores existing research related to the factors affecting ELLs' language learning and their language proficiency. The following sections provide a conceptual model and hypotheses of this study.

History of English Language Institutes in the United States

English language institutes offer intensive English programs at campus sites across the U.S.A. providing classes for learning English as prerequisites to beginning academic programs. The first Intensive English Program (IEP) was the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, begun in 1941 by Charles C. Fries (Barrett & Parsons, 1985). The charge to this English Language Institute at the University of Michigan was twofold: to conduct research in teaching English as a foreign language and to test new scientifically-based materials for the teaching of English. At the initial session in the summer of 1941, there were thirteen respondents, all from Latin America. The students were predominantly professionals – in medicine, law, engineering,

finance, and psychology – who wished to do advanced study in their fields. The following year there were 22 students, and in 1943, 45 were enrolled. By 1945, there were as many as 80 and in 1946 Professor Fries reported that 750 students had passed through this English Language Institute at the University of Michigan. Since then, especially in the last 30 years, the number of Intensive English programs has grown in response to the increasing number of international students looking for English language instruction and attending U.S. universities and colleges (Barrett, 1982).

Intensive English programs are either attached in some way to a college or university, or they are an independently owned business (Barrett & Parsons, 1985; Grossee & Lubell, 1984). The majority of intensive English programs are those related to universities and colleges, and can be further broken down into two subtypes: integrated into the university and autonomous from the university. Most of them are self-supporting and self-governing (Daesch, 1982; Edwards, 1991).

At all English language institute sites across America, international students participate in the life of the campus and have free use of campus recreational facilities. Among intensive English programs there are certain characteristics which are present in almost every institute. Most obvious of these characteristics is the goal of teaching English to non-native English speakers. This is usually accomplished with courses focusing on the basic language skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening and grammar. In addition, these intensive English programs offer at least three levels of proficiency at which a student can study. In order to place students in the appropriate level, Intensive

English programs will use some type of standardized testing, usually prepared by an outside source, such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or Michigan English Language Aptitude Battery (MELAB). The programs have classes scheduled five days per week, for a total of 200 or more hours of instruction per session, a session being two to four months long. Fewer hours than this and the program might not be considered intensive. Furthermore, intensive English programs provide orientation to U.S. academic life. Their intention is to foster basic conversational skills and writing and understanding English up to the level required for successful academic performance at a U.S. college or university. In this way, English language institutes are the first phase of academic experience for international students in the United States.

During these two or four month sessions, most programs will not leave long periods of time between the sessions. This allows those students to continue studying throughout the year without any major breaks in their studies. The requirements for admission usually stipulate that the student has a high school diploma and some prior English instruction, as most programs are not prepared to handle students with 0-level proficiency. The majority of intensive English program students plan to study at a U.S. university, and are at the intensive English program either as a condition for admission to a university or to bring their language ability up to a level where they can study in a native English classroom. Each intensive English program is staffed by at least one administrator, typically called the director. The teachers are usually trained in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and many intensive English programs

require a minimum of a Master's degree for their faculty (Barrett, 1982; Barrett & Parsons, 1985; Daesch, 1982; Edwards, 1991; Grosse & Lubell, 1984).

Historical Background for Language Learning

The language skills that international students use in social situations need to be sufficiently well developed in order to process the formal academic learning in a university. Jim Cummins' (1979) study in Canada with French-English bilingual children found that minority students who were administered academic assessments scored low in English and had not achieved academically in English even though they were fluent in conversational English (Cummins, 1984). Thus, Cummins (1984) defined two types of English language proficiency. The first refers to basic interpersonal communication skills, and the second refers to cognitive academic language proficiency. Basic interpersonal skills involve the ability to function in everyday communication between individuals; for example, being able to greet, apologize, go grocery shopping or clarify information. Cognitive/academic language, on the other hand, involves the language used to discuss and learn the conceptual knowledge of disciplines such as mathematics, social studies, and science. Conversational fluency requires approximately two years of initial exposure to catch up to native speakers whereas a minimum of five years is required to catch up to native speakers in academic areas of the second language (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Klesmer, 1994). Therefore, ELLs' acquisition of social language is foundational to their acquisition of academic language. In order for them to target instruction on interpersonal communication in spoken and written English,

international students usually enroll in an intensive English program at an English language institute to improve their English skills or gain sufficient conversational skills before entering a university. When international students operate in the classroom with a limited second language, the quality and quantity of what they learn from complex materials and what they produce in oral and written form may be relatively weak. Therefore, understanding ELLs' experiences related to their language learning become very necessary as these experiences contribute to the learners' perspective in learning a language (Lowe & Kerr, 1998; Mezirow, 1990).

Research in language acquisition suggests the differences between the meaningful learning environment and the study of a language in a school setting. Language acquisition occurs in a meaningful learning environment to develop linguistic ability, and it is a subconscious process. Acquiring a language entails learning the language without paying any attention to the process, and it occurs in a setting that is meaningful to the learners and can be used in everyday situations (Krashen, 1992; Gee, 1991). Second language acquisition is an implicit process similar to what students experience in acquiring first languages. For acquisition to take place the learner needs to interact with the language spontaneously and naturally without focusing on the form of messages. Acquisition is focused on communication and meaning and is not concerned with rules and error correction.

As contrasted with the study of language acquisition in a school setting, language learning is knowing about a language, or formal knowledge of a language, and it is a

conscious process. Studying language is focused on form, and is concerned with rules and error correction. Chomsky's theory (1965) states that "language is a finite or infinite set of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. A grammar is a finite set of rules that will produce an infinite set of grammatical sentences and no non-sentences (p.2)." Moreover, Chomsky proposed a language acquisition device. This language acquisition device can be described as an intrinsic property which allows any individual to learn any human language. Within the language acquisition device is an evaluation procedure which enables the language user to select a particular member of the class of grammars that meet the specifications of the presented primary linguistic data. Thus, the language acquisition device will be able to select one of the permitted grammars that is compatible with the given data from a given language and is the most highly valued grammar to which the user has been exposed. Therefore, formal teaching helps this learning and it uses the monitor and editing function. The acquisition-learning distinction is useful to posit between "implicit" and "explicit" learning. The respondents in this study are engaged in the second type of language acquisition, formal learning at language institutes, and are not acquiring English in a natural setting. It is important to identify the factors that influence ELLs' acquisition of basic or interpersonal communication at the language institutes in the United States.

Factors Affecting ELLs' Language Learning

In the following section, the literature that is relevant to the five factors: learning environment, learning strategies, motivation, belief, and linguistic distance, will be discussed.

Learning Environment

Learning a second language occurs in a social setting either in the classroom or outside the classroom. The interaction among language learners in school, home and social environments is critical. There are several ways to view ELLs' learning environment. The cultural ways of responding influence classroom interactions and learning as well as the discourse pattern between ELLs and their teachers. Thus, English language learners' social behaviors in the classroom may have a major impact on how well they acquire the language. Sato (1981) studied the difference in social behaviors in classroom. Sato grouped thirty-one college English as a Second Language students into Asian and non-Asian. She found that Asian students were much less active in oral participation than other cultural groups. The Asian students took only 36.5 percent of the total student speaking turns, initiated only 39 percent of the student-initiated turns, and were selected by teachers to speak only 39 percent of the turns. For all three, Asian/non-Asian differences were statistically significant. On the other hand, the Asian students requested permission to speak by raising hands or other means twice as many times as non-Asians, who tended to speak out without raising hands or other means. Sato states that "although they [Asians] did not often take the initiative in class discussions, the

Asian students always responded to personal solicits. In other words, their participation was largely dependent upon teacher solicitation” (p. 17). Sato’s findings suggest that some Asian cultures can have difficulty speaking out in class.

In a similar study, Tomizawa (1990) attempted to explain some of the factors which discouraged the oral participation of a small group of Japanese students in their intensive English program by interviewing them about their oral inactivity. Using a belief questionnaire and interviews, ninety-eight Japanese students (nearly all the students in the program were Japanese) were questioned about their beliefs. The result of Tomizawa’s study distinguished the active from inactive students about the beliefs influencing speaking in the classroom. The active students can be characterized as follows: they had a strong goal to learn spoken English, they had beliefs that led them to speak, and they acted on their beliefs. The beliefs of language learning led to oral inactivity in the class included: necessity of learning from native speakers, a belief that they did not need to speak unless they were called on, and a belief that in-class activities did not help because they did not contain the same features as out-of-class communication. Inactive students also seemed ambivalent about whether practicing speaking was actually really necessary. Even when they wanted to speak, they complained about other students who sometimes dominated the class so that they felt they did not have chance to speak themselves. Tomizawa reported that both the active and inactive speakers experienced similar feelings about the factors which discouraged

speaking. However, the active speakers overcome these feelings due to their strong motivation and their awareness of how to reach their goals.

According to the above-mentioned studies, when students with a different cultural background and discourse patterns than their teachers, their class participation is impacted negatively. These studies also showed that students' motivation and beliefs tended to either discourage or encourage their active participation in the classroom, showing that students' motivation and beliefs are two important factors in English language learning.

Another way of viewing ELLs' learning environment is the individuals who interact with ELLs, as these individuals provide access to English at an appropriate level. They provide clues on how to use the language appropriately when using language for intention, information seeking, and communicating ideas with others. ELLs receive corrective feedback so they can negotiate and clarify what they are saying to others. Wong Fillmore (1991), who has examined how students acquire English, has found that certain conditions must be met. Students must interact directly and often with people who know how it works and how it can be used. If students do not have any direct instruction, problems can develop.

Learning must be rooted in a meaningful context and supported by a classroom environment to have a significant effect. This can explain the reason that children who immigrate to the U.S. often develop new language skills faster in the schoolyard than in the classroom. Because the environment in the schoolyard is a more meaningful

environment to them, they can develop the language better than in the classroom. It is only through repeated interaction with the social environment that learners begin to build linguistic proficiency. In other words, an English language learner must find opportunities to interact with members of the community outside the classroom who can help him or her find competency and acceptance within a social context. Vygotsky (1978) called this process the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The zone of proximal development determines how to teach an individual a problem-solving task, and is characterized by two levels of cognitive development. The first level is the actual developmental level; that is, the student has already mastered in a particular knowledge or activity (Vygotsky, 1978). He or she can handle a task without help or coaching. The second level is the level of potential development; that is, the student is in the learning developmental stage that requires guidance by a more competent person than himself or herself to accomplish the task. The ZPD is used to describe the distance between these two levels. It identifies the student's abilities, circumstance, and developmental potential. It helps the teacher to know what has already been developmentally mastered, and what is in the process of becoming mature.

In the process of learning, English language learners need help from knowledge givers. Collaboration with another person, either a teacher or a more competent peer, leads to development in appropriate ways. The greater social distance between cultures, the greater the difficulty the learner will have in acquiring the second language, and the smaller the social distance the better the language learner gain his/her second language.

In addition, most significant learning takes place when the tasks are appropriately matched to the English language learner's developmental level (Vygotsky, 1978). This means that the people whom English language learners interact with in the classroom and outside the classroom become significant.

ELLs' Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies refer to methods that students use to learn. Oxford (1992) provides specific examples of language learning strategies, such as in learning English, Trang watches U.S. TV soap operas, guessing the meaning of new expressions and predicting what will come next, and defined:

...language learning strategies.. specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing second language skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability. (p.18)

They are specific methods and techniques consciously or unconsciously used by the learner that make learning more efficient. Research findings have suggested that there is a relationship between language learning strategy use and language proficiency among learners of English as a second or foreign language (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985). Also, they indicated that the more proficient

learners use a greater variety of strategies and coordinate their strategies use more effectively than do their less proficient peers (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Gu, 1994; Vann & Abraham, 1990). From Rubin's (1975) study, he characterized effective learners as being willing and accurate guessers, having a strong desire to learn from a communication, being prepared to attend both to form and meaning, being hard workers, and being able to monitor their own and others' speech. Effective learners also actively associate new information with existing information in long-term memory, and they tend to apply strategies in the way relevant to their own needs and the characteristics of the task (O'Malley, Chamot et al., 1985; Oxford, 1990). So, they have a variety of strategies and are flexible in using them (Abraham & Vann, 1987), think in the language, and address the affective aspects of language learning (Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978). In contrast, less effective learners either do not know what strategies they use or are aware of fewer strategies (Oxford, 1990).

Second language learning strategies have been classified into various types. One of the earliest and most influential classifications is the one by Bialystok (1981). She listed four general categories of strategies: formal practice, functional practice, monitoring, and inferencing. Another classification has been identified by Oxford (1990) using her instrument, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Oxford's six categories of learning strategies are memory strategies (help learners enter information into long-term memory and retrieve information when they need it to communicate); cognitive strategies (involve the information and revision of internal mental models, such

as reasoning, analyzing, and summarizing); compensation strategies (to overcome a lack of knowledge of the target language, such as guessing unknown meanings); metacognitive strategies (help learners to manage or regulate their learning); affective strategies (enable learners to control their emotions, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning); and social strategies (cooperating with others, asking questions, and becoming culturally aware, facilitate interaction with others). Bialystok's (1981) study explored the role of conscious learning strategies among 157 students of French as a foreign language in two Toronto high schools. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to identify and examine effects of learning strategies (functional practice, formal practice, monitoring, and inferencing) upon language performance. Results indicated significant variation among strategy use, with monitoring and inferencing used more frequently than practicing. However, of the four types of strategies examined, only functional practice was significantly correlated with gains in reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

In a similar study, Huang and Van Naerssen (1987) explored the relationship between learning strategy preferences and oral communication of Chinese learners of English. Subjects were 60 students who were studying at a foreign language institute in the Peoples' Republic of China. The researchers administered a learning strategies questionnaire and an oral communication skills test (in the form of an oral interview). They classified respondents as "successful" or "unsuccessful" based on their level of oral proficiency. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the data. Findings indicated that high proficiency learners used more functional practice strategies than did

their low proficiency peers. Results also indicated a correlation between reading practice and oral proficiency. The significant relationship between functional practice strategies and proficiency demonstrated in this study provides support for Bialystok's (1981) findings.

Other studies have revealed a strong correlation between strategy use (as measured by the SILL) and language proficiency. The research in Korea conducted by Park (1995) investigated the relationship between language learning strategies and second language proficiency among 332 university students studying English as a foreign language. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was administered as a measure of learning strategy preferences, and a practice version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was used to determine English proficiency level. The SILL consists of 50 items assessing the frequency of strategy use for learners of English as a second or foreign language. The SILL items ask survey respondents to indicate their frequency of strategy use on a 5-point scale for the language they are currently learning. Data from 332 university students about the SILL and TOEFL were analyzed using multiple regressions. Results included two major findings: (a) six categories of learning strategies (memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies) were significantly correlated with English proficiency; and (b) cognitive and social strategies were more predictive of TOEFL scores than the other four strategy categories (metacognitive, memory, compensation, and affective). Another research in South Africa conducted by

Dreyer and Oxford (1996) examined the relationship between strategy use and proficiency among 305 Afrikaans-speaking English learners. English proficiency was measured using the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and learning strategy preferences were assessed using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Findings indicated that 45% of the variance in TOEFL scores was predicted by overall learning strategy score on the SILL. Results of a canonical correlation analysis revealed a very strong relationship ($r = .73$) between strategy use and Afrikaans-speaking English learners' proficiency. From above findings, they all pointed out that regardless the locality of learning English, there was a strong relationship between strategy use and language proficiency.

A question arises about the strategy use and language proficiency among ELLs if they have specialized in different disciplines. The study conducted by Politzer and McGroarty (1985) investigated the relationship between strategy use and proficiency among 37 students enrolled in an eight-week intensive English course designed to prepare students for graduate study in the United States. Subjects were primarily male, and most were preparing to enter a graduate program in Engineering. Eighteen respondents were Asian (mainly Japanese), and 19 respondents were Hispanic. The researchers administered a learning strategies questionnaire measuring three types of behaviors (classroom, individual, and interaction) and four measures of English proficiency. All four proficiency measures were administered as both pre-test and a post-test. Researchers analyzed respondents' learning behaviors in light of gain scores on the

proficiency tests. Results indicated only one significant correlation, the relationship between social interaction behaviors was found to be significantly correlated with overall score on the test of communicative competence. An additional finding of interest is that there was significant variation in both strategy use and proficiency between Asian and Hispanic students. Overall, Hispanic students scored higher than Asian students on the “good learner behaviors” measured in this study. In addition, Hispanic students tended to make more progress in oral proficiency and auditory comprehension, while Asian students tended to make greater gains in linguistic competence and communicative competence. The findings indicate significant variation in strategy use and proficiency based on cultural background.

It is difficult to compare results from these studies because of differing assessment instruments and strategy classification systems. However, there are some commonalities among these findings. First, it is clear that the strategy use can be identified as being specific to particular populations, such as there is evidence for variation in strategy use by culture, setting, and students’ purpose for language study. Second, there is a consistent thread among the data linking communicative strategy used for the English learners, such as the functional practice from Bialystok’s study and social strategies from Oxford’s study. As a whole, these studies reveal a clear need for additional research examining the relationship between learning strategies and proficiency in a variety of settings. Therefore, this research will be conducted at the

language institutes in the United States and the respondents would be more than 500 that included a variety of ethnicities.

ELLs' Motivation about Language Learning

What is the reason for the students from all over the world to enroll in the language institutes to study English? The answer to this question is important, because motivation is considered to be one of the factors in successfully developing a second or foreign language. Motivation determines an active, personal involvement in second language learning. Conversely, unmotivated students are passively involved and therefore unable to develop their potential second language skills. In Gardner and Lambert's (1959) study, they indicated that a student's orientation to learning French as a second language was related to his or her motivation to learn the language, attitudes toward French Canadians, and proficiency in the language. Subsequent research by the authors (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) revealed a much more complex structure of interrelationships among the different components of the model, but nevertheless confirmed that motivation was associated with language proficiency.

According to Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, motivation is defined by three variables: (a) desire to learn the second language, (b) effort expended in learning a second language, and (c) attitudes regarding the learning process in the acquisition of a second language. These three attributes are all necessary in capturing a learner's sense of motivation. For instance, in a classroom with an authoritarian teacher, it is possible that individuals who are not truly motivated to learn the material may be shown to display

significant amounts of effort during the class session. In this sense, if motivation was defined only in terms of effort, such individuals may be considered motivated, although they may not possess the desire to learn or may even find the experience unpleasant. Thus, Gardner concluded that a motivated individual is one who wants to accomplish a specific goal, devotes considerable amount of effort to achieve this goal, and experiences satisfaction in the activities associated with achieving this goal. While Gardner elaborated on the importance of motivation in acquiring a second language, his socio-educational model addresses the importance of integrating into a different culture as a means of facilitating the acquisition of a second language but does not include a more practical or instrumental orientation.

With both instrumental and integrative motivations are essential elements of success; it is integrative motivation, which has been found to sustain long-term success in learning a second language (Taylor, Meynard & Rheault, 1977; Ellis, 1997; Crookes et al., 1991). In some of the earlier research conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972), integrative motivation was found to be influential in a formal learning environment. In late studies, integrative motivation has continued to be emphasized, although now the importance of instrumental motivation is also stressed (Ellis, 1997). Instrumental motivation is generally characterized by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language (Hudson, 2000). With instrumental motivation, the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or

achieving higher social status. Additionally, instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired.

As Brown (2000) further pointed out, both instrumental and integrative motivation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Learners tend to select a combination orientation, rather than select one form of motivation. He cites the example of international students residing in the United States, learning English for academic purposes while at the same time wishing to become integrated with the culture and the people of the country. Because both forms of motivation, integrative and instrumental, have been found to impact the acquisition of a second language, it is critical to identify both types of motivation that either directly or indirectly contributes to the successful process of second language acquisition. More importantly, Brown suggests that it is necessary to view motivation as one of a number of variables in an intricate model of interrelated individual and situational factors, which are distinctive to each language learner. Thus, both instrumental and integrative motivation can function as powerful motivators, which subsequently will influence second language proficiency.

ELLs' Beliefs about Language Learning

Beliefs about language learning refer to opinions or views held by people on language learning. Students typically bring to the classroom specific assumptions about how to learn a language, about what activities and approaches work and what do not

work, about themselves as learners, and about the role of the teacher. An important factor influencing language learning is what the student already knows about language. Therefore, teachers need to ascertain students' knowledge levels and teach them accordingly. Beliefs about learning are part of the students' prior knowledge and may greatly influence language learning. Therefore, it is beneficial to explore the beliefs of English language learners about language learning.

English language learners' beliefs about language learning may affect their strategy choice as well as their attitude and motivation toward learning English. Wenden (1986) performed an investigation of students' beliefs about learning a second language by questioning learners about their own learning behaviors in response to specific contexts. The twenty-five learners in her study displayed a variety of beliefs, which Wenden grouped into five areas. These include beliefs about "the language," "their proficiency in the language," "the outcome of using a strategy," "how best to learn a language," and "reactions to a particular learning activity." Since these five types of beliefs came from responses to questions about language learning situations, these categories provide clues as to those areas of beliefs that may influence strategy use. Wenden furthermore found that overall second language learning strategy use was facilitated when the learners believed they had (1) encountered new language items, (2) had insufficient language ability for communication, or (3) experienced negative emotions, such as fear or embarrassment. Wenden also stated that certain priorities or goals that the learners held encouraged the use of second language learning strategies,

such as a need to improve vocabulary, which led one student to ask others to correct his pronunciation.

When choosing which second language learning strategy to employ in a given situation, Wenden found that the learners explained their strategy choices in terms of (1) a belief that a strategy had led to an increase in learning, (2) a belief that the learner's own personal characteristics made the use of a particular strategy appropriate; and/or (3) beliefs about language learning in general which supported the use of a particular learning strategy. These findings by Wenden offer the detailed explanation of relationships between beliefs and second language learning strategies.

In order to have a broader classification of beliefs than Wenden, Horwitz (1986) further expanded the concept of language learning beliefs by asking second language teachers and students to list all beliefs that they or others held about language learning in general. She found five areas of beliefs that people commonly hold about second language learning: "foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivations" (p. 121). From these beliefs, Horwitz created the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), a thirty-four item Likert-scale questionnaire which measures students' language learning beliefs. Using the BALLI, Horwitz (1987, 1988) suggests a number of ways that learners' beliefs could influence their learning, including influencing the way learners react to particular teaching methods, the way they evaluate their learning progress, and the way they use second language learning strategies.

Several studies using the BALLI have demonstrated that learners from different cultures tend to hold different sets of beliefs about how languages are learned (Yang, 1992; Park, 1995; Kern, 1995). Yang (1992) questioned Chinese learners of English as a foreign language using both the BALLI (for beliefs) and the SILL (for strategies). Yang found correlations between the beliefs and second language learning strategies. The beliefs factor that correlated most strongly with overall strategy use was beliefs about self-efficacy in learning a foreign language. Self-efficacy beliefs especially correlated with the use of functional language strategies ($r = .65$). Yang reported that most other correlations between beliefs and second language strategy use were moderate to mild.

In a similar study, Park (1995) also assessed learners' beliefs and second language learning strategy use in Korea. Park founded correlations between students' beliefs reported on the BALLI and strategies reported on the SILL, but all correlations were only mild to moderate correlations. Park and Yang's findings support an important link between the language learning beliefs reported in the BALLI and second language learning strategy use; however, these correlations are not very strong, and it may be that the items in the BALLI represent important language learning beliefs, and that the BALLI is not able to measure the dynamic interaction of learners' beliefs with the learning environment.

Kern (1995) used the BALLI to measure changes in language learning beliefs over time spent in language courses. He found that the students' beliefs did change in time, reflecting to a small extent their teachers' beliefs, but he said that the teachers'

classroom teaching methods affected students' beliefs more than the teachers' own expressed beliefs did. The belief that showed the greatest change concerned each learner's language proficiency. After a semester of study, forty-seven percent of the students had changed their perception of their own language learning ability, some higher and some lower, showing a possible effect of success in the classroom upon the students' perceptions of themselves as learners.

The works of Horwitz and Wenden have described a number of beliefs types that affect language learning, as well as providing suggestions as to how these beliefs might affect learners' behaviors. However, more research is needed to define the process by which these beliefs might influence ELLs' choices of learning strategy use and which beliefs are most important to learning a language.

Linguistic Distance Between ELLs' First Language and English

Language distance is the differences in the form, the meaning, the structure, and the use of words between the first language and the second language. Second language acquisition after childhood occurs more easily when the structural and semantic characteristics of the first language and the second language are similar, or in other words, when the linguistic distance is less. For learners whose first language is closely related to the second language, the learning burden of most words will be lighter. For learners whose first language is not related to the second language, the learning burden will be heavier (Nation, 2001).

English is linguistically closer to Western European languages, such as French and German, than it is to East Asian languages, such as Korean and Japanese. It would be expected that Western European students in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia would attain a higher level of proficiency in English, and would attain any given level of proficiency sooner, than students from East Asia (Corder, 1981).

Several empirical studies (Carson & Kuehn, 1994; Cummins, 1979; Freeman & Freeman, 1994; Odlin, 1986) have observed the transfer of prior linguistic and cognitive knowledge from the first language to the second language. Students with strong academic skills in their first language generally acquire the needed information for a second language more quickly than those without sufficient formal schooling in first language. According to Cummins (1981) and Freeman and Freeman (1994), what learners have learned in their first language is easily transferred to their second language. Cummins (1979) demonstrated that students who read well in their first language were likely to read well in their second language. Odlin (1986) found that the level of proficiency reached in the first language influences the development of proficiency in the second language. Carson and Kuehn (1994) also found that “transfer of ability to second language can only occur if individuals have already acquired that ability in their first language” (p. 260). Jiang and Khuehn (2001) similarly discovered that transfer of first language knowledge and strategies is easier for students with higher first language proficiency. They suggested that students who have first language education and prior

knowledge might progress faster because of the active transfer that helps facilitate their learning process and accelerate their own second language learning.

In summary, English language learners have the least difficulty in acquiring English as a second language when the form or structure of their first language can be transferred to English with the least amount of change. Also, the majority of the research on language transfer indicates that a student's proficiency level in their first language (e.g., prior knowledge, skills, and culture) has a noticeable impact on their facility with second language learning.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The review of existing research reflects the study of a number of individual factors that contribute to English language learning. Yet the research has not explored the relationship among these factors. In brief there is a gap in the research literature that needs to be filled. Studies are needed that explore the relationships among factors such as motivation and learning environment to English language learning that needs to be filled. Language learning is a complex process, exploring the effects of these factors to ELLs' language learning helps to close the gap.

In order to understand the relationship among these factors and ELLs' language proficiency, the dependent variable for this study is ELLs' language proficiency and these factors that affecting ELLs' language proficiency are independent variables. In this study, ELLs' language proficiency, the dependent variable, is determined by ELLs' TOEFL score. TOEFL is a standardized test that measures the ability to understand, to

recognize, and to read short passages that are similar in topic and style to those that students are likely to encounter in North American colleges and universities. Language learning as measured by the TOEFL may be related to one or more factors. The independent variables, learning environment, learning strategies, ELLs' beliefs about language learning, motivation, and linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English, was hypothesized to impact ELLs' language proficiency (See Figure 2.1).

According to Figure 2.1, one of the variables, learning strategies, was hypothesized to increase ELLs' language proficiency directly. Similarly, linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English was hypothesized to increase ELLs' language proficiency directly. Motivation and beliefs about language learning can impact ELLs' language proficiency directly. Finally, learning environment was hypothesized to increase ELLs' language proficiency directly as well. It is expected that ELLs' motivation, beliefs about language learning, learning environment, linguistic distance and learning strategies increase ELLs' language proficiency directly. Additionally, the five independent variables were hypothesized to be correlated with one another. Consequently, the following hypotheses were examined in the present study:

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship among the factors contributing to ELLs' language learning. The five factors, learning environment, learning strategies, ELLs' motivation, ELLs' beliefs about language learning, and linguistic distance, were hypothesized to be correlated with one another.

Hypothesis 2: The learning environments significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English. ELLs' language proficiency was hypothesized to be impacted from ELLs' learning environment. In order to increase ELLs' language proficiency, ELLs' learning environment may need to be emphasized.

Hypothesis 3: The learning strategies significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English. Learning strategies was hypothesized to increase ELLs' language proficiency.

Hypothesis 4: ELLs' motivation significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English. ELLs' motivation was hypothesized to increase ELLs' language proficiency.

Hypothesis 5: ELLs' beliefs about language learning significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English. ELLs' beliefs about language learning was hypothesized to increase ELLs' language proficiency.

Hypothesis 6: The linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English. ELLs' language proficiency was hypothesized to be impacted by linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English.

CHAPTER III

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the various factors related to English language learning and English language learners' (ELLs) language proficiency from ELLs' perspectives. This chapter contains descriptions of the study design and methodological procedures. This information is presented within the following organizational framework: a) data which includes, the settings for the study, sample size, and respondents, b instrumentation, c) data collection procedure, d) variables and measurements, and e) data analysis procedure.

Data

Settings

This study was conducted at English language institutes in the United States, because these English language institutes are often the first phase for international students to receive academic experience in the United States. An English language institute may be either college/university affiliated or may operate as an independent, private program. Usually these language institutes offer intensive English programs for international students to improve their English skills within a relatively short period of time. These intensive English programs are usually about four hours or more per day of class time, five days a week. Prior approval for data collection was obtained from Texas Woman's University at Institutional Review Board (See Appendix A).

Sample Size

Sample size for the study was determined by recommended statistical sampling and length of questionnaire size. It was recommended that sample size be four to ten times the number of items on the questionnaire (Cattell, 1978; Gorsuch, 1983; Tanaka, 1987). Accordingly, this study required 172 to 430 respondents, to accommodate the 43 items in the questionnaire.

Respondents

In order to obtain enough respondents for this study, the researcher sent an invitation letter (See Appendix B) via email to all 273 English language institutes on the American Association of Intensive English Programs list. The language institutes that were willing to participate in this study received a package which included a letter explaining the purpose of this study (See Appendix C), the questionnaire (See Appendix D), and the appropriate school letterhead to return the agreement letter to the researcher (See Appendix E).

The international students from the language institutes that were willing to participate in this study were invited to complete a questionnaire. Following the completion and return of the questionnaires, only the respondents who reported his/her Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score were included in this study. This was necessary since the TOEFL score was used as the dependent variable to identify ELLs' language proficiency. The researcher included the responses from respondents whose levels of English competency were in the middle or above at language institutes

instead of the lower level to assure comprehension of the questionnaire. The respondent's TOEFL score and his/her level of English competency formed the basis of choosing questionnaires valid to this research project.

Instrumentation

The design of the questionnaire instrument was critical for discovering what ELLs perceived as important aspects of learning English. With this purpose in mind, the researcher examined several existing questionnaires from past research, but could not find an appropriate one for the purpose of this study. The existing research was focused on one single language learning factor individually, and does not consider the complexity of the language learning process. Questionnaires that have been reviewed were "*Support vs. Challenge in Classroom Interaction*," "*The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery*," "*Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)*," "*College and University Classroom Environment Inventory (CUCEI)*".

The first questionnaire that has been reviewed by the researcher was *Support vs. Challenge In Classroom Interaction*. This questionnaire was developed by Luciano Mariani (1997). There are two parts on this questionnaire: challenge with ten items and support with ten items. This questionnaire is collecting the information from the teacher's point of view regarding the teaching style. For this study, this questionnaire is not appropriate to use as the purpose of this study is gathering the perspective from the learners' point of view related to the various factors affecting their language learning.

The second questionnaire that has been reviewed was *The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery* which developed by R. C. Gardner (1985). The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery has been developed to aim at the investigation of English speaking students learning French as a second language. As a consequence, the items comprising the battery are concerned primarily with French. The purpose of this Attitude/Motivation Test Battery emphasize such as improved understanding of the other community, desire to continue studying the language, an interest in learning other languages, and etc. However, due to the purpose of this study, several factors need to be taken into account.

The third questionnaire that has been reviewed by the researcher was *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)*. This instrument was developed by Elaine Horwitz (1981). In order to identify adult student beliefs about language learning, Horwitz created an instrument to gather data concerning the beliefs of students studying commonly taught languages in the U.S. (e.g., English as a second language (ESL), French, German, and Spanish) and beliefs of teachers of ESL and commonly taught languages. Three distinct BALLIs are in use today: one for ESL students, another for foreign language teachers, and a third for foreign language students. The ESL BALLI and teachers BALLI comprise 27 statements; the foreign language BALLI comprises 34 statements. Among these three BALLIs, the researcher reviewed the one for ESL students and found out that Horwitz proposed four themes represent statements in the BALLI: foreign language aptitude, difficulty of language learning, nature of language learning, and appropriate language learning strategies. But for the purpose of this study,

the researcher needs to use a questionnaire that covers five factors including ELLs' learning environment, ELLs' learning strategies, ELLs' beliefs about language learning, ELLs' motivation about language learning, and the linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English.

The fourth questionnaire that has been reviewed was *College and University Classroom Environment Inventory*. The *College and University Classroom Environment Inventory* was developed by Fraser, Fisher and McRobbie (1996) to assess perceptions of the psycho-social environment in university and college classrooms. This questionnaire contains seven scales: personalization, involvement, student cohesiveness, satisfaction, task orientation, innovation, and individualization. Each scale comprises seven items, making a total of 49 items in all. This questionnaire is emphasized on the general college and university classroom environment, but not the classroom for the students who language learning. Therefore, the researcher thinks that this questionnaire would not meet the purpose of this study.

The fifth questionnaire that has been reviewed was *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)*. The *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* was devised by Oxford (1986) to investigate learning strategies employed by second language learners. The SILL questionnaire measures the frequency with which a students uses in the following six language learning strategy classification systems: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social language learning strategies. The SILL questionnaire is used to identify the level of strategy uses for each strategy class

regardless other factors. The researcher thinks that this questionnaire measures the learning strategies only and is not fit for this study.

After reviewing the existing questionnaire, the researcher feels that there is a need to develop a questionnaire which consider the complexity of language learning process. The questionnaire for this study contains two sections: section I covered demographic information, including age, gender, personal background, and English proficiency of the respondents (TOEFL score). Section II consisted of 43 statements about various factors related to language learning. All statements in the questionnaires requested the respondents to indicate on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) their thoughts about the language they were currently learning, in this case, English.

Pilot testing is important for establishing content validity by assurance that the items are really measuring what they are intended to measure (Creswell, 2003). In regards to selecting groups to determine content validity of a given instrument, Dillman (1978) suggested that a survey should be examined by three types of people: colleagues, people who might use the data, and persons drawn from the same group as the study population. Accordingly, the researcher has developed the questionnaire carefully reviewed by giving this instrument to three experts, dissertation committee members, and the students from the sample group. Recommendations from the various field review sources were included in the revision of the final questionnaire instrument. Once the initial draft questionnaire was completed, a four-phase validation process was completed

The first phase was giving the first draft of the questionnaire to ten English language learners who were studying at an English language institute. This pilot study was conducted to check the clarity of the questions and instructions on the questionnaire. There were two questions at the end of the questionnaire: 1) Is it difficult or easy to understand this questionnaire? 2) How long did it take you to finish this questionnaire? The comments from ten students indicated that the questionnaire was easy to read and understand, and took five to ten minutes to complete. Based on the results, some questions were added on each five factor in order to get more details information from the respondents and revisions were made.

The second phase of the validation process was to give the second draft of the questionnaire to the researcher's dissertation committee members to review. Some suggestions have been provided by the committee members, such as avoiding using a conditional clause in the wording of the questions. After having an in depth review of the questionnaire by the committee members, the questions were revised a third time.

The third phase of the validation process was to request an independent review from three experts in the field of second language acquisition to refine and clarify the statements in the questionnaire. After editing the questions for proper word choice and clarification for the true intent of the items according to the three experts' feedback, the researcher refined the statements and arranged them in random order to account for any order effects.

The fourth phase of the validation process was to give the fourth draft of the questionnaire to the researcher's dissertation committee members for the final review before sending out to English language institutes.

On the final questionnaire, six statements focused on ELLs' motivations to learn a language. Eleven statements focused on respondents' beliefs about learning a language, and eight statements addressed students' learning strategies. There are twelve statements that covered students' learning environments, and lastly, six statements were related to the linguistic distance between the students' first language and English (See Table 1).

Table 1
Five Proposed Categories for The Questionnaire

| <u>Number of Statements</u> | <u>Descriptions</u> |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 6 | ELLs' motivation |
| 11 | ELLs' beliefs |
| 8 | ELLs' learning strategies |
| 12 | ELLs' learning environments |
| 6 | Linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English |
| Total: | 43 |

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher collected the data in the late summer and early fall of 2006. Data from each language institute willing to participate were collected in two phases. In the first phase, the researcher wrote an invitation letter to all 273 language institutes via email from the American Association of Intensive English Program list. Of the 273 language institutes, 25 language institutes responded to the email saying that they were interested in this study and the director of each language institute would need to review the questionnaire before initiating the study. Five language institutes were dropped because of the time required to answer the questionnaire. Thus, the remaining 20 institutes comprised the majority of the study. They represent fourteen states: Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Washington, and Utah.

In the second phase, each of these 20 language institutes was sent via the post office a package of questionnaires with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study. Individual questionnaire instruments were identified with a numeric code so that the respondents were anonymous and could not be identified. Each language institute administered the questionnaire with its own staff, placed them in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided by the researcher, and mailed them back to the researcher within two weeks. The administration of the questionnaire was very flexible depending on the situation at each language institute. Some language institutes distributed the questionnaire in the computer lab or in the conversation class. Other language institutes

administered the questionnaire in controlled settings such as a class session or at the testing place. In any case, answering the questionnaire was voluntary.

One thousand copies of the questionnaire were distributed to 20 English language institutes from June 2006 to September 2006. Six hundred and thirty students answered the questionnaire. Among them, 74 respondents' responses were discarded because the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score was unidentifiable or the questionnaire was incomplete, thus yielding 606 viable questionnaires. So, the response rate for this present study was 60.6%.

Variables and Measurements

Dependent Variable

In order to control ELLs' language proficiency, TOEFL score was utilized as a dependent variable. TOEFL is created and validated by Educational Testing Service (ETS) with experts working on research and development in the language learning and testing fields. Educational testing service is the world's largest private educational measurement organization and a leader in educational research. TOEFL is a norm-referenced standardized test that measures the ability to understand English as it is spoken in North America, to recognize and apply selected structural and grammatical points in English, and to read short passages that are similar in topic and style to those that students are likely to encounter in North American colleges and universities (ETS, 2001). It was originally designed to test the English proficiency of international students wishing to study in the United States, but it has been used by a number of foreign

academic institutions, agencies, and governments as well (ETS, 1997). There are three different kinds of testing: paper-based test, computer-based test, and internet-based test. Because the content and format of these three tests are different, scores on each are reported on a different scale (See Table 2). Also, educational testing service has published a table which shows how to change the score from one test to another test (See Appendix F). Reliability of the test has been reported as .95; and high levels of validity have been reported in over 80 studies (ETS, 1997).

Table 2

TOEFL Score Scale

| | Computer-Based Test Score Scale | Paper-Based Test Score Scale | Internet-Based Test Score Scale |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Speaking | - | - | 0-30 |
| Listening | 0-30 | 31-68 | 0-30 |
| Structure/Writing | 0-30 | 31-68 | 0-30 |
| Reading | 0-30 | 31-67 | 0-30 |
| Total Score | 0-300 | 310-677 | 0-120 |

In this present study, the researcher used scores from computer-based test scale since most English language institutes' respondents were taking the TOEFL via computer. If the respondents reported the other two testing methods, the researcher transferred the scores to computer-based test score scale. Scores of Computer-Based Testing on any section can range from 0 to 30. The Structure/Writing score will fall within the range once the student's essay is read and rated. Likewise, the total score falls within the range once the Structure/Writing score is known. The total score is calculated using a multiple of the scores on the individual parts of the test, and can range from 0 to 300.

Independent Variables

The first independent variable is learning environment. Learning environment in this study refers to the learning setting both in the classroom and the social setting outside of the classroom.

The second independent variable is learning strategies. Learning strategies in this study refers to methods that students use to learn and make learning more efficient. An example of learning strategies identified in this study included students' perception that making a connection between the new concept and the things that the learners already know is useful.

The third independent variable is ELLs' beliefs about language learning. Beliefs about language learning refer to opinions or views held by people about language learning. Students typically bring to the classroom specific assumptions about how to learn a language, about what activities and approaches work and what do not work, about

themselves as learners, and about the role of the teacher. An example of beliefs about language learning in this study was to practice English with native speakers.

The fourth independent variable is ELLs' motivation about language learning. In this study motivation includes two aspects: integrative and instrumental motivation.

Integrative motivation refers to the learners' desire for interaction with the community and interested in the language. On the other hand, instrumental motivation refers to the learners' desire to gain some social or economic reward by learning a second language.

The fifth independent variable is the linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English. Language distance in this study refers to the differences in the form, the meaning, the structure, and the use of words between the first language and the target language.

Data Analysis Procedures

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, as well as means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the demographic information of the respondents and the Likert scale data from the questionnaires.

To examine the each factor associated with a specified subset of indicator variables that the researcher's has hypothesized beforehand, confirmatory factor analysis was selected. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine if the items on the questionnaire loaded as predicted on the expected number of factors. For this study, the researcher has hypothesized about which variables would load on which factors. Confirmatory factor analysis was utilized to determine if measures created to represent

the items for each factor on the questionnaire really belong together. In addition, this study used varimax rotation in the factor analysis. Varimax rotation is an orthogonal rotation of the factor axes to maximize the variance of the squared loadings of a factor (column) on all the variables (rows) in a factor matrix, which has the effect of differentiating the original variables by extracted factor. Each factor will tend to have either large or small loadings of any particular variable. A varimax solution yields results which make it as easy as possible to identify each variable with a single factor.

In order to determine the value of respondents' rating, the factor loading was used. The factor loading is the correlation coefficients between the variables (rows) and factors (columns). Similar to Pearson's r , the squared factor loading is the percent of variance in that variable explained by the factor. The eigenvalues for a given factor measures the variance in all the variables which is accounted for by that factor. The ratio of eigenvalues is the ratio of explanatory importance of the factors with respect to the variables. If a factor has low eigenvalues, then it is contributing little to the explanation of variances in the variables. Thus, eigenvalues measure the amount of variation in the total sample accounted for by each factor.

The items within each subscale were averaged to create five subscale scores. Pearson's Product Moment Correlations were conducted to determine the relationships between the subscales, as well as between each subscale and the continuous demographic variables, including age, TOEFL score, the number of reasons learning English, and the number of learning aids in the home environment. A multiple regression was also

conducted to predict ELLs' language proficiency (TOEFL score) from the five subscales (learning environment, learning strategies, motivation, beliefs, and linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English). Multiple regression is a statistical techniques that can determine the relationship between two or more independent variables and a single dependent variable. This study used the technique to explore the relationship between the five factors (learning environment, learning strategies, motivation, beliefs, and linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English) as independent variables and English language proficiency as a dependent variable.

Summary

This chapter presented the data and methodology of the study. A total of 606 ELLs who studied at English language institutes in the United States constituted the final sample. The self-developed questionnaire was used to explore ELLs' perspectives about language learning. All of the statistical techniques used for quantitative analyses of the data are described, and the results are provided in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

To accomplish the research objectives of the current study, two research questions were developed:

1. What do English language learners (ELLs) perceive to be the important factors contributing to their language learning?
2. What are the relationships among the factors affecting ELLs' language learning and their language proficiency?

This chapter presents the results of the data analyses including descriptive analysis, factor analysis, bivariate analysis, and multivariate analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

In the present study, respondents were international students who studied at English language institutes in the United States. One thousand copies of the questionnaire were distributed to 20 English language institutes from June 2006 to September 2006. Six hundred and eighty students answered the questionnaire. Among them, 74 respondents' responses were discarded because the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score was unidentifiable or the questionnaire was incomplete, thus yielding 606 viable questionnaires. So, the response rate for this present study was 60.6%. A response rate of at least 50% is considered adequate for analysis and reporting, 60% to 69% is considered good, and 70% or more is very good (Babbie, 1990).

ELLs' language proficiency was measured by the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) standardized test. Of these 606 respondents, the minimum of TOEFL score was 63 and the maximum was 267 ($M = 162.17$, $SD = 35.80$). The total score of computer-based test TOEFL can range from 0 to 300. The average of TOEFL scores for this study was 162.17 ($M = 162.17$), above the average score (150) and the standard deviation was 35.80.

Basic Demographics

Respondents in the present sample were born in 62 different countries (See Appendix G) with 34 first languages (See Appendix H). As shown in Table 3, the sample consisted of 306 males (50.5%) and 300 females (49.5%).

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of Distributions of Respondents by Gender

| | Frequency | % |
|--------|-----------|------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 306 | 50.5 |
| Female | 300 | 49.5 |
| Total: | 606 | 100 |

The largest group of the respondents was from Korea (20.8%), followed by Saudi Arabia (19.5%), Japan (13.7%) and Taiwan (12.9%). Twenty-three percent of the

respondents' first language was Arabic, followed by Korean (20.7%), Japanese (13.9%), Mandarin (13.8%), and Spanish (8.6%). While the majority of respondents stated that they were using English at school, only a few respondents (6.3%) were using English at home. Additionally, besides their first language and English, more than three quarters of the respondents (78.8%) stated that they did not speak other languages (See Appendix I). Of those who reported speaking another language, Japanese (4.2%), French (3.3%), Mandarin (2.8%), Spanish (2.4%), and Italian (0.9%) were the most reported languages (See Table 4).

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage of Distributions of Respondents by Nativity, First Language, and Other Languages Spoken (N = 606)

| | Frequency | % |
|--|-----------|------|
| Country Where Respondents Born (Top Four Countries) | | |
| Korea | 126 | 20.8 |
| Saudi Arabia | 118 | 19.5 |
| Japan | 83 | 13.7 |
| Taiwan | 78 | 12.9 |
| Other | 194 | 32.9 |
| Subtotal: | 599 | 99.8 |

Table 4, continued

Frequency and Percentage of Distributions of Respondents by Gender, Nativity, First Language, and Other Languages Spoken (N = 606)

| | Frequency | % |
|---|-----------|------|
| First Language That Respondents Speak (Top Five Languages) | | |
| Arabic | 140 | 23.1 |
| Korean | 124 | 20.7 |
| Japanese | 84 | 13.9 |
| Mandarin | 83 | 13.8 |
| Spanish | 51 | 8.6 |
| Other | 118 | 19.9 |
| Subtotal: | 600 | 100 |
| Other Language That Respondents Speak (Top Five Languages) | | |
| No other language spoken | 453 | 78.8 |
| Japanese | 24 | 4.2 |
| French | 19 | 3.3 |
| Mandarin | 16 | 2.8 |
| Spanish | 14 | 2.4 |
| Italian | 5 | 0.9 |
| Other | 21 | 3.6 |
| Subtotal: | 552 | 96 |

Note: Frequencies not adding to 606, and percentages not adding to 100 reflect missing data.

Reasons for Learning English

Respondents were asked to check all the reasons for learning English. As shown in Table 5, there were six reasons for the respondents to choose for learning English: need for future career, need for college acceptance, interest in the language, required to take course, friends who speak the language, and interest in the culture. Most respondents reported that they learned English for a future career (83.2%), followed by the reason of college acceptance (63.2%). A little more than half reported that they were interested in this language (57.8%). About 40% were required to take English. Only 31% reported that they were learning English because their friends speak the language, and only 27% reported that they were learning English because they are interested in the culture.

Language Learning Aids at Home

Respondents were also asked which language learning aids they had in their home environment. Most of the respondents stated that they had a dictionary (91.4%), a computer for their school-work (80.0%), link to internet (71.9%), a quiet place to study (70.5%) and more than half had books to help their school-work (59.1%). Only 31.4% reported having educational software, 15.7% reported having poetry books, and 18.8% reported having classic literature in their home (See Table 6).

Table 5

Frequency and Percentages of Reasons for Learning English for All Respondents

| | <u>Yes</u> | | <u>No</u> | |
|--------------------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Need for Future Career | 504 | 83.2 | 101 | 16.7 |
| Need for College Acceptance | 383 | 63.2 | 222 | 36.6 |
| Interest in the Language | 350 | 57.8 | 255 | 42.1 |
| Required to Take Course | 241 | 39.8 | 364 | 60.1 |
| Friends who Speak the Language | 188 | 31.0 | 416 | 68.6 |
| Interest in the Culture | 164 | 27.1 | 441 | 72.8 |

Factor Analysis

In order to determine the number of factors and the loading of measured (indicator) variables were as predicted on the basis of prior theory, the confirmatory factor analysis was applied to the study. The researcher hypothesized that 43 items on the questionnaire determinants of English language acquisition should be able to measure five distinct factors: learning environment, learning strategies, motivation about language learning, beliefs about language learning, and linguistic distance between ELLs' first

language and English. Therefore, the researcher conducted confirmatory factor analysis for each of five factors separately.

Table 6

Frequency and Percentages of Language Learning Aids in Respondents' Home Environment

| | <u>Yes</u> | | <u>No</u> | |
|---------------------------|------------|------|-----------|------|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Dictionary | 554 | 91.4 | 52 | 8.6 |
| Computer for School Work | 485 | 80.0 | 121 | 20.0 |
| Link to Internet | 436 | 71.9 | 170 | 28.1 |
| Quiet Place to Study | 427 | 70.5 | 179 | 29.5 |
| Books to Help School Work | 358 | 59.1 | 248 | 40.9 |
| Educational Software | 190 | 31.4 | 416 | 68.6 |
| Classic Literature | 114 | 18.8 | 492 | 81.2 |
| Poetry Books | 95 | 15.7 | 511 | 84.3 |

Data from the 43-item questionnaire were analyzed using factor analysis to confirm the underlying each of five factors. The number of factors to be confirmed was based on minimum eigenvalues of 1.0 and .42 as the cut off point for factor loading of

individual items under each factor (Gorsuch, 1983). For factor loadings to be significant, researchers have recommended a minimum value of $\pm .3$ (Cliff & Hamburger, 1967). Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998) have also considered $\pm .3$ to be minimal, $\pm .4$ more important, and $\pm .5$ practically significant.

The varimax rotation method for each factor was employed because it is a type of orthogonal rotation that mathematically ensures that the resulting factors are uncorrelated with each other (Loehlin, 1998). Moreover, orthogonal rotation, such as varimax, is much simpler to comprehend and explain (Kim & Mueller, 1978). For example, after the first round of varimax rotation for factor one (learning environment); it consisted of 12 items of the questionnaire. However, the following three items did not reach the cut off point $\pm .42$ at the first round and needed to be eliminated:

| <u>Item Number</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Factor loading</u> |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Item 33 | It is important to work in the whole class. | .041 |
| Item 37 | It is important to work with other students in pair or small groups. | .155 |
| Item 42 | It is important to work individually with a teacher | -.117 |

On the second round, item 39, *It is important to read printed materials in English outside the classroom*, only loaded as .007 that also needed to be eliminated. Therefore, these four items (33, 37, 42, and 39) were eliminated for factor one.

Learning environment, the first factor conceptually dealt with how important the environments in the classroom and outside of the classroom were for ELLs' language

learning (See Table 7). Some of the items were eliminated because an examination of the eigenvalues revealed low factor loading. The eigenvalues measure the amount of variation in the total sample accounted for by each factor. Thus, if a factor has low eigenvalues, then it is contributing little to the explanation of variances in the variables. Tables 7 showed that learning environment consisted of eight items are the good indicators of the learning environment subscale, and revealed accounting for 39.6% of the variance.

Table 7

Principal Factor Loading for Learning Environment

| Subscale/Item # | Item Name | Factor Loading |
|-----------------|---|----------------|
| Item 3 | Watch TV programs in English outside the classroom | .592 |
| Item 8 | Opportunity to express opinions in my English classes | .658 |
| Item 9 | Use the real-life activities in the classroom | .623 |
| Item 16 | Practice conversation with other students several times | .558 |
| Item 26 | Important to repeat words and phrases several times | .549 |
| Item 28 | Students have good communication with their teachers | .720 |
| Item 29 | Native English speaker as a friend to converse with | .677 |
| Item 30 | Important to have a supportive teacher of English | .637 |

Learning strategies, the second factor consisted of seven items on the questionnaire. Item 2 was eliminated at the first round because of the low factor loading (-.072), *It is important for students to look for the definition of every new word from a dictionary*. Table 8 showed the final 7 items for the learning strategies subscale and revealed accounting for 31.0% of the variance.

Table 8

Principal Factor Loading for Learning Strategies

| Subscale/Item # | Item Name | Factor Loading |
|-----------------|---|----------------|
| Item 4 | To monitor their own learning in English. | .448 |
| Item 6 | Search for information from a several resources | .583 |
| Item 24 | How the English I have learned can be used in everyday life | .584 |
| Item 27 | New concepts by relating them to things I already know | .601 |
| Item 32 | Have classmates who are interested in learning English | .626 |
| Item 35 | Acceptable for students to attempt a word they don't know | .479 |
| Item 38 | Know what classroom activities work best to help me learn | .554 |

Motivation about language learning, the third factor was conceptually identified as representing a need for students to learn English. Some of the items were eliminated because an examination of the eigenvalues revealed low factor loading, such as Item 1, *I am studying English to be more at ease with people who speak English*, loaded as -.085. Therefore, this item 1 was eliminated and the remaining 5 items revealed accounting for 38.7% of the variance (See Table 9).

Table 9

Principal Factor Loading for Motivation About Language Learning

| Subscale/Item # | Item Name | Factor Loading |
|-----------------|--|----------------|
| Item 12 | Understand and appreciate American arts and literature | .691 |
| Item 14 | To make myself a more knowledgeable person | .614 |
| Item 18 | I am studying English to get a good job | .503 |
| Item 22 | I am studying English to gain the respect of other people | .655 |
| Item 34 | To participate more freely in activities of other cultures | .631 |

Beliefs about language learning were the fourth factor. Conceptually all items dealt with the beliefs that ELLs held toward language learning. The following items were eliminated because of the low factor loadings:

| <u>Item Number</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Factor loading</u> |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Item 15 | Some languages are easier to learn than others. | .019 |
| Item 10 | The most important part of learning English is learning vocabulary words. | .052 |
| Item 36 | To most people in my country, it is important to be able to speak English | .155 |
| Item 19 | The most important part of learning English is mastering the grammar. | .126 |

Thus, these four items (15, 10, 36, and 19) were eliminated because of the low factor loading. On the second round, Item 13, *People who are good at mathematics or sciences are not good at learning foreign languages*, loaded as -.288. These five items (15, 10, 36, 19 and 13) were eliminated and the remaining 6 items revealed accounting for 39.8% of the variance (See Table 10).

Table 10

Principal Factor Loading for Beliefs About Language Learning

| Subscale/Item # | Item Name | Factor Loading |
|-----------------|--|----------------|
| Item 5 | Practice English with native English speakers | .712 |
| Item 7 | Children learn a foreign language more easily than adults | .689 |
| Item 20 | Important to speak English with excellent pronunciation | .560 |
| Item 23 | Speak English fluently has a better opportunity to get a job | .402 |
| Item 31 | Learn English in an English-speaking country | .666 |
| Item 40 | It is important to have a skillful teacher | .699 |

Items in the fifth factor dealt with the linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English. Item 17, *It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it*, loaded as -.031 has been eliminated because of the low factor loading. Linguistic distance, this factor consisted of 5 items revealed accounting for 52.3% of the variance (See Table 11).

Table 11

Principal Factor Loading for Linguistic Distance

| Subscale/Item # | Item Name | Factor Loading |
|-----------------|--|----------------|
| Item 11 | Important to translate from my native language to English | .427 |
| Item 21 | My native language to have similar grammar to English | .772 |
| Item 25 | My native language similar pronunciation to English | .764 |
| Item 41 | Writing system of my native language similar to English | .793 |
| Item 43 | Important for one's native language to be similar to English | .789 |

After analyzing 43 items on the questionnaires from the confirmatory factor analysis, data from 31 items remained and were utilized for the data analysis.

Internal Consistency Reliability

Inter-item analyses were conducted to test the consistency between the items within the five subscales (See Table 12). Cronbach's Alpha was chosen to examine this relationship and was considered the most appropriate statistical test for reliability given the ranking of responses used to construct the scales.

Reliability is the consistency with which an indicator measures what it is intended to measure (Gay, 1996). Reliability is a measure of the squared correlation between

observed scores and true scores (Cronbach, 1951). The theory behind it is that the observed score is equal to the true score plus the measurement error. A reliable test should minimize the measurement error so that the error is not highly correlated with the true score. On the other hand, the relationship between true score and observed score should be strong.

In addition, Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0 to 1. In general, an alpha equal to or greater than .7 is considered a good level, less than .7 and greater than .35 is considered an acceptable level (Cohen & Cohen, 1975). In the present study, for the eight items in the Learning Environment subscale, Cronbach's $\alpha = .776$, for the four items of the Learning Strategies subscale, Cronbach's $\alpha = .622$, for the five items of Motivation about Language Learning subscale, Cronbach's $\alpha = .597$, for the six items of Beliefs about Language Learning Subscale, Cronbach's $\alpha = .674$, and for the five items of Linguistic Distance Subscale, Cronbach's $\alpha = .760$. These good to excellent inter-item reliability coefficients show that the items within these subscales are highly correlated with one another.

Based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis and the inter-item consistency ratings found for each subscale, the agreement ratings of the items in each subscale were averaged to create five subscale scores for each respondent. The rating on the questionnaire is from 1 to 5.

Table 12

Cronbach's Alpha for the Items in Each Factor

| | Cronbach's α |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Learning Environment | .776 |
| Learning Strategies | .622 |
| Motivation about Language Learning | .597 |
| Beliefs about Language Learning | .674 |
| Linguistic Distance | .760 |

To explore ELLs' perspective to be the important factors contributing to their language learning, data were analyzed and was shown in Table 13. Mean score for beliefs about language learning was 4.27, 4.24 for the learning environment subscale, 3.97 for learning strategies, 3.48 for motivation about language learning, and 3.06 for linguistic distance. That means that the respondents had the greatest importance ratings for beliefs about language learning scale, followed by the learning environment subscale, learning strategies, motivation about language learning, and linguistic distance. Accordingly, ELLs' perceive that their beliefs about language learning were the important factor contributing to their language learning.

Table 13

Average Scores for Five Factors

| | N | Mean | SD | Min | Max |
|------------------------------------|-----|------|------|------|-----|
| Beliefs about Language Learning | 606 | 4.27 | 0.54 | 1.17 | 5 |
| Learning Environment | 606 | 4.24 | 0.53 | 1.0 | 5 |
| Learning Strategies | 606 | 3.97 | 0.47 | 1.43 | 5 |
| Motivation about Language Learning | 606 | 3.48 | 0.65 | 1.20 | 5 |
| Linguistic Distance | 606 | 3.06 | 0.83 | 1.0 | 5 |

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations were performed to examine the correlation between the five factors, as well as with age and ELLs' language proficiency. The results of Pearson's Product Moment Correlations revealed positive significant relationships between all five factors, all $r_s, p < .01$, except between learning environment and linguistic distance, as well as beliefs and linguistic distance. That is, respondents who rated learning environment subscale as an important factor tended to rate the other three subscales as important, except linguistic distance subscale. Additionally, respondents who rated beliefs about language learning as an important

factor tended to rate the other three subscales as important, except linguistic distance subscale (See Table 14).

In addition, the result of Pearson's Product Moment Correlations presented significant relationship between four factors (learning environment, learning strategies, beliefs, and linguistic distance) and ELLs' language proficiency. That is, respondents perceived that language proficiency was affected by these four factors (See Table 14).

Age

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations also revealed that age was significantly correlated to ELLs' language proficiency, $r(606) = .116, p < .01$, reasons for learning English, $r(606) = -.118, p < .01$, learning environment, $r(606) = .068, p < .05$, and learning strategies, $r(606) = .082, p < .05$, but not significantly correlated to any of the three subscales: motivation about language learning, beliefs about language learning, and linguistic distance (See Table 14). Age was also significantly correlated to ELLs' language proficiency. This result indicated that an increase in the age of the respondents was related to an increased ELLs' language proficiency.

TOEFL Score (ELLs' Language Proficiency)

Overall, Pearson's Product Moment Correlations revealed that TOEFL scores were significantly correlated to age, $r(606) = .116, p < .01$, reasons for learning English, $r(606) = -.115, p < .01$, learning strategies, $r(606) = .145, p < .01$, linguistic distance, $r(606) = -.118, p < .01$, learning environment, $r(606) = .102, p < .05$, and beliefs about language learning, $r(606) = .089, p < .05$ (See Table 14). Specifically, the results showed

that TOEFL scores were positive significantly correlated to age, learning strategies, learning environment, and beliefs about language learning. That is, respondents who were older tend to score higher on TOEFL. Also, respondents who had greater learning strategies, learning environment, and beliefs tend to score higher on TOEFL scores. However, Pearson's Product Moment Correlations showed a significant negative relationship between linguistic distance and TOEFL scores. Respondents who had greater linguistic distance tend to score lower on TOEFL.

The Number of Reasons for Learning English

There were six reasons of learning English for the respondents to choose: need for future career; need for college acceptance; interest in the language; required to take course; friends to speak this language, and interest in the culture. For each respondent the number of reasons chosen was summed to create a total reasons variable. Pearson's Product Moment Correlations showed that the number of reasons for learning English was significantly correlated to motivation about language learning, $r(606) = .136, p < .01$, but was not significantly correlated to the others four subscales, learning environment, learning strategies, beliefs about language learning, and linguistic distance (See Table 14). This result indicates that having more reasons for learning English was related to increase ELLs' motivation about language learning.

PLACE HOLDER FOR TABLE 14

Learning Aids in the Home Environment

Pearson's Product Moment Correlations showed that the number of learning aids in the home environment was significantly negatively correlated to linguistic distance, $r(606) = -.132, p < .01$, but was not significantly correlated to the others four categories, learning environment, learning strategies, motivation about language learning, and beliefs about language learning. This result indicates that an increased number of learning aids at the ELLs' home environment was related to lower ratings on linguistic distance.

Multiple Regression Analysis

To determine the relationships among the five factors (independent variable) and ELLs' language proficiency (dependent variable), multiple regression was applied to analyze the data. Multiple regression is used to determine the relationships between several independent or predictor variables and a dependent or criterion variable. In general, multiple regression procedures estimate a linear equation of the form: $Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_kX_k$, where k is the number of predictors. Note that in this equation, the regression coefficients represent the independent contributions of each independent variable. That is, variable X_1 influences the Y variable, after controlling for all other independent variable.

In the present study, multiple linear regression analysis with the enter method was applied to predict ELLs' language proficiency as the criterion (dependent) variable from the controlling variable, ELLs' age, as well as the five subscales as predictor (independent) variables (See Table 15).

Table 15

Multiple Regression Analyses of Learning Environment, Learning Strategies, Motivation, Beliefs, and Linguistic Distance on ELLs' Language Proficiency

| Predictor | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| | Unstandardized B | Beta β | Unstandardized B | Beta β |
| Age | .770 | .116** | .648 | .098* |
| Learning Environment | | | .09 | .001 |
| Learning Strategies | | | 12.77 | .166** |
| Motivation | | | -4.63 | -.085 |
| Beliefs | | | 1.20 | .018 |
| Linguistic Distance | | | -4.57 | -.106** |
| R ² | .020 | | .060 | |
| F | 6.245** | | 5.498** | |
| N | 606 | | 606 | |

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

In order to answer the research question, the results presented in Table 15 showed that two of the five factors (learning strategies and linguistic distance) contributed significantly to the prediction of ELLs' language proficiency, and motivation marginally significantly to the prediction of ELLs' language proficiency. That is, learning strategies was the most important effect on ELLs' language proficiency ($Beta = .166$), followed by linguistic distance ($Beta = -.106$), and motivation ($Beta = -.085$).

Overall, these variables were significant in predicting ELLs' language proficiency (TOEFL scores), $F(5, 600) = 5.50, p < .001$, and accounted for 6% of the variance. The results showed that ELLs' learning strategies and linguistic distance of ELLs' first language and English were significant individual contributors in predicting ELLs' language proficiency (TOEFL scores), all $ts, p < .001$. Specifically, controlling for the other subscales, as rating the importance on learning strategies increased a unit, TOEFL scores increased 12.77 points ($B = 12.77, p < .01$). Controlling for the other subscales, as rating the importance on linguistic distance increased, TOEFL scores decreased ($B = -4.57, p < .01$). Accordingly, ELLs' language proficiency could be predicted from their learning strategies, motivation, and linguistic distance of ELLs' first language and English. In other words, the relationships between ELLs' language proficiency and ELLs' learning strategies as well as ELLs' linguistic distance are strong. The relationship between ELLs' language proficiency and their motivation about language learning is moderately strong.

Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that beta coefficients describing the relationship among the predictor variables, age, learning environment, learning strategies, motivation, beliefs, linguistic distance, and the criterion variable ELLs' language proficiency, holding all other predictor variables constant. Predictor variables with the largest beta weights were determined to be the predictors with the strongest regressed relationships with the dependent variable of ELLs' language proficiency. Additionally, *t* tests were included to test the significance of each beta. The predictor variable of learning strategies yielded the largest beta of .166 and a *t* value of 2.930 ($p < .01$) resulting in a significant relationship with the criterion variable ELLs' language proficiency. The predictor variable of linguistic distance yielded the second largest beta of .106 and a *t* value of 2.588 ($p = .01$) resulting in a significant relationship with the criterion variable ELLs' language proficiency. Moreover, the predictor variable of ELLs' motivation about language learning was marginally significant relationship with the criterion variable ELLs' language proficiency ($p = .057$). Finally, the predictor variable learning environment yielded a beta of .001 and a *t* value of .021 ($p = .984$) while the predictor variable beliefs yielded a beta of .018 and a *t* value of .319 ($p = .750$) resulting in a non-significant relationship ($p > .05$) between learning environment, beliefs, and ELLs' language proficiency.

Gender

To find the difference between male and female students on ELLs' language proficiency, as well as on the five factors, Independent Samples *t* tests were calculated. The results were shown in Table 16. A significant difference was found between male and females for language proficiency, $t(605) = -2.04, p < .05$, but no differences were found between males and females on any of the five factors. Examination of the means showed that females ($M = 165.15, SD = 35.38$) had significantly greater TOEFL scores than males ($M = 159.25, SD = 36.03$).

Summary

The results of this study showed relationships with the subscales for age, TOEFL scores, reasons for learning English, and types of learning aids in the home environment were related to the subscales. The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What do ELLs perceive to be the important factors contributing to their language learning?

As shown in Table 13, respondents had the greatest importance ratings about their language learning were their beliefs about language learning subscale, followed by the learning environment, learning strategies, motivation about language learning, and linguistic distance. The linguistic distance subscale had the lowest importance ratings. Therefore, ELLs' perceive that their beliefs about language learning were the important factor contributing to their language learning.

Table 16

Average TOEFL and Subscale Scores between Male and Female ELL Students

| | N | Mean | SD | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----------------------------|-----|--------|-------|----------|----------|
| TOEFL Score | | | | | |
| Male | 306 | 159.25 | 36.03 | -2.035 | .042 |
| Female | 300 | 165.15 | 35.38 | | |
| Environment | | | | | |
| Male | 306 | 4.24 | 0.47 | -.006 | .995 |
| Female | 300 | 4.24 | 0.59 | | |
| Learning Strategies | | | | | |
| Male | 306 | 3.98 | 0.47 | .464 | .643 |
| Female | 300 | 3.96 | 0.47 | | |
| Motivation | | | | | |
| Male | 306 | 3.45 | 0.67 | -1.250 | .212 |
| Female | 300 | 3.52 | 0.64 | | |
| Beliefs | | | | | |
| Male | 306 | 4.27 | 0.48 | -.009 | .993 |
| Female | 300 | 4.27 | 0.60 | | |
| Linguistic Distance | | | | | |
| Male | 306 | 3.10 | 0.83 | 1.152 | .250 |
| Female | 300 | 3.02 | 0.84 | | |

Research Question 2: What are the relationships between these factors affecting ELLs' language learning and their language proficiency?

Presented in Table 15 are the results of the multiple regression, using the five factors as predictor variables, and ELLs' language proficiency as a criterion variable. The results showed that two of the five factors (learning strategies and linguistic distance) contributed significantly to the prediction of ELLs' language proficiency, and motivation is marginally significantly to the prediction of ELLs' language proficiency. That is, learning strategies was the most important effect on ELLs' language proficiency (Beta = .166), followed by linguistic distance (Beta = -.106), and motivation (Beta = -.4.63).

ELLs' language proficiency was mediated by the relationships among ELLs' learning strategies and linguistic distance between their first language and English. In other words, controlling for the other subscales, as rating the importance on learning strategies increased a unit, TOEFL scores increased 12.77 points ($B = 12.77, p < .01$). Controlling for the other subscales, as rating the importance on linguistic distance increased, TOEFL scores decreased ($B = -4.57, p < .01$). Accordingly, ELLs' language proficiency could be predicted from their learning strategies, motivation, and linguistic distance of ELLs' first language and English. In other words, the relationships between ELLs' language proficiency and ELLs' learning strategies as well as ELLs' linguistic distance are strong. The relationship between ELLs' language proficiency and their motivation about language learning is moderate strong.

Specifically, the following hypotheses were examined in the present study:

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship among the factors contributing to ELLs' language learning.

The researcher hypothesized that there is a relationship among five factors: learning environment, learning strategies, motivation, ELLs' beliefs about language learning, and linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English. The results of Pearson Correlation among the factors showed that four factors (learning environment, learning strategies, motivation, and ELLs' beliefs about language learning) were significantly correlated to each other.

Hypothesis 2: The learning environment will significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English.

Learning environment was hypothesized to increase ELLs' language proficiency. The result of this study rejected this hypothesis. The relationship between learning environment and ELLs' language proficiency was not significant.

Hypothesis 3: The learning strategies will significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English.

The researcher hypothesized that ELLs' language proficiency would predict by ELLs' learning strategies. The result of this study confirmed this hypothesis. The relationship between learning strategies and ELLs' language proficiency was significant ($\beta = 0.166, p < .05$). In addition, ELLs who perceived that learning strategies contribute

to language learning did in fact have higher TOEFL scores. Also, the data supported that emphasis on learning strategies, ELLs' language proficiency increased ($B = 12.77$).

Hypothesis 4: ELLs' motivation will significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English.

The researcher hypothesized that ELLs' motivation impact ELLs' language proficiency. However, the result of this study showed that there was no significant relationship between motivation and ELLs' language proficiency.

Hypothesis 5: ELLs' beliefs about language learning will significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English.

The researcher hypothesized that ELLs' beliefs about language learning would predict ELLs' language proficiency. However, the results of the multiple regression performed that ELLs' language proficiency could not be predicted from this factor ($B = 1.20$). So, the relationship between ELLs' language proficiency and beliefs is weak.

Hypothesis 6: The linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English will significantly predict ELLs' language proficiency in English.

Linguistic distance between ELLs' first language and English was hypothesized to increase ELLs' language proficiency. The results from this study partially confirmed this hypothesis, the relationship between linguistic distance and ELLs' language proficiency is significant, but negative ($B = -4.57$). That is, the perceived importance of linguistic distance, ELLs' language proficiency decrease with ELLs' linguistic distance

This chapter described the results of data collected from English language learners (ELLs) at English language institutes in the United States, ELLs' perceptions regarding their language learning. The chapter also reported the findings of statistical analyses of the data. The results of these hypotheses are further discussed in Chapter V. It also discusses limitations of this study and possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUMMARY

Discussion

Many factors affect language learning in students, including the learning environment, learning strategies, motivation about language learning, beliefs about language learning, and the linguistic distance between the English language learners' first language and English. Adult English language learners (ELLs) have a vast amount of language learning experience. When addressing processes that English language institutes use to recruit international students, it is necessary to use ELLs as a source of information. By exploring ELLs' perspectives about language learning, the information gathered in this study can help teachers and directors at English language institutes understand and appreciate factors affecting language learning in order to create a better learning environment to meet their language learning needs. This chapter discusses and summarizes the findings of this study through a discussion of the results from the data analysis in relation to the research questions, implications, and the possible direction for further research.

A total of 606 ELLs who studied at English language institutes in the United States constituted the final sample. Respondents were born in 62 different countries with 34 first languages. The largest group of the respondents was students from Korea, followed by Saudi Arabia, Japan, and Taiwan. Additionally, the respondents' age ranged

from 18 to 59 years old. The 43-item survey was used to explore ELLs' perspectives about English language learning. Employing a series of statistical techniques, descriptive analyses, confirmatory factor analyses, and multiple regression, this study investigated the important factors contributing to language learning from ELLs' perspectives and how these factors relate to ELLs' language learning and language proficiency.

While much is known about the individual factors that contribute to students' language learning, little is known about the relationships among the factors and ELLs' language proficiency. Thus, the researcher created a new model for ELLs about language learning. This new model includes many of the concepts that the researcher has found useful in language learning theory along with concepts in second language acquisition theory. To get the most complete picture of ELLs' learning situation, I proposed a model of learning that would integrate both internal and external factors, such as learning environment, learning strategies, ELLs' beliefs about language learning, that affected ELLs' language learning and illustrated the interactions that occur within these factors (Figure 2.1). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the five factors (learning environment, learning strategies, motivation, beliefs, and linguistic distance) that related to learning English from the perspectives of adult English language learners (ELLs) and to determine the relationship among the factors and their language proficiency. The following questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What do ELLs perceive to be the important factors contributing to their language learning?

The first research question addressed ELLs' perception towards the five factors in language learning. Based on the findings, respondents rated beliefs about language learning as the highest in perceived importance ($M = 4.27$), followed by the learning environment ($M = 4.24$), learning strategies ($M = 3.97$), motivation ($M = 3.48$), and linguistic distance ($M = 3.06$). This result revealed that the most important factor influencing respondents' language learning was their beliefs about language learning. Horwitz (1987) and Wenden (1986) concluded in their research similar results and found that the types of beliefs that students hold affect their learning behaviors.

Beliefs about language learning can be referred to as opinions or views held by people on language learning. Wenden (1986) and Horwitz (1988) stated that the learners' beliefs could influence their learning. Examples of the influence of beliefs on language learning include the way learners react to particular teaching methods, the way they evaluate their learning progress, and the way they use language learning strategies. For this study, beliefs about language learning were shown to play a major role in English language learning for ELLs at the English language institutes. A ranking of ELLs' beliefs is listed in Table 17.

Table 17

The Ranking of ELLs' Beliefs from the Respondents

| Rank | Item Description | Mean |
|------|--|------|
| 1 | Item 5 Practice English with native English speakers | 4.67 |
| 2 | Item 7 Children learn a foreign language more easily than adults | 4.54 |
| 3 | Item 31 Learn English in an English-speaking country | 4.39 |
| 4 | Item 40 It is important to have a skillful teacher | 4.15 |
| 5 | Item 20 Important to speak English with excellent pronunciation | 3.96 |
| 6 | Item 23 Speak English fluently has a better opportunity to get a job | 3.91 |

Among all the items in the beliefs section, respondents perceived that practicing English with native English speakers was critical for learning English. During the data analyzed, four items were eliminated because of the low factor loading. That is, respondents perceived that these four items were not as important as the other items. Among the eliminated items, two of the items addressed that the most important part of learning English is learning vocabulary and mastering the grammar. This belief is not typical of what the research literature has shown about the importance of word study in learning a language (Krashen, 1992). It may, however, reflect that respondents believed

they needed to learn a language in a setting that is meaningful and could be used in everyday situations rather than concern with the rules and error corrections. The study shows that respondents believed they needed to converse more with native English speakers and have a skillful teacher guide them in order to improve their English proficiency. These beliefs reflect ELLs' learning environment is another area affecting language learning.

In this study, learning environment included two aspects: one is in the classroom and the other one is outside of the classroom. According to the learning environment section presented in Table 18, the respondents preferred having native speakers to converse with them outside the classroom, having a good communication with their teachers, and having opportunities to express opinion in the classroom. Accordingly, the respondents wanted to have the learning environment rooted in a meaningful context and supported by a classroom environment as well as a social setting outside the classroom in order to have a significant effect on language learning. Similar findings from Pica (1994) identified four conditions for successful language learning:

1. Learners should be given input that is made meaningful and comprehensible,
2. Learners selectively attend to the form of the input as well as its meaning,
3. Learners must produce the second language, and
4. Learners should be given feedback toward greater comprehensibility, appropriateness, and accuracy.

Table 18

The Ranking of the Learning Environment from the Respondents

| Rank | Item Description | Mean |
|------|--|------|
| 1 | Item 29 Native English speakers as friends to converse with | 4.39 |
| 2 | Item 28 Students have good communications with their teachers | 4.30 |
| 3 | Item 8 Opportunity to express opinions in my English class | 4.29 |
| 4 | Item 16 Practice conversations with other students several times | 4.26 |
| 5 | Item 3 Watch TV programs in English outside the classroom | 4.23 |
| 6 | Item 9 Use the real-life activities in the classroom | 4.23 |
| 7 | Item 30 Important to have a supportive teacher of English | 4.14 |
| 8 | Item 26 Important to repeat words and phrases several times | 4.08 |

Based on the result presented in Table 18, the respondents responded that practicing conversations with other students several times, watching TV programs in English outside the classroom, and using the real-life activities in the classroom were important for language learning. It appeared that learners may need to be exposed to meaningful input in various contexts to acquire the target language effectively and may need to be offered opportunities to use English both receptively and productively.

Teachers become an important role in language learners' learning process as teachers can facilitate active participation.

Teachers help build the academic foundations in the ELLs' learning process by encouraging students to independently seek outside resources to further their learning process. Teaching is viewed as the means whereby the conditions for learning are created (Ledford & Sleeman, 2000). In other words, besides receiving knowledge from the language teacher, students may need to be offered various opportunities for constructing their language knowledge both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Learning takes place through repeated interaction with the social environment that learners begin to build linguistic proficiency. Therefore, ELLs need to have an environment in which they are able to express their opinion, use the real-life activities in the classroom, and friends to converse with in English.

As previously discussed, ELLs perceived that their beliefs and the learning environments were the most important factors in learning English. Surprisingly, this study determined that the linguistic distance ($M = 3.06$) was the least important language learning factor as perceived by ELLs. Corder (1981) and Nation (2001) have expressed that for learners whose first language is closely related to the second language, the learning burden of most words will be lighter. For learners whose first language is not related to the target language, the learning burden is heavier (Nation, 2001). So, when the linguistic distance between the learner's first language and the target language is closer, it is easier for the learner to pick up on the target language.

Based on the findings reported in this study, it is interesting to note that students at the language institutes were more concerned about other factors (beliefs, learning environment, learning strategies, and motivation) than they were about the linguistic distance. This finding appears to contradict current theory. Yet a closer analysis of the data indicated that ELLs who had higher TOEFL scores or who were more advanced in their knowledge of the language showed a lower perception of the importance of linguistic distance. Accordingly, ELLs' perceptions of beliefs about learning the language and the importance of the learning environment may suggest that social interactions while learning a language decreases the need to emphasize on the structural similarities of the language being studied. Therefore, the respondents in this study perceived that beliefs and learning environment are the most important factors for language learning.

Research Question 2: What are the relationships between the factors and ELLs' language proficiency?

The second research question focused on the relationship between the five language learning factors and ELLs' language proficiency. Language proficiency as determined by the TOEFL score was used as the dependent variable, and the five language learning factors (learning environment, learning strategies, beliefs, motivation, and linguistic distance) were used as the independent variables.

In this study, the findings indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between learning strategies and ELLs' language proficiency; but negative

significant relationship between linguistic distance and ELLs' language proficiency. Additionally, there was a significant relationship among four factors (learning environment, learning strategies, beliefs and motivation).

Learning Strategies and ELLs' Language Proficiency

Learning strategies were identified in this study as learning techniques, behaviors, problem-solving or study skills which make learning more effective and efficient (Oxford and Crookall, 1989). The relationship between learning strategies and ELL's language proficiency was significant. The more importance the ELL placed on learning strategies, the higher the ELL's language proficiency score. While this study did not attempt to measure the degree of use of learning strategies, the relationship of learning strategies to ELL's language proficiency suggest that ELLs' perceived learning strategies contribute to language learning and in fact the data supports the increased ELLs' language proficiency ($B = 12.77$). Emphasis on learning strategies by teachers of ELLs appears to be important to English language learners.

Among the learning strategies presented in Table 19, ELLs perceived that applying the language that they have learned in their daily life was important for language learning. Also, the respondents in this study would like to know what classroom activities help them learn the language and have classmates that are interested in learning English. The existing research has shown that strategies make learning more effective. The result from this study remains consistent with findings from the majority of existing strategy studies (e.g., Chamot, 1990; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford &

Nyikos, 1989; Park, 1997), which suggest language proficiency was affected by learners' strategy use. Overall, it becomes clear that there are indeed differences between good readers/language learners and poor readers/language learners and proficiency level. This study has provided evidence that ELLs' language proficiency has a significant effect by their strategy use. The relationship between ELLs' learning strategy and their language proficiency is significant.

Table 19

The Ranking of the Learning Strategies from the Respondents

| Rank | Item Description | Mean |
|------|---|------|
| 1 | Item 24 How the English I have learned can be used in everyday life | 4.24 |
| 2 | Item 38 Know what classroom activities work best to help me learn | 4.17 |
| 3 | Item 32 Have classmates who are interested in learning English | 4.11 |
| 4 | Item 27 New concepts by relating them to things I already know | 3.92 |
| 5 | Item 4 To monitor their own learning in English | 3.88 |
| 6 | Item 6 Search for information from a several resources | 3.79 |
| 7 | Item 35 Acceptable for students to attempt a word they don't know | 3.68 |

Linguistic Distance and ELLs' Language Proficiency

Based on the result of multiple regression, linguistic distance was the second most important factor contributed to the prediction of ELLs' that language proficiency.

However, when exploring the relationship between linguistic distance and language proficiency, there was a significant negative effect. That is, ELLs' language proficiency decrease with ELLs' linguistic distance increased. This finding does not match with current thinking in the study of language learning. Yet, this negative relationship may suggest that as ELLs become less dependent on the commonalities of language structures if their English proficiency increases.

The respondents with the less proficiency in language may tend to be concerned with the linguistic distance between their first language and English. ELLs may study the differences between their first language and English in the form, the meaning, the sentence structure, and the use of words, rather than acquiring the language in daily situations. Another possible explanation is that the respondent with a higher TOEFL score better tolerates the differences between their first language and English than the respondent with a lower TOEFL score.

The Relationship among the Factors

The result of Pearson Correlation among the factors determined that four factors (learning environment, learning strategies, beliefs, and motivation) were significantly correlated to each other. According to ELLs' perception in this study, they think that practicing English with native English speakers and applying the language that ELLs

have learned in their daily life is very important for language learning. In order to practice English with English speaking students, ELLs may need to have a social setting to be able to interact with English speaking students. Similar to applying the language that ELLs have learned in their everyday life, ELLs may need to have this environment to practice what ELLs have learned. Practicing English with native speakers and applying the language in the daily life, ELLs may use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence. Social interaction is important when learning a language otherwise students have difficulty learning basic interpersonal communication skills. The interaction between learner and environment is strongly emphasized. A relationship is seen between learning environment, both in the classroom and outside the classroom in the social setting, and learning strategy.

The relationship is statistically significant between ELLs' beliefs and learning environment. Based on ELLs' perception in this study, they believed it is important to practice English with native English speakers and to have a skillful teacher while learning a language. This belief indicated that native English speakers and the teachers in learning environment were very critical. According to Vygotsky's theory (1978), it is important for teachers to foster learning by modeling, scaffolding, and helping students to construct understanding, with the goal of becoming independent thinkers and problem solvers. Teachers can help English language learners become literate by carefully considering all the activities presented to English language learners, making necessary adoptions to the curriculum, and offering support where needed.

Learners' motivation has been found to be a critical component in language learning (Dornyei, 1990; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Schmidt et al., 1996). Several researchers (e.g., Gardner, 1985; Ellis, 1997; Brown, 2000) pointed out that two types of motivation, integrated and instrumental, have been found to impact the language learning. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), two major motivational orientations were discussed: instrumental orientation for enhancing career or academic prospects and integrated orientation for fitting in with people who speak the language. Of significant interest is the result from the demographic information which shows respondents learn English for their future career (83.2%), followed by college acceptance (63.2%) and language interest (57.8%). A result from the questionnaire strongly indicates that understanding and appreciating American arts and literature was the first reason respondents learn English. The results of this study showed that the reasons that motivated the respondents to learn English were they want to get a good job and are interested in American culture. Accordingly, learning English is a way for ELLs to achieve practical benefits, such as passing the university's language proficiency requirement, attaining good grades, and getting a good job in the future. The importance of achieving high levels of English language proficiency is becoming more salient to ELLs not only because they are required to pass certain benchmark (such as TOEFL), but also because English is the official language of instruction at the universities across all the disciplines. This study indicated that both motivational orientations (instrumental and integrated) play a prominent role in students' motivation to learn English.

Learning a language is a complex process. As an educator or researcher, we cannot focus on one factor individually and ignore the complexity of the learning process. In order to broaden students' desire to learn in school, teachers may need to consider the activities carefully to increase ELLs' interest to learn more and provide the opportunities for them to express their opinion in the classroom. We can see that this learning process involves teachers, the learning environment in the classroom, and the learners' cooperation. Four factors (learning environment, learning strategies, beliefs, and motivation) in this study were significantly related.

Implications

Exploring ELLs' perspectives yielded information that can be utilized by English language institutes, teachers in language institutions, and to further our understanding of the complexity of the language learning process.

Recommendations for the Director at English Language Institutes

Based on the findings in this study, some implications for the directors at English language institutes are suggested.

First, the ELLs' learning environment for language learning in the United States is a critical factor. It is important to have an appropriate learning environment both in the classroom and outside the classroom for ELLs in order to apply the language that they have learned in their daily life which was perceived by ELLs from this study. An example would be considered living with the native speakers in a dormitory rather than living by herself or himself in an apartment, or with some friends who speak the same

language. ELLs may interact directly with people who know how the language works and how it can be used (Wong Fillmore, 1991) to build linguistic proficiency.

Second, language institutes directors may want to develop their programs using opportunities for students to communicate with native speakers as a criterion for program quality. An example of a program design included inviting graduate students that are in an English as a second language major into the classroom to pair up with higher level of students at English language institutes in conversation and writing classes. For the less proficiency of English language students, they can learn from the higher level students at English language institutes. Accordingly, all the students at English language institutes have opportunities to interact with the people who are more competent in English. In this learning process, ELLs receive help from students proficient in English and make strides during their learning process (Vygotsky, 1978).

The findings in this study concerning learners' beliefs about language learning and ELLs' learning strategies in their learning environment provides directors at English language institutes in the United States with more knowledge about language learning from the perspective of English language learners. With this knowledge the directors at language institutes could make better decisions regarding the curriculum design as well as creating a meaningful learning environment for English language learners.

Recommendations for the Teachers at English Language Institutes

Based on the findings in this study, some pedagogical implications for the teachers at English language institutes are suggested.

It is important to make students aware of their own learning process and all the learning strategies actually available to them. In order for students to learn to use learning strategies, teachers might emphasize two areas. The first area focuses on teaching learning strategies that accelerate ELLs' language learning, such as how to make the connection between the new concepts with the things that learners already know. The second area of consideration includes the attention that teachers give to students' explorations of learning strategies, such as making the connection between the new concepts and the things that the learners already know. These strategies include practicing English by making use of new language input as well as constantly writing and speaking the language.

It is necessary that teachers enrich the learning environment in the classroom by offering more opportunities for students to learn, use, and practice English. Moreover, activities which allow students to practice English outside the classroom help; most of the respondents did not speak English at home and practiced speaking English once they left the classroom.

Finally, English language learners need to be better informed about the availability of English materials and given easy access to such materials outside classroom contact hours. This study and others (e.g., Green & Oxford, 1995) have found that more proficient learners contact other sources outside the classroom for improving their language skills, such as watching TV and films in the target language, listening to the radio in the target language, and reading materials in the target language. Therefore,

providing ELLs with easy access to authentic input in the target language via various means, both in and especially outside the classroom, can lead to increased motivation and more positive attitudes towards language learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study presented a new way to study the relationships that exist among factors and thus introduces a new construct for studying the factors related to language learning.

The following suggestions for further research:

1. Using other methods to gather the data. For example, a think-aloud protocol and/or an interview, or a mixed, methodological design consisting of semi-structured interviews might yield some insights into these factors affecting ELLs' language learning. Case studies of individuals would provide a clearer picture of the complex learning process. It is important to take into account the qualitative aspects of language and of its learners in order to better understand what factors contribute to language learning.
2. Language learning is a complex process involving long periods of time, usually hundreds of hours of instruction and contact spread over several years. A longitudinal case study approach may be useful to investigate the learning process. Such research could combine the periodic collection of language production data with case study procedures. More individualized and qualitative analysis-orientated research would complement a future study to get more depth about language learning from English language learners.

3. Several researchers have called for the replication of language learning studies within and across various cultures and countries in order to compare results and determine the generalizability and significance of the findings (e.g., Rees-Miller, 1993; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). The limited availability of the Western European respondents may have resulted from the fact that the respondents were gathered from English language institutes in the United States. It seemed that the biggest cultural group in most of the English language institutes was the Asian group, and that the only fraction of the respondents belonged to the Western group. Future research should focus on a different source for the Western subjects should be sought. For example, gathering Western respondents from Europe and utilizing TOEFL or other language proficiency tests to compare the findings across the different cultures and countries.
4. Regarding the relationship among several factors affecting the language learning, these results were initial study. Further investigation with additional questions is necessary to support or modify the findings of the present study as well as the model that the researcher has created at the beginning of this study. It is necessary to create the questionnaire through the additional studies, such as case study, and test the questionnaire in different groups to verify the validity and reliability, and then the researcher

would be able to employ a more advanced analysis that could contribute to a complex model of relationships about language learning.

Summary

The present study surveyed adult ELLs' perceptions about five factors that affecting their language learning. Additionally, this study determined the relationship between the factors and ELLs' language proficiency. The perceptions of the ELLs provide information for language institutes and teachers in language institutes. This investigation examined five language learning factors affecting 606 English language learners at English language institutes in the United States. These five factors were related to ELLs' language proficiency in their language learning. The data from this study suggest that the most important factor influencing ELLs to learn English regardless of proficiency level at English language institutes was learners' beliefs about language learning. Linguistic distance was the least important factor. Moreover, there was a significant relationship among the four factors: learning environment, learning strategies, beliefs, and motivation. The results of this study confirmed the partial of the researcher's hypothesis. First, four factors (learning environment, learning strategies, motivation and ELLs' beliefs about language learning) were significant correlated to one another. Second, the relationship between learning strategies and ELLs' language proficiency was significant. Third, the perceived importance of linguistic distance, ELLs' language proficiency decrease with ELLs' linguistic distance increased. Further investigations about the relationships among five factors for ELLs are needed.

The researcher's perspective is that international students need our comprehensive effort to support their language learning. With the results from the present study, the directors and teachers at English language institutes in the United States are able to develop the learning environment ELLs need to learn a new language effectively.

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APPENDIX A

**Approval Letters from Texas Woman's University
At Institutional Review Board**



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378 Fax 940-898-3416
e-mail: IRB@twu.edu

January 25, 2006

Ms. Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou
1803 North Bell Ave.
Denton, TX 76209

Dear Ms. Chou:

Re: Factors Affecting Language Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language Institutes in The United States

The above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was determined to be exempt from further review.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt PRIOR to any data collection at that agency. Because you do not use a signed consent form in your study, the filing of signatures of participants with the TWU IRB is not required.

Another review by the IRB is required if your project changes in any way, and the IRB must be notified immediately regarding any adverse events. If you have any questions, feel free to call the TWU Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Nichols, Chair
Institutional Review Board - Denton

cc. Dr. Margaret Compton, Department of Reading
Dr. Anne Simpson, Department of Reading
Graduate School

APPENDIX B

An Invitation Letter to English Language Institutes

Title: Factors Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners
at Language Institutes in the United States

Investigator: Emily Chou, M.A.

(940) 243-0825

Advisor: Anne Simpson, Ph.D.

(940) 898-2049

Dear [Name of the director:]

The students at [name of the institute] are being invited to participate in a research project for Emily Chou's dissertation at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this study is to explore the importance of various factors related to language learning from the perspective of English language learners (ELLs). These factors will be determined through a questionnaire to be completed by English language learners who are studying at language institutes. Students will not be asked to identify themselves to ensure confidentiality. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The students' involvement in this research is completely voluntary, and they may discontinue their participation in this study at any time without penalty.

The significant findings of this study contribute directly to the body of research about ELLs' perspectives on language learning and will increase the existing knowledge of the factors which are important for ELLs' language learning.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at 940-243-0825 or Emilychou2006@yahoo.com

Sincerely,

Emily Chou

APPENDIX C

Cover Letter of Questionnaire for Language Institutes

Title: Factors Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners
at Language Institutes in the United States

Investigator: Emily Chou, M.A.

(940) 243-0825

Advisor: Anne Simpson, Ph.D.

(940) 898-2049

Dear [Name of the director:]

Thank you for participating in my study. The purpose of this study is to explore the importance of various factors related to language learning from the perspective of adult English language learners (ELLs). These factors will be determined through a questionnaire to be completed by English language learners who are studying at language institutes. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The students' involvement in this research is completely voluntary, and they may discontinue their participation in this study at any time without penalty.

The survey includes two sections. Section I covers demographic information. Section II consists of 43 statements of belief and feelings about language learning. The students respond to these statements, based on their experience of learning a language and their beliefs. Please assist me in conducting my research by distributing the following survey to your students and collecting the completed survey. Also, please place the completed survey in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided and return it to the researcher. If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at emilychou2006@yahoo.com

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. I hope together we will be able to make a difference in assisting future English language learners to accomplish their goals.

Sincerely,

Emily Chou

APPENDIX D

Questionnaire

The return of your complete questionnaire constitutes your informed consent to act as a participant in this research.

I. DEMOGRAPHICS:

Please write in the blank spaces provided, or check an appropriate box.

Date: _____

1. Please indicate your age: _____
2. Please indicate your gender: Male Female
3. Have you taken the TOEFL test? Yes No (If No, go to the question 5)
4. If yes, what was your score? _____
 Which year did you take the TOEFL test? _____
5. What other assessment tests (e.g. TOEIC test , Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency,) have you been taken? _____
 What was your score for each test? _____
6. What is your language level in Language Institute this semester? _____
7. How long have you been learning English? _____
8. Please list all your grades for each course from the last term? (If it is your first semester in the Language Institute, please skip this question and go to question 7)
 Grammar: _____ Reading: _____ Writing: _____
 Communication: _____ Others: _____
9. In what country were you born? _____
10. What is your mother tongue (first language)? _____
11. What language do you usually speak at school? _____
 What language do you usually speak at home? _____
12. What other language(s) do you speak? _____

The return of your complete questionnaire constitutes your informed consent to act as a participant in this research.

13. Why do you want to learn English? (Check all that apply)

- I am interested in this language
- I am interested in the American culture
- I have friends who speak this language
- I am required to take this course in order to graduate
- I need it for my future career
- I need it for acceptance to university/college in the United States
- other (list): _____

14. How many books in English are there in your home? (Do not include magazines, newspapers, or your schoolbooks)

- 0-10 books 11-25 books 26-100 books
- 101-200 books More than 200 books

15. Which of the following do you have in your home now? (Check all that apply)

- A quiet place to study
- A computer you can use for school work
- Educational software
- A link to the Internet
- Classic literature
- Books of poetry
- Books to help you with your school work
- A Dictionary

II. ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING:

Using the following 1-5 scale, please indicate the degree to which you agree with the statements listed below:

_____ 1 2 3 4 5 _____
 Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

| No. | Statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I am studying English to be more at ease with people who speak English. | | | | | |

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

| No. | Statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | To learn English, it is important for students to look for the definition of every new word from a dictionary. | | | | | |
| 3. | To learn English, it is important to watch TV programs in English outside the classroom. | | | | | |
| 4. | It is important for a student to monitor their own learning in English. | | | | | |
| 5. | It is important to practice English with native English speakers. | | | | | |
| 6. | To clarify a problem with English, it is important to search for information from a several resources. | | | | | |
| 7. | Children learn a foreign language more easily than adults. | | | | | |
| 8. | To learn English, it is important to have an opportunity to express opinions in my English classes. | | | | | |
| 9. | To learn English, it is important to use the real-life activities in the classroom. | | | | | |
| 10. | The most important part of learning English is learning vocabulary words. | | | | | |
| 11. | The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language. | | | | | |
| 12. | I am studying English to better understand and appreciate American arts and literature. | | | | | |
| 13. | People who are good at mathematics or sciences are not good at learning foreign languages. | | | | | |
| 14. | I am studying English to make myself a more knowledgeable person. | | | | | |
| 15. | Some languages are easier to learn than others. | | | | | |
| 16. | To learn English, it is important to practice conversation with other students several times. | | | | | |
| 17. | It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it. | | | | | |
| 18. | I am studying English to get a good job. | | | | | |
| 19. | The most important part of learning English is mastering the grammar. | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 20. | It is important to speak English with excellent pronunciation. | | | | | |
| 21. | To learn English, it is important for my native language to have similar grammar to English. | | | | | |
| 22. | I am studying English to gain the respect of other people. | | | | | |
| 23. | A non-native English speaker who speaks English fluently has a better opportunity to get a job. | | | | | |
| 24. | It is important to know how the English I have learned can be used in everyday life. | | | | | |
| 25. | To learn English, it is important for my native language to have similar pronunciation to English. | | | | | |
| 26. | To learn English, it is important to repeat words and phrases several times by oneself. | | | | | |
| 27. | It is important to understand new concepts by relating them to things I already know. | | | | | |
| 28. | To learn English, it is important that students have good communication with their teachers of English. | | | | | |
| 29. | To learn English, it is important to have a native English speaker as a friend to converse with outside the classroom. | | | | | |
| 30. | To learn English, it is important to have a supportive teacher of English. | | | | | |
| 31. | It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country. | | | | | |
| 32. | It is important to have classmates who are interested in learning English. | | | | | |
| 33. | To learn English, it is important to work in the whole class. | | | | | |
| 34. | I am studying English to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups. | | | | | |
| 35. | To learn English, it is acceptable for students to attempt a word they don't know in English. | | | | | |

1
2
3
4
5

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

| No. | Statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 36. | To most people in my country, it is important to be able to speak English. | | | | | |
| 37. | To learn English, it is important to work with other students in pairs or small groups. | | | | | |
| 38. | It is important for my teachers to know what classroom activities work best to help me learn listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. | | | | | |
| 39. | To learn English, it is important to read printed materials in English outside the classroom. | | | | | |
| 40. | To learn English, it is important to have a skillful teacher. | | | | | |
| 41. | To learn English, it is important for the writing system of my native language to be similar to English. | | | | | |
| 42. | To learn English, it is important to work individually with a teacher. | | | | | |
| 43. | To learn English, it is important for one's native language to be similar to English. | | | | | |

APPENDIX E

English Language Institutes Approval Letters

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Tutorium in Intensive English (MC 324)
1333 South Halsted Street, Suite 260
Chicago, Illinois 60607-5019

Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou, M.A.
TWU Reading Education
2220 Stonegate Dr.,
Denton, Texas 76205

September 12, 2006

Dear Ms. Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou:

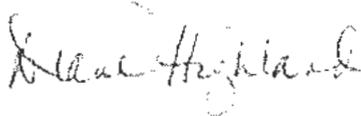
The Tutorium in Intensive English, University of Illinois at Chicago, will participate in the study *Factor Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language Institutes in the United States*.

We understand the purpose of this study is to survey the importance of varied factors related to language learning from the perspective of English language learners and to determine the effects of all the factors on English language learners' language proficiency.

We understand that questionnaires will be used to collect data from the English language learners at intermediate and advanced level. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected by number code.

We understand that we may contact the researcher at any time during the study and will receive the results when the study is completed. We understand that participation in this study is completed voluntarily, and that we may discontinue our participation at any time.

Sincerely,



Diane Highland, Director

UIC

Phone (312) 996-8188 • Fax (312) 996-4394 • E-mail tutorium@uic.edu



English as a Second Language Program
3800 Victory Parkway
Cincinnati, Ohio 45207-2511
Phone 513 745-2847
Fax 513 745-3846

October 19, 2006

Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou, M.A.
TWU Reading Education
2220 Stonegate Dr.,
Denton, Texas 76205

Dear Ms. Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou:

The Intensive English Program at Xavier University will participate in the study *Factor Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language Institutes in the United States*.

We understand the purpose of this study is to survey the importance of varied factors related to language learning from the perspective of English language learners and to determine the effects of all the factors on English language learners' language proficiency.

We understand that questionnaires will be used to collect data from the English language learners at intermediate and advanced level. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected by number code.

We understand that we may contact the researcher at any time during the study and will receive the results when the study is completed. We understand that participation in this study is completed voluntary, and that we may discontinue our participation at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane S. Conzett".

Jane S. Conzett, Director
Intensive English Program

Savannah College
of Art and Design

October 10, 2006

Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou, M.A.
TWU Reading Education
2220 Stonegate Dr.
Denton, Texas 76205

Dear Emily,

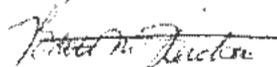
The ESL program at the Savannah College of Art and Design will participate in the study *Factors Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language Institutes in the United States*.

We understand the purpose of this study is to survey the importance of varied factors related to language learning from the perspective of English language learners and to determine the effects of all the factors on English language learners' language proficiency.

We understand that questionnaires will be used to collect data from the English language learners at intermediate and advanced level. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected by number code.

We understand that we may contact the researcher at any time during the study and will receive the results when the study is completed. We understand that participation in this study is completed voluntary, and that we may discontinue our participation at any time.

Sincerely,



Brett Reichert
Director of ESL
Savannah College of Art and Design
www.scad.edu/esl
An "AAIEP Approved" Program
912-525-7306
Fax 912-525-5251

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Savannah College of Art and Design
www.scad.edu





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Reno, Nevada 89557
TEL (775) 784-6075
FAX (775) 784-4015
E-mail: ielc@unr.edu
<http://www.unr.edu/ielc>

Deirdre W. Noyan
Director

July 11, 2006

Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou, M.A.
TWU Reading Education
2220 Stonegate Dr.,
Denton, Texas 76205

Dear Ms. Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou:

The Intensive English Language Center at University of Nevada in Reno will participate in the study *Factor Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language Institutes in the United States*.

We understand the purpose of this study is to survey the importance of five factors related to language learning from the perspective of English language learners and to determine the effects of all the factors on English language learners' language proficiency.

We understand that questionnaires will be used to collect data from the English language learners at intermediate and advanced level. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected by number code.

We understand that we may contact the researcher at any time during the study and will receive the results when the study is completed. We understand that participation in this study is completed voluntary, and that we may discontinue our participation at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kende Franklin".

Kende Franklin
Marketing and Recruiting Director

the
LANGUAGE
COMPANY

TLC: EDMOND LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

June 26, 2008

Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou, M.A.
TWU Reading Education
2220 Stonegate Dr.,
Denton, Texas 76205

Dear Ms. Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou:

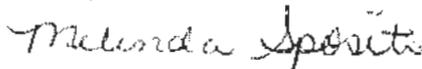
The Language Company: Edmond Language Institute will participate in the study
*Factor Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language
Institutes in the United States*

We understand the purpose of this study is to survey the importance of five factors
related to language learning from the perspective of adult English language learners
and to determine the effects of all the factors on adult English language learners'
language proficiency.

We understand that questionnaires will be used to collect data from the adult English
language learners at intermediate and advanced level. The confidentiality of the
participants will be protected by number code.

We understand that we may contact the researcher at any time during the study and
will receive the results when the study is completed. We understand that participation
in this study is completely voluntary, and that we may discontinue our participation at any time.

Sincerely,



Melinda Sposito, Director
Edmond Language Institute



TLC: EDMOND LANGUAGE INSTITUTE • UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA
100 N. UNIVERSITY DRIVE • P.M.B. 341881 • EDMOND, OKLAHOMA 73034-5289 • U.S.A.
Tel: (405) 341-2125 • FAX: (405) 341-1165 • E-mail: eli2@ix.netcom.com
Website: www.thelanguagecompany.com





May 26, 2006

Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou, M.A.
TWU Reading Education
2220 Stonegate Dr.,
Denton, Texas 76205

Dear Ms. Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou:

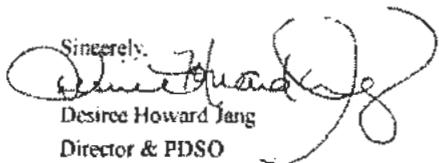
The Language Company, Shawnee English Institute will participate in the study *Factor Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language Institutes in the United States*.

We understand the purpose of this study is to survey the importance of five factors related to language learning from the perspective of adult English language learners and to determine the effects of all the factors on adult English language learners' language proficiency.

We understand that questionnaires will be used to collect data from the adult English language learners at intermediate and advanced level. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected by number code.

We understand that we may contact the researcher at any time during the study and will receive the results when the study is completed. We understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary, and that we may discontinue our participation at any time.

Sincerely,


Desiree Howard Jang
Director & PDSO

Utah State UNIVERSITY

INTENSIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

6715 Old Main Hill
Logan UT 84322-0715
Telephone: (435) 797-2081
Fax: (435) 797-4050
Email: iel@cc.usu.edu
<http://www.usu.edu/iel/>

September 14, 2006

Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou, M.A.
TWU Reading Education
2220 Stonegate Dr.,
Denton, Texas 76205

Dear Ms. Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou:

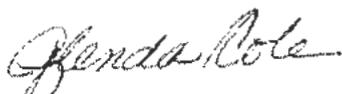
The Intensive English Language Institute at Utah State University will participate in the study *Factor Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language Institutes in the United States*.

We understand the purpose of this study is to survey the importance of varied factors related to language learning from the perspective of English language learners and to determine the effects of all the factors on English language learners' language proficiency.

We understand that questionnaires will be used to collect data from the English language learners at intermediate and advanced level. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected by number code.

We understand that we may contact the researcher at any time during the study and will receive the results when the study is completed. We understand that participation in this study is completed voluntary, and that we may discontinue our participation at any time.

Sincerely,



Glenda Cole
Director
Intensive English Language Institute



Embry-Riddle Language Institute
800 S. Clyde Morris Blvd.
Daytona Beach, FL 32114-0900
(386) 226-8192 Fax: (386) 220-8165
www.embryriddle.edu

September 21, 2006

Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou, M.A.
TWU Reading Education
2220 Stonegate Dr.,
Denton, Texas 76205

Dear Ms. Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou:

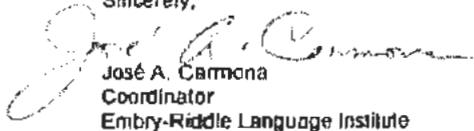
The Embry-Riddle Language Institute at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University will participate in the study *Factor Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language Institutes in the United States*.

We understand the purpose of this study is to survey the importance of varied factors related to language learning from the perspective of English language learners and to determine the effects of all the factors on English language learners' language proficiency.

We understand that questionnaires will be used to collect data from the English language learners at intermediate and advanced level. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected by number code.

We understand that we may contact the researcher at any time during the study and will receive the results when the study is completed. We understand that participation in this study is completed voluntary, and that we may discontinue our participation at any time.

Sincerely,


José A. Carmona
Coordinator
Embry-Riddle Language Institute



SPRING INTERNATIONAL
LANGUAGE CENTER

September 18, 2006

Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou, M.A.
TWU Reading Education
2220 Stonegate Dr.,
Denton, Texas 76205

Dear Ms. Chin-Ting (Emily) Chou:

The Spring International Language Center will participate in the study *Factor Affecting English Proficiency of Adult English Language Learners at Language Institutes in the United States*.

We understand the purpose of this study is to survey the importance of varied factors related to language learning from the perspective of English language learners and to determine the effects of all the factors on English language learners' language proficiency.

We understand that questionnaires will be used to collect data from the English language learners at intermediate and advanced level. The confidentiality of the participants will be protected by number code.

We understand that we may contact the researcher at any time during the study and will receive the results when the study is completed. We understand that participation in this study is completed voluntary, and that we may discontinue our participation at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Jeanne E. Hind'.

Jeanne E. Hind
Director

APPENDIX F
TOEFL TOTAL Score Comparisons



Total Score Comparisons

Score Comparison

| Internet-based Total | Computer-based Total | Paper-based Total |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 120 | 300 | 677 |
| 120 | 297 | 673 |
| 119 | 293 | 670 |
| 118 | 289 | 667 |
| 117 | 287 | 663-663 |
| 116 | 283 | 657 |
| 114-115 | 280 | 650-653 |
| 113 | 277 | 647 |
| 111-112 | 273 | 640-643 |
| 110 | 270 | 637 |
| 109 | 267 | 630-633 |
| 108-108 | 263 | 623-627 |
| 105 | 260 | 617-620 |
| 103-104 | 257 | 613 |
| 101-102 | 253 | 607-610 |
| 100 | 250 | 600-603 |
| 98-98 | 247 | 597 |
| 96-97 | 243 | 590-593 |
| 94-95 | 240 | 587 |
| 92-93 | 237 | 580-583 |
| 90-91 | 233 | 577 |
| 88-89 | 230 | 570-573 |
| 88-87 | 227 | 567 |
| 84-85 | 223 | 563 |
| 83 | 220 | 557-560 |
| 81-82 | 217 | 553 |
| 79-80 | 213 | 550 |
| 77-78 | 210 | 547 |
| 76 | 207 | 540-543 |
| 74-75 | 203 | 537 |
| 72-73 | 200 | 533 |
| 71 | 197 | 527-530 |
| 69-70 | 193 | 523 |
| 68 | 190 | 520 |
| 66-67 | 187 | 517 |
| 65 | 183 | 513 |
| 64 | 180 | 507-510 |

Score Comparison, cont.

| Internet-based Total | Computer-based Total | Paper-based Total |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 62-63 | 177 | 500 |
| 61 | 173 | 500 |
| 60-60 | 170 | 497 |
| 58 | 167 | 493 |
| 57 | 163 | 487-490 |
| 56 | 160 | 483 |
| 54-55 | 157 | 480 |
| 53 | 153 | 477 |
| 52 | 150 | 470-473 |
| 51 | 147 | 467 |
| 49-50 | 143 | 463 |
| 48 | 140 | 460 |
| 47 | 137 | 457 |
| 45-48 | 133 | 450-453 |
| 44 | 130 | 447 |
| 43 | 127 | 443 |
| 41-42 | 123 | 437-440 |
| 40 | 120 | 433 |
| 39 | 117 | 430 |
| 38 | 113 | 423-427 |
| 36-37 | 110 | 420 |
| 35 | 107 | 417 |
| 34 | 103 | 410-413 |
| 33 | 100 | 407 |
| 32 | 97 | 400-403 |
| 30-31 | 93 | 397 |
| 29 | 90 | 390-393 |
| 28 | 87 | 387 |
| 26-27 | 83 | 380-383 |
| 25 | 80 | 377 |
| 24 | 77 | 370-373 |
| 23 | 73 | 363-367 |
| 22 | 70 | 357-360 |
| 21 | 67 | 353 |
| 19-20 | 63 | 347-350 |
| 18 | 60 | 340-343 |
| 17 | 57 | 333-337 |

(continued)



Total Score Comparisons (continued)

Score Comparison, cont.

| Internet-based Total | Computer-based Total | Paper-based Total |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 16 | 53 | 330 |
| 15 | 50 | 323-327 |
| 14 | 47 | 317-320 |
| 13 | 43 | 313 |
| 12 | 40 | 310 |
| 11 | 37 | 310 |
| 9 | 33 | 310 |
| 8 | 30 | 310 |
| 7 | 27 | 310 |
| 6 | 23 | 310 |
| 5 | 20 | 310 |
| 4 | 17 | 310 |
| 3 | 13 | 310 |
| 2 | 10 | 310 |
| 1 | 7 | 310 |
| 0 | 3 | 310 |
| 0 | 0 | 310 |

Range Comparison

| Internet-based Total | Computer-based Total | Paper-based Total |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 111-120 | 273-300 | 640-677 |
| 96-110 | 243-270 | 590-637 |
| 79-85 | 213-240 | 550-607 |
| 63-78 | 183-210 | 513-547 |
| 53-64 | 163-180 | 477-510 |
| 41-52 | 123-150 | 437-475 |
| 30-40 | 83-120 | 397-433 |
| 19-29 | 63-60 | 347-393 |
| 9-18 | 23-60 | 310-343 |
| 0-8 | 0-30 | 310 |

Note: The paper-based total score does not include writing.
The paper-based and computer-based total scores do not include speaking.

APPENDIX G

Basic Demographic: First Languages that the Participants Speak

Frequency and Percentages of First Language (Mother's Tongue)

| | Frequency | % | | Frequency | % |
|------------|-----------|------|------------|-----------|-----|
| Arabic | 140 | 23.1 | German | 3 | 0.4 |
| Korean | 124 | 20.5 | Catalan | 2 | 0.3 |
| Japanese | 84 | 13.9 | Farsi | 2 | 0.3 |
| Mandarin | 83 | 13.7 | Slovene | 1 | 0.2 |
| Spanish | 51 | 8.4 | Bambara | 1 | 0.2 |
| Thailand | 20 | 3.3 | Mexican | 1 | 0.2 |
| Chinese | 13 | 2.1 | Punjabi | 1 | 0.2 |
| Italian | 11 | 1.8 | Swahili | 1 | 0.2 |
| Portuguese | 9 | 1.6 | Singhalese | 1 | 0.2 |
| Polish | 8 | 1.4 | Tanzania | 1 | 0.2 |
| Turkish | 7 | 1.2 | Somali | 1 | 0.2 |
| French | 6 | 1.0 | Guinea | 1 | 0.2 |
| Vietnamese | 6 | 1.0 | Persian | 1 | 0.2 |
| Cantonese | 6 | 1.0 | Pushtz | 1 | 0.2 |
| Mongolia | 5 | 0.8 | Kyrgyz | 1 | 0.2 |
| Russian | 5 | 0.8 | Swedish | 1 | 0.2 |
| Indonesia | 4 | 0.7 | Belarusian | 1 | 0.2 |

Note: Frequencies not adding to 606, percentages not adding to 100, reflect missing data.

APPENDIX H

Basic Demographic:
Other Languages that the Participants Speak

Frequency and Percentages of Other Languages that Participants Speak

| | Frequency | % |
|--------------------|-----------|------|
| None | 453 | 78.8 |
| Japanese | 24 | 4.2 |
| French | 19 | 3.3 |
| Mandarin | 16 | 2.8 |
| Spanish | 14 | 2.4 |
| Italian | 5 | 0.9 |
| Russian | 4 | 0.7 |
| Korean | 3 | 0.5 |
| Chinese | 3 | 0.5 |
| German | 3 | 0.5 |
| English | 2 | 0.3 |
| Hindi | 2 | 0.3 |
| Arabic | 1 | 0.2 |
| Thai | 1 | 0.2 |
| Cantonese | 1 | 0.2 |
| Malaysia | 1 | 0.2 |
| Multiple Languages | 23 | 4.0 |

Note: Frequencies not adding to 575, percentages not adding to 100, reflect missing data.