"All the Time Learning... Three Months are Equal to One Year":

Second Language Learning in a Target-Language Community

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

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to whom I owe what I am today.

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Abstract

Australia hosts thousands of English language learners every year and one of the reasons learners give for this is their belief that living in the target language community naturally avails them of more language learning opportunities than are available in their homelands. In fact, learners actually learn faster and more effectively compared to the limited gains in their respective countries. Believing that the target language community has a strong role in language learning, this research focuses on the factors and opportunities which enable students to develop their language skills in informal settings outside the school.

Due to the vast scope of the research area, six different types of data collection methods have been used so that a wider spectrum in SLA could be investigated. These include an exploration of learner beliefs about their language learning experiences and a study of authentic social activities and linguistic engagements within those activities.

The outcome of this research suggests that language learning is not first initiated "in the head", but starts with the social activities in which learners participate and the qualities of the linguistic challenges and opportunities within these activities. The research draws on sociocultural theory (Vygotsky 1962, 1978), ecological approach to learning (van Lier 1999) and register theory (Halliday and Hasan 1985), and also on a range of research within second language acquisition studies.

The study illustrates that language learning occurs in the context of activity-based communication experiences in authentic contexts, and the more the constant challenge and varied linguistic opportunities exist in the learner's ecology, the more and better the chances to learn language. An overall approach to understanding independent language learning and a conceptual framework for examining informal language learning opportunities, have been developed. The study concludes with some implications for pedagogical practice in English language classrooms.

CHAPTER 1

Language Learning Outside the School: Introduction

"A solution to language teaching lies not so much in expensive equipment, exotic new methods, or sophisticated language analysis, but rather in the full utilisation of the most important resources; native speakers of the language in real communication."

(Krashen 1982, p.1)

1.1 Rationale for the research

Australia, like New Zealand, the US, the UK and Canada, hosts thousands of overseas students for language education from all around the world every year. Often these students, including the participants in this research, study in ELICOS colleges (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students). Adult learners from various non-English speaking countries prefer to learn English in countries where it is spoken supporting a common notion that languages are best learned where they are used. In fact, the outcomes achieved by overseas students through independent learning opportunities in the target language community usually support this notion. As one participant in this research stated "learning English in Australia for three months is equal to one year study in my country". In this sense, learning English in the target language community for these students appears to involve a combination of skills gained from the social activities in which they are involved outside school, as well as formal learning in the classroom.

The noticeable success rate for many students, as observed by teachers, does not solely rely on the differences in the methods of formal studies in language schools. Rather, it is an innate manifestation of the fact that languages come into existence, gain meaning and survive so long as they are spoken in a community, and learning language functionally by authentic activities in real social contexts may be more effective and long-lasting than classroom scenarios. For example, as the student quoted above suggests, many years of theoretical language education may not satisfactorily equip learners with practical language skills.

However, language learning will not be realised if learners do not make *use* of the opportunities offered by the target language (TL) community. In other words, physical existence in the TL community is not sufficient to learn its language. A personal anecdote illustrates this. Noticing a learner's poor English language skills I inquired how long she had been in Australia. She stated that she had been in Australia for six months, but that she had minimal contact through English. She had roommates and a boyfriend from the same linguistic background and spent most of her time at home watching videos in her mother

tongue. Apart from occasional shopping, it seems that she had very limited interactions in English. Language learning in the TL community clearly requires more regular and active linguistic engagement than this student had.

In this research all participants strongly believed that living in Australia helped their English language learning. Formal school tests and the classroom performances of learners also suggest that overseas students do make rapid and significant progress in their language skills in a considerably shorter time, compared to the often limited language skills developed through formal studies in their homeland. The factors behind this rapid English language development do not appear to be simply the result of pure hard work in language schools in formal settings. Thus this research asks the question:

- In what ways does the context of informal settings contribute to language learning?

Language learning, including a second language, is not considered to be learning solely the linguistic forms of the target language, but learning sociocultural properties of the target language which give meaning to linguistic elements in social contexts. In relation to this, Lantolf states that:

> "each generation reworks its cultural inheritance to meet the needs of its communities and individuals… Likewise, languages are continuously remolded by their users to serve their communicative and psychological needs".
>
> (Lantolf 2004, p. 2)

From this perspective, language learning does not involve only the lexis, phonology and formal grammar of the target language but also the social activities through which they are historically constructed to make meaning for users of that language. The question for this research emerges at this point when we ask how living in a TL community assists language learning and how social activities in which participants are involved contribute to language learning. This research explores the types of opportunities for language learning in the TL community and the framework in which learning occurs.

As suggested by participants in the statements below, language learning relates to the functional and regular use of the target language in authentic social contexts:

> *I learn more outside school because I live with my boyfriend. He is Australian. I spend time with him every single day and have to talk English.*

> *Talking is important. Outside school too much talking. So, maybe outside school more than important at school.*

> *I have to speak English every day.*

As supported by the participant statements above, the need to use the target language in social contexts on a daily basis is the fundamental factor for language use and creates potential opportunities for independent language learning.

Assuming that formal studies in language classrooms generally use similar methods around the world, the 'unknown' in learners' rapid language development in Australia during their formal studies is the starting point of this research. It is important to underline that the focus here is on the contributions of informal authentic opportunities of independent learning in social settings and the contributions of informal social settings in which learners experience TL exposure and how they use it daily. So, the opportunities for independent second language learning are the subject matter of this research. In this study learner activities outside school have mainly centered around the context of home, the work place and other social environments. The central issue is how these various social contexts contribute to language learning. Language learning is specifically discussed for outside school experiences in terms of the contexts that created or enhanced learning opportunities and how learners made use of those contexts. As a result of findings in this research, an overall approach to understanding independent language learning has been developed, which also has implications for the curriculum for formal learning in language schools. The research thus contributes to providing a conceptual framework for examining

informal language learning opportunities and the contexts in which learning occurs. Such a framework may also be useful for examining similar contexts of informal language learning.

In addition, to further enhance the quality of English language education in Australia, it is important to have a greater understanding of the outside-school activities of learners in ELICOS colleges so that better curricula, methods and materials can be developed and incorporated into language education programs. Krashen (1982, p.1) narrows down language development to real life interactions stating that a solution to language teaching lies not so much in expensive equipment, exotic new methods, or sophisticated language analysis, but rather in the full utilisation of the most important resources: native speakers of the language in real communication.

Despite individual differences between students, living in the target language community itself necessitates certain activities where linguistic interaction is unavoidable for any learner. For example, most students work casually, which generally requires some English language use. Sharing accommodation is a common practice between overseas students, which also creates opportunities to interact with people from different linguistic backgrounds. Learners enjoy plenty of leisure time activities in Australia, for instance, going to the cinema, holidays, festivals, frequenting pubs, and going shopping. Whether, and how, all these social activities offer ample sources of linguistic interaction that contribute to cultural and linguistic understanding and learning of the target language is discussed in the data obtained from the participants.

The distinction between formal and informal learning settings is significant in debates about second language development. Lightbown and Spada (2001) describe informal settings as the contexts in which the adult learner is exposed to the target language at work or in social interactions, and formal settings as the contexts where the target language is being taught to a group of second or foreign language learners. In the formal case, the focus of learning is on the language itself. In informal settings learners use the target language for other

purposes in real-life situations. That is, in these informal settings there is a social purpose for which language is required.

Formal and informal learning settings are investigated separately in the literature, and the relationship between them has remained largely uninvestigated. During English as a foreign language (EFL) study, where the target language is learned like any other subject in non-English speaking countries, the possibility of an informal learning environment is significantly limited to some occasional contacts with native or proficient speakers. In contrast, overseas students in ELICOS colleges in Australia are in direct and abundant contacts with the target language speakers in the community in real-life contexts outside school. For this reason, informal learning settings in Australia need to be considered as part of a learner's overall language development. This fact seems to be largely ignored by language colleges, and informal learning is rarely explicitly 'built on' in classrooms. From this point of view, connections between formal and informal settings in second language development pedagogy in Australia need to be researched as they may pose a critical challenge in terms of professional practice in classrooms. In light of studies of informal contexts, possible changes could be made in the curriculum design, teaching materials and teaching methods in language schools. Corder (1981 p.77) suggests that 'efficient language teaching must work with, rather than against, natural processes, facilitate and expedite rather than impede learning'. Corder's comment clearly relates to the rationale of this research. In fact, in the last twenty years much SLA research has shifted to a focus on the natural (informal) environment, which has resulted in a distinction in the literature between *formal* and *informal* learning (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991).

However, it seems that little has been actually published about how these informal learning settings are made use of and affect second language learning. Research on the contributions of living and studying in the target language country to learners' language development still appears to be insufficient. Moreover, although there is a significant amount of research on natural learning contexts in formal settings (Prabhu 1992; Torr 1993; van Lier 1996), research on

natural learning outside the school environment still remains limited (Davis 1995). One reason for the lack of literature in this respect may be the difficulty of monitoring learners' outside-school activities and answering questions such as when and under what conditions learners are exposed to the target language, and how these interactions in informal learning settings contribute to the learners' language development. Although some data regarding their formal studies are discussed in this research to understand the interactions between formal and informal learning settings, the majority of the data has focused on informal learning settings to address this gap.

So, the challenging questions here are:

- What are the factors that support learners to develop their language in a short period of time in a Target Language community?

- How do the social contexts in the communities in which learners participate affect their second language development?

Consequently, what makes this research important and interesting for the field is that if we develop a greater understanding of the factors behind this rapid language development, the research may offer implications at both a theoretical and practical level and may impact on the second language pedagogy. The results of this research can contribute to the learners, teachers and researchers who are concerned with improving the quality of second language education in ELICOS-type settings.

In summary, this research is first aimed at the critical task of exploring the independent language learning opportunities available to students. It aims to determine how living in the Target Language community affects adult learners' second language development. Secondly, overseas students, in general, come to Australia with strong expectations that they will interact with English speaking people on various occasions to enhance their language development during their stay and study in Australia. This research focuses on what learners actually do to learn the TL outside the school, what problems they have in their interactions with native-speakers and the implications for facilitating and accelerating their English language learning experiences in Australia.

1.2 Contextual background

Australia, being one of the English language education provider countries, pays special attention to the quality of language education by means of accredited expert institutions in the language education sector and opportunities for language experience in social life. National ELT (English Language Teaching) Accreditation Scheme (NEAS) is the organization responsible for regulating and monitoring the quality of language education in Australia. NEAS states:

> "The primary goal of NEAS is the maintenance of high levels of quality in the provision of English Language Teaching (ELT) programs and services by its client institutions in Australia."
> (ELICOS Accreditation Handbook - February 2002, p.4)

An important factor to ensure a high quality of English language education in Australia is related to the existence of opportunities for learners in informal social settings along with formal studies. According to NEAS standards, the face-to-face formal study period per week in ELICOS colleges can be reduced to twenty hours per week, which, in fact, allows more opportunities for learners to engage independently with the local community outside the school. This is significant in understanding the role of social settings and engagement with the local community in students' English language development.

In Australian language colleges, learners are generally aged between 18 and 31, and they come from various countries. In this study, students come from Brazil, China, Thailand, Poland, Japan, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Turkey. Learners' educational backgrounds range from high school to university graduates. Another important characteristic of learners is that most of them come with a few years of English study as a foreign language (EFL) background in their homeland. Some learners come to Australia on student visas and some on working holiday visas. The formal language study period for student visa holders varies from three months to six months in general, but depending on personal conditions and goals it may rise up to one year. Although holiday-makers decide the length of English study according to their individual needs and satisfaction, the period of study is usually the same as visa holder learners.

Language schools offer a minimum of 20 hours face-to-face formal teaching per week with an optional 5 hours self-study period and/or school excursions. In schools, in addition to up-to-date textbooks, modern technological instruments such as computers, overhead projectors and internet services are generally incorporated into learning activities. Broadly, a communicative approach is used through task- and genre-based activities. It is also important to mention that schools are encouraged by NEAS to develop their teaching materials and methods in accordance with changing times and conditions. Language schools generally provide learners with a friendly social environment and independent learning facilities. Language schools, in fact, are places which provide plenty of social opportunities for second language (L2) learning readily accessible for overseas students in Australia.

At language schools, attendance in formal studies is not only important in terms of the learner's linguistic awareness and exposure to structured formal language education programs according to their levels of proficiency, but also offers opportunities for informal learning through L2 interactions with other peer-learners. Attendance means being in a social environment which naturally creates opportunities to interact in the target language. In addition, learner-to-learner and learner-to-teacher interactions during class times and at breaks can also be a factor in language learning.

However, students are often absent from classes for various reasons. This phenomenon may reflect their level of involvement and motivation about formal English language education at ELICOS colleges. Although this seems a negative aspect from a formal educational point of view, learners are still likely to be exposed to the target language outside the school. The rapid development of English language skills over a period of two or three months suggests that there must be some important factors contributing to language learning in informal settings. Understanding what assists language learning during this short period enables educators to have a better understanding of their students' second language learning.

It is also important to highlight the structure of the TL learning environment for overseas students in Australia. The major cities in Australia where many language schools operate and host an increased number of language learners are Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. Two aspects of the learning environment in these cities are worth considering: '*location*' and '*interactants*'. '*Location*' refers to the parts of the cities where learners spend most of their time in relation to their outside school activities, and '*interactants*' refers to the individuals with whom they mostly interact in the TL. As the language schools and workplaces are mainly located in the Central Business Districts (CBDs), learners, in common, live, study and work in, or in the vicinity of, CBDs. This results in a concentrated population of L2 learners within certain part of the cities where native English speakers, non-native English speakers and learners interact with each other.

Since the rapid language development in Australia is the starting point of this research, it is necessary to substantiate how the assessment of language development has been made in terms of their actual language skills at the beginning of this research. As explained in Chapter 3, learners with the weakest language skills in English have been chosen as participants in order to observe their language development better. Out of eleven participants who completed the research, five of them were total beginners with no English language skills at all, either in oral or written language. For example, on the enrolment day they were unable to respond to the basic questions below, and interpreters were needed to communicate with the students:

- What is your name?
- Where are you from?
- How old are you?
- What is your address?

When the research ended after approximately three months, these five participants demonstrated a significant progress in all their language skills. To illustrate this, some extracts from the final group interviews are included here, and some samples of their written work. In the interviews, it was also significant that they were all able to understand the follow-up questions asked by the interviewer.

Some participant utterances from the group interviews:

> *Sometimes I speak English weekend in the church, because it is Australian church.*
>
> *Many times I was in the pub with my friends… just talking.*
>
> *I think Australia is same as Brazil.*
>
> *My restaurant sometimes comes Australian people, and of course speak English and I can understand them."*
>
> *"I think you have to use every day.*

Written samples taken from research tasks:

> *I'm unhappy with my health here, because I'm thinking, don't by [be] sick my anglish [English] can by [be] to [too] much better.*
>
> *I spent all my time in bed, watching movie and talking with my flatmade [flatmate] in anglish [English], I'm very tired of pills which I took from my allergy.*
>
> *I wasn't at school today, but I was with my brother on the Christmas party organized by his boss. I tried to talk to his colleagues.*

Given that all these students were total beginners at the beginning of the 3-month period of the data collection, these examples of language used by the participants give an idea of how much language development has been achieved in this short period of time. This study explores how this fast learning occurred.

CHAPTER 2

From Individual to Social Theories of Language Learning: A Review of Relevant Literature

"No doubt, over time, the pictures provided by the different sides of the prism will become clearer, but whether this will lead to a single, unifying account of L2 acquisition, as some believe is necessary, remains to be seen."

(Ellis 1994, pp. 689-690)

2.1 Approaches to Second Language Acquisition

Research for second language learning has always been challenging and has encountered multi-faceted aspects both in social and psychological disciplines. As suggested by Larsen-Freeman (1997) second language acquisition (SLA) is complex and non-linear. The factors underlying the complexity of SLA originate from the nature of complex genesis and evolution of languages through sophisticated human activities in human history. Whether that complexity of second language learning can be or needs to be singled into one theory has been stated by Ellis (1994).

> "No doubt, over time, the pictures provided by the different sides of the prism will become clearer, but whether this will lead to a single, unifying account of L2 acquisition, as some believe is necessary, remains to be seen."

(Ellis 1994, pp. 689-690)

Although a single explanation of L2 acquisition could theoretically facilitate L2 pedagogy, the theories by which a second language is learned by adults (Breen 1985; Long 1993; Gregg 1993; Ellis 1994; Lantolf 1996; Block 1996) suggest that it is yet too early or simply too complex to formulate a single account of L2 learning. This research takes into consideration aspects of SLA from a multi-faceted perspective, but with an emphasis on the learning opportunities (or "affordances", to be discussed later, offered by the social contexts. The following review of literature serves to outline the relevance of this research within SLA, particularly in relation to the sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky 1962, 1978) and an ecological approach to understanding language learning (van Lier 1999).

Early SLA research was primarily psychological in orientation, but in more recent years it has become more socially oriented. The focus of psychological research on SLA was on morphology, syntax and acquisition order (Dakin 1973; Dulay and Burt 1973, 1974; Bailey, Madden and Krashen 1974; Brown 1973; Larsen-Freeman 1975) while social research in language learning was directed towards discourse and text analysis and on the social factors that impact on language learning (Matthiessen 1990; Tannen 1991; Fairclough 1992; Dawning and Locke 1992; Leont'ev 1981;

Swain 1985). In the literature review below, theoretical approaches to second language learning are discussed in relation to this research from three major standpoints: Psychologically Oriented Approaches, Socially Oriented Approaches and Social-cultural and Ecological perspectives. Each of these approaches is discussed in relation to this research study in order to position it within a broader research background.

2.2 Psychologically Oriented Approaches

2.2.1 Behaviourism (1940s – 1950s)

Behaviourism dates back to the studies on classical conditioning by Russian psychologist Pavlov (Mangubhai 2004), followed by Skinner (1957), to understand first language learning based on operant conditioning, a variation of classical conditioning (Bloomfield 1933; Skinner 1957; Lado 1964; Bloom and Lightbown 1974). Behaviourists believe that as it is not possible to uncover what happens in the brain, observable behaviours of humans should be studied to understand learning processes. They claim that learning is a habit; a data-nurturing environment is a determinant factor in learning and learning is realized by being stimulated, responding to stimulation and receiving feedback to responses (Ellis 1999).

According to the behaviourist approach, understanding of second language learning studies relies on and follows the assumption that children learn their mother-tongue by imitation and reinforcement (positive feedback) thus forming a habit of language use (Lightbown and Spada 2001). Learners are exposed to linguistic input from other speakers in their environment and form meaningful associations between the language, objects and events around them. As those associations are repeated and fortified by experiences in the form of reinforcements and corrective feedback, they turn into linguistic habits (Skinner 1957).

The critical weakness of the behaviourist approach is that observable behaviours, hence language, were seen as 'mechanical' learning that was then used in a social environment. The sociocultural background and more importantly the method of developing those complex social behaviours were not considered part of language learning although it has been stated (Watson 1924; Skinner 1957) that a meaningful association between objects and events resulted in language formation. According to

behaviourists, it was important to solely copy the outcome (language) of the relations, but not to understand how those relations between individuals were perceived and turned into linguistic outcomes. In contrast, this research aims to look at language learning in a sociocultural and ecological context and to explain language development as a holistic and dynamic combination of skills in order to maintain social relations in a community. Within this complexity of communication systems, language itself constitutes only a part.

2.2.2   Innatism (1960s – 1970s)

In contrast to the behaviourist approach, innatists (Chomsky 1965; McNeill 1966; Lenneberg 1967) developed arguments from a cognitive perspective. Children's grammatical use of the language problematised notions of imitation and classical conditioning as explanations of language development. Children demonstrated that they did not, at all times, imitate what had been presented to them (McNeill 1966).

For example, children do not imitate adults in using irregular forms of verbs and plural forms of nouns (Mangubhai 2004). They use terms such as 'wented', 'taked', and 'mouses' and 'sheeps', which could not be said to have been 'imitated' from adult models. Secondly, the American psycholinguist, David McNeil showed that against all persistence from a parent, a child does not copy an introduced grammatical pattern. Note the dialogue between a child and a parent   (McNeill 1966, p. 69):

> Child : Nobody don't like me.
>
> Mother : No, say 'Nobody like*s* me.'
>
> Child : Nobody don't like me.
>
> (Eight repetitions of this dialogue.)
>
> Mother : No, now listen carefully: say '*Nobody likes me.*'
>
> Child : Oh! Nobody don't like*s* me.

Language learning is therefore more than mechanical imitation and feedback processes for particular stimuli. In addition, the language children are exposed to is not always 'correct' in the formal sense. There are many false starts, incomplete

sentences and slips of the tongue. As a result, it has been observed that cognitive characteristics of the human brain have an impact on language learning processes, and the behaviourist approach is inadequate in explaining the complexity of language learning (Chomsky 1981; Cook 1988; White 1989). Consequently, from the 1960s, SLA research included an innatist view.

The main feature of innatism is related to first language acquisition during the critical period of a child's language development. Chomsky (1959, 1965, 1980) referred to the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), by which he refers to the innate capacity of an able child to learn language in his or her environment. Opposing the data-nurturing environment, Chomsky argued for the presence of a skill which endowed humans with inherited knowledge of 'Universal Grammar' (UG) to acquire a language (Chomsky 1981; Cook 1985, 1993; Mitchell and Myles 1998). He sees language as a system of rules (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991).

Monitor Model

Drawing on this work, Krashen (1981, 1982) proposed a 'monitor model' of second language learning in which he put forward five hypotheses: the input hypothesis; the natural order hypothesis; the acquisition-learning hypothesis; the monitor hypothesis; and the affective filter hypothesis.

In the input hypothesis, Krashen based his second language learning arguments on the tenets of first language acquisition. He suggested that there should be enough silent periods in which there was a lot of listening to the target language (TL). He stated that it was critical that the listening opportunities provided, should be comprehensible enough for learners to make sense of the meaning and thus enable acquisition to occur. In other words, he argues that if the input incorporates new structures beyond the learner's competence level, which he calls 'i+1', this will not only allow comprehension, but also acquisition of the new input. According to Krashen, comprehensible input, rather than the act of speaking, is the crucial factor in SLA (Krashen 1982, 1988, 1989). This view contradicts the nature of language development as speaking is not an outcome of acquired language, but also an act of building acquisition which comprises of effort to extract input. In this sense, speaking, in other words interaction, is an act of learning by itself (Swain 1985). This research demonstrates the critical role of interaction in the language

development of the participants in this study, especially through listening and speaking in actual contexts outside the school.

In the natural order of language development, Krashen (1982) claimed that grammatical structures were learned in a predictable order, but he stressed that the order of grammar points taught in schools did not precisely match that natural order. For this reason, he believed that the explicit teaching of grammar was not of great value for language learning. Krashen made a clear distinction between learning and acquisition of language, and pointed out that acquisition was more important than learning. To support his argument he highlighted the performance of language use between L1 learners and natural learners in comparison to formal learners (Lightbown and Spada 2001). This research explores how informal settings make participants natural learners.

The monitor hypothesis claims that second language learners edit their language performances before or after the linguistic production depending on three conditions; having enough time for linguistic check; attention being on the form but not meaning; and knowing about the grammar rules. According to Krashen (1982) this hypothesis affirms that languages are acquired and learning is to edit what has already been acquired. In other words, learning language is learning how to monitor what is already 'in the head'. By contrast, this research explores language learning as a development of communication skills in authentic social contexts for future use.

Lastly, the affective filter hypothesis refers to the psychological conditions of a learner which are related to learner motivation, self-confidence or anxiety. He also argues that the psychological mood of a learner affects their learning. Accordingly, learners should not be bored, confused, or anxious which he postulates created obstacles for language learning. He believes that when a learner is unmotivated, lacks in self-confidence or is anxious, a learner may understand the language but not acquire it (Krashen 1985).

Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis is of great value in second language pedagogy. However, as for the affective filter hypothesis, it should be noted that language learners in this study are generally voluntary and self-motivated at a 'macro' level. Macro here refers to the overall personal interest in the target language. In fact, affective factors are related to learning processes at a 'micro'

level, that is, the interpersonal dimension of actual language use and conditions under which learning takes place. Data in this research provide insight into how those learning settings, especially outside-school, affect L2 learning.

Order of Acquisition, Pivot Grammar and Connectionism

In the innatist approach there are scholars who focused on structural development of languages and named their models of language development based on those specific structural development patterns. Four of them are; Brown (1973) and the 'order of acquisition'; Berko (1958) and 'linguistic rule formations'; Bloom (1971) and 'pivot grammar'; and Spolsky (1989) and the 'connectionism model'. Brown's studies show that there is, in general, a systemic order of acquisition for the structures of language at the morphological level, such as interrogatives and negation forms. On the other hand, in an experiment, commonly known as the 'wug' test, with young children, Berko found that children had not only learned grammatical rules but also variable phonological rules. For instance, children had invented the plural for the made-up noun 'wug' pronouncing it with a /z/ ending. And, pivot grammar (Bloom 1971) claims that during acquisition, children follow some regular patterns in two-word sentences such as *drink milk*, *drink water* where 'drink' is the pivot. When sentences are longer than two words, children manage to follow the correct word order as in their mother tongue; for example, 'Daddy read book' but not 'Daddy book read'. However, Spolsky (1989), as a challenge to generative rule learning, developed a neurobiological model of language structure learning. He asserts that neurons in the brain form multiple connections and linguistic performance is the consequence of those neural formations but not applications of linguistic rules in order one after another. In contrast to other innatists' argument that linguistic input in the environment activates innate knowledge, this model relies on the input as the main source of linguistic knowledge.

However, linguistic structures are not simply the products of cognitive faculties but also the product of historically and culturally inherited systemic sets formed as a result of social relations and they are subject to change as cultures change. Therefore, the formation and learning of linguistic rules should not be seen as the artifacts of brain but as the transformation of systems; of how social relations are

developed and mediated to learners in a given community. Therefore, the order of language acquisition (Brown 1973) can be explained as the perceptional order of ecological and social relations between objects and individuals rather than the cognitive order of learning processes. That is to say, cognitive learning order is initiated by children's expanding level of social relations. Linguistic rule formation (Berko 1958) is, however, from a sociocultural point of view, the consequence of imitation in the transformative understanding of the processes as construed by Vygotsky, Baldwen, and Tomasello (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Likewise, pivot grammar (Bloom 1971) is rather the reflection of strengthening and expanding the meaningful relations between semiotic representations.

In short, all studies and arguments discussed by innatists see linguistic patterns as static systems and investigate their development in a piecemeal fashion looking at the 'visible' progressive processes and products but overlooking the 'invisible' created through experiential sociocultural relations behind language development. In other words, these perspectives of language development are not sufficient to explain the sociocultural aspects of language and language learning because they look at language development linguistically and ignore social factors affecting language learning.

In fact, for adult learners in the target language community, exposure to and use of the target language do not necessarily follow the systemic developments mentioned above, since the language learning conditions are different from a child's language development. Consequently, in this research, language development is seen as holistic phenomenon and examined as an outcome of language (communication) skills learned through social activities.

2.3 Socially oriented approaches

In recent years, language learning has been considered an outcome of linguistic interactions with native or more proficient speakers of the target language. Furthermore, linguistic interaction is considered as learning per se (Swain 1985). Social interactionists see the learner in his or her environment as a perceiver, actor, follower and learner (Giles and Smith 1979; Schumann 1978; Andersen 1980; Long 1983; Gardner 1985; Hatch 1992; Pica 1994). In contrast to behaviorist approaches,

the relations between the learner and the social environment in this approach are not limited to imitation and reinforcement, but are more dynamic, fluid and innovative. Learning is contextual, relational and open to a wide range of perception, and the teacher or the more proficient speaker cooperates with the learner to sustain a meaningful communication. In socially oriented approaches, three models of second language learning are particularly relevant to this study: the Acculturation model developed by Schumann (1978), the Socio-Educational model developed by Gardner (1985), and the Interactionist model developed by Hatch (1992); Pica (1994); Long (1983); Day (1986); Donato (1994); Gass and Varonis (1994); Lantolf and Appel (1994).

2.3.1   Acculturation Model

As the importance of linguistic interactions in SLA has been central to social interactionists and language is an important symbol of a culture, it became a strong belief that living in the target language country should create ample opportunities for learners both to learn and participate in the new culture. Within this perspective, Schumann (1978) conducted research in America to find favourable conditions under which immigrants could develop their target language skills and cultural adaptation to a target group. This is called 'acculturation' and was first defined by Brown (1980, p. 129) as 'the process of becoming adapted to a new culture'. Schumann's acculturation model (1978) is relevant to this research in understanding the impacts of acculturation on overseas students for language development opportunities in Australia.

Schumann's acculturation model suggests that certain social and psychological variables in SLA cluster into a single variable; acculturation. By acculturation, he refers to the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language group (TLG), and argues that the learner will acquire the second language only to the degree that he or she acculturates. According to Schumann, the extent of SLA travels within two separate but intertwined continua which are the social, and the psychological, distances between the learners and the target language culture. While social distance stems from factors such as domination/subordination; assimilation versus adaptation; and size of group and attitude, psychological

distance is associated with language; cultural shock; and motivation (Schumann 1986). Schumann (1986) suggests that the following conditions are favourable in SLA:

- The TL and SL groups see each other as equal
- Both TL and SL groups support assimilation
- The TL and SL groups share social institutions
- The SL group is small and/or not cohesive
- There are many similarities between L1 and L2 groups' cultures
- Both groups treat each other positively
- The L2 group plans to stay in the TL area for a long time

Strong and long-lasting language learning strategies of the acculturation model are subject to long-term and intensive engagement of the learner (mainly immigrants) with the target language group, which does not fully correspond to overseas learners whose goals and social status are different. Moreover, the acculturation model relies on natural learning only and does not refer to formal studies whereas in this research, although the focus is on natural learning, learners also benefit from their school studies. Other than these two differences, this study also explores whether there are any disharmonies that overseas students face in the target language community.

However, Ellis (1994) pointed out, this model failed to show the influence of social factors on the type of engagements learners were involved in. This is a central issue that is to be explored by this research. From this perspective, this model is of value both in understanding the linguistic interaction possibilities (later to be discussed as 'affordances') and the social activities of a learner for language learning purposes. In this research, the question is whether there is any connection between learners' language learning and their level of acculturation to albeit limited Australian society in their study periods. As mentioned above, by acculturation Schumann refers to an ideal target language community composed of native speakers and learners. This research explores the answer to the question: how does living in the target language country create opportunities for language learning and acculturation for overseas learners?

2.3.2 Socio-Educational Model

Gardner's socio-educational model (1985) discusses the social and cultural milieu of the learner, individual learner differences and the context in which learning takes place (formal or informal settings). Gardner divided the socio-cultural milieu into four: antecedent factors; individual difference variables; language acquisition contexts; and outcomes. Antecedent factors are investigated under two categories: biological and experiential. Individual differences for biological factors are intelligence, aptitude and strategies, and experiential differences are attitudes, motivation and anxiety. Learning contexts may be formal such as the classroom and informal such as the workplace. In Gardner's view, the nature of social contexts and opportunities learners are engaged with, in formal and informal settings, is significant for learner behaviour and language learning. This research contributes to the knowledge in this field especially in informal settings. In Gardner's research, outcomes are classified as linguistic and non-linguistic. Linguistic outcomes refer to lexis, morphology, syntax, pronunciation and fluency. Non-linguistic outcomes include favourable attitudes towards the TL community, a general appreciation of other cultures and values, and interest in further language study (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993).

Although Gardner's study (1985) encompasses both cognitive and social aspects of language learning, the scope of social factors is mainly centered on the individual psychological aspects for formal and informal learning settings, especially attitudes and motivation of learners towards language learning. This position studies the behaviour of learners, but lacks a focus on sociocultural factors that instigate and regulate learner activities. This, in turn, impacts on attitudes and motivation. Gardner's model reflects the outcome of dominantly psychological factors in formal and/or informal learning settings. However, this study explores the social aspects of learner activities in informal settings and their contribution to language learning.

Lightbown and Spada (2001) describe informal settings as contexts in which the adult learner is exposed to the target language at work or in social interactions, and formal settings as contexts where the target language is being taught to a group of second or foreign language learners. In formal learning, the focus of learning is on

the language itself. In informal settings learners use the target language in real-life situations, which also assists their language learning (Nesdale, Simkin, Dang, Burke and Fraser 1995; Polanyi 1995).

2.3.3   Interactionist Position (1980s - 1990s)

The fact that this research focuses on the outside-school language development opportunities of overseas learners, the linguistic interactions (hence the interactionist position) in informal settings are especially important in understanding their contributions to SLA.

The interactionist position argues that a considerable amount of second language acquisition takes place through conversational interaction (Hatch 1992; Pica 1994; Long 1983; Swain 1985). Interactionist theories are powerful because they invoke both cognitive and environmental factors to explain second language learning. They all emphasise that in language development, the interaction of a learner with other speakers who are more advanced learners or with native speakers is more helpful than linguistic simplification or modification which is planned in advance. This research supports that theory because of the fact that the data obtained in this study have many examples in which second language learners made use of the interactions in which they participated to develop their L2 skills in outside school environments.

As a result of his observations on linguistic interactions between learners and native speakers, Long (1983) concluded in agreement with Krashen that comprehensible input (not planned in advance) was vital for language learning, but he was more concerned with how input could be made comprehensible. He reported that on most occasions there were cases in which there had been a language modification between a learner and a native speaker (Long 1983). This means language modifications work to create comprehensible input, hence facilitating language learning. Language modifications are also significant in this research in order to understand how they contribute to learners' language learning.

Besides the concept of comprehensible input (Krashen 1981), the interactionist position addresses other conversational features which play a role in second language learning. They are: comprehensible output (Swain 1985; Swain and Lapkin

1995); pushed language (Swain and Lapkin 1995); negotiation of meaning (Long 1983; Pica 1994; Swain 1985); noticing (Swain 1995; Ellis 1994); communication strategies (Varadi 1973; Tarone, Cohen and Dumas 1976; Tarone 1977, 1981; Corder 1983; Færch and Kasper 1983; O'Malley et al 1985); and contextual aids (Lightbown and Spada 2001).

The comprehensible output hypothesis (Swain 2000) states that as learners are in control of their own output, output motivates learners to move from strategies for comprehension in the target language to accurate grammatical production of the target language, and in this process their language is 'pushed' or 'stretched'. While focus on the quality of comprehensible input (Krashen 1981) remains limited to non-learner's linguistic input, comprehensible output (Swain 1985) encourages a focus on social and meaningful dialogue. In this research, voice-recordings examine how Swain's comprehensible output hypothesis works in real-life language interactions, especially for low-level learners. The notion of 'strategic competence' (Canale and Swain 1980) is relevant here. Strategic competence encompasses the overall communicative capabilities used by a learner in an authentic communication to grapple with linguistic difficulties and to keep the linguistic interaction going (Canale and Swain 1980).

"Pushed language" (Swain 1985) is closely related to SLA in informal learning settings since it refers to forcing a learner into their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978). In other words, pushed language results in an outcome from ZPD processings. Learners in a TL community experience a lot of challenging linguistic interactions which push their language skills to the limit, leading to more constructive mental efforts to make meaning and notice what they need to learn. From this perspective, learners pushed into production of more comprehensible outputs are more proactive in language development compared to those using only inputs, which are readily and contextually supported to be understood (Swain 1985). In more general terms, the explanation for the faster development of listening and reading skills in comparison to speaking and writing skills lies in the fact that while the former require less mental effort, the latter push the learner to produce the language. Analogically, language development is similar to body building; the more

you push, the more you build! One question to be answered in this research for learners in the TL community is which of these skills they are more engaged in.

Negotiation of meaning is a characteristic of conversation between a learner and a native or more proficient speaker where they both try to clarify incomprehensible linguistic utterances (Tarone 1981; Long 1983). The efforts put collectively over time by a learner and more proficient speakers result in language learning where negotiation of meaning occurs in both formal and informal settings. Being one of the communication strategies in a conversation between learners and other interlocutors, negotiation of meaning is also a point of discussion in this research.

Another salient point in the interactionist position is the notion of 'noticing'. Noticing is when a learner becomes aware of a linguistic gap; what s/he *wants* to say and what s/he *can* say during a communicative activity (Swain 1995). In other words, noticing is the realisation of what to learn *next*. Schmidt (1990) strongly stressed the significance of noticing in SLA as he believes that everything learned about a language first starts with 'noticing'.

Communication strategies for adults are of special consideration when learning a second language in authentic settings is considered. In relation to this research, the efforts of low-level learners to communicate in real-life situations are studied to understand the strategies they use, which, in fact, are part of language learning itself.

Discussions on communication strategies are varied mostly depending on whether they are primarily linguistic and attempted by learner only (Tarone et al 1976) or conversational in nature and attempted by all interactants (Tarone 1981). The notion of 'consciousness' is also added as a common character to the discussion (Færch and Kasper 1983). Of the two definitions of communication strategies below, the first is of linguistic character, while the second is of conversational:

> "…a systematic <u>attempt by the learner</u> to express or decode meaning in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed."

> (Tarone, Cohen and Dumas 1976, p. 5, emphasis added)

> "…communication strategies…may be seen as <u>attempts to bridge the gap between</u> the linguistic knowledge of the second language <u>learner</u>, <u>and</u> the linguistic knowledge of the target language <u>interlocutor</u> in real communication situations."

> (Tarone 1981, p. 288, emphasis added)

Definitions for communication strategies vary in time, but the core of the discussion will probably remain the combination of all efforts to maintain a meaningful communication through all ecological supports (body and/or other materials) and linguistic skills (even leading to pushed language). The goals of all these efforts are: to maintain a discourse to reach a certain goal; to make others comprehensible to him/herself; and to make him/herself comprehensible to others. Bialystok's quotation below is a statement that points to the significance of communication strategies for adult L2 learning.

> "...communication strategies are an undeniable event of language use, their existence is a reliably documented aspect of communication, and their role in second language communication seems particularly salient."

> (Bialstok 1990, p. 116)

Informal settings are the most prevailing environments for communication strategies and this research focuses on these features of communication that affect L2 learning of the participants in this study.

Examples of contextual aids as a conversational feature include comprehension checks, clarification requests, recasts, confirmation questions (Lightbown and Spada 2001), and these kinds of modifications and contextual aids are examined in this research in the voice recordings collected outside school.

In comprehension checks, the native speaker tries to confirm that the learner has understood the message correctly.

> Example: 'The lesson starts at 9 o'clock. Do you understand?'

Clarification requests are the interactants' efforts to understand what was not comprehensible.

Example: 'What did you say?' or 'Do you mean ...?'

Recasts are self-repetitions or paraphrases of the utterances by the native speaker in a different way to provide a variety of or more appropriate language for better understanding.

Example: S: Where you went yesterday?

T: Where did you go yesterday?

Confirmation questions are those learners ask to make sure that they understand correctly.

Example: 'Do you mean that you don't want to come?'

As discussed above, interactionists stress that interactions especially with native speakers (NS) contribute to learners' language development from language input, processing and output perspectives (Long 1996; Pica et al. 1996). Although learners' interactions with NS are emphasised and taken as the yardstick, it is also mentioned that learner/non-native speaker (NNS) interactions contribute to language learning (Tarone 1980; Porter 1983; Pica and Doughty 1985; Varonis and Gass 1985) and should not be considered less important since the contribution of these types of interactions to SLA is yet to be studied further. The data in this research include learner interactions outside school both with NS and NNS and it is likely that different language learning processes can be observed in those linguistic interactions due to the different social goals and roles of the interlocutors.

This research focuses on the critical issues from an interactionist position for learners in Australia and they are: the amount of interactions; the types of interaction opportunities; the communication strategies used by learners to facilitate language learning; and last the environmental advantages of the TL community in providing opportunities for learners to initiate interactions.

2.3.4   Register Theory

One of several analytical tools used in this research is register theory (Halliday and Hasan 1985). Language is involved in most human activities and any language use occurs in two types of contexts; cultural context and situational context. Cultural and situational contexts are integrated as each will reflect on the other in use. Cultural context is related to the genres used in which certain patterns of speech in a culture are expected and accepted, such as how to greet someone, how to order in a restaurant or how to write a business letter. Although cultures may share some common purposes and goals in language, the way they use the language, that is to say genres, varies (Gibbons 2002). This cultural dimension of language use impacts on language learning.

The situational dimension of a context is relevant to the circumstances in which the language is used. The situation and the language used in it are interrelated and language varies according to context. Halliday and Hasan (1985) refer to these contextual factors as *field, tenor* and *mode* (Halliday 1978, 1985) which together constitute the *register* of a text (Eggins 2003).

- *Field* refers to the topic of a text
- *Tenor* refers to the relationship between interactants
- *Mode* refers to the way the language is conveyed

As this research indicates, social contexts offer opportunities for students to participate in using a range of registers. Furthermore, each register variable (Eggins 2003) has continua to explain the subdimensions that operate within them.

Let us look at the continua for field suggested by Martin. Martin (1984; 1992). points out that field varies according to the activity focus, and ranges from commonsense (everyday) to specialised (technical) language. He argues that although the field may remain the same, the level of complexity of the structure and lexis may change due to differences in the purpose and context of the text. For example, texts (written or spoken) for beginners and experts explaining how to play bridge are significantly different in terms of syntax, lexis and abbreviations. Therefore, field should be determined according to the type of social activity where language is an accompanying action (Martin 1992).

Martin (1984) also argues for two dimensions of mode; namely spatial/interpersonal distance and experiential distance. A spatial or interpersonal distance continuum ranges texts in relation to possibilities of immediate feedback between the interactants. For instance, mode is different in a face-to-face conversation than from reading a novel, in terms of visual contact, aural aspects and immediate feedback. Experiential distance (Martin 1984) explains the functions of language in a linguistic communication and refers to whether the language is a means to perform a task with other interactants (language as an *action*) or to reflect on one's experiences (language as a *reflection*). Communicating with others about what one is doing while playing a game is an example of language as Action, while writing a novel is an example for language as a Reflection.

Tenor is influenced by factors such as power, contact and affect (Poynton 1985). Power refers to the position of and relationship between interactants in a text, whether their social roles are equal or not. For example, a dialogue between a job seeker and an employer is likely to reflect unequal power relationships. Contact refers to the relational position of the interactants in regards to the frequency of engagements. For example, the contact between two classmates is most likely to be more frequent than the contact between two bus drivers working for the same company. Affect refers to the position in which affective involvement between interactants is strong or weak. For example, a couple dating are more strongly involved with each other compared to a pair of workers in a supermarket.

To better understand how registers change, a comparison of two texts is included here as an example:

> Text 1: nah dunno any grammar... hate it... this teacher used to make us do
> grammar exercises you know when we were bad... we'd get stacks
> of exercises – changing parts of sentences – that sort of thing...
> have to stay in till we'd finished....
> (de Silva Joyce and Burns 1994, p. 4)

Text 2: It is also true that many native speakers have little or no ability to describe their own grammatical knowledge. Either because they have never been taught to do so, or because the potential fascination of this task has been stifled by poor teaching methods. (Crystal 1995, p. 191)

As the topic of these two texts are the same, so are their fields. However, the tenor is different in each text because the first text is trying to establish a familiar relationship with the listener while the second has a formal and distant relationship with the reader. The first text is spoken and the second is written, resulting in a change of mode in the way the texts are conveyed to interactants. Since the situational contexts in which the texts are produced change, so do the registers.

As languages are always used within specific contexts, aspects of registers (field, tenor and mode) are likewise relevant to language teaching and learning. Learners are expected to use the target language in various registers, changing fields, tenor relationships, and in different modes. What makes the use of the target language complex is that there are no fixed grammatical patterns or lexical choices, and even the phonology (stress and intonation) can change according to situation. From person to person, language use may vary even though the common purpose can remain the same. Under these circumstances, the problem in language education is to determine what and how to teach, as far as the range of register possibilities are concerned.

The relevance of this theory (Halliday and Hasan 1985) for this research is that it offers a way of describing learners' opportunities for using language in independent contexts outside the school. Learners in a target language community have many functional opportunities to experience various authentic registers compared to 'manufactured' ones in formal settings. Typical daily routines necessitate learners using the target langage in different situations resulting in abundant exposure to the target language, and therefore they need to control varying registers. In this research, registers in authentic situations in a target language community are studied and examined in terms of their role and contribution to independent language learning.

For learners, the models of a range of registers in the TL community is of crucial importance in learning language. To gain insights into the quality of independent learning, it is important to know what type of fields, tenor relationships and modes are experienced in the learner's private activities. The field is especially relevant to lexis development, and depends on the type of learner activities and engagements in authentic settings, such as going to a rock concert with friends or working on a farm as a volunteer. In each activity, learners are exposed to and use specific language models, hence learn different lexis and forms. A range of tenor relationships make learners familiar with the tone and type of language for different interactants. Mode explains the way learners mostly practice the target language or the way they are exposed to it. This study contributes to uncovering what learners actually experience and how it reflects on their language learning.

In short, register theory can be used as a tool to analyse learner language development. Models of the language use of learners reflect the type of engagements learners are involved in in their independent activities. For example, while a learner working in a cafe as a waiter develops language skills relating to taking orders and lexis on patisserie, another learner working in a supermarket as a shelf-stacker develops a different lexico-grammar. Therefore, learner language development as a result of a different range of registers outside school can be used to moniter language development of learners in the TL community.

2.4 Comparison of Psychological and Social Approaches

Psychological and Social perspectives differ in how they define views of language, and how it is learned. Figure 2.1 shows the major defining features of each approach and Figure 2.2 the differences between language learning that these two approaches suggest. Figures 1 and 2 have been prepared based on the ideas from the work of van Lier (1999, 2000, 2004):

Figure 2.1   Comparing views of language

(Psychological and Social Perspectives)

According to the Psychological Perspective, a language is:	According to the Social Perspective, a language is:
a set of systems	a semiotic system
that which can be reduced to pieces	a holistic activity
a material phenomenon	a relational phenomenon
that which can be possessed	a skill
a property of an individual	a property of a culture
formed cognitively	formed socially through interactions

Figure 2.2   Comparing approaches to language learning

(Psychological and Social Perspectives)

Psychological Perspective of Language Learning	Social Perspective of Language Learning
all learning occurs in the mind	learning is the result of context in which the learner participate
learning is a cognitive activity	learning is a perceptual and social activity
learning is a piecemeal transfer of meanings	learning is to develop ways of communication within a society
learning sits in the brain	learning is embedded in the learner's environment
learning is factual	learning is situated
learning is material	learning is representational
learning is self-regulated	learning requires scaffolding

2.5 Sociocultural Approaches

2.5.1 Sociocultural Frames

In this research, the theoretical schemata of language learning as a sociocultural phenomenon rests on a number of constructs: Activity Theory (Leont'ev 1978); mediation (Vygotsky 1978); zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978); and scaffolding (Wood, Bruner and Ross 1976). These four significant constructs are now discussed.

2.5.2 Activity Theory

Although it was not originally to do with language learning, activity theory formulated by Engeström (1996, 1999) can be summarised as a collaborative activity by individuals who have goals and roles, and who use some tools to achieve certain purposes in a community within certain rules. In other words, activity theory, in broad terms, accounts for actions or practices that are systematically followed to attain a particular goal using various tools (physical or mental), leading to social and mental developmental processes (Kaptelinin 1996; Nardi 1996; Hedegaard, Chaiklin and Jensen 1999; Engeström 2001).

The origins of activity theory can be traced to three periods (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). The first period starts with Vygotsky (1978), who saw objects in the environment as cultural entities. Actions on objects were crucial in understanding human mental development. The second period includes the work of Leont'ev (1981), who made a distiction between activities and actions. According to Leont'ev, actions were only the constitutents of an activity which satisfied a need. So, actions can only make sense when they are evaluated in a social context of a joint labour activity between the individual and the object. The third period includes the work of Engeström (1987), who formulates activities as three interacting entities, the individual, the object and the community. This is different from that of Leont'ev's two entities, the individual and the object. Moreover, Engeström (1987) adds two more notions to activity theory, the notion of rules and the notion of collective subject. As an example of this system, figure 2.3 is Engeström's diagram (1991, p. 248) adapted in relation to second language learning in schools:

Figure 2.3   Formal L2 learning within activity theory

Tools
Teaching/learning materials

Actors   **Target**   **Outcome**

Teachers   L2 ⟹ L2 Skills
Learners

Rules   **Community**   **Roles**
Teach/learn   School   Teacher/Student
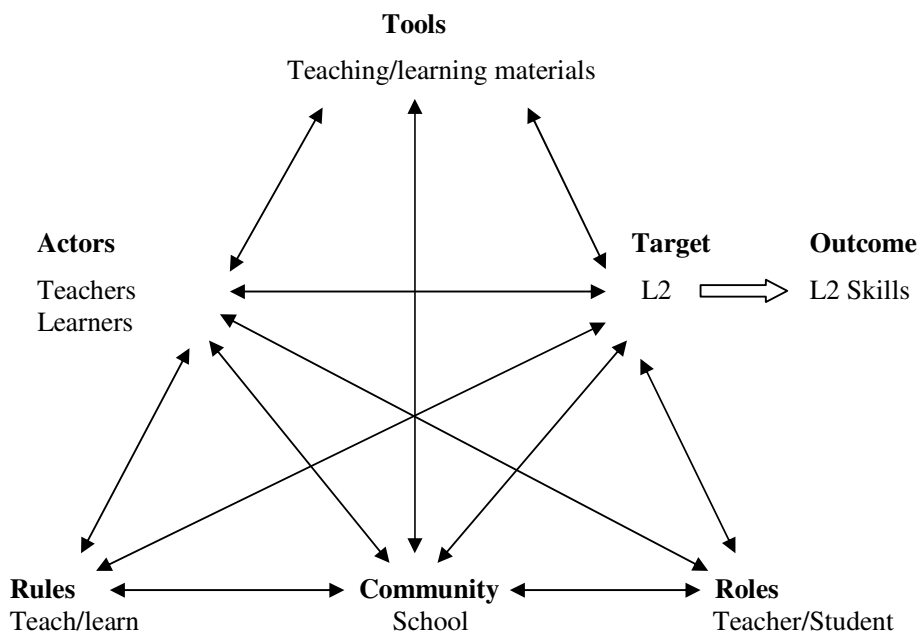
Activity theory is relevant to this study in that learners in the Australian community experience various modes of learning activities and participate in different activity systems compared to foreign language studies in their homelands. First of all, they are essentially *in* the target language community which enchances the chances of exposure to the TL. Secondly, the social community in which learners develop the TL has rich and different sources of linguistic tools such as native speakers, language teachers, and international classmates. All of these language learning sources make English speaking inevitable even outside the classroom, and living in the TL community creates more linguistic opportunities. On the other hand, learners become familiar with the TL culture since they act in accordance within the *rules* of the target language community and are learning and acting their *roles* in the society.

In addition, the distinction made by Leont'ev (1981) about Actions and Activities are salient for this research as the activity of the learner is broadly learning the target language. Within this, the actions of learners, especially in informal settings, is the central point. According to this distinction, the data in regards to the actions of learners in the TL community is crucial to understanding how the goal is achieved.

In Kuutti's words, activity theory is:

> "...a philosophical and cross-disciplinary framework for studying
> different kinds of human practices as development processes,
> with both individual and social levels interlinked at the same
> time."
>
> (Kuutti 1996, p. 25)

Drawing on this perspective of the activity theory, it is justified to claim that learners using the target language everyday in the TL community are in constant language development. What makes this view of the activity theory relevant to this research is that it offers a framework within which to recognise the factors affecting the relationship between language use and potential for language development in informal settings.

2.5.3   Mediation

The principal tenet of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky 1978, 1986) of human mental development claims that the human mind is mediated not only by the physical world but also by the symbolic tools and artifacts which evolve socioculturally (Lantolf 2004). Vygotsky believes that the human mind is a functional system in which biological properties of the human brain are mediated into a socially formed mind and thinking through the integration of symbolic artifacts or psychological tools. One of those symbolic artifacts, which is prevalent in most human activities, is language. Consequently, the intellectual structure of the mind is the reflection of semiotic symbols and relations of physical and social environments.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978, 1986) explains the phenomenon of mental development from a sociocultural point of view where learning emerges as a transfer of historical, cultural and systemic tools and artifacts between the members of a society by mediation. Vygotsky (Luria 1976) points out that all cognitive development, including language learning, arises as a result of social interactions between individuals. That is to say it is not primarily innate factors which determine cognitive skills and thinking patterns but the activities of individuals exercised in a sociocultural environment. Language is therefore a crucial tool for cognitive

development as higher mental skills are transmitted by means of words (Murray Thomas 1993). Therefore, the source of mental development, including language development, should be sought in social activities along with a resource-rich linguistic input, but not solely in cognitive capabilities. By resource-rich, I refer to various types of linguistic data and patterns which contribute to language learning in the learner's social environment.

According to Vygotsky, language is the root of learning, this is in contrast to Piaget's notion of language as a 'by-product' of intellectual development (Gibbons 1999). It is in the idea of mediation that Piaget and Vygotsky most differ. There is no equivalent to mediation in Piaget's work. In fact, if Piaget were right in his assertion, second language learners would be very successful language users of the TL by virtue of their already-developed L1 skills. SLA literature also claims the value of social interaction in language learning, which has been discussed earlier in the Interactionist approaches. Therefore, mediated social interactions of learners in a TL community are seen as a major focus in this research.

Vygotsky examines this chained historical transfer of sociocultural data and higher mental development faculties in four genetic domains: polygenetic, sociocultural, ontogenetic and microgenetic domains (Wertsch 1985; Wertsch and Toma 1991). The microgenetic domain examines mediational and interactional engagements in a particular social context, which result in mental development such as learning a word, a sound or a grammatical pattern (Lantolf 2004). Ohta (2000, p. 54) suggests that 'cognitive development occurs moment by moment in social interaction. Microgenesis is the dynamic transformative process, which allows for language acquisition to occur.' The microgenetic domain is the one that plays an important role for a second language learner, and is congruent with Halliday's notion of the context-of-situation.

The Sociocultural approach to mental development, that is to say *learning*, brings a new perspective to the understanding of language development and pedagogy. Creation of language as a symbolic tool can then be deduced as the semiotic product of the activities through which humans regulate their relationships within their social environment. Language is the accumulation of the deductions of those social

interactions in an extended community over a period of time. Those deductions are the meanings (named and categorised) that are deduced from the actions individuals are exposed to or engaged with in their everyday lives. From this point of view, it can be assumed that there should be a correlation between the language development and the amount and variety of the learner social activities.

2.5.4   Zone of Proximal Development

The notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978; Newman and Holzman 1993; Wells 1999; Chaiklin 2003) is essential in understanding the sociocultural theory of learning and mental development and provides another perspective on the data. Vygotsky defines the ZPD as:

> "…the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance of and in a collaboration with more capable peers."
> (Richard-Amato 1988, p. 348)

This cognitive gap (Gibbons 1999) between what an individual can do alone and what s/he can do with the assistance of a more skilled person is when and where the lack of knowledge is realised and help is needed. Vygotsky believes that learning occurs when the learner is struggling in the ZPD to fulfill the task.

The ZPD, therefore, is not a property of the brain but is concerned with the socially created role and task that the individual is participating in (Gibbons 1999). For that reason, as Vygotsky explained, knowledge and learning originates from and within the society, not the brain. As many of the transcripts in this research show, it is evident that in many instances learners are indeed operating within their ZPD: they are being 'pushed' beyond the boundaries of their fluency.

Schütz (2004) observes a resemblance between Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis and Vygotsky's ZPD. He assumes that as the comprehensible new input during an interaction in the target language carries the learner one step ahead of his or her prior level of linguistic competence, this is similar to learning in ZPD. Similarly, the

concepts of 'reasonable challenge' (Prabhu 1987) and 'pushed language' (Swain 1985) also reflect the notion of ZPD. These concepts are relevant to this research since living in the TL community is full of challenges to push learners to stretch their language skills further.

Noticing, as discussed in the Internactionist position, means the awareness of a linguistic gap (Gibbons 1999) in the learners' capabilities in a communicative interaction (Swain 1995). In SLA terms, this indicates that the learner is in the ZPD as Vygotsky described it; the zone between what one can do by him/herself, and with assistance. Learners being in the TL community are often likely to be in the ZPD or noticing their linguistic gaps. Those communication gaps are significant in terms of compelling the learner into some strategies (discussed in Chapter 4) to maintain the discourses.

The ZPD, in fact, provides a framework for exploring how learners learn while engaged in challenging tasks. In formal second language education, the case seems to be the opposite as learners are usually prepared for what they are going to learn and are provided with the language samples they need to use, which means a limitation in creating ZPD in classroom tasks. Freire (1983) calls this type of learning 'banking education' in which the teacher 'deposits' into the learner who memorises and repeats. However, in informal settings, conversations are developed according to social needs and the language to be used is unpredictable but goal-oriented and meaningful with abundant opportunities for operating within the learner's ZPD. In this sense, informal settings would seem to be more proactive for SLA, and this research investigates the validity of this.

In this study, once entered into action or interaction in informal settings outside school, the adult language learners need support to express themselves where their language skills and capabilities are insufficient. The necessary help to assist the learner to use the appropriate language to make the discourse continue is the process of 'scaffolding'. The scaffolding outside school is given by ordinary people, not language teachers.

2.5.5   Scaffolding

Scaffolding, a term closely linked with the ZPD, was first used by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) to describe the structural assistance offered by parents or other individuals to a child to do a task beyond the child's actual capacity. Scaffolding is task-specific support which will enable a learner to do similar tasks alone in future instances. The term was later adapted to second language learning to describe the linguistic assistance offered by language teachers or other more proficient speakers to learners in order to improve students' language skills.

In the act of scaffolding, there are three essential constituents; individual(s) who will assist the learner; tools or artifacts available in the learning environment; and the historical and cultural background of the learner (Duffy and Cunningham 1996). When these constituents are applied to language learners in a TL community in informal learning settings, to examine them is rather difficult and impractical since individual assistants, tools in the environment, and the cultural background of learners, are various and numerous. However, this study explores the assistants and tools of language learning, but cultural differences of learners are excluded from this research. Reflections of historical and cultural differences of learners on their language development is outside the scope of this research.

According to Vygotsky, a teacher's role is to support learners to use culturally defined tools, signs and artifacts so that they become an active member of that society. This role of a teacher enables learners to appropriate the current knowledge. However, outside-school linguistic engagements of adult language learners are not instruction-based but function based. That is to say learning occurs as an outcome of natural encounters in meaningful linguistic interactions (John-Steiner 1975). In this study, scaffolding is explored in the context of informal language learning through the activities of adult learners in the TL community.

The method of teaching when a learner is within the ZPD has also been researched by Wood (1999) comparing different scaffolding models in formal settings. The finding suggests that full control on the learner in this situation produces passive learners. Learning does not involve acquiring only the new knowledge, but also understanding the construction of, and making relevant associations with, that new

knowledge. If new knowledge is provided without conscious effort, learners' acquisition abilities will not develop properly, leaving them as passive learners. As a result, Wood (1999, p. 273) puts forward three conclusions. First, he argues that the tasks should offer 'just enough comprehensible problems'. Second, the teacher will constantly observe the learner and intervene just to overcome the current difficulty when needed. Third, the teacher will gradually reduce the scaffolding and leave the control to the learner. These learning issues are also relevant to this research in exploring the challenges that push learners into the ZPD. Therefore, the sources of scaffolding and how active learners are on their own in informal settings are also explored in this research.

Scaffolding, in relation to the sociocultural perspective of learning, differs from formal teaching practice in that scaffolding occurs in the unpredictable and novel behaviour of learners (Conference Paper, van Lier 2004). Adult language learners in the TL community experience an ample amount of linguistic interactions in which learners behave and use the TL in accordance with their own cultural values and linguistic capabilities. These situations are loaded with possibilities for scaffolding by other interlocutors. One issue in this research is how scaffolding is actually offered by others and how it is perceived and taken up by learners.

From a sociocultural perspective, the legitimacy of and the affinity between interlocutors in an environment are critical for the learner to make the best use of his or her social ecology, and these conditions do not prevail in conventional classrooms (Schütz 2004). The question here is whether these conditions prevail outside school for language learners, and if so, to what extent. As far as scaffolding is concerned, the legitimacy and affinity of a child in a family and an adult language learner in a TL community are quite different from each other. While a child is provided with the necessary physical and social tools to learn a language within a family and the social environment without conscious effort, an adult learner is expected to perceive all those tools and affordances and initiate his or her own activities, thereby learning.

Drawing on these points of opportunities for scaffolding, Lave and Wenger (1991) propose situated learning and 'legitimate peripheral participation' in which learners are to be placed in such social situations that they will have a legitimate position to

be a party in that discourse. Furthermore, the arguments of 'guided participation' and 'apprenticeship' techniques (Rogoff 1990, 1995) in formal education are also relevant to this research as guided participation is related to formal learning settings and apprenticeship might exist in informal settings. Guided participation refers to an act of directing the learner into an activity which embodies learning opportunities. Apprenticeship refers to an act where the learner participates in an activity together with an instructor but guides him or herself in order to learn through practice (John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith 1994). All these conditions exist naturally for a child during L1 acquisition in his or her social environment. However, whether these teaching-learning suggestions are available for an adult learner in a TL community is considered from the point of view of the learners' experiences.

The nature of scaffolding delivered to learners in informal settings is yet to be discovered and defined in order to understand the quality of learning opportunities in outside-school environments. When informal learning settings are researched, two approaches need to be considered (Ellis 1999): the study of foreigner talk (the register used by native speakers to non-native speakers); and the study of discourse (conversations between native speakers and second language learners). It is challenging to describe the foreigner talk as Long (1981) points out. Collecting baseline data in this research was difficult due to the age of the participants, the topics of conversation, the proficiency of the learners and also because of ethical concerns. As pointed out by most of the participants in this research, adult participants are usually reluctant to be recorded for research purposes because the topics of natural discourses are usually private. Moreover, learners' very limited proficiency in the target language posed another serious handicap for collecting natural discourse data. However, in this research some recordings in natural environments have been collected to show insights into the nature of scaffolding given to adult learners in the TL community.

Long (1981a) describes foreigner talk as having two characteristics; input and interactional features, which are both relevant to scaffolding on a practical level. Input features consist of grammatical simplifications and simplifications leading to ungrammatical speech. These simplifications occur in three areas; grammar, lexis and pronunciation. Interactional features are specific discourse functions used by

native speakers such as comprehension and confirmation checks and clarification requests. These input and interactional arrangements (Ellis 1999) are identified in detail by scholars like Ferguson and Debose (1977), Hatch, Shapira and Gough (1978), Long (1981a, 1981b, 1983a) and Arthur et al (1980).

Foreigner talk has a higher proportion of statements as opposed to motherese (mother's talk to a child in a first language) which shows a high proportion of instructions and questions (Freed 1980). Freed explains motherese as a mothers' intention to direct a child's behaviour and foreigner talk as the exchange of information. However, Scarcella and Higa (1981) see this difference as a reflection of general difference between talking to a child and talking to an adult rather than a specific difference between motherese and foreigner talk. This research includes some analysis of the aids and types of features and scaffolding practices, in discourses used by learners, with both native and non-native speakers of English.

The constructive support of the proficient speaker to the learner in a discourse is relative to the enrichment developed by the learner in a conversation, because, as in relevant discourse studies, the feedback a learner provides affects the nature of subsequent input from the proficient speaker (Ellis 1999). In other words, in a conversation, a learner's responses to the proficient speaker may open doors to new input for themselves. Similarly, Sharwood-Smith (1981) points out that the learner's output comes back to them as an input for further language processing mechanisms. Swain (1983) also emphasises the importance of comprehensible output as a mechanism for a learner to express themselves better by means of other language forms where there is a communication breakdown. Harder (1980) makes a similar point stating that extending one's action potentially extends opportunities for language learning. Another important characteristic of discourse is that in adult-to-adult conversations, proficient speakers try to help by scaffolding or modeling what the learner wants to say (Hatch 1978). Drawing on this work, this research looks at the types of feedback learners get from their interlocutors at different proficiency levels in order to understand what assists low-level learners to advance in language skills in these contexts.

2.5.6   Why the Sociocultural Approach to SLA

There is some strong evidence to support Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that languages are mediated and developed through activities in a social community and do not directly rely on the physical world (see, for example, the work on Victor and Genie (Lightbown and Spada 2001) who failed to develop language when deprived of normal social interactions). Developing a language is to gain skills to make sense of the relations in a given environment and to be able to interpret and cope with interpersonal relations as an individual. In his systemic functional grammar Halliday (1985) argues that languages are used both to describe the world (experiential function) and to develop and maintain relationships (interpersonal function). In order to be able to do this the learner develops the lexico-grammar and discourse functions appropriate to specific situations, and builds up confidence and knowledge of that given social ecology or culture.

The importance of interaction for SLA can also be seen in the fact that children learn their mother-tongue based on the interactions with their immediate social circle without any formal education. It is important to note that children learn their mother-tongue mainly through activities. In fact, activity is the most distinguishing characteristic of a child as far as their physical and mental development, including language skills, are considered. Children are often the initiators of the linguistic discourses with their parents (Halliday 1975; Wells 1985) whilst it is commonly reversed for adult language learners in classrooms.

Another important phenomenon to support the role of interactions and engagement in SLA is that some adult learners do develop a first or second language in naturalistic ways by being a participant in a variety of community practices (Brown, Collings and Duguid 1989; Lave and Wenger 1991). Again, the question of second language learning without formal education would seem to lie in the activities and the role and relations of the learner in linguistic discourses. In this research, the social activity survey aims to explore the learner social activities outside the school and their contributions to language development.

As discussed earlier, the former studies of language structures from the positivist view were not adequate to explain the meaning-making structures and functions of a language from all aspects. In contrast, systemic functional grammar (Halliday 1985)

analyses language as a social semiotic system and this approach to language maps onto a sociocultural theory of learning in that both approaches see learning as socially constructed. Halliday examines the language patterns as orders of social relations and descriptions of how the physical world is perceived. Both sociocultural theory and systemic functional grammar interpret language as a systemic representation of socioculturally mediated semiotic symbols. Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky 1981) and systemic functional grammar (Halliday 1985) both present language as a semiotic, relational, cultural and experiential phenomenon. In short, language and context are inseparable. It is the combination of these ideas that directs this research to focus on the natural language learning in social contexts in informal settings.

2.6 An Ecological Approach

2.6.1 Ecological Perspective of Language

Since this research focuses on learners in a TL community, the relationship between learners and their surroundings, in ecological terms, becomes a factor for language learning. That is to say in relation to research on SLA, attention is moving to learner ecology in terms of social, cultural and spatial factors (Leather and van Dam 2003).

Ecology, in addition to its use in biology and geology, is now associated with language learning. Contexts of language learning are always complex, dynamic and in principle emergent (Leather and van Dam 2003). Ecological linguistics is not only engaged with relations of thought, action and power between users and learners but with purely linguistic objects such as words, sentences and grammar and also attributes of communication and meaning-making such as gestures, mimics, body language, drawings and artifacts (Kress, Martins and Ogborn 1998; McCafferty 1998). In this research the social environment is particularly important as learners are exposed to TL in such contexts where the TL is lingua franca. The social environment in the TL community is a significant factor in language learning. Yet, it is necessary to take into account the characteristics of the multi-cultural ecology of a TL country, like Australia, because the social ecology may offer affordances of different quality and quantity, and their contributions to SLA are significant.

Van Lier (1999) summarises the fundamental properties of language learning in the ecological approach as follows.

Languages emerge. The notion of emergence of a language converts the scientific attitude of reductionism to a holistic approach. Language learning is not a cognitive process in the brain which formulates linguistic structures the learner is exposed to, but it is the social and perceptual activities of the learner which become meanings and turn into an holistic system of communication including all verbal and non-verbal interactions. The emergence of language is theorised in that 'language is connected to the world and is, thereby, learnable' (Dent 1990). Dent discusses children's detection of the relationship between the language devices such as words, syntactic forms, intonations and events in everyday life. She argues that there must be a correlation between language devices and stable patterns in the environment. Her argument relies on the basis that language devices are changeable and useable according to situations (Millikan 1984). Dent's ecological approach to perception is supported by scholars such as Gibson (1966, 1979); Dent and Rader (1979); Rader and Dent (1979) and Reed (1985, 1987).

Language learning is not a piece by piece construction of linguistic knowledge, but develops in non-linear ways (Baynham 1993; Larsen-Freeman 2003), so that the learner develops skills which he or she utilises to interact with within their ecology. One implication of this notion for this research is to understand the breadth of the situation in which this non-linear development occurs. In this regard, discourses outside the school give insights about the type of language learners experience and how they manage to 'deal with' those varied use of structures.

Not all mental faculties can be explained as a cognitive process. Brain functions are not confined to internal processes but are stimulated by external activities a learner is involved with. It is worthwhile to quote Mace who wrote, "ask not what's inside your head, ask what your head's inside of" (Reber 1993, p. 58). Data collected in this research (see Chapter 3 for 'Outside-School Activities' survey) assists in understanding the relationship between a learner's social activities and their language development.

All types of activities a learner is engaged in are relevant in terms of understanding what s/he learns and van Lier (1999) also makes a correlation between activities and

learning. Language learning is semiotic and ecological. It is semiotic because it has formulaic patterns, and historical and cultural backgrounds. It is ecological because it is perceptual, emergent and action-based. As the learners in this research learn the target language in the TL community, the findings are expected to point to some formulaic, cultural, action-based language learning.

2.6.2   Affordance

Central to this research is the notion of an 'affordance' and this section explores it as opportunities for language learning (van Lier 1999, 2000). As the following discussion clarifies, a linguistic affordance can be defined as the interface where potential possibility of linguistic interaction and social engagement exist for further action. In other words, affordances are the relationships which contain possibilities to enable learners to go into a further action in a linguistic environment (Neisser 1987). Whether the affordance is taken up or not depends on the sociocultural background (Norman 1988) and the goal of the perceiver. Therefore, the goal of the perceiver is a determining factor for perception and further action in an affordance.

Gibson (1979) defined affordance as all action possibilities latent in the environment, objectively measureable, and independent of the individual's ability to recognise those possibilities; and those possibilities are dependent on the capability of the perceiver. The example given by van Lier (1999) explains how the perception of an affordance may differ for each actor. He writes:

> "A leaf in the forest can offer crawling on for a tree frog, cutting for an ant, food for a caterpillar, shade for a spider, medicine for a shaman. In each case, while the leaf and its properties remains the same, different organisms perceive and act upon it from a different perspective."
>
> (Lantolf 2004, p. 252).

The main properties of affordances according to Gibson (1979) are as follows.

Affordances are properties of the environment in terms of how the environment is equipped, what it supplies and the way it encourages the perceiver. This is why affordances are the opportunities for further action as a combination of these three

properties of the environment. In this research, these features of affordance are analysed in informal learning settings in terms of how they are equipped, what opportunities exist and how the learner is moved for further action to develop the target language.

Perception is the cognitive awareness of particular features (values and meanings) of objects in an environment within the radius of the actor's physical observation. Consequently, affordances for a language learner are external to the perceiver and can be perceived by different students in different ways. This feature of affordance is relevant to learners' observation of their social and physical environment for language learning purposes, and their willingness to engage with it. Affordances are relative to perceivers and can only be measured in ecology, not in physical values. In other words, relativity here represents the relational engagement of the perceiver with the environment. In our case, each learner roams in different ecologies, creating different affordances.

Affordances are holistic. The way the objects are perceived in an environment is their affordance, not their physical dimension and properties. This property of an affordance refers to the combination of exteroception (perceiving phenomena outside the body) and proprioception (perceiving oneself and one's actions) (Gibson 1979). In this study, this combination (of exteroception and proprioception of an affordance) reflects on language from the learner's point of view as the way learners perceive the target language in an authentic context around them (either directed at them or not) and their social roles and goals to take further action (or not) in this regard. The learner's social position and intentions here is a determining factor in taking further action leading to linguistic engagement and language learning. This research investigates the conditions and the situations that push or initiate learners to take action. The learner is in constant social contact with his or her enviornment throughout the routines of a typical day. The learner's environment is not only limited to objects, but also people and events which are quite different in nature and dynamics. That being the case, learners are living in a sea of *social affordances* (Knebel 2004) which offer potential for language learning.

Affordances may be of various kinds in respect to the learner's position. The linguistic encounters that learners are engaged with are not merely an exchange of linguistic utterances but dynamic social relations in which there are give-and-take situations, gains and losses, possibles and impossibles, and acceptables and unacceptables (Shotter and Newson 1982). This study explores some of the affordances that are taken up or preferred by students in Australia, and considers their value for language development.

From the perspective of sociocultural theory, affordances are the fundamental opportunities for language learning while living and studying in a TL community. Formal and informal learning settings have great potential to create opportunities for linguistic affordances and actions whether or not learners are willing to make use of them. But learners are in such a social ecology that it is almost impossible to exclude themselves from affordances and to use English language as a communication medium is unavoidable. The social environments in Australia provide learners with abundant opportunities and affordances to engage in English speaking contexts.

2.7 Conclusion

Over the years, the perspective of classroom-based SLA has changed from the psychologically-oriented approaches such as behaviourist and innatist models based on knowledge transfer to learners, to the collaborative socio-constructivist position (Vygotsky 1981; Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Rogoff 1990; Bruner 1996; Hillocks 1995, 1999; Dewey 1968) focused on knowledge building as a cooperative activity with learners. So, knowledge is not a static property possessed and to be passed over to learners, but an outcome of social activities in a community and change over time. Consequently, what a language learner develops depends on the opportunities of engagements around the learner in a social environment. Language learning does not happen naturally as innatists (Chomsky 1965; McNeill 1966; Lenneberg 1967) state nor is it a process of 'carbon copying' as claimed by behaviourists (Bloomfield 1933; Skinner 1957; Lado 1964). Rather, it depends on the linguistic interactions in social activities a learner is engaged in. Therefore, this research explores the second language learning opportunities, that is to say affordances, for adult learners in a TL community and how learners benefit from those advantages offered by the TL community.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Rationale

As discussed in Chapter 2, early SLA research focuses on the mental processes of language learning using psychological approaches. These psychological approaches are positivist and look for reliable hard data and replicable outcomes (Davis 1995). Their research designs and data collection methods focus on measurable findings ignoring the semiotic and holistic properties of languages which are developed through both context and relation-based experiences and are not suited to reductionism. As suggested in Chapter 2, the data of this research do not focus on learners' proficiency in the target language but rather on the opportunities through which they learn it in natural environments. It focuses rather on how learners have come to do, rather than what they know (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991). As we have seen in Chapter 2, language development is not an individualistic mental process only but is related to the sociocultural contexts in which it emerges (Davis 1995). Therefore, the orientation in research focusing on the ecological factors in SLA requires a qualitative approach in which subjective data on learner experiences, beliefs, activities, ideas, learning methods and strategies are the fundamental data sources for analysis.

Methods of data collection for this type of research are complex and challenging because they focus on the independent learning experiences of adult learners outside school. This research relates to the contexts, relations and interactions contributing to learning in *unpredictable* contexts: for the participants learning could occur any where and any time. For that reason, the data collection focused on the depth of the data rather than the breadth, focusing on an in-depth study of a small group of participants. It was important to understand the opportunities from which the participants benefited and the factors which contributed to language learning. The research was designed to this end.

3.2 Approach to Research

As Chapter 1 discussed, this research explores some of the possible reasons behind the fast rate of English language development of overseas ELICOS students in Australia. In addition, importantly, the research seeks to identify

participants' *own perception* about their learning. Since the research focuses on the independent language learning experiences in the TL community, the design and methodology were naturalistic, hence qualitative and interpretive for several reasons.

There are three main reasons for this research to be qualitative. First, the relationship between the data and the participant is subjective to each participant. Second, learning is not a static activity; therefore it changes from participant to participant. Third, the theoretical constructs of this research which were discussed in Chapter 2 are mainly qualitative in nature; activity theory, the notion of affordances, register theory, the ZPD and scaffolding. This chapter shows why an interpretive and qualitative approach to the data has been taken.

3.2.1   Data: the interpretations of the participants

The data in this research rely on the interpretations of the participants. Each learner experiences different linguistic interactions which are unique instances and their learning values can only be explained by the learner him/herself. Moreover, single events and situations can be interpreted differently by each participant (Cohen et al 2000). Therefore, learning experiences of participants in informal environments outside the school are difficult to explain objectively and generalizations applicable to all learners cannot be made. Researchers for language development need to act upon the data given by the participants. Learning experiences should be examined through the eyes of participants rather than the researcher (Cohen et al 2000), with an 'insider' perspective (Reichardt and Cook 1979).

It is quite impractical to observe or interfere with participants' private lives for ethical reasons. Moreover, a researcher cannot of course monitor all instances in the course of a participant's daily routine. Furthermore, the social world should be studied in its natural state, without the intervention of or manipulation by the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). This is why data in this research largely rely on what the participants provided to the researcher.

This research looks at the interactional aspects of the participants in language learning experiences: how students approached language learning in Australia, what they did to learn the target language, what kind of affordances existed for the social interactions in the natural environment and what kind of scaffolding was available to them in informal settings. To address all these factors, it is necessary to understand the participants' interpretations of the world around them from the learners' point of view, rather than the researcher's (Cohen et al 2000).

As language learning is multi-faceted, complex and fuzzy, and cannot be reduced to crystal clear explanations, most data collected are subjective, fluid, flexible, complex and unpredictable and require a qualitative research design. Furthermore, language learning is the accumulation of linguistic experiences and practices in both formal and informal settings the combination of which cannot be measured in concrete scales. Therefore, a 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) was considered important here. The 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973) in SLA refer to the density of the data interpretations where the data analysis cannot be reduced to a single explanation. Moreover, the data tend to be multi-layered and from several sources, and are interpreted from a range of perspectives.

3.2.2   Similar contexts, different learning

Since learning occurs naturally in everyday activities, learning experiences are not predictable; they occur randomly and language learning cannot be singled out. Therefore, in this research it is difficult to employ an experimental approach to the data collection and analysis.

Learners individually build their own social network and relations in the TL community, which directly impacts on their learning opportunities. Adult learners have different patterns of activities and specific affordances cannot be predicted. People actively construct their social world – they are not the 'cultural dopes' or 'passive dolls' of positivism. (Becker 1970; Garfinkel 1967). Social activities in a community are different for each learner, thus affecting the amount and the quality of linguistic affordances. Participants are deliberate and

creative in their actions outside the classroom. They act intentionally and make meanings in and through their activities (Blumer 1969), which itself is learning language (Swain 1985). As the relations develop over time, the depth of the language use changes, creating new learning opportunities. The combination of all these factors of this research requires a qualitative approach. Social contexts and relations within those contexts can be explained through activity theory (discussed in Chapter 2) in terms of the 'roles' and 'goals' of the participants in the TL community. The 'affordances' perceived and used in those contexts and the relations are critical to explain, clarify and demystify how learners' views shape the action which they take within that reality (Beck 1979).

Since it is important to note that learner profiles, settings of learning and goals of learning change from learner to learner, it is difficult to describe all the variables in language learning (Seliger 1984), hence the ethnographic nature of this research.

3.2.3   The theoretical constructs

This research investigates the language learning experiences of overseas Elicos students in Australia from the perspective of the sociocultural constructs discussed in Chapter 2: activity theory, affordances, zone of proximal development, and scaffolding. Register theory is also used to explain the dimensions of topic, interpersonal relations and form of language used in relation to social contexts. Using sociocultural constructs, learners' social contacts in their new social ecology are discussed to explain the contributions of socialising to language learning. The connection between learner activities and social contacts is important to understanding how affordances are perceived and used and how other interactants support language development for learners. Aspects of register theory give insight into the types of lexico-grammar used, how learners adapt themselves to changes in interpersonal relations and the types of skills most used such as oral or written.

The research data are analysed to understand the activities of learners in the target language community, the contexts of the affordances perceived and the actions taken further to develop language and to assess the communication

features of the linguistic interactions in terms of the ZPD and scaffolding offered. While investigating those areas, learners' social contacts in their new social ecology in and outside school and how these relations affect their language learning experiences are discussed to understand the connection between language learning and the quality of social relations. When taken into consideration as a combination to analyse the 'soft' data of this research, a qualitative/interpretive method is an appropriate research design.

3.3 Participant Criteria

The participants for this research were chosen according to the three criteria below:

- Level of proficiency
- Period of study
- Number of participants

Care was given to choosing equal numbers of males/females and a mixture of participants from different linguistic backgrounds. This was to include a range of overseas students in Australia.

3.3.1 Level of Proficiency

All participants were total beginners for two reasons. First, the lower level learners' language development is more significant and rapid in short periods of time compared to the learners at intermediate or more advanced levels. This rapid and significant language development is important in this study for understanding the factors affecting independent language learning. Secondly, for obvious reasons, total beginners need to be more proactive in being engaged with learning through necessity than those who can, to an extent, communicate in the TL community. This quality of engagement was important in order to explore the informal learning experiences in the TL community.

3.3.2 Period of Study

Overseas students in Australia usually study English formally for around three and occasionally up to six or ten months. Since this research was longitudinal, the most practical solution was to choose participants who were going to study

English for a minimum of a three-month-period. In addition, to choose participants with much longer periods of formal study was not practical as most students do not study for extended periods.

There are two main reasons behind the minimum three months of formal study criterion. The first is that it would be difficult to determine the factors for language development in a shorter period of time as the language development is a progressive process. The second reason is that even though it is a relatively short time, low level learners do generally make significant progress in that time in their language skills. Since it is likely to be a critical period for almost all of the low level learners, the first three months can offer salient insight about their language development.

3.3.3   Number of Participants

The sample size is generally relative to the style of the research, whether it is survey based, interview or diary keeping, and the other factors such as cost and administration. Qualitative research is generally expected to require a small group (Cohen et al 2000) while the focus is on the depth of the data. The decision about the size of the sample group depended on the type of instruments to collect the data, the workload on the participants, the research period and the variety of the data. There were six different types of data collection methods. Two of them, 'Daily Question' and 'Daily English Activity Sheet' were filled out by the participants every day. They required considerable time and mental effort. Other instruments, taking less time and effort, were two surveys, a one-hour group interview and occasional voice recordings. Therefore, the research started with fourteen participants, and eleven participants completed the research successfully. As expected, the data collected from the participants provided sufficient feedback for the research.

3.4 Data Sources

The data collecting methods considered in conducting this research were difficult to prepare because the large number of informal learning environments and instances that each learner was involved in could not be foreseen clearly in the TL community. For that reason, the data collection methods chosen were:

- survey
- diary keeping
- voice recordings
- interviews.

Consequently, the participants were asked to:

- complete two identical "Learner Belief" surveys (one at the beginning and one towards the end of the research);
- complete an "Outside School" Activities survey;
- fill in a "Daily English Activitiy" Sheet daily;
- answer a "Daily Question" daily;
- participate in a "Group Interview";
- carry out "Voice Recordings" in natural environments.

3.4.1 Learner Belief Survey

Samples of the Learner Belief Survey is in the Appendix.

To be able to explore the learning opportunities in the TL community, it was necessary to know what factors the participants believed would support their learning. A rating scale of two single questionnaires was prepared. These had the advantages of being quick to complete and enabling the researcher to make comparisons within the sample group (Oppenheim 1992) without any undue differences in the data because of the participants' limited language skills (Wilson and McLean 1994).

Two identical 'learner belief' surveys were completed by the participants; one asking about their expectations of language learning at the beginning of the research, and one documenting their actual experiences at the end. The second

survey explores how far their expectations were met. In other words, the rationale of the learner belief surveys was to understand what opportunities learners thought they would have for language learning during their time in Australia and which ones were actually realised at the end. The two surveys helped to extract the differences between how the learners expected to learn English and how, in fact, they did learn it. In fact, the answers in the second survey indicated how potential opportunities were turned into affordances. So, the differences in the learner beliefs are significant in two aspects: first, in ways actual learning occurred; and second, how second language learning attitudes, strategies and expectations of the participants changed over time.

The scores representing each survey item suggest the overall relative strength of the beliefs about learning opportunities; they are not intended to show actual learning and represent general tendencies only. Furthermore, the outcomes of the learner belief survey also suggest not only the individual differences but also common tendencies for all learners. In addition to the structured options in the survey, the participants were asked to add any extra beliefs of their own to the lines provided at the bottom of the survey items and rate them.

3.4.2 Learner Social Activity Survey

A sample of the Learner Social Activity Suvery is in the Appendix.

This survey consisted of the questions about the activities the participants were involved in and that they thought were of value in terms of language learning in the TL community. In fact, these activities were the potential opportunities which were loaded with affordances. In addition to the list of the social activities suggested as examples, the participants were also asked to add to the list the activities which contributed to their language learning. This survey was given towards the end of each participant's formal study to gain a better understanding of their outside-school activities already experienced. The later this survey was conducted, the more data would likely be received.

The data collected through this survey is significant as language learning is directly related to their social-life activities. It is important to know about the participants' socialisation in Australia in order to understand the activities in which participants perceived the affordances and took further action to develop their English language skills.

3.4.3 Daily Question Sheet

A sample of the Daily Question Sheet is in the Appendix.

The participants were asked to complete a daily question sheet answering the same question everyday from the day they agreed to participate in the research. It consisted of the instruction:

> Write the **special things** that helped you to learn English today *at school and/or outside school*.

The daily question sheet contributed to the research in two ways. First, the factors that learners believed helped them to develop their language skills were recorded daily. Even though not all the data collected this way seemed relevant to language development, there was much of value. Secondly, the daily question sheet functioned as a daily diary about participants' language experiences which gave insight about their activities and attitudes towards the language learning in informal settings.

The daily questions sheets were first examined individually, and then compared with others to find similarities between the participants in terms of the learning opportunities and practices. The data obtained enabled the researcher to discuss the specific locations and contexts where some learning occurred. Data also provided the researcher with some insight about the relationship between social activities and learning processes. Participants' retrospective accounts in this regard were significant to better understand the factors in social learning.

3.4.4   Daily English Activity Sheet

A sample of the Daily English Activity Sheet is in the Appendix.

The daily English activity sheet consisted of two parts. In the first part there were twelve questions asking about the participants' amount of exposure to the target language in the four main skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. These data suggested the amount of time the participants estimated they were exposed to the target language in a day in the three different environments – during the classes, between the classes and outside the school. However, data of this nature is not necessarily reliable or accurate since the participants do not keep an exact time of their language engagements, and their estimations in regards to the daily period of TL exposure reflected may not be precise. Nevertheless, in interpreting their feedback, we need to be mindful of the fact that the data here reflect the participants' view of their learning. As the type and intensity of the input is an important factor in language development, the data obtained by means of the daily English activity sheets does suggest how and where most of the language involvement was realised in natural environments outside the school. Considering the amounts of the exposure in time and environments, it was possible to identify the likely affordance-rich opportunities for language learning in the target language community.

Another important aspect in the first part of the daily English activity sheet was that it showed how the continuum between formal and informal learning settings changed from learner to learner. Although this continuum was evaluated at an individual participant level, it was also possible to look at overall tendencies. At one end of the continuum were the learners who believed they learn more in formal settings while at the other, were learners who believed they learn more in the informal settings. The data suggested some major rich affordances for language learning in informal settings.

The second part of the daily English activity sheet focused on learners' beliefs and attitudes regarding their motivation, satisfaction and achievements in and outside school learning. In various theories of SLA literature, the issues of beliefs, attitudes and motivation have been discussed as a socio-psychological

factor affecting the L2 learning for adults (Spolsky 1969; Brown 1987; Lukmani 1972; Burstall 1975; Gardner 1979; Strong 1984; Cooper 1981). It is important to note that these affective factors are generally related to the social contexts (ecologies) of the learner. From this point of view, this part of the daily English activity sheet explores the affective aspects of the participants in L2 learning in the TL community.

3.4.5 Group Interviews

A sample of the Group Interview Questions is in the Appendix.

Gathering data through group interviews is significant in qualitative research as the participants are not seen as controllable data sources but as data is generated through socialising (Kvale 1996). In addition, the data generated through socialising are richer and deeper, providing a wider range of aspects than individual interviews (Lewis 1992). Since interviews enable the participants to question themselves, and express how they see their experiences from their own perspectives (Watts and Ebbutt 1987; Cohen et al 2000), the two group interviews were quite rewarding in understanding what the participants saw as the L2 learning opportunities.

The two group interviews were held towards the end of the data collection period with those who were about to finish their formal studies. The number of participants in each interview was five in one and six in the other, which complies with the suggestion that Lewis (1992) makes for group interviews. The underlying purpose of conducting group interviews with around six students was to encourage the learners to participate in discussing and sharing their learning experiences in the TL community. If the groups were too small, it was expected that the participants might say less. The group interviews provided valuable data for the research.

While forming the groups, the primary concern was the participants' course completion date because it was important that participants had similar period of experiences in the TL community so that data obtained would be stronger in

terms of validity and reliability to make some generalizations. The second concern was the availability of participants to join the group interviews on a date fixed by the researcher.

These two group interviews were another salient method of data collection in this research. The questions in the interview addressed all the research questions from different perspectives to get a more comprehensive view of the research objectives. The interview was based on the three main research questions focusing on around 15 detailed questions (see appendix) and aimed to explore in more depth the contexts and the factors that played a significant role in the students' learning.

3.4.6 Voice Recordings

The participants were asked to do some occasional voice-recordings of their interactions in English in their natural environments during their participation in the research. The voice-recordings outside the school between learners and third parties in real-life situations gave information about how affordances were 'played out' in actual interactions. The importance of the voice recordings is discussed by scholars from different perspectives (Coyle 1995; Habermas 1970; Edwards 1991). For example, Coyle (1995) argues for the importance of understanding discourse in order to see how meanings constructed in social contexts. In addition, Habermas (1970) argues that the utterances in a discourse create meaning not only by their linguistic qualities but also by their intersubjective contexts in which they are articulated. For the participants in this research, this is an important aspect in the discourse analysis of the voice recordings when their limited language skills are taken into consideration. Similarly, Edwards (1991) argues that making meaning is related to both the words and the situations in which they are used.

Initially learners were asked to do some voice recordings in their natural interactions outside the school without informing the other interactants. However, for ethical reasons, it was decided that the voice recordings be done 'in safe environments' with written consent. This would assure their security and minimise the likelihood of possible negative feedback from the third parties.

Those safe places were mainly their homes and their workplaces and the school where they studied English. Participants received a blank copy of a consent letter to be signed by every third party prior to the students recording their English conversation with them. In the case of the workplace, they first got a letter of consent from the person in charge of the workplace and then from each individual to be recorded. Obtaining a consent letter prior to recording resulted in some disadvantages such as a limited number of recordings and possibly 'careful' language used by the proficient speakers.

Voice recordings in natural environments with the third parties were carried out by easy-to-carry MP3 players supplied by the researcher, which became their personal property at the end of the research as thanks from the researcher for their participation in this study.

3.5   Analysis of Data

Due to the nature of the research methodology, the analysis of the data was made on two grounds: Content and Discourse analysis. Content analysis focused on what the participants provided through surveys and questionnaires and was important in understanding the learners' perspective on language learning experiences. On the other hand, discourse analysis focused on the learner language interaction data obtained through the voice recordings. Discourse analysis was carried out using aspects of register theory and insights from SLA research.

3.5.1   Content Analysis

The data on the two learner belief surveys were examined to show the changes in learner beliefs and whether learners believed most language learning occurred in formal or informal settings. Changes in beliefs were classified as increasing or decreasing strength of beliefs (some slightly and some noteably). After discussion of those items, a summary was made of the findings. The rationale of categorising the findings in this section in such a manner resulted from the differences between the first and the second learner belief surveys. Items which increased in their scaling suggest that those beliefs played a more significant

role than the participants expected. On the other hand, the items which decreased suggest that those beliefs were not realised as expected. Moreover these responses provided some triangulations with other data sources.

The data in the daily English activity sheet were put into a bar chart for each participant as the data were being provided by the participants daily. There were four bar charts for all individual participants; one each for listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each separate skill chart contained data for the amount of exposure at the school, outside the school and between the classes. These four skill charts represented the quantitative representation of the TL exposure according to the learners' perception.

The outcome of the data from the Social Activity survey were first analysed in two separate ways: from linguistic and from social aspects. The linguistic aspect refers to how far activities were likely to challenge the participants as far as the extended language use was required. In other words, the relationship between the activity and the linguistic challenge or risk-taking was salient in terms of understanding the types of activities the participants preferred or participated in the TL community. Moreover, the relationship between the learners' language skills and the type of social activities in the TL community is also important in understanding which activities are favourable. On the other hand, the social aspect refers to the quality and the functions of the activities and their contributions to language learning. This analysis focused on the social properties (affordances) of the activities for the participants.

The input collected through the Daily Question questionnaire was analysed according to the domains in which the participants experienced learning opportunities. The participant statements in the daily questionnaire mainly focused on where and what they learned; that is to say where the affordances existed and in what way they made use of them for language learning.

In group interviews, the participants were addressed by the research questions for approximately one hour in each respective session. The participants appeared relaxed and all the learners participated in the open-ended discussions about their language learning experiences. Because of the collaborative nature of the group interview, valuable data were gathered. In fact, the group discussions

assisted the participants to generate more detailed data. In some instances, participants assisted each other to better explain themselves, thus leading to a deeper understanding of their learning experiences.

The analysis of group interview was made by taking notes of the participant answers for each question. The notes taken were then classified according to their contents. The data in this section mainly focused on the activities providing affordances in formal and informal settings, learning opportunities outside the school and the linguistic issues faced by the participants in informal settings.

3.5.2   Discourse Analysis

The voice recordings were analysed in terms of the communication strategies between the participants and the proficient speakers. The discourse was examined using aspects of the register theory. Analysis was made in the following manner. First, when the participants delivered the voice recordings, they were asked to give information about the social context of the discourse, the relation between the interactants and the topic of the recordings to be able to analyse the discourses properly. Then the recordings were transcribed by the researcher in the 'vertical' construction (Scollon 1974) so that the discourses could be split in such a way that the strategy of scaffolding (Slobin 1982) could be observed easily. In other words, how learners build their language on the feedback they receive from the proficient speakers could be seen constructively.

Another application of the discourse analysis was the foreigner talk dynamics (Freed 1978; Long 1980) in which proficient speakers make adjustments to keep the discourse comprehensible. It was relevant to this research to understand how these modifications pushed the participants to their limits and worked in the ZPD. Foreigner talk was also significant to understand the scaffolding efforts of proficient speakers. It gave insight about the dimension of affect between the interlocutors to discuss the strength of the learning environment.

The communication strategies (Tarone 1977) of the participants were another salient aspect of the discourse analysis wherein the participants used various techniques to maintain conversation with the locals. These strategies were

important in understanding how the participants were 'hanging on' the learning opportunities and turning them into learning. In fact, communication strategies and foreigner talk dynamics work together to understand how to maintain the discourse and expand language use.

CHAPTER 4

Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

Discussions in this chapter are under six sections according to the six data sources discussed in Chapter 3. These are 'Learner Belief Survey', 'Daily English activitiy Sheet', 'Daily Question', 'Social Activities Survey', 'Group Interviews' and 'Voice Recordings'. Since the nature of the data for each section is unique in itself, it was better to interpret and discuss them individually. During the discussions, the points of interpretations are supported by the data and triangulations and contradictions between data sources are also discussed. Where relevant, students' comments from the other data sources have been added.

4.2 Discussion of Learner Belief survey

As Chapter 3 discussed, learner beliefs were surveyed at the beginning and end of the learners' formal studies in the language college to find out if there were any changes after their formal and informal language learning experiences in Australia (see Appendices 4 and 5). While only two survey items' scores slightly increased, five items' scores notably decreased. The rest of the items remained almost the same. As discussed in Chapter 3, 'increase' or 'decrease' in scores refers to learners' strengthening or weakening beliefs in the item respectively. Below are the discussions of learner beliefs and of the ways they changed between the beginning and the end of the learners' formal studies. Each item is discussed separately, however in one instance two items are discussed together as they are relevant to each other. Overall tendency scores for each item refer to the outcome of the second survey. The tabulated results of the learner belief survey for all participants is included in Appendix 5.

4.2.1 Strengthened beliefs

Two beliefs appeared to strengthen during the students' stay in Australia: 'living in Australia will help me to learn English faster' and 'I will often have contact with native speakers'. The learner beliefs about these two items were both scored high at the beginning of their formal studies (with an overall tendency of 3.8 and 2.6 respectively) and they appeared to be more strongly held at the end. The possible reasons behind this strengthening are discussed in the following section with some relevant data.

• *Living in Australia will help me to learn English faster.*

At the beginning of their language studies in Australia, learners expressed a very strong belief that *living in Australia* would help their English studies and there was not a significant change in this belief at the end of their studies. 'Living in Australia' in terms of learning English is a comprehensive term and does not point at any particular means of language learning but refers to being in an English speaking community in which learners are in continuous contact with the target language and may exploit particular linguistic affordances. As suggested in Chapter 3, living in Australia comprises of all activities of daily life thus not only creating ample linguistic affordances and interactions but also requiring learners to engage in discourses in English in various social settings. The findings suggest that learners were indeed often immersed in social settings in which they needed to use the target language. Examples of participants' comments given below from other data sources support the contributions of living in Australia to their language learning experiences.

> "I m unhappy with my health here, because I m thinking, don't be
> sick my English can be too much better."
> Participant 1 (Daily question)

> "I use English all the time, reading, speaking, listening..."
> Participant 2 (Group interview 1)

• *I will often have contact with native speakers.*

Secondly, learners expected a fairly high level of contact with native speakers, and this belief proved to be true; it remained almost the same with a very slight increase. This suggests that the learners' native-contact expectations were met during their studies in Australia despite relatively limited regular and consistent interactions with native speakers. Nevertheless, learners expressed in group interviews that in incidental short dialogues with local community members, they had difficulties following the conversation for two reasons: accent and speed. However, the overall finding is that despite accent and speed complications, learners had plenty of contacts with locals. Below are some data in relation to contacting with native speakers in the TL community:

"I wasn't at school today, but I was with my brother on the
Christmas party organized by his Australian boss. I tried to talk to
his colleagues."
Participant 6 (Daily question)

"Conversation with native speaker (British)."

"Conversation with other people in the party. Native speaker or
other countries."
Participant 7 (Daily question)

"Making conversation with my Australian boyfriend's parents."
Participant 8 (Daily question)

4.2.2   Weakened beliefs

Other student beliefs appeared to become less strongly held during the students'
stay in Australia. These items are discussed in two parts: slight decreases in
beliefs and notable decreases. Most items showed an insignificant decrease. Five
items decreased notably. It is important to note that although these items
decreased notably, their ratings remained high (above 2 out of 4) in the survey.
That suggests learners still believe that those items were of significant value in
terms of their own language learning.

Items that slightly weakened

• *Australian community will be helpful to learn English.*
Learners expected that the Australian community would help their language
learning studies. Although there is a slight decrease in this belief, they still
believe that the community around them contributed to their language learning.
The slight decrease can be explained by the fact that their involvement with the
local community remained limited in most cases. It is likely that learners and
locals may have not engaged much due to individual daily routines and personal
commitments. In other words, the social contexts where learners and locals
interacted in the target language were limited due to different goals and roles in
the community. However, the outcome of this item indicates that social contacts

between locals and participants in this study seemed supportive for low level language learners. After living in a neighbourhood for a while, it would seem that learners are recognised and accepted as a member of the community and begin to develop social relations with the locals of the area. Evidence of this comes from participants' comments about communal interactions, for example:

> "When I go to home from shopping, I have to pass some shopping centre, and there are two security guys. All the time they see me with the bags, they say something to me, a little bit conversation. They don't have to."

> "I took every morning the same bus, and the same driver. The driver talks to me: how are you today; oh, nice dress today; something changed in your life; you learned more..."
> Participant 7 (Group interview 1)

As suggested in Chapter 2, the chances of affordances for learners with locals are relative to a learner's goals and roles in different social settings determined by his/her activities. For example, although putting learners in a position to speak in the TL, working as a kitchen hand does not require TL use as much as being a waiter or waitress. The more TL-dependent social contexts learners are involved in, the more opportunities of quality affordance learners will have. That is why a learner's goals and roles play a crucial factor in TL engagements. The following statement of a participant supports the importance of TL-dependent social contacts in language learning.

> "The special thing that helped me to learn English today is making conversation with my boyfriend's families all day and night. My boyfriend is Australian. I met, listened to, talked to my boyfriend's oldest brother and his friend at day time."
> Participant 8 (Daily question)

• *I need English to live in Australia.*
Learners' belief that they would 'need English to live in Australia' remained the same with a slight decrease. This suggests that for most students English still

remains the *lingua franca* and creates opportunities for learners to interact in English. No matter if students have roommates, classmates and workmates from their own countries or the same linguistic backgrounds, living in Australia still requires learners to speak English in their daily lives. Below is an example strongly indicating the necessity to use English in Australia.

> "If you live in Australia, you have to use English, because it's not
> possible living in Australia without English."
> Participant 6 (Group interview 2)

According to the daily activity sheets, the circumstances in which the participants need to speak English are usually the language school, workplace and at home with speakers of other languages. Other than these, they have to speak on many other occasions such as in shopping centres, banks, cafeterias, on buses or trains. Depending on their daily routines and priorities the amount of engagements in English, hence L2 learning, changes from learner to learner.

It is also important to point out that the necessity to speak English in Australia refers to a holistic language learning in an English-speaking community. The student's comment above supports the fact that his language learning experience in Australia is different from his experience in the student's homeland, in that learners in Australia are intensively and functionally exposed to target language both at school and outside school. Learners spend a considerable portion of their daily lives *in* the target language. In short, for these students the need to speak English in Australia assisted them to develop the target language faster through social relations.

Frequency and consistency of English use and period of stay in Australia are the other issues relevant to language development. As the participants emphasised, the language learning process continues after school in Australia unlike the limited school studies in their homelands.

- *I will learn a lot of English outside school.*

Learners originally strongly believed that they would 'learn a lot of English outside school', but there was a minor decrease in this belief. However, their responses suggest that they still believe that they learned a considerable amount

of English outside the school. The reason behind this decrease is likely to relate to two issues. First, as group interview data suggest some learners were not involved with the local community as much as expected. Secondly, the nature and quality of outside-school discourses were authentic and message-oriented rather than pedagogic. For that reason, the concept of language learning for participants generally relies on their performance capacity rather than the holistic competency in the TL. In other words, the quality of language learning for learners is to speak fast, to sound like a native speaker, to know a lot of words, and to understand everything word by word whether it be written or spoken. They do not consider their overall linguistic faculties behind those linguistic performances. In fact, they may not be fully aware of the contributions of social language learning in informal settings. Some of the data supporting English learning outside the school are listed as follow:

> "I played game with my roommate in afternoon, they have better English than I, they help me for English."
> Participant 1 (Daily question)

> "I learned some new things in the pub."
> Participant 2 (Daily question)

> "I have a meeting with my friend today. We were talking about many subjects."
> Participant 7 (Daily question)

> "I didn't go to school or go to anywhere today but spent most time talking to my bf and some families and friends in Thailand on MSN & phone as well."
> Participant 8 (Daily question)

> "I went to Rockdale beach with Polish friend and I spoke only English."

> "I practiced English in Darling Harbour."
> Participant 9 (Daily question)

"After school, my sister and I joined some classmates to shopping."
Participant 10 (Daily question)

"On the way to school on the bus today, I talked about Sydney about
10 minutes with the person sitting next to me."
Participant 14 (Daily question)

• *In Australia I will learn better English than in my own country.*

Learners strongly believed that 'they would learn better English in Australia'
and they maintained this belief almost at the same level. The language
development achieved during their limited study period of three months is
admirable as far as their listening comprehension, speaking and reading skills
are concerned, although their writing skills were the least developed. For
example, when participant 1 first started her formal studies, she could not speak
a word in English. After three months, despite her poor attendance, irregularity
in formal studies and lack of eagerness, she was able to communicate in English
comfortably, albeit at a relatively basic level. In other words, she developed
sufficient communicative skills to conduct conversations for daily purposes with
limited grammar knowledge and vocabulary. However, what is significant here
is that learners gain enough confidence, language competence and skills to
express themselves within basic structures. As Swain (2000) has pointed out,
output is not just the result of learning, but learning itself. As a result, learners'
beliefs that they learned better English in Australia in three months should not
be seen purely as the result of formal studies, because there is strong evidence in
this and other data that informal learning is also a great contributor to their TL
skills both linguistically and socially as a member of an English-speaking
community. Students' comments in relation to this include:

"I study here 20 weeks. I think 20 week is the same for one year
in my country for English."
Participant 1 (Group interview 1)

"In my country I study English at school and after school I use only
my first language, and I forget English."
Participant 6 (Group interview 2)

• *I will learn English mostly at school.*

Learners' strong belief that they would 'learn English mostly at school' remained almost the same with a slight decrease. This suggests that learners are motivated for formal learning and have high expectations from language teaching institutions. However, in the group interviews some participants stated that 'they learn fifty-fifty at school and outside school'. What makes them believe that they learned mostly at school may be that they have easy access to teachers whose job is to teach them the target language; they can learn linguistic items for their needs; and can participate in plenty of activities interacting with their classmates. Learners have opportunities to develop their basic language skills and their linguistic awareness at the language schools through pre-planned linguistic activities by means of the communicative methods of language studies. Therefore, the language schools are, in fact, legitimate *social* language learning settings which do offer affordances either perceived by or presented to learners. Some examples supporting this survey item are:

> "I think is school very important, because I don't must speak in English in my flat."
> Participant 1 (Daily question)

> "I learned many things with my classmate and teacher. The teacher always corrects me about my pronunciation, grammar."
> Participant 2 (Daily question)

• *Independent learning is better than schooling.*

Taken with the previous item, this item suggests that learners believe in independent and formal learning equally. However, at the beginning the belief in independent learning was slightly higher. Learning is generally taken by learners as a give-and-take process between a student and a teacher, and their activities outside the school are considered to be 'practising' what they have learned at school, because there is no direct teaching to learners outside the school. When compared with other data sources, direct and indirect contributions of the independent language uses into overall language learning here appear to be underestimated by learners. As Chapter 2 suggested, direct contributions include

extra vocabulary and structural knowledge, and indirect learning includes the opportunities for authentic interactions in a range of contexts, as well as phonological and cultural aspects of the language learning, and the opportunities for developing a broader range of registers. One important implication of this is that the value of the independent language learning should be explained to learners as part of their formal studies. It could be suggested to learners that language learning is not only realised through explicit explanations, definitions and instructions but also by means of implicit learning mediums such as imitation, noticing, negotiation and reasoning in settings outside the school.

• *I will learn English from experienced students.*

The belief that 'I will learn English from experienced students' remained strong despite a slight decrease. Other data suggest that learners learn significantly from experienced learners. Experienced learners from different language backgrounds are of great help to learners as far as language learning is considered. It should be noted here that experienced learners do not only include roommates from the same linguistic background. In fact, they mainly represent learners from a different linguistic background who are more proficient in the TL than the participants. Two quotations are as follows:

> "Friends teach me some words"
> "Learned some words with Holland friends"
> Participant 2 (Daily question)

The first reason for this phenomenon that experienced-learners contribute to L2 learning could be that learners are more likely to have functional discourses with experienced learners through the TL compared to same-language learners with whom they naturally use their mother tongue instead of the target language. Communicating with experienced learners from different language backgrounds helps learners to discourse in the TL in authentic social settings. Another reason could be that learners from different linguistic backgrounds treat each other with empathy, and support each other in language learning, because they all experience similar difficulties in L2 learning.

• *Understanding Australian culture will help my English.*

Learners believe that 'understanding Australian culture helps their language development'. This belief represents the connection between language and culture. We do not know how learners connect language learning and TL culture, but it may be related with experiencing language in authentic social settings and making connections between social activities and relevant language used in them. Therefore, it seems that TL used in its authentic social settings assists learners to establish culture-language connections for long-lasting learning and in developing appropriate registers for different social situations. Below is an example to support this belief.

> "I was very happy to learn English from Australian people and Australian culture at same time."
> Participant 8 (Daily question)

• *I will learn very good English in Australia.*

Despite a slight decrease this item still remained high being congruent with the item 'In Australia I will learn better English than in my own country'. This finding suggests that students believe that they learned good language skills with support of the TL community possibly along with formal studies. In general, the outcome of this item seems to be related to frequent authentic use of English on a daily basis enabling learners to be confident users compared to their experiences in more theoretical studies in their homelands.

• *I will learn English in cafes and restaurants.*

• *I will learn English in shopping centres.*

Participants scored these two items reasonably high (2.5 and 2.4 respectively). Besides being a customer, this outcome could be connected, to some extent, with employment of the participants, as most participants worked in shops, restaurants and cafes. The findings for these two items suggest that shops, cafes and restaurants in the TL community are also places for language learning. One participant stated:

"My Italian friend comeback in Sydney, I was with him in pub, we
have same English, I understand him end he understand me, I
learned new word, early, ugly, traffic, farm."

Participant 1 (Daily question)

• *I will learn English on the phone.*

This item remained high in both surveys with an overall tendency of 2.4.
Actually, all participants had mobile phones and communicated over the phone
for many purposes such as finding a job, work-related contacts and socialising
with friends. As talking on the phone is always challenging for learners in
comparison to face-to-face communication, it is likely that learners paid more
attention to pronunciation and lexico-grammar as well as spelling for SMS
messaging. It is also likely that language learning through phone contacts would
make learners more confident listeners, speakers and writers in the TL. Another
point to be highlighted in this item is that mobile phones appear to play an
important role in language learning while living in the TL community. Below
are examples suggesting the mobile phone as a language learning tool.

"Today I can write SMS my friend because he going to go to
Victoria, I learnt: *I wish you everything the best*; *Be careful = Be
care*; and *one time we will meet again*."

"In Sunday I met Italian guy, and today I want going to go to pub
with he [him]. Am I must write SMS."

"My boyfriend writes my [me] SMS, he writes kiss*es*→

      Normal – name names
             book → books
             kiss → kisses**"**

Participant 1 (Daily question)

"I wrote SMS to my friends in English."

Participant 6 (Daily question)

Items that notably weakened

• *Native speakers will help me to learn English.*

Learners had a high opinion of language learning contributions from native speakers for their language development on their arrival, but there is a significant decrease in this belief by the end of their studies. This outcome is significant from two perspectives. Firstly, some learners might not have enough contact with native speakers for linguistic interactions, and/or secondly, those contacts contributed little to language learning due to lack of regular contact. In fact, in other data sources learners stated that they did not have frequent contacts with native speakers and when they did have linguistic interactions with native speakers, they benefited as long as the native speakers modified their language. The example below shows how locals can contribute to learners' language development.

> "I was in musical festival in Glebe and I learn: my australand [Australian] friend said: don't drink and drive, and I learn: went (past simple go) and I learn speaking, I spelling my name, my address, and I listening your spelling."
> Participant 1 (Daily question)

• *I will have many Australian friends.*

The most significant decrease in this survey was observed in the expectation of *having many Australian friends*. The sharp decrease in this item indicates that learners' interactions are limited to typical protocols such as buying tickets, ordering at a restaurant or shopping. It seems that for most learners, making Australian friends was not realised as expected. Only a limited number of learners managed to make Australian friends during their studies. Making friends with native or local speakers is important in terms of the opportunities it offers for frequency and consistency of target language use. Some comments from participants indicating difficulties in meeting with locals include:

> "I write my parents. OK, I stay here three months and I didn't see kangaroo and I didn't see Aussie guys."
> Participant 1 (Daily question)

"I know more Australians in Brazil than here."

Participant 2 (Group interview 1)

"It's hard to meet Australians."

Participant 6 (Group interview 2)

"Just my teacher, Simon."

Participant 12 (Group interview 1)

• *Other students who speak my language will help my English study.*

Learners believed that 'they would have support for their language learning from other same-language background learners' in Australia during their studies. However, the data show that this belief also decreased considerably. In interviews with learners, they stated that their English language learning collaboration with more proficient other same-language background learners was quite limited and focused on only specific needs in English. As discussed in the group interviews, students from the same language background seem to be supportive of each other's language learning occasionally just to exchange some specific linguistic items for certain purposes. The quotations below are examples supporting learner collaboration between the same L1 speakers.

"My roommate (from Brazil same nationality) teach me many words."

"My roommate teaches me some rules of grammar, but in Portuguese."

Participant 2 (Daily question)

• *Roommates from other countries will help my learning.*

High expectations of 'language learning from roommates from other countries' decreased significantly. This suggests that having a roommate of a different linguistic background is of limited help for learners. It seems that the interactions between roommates of different linguistic backgrounds remained limited. Perhaps the reasons behind this may be either due to difficulties in establishing personal relations or an underestimation of the opportunities and value of interacting in the target language with another learner. However, there

are some data suggesting that language learning *does* occur between learners from different linguistic backgrounds. The example below shows that learners support each other's language development through casual conversations.

> "The second thing to help me learn English was making conversation with my 2 Korean roommates."
>
> Participant 8 (Daily question)

• *I will learn English at my workplace.*

In the first survey most participants gave the highest score (4) for this item indicating that workplaces could offer them plenty of opportunities for linguistic interaction. However, the scores in the second survey showed a notable decrease for many participants suggesting that workplaces offered limited opportunities.

The reasons for the decrease in this item might be both language- and workplace-related. It might be language-related because the participants in this research had no or very low level of English skills, and thus the chances of finding a job which required English use were limited. Therefore, their positions at work usually included physical duties with only occasional English language use. It might be workplace-related because participants mostly find jobs at workplaces run by employers from the same linguistic and/or cultural background. This tends to cause workplaces to become mono-lingual and mono-cultural social environments with only some employees speaking English for professional contacts. As a result of these situations at workplaces, the chances of linguistic interactions diminish for learners. However, as learners' language skills improve, they find new positions where they can use English more often. The following example illustrates the reason for the decrease in this item clearly:

> "In workplace I never speak English, only Thai."
>
> Participant 5 (Group interview 2)

On the other hand, as stated above, some participants benefited from their workplaces for language learning as well. Some managed to have a position to work as a waiter or waitress despite their limited English language skills, and they interacted with their workmates as indicated in the following examples:

"In my work I have t-shirt with long sleeves. My colleague said: Do you feel hot? I learn – feel hot."

"I can drink 1 coca cola in my work, and I learned question past, my boss said: Did you drink Coca-Cola?"
Participant 1 (Daily question)

"I learned many new words in my job with my friends and boss."

"In an interview for a job, the manager teaches me some words with a picture, or just explaining."
Participant 2 (Daily question)

4.2.3   Triangulations and Contradictions

Several items in this survey specifically investigated the role of language learning in the TL community from different perspectives and the outcome shows that overall these items support the contribution of language learning in the TL community. Below is the list of the items with the overall scores received from the participants at the end of their studies out of a 4 scale.

- *Living in Australia will help me to learn English faster.* (3.8)
- *In Australia I will learn better English than in my country.* (3.6)
- *I need English to live in Australia.* (3.4)
- *I will learn very good English in Australia.* (3.1)
- *Australian community will be helpful to me to learn English.* (2.8)
- *I will often have contact with native speakers.* (2.7)

Although some items such as 'I will learn English at the workplace' and 'I will have many Australian friends' dropped significantly with an average of 2.2 and 1.9 respectively, the overall result suggests the importance of the contribution of the TL community to language learning.

The item 'independent learning is better than schooling' contradicts the above findings since it slightly decreased to an overall tendency score of 2. However, it correlated with the findings in group interviews in which participants stated that 'they learn fifty-fifty at school and outside school'. In fact, it should be noted that language schools are also social environments rich in affordances for learners.

Another minor contradiction has been observed in the first item against the following two below:

- *I will learn English from experienced students.* (3)
- *Other students who speak my language will help my English study.* (2.5)
- *Roommates from other countries will help my learning.* (2.3)

In the first item participants imply that they learn a lot from experienced students, which is significant in terms of peer-collaboration in language learning. Although the following two items are not as strong as the first, they still remain strong beliefs and support the collaboration of peer learners.

4.3 Findings of Daily English Activity Sheet

As Chapter 3 discussed, the first part of the daily English activity survey recorded how the use of the four macro-skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) varied for an overseas language student in a target language community. The second part focused on the relative relationship between learner engagement and learning (see Appendix 1).

The outcome of the data in the first part shows that listening and speaking are the most intensive means of language learning practices in both classes and outside-school learning settings. It is significant here to note that the amount of listening practice for all the participants is far greater than speaking, reading and writing practices. In terms of intensity, listening is followed by speaking. On the other hand, reading and writing, compared to listening and speaking, are relatively minor practices.

The intensity of exposure and use of the target language according to learning settings (namely in classes, between classes and outside school) suggests that classroom activities and outside school settings are the environments where learners are highly engaged with the target language. Target language learning efforts seem relatively limited between classes.

When the intensity of language learning practices is compared for in-classes and outside-school settings, it is noted that listening and speaking activities are significantly greater than reading and writing. This comparison of activities implies that in both settings, learners are intensively engaged with listening and speaking, but less engaged with reading and writing. Between classes, listening and speaking is again higher than reading and writing.

The second part of the survey, in relation to learner engagement and learning, seems balanced both in- and outside-school settings. According to participant feedback, both formal and informal environments in the TL community offer contexts for language learning. However, depending on learner activities outside the school, for some participants outside school engagements and learning opportunities seemed significantly higher than others. This suggests that there is a correlation between the activities and engagement/learning opportunities . As a result, the outcome in the second part supports the fact that studying an L2 in a TL community offers social contexts which offer opportunities for learners in both settings.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the approximate hours, according to learners' perceptions, of their use of the four language skills in learning settings (formal and informal). It shows very clearly the relatively much greater amount of spoken language use and social interactions that learners participated in, compared to reading and writing. In fact, the language use in informal settings are also significantly higher than formal settings in listening and speaking, which suggests that informal settings are rich sources of language learning. Reading and writing language uses are similar in both settings. In conclusion, Figure 4.1 illustrates that TL community *does* provide significant opportunities for spoken language use, and hence for language learning.

Figure 4.1   Quantitative comparison of overall TL exposure according to learners' perceptions

Listening Practices

Speaking Practices

Reading Practices

Writing Practices

In the following sections, listening/speaking and reading/writing practices are discussed separately to explore possible reasons behind the quantitative differences from a social perspective and also to suggest how these might support language development.

4.3.1   Listening and Speaking

This section discusses how these experiences of using spoken language are valuable in terms of language learning and draws on other data sources (daily question and interviews) to illustrate what practices students were actually engaged in. The distribution of data according to the intensity of language learning practices in this section suggests that language learning for overseas students is predominantly related to social activities in which learners interacted in the TL. Similar to a child's language learning through socialising, adult learners also experienced a similar route by means of intensive listening and speaking practices in the TL community. It can be assumed that what makes overseas students better language learners could be those ample linguistic affordances which exist in the target language community.

Overseas language learners enjoy more interpersonal relations through the target language with either native speakers or speakers of other languages. The evidence that the majority of their language learning activities are listening and speaking indicates that language learning even for adults relies essentially on social relations.

Socialising creates more authentic and functional linguistic affordances. Social relations are sources of linguistic affordances which create reciprocal interactions between learners and other interlocutors. Learners are in contact with their immediate social environment where the target language use is indispensable in many instances. As seen in Chapter 2, the more learners are engaged with others in the TL community, the more chances they generate for linguistic interaction.

Living in a target language community perhaps led to language learning because the learners became "legitimate peripheral participants" (Laver and Wenger, 1991). There is a strong correlation between this phenomenon and the first item (full agreement from all participants) in the Learner Belief Survey: 'Living in Australia helped my English learning'.

Generally the nature of listening and speaking practices suggests increased face-to-face engagement in a social context. As a natural consequence of personal engagement, the learner is unavoidably party to the discourse and constantly bound to follow the discourse, respond to the interlocutor(s) and give feedback in accordance with the flow of the communication. That is why, as Swain (1995) suggests, language learning through listening and speaking may be challenging to students. Below is a comment from a participant describing how she struggled in an intensive and challenging casual conversation with native speakers.

> "After I got back from the language school today, I went to see my boyfriend's brothers. I thought that listening to their conversations and trying to understand made me a bit headache cause they spoke very fast. Anyways, I can say that I didn't understand all words but knew what they said and wanted from some words. I understood them plus with their body languages."
> Participant 8 (Daily question)

Face-to-face spoken language may be more comprehensible to learners in terms of phonological and non-verbal aspects of communication. Stress, intonation and gestures are all functional in making meanings. In the quotation below, participant 8 highlights the contributions of contextual visual aids in a face-to-face dialogue in understanding the other interactants.

> "I met my boyfriend then his mom rang me. Talking to his mom on phone helped me to learn English as well. I noticed that first time we had talked I did not understand her as much as today talking. I can say that I have problem always when make conversation with English native people who I've never met

before cause I can't see their body language and try hard to make

sense each person's accent."

Participant 8 (Daily question)

Listening and speaking practices in the TL community afford a rooted cultural understanding of meanings and learning of the TL as meanings emerge from social activities. It is a common practice among learners that they refer to their dictionaries to express themselves and quite often fail to deliver the exact message they wish to give. However, learning lexis and structures in the target language community in real life situations constitutes substantiated knowledge in the target language. The following quotation is an example of language learning along with the social aspects of the TL.

"The special thing that helped me to learn English today is making conversation with my boyfriend's families all day and night. I met, listened to, talked to my boyfriend's oldest brother and his friend at day time. Then went out having dinner with his parents, spent lot of time through the evening. Then, later came back to my apartment with my boyfriend's youngest brother as he stayed overnight with us. So I was super tired but had much fun & was very happy to learn English from Australian people and Australian culture at same time."

Participant 8 (Daily question)

The variety of contexts allows for greater variety of spoken language. For example, outside school learning activities are authentic in different fields, affordance-oriented in nature and allow for individual take-up. In their daily spoken language routines, learners experienced plenty of unique social instances which necessitated various linguistic challenges. In contrast to goal-oriented linguistic outputs in the classroom, learners may enjoy the freedom of risk-free listening in various environments and free-range responses when they are challenged to speak. The following is a quotation from Participant 1 supporting the availability of various linguistic interactions in the TL community.

> "I have had problem with my student account, I went to bank, this was my first time here, when I was alone. I'm happy with me, everything was OK, I have new account, I understand what I need, what time I will have card… sometime this was comedy, but I think [thought] I cannot [could not] do it before."
>
> Participant 1 (Daily question)

Listening and speaking create opportunities for new lexis and structures in the TL due to the immediately relevant social context learners are in. Learners being operative actors in many social contexts are in need of expressing themselves, and this situation pushes learners to produce an appropriate piece of language instantly. This mental effort stretches the ultimate language production capacity of a learner beyond the existing limits of language skills, pushing learners to operate within the zone of proximal development. Consequently, as discussed later in this chapter, as a result of some negotiation of meanings, learners are scaffolded for a new piece of language use.

Thus, the fact that the participants were largely involved in spoken, rather than written situations, suggests that social activities and linguistic interactions outside the school may have been one reason for their substantial language development.

4.3.2 Reading and Writing

Reading and writing practices outside the school are often functional and relevant to learners' immediate social context and activities in the target language community. Living in the target language community requires some reading and writing tasks as part of a learner's daily goal-oriented necessities. Quotations below are examples of functional reading and writing practices.

> "…filled in 3 pages employment application."
>
> Participant 7 (Daily question)

> "...reading the label at supermarket before buying food or goods."

"Reading Magazines and job advertisement in the newspaper today are the things to help me learn new vocabularies, very helpful."

Participant 8 (Daily question)

A considerable amount of reading and writing targets language learning.

"Writing down what I've done today on my diary helps me a lot."

Participant 8 (Daily question)

"Can you correct my 'Daily Activity Sheet Survey' and copy it to me. I want to know my mistake from it. Thank a lot."

"I read the newspaper and find the difficult words from dictionary."

Participant 10 (Daily question)

"In the evening I read some magazine and translated them."

"This morning I wrote down in my notebook the questions I thought of in my mind. I tried to memorise the important question and their answers."

Participant 14 (Daily question)

Some reading and writing practices are part of social daily activities.

"In Sunday I met Italian guy, and today I want going to go to pub with he. And I must write SMS."

"Today I can write SMS [to] my friend because he going to go to Victoria."

Participant 1 (Daily question)

Some readings and writing practices are for pleasure.

"…reading advertising in the street."

Participant 2 (Daily question)

"I looked at the pieces in the museum and read the texts under them about 5-10 minutes."

"I wrote SMS to my friends in English."

Participant 6 (Daily question)

4.4   Findings of Daily Question

As discussed in Chapter 3, participants were asked to write what helped them to learn English on a daily basis (see Appendix 2). Participants reflected their views on what was of value for their language learning on the daily question sheets. These are summarised below, together with discussion about their potential for language learning. All quotations in this section are taken from the "Daily question sheets".

According to the data obtained in this section, factors that are relevant to language learning are discussed under social environments that had learning opportunities and hence potentially contributed to participants' language development outside the school.

The data suggest that social environments for language learning can be divided into four main locations: the language school; home; the workplace; and the various places for leisure activities such as cinemas, festivals, museums, cafes, shopping centres and pubs. The discussion that follows focuses on each of these in turn. The interactants in these locations include teachers, classmates, roommates, workmates and encounters. The other sources that provide opportunities for engagements in those locations include books, magazines, advertisements in the streets and computers. According to these locations, there seems to be an interaction continuum for learner engagements. At one pole of the continuum, interactants initiate the engagement, at the other end the learner initiates.

Language learning experiences are realised in a social environment and in this environment there are linguistic sources and learner interests and needs which are determinants for further action. For that reason, data analysis for the daily question will be a combination of the discussion of the social environment in which learners participated, and the quality of affordances this offered.

4.4.1 Language School

As discussed above, one significant context for language learning (indicated by the participants in the daily question) was the language school. As discussed in Chapter 1, ELICOS colleges (the language schools) in Australia offer minimum 20 hours of face-to-face teaching in classroom in a week. Including breaks and independent study periods, a learner presumably spends between 5 or 6 hours in the language school in a weekday. Therefore, in their responses to the daily question, participants reflected that a considerable amount of their learning experiences occurred at their language school.

Language schools offer formal learning environments which assist students in learning specific linguistic usages in classrooms. Pre-planned properties of the TL are presented distinctively and in concentration in formal studies according to the learners' proficiency levels. As discussed in Chapter 2, over time, approaches to formal studies have shifted from cognitive to more social approaches such as the communicative approach. However, traditional methods are still practised in classrooms when needed as the following participant statements indicated.

> "I learnt in school: much, many, too much, too many."
> Participant 1

> "I learned many things with my classmates and teacher. The teacher always corrects me about my pronunciation, grammar."
> Participant 2

> "English lessons are easy to understand. So I am having fun."
> Participant 4

> "We played a very good game at school. There were some sticks of paper. On one was the beginning of the sentence and I have to find the paper where the end. Each pair had 30 papers and we had to find the right sentence. I think it was a good practice for me."
> Participant 6

"I don't understand about present perfect? But teacher is teaching me very kind! And then understand."

"Test and book."
Participant 12

"We did a lot of grammar."
Participant 14

"In the class, my friend taught me some word, when she made a picture."

"I learned many things with my classmate and teacher."
Participant 2

Data from the daily question suggest that during formal studies learners assist each other for language learning. This case of learner-to-learner collaboration may result from the multi-lingual composition of classrooms and the nature of language learning activities practised in the classes. In fact, forming multi-lingual classrooms in language schools is a regular practice due to learner and market demands; however, on the other hand, multi-lingual classrooms also create opportunities and affordances for learning. As the learners of a class get more diversified in terms of their mother tongues, the chances of linguistic affordances, as anticipated, increase.

Another factor in increased affordances between learners stem from the collective characteristics and objectives of learners in a language school. As learners of a class are at a somewhat similar level of TL proficiency, it would seem that students might have empathy for each other and develop further opportunities interacting more comfortably and actively. For example, it is significant to note that all learners mentioned the value of peer learning from classmates as stated in the quotation below.

"My friend in my class helps me, teach me some word, with a mime and a dictionary."
Participant 2

Guided self-study is another enjoyable way of learning at school and assists to create better independent learners. Below is a participant quotation explaining the contributions of self-study at school.

> "In school we looking for information about New Zealand on the Internet. This was interesting for me. I learnt new words: scenery, mountains, sheep, volcanes."
>
> Participant 1

However, the qualities of a language school environment are not limited to pre-planned formal studies only. The Daily English Sheet indicates that learners also enjoy various linguistic affordances at school through socialising with other learners in and outside the classroom (see Fig. 4.1). In other words, break times at language school are also opportunities for learners to socialise through the TL. Participant 7, for example, mentioned "Conversation with friends on the breaks". However as Figure 4.1 indicates, such conversations remained considerably limited. The relatively limited interactions in the out-of-class periods in this language school can be explained by there being only one or two short breaks (between 10-20 minutes) in the morning sessions and a longer lunch break (45-60 minutes). Some schools do not have any break in their afternoon session(s). Learners tend to use those periods for personal needs such as checking their email accounts, making phone calls or replying to the calls received during class times, talking with their friends from the same linguistic background or going to the toilet. However, as seen in figure 4.1, learners *do* use the target language, but it seems that the length of lesson breaks may be too short to develop conversations in depth.

4.4.2   Home

A second important context for learners to use English was their home. Home, being an environment where learners spend a great deal of time, potentially generates plenty of linguistic affordances for learners. However, the quality and amount of affordances at home depends of course on the language background of the roommates. In some accomodation learners are from the same culture and language background, and in others learners are from more than one culture and

language background. Homestays can fall into either group. Although reasons for choice of roommates have not been specifically examined, in group interviews, participants stated that they found their roommates through friends or social networks from the same linguistic and cultural background. This method of finding accommodation resulted in an environment with monolingual and monocultural tenants, thus limiting the potential for exposure and use of the target language in an informal environment.

In each group, the social interactions may show differences due to linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but linguistic affordances still exist although they may differ in nature. For example, within mono-lingual groups, higher level students teach less proficient students certain lexis or grammar in the TL. In other words higher level students provide scaffolding for less proficient students. Below are some quotations about language learning collaborations at home.

> "I talk with my roommate and we make fun in English. I learnet: I
> am very super, because I'm the best of the best and he said: 'No,
> I'm better than you.' I learnt: I'm better than you."
> Participant 1

> "My roommate, from Brazil same nationality, teach me many
> words."

> "My roommate teaches me some rules of grammar, but in
> Portuguese."
> Participant 2

On the other hand, multicultural homes also allow for message-oriented communicative discourses between learners.

> "The second thing was making conversation with my two Korean
> roommates. They always speak English in Korean accent that's
> why first day I met and talked and communicated with them made
> me a bit headache but today I almost understand them
> completely."
> Participant 8

4.4.3   Workplace

According to the daily question data, the workplace is one of the environments where linguistic affordances may be available no matter what the actual duty of the learner is. This is somewhat contradictory, given that beliefs about the value of the work place for learning (in the Learner Belief Survey) decreased over time. However, it seems that linguistic affordances may in fact emerge in the interactions between both workmates and customers for professional purposes. The participant quotations below also indicate that interactants in workplaces are workmates, bosses and/or customers.

> "In an interview for a job, the manager teach me some words with a picture, or just explaining."

> "I learned many new words in my job with my friends and boss."

> "I learned some words in my job, the guys teach me with mime and explaining."

> "In my job, today I learned the name the many thing, and my friend, from my country that work with me, help me and teach me some things too."
> Participant 2

> "Conversation with customers."

> "Arguments with my boss."
> Participant 7

Language use in a workplace may require not only listening and speaking skills but also reading and writing for functional purposes as in the quotations below.

> "I must write: Can you write my next shift? (*referring to the roster*)"
> Participant 1

> "I filled in 3 pages employment application and conversation with manager."
> Participant 7

It therefore seems that the workplace offered some opportunities for language learning, and involved interactions with a range of interactants. The actual choice of workplaces is generally fortuitous as learners in this research have limited language skills. The availability of jobs is therefore limited due to the learners' relatively low level skills. As discussed in the learner belief survey, learners expected to learn more English at their workplaces than what they actually learned since the duties offered to participants were less language-oriented.

4.4.4   Leisure Environments

In responses, all participants mentioned various leisure activities which seemed to be good sources of affordances for language learning. It is important to underline that those leisure activities involved all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Some examples of those leisure activities were:

- *reading short stories;*
- *newspapers, magazines and advertisements;*
- *watching Australian TV and DVDs with English subtitles;*
- *chatting or surfing on the Internet;*
- *listening to radio and music in English;*
- *going to the cinema, festivals and parties;*
- *travelling in Australia;*
- *volunteer work in nursing homes and WWOOFs (Willing Workers On Organic Farm);*
- *casual conversations on buses, in pubs, cafes, restaurants;*
- *going to churches;*
- *dating partners with different linguistic backgrounds; and*
- *making translations into or from English.*

All participants mentioned listening to music in English, watching TV and watching movies in English. Many mentioned reading books. Further examples of other leisure activities included:

"Conversation with people in the party. Native speaker or other."

Participant 7

"The special thing that helped me to learn English today was talking to my Thai and Canadian friends on MSN."

Participant 8

4.5   Findings of Social Activities Survey

As Chapter 3 discussed, this survey investigated the social activities participants experienced during their studies in Australia (see Appendix 6). The list of survey items included common activities learners would possibly be engaged in. In the optional section of the survey, only two participants added extra activities and scored them. All other common social activities listed by the researcher and marked by the participants in the survey are discussed in accordance with their language learning values in relation to skill types such as listening, speaking, reading and writing and the linguistic challenges involved. The reason behind this categorisation is that each social activity requires one or a combination of these skills with a certain level of risk-taking. While some activities are completely risk-free such as watching TV, some are very challenging such as trying to speak English with Australians.

The degree to which the specific macro-skills are required in social activities in this survey is as follows: Listening; Listening and Speaking; Reading; and Writing. In fact, this finding correlates with the daily English activity data which collected the amount of daily use of language skills. Of the four skills, listening, according to the participants, was the most used. This may be because listening activities were seen by learners as relatively 'risk-free'. Activities requiring both listening and speaking were perhaps associated with a considerable amount of challenges. Although reading and writing activities were relatively risk-free, they were less used activities. To sum up, risk-free types of listening activities and challenging listening-speaking activities constituted the most dominant social activities in the TL community. Below is a more detailed discussion of each survey item.

4.5.1   Analysis of items in the survey

The order of discussion of the survey items in this section is from the most commonly practised activities to the least practised, relying on the overall scores given by the participants. The overall score for each item is included at the headings. While some survey items are discussed separatetly, some are discussed as a group as they are related to each other. A copy of the tabulated social activity survey is included in Appendix 6.

• *I listen to English music. (3.1)*

The most common practice of social activity according to the survey was '*Listening to music*'. The contribution of this activity to language learning is questionable as listening to music is less contextual or interactional compared to all other activities. In fact, listening to songs in the TL is quite challenging where phonology, lexis and structures are considered. It seems that learners may still benefit from this activity in terms of language learning. That learners do not listen to music only for fun is supported by a participant example. See below a participant's response to the daily question on one occasion:

> "I listened music, I'm happy. I understand what about is this
> song. And sometime I understand all sentences:
>
>> *'Don't wake me up, I want to*
>> *Dreams to last forever*
>> *Don't wake me up before I*
>> *Understand what everything's mine'."*
>
> Participant 1 (Daily question)

• *I listen to other people in streets, trains, buses, etc. (2.9)*

It is significant that the second most common activity was '*Listening to other people in the trains, buses or streets*'. This activity is salient for two reasons. First, learners make use of the linguistic affordances around them in society at any time (listening in this case). Second, although this type of activity does not permit learners to engage in it and interact in that particular linguistic affordance, learners can still benefit from observing the TL use in authentic

contexts by authentic interactants. As an outsider in that linguistic exchange of the TL, learners enjoy having insights about how native speakers use the TL in certain contexts for different goals. These aspects of language and its use constitute language models for learners to comprehend and copy or imitate the target language used in authentic contexts. Another important aspect of this activity is that learners take no risks. Learners enjoy an authentic linguistic interaction in their legitimate immediate surroundings while being an observer only. In fact, for learners social activities that appear "risk-free" are the most common activities, followed by less challenging and then more challenging activities.

• *I watch Australian TV. (2.8)*

Another common risk-free activity was '*Watching TV*'. Similar to listening to others in the immediate social surrounding, watching TV also creates the similar kind of contributions to learners for language learning. However, there are some differences between these two affordances. Authentic discourses differ from TV dialogues. TV programs may be edited for commercial purposes while authentic conversations are produced naturally and spontaneously. Authentic dialogues are unpredictable and not pre-set. In other words, they are dynamic and fluid changing from topic to topic. This property of an authentic discourse requires more linguistic awareness as predicting the upcoming language is more difficult. However, according to what learners claimed, they benefited from watching TV, especially for listening comprehension.

• *I try to speak English with Australians. (2.8)*

The item '*Trying to speak with Australians*' was also a frequent practice. The intensive practice of this highly challenging activity shows that learners are well aware of the rich linguistic sources of affordance around them: native speakers. The importance of a native speaker as a linguistic affordance is significant for many reasons. First, interactions with native speakers usually occur in an authentic social context. Second, the borders of the discourse, as opposed to classroom exercises, are unlimited and relatively unpredictable. Learner and interactant(s) may 'surf' in the target language with no limits of structures, lexis and topics. This creates extra opportunities of linguistic exposure in a social

context. Third, learners may gain insights between language and culture. That is to say, structures and lexis used make more sense for learners in authentic contexts. Fourth, learners hear authentic pronunciation and lexico-grammar in relation to social contexts. As the choice of lexico-grammar may be a common problem among learners, learners have the benefit of hearing models of language used by native-speakers for certain specific messages. It is also important to note that learners hear grammatically non-standard colloquial language (which may also constitute a dilemma between formal and informal learning). And last, native speakers speak the TL at its standard fluency, which does not usually happen in formal settings between peer learners, nor even between teacher and learners.

• *I like reading signs, advertisements, etc. (2.8)*

'Reading signs' is another common practice by learners. What makes this activity significant probably depends on two factors. First, it is risk-free and creates opportunities for learners to improve their vocabulary and to gain some structural knowledge. Second, society is full of affordances for reading purposes. For a learner typical daily life necessitates a considerable amount of reading on various occasions. From traffic notices to sale advertisements on windows, a city environment is full of written communication for those who perceive it. A learner is often more engaged with his or her new environment in the TL community, and anything and everything around them is of interest. They generally try to make sense of what they read and in fact, learning through reading is almost constant due to the written signals around them, although perhaps participants did not always recognise that (see 4.3).

• *I try to learn about Australians and their culture. (2.8)*

Another item marked high is "*I try to learn about Australians and their culture*". The outcome on this item should be evaluated from the point of the learners' understanding of the relationship between language and culture. Learners seem to be interested in the local people and their culture in understanding and learning the target language. It can be argued that as language reflects the interpersonal relations in a community through which cultural values are constructed, understanding how cultural values and language together create

meaning is essential for understanding and language learning. Data indicate that learners try to make use of the advantage of living in the TL community in their language learning.

• *I go to festivals, concerts, etc. where Australians usually go. (2.7)*

Although scoring slightly lower than the item above, the survey item "*I go to festivals and concerts, etc. where Australians usually go.*" indicated that students participated in cultural events. In fact, this item is closely related to the previous item in that these social activities are related to cultural values and practices. These activities are also more likely to provide abundant affordances for learners to interact with local people. Another critical importance of these activities is that learners make use of the legitimate access into community practices.

• *I go shopping and speak English. (2.7)*

• *I eat out and speak English. (2.7)*

• *I try to socialise with Australians. (2.6)*

• *I speak English at my workplace. (2.6)*

Items listed above appear to be related to daily routines such as '*shopping, working, eating out and casual socialising*' and have therefore been grouped toether. These activities generally require unavoidable linguistic interaction. In these activities, learners are challenged to use the TL. In group interviews, participants also mentioned the importance of these linguistic interactions for their language learning. However, they also mentioned that the language used in those settings did not vary a lot and remained within certain structures and lexis. Thus it is likely that they were not learning in their ZPD.

• *I speak English at my workplace. (2.6)*

This item of the survey remained high (2.6) suggesting that learners did use English at their workplaces although some data from other sources contradict this. The workplaces that participants usually worked in were restaurants or take-away shops which are in general socially active places with constant interactions between workers and customers. In such environments learners, even with limited language skills, experience language use for work-related or

social reasons with colleagues and customers. Therefore, workplaces are locations where learners believe that they have opportunities to learn English.

- *I study English / do homework at home. (2.6)*
- *I practise writing English at home. (2.5)*

These two items are related to each other as they both refer to self-study at home and are discussed together. They were both marked significantly high (2.6) indicating that learners spend a considerable time at home studying English. Besides homeworks, as discussed in the daily question survey, learners read and make translations for learning purposes. In fact, these studies are more conscious than is informal social learning, and relate more to formal learning practices.

The following three survey items suggested the contribution of peer learners for language learning and they will be discussed as a group.

- *I visit and speak English with my friends. (2.3)*
- *I learn English from my roommates in my language. (2.3)*
- *I chat with my friends in English at home. (2.3)*

The same score (2.3) for these items suggests that outside school peer-learner collaboration in language learning remained comparatively limited. As indicated in other data sources (e.g. daily question) learners stated that they received assistance from other learners occasionally. Therefore the data suggest that there is no systematic language learning collaboration between learners in informal settings. However, according to the overall score (2.3) the collaboration between peer-learners cannot be underestimated.

- *I travel and speak English. (2.3)*

Travelling around Australia is a common practice for most students as a social activity and the possibilities of linguistic interactions is high as learners need to interact with local people for their needs such as finding accommodation, asking for directions and inquiring about the places of interests and activities. The linguistic interactions experienced during travels could be beneficial in terms of the topics talked about and the colloquial language used.

• *I go to the cinema. (2)*

Although going to the cinema does not seem to be a frequent social activity, almost all learners scored that they went to the cinema. The linguistic contribution of watching a movie in a cinema to a low level language learner could be limited but with the support of visual contexts learners could benefit for listening practice.

• *I do sports and speak English. (1.9)*

While four participants marked this survey item as a (2), two participants marked it the highest (4). The rest of the participants marked it as a (1). This outcome indicates that some learners were engaged on a regular basis in doing sports and this potentially gave them opportunities to interact with some proficient speakers. In fact, developing relations through sports activities could possibly turn into friendship and create more engagements with local people in different social contexts.

• *I go to libraries. (1.4)*

Going to libraries was the least practised social activity in this survey; two participants scored it 2 and one 3. This finding suggests that learners were not much interested in printed or recorded materials in libraries when they were outside the school but, rather, were engaged in social interactions for real life goals such as working or joining social events.

In addition to the social activities listed in the survey, two participants added their own activities and marked them (reading books and newspapers, and going to church: participants 7 and 12 respectively). However, as supported by other sources of data, most participants 'read books and newspapers in English' although they did not add it in the survey. '*Going to church where Australians usually go*' may be individually specific and there are no other data in this regard.

In some cases, learners initiated the linguistic interaction and in some cases interactions were unavoidable. Some of the most practiced activities were those which were readily available (cost-free) such as listening to music, and some were effort, time and fund demanding activities such as going to the cinema,

doing sports and travelling. Those which were initiated by learners usually seemed to be risk-free activities, and those which were unavoidable seemed to be challenging. Social activities of learners thus can be organised in four categories: a) cost and risk-free; b) cost-free but challenging; c) risk-free but costing; and d) challenging and costing. Most of the activities that students participated in were without cost and were those over which students may have felt they had some control. In general, the social activities survey reveals that learners are extensively involved with the target language outside the school in a range of ways.

4.6   Findings of Group Interviews

As discussed in Chapter 3, the group interviews suggest that language learning in the target language community is significant for its intensive and extensive supply of linguistic affordances both in formal and informal settings (see examples of questions asked in Appendix 3). Discussions for this section are under three subtitles; affordances at school, outside school and participant-initiated issues in interviews. All quotations in this section are taken from the group interviews.

4.6.1 Affordances at school

Participants all find formal studies necessary and useful. What makes the school environment useful for language learning is that linguistic affordances are provided or exist readily in the classroom. While outside-school linguistic affordances may be sometimes limited for beginner learners, the school environment may be more affordance-rich initially for these learners. However, as their language skills improve, the learning setting shifts from formal to informal settings. Students comments below explain why for them school is an important place for language learning.

> "First time I am learning at school because I didn't know to speak
> English. I live with Czech people. I work with Czech people.
> Now I think fifty-fifty."
> Participant 1

"I work in Japanese restaurant... not much talking in English. So, just school."

Participant 4

"I learn more at school. I live with my husband, and we speak Portuguese at home."

Participant 12

Participants stated that formal studies were particularly helpful to them as linguistic items were mediated in meaningful contexts with clear and slow pronunciation, and explained through the target language. In other words, formal affordances are oriented for linguistic goals and tailored for learner proficiency and anticipated needs. As one student commented:

"At school, we learn new things what we need to speak better."

Participant 7

There seems to be a some connection between what is learned at school and the language learners use outside the school. Almost all participants stated that they used what they learned at school and vice versa. All participants agreed that they used English in both formal and informal settings. One participant commented on whether they used what they learned at school as:

" When you have a job or job interview, we use."

Participant 9 (all agreed)

4.6.2   Affordances outside the school

As previous discussion has shown, outside the school, learners experienced various linguistic affordances depending on their social activities. All participants agreed that the TL is inevitable outside the school in many social circumstances and this pushed them to use the TL on various occasions. The frequency of affordances in social environments suggests that regularity of linguistic interactions was seen as important by the participants, and all participants agreed that they were learning "all the time".

Participant statements reveal that they believe that the quantity and type of affordances are richer outside the school than in formal settings. Learners are aware of these learning opportunities and make use of them. The use of linguistic affordances outside the school correlates with the first item in the learner belief survey, that "living in Australia helps me to learn English". The participant quotations below confirm the affordance-richness of the TL community for language learning.

> "Outside school, I think we learn so much... signals, or watching movies, TV, listen to music, reading books...."
> Participant 2

> "I learn more outside school because I live with my boyfirend and he is Australian. I spend time with him every single day. Have to talk, you know, in English.... After finish school, I go back home, straight away watch TV, listen to music, talk to my boyfirend...."
> Participant 8

> "I can learn more at supermarket... or reading newspaper ... and learn from 'Doctor I' [*computer-based English learning program*]."

> " On Christmas holiday I go to farm. In farm two Australian I can learn more from them, because I can have more opportunity to talk with them."
> Participant 10

> "Weekends I go to church, Australian church. They speak English to me."
> Participant 12

In the interviews, most participants also agreed that they referred to their friends from the same cultural and linguistic background when they needed assistance in the TL, such as when buying something or for certain phrases for future use. This suggests that friends from the same linguistic background are sources of scaffolding for learners. Two quotations below explains how proficient speakers of the same L1 assist learners in the TL community.

> "Sometime I ask my Czech friends, easier for me."
>
> Participant 1
>
> "Many times I ask my Brazilian friends in Portuguese how I can say some words."
>
> Participant 2

Learners' comments also suggested that while formal studies focus on the TL as a target, informal conversations are better described as 'message-oriented' discourses by means of the TL. This is important because informal discourses challenge learners to communicate in many different contexts in the TL. Another contribution of these informal discourses is that they enable learners to develop TL use fluently. This type of communicative language learning totally relies on 'learning through use' rather than 'learn to practise or theorising to learn' as in formal settings. This supports van Lier's (1999) notion that "what you do is what you learn". Participant 8 explicitly states this case:

> "We study grammar, idioms, expressions at school. I don't think we can learn more grammar, expressions and idioms outside school, just talk. We don't care about grammar. We talk to people just try to make them understand and try to understand what they talk about."
>
> Participant 8

4.6.3   Participant-initiated issues in interviews

During the group interviews, participants raised some additional issues that were pertinent to them. In particular they identified a number of difficulties in relation to talking to local people. As we have seen, discourses outside the school for a learner are loaded with challenges in meanings, pronunciation, speed of articulation, lexis, morphology and more importantly, irregular and insufficient formal scaffolding. The most commonly emphasised problem identified by all the learners is the phonological aspects of the TL, especially from native speakers. Learners state that native speakers' pronunciation and intonation are difficult to understand as the student's comment below points out.

> "My biggest problem is talking to Aussies, because accent is
> so different, pronunciation different. Sometimes I can't hear
> [understand] what they talk. I understand my German friend
> and French boss better than Australians."
> Participant 2

Significantly, all students strongly agreed with this comment.

In terms of register theory, the fields about which learners interact in the TL in informal settings are different from those in the formal settings. In such cases, learners are pushed to their limits in terms of lexico-grammar to explain themselves. This suggests that learners work harder in the ZPD and as a result their interactants may provide scaffolding in the event of communication breakdown. The two comments below explicitly show learners' views about the fields they came across outside school interactions.

> "When I speak with my friends, it is another topic. This is
> problem, I think I can't speak, because I don't know words."
> Participant 1

> "Sometimes I can't understand Aussie talk. And I've got feeling
> that in school we're learning something different or I don't
> know."
> Participant 6

Despite intensive studies at school, learners in general are frequently challenged by unpredictable fields which they are not educated for in language schools. This requires some consideration in incorporating topics of learner interest independent of learner TL proficiency. Participant statements below explicitly point to this issue as in the quotation given below.

> "Sometimes very different. What I learnt in school and what I
> want to speak outside; it is very different. Thema [Topic] is
> different."
> Participant 1

"At school we can't talk about everything."

Participant 7

"Some of them [some school topics] are different."

Participant 10

In summary, participant interviews supported many of the findings from the other data sources, in particular how living in the TL community offered them various contexts where they could use and learn English independently. Group interviews suggest that social activities and the contexts of those activities in the TL community are significant in providing affordances for language learning. The next section, 4.7, takes up the ways in which learners respond to difficulties they faced in outside school interactions, and also explores some of the ways that their interlocutors supported them.

4.7   Findings of Voice Recordings

The contents of voice recordings outside the school provide rich data in regards to processes for language learning in informal settings. As Chapter 3 indicated, the data give significant insights about learner discourse practices in authentic environments with peers and locals on a range of topics. However, it should be noted that learner discourses are not limited to voice recordings obtained in this research. Learners experience plenty of affordances outside the school which could not be recorded. Discussions in this section are restricted to recordings under research guidelines for voice recordings discussed in the methodology chapter.

Analysis of voice recording data show that language learning processes can be observed from three perspectives or 'lenses': sociocultural, SLA and register theories. It should be noted that the same data are used to illustrate these three different theoretical approaches to understanding language learning. Language and language learning are both social and linguistic in nature, and are interdependent and inseparable. The discussions to follow draw on sociocultural theory, particularly the notions of the ZPD and scaffolding; conversational features of the Interactionist position in SLA; and the notion of register (see

Halliday 1985), which is used to view the discourses through a functional perspective.

Within this framework, the central point in analysis is on various features of discourse that help a learner to construct and maintain meaningful and coherent communication. These features are discussed in terms of positive tenor relations; familiarity with the field; ZPD and scaffolding; learners' use of strategic competence; and negotiation of meaning. These discourse properties exist as unifying components in face-to-face communication. Meaningfulness and coherence of authentic discourses result from the affordances offered in specific situational contexts. To realise a healthy conversation, learner and interactant cooperate to follow shared paths and directions so that the dialogue is meaningful and coherent.

It is important to highlight that learning facilitated through these discourse features does not represent a 'piecemeal' construction of linguistic skills, but rather it represents holistic learning. As discussed previously, language learning is both a linguistic and social activity, and is realised over time as a contribution to overall communicative skills. Holistic learning can thus be defined as all learner skills in combination to communicate meaningfully. This is suggested by the voice recording data.

The following discussion describes the type of discourse features observed in these authentic dialogues obtained from the participants. In the examples discussed, P stands for proficient speakers, L for lower-level learners and NS for native speakers. In this section (findings of voice recordings) of Chapter 4, all examples and discourse lines are numbered for ease of reference.

4.7.1 Texts and discussions

The significance of positive tenor relations

As discussed earlier, tenor explains the role of interactants in a discourse. In the text discussion below, tenor relations involve two dimensions; dimension of contact and affect. Contact is related to the frequency of engagements between interlocutors. In that sense, regularity of encounters may reflect positively on the

learner as the language may be more coherent as a result of past references between both interactants. Affect, the state of intimacy between interactants, is salient as it is likely to reflect on the language use and scaffolding as the level of personal integrity goes deeper with the learner. There are some samples for both aspects of tenor relations in the examples below.

Dimension of Contact

Dimension of contact, as discussed above, refers to the frequency of personal contacts and linguistic engagement between interactants. The more frequent individuals are in contact with each other, the more expanded and reference-loaded dialogues are likely to occur over time. Example 1 below shows how the learner refers to an activitiy about which both interactants had shared knowledge (*the picture that you… you make the other day*, lines1 and 3).

    Example 1:

    1 L – do you finish . er . the picture in . that you

    2 P – no . I don't know

    3 L – you make the other day

    4 P – I don't know . I don't know when it is finish . when it's going be

        finished

Maintaining long-term relationships with certain people probably assists learners to expand or divert the topics of the dialogue. Continual relationships are important because they create such opportunities that learners can experience varied, expanded and complex language use, and learn about cultural values. The depth of the relations is important in creating richness in linguistic variety and complexity.

Dimension of affect

Dimension of affect, as discussed above, refers to the level of familiarity between the interactants in a discourse. The language used can range between the continuum of formal and informal depending on the parties in a discourse. As the level of familiarity becomes higher, the language used is more likely to

shift to the informal pole of the continuum. Example 2 shows how far language can be informal and care-free when interactants are close friends.

Example 2: (Close friends)

1   P – <u>are you touching wood</u>?

2   L – er [long pause] in June, Juni?

3   P – June

4   L – yeah with my father's . working motorcycle . his motorcycle
        and we [sound of hand banging] fighting car . car

5   P – ah you crashed into a car

6   L – yeah crashed

7   P – ah <u>shit</u>

8   L – yeah   P – <u>ouch</u> [overlapping]

9   L – the car stopped . just these [body language] . my head

10 P – this close to your head oh…

11 L – I just opened my eyes [horror sounds] .. my father and the guy
        . what's that you're <u>fucking [close] at my ass</u> . fight stop it
        stop it

12 P – did you . did you have a shock? had a shock?

13 L – no no . because not is my first crash

14 P – OK

15 L – I used . I had . before .. crash by car

16 P – OK

In the dialogue above, the proficient speaker's utterance "are you touching wood" and the expletives used by the learner are examples of positive affect in tenor relations. These positive affects of tenor and learner-directed (personalised) linguistic interactions create opportunities to push learners to maintain the dialogue in the TL and stretch their language skills beyond their

current capabilities, in contrast to communication breakdown between non-familiar interactants. We can assume that the learner in this example feels comfortable and unthreatened in this interaction, and that gives her confidence to express something that is in fact beyond what she is able to do easily in English. Accordingly, the learner's endeavors to express herself in the ZPD operate functionally as the piece of language required is directly relevant to the situation.

Tenor affects the type of language used. Learners are usually engaged with peer learners or other people of equal status outside the school. This case reflects on the type of language they are exposed to. Data show that language outside the school tends to be more informal compared to a formal classroom environment. 'Carefree' exposure and use of the TL in informal settings increase learner engagement and interaction in the discourse leading to intensive learning opportunities. In other voice recordings where formal relations exist between roommates, the language used is quite formal with no traces of slang or vulgar usage.

Example 3 represents a formal tenor relation in which the language use is formal between interanctants, especially the vocabulary chosen and the structures used are standard.

> **Example 3:** (roommates with formal relations)
>
> 1 L – you have brothers and sisters?
>
> 2 P – I have a sister
>
> 3 L – you've sister . one?

As seen in the examples, the texture of the social context the learner and other(s) are in, is shaped according to the level of personal relations and the nature of discourse. The quality of feedback is graded on these social relations. The degree of engagement in the learner's social environment is a key factor for the quality of language learning s/he experiences in the target language community. The degree of engagement (formal or informal) with others can potentially determine the type of linguistic exposure to TL for a learner in terms of lexis

used (such as slang language) and/or non-standard structures. In other words, the social distance (Schumann 1978), (related to tenor in terms of register theory) between a learner and the other(s) may affect the amount and quality of cultural and linguistic learning.

Field

As discussed in the findings of 'Social Activities Survey', students participate in a wide range of social activities, and as discussed in Chapter 2, field is an important variable in context-specific discourse in those activities. It appears that sharing a common interest (that is, having knowledge of a shared field) is a key factor for the extent of linguistic engagements. The TL community offers opportunities for learners to learn lexis which may usually not be included in textbooks. For example, participant 8 during this research had been living with an Australian boyfriend and stated that:

> "I had spent half of the day at my boyfriend's stepdad's pharmacy so learned vocabularies from selling there."

> "I woke up in the morning and spent much time today watching cricket with Australian families so learned some words from the game and making conversation with them was really helpful."
> Participant 8 (Daily question)

A learner's confidence in the field talked about may push him or her to initiate the discourse with proficient speakers. Example 4 below is between a German (proficient speaker) and a Brazilian (learner). While the proficient speaker talks about the sectorial differences in Brazil, the learner interrupts the interactant and takes over the initiative. In Example 4, the learner directs the conversation and uses her own discourse strategies. This gives the learner opportunities to validate her use of the TL, and form her own style of language use.

Example 4:

1   P –   I want to see the North and the South of Brazil I want to see
          both of everybody . always . you guys always says South is
          better . and the people from Bedire they say . ah ..

2   L – ah ..

3   P – very ..

4   L – I think .. very different . very . totally different

5   P – mhm

6   L – maybe you think .. come on what's happening? two countries?

7   P – really?

8   L – yes totally totally .. er . the people . cultures .. ehh

The field in which the discourse is focused creates opportunities for learners to initiate and gain dominance in an interaction if the learner is an expert or knowledgeable in the field. The learner, feeling confident in the field, takes initiative to enlighten the interactant on the subject matter, which causes the learner to push and stretch all their linguistic and strategic sources, and put them into practice. In formal settings, the fields are usually determined by the textbooks or teachers, but in informal settings fields change according to the flow of the conversation between interactants. And familiarity with the field in informal settings encourages the learner to be an active and functional user of the target language in relevant contexts.

Data in voice recordings indicate that learners generally do not experience difficulties of comprehension which could cause communication breakdown. Learners bring their sociocultural and sociolinguistic backgrounds into their discourses. Consequently, when familiar with the field, learners appeared easily capable of understanding the messages. This would have facilitated their noticing of the new structures and lexis, and at the same time prompt scaffolding from the proficient speaker.

ZPD and Scaffolding

The data indicated many examples of students working in their ZPD and instances of 'struggle', along with responsive scaffolding by their interlocutors. Unlike the controlled and guided classroom discourses, authentic discourses for real-life goals are more likely to move learners to work in the ZPD as the responses from others may not be as learners expected. These linguistic challenges in authentic dialogues create critical opportunities for learners to push their limits in the ZPD. Depending on the level of difficulty and hence the response of the learner to the challenges, proficient speakers are prompted to provide scaffolding to learners in order to maintain the communication, assisting the learner to express him or herself. The texts below are examples of ZPD and scaffolding in cooperation in authentic dialogues.

It is salient to note that learner language is not overtly corrected by proficient speakers, but is often recast implicitly. Language use in informal settings is message-oriented in nature, and language corrections by proficient speakers aim to clarify mutual understanding rather than deliberately teach linguistic properties of the TL. However, these manipulations by the proficient speaker in the discourses assist learners to realise or notice their misuses of the TL and illustrate how they should be constructed correctly.

The examples below show how learners are pushed into their ZPD to stretch their language skills in order to continue their conversation with proficient speakers. In example 5, the proficient speaker's question requires the participant to explain a different system of championship. Initially, the learner appears not to understand the question addressed to her. She asks for clarifications and receives scaffolding until she attempts to answer. In the examples below, sentences in italics indicate where it appears learners are working in the ZPD, reaching the limits of their linguistic abilities. Underlined sentences indicate the scaffolding they receive from the proficient speaker.

Example 5:

1   P – was Brazil .. South American champion last time?

2   L – *sorry?*

3   P – <u>South American cup . soccer cup</u> [clarifies by example "soccer cup".]

4   L – *yeah?*

5   P – <u>was Brazil champion?</u> [rewording of initial question]

6   L – *mhm (long pause) wait ..*

7   P – <u>five years . two years ago?</u>

8   L – I don't know

9   P – two years ago the European champion Greece

10   L – *but . er* [long pause] *South America's cup .. not .. er .. not is team .. from .. Brazil team or Argentina team*

11   P – oh no?

Each time the learner is at the outer limits of what she can do alone (lines 2, 4, 6 and 10), interactant provides scaffolding (lines 3, 5 and 7). This transcript clearly illustrates the inter-relationship between the ZPD and scaffolding. It also suggests the value for a learner's language development of a supportive interactant.

The relationship between the ZPD and scaffolding, and the role of a supportive interactant, is also evident in Examples 6, 7 and 8. Again italics represent those points when the learner appears to need assistance in order to continue, and underlining represents those points where the interlocutor provides this assistance.

In Example 6, the learner lacks first the verb 'crash' to explain the accident that occurred while riding on her father's motorcycle, and second, the phrase to describe the distance between her head and the car involved in the accident.

Example 6:

1   L – yeah with my father's .. working motorcycle his motorcycle and

      we [sound of banging] *fighting car . car*

2   P – ah <u>you crashed into a car</u> [providing unknown word]

3   L – yeah . crashed

4   P – ah shit

5   L – yeah

6   P – ouch [overlapping]

7   L – the car stopped *.. just these* [body language] *.. my head*

8   P – <u>this close to your head</u>

Example 7 is an example where the learner does not know how to answer the question addressed to her. The proficient speaker scaffolds her by giving an alternative answer which she confirms upon understanding the scaffolding.

Example 7:

1   P – what is Uruguay? is it a good team of South America? good?

2   L – I don't know

3   P – <u>It's not too bad?</u>

4   L – *mhm not too bad*

5   P – <u>not the best but it's not the worst</u> [recasting]

6   L – yeah

During discourses, it is common practice that learners prompt proficient speakers for proper pronunciation. In the following example (8), the learner's search for the correct pronunciation of an already-known word 'June' causes the proficient speaker to scaffold the proper pronunciation.

Example 8:

1   L – er [long pause] in *June, Juni*? [different pronunciation]

2   P – <u>June</u> [recasting]

Strategic competence

As Chapter 2 discussed, strategic competence can be defined as the overall skills that a learner uses in order to keep a conversation going successfully when faced with linguistic challenges in authentic discourses. Strategic competence of a learner is especially important since, as shown in the interviews, learners are challenged frequently in the TL community. Therefore, exploring these communicative skills is particularly significant in understanding informal language learning. The following are examples of strategies used by participants in this study.

Non-verbal communication

According to the participants, gestures and other non-verbal communication are very supportive behavioural features of face-to-face discourse. All participants expressed that gestures are important clues to comprehend the messages between interactants, especially when the language used is too complex for them. However, the discussions below support the importance and contributions of non-verbal communication in dialogues from the learner's perspective. In the following two examples (9 and 10), non-verbal communication parts are interpreted in brackets and the underlined parts represent the scaffolding offered.

In Example 9, the learner makes the sound of a car crash. As a result, rather than bringing the discourse to a halt, the discourse continues and the learner is provided with the word she is seeking.

> **Example 9:**
>
> 1   L – yeah with my father's .. working motorcycle his motorcycle
>   and we [sound of banging] fighting car . car
>
> 2   P – <u>ah you crashed into a car</u>
>
> 3   L – yeah . crashed

Use of gestures and other non-verbal communication in face-to-face discourses is a common practice as also stated in responses to the daily question survey. Although voice recordings do not allow us to observe those gestures visually,

there are phonetic clues that some body language is involved in the discourse. Use of non-verbal communication not only enables the communication to continue but also creates opportunities for learning through negotiation of meaning.

Gestures, being an example of strategic competence, also function as a negotiation of meaning because they may lead the proficient speaker to recast, and the learner to notice and take up the new item. At the same time, gestures indicate that the learner is in the ZPD trying to find appropriate structures and lexis. In the example above, the learner tries to explain the act of 'crashing', which is guessed by the proficient speaker with clues from the learner (crashing sounds). In response to this, the proficient speaker validates the gesture by recasting ["ahh, you crashed into a car"]. This confirmation and recasting are substantial scaffoldings for the learner from four aspects. First, the learner hears the past tense structure in recounting; second, she notices the new lexis; third, she takes up the critical verb 'crash'. In her response, learner feedback confirms this learning: 'yeah, crash+ed'; and finally, the learner gains confidence in expressing herself and in maintaining the communication.

In Example 10, although transcribed from voice recordings, the words 'just these' suggest that learner used body language to express the distance between her head and the car that was about to hit her.

Example 10:

1   L – the car stopped .. just these [body language] .. my head

2   P – this close to your head

In Example 10, all aspects of communication exist as in Example 9 except with the difference that the recasting is not taken up by the learner. Why the learner does not take up the phrase 'this close to' can be explained by two possibilities. Either the learner does not notice it or the importance of the input phrase is less critical than 'crash'. Nevertheless, it is not clear in this instance how the learner perceives the recasting or how recasting reflects on the learner.

Circumlocution

Circumlocution is a discourse feature in which learners try to give a message in different ways in cases where they do not know or recall the appropriate word(s). The underlined question in Example 11 is an example of this circumlocution (for *gasoline* or *petrol*).

Example 11:

1   P – not very different from a car?
2   L – no no eh .. <u>what do you put .. is for the car walking</u>?
3   P – gasoline . petrol
4   L – yeah yeah
5   P – OK
6   L – Gasoline…

From line 2 and the confirmation feedback from the learner (line 4), it can be presumed that the learner already knew the word in question but was not able to recall it at the time of speaking and asked a question to find the word needed. Another indication is that from the two optional scaffoldings 'gasoline or petrol' (line 3), the learner takes up the first one which she was trying to pronounce.

Clarification requests

As discussed in Chapter 2, clarification requests are the discourse features used by interlocutors in order to understand what was not comprehensible. In Example 12, the learner cannot grasp the question from the proficient speaker and responds by a question tone for clarification.

Example 12:

1   P – who is cooking you or your husband?
2   L – ha?
3   P – who is cooking?
4   L – no I never cook . just in the weekend
5   P – he never cooks?
6   L – because he working every day Japanese take-away and bring food
         everyday

The learner uses clarification requests to carry on the conversation. In the above example, the learner grasps two key properties in the proficient speaker's utterance (line 1): it is a *question* and it is about *cooking*. However, the response (such as Q: Who is cooking? A: No, I never cook) would be seen as 'incorrect' in the classroom but here it functions to share meaning and allows the communication to continue.

Confirmation of comprehension

Confirmation questions, as discussed in Chapter 2, are the questions that learners ask to make sure that they understand correctly and continue the conversation. Line 3 in Example 13 is a typical example for a confirmation question.

Example 13:

    1 L – you have brothers and sisters?

    2 P – I have a sister

    3 L – you've sister . one?

The learner here uses a strategy to confirm the understanding and extend the communication further (line 3). For the learner this strategy is important for follow-up questions thus making it likely that the conversation will continue. This confirmation also allows the learner to interpret the proficient speaker's comprehension.

Use of Fillers

Fillers are sounds and/or utterances used by learners strategically during discourses to gain time when they are working at their ZPD. Fillers do not essentially carry a specific message, but fill discourse gaps and facilitate the flow of dialogues. Common fillers are 'er' and 'yeah'. Examples 14 and 15 show how fillers (underlined) are used by the participants.

Example 14:

    1 L – <u>er</u> .. do you want Julien go together?

    2 P – I don't know

Example 16:

1   P – so maybe the North is better for holiday or because it's hot and it's

2   L – <u>yeah</u>

3   P – there is samba . and carnival

4   L – oh samba has .. all year .. by years Salvador

5   P – OK

6   L – <u>er</u> .. but very different in .. have wonderful places .. all Brazil

Learners use these fillers during their interactions for two reasons: a) to divert the conversation to a new but relevant line and b) to gain time. In a classroom environment, fillers are not specifically considered part of communication or an aid to learning. Nevertheless, the data reveal that redundant items are like stepping-stones in learning because they allow communication to continue.

Negotiation of meaning

As discussed in Chapter 2, a common interactional feature between proficient speakers and language learners is the negotiation of meaning where both interlocutors try to clarify a certain message which is not clear in the flow of their discourse. Negotiation of meaning is a significant feature of a discourse as it pushes a learner to his/her linguistic limits. The following are the discussions of two examples (16 and 17) of negotiation of meaning.

In Example (16), the learner appears to have difficulty in defining the quality of a soccer team herself, but they come to an agreement between the options presented by the proficient speaker.

Example 16:

1   P – what is Uruguay? is it a good team of South America? good?

2   L – I don't know

3   P – It's not too bad?

4   L – mhm . not too bad

5   P – not the best but it's not the worst

6   L – yeah

In line 1, the proficient speaker addresses a question to the learner. The learner response in line 2 'I don't know' may not mean that the learner does not know the answer (according to line 6 where learner confirms the definition offered by the proficient speaker), but it may indicate that she does not know how to answer or she wants to avoid answering. The proficient speaker recasts in question form asking for confirmation (line 3). The learner, with increased voluntary attention, notices the scaffolding '*not too bad*' (line 4) and takes it up. This is followed by another recasting for further confirmation (line 5) and the learner confirms it (line 6), but there is no indication of taking it up as well.

Despite the fact that the following example (17) seems quite a simple and rapid exchange of language, this dialogue has offers potential for language learning.

Example 17:

1   L – is .. eh .. how do you say?

2   P – won

3   L – Won?

4   P – yeah . the same champion

5   L – yeah

Negotiation of meaning pushes the learner to initiate in order to continue the conversation. Example 17 is another example of learner initiation (line 1), recasting by the proficient speaker (line 2), noticing by the learner and uptake (line 3), followed by further recasting (line 4) and confirmation by the learner (line 5).

Negotiation of meaning is therefore significant for the learner for various reasons. First, the learner starts working in the ZPD. Second, the learner hears new language in an authentic context. Third, negotiation of meaning is a source of much recasting with contextual new items. Recasting is a concrete example of scaffolding. Fourth, it increases the learner's voluntary attention as interlocutors are trying to reach an agreement on meaning. Fifth, the learner notices various new items due to increased attention. And finally, learners are supplied with opportunities to take up different linguistic items and develop communication strategies.

In summary, the voice recordings were useful in showing the overall range of language to which students were exposed outside the school. In informal settings, learners were exposed to a wide range of linguistic structures heard in authentic contexts including many which they were probably not already familiar with. Unlike teacher-directed classroom talks, informal discourses include a wide range of language use which is directed to the learner. This is a major difference between formal and informal settings.

The following examples indicate the range of language to which one learner was exposed in a single exchange; in this case the verb forms alone are underlined to indicate the variety of tenses she was exposed to in a meaningful context.

- I've been to my neighboring countries very often.

- Julien wants to go Brazil.

- Was it expensive there?

- Are you touching wood?

- Ah, you crashed into a car.

- I don't know when it is finish… when it's going to be finished.

Being exposed to a wide range of lexico-grammar is a significant characteristic of social learning in informal settings and a good example of holistic learning. Learners have opportunities to notice and take up various linguistic inputs contextually for authentic purposes. In such contexts, learners also develop a range of communicative strategies, using many kinds of strategic competence in order to maintain the flow of discourse. Keeping the discourse going enables learners to be exposed to various structures and lexis in context. Experiencing the L2 in authentic contexts is effective for comprehension and learning for real-life goals. Most participants stated that their TL use remained limited in certain fields due to their language skills and their social roles in the TL community, but significantly, they also expressed that if they could speak on various topics, they would learn more.

An important factor in outside-school linguistic interactions is that learners build confidence in TL communication, which prepares learners to perceive further affordances in their social ecology. Overseas students in Australia develop communicative confidence in English in a short period of time due to necessity but also due to the opportunities around them. Communicative confidence in the TL is likely to create better learners by way of having more contacts with the local community and maintaining longer and more complex discourses.

The dialogues in voice recordings suggest that there seems to be no intentional grammar learning; the focus is on comprehending and responding. Proficient speakers do not specially teach grammar or lexis as a target but the flow of discourse creates opportunities for learners to work in the ZPD, while proficient speakers provide scaffolding for various new lexical and structural items. For this reason, informal learning contexts are embedded with unintentional learning opportunities.

Learning in any discourse depends on how much learners are challenged and receive scaffolding. It is especially significant that learners are pushed to use the TL for different goals thus noticing the need to learn new structures and lexis. As learners are pushed for further lexis and structures, they are more likely to notice the scaffolding offered to them. The contexts which force the learner beyond their L2 limits seem central in activating the ZPD.

4.8 Summary of findings

Six different sources of data used for analysis of findings enhanced the validity of this research as all sources of data supported each one way or another despite minor differences or in a few cases, contradictions. For example, the outcome of learner beliefs, social activities, daily question and group interviews were all congruent with each other in showing the existence of abundant language learning opportunities in the TL community, and showing how living in the TL community contributed to language learning. Daily English language use and voice recordings gave insights about the amount of functional TL use in authentic contexts and how learners grappled with the linguistic interactions in

real life experiences using their strategic competences (Canale and Swain 1980). In general, analysis of the data in this research indicates that L2 learning experiences in the TL community for adults are rich and multi-faceted from linguistic, social and cultural aspects (Baynham 1993).

Findings in this research also indicated that learners frequently used the target language in two types of technology-mediated communications; mobile phones and Internet-based emailing. As the Daily Sheet indicated, by these means, learners communicate with friends, student agents, bosses, workmates and language school staff. In terms of language learning, these means of communications require all language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, it is common among the young generation that SMS and email messages might contain non-standard shortened forms of lexis and structures; for example, 'Are you coming tonight?' can be replaced with 'r u coming 2nite?'. While these literacy practices involve non-standard forms of English, they nevertheless create additional contexts for language use in the target language community.

CHAPTER 5

Activities as Language Learning: Conclusions

"What you do is what you learn."

(van Lier 1999)

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, the goal of this study was to investigate the independent L2 learning experiences of overseas adult students in Australia. The rationale behind this research was to understand what opportunities for L2 learning existed as part of participants' daily life in Australia; in other words, how living in the TL community could support an L2 learner in developing English. As discussed in Chapter 2, the theoretical bases used for this research were sociocultural theories of learning (Vygotsky 1978), aspects of register theory (Haliday and Hasan 1985), activity theory (Leont'ev 1978), and an ecological approach (van Lier 1999, 2000; Leather and van Dam 2003) to second language learning.

5.2 Overview of L2 learning in the TL community

As discussed in Chapter 4, this research has been underpinned by two overall frameworks: ecological constructs and second language learning processes. In this research, ecological approaches draw on aspects of activity theory, the notion of linguistic affordances and register theory. Learning processes in this research comprised of a combination of social and cognitive aspects of learning and refer to the notion of the ZPD, scaffolding and learner strategies. The use of this range of theories has provided the means for a multi-faceted view of the data, and has suggested the complexity of the factors that impact on language development. This approach may also be of value in research aimed at understanding the language development of learners in other social contexts.

As the research suggested, in terms of the ecological constructs, learner activities in the TL community constitute social settings that are loaded with ample opportunities for independent language learning. These social settings in activities offer linguistic affordances for linguistic engagement. When these affordances are taken up, learners use and are exposed to certain registers which relate to the different fields of the context. Learner activities and linguistic affordances are interdependent and interrelated with each other and relate to the use of appropriate registers. As the learner activities change, the nature of affordances change, as does the range of registers in which students participate.

As functional grammar suggests, the settings in which learners participate are thus components of language and language use, and are the settings for linguistic interaction in various social contexts (Halliday 1985). The figure (5.1) below illustrates the relationship between these aspects of the setting.

Figure 5.1   The ecological constructs in L2 learning in this research
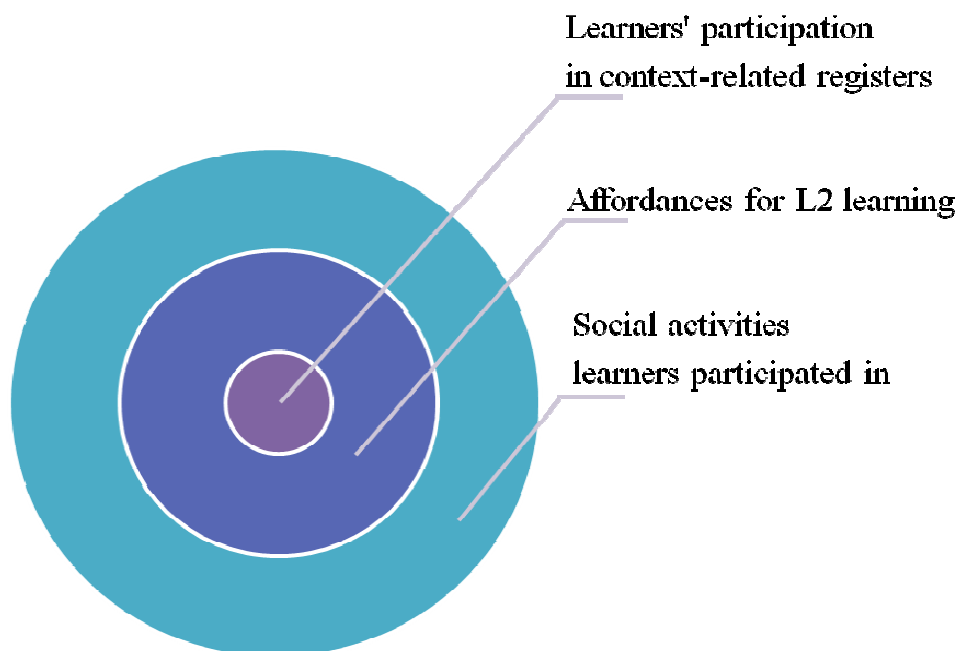
As for the learning processes, the data have shown that most of the learner activities in the TL community are loaded with social and linguistic challenges, and also potential for language learning (Nesdale, Simkin, Dang, Burke and Fraser 1995; Polanyi 1995). As Chapter 4 indicates, they offer opportunities for learners to develop language skills within their ZPD as they are supported by interactive scaffolding prompted through learners' communication strategies. In other words, there are many activities in which some linguistic interactions push learners' language capacities to the limits (ZPD), and learners battle through these challenges using various communication strategies while taking up the scaffolding offered. Challenge is significant to learning as learning is the experience of *dealing with* the challenges successfully by means of strategies (Tarone 1981) and taking up scaffolding (Wood, Bruner and Ross 1976).

The figure (5.2) below illustrates how second language learning processes interact with each other.

Figure 5.2   Relationship of learning processes in L2
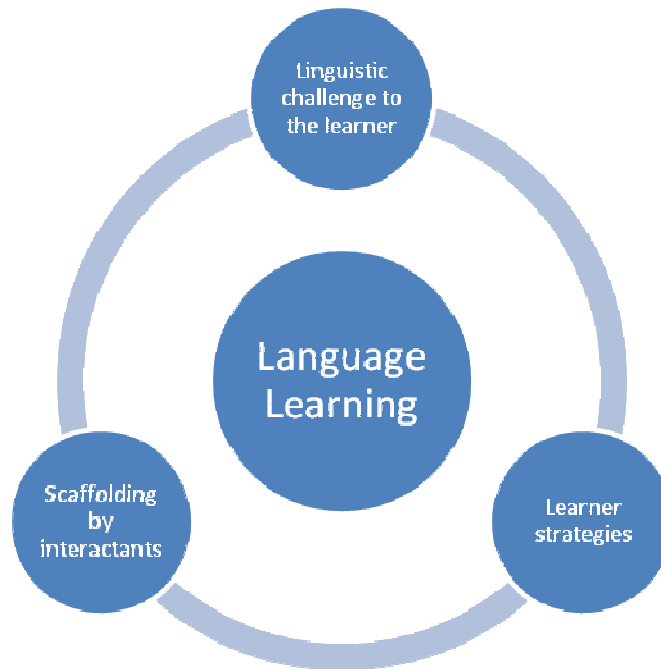
The relationship between activities, affordances, the situational registers and learning processes work together for language learning. In fact, the language used is constructed according to the relationships shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 and also in the flow of the activities and discourses learners are engaged in. For example, while some activities, such as opening a bank account, may require more complex lexico-grammatical structures and lexis, some, such as buying a train ticket, may require less. Therefore, the complexity of activities has a direct impact on the nature of affordances and opportunities for language development. The data in this research suggest that there is a relation between the specific activity, the degree of linguistic challenge for the learner and the corresponding affordances for language learning. Participants recognised and expressed that they needed more language-challenging activities which would push their linguistic limits to maximum language learning opportunities (Swain 1985).

However, neither of the figures above is sufficient to fully illustrate the language learning discussed in this research. While the pieces in the first construct the socio-ecological conditions in the TL community, the pieces in the second illustrate how learning occurs. Therefore, the overall realisation of language learning, and linking between the 'centres' of figures 5.1 and 5.2 is illustrated in figure 5.3. Figure 5.3 is a suggested model based on this research for understanding how activities in which the learners participate relate to their language learning.

Figure 5.3   Compound L2 learning diagram in the TL community

Learner social activities
in the TL community

Linguistic affordances
in learner social activities

Registers
in which learners practice the L2

Learning processes in L2
as in Fig 5.2
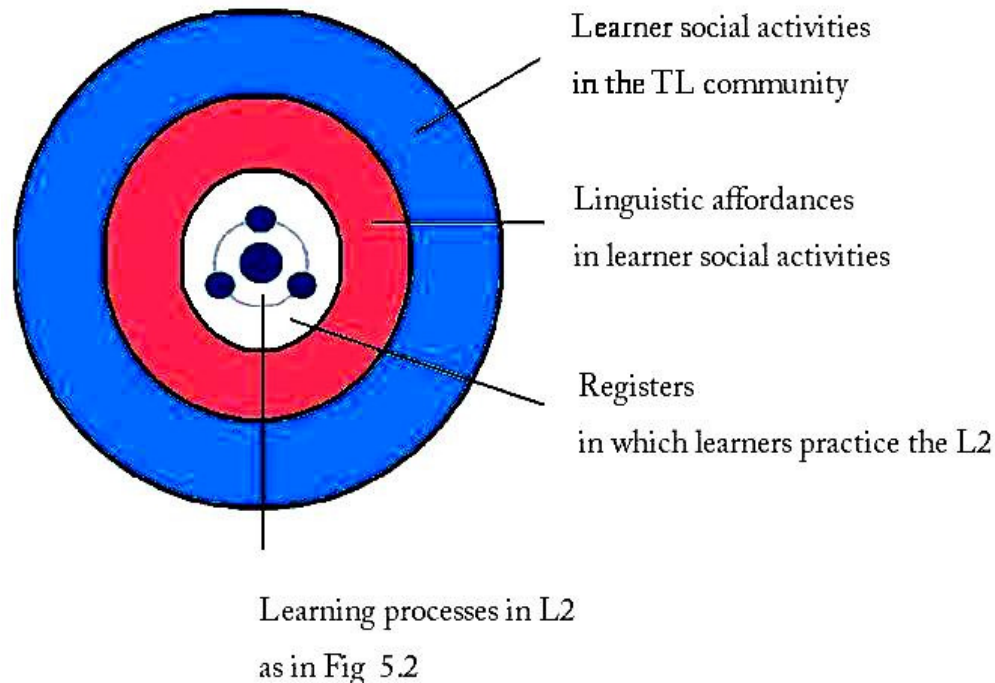
Due to the complex and fluid nature of language learning as illustrated above, it is problematic to formulate a single theory of language development for adults (Ellis 1994). However, a single approach to understanding language learning can be summarised as one that provides a social ecology for the learner in which he or she can engage in linguistically challenging and purposeful activities (Swain 1985).

The outcome of this study suggests some key differences between L2 learning in formal and informal contexts, within an activity theory framework (see Figure 5.4). It shows how in formal and informal contexts learners take on different roles and identities, make use of different tools, obtain different outcomes, and operate within different sets of rules as a result of participating in these two 'communities' of practice (Gardner 1985).

Figure 5.4   L2 learning in formal and informal contexts

(F: Formal; Inf: Informal)

(Tools)

F   : Teaching materials

Inf : Community (friends, workmates, roommates)

(L2 Learner)   **(Target)**   **(Outcome)**

F: Student   F:L2   ⟹ L2 repertoiere
Inf: Community   Inf:living in ⟹ Communication skills
    Member   the community   Cultural knowledge

(Rules)   **(Community)**   **(Roles)**
F: Learn ⟹ Communicate   F: School   F: Learner
Inf: Communicate ⟹ Learn   Inf: Outside school   Inf: Community member
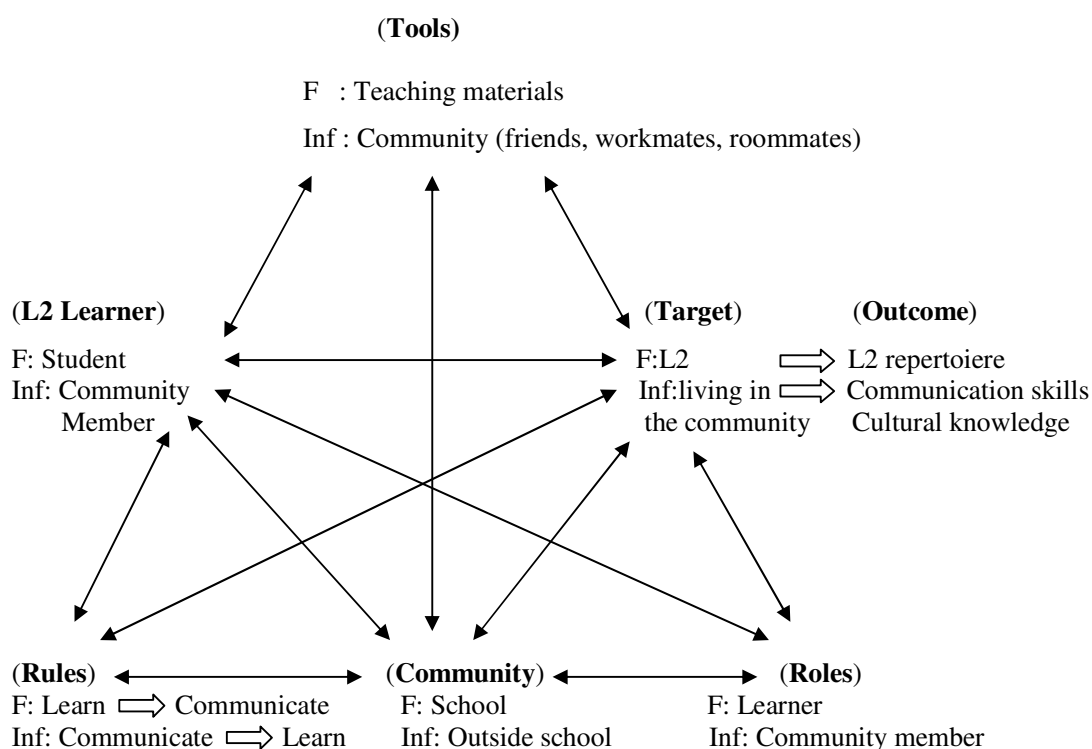
5.3 Factors affecting language learning in the TL community

5.3.1 L2 environment

This research suggests that the environment that learners are in is important in language learning for two reasons. First, it is the source of learning opportunities, and second it directly impacts on learning. As Mace (1974 cited in Reber 1993, p. 58) states "don't ask what is inside your head, ask what your head is inside of". Language learning is largely determined environmentally,

and is emergent and symbiotic. This is supported by data obtained in this research. Not surprisingly, all participants explicitly and overwhelmingly indicated that living in Australia assisted their language learning.

5.3.2   Social activities in the TL community

As discussed in Chapter 4, this study shows that learner activities in the TL community are important in terms of four aspects for optimum language learning. According to the data, participants learned more when their activities were: linguistically challenging; involved regular contacts in L2; were inclusive of a range of social contexts (and hence of language variation); and involved minimal cost. The nature of learner activities in informal social contexts changes according to learner roles and goals in the target language community.

As discussion in Chapter 4 suggests, learner beliefs have illustrated that living in Australia has been an important factor for language development for all participants. They stated that they had to use the L2 in many activities in the TL community. This suggests that participants were regularly involved in what were for them linguistically challenging activities, which pushed them to communicate through the target language.

This study also suggests that the regularity and variety of learner activities with the local community is essential for consistent language development. In the early stages of learning, learner activities in the TL community are short and remain within limited linguistic boundaries due to participants' limited English skills. However, perhaps with the support of formal studies, these learners gained some language skills and confidence for linguistic challenges in informal settings outside the school. Activities requiring regular and intensive linguistic interactions in natural environments, scaffolded both formally and informally, appear highly supportive for comprehensive language development since they push learners to work in their ZPDs more extensively.

This research has further suggested the importance of learners forming bonds with the local community for extensive learning opportunities in authentic settings. Particularly, learners who follow a special hobby or interest in

Australia, such as playing soccer or listening to rock music, are more likely to encounter native speakers regularly in their respective social circles. Individuals who share a common interest are likely to feel empathy toward each other. This social phenomenon is advantageous for a learner to form stronger and continuous bonds with the members of the target language group for language learning. Wells' (2007) comment that "Who we become depends on the company we keep and on what we do and say together" is closely related with the social bonds learners develop in the TL community.

However, this study has also suggested (in the social activity survey analysis) that there is a connection between language learning and a learner's financial resources as monetary constraints limit the possibility of engagement in some social activities. This issue has also been raised in other studies as an obstacle to reaching the L2 learning goal in the TL community (Lillie 1994; Teichler 1994; Teichler and Steube 1991). The relevance of learner finance with language learning is not simply related to a learner's linguistic skills but rather to the capacities to join many and different social activities, thus building regular and stronger bonds with L2 proficient speakers. It is usually the case that the possibilities of becoming involved in the local community may in reality for some students be impractical or costly.

5.3.3   How affordances play a role in L2 learning

According to the research data, L2 learning affordances in the TL community are constituted through location, the interactants involved, and the purpose for which the language was used. *Location* refers to the physical area where there are opportunities for linguistic interactions, such as shopping centres and workplaces. *Interactants* refer to the individuals who are present in that location and represent the potential for interaction in the L2. They may be, for example, a workmate or a flatmate. *Purpose* refers to the potential piece of language to be used in a particular context, such as purchasing something, asking for information or describing an event. These three aspects of affordances determine a learner's linguistic experiences and practices. The remainder of this section looks at these aspects of an affordance in relation to this research.

Location

As far as the location aspect of an affordance is considered, learners' social environments in this research typically consist of the language school, the workplace, home and other informal social settings. In this research, informal social settings included houses where participants' friends live, shopping centres, government offices, churches, libraries, banks, farms, public transports, pubs, parties, cinemas, restaurants, beaches and parks. As we have seen, each of these social environments offers opportunities for language use. Although language schools include both formal and informal social contacts, the workplace, home and other social settings are primarily informal. Affordances perceived and taken up by participants in this research have been discussed for the affordances which were outside the school. It is important to remember that each affordance is perceived and used differently by learners in accordance with their roles and goals in that environment and the interpersonal relations involved.

Interaction

In terms of the interactional aspect (that is to say, who the learners interacted with), the analysis suggests that students interact regularly in English with non-native speakers, in some cases more than with native speakers of English. As discussed in Chapter 1, this is due to the fact that Australia is a multicultural country with speakers of many different languages with English being the lingua franca. For example, learners speak English at outlets or supermarkets where the shop assistants are non-native speakers of English. Furthermore, it is quite common among overseas students that they share accommodation and interact with individuals whose L1 is not English. It is usually the case that learners are employed at workplaces and use English with their workmates who are non-native speakers of English. Learners make friends with other non-native speaker of English such as classmates. This may be significant as far as the variety of English developed by learners.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the contacts of participants with native or proficient speakers, with some exceptions, seemed to be usually occasional and short-term, such as finding accommodation, negotiating immigration office procedures,

applying for a tax file number or looking for a job. Some of these (immigration and tax office procedures) can often be carried out on the internet without personal contact. In fact, for the majority of the participants, the contribution of native speakers to learners' language development outside the school seemed relatively limited.

The research data have shown that learners also made contact with speakers from the same linguistic background on various occasions in the TL community, for example at the language school, at home or in the workplace. This reduces regular, consistent and intensive social and linguistic engagement in L2. Moreover, learners' social and linguistic affordances were sometimes diminished by friends and/or learners from the same linguistic background in classrooms, by school staff, workmates and/or employers in the workplace, and by flatmates at home. Learners usually tend to make friends with other learners from the same linguistic background because they comfortably share their experiences and difficulties in the TL community through L1, socialise without cultural concerns and assist each other to find accommodation and job. Language schools may have some employees, such as Chinese or Japanese, to better communicate and provide service to overseas students from China and Japan. Learners tend to have roommates from the same cultural and linguistic background so that they feel more confortable at home and socialise as they are used to. It is also common that learners can find work at businesses owned by the employers whose L1 is the same as the learner's, resulting in a group of employees speaking their first language at a particular workplace. All these cases encourage the use of the respective L1 for learners, reducing the opportunities of challenge and interaction in the target language community.

On the other hand, there are some advantages of contact with people from the same linguistic background. Participants develop stronger relations with people from the same linguistic background and try to sort out their linguistic difficulties by referring to their friends, usually other learners. These people scaffold learners with some knowledge about the sociocultural properties of the TL community such as understanding general values and attitudes of locals,

using the transportation system and applying for accommodation. As discussed in Chapter 4, learners benefit at times from interactions with people of the same linguistic background when needed.

Other important contact groups for the participants were students from different linguistic backgrounds. As Chapter 1 discussed, participants in this research included speakers of Czech, Portuguese, Polish, Japanese, Thai, Chinese, Slovak and Turkish. It seems that peer learners from different linguistic backgrounds in a target language community feel themselves to be socially equal and develop stronger relations between themselves through the target language. For example, besides formal studies in the classroom, learners also enjoy linguistic affordances at school when socialising with peer learners outside classroom settings. In those cases, TL is not a target or a 'subject' anymore but a medium for authentic communication between learners. These informal linguistic affordances at school are quite beneficial for learners in using their target language skills because of the equality of tenor relations, as learners feel themselves to be of equal status and this seems likely to create more risk-free communication opportunities (Pica and Doughty 1985). Moreover, there are some data which indicate that learners from different linguistic backgrounds carry their school friendship outside the school as well.

Purpose

The purpose of each interaction is closely related to the registers that occur. Depending on learners' goals (purposes), aspects of a register change, thus creating opportunities for learners to experience different usage of the target language. The field changes according, for example, to the learner's workplace, hobbies and interests. Participants stated that they needed linguistic interactions in which they could be exposed to various lexis and structures. Routine discourses such as 'exchanging personal information' or 'taking orders from the same menu' assist learners to gain proficiency and fluency in a specific field, but this is not enough for communication in many other fields in the target language. Tenor relations change according to learner activities such as student-teacher, student-to-student, housemates, workmates, or personal friends. The mode of language is, in most cases, oral although this may vary between face-to-

face interactions and more 'written-like' spoken language that, for example, typifies a telephone call. In this research, students experienced situations in which they wrote messages (including digital), read signs, listened to people in the streets, asked questions to others, talked on the phone or socialised. However, the daily activity data show that oral communication, that is listening and speaking through personal contacts, is the most intensive mode of language use in informal settings. There is therefore the potential for learners to be participants in a wide range of registers outside the school.

By contrast, the registers in the classroom are typically based on the textbooks, hence they are systemic, limited and pre-planned, and focus more on reading and writing activities. The field is often created through textbooks and curriculum planners. Topics are usually chosen and studied on the basis of being situations in which students may be involved. They are, in a sense, 'pseudo-contexts', and due to numerous possibilities of unpredictable circumstances outside the school, formal studies cannot replicate all fields of language that students will need. As discussed in Chapter 4, despite the fact that the participants stated that the fields studied at school are relevant to their daily life routines and needs, participants also expressed that they sometimes felt 'lost' in the discourses with native (local) speakers. This can be related to the impossibility of reflecting all sociocultural elements in textbooks.

5.4 Challenges for future research

In Figure 5.3, a model was suggested for understanding how the activities in which learners participate became affordances for language learning. Future similar research on informal L2 learning could refine this framework further and extend our understanding of the relation between activities, affordances and L2 learning processes.

Another area for possible research is to understand further the kinds of learner strategies that help adult learners construct and use the target language. This is related to understanding the processes of language learning. Due to ethical restrictions, authentic data collection on actual interactions remained limited in

this research. However, perhaps future research could focus further on this type of data as it could shed further light on learners' communication strategies and language acquiring processes. A single case study may also be considered for in-depth analysis of learning processes outside the school.

As linguistic interactions in the TL between learners (learner-to-learner) from different linguistic backgrounds and learner-to-NNSs (locals and other proficient speakers) had a significant role in L2 development in this research (Tarone 1980; Porter 1983; Pica and Doughty 1985), it is worth researching further how these interactions assist L2 development through the discourses made in L2 in informal contexts. Future research in this regard may focus on both communication strategies between interactants and the language used.

Another issue to consider as future research is second language learning as a combination of formal and informal learning settings. To research the interactions between these two learning settings, understanding the nature of formal and informal settings, especially from a pedagogical point of view, is also crucial.

5.5 Implications for the second language classroom

Despite the fact that participants strongly expressed the value of living in the target language community to their second language development during this study, research data suggest that they did not always seem to make optimum use of the environment as much as expected (as suggested by the data obtained through the learner belief, social activity surveys and group interviews, discussed in Chapter 4). For this reason, some outside-school tasks and strategies to support learners' interactions and language development outside the school could be incorporated into the formal education curriculum. For example, as part of their formal studies learners could be asked to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom in authentic social contexts such as asking for directions, getting or giving information or recounting past events. After such language encounters outside the school, they could then report their experiences to friends and teachers. For example, at school students could learn

ways of asking for directions and look at possible responses from interactants. After they have used these in authentic contexts, they could be given opportunities in class to compare the authentic conversations with those forms learned in the classroom. This type of pedagogical activity could be used to show the learner the variations that occur in authentic language use.

In relation to the outside-school practice discussed above, there could also be a time for learners to take part in a session where they are asked to discuss their language experiences outside the school the previous day, perhaps along the lines of the 'daily question' in this research. These sessions may not only create opportunities for the teacher to discover students' individual needs, but also offer learners a chance to share their experiential learnings with other learners, thus encouraging learner engagement with the local community. Moreover, learners can develop their own strategies how to make use of the language learning opportunities outside the school.

To increase the social learning opportunities in formal and informal settings, language schools may conduct a mini survey for all students at enrolment to find out learner hobbies such soccer, movies or music, and place them in a school hobby group as a part of their formal studies, through which they could share their hobby experiences in the TL community. This type of 'formal socialising' might not only encourage learner engagements even outside the school with each other, but also encourage learners to get involved with the same hobby groups in the TL community.

Some authentic extracts recorded or video-taped naturally in real life situations could also be also used for listening purposes, and the lexis and structures in those discourses could be focused on in school so that learners become familiar with such authentic TL usage. This type of material will also give learners opportunities to be familiar with authentic accent, speed of speech, and lexico-grammatical forms.

Thus, there needs to be a stronger correlation between what is studied at school (formal corpora) and what is needed outside school. Formal studies could be partially arranged according to the real life affordances which learners actually

experience in informal environments, rather than around hypothetical cases only. The content and models of activities could contain topics and related registers which are parallel to the current issues and activities outside the school so that learners will not get 'lost' in a world of meanings in real life linguistic situations. Moreover, learners could be encouraged and assigned to engage in assorted activities outside the school as part of their curriculum requirement, and these can be used as a basis for more formal language study in school.

In the Daily Question Survey, participant 1 stated that "I'm afraid when I speak… because a lot of people don't understand me." As also mentioned by other participants, these pyschological factors can be obstacles that work against adult learners taking the initiative in social interactions. Therefore, adult learners should also be educated not to be scared or shy of talking in the TL in both formal and informal settings. In addition to friendly and encouraging relations with both teachers and peer learners in formal settings, unavoidable social contacts in the TL outside the school are also a significant contribution towards gaining confidence for further interaction opportunities, and may also be strong 'confidence-builders'.

In Chapter 1, it was suggested that relatively little is known about the role of informal language learning outside the school (Davis 1995). This research has aimed to contribute to our understanding of the significance of linguistic affordances and social engagements for learners' second language development in informal social contexts in the TL community. The research suggests the complexity of informal language learning and illustrates that language development cannot be seen as a linear process. Rather, as suggested by Baynham (1993), language learning involves diversified functional operations and extended communication strategies. This research may also offer insights into improved and more relevant curriculum design for language schools.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Daily English Activity Sheet

Daily English Activity Sheet

Participant Code: ………….   Day: …………

Date:...............................

Read the following lists and mark the most appropriate choices that describe you best. The information will be kept confidential and it will be used for research only. Your name will not be used. Please take your time and answer the questions honestly. Your contribution is of great importance. Thank you in advance.

	Minutes
How long did you listen to English during classes today?	....
How long did you listen to English outside classes today?	....
How long did you listen to English outside school today?	....
How long did you speak English during classes today?	....
How long did you speak English outside classes today?	....
How long did you speak English outside school today?	....
How long did you read English during classes today?	....
How long did you read English outside classes today?	....
How long did you read English outside school today?	....
How long did you write English during classes today?	....
How long did you write English outside classes today?	....
How long did you write English outside school today?	....

	None		**A lot**	
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
How much did you enjoy your school studies today?	1	2	3	4
How much did you enjoy outside-school English learning today?	1	2	3	4
How much English did you learn at school today?	1	2	3	4
How much English did you learn outside school today?	1	2	3	4

Appendix 2

Daily Question

DAILY QUESTION

Participant Code: ……………. Day: …………
Date:.......................................

Read the following instruction and write your opinions. The information will be kept confidential and it will be used for research only. Your name will not be used. Please take your time and answer the question honestly. Your contribution is of great importance. Thank you in advance.

Write the **special things** that helped you to learn English today ***at and/or outside school***.

Please circle your answer.

Did you do any voice recording today?   Yes   No

Appendix 3

Group Interview Questions

Group Interview Questions

Interview questions addressing first research question:

(*How do formal and informal learning settings interact with each other?*)

Where do you think you learn more, at school or outside school? Why?

Do English classes help you outside school? How?

Do outside school activities help your school studies? How?

Do you use school learnings outside school? Yes – how often; No – why not?

How helpful are the school excursions to your English learning?

Interview questions addressing second research question:

(*How does living in Target Language community affect second Language development?*)

Do you like living in Australia? Why – why not?

In what ways (how) does living in Australia help you to learn English?

What have you learned about Australians and their culture?

Who do you usually talk to outside school? How long? Usually about what?

What kind of problems do you have when you talk with local people (Australians)? Social and/or linguistic?

What are the best ways to make contact with local people (Australians)?

How different is it to learn English in Australia than in your country?

What kind of English problems do you face outside school?

Interview questions addressing third research question:

(*What are the factors that support learners to develop their second language skills in a short time?*)

What helps you to learn quickly or faster?

What do you do to learn English outside school?

Appendix 4

Learner Beliefs on Language Learning in Target Language Community – 1

Learner Beliefs on Language learning in Target Language Community – 1

Participant Code: ……….   Date: ……………………

Please circle which describes you best.

	Disagree		Agree	
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Living in Australia will help me to learn English faster.				
Australian community will be helpful to learn English.				
People from different countries will help my English.				
People from my country in Australia will slow my learning.				
People from my country will help my English study.				
I will often have contact with native speakers.				
I need English to live in Australia.				
I will learn a lot of English outside school.				
Independent learning is better than schooling.				
In Australia I will learn better English than my country.				
I will learn English from experienced students.				
I will learn English mostly at school.				
Native speakers will help me to learn English.				
I will learn to speak English like native speakers.				
Learning English in a native country is the best.				
Roommates from other countries will help my learning.				
I will be like Australians when I learn English in Australia.				
Understanding Australian culture will help my English.				
I will learn very good English in Australia.				
I will have many Australian friends.				
I will learn English in cafes and restaurants.				
I will learn English in shopping centres.				
I will learn English in the workplace.				
I will learn English on the phone.				
Other: ……………………………………………………				

Appendix 5

Learner Beliefs on Language learning in Target

Language Community – 2

Learner Beliefs on Language learning in Target Language Community – 2

Participant Code: ……….   Date: ………………………..

Please circle which describes you best.

	Disagree		Agree	
	1	2	3	4
Living in Australia helped me to learn English faster.				
Australian community was helpful to learn English.				
People from different countries helped my English.				
People from my country in Australia slowed my learning.				
People from my country helped my English study.				
I often had contact with native speakers.				
I needed English to live in Australia.				
I learned a lot of English outside school.				
Independent learning was better than schooling.				
In Australia I learned better English than my country.				
I learned English from experienced students.				
I learned English mostly at school.				
Native speakers helped me to learn English.				
I learned to speak English like native speakers.				
Learning English in a native country is the best.				
Roommates from other countries helped my learning.				
I became like Australians when I learned English in Australia.				
Understanding Australian culture helped my English.				
I learned very good English in Australia.				
I had many Australian friends.				
I learned English in cafes and restaurants.				
I learned English in shopping centres.				
I learned English in the workplace.				
I learned English on the phone.				
Other: ……………………………………………………				

The tabulated results of the Learner Belief Survey marked by the participants

P: Participant   OT 1: Overall Tendency for survey 1   OT 2: Overall Tendency for survey 2   Dif.: Difference between the two surveys

For each participant, first scores refer to Survey 1 and the seconds Survey 2.

	P - 1		P -2		P - 4		P - 5		P - 6		P - 7		P - 8		P - 9		P -10		P -12		P -14		OT.1	OT.2	Dif.
Living in Australia will help me to learn English faster.	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3.8	4	+ 0.2
Australian community will be helpful to me to learn English.	2	2	4	3	4	3	3	4	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	1	3	2	2	3	3	2.8	- 0.2
Native speakers will help me to learn English.	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	1	4	4	3	3	3	1	4	1	3	3	3.5	2.5	- 1.0
Other students who speak my language will help my English study.	4	2	4	4	4	3	4	3	2	3	2	3	4	1	3	3	4	1	3	2	1	3	3.2	2.5	- 0.7
I will often have contact with native speakers.	1	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	4	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	1	4	2	3	3	2.6	2.7	+ 0.1
I need English to live in Australia.	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	4	2	4	4	4	3	3.8	3.4	- 0.4
I will learn a lot of English outside school.	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	2	3	2	3	4	3	3	3	2	4	2	2	2	3	2.7	- 0.3
I will learn English mostly at school.	2	3	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	3.4	3.3	- 0.1
Independent learning is better than schooling.	2	1	3	3	4	1	4	3	1	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2.4	2	- 0.4
In Australia I will learn better English than in my own country.	4	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3.9	3.6	- 0.3
I will learn English from experienced students.	3	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	1	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.3	3	- 0.3
Roommates from other countries will help my learning.	1	2	4	4	4	2	1	2	4	1	3	3	4	4	3	4	1	1	3	3	3	2	2.9	2.3	- 0.6
Understanding Australian culture will help my English.	1	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	4	4	3	3	2	2	3	1	3	2	2.9	2.5	- 0.4
I will learn very good English in Australia.	3	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.6	3.1	- 0.5
I will have many Australian friends.	2	1	3	2	4	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	4	4	4	1	2	1	3	1	3	3	2.9	1.9	- 1.0
I will learn English in cafes and restaurants.	1	2	4	3	4	2	3	3	x	1	4	4	4	3	2	2	4	3	3	1	2	3	2.9	2.5	- 0.4
I will learn English in shopping centres.	1	2	4	3	4	2	3	2	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	2	4	3	3	1	2	3	2.8	2.4	- 0.4
I will learn English at workplace.	3	1	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	1	2	1	3	1	3	1	3	3	3	2.2	- 0.8
I will learn English on the phone.	1	2	4	4	4	1	4	4	3	1	2	3	4	4	3	4	3	1	4	1	2	1	2.8	2.4	- 0.4
Other: *I hope I'd like to live in Australia (added by participant).*							4																		
Other: *Watching TV (added by participant).*					4																				
Other: *Reading book (added by participant).*					4																				
Other: *Listening to music (added by participant).*					4																				

Appendix 6

Outside School Activities

Outside School Activities

Participant Code: …………   Date: ……………………………

Please circle which describes you best.

	Never Often
	1 2 3 4
I try to speak English with Australians.	
I speak English at my workplace.	
I chat with my friends in English at home.	
I try to socialize with Australians.	
I go to festivals/concerts, etc. where Australians usually go.	
I watch Australian TV.	
I listen to other people in streets, trains, buses, etc.	
I listen to English music.	
I go to the cinema.	
I go to libraries.	
I like reading signs, advertisements, etc.	
I practice writing English at home.	
I visit and speak English with my friends.	
I do sports and speak English.	
I study English / do homework at home.	
I try to learn about Australians and their culture.	
I learn English from my roommates in my language.	
I travel and speak English.	
I go shopping and speak English.	
I eat out and speak English.	
Other: …………………………………………………	
Other: ……………………………………………….	
Other: ……………………………………………….	
Other: …………………………………………………	

The tabulated results of the Social Activity Survey marked by the participants

P : Participant   OT: Overall Tendency for all participants

	P - 1	P -2	P -4	P - 5	P - 6	P - 7	P - 8	P - 9	P - 10	P - 12	P - 14	OT
I try to speak English with Australians.	3	4	4	3	2	2	4	3	1	2	3	**2.8**
I speak English at my workplace.	2	4	4	2	4	4	no work	1	1	1	3	**2.6**
I chat with my friends in English at home.	1	4	2	1	1	1	4	3	1 or 2	3	2	**2.3**
I try to socialize with Australians.	2 or 3	4	3	2	3	3	4	3	1	1	2	**2.6**
I go to festivals/concerts, etc. where Australians usually go.	2	3	2	3	2	3	4	4	2	2	3	**2.7**
I watch Australian TV.	1	3	1	3	4	4	4	4	1	4	2	**2.8**
I listen to other people in streets, trains, buses, etc.	2	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	2	2	2	**2.9**
I listen to English music.	2	4	2	3	4	4	4	2	2 or 3	3	3	**3.1**
I go to the cinema.	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	3	1	2	2	**2**
I go to libraries.	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	**1.4**
I like reading signs, advertisements, etc.	1	4	3	2	3	2	4	3	4	2	3	**2.8**
I practise writing English at home.	1	2	2	3	1	2	4	4	3	2	3	**2.5**
I visit and speak English with my friends.	2	2	2	3	2	2	4	3	1	1	3	**2.3**
I do sports and speak English.	1	1	2	2	1	2	4	4	1	1	2	**1.9**
I study English / do homework at home.	1 or 2	2	2	3	2	3	4	2	4	2	3	**2.6**
I try to learn about Australians and their culture.	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	2	2	3	**2.8**
I learn English from my roommates in my language.	2	4	2	1	3	3	4	2	1	1	2	**2.3**
I travel and speak English.	2	3	2	2	1	1	4	2	3	2	3	**2.3**
I go shopping and speak English.	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	2	2	2	3	**2.7**
I eat out and speak English.	2	3	3	4	1	3	4	3	2	3	2	**2.7**
I read books and newspapers in English (added by participant).						3						
I go to church where Australians usually go (added by participant).										4		

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